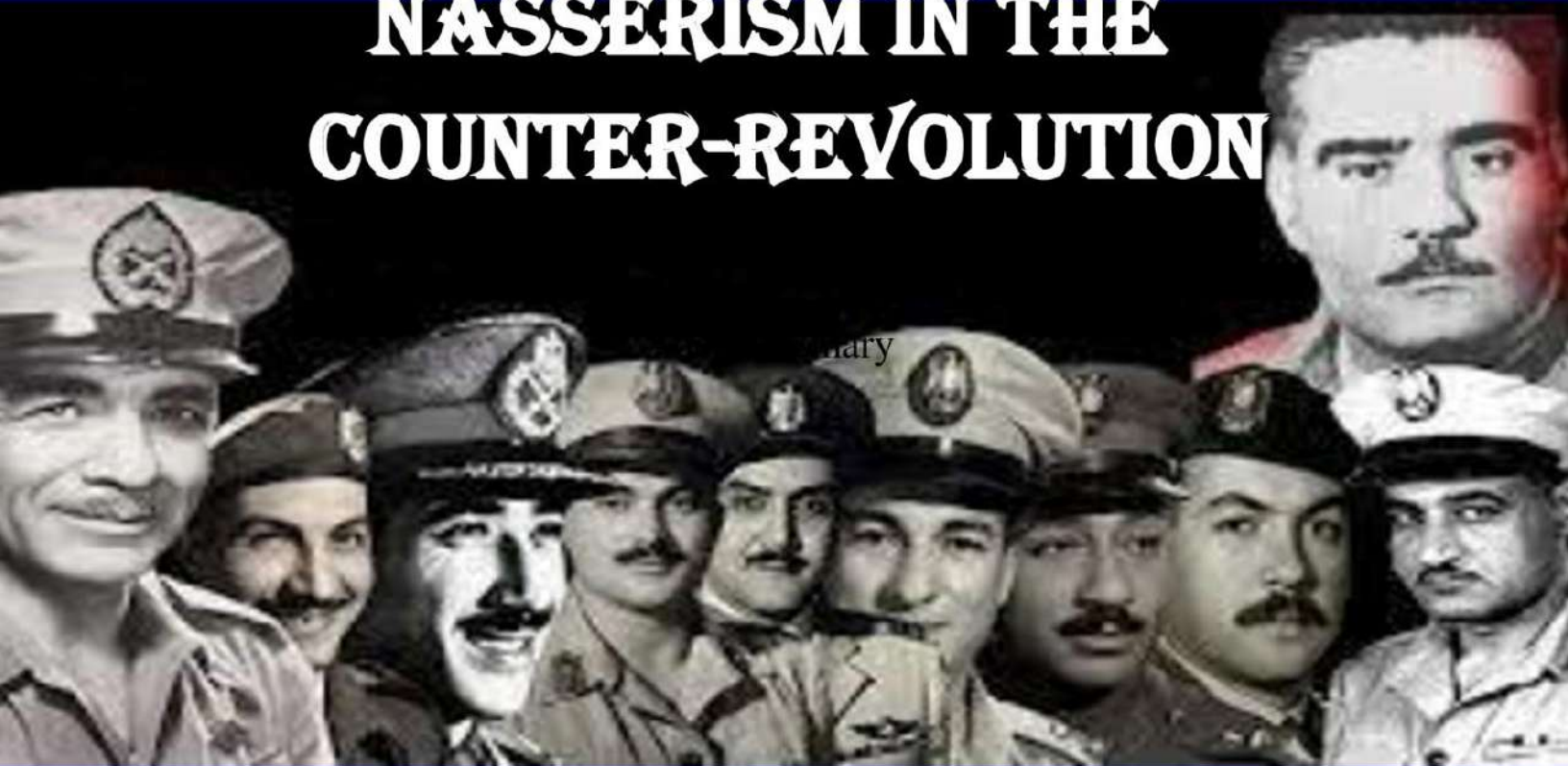


# **NASSERISM IN THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION**



**Adel El-Emary**

**DEDICATION**

**TO MY CLOSE FRIEND**

**WHO HAS ALWAYS SUPPORTED ME**

**MONA HAMED IMAM**

# **NASSERISM IN THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION**

**Adel El-Emary**

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## **GLOSSARY**

**\*Abbas Bridge Battle: February 9, 1946 - thousands of students marched from King Fouad I University, also known as Cairo University, to Abdeen Palace to call for the withdrawal of British forces and the cessation of negotiations between Egypt and Britain. A rumor has been circulated that numerous students had been killed and others had drowned in the Nile as a result of the bridge being opened by the prime minister's order. In reality, no fatalities or drownings occurred during this incident.**

**\*Al-Mahdi is a figure in the Islamic faith who is believed to appear at the end of time to rid the world of evil and injustice. He is said to be a descendant of the prophet Muhammad and will appear shortly before the return of Christ.**

**\*Ali Maher was a Pasha, a jurist, and an official who served three times as the prime minister of Egypt from 1936 to 1952. He also held positions as the minister of education and minister of finance. He belonged to the aristocracy and aligned himself with conservative political groups that believed in cooperating with the British and the king. Ahmad Maher played a significant role in forming a party called the Saadist Party, which he led and was supported by the king. In the April 1938 elections, palace candidates secured 193 seats, with 113 going to the Constitutionalists and 80 to the Saadists.**

**\*Ali Sabri was an influential Nasserist. He held several prominent political roles, including Vice President of the Republic, Chairman of the Cabinet, Minister of Presidential Affairs, Minister of Local Administration, Head of the General Intelligence Service, and Secretary-General of the Socialist Union.**

**\*Al-Nuqrashi was a conservative politician who initially supported the Wafd party after the 1919 revolution. However, in 1938, he was expelled from that party and joined the Saadist, or dissident Wafdist party, eventually becoming its president in 1945. He also served as a minister of communications (1930, 1936–1937), and from 1938 to 1940 he held various**

portfolios, including interior, education, and finance. He became prime minister on February 25, 1945. Al-Nuqrashi was assassinated in 1948 by Abdel Megid Hassan, a member of the Ikhwan, i.e., Muslim Brotherhood.

**\*The Wafd (Al-Wafd) was the largest patriotic liberal political party in Egypt. It was also the most popular and influential during the period from the end of World War I through the 1940s. During that period, the Wafd was working to amend the 1923 constitution. It aimed to facilitate Egypt's transition from a monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. It was dissolved by the government of the 1952 coup.**

**\*Fallah is an Arabic word translated to English as peasant or farmer, despite the big difference in meaning. A peasant exactly means a poor smallholder or agricultural laborer, while a farmer is a person who owns or manages a farm.**

**\*Fedayeen: Guerrilla**

**\*Industrial capital: This phrase is used in this book in two Marxist senses. The first is the capital employed in the industrial sector. The second is the capital employed in sectors that produce added value.**

**\*Ismael Sidqi was a prominent Egyptian politician. After World War I, Sidqi joined the Wafd Party. Public outcry forced Britain to allow the Wafdist leaders to present their case in Paris, but they were closely monitored and criticized by British authorities. Sidqi became disillusioned with the Wafd's plan in Paris, believing that foreign recognition would not be achieved. Instead, he advocated for returning to Egypt to continue the struggle there. This disagreement eventually led Zaghouel to expel him from the party. Sidqi then joined the conservative "Constitutional Liberalists" party, which opposed the radicalism of the Wafd. He cooperated with and supported the king and accepted the appointment as prime minister on June 20, 1930. He also held positions as Minister of the Interior and Finance, and on October 23, 1930, he changed the constitution to a less democratic one.**

**\*Muhammad Hassanein Heikal (1923–2016) was an Egyptian journalist. For 17 years (1957–1974). He worked as editor-in-chief of the Cairo newspaper Al-Ahram. Moreover, he was a commentator on Arab affairs for more than 50 years. He articulated the thoughts of President Gamal Abdel Nasser earlier in his career, worked as a ghostwriter for him, and represented the ideology of pan-Arabism. Heikal was a member of the Central Committee of the Arab Socialist Union. He was also appointed Minister of Information in April 1970 but resigned in 1974 over differences with President Sadat.**



**\*Mostafa Al-Nahhas was one of the most prominent Egyptian politicians of the twentieth century. He helped found the Wafd Party and served as its leader from 1927 to 1952, when the party was dissolved by the first Nasserite government. He struggled to convert Egypt to a constitutional monarchy and to end British colonialism. He was the most patriotic radical representative of the dominant class in Egypt.**

**\*The Saadist Party was a conservative anti-Wafdist party formed by Ahmad Maher Pasha, Mahmoud Fahmy El-Nokrashi, and their supporters. It was led by Ahmad Maher and backed by the court. Elections took place in April 1938, with court candidates securing 193 seats, 113 for the Constitutionalists and 80 for the Saadists.**

**\*The Socialist Union: the party of the Nasserite regime. The Arab Socialist Union was founded in 1962 as the country's sole political party. It was established in 1953 under the name of Liberation Rally, which was renamed the National Union in 1957. Membership was compulsory and collective. The party was authorized to select candidates for the Parliament.**

**\*The Urabi Revolt, also known as the Urabi Revolt (Arabic: الثورة العربية), was a nationalist uprising from 1879 to 1882. It was led by and named after Colonel Ahmad Urabi Pasha and sought to end imperial British and French influence over the country. The uprising was ended by the Anglo-Egyptian War and the British takeover of the country. It was supported by Egyptian soldiers and officers, as well as the lower classes, mainly peasants. Many Bedouins also participated, along with Sudanese volunteers.**

**\*The 1936 treaty: According to the treaty's terms, Britain was required to evacuate its troops from Egypt, except for 10,000 to protect the Suez Canal and its surroundings, plus auxiliary personnel. Additionally, the United Kingdom would supply and train Egypt's army and assist in its defense in case of war. The treaty was to last for 20 years.**

**\*Voice of the Arabs radio (Sawt al-Arab, in Arabic: صوت العرب) was a leading transnational Arabic-language radio service based in Egypt. The service became known to many Arabs and non-Arabs alike as the main medium through which the Nasserite regime disseminated its messages regarding Arab unity and revolutions across the Arab world. It enjoyed unparalleled popularity throughout the majority of the 1950s and 1960s.**

**\*Wasfi Tal was a Jordanian politician, senior statesman, and military officer known for his pro-Western stance. He was appointed as prime minister in 1970 during the Black September events, a conflict in which "Palestine**



**Liberation Organization” fighters were expelled from Jordan. He was assassinated by the Palestinian Black September Organization in Cairo due to his role in the conflict.**

**\*4 February 1942, Abdeen Palace incident: It was a confrontation that took place between the British occupation and the King of Egypt. Following a ministerial crisis in February 1942, the British government, via its ambassador in Egypt, urged Farouk to install a Wafd or Wafd-coalition government to replace the existing ministry. It was believed that the Wafd, still the most popular of the Egyptian political parties, would be more effective in gaining public support for the British war effort than all other parties. It was also hoped that a Wafd government would diminish the influence of the pro-Axis factions surrounding King Farouk. The king was compelled to comply by being told that he would have to abdicate unless he consented to appoint the Wafd leader to form a government. On the evening of February 4, 1942, British forces and armored vehicles surrounded Abdeen Palace in Cairo, delivering to Farouk a prepared abdication decree. The king yielded, and soon thereafter, Al-Nahhas formed a government.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

**This study was originally concluded in Arabic in 1986 but was not published at the time due to various difficulties. The book was first published online in 2002 by the late friend Sameh Saeed Abboud, and then an edition was issued by “Dar al-Mahrousa for Publishing & Press Services & Information” in Cairo in 2009 under the title The Left, Nasserism, and the Counter-Revolution - A New Look at Old Files. A new version was published online in 2017, followed by a third one in 2023. This is an English translation of the fourth version.**

**In the third version, some modifications were made to the book editing. Some footnotes have been integrated into the text of the book, tables were presented in a more aesthetically pleasing way, and references were checked. The observed linguistic and**

typographical errors were corrected, with some adjustments to punctuation marks to enhance the presentation. Additionally, minor additions were made to the content of the book to verify particular data, expressions, formulations, and citations without changing the overall content, which remained unchanged.

In the fourth revised version, the book has been re-edited to scrutinize some phrases and enhance its appeal.

However, human work is never perfect, and its strength ends with its imperfections.

What gives this study its vitality is that Nasserism is still alive and has not become a relic. Its fingerprints are still etched in the core of the current political system, and it still, as an ideology, has many supporters. In addition, nostalgia for its slogans remains strong among a wide audience. The Egyptian Left, as a whole, is, to some extent, Nasserist. It is expected that one only looks to the past insofar as it impacts the present. Even the reverence for the deceased in primitive tribes was based on the belief in their influence on the living. While Nasserism has ceased to exist as a specific entity, it continues to captivate the minds of many living individuals, indicating that it remains a vibrant idea. Beyond the tangible effects it left behind, it has deeply embedded itself in Egyptian and Arab consciousness. To this day, that consciousness has not qualitatively surpassed it, and therefore, its decline did not lead to the emergence of a radical alternative.

Nasserism is characterized as a distinct form of Bonapartism, encompassing a particular governance structure, specific policy directions, and ultimately solidifying into an elite that functioned as the supreme state bureaucracy. This role allowed it to impose significant royalties on all social classes. Over time, it aided in both the maintenance and alteration of the social system. This refers to the system in its entirety rather than a specific subset of the dominant class.

**We regard the Nasserite ideology as the philosophy of Bonapartist-Nasserite governance, as it was utilized to help reinforce the authority of the bureaucracy.**

**The main distinction between us and the Nasserists is that we view the events of July 1952 as a military coup and a counter-revolution rather than a revolution. The book will go into further detail about this viewpoint.**

**Nasserism was presented herein using Hegelian dialectics as a method of presentation, while simultaneously rejecting Hegel's mysticism. The general research framework consists of four sections: the genesis of Nasserism, its essence, its ultimate realization, and the mechanisms of its downfall, or negation in the Hegelian sense, i.e., its assimilation into the next stage, Sadatism. Meanwhile, we followed a chronological order of events, avoiding utilizing later findings to explain previous concerns in the same field. The goal is to find the horizons of each instant before proceeding to the next step of analysis, only turning to later results for clarity in exceptional situations.**

**The historical backdrop of the period was investigated, with a focus on understanding the causative reasons underlying the actual events by assessing the likelihood of their occurrence. The study moved from the universal to the particular, or from the abstract to the concrete, with a consistent methodology throughout each analytical phase. We continually considered not only the chronological order of events but also set a special methodological task: to discover the relationships between causes and consequences. This was not viewed as an assumption of historical determinism but rather as a direct causal link between original conditions and resultant events. The goal is to understand the underlying rationale of events and facts, as well as the mechanisms that drive changes in the real world.**

**We advocate for a materialistic perspective, dismissing approaches that place greater importance on thought than on reality**

and that elevate the individual's role above objective conditions; Meanwhile, we still acknowledge both aspects. Human history is mainly considered a history of struggle among social forces over interests and status. Moreover, the poor idea that deals with history as a mere conflict between good and evil is rejected. We also reject the naïve idea that categorizes human actions as purely positive or negative or as achievements and failures in abstract terms. Furthermore, we do not entertain absolute certainties or conspiracy theories. Instead, it is focused on analysis rather than moral judgments or assessments of intentions.

The economic policy garnered significant attention, accounting for more than one-third of the overall research volume and requiring considerable effort. This is not out of reverence for the economic factor in history, but rather because the Nasserite economic policy represents the most attractive element of Nasserism for both the general populace and the Left. It is the most mysterious in the minds of many people because it has been surrounded by various myths. Ultimately, it remains the most convincing rationale for the revolutionary and progressive character of Nasserism as viewed by its supporters.

Mahmoud Hussein's study deserves attention due to its comprehensive nature and the inclusion of radical theses that go beyond traditional leftist views, as outlined in his book "Class Struggle in Egypt 1945-1970." We concur with his essential perspective on Nasserism, particularly regarding the following aspects :

1. It was a consequence of a balance of political forces.
2. It failed to address the socio-economic challenges faced by Egypt during the mid-20th century.
3. It suppressed precursors of the popular revolution in favor of the social system that existed.
4. It was not a progressive stage in Egyptian history.

5. We also agree with his assessment of the Egyptian communist movement during the 1940s and other related matters.

He argued that the July coup embodied the ambitions of “*middle cadres in the state apparatus and the economy*” (p. 49). Furthermore, he contended that these elite, as he called them, possessed dormant capitalist potential that might be converted into stable capitalist interests. Nevertheless, these elite were suffering from a protracted transition from feudalism to capitalism, which was enhanced by British colonialism, landed aristocracy, and senior state officials. Furthermore, he pointed out that “*it is the petty bourgeoisie that forms the link between all disconnected levels of society*” (p. 52). “*Even when the social equilibrium experiences a period of relative stability, a period of diminished class struggle, this petty bourgeoisie makes itself a shield between the dominant class and the proletarian or proletarianized masses, exerting a paralyzing influence on them.*” (p. 52) However, Mahmoud Hussein did not consider the July coup as a revolution or a revolutionary episode, nor did he consider the rise of the “elite” as a significant historical occurrence or a progressive development.

In our opinion, a notable weakness in his analysis is his reluctance to articulate the latent capitalist energies of the aforementioned elite, as well as his inability to clarify the reasons behind this elite’s rise to power in 1952 in the condition of the *political balance* he acknowledged.

However, we are surprised by the description of the officers as representatives of the petty bourgeoisie. This class consists of the owners of shops, workshops, and small landowners in general, and it lacked the position, role, and strength in the social struggle in Egypt during that period. Was a party formed like the Jacobin Party in France, for instance? Was it economically or politically strong enough to infiltrate the army and take power? In fact, the Left generally tends to consider the middle strata as a whole as part of the petty bourgeoisie without any plausible justification.

We disagree with Mahmoud Hussein on several points, including:

1. The nature of Egypt's economic dependency during the Nasserite era, which we believe benefited global capitalism rather than the Soviet Union.
2. His characterization of the Nasserite elite as a state's bourgeoisie class.
3. His view of the Egyptian system as capitalist.
4. The conflation of the petty bourgeoisie with the intelligentsia and bureaucracy, practiced by the majority of Marxists.
5. Furthermore, Hussein prioritized economy over politics and lacked sufficient factual evidence to support some of his claims.
6. While Hussein touched on the Bonapartist nature of Nasserism and its counter-revolutionary status, he did not emphasize these aspects directly, which will be addressed in this study.

Adel El- Emary

June 2025

## **SECTION ONE**

### **The Coup d'état<sup>[1]</sup>**

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<sup>[1]</sup> The researcher will disagree with most of the known literature on the history of social and political conflict in Egypt in the period before the 1952 coup on two issues of particular significance. However, this difference will have little impact on the general course of the analysis and its final results. Therefore, these two differences will be referred to here without elaboration in order to avoid misunderstanding what may appear to be a confusion of concepts.

1. The Wafd Party was excluded from the patriotic movement, confining the concept to the parties, organizations, and struggles of the intelligentsia and the lower classes, on the

**A REVOLUTION IS NOT A DINNER PARTY, WRITING AN ESSAY,  
PAINTING A PICTURE, OR DOING EMBROIDERY. IT CANNOT BE  
SO REFINED, SO LEISURELY AND GENTLE, SO TEMPERATE,  
KIND, COURTEOUS, RESTRAINED AND MAGNANIMOUS. A  
REVOLUTION IS AN INSURRECTION, AN ACT OF VIOLENCE BY  
WHICH ONE CLASS OVERTHROWS ANOTHER**

*Mao Zedong*

## **Part One: The Course of General Domestic Conditions after World War II**

grounds that the Wafd represented the interests of the dominant class, which undoubtedly sought to achieve political independence through its well-known compromise, depriving the other classes -as much as possible- of any advantages, as was evident in the 1919 revolution. The Wafd's readiness to form alliances with colonial powers or engage in compromises was also apparent, as illustrated by its endorsement of the 1936 treaty and subsequent opposition to the Fedayeen following their increased operations in 1951. In contrast, the patriotic parties were far more radical, and their pressure on the Wafd was an important factor in pushing the latter's leadership to take some radical positions. Moreover, the post-1945 period witnessed a clear leniency on the part of the Wafd toward the king, in contrast to the increasingly radical communist, socialist, and other organizations.

In addition, we did not classify the Wafdist Taliaa, i.e., Vanguard, in the (authentic) Wafd Party, as it effectively constituted a split from the Wafd rather than merely a youth faction. It played a major role in putting pressure on the three components of the political system: the occupation, the royal court, and the Wafd, by which we mean the main bloc of the Wafdite body. The patriotic forces mainly encompassed communist organizations, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Socialist Party (formerly the Misr Alfatah), Wafdist Taliaa (Vanguard), small armed organizations, trade unions and small business owners' unions, and other small organizations, cells, and gatherings.

2. We did not consider the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic current in general as mere relics of history. There is no doubt that this current holds a bitter animosity toward secular and semi-secular currents and democracy in general. Nevertheless, it predominantly embodies segments of the intelligentsia. Although nominally based on religion, it has taken a strong anti-colonial and anti-Zionist turn and considered secularism as mere westernization. It is no coincidence that this movement played a pivotal role in the 1948 war and the armed resistance in 1951. Therefore, it is considered an integral part of the patriotic movement. We assert that the Islamic movement in its entirety is a product of contemporary society rather than merely a reflection of historical precedents.



## **Chapter One**

### **Widening of the Gap between Social Classes**<sup>[2]</sup>

In the aftermath of World War II, the dominant class significantly increased its financial assets. The government, along with various private entities and individuals, owed Britain more than £400 million.<sup>[3]</sup> Large landowners also accumulated enormous wealth due to rising land value, rents, and a dramatic escalation of the price of cotton. The dominant class contributed 84% of annual investments after the war and held 39.3% of the registered capital of industrial and commercial companies in 1948.<sup>[4]</sup> Furthermore, the government's considerable investments in the transportation sector also resulted in the establishment of a respectable transportation network throughout the country.

The manufacturing industry also experienced a significant leap during and after the war, enabling it to meet the domestic market's demand for sugar, alcohol, cigarettes, salt, and flour. Its reliance on foreign financing declined significantly, especially for cotton yarns, shoes, cement, soap, beer, furniture, sulfur, and vegetable oils.<sup>[5]</sup> Industrial production surged by 37% during the war, and industrial investments as a whole increased by 56.7 million pounds between

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<sup>[2]</sup> In this study, we use the term "class," often imprecisely, for simplicity's sake. But we do not see social classes as having crystallized in modern Egypt until the mid-1950s, as they did in advanced capitalist countries, except the class of large landowners, which was nevertheless unique in the way it had employed the labor force.

For the same reason, we will use the term dominant class, referring to large landowners, businessmen, and capitalists, even though we believe that they do not constitute a single class or even compositionally coherent classes.

<sup>[3]</sup> Naglaa Muhammad Abdel Gawad, Egyptian Creditor Assets.

<sup>[4]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, The Historical Origins and Development of Egyptian Capitalism, p. 164.

<sup>[5]</sup> Patrick O'Brien, Revolutionizing Egypt's Economic System, p. 31.

1945 and 1951.<sup>[6]</sup> In addition, the industrial profit rate rose from 13% prior to the war to 20% annually in the post-war period.<sup>[7]</sup> This investment boom was accompanied by an increase in the domestic savings rate from 5% in 1929 to 29% in 1944.<sup>[8]</sup>

The war period and its aftermath gave rise to war profiteers, especially adventurous merchants who capitalized on the shortage of essential foreign goods and accumulated considerable wealth that they subsequently invested in substantial real estate ventures. With the resumption of imports after the war, individuals of the dominant class began to compete to acquire them with their enormous accumulated wealth, leading to a rapid proliferation of luxury consumption.

On the other hand, the conditions of workers, the rural poor, and small employees greatly deteriorated. The lower classes suffered from shortages of basic goods, high prices, and weak purchasing power, which began to deteriorate increasingly during the war in particular and continued to do so afterward. The unemployment rate saw a notable increase, affecting even educated individuals, with approximately ten thousand unemployed in 1946, a staggering figure for that era.

This misery and devastation experienced by the lower classes, juxtaposed with the prosperity and wealth of the dominant class, were exacerbated by the proliferation of corruption. This included embezzlement, misuse of authority, nepotism, bribery within government bodies, illicit trading, and speculation on essential goods. In addition, the royal court was corrupted on an unprecedented scale, ranging from the king's financial scandals, such as embezzlement of endowment funds, to his numerous moral transgressions.

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<sup>[6]</sup> Charles Issawi, *Egypt at Mid-Century, An Economic Survey*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>[7]</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>[8]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

Given the considerable social disparity characterized by the juxtaposition of widespread suffering and the concentration of wealth and corruption, public dissatisfaction intensified, compelling governments to take some reform measures in favor of the lower classes. For instance, in 1941, the government enacted the Trade Unions Law, which granted the right to strike, albeit with certain limitations. Additionally, it provided basic goods via ration cards at subsidized prices and established price controls on select items. The final government of the Wafd party also enacted the Individual Labor Contract Law, followed by the Collective Labor Contract Law, along with legislation concerning compensation for work-related injuries and an increase in the cost of living allowance. Nevertheless, these measures proved insufficient to alleviate the growing public unrest.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Growth of Contradictions within the Dominant Class**

The significant economic recovery experienced by the dominant class during and after the war contributed to an intensification of contradictions among its various factions. Furthermore, large landowners maintained their grip on state power, a phenomenon often described as the dominance of “agrarian logic.”<sup>[9]</sup> Although the state occasionally intervened to support large landowners, such as purchasing cotton at elevated prices during depressions or selling Nile-slope lands at minimal prices, it did not extend similar support to industrialists. The industrial sector faced substantial taxation, and it suffered under the constraints of agrarian logic, particularly due to a lack of technical personnel resulting from a preference for theoretical education over practical vocational training.

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<sup>[9]</sup> For instance: Sobhi Wahida, On the Origins of the Egyptian Question.

Furthermore, there was a shortfall in the electricity sector, which compelled businessmen to purchase expensive private electric generators. Nonetheless, the state took many measures to protect the domestic industry. It imposed relatively high customs duties on competing imports, established and funded the Industrial Bank, and conducted studies on the fertilizer and steel industries. However, all of this was not sufficient and did not compare to what it provided to large landowners. Industrialists subsequently urged increased state intervention to bolster the industry. Their demands included financial support for industries, customs preferences for equipment and raw materials, and the imposition of high tariffs on competing imported goods. They also advocated for assured profits for emerging businesses and lowered taxes on industrial revenues.<sup>[10]</sup> They also urged the state to intervene to reduce the prices of raw materials, particularly Egyptian cotton, and permit the importation of the cheap short-staple cotton in exchange for the export of the expensive Egyptian cotton. However, the state, under the influence of large landowners, was largely unable to meet the demands of industrialists. Although some of the most prominent industrialists held the premiership multiple times, many were also large landowners. On the contrary, ministries headed by industrialists worked under the protection of the king, the largest real estate owner in the country.

Factories continued to purchase cotton at progressively elevated prices, while they were exposed to competition from imported products. In the period between 1945 and 1948, approximately 109,715 industrial establishments closed out of a total number of 129,271 that existed at the end of the war,<sup>[11]</sup> largely due to the arrival of superior and more affordable foreign goods.

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<sup>[10]</sup> The demands of industrialists can be found in the last three chapters of Sobhy Wahida's aforementioned book.

<sup>[11]</sup> Tariq Al-Bishri, *The Political Movement in Egypt from 1945 to 1952*, p. 158.

Furthermore, these factories were burdened with substantial tax obligations.

In the context of the conflict over the division of the social surplus, a group of reformers demanded the implementation of measures, such as abolishing the endowment, determining agricultural ownership and land rents, and reforming government administration. The industrialists supported these demands, as did the intelligentsia in general.<sup>[12]</sup>

Charles Essawi described the large Egyptian landlords as having *“all the defects of a privileged class unredeemed by any of the virtues of a ruling class.”*<sup>[13]</sup> In fact, despite their close ties to industry, they were the focus of social reform advocates. Although the industry found itself in a position hostile to large landowners, industrialists could not raise radical and anti-landownership slogans for fear of the unforeseen social changes that might result.<sup>[14]</sup>

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<sup>[12]</sup> It is meant by intelligentsia in this study individuals who specialize in mental work, i.e., educated people: Doctors, engineers, lawyers, managers, accountants, journalists, scientists, researchers, writers, artists, artists, writers, politicians, media people, clergy, etc.

<sup>[13]</sup> Charles Issawi, *Egypt, an Economic and Social Analysis*, p. 149.

<sup>[14]</sup> This is reminiscent of the great struggle in the 19<sup>th</sup> century between the bourgeoisie and large landlords in England over the Wheat Act. However, the outcome was completely unique in the two cases. In England, the bourgeoisie had succeeded in breaking the dominance of large landlords, but the Egyptian bourgeoisie never managed to clash with the big landowners. On the contrary, large landowners had always played a decisive role in the economic and political life of the country and remained incomparably more powerful and influential than the industrialists. The fundamental distinction lies in the fact that in capitalist countries, industrial capital can flow into various sectors and eventually achieve complete dominance. In contrast, industrial capital, in an underdeveloped country such as Egypt, functions merely as a conduit for intermediate activities. Moreover, industrial capital is unable to infiltrate pre-capitalist sectors all the way to the end and is obligated to resort to pre-capitalist methods to generate surplus. Moreover, industrial capitalism in Egypt has never been able to create a distinct political party. This fact becomes clearer when it is noticed that among the opponents of repealing the Cotton Law (similar to the Wheat Law in England) were the textile companies of Bank Misr. They took this position under the pretext of fulfilling a national duty, as observed by Robert Mabro & Sameer Radwan, *Industrialization in Egypt (1939-1973)*, p. 92.

Within the industrial sector itself, shareholders expressed their dissatisfaction with the prominent industrialists, wealthy individuals, and senior directors. Monopolistic companies were making substantial profits at the expense of the small ones by transferring a portion of their revenues. Moreover, the Egyptian industry experienced a unique phenomenon during that period, which was the administrative monopoly. In many circumstances, a single person held the boards of directors of up to 20, 30, or even 40 companies simultaneously.<sup>[15]</sup> The majority of these people owned only a few shares. By managing so many companies, they maximized their income and exploited the firms for their benefit.

In this context, they drained one company's treasury into another, resulting in a significant loss for shareholders. This situation led to a lack of trust in the administration among the shareholders, as the second side sought to distribute the greatest percentage of the achieved profit. Thus, shareholders impeded the business expansion, while the administration impeded the growth of small entities. Therefore, the dominant class was fragmenting and splitting into conflicting blocs, groups, and parties, each of which outbid others in order to justify the legitimacy of its existence. The matter reached the king, who declared himself the representative of the poor man, etc. Moreover, liberal parties were competing to polarize the masses in any way they could, with each side proposing to sacrifice the other as a scapegoat for the system as a whole.

The country witnessed many strikes and violent social conflicts in the period from 1945 to 1952. The country witnessed many strikes and violent social conflicts in the period between 1945 and 1952. In 1947, the matter reached the point of the policemen striking for the second time in the modern history of Egypt.<sup>[16]</sup> This imposed on the dominant class the necessity of sacrificing some of its gains or

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<sup>[15]</sup> Tariq Al-Bishri, Op. cit., p. 191.

<sup>[16]</sup> Ibid, p. 216.

offering a scapegoat for it as a whole, especially since its ability to exercise repression began to weaken after the defeat of 1948 and the spread of feelings of discontent within the army and the rest of the state apparatus. The growth of the popular movement pushed contradictions within the dominant class away and increased the intensity of clashes between its various blocs. The class would try to hold itself together in the face of the patriotic movement, only to find itself soon disintegrating again.

The agrarian aristocracy, protected by the royal court, was the most suitable party to step forward on the altar of redemption. But it was inconceivable that the most powerful section of the dominant class would volunteer of its own accord to gain the honor of sacrificing for the sake of regime stability. Hence, this process could only be carried out by force.

The royal court held a special status during this crisis. It was one of the most important pillars of the political system, and the king controlled the minority parties, or at least he could polarize them. He was the most hostile party in the system to social and political reform, due to his special position at the head of the agrarian aristocracy, along with his personal narrow-mindedness. Thus, he long obstructed many reform attempts proposed within the regime itself. Moreover, his bad personal reputation contributed to the increasing embarrassment of the regime. However, since the court symbolized the power of the dominant class at that time, confronting it directly by reform advocates was not guaranteed, as there were revolutionary repercussions on the horizon. For this reason, the king personally appointed the ministry that supervised the 1950 elections and presented it as “*an Eid gift from the king to his people.*”<sup>[17]</sup> The Wafd Ministry, the heiress daughter of the aforementioned Eid gift, despite all the reform measures it had taken in response to the will of the rebellious masses, stood weak

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<sup>[17]</sup> Ibid., p. 276.



before the court itself. In fact, it was the most conciliatory ministry of that party toward the king. The conservative “Wafd” of 1950 was no longer the same old fighter, while the revolutionary movement was gaining strength. In fact, the period was the most suitable in modern Egyptian history for radical transformations.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **The Explosion of the National Question and Social Conflict**

Egypt suffered heavy losses during the war. According to the 1936 treaty, the occupying army used the country’s seaports, airports, roads, and other facilities. It also seized substantial quantities of domestically produced goods for which it did not pay and which were considered a debt to the British government. The lower classes ultimately bore the burden of these obligations, along with the burden of the immense enrichment of the dominant class during the same period.

The result was an escalation in popular discontent with the occupation. Additionally, illusions emerged among broad sectors of the population that a fascist victory would free Egypt from the burden of occupation. The 1936 treaty proved to be not “*concluded for Egypt*,” as Al-Nahhas claimed, but rather for Britain and its domestic ally, the dominant class, which greatly benefited from the implementation of the treaty during the war.<sup>[18]</sup>

The war, with its various repercussions, led to a state of popular unrest against the occupation itself. During it, there were many clashes between the masses and foreign soldiers, and the mere presence of the occupation army became a source of great popular provocation.

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<sup>[18]</sup> Patrick O’Brien mentioned that the wage of the Egyptian industrial worker in that period was one of the lowest in the world, *ibid.*, p. 46.

**In addition to supporting domestic industrial capital power, the war also stimulated the growth of the number of industrial workers and their influence in the patriotic movement. However, it also resulted in a severe deterioration in their standard of living, as they were the most affected group during the war. The war also played a significant role in increasing political consciousness among the poor social classes, students, and the intelligentsia, who were the most influential force in the patriotic movement. Furthermore, the war improved the reputation of the Soviet Union globally, especially in the colonies, as a country that made significant efforts to defeat fascism and supported leftist and patriotic movements. Additionally, the war weakened the old colonial empires led by Britain and France, which seemed to encourage the ambitions of other global powers, particularly the United States, as well as various domestic groups, classes, and political forces.**

**On February 4, 1942, the king experienced the greatest shock of his life when the British forces imposed Al-Nahhas ministry upon him.<sup>[19]</sup> From that moment on, he was seeking the opportunity to strike back at the majority party to regain his authority, which he had always partially lost under Wafdist governments, and to reclaim his prestige before both the populace and the occupation.**

**The minority parties were hoping to completely eliminate the Wafd after the February 4 incident and the expulsion of Makram Ebeid, the party's number two, in addition to the scandals of the famous "Black Book" issued by Ebeid. February 4 had somewhat damaged the Wafd's reputation among its proponents, but after the war, it soon regained much of its influence, mainly thanks to the corruption of the ministries of the minority parties that followed it, rather than its own struggle. However, its proponents after the war were not the same as those before. Lower classes had become more**

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<sup>[19]</sup> Details are available in:

- Mahmoud Metwally, The February 4, 1942 incident in contemporary Egyptian history.
- Muhammad Anis, February 4, 1942, in Egyptian political history.

inclined toward radical slogans and violence. Maintaining their support required the party not only to raise national slogans but also to adopt increasing social demands, especially since the war had led to a sharp deterioration in their standard of living. The national issue was also no longer open to many compromises among this rebellious mass after the occupation had cost it so much sacrifice and pain during the war.

Meanwhile, the Wafd became more conservative than before, with its leadership had been dominated by the real estate aristocracy after the 1936 treaty. To retain its influence on the street, it first had to restrain itself, override the conservative tendencies of its leadership, and stick to its populist slogans, which was a new kind of responsibility.

Following the war, the dominant class as a whole developed fresh aspirations regarding the national question, which, from its perspective, had always been essentially a question of political independence. It began to demand a larger share of the pie from weary Britain, considering the outbreak of the patriotic movement as an opportunity to put pressure on the former to grant it more political independence.

The situation on the Egyptian scene became more complicated due to a novel and intricate scenario, which included the increasing revolutionary sentiment of the people, the widening division between dominant groups, and the apparent decline of British colonialism. The national issue became extremely explosive, and social issues were first on the agendas of workers and intellectuals before reaching the peasantry, albeit only somewhat. Since democracy is the only system that can ensure a functioning government, it continued to be the Wafd party's primary focus. Furthermore, competition among the various parties of the dominant class developed into a significant rivalry.

The Wafdist Taliaa (Vanguard), Islamist organizations, Marxist organizations, and the "Misr Alfatah" party (Young Egypt party)

were among the new forces that entered the battle and greatly increased their influence in terms of the local political balance of powers.

The power struggle between different groups of the dominant class started as the war came to an end. The conclusion of the war and the imminent defeat of Germany made it feasible for the monarch to overthrow Al-Nahhas government, probably with British consent. By taking advantage of Britain's protection, the prime minister was purposefully provoking the king. In late 1944, the latter achieved his goal and appointed Ahmad Maher of the Saadi Party as prime minister.<sup>[20]</sup> Maher formed his ministry from the Saadists, the Constitutional Liberal Party, the Wafdist Bloc, Makram Ebeid's party, and the National Party. He also announced a date for the general elections to establish the House of Representatives.

The Wafd was excluded from the new ministry, and it was evident that Ahmad Maher's government would manipulate the elections. The Wafd demanded that the elections be conducted under the supervision of a neutral government, but eventually decided to boycott them.

The new ministry was formed under the leadership of Ahmad Maher, who was not given a reprieve by patriots who assassinated him on the same day he decided to declare war on Germany. The new ministry announced its commitment to the 1936 treaty and the alliance with Britain, especially since the latter had tended, after the war, to adopt the idea of alliances instead of military occupation to save expenses. However, it was compelled to release some democratic liberties that had been brutally curtailed during the war when it seemed that there was no justification for continuing martial law. As a result, a large popular protest movement erupted against

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<sup>[20]</sup> Refer to Kamal Abdel Raaouf, Tanks around the Palace, Lord Kilburn's diary of February 4, 1942, pp. 110-112.

the occupation, the 1936 treaty, and the government's announcement of its approval of the idea of an alliance with Britain.

In contrast to the ministry's position, patriots and the Wafd Party insisted that the issue of the occupation of Egypt be brought before the Security Council. At that time, the Soviet Union was negotiating with Western countries to withdraw from Iran in exchange for Britain and France evacuating Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. The Soviet presence was still strong in Iran, and the Communist Party was influential in Greece. Syria and Lebanon seized the opportunity and brought the occupation issue before the Security Council, and a settlement was reached in their favor. As for the Saadist ministry in Egypt, which was more capable in reality of representing the dominant class, unlike the Wafd, which was more closely connected to the masses and thus more likely to respond to their pressure, it believed that the ideal solution was to achieve independence, while maintaining some form of alliance with Britain.

Al-Nuqrashi, who replaced Ahmad Maher, submitted a memorandum to the British government in December 1945, advocating for a reassessment of the 1936 treaty and suggesting a potential alliance with Britain. However, the British government's response was disappointing to him. Both the memorandum and the subsequent reply were transmitted discreetly, yet details regarding both were leaked to the public, eventually compelling the government to publish them, leading to massive protest demonstrations and widespread clashes, including the notable Battle of Abbas Bridge. Al-Nuqrashi then resigned from the ministry, while Ismail Sidqi was appointed as the new prime minister.<sup>[21]</sup>

In an attempt to appeal to the rebellious masses, the Wafd proposed the slogan of "Unity of the Nile Valley" as a solution to the Sudanese question, as well as canceling the 1936 treaty,

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<sup>[21]</sup> Find details in Tariq Al-Bishri, Op. cit., pp. 86-91, Ahmad Hamroush, The Story of the July 23 Revolution, part (1), pp. 88-96.

which required complete evacuation. More crucially, the party focused on the need to hold new, free elections overseen by a neutral government. These slogans come at a high cost.

The agenda of patriotic forces, excluding the Islamic movement, aimed to empower the Wafd to realize its slogans or, at the very least, to present the issue to the Security Council. Among the slogans of the Democratic Movement for National Liberation (HADITU), the largest communist organization at the time, was the assertion that opposing the Security Council constituted treason. This belief stemmed from the idea that the mere presence of the Soviet Union in the Council would ensure Egypt's success.<sup>[22]</sup>

Sidqi's ministry, which followed Nukrashi's, decided to enter into negotiations with Britain to resolve the Egyptian and Sudanese issues. Consequently, it allowed more political freedoms to improve the government's image on the one hand and to utilize mass movements in the upcoming negotiations with the colonizers on the other hand.

The public's initial reaction to the release of freedoms was to stage protests against Sidqi's government. They demanded a fair distribution of national revenues, a complete withdrawal of the occupation army, and the referral of the national issue to the Security Council. Additionally, the "National Committee for Students and Workers" was established, and the protests continued for several days. Nevertheless, Sidqi opted to start negotiations amidst the demonstrations, aiming to leverage the situation to his advantage.

In contrast to Sidqi's plan, some British circles expressed their keenness to have negotiations with a government that enjoyed tangible popular influence, i.e., the Wafd Party. As a maneuver, Sidqi offered the party to include two members, but Mustafa Al-

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<sup>[22]</sup> Find further details in Tariq Al-Bishri's aforementioned book and in Rifaat Al-Saeed, *Organizations of the Egyptian Left 1950-1957*.

Nahhas turned it down, providing some requirements for taking part in the talks:

1. The negotiations should take place regardless of the aforementioned Al-Nuqrashi memorandum.
2. The Wafd Party must have a majority in the negotiating delegation.
3. Dissolving the House of Representatives after the end of negotiations and holding elections under the supervision of a neutral government.

Faced with these conditions, Sidqi began to harshly criticize the Wafd, while the negotiating delegation was formed from the minority parties amidst fierce media conflicts between the Wafd Party and the government. Furthermore, there were extensive and violent protest demonstrations that demonstrated to Sidqi, although not yet to Al-Nahhas, that the strategy of utilizing mass movements had become ineffective, and the conditions that had previously facilitated this were no longer available. So, he quickly retreated in panic from his “democratic” experience—using the terminology of the current era—and issued the “Social Order Protection” act,<sup>[23]</sup> a law that no Egyptian government has dared to repeal. That law included harsher criminal penalties under the pretext of protecting the social order against communist ideas. He entered the negotiations after taking extremely violent, repressive measures against the rebellious masses and the opposing press. However, the desired negotiations ended with the well-known Sidqi-Bevin Project, which stipulated the formation of a joint defense committee and the continuation of the administrative system in Sudan as it was.<sup>[24]</sup>

The Wafd’s response to Sidqi-Bevin was to declare that Sidqi would not succeed in implementing any agreement or achieving any

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<sup>[23]</sup> Find details in Tariq Al-Bishri’s aforementioned book, pp. 116-130.

<sup>[24]</sup> Full details can be found in The Egyptian Issue 1882-1954, pp. 533-536.



solution to the national question. It called once again for free elections, which would lead, as usual, to a Wafdist government. Meanwhile, Al-Nahhas began quietly approaching yesterday's enemy: the king.

The patriotic forces declared their position, which was summarized in the cancellation of the 1936 treaty and referral of the issue to the Security Council. In the face of the Sidqi-Bevin Agreement, there were widespread acts of popular violence that were met with a fierce wave of repression. However, the masses did not withdraw from the streets until Ismail Sidqi resigned.

The intelligentsia and lower classes achieved an important goal until Sidqi's resignation. This was preventing the establishment of a defensive alliance with Britain, which was the latter's main goal in concluding any agreement with Egypt at that time. Thus, the people thereby cut off the most conservative bloc of the dominant class from solving the national issue for its benefit. Minority party governments had thus far demonstrated their inability to reach any agreement with Britain, a shortcoming openly criticized by the British press. In response, the British government expressed its preference to negotiate with a government more acceptable to the populace. Thus, the dreams of the Wafd seemed within reach. However, the king was still determined to destroy this particular party. Therefore, he handed over the ministry to Nuqrashi once again.

Al-Nuqrashi, with the king's support, decided to propose the idea of resuming negotiations with Britain, but based on amending the agreement to resolve the Sudan issue. In this way, he would have achieved one of the most important aspirations of the patriotic movement and pulled the rug out from under the Wafd Party, even if only partially. However, he did not think about renegotiating the issue of the alliance. This issue continued to be a significant flaw in his plan, which the Wafd exploited to rally the public against him. In response to the amendment demands mentioned earlier, Britain

positioned itself as a defender of Sudanese rights, claiming to oppose Egypt's colonial ambitions in Sudan. This stance aimed to embarrass the Al-Nuqrashi government. In response to the king's insistence on not returning the Wafd, Britain raised the issue of democracy in Egypt, attacked Al-Nuqrashi's government, and publicly called for the Wafd's return. In response, the king appointed Ibrahim Abdel Hadi of the Saadi Party as head of the royal court. He was known for his strong hostility toward the Wafd Party.

In the patriotic movement camp, demonstrations and protest movements continued, with their slogan for Sudan being the unity of the Nile Valley. This movement gained enormous popularity in Egypt and Sudan, with an insistence on presenting the national issue to the Security Council.

In response to the tightening of both Britain and the nationalist movement, Al-Nakrashi decided to present the case to the Security Council to alleviate popular pressure and embarrass Britain at the same time, hoping to win the United States over to his side.<sup>[25]</sup> In the worst-case scenario, where the Security Council fails to provide a solution to the Egyptian issue, the patriotic movement would be thwarted, its demands defeated, and the masses would return to calm.

However, Britain insisted on continuing the 1936 treaty, while the Security Council was no longer able to offer anything to Egypt. The Soviet Union withdrew from Iran; the situation in Greece was calmed down. In addition, Britain no longer had a reason to make concessions, especially since it temporarily and to some extent

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<sup>[25]</sup> In the postwar period, the dominant class tried to leverage the contradiction between Britain and the United States by welcoming the influx of American capital and cozying up to the United States in an attempt to undermine British influence. For instance, Egypt left the sterling bloc in 1947 to be pegged to the dollar, which had been the world currency since 1944. However, it practically remained pegged to sterling until 1962, when it was linked to the dollar.

coordinated its interests in the Middle East with the United States. It was not yet prepared to abandon its base in Egypt, especially since Palestine had come under Zionist control and the end of the British occupation was approaching.

Al-Nuqrashi's maneuver was not overlooked by the patriotic movement. The latter announced in its newspapers, demonstrations, and conferences that presenting the issue to the Security Council required first the cancellation of the 1936 treaty and the 1899 agreement concerning Sudan and revoking the Sidqi-Bevin agreement. Thus bringing the conflict to a new level of stress.

The Wafd Party announced its rejection of the principle of alliance, attacking Al-Nuqrashi and calling for free elections. The party stated that the government does not represent the nation as it claimed.

A new series of demonstrations took place, and waves of mass violence and counter-repression were again active, forcing Britain to withdraw its forces from Cairo and Alexandria, contenting itself with stationing them in the Canal Zone, with the jubilation of the Nuqrashi government. In contrast, the masses continued their attacks on the withdrawing occupation forces and violent demonstrations against the government.

After a lengthy delay, in July 1947, Al-Nuqrashi delivered a memorandum to the Security Council in which he attacked colonialism with a level of violence unusual for a man such as the Saadi Party leader, aiming to appeal to the masses. Nevertheless, Britain leveraged the Sudanese issue to counter Al-Nuqrashi's attack, highlighting what it referred to as Egypt's colonial ambitions in Sudan. Meanwhile, Egypt's efforts to gain support from the United States proved entirely unsuccessful.<sup>[26]</sup> The matter concluded with the council's inability to decide on the issue. Nonetheless, Al-Nuqrashi believed that, despite the council's inaction, he had

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<sup>[26]</sup> Find the details of this in Tariq Al-Bishri, Op. cit., pp. 151-152.

**fulfilled the patriotic movement's demands. However, the results were completely different from what he expected, as the country erupted in demonstrations, and the minority government supported by the king became unable to take further initiatives. Therefore, a new phase of violent clashes between the masses and the police forces began on a large scale.**

**The following period saw several union and economic strikes, culminating in the police strike of September 1947. This strike harmed the regime's reputation and led to significant dysfunction within the police apparatus.**

**The same period also witnessed an escalation in acts of terrorism, especially by the Muslim Brotherhood.**

**However, the Palestine crisis helped save the regime from a state of chaos that it had not previously experienced. In 1947, Britain announced its intention to withdraw its forces from Palestine, leading to escalating clashes between Arabs and Zionists. The declaration of the establishment of a Jewish state became imminent as tensions reached their peak. The United Nations resolution to partition Palestine was issued in October 1947, followed by the declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel on May 15, 1948.**

**Arab nationalism began to rise significantly in Egypt following the Second World War. The intensification of the Palestinian issue further sparked interest in Arab nationalism among the Egyptian populace. This did not result in the formation of a political party similar to the Baath, nor did communist organizations adopt this issue, except for the weak remnants of the old Egyptian Communist Party from the 1930s. However, the feeling of Arab belonging started to permeate the consciousness of the masses, who began to see the impending Zionist win in Palestine as a victory for colonialism, against which they were still fighting in Egypt. Additionally, the slaughter, displacement, and expulsion of Arab brothers from their homes further stoked this sentiment. The**

**“Misr Alfatah” party and the “Muslim Brotherhood” played significant roles in advocating for the fight against Zionism and supporting the Palestinians. The largest communist organization supported the partition of Palestine and opposed Egypt’s entry into the war in 1948 based on its analysis of Zionism, despite its rejection and opposition to it. The majority party did not prioritize the Palestinian issue, contenting itself with theoretical support for the struggle against Zionism in general and later supporting entering the war against Israel.**

**The declaration of the establishment of Israel ignited the entire region, leading to war.**

**The patriotic movement in Egypt sparked in an unprecedented manner, as another major victory for colonialism occurred. Anti-colonial and anti-Zionist demonstrations took place, and the call for war intensified. The Muslim Brotherhood and groups of nationalist junior officers carried out armed activity against Jews in Palestine, and it became clear that the people and the army were determined to go to war whether the government decided or not.** <sup>[27]</sup>

**The king seized the opportunity to reclaim his diminished prestige domestically and enhance his popularity within the Arab region. Following World War II, he adopted an Arab identity, aligning with the rising Arab nationalist movement to strengthen his influence domestically against the Wafd party. His primary rivals in the Arab world, the monarchs of Iraq and Jordan, were also likely to intervene.** <sup>[28]</sup> **In a unilateral move, the king declared war without consulting his prime minister, subsequently ordering the military to mobilize. He sought to gain honor via a show of patriotism, even at the expense of his government and limited military capabilities. The ministry was compelled to support him, despite the unconstitutional**

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<sup>[27]</sup> Find details in Ahmad Hamroush’s book “The Story of the July 23 Revolution” (1) pp. 122-124.

<sup>[28]</sup> David Downing & Gary Herman, War without End and Peace without Hope, p. 21.

**nature of his decision, and the Wafd party had no choice but to endorse the war.**

**Britain, despite its occupation of Egypt, could not stand up to the inflamed nationalist fervor, and in general it did not provide substantial support to either the Arabs or the Zionists.**

**The declaration of war was also an opportunity for the dominant class and the occupying forces to enforce martial law and freeze the social conflict.**

**Under these circumstances, a significant portion of the populace accepted martial law with great satisfaction. It seemed that things were going by then in favor of the dominant class. The Wafd did not forget to add to its welcoming the martial law a condition that these laws would only be used for the purpose for which they were enforced.**

**Moreover, the war catalyzed the activity of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Misr Alfatah Party, and one of the Marxist organizations, the Taliaa (Vanguard) of Workers and Peasants. These organizations engaged in broad popular activity, especially since the war had inflamed the masses and aroused a tremendous upsurge of national sentiment.**

**However, the war concluded as anticipated. The political and military management of the battles exposed great corruption in the state apparatus. The masses and patriotic forces learned a fundamental lesson: that they were defeated because they did not fight under their own banner and that the liberation of Palestine was intrinsically linked to the liberation of Egypt from colonialism and its collaborators.**

**One of the most significant consequences of the defeat was increased political polarization. The Muslim Brotherhood, which had consistently supported the minority governments and parties in 1946-47, found in the war an opportunity to strengthen its military apparatus, militarily train thousands of its members, and store large**



quantities of weapons. Its bases also launched an extensive terror campaign against Jewish installations and elements throughout the war and following it. However, its violence was met with severe oppression by the Nuqrashi government, which eventually issued a decision to dissolve the organization in December 1948 in order to force its members to desist. However, this decision led to a surge in its violent operations. Finally, Al-Nuqrashi and Hassan Al-Banna were assassinated, and a brutal campaign of persecution was carried out against members of the organization by the government of Ibrahim Abdel Hadi, who succeeded Al-Nuqrashi.

During and following the war, the ranks of the Wafdist Taliaa, the left faction of the Wafd, grew. Most of the party's base aligned themselves with this vanguard, which began to challenge the party leadership itself. Young officers returned from the battlefield with a sense of defeat and frustration, feeling that they had sacrificed the lives of their comrades for cheap conspiracies and political maneuvers disguised by shiny slogans. More importantly, they started to perceive themselves as mere tools in the hands of a regime that was constantly weakening. They felt that they should not submit to the authority of a worn-out regime but rather that they were more deserving of assuming control. The war and defeat had a profound impact on the young officers, prompting them to mentally engage in the patriotic movement and eventually physically participate in it. They believed that the country's salvation should be in their hands. Therefore, they assumed the responsibility of leading the entire society, as they saw no hope in the government or political parties, and the organizations of the patriotic movement were unable to address the prevailing void.

Moreover, the defeat sparked a wave of strikes, demonstrations, and acts of terrorism, pushing the government to resort to violence in the form of political assassinations and brutal torture of detainees.



Afterward, more radical social slogans were put forward, workers' strikes erupted, the fallah (peasant) movement began to gradually develop, and secret organizations, especially communist ones, as well as armed patriotic organizations, became more widespread.

Furthermore, the smaller political parties were worn out and shattered under the weight of the public revolt. The king's popularity significantly waned, and he increasingly became preoccupied with personal pleasure and adventures, evading the starkness of his circumstances.

Amidst this turmoil, the Wafd Party persisted in raising its favorite slogan: new general elections. However, it began to outbid not the minority parties, which had deteriorated and lost the majority of their few supporters, but rather the patriotic movement itself in terms of social demands. This was something new, and everyone recognized its significance.

The dominant class lost all its cards except for one: the Wafd Party, which still enjoyed some degree of popular trust. Its old heritage was still fresh in people's minds, and the presence of many patriotic elements among its ranks gave it a fair amount of popular support.

Despite the growing polarization, patriotic forces, including communist organizations and their supporters, were content with their previous plan: a Wafdist government that would meet national aspirations. Although they were strong, they collectively lacked a united will and did not possess a cohesive and clear strategy to transform society independently and outside the framework of the Wafd.

Thus, it became clear to Britain that a Wafd government was the only guarantee for the success of any agreement with Egypt. While the king saw only one way out to stop the escalating revolutionary violence and save his crumbling throne: handing over the ministry to his archenemy.

However, the Wafd Party experienced a decline and was heading toward a split between its leadership and base.<sup>[29]</sup> Furthermore, the dominant class fulfilled most of its objectives in 1919, 1923, and 1936, and it had little left to lead or to exceed the aspirations of the patriotic movement. Consequently, the party became more conservative. Nonetheless, it remained perceived by the general public as a weapon that might be used against colonialism and even the ruling elite, despite a noticeable decline in its influence. It also began to lose much of its audience after accepting the 1936 treaty. Before that, its conservative tendencies during the 1919 revolution and its inability to satisfy the nationalist ambitions of the intelligentsia contributed to the rise of Islamic organizations that were always hostile to it, as well as the leftist organizations. The February 4, 1942, ministry was another new factor behind further polarization in the political landscape. That ministry, which was imposed on the king by the occupation tanks, did not provide the social reforms that the people were accustomed to receiving from every Wafdist government. For instance, the February 4 government prohibited the establishment of a general workers' union and refused to stipulate in the Trade Unions Law the right of agricultural workers to organize themselves, nor did it provide tangible social reforms.<sup>[30]</sup> Additionally, Makram Ebeid's defection in 1942 and the issuance of his "Black Book" were additional factors that contributed to the weakening of the Wafd. The dominance of large landowners in the party's leadership positions further weakened the party in the political arena.

In the face of all these losses, the Wafd compensated for its weakness by outbidding other parties by adopting the slogans of the patriotic movement, especially since its so-called Wafdist Taliaa was strong enough to intimidate the leadership. The party imagined that it was still able to practice the process of leveraging the mass

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<sup>[29]</sup> See details in Muhammad Zaki Abdelkader, *The Constitution's Ordeal (1923-1952)*.

<sup>[30]</sup> Raouf Abbas Hamed, *The Labor Movement in Egypt (1899-1952)*, pp. 178-179.

movement. A process it practiced since 1919, but it did not realize that the character of the patriotic movement had now changed.

The dominant class became increasingly incapable of implementing social reforms, particularly when social demands became more radical and appealing to a broader audience. As a result, it, particularly the Wafd, tried to compensate for its incompetence by fiercely condemning colonialism and indirectly blaming it for the country's problems. As a result, the patriotic movement grew stronger, and the public increased pressure on the Wafd, specifically, to cancel the 1936 treaty.

The majority of the Wafdist youth gathered around its leftist leadership, the Wafdist Taliaa. Furthermore, patriotic youth's identification with the Wafd evolved into a largely ideological affiliation with the latter. As a result, the Taliaa leadership became the primary guarantor of the Wafd's popular power. Due to this undisclosed split, the genuine Wafd was transformed into a new minority party, with its members adopting both its old slogans and the new slogans of the Wafdist Taliaa, which had imposed itself on the party leadership.

Marxist organizations grew at the expense of the Wafd in the period following the Second World War. They started as small groups in the early 1940s and expanded with the growth of the patriotic movement. They were able to extend their influence to many workers' unions and achieved a widespread presence in universities. The Democratic Movement for National Liberation (HADITU) established cells in the countryside, reaching one hundred in 1952.<sup>[31]</sup> It also infiltrated the army, the air force, and the Royal Air Force.<sup>[32]</sup> Communists excelled in organizing large-scale demonstrations, especially during the industrial crisis in 1949.

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<sup>[31]</sup> Walter Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*, p. 46.

<sup>[32]</sup> Rifaat Al-Saeed, *Organizations of the Egyptian Left 1950-1957*, p. 88 - Ahmad Hamroush, *The Story of the July 23 Revolution (2)*, p. 36.

Communist leaders in the university effectively participated in leading the “Workers and Students’ Committee” in 1946. They also achieved political successes after the Soviet Union’s position on Egypt in the Security Council in 1947, leading demonstrations to the Soviet embassy, chanting “Long live the Soviet Union.” Nonetheless, the influence of Marxist organizations was affected by HADITU’s stance against the popular sentiment toward the Palestinian issue and Stalin’s position on the Jewish state. However, their adoption of social slogans gave them considerable influence among the educated poor and, to some extent, industrial workers. Nevertheless, they never attempted to seize power and—instead—declared their overall support for the Wafd Party on the basis that it is the party of the national bourgeoisie. Although some small organizations in the Egyptian communist movement, especially the Egyptian Communist Party (ECP), did not share this position, the essence remained the same. The ECP did not set itself the practical task of overthrowing the regime and, in practice, continued to follow HADITU’s approach, advocating for a popular front rather than a national one, waiting for this slogan to materialize as a prelude to a revolutionary coup. Marxist organizations, on the other hand, exerted pressure on the Wafd and the dominant class by effectively stirring and spreading social slogans. Communist organizations prioritized national democracy and social slogans inside systems that existed, rather than a socialist revolution.<sup>[33]</sup>

Additionally, the Misr Alfatah Party experienced significant growth at the expense of the Wafd Party. It rebranded itself “as The Socialist Party” in 1949 and changed its slogan from “God - People – King” to “God - People.” The party shifted its approach from formal imitation of fascist parties in Europe and anti-communism to a more patriotic, democratic, and enlightened stance. It actively

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<sup>[33]</sup> We presented a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the Egyptian communist movement in “Al-Raya al-Arabiya” (The Arabic Banner) - non-periodical book, Issue 3, April 1991.

engaged in political life post-war, focusing on social issues, making it more radical in this aspect than Marxist organizations.<sup>[34]</sup> Its position on communism underwent a radical change, becoming sympathetic to the international communist movement and publicly defending communism more fervently than the communists themselves.<sup>[35]</sup> Moreover, the “Socialist Party” was the sole party in Egypt advocating for a socialist revolution and criticizing the Wafd, which Tariq Al-Bishri rightly described as playing the role of the “*sick man*” in front of all conflicting parties. Despite enjoying support from most patriotic forces, including many Marxists, the party never fully organized. Party chairman Ahmad Hussein viewed the Wafd as a reactionary party that suppressed people’s rebellion and posed a significant threat to revolutionaries. He called for confronting the Wafd and establishing a radical front instead. However, the Socialist Party remained centered around Ahmad Hussein, with the party masses rallying around him. He did not make efforts to establish a party organization and instead surrounded himself with a group of extremist patriotic intellectuals. To compensate for this weakness, he promoted extremist catchphrases without a clear plan or scenario for implementation. The transformation from the Misr Alfatah Party, imitating fascist parties and targeting communism and Jews, to a socialist party in 1949 with a more radical program than Marxist organizations was sudden and drastic.

During this period, armed patriotic groups gained significant traction, earning widespread support from the public and being revered as national heroes. These groups not only fueled the revolutionary spirit among the masses but also posed a challenge to the conservative spirit of the Wafd Party. Despite facing substantial setbacks, particularly between 1948 and 1950, the Muslim Brotherhood experienced notable growth, especially in its military

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<sup>[34]</sup> Find details in Tariq Al-Bishri, Op. cit., pp. 389-395.

<sup>[35]</sup> Ibid., pp. 389-415.

wing. It played a pivotal role in the 1948 war and later became entangled in the Suez Canal conflict in 1951, despite not officially participating in the battle.

The rising influence of patriotic forces indicated that the masses backing the majority party were no longer confined by its limits. They no longer viewed it as their inspirational leader but rather as a tool to challenge the royal court and colonialism, even if they were unaware of this underlying shift.

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Al-Wafd was dealt with as the sick man in the Egyptian political scene. Having a large number of patriots in its ranks, it served as a formidable instrument for the populace in their struggle against colonialism and the dominant class. As a relatively new minority party, it acted as a safety valve for the dominant class, countering the rising revolutionary sentiments. From the British viewpoint, the Wafd was perceived as the sole party with which a new alliance-based treaty could be negotiated. For the monarchy, it remained a principal adversary, albeit one that was deemed rational and occasionally indispensable, despite its numerous shortcomings. Ultimately, the Wafd regarded itself as the representative of the nation, capable of wielding power and engaging with all its rivals, including its own supporters. It believed it could maneuver among various parties, yet in reality, it was unable to provide substantial benefits to any faction without compromising others and undermining its own organizational integrity.

As the political-social confrontation escalated, Al-Wafd prompted increased demands from certain opponents, while angering others. As a result, it was transformed into a ball that all other parties were clutching for. The people wanted full evacuation, Nile Valley unity, and some form of social justice. Britain urged the conclusion of an alliance treaty. The dominant class, on which it was built -rich



landowners and businesses- asked that the raging social struggle be calmed, but not at any cost.

In actuality, the aforementioned period witnessed a political dynamic in modern Egypt that had not been seen since the Urabi Revolt. The lower classes had more radical demands and became a party in the raging political conflict. However, the intelligentsia remained the primary striking force, whose ranks expanded greatly with the expansion of compulsory and university education. This was the fundamental change that Egypt's political landscape underwent after World War II, marking a significant factor in the regime's crisis.

Because of these circumstances, Al-Wafd, supported by its rebellious masses, became a burden on its social class. It could only persuade other political factions to agree to its request for a neutral government capable of facilitating free elections by relying on these rebellious masses. Consequently, Al-Wafd effectively remained precisely a popular breakthrough, a Trojan horse infiltrating the core of the regime. The latter, in turn, was fully oriented with this strategy as it sought to secure victory.

In light of these developments, a major clash was anticipated.

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Under pressure from Britain and public demonstrations, the king instructed his prime minister, Ibrahim Abdul Hadi, to step down on 20/7/1949 and subsequently introduced a new ministry. While the king expressed his joy at getting rid of the minority parties that he believed undermined the legitimacy of his reign, he was actually concealing his apprehension regarding the next move, feeling that he was going to lose his throne.

The elections were held under the "Eid gift," during which the Wafd party refused any collaboration with the minority parties,



intending to permanently sideline them once and for all. Conversely, it capitalized on the defamation of the minority parties and former administrations by patriotic organizations. Additionally, it employed underhanded tactics to undermine them further.

Al-Wafd exposed the oppressive measures taken by Ibrahim Abdel Hadi's ministry. The press freedom during the elections allowed for greater scrutiny of the scandals associated with the former government and the monarchy. This led to the Saadist and Liberal parties engaging in mutual criticism of the oppressive measures and corruption. As a result, while the Wafd stood by observing its two traditional rivals destroying each other, it was unaware that it had unleashed a goblin that it would be unable to put back in the bottle.

The Wafd was obligated to adopt social slogans that went beyond the horizon of the class it represented in order to outbid the patriotic movement, with the hope of eliminating its opponents one by one. Marxist organizations and the Socialist Party played a crucial role in pushing it to adopt these slogans.

Al-Wafd secured victory in the elections. However, the outcomes revealed a significant new fact: the party garnered 45% of the valid votes and 27% of the total votes of registered voters.<sup>[36]</sup> This is

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<sup>[36]</sup> The number of registered votes amounted to 4.26.879, while the number of valid votes amounted to 2.496.208, or 61%, with the Wafd receiving 45% of the valid votes, and the Saadi Party and the Ahrar Party together receiving 16.7% of the registered votes, only 10.2% less than the Wafd. These are the percentages of votes received by the Wafd from registered voters since 1924:

Election year	Percentage of votes received/number of registered voters
1924	%43.5
1925	%65.5
1926	%34
1929	%39
1936	36.6

evidence of the further decline in the party's influence. Although it seized the majority of the parliamentary seats, its presence in the political landscape had become increasingly limited. The most reluctant group to participate in the electoral activity was the educated class, which has historically been the traditional support base of the party, especially in Cairo and Alexandria. <sup>[37]</sup>

Finally, the election results showed that a large audience had left the field of legal politics altogether.

### The final Wafd ministry in 1950

Al-Nahhas Pasha seized power with the support of a limited segment of the rebellious masses. Nonetheless, the Wafd in power and the Wafd outside of it are typically not the same. The new government was a conservative Wafd type. The party benefited from popular support in obtaining the ministerial seat. Still, when the ministry was formed, the radical elements were completely excluded, and it bore the fingerprints of the conservative Wafdist leader Fuad Serag Eddin Pasha. To complete the game, the new government pursued a policy aimed at appeasing the king, who had proven to the Wafd over the past five years that he was a strong opponent. More importantly, the masses were besieging the new ministry with their radical slogans; thereby, it became necessary for that government to strengthen its ties with the conservative court. Therefore, something should be offered to the king.

An agreement was reached to designate a Wafdist Minister of Defense and to create a new role, that of Commander-in-Chief of the

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1942	%33.1
1950	%27

Reference: Mahmoud Metwally, The Incident of February 4, 1942 in Contemporary Egyptian History, pp. 259-262.

<sup>[37]</sup> Tariq Al-Bishri, Op. cit., pp. 298-299.

Armed Forces, which would be appointed by the King. This position was subsequently utilized during the Nasserite period for comparable objectives. Additionally, the ministry granted the court the authority to influence the appointment of police officers and senior state officials, a privilege that Al-Wafd had not previously permitted. Furthermore, it was permitted to appoint certain members of the Senat. <sup>[38]</sup>

As previously mentioned, with the intensification of the social strife, King Farouk had a tendency to indulge in his personal pleasures, seemingly in despair at the state his regime had reached. News of the moral scandals of the royal family spread, but the Wafdist ministry entirely disregarded this matter. Furthermore, it did not retrieve 45,000 feddans that had been taken from the endowments during the previous ministers' reign, and it agreed to pay 100,000 pounds from the king's annual salary in advance.

Meanwhile, the ministry granted public freedoms to maintain the party's influence with its semi-liberal traditions. It also lifted the state of emergency in May 1950, allowing the patriotic opposition to gain momentum. Many cases of corruption under previous governments were exposed, including instances of court corruption and others linked to the new leadership. Furthermore, press freedom enabled the patriotic opposition to openly promote revolutionary slogans. More significantly, the Wafd Ministry was held accountable by both the dominant class and the populace for releasing the goblin and unleashing the king's hand. As a result, it faced backlash from both parties in both cases.

Corruption at the court and the leniency of the ministry toward it were followed by corruption among the ministers themselves and those in their employ. Bribery, favoritism, and embezzlement of state funds became common among the royal entourage, ministers, their relatives, and even influential families from the Wafd party.

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<sup>[38]</sup> Ibid., p. 390 in the 2002 edition.

One of the Wafd leaders even publicly defended corruption within the king's entourage in parliament and directly criticized the patriotic opposition.<sup>[39]</sup>

Regarding the national issue, Al-Nahhas Pasha engaged in negotiations with Britain without facing significant public dissent, as he retained a measure of trust and embodied certain aspirations. Nevertheless, these negotiations proved fruitless, as Britain, following the establishment of Israel, became increasingly resolute in maintaining its military presence in Egypt and failed to recognize the internal challenges confronting the Egyptian government. The latter could only advocate for a complete withdrawal of British forces and the unification of the Nile Valley, firmly rejecting the project of an alliance under pressure from the general populace.<sup>[40]</sup> Consequently, the negotiations culminated in failure, despite Al-Nahhas's efforts to convince Britain of the complexities of his domestic situation.

While the government continued to procrastinate after the failure of negotiations regarding the national issue, pressure from patriotic forces, including the Wafd's bases, for the annulment of the 1936 treaty and the 1899 agreement concerning Sudan increased. The call for armed struggle also became popular among sections of the general public, as well as the demand for the unity of the Nile Valley. Moreover, the situation of the king deteriorated, leading to direct criticism with persistent attacks against him, which circumvented the statute against insulting the monarchy. Fallaheen uprisings surged during 1951, and in some villages, such as Kafr Negm and Bahout, they assaulted the palaces of large landowners and clashed with the police in multiple locations.<sup>[41]</sup>

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<sup>[39]</sup> Ibid., first edition, p. 315. Refer also regarding this period to Muhammad Zaki Abdelkader, *Op. cit.*,

<sup>[40]</sup> Minutes of the Political Discussions and Exchange of Memoranda between the Egyptian Government and the United Kingdom Government, March 1950-1951

<sup>[41]</sup> Ahmad Hamroush, *The Story of the July 23 Revolution* (1), pp. 83-84.

**Additionally, the number of workers' strikes and participation grew. However, the wholly new issue was that a section of the audience began openly criticizing the Wafd itself. The latter appeared unable to resolve the occupation issue and to implement significant social reforms. It also appeared accountable for the spreading of corruption in the country and the decline in the living standards of lower classes. Additionally, its outbidding was no longer sufficient to quell the ongoing demonstrations and protest movements against its policies. Therefore, patriotic organizations, including the Wafdist Taliaa that played a major role in fighting the Wafdist ministry, began to act as a united front against the last Wafd government.**

**The conflict between the government and the patriotic opposition grew to the point that the former was obligated to use coercive measures that the Wafd Party had always strongly condemned when it was out of power. These measures included the arrest of journalists and extreme opposition members, as well as the enforcement of anti-freedom legislation. The Wafdist Taliaa obstructed the passage of this legislation the most, while the judiciary played a significant part in the acquittal of opponents in court.**

**Matters escalated when the government's appeasement toward the occupation was prolonged. Patriotic organizations were no longer content with demonstrations and protests but started to work for armed struggle in the Suez Canal region, particularly within the army, the bases of the Muslim Brotherhood, and HADITU. It became evident that the goblin was not going to be put back in the bottle, and the ministry's position seemed desperate.**

**The Wafd gave the king what he required, but it could not tolerate the repercussions. Some of its leaders also indulged in more general royal corruption. It granted public freedoms to the people but could no longer protect them. It was also unable to withdraw what it had given to either party because, in reality, it had not given**

anyone anything. Otherwise, things were taken from its hands against its will. At the same time, the Wafd could not take from Britain what would calm the patriotic movement because it was unable to offer anything in return.

On October 8, 1951, Al-Nahhas found himself obligated to navigate through contradictions by announcing the abrogation of the 1936 treaty and the 1899 agreement. He sought to change the situation following the breakdown of his negotiations with Britain, as he had no other options left. Since the ministry was incapable of facing the masses and manifested its ineffectiveness in practice, it was at risk of being dismissed. To avoid the impending blow and retain the ministry's position, the bidding battle had reached its peak. However, the Wafd party held onto the belief that fulfilling certain national aspirations would guarantee the public's loyalty to the government and reunite them under the regime's umbrella.

This signified that the Wafd was unconsciously risking the political system it was supposed to represent in search of continuing its role at any cost. Therefore, it prioritized the party apparatus and the rationale of retaining power, even when it conflicted with the long-term interests of the system itself.

But later, it became clear that Al-Wafd had been delving into illusions. The annulment of the 1936 treaty rejuvenated his youthful visage. However, the subsequent priority on the agenda of the patriotic movement was an embarrassing request: armed struggle.

It is clear that with these results, the plan of the patriotic movement was proceeding successfully until then. It brought the Wafd to power as its captive and was able to compel it to achieve its most important goal, which was to cancel the 1936 treaty in preparation for the armed struggle.

Demonstrations erupted for several days after the cancellation of the treaty, demanding weapons and armed struggle. Thousands of workers withdrew from British camps, workshops, and

administrations. The Wafd government encouraged and supported this movement to implement the decision to cancel the treaty. At a conference at Cairo University, workers and students demanded to meet an official; thereby, Abdel Fattah Hassan, the Minister of State, was brought to them. He began sarcastically saying, “*Can we ask for weapons from Russia?*” The audience’s answer was, “Yes, yes,” leaving the official stunned.

Railroad workers also refused to transport British soldiers, and the patriotic and liberal press called for a boycott of British goods.

Social slogans were not forgotten amid the patriotic fervor. On the contrary, pointing arms at colonialism opened the door to declaring war against colonial agents and collaborators, i.e., some symbols of the regime itself. The patriotic press began to expose every businessman who was dealing with the British. In addition, junior officers began to organize fedayeen battalions, and students and workers moved to the canal for armed struggle. In sight of this, the British, the king, and the dominant class prepared themselves for launching a counteroffensive.

Al-Nahhas Pasha could not simply retreat but was obligated to persevere; thereby, he pledged to work toward passing legislation granting all Egyptians the right to bear arms.<sup>[42]</sup> This right was practically exercised, and the government even began to buy weapons for fedayeen from Upper Egypt.<sup>[43]</sup> Perhaps Al-Nahhas was thinking of merely frightening Britain; however, this right found those who demanded its practical implementation, that is, by distributing weapons to the masses and forming a popular army, which was beyond the Pasha’s limits.

Strident protests emerged demanding weapons instead of words, fedayeen operations increased, and British retaliation aroused more resentment from the populace toward the government, which did

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<sup>[42]</sup> Tarek Al-Bishri, Op. cit., p. 498.

<sup>[43]</sup> Ahmad Hamroush, Op. cit., p. 149.



not dare to declare war on Britain. Social slogans began to consolidate, while the majority party failed to provide the required social reform. The police began to fight the British in the canal, while they were ordered to beat the revolting masses in Cairo. The government resorted to obstructing the activities of the fedayeen to avoid escalating the battles, thereby issuing orders to arrest them in the Sharqiya Governorate. However, most of the junior police officers did not comply with these orders at a time when the fedayeen were fighting real battles west of the canal.<sup>[44]</sup> The government also confiscated leftist newspapers and arrested many members of the patriotic opposition, to no avail. In the face of junior army officers engaging in the armed struggle movement, the government tried to organize and control the battalions, but to no avail. Within the army itself, the “Free Officers” organization was working actively, and its activity finally culminated in December 1951 in the success of their candidate and the defeat of the king’s candidate in the Officers’ Club elections.

The patriotic movement reached its pinnacle with the Ismaelia battle on January 25, 1952, followed by the general workers’ strike<sup>[45]</sup> and the outbreak of demonstrations in Cairo the next day. On that day, the demonstrators burned downtown Cairo, while the king hesitated to issue orders to confront the situation.<sup>[46]</sup>

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<sup>[44]</sup> Siranian, *Egypt and its Struggle for Independence (1945-1952)*, pp. 241-248.

<sup>[45]</sup> Anwar Abdel Malek, *Egyptian Society and the Army*, p. 64.

<sup>[46]</sup> Many have analyzed the Cairo Fire, offering different opinions, including that it was orchestrated by the king, the king and the British, or the British only, and some even accused the “Free Officers” of it. No serious investigation was ever opened during the Nasserite era, and no one was legally accused. Instead, official propaganda blamed the king and the British. Nasser even accused the communists in some of his addresses. In fact, none of these assumptions has been proven to be true. Rather, the immediate facts indicate that the angry crowd burned property belonging to the dominant class or engaged in the kind of amusement of which they were deprived.

Refer to Gamal Al-Sharqawi, *The Cairo Fire, A New Indictment*; Muhammad Anis, *The Cairo Fire*, pp. 51-54; Ahmad Mortada Al-Maraghi, *Oddities from the Farouk Era and the Beginning of the Egyptian Revolution*, pp. 100-128. While Nasser accused the communists

**Al-Nahhas took advantage of the chaos caused by the fire to submit his resignation to the monarch. However, the king, determined to remove him from power, rejected the resignation and insisted on destroying the Wafd papers. Al-Nahhas's party had no choice but to contain the situation. The Minister of the Interior declared a state of emergency and arrested 300 patriotic individuals on the evening of January 26. Additionally, universities were closed, and patriotic newspapers were suspended. The Wafd did not set a date for ending martial law and thus did not put any future government in an awkward position, since its dismissal was imminent on January 27, 1952. With this result, the plan of the patriotic movement ultimately achieved only half success, as the Wafd Party did not continue to fulfill its aspirations. It did not declare war on Britain, nor did it confront the king and corruption. Rather, it left the scene and fled, leaving its masses to continue to fulfill their aspirations on their own.**

**The popular movement reached a high degree of strength on January 26, but the organizations were less prepared than the masses expected. The majority party on which the patriotic forces pinned their hopes had fallen before they could fully awaken from their illusions. Despite the violent clashes between the Nahhas government and the patriotic movement before the fire, the movement as a whole did not fully understand that the Wafdist government could not, in practice, fulfill all its aspirations. The Socialist Party and the Egyptian Communist Party (1949) failed to offer viable alternatives to the Wafd government, despite adopting largely anti-Wafd slogans. These two parties were the most radical within the national movement, yet in practice, they were unable to step forward as an alternative leadership. They also had little real organizational potential among the masses.**

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**in some of his addresses during the period of fighting them. For instance, a speech he gave at a press conference held by the Liberation Commission on 21/8/1954.**

The political-social struggle peaked on January 26, and the dominant class ran out of options and was unable to resort to violence. The state apparatus itself was disintegrating, the police rank and file sympathized with the people, and the army rank and file rebelled against the king. The people themselves had neither strong leadership nor a capable organization for all that they did in their spontaneous movement.

The Cairo fire had concluded in tranquility, but it was a tense calm. From that moment on, the intensity of social and political conflict began to decline. This period was characterized by the governance of four successive ministries. The state of emergency continued, parliament was dissolved, and armed battalions were being disbanded. Moreover, some social reforms were introduced, such as reducing prices and increasing food rations, along with initiatives to address corruption. However, the four ministries that followed the Wafd ministry were unable to effectively control power, as reform meant that what was given to one party had to be taken away from others. Each ministry's attempts at reform faced resistance from the king, main parties, and government administration. The people's calm was merely a precursor to a new storm. The return of the goblin was still pending, and the idea of a "Just Tyrant" gained traction among the masses and even in Western circles.<sup>[47]</sup> However, achieving this idea peacefully was not feasible. If a tyrant was needed to maintain social order after the fire, it would have to come from outside the main conflicting forces. The patriotic opposition could advocate for this idea but could not impose its rule on the social system. Similarly, the dominant class parties lacked the mechanisms to present a suitable tyrant given the

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<sup>[47]</sup> For instance, the "Sunday Times" reported in a 1952 issue: *"To talk of reviving democracy in a country where the majority of the people live lower than animals is nonsense. Egypt does not need a democracy; it needs an individual man. A man like Kamal Atatürk, who will make the necessary reforms needed for the country. But Egypt's problem is how to find a dictator because none of its men have the necessary qualifications for a dictator."* Ahmad Hamroush, *The Story of the July 23 Revolution - The Search for Democracy*, p. 85.

power dynamics that existed. The wealthy and greedy class would not accept their present being taken as a guarantee for the future in a peaceful manner.

As previously mentioned, in such circumstances, the scapegoat for the crumbling regime had to be sacrificed *by force*. The expected Mahdi could only come from outside the existing balance. The dominant class parties and their king had already lost legitimacy among the general public, and the latter did not mobilize in large numbers behind any of the patriotic groups, which themselves were in a waiting status. The socio-political struggle had also stagnated since the fire of January 26, and political life was characterized by paralysis. All parties were heading toward weakness, and there was only one force that moved and took the initiative, namely, some army officers.

Following the fire, the “Free Officers” organization decided to seize power, growing from a few dozen officers to roughly a hundred in a few months. They started allocating and coordinating their members in preparation for the coup d’état. The idea of an imminent military coup was welcomed in official circles, except for the terrified king, who daydreamed about the possibility of maintaining the false calm and regaining control without specifying the precise steps he needed to take to save his throne.

While waiting for the anticipated Mahdi, the masses gradually turned away from parties, organizations, and the political movement in general. However, they were in a state of waiting for salvation, and a feeling of anticipation remained over the country. As Tariq Al-Bishri said, “*January 26, 1952 was the last day of the existing regime, but not the first day of the new one.*”<sup>[48]</sup>

On the night of July 23, 1952, the “Free Officers” organization carried out a successful military coup.

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<sup>[48]</sup> Op. cit., p. 553.

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## **Part Two: The Government of the “Free Officers”**

**THESE YOUNG MEN CAN SAVE EGYPT FROM THE COMMUNIST  
TIDE THAT THE EVILS OF FAROUK AND THE PASHAS WOULD  
HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY PAVED THE WAY FOR IN ALL PARTS OF  
THE COUNTRY. THEY WILL IMPLEMENT REFORMS AND RAISE  
THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF THE PEOPLE, AND WE WILL  
ENCOURAGE THEM**

Jefferson Caffrey

The officers seized power amidst an atmosphere charged with the spirit of a spontaneous and helpless revolt of the masses, a frustrated warfare of the ruling class, and an occupation aiming to counter this turmoil. They reflected the ruling class's desire for a stable system, as well as the intellectual and lower classes' aspiration for improved living conditions, independence, and social reform.

The officers arrived amid social turmoil, but it was within the framework of a state of political balance. The trend toward radicalization and polarization was reversed since January 26, 1952, and all conflicting parties were gradually moving toward paralysis and collapse.

The officers did not meet on one ideology, a clear program, or a plan to rebuild society. They did not form a political party but rather an organization of low- and mid-ranking army officers, whose members differed ideologically, and some even held contradictory thoughts. They were united by a single goal: to find a way out of the prevailing situation, which in their own words was a state of public corruption, which they saw very well when the

regime sacrificed them in a farcical war in 1948. This was evident in their leaflets and then in their famous six-point program. Their leader was raised in the “all-in-one” school. He rejected parties early on, dreaming of becoming “*the hero the East was waiting for*,” in his own words. In Egyptian parlance, he saw himself as Ibn al-Balad, meaning the Noble Man, or the faithful Son of the Country. He never believed in the masses, and so his activity was confined to the army. He did not attempt to build a mass organization and did not allow any civilians to join his group, not even a single soldier. He never even attempted to form a revolutionary front of any kind, limiting the distribution of the organization’s publications to officers, elite politicians, and journalists. The way he set up and ran his organization and orchestrated his coup determined how he would run the entire society.

Regardless of their genuine intentions, they eventually seized an empty power. Instead of sitting in their barracks under the direction of a shaking hand, they were able to remove it with ease. Their inner voice demanded, “Why don’t things go as we decide, while we are the only force in the country capable of movement?”

Less than a hundred officers at the head of a rickety army were able to seize power, despite the presence of established parties, the occupation army on the canal, and the rebellious masses. Thus, the impotence of all parties was evident. In reality, the state of political balance allowed them to transform from a tool in the hands of the dominant class into masters of the entire society. The “Free Officers” did not constitute a political force before the coup. Instead, they contented themselves with announcing their existence primarily through publications, and they simply were not confronted by any real force. The political forces were mired in a futile struggle, as none could resolve the social and political conflict in their favor. What had been emerging since 1947 was the beginning of the state tool itself slipping out of the hands of the dominant class without being attracted by other parties. The military machine, which as an institution did not constitute one of



the parties to the raging socio-political conflict at that time, became the strongest political force in the country, thanks to it being the only social institution that stood outside the aforementioned conflict. Rather, it appeared before the general populace as a victim of the regime in the 1948 war, appealing to its respect. The “Free Officers” carried a program that suited their cultural background, a confused and abstract program. They set themselves the task of achieving this confused program, whose confusion gave it considerable strength, which is a significant topic.

Abstract formulations are subject to multiple interpretations, thus embodying the aspirations of various factions. The proposal to introduce a prominent scapegoat, which was more defined than other points, revived the hopes of the broadest forces on the Egyptian landscape. It was not possible for the officers to rule the country under the political map that it was on. The political system, with its various legislation and regulations, did not accommodate military rule. The constitution did not stipulate this, the laws did not give the military any political rights, and all political forces had been looking for seizing power for themselves, not for the military. Most of these entities did not resist the coup, as each perceived it as their own pathway to power. While the officers garnered a certain level of public support, this sympathy was not directed towards military rule itself but rather towards the ambiguous hopes they symbolized—hopes that were unattainable within the political structure that existed and could not be envisioned under the current balance of power.

The officers proposed certain principles that did not comprise a real program and were primarily abstract. The ambiguous character of their program provided an opportunity for them to unite, rally the army around them, attract the majority of the populace, avoid antagonizing the dominant class or Western circles, and justify future acts. Instead of outbidding everyone, they focused on making general points that would not offend many parties. This allowed them to gain the favor of as many parties as possible, while



avoiding their hostility. What allowed them to play this game was that they appeared before society as a socially neutral power, which was not available to any government prior to the coup or to any existing party.

The officers seized power in the presence of the monarchy, the 1923 constitution, the parliament, and the party system, and could only take legitimate actions by legalizing their power. This was done through a series of thorny struggles from July 23, 1952, to at least the end of March 1954.

On July 23, army generals were jailed, and the military machine took over, giving up the responsibility of serving as the king's loyal guard. It also proclaimed expressly that it would now play its role, reformulating the system in what it saw as "*in the name of the people*," and promising to return to the barracks once completed.

The coup leaders urged the citizens to remain calm and silent. Moreover, its cannons had been deployed, warning and threatening anyone who did not comply with its will, which it claimed to represent *that of the populace*. Ultimately, the public was urged to remain composed.

In the shadow of guns, the "Free Officers" started removing any obstacles that hindered their quest for absolute power, starting with the tools of social struggle. They came to power thanks to this very struggle, yet its freezing was a condition for the coup not to be repeated. The removal of the political balance was, at the same time, the first condition for the survival of a military bureaucratic government. Consequently, in eliminating the condition that was an objective justification for its coup, the military apparatus was compelled to reconstruct itself, ensuring that its very presence would serve as a justification for its authority. Instead of relying on an exceptional circumstance that society had experienced, it was imperative to establish enduring conditions for bureaucratic rule. In essence, it needed to secure the legitimacy of its rule not solely by legal means but also through the support of the populace and the

regime. This required not only the destruction of structures that were in place but also the creation of new ones, taking from one party to give to others, and achieving a minimal set of accomplishments that could justify its existence.

The officials formed their preliminary ministry, which included Pashas, beys, technocrats, and administrators who were detached from ideological biases and political involvement. Each ministry was supervised by an officer who commenced the transformation of the political structure to reflect their objectives.

## **Chapter One: King's Deposition**

Major political forces became intolerant of the king's continued existence, and the small liberal parties did not influence them to support him. Instead, he supported whoever he wanted. Moreover, his army was now in power, over his head, after the most important elements loyal to him had been eliminated. Businessmen and landowners were no longer reluctant to get rid of the monarchy because the royal scandals had become a stain on the entire regime. The removal of the royal institution was thus a necessary purge of the regime. The king demonstrated in the months following the Cairo fire that he would oppose any reform measures aimed at renewing the regime. With his narrow mind, or the very limited horizon of his interests, he would constitute a formidable obstacle to repairing the cracked regime. As a result, Farouk had also lost the support of Western circles.

For the officers, King Farouk was the weakest link in the system, the worst representative of the dominant class at the time. He was also the biggest legal obstacle to military rule, and his removal would have given the new authority a significant popular influence overnight, especially since the royal court had become extremely

vulnerable on the political scene after the events of recent months. The monarchy no longer enjoyed significant sympathy at the general popular level, and the ruling family did not present a person who might be considered a “just tyrant” who could distinguish between the corruption of King Farouk and the corruption of the monarchy itself. This provided the officers an additional advantage, as they could have announced the abolition of the monarchy from the start, but at first they were feeling their way at the time, so they were content with overthrowing Farouk without officially abolishing the monarchy. His young son was installed as the new king with a regency council appointed by the “Revolutionary Command Council.”

One year later, the republic was declared on July 18, 1953. However, the constitutional powers of the king had been assumed by the ministry on July 29, 1952. During the same year, elements loyal to him in the army and police were expelled.

The officers followed a conciliatory approach with the king. He was not humiliatingly deported, nor was he tried or executed, despite the demands of some officers. He was saluted, and the artillery fired twenty-one rounds for him. Muhammad Naguib personally bade him farewell from the port of Alexandria and allowed him to carry all the belongings he wanted. Moreover, he was escorted by the American ambassador to his yacht.

In the early days of their regime, the officers were not sufficiently stabilized, and their grip was still weak; therefore, it was more appropriate for them to start their new life with some gentleness. Moreover, they feared that the spirit of revenge would spread, which could have been provoked by the execution or humiliation of the king, opening a door for the mass initiative that they fought against from the first moment.

## **Chapter Two: Liquidating the Workers' Opposition and Striking Marxist Organizations**

**THE DEGRADATION, HUMILIATION, AND TERRORIZATION TO WHICH ALL WORKERS PRESENT WERE SUBJECTED WERE HARSHER THAN WHAT A PRISONER OF WAR IN A DEFEATED AND SURRENDERED ARMY COULD BE SUBJECTED WITHOUT RESTRAINT, WHICH MADE THE VICTOR TREAT THEM WORSE THAN SLAVES**

One of the workers who attended the verdict to execute Khamis and Al-Baqari

When the officers declared the agrarian reform initiative, abolished official civil titles, and deposed the king, the workers perceived a reflection of themselves in the new authorities. However, they failed to recognize that this reflection was distorted. Consequently, they initiated a revolt in Kafr el-Dawar, a significant and relatively advanced industrial region at that time. They occupied several factories, took control of their administrations, and ousted their managers and directors, articulating a series of demands:<sup>[49]</sup>

1. The establishment of elections for free unions and the legalization of the right to strike.
2. Equal allowances for both workers and employees, along with salary increases.
3. The prevention of arbitrary dismissals.
4. The expulsion of the company's counsel from Kafr el-Dawar.

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<sup>[49]</sup> Many details about the events were published by the Egyptian magazine "Sawt al-Amal" (The Voice of Hope) in its third, fourth, and fifth issues, published in October 1985, January 1986, and April 1986, respectively.

**In addition to other demands.**

**Actually, the workers rose up against the administrations and capitalists, not against the “Free Officers.” The coup government’s program inspired the workers to rise up, with the expectation that the military government would uphold their rights. However, they were taken by surprise when their sit-in terrified the entire system. The authorities and the dominant classes and their mouthpieces raised cries of terror from every direction, demanding the most severe punishment for the workers. On the evening of the strike, the leadership issued a statement describing the events as being orchestrated by some traitors. The announcement also included the ministry’s approval to establish a high military council endowed with the necessary authorities to prosecute those responsible for what has been characterized as criminal activities perpetrated by the employees of this company, as well as those who instigated these events. The Wafd party further accused royal court officials of orchestrating the strike “to undermine the revolution,” while Al-Nahhas Pasha himself placed blame on the workers, urging them to pursue legal avenues, a course of action he would follow shortly. Abdul Rahman Al-Rafei remarked in a manner that implied a similar sentiment, suggesting that the ten thousand workers of Kafr el-Dawar possess benefits that surpass those of all other workers in Egypt, noting that the company treats them favorably and that their actions indicate a possible underlying plan.<sup>[50]</sup>**

**The National Party also issued a statement condemning the workers. Furthermore, Sayyid Qutb authored an article entitled “*Movements that do not frighten us*,” in which he asserted, “*The Kafr el-Dawar incidents should not frighten us. It is the octopus of feudalism, capitalism, colonialism, and communism. It must be dealt with before it takes its last breath. A decayed era is on the verge of collapse, challenged by a force that is both pure and formidable. It is expected for it to***

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<sup>[50]</sup> Abdel Rahman Al-Rafeei, The July 23 Revolution - Our National History in Seven Years, pp. 54-55.

*resist, but it is a dying era, an era that is ending. What is crucial is that we begin to bring it to an end and that the knife be sharp so that the struggle and suffering are not prolonged. The devil has shown his true nature in Kafr el-Dawar. Let us strike hard and swiftly. The populace has no choice but to witness as we bury reactionism and demagoguery after making them witness its demise before it takes its last breath.”*<sup>[51]</sup> The journalist Galal Eddin Al-Hamamsi commented in an article entitled *Smoke in the Air*: “The journalist Galal Eddin Al-Hamamsi issued an article titled “Smoke in the Air,” remarking, “The workers engaged in this movement because hidden forces were influencing their minds, which were governed by corrupt political thinking, and because there was a satanic mindset that portrayed the new era to them in ways that contradicted reality and appearance.”<sup>[52]</sup>

It was expected that the industrialists would be upset, demanding to crush the labor movement. They were the most terrified of all, but the “Free Officers” were the most practical. Army and police forces stormed the factories on the orders of the authorities, occupied them by force, and shot at the workers. After a major battle with the strikers, a large number of whom were killed, 567 workers were arrested. Twenty-nine of them were brought to military trial at the same scene of the incident as a deterrent. The court’s abuse of the lawyers was so evident that they were forced to withdraw. Moussa Sabri was present as a journalist to cover the events. He had a law degree but was not a lawyer; however, the court considered him a lawyer, and he came forward to defend the defendants without presenting anything to acquit them. Moussa Sabri did not call the witnesses that Mustafa Khamis had requested to listen to, while the court presented false witnesses. Then the death sentence by hanging was issued against Muhammad Al-Baqari and Mustafa Khamis, while a retrial was rejected. A sentence of life imprisonment with hard labor was also issued against 12 defendants, and three defendants were sentenced to 15 years in

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<sup>[51]</sup> “Al-Akhbar” Newspaper, Issue No. 15, August 1952, quoting more than one reference.

<sup>[52]</sup> Quoted from Yasser Bakr, *The Art of Lying*, p. 256.



prison.<sup>[53]</sup> At the time of the events, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces issued a statement saying, *“The Commander-in-Chief announces to all sections of the people, especially the workers, that any breach of order or stirring up chaos will be considered treason against the homeland, and the penalty for treason is known to all. Whoever has a complaint should submit it through the legal route. Order must prevail, whatever the costs, and those who have been warned are not excused.”*<sup>[54]</sup> This was the first announcement by the new government regarding the issue of democratic freedoms. Notwithstanding, the trial was conducted illegally! The authorities also allowed “chaos” to spread at the university when members of the Muslim Brotherhood attacked communists with hoses, sticks, and knives, injuring many of them immediately after the execution of Khamis and Al-Baqari.

The workers’ trial in Kafr el-Dawar was fundamentally political, aiming to terrorize the working class, the communists, and the opponents of the coup in general. The trial methods and the subsequent verdicts solidified the breakdown of the rule of law in Egypt. Moreover, the atmosphere of the meeting of the “Revolutionary Command Council” to deliberate the case as well as that of the courtroom was replete with sentiments of anger, mobilization, agitation, resentment, and a desire to gloat over the working class and communism, despite HADITU’s statement that condemned and denounced the Kafr el-Dawar workers’ strike. The July officers harbored deep animosity and fear towards communism, except for a few communists among them who were swiftly dismissed or neutralized. This sentiment reflected the dominant culture among army officers of the time. Their stance became evident when they initially released the political detainees, except for some communists, and then when they executed Khamis and Al-Baqari, and subsequently when they began arresting and torturing them on every occasion. Moreover, their animosity toward

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<sup>[53]</sup> Ibid., chapter 6.

<sup>[54]</sup> Quoted from Ibrahim Issa, *All Months are July*, p. 237.



communism culminated in a low-cost media and ideological campaign across the Arab world, consistently highlighting the distinction between their version of socialism and what they termed Marxisian socialism.

After the execution of the two workers, calm returned to the large landowners and businessmen, while the officers continued to take reassuring measures for them. Several decisions were issued prohibiting strikes, placing the workers' unions and their funds under state control, and depriving them of political activity.<sup>[55]</sup>

Leftist newspapers were confiscated, and a large number of communists were arrested. To ensure that no further reactions would occur, the government issued a decision prohibiting the arbitrary dismissal of workers in March 1953, and the minimum wage for industrial workers was also raised from 12.5 piasters to 25 piasters per day.<sup>[56]</sup> Furthermore, additional guarantees were provided for medical treatment and various vacation benefits. However, these measures were not fully implemented.

In fact, reassurance returned not only to the propertied classes but also to the largest section of the leftist intelligentsia, which would later become Nasserist, claiming to represent the workers and sometimes the peasants. While a British communist journalist attacked the coup government, the leaders of HADITU and the Sudanese National Liberation Movement (HASITU) responded to him<sup>[57]</sup> in defense of the officers, considering them representatives of the national *democratic* revolution. The two organizations depicted the behavior of the officers as something consistent with the nature of the alleged revolution. HADITU's position toward the workers' movement after the coup was particularly hostile. The seed of this was evident in a statement issued on July 31, 1952, by the founding

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<sup>[55]</sup> Patrick O'Brien, *The Revolution of the Economic System in Egypt*, p. 245; Robert Mabro, *The Egyptian Economy from 1952-1972*, pp. 324-325.

<sup>[56]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>[57]</sup> Hamroush, *The Story of the Revolution of July 23, 1952*, part two, p. 118.

committee of the General Federation of Trade Unions, to which it belonged, supporting the *People's Army uprising* and affirming that the army is the guardian of the constitution. After the Kafr el-Dawar uprising, the organization disavowed the workers' movement, issuing this statement: *"The founding committee of the Egyptian General Federation of Trade Unions has become aware that certain individuals, who oppose the interests of both the workers and the nation, are attempting to undermine the patriotism of the working class. These actions are being fueled by remnants and supporters of reactionary and colonial forces. In the representation of the workers, the founding committee strongly condemns these unlawful acts, which serve only to aid the adversaries of our homeland. The committee hopes that these offenders will face stringent consequences, thereby facilitating the liberation of our nation and fostering unity among our ranks under a respected constitutional framework."*<sup>[58]</sup>

HADITU leaders claimed that the uprising was being orchestrated by political police agents<sup>[59]</sup> (who were not loyal to the "Free Officers"?!). HADITU then continued to attack the workers' movement, attributing it to agents and security intelligence. It also urged workers to remain calm and quiet, accusing businessmen of inciting them to strike and urging them not to respond to what it described as the provocation of factory owners who were lowering their wages, while being protected by the new authority, which began to crush the workers' strikes with cruelty.

Late in the year, the main bloc of the Egyptian communist movement, Haditu, began to change its position toward the officers under the impact of successive blows directed at it. The cadres of the conservative organization had had enough, and the traditional frameworks with which the organization's leaders had surrounded the cadres' revolt broke. HADITU members actively engaged in uprisings by workers and peasants against the authorities, participating in events at the Imbaba factory, the Shubra al-Khaymah and Bulaq factories, and in the villages of al-Jaafariya, al-

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<sup>[58]</sup> Rifaat El-Saeed, *Egyptian Left Organizations 1950-1957*, p. 63.

<sup>[59]</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

**Daroutin, and Nawag, as well as at the university. In response to its previous negative position regarding the Kafr el-Dawar strike, HADITU adopted a more aggressive approach in opposing the government, demonstrating considerable commitment and making substantial sacrifices from its members during the confrontations with the authorities. The organization also started to alter its previously negative position regarding communist unity and took a significant role in consolidating various groups into the “Unified Egyptian Communist Party.” Furthermore, it endorsed the principles put forth by the most radical faction involved in this unification, known as “HADITU—the Revolutionary Current.” This effort culminated in the establishment of a coalition that included members of the Wafd party and military officers, who once again advocated for military resistance against the occupation.**

**However, the HADITU revolt was merely a psychological reaction to the officers’ attacks, and it only succeeded in appeasing the disgruntled members of the organization. It never deviated from the Left’s main line and ended in considerable cadre casualties.**

**The rest of the Marxist organizations took a hostile stance toward the officers from the beginning, especially after the Kafr el-Dawar events. However, they contented themselves with accusing the authorities of being fascist, while turning to support the liberal parties. The execution of two workers was enough, from their point of view, to confirm the fascist nature of the new authorities. Regardless of the accuracy of that, their confidence in the validity of their analysis pushed them into the arms of the other party, the liberals, specifically the Wafd.**

**When the wave of arrests of communists, including members of HADITU, and the confiscation of their newspapers intensified, and the parties were dissolved, Youssef Siddiq, one of the most prominent officers’ leaders, a Marxist, resigned from the “Revolutionary Command Council.” He was not in a position that may have helped him to successfully challenge the Nasserists, who**

exiled him abroad, and on returning covertly, they determined his residence.<sup>[60]</sup> However, he was generally more consistent with his leftist ideology than his comrade Khaled Mohieddin, who eventually accepted the new rules of the game, placing himself at the disposal of the “Boss” after some opposition in March 1954.

The officers used a traditional approach to suppress the workers’ movement: the reward and the stick, along with intensifying anti-communist propaganda. During that period, they were able to launch a broad media onslaught against communism in collaboration with Nuri Al-Saeed in Iraq, the CIA, and the “Akhbar al-Yawm” newspaper, which had close ties to the Americans.

The success of this approach indicates that the workers’ movement had politically and organizationally deteriorated to the point where it was deprived of the ability to take the initiative and adhere to an alternative to the officers’ reforms. It had become a reactive movement toward the other. Thus, it gradually lost its independence, taking the path of submission to the officers’ government.

During the months following the coup, the officers succeeded in dealing fatal blows to the communist organizations so that the latter suffered heavy losses in personnel and printing equipment and eventually became extremely weak.

### **Chapter Three: The Agrarian Reform**

**WE CONSIDER IT NECESSARY TO TAKE MEASURES TO  
PREVENT THE MASS EVICTION OF SMALL-SCALE OWNERS AND  
PEASANTS, A USEFUL AND IMPOTENT STRATUM OF SOCIETY,  
WHOSE EXPULSION FROM THE SMALLHOLDINGS ON WHICH  
THEY AND THEIR FAMILIES LIVE RUNS COUNTER TO THE**

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<sup>[60]</sup> Hamroush, Op. cit., part 2, p. 123.

## **FUNDAMENTAL INTERESTS OF AN AGRICULTURAL COUNTRY LIKE EGYPT**

**Lord Kitchener**

**The proposal for agrarian reform legislation was not created by the military coup of 1952. Rather, it was a call that had emerged several years earlier. Additionally, the government established by the officers was not the first in Egypt to contemplate introducing social reforms in the countryside. Lord Kitchener is recognized for enacting Law 31 in 1912, which safeguarded landholdings smaller than five feddans from being seized to settle mortgage debts, effectively curbing the expropriations occurring at that time in favor of foreign creditors. This legislation became known as the “Five-Feddan Law.” Lord Kitchener believed that maintaining the small peasant class was essential for the regime, as he described it as a useful yet impotent class,<sup>[61]</sup> a perspective that aligned with Cromer’s policies.**

**Furthermore, in 1948, King Farouk allocated five feddans to impoverished individuals, including some who were not engaged in agriculture, in Kafr Saad, under the initiative titled “The Project to Increase Small Properties.” On this occasion, he also issued a commemorative coin.**

**The dire conditions of the Egyptian countryside prior to the July 1952 coup prompted numerous politicians from various factions to advocate for agrarian reform in one form or another. Muhammad Khattab, a prominent member of the Saadi Party, called on the Senate to define agricultural ownership, advocating for a 50-feddan cap on future landholdings. However, his proposal was met with criticism and allegations of communism from other council**

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<sup>[61]</sup> Gabriel Baer, *History of Land Ownership in Modern Egypt 1800-1950*, p. 89.

members.<sup>[62]</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood similarly called for defining ownership. Sayyid Qutb commented on Khattab's initiative, stating, *"Muhammad Khattab thinks like a conscious capitalist. He recognizes the necessity of modifying the structure of real estate ownership to avert the storms gathering on the horizon."*<sup>[63]</sup> Additionally, Western circles began advocating for agrarian reform across all underdeveloped countries following World War II and the rise of revolutionary movements, with 92 countries responding to this appeal.<sup>[64]</sup> The motivations behind this initiative were clearly articulated in a declaration from an advisory committee appointed by the American president post-war:

*"In some countries, hunger and socialism can only be fought by agrarian reform."* The perspective of the US Department of Agriculture was that *"a modest parcel of land, coupled with certain advantageous conditions, significantly influences peace—an aspect that develops within an individual and is challenging to cultivate and remove."*<sup>[65]</sup> The US government, via the United Nations, urged the governments of underdeveloped countries to implement some sort of agrarian reform. Furthermore, the US ambassador in Cairo, Jefferson Caffrey, emphasized the necessity of implementing agrarian reform and raising salaries to reduce class differences in order to combat the menace of communism.<sup>[66]</sup> He also called for purging political parties.<sup>[67]</sup> Additionally, some foreign

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<sup>[62]</sup> Tariq Al-Bishri, Op. cit., The writer described how members of liberal parties received Khattab's project and how a plot was hatched to stifle it, even though the Secretary-General of the Wafd party at the time pretended to sympathize with the project for fear of opposing it publicly. pp. 218-219.

<sup>[63]</sup> Anwar Abdel-Malik, Op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>[64]</sup> Fathi Abdel Fattah, The Contemporary Village, p. 14.

<sup>[65]</sup> Anwar Abdel Malik, Op. cit., p. 92, p. 98, respectively.

<sup>[66]</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>[67]</sup> Ahmad Mortada Al-Maraghi, Op. cit., p. 199.



liberal economists favored implementing agrarian reform in Egypt, criticizing the shortcomings of the Officers' Law. <sup>[68]</sup>

Only the large landowners opposed the idea of agrarian reform that affected land ownership. The Wafd party agreed to impose progressive taxes on agricultural revenue without specifying ownership. However, neither the final Wafd government nor the Nasserite authority issued any law stipulating the imposition of taxes on agricultural revenue. On the contrary, the Wafd government imposed more taxes on industrialists.

The law of September 9, 1952, was one of the most provocative issues that sparked intense political conflict after the coup and greatly contributed to the consolidation of the officers' power and popular influence. It also fueled the imagination of the intelligentsia, which until recently has never fully subsided regarding agrarian reform.

Most Marxist organizations endorsed the law shortly after it was enacted, and some members traveled to the countryside to explain it to peasants. <sup>[69]</sup>

The prevailing perspective among Marxist writers, the most influential theorists of Nasserism in Egypt, considers the law as a step in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. <sup>[70]</sup> According to this view, the law was established within the framework of supporting industry by expanding the rural market and promoting the capitalist mode of production in the village. However, Nasserite propaganda focused solely on aspects that would garner peasant

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<sup>[68]</sup> Patrick O'Brien, *Op. cit.*; Robert Mabro, *The Egyptian Economy from 1952-1972*; Doreen Warriner, *Land Reforms & Development in the Middle East*.

<sup>[69]</sup> Then in late 1952, HADITU again opposed the law as a smokescreen. Refer to Walter Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*, p. 49.

<sup>[70]</sup> Refer, for instance, to Anwar Abdel Malek, *Egyptian Society and the Army*, p. 102. He placed the law within the aforementioned framework, although he acknowledges its failure to achieve the desired results. Moreover, Anwar Abdel Malek did not resort to any analysis of the framework he originally assumed.



support for the new regime. Gamal Abdel Nasser stated, *“What is the most significant consideration for determining ownership and allocating land? Determining ownership, which frees us from the feudalism that had existed in this country for many years, represents two fundamental meanings: the first is political freedom, and the second is the abolition of political tyranny.”*<sup>[71]</sup> *“Our demand was not economic but rather liberating the fallah from the control of the master.”*<sup>[72]</sup> The slogan “eliminating feudalism” meant social reform, and the focus was only fleetingly on the effect of this on industrial growth. The demand of some industrialists to limit land ownership was not due to a feeling of the special economic weight of the “agrarian question” but to the danger of social revolution. That is, pre-capitalist relations of production did not constitute a fundamental obstacle to industrial growth, as the economy was highly monetized.

Business circles in Egypt welcomed the issuance of the law, especially major bankers. The president of Bank Misr stated that the law *“protected the country from the pitfalls of violent solutions.”*<sup>[73]</sup> The National Bank of Egypt also welcomed it with great pleasure: *“Egypt can congratulate itself because, after many bright promises and empty talk, the matter did not escape the hands of a regular government that deals with it within the framework of the law. Matters did not descend into a circle of popular initiatives, violence, and chaos. If we look at the matter from this angle, any reform that takes place, regardless of its radicality, is better than the chaos of the masses. Critics, especially foreign critics, must take this into consideration.”*<sup>[74]</sup> The main liberal parties initially opposed the law and proposed instead imposing progressive taxes on agricultural revenue, but they were obligated to agree because of the officers’ determination.<sup>[75]</sup>

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<sup>[71]</sup> An address delivered on 4/19/1954 to delegations of farmers and workers from the glass factory on their way to Kafr El-Dawwar to distribute land ownership contracts.

<sup>[72]</sup> An address he gave at the Management Club on 4/15/1954.

<sup>[73]</sup> Ibrahim Amer, Op. cit., p. 147.

<sup>[74]</sup> The National Bank’s Economic Bulletin, Volume 5, Issue 3, 1952.

<sup>[75]</sup> Refer to Abdel-Azim Ramadan, Op. cit., chapter five.

**The July government's agricultural policy and its evolution are discussed elsewhere in this book. The focus here is on the 1952 law, which was a key component of the Nasserists' agriculture policy. The context in which it was carried out is similar to that in which the officers' coup occurred. This will be further investigated below.**

**The law content can be summarized as follows:**

**1. The most important article stipulated that the maximum ownership of agricultural land should be 200 feddans per individual. This provided the basis for the nationalization of 370,000 feddans of the lands of large landowners. Additionally, in 1953, the lands held by the royal family were confiscated.**

**2. Compensation for land, buildings, machinery, and trees is paid in bonds payable after 15 years and with an annual interest of 3%.**

**3. The land rent was set at seven times the tax imposed in 1952.**

**4. The nationalized land was allocated to tenants at a rate of 2-5 feddans for each fallah. Conditions were imposed that the beneficiary cultivate it himself and repay its price within 30 years in the form of annual installments at an interest rate of 3% per annum. Non-tenant agricultural workers were virtually excluded from receiving any land.**

**5. The land should not be rented except to those who cultivate it themselves, and a rental contract shall be drawn up between the owner and the tenant.**

**6. The wages of agricultural workers were set at a minimum of 18 piastres per day for an adult male and 10 piastres for a woman and child.**

**7. Agricultural workers were allowed to form their unions.<sup>[76]</sup>**

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<sup>[76]</sup> The articles of the law and its explanatory memorandum are published by Muhammad Kamal Abu al-Khair in his book "The Agrarian Reform Law."

## **Implications of the law**

1. The process of determining ownership did not have a direct or indirect impact on pre-capitalist production relations. To align with the transition from feudalism to capitalism, a law should have been enacted to abolish forms of serfdom, sharecropping, the worker service system, and others. This would fit within the intended framework. The partial transfer of ownership did not differentiate between lands cultivated in a capitalist mode and those cultivated in other modes of production. In some cases, capitalist farms were fragmented and converted into small family commodity production units. The law did not prohibit sharecropping, and when it was abolished in 1961, it was not fully or partially enforced. (The modes of production in the Egyptian countryside in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century will be discussed in the chapter on Nasserite economic policy.).

2. The legislation provided a five-year grace period for large landowners to sell off excess land. A total of 145,000 feddans were sold, primarily acquired by rich rural individuals who preferred employing wage labor over the agricultural aristocracy. The government promptly terminated the grace period, confident that within a few additional months, all excess land would be sold, thwarting the officials' goals in enacting the law, particularly the aim of broadening the small property base. This occurred despite the fact that the initial approach could promote capitalist development, in contrast to the latter, which would further disseminate family-run and small-scale commodity production modes.

3. It is clear from the above that the law was objectively directed toward increasing the number of small holdings at any cost, regardless of the issue of modes of production.

4. The total annual rent value, which was mostly pre-capitalist, did not decline:<sup>[77]</sup>

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<sup>[77]</sup> Charles Issawi, *Egypt in Revolution*, p. 154.

Year	Annual rent in million pounds
1935-1939	140.9
1952	150.6
1953	151.4
1956	164.5
1957	163.1
1958	161.2

**This absolute growth, even at current prices, in the rent value reflects the extent of the role that the pre-capitalist surplus continued to play, which is a partial deduction from industrial profits.**

**5. The law was neither designed nor implemented to foster domestic industry. That is, in a sense, capitalist growth in the metropolis. The distribution of 6-7% of the land, or 10%, including the royal family land confiscated in 1953, to small peasants, in addition to the official reduction of land rent by a negligible percentage, did not guarantee a tangible increase in the purchasing power of the peasants.**

**As aforementioned, the land rent paid by the peasants increased.**

**6. The payments made by peasants to the government for the allocated land continued until 1964. In many cases, these payments were equal to or even exceeded the rent previously paid for the same land. According to Anwar Abdel Malik, a study conducted by the newspaper “al-Jumhuriya” in the village of “Beltag” following the enactment of the September 9 Law revealed that the fallah who received four feddans from the agrarian reform paid an annual sum**

of 125 pounds to the government, leaving him with 115 pounds.<sup>[78]</sup> Moreover, some observers contended that the annual installment paid to the government was greater than the rent that had been paid for the land prior to the reform.<sup>[79]</sup> The government was eager to maintain the “usefulness” of the peasant class, a concept highlighted by Lord Kitchener in 1912; thereby, it took measures such as reducing interest rates on installments, extending the payment period, and ultimately abolishing the installments altogether in 1964.

7. Furthermore, the proliferation of smallholdings does not always lead to increased productivity. Land fragmentation has resulted in the loss of fertile areas. According to Fathy Abdel Fattah, the loss of agricultural land due to fragmentation and backward irrigation accounted for 25% of all agricultural holdings under 3 feddans.<sup>[80]</sup> According to Sayyed Marei, 10-20% of Egypt’s total agricultural land area.<sup>[81]</sup> Furthermore, the spread of smallholdings does not always result in higher productivity. Land fragmentation has resulted in the loss of fresh sections. According to Fathy Abdel Fattah, the loss of agricultural land due to fragmentation and backward irrigation accounted for 25% of all agricultural holdings under 3 feddans. According to Sayed Marei, 10-20% of Egypt’s total agricultural land area has been lost to bridges, water canals, and property boundary delineation.

8. Determining the rent did not lead to a significant increase in the income of small peasants, as the new official rent per feddan was not significantly less than the old one, nor was it applied

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<sup>[78]</sup> Egyptian Society and the Army, p. 97.

<sup>[79]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[80]</sup> The Egyptian Village, 1973, p. 112.

<sup>[81]</sup> Agrarian reform and the population problem in Egypt, pp. 180-181. Sayed Mareei is a staunch Nasserist and one of the most influential men in power throughout the rule of Abdel Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak.

comprehensively. Later in the 1960s, it reached one hundred pounds.<sup>[82]</sup>

The narrow-minded manner in which land reform was carried out greatly limited the possibility of improving the conditions of peasants; otherwise, it merely extended the base of small-scale land ownership.

9. If there was a redistribution of agricultural income in favor of poor peasants, the agrarian reform did not deprive the class of large landowners of the income needed for luxury spending on imported goods, which is what industrialists were complaining about.

It is also impossible to place the agrarian reform law in the context of encouraging investments in industry:

- The data demonstrated a growing tendency for capitalists, especially large farmers and those with rentier incomes, to invest in real estate and speculate in securities. This tendency did not change, but quite the opposite, although agrarian reform was not accountable for this. It is worth noting that the wealth of large landowners was not previously invested in agriculture at a tangible rate, despite its great backwardness, nor even in purchasing land. This can be inferred from the following table:

Percentage of land owned by owners of 50 acres and more<sup>[83]</sup>

Year	% of agricultural land
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<sup>[82]</sup> Michel Kamel, on the Movement and Trends of Class Struggle in the Egyptian Countryside.

Robert Mabro mentioned that the new determination of rent was in line with market conditions and not due to a mere government decision, and then he placed new reservations about the actual value that was paid after 1952 as rent, Op. cit., pp. 331-332.

<sup>[83]</sup> Fathi Abdel Fattah, Op. cit., p. 101.

Percentages are derived from the table.

Ibrahim Amer said that in 1894, the large landowners owned 44% of the land, which decreased to 34.2% in 1952, Op. cit., p. 91.

1900	43.5
1952	34.2

The bonds issued by the state to large landowners were not freely tradable and could solely be utilized for the acquisition of fallow lands purchased from the government, for setting taxes on lands that had not been taxed before the law, and for paying the inheritance tax.<sup>[84]</sup> The legislation did not specify that their application should be restricted, or even permitted, to the purchase of industrial stocks and bonds, despite the government's promotion of the private industrial sector.<sup>[85]</sup> Moreover, depriving the large landowners of compensation, while exempting the peasants from paying any installments would be sufficient to significantly increase peasants' income. This would encourage the purchase of domestically manufactured goods, an effect the September 1952 law did not achieve until 1964.

The shift in ownership relations did not contribute to fulfilling the industry's demand for agricultural raw materials; however, it was essential to modify the prevailing agricultural cycle system. This modification commenced following the conclusion of the Korean War and continued into the subsequent period, prioritizing rice production over cotton rather than aligning with the requirements of the domestic industry.

It is important to note that altering property relations in this specific manner within a broadly underdeveloped context does not inherently promote the growth of commodity production or the subsequent enlargement of the market. During the nineteenth century and the initial decades of the twentieth century, the agricultural aristocracy transitioned into export farming due to a

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<sup>[84]</sup> Muhammad Kamal Abu Al-Khair, *Op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>[85]</sup> Doreen Wariner criticized the payment of these reparations in the first place because they are economically unjustified. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.



strong demand for Egyptian cotton in international markets, while small-scale farmers tended to consume a significant portion of their output. The Nasserists implemented a system of agricultural cycles and compulsory supply to guarantee the production of export goods and the provision of grain to urban areas, and the modifications in property relations were unrelated to this framework.

In this way, it became evident that the agrarian reform had produced two basic effects on the social level: the first was the liquidation of the agrarian aristocracy, and the second was the expansion of the base of small land ownership, about which Marx rightly said, “*forms a suitable basis for an all-powerful bureaucracy.*”<sup>[86]</sup>

Between 1950 and 1952, Egyptian villages began showing signs of rebellion. Widespread poverty among peasants forced hundreds of thousands to migrate to cities,<sup>[87]</sup> intensifying the social struggles in urban areas. In general, in a rural country where the city experiences unrest in isolation, the situation remains manageable for the ruling class, but when the countryside explodes with the urban, this is evidence that the regime is facing a major crisis. The revolt of the “impotent” and “useful” class is evidence of this. Therefore, its satisfaction was necessary. The more far-sighted representatives of the dominant class were fully aware of this.

Therefore, the issuance of the September 9 law weeks after the coup, as well as the propaganda surrounding its anticipated release shortly thereafter, were necessary steps to consolidate the foundations of the new authority. Just allocating or selling a small portion of land to poor peasants under a shiny slogan, such as agrarian reform, had a significant impact on the populace. It provided a deceptive impression of the new authority’s policies in the absence of a radical alternative. The popular resonance of the

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<sup>[86]</sup> The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, p. 64.

<sup>[87]</sup> This phenomenon has not disappear but rather worsened despite successive agrarian reforms.

law was not commensurate with the modest real gains for the poor, which are disputed, and the temporary gains included in its articles. This contradiction itself confirms the political purpose of enacting the law, which, even before the public was aware of some of its details, led to a considerable reinforcement of the position of the new authority.

The agrarian reform did not considerably reduce rural class disparities, let alone address them radically. It did not result in the elimination of large property owners as a class, although the share of land under their control declined. Based on unreliable government statistics, their holdings reportedly dropped from 34.2% of total agricultural land in 1952 to 20.3% in 1953.

This change involved confiscating the lands of the royal family and the sale of a significant portion of the lands by large landowners during the first months following the enactment of the law.<sup>[88]</sup> The government permitted the sale of 145 thousand feddans to wealthy villagers and some small tenants.<sup>[89]</sup> Large landowners were able to register some of their properties as building lands, as the law did not apply to them. This was done, for example, by Ahmad Abboud in Armant and Muhammad Sultan in Minya.<sup>[90]</sup> The land sold prior to July 23 was also exempted, even for sons and grandsons. Major landowners could leverage this provision to falsify sales contracts with old dates for their sons and grandsons, enabling them to retain large areas of land. For instance, the executive office of the Arab Socialist Union in Kafr el-Sheikh Governorate discovered in the

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<sup>[88]</sup> Mahmoud Abdel Fadeel, *Economic and Social Transformations in the Egyptian Countryside*, p. 24.

It is meant here by large landowners, those who own more than 50 feddans.

<sup>[89]</sup> Fathi Abdel Fattah, *The Contemporary Village*, p. 18.

<sup>[90]</sup> Igor Belyaev & Evgeny Primakov, *Egypt in the Era of Abdel Nasser*, p. 59, quoted from "al-Taliaah" magazine, issue 6, 1966.

mid-1960s that ten major landowners had each retained five thousand feddans.<sup>[91]</sup>

The Agrarian Reform Law did not result in a considerable increase in small peasant ownership, with only 146,496 families getting land.<sup>[92]</sup> Some minor tenants lost parts of their holdings because they were designated as land belonging to large landowners under the Agrarian Reform.

The law's negative impact on farmworkers' income was discussed elsewhere.

In short, the agrarian reform did not result in a true and radical dissolution of class divisions in the countryside.<sup>[93]</sup> Its actual role in bribing the peasants did not contribute to its immense sentimental appeal. It primarily impacted the existence of powerful aristocratic families, leading to the decline of many in favor of the growth of small-scale land ownership. Regardless of the law's meager economic consequences on poor peasants, its political effects in the countryside and even in cities were substantial. In the metropolis, the poor and most intellectuals viewed the measure as an indication of a more equitable policy of the officers' government than previous ones. Additionally, it created prospects among various poor classes for change for the better. This aspiration was undoubtedly more

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<sup>[91]</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>[92]</sup> Mahmoud Abdel Fadeel, Op. cit., p. 22

<sup>[93]</sup> Comparing Nasserite Egypt's land reform with similar measures in other underdeveloped countries shows how moderate the former was. Interestingly, the Iranian reform (1962) implemented by the Middle East's biggest dictator at the time was more radical than all the agricultural reforms in the entire region. The reforms implemented in Taiwan and South Korea following World War II should also be mentioned, which established a maximum ownership limit of 2.5 feddans. Moreover, when comparing the Nasserite reform to the Japanese reform implemented after World War II, it is evident that the former resulted in land ownership benefits for approximately 8–10 percent of the rural population. In contrast, the Japanese reform facilitated land distribution to 33 percent of the rural populace, with a maximum ownership cap set at 7.5 feddans. Various references.

powerful than the reality that the peasants experienced with their hands.

Interestingly, many educated people in Egypt to this day believe that the officers distributed five feddans to each fellah!

The agrarian aristocracy was utilized as a scapegoat by the regime to resolve its political crisis, i.e., to bring a large mass of the populace into its fold.

The mere dismantling of the land aristocracy, known for its profound disdain for the poor and its collaboration with colonialism, was sufficient to enhance the officers' influence among the populace. Distributing land, setting rents, and similar measures, although they had little actual economic effect, added a new dimension to the dismantling of the aristocracy. The law opened a new door of hope for the small peasant and all the poor classes, which was the most significant of all. In a period marked by stagnation and despair, this act carried profound significance. The ownership structure changed, which, while not revolutionary or heavily detrimental to the aristocracy, was still striking within the context of modern Egypt. Since the era of Muhammad Ali, private property had only been meaningfully challenged by the July officers, albeit within a conservative context.

The growth of the small property base further enhanced the state's economic influence in the countryside. After the liquidation of the properties of the prominent aristocratic families, the state became more adept at partnering with large landowners to supervise the village.

The demolition of the agrarian aristocracy did not primarily aim to eliminate it as a political competitor. The events leading up to the coup, as well as its success, demonstrated that the dominant classes had been politically weakened and had lost much of their popular support. If the aristocracy had any remaining bases of support, it would have been more appropriate to fight against the law rather than supporting it or remaining silent, as most of its members

actually did. In fact, the goal and context of the agrarian reform was an attempt by the officers to quell popular discontent, to overcome the political crisis facing the regime, and to consolidate its authority.

Ultimately, and without doubt, the agricultural reform had some economic impacts in both the countryside and the metropolis, as is expected of any event that affects people's economic activity. However, this adds nothing to the essence of the previous analysis of its nature.

The framework or context in which the Nasserite agrarian reform was realized was not, as many Nasserist theorists have argued, the transition from feudalism to capitalism or the stage of bourgeois revolution, but rather the dominant class's response to the masses' revolt via its bureaucratic instrument. Regardless of the existence of any direct or indirect economic effects, even if, arguably, they were in favor of the growth of industry, understanding agrarian reform within this framework also explains and reveals its limitations. One of the most significant requirements for evaluating history is the elimination of axioms and dogma. In this instance, one must first abandon the notion that all agrarian reforms are bourgeois revolutions.

## **Chapter Four: The Parties and the Constitution**

In times of political instability, it is common for political parties to split. However, when these parties not only face turmoil but also experience a decline in popularity, particularly when their primary supporters, such as colonialism and the monarchy, become ineffective, they become susceptible to self-destruction. As the crisis within the regime escalated, each liberal party in Egypt increasingly depended on the failings of the others. This situation shows that they arrived at a stage where their survival depended on others' failure to eliminate them, rather than on their abilities. They lost the

capacity to take initiative, having given up their clarity of vision and, consequently, their effective will. In contrast, the officers' government effectively leveraged the contradictions of others, demonstrating initiative and a resolute will. Conversely, the officers' government capitalized on the contradictions of others in a constructive manner, as it was able to take the initiative and possessed a strong will. Aware of its weaknesses, it sought to leverage the divisions among its opponents and incite conflict and fragmentation, ultimately leading to their disintegration, akin to how the intensification of battles among weakened entities accelerates their collective downfall. The "Free Officers" derived their honor not from a historical justification for ruling but thanks to their ability to rebel, which led them to revolt against a situation that everyone was tired of: the political balance that gave them the opportunity for rebellion itself. The officers drew their rebellious spirit from the impotence of their masters. They were in the position of keen observers, from which they began to build their own history free from the burden of crimes and betrayals that had practically tainted all influential official and unofficial political institutions.

This situation offered them a significant advantage in the upcoming conflict. Since they had portrayed themselves as the hero who came to save the nation, everyone was eager to gain their favor from the beginning: liberal parties, the main bloc of the Left,<sup>[94]</sup> and Islamic organizations, albeit at a high cost. However, the officers would only be pleased with smashing everyone. So the liberals and their allies were gradually forced to crush themselves to gain that desired satisfaction, which was never going to come. They hoped for a miracle similar to those shown in Egyptian movies.

Partisans did not succumb to despair, which was a very expensive luxury. They had real and wide-ranging interests at stake and were compelled to engage in the struggle until the end. When the time

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<sup>[94]</sup> It is meant HADITU, and soon other teams would follow its policy after temporary clashes with the authorities.

arrived to officially acknowledge the demise of their parties, they had only one option: to awaken. Yet, in that moment, they realized they were only capable of awakening to death.

Thus, Egypt witnessed a period of extremely complex conflict from July 1952 to March 1954.

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The “Free Officers” decided to abolish civil titles one week after the coup. Who could oppose or protest now? Who could not give their blessings to a government that issued such a decision? Thus, the officers began their battle very early and shrewdly. The titleholders included leading members of the liberal parties. Thus, the era of pashas was officially over, much to the delight of the general public.

Meanwhile, the authorities issued a seemingly innocent directive: purge the parties. Who hates purges? How could such a call be refused? It could have passed with little reaction or ramifications, but under different circumstances. However, the liberal parties experienced fragmentation and were eager to win the favor of the officers; the response was quick and also humiliating in every sense of the word.

Where was that party that did not need to be “purged” in some sense at that very moment, as long as it still dreamed of power? The Wafd was the one that swallowed the bait until it tore its entrails. It was decided to expel some members of the party without giving reasons. Attacks and counterattacks escalated within the organization, and voices were raised with serious accusations against the party leadership by those expelled. However, Muhammad Naguib declared that he did not like the Wafd’s way of purging itself. Ahmed Abu al-Fatah, a senior and genuine Wafdist, warned and condemned the party for failing to purge itself,



cautioning that the army might dissolve the parties—a clear call for self-destruction.

The Saadi Party attempted to confront the appeal; thereby, its head declared that no one in the party deserved to be purged. However, the party decided to purge itself of its leader in particular. Thus, it began a spiral of disintegration that culminated in its collapse.

The Constitutionalist Liberal Party resisted the call for a while, but it was not influential enough to pose a threat to power and spontaneously disintegrated after the deposition of the king and the agrarian reform.

The issuance of the agrarian reform law exacerbated the divisions among the liberals, particularly the Wafd. Initially, it opposed the law as a spontaneous reaction on the part of its aristocratic landed figures, adding a new black page to its history and losing a vital point in front of the officers, along with the rest of the liberal parties.

This was followed by arresting 74 major party figures “to help the parties purge themselves,” as the government pretended.<sup>[95]</sup> Who would object? Aren’t the vast majority of them figures rejected by most of the populace?

Following the declaration of agrarian reform, a law governing political parties was enacted, and 16 notifications were submitted to the government. In response, parties tried to appease the officers, especially the Wafd, which declared itself a social democratic party, introducing a program that was more radical to the left than the policies of the officers’ government at the time.<sup>[96]</sup>

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<sup>[95]</sup> Find details in Abdel-Azim Ramadan’s book “The Social and Political Conflict in Egypt from the Revolution of July 23, 1952 to the End of the March Crisis,” p. 127.

<sup>[96]</sup> Find some of the program’s items in the previous reference, pp. 129-130, and in Ahmad Hamrash, *Op. cit.*, 2, p. 94.

The outcomes of the conflict between the officers and the parties later proved that the issue was not related to political programs but to the political forces themselves and their history. The public usually does not choose abstract programs because they neither apply to nor impose themselves on anyone. Therefore, the party as an effective political institution is the first point of its program, with its actual practice, declared positions, sacrifices, and entire history. The new program of the Wafd failed to transform it again into the majority party, as membership applications did not pour in, and Muhammad Naguib's supporters did not disperse. However, the officers also announced their dissatisfaction, demanding the dismissal of Al-Nahhas himself, the leader of the Wafd and its most popular figure. However, the party tried to oppose it, but only for a while. When Muhammad Naguib visited Al-Nahhas's hometown, the people received him with great enthusiasm, proving to the Wafd that Al-Nahhas was no longer the undisputed leader. It became evident at this point that the majority of public sentiment had shifted in favor of the coup's officers. Therefore, it was decided to make Al-Nahhas the honorary president of the party, while several resignations poured in from the Wafd committee. However, the officers refused for the third time to grant their approval, demanding his ultimate dismissal. This was the most embarrassing situation for the Wafd, as Al-Nahhas's departure from the party at that moment signified that the party was losing its core identity. Al-Nahhas had become the spirit of the Wafd, especially in those critical moments. Despite his conservative ideas, Al-Nahhas was the only leader who had any historical worth to utilize, while negotiating with the officers. However, what might the ill party do? It did not have any cards to play with.

The Wafdist Committee filed a lawsuit against the officers, claiming the unconstitutionality of the Party Organization Law. The constitution was its last card in the deck, appearing to be leaning against a slanted wall, as the popular saying goes. The constitution itself did not stipulate the right of the officers' organization to seize

power and depose the “legitimate” king, etc. However, one of the Wafd’s lawyers stood up in court, saying, *“It was not a revolution against the 1923 constitution, but rather a revolution for this constitution.”*<sup>[97]</sup> Thus, the lawyer had been attacking the officers’ actions, awakening their consciences. However, the coup plotters’ response was very rational and simple: to abolish the 1923 constitution on December 10, 1952, under the pretext of being able to try the former ministers to whom that constitution granted immunity.

On January 16, 1953, a decision was issued to dissolve the parties. It was issued in terrible silence and followed by widespread arrests of senior party members and communists. Then a constitutional declaration was issued for a transitional period estimated at three years, after which a new constitution would be drawn up.

No one could then file a lawsuit against the government in the name of the constitution.

The liberal parties were easily dismantled, which can be explained by a proclivity to commit suicide as a result of feeling bankrupt. Their reliance on leaders and icons rather than cohesive organizations was one of the most critical factors in their breakdown following their removal, in addition to the cleverness of the July Knights in handling the operation.

The new government was legalized on June 18, 1953, coinciding with the declaration of the republic. Muhammad Naguib was designated as president in the presence of a limited assembly of supporters, who were gathered to lend an electoral aspect to the appointment.

When the parties were disbanded, the Muslim Brotherhood was excluded due to its status as a group rather than a party. Rather, the killers of Al-Khazindar and Al-Naqrashi were released to win the Brotherhood’s favor. This exemption was granted in exchange for

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<sup>[97]</sup> Abdel Azim Ramadan, Op. cit., p. 136.

not working to reach power or participating in elections. The Muslim Brotherhood agreed to the deal on the idea that their mere existence alone as an organized group would enable them to later assume power without challenge. Their welcoming of the dissolution of the parties was a naive plan to monopolize the arena. Their position was essentially a decision to commit suicide, as the deal was concluded at a time when the group was suffering from disintegration that crystallized in the election of Hassan Al-Hudaybi, the weakest candidate for leadership as General Guide after the assassination of Hassan Al-Banna. Actually, Al-Hudaybi played the role of the front behind which the struggle for leadership within the group took place.

After dissolving the parties, the Brotherhood began to demand what they considered their natural right to power. They demanded a share in ministry, but they were surprised by the categorical rejection. Therefore, they found themselves obligated to return to the well into which they had previously spat: the parties. They participated in forming the “National Democratic Front” with communists, Wafdists, and members of the Socialist Party. However, they withdrew shortly after due to tactical differences and began to mobilize their men in the university to clash with members of the governmental Liberation Rally and to issue statements hostile to the officers. The tension between them and the government reached its pinnacle on January 12, 1954, when a major battle took place in the university in which the group used sticks and knives against members of the rally. This was followed by a decision immediately issued to dissolve the organization and arrest its leaders on January 14, 1954.

## **Chapter Five: Destroying Opposition in the Army and Unifying the Leadership**

Within three months following the coup, 500 senior officers and some junior officers from families considered suspicious were dismissed.

Faced with democratic resistance in the army, the coup leaders expelled a substantial number of artillery officers in January 1953, who were demanding that the “leadership of the revolution” be elected and issued a circular calling for this. Some armored officers who protested the arrest of their colleagues were also arrested for this reason, and some resigned in protest of the leadership’s undemocratic behavior, one of whom was sentenced to death.<sup>[98]</sup> The arrested officers were subjected to extreme torture, and First Lieutenant Ahmad Wasfi died under torture. Meanwhile, the conflict was escalating within the “Revolutionary Command Council,” as a major dispute began between Muhammad Naguib and the Command Council.

Gamal Abdel Nasser was the leader of the organization prior to the coup. However, because Muhammad Naguib was the highest-ranking member of the Command Council, it was predetermined that he would take over as president following the coup. He also assumed the ministry’s presidency after Ali Maher resigned. Nevertheless, the ministry had no actual authority, as the members of the “Revolutionary Command Council” took it upon themselves to issue decisions and orders and reorganize the state apparatus without reference to it, as Muhammad Naguib mentioned. Gamal Abdel Nasser’s actual influence was increasing, while Muhammad Naguib was content to take responsibility for the decisions issued by the council in his name. Weeks after the coup, he gained great popular sympathy, which reassured him in his anticipated conflict with the junior officers in the Command Council.

Muhammad Naguib seems to exhibit considerable confusion. An examination of his works, “My Word to History” and “I Was

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<sup>[98]</sup> Ahmad Hamroush, *The Story of the July 23 Revolution* (2), pp. 181-184.

President of Egypt,” reveals a lack of a clear perspective on the events following the coup and leading up to his ousting. He suggested that his involvement in the coup was motivated by a desire to address national issues, including the situation in Sudan, to overthrow the monarchy, and subsequently to return the military to its barracks. He also asserted that he opposed nearly all decisions made by the Command Council, despite having signed them voluntarily. Furthermore, he claimed to have repeatedly yielded to the pressures of others in various circumstances. In reality, he failed to grasp the dynamics at play, as the officers utilized his senior rank to lend credibility to their actions on the global level, given his established reputation as a prominent general. Nasser, on the other hand, held the majority of the power, being the architect of the organization and the most adept at strategizing and exerting control. Following the coup, Nasser commenced his tenure in power as Minister of the Interior, while Naguib took on the roles of Chairman of the Command Council and subsequently the ministry after Ali Maher. Nasser was consolidating his influence within the military and police by placing his proponents in key roles, diminishing the presence of democratic elements among the officers, and tightening his grip on Naguib within the army. Meanwhile, Naguib was attempting to bolster his public appeal at a time when public engagement in politics was waning. Ultimately, Naguib was deceiving himself with the applause of the public, who supported him as their *hero* and not as their *representative*, while he was demanding calm and tranquility from them, reaping later what he sowed. Actually, Naguib armed himself with the power of *appearance*, while Abdel Nasser armed himself with the power of *the state apparatus*.

In early 1954, Naguib began calling for the return of parliamentary life, seeking the support of political parties, the Muslim Brotherhood, and intellectuals such as lawyers for a popular referendum on his presidency. However, the public’s response was becoming less and less active, content to watch and see.



**It was clear that Naguib had shifted his stance on the parties after being besieged in the Command Council and unable to make a decision.**

**The conflict within the Command Council was a power struggle among members over the position of leadership. Some of them were quickly eliminated, while Abdel Nasser's leadership was consolidating. He had to clash with Naguib, the popular but weak leader within the officers' organization.**

**The authority of the Command Council was strengthened by the abolition of the constitution, the dissolution of the parties, and the issuance of the constitutional Declaration on 10/2/1953, which implicitly approved the abolition of the separation of powers. This was followed by the formation of the "Treachery Court" (treachery signifies the corruption of political life) on 25 February 1953, marking the first direct assault by the officers on the judiciary. Then another shift came in the struggle between Abdel Nasser and Naguib. Naguib was appointed president of the republic on 18 June 1953 in exchange for Abdel Nasser becoming deputy prime minister and Abdel Hakeem Amer becoming commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces after he was promoted from major to major general. This marked the end of Naguib's role in the army. Three months later, a court known as the Revolutionary Court was established to try any opposition, whether left or right, followed by extensive new arrests.**

**The arrests of the Muslim Brotherhood and the dissolution of their organization on January 14, 1954, were a new blow to Naguib. He then offered the council, on February 25, 1954, to either agree to the return of parliamentary life or his resignation. The council chose the second option, and Muhammad Naguib was arrested for several hours. Afterwards, several demonstrations followed, with members of liberal parties, communists, and the Muslim Brotherhood supporting him and demanding his return. Naguib was reinstated,**



but there were new arrests of members of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Socialist Party, the Wafd Party, and communists.<sup>[99]</sup>

The Command Council subsequently sanctioned a new strategy. Official propaganda associated the reinstatement of political parties with the restoration of the Pashas and the annulment of agrarian reform, among other factors. In essence, the revival of parliamentary life was portrayed as a return to the entirety of the past. Furthermore, the 1923 constitution faced significant criticism from the officers' press. Conversely, Naguib found reassurance in the substantial popular support he enjoyed, alongside backing from political parties. In the absence of counter-propaganda and with the diminishing popular influence of the parties, Nasserite propaganda ultimately succeeded in undermining Muhammad Naguib's authority.

Then the events proceeded. Under intense pressure from Muhammad Naguib and his supporters inside and outside the army, the "Revolutionary Command Council" decided on March 5, 1954, to abolish martial law and hold a constituent assembly by direct universal suffrage to draft a new constitution. On March 25, the council decided to allow the formation of political parties but not to form a party of its own. It also decided that the constituent assembly would be elected without any appointments and to dissolve the "Revolutionary Command Council" on the basis that the "revolution" was over. It also voted to abolish the deprivation of political rights.<sup>[100]</sup> However, Naguib's request for the reinstatement of the parties and for a popular referendum on the presidency of the republic before the convening of the constituent assembly was rejected. Nevertheless, political prisoners remained incarcerated, with the sole exception of members of the Muslim Brotherhood. They were released under new conditions involving the

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<sup>[99]</sup> Abdel Azim Ramadan, *Op. cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>[100]</sup> Muhammad Naguib, *My Word for History*, p. 156, p. 168.

reinstatement of the organization, while agreeing not to reestablish political parties. Consequently, the organization issued a statement on March 27, which was published in newspapers. The statement stated, “Concerning the reinstatement of political parties, we hope that corruption will not revert to its original state. We will not remain passive in the face of this corruption; rather, we will strongly advocate for the complete freedom of the people and will oppose the formation of political parties for a fundamental reason: we call on all Egyptians to follow us and follow our lead in the cause of Islam.”<sup>[101]</sup>

Simultaneously, the “Free Officers” were mobilizing their supporters from various groups, including workers from the Tahrir Directorate, public transportation employees, National Guard members, youth organization members, and individuals affiliated with the Liberation Rally, along with some loyal officers. On March 29, these groups demonstrated, chanting numerous slogans, one of which would later become famous: “*Long live the revolution... Down with reactionaries, long live the revolution... Down with freedom.*” This is along with other slogans such as “not allowing strikes, not engaging in electoral battles,” and banners bearing them were raised.<sup>[102]</sup> Meanwhile, anti-tank artillery surrounded the armored corps camps, and planes flew over them. Additionally, junior officers gathered and surrounded the headquarters of the “Revolutionary Command,” protesting the decision to end the “revolution.”

While the State Council was preparing a statement to support the March 5 and 25 decisions, the pro-coup protestors attacked the assembly and tore up the statement. Rather, the head of the State Council, Abdul Razzaq Al-Sanhuri, was insulted and beaten with shoes. Moreover, he was dismissed from his judicial position and banned from traveling for years. All this happened without

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<sup>[101]</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>[102]</sup> Find details in Abdel Azim Ramadan, Abdel Nasser and the March 1954 Crisis.

noteworthy popular reaction, except for a group of demonstrators raising other slogans, the right to strike, and forming a national assembly. It should be noted that the head of the State Council, who was assaulted, had provided the July coup government with all legal cover and legislation that codified its authority. He issued a fatwa (advisory opinion) on July 31, 1952, one week after the coup, contravening the provisions of the 1923 constitution, which required the summoning of parliament for the Council of Guardians to take the constitutional oath before it, as King Farouk had abdicated the throne in favor of his young son Ahmad Fouad. Al-Sanhouri even issued a fatwa saying, *“The advisory opinion issued by us includes a call on the government to use force if the dissolved Wafdist parliament tries to convene on its own.”* So the “Free Officers” applied the fatwas he issued, using force against him!

The subsequent action involved the removal of Naguib from both the premiership and the Command Council. Nasser got him the ministry assignment without accepting his resignation from the presidency. According to Naguib, from that moment onward, the president refrained from entering his office for several months, and the day he finally did was the last day Naguib occupied his position, as he was promptly arrested and placed under house arrest.

A campaign of arrests was conducted throughout this period, culminating in the dissolution of the Journalists’ Syndicate on April 15, 1954, as well as the Press Law being amended. This was preceded by the dissolution of student and labor unions, which were then reorganized by appointment.

In 1953, a committee of fifty prominent political, cultural, judicial, and military figures was formed under the leadership of Prime Minister Ali Maher to draft a new constitution for the country. But when the draft was presented to the Revolutionary Command Council in 1954, it was ignored and thrown in the trash because it was described as “too democratic.” This draft included a parliamentary republic.

**Only now could Nasser see the “all-in-one” theory come to realization, as he became the unrivaled leader of the officers’ government and the president of all Egypt.**

**This process shows how the country was falling into political stagnation:**

**First, at the helm of events were forces that followed in succession from the strongest to the weakest: the popular minority parties, representing the dominant groups and more militant toward the public and their demands than the Wafd. This party represented the weakest link in the political system from the point of view of the dominant class, and it no longer fully represents it. Thus, it crystallized the weakness of the entire system, as all parties in the regime’s camp were obligated to put it as their last card, for the simple reason that they could no longer fight and challenge the populace. However, those same parties were obligated to burn their boats on January 26, sacrificing the last Wafd ministry. They discovered that they had not kept any weapons for themselves. So, they had to use paper weapons -the four ministries- so that the “Free Officers” could easily take power from them, thus proving that the dominant class had ended politically.**

**Second, Muhammad Naguib rose to prominence among the officers, gaining formal power and becoming Egypt’s most popular leader. However, his popularity began to decline, giving way to younger commanders, who, in addition to not having emerged as leaders until that point, had not yet taken official control. They were obligated to seek refuge with a great and revered general, while their actual leader refused to embrace the image of the inspiring hero until all other leaders were eliminated. The “Free Officers” became the strongest link in the regime for one reason: the regime no longer had any real strength; therefore, it began to proceed according to its own inertia with the tool of repression.**

**Third, the self-disintegration of all political forces was moving forward. The public, in an atmosphere of despair, withdrew from**

the political scene, and the ongoing battle shrank to become limited to various elites. The masses, who had previously taken action in places like the Canal, Sharqiya, Cairo, universities, factories, and the countryside, became increasingly passive, driven by a mix of despair and hope. They lost faith in their leaders and hoped for a savior to emerge. However, with these contradictory feelings, they were expressing the bankruptcy of their spontaneous movement. The masses did the best they could under the circumstances and could no longer see the way, as they failed in all ways because they lacked a clear vision and organization, i.e., in the end, leadership, and they were increasingly inclined to surrender their reins to fate.

Hence, one should not be surprised when the officers backed away from “ending the revolution” in one fell swoop and with little reaction, once a few thousand hired persons, some workers, yellow trade unionists, and security guards came out. Decisions like abolishing the constitution, disbanding parties, and establishing a “treachery court” would have sparked violent clashes just a few years or months earlier. However, these decisions were practiced without significant resistance, even though the officers had not earned the people’s approval for a military dictatorship by March 1954. Only a small minority was politically active, a stark contrast to the period of 1945-1952.

The mere fact that each social force overtly expressed itself and its actual capabilities was an opportunity for a handful of officers to take control of the country without effective protest from the basic social classes.

## **Chapter Six: The National Question and the Question of Sudan**

Following the successful suppression of the uprising on January 26, 1952, the government initiated campaigns aimed at confiscating

weapons and apprehending militants. By the time of the July coup, armed resistance in the Canal nearly ceased. There were no efforts to reignite this struggle during the period preceding the coup, as the patriotic movement had significantly become feeble, with many of its most radical members incarcerated. While the general populace had largely lost their initiative, they still harbored resentment. Consequently, upon seizing power, the military bureaucracy found itself compelled to address the national dilemma, which included the issue of Sudan. This challenge had previously burdened the regime's political parties, and it became essential for the regime's survival to identify a solution that would appease the fundamental social powers or, at the very least, one that would not provoke another revolutionary upheaval. This was of utmost importance for the new authority.

The military elite found themselves immersed in a complex landscape of local social and political disputes, as well as a challenging global environment filled with contradictions. Their responsibility to all societal classes was to steer the nation through these turbulent waters. The officers' assumption of power could not be the end of the social conflict because this conflict itself had created a new political map of society that could not be easily changed. The outcomes of the conflicts from 1945 to 1952 ultimately set the stage for the military coup. If one were to consider the political crisis resolved by this coup, it is natural to contemplate the anticipated return of the monarchy, the Wafd party, and foreign occupation- elements that Lord Killearn, the British ambassador to Cairo at the time, rightly regarded as the three foundational pillars of the regime.

However, the mere success of the coup did not solve the crisis. On the contrary, it made it more complicated. One of the regime's legs was broken as soon as the coup had taken place, as the king no longer ruled. A short, while later, a second leg was broken: the Wafd, in the context of legalizing military rule. The chair itself was worn out; therefore, it became necessary to repair it as a whole.



Because the national issue was the most sensitive topic for public opinion and around which the political conflict revolved, the new government had only one way, which was to achieve a minimum of the demands of the patriotic movement. The stillness that followed the Cairo fire was not the final decision of the masses but rather a state of waiting. So it was better for the new regime not to wait too long; otherwise, a new wave of social conflict was inevitable. The threshold was not too small. It required the skill and flexibility of the officers and the help of outside forces, as the new government had decided to abandon the idea of arming the people altogether.

The foreign power that emerged and offered its assistance was the United States. The officers' objective was to achieve the evacuation of Britain under the most advantageous conditions with American assistance, while not entering into a defense alliance with the West. The latter point was mainly an American stipulation in exchange for economic openness and the continuation of the Point Four Program.<sup>[103]</sup> It was also crucial for the coup's authority to achieve the evacuation of Britain from Sudan as well, as the Sudan issue was non-negotiable for Egyptian public opinion.

The officers aimed to confiscate all power for themselves, and they had no interest in handing Egypt over to the Americans or leaving Sudan to the British. After demobilizing the workers' movement, dissolving student unions, purging universities of dissent, confiscating leftist newspapers, arresting most communist cadres, and dissolving parties, reconciliation negotiations with Britain began on April 17, 1953. The latter was still very strict regarding its military presence in Egypt after losing its base in Palestine with the establishment of Israel. So, the officers were obligated to cut off negotiations on May 6 of the same year due to Britain's insistence on

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<sup>[103]</sup> This is an American technical assistance program for underdeveloped countries. It was announced by United States President Harry S. Truman on January 20, 1949. It took its name from the fact that it was the fourth foreign policy objective mentioned in the President's address.



keeping part of the Suez Canal base and allowing the return of its forces in the event of an attack on any Arab country or Turkey. <sup>[104]</sup>

Up to that date, the new authority was unable to submit to these conditions it later agreed to, especially since it had been fighting battles on multiple fronts at home with groups of dissolved parties, remnants of Marxist organizations, and democratic officers.

Therefore, Abdel Nasser proceeded to declare, “*Colonialism must pick up its stick and leave.*” “*Colonialism will not be expelled except by force.*” The National Guard was formed with the declared aim of resisting the British in the Canal under the supervision of intelligence officers. In reality, this guard did not carry out any significant actions against the occupation, but official propaganda greatly exaggerated its role to the extent that it seemed as if the government had declared war on Britain, which did not happen. It seems that the formation of the National Guard was intended to be used when necessary as an alternative to the police, like the Central Security forces today. In fact, it played its role perfectly in the events of March 1954. <sup>[105]</sup>

The government of the coup repeatedly declared its refusal to participate in any military alliances. <sup>[106]</sup> However, after the

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<sup>[104]</sup> Ahmad Hamroush, Abdel Nasser’s Society, pp. 20-21, p. 27.

<sup>[105]</sup> Muhammad Naguib, Op. cit., p. 178, Ahmad Hamroush, Abdel Nasser’s Society, pp. 21-23.

<sup>[106]</sup> Muhammad Naguib mentioned, quoting the memoirs of General Robertson, the chief military negotiator, that Gamal Abdel Nasser was secretly in contact with the British during the period preceding the signing of the evacuation agreement, i.e., the period during which the beautiful national slogans were being launched. It is also certain that similar contacts were ongoing between some officers, especially Gamal Abdel Nasser, and the Americans, especially Kermit Roosevelt. Muhammad Naguib also indicated that the evacuation agreement was a price paid by Abdel Nasser in exchange for the Americans’ assistance during the “Free Officers” struggle with the opposition, quoting Khaled Mohieddin, who got the news from a French journalist, My Word for History, pp. 123, 101, 173, 206.

In fact, there were real differences between the officers and Britain, which required tangible American efforts. Apart from Muhammad Naguib’s conspiratorial interpretations, signing the agreement in this form was only possible after the elimination

liquidation of internal opposition and the reorganization of the state, the “Free Officers” became more flexible in negotiations. This will be addressed later

The question of Sudan, one of the two stumbling blocks in the pre-July coup government’s negotiations with Britain, necessitated a high level of skill and ingenuity. Previously, the Sidqi-Bevin agreement fell apart, and Sidqi himself resigned following popular uprisings that rejected the mutual defense agreement with Britain and Sidqi’s concessions regarding Sudan.

The Saadists also failed to address the issue of Sudan. The Wafd came and canceled the 1936 treaty without daring to maintain the 1899 agreement regarding Sudan, as the unity of the valley’s inhabitants was not something that the masses would accept negotiating or tampering with.

Despite the Egyptian occupation of Sudan and the consequent oppression and exploitation of its resources during and after the reign of Muhammad Ali, the national movements in both countries sought to achieve unity. This aspiration became evident early during the Urabi Revolt. Sudanese peasants actively participated in the revolutionary events, providing both supplies and manpower to Urabi.<sup>[107]</sup> In return, the Urabists, in their endeavor to establish a democratic parliament, advocated for the representation of the Sudanese people by twenty members within the Egyptian parliament. During the 1919 revolution, many Sudanese rallied behind the Egyptian Wafd Party, viewing it as their political representative. Additionally, activists gathered signatures in support of the Wafd until they were instructed by “those in charge” in Egypt to cease their efforts, having amassed 3,000 signatures.<sup>[108]</sup> The

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of the radical patriotic opposition, meaning that American mediation had become more effective. This does not rule out the existence of deals with the Americans, even if implicitly.

<sup>[107]</sup> Muhammad Fuad Shukri, *Egypt and Sudan, History of the Political Unity of the Nile Valley in the Nineteenth Century 1820-1899*.

<sup>[108]</sup> Tariq Al-Bishri, *Saad Zaghloul Negotiates with Colonialism*, p. 108.

**national movements in Egypt and Sudan united in their pursuit of liberation, recognizing Saad Zaghloul as the leader of the Egyptian-Sudanese nation. Reflecting this shared aspiration, the Wafd Party strongly advocated for the complete independence of both Egypt and Sudan.**

**As the national movement flourished in both countries, various Sudanese organizations were formed, seeking unity with Egypt, such as “The White Brigade Society” and “The Sudanese Union.”**

**However, the situation was different for the dominant classes. In Egypt, the dominant class and its affiliated parties regarded Sudan as Egyptian territory without regard to the people themselves. Their stance was rooted in what they referred to as “Egypt’s rights in Sudan,” which encompassed claims to unrestricted trade, property ownership, and control over the Nile’s waters. So, major Egyptian landowners opposed the Jazira Project adopted by Britain, fearing its impact on Egypt’s water resources.<sup>[109]</sup> Additionally, Egyptian goods enjoyed customs exemption upon entering Sudan according to the 1899 agreement. Sudan also remained part of the Egyptian currency zone until 1956.**

**British colonialism was the primary barrier preventing Egyptian businessmen and large landowners from achieving their ultimate objectives. The colonial authorities sought to promote domestic Sudanese interests. It created a distinct state apparatus separate from Egypt. It also disrupted the connectivity of the two countries’ railway systems by constructing southern railway lines with incompatible gauges that hindered train movement into Egypt. Additionally, colonialism played a significant role in shaping Sudan’s unique water interests.<sup>[110]</sup> Furthermore, the leaders of Egyptian liberal parties approached the Sudanese issue in a manner that intimidated the emerging dominant class there. As a result, the**

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<sup>[109]</sup> Salah Issa, *The Egyptian Bourgeoisie and the Negotiation Method*, pp. 157, 159.

<sup>[110]</sup> Refer to Gamal Hamdan, *The Character of Egypt*, part two, p. 928.

former aspired to take power in Sudan on its own, and the sectarian Sudanese Umma Party gave strong expression to this tendency.

It is worth noting that the liberal parties in both countries significantly refrained from expanding their organizational existence into the other side. Interestingly, the Egyptian Wafd party, led by Saad Zaghloul, deliberately refrained from raising the issue of Sudan during its negotiations with Britain. This strategic decision aimed to avoid upsetting the British and to secure favorable concessions for Egypt. When Saad faced intense pressure from fellow Wafd members concerning the Sudan issue during his negotiations with MacDonald, he attempted to avoid raising the topic, thereby putting his Wafdist opponents in a difficult position. As the pressure from certain members intensified, he found himself compelled to publicly avoid the subject.

The Democratic Unionist Party of Sudan advocated for unity with Egypt. However, it did not create a branch there. Instead, the party's chairman, Ismail Al-Azhari, stated in 1955 that he merely backed the project of unity to get Egypt's support for his party and that he sought Sudan's independence precisely as the Umma Party desired. <sup>[111]</sup>

However, the dominant class parties in Egypt and the Unionist Party in Sudan were obligated to raise unitary slogans under pressure from the public. Liberal parties in Egypt even began to outbid each other. The leader of the Wafd party threatened MacDonald when negotiations with Britain became complicated by bringing up the contentious issue of Sudan, instructing his proponents to “*stir up sentiments regarding Sudan.*” <sup>[112]</sup> Additionally, King Fuad firmly proclaimed his unwavering adherence to Sudan.

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<sup>[111]</sup> Nabil Bayoumi Abdullah, *The Development of the Idea of Arab Nationalism in Egypt*, p. 216.

<sup>[112]</sup> Tariq Al-Bishri, *Op. cit.*, pp. 110-111.

**Additionally, Prince Omar Toson declared, “If we do not rule Sudan, let the Sudanese rule us.”<sup>[113]</sup>**

**Furthermore, the Wafd party and all Egyptian liberal parties later replaced their favorite slogan, “sovereignty,” with a new slogan, “The Common Crown,” in 1944, and then with “Unity.”<sup>[114]</sup>**

**The Sudanese unionist parties merged in 1954 to form the “National Unionist Party,” which swept the elections using the slogan “Unity of the Nile Valley”.**

**Facing liberal parties, Britain raised a bright and democratic slogan: the right to self-determination for the Sudanese people, compelling the Egyptian side to resort to demagogic slogans and placing new obstacles in front of its ambitions in Sudan.**

**The national movement in Sudan demonstrated a stronger commitment to the unity project compared to its counterpart in Egypt, reflecting a dynamic similar to the Levant’s stance toward Egypt during the 1950s. In the 1940s, popular pressure in Sudan actively pushed for unity. During the Sidqi-Bevin negotiations, a delegation representing Sudanese intellectuals traveled to London to urge Sidqi to support the unity project. During this time, a Sudanese initiative led to the formation of the “Sudanese Unity Committee,” aiming to achieve unity between the two countries, with members from both countries’ parties participating. Furthermore, the “Alumni Conference,” or Graduates Conference, was formed in Sudan, embracing the advocacy for unity.<sup>[115]</sup> The Socialist Party in**

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<sup>[113]</sup> Ibid., p. 106. Prince Omar Toson was an Egyptian prince of the Muhammad Ali dynasty. He excelled in many fields, including charitable works, discoveries, and writings in history, geography, and archaeology. Additionally, he published numerous books and maps in Arabic and French. He was also the first to suggest sending a delegation from Egypt to the Versailles conference to demand independence, a plan that was later followed by Saad Zaghloul.

<sup>[114]</sup> Nabil Bayoumi Abdullah, Op. cit., pp. 34-35.

<sup>[115]</sup> Find details in Ahmad Hamroush, The Story of the July 23 Revolution, part three, chapter five.

**Egypt incorporated the topic of unity into its agenda, established a branch in the south, and vigorously advocated for the Egyptian-Sudanese unification project.**

**Marxist organizations in the two countries took the same position toward this issue, rejecting the slogan of “unity of the Nile Valley” and opposing it with the idea of the “right to self-determination.”<sup>[116]</sup> Additionally, the “Arab Socialist Baath Party” did not succeed in extending its influence to Egypt, while achieving limited success in Sudan. Therefore, one cannot speak of a Baathist current in the Nile Valley as a whole.**

**During the 1940s, despite the rise of Arab nationalism in the Nile Valley, the advocacy for Nile Valley unity did not transition to the slogan of Arab unity, whether in Egypt or Sudan. Furthermore, a strong sense of loyalty toward the Egyptian state was prevalent among the Sudanese public, largely supported by Egypt’s significant economic involvement in Sudan.**

**The Sudanese situation posed a significant challenge for the ruling class in Egypt. Furthermore, British colonialism obstructed the attainment of even the most modest goals in Sudan, creating a constant threat to that class, which could be manipulated at any time.<sup>[117]</sup> Addressing this threat necessitated considerable effort. Conversely, the national movement opposed any leniency regarding the issue of unity, compelling the ruling class to continually defer a resolution until it became unavoidable after World War II, when the national movement escalated in both countries. The Sudanese issue played a crucial role in intensifying this conflict, ultimately influencing Egypt’s political landscape until the July coup.**

**The issue can be summarized as follows: The advocacy for unity was firmly established by the national movement in Egypt and**

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<sup>[116]</sup> Find the details in Ahmad Suleiman, *Walking Step by Step*, chapter 13.

<sup>[117]</sup> Gamal Hamdan, *Op. cit.*, part two, pp. 927-930.



**Sudan. The dominant class in Egypt had limited interests in Sudan, which did not necessitate a feverish struggle for unity. Therefore, its slogans focused on its narrow vision of its interests, sometimes using unity slogans to alleviate pressure from the national movement. On the other hand, the dominant class in Sudan was openly hostile to any form of unity, except for certain groups that temporarily yielded to the pressure of the popular national movement.**

**The July government in Egypt added further complexity to the issue. Its mere presence hindered the continuation of the unification movement in Sudan. The national movement there was unwilling to be under a military government. Meanwhile, it lacked the strength necessary to lead the unification process.**

**Negotiations to address the Sudanese issue commenced several months following the July coup. They concluded with the February 1953 agreement,<sup>[118]</sup> which did not arouse tangible objections from the opposition. The latter was, at the time, deeply involved in all of its factions in defending its mere existence. The agreement was reached after the constitution was abolished, the parties were dissolved, and hundreds of democratic patriots were incarcerated. The July officers embraced the slogan advocating for the Sudanese people's right to self-determination, coinciding with Sudan's independence from British rule. This agreement represented a progressive move in comparison to the Sidqi-Bevin agreement and bore similarities to the slogans widely circulated among the Egyptian populace at that time.**

**It was evident that the Sudanese public had already made their choice regarding self-determination. The quest for independence from Britain served as a logical prelude for the Sudanese populace to seek self-determination via unification with Egypt. This was particularly relevant as the July officers had not relinquished their**

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<sup>[118]</sup> Refer to Ahmad Hamroush, Abdel Nasser's Society, p. 9.



aspirations for unity and exerted considerable effort to achieve it in their own way.

Additionally, Muhammad Naguib garnered significant support in Sudan, signifying the potential for unity, as the Sudanese public was inclined to align under Naguib's leadership as a reliable assurance of democratic governance.

But since the splitting of the officers' front and the spreading of Nasserist elements within the army and the administration, the Sudanese masses began to renounce the idea of unification with Egypt. The sectarian Umma Party became more daring in its opposition, achieving significant gains at the expense of the Nasserists. It was also able to organize huge demonstrations against them, even in the presence of Naguib himself.<sup>[119]</sup> while the Sudanese populace could not imagine unity except under the banner of the Egyptian government, the parties of the dominant class in Sudan cleverly and skillfully utilized the idea of democracy. However, the behavior of the officers' government toward Sudan also played an additional role in weakening the unitary movement there. They used bribes, for instance, to gain the support of some forces, a method that was used extensively later, along with arrogance and haughtiness.

However, when Nasser took power in March 1954, the Sudan question had not been resolved, and the officers still embraced the idea of unity. The highly popular Sudanese National Unionist Party could take control of parliament in the January 1954 elections. The clear achievements regarding the Sudan issue, such as the independence agreement and the Unionist Party's success, strengthened the officers' stance in their conflicts with both the liberal parties and the army opposition.

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<sup>[119]</sup> Muhammad Naguib, *Op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.

However, things altered in the period from January 1954, the success of the Unionist Party in Sudan, to March 1954, when Nasser defeated Naguib. The Unionist Party adopted a stance on the unity issue that was entirely in line with the Umma Party's stance. Ismail Al-Azhari, the head of the party, was able to get rid of the popular pressure for unity in Sudan. Actually, the setbacks of Nasserism in Sudan were preceded by its successive wins in Egypt. The setbacks began with Al-Azhari's confiscation of the federal newspapers and then sending his officers for training in Britain rather than Egypt. He also refused to receive three-quarters of a million pounds from Egypt to establish social, cultural, and health projects in Sudan. The events unfolded as follows:

**December 19, 1955:** The Sudanese House of Representatives supported secession from Egypt.

**December 22, 1955:** The Sudanese Senate supported secession.

**January 1, 1956:** The Constituent Assembly of Sudan endorsed secession.

The Nasserists had to accept the secession with patience and feigned friendliness. Salah Salem, a prominent member of the "Revolutionary Command Council," was sacrificed and held solely accountable for the failure in Sudan. Despite the failure and the feelings of anger and frustration among Egyptians, many things were changed, and the government could no longer fall because of the Sudanese issue. All patriotic forces opposing the new authority had been crushed before the results of the victory of Nasserism in Sudan appeared, and all independent popular institutions were crushed, such as workers' unions and student unions. The Nasserite government gained broad popular legitimacy after Bandung, the Soviet arms deal, and its continued opposition to alliances with the West. Unity with Sudan was no longer necessary to consolidate its position in power. Additionally, it was the Sudanese people who rejected unity this time. Therefore, the secession of

**Sudan was received by the Egyptian masses with deep but silent sadness.**

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**By liquidating all political forces and mass organizations, resolving the national issue and Sudan's dilemma, and abolishing monarchy and real estate aristocracy, the military government became an all-powerful institution.**

**It has previously been briefly discussed the state of Egyptian society in terms of the relations of various powers after the end of World War II, followed by the movement of social and political conflict. There are now some facts that should be highlighted:**

**When January 26 came, the Cairo fire, all political forces were exhausted, and despair prevailed in all political circles in Egypt. Matters reached a level of balance that made it virtually impossible for any party to move forward concerning its goals. The balance was consolidated in a clear way in the four successive weak ministries after the fire, which did not achieve anything worth mentioning. On July 23, the officers' organization carried out an easy coup.**

**This organization was not moving on orders from anyone, as no one could move the disgruntled army that was surging with patriotic currents and whose true condition was revealed on the day of the Officers' Club elections. It repeatedly announced its rejection of military alliances and its insistence on evacuating Egypt and Sudan. It also dealt severe blows to the royal family, the real estate aristocracy, and the working-class movement. Although it supported the interests of businessmen during the first years of its rule, it liquidated their parties, controlled their trade union institutions, and arrested many of them.**

**It became clear that the "Free Officers" would rule by themselves and leave their fingerprints everywhere. It is plausible that they, as human beings, would not lose sight of their interests, especially since**

they had declared from the beginning their dissatisfaction with the political system as a whole, accusing everyone of corruption. From the first day, they began to reorganize the state apparatus in cooperation with some old politicians, security services, and senior state employees.

In summary, the events unfolded as follows:

1. The socio-political conflict from 1945 until January 26, 1952, concluded with a political balance.
2. The period from January 26 to July 23, 1952, was characterized by political balance.
3. The army was influenced by various currents, most of which were patriotic.
4. The king's influence in the army waned, and the "Free Officers" operated independently.
5. The government of the officers aimed to suppress all political forces, including dominant class parties, their representatives, and the king. While it favored domestic and foreign capital with numerous decisions, it made few economic concessions to industrial workers.
6. The democratic opposition within the army was suppressed in favor of the coup plotters.
7. The new government rejected alignment with the West and prioritized achieving complete British evacuation.
8. The coup plotters promptly divided the benefits of power among themselves by granting state positions and other privileges.

In light of these observations, the situation can be defined as follows: Since the establishment of the officers' government, and especially since March 1954, a group of statesmen, headed by those officers who seized power on the night of July 23, had been exercising rule by themselves and for themselves. They took into account the necessary changes to repair the social system without

demolishing it. This is what their six-point plan and their constitutional declaration implied. They changed the political system without demolishing the social system, which they started to repair, as will be seen in detail.

This type of political system is known as Bonapartism. <sup>[120]</sup>

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## **Part Three: The Revolution and the Counter-Revolution**

### **LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE (DIYOUN) HOW THEY INSPIRE TO HIM**

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<sup>[120]</sup> This concept was first presented in political literature by Karl Marx in response to Louis Napoleon's coup d'état. Louis Napoleon governed France from 1848 to 1870, initially serving as an elected president of the republic before declaring himself emperor following his political coup in December 1851. He secured the presidency with a significant majority over the bourgeois candidate Cavaignac, largely due to the backing of peasants who supported him as the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, who had previously assisted them in their struggle against feudalism.

The election of Louis Bonaparte expressed a state of political balance in France following the 1848 revolution. Louis presented himself to the French as the savior of each class from the other and at the same time liquidated the democratic system and ruled France with an iron fist, using a special entourage of officers and even dregs of French society. While he fiercely fought any political opposition, France witnessed tangible economic growth during his reign. Louis relied on deceiving poor peasants with slogans that he did not implement. During his reign, the ruling elite from his entourage received substantial allowances. In addition, great privileges were provided to the military, security, and senior statesmen. The power and clique of Louis Bonaparte ended as a result of the German invasion of France and workers' revolution in Paris in 1870. In his analysis, Marx also alluded to the Bonapartism of Napoleon Bonaparte's rule, but he considered the second Bonapartism a distortion of the first.

Find more details in Marx, "The Class Struggle in France," "The Civil War in France," and "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte."

**THE AIR FILLED WITH CHEERS FOR THE LIVES OF HIS KILLERS**

**THE SLANDER AFFECTED HIM, AND LIES COVERED HIM**

**WHAT A PARROT HE IS, HIS MIND IN HIS EARS**

Ahmad Shawqi on the tongue of Hapi

Now, can the July 1952 coup be described as a revolution?

Initially referring to itself as a coup, Nasserism introduced itself to the world as a “movement,” followed by a “blessed movement,” and then a “revolution.” Although *it did not definitively define its social nature*, some saw it as a link in the chain of the Egyptian bourgeois revolution, while others saw it as a bourgeois revolution that evolved into a socialist one. <sup>[121]</sup>

By July 1952, it was certain that political power had shifted from the dominant class to the state bureaucracy itself. Therefore, it cannot be referred to as a political revolution since the new regime, as indicated in the previous analysis, exhibited democratic setbacks and did not present itself as a progressive alternative to the previous regime. On the contrary, it was a political counter-revolution from three perspectives: first, it curtailed public freedoms and even the right to *citizenship* from the outset. Second, it put the security

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<sup>[121]</sup> Muhammad Naguib stated, “*Those who supported and were enthusiastic about us called our action a revolution as if they were honoring us. Those who opposed us and rejected what we have done said coup, as if they were belittling us. When we moved on the night of July 23 and seized the leadership building, it was understood by all of us as a coup, and this word was the term used among us, which did not scare us because it expressed a fait accompli. When I first negotiated and communicated with the government officials and the president to return to the barracks, the word “coup” was used. The phrase “movement,” which is a polite and gentle way of saying “coup,” was then used when we wished to address the populace and persuade them to support us or, at the very least, stop opposing us. At the same time, it is a fluid and elastic term with no equivalent or clear meaning in political terminology lexicons. When we felt that the masses supported and cheered for us and chanted for our lives, we added the attribute of blessed to the word movement.*” I was the President of Egypt, p. 145.

services in charge of the popular movement and suppressed it by disbanding its institutions and organizations, including unions. Third, it gave its bureaucratic apparatus direct political influence over the dominant class. In terms of modernity, this established a military-bureaucratic dictatorship, regressing the system of governance. The counter-revolution occurred on two levels: on the general social level by eradicating the politically independent existence of the lower classes and stifling their movement, and on the level of the dominant class by dismantling its semi-liberal political system and instituting a military totalitarian regime. The political elite, mostly comprised of lawyers, were sidelined in favor of the military elite. The governance of politicians was replaced by the rule of the military.

The procedures of the officers' government even then also make it clear that they intend to consolidate their authority at any cost. This process, given the political dynamics that accompanied it, would not include achieving revolutionary transformations. Resolving the national question through compromise, without relying on the populace but, on the contrary, after taming them, and expanding the small property in the countryside without liquidating pre-capitalist production relations, indicates the limited horizons of the July officers. A government that confiscates the popular initiative to this extent can only be a reactionary government, for the simple reason that by doing so it blocks the radical transformations that the initiatives of the masses must impose and places itself in the position of preserving the social order.

It can be confidently considered that the July Knights' subsequent subjugation of private property to state control, the confiscation of part of it for the latter's benefit, and the partial imposition of a central planning system are aspects of the counter-revolution. This represents a partial return to pre-capitalism, specifically some features of the *Asiatic mode of production*, which later led to a partial retreat to the pre-modern era. The counter-revolution emerged with the July coup d'état and dominated the scene since the



strikes of March 1954 in support of the military government. Even assuming that the Bonapartist regime would pursue reforms or social development, the mere confiscation of mass initiative removes the foundation necessary for a government of adventurers to implement radical reforms and hinders the possibility of revolutionary changes in the social system. The confiscation of mass initiative is not a mere oversight or flaw on the part of the July Knights, but rather a fundamental component reflecting the officers' attitude toward the social system. It is obvious that the Nasserite regime could not have consolidated without being dictatorial; otherwise, the army would have gone back to its barracks.

All revolutions are democratic to one degree or another. People revolt to achieve their aspirations, or some of them: their dreams of freedom, of ruling themselves or at least participating in ruling, of seizing their economic and cultural rights, and of achieving security for individuals and for society as a whole. In short, dictatorial revolutions do not take place, as they are characterized by the people's desire to assert their voice. Achieving sovereignty for the largest segment of the populace is the sole requirement for a revolutionary situation. This was the way the Great French Revolution began, followed by the Girondist coup and, finally, Napoleon's coup, which was a blatant counter-revolution. Notably, during Robespierre's Reign of Terror, the lower classes targeted members of the feudal class and the large bourgeoisie, while some members of the general public who were not directly implicated were also affected. The overthrow of the despotic tsarist regime and the attainment of maximum liberties, including the control of people's councils, marked the beginning of the Russian revolution as well. The Bolsheviks' suppression of workers, peasants, parties, unions, and soviets marked the start of the counter-revolution. The Stalinist coup transformed it into a full-fledged counter-revolution. This transformation culminated in the execution of the majority of the notable Bolsheviks and the establishment of a bureaucratic,

**tyrannical, and totalitarian regime. A similar scenario happened in Iran. The 1979 revolution against the Shah began carrying democratic and popular aspirations, and the broadest freedoms were actually practiced by the general public. However, ultimately, it ended with a counter-revolution and a fascist government. Islamic fascism could, with the support of backward and pre-modern sectors of the populace, seize power. Tens of thousands of revolutionaries were slaughtered, and an individual rule and a totalitarian regime were established.**

**A dictatorial government that confiscates the will of the people cannot be described as revolutionary. The government serves the interests of elite or the dominant class, whatever it is, even if it throws some crumbs to the masses.**

**In actuality, the government that emerged from the coup in Egypt in 1952 did not arise to confront a revolution; instead, it aimed to thwart its potential and to obstruct its trajectory. The revolution, which certainly had a bourgeois horizon, did not actually start but was suppressed in its infancy, while it was creating its elements and assembling its forces. From the beginning, the Nasserite government followed the path of compromise with the colonialists and the conservative classes, avoided any radical measures, even those of a bourgeois nature, and actively suppressed revolutionary movements as well as other political entities.**

**Thus, the new regime emerged as a counter-revolution to the autonomous popular movement, adopting a more autocratic and oppressive political system, not arising within the context of a true social revolution but rather preceding and impeding it.**

**As previously discussed, in the 1940s, Egypt witnessed a state of intense political, social, and economic crises. The dominant class of major landowners and businessmen was extremely conservative and voracious. Moreover, this class did not seek to achieve any revolutionary transformations. Agriculture, in general, persisted in using the same primitive techniques that had been in use for**

thousands of years. An industry that hindered its own development was established, as will be demonstrated in detail later. It did not decisively overcome the pre-modern culture. In short, this class effectively hindered any radical bourgeois transmutations that the leftist and patriotic intelligentsia as a whole aspired to. On the contrary, it was leading society to deeper imbalance and to a state of permanent and escalating crisis. Its own interests were never reconciled with resolving this crisis because it was inherently aligned with it. Nevertheless, it regarded the crisis with a degree of apprehension, mainly due to the public discontent it resulted in. However, it occasionally implemented some reforms, but its ability to introduce them was constantly diminishing.

On the other hand, the patriotic movement, despite its considerable strength, was largely characterized by randomness and spontaneity. It did not manage to establish extensive popular political organizations. Furthermore, its various factions were unable to propose a comprehensive program for social and political change. Although democracy was acknowledged as a goal, it is important to highlight that it was not prioritized among their objectives. The Muslim Brotherhood, in particular, opposed democracy and aligned itself with the monarchy before the coup, subsequently supporting the military regime against other political parties, while explicitly rejecting democratic principles. The Misr Alfatah Party was fascist most of the time before it finally changed, and the majority of intellectuals were looking forward to a just tyrant more than a democratic system. Moreover, the vast majority of the populace was fed up with the party system and had no demands for democracy to speak of; instead, they were concerned about social change and the national issue. Consequently, the patriotic movement did not actually struggle against the monarchy and tyranny. That is why they were not, for instance, welcoming of the slogan "The Constituent Assembly," which adhered to the royal constitution of 1923. But despite all of this, the popular movement had its own tools and institutions and was

looking forward to imposing its presence and vision: free unions, political organizations, armed organizations, independent student unions, etc., which manifested its democratic horizons. That is why it announced its discontent with the Nasserists' deposition of Muhammad Naguib and his supporters.

Thus, the revolutionary movement prior to the July coup was a patriotic movement before anything else. However, it had social aspirations and democratic horizons. In addition, it was characterized by narrow-mindedness and low ambitions. Therefore, it did not succeed in overthrowing the regime but was only able to paralyze the movement of the dominant class and its elites.

Most of the general populace began to contrast the narrow-minded agrarian reform, the still-unimplemented law to abolish arbitrary dismissals, rising nominal salaries and wages, and other such measures with liberalism. Patriotic organizations sided with the latter, seeing it as the desired national-democratic ally. Some workers, a portion of whom were hired, opposed it, seeing nothing more than the fezzes of the pashas, while the military uniform seemed like a better alternative.

Demonstrators chanted against freedom, as indicated. This event can only be understood in the context of the absence of an alternative that might offer the people greater hope, while the masses themselves did not have the ability to produce more competent leaders. The narrow-mindedness of the dominant class and the failure of the patriotic movement, led by the intelligentsia and industrial workers, played the primary role in the "Free Officers'" success. Meanwhile, public transit workers, together with other masses and hired elements, played a direct role in achieving this success. The outcome, which emerged from years of brave fighting by the populace, suggests that it did not align with the aspirations of the patriotic movement. Rather, it reflects a balance between the strength of the movement and that of the dominant class.

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The slogans of March 1954 could have directly proclaimed their profound content if they had been translated into a slogan: *Long live Bonapartism*. The involvement of mercenaries does not imply that what happened in March 1954 was a mere conspiracy. Simply hiring some mercenaries is not enough to achieve a victory of this importance unless the political climate supports it. Additionally, the movement of mercenaries was not everything. A large number of army officers, encouraged by the pre-prepared demonstrations, also mobilized.

In July 1952, the military succeeded in resolving the socio-political conflict, leading the country on a course that began with the elimination of all political forces and suppressing the class struggle.

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## **SECTION TWO**

### **Nasserism**

**THE PATIENT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO WEAR THE GARMENT OF  
HEALTH JUST BY WISHING TO DO SO**

Aristotle

**Prologue:**

The government policy does not directly reflect the interests of particular social groups. Instead, it expresses the dynamics exerted by certain groups and the government's perception of the interests it represents. The role of the ruling political elite mediates between the genuine interests of the dominant class and the actual practice of its state apparatus. The government bases its decisions on specific assessments of both action and reaction, that is, on the basis of realities and possibilities.

In general, people's actions are not necessarily connected to their actual interests; instead, they are influenced by the perceptions they form about these interests, which may not always be clear. Consequently, the analysis of people's behavior and governmental policies can only be as comprehensive as possible in light of a concrete analysis of their actions, aspirations, and interactions with the concepts that shape their behavior.

In the previous chapter, the political context in which the Nasserite coup took place and how the Bonapartist rule fully established itself were discussed. The Nasserists did not devise a well-thought-out plan in advance to achieve their goals and chart their next steps but rather found themselves jumping to power in contexts that were vague to them. Ever since Nasserism as a state authority *existed*, albeit in a primitive state of consciousness. Therefore, while it was forming an idea about itself, it proceeded to devise appropriate policies. Its leader expressed this action using the term "trial and error." At every stage, the experiment provided a novel experience. Nevertheless, once its policies were consolidated into a complete intellectual system, the authority and its experiments began to crack and quickly headed toward their demise. This is because the trial-and-error approach, or Nasserite policy, was besieging itself with fixed limits that it could not cross because Nasserism was besieged in power. Therefore, politics automatically headed toward exploding to destroy the framework

surrounding it. Through the resulting wreckage, it was transformed into Sadatism, the oligarchic government, which is still ongoing by then.

The Nasserite policy faced significant challenges, as it was not entirely aligned with the authentic identity of the social system. Specifically, the political framework of Bonapartism did not fully correspond with the inherent characteristics of the social structure. While the new authority represented the system, it was not solely the governance of the dominant class. Generally, a distinction exists between the dominant class and its social system, as the latter can encompass a broader scope than the immediate interests of the class itself. Nevertheless, these immediate interests, regardless of the class's long-term vision, cannot ensure the sustainability of the system, since, as a collective entity, the class cannot afford to wait for its immediate goals to be realized beyond the foreseeable future. The system, as such, tends to endure and expand over the long term. This can be understood as the dominant class's interests being categorized into two distinct levels: the immediate interests of its members and the long-term interests that pertain to the class as a whole, reflecting the interests of the overall social system. The presence of a power that is confined to representing the long-term interests of the dominant class, often through a definite group of statesmen, does not eliminate its immediate interests. Nevertheless, this condition inevitably leads to concerns and prompts all factions, including the wealthy, to exercise caution because there is no guarantee that the future will be like the present. The 1952 coup marked the handover of state authority from the major landowners to the Nasserite elite, in which the dominating class as a whole was embodied. The newly established authority had to meet the need to reduce class strife, while operating within the confines of the existing social structure.

In the first section, it was concluded that the social system was in danger of collapsing prior to 1952 coup because the dominant class was unable to focus its primary attention on its longer-term



interests. The July coup was the result of this dilemma, which was practically represented in a sharp socio-political conflict, to the extent that a state of political balance was attained among the various political forces. The intelligentsia and lower classes posed a challenge to the entire social system, completely going beyond the idea of presenting some partial demands. However, a clear plan and a specific vision for an alternative system were not put forward, which allowed the “Free Officers” to take over the reins of power, presenting themselves at the beginning as reformers of the existing socio-political system.

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The officers’ initial measures were executed with adequate prudence, as their assumption of power was not done for the sake of businessmen, workers, peasants, or even American imperialists. Rather, their own interests constituted, in a certain respect, their immediate focus. Under these conditions, the emerging elite could not, even in their most ambitious aspirations, distribute the country’s wealth directly among themselves. The primary concern was fundamentally to secure its authority in order to protect its privileges, particularly its status, power, and prestige. To sustain this position, it was necessary to engage in actions that would perpetually suppress social and political conflict. At first glance, this notion may appear peculiar; it is not entirely credible to assert that all officers were solely motivated by their personal interests. However, such a perspective may stem from a limited interpretation of private interests. While it is accurate that not every officer on July 23 was primarily focused on acquiring financial gain, the underlying ambition was present from the outset. They intended to organize the system and restore stability, guided by a somewhat nebulous vision of the political framework they aspired to establish. They often envisioned themselves as the anticipated saviors of the country, the future leaders. As events unfolded, this initial ambition

flourished. The Nasserists' presence in positions of power became, in their perception, the sole assurance for the system's stability. This reflects a clear manifestation of private interest, as the statesman is primarily concerned with his own authority and status rather than merely fulfilling a role within a particular system or serving a specific group. Some may be unaware that they are pursuing their own interests. However, the unconscious is more powerful than the conscious, as the mighty psychoanalysts have confirmed.

However, the "Free Officers" began sharing the spoils among themselves from the first day of their coup, such as positions and, therefore, direct material rewards. They used their new positions to advance their personal material interests, which will be elaborated on in another place in the book. The framework in which the officers' rule came about shackled them to the demands of various social classes. What has characterized the political movement since the end of World War II, as mentioned earlier, is the rise of an independent movement of lower classes, and their struggle against the dominant class was one of the most prominent factors that gave the "Free Officers" the opportunity to ascend to the seat of power. Consequently, the emerging elite could not overlook the numerous pressing demands of the populace without the potential danger of reviving the specter of revolution. Additionally, they could not dismantle the entire social system, as this would likely result in a serious confrontation with the dominant class, which might have risen in response to an actual process of liquidation, notwithstanding its political exhaustion. Therefore, liquidating the system necessitated widespread popular actions. In both instances, the matter would involve the social conflict reaching its peak, which could directly threaten the authority of the coup plotters. Thus, their interests were aligned with those of the existing social system despite the distinction.

The system now operates on inertia, meaning it is led by the state apparatus.

**The process of consolidating its authority between 1952 and 1954 was the first step on the path of the Nasserists to create their sovereignty. However, at the same time, they had to avoid its spontaneous tendency to flare up by following certain policies:**

**First, no social group should be allowed to articulate its views except through state institutions and specifically with the consent of the new ruling elite.**

**Second, it was essential to carry out a series of social reforms that are sufficient in quality and quantity to secure public support and overcome any opposition.**

**Third, this necessitated occasionally sacrificing some of the short-term interests of the dominant class. The authority also had to make every effort to improve national income sources in order to minimize its impact on this class.**

**Fourth, to maintain social stability, the authority had to conciliate with the middle strata that had the ability, more than others, to adapt to the new situation, especially small landowners, along with appeasing or at least neutralizing the intelligentsia.**

**Fifth, handling national issues in a way that maximizes gains for the regime and does not disrupt the growing national sentiments in the country and the region as a whole.**

**Sixth, the “nationalization” of the social struggle necessarily entailed a coherent policy of demagoguery, based on achieving partial internal and external successes, actual or fictitious. Meanwhile, it should amplify what the authority considers actual successes. This policy included the necessity of not allowing anyone to overtake Nasserism on its left, whether by raising more radical slogans or by distorting these forces or even suppressing them altogether, while highlighting their failures.**

**Within these boundaries, the system operated as it pleased. However, these necessary boundaries for the system itself eventually became unnecessary and even explosive. The social system does not**

operate in a self-rebuilding cycle. Rather, it struggles in all circumstances to expand boundaries that it did not impose on itself, except out of necessity and under intense pressure, waiting for any opportune moment to declare its rebellion.

A significant element that many analysts and historians of the era overlooked was the role of the lower classes' struggle, particularly its political side. These perspectives suggested that politics was merely a direct outcome of economic conditions. In addition, some attempted to demonstrate that Bonapartism was fundamentally linked to economic changes. Some even went so far as to call the Nasserite authority a technocracy. The current analysis presents a fresh perspective, positing that Nasserism arose from a broader political and social struggle that resulted in a political crisis affecting all social classes, rather than being solely the outcome of a particular social group's efforts.

The poor masses' suffering from the economic crisis contributed, along with the national question, to igniting sociopolitical clashes in the period following the Second World War. However, the July 23 coup did not signify the ascent of a specific social class. Instead, it was the outcome of political conflicts arising from sharp differences between the interests of prevailing social powers, leading to a severe sociopolitical struggle. This struggle culminated in a state of political balance that gave the "Free Officers" an opportunity to seize and monopolize power, representing the interests of the overall social system. How the new supreme state bureaucracy's objectives were realized, as the cost of maintaining the system will be explained later.

The policies of the new authority reflected its Bonapartist nature and the context of its emergence. However, a concrete analysis is needed to make a final judgment on the events that transpired in Egypt during that historical period.

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## **Part One: Nasserite Governance**

**THE GOAL OF PERSECUTION IS PERSECUTION, THE GOAL OF  
TORTURE IS TORTURE, AND THE GOAL OF POWER IS POWER**

George Orwell

### **Prologue:**

Nasserism began with officers seizing power. Therefore, the establishment of a special system of governance marked the beginning of its formation. The officers' seizure of power was the actual and "logical" beginning of their transformation from a docile tool of the dominant class to a "slave riding his master," as Trotsky put it. They could not achieve their entire influence except via this route: the coup.

First and foremost, a political coup entails taking control of the state apparatus. In the Nasserite case, this also meant overthrowing the existing political system and putting in place a new one that would take into account the unique and novel function of the military bureaucracy.

Because its rule was the key to its existence and the basis for its realization, it strived to uphold it by all possible means. Its existence as an authority formed the theoretical and practical foundation for practicing its policy and realizing its own interests. Consequently, the collapse of Nasserite rule would signify the demise of all the aspirations of the new senior statesmen. Hence, Nasserite rule was the primary and basic interest of the rising bureaucratic elite, and the state apparatus served as its principal weapon. It is inconceivable that the Nasserite elite, unlike any other social power,

could achieve its ambitions and interests without being at the apex of political power.

## **Chapter One: The Rationale of the Regime**

**\*Prior to the 1952 coup, Egypt witnessed a form of governance that can be described as semi-party and semi-parliamentary. Nonetheless, it is common among the Egyptian intelligentsia to depict that regime as a bourgeois democratic system. Following the coup, communist organizations allied with liberal parties based on reverting to the 1923 constitution, which retained the monarchy. Furthermore, they chose to reinstate the parliament rather than the officers' more democratic slogan, the Constituent Assembly, which the officers themselves did not adhere to. In actuality, these organizations believed in and aspired to the alleged democracy of the era prior to the 1952 coup.**

**In actuality, Parliament was only involved in governing the country for nine years, from 1924 to 1952. For the rest of the time, power was monopolized by the British and the king, facilitated by fraudulent elections conducted with the king's direct involvement. Consequently, it was only in the nine sporadic years in which the Wafd Party formed the cabinet that the ministries and their parliaments actually participated in governance. Notably, the Wafd was consistently ousted from power. Ironically, the longest duration of its governance was the one in which the occupation compelled the king to accept it following the events of February 4, 1942. In addition, the Wafd often disregarded legitimacy, while in power, resorting to the arrest and dismissal of its opponents. Moreover, during its final term in 1950, peaceful demonstrations were faced with gunfire, and then the ministry was expelled, as reviewed in the first section.**

The bottom line is that bourgeois democracy was practiced to a limited extent, and Egypt remained a genuine monarchy.

Nevertheless, almost all parties adopted the slogan of returning to the parliament instead of the constituent assembly because the latter included a negation of the legitimacy of this alleged liberalism. However, they did not specify a particular form of the future government. The “Free Officers” did not actually implement their slogan, especially since the political forces had rejected it. Instead, they utilized it to help them dismantle the existing parties. As for the government’s policy, it was implicitly decided from the outset, as evidenced by Muhammad Naguib’s initial appeal to the people: *“Our success in the country’s affairs so far is primarily due to your support, following our guidance, and maintaining calm and peace.” “I urge you to continue to stay calm so we can progress with your interests safely.”*<sup>[122]</sup>

This declaration implies the essence of the forthcoming governance. To express it more distinctly, it can be formulated as, *“Allow us to govern, and we will meet your needs,”* as Abdel Nasser later explicitly articulated.

The previous appeal was completed with an addition that included Muhammad Naguib’s “advice,” which also contained a threat to anyone who dared to rebel against the regime. This threat became apparent after the Kafr el-Dawar strike and was executed by suppressing all political and union forces, as mentioned. To summarize both the advice and the threat, the underlying rationale of the upcoming Nasserite rule can be discerned: the advice offered the promise of reward, while the threat wielded the power of punishment.

The fundamental principles of this policy were analyzed in Part I, while addressing the period from July 1952 to October 1954. During that period, the new regime was being formed in both its rationale and its formula. It is evident that the reward and punishment policy

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<sup>[122]</sup> “Al-Taliaah” Magazine, Cairo, July 1965 issue, July Revolution Documents.



would be practiced during the Nasserite era and would involve all social classes, which distinguished the Nasserite regime.

**\*There is no doubt that offering some material advantages to the lower classes was unavoidable at the time for any government seeking to maintain its authority. Those gains were detailed in their appropriate place in this book.<sup>[123]</sup> However, the system did not have much to offer the masses. On the other hand, meeting some demands would lead to more quests. Consequently, the new ruling elite also resorted to repression, the basis of which had been established from the very outset of the 1952 coup.**

**\*The Nasserite period was characterized by a significant growth in the number, size, and effectiveness of both overt and secret security services compared to the previous era. The necessity for continuous repression pushed the regime to take this route. The secret security services were able to spread among the masses in an unprecedented manner, such that strict control was imposed on them. Additionally, the authorities relied on these services in the direct management of the political system and numerous societal institutions.**

**The Nasserite regime did not lift the state of emergency imposed by Al-Nahhas government in 1952 except for a very limited period prior to the 1967 war. It also occasionally issued laws restricting freedoms, such as Law No. 119 of 1964. This law granted the president the authority to arrest individuals from specified categories and hold them in secure locations. Additionally, it allowed for the imposition of guardianship over the financial resources and assets of individuals involved in activities aimed at disrupting work in facilities, harming the interests of workers, or violating the national interests of the state. These individuals were subjected to**

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<sup>[123]</sup> The people's political gains were represented in raising many of their national slogans and actually achieving some of them to some extent, especially refusing to ally with the West and following a policy of non-alignment, etc.

the State Security Court, whose rulings were not subject to appeal. <sup>[124]</sup>

The Nasserite era was a period of emergency. Despite the regime's overwhelming popularity since 1956, police terrorism never ceased. Additionally, arrests were often accompanied by extreme insults, beatings, and severe torture, sometimes resulting in death for some detainees. An example is the security services dissolving Farajallah Al-Helou, the secretary of the Lebanese Communist Party, after torturing him to death with concentrated acid to hide the evidence of the crime. Moreover, torture was intentional, aiming to break the victims' spirits and completely subjugate them to authority or permanently destroy them. <sup>[125]</sup> However, one cannot ignore the existence of personal vendetta tendencies toward specific individuals among members of the ruling elite, including the president himself, which is a phenomenon present in all despotic regimes. Abdul Latif Al-Baghdadi, a member of the "Revolutionary Command Council," mentioned some examples in his memoirs.

It is challenging to distinguish between the policy of repression and the popular influence of the regime. Nasserism achieved its popularity through a carefully planned strategy of patriotic policy, social reform, repression, and propaganda. In this context, repression served a dual role: it not only suppressed opposition but also enhanced the regime's reputation and prestige. Particularly in Eastern countries, reform performed by a prestigious government has a greater psychological impact than that performed by an ordinary one. This does not negate the fact that police repression reflected the regime's terror of any opposition and its feeling of vulnerability in the face of political adversaries. This is because it

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<sup>[124]</sup> "The Official Gazette," Issue No. 69, issued on March 24, 1964.

<sup>[125]</sup> Many torture stories have been reported in Nassirite prisons, involving communists and members of the Brotherhood, such as Ilham Saif Al-Nassr, Fathi Abdel Fattah, and many others. One of the most significant references in this regard is "The Story of Communists and Abdel Nasser" by Abdel Al-Azim Ramadan.

did not have much to offer, whether in the field of politics or the economy. The policy of repression effectively curtailed the expansion of opposition but simultaneously bolstered the effectiveness of a policy centered on mass bribery.

The regime directed repression against both right-wing and left-wing opposition, and sometimes even against some of the regime's supporters. Several Nasserists, leaders of the Socialist Youth Organization, and professors at the Higher Institute for Socialist Studies were arrested in 1966 on charges of promoting Marxism,<sup>[126]</sup> as the regime was extremely sensitive to any opposition, even if it came from within its ranks.

Consequently, it became clear that the state was the exclusive holder of freedom. Nasserism mercilessly suppressed organized opposition, while permitting, within limits, some criticism directed at specific bodies without touching the Boss or the regime as a whole. It was also able to incorporate many educated elements, who could never tolerate the totalitarian regime, into its institutions, giving them a small margin for criticism and self-expression. It deployed them on various fronts: propaganda for Nasserism directly among the public (such as in theaters), portraying the regime in a formal, progressive, and democratic image, and venting the rage of educated sectors of the population. In addition to revitalizing the stagnant Nasserite apparatuses, such as the General Authority for Cultural Palaces and youth organizations, there was a need to monitor public opinion trends to allow the leader to maintain and regain control over various matters. For example, raising the issue of itinerant workers and the assassination of Socialist Union member Salah Hussein in 1966 prompted the authorities to form the Feudal Liquidation Committee, thus avoiding the emergence of an independent peasant opposition.

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<sup>[126]</sup> Fathy Abdelfattah, *Communists and Nasserists*, p. 268.

Because the authority, like any other authority, could not exclusively depend on bribery, it was obligated to practice repression to reduce the size of the reward as much as possible and preserve the regime's prestige. The two operations converged on a third dimension: propaganda. The reward served as a material basis for raising populist and revolutionary rhetoric, while repression was justified as a means to eradicate forces and elements perceived as antagonistic to the authority and its official narratives, which included the very populist and revolutionary slogans being propagated. The Nasserite regime extensively utilized propaganda, which was instrumental in consolidating its hegemony over the populace and served as its most formidable tool against opponents from both the Right and the Left. The regime was more skilled than all its opponents. Its propaganda embraced slogans that had previously been adopted by the public and enthusiastically supported when endorsed by the new ruling elite. Furthermore, Nasserite propaganda played a significant role in the marginalization of liberal, Islamic, and Marxist ideologies. Although it often did not match with the actual practices of the authority and sometimes contradicted them, the political narrative was largely aligned with the propaganda, appealing to hundreds of thousands of young people and prominent intellectuals. Thus, it achieved overwhelming influence among the populace.

The justification for Nasserite propaganda was material bribes offered in the form of social and economic changes, as will be addressed in another chapter. Nevertheless, these reforms did not justify, in terms of quantity, the enormous popular influence that the regime gained. This signifies that other factors played significant roles in this regard, such as propaganda, which also helped to justify and embellish the repression so that it actually became generally accepted by a broad sector of the populace. The repression was portrayed as targeting reactionaries, traitors to the revolution, and atheistic communists, as they were described. In general, demagogic propaganda cannot achieve the desired success

unless it deals with individual or partial facts and theoretically transforms them into comprehensive facts. The success of Nasserite propaganda was a continuation of the success of the Nasserite coup itself, meaning a continuation of its significance. The opponents' failure was a genuine internal shortcoming rather than the strength of their adversaries. The Nasserite regime also resorted to fabricating incidents to demonize its opposition. But this had its significance, as the opposition itself had many drawbacks, the most important of which was its lack of a clear and practical political vision.

For example, since the middle of the 1950s, the persistent criticism of “exploitative capitalism” had been founded on concrete evidence. However, this critique often implied support for a “non-exploitative” and “national” capitalism. The narrowing of the exploitation concept, combined with the broadening of nationalism, worked together to bolster this potential defense. Therefore, the propaganda was not entirely demagogic.

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Nasserite propaganda proceeded on four main axes:

1. Acting to confer a super-class character on the Nasserite elite by depicting it as if it represented an alliance of “the people’s working forces” with a declared objective of “dissolving the differences between classes.” This approach was complemented by a version of socialism that upheld “national capitalism”, while suppressing class struggle. This axis aligned seamlessly with certain partial measures and resonated with the Bonapartist style of governance, where the dominant class was not explicitly represented. Various media outlets adopted such slogans, issuing appropriate books and publications and allowing the translation of works that fit this spirit. At the same time, other ideas were deprived of media outlets. In addition, power agencies conducted extensive propaganda against communism, liberal ideology, and the

Muslim Brotherhood, introducing special interpretations of freedom and democracy, often using Marxist and sometimes Islamist rhetoric. It also never allowed any faction to surpass it on its left in terms of slogans, while striving to maintain a more radical stance in its propaganda.

2. Launching numerous bogus pretenses about attaining successes and accomplishments, the majority of which were fictitious. These included victories against colonialism, such as the alleged military victory in 1956 and the exaggerated victories in Yemen.<sup>[127]</sup> The goal was to complete the superclass image by highlighting the tendency toward national grandiosity and regional sovereignty. Likewise, fictitious successes were announced on the domestic level, such as attaining social justice, dissolving class differences, building a sound democracy, and producing everything from a needle to a rocket, based on much fewer actual achievements. The media even pretended that Egypt was preparing to produce a satellite and, most significantly, a spaceship in 1965.<sup>[128]</sup>

Significantly, since the mid-1960s, Nasserite propaganda increasingly shifted to the left, a move some leftists attributed to the evolution of Nasser's thought.<sup>[129]</sup> In reality, however, this shift was driven by growing public pressure and the failure of the 1960-1965 plan, in which the authorities had placed significant hopes. The regime began to implement relatively broad social reforms in 1960, based on optimistic expectations regarding this plan. In addition to the actual increase in the influence of the regime's right, prompting its left to intensify its propaganda war. Therefore, it was not surprising that the same period witnessed tangible retreats by the

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<sup>[127]</sup> Since 1964, Egyptian forces had suffered defeats by royalists. Afterward, Nasserism had to seek a compromise with Saudi Arabia and the tribes. Between October 1962 and June 1964, Egypt lost 15,195 dead. Fred Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans*, p. 111.

<sup>[128]</sup> Refer to the Egyptian Magazine, *al-Musawwar*, April 16, 1965.

<sup>[129]</sup> Among the references are articles in many dispersed issues of the Cairo magazine "*al-Taliaah*" and others.



regime concerning its slogans and socialist project. For example, the project to establish a free zone in Port Said, reforming relations with the World Bank, and giving the private sector significant facilities after the 1967 war were expressions of its retreat from socialism.

3. To distance the populace from politics, propaganda on this front primarily relied on the use of religion. This involved setting up a Quran radio station, promoting the Al-Azhar institution, transforming it into a university that teaches all sciences, and opening branches in numerous Islamic countries. The initiatives also included Al-Azhar missions to disseminate Islam across Africa and Asia, revitalization of the state-affiliated Muslim Youth Association, and the construction of numerous government mosques, increasing their number from 11,000 before the coup to 21,000 by 1970. Efforts were made to uphold religious rituals and broadcast them widely, intensify religious education in schools, and establish religious studies as a mandatory subject essential for academic success. Additionally, the establishment of Beouth (missions) Islamic City, where numerous Muslim students from seventy Islamic countries studied and resided for free, translating the Quran into most languages of the world, recording the entire Quran on records and tapes for the first time in history, and distributing them worldwide, organizing Quran memorization competitions at the national, Arab, and Islamic levels, and establishing the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, which issued Gamal Abdel Nasser's Encyclopedia of Islamic Jurisprudence, encompassing all the sciences and jurisprudence of Islam in dozens of volumes and distributing it globally. They also sent missions for preaching, guidance, and teaching the Arabic language; contributed to the establishment of Islamic centers in various parts of the world; issued Islamic books and the magazine "Minbar Al-Islam;" built thousands of Al-Azhar and religious institutes in Egypt; established the Organization of the Islamic Conference in collaboration with Saudi Arabia; distributed millions of copies of



Islamic publications and hundreds of thousands of prayer records worldwide; and enacted a law prohibiting and preventing gambling.<sup>[130]</sup>

The Sufi brotherhoods garnered significant attention from Nasserists, who endeavored to control them and were largely successful in their efforts. They provided various forms of assistance, while opposing those orders whose allegiance was questionable. One notable form of support was granting membership in the Socialist Union and the Parliament to certain sheikhs. A special law was issued regulating the work of these orders, allowing the establishment of many of them. They were also given opportunities to appear in various media outlets, ascend the pulpits, and build mosques for each order. Muhammad Mahmoud Alwani was appointed as the head of the Sheikhdome of the Sufi brotherhoods as an alternative to the previous electoral system as a reward for his loyalty to the authorities. Forms of oppression included the confiscation of the Bektashi Tekke (hospice) in the Muqattam neighborhood in Cairo in 1957 on the pretext of its affiliation to the pre-1952 regime, the confiscation of the properties of the Damardashiya Tekke in 1961, and the oppression of the Hasafiyya brotherhood on suspicion that some of its followers were related to the Muslim Brotherhood. The same accusation was directed at the Naqshbandi brotherhood, which was dissolved, and its Sheikh, Nagm Eddin Al-Kurdi, was arrested in 1965.

Thus, Nasserism concurrently built ideological barriers against the ideologies of the Muslim Brotherhood and Marxism.

Among these means was the promotion of numerous long songs (Umm Kulthum was a key figure in this field). The pro-Nasserism scholar, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, described the matter as follows: *“Abdel Nasser was the savior and redeemer of the masses, and the other voice that the*

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<sup>[130]</sup> Refer to Ahmad Hamroush, “The Story of the 23 July Revolution - Search for Democracy,” p. 151; Sabri Mohammed Khalil, “Abdel Nasser and the Nasserite experience - an objective Islamic assessment;” Rifaat Syed Ahmad, “Religion, State, and Revolution.”

*masses continued to listen to was the voice of Umm Kulthum, who sang what was on their minds and stirred their hearts. This is how it appeared as if Salah Eddin had returned anew.*"<sup>[131]</sup>

The third method was to encourage football and broadcast its matches live extensively, which the President of the Republic himself watched. The clubs were also supervised by senior officers, including Abdel Hakeem Amer, the second member of the ruling elite.

4. Creating fake public support. This does not negate the existence of actual support, especially since 1955/1956 onwards. This was demonstrated by compelling official institutions and unions to announce their allegiance to the authority on various occasions. In addition to hiring protestors or forcing crowds to participate in demonstrations to promote the government. This approach was followed to boost the prestige of the regime by creating a kind of competition among the populace in demonstrating not only support but also the highest level of enthusiasm for Nasserite authority.

It is noticeable that many Marxist intellectuals played a significant role in Nasserite propaganda, especially during the 1956 war, and then starting in the second half of the 1960s, as the regime's socialist slogans were appealing to many communists. The regime's propaganda likely influenced the Egyptian Communist Party to officially dissolve itself. Interestingly, the party's intellectuals later started to interpret Nasserite slogans in a Marxist, and sometimes even Hegelian, manner, as will be discussed.

## **Chapter Two: Formation of the Regime**

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<sup>[131]</sup> The Social and Cultural Origins of National Leadership, the Nasser Model, in the book *Egypt, Arabism, and the July Revolution*, Center for Arab Unity Studies - Arab Future Books Series 3, p. 217.

The Nasserite regime was not formed according to a predetermined plan. The “Free Officers” seized power without a clear blueprint. The new elite, as it consolidated itself, sought to tighten its control over society, transforming it into a modified version of its seed: the organization of the “Free Officers.” while in power, they pragmatically established and formalized their institutions, setting for themselves a “philosophy” that changed more than once. The “philosophy” came after practice as a justificatory pretext. The actual practice of governance followed a predefined rationale, but the authority itself did not predetermine it; rather, it emerged with the new regime, closely tied to the nature of the new ruling elite. This rationale evolved into specific doctrines as the “Free Officers” and those who joined them solidified into a ruling institution. From the outset, the challenge was to establish legitimacy or justify the Bonapartist rule.

#### **A. The Constitution:**

The coup implied the abrogation of the constitution because it undermined the spirit and provisions of the latter. Subsequently, the new constitution was designed to legitimize the coup as a form of constitutional governance. Initially, the constitution was suspended, and a constitutional declaration was issued on December 10, 1952, explicitly stating that the military would undertake the responsibilities they considered a trust in their hands until a new constitution could be prepared. Then, a new declaration was issued on January 16, 1953, taking significant steps toward codifying the new regime. It decided to grant the head of the “Revolutionary Command Council” the right to name ministers and make the decisions that it considered necessary to safeguard the “revolution.”<sup>[132]</sup> Additionally, it abolished the role of parliament by

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<sup>[132]</sup> Tariq Al-Bishri, *Democracy and Nasserism*, p. 78.

granting the ministry both executive and legislative powers. Subsequently, the interim constitution of 1956 was enacted to advance the codification of the Bonapartist-Nasserite rule, a process made possible by the regime's increased popularity in 1955 and 1956. According to it, the president of the republic acquired constitutional authorities that surpassed those previously held by the king.<sup>[133]</sup> Although the constitution restored the institution of parliament, the latter was deprived of any actual authority. It nullified an article that existed in the 1923 constitution that gave the parliament the authority to withdraw its confidence from the ministry and expel it.<sup>[134]</sup> Furthermore, it stipulated that any amendments to the state budget required government approval.<sup>[135]</sup> It also specified that parliamentary nominations would occur via the "National Union,"<sup>[136]</sup> an organization initially founded by the new regime under the name "Liberation Rally" in 1953.

The constitution also reserved the right of the president of the republic to dissolve the parliament. It also did not stipulate the right to form political parties. As for the interim constitution of 1964, it stipulated the right of the parliament to withdraw confidence from the ministry. This statement did not grant it any actual authority because of the numerous restrictions that limited the use of this prerogative in practice. What was more ironic is that the constitution withheld any real authority from the ministry. Moreover, the executive power in the constitution was vested in the president of the republic, and the ministry was nothing more than a board of directors—in Tariq Al-Bishri's words—of the president's assistants. Consequently, the act of withdrawing confidence holds no constitutional or legal importance, as no individual or entity had previously conferred such confidence upon these cabinets.

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<sup>[133]</sup> Ahmad Hamroush, *The Search for Democracy*, p. 116.

<sup>[134]</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>[135]</sup> Tariq Al-Bishri, *Op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>[136]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

**Furthermore, the president retains the authority to reappoint them following the withdrawal of confidence.**

**However, in practice, the parliament's use of this right might cause embarrassment to the government, something that Abdel Nasser could do without, although he could have responded decisively. Indeed, the dominant class was politically revitalized at that time, penetrating the government administration and attracting hundreds of Nasserists who had become businessmen. In short, the 1964 constitution expressed a change in the balance of political powers in society and the beginning of the cracking of the political system.**

**Above all, the Nasserists did not forget to stipulate that the constitution itself was temporary so that they could change it from time to time as circumstances changed.**

**It is clear that the series of constitutions systematically shifted power from the bottom to the top, transitioning authority from the parliament to the ministry and ultimately consolidating it in the office of the president of the republic. According to the provisions of the most recent constitution, the president was to be elected via a public referendum following a nomination by the parliament, whose members were appointed by the "National Union." Although this body was officially recognized as the governing authority, it remained entirely under the president's influence. Consequently, the president, as a representative of the ruling elite, effectively appointed himself. This encapsulates the fundamental essence of the constitution. Despite various legal considerations, the constitution was consistently provisional, enacted, and lifted at the discretion of the president.**

**The constitution undoubtedly reflects the prevailing power dynamics within society to a significant degree. However, being drawn up from above signifies that the ruling elite establishes it according to the expected possibilities of the political situation, not based on the actual political dynamics. This scenario is perfectly**

conducive to an absolute individual rule. This situation is complemented by the fact that the authorities, at times, exceeded the defined boundaries of the constitution, which is just a logical extension of the fact that it was enacted by the president.

It is unnecessary to elaborate further on the remaining articles of the constitution because they all revolve around the same aforementioned framework.

## **B. The Individual rule (Autocracy)**

The constitution demonstrated the centralization of authority in the figure of the Boss. It was enacted from above, containing specific provisions that were previously outlined. They can be summed up as the confiscation of all political authority and any political action outside the scope of the state apparatus. This signified that the populace no longer had any say in determining their relationship with the political power, which had become the single politically active entity.

Things progressed toward the establishment of individual rule, reflecting this situation as follows:

### **1. The Parliament**

The method and content of the constitution inherently negated the existence of a genuine parliament. The executive authority alone defined its relationship with the populace, without any obligation to form a parliament. This meaning was explicitly stated in the constitution.

The status of the parliament during the Nasser era was as follows:

1. Between 1952 and 1957, no parliament was held.
2. In 1957, an elected parliament was held as follows:<sup>[137]</sup>

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<sup>[137]</sup> Ahmad Hamroush, Op. cit., chapter ten.

**\*2,508 people applied for candidacy, while the National Union objected to 1,188 of them, i.e., more than 47% of the candidates.**

**\*43 circles were closed to specific individuals, and no one else was allowed to run in them, despite that the constitution does not stipulate this.**

**\*59 army and police officers were elected at the direct pressure of the authorities, out of 350 members, and took over five of the 18 committees, and an officer was elected Speaker of the Parliament.**

**\*However, six members of the semi-opposition elements leaked out, were expelled from the “National Union”, and hence were not allowed to enter the council, and their circles were considered empty without any mention of them under the council dome.**

**\*Nevertheless, some upset appeared within Parliament, as the Minister of Education and Magdy Hassanein, the official responsible for the Tahrir Directorate project, were questioned. It seemed that some members of Parliament had not yet understood the nature of their duties in the new era.**

**\*The council was dissolved seven months after its election under the pretext of unity with Syria.**

**3. Egypt and Syria were without a parliament between 1958 and 1960.**

**4. The president of the republic decided to appoint a parliament in 1960 following the resignation of the Baathist ministers in December 1959.**

**5. In 1961, the appointed parliament was dissolved one week prior to the Syrian secession.**

**6. No parliament was held between 1961 and 1964.**

**7. A new parliament was elected in 1964, which did not differ from the parliament of 1957 except that the members had fully understood the nature of their situation.**



8. A new parliament was elected in 1969 with the goal of implementing the March 30 statement.<sup>[138]</sup> This council experienced political unrest following the collapse of key political institutions after the 1967 defeat. However, it was dissolved by Sadat in May 1971 without the March 30 statement being fully implemented.

The parliament was, in fact, merely an advisory council or something slightly more, starting in 1964.

Each time the parliament was formed, there was a greater integration between the membership of this council and the membership of the ruling elite compared to the previous parliament. Therefore, the parliament constantly witnessed more blatant forms of debate and polite opposition, complemented by its reshaping. However, it never recorded any significant objection to the decisions of the executive authority, especially since the Socialist Union had gained the right to suspend its members. In the 1957 parliament, six members were dismissed from the National Union, while retaining their parliamentary seats. In contrast, in the 1964 parliament, a new rule was introduced. Dismissing a member from the Socialist Union would automatically lead to his expulsion from the parliament. Therefore, while Nasserism granted the parliament the authority to withdraw confidence from the ministry, it also, in return, granted itself the right to expel its members. It is noticeable that, while most members of the 1964 parliament were admitted to the 1969 parliament, a significant portion of the Nasserite clique had merged with businessmen and large landlords.

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<sup>[138]</sup> A statement issued by President Gamal Abdel Nasser on March 30, 1968, as a constitutional document outlining the contours of the stage following the defeat of June 1967. It included mobilizing all energies for the battle. It also provided guarantees that ensure freedom of expression, publication, scientific research, the press, the independence of the judiciary, the protection of public, cooperative, and private property, etc.

A publication entitled President Gamal Abdel Nasser's Statement to the Nation—Statement of March 30, 1968, The Complete Collection of Addresses and Statements of President Gamal Abdel Nasser, prepared by Huda Abdel Nasser, Part I.

Therefore, this parliament was an assembly of senior state officials who had private businesses. In addition, the political system was disintegrating as a consequence of the 1967 defeat, which affected the reputation and prestige of the army, the most powerful pillar of the regime.

Throughout the period, the president of the republic possessed the authority to enact decrees with the force of law. He could even promulgate laws in the absence of parliament for most of the period. Therefore, the legislative power was, for most of the time, one of the authorities of the presidency. <sup>[139]</sup>

## **2. The Judiciary**

It is not possible for the executive power to completely control a long-established judiciary, as the work of judges is tied to specific statutes. However, during the Nasserite period, some judges were aligned with the Nasserite elite, and there was direct pressure on the judiciary. Nevertheless, the primary method used to influence the judiciary was to draft legal statutes aligning with the government policy. The presidency took charge of this matter.

The judiciary operates according to specific regulations and laws. These laws are reflected in its procedures and are ultimately manifested in judges' rulings. The judiciary adjudicates cases that arise between individuals or civil institutions and between them and the state. In the first area, Nasserism left the judiciary largely untouched. It did not solely resort to intimidation, and suppression of the judiciary was not deemed necessary, as it is an essential system for resolving personal disputes in any society. However, in the second domain, which dealt with the state and the regime, Nasserism disregarded the judiciary and -instead- proclaimed itself a judicial power. This was realized in the early days following the coup. It began with the establishment of the Treachery Court,

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<sup>[139]</sup> Tariq Al-Bishri, Op. cit., pp. 20-21.

followed by the Revolutionary Court, and subsequently the State Security Courts. In addition, civilians were tried before military tribunals if they were involved in actions opposing the political regime. Furthermore, the extension of the emergency statute granted the executive authority the power to arrest and interrogate citizens without the approval of the prosecution.

Furthermore, the authorities undertook actions that circumvented the law. Abdel Nasser encapsulated this scenario, stating, *“The consensus was that if there was a political case, we would make it a political case, and we would even act as judges, ruling as we see fit and keeping the judges at bay, refraining from interfering in the judiciary.”*<sup>[140]</sup> Interestingly, the Nasserist writer, Abdullah Imam, stated that “the law has granted the state this right,”<sup>[141]</sup> without recognizing that it was the state itself that established the mentioned law.

The judges remained the most disobedient group to Nasserism, which never succeeded in attracting the majority of them to its side. Nasser was even obligated to dismiss 189 judges and advisors in 1969, after the Socialist Union candidates were defeated in the Judges Club elections. He issued a decision to dissolve the club and reconstitute it by appointment.

In summary, executive power usurped the most crucial powers of the judiciary, which was transformed, as described by former Minister of Justice Muhammad Abu Al-Nasr, into a state facility.<sup>[142]</sup> It no longer holds sway over the state itself, as its influence in political matters waned with the continuation of the state of emergency. Ultimately, the judiciary was diminished as one of the fundamental powers.

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<sup>[140]</sup> Abdullah Imam, *The Massacre of the Judiciary*, p. 74.

<sup>[141]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>[142]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27. It was also described as such by Muhammad Hassanein Heikal in his book *For Egypt, not for Abdel Nasser*, p. 59.

### **3. Absolutism**

The series of measures that led to the dissolution of certain institutions and their transformation into appendages of the state apparatus, such as unions, have already been discussed. The parliament, the judiciary, and the ministry were invalidated as state powers. Moreover, the populace suffered from the numerous authoritarian security agencies with their arbitrary procedures, the emergency law, detainee torture, electoral fraud, and special prisons supervised directly by state security investigations. Consequently, the executive authority consolidated all powers, much like the presidency consolidated the executive authority.

On June 18, 1953, the officers' government announced the establishment of a nominally republican regime. The first president was appointed by the "Revolutionary Command Council." His successor assumed office via a referendum conducted under the supervision of the same government that he or his predecessor had appointed, according to the 1953 constitutional Declaration, as being the head of the Revolutionary Command Council. In other words, he was self-appointed.

The presidency of the republic became a large institution with a significant special army and affiliated organizations. The president also held the position of the leader of the single political party, along with numerous other roles, making the main state institutions mere extensions of the presidency. Although the Nasserite elite was divided into blocs and factions, the presidency of the republic remained the central authority, wielding control over all powers. Nonetheless, the presidency as an institution did not diminish the authority of the individual president. On the contrary, the president's power was continually reinforced within the framework of the elite's authority. The absolute individual rule did not imply governance driven solely by Gamal Abdel Nasser's whims, despite his undeniable charismatic influence. He was not an absolute ruler in the manner of Gamal Abdel Nasser but rather served as the

leader of the ruling bureaucracy. His decisions represented the collective will of the elite, restricting his ability to act solely on personal ambitions. This limitation was evident in his inability to remove Field Marshal Abdel Hakeem Amer after the Syrian secession. In fact, in the case of individual rule, authority is often more personalized than the person himself, as a person, is an authority. Regardless of the ruler's style or rhetorical abilities, their influence is only effective if individuals are willing to accept and be guided by it. This highlights the broader foundation of Nasser's authority.

The social conditions that favored bureaucratic rule were fundamentally rooted in individual authority. Consequently, in the long term, the continuing influence of one or another bloc of the bureaucracy was determined by the general conditions of the political and social dynamics that were either actually present or had the potential to develop. This leads to a third observation. Although the Boss of Nasserism held absolute political authority, he was not merely a passive embodiment of the elite's objectives. Instead, he actively shaped these ambitions via his capacity to comprehend and react to the broader social context. This analysis elucidates the systematic propaganda surrounding the leader's persona. Highlighting his genius, greatness, strength, etc., aimed to create personal prestige for the Boss and to show that he ruled with his ability, as if he were the inspiring prophet of the nation and not just the head of an authoritarian elite.

The most significant side of the absolute rule was imposing political isolation on the entire society, depriving individuals of citizenship rights and turning them into subordinates of the state. The absolute rule implied that neither the law nor the constitution was respected when it came to the interests of the ruling regime, along with falsifying the will of the electorate by manipulating the results of elections and referendums. The overwhelming approval ratio of 99.99% in presidential referendums indicates a profound disregard for the citizen, relegating him to a position of subservience

and undermining his identity as a member of the polity. This decline from the period prior to the coup, when citizens enjoyed certain rights, reflects a significant erosion of individual citizenship in favor of state authority. The minimal advancements toward genuine citizenship, which would allow for active participation in governance, were incompatible with the social structure before and after 1952, as it failed to support even this basic form of bourgeois democracy.

The Nasserite republic, characterized by absolutism, stripped individuals of their citizenship rights, undermining the notion of a republic.

Nasserism retained the fundamental components of monarchy but modified them to fit the characteristics and objectives of the new ruling elite. Consequently, referring to a Nasserite republic is akin to describing a paradoxical phenomenon, like a square circle.

### **C. The Role of the Army**

When the “Free Officers” took off their military uniforms after seizing power, this did not signify that the role of the army was over. Contrariwise, the army, which had become Nasserite after being the stronghold of the previous monarchy, maintained a crucial role in society. However, it did not directly exercise power as the First Boy by military force. Instead, it operated from behind the scenes of the absolute rule. The Nasserite elite, which emerged from a military coup, consistently feared the possibility of being overthrown similarly. Certain sectors of the military continued to pose a latent threat, which transformed into a significant danger during both the early and late periods of Nasserite rule. Consequently, officers maintained a privileged status within the ruling elite, especially those who remained in the army. They formed a distinct faction within the ruling elite that centered around Abdel Hakeem Amer, referred to by officers as “the first man repeated.”



**This group held considerable influence within the state. Their authority was officially recognized in 1958 when Abdel Hakeem Amer was named Vice President of the Republic. He was also granted a free hand in Syria after unification and in Yemen following Egypt's intervention. Later he became Abdel Nasser's first vice president in 1964. The army could extend its influence within numerous civilian institutions by appointing personnel who were loyal to senior officers on personal and interest bases, particularly Abdel Hakeem Amer. The army also directly supervised some civil institutions, such as the Public Transport Authority, the Feudal Liquidation Committee, and various sports federations. In addition, it participated in many civilian works. Abdel Hakeem Amer's prominent role in power stemmed from his big position in the army. This resulted from the concentration of power in the hands of the supreme state bureaucracy, of which army and security service commands were the main body. The field marshal maintained his position as an unparalleled leader of the army primarily due to the unwavering personal trust he enjoyed from the big Boss. Furthermore, he solidified his influence within the military by fostering strong personal relationships and granting numerous privileges to officers. The army's dominance did not conflict with Nasser's individual leadership but rather was its main pillar. The dispute between the army and the president obscured their deep and strong relationship, and there were no specific political disagreements between the two parties. They simply disagreed over the authority assigned to the army and the officers, as well as differences in personal viewpoints between the president and his field marshal. It is well known that the latter had little competence and seriousness in terms of his occupation as a military leader.**

**The dispute between the two parties did not mean that the officers' sector was hostile to Nasser, but, like all other factions within the ruling elite, the officers were trying to impose their point of view. The basic meaning of Nasser's attempts to impose his authority on the army via the "Vanguard Organization" or his personnel was**



that there were other forces within the elite. This indicates that the army's power was not absolute within the state. The removal of military uniforms by the "Free Officers" signified that the primary authority did not rest with the military but with the elite who carried out the coup, which had the sole privilege to choose its partners. Consequently, the military was required to maintain its role as an army, while exerting its influence discreetly behind a civilian facade to prevent repeated military coups.

The army's defeat in 1967 resulted in the collapse of the elite as a whole. The most influential power center lost its standing, which had been the cornerstone of Nasserism's prestige.

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The dictatorial nature of Nasserite rule was not revealed to prove that Nasserism was the government of the devil. The authorities in general do not practice oppression out of love but to support themselves. In the end, the aim is to examine Nasserism and nothing more. This analysis of the form of governance is only a moment in the context of exposing its internal nature.

The previous examination focused on exposing the nature of Nasserite oppression, which affected all social classes. It was not the oppression of the dominant class over the populace but the supreme bureaucracy's subjugation of the entire society. It was a state of emergency embodied in a political system. This type of governance was crucial for the new ruling elite and a long-term necessity for the social system as a whole. The oppression of the dominant class members was intertwined with the oppression of the masses in the name of the populace. This dual form of oppression characterizes the phenomenon of Bonapartism.

This new political system arose as a result of previously analyzed specific conditions. Nasserism was a consequence of the political balance of powers in 1952. However, analyzing its system of

**governance indicates a modification in this balance, as the government practiced repression against all classes. This rationale must contain the foundation of new policies that began to emerge following the coup's inception. These policies included agrarian reform, raising workers' wages, encouragement of domestic and foreign capital, and rejection of Western alliances.**

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**The repression of all social classes clearly involved changing the political system and modifying the social order without destroying it. The repression of the dominant class was aimed at modification, while the repression of the radical opposition was aimed at preventing the collapse of the system. Discovering this fact was the goal of analyzing the Nasserite regime. Analyzing the Nasserite system of governance was intended to reveal this fact.**

**A question must emerge here: What is the social significance of this governance with its multiple features? What exactly did it express, regardless of the direct motives for its behavior? This is the issue.**

**There is a widespread conception among Arab intellectuals concerning Nasserism. It can be encapsulated in the distinction between the Nasserite power as it is and the bodies responsible for implementing its policies. In other words, between the upper hand in power and its functionaries. The validity of power, its revolutionary nature, or its belonging to the populace remains as the Kantian "thing in itself," which is indissoluble despite practices that completely contradict this conception. The matter can be simplified as follows: the Boss was good, but the evil people surrounding him are the source of corruption. So the main thing is sound. Consequently, there was no basis for criticizing and attempting to overthrow the regime. This is the principal objective of the concept. Abdel Nasser, or, in a sense, the core of the regime, is characterized by revolutionary ideals, democratic principles, and significant**

achievements. The suppression of opponents and conspiracy against revolutions in the Arab world, such as in southern and northern Yemen, the Levant, and Iraq, should be attributed to certain state officials or institutions rather than the Boss himself, meaning it was not the regime's fault. Moreover, many have strived to search for phrases or words that Abdel Nasser—allegedly—said to a journalist or somebody else in a closed room, for example, to prove his honesty and greatness. Advocates of this conception also strive to prove that most, if not all, of the repression directed against Egyptian and Arab leftist opposition by Nasserists was carried out by reactionary individuals or entities. In addition to being influenced by specific interests originating from within the regime.<sup>[143]</sup>

This idea is entirely subjective. It presupposes that the regime is synonymous with Nasser and that Nasser is not defined by his actions but is inherently virtuous, as if he were exemplifying Plato's ideals. This suggests that his intellectual evolution directly influenced the regime's development, even if these ideas remain purely theoretical.

It is not necessary to address in detail the personality of Abdel Nasser when dealing with the phenomenon of Nasserism. The person might have enjoyed various personal advantages according to prevailing norms, which some people have strived to prove, but such matters do not have much significance in the subject presented here. The individual's role in history is nothing but his actions. As articulated by Hegel, *"Man is nothing other than what he does."* Nasser's actual role, or what concerns the people, lies at the core of the matter. If his apparatuses committed evils, he bore ultimate accountability for their actions. These evils, if deemed such,

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<sup>[143]</sup> Here is an example: Ghali Shukri's book, "Confessions of a Failed Time," chapter two, delves into Nasserism from the perspective of Gamal Abdel Nasser's role. Shukri attempts to demonstrate that Nasser had a significant historical impact as an individual and should not be held accountable for what he refers to as "regime's mistakes" or "blemishes."

originated within his regime and governance. In actuality, absolute individual rule inherently implies corruption and capriciousness of the governing apparatuses. In essence, individual rule is itself the pinnacle of political corruption. It is not necessary to explore the extent of Nasser's awareness or unawareness as a person regarding certain actions or even state policies. The state is hostile to the Left and independent popular organizations, while being lenient with reactionary thought. It is necessary to demonstrate that the policies formulated and executed by Nasserism were inherently linked to the essence of the Nasserite elite itself and the circumstances in which it seized power and governed. These policies did not arise from the evolution of the Boss's thought or from predetermined ideology or metaphysical principles. The relationship between Nasserism and its concrete policies has already been explained. This same connection regarding its self-perception will also be analyzed. However, the intention of Nasser as a person will not be considered.

It is not aimed herein to portray the positive or negative aspects of Abdel Nasser because history is not a battle between good and evil. Nasser was only the head of the regime, which is an entity, not a latent idea that is released in closed rooms. He played the role of the leader of the supreme bureaucracy, even if unintentionally, regardless of his belief that his actions were right, good, or in the people's best interest. He may have believed that he was implementing socialism in his unique manner. Nevertheless, his genuine beliefs were evident in his actions, which did not always correspond with his personal aspirations. As a leader, he had to represent various groups and balance the interests of the elite alongside those of other societal powers.

Nasser's decisions were not solely based on his personal preferences. Instead, they were based on the outcome of opposing forces. This does not diminish his capacity as a creative individual, nor does it overlook the significance of his personal inclinations. However, as a leader of the ruling elite, his actions ultimately reflected the interests and dynamics of this personalized elite.

## **Chapter Three: The Philosophy of the Regime**

**Is there a Nasserite philosophy?**

**It has been established that Nasserism is the dominant bureaucratic group that governed Egypt since the success of the July 1952 coup, based on its rationale and structure. It will be shown later that Nasserism also encompasses a set of economic and social policies. But does Nasserism also encompass a philosophy?**

**The military government introduced itself to the world with six principles that later gained fame.<sup>[144]</sup> Abdel Nasser then presented his book “The Philosophy of the Revolution,” discussing the hero that the East awaited and the three circles in which Egypt was situated according to his perspective: an Arab, an African, and an Islamic circle. The “National Charter” was introduced in 1962 to solidify Nasserism as a set of ideas, followed by numerous publications and explanations. The new idea was championed by an organization that initially started as the Liberation Rally, then evolved into the “National Union,” and eventually became the “Arab Socialist Union.” A youth organization was established alongside, and the “Vanguard Organization” was clandestinely formed as an authentic Nasserite party that espoused Nasserism as its ideology. Therefore, it is unreasonable to deny the existence of a Nasserite theory. The multitude of unique concepts that permeated and overshadowed Islamic thought and Marxism in the Arab region**

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- [144]**
- 1. Eliminating colonialism and its traitorous Egyptian agents.**
  - 2. Eliminating feudalism.**
  - 3. Eliminating monopoly and capital’s control over government.**
  - 4. Establishing social justice.**
  - 5. Establishing a strong national army.**
  - 6. Establishing a sound democratic life.**

**Source: The Charter, p. 5.**

are indeed real ideas, regardless of one's perspective and their analysis, and even irrespective of the Nasserite regime's adherence to them.

Just as the autocratic rule defined itself, it also began to define its self-concept by formulating a theory or ideology that encompasses an analysis of its essence.

Nasserite ideology remained merely an extension of its absolute rule, or rather, incorporated it in terms of production and dissemination, as well as content. It was essential for the regime to justify its existence as a totalitarian system; therefore, it imposed ideology. It was taught in schools and universities as absolute truth and examined by students. Additionally, banners with its slogans were hung in squares, media broadcast it, and specific camps were allocated to indoctrinate young people with its principles, known as cadre preparation camps. Additionally, the July government promptly established a ministry known as "National Guidance" on November 10, 1952. The primary objective of this ministry was to oversee media, culture, and the arts, as well as to shape public opinion in a comprehensive manner.<sup>[145]</sup>

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Nasserite ideas were one of the regime's most formidable weapons, if not the most influential of all. They were employed to justify and glorify reformist policies in a very effective way, to defend and even celebrate acts of repression, and to present the Nasserite regime in the guise of a revolution, while concealing its conservative content, resulting in overwhelming popular support.

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<sup>[145]</sup> Decree-Law no. 270 of 1952, "the Official Gazette," Issue 149 bis, issued on November 10, 1952.

Nasserite ideology will be examined in this context as an abstract thought, distinct from its practical implementation.<sup>[146]</sup> This distinction between theory and practice is intended to facilitate a focused analysis of the theory itself. Practical application serves as the true evaluation of theory; examining the theory itself is an essential logical step toward achieving a more comprehensive understanding. This sequence, in the case of Nasserism, is fundamentally a logical one. The Nasserite theoretical framework never preceded practice. Rather, it was formed through a process of “trial and error.” Eventually, it was presented in documents after significant practical advancements had been made. However, it is not sufficient to simply assert that practice preceded theory, as practice itself involves the application of ideas, even if they are in a nascent form. In fact, embryonic ideas emerged prior to action but ripened to crystallized ones subsequent to their implementation. It has been previously revealed that the seed of Nasserite ideology emerged with the coup itself (or even prior to it, in the form of six principles) and began to grow with the events. Therefore, the introduction to the study of actual policies should begin with studying Nasserism as an ideology. In actuality, Nasserite philosophy is considered just a moment in the policy of the Nasserite rule.

It is inconceivable that the absolute police rule, relying on reward, stick, and demagoguery, would present a theory solely dedicated to

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<sup>[146]</sup> An idea was put forward that Nasserism adopted logical positivism. Refer to, for instance, Ameer Iskandar’s book “The Struggle of Right and Left in Egyptian Culture,” p. 40. In fact, Nasserism converged with that philosophy in its essentially experimental tendency. However, logical positivism did not develop into an intellectual movement, and its loyal philosopher in Egypt (Zaki Naguib Mahmoud) remained a solitary figure. His writings may have sparked some controversy in the fifties and sixties, but he was unable to disseminate his philosophy widely. His greatest influence on his students was primarily educational, as he was one of the leading specialists in philosophy in Egypt, but he was never the philosopher of the regime. This is because Nasserism did not require a specific philosophy to confront its uniqueness, as evidenced by the fact that the Charter surprised the majority of the Marxist left.



the quest for truth. The rationale of this governance was leading it to formulate its concepts in a manner that legitimizes its autocracy. Consequently, the theory should encapsulate the core principles of authority, aligning entirely with a *statist* perspective. Furthermore, it must serve as a justification for Bonapartist rule.

This analysis is based on the main document that the regime's theorists identified as the revolutionary theory: the Charter.

The Nasserite elite initially found itself unable to confront its opponents on the ideological level. This weakness peaked as the influence of these enemies intensified: communism and the Arab nationalist movement in the region after the 1956 war. Therefore, it was strongly motivated to create a theoretical structure. In doing so, it resorted to using the same terminology and rhetoric as communists and nationalists and even adopted as much of their premises and arguments as it could. Nevertheless, it had not forgotten to focus on what it had considered one of its most key advantages over Marxism: religion. Religion was primarily utilized to restrict the dissemination of leftist ideas and to prevent a surge of intellectual support for them. Consequently, Nasserism did not go so far as to embrace Islamic law. Rather, it was content to remind the populace that Marxism is religiously prohibited.

It will be focused here on elucidating the core content of Nasserite thought, or its authentic ideas. The objective is to conduct a thorough analysis of these ideas in anticipation of their exposure in practice, i.e., in Nasserite policies.

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The Charter begins with a decisive statement: Revolution is necessary to eliminate oppression and backwardness, among other abstract things. Then it sets three goals for the Arab revolution: freedom, socialism, and unity.

**\*Freedom encompasses both the liberty of the nation and the rights of its citizens.**

**\*Socialism is a means to achieve sufficiency and justice.**

**\*The method for achieving Arab unity is peaceful work and mass invitation.**

**The ways to achieve these aims are:**

**Freedom is achieved through violent struggle against colonialism.**

**Socialism is achieved peacefully and *without class struggle* by dissolving the differences between classes. This is because there are new conditions facing modern socialist experiments, represented by the nuclear balance and the existence of moral powers such as the United Nations, which are capable of making international peace. For the same reasons, the era of German-style unity is over.**

**It is also stated that “*it is no longer necessary for socialist work to adhere literally to laws formulated in the nineteenth century*”(referring to Marxism). The Charter also rejects categorizing Arab Revolution ideology in *closed theories*, including Marxism. The discussion so far may seem abstract, but it gradually becomes clearer, as will be demonstrated:**

### **First :Freedom**

**For Nasserism, freedom of the homeland refers to political independence, which involves the liberation of the state apparatus and the dismantling of foreign capital’s control over political and economic power.**

**Nasserism encompassed its conception of political independence in the slogans “positive neutrality and non-alignment” and “We befriend those who befriend us, and we are hostile to those who are hostile to us.” These slogans expressed an experimental and unprincipled tendency, along with recognizing the international situation as final. Nasserism did not set itself the task of creating a**

new global power. This could be achieved, for example, by establishing alliances that were possible at the time, in the face of existing global powers. This position is in stark contrast to that of China. The latter embraced the principle of non-alignment primarily as a strategy to counter Soviet dominance, while it decided to create a new global center since the success of its revolution. Therefore, China has not signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, while Nasserite Egypt has signed it, and the treaty was later ratified in 1981. Furthermore, the comparison between the Red Book and the Charter is very useful in this regard, as the spirit is vastly different.

Regarding citizens' freedom, Nasserism conceives it in a particular way. The Charter directs important criticisms at the democracy prior to 1952: *"The peasant's vote was compulsory, vote buying, fraud, expensive cash insurance for parliamentary candidates, and loss of freedom of the press."* However, it is not a radical criticism, as it only criticizes partial issues and does not criticize liberalism as a principle and a system. Although the Charter tries to appear radical when it posts, *"The freedom of bread is an indispensable guarantee for the freedom of a ballot card."* Then it adds on page 35: *"Democracy is the affirmation of sovereignty for the populace and the placing of all power in their hands and devoting it to achieving their objectives."* So far, the Charter had progressed, seeming to criticize the control of businessmen and large landlords over state power, considering this to be the essence of pre-1952 democracy. Then it set a very logical conclusion: *"Political democracy cannot be achieved under the control of one class."* (p. 40) Therefore, consider that socialism is the only gateway to authentic democracy, where there is neither single-class control nor class struggle. It specifies three guarantees for citizens' freedom: *"The citizen does not have the freedom to vote in elections unless he has three guarantees:*

- *To be free from exploitation in all its forms.*
- *To have an equal opportunity for a fair share of the national wealth.*

*- To eliminate all anxiety that undermines the security of the future of his life.”*

Then the Charter discusses the alliance of Working Peoples' Forces, highlighting five key groups, including soldiers, representing the military as a whole, alongside what it refers to as national capitalism. It then details various assurances necessary for initiating the efforts of these five forces:

1. Workers and peasants should have 50% of the seats in popular and political organizations.

2. The authority of the people's councils must be consistently asserted above that of the state apparatus.

3. Building a new political apparatus within the Socialist Union to recruit elements suitable for leadership.

4. Collective leadership, which it did not define.

5. The populace owning the press in the form of ownership by the “Socialist Union.”

It also believes that excluding reactionism provides the strongest safeguard for the freedom of assembly and discussion, while fostering criticism and self-criticism are among the most powerful guarantees of liberty. It also advocates for popular organizations, such as unions and cooperatives, to play an influential role in empowering sound democracy. For the implementation of this “new democracy,” it calls for changing government statutes and laws to suit the new social relations (p. 43). Subsequently, the Charter demands the right to work, education, medical care for citizens, equality between women and men, and freedom of religious belief. Then it proceeds:

*“Freedom of speech is the first premise of democracy, and enforcing law is its final guarantee.” (p. 80).*

*“The means of democracy is to achieve the authority of the people's councils over all centers of production and above all central or domestic administrative organs” (p. 83).*

However, the Charter did not forget to mention that “social freedom is the only gateway to political freedom” (p. 79) and that achieving these freedoms does not happen overnight.

This is the concept of Nasserism and its program to achieve the freedom of the individual.

The Nasserite concept of political freedom contains abstract and concrete meanings, as well as some logical contradictions. If the Charter considers that democracy means placing all power in the hands of the populace, it must acknowledge an important point: the state itself is the apparatus of political power. The actualization of the people’s power requires that the state apparatus become a people’s state. Furthermore, if the Charter criticizes pre-1952 democracy as serving the interests of the owning class, it should acknowledge the necessity to dismantle the state apparatus belonging to this class. In fact, the issue of power, particularly the state apparatus, is—as Lenin rightly pointed out—the central issue in every revolution. If the Charter promised a socialist revolution, then the state apparatus must be fundamentally different from that belonging to landowners and businessmen. The democracy of the class of landowners serves only its own interests. Consequently, the democracy of the general populace should likewise serve their interests, as articulated in the Charter itself. Thus, the establishment of a people’s state, through popular councils, is essential for the realization of socialism.

Additionally, the Charter is misleading with its popular councils:

\*It refers to the local councils that were established and still in existence and did not go beyond that in its description of them. These councils enjoy very limited powers and do not have any political authority.

\*It distinguishes between them and state institutions on the basis that, in its concept, the people’s councils are not the people’s state institutions.

**\*It was not decided that these councils possess the authority to elect the parliament, supervise the country's institutions, or engage in matters pertaining to the army, police, or judiciary, nor are they involved in the selection of senior officials. In addition, they do not replace the bureaucratic apparatus of the state. Consequently, they work as an additional facility of the state, rather than a political authority.**

**The Charter's concept of the people is also misleading. It integrates soldiers within the working forces of the people, obviously meaning the entire army, including officers. Thus, without acknowledging the necessity of reconstructing the military institution, i.e., it did not take a position hostile to it, which is a— as an institution— a conservative, professional, distinct, and even arrogant toward the people. It also did not mention democratizing the army, modifying its regulations and system as a whole, forming soldiers' councils, or involving its individuals in political action. In other words, reconstructing it on popular grounds. Furthermore, it refers to intellectuals in general, and the issue was eventually remedied in other texts by adding “revolutionary intellectuals,” which means, in the Nasserite lexicon, official intellectuals.**

**The Charter also introduced the concept of “national capitalism” and recognized the existence of a non-exploitative capitalism, while it failed to define exploitation. In actuality, the Nasserite deception culminates in the conflation of the lower classes and capitalism under the guise of an alliance of the “working people's forces.” This was intended, as the context of the analysis clearly shows, to undermine the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat.**

**The concept of minimal representation, which includes 50% of workers and farmers and encompasses two forms of falsification, provides a comprehensive understanding of the situation:**

- The rationale of the idea itself is bogus, demagogic, i.e., lacking logic at all. The presence of at least 50% of workers and farmers in political and local councils is only beneficial to them if these councils**

themselves have actual power, which the Charter does not recognize. Therefore, the presence of this percentage does not automatically mean that workers and farmers participate in power. Workers do not necessarily require representation by individuals who share their specific occupational background; rather, the fundamental concern is their ability to select any individual they wish to serve as their representative. This underscores the importance of having the freedom to nominate and elect representatives, a feature that was absent in the Nasserite regime and not guaranteed by the Charter. Furthermore, the stipulation of 50% representation is inherently unjust to workers and farmers, as their actual numbers in society surpass this proportion. At the time the Charter was being drafted, the combined percentage of workers and poor peasants within the workforce exceeded 75%.

-The definition of “worker” and “farmer” is not specified in the Charter but can be found in other documents. It states, *“A worker is anyone who fulfills the conditions for membership in a trade union.”* This definition encompasses independent artisans who do not employ others. However, it excludes directors of companies and institutions, department heads, commissioners, and board members, except for those elected to represent workers and employees.<sup>[147]</sup> It is noteworthy that anyone whose basic income was a salary was allowed to join labor unions, except directors. Thus, the administrative staff was included in the working class. A farmer was defined as *“Anyone who lives in a village, works in agriculture as their primary source of income, owns 25 feddans or less for themselves and their family, has not been affected by agrarian reform laws, and does not hold a public office.”*<sup>[148]</sup> After the February 1968 demonstrations, Abdel Nasser agreed to lower the maximum landholding limit from 25 to 10 feddans and promised to modify the formal definition of a worker. In his numerous addresses, while discussing the definition

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<sup>[147]</sup> Lutfi Al-Kholi, “al-Taliaah” Magazine, May 1966 issue.

<sup>[148]</sup> Mentioned by Kamal Al-Menoufi, *The Political Culture of Egyptian Peasants*.



of the farmer and the worker, Abdel Nasser evaded the suggestion of defining them himself, pretending that he wished to avoid imposing his own perspective on the matter. The charter emphasized the importance of individual freedom dozens of times. However, it never provided any formula that included mechanisms for exercising this freedom, such as the right to strike, freedom of demonstration, publication, speech, independence of non-governmental organizations, etc. It constantly attacked liberalism as “fake democracy” and rejected class struggle outright. Moreover, it emphasized that social democracy is necessary to achieve genuine freedom. However, this raises the question: what constitutes the minimum freedom of an individual who already exists within a class society? Is it conceivable to have a form of democracy that does not give the individual the political rights acknowledged in liberal systems? Where is the freedom of the individual who wishes to criticize the head of state, oppose socialism, reject a one-party system, or at least has an alternative ideology?

The Charter appears to be overly materialistic when it considers that social democracy, i.e., socialism, is the only path to political liberty. This rationale implies that building socialism is not done by the direct authority of the people, as the latter is achieved after socialism is implemented. This raises the question: Who, then, is responsible for implementing socialism?

It also goes the furthest on the matter of democracy, which is ultimately the problem of power, the Nasserite regime’s holy of holies.

It is now reasonable to delve further into the Nasserite concept of freedom, focusing on the political organization:

The political organization was established to supplant the parties, embodying, as per Nasserite propaganda, the “People’s Working Forces Alliance.” However, its central committee had been formed by appointments made by the executive authority until the year 1968. Moreover, the state had controlled the newspapers since 1960

by transferring their ownership to that organization. In addition, the latter had been granted the right to nominate the members of the parliament and company boards of directors since 1964, plus other functions of this kind. It was also one of the legal paths for bureaucratic embezzlement, as will be detailed later. Astonishingly, its membership was collective and compulsory for many categories, especially workers.

Nevertheless, Abdel Nasser himself acknowledged that his organization had failed to carry out its fundamental objective: propaganda for the regime. He stated, *“We lack loyal kinesthetic elements within the Socialist Union.”*<sup>[149]</sup> *“The Socialist Union until now (1964) is an organization on paper,”*<sup>[150]</sup> *“I consider that there is no Socialist Union until now”* (1965),<sup>[151]</sup> and *“We have relied in the past twelve years on administrative effort in socialist and national work.”*<sup>[152]</sup>

The authorities resorted to introducing a full-time system in 1965 to ensure that members could carry out their duties. Ali Sabri, in an interview with the Cairo magazine “al-Taliaah,” stated, *“The importance of full-time work does not lie in providing an amount of time that an individual can give to the Socialist Union, but rather lies primarily in ensuring the loyalty of this individual to the Union, not to any other party.”*<sup>[153]</sup>

Finally, Abdel Nasser formed a secret organization to be an authentic party for the regime. This organization –significantly- did not include any members of the “Revolutionary Command Council” other than himself. He used it to extend his influence within the army via its military members. He also included about twenty communists, or 36 according to the journalist Salah Issa. However, they were restricted from establishing contact with the army.

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<sup>[149]</sup> Rifaat Al-Saeed, Nasserite Papers in a Top Secret File, p. 38.

<sup>[150]</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>[151]</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>[152]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[153]</sup> December 1965 issue.

Moreover, the organization included many right-wing, opportunistic, authoritarian elements and trustworthy persons. This was completely deliberate on his part, according to what Ahmad Hamroush described and analyzed in some detail. Membership in this organization was also compulsory.<sup>[154]</sup>

Needless to say, the Socialist Union did not govern but was a de jure and de facto appendage of the Presidency of the Republic. Additionally, it could not lead the masses but was hated and despised by them to the utmost degree, notwithstanding their compulsory membership. Furthermore, it failed to accomplish the most important task entrusted to it, which was to promote itself and the government using Nasserite ideology in such a way that would appear to the populace as an acceptable alternative to the old parties, revolutionary organizations, and independent public institutions that the regime dissolved.

In actuality, the Nasserite conception of freedom, whether national or individual, is fundamentally confined to the autonomy of the state alone. This pertains to its sovereignty toward other states and its absolute authority over the populace. It conflates the concept of the state with that of the populace, rejecting, Meanwhile, the individual's right to protest in all forms, which is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving freedom. Instead, it posits that all actions, decisions, and policies enacted by the Nasserite government were, in fact, executed by the populace via their representative, namely the army and the state, as pretended. The mechanism underlying this process was the inspiration of the masses, which was conveyed to the Nasserite elite. Even the July coup is seen as a popular revolution carried out by the "Free Officers," who acted as a tool of the people. In addition, the latter guides and teaches the leaders themselves. That is, the people are genuine leaders and teachers.

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<sup>[154]</sup> A statement of the State Commissioners Authority in the Supreme Administrative Court, cited by Abdullah Imam, *The Massacre of the Judiciary*, pp. 114-115.

Despite all the contradictions of Nasserite ideology, demagogic ideas found popularity through the media and Nasser's addresses. The regime was even able to attract thousands of enthusiastic youth who believed in their leader's dazzling slogans and thus began to pressure him. In fact, the position of Nasserist youth became similar to that of the Wafdist Taliaa toward the Wafd leadership. This youth began to mature in 1965 and 1966, during the period of the regime's disintegration.

### **Second: Socialism**

Socialism, according to the Charter, is the path to social liberty, meaning freedom from the control of capital and large landowners: "*Scientific socialism is the appropriate formula for determining the correct route of progress*" (p. 51). However, scientific socialism is not a recipe for progress. Rather, it has been described as scientific in the sense of being a historical necessity or inevitability dictated by the laws of history. Nasserism uses familiar concepts but gives them new meanings. It simply required calling itself Marxism to amplify the fallacy. The Charter altered the relationship between the socialist system and progress. The latter is not just a product of socialism but rather a prerequisite for it. This is what prominent socialists have been considering, contrary to the charter's conception. It is widely recognized within authentic socialist ideologies that the establishment of socialism, first of all, necessitates the achievement of significant progress of productive forces. Abdel Nasser clarified his conception of socialism in some addresses, thereby eliminating any potential misunderstandings. For example, he stated, "*Our socialism is scientific, based on science and not on chaos. It is by no means materialistic socialism. We did not say that we are materialistic socialists. We did not say that we are Marxist socialists, and we did not say that we have abandoned religion. Rather, we said that our religion is the first socialist religion and that Islam in the Middle Ages achieved the first socialism in the*

world.” <sup>[155]</sup> So, scientific socialism is based on science. But he did not specify whether he meant science in the general sense of the word, i.e., what socialists call the scientific method, or the physical sciences. However, declaring his adherence to religion in order to confront Marxism means one thing: negation of the theoretical basis of socialism as defined by Marxists. Consequently, consider scientific socialism a means or a formula for progress. Thus, socialism became merely a treatment or a recipe. Anyway, the leader clearly categorized socialism into two types: materialistic and religious, meaning precisely Marxian and Nasserite. Despite the use of the term historical inevitability in numerous Nasserite publications, it referred to a necessary choice for development rather than an unavoidable outcome dictated by the laws of history.

Abdel Nasser also distinguished in his addresses between Marxian socialism and “Arab socialism,” highlighting fundamental differences between the two: *“We did not say that the working class would defeat and destroy the other class, eliminate it, and confiscate all its wealth. Our socialism is not like this. Our socialism is based on brotherhood and national unity. We said we would limit ownership and decided on compensation. We said we would nationalize and decided on compensation. We allowed profits. We said we would transform the workers and the oppressed class into a class that enjoys its right to life, and we never said we would deprive the oppressor class and transform it into a class of the destitute.”* <sup>[156]</sup>

Socialism, before being used for ideological or political purposes, is something defined and completely understandable: an egalitarian social system. Marx’s addition was only related to the path to socialism, not to socialism itself. He claimed to have discovered its historical inevitability and that it is achieved by the proletarian revolution, as he considered. This addition is what Nasserism had constantly sought to negate, using the slogan “The Arab Path to

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<sup>[155]</sup> Quoted from Ameer Iskandar, “al-Taliaah” magazine, November 1975 issue, and other references.

<sup>[156]</sup> President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s address on the ninth anniversary of the revolution from Jomhoryya (Republic) Square, 7/22/1961.

**Socialism,” specifically intending to deny the necessity of a workers’ state to establish socialism. This addition completes the Marxist concept of historical materialism. Accordingly, socialism is not created via the intentions of leaders but rather by the broad masses at an advanced stage of productive forces. It is a socio-economic system that cannot be divided into religious and irreligious.<sup>[157]</sup>**

**The religious socialism of the Nasserite Charter requires some conditions:**

**1. The people’s control over the means of production: (p. 53) “*The people’s control over all the means of production does not necessitate the nationalization of all of them, nor does it abolish private property, nor does it affect the right of legitimate inheritance.*” Rather, this is achieved through:**

- Creating a capable public sector.**
- The involvement of the private sector in development follows a comprehensive plan without exploitation.**

**This is because the Charter distinguishes between two categories of private property: exploitative and non-exploitative. However, the significance of its conception is incomplete without remembering that there is also non-exploitative capitalism, as articulated in numerous Nasserite documents and its leader’s addresses. Additionally, the notion of the people encompasses what they call national capitalism.**

**Consequently, it appears that the socialism outlined in the Charter resembles democratic socialism, that of the Socialist International, but without its democracy.**

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<sup>[157]</sup> Nasserism did not introduce anything unique in this domain. The governments of socialist countries preceded and theoretically surpassed it. Nasser was outshone by prominent socialist leaders like Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin. All spoke about the necessity of coercion to build socialism, the importance of loyalty from the workers to the party, and the possibility of initiating it in a backward country. Refer to Lenin’s last works and Trotsky’s book “Terrorism and Communism.”



On one occasion, it is pretended that Abdel Nasser had settled the debate among the Nasserite elite regarding the appropriate form of the required socialism. He announced that socialism is one thing; nevertheless, there is an Arab path to socialism. However, according to the Charter, this was not Nasser's authentic conception: *"The Arab implementation of socialism in the field of agriculture does not believe in the nationalization of the land."* (p. 63) This is justified demagogically by *"the Egyptian fallah's ability to work creatively."* The Charter subsequently addresses agricultural cooperation without indicating whether it pertains to production or marketing. Therefore, it becomes evident that the purported Arab path to socialism is not just an approach but a distinct socio-economic system that incorporates certain things and discards others. More significantly, it has become clear that the Nasserite conception of socialism diverges from that of Fourier, Owen, or Marx. Nasser defined it as *"the non-exploitation of man by man."* This is included in socialism, but recall that Nasserism indicates that there is a non-exploitative capitalism. Thus, exploitation becomes an ambiguous or relative concept. Moreover, there is nothing more absurd than the racist and demagogic justification for maintaining eternal private ownership of land, such as citing the ability of the Egyptian fallah. Consequently, the slogan *"the land belongs to those who cultivate it,"* rooted in bourgeois ideals tied to individual land ownership, should be set aside.

2. In domestic trade: The Charter aims to achieve state control over 25% of domestic trade within ten years, i.e., until 1970. It warns that domestic trade must be non-exploitative and with reasonable profit (p. 57). As religious socialism does not require the confiscation of private property, nationalization of trade is out of the question. However, the Charter insists on state control over foreign trade, without mentioning any justification for the difference between the two positions. It is understood that trade in underdeveloped countries controls, albeit indirectly, industry and production sectors in general. The real justification is that Nasserism was actually unable to nationalize trade and contracting.



Occasionally, Abdel Nasser expressed reservations about any attempt to confront the big traders.

3. The Charter (p. 73) addresses the concept of peaceful struggle among classes, advocating for the elimination of the differences between them without specifying the extent of this elimination. In addition, it emphasizes that the class struggle should be resolved peacefully within the framework of national unity. Does it reach, for example, the complete abolition of classes? It is clear that this is not the desired purpose. Moreover, the concept of the peaceful struggle between classes explicitly includes the forbidding of the right to strike and demonstrate. Above all, it disregards the right of the lower classes to use violence against their exploiters who own the repressive apparatus that Nasserism confiscated and used on its behalf, and the Charter did not call for its dismantling.

Everything but Marxism. That is the issue, as noted by the prominent writer and researcher Ghali Shukri, without inferring anything important. He also pointed out that Abdel Nasser was attacking the Left intellectually without doing the same with the Right, but he sees in this nothing more than a “blemish.”<sup>[158]</sup>

Another point worth commenting on is that Nasserite socialism is not international or even Arab, but rather local. This is despite Nasserism’s declaration that the Arabs are one nation. It takes precedence over Arab unity, as will be demonstrated shortly. Here Nasserism outdid Stalinism, transforming the concept of “socialism in one country” into socialism confined to a single location, despite sometimes being referred to as Arab socialism.

It is evident that the Charter’s advocacy for socialism in 1962 was describing and justifying the actually existing situation at that time. This was an attempt to draw a socialist image for Nasserite Egypt and—more importantly—to confront Marxism, rather than developing a socialist project.

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<sup>[158]</sup> Confessions of a Failed Time, p. 21.

### **Third: Arab Unity**

The concept of Arab unity in Nasserite ideology is closely linked to liberty and socialism, as unity represents the culmination of both. Therefore, unity within a Nasserite system grounded in its socialist principles is required. The latter recognizes national capitalism and private ownership of land and domestic trade. Nasserism emphasized a peaceful transition to socialism. Moreover, it asserted that Arab unity can only be achieved by peaceful means, claiming that *“coercion in any form goes against unity.”* However, the Charter does not clarify whether it refers to the coercion exerted by the peoples or by national governments. It then goes on to condemn coercion in general as an immoral act that poses a threat to national unity. Furthermore, while the Charter did not rule out violence against capitalism, it did not explain the exact form of this violence—whether it entails a bloody revolution and civil war akin to Leninism or the repression carried out by Nasserite security services.

Additionally, the Charter clarified its stance toward local governments, positing that the Arab League consists of governments and can only take certain steps toward unity. Therefore, the League must be supported. It also indicates that unity cannot be achieved solely by the efforts of the people but also requires the participation of the governments in the Arab League, i.e., “non-national” capitalism and sheikhs. The Charter also suggests that Arabs are already united to some extent, arguing that *“those who point out differences between Arab governments as a barrier to unity are looking at the issue superficially. The mere existence of these differences is evidence of progression toward unity.”*

It is obvious that the slogan advocating for Arab unity is founded on Nasserism’s conviction in the existence of a single Arab nation. Nevertheless, it did not present any specific ideas in this regard. It is only contenting itself with reiterating the ideas of various Arab nationalist schools.

Arab unity, according to the Nasserite conception, should take place within the context of Nasserite socialism that is considered different from Marxian socialism, as articulated by Nasser. Therefore, this unity should take place within a context that is hostile to radical revolutionary movements and the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus, unity should be achieved at the expense of the communist movement and in favor of a large police state on the Nasserite model.

The peaceful advocacy ended with police rule, which was an important factor in the failure of Nasserite unity attempts. The failure first appeared in Sudan, where the Sudanese people ultimately rejected Nasserite unity because they enjoyed a greater degree of freedom under their ruling regional class, and then in Syria due to factors including the Syrian people's general rejection of the Nasserite police regime.

Likewise, the conditions of Nasserite unity include, or are in fact, a negation of the idea of unity itself. It pertains to the "working forces of the people" that do not objectively tend to be united on the level of the purported Arab nation. Furthermore, it excludes an indispensable means of achieving unity: violence against the dominant classes, which may sometimes be necessary if the project is really serious.

The Charter also declares the necessity of supporting the Arab League on the basis that the Arab governments, which Nasserite discourse divided in the early 1960s into puppets, reactionary, and progressive governments, can push the issue of unity forward. By considering that *"any violence is against unity,"* the picture becomes complete; that is, practically, no unity at all.

It can now be concluded that, according to Nasserite ideology, the project of Arab unity, during that era, was not an urgent topic, nor was it even theoretically on the agenda in the immediate term. Moreover, its achievement was conditioned on various factors that were completely obstructing the realization of this concept. These

factors included the rejection of any violence and, in addition, the cooperation with Arab regimes that have principally opposed and been hostile to that unity.

The Charter asserts that the era was witnessing “*global changes that prevent the establishment of unity in the German and Italian style.*” While the Vietnamese were achieving this in almost the same way, they eventually succeeded in 1975. The same thing applies to the class struggle. In 1962, while the Charter was addressing global transformations, Castro was leading an armed revolution in Cuba and proclaiming the liquidation of the dominant class. Subsequently, the world witnessed armed revolutions in South Arabia, Angola, Mozambique, Cambodia, and Laos.

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The Nasserite ideology, as concluded from the Charter in the previous analysis, is a confused mixture of materialism and idealism, pragmatism, and demagoguery. This eclecticism is characterized by the absence of a definite methodology, or it may be considered a vacuous one. In fact, it is ideologically neutral and politically impartial.

The content of Nasserite ideas is summarized as calling for direct political independence, expropriating civil society in favor of the state, and extending Egypt’s influence to the Arab world to the extent that it preserves the prestige of the state at home without getting involved in real projects of Arab unity. In addition to leveraging international and local contradictions to strengthen the regime and repairing the social system to enable the state to suppress the class struggle.

*The essence of all these ideas is the realization of state sovereignty over civil society.*

Nasserism put forward the content of its ideas from the beginning of its coup, as they were fully in line with the demands of the new

power-hungry elite and the consequent realization of their interests. However, the form of these ideas was changed more than once, and even after the Charter was drawn up, other documents were issued that included a change in the image of Nasserite thought, i.e., in slogans without deep content.

The analysis of Nasserite ideology has been addressed. An analysis of slogans that could contradict the core content will be done when examining the regime's actual policies.

The Nasserite ideology reflected the rationale behind Nasserite governance. This ideology originated with the coup, through which the Nasserite elite emerged according to the dynamics at the time. Therefore, it expressed the content of its ideas with its six principles interacting with contemporary reality.

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#### The communist movement's stance on Nasserite ideology:

During the Nasserite era, alongside other political movements, the Left, with a few exceptions, ultimately aligned with the Nasserite regime. Marxist ideologues played a crucial role in promoting this regime's propaganda. Therefore, the perception of this movement will be analyzed here, not as an opposition current but as the most prominent mouthpiece of the regime on the ideological level, starting from 1964/1965 onwards. Essentially, the Marxist theorists' contributions deepened the Nasserite "philosophy." It can be argued that they played a significant role in shaping a coherent and profound Nasserite ideology. In fact, the majority of Egyptian Marxists at the time can be seen as Nasserists to varying degrees, particularly their leading intellectuals.

Although almost all Marxist organizations prior to July 1961 were still thinking in terms of the democratic revolution,<sup>[159]</sup> the measures

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<sup>[159]</sup> Rifaat Al-Saeed, Egyptian Left Organizations 1950-1957.

of 1961 led the largest of them to abandon this idea. Since then, the slogan of the socialist revolution has been espoused by the majority. It would have been more logical for the Egyptian Communist Party to reject the socialist slogans of the regime as well as the alleged socialist measures, which were premature according to the original party's political line.

Indeed, the majority of the Left became enthusiastic after Nasserism surpassed its program and supported Nasserism's new line, considering that the socialist revolution had begun, or at least that the government was moving on the path of "noncapitalist" development, which eventually leads to socialism. Furthermore, they considered this transformation a step that they were unable to perform. Most Marxists considered the declaration of socialism by Nasser as the beginning of the social revolution, while the 1952 coup was the beginning of the political revolution. Ghali Shukri, for example, does not suffice with describing Nasserism as a revolution, but rather he stated, *"We would be unfair to Nasserism if we said that it was one revolution. In fact, it was three revolutions."* Then he divided them as follows: *"The period between 1952 and 1956 is the national revolution."* *"The period between 1958 and 1961 was the revolution of national unity."* *"The period between 1961 and 1970, despite the military defeat between them, the deterioration of the economic development plan, and the rise of the 'new class,' was the social revolution, where power in the person of its leader moved from representing the middle class objectively to representing a broader*

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Interestingly, Shuhdi Attia Al-Shafei's letter to Gamal Abdel Nasser insisted that the socialist revolution was not the issue of the day for his party but rather summarized his program as follows:

1. The people rally around the current government.
2. Alliance of national classes to implement the government's program.
3. Transforming the National Union into an effective party for the whole people.
4. Removing the rift between Egypt and Iraq.
5. Confirming friendly relations with the socialist camp.

The letter was written in September 1959 and published in "al-Taliaah" magazine in January 1975. Rifaat Al-Saeed published parts of it in History of the Egyptian Communist Movement, Unity - Division - Solution (1957-1965), pp. 203-204.



*social base of the middle and small bourgeoisie, peasants, and workers.” To be fair, it should be mentioned that Ghali Shukri has described these alleged revolutionary waves as incomplete revolutions.<sup>[160]</sup> However, the reference to these “revolutions” as being incomplete expresses Mr. Shukry’s discomfort with his analysis. All revolutions throughout history were incomplete in some sense, including the Great French Revolution. Moreover, the transfer of authority from one class to another, embodied by a Boss requires an explanation that Mr. Shoukry has not provided. This concept has often been advocated by Nasserists and Egyptian Marxist intellectuals, suggesting that the leader’s evolving ideology directly influenced the transformation of the system. However, no clear mechanism has been outlined to explain how such a significant change could occur.*

Except for the initial period after the 1952 coup, members of the communist organizations were extremely enthusiastic about Nasserite policies, especially foreign and economic ones. Enthusiasm was higher during the 1960s, even among those in detention. An exception was the position of a relatively hardline leftist minority that exhibited a lack of enthusiasm, and some of whom were even hostile. They did not welcome the socialist slogans of the regime, labeling it as a bourgeois system despite the major nationalizations that had taken place. The disagreement that was always taken into account by almost everyone concerned the question of the system of government, i.e., democracy. Since the release of the arrested communists, however, the majority, particularly the intellectuals, have shifted their stance. They strived to avoid any conflict with Nasserism whenever possible, even on matters like democracy. Eventually, a front with the regime in a genuinely Nasserite manner was formed. The Marxist right factions were absorbed into the regime’s institutions, not only disbanding their party in 1965 but also adopting slogans that had never been explicitly promoted

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<sup>[160]</sup> The Counter-Revolution in Egypt, pp. 375-376.



before. Therefore, they portrayed the Nasserite governance as both revolutionary and democratic.

The Vanguard Organization included a limited number of moderate communists. Some of whom had joined before the dissolution of the Egyptian Communist Party. They played a significant role in preparing publications and research that depicted Nasserite rule as a socialist and popular democratic regime and in giving lectures to youth to indoctrinate them with the principles of Nasserite ideology mentioned above.

This group adopted the 50% formula, the Socialist Union as a revolutionary organization, and the Charter as a revolutionary theory. The latter was deemed an implicitly recognized alternative to Marxism, from which some formulas and writing traditions were borrowed and utilized in the service of Nasserism. Looking back at the official platforms of the Right of the communist movement during the period following 1965, the magazines “al-Taliaah,” “al-Kateb,” and “Rose Al-Youssef” to some extent, and the newspaper “al-Akhbar” at one point, it appears that Nasserite ideology was promoted according to Marxian formulas. Almost no single issue was devoid of dozens of assertions regarding the validity of the Nasserite “revolutionary theory” and “revolutionary organization.”

Here are some examples for the reader to grasp the spirit of the moment, so to speak:

*“Our socialism recognizes the class struggle in the Charter and provides it with the most advanced scientific analysis known, calling for a peaceful solution to it.”* <sup>[161]</sup> The same writer continues, speaking in a long paragraph about the dictatorship of the proletariat as a prerequisite for the socialist revolution. However, he “corrects” himself by saying that after the Second World War, *“something completely new appeared in the developing countries.”* *“These countries began to transform from the national revolution to socialism without establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat,*

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<sup>[161]</sup> Fouad Morsi, “al-Taliaah” Magazine, October 1966 issue.

*but by adopting new forms of the power of the working people.”* <sup>[162]</sup> Fouad Morsi, a Marxist scholar, believed that the dictatorship of the proletariat is only one form of the power of the working people. In the Marxisian classics, the power of the Soviets, or the people’s councils, was considered a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the opposite of what he meant. Fouad Morsi adds, *“The 50% principle is the most dangerous democratic principle approved by the Nasserite experience.”* <sup>[163]</sup>

Lotfi Al-Kholi conducted an in-depth analysis to mark the founding of the Vanguard Organization:

*“This objective duality of the conditions of the current Arab Egyptian society is—in my opinion—the material basis that necessarily reflects the duality of political organization in Egypt, as it must be popular and vanguard at the same time.” “This duality in organization is useful in our current circumstances in avoiding the pitfalls and shortcomings of the one-party system.”*

Furthermore, he resorts to using Hegel’s rhetoric: *“The political apparatus is therefore, objectively, a part of a total organization. In a more precise sense, it is the capable and qualified part. The relations that must exist between the socialist union and the political apparatus are of the latter type: relations of organic unity.”* <sup>[164]</sup> He then continues to talk about a new concept, which is the dual membership of the cadre of the political apparatus. What completes this dialectical analysis is what Lotfi Al-Kholi said afterward: *“Any attempt to reorganize the communist organization or form a new organization that violates the commitment must be condemned because it has become a conspiracy against the cause of building socialism in our society in the way chosen by the Charter and the alliance of the working people’s forces under its revolutionary leadership.”* <sup>[165]</sup>

Mahmoud Amin Al-Alem, the most profound theorist of Nasserism, advanced his discourse on freedom in a more Hegelian

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<sup>[162]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[163]</sup> “Al-Taliaah” Magazine, July 1965.

<sup>[164]</sup> “Al-Taliaah” Magazine, April 1965 issue.

<sup>[165]</sup> Editorial of “al-Taliaah” Magazine, Issue 12, 1966.

guise.<sup>[166]</sup> He criticized its liberal concept, presenting a very Hegelian one. He stated, “Freedom is the knowledge of necessity.” However, this was shocking to the readers because Al-Alem did not mean by “necessity” the Hegelian conception of necessity, but rather the state of permanent emergency throughout the Nasserite era. He proceeded, “*Many citizens still lack the true meaning of freedom and cling to a liberal style that does not conform to our new revolutionary circumstances,*” “*and perhaps the Charter is the most mature thing written so far about the correct scientific concept of freedom.*” Then he aligned himself with Hegel’s philosophy, stating, “*Hegel defined freedom by knowing necessity.*”<sup>[167]</sup> Then he proceeded, “*Which situation offered greater freedom:*

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<sup>[166]</sup> Intellectual Battles, pp. 154-187.

<sup>[167]</sup> The meaning that is intended by Hegel is different from that of Mahmoud Al-Alem. Hegel considered that “*freedom means that the other thing with which you deal is a second self, so that you never leave your ground but give the law to yourself. In the impulses or appetites, the beginning is from something else, from something that we feel to be external.*” (Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences, Volume 1, p. 21). Freedom, in short, means self-determination; that is, you determine yourself by yourself. If the laws express my will, then I am free. However, if they express the will of the ruler, then I am not free because “*for freedom we must feel no presence of something else which is not ourselves*” (p. 21). Hegel believed that the real is the universal, so the individual is a real human being to the extent that he is in identity with his concept as a human being, that his will is the will of the whole, the human being as a thinking self, that is, the will of reason. As for the freedom of the natural human being, it is the opposite of freedom because this human being, according to Hegel’s expression, “*Be he as self-willed as he may, the constituents of his will and opinion are not his own, and his freedom is merely formal.*” (p. 21).

The role that Hegel set for authentic freedom is much deeper than the conception of Professor Mahmoud Al-Alem. Freedom should be understood rationally. The individual human, as a thinking self, must define himself by this characteristic and thus define it according to what is reasonable. The reasonable is universal because human reason is human reason in general and not many reasons. The truth—for Hegel—is one; logic is one, and the truth always coincides with reason, for it is the reasonable itself. As for the individual reason that opposes the reasonable, it is not in identity with the concept of reason; that is, it is not a real reason.

Hegel extended his words in a straight line, deducing civil society and the state in a way that seemed logical. But in actuality, he did so in a very arbitrary way, and despite that, he said that “*a bad state is an untrue state*” (Encyclopedia, p. 22), meaning a state that does not agree with the concept of the state as he defined it. Delving into this issue would require a lot of elaboration, but the aim here is to clarify how Nasserite “philosophy” was presented using concepts that have their brilliance but with meanings that contradict them.

*Egypt before the revolution of July 23, 1952, or Egypt following it?” “In Egypt before 1952, there were parties, constitutional battles, a parliament, elections, ministries that rose and fell, newspapers and magazines owned by parties or individuals, and a parliamentary opposition.” However, he did not add that there were also unions for workers and students, the right of workers to strike, independent professional syndicates, a constitution that guaranteed personal freedoms for individuals, a public and legitimate leftist press, etc. “In the framework of revolutionary Egypt, there are no political parties, party rivalries, or parliamentary opposition in the conventional sense, along with a lack of private ownership of newspapers and magazines.” Then he contemplated, “Which of the two situations can provide more freedom?” His extensive response came in a long paragraph: “The essence of freedom prior to 1952 was associated with reactionaries, capitalists, and feudalists.” “However, after 1952, higher foundations for freedom were realized thanks to the transfer of state power to national hands. Subsequently, the authority was transmitted from the Revolutionary Council to the working people in addition to a determined percentage of workers and peasants.”*

At the end of the chapter, he remarked, *“This is the significance that we commemorate during the festivities of the glorious July Revolution.”*

It is not necessary to reiterate what was mentioned about the characteristics of Nasserite individual rule.

It is not difficult for Professor Mahmoud Al-Alem to comprehend the extent of the falsehood of the aforementioned 50%. Moreover, it is sufficient for him to refer to the Nasserite definitions of worker and fallah. Likewise, it is easy for him to see very clearly how power was transferred from the “Revolutionary Command Council” to individual rule and not to the working people. Moreover, it can be easy to notice the absence of the people’s parliament and the people’s councils, etc.

It is important to acknowledge that Al-Alem refers to the reality at the time. The parliament was deemed popular because it included 50% workers and fellahs in line with the Nasserite definition.

Nevertheless, he conveniently overlooked the fact that a substantial portion of these workers and peasants included office employees and landowners.

In the name of socialism, and with significant help from leftist thinkers, many of whom had become Nasserists, the July regime was presented as both socialist and revolutionary. However, the authorities deemed the transition to socialism a feasible option when they opted for this solution. That is, socialism could be achieved by an inspired individual whose ideas evolved, while he was at the top of a reactionary state apparatus. Moreover, it had become possible for the reactionary state apparatus to be convinced of the necessity of what was termed the socialist solution to society's problems and the transition from capitalism or other systems to socialism voluntarily and by choice. Additionally, the class struggle had acquired new titles, such as the theory of unity and struggle. With this new concept, it became possible to resolve it peacefully. Consequently, historical development had to take place not under class struggle but rather via its peaceful resolution. This had to be facilitated by a super-class element, a conciliatory apparatus, as the Nasserite authority presented itself. In the most extreme cases, the class struggle could be resolved via intellectual dialogue within the alliance of the working forces of the people. Many left-wing thinkers abandoned even the role of parliamentary rivalry and the slogan of parliamentary government. Moreover, they considered liberal democracy to be something bourgeois and reactionary, sometimes describing it as a call for a counter-revolution.

A legitimate question arises here: why had the authority, which was purportedly representing working people, been arresting and subjecting to torture those communists who adopted its demagogic slogans, or rather, whose slogans and rhetoric had been co-opted by that regime? In fact, the distinction between the state and its institutions went on and ultimately reached its pinnacle at the hands of the second leader of the majority group, Abu Seif Youssef. He acknowledged—using a Hegelian undertone—the existence of a

contradiction between communists and the Nasserists. However, he affirmed the unity of “national forces,” relying on the dialectical law of the unity and struggle of contradictions. This principle was articulated in the opinion of the majority’s philosopher by the poet’s saying,

My community, even if it is unjust to me, is dear

My family, even if they are stingy with me, is generous

The philosopher’s comment was as follows: “*This poet expresses in some way a formulation of the law of unity and struggle.*”<sup>[168]</sup> In fact, contradiction is always linked to unity. However, unity or identity in dialectics is not as Abu Sayf Yusuf’s mindset perceived it, but rather it is a *unity of contradictions*. More significantly, the philosopher did not explain the facts, as contradiction had overcome unity. He had not said any word about the possibility of this unity being unrelated to nationalism. Do not the bourgeoisie and the proletariat also unite in a single mode of production? Unity in dialectics does not imply friendship or love as our dear philosopher understands it.

Egyptian Marxism in the Nasserite period was perplexed by a power that resembled a sphinx, enveloped in ambiguity from all angles. Consequently, the differences among the new Marxist organizations that emerged after the decline of Nasserism were centered on various interpretations of the essence of that power. The confusion peaked with T. Th. Shaker, who believed that in the Nasserite regime, “*the political weight was in the intellectual sphere of the petty bourgeoisie... While its practical policy basically served the interests of the middle classes of the bourgeoisie.*” In another instance, he delved deeper into this notion, suggesting that Nasserism “*embraced the ideology of the petty bourgeoisie to wield it in the battle against its adversaries.*”<sup>[169]</sup> In

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<sup>[168]</sup> “Al-Taliaah” Magazine, January 1975.

<sup>[169]</sup> Op. cit., pp. 23-25.



reality, T. Th. Shaker explored various ideologies in his brief book and never clearly defined the essence of Nasserite authority. For instance, he stated, *“The Nasserite regime essentially represented the middle bourgeoisie and relied on the petty bourgeoisie as a strong social foundation”* (p. 37), while also mentioning in the same book that Nasserism was a coalition of the petty, middle, and upper bourgeoisie (p. 38).

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In fact, Nasserite ideology aims to justify the system rather than to seek the truth. Therefore, it has refrained from engaging in authentic interactions with other ideologies. Moreover, the Nasserite ruling elite had done its best to prevent criticism of its ideology.

It has been presented to the people as an absolute truth, akin to religion, rather than a perspective. In this regard—and to be fair—it does not differ from other ideologies in the region. However, it is formulated to outline the regime in a way that contradicts its actual content. It has been using an arsenal of borrowed concepts, emptying them of their genuine content. In this regard, it is truly unique and has outdone all other ideologies in the Arab arena.<sup>[170]</sup>

The propaganda for the Boss is a fundamental component of Nasserite ideology. It forms the basis for the phenomenon of the *cult of personality* that continues to characterize Nasserists *today*. Supporters of the Boss cult are interested in portraying him as an inspiring prophet, a saint, or one of God’s righteous figures. Nevertheless, they accept the refutation of many components of the system he represented or even reservations about it as a whole. Thus, Nasserite ideology has become a true religion: a sacred leader,

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<sup>[170]</sup> On a global level, Nasserism was overshadowed by Stalinism, which was much more profound in theory and justified by a significantly larger and more influential state. Stalinism became a widespread intellectual trend and gained immense political influence. However, Stalinism was built on a foundation that was already established, stemming from the Leninist legacy and an established party. It did not need to borrow concepts, whereas Nasserism was theoretically lacking and had to rely on the ideas of others.



his sacred sayings, and rituals such as celebrating the anniversaries of his birth and death.

Imaginary perceptions were created about Nasserite Egypt far from reality, and mentioning facts and figures is not enough to dispel them. It is a belief that is difficult to refute with logic and demonstration.

It is insufficient to end with this theoretical assessment. Instead, its validity should be examined via the analysis of concrete reality. Indeed, the essence of an idea is revealed not in its abstract form but in its opposite, concrete reality. Consequently, it is now necessary to transition from the abstract notion to the idea as an objective existence, i.e., while it is being realized.

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## **Part Two: Nasserite Policy**

**IT IS NOT ENOUGH FOR THOUGHT TO STRIVE FOR  
REALIZATION; REALITY MUST ITSELF STRIVE TOWARD  
THOUGHT**

Karl Marx

### **Prologue**

1. In the previous analysis of Nasserite ideology, a contradiction between its content and form is evident. This contradiction is, from a certain perspective, artificial and unreal, completely superficial, between words and their intended meanings. But at the same time, it is a real contradiction in a certain sense. It reflects the reality of the

contradiction between the actual content of Nasserism and the revolutionary image it attempted to portray for itself. Consequently, demagoguery is an essential constituent in Nasserite ideology, employing familiar progressive concepts but imbuing them with unique meanings. In fact, it does not embody the essence of its slogans, but rather their opposite.

However, demagoguery was not entirely baseless. For propaganda to be effective, it must rest on some realistic foundations. For this reason, certain limits are found within which Nasserism implemented its ideas, which could not have been purely demagogic. Actions, not just words, were the regime's obligation to justify its existence. In a sense, it had to—partially—implement its false revolutionary ideas that arose with its appearance and continued to crystallize throughout the entire era.

The regime adopted a trial-and-error approach, striving to accomplish specific objectives via various attempts. These objectives emerged during the power struggle period between 1952 and 1954. They resulted from the interaction of the core ideas of the “Free Officers” with the power dynamics that evolved during the mentioned period. The central Nasserite principle revolved around the new elite's absolute control of the state apparatus. This control was the fundamental thing justified by the Nasserite ideology, which logically preceded Nasserite politics. Despite changes in its form, the core content of this ideology remained consistent, perpetuating the contradiction between its content and form. The commitment to implementing Nasserite ideas posed tangible risks due to the inherent contradiction between the form and the content. The regime had to practice contradictory policies to uphold the appearance of Nasserite ideology, often leading to formal concessions and risky ventures. The dilemma at the heart of Nasserite ideas stemmed from the regime's struggle to reconcile the form with content, resulting in complex and sometimes costly situations. Nonetheless, one important insight emerged regarding the genuine essence of Nasserite thought. However, this formal

contradiction does not go unnoticed because the “Socialist-Libertarian-Unitary System” was obligated to highlight the form at the expense of the content, or more precisely, to make the latter appear like the former. Consequently, it undertook many initiatives to highlight this image. Due to the apparent contradiction between the form and the content, the commitment to highlighting the form in the image of the essence of Nasserite ideology necessitated numerous concessions, formal positions, and reckless adventurism. It also implied getting involved in embarrassing and costly situations because achieving successes consistent with the form, if it exceeds a certain limit, becomes harmful to the content itself. In short, Nasserite ideas included a dilemma that lies at the heart of the regime’s nature, which cannot be inferred from an analysis of Nasserite ideology. Rather, it requires special analysis, in which the path of this contradiction between the form and content of Nasserite ideology will be revealed.

2. The general policy of any state authority is embodied in its economic strategy, but it matures fully in its social policy, i.e., the nature of the social system it espouses or wants to modify as well as the boundaries it alters. However, the new political system was the first manifestation of the essence of Nasserism. It was directly materialized in the form of a specific system of governance, a special form of Bonapartism. Its rule was not one of its policies, but rather its pure self. Nasserism, in essence, was not a social class, but it appeared, upon beginning to decipher its symbols, i.e., from a theoretical perspective, as a mere political system. However, this system potentially had a specific policy.

3. Domestic politics and foreign policy are two sides of the same coin. The ruling elite is the source of both, and it acts for itself in each domain.

4. In summary, the contradiction between the form and content of Nasserite ideas shapes the regime's policies and actions, highlighting the challenges of maintaining a coherent narrative, while navigating real-world complexities.

## **Chapter One: The National Question**

**THE SYRIAN MINISTERS HAVE RAISED THE ISSUE OF THE  
DIVERSION OF THE JORDAN RIVER, PUTTING US IN A VERY  
AWKWARD POSITION. OUR MISSION IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS TO  
COMBAT COMMUNISM. IF WE RAISE THIS ISSUE NOW IN THE  
NEWSPAPERS, PUBLIC OPINION IN THE UNITED ARAB  
REPUBLIC AND THE ARAB WORLD WILL BE AGAINST THE  
DIVERSION, AND RUSSIA WILL JOIN IN SUPPORTING THIS  
POSITION. THEREFORE, NOTHING SHOULD BE MENTIONED IN  
THE NEWSPAPERS ABOUT THIS SUBJECT**

**Gamal Abdel Nasser**

### **1. Evacuation under the American Umbrella**

Nasserism had addressed the national question. Given the circumstances of its emergence, it was essential to approach the issue of political independence in a manner that would prevent unrest and maximize benefits for the dominant class. Simultaneously, Nasserism's interests aligned with attaining complete independence, as every authority prefers to be free. Being Bonapartist makes this goal more pressing. However, this overarching trend of Nasserism was not solely driven by the Bonapartist nature of the government but primarily by specific local political dynamics, with a consensus among most classes on the importance of direct political independence at that time. However,

while the United States was preparing to storm the Middle East, the country was up against a formidable foe in Britain.

Following the July 1952 coup, Kermit Roosevelt, an American intelligence operative in Egypt, played a key role in persuading Britain to withdraw its troops from Egypt during the negotiations.<sup>[171]</sup> The American role ultimately yielded effective outcomes, as the two parties exchanged tangible concessions. Despite the Nasserists' attempts to extract the largest possible gains via British concessions, their situation did not allow them to engage in a decisive conflict with the West. They were obligated to compromise and engage in flexible negotiations, taking what they had refused before. At the beginning of the negotiations on April 27, 1953, they faced effective internal patriotic and liberal opposition. So, they could only accept the British terms after suppressing this opposition. Anyhow, the evacuation agreement was executed, which Al-Nahhas Pasha ridiculed, and the Muslim Brotherhood opposed vehemently. The most significant factor that led to their clash with the officers was the latter's breach of commitments concerning power. However, the agreement signed on October 19, 1954, directly triggered the 1954 clash.

The agreement comprised 13 articles, including the following summarized points:<sup>[172]</sup>

1. Her Majesty's forces shall be completely evacuated from Egyptian territory in accordance with the schedule set out in Part (A) of Annex No. (1) within a period of twenty months from the date of signing the present agreement.

2. Part of the British base in the Canal will remain operational, and Egypt will hand it over to Britain

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<sup>[171]</sup> Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, *The Years of Turmoil*, al-Ahram Newspaper, 10/24/1988.

<sup>[172]</sup> The full texts of the treaty were published in Abdel Rahman Al-Rafei's book "The Revolution of July 23, 1952 - Our National History in Seven Years," pp. 54-56.

**immediately in case of an attack on a country with a joint defense treaty with the Arab League countries or Turkey. This includes using Egyptian ports. This was a new concession after the cancellation of the 1936 treaty.**

**3. In the event of an armed attack by an outside state on any country that at the time of signing this agreement is a party to the Treaty of Mutual Defense between the States of the Arab League signed at Cairo on the thirteenth of April, 1950, or Turkey, Egypt shall provide the United Kingdom with such facilities as may be necessary for the preparation of the base for war and its effective management. These facilities shall include the use of Egyptian ports to the extent strictly necessary for the purposes mentioned above.**

**4. This agreement shall remain in force for a period of seven years from the date of its signing.**

**The agreement provoked general popular discontent, but it came at a time when the patriotic opposition was weakened and unable to engage in broad battles with the authorities, except in more disastrous circumstances. Here it becomes clear how the blow to the patriotic movement enabled the dominant class to concede goals it had previously approved. Concluding such an agreement during the last Wafd government would have turned the country into an arena for civil war. However, after March 1954, it became possible to conclude such an agreement. The dominant class, in the person of the Nasserite elite, became able to resume dealing with the national question using its own rationale. Taking into account that some of the officers' strictness was in anticipation of the masses' reaction, it becomes evident that the immediate capabilities of the Egyptian dominant class were less than the limits established by this agreement. Therefore, the great ambitions that Al-Wafd previously expressed—officially—were, for the most part, throwing dust in the eyes of the patriotic movement for being unable to confront it. The pent-up public discontent was eclipsed by the “Manshiya” incident, in which an attempt was made to assassinate Gamal Abdel Nasser.**

**In the aftermath of this event, the general public's feelings turned into significant sympathy for the regime and Nasser's person. The details surrounding the incident reveal that it was indeed a real attempt by the Muslim Brotherhood to assassinate Abdel Nasser. However, it was exposed in advance and orchestrated in such a way that it would not succeed. This allowed Gamal Abdel Nasser to acquire the image of a national hero. This is substantiated by the confession of the accused and the direct planner, Hendawi Dweir, as well as Yusuf Al-Qaradawi's handling of the issue in his memoirs. It is noted that the agreement carried a clear contradiction. It is considered a step forward on the road to political independence, as it was decided that the British army would withdraw from Egypt and completely evacuate part of the base. Second, it is considered a step backward because the existence of a part of the British base became legal after it had lost its legitimacy with the abrogation of the 1936 Treaty, and, in addition, Egypt became indirectly linked to NATO through the article on Turkey.**

**The way the officers achieved political independence reflects the extent to which the authorities had become keen to exclude any role for the masses and no longer even accepted the idea of using their movement as a pressure card in negotiations in an organized manner, as the Wafd Party and even Al-Nuqrashi had done.**

**The concessions made by the officers in the 1954 agreement may have been a strategic move to ensure the evacuation of the maximum number of British soldiers. However, the execution of this objective marked a departure from the tactics employed by the pre-coup regime. While the Wafd Party had deliberately and systematically relied on mass mobilization up until 1950, the July Nights refrained from using this approach. This departure marked a change in the trajectory of the mass movement and its overall sentiment. It grew more radical, surpassing the aspirations of the dominant class. Consequently, it could no longer serve as a tool to exert pressure on colonialism. Rather, the regime confronted it, in part, by the use of violence, alongside bribery, by achieving some of**



its ambitions, while leveraging its inherent and imposed pressures. Furthermore, there existed another pivotal mechanism that subsequently contributed to the strengthening of the foundations of Nasserism. That was the authority's outbidding of the populace via official propaganda and trying, as much as possible, to surpass their dreams theoretically, while suppressing them in practice. For instance, the evacuation agreement was signed under grandiose slogans about expelling and defeating colonialism. In addition, June 18, 1956, was considered a national day, the day on which Britain completed the withdrawal of its forces from the Suez Canal in accordance with the Evacuation Agreement.

The United States reinstated its economic aid to Egypt a few days after the signing of the agreement. Additionally, a period of cooperation began between the Nasserists and the government of Nuri al-Saeed to combat communism in the Middle East. At least one meeting took place between Nasser and Nouri Al-Saeed, and Salah Salem visited Iraq following the agreement. Moreover, the Nasserite government ceased attacking the Turkey-Pakistan alliance, the Iraqi regime, and the American backing of Iraq. It was noteworthy that Salah Salem declined to respond to a specific question about the rationale for the cessation of these attacks. After he visited Cairo on September 15, 1954, Nouri Al-Saeed proclaimed, *"Viewpoints agreed on the measures that will benefit the Arabs."* His foreign minister described the 1954 agreement as *"a harbinger of good for Egypt and the Arabs."* <sup>[173]</sup> Nasser further remarked that *"If aggression occurs in the Middle East, it will come from the communist world."* <sup>[174]</sup> Additionally, he proceeded to attack the communists on almost every occasion. In

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<sup>[173]</sup> Jefferson Caffrey, the American ambassador to Egypt in the early 1950s, believed that the United States should support Nasser and likened him to Atatürk as a moderate revolutionary leader and a shield against communism. This ambassador was largely sympathetic to and understanding of the Nasserite formula. Reference: Ahmad Abdel Rahim Mustafa, "The United States and the Arab East," pp. 95, 115.

<sup>[174]</sup> Lawrence Martin, *Positive Neutrality and Non-Alignment - Modern States in World Affairs*, p. 178.

response to their opposition to the 1954 agreement, he said, *“Communists come and print and distribute leaflets that are all lies, all misleading, and all deceitful. From where do they get the money for these leaflets? Who pays for the means they use? Who do the communists serve? Do they serve Egyptian nationalism? Do they serve Egyptian sovereignty? Or do they serve a foreign country? I told you in the past that it has been proven that communism in this country and in this homeland is definitely working with Zionism, and you will hear in the near future about the latest case, which is the case of the fires that were set before the agreement, which were intended to obstruct this agreement, burning the American information offices and burning the cinemas, and it has been proven that those who set them were Zionist Jews and communists at the same time cooperating with communism.”* He further charged them in the same address with having set fire to Cairo on January 26, 1952, in an effort to incite chaos, as he set it. <sup>[175]</sup>

The same period witnessed the extension of the Egypt/Iraq axis to include Saudi Arabia,<sup>[176]</sup> as well as an “economic openness” and increasing development of various types of cooperation between Egypt and the United States.<sup>[177]</sup> It seems that the signing of the evacuation agreement was linked to providing American aid to the coup government. Muhammad Naguib even alluded to reports suggesting that the deal involved providing support to Nasser against him.<sup>[178]</sup> This may partially explain the concessions made by the Nasserite leadership, which, nonetheless, did not amount to capitulation. Nevertheless, the honeymoon with the United States was not without ups and downs. Abdel Nasser had steadfastly

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<sup>[175]</sup> President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s address at a press conference from the editorial board on 8/21/1954.

<sup>[176]</sup> Until 1958, the friendship remained warm between King Saud, the “Nasserist” at the time, and the regime of Nuri al-Saeed. They issued a joint statement in May 1957, which included: “The union between the Saudis and the Hashemites is an example for the Arab world, and any aggression against Iraq is considered an aggression against Saudi Arabia. Ahmad Hamroush, *The Story of the July 23 Revolution*, part three, p. 150.

<sup>[177]</sup> Refer to Qais Abdel Hamid Al-Yasiri, *Iraqi Press, and the National Movement*. Refer also to Fouad Al-Mursi, *Egyptian-Soviet Relations (1943-1956)*, pp. 138, 139.

<sup>[178]</sup> Muhammad Naguib, *My Word for History*, pp. 184-185.

rejected the project of a defensive alliance with the West. His public courtship of the United States persisted, intending to secure weapons and funding for the High Dam project. Essentially, the United States was expected to replace Britain's, but not via direct intervention, but by providing financial support, military equipment, and training for the army and intelligence forces. Abdel Nasser aimed to exploit the divisions within the Western bloc to his advantage.

The United States formulates its foreign policy within the framework of a general approach toward the world, in which Egypt holds a specific position. From the American point of view, replacing Britain meant, first and foremost, integrating the Arab region into a military alliance hostile to the Soviet Union in the context of the Cold War waged by the Western camp against Moscow. At the time, the United States' dread of Soviet influence had become pathological. Therefore, the aforementioned period witnessed extreme American policies, such as "brinkmanship" and "the big stick." Given the balance of political power on the Egyptian and Arab scene, Nasserism's situation was difficult. The hammer was at home: the patriotic movement, capable—despite its fragmentation—of reviving if catastrophic circumstances required, and the anvil was abroad, represented by the embarrassing American demands, especially since Nasser had signed the evacuation agreement under grandiose slogans: "Let colonialism pick up its stick and leave," to appease national sentiments. Nasserism was obligated from the beginning to set limits for itself that partially took into account the interests and sentiments of different social classes and groups.

## **2. The Dispute with the West**

After the evacuation agreement was signed and its implementation began, Nasserists felt that they had made a fair concession for gaining the trust of the West, especially given the

circumstances in the region, which were incompatible with Egypt and Arab countries joining a Western military alliance. This was the main Western demand from 1945 to 1958, and it was the source of dispute between Nasserism and the West. This was attributed by the majority of the Left to the nationalism and progressiveness of what they called the Egyptian bourgeoisie. This view ignores the fact that the officers had opened the door wide to foreign capital and that the capitalist countries had blessed their agrarian reform and their major project, the High Dam, promising to finance it. They also announced their encouragement of their policies in general. The United States even provided them with aid at a rate of 40 million dollars annually. Actually, the officers had nothing more to offer the West on the economic level than they had already given. However, they refused to make more political concessions, such as participating in a Western military alliance. This refusal reflects the officers' basic fear of the patriotic movement igniting if they accepted it. It is unlikely that allying with the West would have harmed the interests of the dominant class. It had opened its market wide to foreign capital and goods without conservation. In addition, it had built high hopes for the influx of American capital. Nevertheless, such an alliance would have adversely affected the sovereignty of the rising Nasserite elite. Al-Nahas openly expressed his viewpoint on the alliance during his negotiations with Britain in 1951. He proposed another form of cooperation between the two countries, such as arming Egypt or the presence of British forces in the Gaza Strip, citing the people's rejection of any direct British presence on Egyptian land. In other words, he registered his disagreement with the tactics only, without objecting to the strategy, which was to link Egypt to the West politically and militarily.<sup>[179]</sup>

This does not negate the dominant class's aspiration to achieve as much political independence as possible. Such an objective did not

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<sup>[179]</sup> Minutes of Political Talks and Exchanged Notes Between the Egyptian Government and the United Kingdom Government, March 1950-1951.

directly reflect economic interests. Instead, it aimed to achieve the highest degree of political freedom. This may clarify the simultaneous coincidence of the political tensions with the West alongside total economic openness toward it. The dominant class was aspiring to achieve its direct political independence, while maintaining and perhaps improving its subordinate position within the global market. In short, the aforementioned dispute was not related to subordination per se, but rather to political subordination, which Nasserism rejected on two grounds. The first of which was the most important: its fear of the explosion of the patriotic movement. The second: its own political interest as a regional power.

Subsequent events proceeded in a way that drove it to rebel and even to confront the West, especially since the Soviet Union had been seeking to expand its influence in underdeveloped countries. After World War II, the United States worked to present itself as a peace-loving power in the Arab East, with the aim of replacing Britain and France without provocation that would lead to the spread of the revolutionary tide in the region, especially among Palestinian refugees. Truman declared that he feared that the Palestinian refugees would become a “destructive force” in the region. Therefore, the USA requested that Palestine be placed under trusteeship in 1947, prior to the declaration of the State of Israel. In 1950, it collaborated with France and Britain to issue the notable “Tripartite Declaration.” This declaration affirmed the right of countries in the Middle East, including Israel, to safeguard regional security and their internal stability through a collective defense arrangement. In addition, the three countries had committed to support each of them militarily to the extent necessary to achieve this objective with a mutual pledge of non-aggression.<sup>[180]</sup> Moreover, in 1952, the United States had rejected Israel’s appeal for military

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<sup>[180]</sup> Refer to the statement in Saleh Saeb Al-Jabouri, *The Ordeal of Palestine and Its Political and Military Secrets*, pp. 386-387.

aid and opted instead to support Arab countries and Israel economically. It even cut off its aid to Israel due to its insistence on diverting the trajectory of the Jordan River. Additionally, it suspended a short-term loan to Israel in the same period due to its insistence on shifting the government headquarters to Jerusalem. The USA had also submitted, in collaboration with France and Britain, a draft to the United Nations condemning Israel's military assault against the West Bank. These positions were designed to enhance the United States' reputation in the Middle East. In addition, to gain the backing of Arab countries in the context of the Cold War. In fact, this policy reflected an escalation of the Arab nationalist movement.

This entry into the region aimed to engage Arab countries in a military alliance led by the United States. The main objective of this alliance was encircling the Soviet Union from the south and linking Arab countries directly to the United States. However, this was actually unattainable at a time when the Arab nationalist movement was raging.

The dominant class was insisting on rejecting this idea prior to July 1952. It faced pressure from the patriotic movement on the one hand, while leveraging the new international dynamics on the other hand. Particularly the tensions between the Soviet Union and the West, as well as the internal contradictions within the West itself. The same situation continued after the July coup, while relations between Egypt and America continued to be fine for both sides except for one thing: the idea of a military alliance.

At the time, Egypt was among the Arab countries least hostile to Israel.<sup>[181]</sup> Moreover, Nasserism was ready to set a final peace agreement with that country. Clandestine talks were held in Paris in 1954 between envoys of both Moshe Sharett and Gamal Abdel Nasser. The aim was to establish peace on the borders and open the

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<sup>[181]</sup> Alfred Lilienthal, *There Goes the Middle East*, p. 92.



Suez Canal for the passage of Israeli goods without ships.<sup>[182]</sup> Egypt also agreed with the United States on a project to settle Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip in Sinai.<sup>[183]</sup>

However, these projects were aborted due to Israel's refusal and the Palestinian rebellion in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, Israel did not want the British evacuation of Egypt, as it knew about the negotiations under US supervision. It considered the British base in the canal a safety belt for it in the south, at a time when it was still building itself. Israel also saw Nasserite Egypt as a competitor for the American friendship that was rapidly growing. To end the Egyptian-British talks and destroy the relationship between Egypt and America, Israel planned to carry out sabotage operations in Egypt against American and British installations in what was known as the Lavon Affair,<sup>[184]</sup> which was exposed and disgraced by the Nasserite government, leading it to withdraw from the Paris negotiations.

In fact, the hard-line Zionist factions in Israel were not inclined to achieve peace with Egypt. Consequently, they thwarted the attempt of moderate Zionists by the Lavon Affair. Following the termination of the Paris talks and the fall of Lavon, Israeli policies toward Egypt became more aggressive. Regarding the Sinai project, the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip protested and opposed it, compelling the Nasserite government to cease its implementation.

In fact, Israel's victory in 1948 and its success in evacuating the Egyptian army from the Negev were not the end of its aspirations. Arab guerrilla raids from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank had continued, worrying Israel and mobilizing it against the

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<sup>[182]</sup> David Downing and Gary Herman, War without end, peace without hope: Thirty years of the Arab-Israeli conflict, p. 83 - Muhammad Nasr Mahna, The Soviets and the Palestine Question, p. 23. Some have pointed to Egypt's direct negotiations with Israel in 1950, Op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>[183]</sup> Abdel Qader Yassin, Doubts about the Palestinian Revolution, p. 101.

<sup>[184]</sup> David Downing-Gary Herman, Op. cit., pp. 83-84.



surrounding Arab countries. Israel then launched retaliatory raids on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The Arab regimes surrounding Israel were also unwilling or unable to accept the existence of the Zionist state for two reasons: the first was their concern about the growth of Israel's power in the region, while each of them originally feared the other (Iraq-Saudi Arabia, Iraq-Syria, Jordan, etc.). The second was the strength of the Arab nationalism movement, which prompted regimes such as Nouri Al-Saeed's to fiercely oppose Israel's admission into the Baghdad Pact. However, these two reasons were not enough to push the Arab regimes to take serious action against Israel. Indeed, no Arab regime, except the leftist Syrian government in 1966 and 1967, permitted Arab guerrillas to act against Israel within its borders or even within the Palestinian territory under its administration. For instance, the Nasserite regime had been protecting the borders with Israel and the Gaza Strip, arresting the fedayeen, and confiscating their weapons from 1952 until the last moment of Nasserism's life, except for very brief moments when the guerrilla operations were being launched under government supervision.

However, the inability and unwillingness of the Arab regimes to take specific action against Israel did not prevent the latter from constantly striving to achieve its interests in the region. As early as 1952, it began diverting the trajectory of the Jordan River in its favor, despite the United States' opposition. It also drained al-Hula Lake. Moreover, it launched numerous assaults on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in response to the guerrilla raids, to pressure Arab regimes to recognize it, and to spoil the American plan that aimed to integrate these regimes into a Western military alliance. Israel feared that this alliance would strengthen Arab states and provide them with American protection against its ambitions. In addition to reducing the West's dependence on it, which would negatively affect its capabilities. One of the most prominent results of Israel's repeated raids was the rise of anti-Western nationalism in the Arab world, which pushed the Nasserite

regime to shift from one of the least hostile Arab regimes to one of the most hostile to Israel.

The American policy aimed to win over both Israel and Arab regimes. However, it was caught between the hammer of the Arab nationalist movement, mainly represented by the intelligentsia at that time, and the anvil of the Israeli expansionist tendency, which greatly motivated the former. The Arab nationalist movement, in turn, pressured Arab regimes, making it impossible for them to fully accept the American plans.

Therefore, the dispute with the West had escalated quickly:

Israel launched a military attack on the Gaza Strip in February 1955, killing 40 Egyptian soldiers and Palestinian civilians. Residents of the Strip responded with three consecutive days of public demonstrations, during which clashes with the Nasserite police resulted in the deaths of about 40 Palestinians.<sup>[185]</sup> The main demands of the protesters encompassed the safeguarding of the Strip by the Egyptian army, providing Palestinian people with arms, and permitting the guerrilla to operate against Israel. The Nasserite government had declared its agreement to protect the Strip and arm the people, leading to the cessation of the demonstrations. Nevertheless, it then arrested many communists and Muslim Brotherhood members within the Strip, while beginning to establish Palestinian guerrilla units under its oversight. However, the main outcome of the Israeli raid was the Egyptian government's insistence on requesting weapons from the West. However, the latter began to procrastinate, thus unwittingly spoiling its own plans. Unarmed demonstrations in the Gaza Strip compelled Nasserism to form fedayeen squads. So, what can the nationalist movement do in the Levant and Iraq in particular? In this context, a semi-official alliance was formed between Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, aiming to confront Israel and the project of the Baghdad Pact,

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<sup>[185]</sup> Abdel Qader Yassin, *Op.cit.*, pp. 53-54.

which had already begun to form and was joined by Iraq, Turkey, and Pakistan, while the Egypt-Iraq axis dissolved. The new alliance proposed an alternative to that pact, which was to provide Arab countries with weapons for self-defense, suggesting that direct alignment with the West may be supportive of communist expansion, rather than the other way around, as the United States and Britain thought. However, it seems that American diplomacy was smart enough to refrain from exerting severe pressure on Arab regimes to include them in the alliance. It was evident that the influence of communist organizations was increasing in countries directly linked to the West, such as Iraq. However, objective differences were pushing the relationship between Arab regimes and the West toward more tension, as Israel's ambitions could not be completely thwarted. In addition, nothing specific could be provided to it or to Arab regimes except at the expense of the other side.

In terms of official economic relations, things went well, but in politics the question of a military alliance remained a difficult knot to resolve. Instead of an alliance, the Nasserite regime insisted on demanding arms. It was obvious that it understood the balance of power in the Middle East better than the American administration. The establishment of a defensive alliance in the Middle East could have directly stimulated the collapse of the involved Arab regimes, as happened in Iraq shortly after. This matter was not well evaluated or appreciated by Western countries. On the contrary, they escalated their dispute with Nasserism to its pinnacle by implicitly encouraging Israel's raids and threats and by refusing to supply Egypt with defensive weapons. The alternative policy, i.e., arming Egypt, posed a larger risk from the American point of view since it would eventually lead to war with Israel because the latter would not accept the presence of a well-armed Arab state adjacent to it. Moreover, according to American policy, it was permissible to allow Israel to be overwhelmingly militarily superior to the regimes around it because it represented for them the strategic base in the region. Therefore, arming Arab regimes required increasing Israel's

armament or putting the United States in an awkward position. The American tank deal with Saudi Arabia, finalized in 1955, led to a crisis for American diplomacy when it was delivered in 1957. Despite this, the United States sought to present itself as a neutral party, while Britain, France, and Canada continued to supply weapons to Israel.

The American government quickly came to terms with the situation and began providing economic assistance to Nasserite Egypt in 1958/1959, fully accepting the entry of Soviet arms and understanding Nasserism's conservative role in the region.

### **3. The Clash with the West**

Nasserism firmly refused to join the Baghdad Pact. Consequently, a reaction ensued, characterized by Western pressure, particularly the persistent threat of Israeli aggression. Simultaneously, the Arab nationalist movement went beyond merely rejecting the defensive pact, but rather extended this rejection to demand a neutral policy on a global level. This was one of the most prominent ideas of the Baath party and the Egyptian patriotic movement. Abdel Nasser clearly expressed his understanding of this fact when he attended the Non-Aligned Conference in Bandung (1955). He stated, *"My visit to India (on his way back from Bandung) was a turning point in my political conception. I learned that the only wise policy for us is to adopt positive neutrality and non-alignment. After my return home, the welcome with which this policy was received convinced me that it was the only possible policy that could attract the widest support from the Arab people."*<sup>[186]</sup> The concept of non-alignment emerged within the Egyptian political landscape prior to the July coup. It was the perspective of a substantial bloc of the dominant class and the middle strata since the Second World War. The Wafd Party also strongly embraced it. Rather, the Socialist Party called to side with the Soviet Union against the West

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<sup>[186]</sup> Anwar Abdel Malek, *Egyptian Society and the Army*, p. 229.

and found significant support among intellectuals. It was also the same stance of Marxist organizations. This indicates that the patriotic movement adopted the idea of non-alignment at least. Moreover, the dominant class found an opportunity to improve the conditions of its dependency in light of the Cold War by following this policy. These facts are what Abdel Nasser discovered, as he mentioned after his return from Bandung.

This statement indicates that the policy of absolute dependency on the West was rejected by Arab masses and that Nasserism had embraced non-alignment in response to pressure from the nationalist movement, at least as a fundamental motivation. Non-alignment was not solely a Nasserite choice but a decision influenced by real pressures from Arab public opinion, spearheaded by the Baath, Arab nationalists, and Egyptian intelligentsia. Gamal Abdel Nasser was frank and straightforward with the American Secretary of State, Dulles, when he justified his refusal to enter into a military alliance with the West. He argued that such an alliance would jeopardize his position of authority due to the sentiments of Egyptian patriots, to the extent that Dulles seemed to be persuaded by his reasoning. Nasser's response was, *"If I tell my people that the British position here will change and that they will turn from occupiers into partners simply by changing the flag, they will laugh at me. They will lose faith in me, and other people will start their activities secretly underground and gain the people's trust. If I stop leading my people as a national leader, other national leaders will arise, and must arise, and will lead the Egyptians and will exploit my participation and membership in the alliances concluded with you to say that I am your agent and your creation."* <sup>[187]</sup>

Egypt's attendance at the Non-Aligned Conference meant that Nasserism was beginning to rely on external forces in the face of imperialist pressure. At least that is how it looked.

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<sup>[187]</sup> Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, *The Cairo Documents: The Inside Story of Nasser and His Relationship with World Leaders, Rebels, and Statesmen*, pp. 66-68.

**In Bandung, Nasser grasped the power of the communist camp and a new ally, the People's Republic of China, which would later play a role in concluding the Czech arms deal. He also discovered that the non-aligned countries themselves could play a supporting role for him in international politics, especially since they had not anticipated Israel's invitation to attend the conference. In fact, the international conflict between East and West gave small, backward countries an opportunity to achieve some gains and play a relatively tangible role on the international scene.**

### **Heading East**

#### **1. The Soviet Union and the Middle East**

**Following the October Revolution of 1917, the young, nascent state promptly extended military assistance to Kamal Ataturk and offered economic aid to Afghanistan in 1920.**

**Lenin's government positioned itself as a revolutionary entity. It considered Russia, which later became the Soviet Union, just a base for the international revolution. Thus, it prioritized revolution over the state. However, the actual policy was not consistent with this proposal. From the outset, the interests of the state took precedence over all other considerations, even at the expense of revolutionary movements overseas. This policy was initially executed cautiously under radical revolutionary slogans. However, following Stalin's coup, the slogan "socialism in one country" became the official stance in the Kremlin, shifting Soviet policy to openly prioritize the state over revolution. Other countries and powers were viewed as mere pawns in the struggle with the West. The Soviet government came to define its position toward various governments according to their attitude toward the West rather than their people. This shift in focus was encapsulated in the slogan "socialism in one country." In addition to making deals with various reactionary governments, the Soviet bureaucracy utilized compliant Communist parties in other countries to further its diplomatic goals, disregarding the interests**



of the revolution within those communities. Numerous examples exist, such as the Comintern's directive in 1935 for Communist parties to align with the "Popular Front" and "National Front" against fascism, reversing this stance in 1939 after signing the Soviet-German Treaty. The Soviet government then called for intensified opposition to Anglo-French colonialism. In 1941, following the Nazi invasion of Soviet territory, the focus returned to anti-fascism. Additionally, the Soviet government urged semi-colonial governments to declare war on the Axis powers, criticizing the Wafd Party for not doing so. Stalinist organizations in the colonies promptly followed these directives, despite their inconsistencies.

Until the 1950s, the Soviet Union had depended on its affiliated parties to create and extend its influence in other countries. But due to the weakness of these parties in the Middle East during the 1940s, the Soviet Union had little influence in this region. Until the 1950s, the Soviet Union relied on affiliated parties to create and extend its influence in other countries. Due to the weakness of these parties in the Middle East during the 1940s, the Soviet Union had little influence in the region. However, its positions in the Security Council on the Syrian and Lebanese questions after the war and on the Egyptian question in 1947 improved its reputation among the Arab masses, reinforced by the absence of any previous colonial history in the region, as well as its heroic war against fascism in World War II. Since 1955/1956, however, the Soviet Union began to exert its influence and extend it via national governments directly, with military and economic aid. <sup>[188]</sup>

The Soviet policy in the Middle East can be summed up by a single political goal: to counter Western influence in the region in order to prevent the West from encircling the Soviet Union

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<sup>[188]</sup> Lacour, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East*, pp. 287-300.



militarily and maritimately from the south. It was mostly a defensive approach.

## **2. The Soviet Union and Arab Nationalism**

The Soviet Union's position toward Arab countries was consistent with its general approach toward the Middle East as a whole. Therefore, it dealt with Arab nationalism in the framework of its overall strategy. Thus, its perspective regarding the concept of the Arab nation can only be understood on this basis. Ultimately, Soviet diplomacy did not acknowledge the existence of the so-called Arab nation or its right to establish a unified national state. <sup>[189]</sup>

Regarding the Zionist movement, the Soviet Communist Party took a hostile position from its inception until 1930. This hostility continued for some time; however, it gradually subsided, allowing the establishment of a Jewish Agency center in Moscow. In the 1940s, Stalinist plans in the Middle East coincided with the Zionist movement. Zionist organizations in Palestine began to attack the British military presence at a time when removing Britain from the Middle East was one of the goals of Soviet policy. The Soviet's position on Zionism had been determined according to the latter's direct position toward Western colonialism. Its position on the Arab nationalist movement was not considered, even regardless of the nature of Zionist ideology itself. Consequently, from the beginning of the Zionist "struggle" against British colonialism in Palestine, Soviet propaganda strived to project a progressive image of Zionism. Moreover, it proceeded to criticize Arab rulers, not because they failed to protect their country, but because, as Stalinist propaganda claimed, *"they actually wanted to make the Jews a national*

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<sup>[189]</sup> The Soviet Union was hostile to the Arab Baath movement and declared its position in the late 1950s. In addition, the Soviet delegate's position in the Security Council in 1947 on the Egyptian issue was also opposed to the unity of Egypt and Sudan, because *"he does not know exactly the aspirations of the Sudanese people."* (Fouad Al-Mursi, Op. cit., p. 89).

*minority in Palestine.*”<sup>[190]</sup> In addition, in 1948, the Soviet Union condemned the declaration of war on Israel by Arab countries, characterizing it as “*Arab aggression against Israel.*”<sup>[191]</sup>

The Soviet government espoused the project of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. Malenkov, one of the most senior Soviet officials at the time, declared in July 1944 that the territorial demands of the Jewish people must be met. Additionally, at the Yalta Conference in 1945, Stalin consented to establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Furthermore, the Soviet delegate to the

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<sup>[190]</sup> Lacour believed that the Soviet Union had imagined that the success of the Zionist Left in Palestine would lead to the establishment of a Jewish socialist state, or at least a state more progressive than the Arab countries. In the Soviet sense, this would be a state closer to Moscow than the states of the reactionary Arab kings. This perception was a product of Soviet analysis of the Zionist movement during the 1940s. The establishment of kibbutzim and the dominance of the workers’ union over the largest industrial establishments were not considered socialism by the Soviets until the 1940s, when the clash between Zionism and Britain began after the ban on Jewish immigration in 1939 (Reference: Menachem Begin, *The Revolt: Story of the Irgun*). That is, after Zionism began to work—objectively—in the interest of Soviet policy in the short term. In general, Soviet policy is not based on principles. Additionally, the Soviet Union was a state, not a revolution, with its own interests that explained all its policies. However, Soviet policy was short-sighted, resulting not from its stupidity, which sometimes is not ruled out, but from the narrowness of its interests, which determine its defensive strategy and, consequently, its own shortsightedness. It bet on Zionism against anti-colonial Arab nationalism because the latter, by launching a radical battle with the foreign presence in the region as a whole, exceeded the horizon of Soviet strategy. In fact, it constitutes the seed of an independent power with enormous interests and ambitions, which cannot be compared to Zionism as it appeared in the 1940s in particular. *Op. cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>[191]</sup> The development of the Soviet Union’s position on the 1948 war, has clear significance:

\*1948-1950: War of Arab aggression against Israel.

\*1950-1958: the war is an act for which Israel and the Arab countries take responsibility. This marked a period of deteriorating relations between Moscow and Tel Aviv following the latter’s stance on the Korean War and its involvement in the 1956 aggression against the Nasserite regime, which was aligned with Moscow.

\*1958 and beyond: War is an act of aggression on the part of Israel.

This is the period that witnessed the crystallization of the map of Soviet relations with the countries of the Middle East.

Lacour, *Op. cit.*, pp. 174-175.

Security Council declared in 1947 that *“it is unjustifiable to deny the Jewish people their right to realize their hopes for the establishment of their own national state.”* <sup>[192]</sup>

The Soviet government went on to outdo the United States, declaring that the U.S. *“merely claimed”* to support Israel, while it *“did everything it could to harm it. It recognized Israel only in de facto terms, while the Soviet Union recognized it in full legal terms.”*<sup>[193]</sup> The Soviet ambassador presented his credentials in Jerusalem in 1954 as the capital of Israel.<sup>[194]</sup> Furthermore, in 1951, the Soviet delegate to the Security Council chose to abstain from voting on a resolution condemning Egypt for not allowing Israeli vessels to transit the Suez Canal. At that time, the Egyptian patriotic movement expected that he would use a veto.<sup>[195]</sup> He also abstained from voting on a resolution condemning Israel for attempting to divert the trajectory of the Jordan River, while Western countries—the United States, France, and Britain—approved the resolution.

The Soviet Union likewise opposed discussing the Palestinian refugee situation in 1948 unless the issue of Jewish refugees in Europe was concurrently addressed. This position continued until 1955. Furthermore, in the late 1940s, the Soviet Union permitted the governments of Eastern European countries to supply Jewish organizations in Palestine with weapons.<sup>[196]</sup>

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<sup>[192]</sup> Muhammad Nasr Mehanna, Op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>[193]</sup> Lacour, Op. cit., p. 175.

<sup>[194]</sup> Ibid., p. 234; Muhammad Nasr Mehanna, Op. cit., p. 21.

It seems that the caution of the United States in dealing with Israel until the early fifties was an additional motivation for the persistence on the part of the Soviet Union in expressing its feelings toward it.

<sup>[195]</sup> Fouad Al-Morsi, Op. cit., pp. 148-152.

<sup>[196]</sup> Some Israeli leaders mentioned in their memoirs that without the military support of the Eastern Bloc, Zionism would not have been able to continue its “struggle” in Palestine. Indeed, the few aircraft that Israel had during the 1948 war were imported from Czechoslovakia. Alfred Lilienthal also mentioned the same information (ibid., p. 26, p. 124).

However, the Soviet position began to change in the early 1950s with Israel's acceptance of the Tripartite Declaration of 1950. This acceptance significantly undermined the hopes that the Kremlin had for the State of Israel. The second blow came shortly after when Israel supported the West in the Korean War. Relations were severed by Moscow in 1953 but restored after Israel pledged not to enter into alliances hostile to the Soviet Union.

Thus, Israel exposed the shortsightedness of Soviet policy by openly declaring its identity as an organic ally of the West. In contrast, Arab regimes in Egypt and Syria had begun, since the mid-1950s, to highlight their disagreement with Western projects in the Middle East, while the conflict between them and Israel intensified. All of this prompted the Soviet policy to reconsider its position on both sides. Finally, the Kremlin woke up to the fact that Israel was persecuting the Arab minority in Palestine, expelling them from their homes, attacking neighboring countries, and the Jordan River, etc. In fact, the Soviet position changed gradually and timidly, perhaps in anticipation of other changes. It began in 1953 when the Soviet Union opposed a draft resolution in the Security Council condemning Egypt for refusing to allow Israeli ships to pass through the Suez Canal. Then, it supported Syria against Israel in 1954 regarding the latter's project to drain Lake al-Hula. Additionally, Egypt and Syria categorically rejected the pro-Western military alliance project, a satisfactory position for the Soviet Union.

Thus, the Soviets' tensions with Israel began to escalate in 1955. Soviet media launched sharp attacks on Israel because of its repeated assaults on neighboring countries, particularly after Egypt concluded the Czech arms deal. The Soviet position on Israel and Zionism changed to its opposite within a fixed framework, which was the Soviet bureaucracy's defense against Western harassment. Therefore, the episodes of hostility toward Zionism, supporting it, and then returning to attack it were not characterized by complete consistency. Hostility did not prevent the establishment of a Jewish

Agency center in Moscow. Furthermore, the support did not accompany the permission for Soviet Jews to immigrate to Israel, despite the insistence of the Jewish Agency and later the Israeli government. As this immigration at a time when Stalin was announcing that he had achieved 99% of socialism was something that could do his socialism a great disservice. However, Moscow allowed immigration during its new period of hostility toward Zionism, under pressure from the international consensus, its need for American wheat shipments, and Western loans.<sup>[197]</sup>

Thus, the Soviet Union's position on Zionism, as well as on Arab nationalism, was determined in all these periods by the supreme interests of the Soviet state.

### **3. The Soviet Union and Nasserism**

The Soviet government's perspective on Nasserism underwent several fluctuations. Initially, the July 1952 coup was considered an American-backed coup, and the Soviet Union declared its hostility toward the "Free Officers." Their media criticized the agrarian reform law on the grounds that it was meaningless and prepared to save the large landowners from an inevitable revolution.<sup>[198]</sup> Soviet newspapers also attacked the death sentence issued against Khamis and Al-Baqari and the arrests of communists that took place at that time as a sign of the coup leaders' concern about the workers' and peasants' movement.<sup>[199]</sup> But as soon as the officers clearly declared their rejection of the project of a pro-Western alliance, the Soviets announced in 1953 that *"the army revolution took place, and for the first*

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<sup>[197]</sup> The emigration of Jews and others from the Soviet Union is regarded as a fundamental human right. Nevertheless, this issue is addressed here in terms of its relation to the underlying motivations of Soviet policy.

<sup>[198]</sup> Lacour, Op. cit., p. 179.

<sup>[199]</sup> Fouad Al-Mursi, Op. cit., p. 129.

*time in Egypt a socialist government was formed that eliminated feudalism and confiscated the money of the exploiters.”* <sup>[200]</sup>

Thus the situation changed from describing the agrarian reform as being prepared to save the large landowners to claiming that the officers’ government had eliminated feudalism. The narrative also shifted from the “American coup” to a “socialist government.” Moreover, the outcry for Egyptian communists turned into shouting in their faces. During the conflict between Muhammad Naguib and the liberals against the Nasserists, the Soviet Union initially supported the former. However, after the Nasserists rejected the military alliance, Moscow’s position was reversed. The first trade treaty between the officers and the Soviet Union was signed in March 1954, which decided to supply wheat to Egypt in exchange for cotton. Subsequent deals were made to import oil and Soviet films. The Egyptian government then began sending students to Soviet universities in small numbers. <sup>[201]</sup>

Until then, negotiations between Nasserists and Britain were still ongoing. After the signing of the evacuation agreement, the Soviet position on Nasserism changed once more. However, it no longer supported the liberals, who had lost their organized presence, but instead supported the Muslim Brotherhood, which opposed the agreement, which the Kremlin acknowledged had been signed under American pressure. When it became evident that the agreement was not the beginning of a long honeymoon with the West, the Soviet Union once again considered Nasserism a revolutionary government hostile to colonialism. This position was reinforced after Abdel Nasser attended the Bandung Conference in 1955 and recognized

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<sup>[200]</sup> Ibid., quoted from Radio Moscow on 11/22/1953, p. 132. This reference mentions many other facts that clearly illustrate the development of the Soviet stance on the July 1952 coup, pp. 121-140.

<sup>[201]</sup> Since 1958, the liquidity crisis in hard currency prompted the government officials to increase the number of students in Soviet universities and universities in Eastern European countries instead of universities in America and Western European countries.



the People's Republic of China. It proceeded to support the Nasserite government economically by purchasing the stagnant inventory of cotton in the same year and providing significant loans to both Egypt and Syria.<sup>[202]</sup> Furthermore, while Egyptian exports to the Soviet Union accounted for approximately 50 percent of all exports in 1957,<sup>[203]</sup> the latter suspended its economic relations with Israel.<sup>[204]</sup>

This tangible improvement in relations with the Soviet Union represented significant support for Abdel Nasser in his conflict at that time with the West over the issue of the defensive alliance. After the expansion and repetition of Israeli raids, Nasser started to threaten to acquire weapons from the Soviet Union, especially since Zhou Enlai had promised him during the Bandung Conference that this was feasible. Instead of providing Nasserism with weapons, Western countries increased their pressure, withholding funding for the High Dam and providing Israel with weapons and economic aid. In these circumstances, Nasser saw only one way out: the Soviet Union. He concluded an arms deal with Czechoslovakia in May 1955. The pact frightened the West, while delighting Arab peoples and governments, including the British proxy government of Nouri Al-Saeed. In these conditions, Western governments would not have attempted to counterbalance the deal with a comparable one. NATO would not have recklessly shipped Nasserism further and more ambitiously at a time when the Soviet Union could have earned an important point and cut it off. From the perspective of the Arab masses, Nasserism appeared as a revolutionary administration, giving it unrivaled trust. In such conditions, the West's concession to Nasserism proved counterproductive.

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<sup>[202]</sup> Laqueur, *Op. cit.*, pp. 245-247, p. 296.

<sup>[203]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>[204]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

After this deal, the Kremlin regarded Nasserism as its foothold in the Middle East, followed by Syria and Yemen, both of which entered into a similar agreement in 1956. Above all, the Soviet press attacked some Egyptian communists who continued to oppose Nasserism after the deal. For instance, this statement: *“The troublemakers who call themselves communists in Egypt and who dare to oppose the government of President Nasser.”*<sup>[205]</sup> These troublemakers were only a few, as statements of support for Nasser were being issued from prison by all major organizations at the time. Additionally, the “United Egyptian Communist Party” took a similar position. In issue 32 of the newspaper “Kifah al-Shaab,” (Struggle of the People), Communists opposed to Nasserism were described as a group pretending to be communists, and the party even pledged to stand up to this group: *“We call on our fellow workers and the Egyptian working class to be wary of anyone claiming to be communist and trying to cast doubt on the patriotism of the leader of the patriotic movement today, President Abdel Nasser.”*<sup>[206]</sup> Thus, the Communist Party began to support Nasserism, blaspheming its opponents from communists outside the party, gradually turning to Nasserism.

The Soviet-Czechoslovak agreement was reached during a period when the Nasserists were persistently waging their holy war against communism, while numerous communists were under arrest. However, this did not matter to the Kremlin rulers, who gave all consideration only to the international conflict.

### The Crisis

### The High Dam

The new relationship between Egypt and the Soviet Union was essentially an outcome of the crisis in Egypt’s relationship with the West. Until the arms deal, the crisis was still dormant. This crisis

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<sup>[205]</sup> Ibid., p. 253.

<sup>[206]</sup> Rifaat Al-Saeed, *Egyptian Left Organizations 1950-1957*, pp. 283-284.

was related to Nasserite Egypt's rejection of the principle of a defense alliance, which was completely rejected by the Arab nationalist movement. But with the arms deal, the crisis reached the right moment to explode.

In the same year (1955), the Soviet Union offered to finance the High Dam project, without any conditions, at a time when Western countries were dragging their feet on finalizing the agreement on the implementation of the project. However, Nasser did not announce his acceptance of the Soviet offer. Instead, he told Dulles, *"We prefer to deal with the World Bank even though the Russian government has offered us better terms."*<sup>[207]</sup> Thus, Nasser skillfully capitalized on international contradictions as much as possible by relenting and applying pressure on one power against another, avoiding or minimizing a confrontation with the United States.

The World Bank agreed to finance the project at an interest rate of 5.5%, with the bank supervising the Egyptian budget. Later, the terms were amended in Egypt's favor. The United States and Britain also agreed to co-finance, but only by providing their annual shares. The Egyptian government agreed.

The project faced resistance from Zionist groups in the United States, which were concerned that Egyptian-American relations would not be strengthened. American cotton farmers also feared competition from Egyptian cotton. Additionally, the "Friends of China" groups were angered by Nasser's recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1955. The conclusion of the Soviet arms agreement caused a temporary break in Nasserism-American relations. The crisis began when a senior American official asked the Egyptian ambassador in Washington to work toward peace with Israel and halt the arms deal as an unofficial condition for completing the High Dam deal. However, accepting the American condition was not possible or necessary at that time. The Soviet

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<sup>[207]</sup> Fouad Al-Mursi, Op. cit., p. 194.

Union had emerged as a strong alternative to American support, and Nasserite Egypt was not completely powerless; therefore, it did not accept the harsh American conditions. Subsequently, America and Britain announced their withdrawal of the offer to finance the High Dam as a punishment for Abdel Nasser. The World Bank, which is subordinate to American interests, followed suit by withdrawing its contribution to the financing, as it was complementary to the American contribution.

The importance of the High Dam battle lies in its role as a direct confrontation between the Nasserite regime and the West. From an economic perspective, the project did not pose any threat to Western interests. There were no real disagreements about it, especially since the officers had accepted American economic conditions.<sup>[208]</sup> The disagreement was purely political, centered on the defensive alliance and reflecting a broader disagreement about the overall relationship between Egypt and the West, particularly in terms of Egypt's position within American strategy.

It is necessary to carefully monitor the powerful party in the Middle East arena that had threatened the plans of the West and those who had accepted them. This party was the Arab nationalist movement, which is often overlooked by most analysts sympathetic to Nasserism. They considered the Nasserite regime's rejection of the US plan a direct expression of great economic and developmental ambitions. However, it was overlooked that the political and economic pressures exerted by the United States did not consistently consider the corresponding influences from the

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<sup>[208]</sup> When the United States defunded the High Dam project, it cited economic reasons related to what it claimed to be Egypt's inability to bear its burden. This was a flimsy argument intended to justify its decision. Some American farmers expressed concerns about competition from Egyptian cotton, a point raised by certain American circles. However, this argument lacked justification, as Egyptian cotton was experiencing a downturn at that time, particularly following the conclusion of the Korean War. Consequently, the Egyptian government was not anticipated to increase its agricultural production; rather, it was transitioning to substitute it with rice.

nationalist movement on Nasserism or the high regard in which it was held by the officers' government.

Nasserism reacted to the defunding of the High Dam by nationalizing the Suez Canal Company. The Nasserite government had been preparing to take over the canal since 1954, indicating its intention to nationalize it. The Nasserists issued a secret decision to conduct a full survey of the canal's operating capabilities. The government also began to attack the company and prepare Egyptian guides to manage the canal since 1955, when the company rejected its demands for improving working conditions in Egypt's favor. The nationalization of the canal had been a widely supported popular demand since the period preceding the coup, as the canal company, despite its substantial profits, represented a daunting colonial legacy. Therefore, the nationalization of the canal was not merely a direct reaction to defunding the dam project. In fact, there had been specific disputes surrounding it before, as an economic project, and Abdel Nasser found in its nationalization an opportunity to respond to the Western pressures. The greatest danger of nationalizing the canal from a Western perspective was, in fact, the possibility of triggering a chain reaction of nationalization waves that would extend to the entire Third World. According to the French newspaper "Le Monde," the Suez Canal Company *"represents something other than just the interests of a joint-stock company or certain shareholders. It represents a symbol, and if this symbol falls, the dam will collapse, and nationalization will follow nationalization; all the oil companies will collapse, and this will be the final blow to the West's prestige."* [209]

The nationalization of the canal was not only an economic blow to Western domination but was also a strong blow to a symbol of its political hegemony and prestige. It actually served as a political response to its pressures. This response came at a time when the Nasserists were enjoying significant Soviet military and economic support, as well as significant popular support after the Bandung

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[209] Quoted from Michel Kamel, *America and the Arab East*, p. 118.

Conference. This blow garnered strong support for Nasserism from the Arab nationalist movement in the entire region. Nasserism had achieved multiple objectives: a strong response to American-British pressures, securing funding for the High Dam project, gaining the support of the nationalist movement, and disciplining the company that refused to comply with its demands.

Indeed, the nationalization of the canal had a significant impact both nationally and internationally. It marked the peak of the crisis with the West, and the negative perception of Nasserism in the Arab world was effectively dispelled. This action dealt a severe blow to a matter of great importance: the prestige of the West, which overshadowed the decision to annul the 1936 treaty. The Canal Company embodied the negative consequences of colonialism. Consequently, Nasserism achieved a remarkable victory. The nationalization also presented a new opportunity for Khrushchev to endorse Nasserism's socialist agenda. Furthermore, it was an excellent chance for the regime to secure the crucial support of communists.

### The Nationalization of the Canal—An Introduction to the 1956 War

The canal's nationalization was a severe blow to the British presence in the Middle East. Since the 1940s, the region had been experiencing a widespread popular struggle against British influence. The Arab nationalist movement managed to halt the Baghdad Pact project and compelled Britain to partially alter its plans in Egypt. The Bonapartist coup of 1952 assumed the role of leader of the nationalist movement, but for this very reason, it further energized the latter, which was against it until the mid-1950s and then behind it, starting with the Bandung Conference in particular.

While Nasserism looked to the Arab nationalist movement as a revolutionary regime, Abdel Nasser looked to Britain as a symbol of



its misery. Therefore, it decided to overthrow the Nasserite government. British diplomacy had not fully grasped the reality of the situation in the Middle East. The actual reason for Britain's misery was the Arab nationalist movement, not the Nasserite regime. Objective analysis should have led this diplomacy to understand this fact, which included a more important one: Nasserism itself could not have acted except in the way it did, and it could have been dealt with by profound understanding. Therefore, Britain bore the consequences of its mistake. <sup>[210]</sup>

France followed the same path, as it considered Abdel Nasser responsible for the Algerian revolution. This was the conception of its politicians, who did not realize that Abdel Nasser, in his assistance to the Algerian revolutionaries, was performing a vital mission for his regime: eliminating traditional colonialism in the region, protecting his own independence, and containing the powerful and pressing Arab nationalist movement. Moreover, the US was satisfied with this assistance. More importantly, he was never the instigator of the Algerian revolution; rather, its main drivers and forces were in Algeria itself. Nevertheless, France decided to cooperate with Britain, despite its implicit support for the Algerian revolution, in overthrowing the Nasserite regime. Moreover, the French and British press began to depict Abdel Nasser as a new Hitler and similar descriptions. Eden, the British Prime Minister at the time, imagined that he aimed to form an Arab empire under his leadership. His fears reached a dangerous level to the extent that the specter of Abdel Nasser as a person became very disturbing to him.

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<sup>[210]</sup> Lord Birdwood, a member of the British House of Lords, declared that the British Foreign Office had determined to overthrow Nasser long before it refused to fund the High Dam. The goal of the 1956 campaign was to overthrow Nasser as a prelude to the leadership of Nouri al-Saeed to drag Arab countries into a series of Western alliances based on or linked to the Baghdad Pact. Ahmad Abdel Rahim Mustafa, *Op. cit.*, p. 106.

**Israel, for its part, identified in the intentions of the two big countries what it had been seeking. It was also suffering from the incurable affliction of Nasserism. Furthermore, there was a prevailing apprehension regarding the implications of the Anglo-Egyptian Evacuation Agreement, with a preference for Britain to resume its former role in the Suez Canal region. Additionally, Israel was particularly affected by the decision to close the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping since 1949. The growing strength of the Egyptian military, bolstered by the large arms deal with the Soviet Union, further exacerbated its concerns. Furthermore, Ben-Gurion's anxieties intensified following the conclusion of the mutual defense pact between Egypt and Syria.**

**Consequently, the three countries decided to dismantle the Nasserite regime. The choice to nationalize the canal had incited the entire Western bloc, as it significantly undermined the standing of Britain and France. From the perspective of these three countries, the timing was deemed suitable to formulate a plan for tripartite aggression, despite their inability to provide a valid rationale for it to the global community. The nationalization of the canal was not an act of aggression against any party; rather, it was a justified response. In fact, the aggressor countries failed to estimate the repercussions of their actions. The well-documented outcomes transformed Nasser into a legendary figure among the Arab populace. Furthermore, the interests of both Britain and France suffered adverse effects, while the results ultimately favored both Israel and Nasserism, as will be elaborated.**

**The United States found an opportunity to achieve its goal of replacing Britain and France in the Middle East. Therefore, in a joint statement with Britain and France, it condemned Abdel Nasser and urged the internationalization of the canal, practically meaning its Americanization. To put pressure in this direction, it decided to partially freeze Egypt's reserves in the US, while Britain and France decided to freeze them completely and cut off economic aid. In addition, the US set up what it referred to as the Suez Canal**

**Beneficiaries Association. At the popular level, the nationalization decision sparked widespread and strong public support for Nasserism in the Arab world, the Third World, socialist countries, and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe. This is because the decision had created a feeling of great defeat for colonialism and made Arab peoples feel proud and hopeful of victory. Most importantly, Nasserism enjoyed an undeniable moral influence on the Third World as a whole. The imperialist threats that followed increased the intensity of the Arab nationalist movement, leading Abdel Nasser to become more hard-line. Consequently, Nasser experienced a simultaneous feeling of his own power and vulnerability. The Arab populace had decided to engage in combat; therefore, he felt compelled to participate, particularly as his regime could leverage the current dynamics of power to secure substantial advantages. Since 1955/1956, Nasserism began to compete with the Baath Party after assuming the role of the Egyptian patriotic movement, and the officers' government became the ideal for many pre-1952 radicals in Egypt.**

**Based on his reading of the local and international balance of power, Abdel Nasser decided to continue his hardline stance, threatening to revoke the 1954 agreement in the case of a military invasion. He began to strengthen his contacts with the Soviet Union. The latter declared its absolute support for Abdel Nasser and rejected the idea of internationalizing the canal, even threatening to send volunteers in case of a military attack. This was an irreplaceable opportunity to enhance its influence in the region, especially since the United States was also seeking to capitalize on the situation. Moreover, Nasser had a great opportunity to derail the Baghdad Pact project.**

### **The 1956 War**

**After the outbreak of the war, the nationalist movement surged throughout the Arab East, including the Gulf, in addition to Egypt.**

Demonstrations condemning the aggression spread across the region, leading to oil pipeline disruptions in Syria and the prevention of British bases usage in Iraq and Libya. Protests in support of Egypt also emerged in Europe and as far away as China. Protests in support of Egypt also emerged in Europe and as far away as China. In Egypt, the patriotic movement regained momentum without its former leadership, regarding the Nasserite elite as its new guide. When Israel attacked and occupied Sinai, and Britain and France occupied Port Saeed, Nasserism found itself in a state of war. The latter engaged in the conflict, considering only the appropriate international dynamics. Therefore, it did not involve the people in the battle. It did not also prepare for war at the grassroots level, relying only on mobilizing the incompetent army. When the masses in Port Saeed demanded weapons from the authorities in response to the foreign armies' strikes targeting their morale, Nasserite security forces responded by suppressing the demonstrations. The police clashed with the demonstrators in the city, who were able to overcome them and seize the weapons sent there, distributing them randomly, forcing the authorities to reorganize the operation. After the occupation of Port Saeed, its governor handed over not only the police weapons, contrary to the police's position in 1951, but also the files of the Brotherhood and communists to the occupation authorities. The Brotherhood and communists tried to enter the city in groups despite the security forces' attempts to prevent their participation in the war. However, the government later had to bring them disguised as fishermen in cooperation with military intelligence. <sup>[211]</sup>

While Nasser was giving speeches at Al-Azhar in the name of struggle, he was unable to practice the Wafd's practical decision which was actually practiced at the time, in 1951: the right of every Egyptian to bear arms. Instead, he quickly accepted a ceasefire and began peace negotiations. For the same reason, relying on

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<sup>[211]</sup> Rifaat Al-Saeed, *Egyptian Left Organizations 1950-1957*, pp. 293-295.

**international dynamics alone, Nasser did not consider achieving a military victory over the aggressor forces. Despite his expectation of war, he chose the wrong moment for his army to nationalize the Suez Canal. Abdel Hakeem Amer was designated as the commander of the armed forces for Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. However, Egypt did not accept that Syria and Jordan participate in the war, even though the situation was suitable as Israel was deploying its military forces into Sinai. It is possible that this refusal was influenced by specific recommendations from the United States.**

**It is worth noting that taking international dynamics into consideration does not deny, but rather indirectly confirms, that internal contradictions were the first role. Nasserism would not have entered the battle to nationalize the canal, which crowned its refusal to enter into a Western alliance, had it not been for the pressures of the Arab nationalist movement. Nasserism did not represent the latter. Therefore, it decided to fight the battle with the aggressors, relying on international dynamics and thus achieving its own equation: raising the slogan of the nationalist movement without raising the latter itself, but rather replacing it. This is a game that the dominant class in modern Egypt has always engaged in. It did not resort to utilizing international conflicts just because they existed, as they have always existed. Instead, the internal dynamics were pushing in a certain direction, imposing a specific policy, including the achievement of political independence. Meanwhile, this class was afraid to involve the populace in the battle for the independence they aspired to.**

**In the context of the 1956 war, the American and Soviet positions remain of particular importance. The two countries raced to succeed France and Britain in different ways, of course, the first with Eisenhower's pressure and the second with threats, the most important of which was the famous ultimatum. The dramatic escalation of the Arab nationalist movement during the aggression had a significant impact on the positions of both countries.**

**The United States played an essential role in ending the war, which it was actually against in the first place. Dulles, the US Secretary of State, declared that force should not be used to support the Suez Canal Beneficiaries Association, even if Egypt rejected a peaceful solution. Moreover, he added that the mission of this association was to supervise freedom of navigation, while collecting the revenue from the canal and handing it over to the Egyptian government, not to the nationalized company. This implies accepting the principle of nationalization. The United States also pressured Britain and France to not present the issue to the United Nations. Moreover, Dulles played an essential role in convincing the U.N. General Assembly to condemn Britain and France. In the end, the United States compelled Britain and France to withdraw in accordance with a United Nations resolution. Eisenhower later played virtually the sole role in getting Israel to withdraw from Sinai, using various forms of pressure and intimidation in addition to granting it access to the Tiran Straits.**

**On the one hand, the war fueled the regional nationalism movement, while simultaneously providing an opportunity for the Soviet Union to establish itself in the Middle East. On the other hand, the United States was unable to effectively address the Hungarian revolution, which erupted during the Anglo-French aggression. The revolution was crushed by Soviet forces because the events of the Suez War eclipsed those in Hungary, leaving the West in too weak a position to interfere in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the war provided an opportunity for the United States to replace the Anglo-French presence in an important portion of the Middle East.**

**The Soviet Union opposed the war, achieving a significant political gain and appearing to the Arab nationalist movement as a supporter. Its formal ultimatum, because it had been issued after the fighting had actually stopped, was a strong moral blow to Western influence in the region, enabling it to reap the fruits of American efforts to stop fighting and end the war. On the contrary, the United States, as a Western country, appeared as an adversary**



to the Arab nationalist forces. This was because it did not explicitly support the Nasserite plan to nationalize the canal. Rather, it partially froze Egyptian assets and also stopped its economic aid to Egypt before the fighting began. From the outset, the Soviet Union stood with the nationalization operation and was decisive in its support for Nasserism until the outbreak of fighting. Nevertheless, it is not certain whether the Soviet Union genuinely intended to carry out its threat, but American intelligence tended to believe in the possibility of actual Soviet intervention in the war. <sup>[212]</sup>

### Outcomes of the clash with the West

The 1956 war ended with the abrogation of the 1954 Agreement and the withdrawal of the aggressor forces from the Suez Canal. With great American efforts, Israel withdrew from Sinai in exchange for a guarantee that Egypt would grant it the right of passage in the Gulf of Aqaba and the Strait of Tiran. This agreement revived the port of Eilat and promoted Israel's penetration into Africa. In addition, Egypt agreed to place international emergency forces on Egypt's eastern frontiers, in the Gaza Strip and Sharm el-Sheikh, to protect Israel from fedayeen raids. Through this action, Egypt achieved direct political independence, albeit it remained somewhat incomplete.

The withdrawal of the aggressors was succeeded by the nationalization of British and French companies in Egypt, followed by Belgian companies, as well as others, as a response to pressures from foreign banks during the conflict.

As for Israel, its position was greatly strengthened by the opening of the Strait of Tiran, which had been closed to it in 1949. It also became protected by international emergency forces from Fedayeen activity. Its third gain was a public one when the Nasserite

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<sup>[212]</sup> Golda Meir's memoirs, Dayan's memoirs, Ahmad Abdel Rahim Mustafa, Op. cit., and Heikal, The Story of Suez. In addition to Anthony Eden's memoirs.

government expelled Jews from Egypt (25,000), most of whom went to France, while a few went to Israel. Nasserism found it useful for propaganda purposes to carry out this operation in front of the nationalist movement. So, it took a short-sighted step in exchange for meager gains on the domestic level, while Israel gained much more globally and domestically. This action did not carry any economic or other political significance, as the Jewish community in Egypt was not mostly Zionist, and the Zionist movement in the 1940s did not achieve great success among them. Moreover, sections of Jews immigrated to Europe and Israel due to the short-sightedness of some factions of the nationalist movement itself, whose religious groups and patriots waged campaigns of hatred against Jews. Some Arab regimes followed this approach after the 1956 war for the sake of domestic consumption.<sup>[213]</sup>

Another important gain for Israel was the demonstration of its power in the region and its ability to act as a policeman on behalf of the West. This will later become a consideration for the United States.

One of the most significant outcomes of the war was that the United States, despite its extensive efforts, did not gain any advantageous recognition of the Arab nationalist movement. Conversely, the Soviet Union gained significant moral leverage with this movement, alongside its friendship with the regimes in Egypt, Syria, and Yemen, the countries poised for future unity.

The war concluded with a partial attainment of political independence. Britain and France were politically beaten, but Israel

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<sup>[213]</sup> Alfred Lilienthal stated: *“Ben-Gurion’s propaganda victory was much greater than any military victory he achieved in the Sinai plains, when the Jewish community in Egypt was liquidated in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion,”* *ibid.*, p. 7. It is noteworthy that the Iraqi regime recognized long after that the decision to expel the Jews was a political error and declared their right to return to their homeland. The same idea was introduced in a general way in the official Arab arena during the 1970s. It is useful to mention that many Egyptian Jews, during their deportation, showed signs of protest and sadness at their expulsion from what they considered their homeland.

**emerged victorious, a fact that Nasserite propaganda has been overlooking. However, the defeat of Britain and France was not solely a Nasserite success but rather the result of certain local and international dynamics accompanying the 1956 aggression. These were the dynamics in which the Arab nationalist movement played a major role. It was also significant that Arab governments, even the puppet ones, such as those of Nouri Al-Saeed and King Saud, were obligated to support Egypt during the aggression, wearing the garb of Arab nationalism. The most significant role played by the Arab nationalist movement was to stimulate a sharp polarization in the region between Arab peoples and states against Israel. It was this polarization that ultimately determined how the two superpowers approached the region. In short, achieving political independence was contingent on the strength of the Arab nationalist movement. During the period in which Nasserism was trying to get rid of the pressures of its local opponents, including the patriotic movement in Egypt, it made important concessions to the West in the 1954 Agreement. The incomplete political independence that had been attained through the struggle of the revolutionary masses between 1945 and 1952 experienced a decline. However, in the face of the West's insistence on the policy of the big stick at an inopportune moment, Nasserism was able to recover most of what it had offered. It could effectively use its boldness, its skill in using international contradictions, and its precise reading of the global, regional, and local political map. However, its concessions to Israel cannot be overlooked.**

**One of the most fundamental consequences of the 1956 war and of the clash with the West in general was the growth of the Arab nationalist movement in a way that was unprecedented in modern Arab history. Although it began to follow Nasserism as its leader, which was another result of the battles of 1955/1956, it formed a pressing force over it. In addition, presenting its slogans and ideas on the Arab scene was implicitly threatening to attain its objectives.**

**For this reason, Nasserism was driven to work feverishly on the Arab landscape as a whole.**

## **Chapter Two: Foreign Policy**

**Until the end of direct foreign influence, political independence appears pure and untainted, but rigid and still. However, the state, for the sole reason that there are other states, is compelled to exercise its independence, that is, to interact willingly with others. In our time, there is no longer a state that does not deal with the outside world. Its entire existence is merely a presence on the international scene. Therefore, its independence is no longer abstract but shaped by its network of foreign relations. To the extent that foreign policy is a means of attaining independence, it also implies the negation of such independence because the state must navigate the wills of other states, which may differ from its own. Looking at the concept of political independence, it seems at first glance as if it is the idea of completely getting rid of foreign influence. However, as soon as one reaches this conclusion, an opposite fact immediately appears. The independent state is a member of the international community and is therefore obligated to deal with it according to dynamics that are determined outside and in interaction with its will. It appears now that it falls under the yoke of foreign influence, and its will can only be attained under its shadow and in interaction with it. However, the matter now appears in the form of indirect foreign influence. Nasserite Egypt had enjoyed direct independence after the 1956 war; nevertheless, it was incomplete independence, as foreign powers continued to have direct influence, represented in the terms of the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai in 1957. When addressing foreign policy, it will become clear how Nasserism in practice realized this imperfect independence. It appeared that Nasserite Egypt had grown free-**

willed following the war. In order to reveal the extent to which this was true, its foreign policy should be analyzed.

The modern state proceeds, in its foreign policy, from the comprehensive interests, both direct and indirect, of its socio-political system, rather than relying on abstract principles. This is a well-established historical reality. However, it embraces abstract principles in so far as they are valid at the moment to articulate those interests. Additionally, the state must consider the influences of competing social forces as well as the activities of other states. By abstract principles, it is meant the structure of ideas that the state actually adopts, regardless of demagogic slogans such as human rights, disarmament, etc. This idea will be adopted during the upcoming analysis of Nasserite policy. From the outset, it should reject that way of thinking that considers the state's policy as expressing the personality of its ruler or his abstract ideas or general goals that are completely separate from the interests of the social forces it represents. Nasserite foreign policy expressed the relationship between the genuine interests of the overall social system and Nasserism's perception of the interests it represented. These two elements were distinctly identified because the ruling elite was clearly separate from the dominant class. The former did not directly rely on the support of the latter. It emerged—as analyzed before—from a state of political balance among various conflicting forces in 1952. Therefore, in its foreign policy, it was required to declare itself as embodying a state of internal balance. It had to strive to defend the interests of the existing system as a whole. That is why it took the form of a super-class power with a hardline national approach. Simultaneously, it was required to embrace slogans that satisfied some ambitions of the lower classes and the intelligentsia, especially considering that the latter had significant objective allies in the Arab countries and around the world.

The state of international polarization provided the Nasserite government with a great opportunity to practice a Bonapartist policy, in the figurative sense of the word, on the global stage. i.e., a

policy based on leveraging international contradictions. It is common for regimes that depend on intricate internal dynamics or that perceive internal vulnerability to seek real or fictitious external victories, which may lead them to serious setbacks. Nasserism exemplified that type of regime.

The ultimate objective of Nasserism was to ensure the persistence and consolidation of its authority. Therefore, this objective entailed adherence to the social system that existed. However, Nasseism was also obligated to show favoritism toward the lower classes. This rationale was also reflected externally as well. Internal contradictions, in addition to being heavily influenced by international contradictions, found their indirect representation outside, with each opposing side having its allies and adversaries. These contradictions had to be considered in order to develop a viable foreign policy strategy. Maintaining the current external dynamics was critical for the internal situation to remain stable.

### **1. Nasserism in the Arab world**

The relationship of Nasserism to Arab nationalism has already been analyzed. Its rationale in this regard has been summarized as the need to cooperate with the regimes that existed, on the grounds that they are capable of taking steps on the road to Arab unity. In addition, the ultimate realization of unity depends on convincing the working people's forces in the Arab countries without using violence.

This logic reflects the state of Nasserism at the height of its ascendancy, which was achieved at the most favorable moment to exploit internal and external contradictions. Although this idea crystallized ten years after the 1952 coup, its logic was being realized from the outset. Compromise was a persistent trend of Nasserism. It constantly strived to maintain a stable equilibrium between right and left. Moreover, within the Arab region, Nasserism did not decisively determine whether it was with or against Arab



unity, with the Left or the Right, with the governments or the peoples. Even during its luminous phase, which lasted for a few months, when it raised the slogan “unity of progressive forces,” it was, in fact, encouraging the Left to confront the strong Right creeping in the region in pursuit of the same compromise. The evidence was manifested in the continuous assault on the hard-line Left, which persisted both domestically and internationally, while actual coordination had gone on with the moderate powers in the region. The Nasserite approach clearly involved finding a middle ground to resolve the national question. The Left in general was strongly anti-Western, while the Right tended to cling to various forms of dependency. The compromise formula was the removal of the direct colonial presence from the region, including the rejection of a defense alliance. This formula meant neither a complete victory for the Left nor a complete defeat for the Right. Thus, the most favorable formula for the revival of the forces that were compatible with it, namely, Nasserism and its counterparts in the region.

In light of the rapid growth of the Arab nationalist movement and its significant influence in Egypt, the Charter proposed and analyzed a lasting compromise formula. The nationalist movement was seen as a dangerous rival that needed to be absorbed or eliminated as an alternative to integration or dependence on it.

As already determined, states do not act based solely on ideological convictions or idealistic or sinister motives, but rather according to their own self-interests. Acknowledging this fact can help make sense of many seemingly bizarre aspects of international politics.

### The union between Syria and Egypt

***THERE WAS NO IMMEDIATE THREAT OF A COMMUNIST COUP.  
HOWEVER, IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT OPPORTUNISTS COULD  
SEIZE THE CHANCE AND GAIN SUPPORT BY EXPLOITING***

***COMMUNISTS AND THE REPUTATION OF THE SOVIET UNION. WE WERE CERTAINLY APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF WHAT THIS COALITION COULD RESULT IN FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR THAT YEAR, AS WELL AS THE SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT THAT THESE RESULTS MIGHT LEAD TO IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. CONSEQUENTLY, IT WAS IMPERATIVE FOR US TO CHOOSE THIS MOMENT TO REALIZE UNITY***

Salah Al-Bitar

After World War II, the Egyptian state, particularly the royal court institution, began to embrace the project of Arab nationalism. King Farouk, with the encouragement of Britain, <sup>[214]</sup> spearheaded the establishment of the Arab League and even rashly declared war on Israel in 1948, despite opposition from his prime minister. Additionally, both the kings of Jordan and Saudi Arabia at that time expressed sympathy for the tenets of Arab nationalism. The significance of this development lies in the fact that the nationalist movement, driven by Arab intelligentsia, was gaining momentum and influence in the region. To counter this growing movement, these governments realized the need to contain rather than confront it. They found it more advantageous to co-opt nationalist rhetoric rather than acknowledge that revolutionary intellectuals were the actual leaders of the movement, especially since major nationalist parties were vehemently anti-communist, particularly the Baath party. <sup>[215]</sup> Furthermore, these governments were eager to compete

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<sup>[214]</sup> Eden declared that he supported any movement among the Arabs that would strengthen their unity, provided that the project received general approval. Nabih Bayoumi Abdullah, *The Development of the Idea of Arab Nationalism in Egypt*, p. 185.

<sup>[215]</sup> Western institutions at the time were aware of the threat posed by the Arab nationalist movement and were considering absorbing it through Arab puppet governments. Consequently, the "Middle East War Council" in London decided on May 10-13, 1945, that British policy in the Middle East following the war should revolve around four axes. These included "establishing some form of Arab union, a weak and loose union to absorb the prevailing nationalist current in the region, which poses a threat to British

for influence within the nationalist movement,<sup>[216]</sup> as it aimed not only to liberate Arab countries from colonial rule but also from their own regional governments.

In fact, many phenomena that appeared in the region cannot be explained without understanding exactly how its governments think and their true starting points in action. It is not plausible to divide the world into two parts: those with Arab nationalism and those against it, and then consider the first party revolutionary and the second reactionary. Numerous situations appear strange when adhering to this oversimplified categorization. For instance, in the 1956 conflict, King Hussein expressed his backing for Egypt and offered his military resources to the Egyptian administration, while Nouri Al-Saeed in Iraq furiously condemned the aggression. Moreover, a strong alliance was formed between Nasserite Egypt, which was hostile to direct dependence, and Saudi Arabia, which was merely one of the tools of the Aramco oil company. The strangest thing is that Imam Al-Badr supported the National Front in South Yemen and wrote poems satirizing colonialism. It would also be strange to know the position of both France and the Soviet Union on the Egyptian-Syrian unity, which the Nasserists and their allies considered a revolutionary act. Just as the most important facts of the period following World War II in Egypt were the emergence of lower classes and the intelligentsia as independent and influential political forces. The most significant phenomenon of the same period on the Arab level was the emergence of the Arab nationalist movement as a prominent force with its own extremely powerful organizational weapons, represented in particular by the Arab Socialist Baath Party.

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*interests. This union would undertake political coordination among the governments of the region in the post-war period.*”Reference: Raouf Abbas Hamid, *America and the Arab East in World War II*, in *American Policy and the Arabs*, p. 40, quoted from Great Britain, Foreign Office.

<sup>[216]</sup> Among the famous slogans adopted by Arab governments in the Arab East were the slogans “Greater Syria” and “The Fertile Crescent.”

The early 1950s also witnessed an upsurge in nationalist activity in the region. This included the armed national struggle in the Arab Maghreb, the nationalist tide in Egypt, Sudan, and the Levant, along with the nationalist movement in the Arabian Peninsula and southern Yemen. The communist movement was also growing rapidly, particularly in the Arab East. The Iraqi Communist Party became the largest party in Iraq, and the Syrian Communist Party became one of the largest parties in Syria and the largest communist party in the Middle East. <sup>[217]</sup>

Nasserism was confronted not only with the demands of the patriotic movement in Egypt but also with the pressures of Arab nationalism throughout the Arab East. The issue did not stop at verbal demands. It also carried the possibility of establishing Arab nationalist governments similar to the Syrian government in 1920 or the radical Baath government in 1966. There was also a threat of extending unity aspirations to Egypt and even the use of nationalist slogans by other Arab governments. Moreover, following the 1956 war, the dominant class in Syria started to exert pressure on Nasserite Egypt to embrace the unity project with Syria in order to save it from the influences of nationalists and communists. Such pressures were not something that could be overlooked, especially as the Arab nationalist movement was excited for a special and unifying Egyptian role. It is striking that Arab masses outside Egypt were more sympathetic to the Egyptian patriotic movement than the latter was to the national movement in other Arab countries. This was manifested in the demonstrations in 1951 that were held in the Levant in support of the abrogation of the 1936 Treaty. Furthermore, the movement formed battalions of volunteers to participate in the armed struggle in the Suez Canal. <sup>[218]</sup>

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<sup>[217]</sup> Erskine Childers, *The Road to Suez*, chapter 14; Walter Laqueur, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East*, pp. 226, 323; W. Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*, p. 166.

<sup>[218]</sup> Tariq Al-Bishri, *The Political Movement in Egypt*, p. 488.

**The challenges faced by Nasserism were growing swiftly, particularly following the partial political victory in the 1956 war in which the Arab nationalist movement participated. This resulted in increased attention toward the Nasserite government and the rise of Soviet influence in Arab society. Furthermore, the pressures from the United States on Arab governments to establish a defensive coalition were refused by the strong Arab nationalist movement.**

**The pressures on Arab governments in the Levant can be summarized as follows:**

**-Internal pressures to establish a unified and independent Arab state.**

**-Western pressure to form a defensive alliance.**

**-Sharp social contradictions are motivating revolutionary movements in most of those countries.**

**The first fall of a monarchy in the region offered the Arab Nationalist Movement great hope. Just as the Sudanese people looked at Saad Zaghloul, many Arabs in the Levant looked at Abdel Nasser in the same way, especially after he rejected the defensive alliance project.**

**In May 1953, for instance, demonstrators marched to the Egyptian embassy in Iraq to demand that the future Egyptian constitution stipulate Egypt's Arabism, while demonstrations in Syria demanded immediate unity with Egypt.<sup>[219]</sup> The 1956 interim constitution recognized Egypt as an independent Arab state.<sup>[220]</sup>**

**The aspirations for Nasserite Egypt increased after the arms deal with the Soviet Union. Additionally, the more Nasserism responded to nationalist slogans, the more the nationalists demanded and pressured Nasser for more. The position of nationalist and communist organizations on the 1954 treaty was a harbinger of**

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<sup>[219]</sup> Dhuqan Qarqout, *The Development of the Arab Idea in Egypt (1805-1936)*.

<sup>[220]</sup> Anwar Abdel Malik, *Op. cit.*, p. 135.

danger for Nasser, as it showed the extent of the Arab nationalist movement. However, events soon overtook the 1954 treaty, as seen during the 1956 war. Conservative governments were compelled to take positions that, in the immediate vernacular, could be characterized as revolutionary. The government of Lebanon severed relations with Britain, and Nouri Al-Saeed sent troops to Jordan to participate in the war and besiege Israel (as he claimed). Even the Saudi government established training camps for volunteers, proclaimed universal mobilization, deployed its army to assist Egypt, sent material support, cut off the supply of oil to the colonizers, and participated in the war with its air forces. Not a single Arab ruler spared his throat. Extreme nationalist slogans were chanted, and Arab capitals and radio stations were filled with furious attacks against colonialists. These activities can be described in terms of the concepts and facts discussed previously.

The first unifying step among Arab regimes after World War II was the establishment of the Arab League. Subsequent events, particularly Israel's raids, promoted the formation of a tripartite alliance and a mutual defense pact between Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia in 1956. In addition, following King Hussein's expulsion of Glubb Pasha <sup>[221]</sup> from Jordan, the Quadripartite Alliance <sup>[222]</sup> was signed in 1957 to provide financial assistance to Jordan in response to Britain cutting off aid to King Hussein's regime.

The apprehension regarding the Arab revolutionary movement was not the sole factor that accounts for the positions of the Arab regimes on regional matters. Although these regimes were directly subordinate to the West in the period immediately following the Second World War, they would not have minded reaching a better position on the international scene and in the Middle East in

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<sup>[221]</sup> A British officer who was the commander of the Jordanian army between 1939 and 1956.

<sup>[222]</sup> This alliance was formed in 1957, comprising Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.



particular. In general, it is always preferred for regimes to have greater freedom of movement vis-à-vis the world, especially with their masters.

The establishment of Israel became a significant factor in the calculations of Middle Eastern regimes as a whole. Israel's goal was not only to subjugate the Arab peoples but also the Arab regimes. Therefore, despite the pressures from the Arab nationalist movement, the puppet regimes in the region viewed Israel as a major threat to their interests, both directly and indirectly. Its mere existence fueled Arab nationalism.<sup>[223]</sup> Furthermore, the larger countries in the region were engaged in a power struggle for control over weaker entities and had mutual fears of each other.

The landscape of Middle Eastern politics during the mentioned period is fully elucidated by determining the nature of the ambitions of the regional countries. This is because that period witnessed broad political movements. There has been a traditional sensitivity between Turkey and the countries of the Arab East. When the Egypt-Syria-Saudi Arabia alliance was formed, Turkey immediately mobilized its forces on the Syrian borders. Iraq also mobilized its forces due to concerns regarding Egypt on the one hand and in

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<sup>[223]</sup> Prince Abdul-Ilah's letter to US President Roosevelt clearly shows that the prince understood the nature of the Zionist movement in a very reasonable way and that he was justified in fearing the establishment of Israel.

Refer to the text of the letter in Saleh Saeb Al-Jubouri, *The Ordeal of Palestine and Its Political and Military Secrets*, p. 489.

In 1942, Nuri al-Saeed presented a more radical, clear, and practical project than most of those proposed at the time to solve the Palestinian issue. It stipulated to unite the Levant (which includes Palestine) in Greater Syria and then establish a union with Iraq. In addition to allowing both the Jews of Palestine and the Maronites of Lebanon to self-administer and subjecting Jewish immigration to the approval of the Syrian state. This project was rejected by the involved countries, including Saudi Arabia, despite incorporating Iraq's ambitions. Nevertheless, these ambitions, as outlined in the proposal, aligned with the interests of both the Arab nationalist movement and the Palestinian cause. Refer to Mahdi Abdel Hadi, *The Palestinian Question and Political Solutions Projects (1934-1974)*, p. 87.

preparation for potential actions from Turkey on the other. At the same time, rulers of Iraq were looking forward to annexing Syria, while this matter worried the rulers of Saudi Arabia. Despite the close relationship with the United States, certain Arab regimes took hard-line nationalist positions to please the nationalist movement on the one hand and to utilize its pressure to limit colonial influence on the other hand. In 1957, a treaty was concluded between Syria and the Soviet Union; therefore, President Eisenhower orchestrated a coup attempt in Syria, the Sixth Fleet was mobilized at the same time, and weapons flowed into Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Turkey. However, due to the Turkish troop buildup, Lebanon and Jordan declared their loyalty to Arab solidarity. Nouri Al-Saeed declared his support for the Syrian government and paid it an official visit. Thus, the United States failed to terrorize Syria. In southern Arabia, the Imam was looking forward to annexing southern Yemen to his kingdom, whereby he encouraged the revolutionaries to resist British colonialism and adopted Arab nationalist slogans.

Thus, slogans and partial positions do not always mean a certificate of revolutionary or reactionary, since a phenomenon can only be truly understood by analyzing its core content and context. Therefore, judging the Nasserite experience in Arab unity cannot be done except by analyzing this process from within and in detail.

In the early 1950s, the nationalist movement, mainly represented by the Baath Party, was clearly on the rise, especially since Syria had been a bastion of Arab nationalism during the previous century and, at the same time, a favorite field for the spread of communism in the period 1955–1958.<sup>[224]</sup> Despite the strength of the Communist Party, which rejected the concept of an Arab nation, it recognized the idea of Arab unity, but not as an imminent project. Rather, it left it to historical development, according to the expression used by

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<sup>[224]</sup> Childers, Op. cit., p. 322.

the party leader, Khaled Bakdash, demonstrating the depth of the unitary surge. The Baath also adopted social ideas that were more radical than the ideas of the Communist Party. This signified that a horrific social clash was on the way. The army was also replete with radical currents. While the dominant class did not have a party that could compete with the powerful Baath. In addition to the weakness of its control over the army, which greatly reduced its repressive capabilities. Therefore, the representatives of the regime were obligated to reiterate nationalist slogans, but with caution. Moreover, there were numerous colonial threats facing the revolutionary surge in Syria. For example, deploying forces from neighboring countries, assaults by Israel, and the mobilization of the Sixth Fleet. The direct result was the escalation of the nationalist movement in Syria and its demand for immediate unity with Egypt. However, official politicians proposed an alternative, which was federal unity.

In the end, Baathist officers and Arab nationalists were able to impose their perspective on the government, which did not have the strength to confront the situation. In short, the demand for unity originated from the depths of the Syrian people, not in response to direct imperialist threats or the Iraqi military buildup. Rather, nationalist sentiment had been solidifying over many decades. The demand for unity was a dangerous provocation to the conservative forces in the region.

Ultimately, the dominant class in Syria was obligated to accept the principle of unity with Egypt. It aimed to appease the nationalist movement and to use unity with the Egyptian regime as a safeguard against the Left and the provocations of neighboring countries. For the merchant and broker class in Syria, reaching an understanding with the July regime was easier than with the Baath and the Communist Parties. Nasserism became a security valve for this class as well as for the unionists, albeit in a different manner. Furthermore, the Baath's apprehension of a communist takeover contributed to pushing it into the arms of Nasserism.

However, the situation in Egypt was different. Despite the growth of Arab nationalism since the end of World War II, it did not coalesce into organized forms similar to those in the Arab East. Consequently, it did not pose a pressure force comparable to its Levantine counterpart. The masses in Egypt had a stronger sense of belonging to the Nile Valley than to the Arab world as a whole and a greater sense of regionalism than nationalism. In essence, the concept of Arab nationalism in Egypt was not a tangible or potential threat to the regime, neither before nor after July 1952. The officers in Egypt did not harbor broad ambitions in the Arab region, and the idea of immediate Arab unity was unacceptable and even frightening to them. This can be observed in the events following the 1956 war up to the establishment of Egyptian-Syrian unity in February 1958.

For instance, Abdel Nasser declared to the Syrian delegation that visited Cairo in January 1958 to discuss the issue of unity that *“the Syrian army has been politicized and is now accustomed to carrying out coups.”* Then he remarked, *“I spent 5 years keeping the Egyptian army uninvolved in the affairs of politics.”* <sup>[225]</sup> Nasser explicitly expressed his opposition to immediate unity. Instead, he advocated for gradualism, favoring the development of cultural, economic, and other relations first. However, the strong insistence of the Syrian delegation prompted him to propose a transitional period of 5 years to facilitate the necessary preparations for unity. <sup>[226]</sup> In response, Syrian nationalists resorted to exerting media pressure against Nasserism, questioning the goals Nasser had proclaimed and expressing concerns about leaving Syria vulnerable to communism or opportunistic elements. *“Where are the goals you called for and*

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<sup>[225]</sup> Quoted from Ahmad Hamroush, *The Story of the July 23 Revolution*, part three, p. 47.

<sup>[226]</sup> Satee Al-Husri, *Regionalism: Its Roots and Seeds*, p. 84.

After the secession, Abdel Nasser admitted that he had accepted the idea of unity under pressure from the Syrian people (an address dated 10/5/1961).

*announced? Will you leave Syria torn apart by hatred? Will you leave Syria to be lost?” “Would Abdel Nasser be satisfied to leave Arab Syria to fall prey to communism or to opportunistic elements ”?*<sup>[227]</sup>

Furthermore, the Baath Party in Syria issued a statement in 1957 on Egypt’s Independence Day, urging the governments of both countries to immediately establish unity.

It was not only the nationalist movement in Syria that was enthusiastic regarding unity with Egypt. The idea of unity enjoyed great sympathy from the majority of the masses in the Levant. Nasserism finally overcame its hesitation and accepted unity on three conditions: excluding the Syrian army from politics, dissolving the parties in Syria, and unifying the political leadership. These conditions were accepted by all trends in Syria except the Communist Party, in light of a state of passion and fanaticism for the idea of unity that dominated the Syrian masses. After the unification, and despite the fulfillment of the three conditions, Abdel Nasser expressed his regret, saying, *“The steps that were taken were hasty and ill-considered.”*<sup>[228]</sup> This was in response to Abdel Salam Aref’s demand for him to unite with Iraq. This response came a few days after the so-called Iraqi revolution (in reality, it was a military coup immediately followed by huge waves of popular demonstrations of support, which is why it was customary to call it a revolution). It was significant that the Egyptian General Intelligence Service advised Abdel Nasser to postpone the unification step after studying the situation in Syria, but he could not evade it until the end. Abdel Latif Al-Baghdadi was very frank when he stated that they, the Nasserists, were obligated to respond in order to avoid the increasing influence of communists in Syria.<sup>[229]</sup>

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<sup>[227]</sup> Childs, Op. cit., p. 327.

<sup>[228]</sup> Ibid., p. 337.

<sup>[229]</sup> Ahmad Hamroush, The Story of the July 23 Revolution, part three, p. 49.

Heikal discussed in detail the process of the Egyptian-Syrian union and mentioned many facts that support our opinion. Refer to the book “What Happened in Syria.”

**It is worth noting that the declaration of unity was preceded by a military agreement between Egypt and Syria in 1957, which stipulated:**

- Unification of the army.**
- Sending Egyptian military experts to Syria.**
- Supplying the Syrian army with weapons.**
- Sending Egyptian forces to Syria. These forces were actually sent in October 1957.**

**This was preceded by another agreement in 1955 after Israel's aggression against the two countries, which stipulated:**

- 1. Concluding a mutual defense agreement.**
- 2. Working to establish economic unity.**
- 3. Not to be bound by military alliances.**

**Clearly, all these measures were sufficient in light of the rise of the nationalist wave in the region and the defeat of Britain and France in the 1956 war to protect Syria against colonial conspiracies. As for the unification procedure itself, it did not add anything tangible in this regard. However, it included a significant addition of another kind, which is the right of Nasserism to intervene directly in the administration of Syria, including its supervision of the dissolution of parties and the removal of the army from politics. In other words, the revolutionary movement, nationalist and communist, was demobilized and removed from the army. The decision to establish unification was not planned by either regime to achieve definite, specific objectives. However, the events' trajectory had a certain slant. The Syrian regime had been exposed to two threats. The first of which was the Baghdad Pact and its affiliates, especially the Iraqi regime. The second was the revolutionary movement inside, principally communists and nationalists. The 1955 and 1957 agreements were enough to confront the first threat, and the Nasserite conditions of unification were actually sufficient to**



confront the second threat, represented by Syrian parties and the politicized army. The unification was performed mainly under pressure from the nationalist movement, while the Syrian regime saw nothing but that it was better than confronting the rebellious masses. Nasserism saw that, under the aforementioned conditions, it was better than Syria falling into the hands of the Right or the Left and being embarrassed in front of the Arab masses, which it was speaking on behalf of.

The idea that the dominant class in Egypt had economic incentives for unification is based on a series of fabrications rather than actual events.

No doubt, any businessman is interested in working in a larger market. Therefore, he would welcome a measure such as the Egyptian-Syrian union if he knew that there were no strong competitors in Syria in the same sector in which he worked. Certainly, the dominant class in Egypt in the 1950s was stronger than its counterpart in Syria, which could motivate it to embrace the idea of unity from an economic standpoint. However, the ambitions of that class never reached this level. The solution to its major problems did not include opening the markets of backward countries, as it did not have much to export to them. Furthermore, the political risks of sweeping the Syrian market were much greater than the expected economic gains. Therefore, the idea of sweeping the Arab markets was not raised in the traditional literature of Egyptian capitalist thinkers, except for the visions of Talaat Harb and Sobhi Wahida, which were buried with them. The concept of Arab unity did not significantly capture their interest. While the persistent demand for several decades had been to facilitate exporting to the Soviet Union was much more urgent than access to Arab markets. Furthermore, Nasserism did not exceed the ambitions of businessmen.

Economic relations between Egypt and Syria after the unity are summarized as follows:

**1. No Egyptian capital migrated to Syria, and Egyptian companies did not open branches there. Instead, restrictions were imposed on the activities of ordinary Egyptian citizens in Syria.**<sup>[230]</sup>

**One amusing incident involved Egyptian retailers who traveled to Damascus and set up shop on some sidewalks, which angered Syrian merchants. The Syrian merchants filed a complaint against the Egyptian retailers to Abdel Hakeem Amer, who swiftly ordered their arrest and deportation back to Egypt the next day. Ahmad Hamroush mentioned that this was perhaps the only instance in which Egyptians attempted to distribute their goods in Syria.**<sup>[231]</sup>

**The customs systems and currency were not unified. Instead, the vice president, Akram Al-Hourani, enacted a decision to increase customs duties in Syria after the unification. Additionally, another decision was issued to exempt goods exchanged between the two countries from import duties. However, this decision was not extended to tobacco, salt, and sugar, as these commodities yielded high profits for Syria.**

**The trade exchange between the two countries developed as follows in million pounds:**

Year	Annual Exchange Volume
1948-1957	1.7
1958	4.4
1959	13.7
Trade balance:	
1958	0.553 in favor of Egypt
1959	1.651 in favor of Syria

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<sup>[230]</sup> Ahmad Hamroush, Op. cit., part three, pp. 57-58.

<sup>[231]</sup> Ibid., pp. 76-77

Egypt's imports from Syria:	
1958	1.922
1959	7.742
Egypt's exports to Syria:(*)	
1958	2.475
1959	6.091

\*Egypt's total exports in 1959 amounted to approximately 191 million pounds.

These figures indicate that the trade exchange after the unification was in favor of Syria.

3. A decree was enacted in 1961 that restricted the outflow of currency from Syria and imposed stringent conditions on imports.

4. Sale of any banknotes by Syrian banks was prohibited.

5. Egypt provided financial assistance to Syria:

\*13.5 million lira immediately after unification to address the budget deficit.

\*3 million Egyptian pounds annually.

\*9 million sterling pounds in cash transfers.

6. Egypt also covered the salaries of Egyptian officers in Syria.

7. Wage differences between the two countries remained in favor of the Syrians.

8. The two budgets remained separate.

It is evident that Nasserism did not engage in any exploitation of Syria. On the contrary, it provided financial support to the Syrian regime and allowed Syrian companies to operate in the larger Egyptian market. This information is intended to refute the notion that economic factors were a significant motivation in the unification process.

### **Finalizing the union**

The unification was accomplished under Nasser's three conditions. However, the Syrian Communist Party rejected the condition of dissolving the parties, as did some factions within the Baath. Nevertheless, Michel Aflaq was able to resolve the matter using his considerable influence. Thus, Nasserism entered Syria through a broad gateway. In addition, Yemen joined the union about a month later, but on a confederal basis. The Imam viewed unity with Nasserite Egypt as helping to liberate South Arabia from British occupation and annex it to North Yemen under his rule.

Initially, Nasserists assumed control of key ministries, such as Foreign Affairs, Interior, War, and Industry. Only four ministerial portfolios were left for Syrian nationalists. Egyptian intelligence branches, the "National Union," and all Nasserite political and security institutions extended into Syria. To keep the army apolitical, communist and radical nationalist elements were swiftly demobilized. In addition, ninety-four Syrian officers were expelled, and twenty were transferred to Egypt, while 850 Egyptian officers were placed there. Moreover, Egyptian officers were placed in high leadership positions in the Syrian army regardless of their competence. This step led to significant discontent among Syrian officers.

The Baath Party also proposed military readiness to confront Israel and prevent it from forcibly diverting the trajectory of the Jordan River, as it was done in 1953. Conversely, Abdel Nasser rejected the use of force in this matter. Another point of disagreement between the two parties was Baath's refusal to appoint officers to sensitive positions based on their political affiliations. Additional differences emerged, including varying perspectives on agrarian reform.<sup>[232]</sup> The intelligence services targeted remnants of the dissolved parties within the army. Moreover, conflict arose

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<sup>[232]</sup> Ibid., pp. 63-66.

between Nasserism and the Communist Party due to the latter's unwillingness to dissolve. While the Baath Party took a different approach, agreeing to dissolve and join the "National Union." However, it was surprising that the "National Union" was formed in a Nasserite style, i.e., open to non-politicized and opportunistic elements. This difference was a key point of contention between Baathists and Nasserists. In response, the four Baath ministers resigned on December 31, 1959, expressing dissatisfaction with the Nasserite regime. Furthermore, the party initiated a vigorous media campaign against the government, leading to widespread arrests of its members. Many officers were expelled from the Syrian army on charges of belonging to the Baath Party instead of the previous accusation of belonging to the Communist Party. Moreover, the government launched significant defamation campaigns against the party,<sup>[233]</sup> depicting it as a reactionary force hostile to Arab nationalism. Nasserism also intensified its crackdown on communist and nationalist organizations following the Iraqi revolution, fearing the spread of revolutionary sentiments across the region.

### The Syrian Secession

The Egyptian-Syrian unity did not offer any novel solutions to Syria in countering external attempts to contain it or interfere in its internal affairs. However, it did provide the dominant class in Syria with Nasserite tools of repression against the revolutionary movement within the country. The unity step itself had a significant impact. One of the key outcomes of the integrative unity was the dismantling of the Communist Parties in Syria and Lebanon and the fragmentation of the Arab Socialist Baath Party, which had been a stronghold of the Arab nationalist movement. This was not solely due to repressive measures. The manner in which the unity

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<sup>[233]</sup> For instance, Abdel Nasser delivered 23 addresses during the 23 days he spent in Syria in February and March 1960, all of which attacked the Baath party. (Ibid., p. 74).

was executed exposed inherent weaknesses within the nationalist movement in Syria, particularly its utopian nature. The Baath Party, for instance, reached a pinnacle of utopianism when it agreed to dissolve itself and submit to Nasserism, despite significant differences in political programs, even on nationalist issues.

Despite its previous concessions, the Syrian branch of the party proceeded to support the secession. Therefore, it sympathized with what it had previously called reactionaries, who had been its bitterest enemies. As a result of this turmoil, Akram Al-Hawrani broke away from the party to form the Arab Socialist Party (participated in the secessionist government). Michel Aflaq held a national party conference, and the Iraqi branch condemned the secession. On the other hand, Salah Al-Bitar in Syria signed the secession document. Finally, following the 1963 coup, the party began to collapse even further. Ultimately, it became merely a bureaucratic entity with nothing of the Baath's revolutionary spirit, not to mention its glorious history.

Ultimately, the forces that were imposed were liquidated, while the enemies of Arab nationalism remained more organized and powerful. In other words, unity, by its own rationale, was, in fact, hostile to real unity. At last, Nasserism did its "duty" in Syria to the fullest extent, such that the region no longer witnessed the vigor of the Arab nationalist movement since the 1950s.

In fact, the Egyptian-Syrian unity was not only a disaster for the progressives in Syria, but it was also the beginning of a large-scale reactionary attack in the Arab East led by Nasserism. An Arab League conference was held following the establishment of unity in 1958. Its resolutions stipulated respect for the Arab systems. This statement is considered considerably conservative during that period. In addition, they not only advocated for Arab solidarity but also turned a blind eye to the presence of Arab disputes, which were noteworthy. The discussions and resolutions also included indirect support for Nasserism. At the same time, the media attacks between



**Egypt and Nouri Al-Saeed's Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon completely stopped, and harmony returned between all the Arab regimes after striking communists in the region and weakening the Syrian Baath. Later, harmony also returned between Nasserism and Western countries. Nasserism supported General Shehab's coup in Lebanon, which blocked the path of the Lebanese Left, under the protection of the American fleet.**

**Although Nasser initially supported the Iraqi revolution, he soon declared his hostility to the government that emerged from it. Propaganda campaigns against Iraq intensified on Cairo Radio due to the expanding influence of communists. Egyptian intelligence plots against the Iraqi revolution continued until the 1963 counter-revolutionary coup, with Egypt's assistance. Egyptian, American, and Shahabi intelligence services also targeted leftist elements in Lebanon. Within this reactionary wave was Nasserism's alliance with the Imam of Yemen, who was granted the certificate of nationalism.**

**In Egypt, the arrests of communists in 1959, who had experienced significant growth after the 1956 war, were associated with the rise of the Soviet Union's influence in the Middle East. Those arrests signaled Nasserism's hostile position against communism. The increasing influence of communists, especially after their consolidation into one party in 1958, prompted Nasserism to launch this campaign. Nasserism also distanced itself from the communist and Arab nationalist movements during and after the tripartite aggression. Moreover, the outbreak of the Iraqi revolution and the Communist Party's support for the new regime posed a serious threat to Nasserism, as Qasim's government became a focal point for Arab communists, competing with Nasserism on the national level, prompting the Nasserists to initiate their campaign.<sup>[234]</sup> Heikal himself frankly stated that the 1959 arrests were due to the**

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<sup>[234]</sup> We and America.

increasing power of the communists and the government's tendency to cooperate with the Soviet Union, which threatened to grow their influence even more. In addition, Nasserism exhausted its informal alliance with the communist movement and the Arab nationalist movement during and after the tripartite aggression. The outbreak of the Iraqi revolution and the support of the Communist Party for the new authority were also a grave threat to Nasserism, as Qasim's regime became a center of attraction for Arab communists and a pole competing with Nasserism on the national level, which motivated the Nasserists to launch their campaign.

During that time, the Nasserite media were characterized by a strong anti-communist sentiment. Numerous anti-communist books were put on the market, some translated by CIA operatives and others. Nasser himself contributed to this campaign in a way that lacked objectivity, resorting to cheap propaganda. For instance, he crudely linked Zionism and communism. In his addresses throughout the unity, he repeatedly accused communists of being collaborators or Zionists. In 1959, he stated that communism had been the greatest supporter of Zionism, whereas the latter was working to establish communist organizations that deceived people with sweet talk about the worker and the peasant. In addition, Henri Curiel was a Zionist who funded the largest communist organization in Egypt. Furthermore, he pretended that communists were helping Zionists occupy the Nile Valley to achieve their dream. Moreover, he falsely accused them of burning Cairo on January 26, 1952. In an address at a press conference from the Liberation Rally organization on August 21, 1954, he said, *"We all know, my brothers, what the goal of the communists is. The communists made the citizens and the fedayeen go fight in the canal, while they burned Cairo in order to spread chaos."*

The liquidation of the Egyptian Communist Party was carried out in the name of Arab nationalism. That is because Nasserism was disguised in a nationalist image while targeting its most powerful pillar at the time, the Baath Party in the Levant. It declared war

against communism, depicting it as the arch-enemy of Arab nationalism. In the last months of 1958, Nasserite media waged great campaigns against communism in the region. It particularly targeted the communist movement in Iraq. Meanwhile, it was receiving assistance from the United States in the form of wheat and other aid.

The position of Arab regimes and Western countries toward Egyptian-Syrian unity was not as hostile as Nasserite propaganda depicted. It is important to mention that Saudi Arabia preferred this unity—despite its conspiracies against it—over the Fertile Crescent project, for concern about the growth of Iraq's influence. Prior to the revolution, Iraq was hostile to this step because it cut off the road to Damascus, which was its old goal. Nouri Al-Saeed announced the formation of the Hashemite Union with Jordan again, as King Hussein was facing an active revolutionary movement internally that was sympathetic to Nasserism and aspiring to power. Consequently, he preferred to form an alliance with Nouri Al-Saeed, opposing Abdel Nasser, in order to safeguard his throne. Iraq, following its revolution and under the leadership of Abdel Karim Qasim, was opposing that integrative unity for reasons related to its being Nasserite in particular. The Iraqi Communist Party opposed that unity for ideological reasons. Abdel Karim Qasim was in a situation similar to Abdel Nasser from a certain angle: he was based on the Iraqi bureaucracy, but in the presence of a violent class struggle and an extremely tense political balance. So, his hostility to Nasserism was based on a spirit of competition for leadership in the region. <sup>[235]</sup>

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<sup>[235]</sup> Abdel Karim Qasim was more hardline than Abdel Nasser toward the West, contrary to what Nasserite propaganda portrayed. Interestingly, he opposed the union of Egypt and Syria at a time when he was looking forward to annexing Kuwait to Iraq, while Abdel Nasser opposed this latter step despite his support for the Fertile Crescent Project, which was announced before the Iraqi revolution in response to the unity of Egypt and Syria.

Western countries held different positions. France explicitly stated its support for unity, fearing that a Britain-aligned Iraq would conquer Syria. Perhaps it saw Egyptian-Syrian unity as of lesser significance than an Iraqi-Syrian deal.<sup>[236]</sup> The rest of Western circles did not see the unity step as deserving of strong criticism. Despite the criticism and propaganda against Nasserism, Western circles saw unity as a superior alternative to Syria's long-standing revolutionary predicament.

The United States reinstated its assistance to Egypt after the establishment of unity. On May 6, 1959, the two countries signed a treaty to sell surplus American foodstuffs worth 21.5 million Egyptian pounds. The Egyptian pound was also certified as a payment currency for the first time after a three-year break.<sup>[237]</sup> Muhammad Hasanein Heikal added his own comment in this regard, stating that the resumption of American assistance to Egypt in 1958 was due to the rise of communist influence in Iraq. In addition to the misunderstanding between Egypt and the Soviet Union (which resulted from the suppression of communists in Egypt and Syria—the author), it was an encouragement to Nasserists to continue their war against communism and the Soviet Union.<sup>[238]</sup> The Anglo-French reparations issue was also settled, the freezing of Egyptian reserves in London and Paris was lifted, and the two countries resumed their trade with Egypt. Furthermore, England and France paid the costs of their imports from Egypt using hard currency, greatly helping the latter to increase its cash reserves. For its part, the Nasserite government lifted the guardianship of 1,362 foreigners in 1959.<sup>[239]</sup> This significant enhancement in the relationship between Nasserism and Western countries did not necessarily imply that the latter regarded Nasserism as their

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<sup>[236]</sup> Refer to Ahmad Abdel Rahim Mustafa, *Op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>[237]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, *Egypt in the Era of Abdel Nasser*, p. 90.

<sup>[238]</sup> We and America.

<sup>[239]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

**protégé. Otherwise, it indicated that their position on Egyptian-Syrian unity was neither completely antagonistic nor entirely supportive. At the very least, they did not perceive the unity as a significant threat to their interests. The Soviet Union did not explicitly articulate its genuine position regarding unity.**

**It is certain that Arab unity is something that the major global powers do not accept or welcome, except as a temporary situation at best. Previously, Britain encouraged the idea of Arab unity and greatly helped in establishing the Arab League in 1945, using nationalist slogans to confront the communist movement and radical nationalist currents. In fact, the unity between Egypt and Syria, driven by its internal rationale, ultimately resulted in the destruction of unitary forces in the Levant, which were the fundamental pillars of the Arab nationalist movement. In this context, unity was, in essence, secession itself, or rather, potential secession in the philosophical sense of the word. Businessmen in Syria decided to secede after the purpose of unity with Egypt had been exhausted, especially after Nasserism began to directly affect their interests in the July 1961 measures. It is ironic that the Syrian army, which imposed unity on the Nasserists, is the same one that played a direct role in breaking it up in the 1961 coup, after “cleansing” it of extremist nationalist elements. The dominant class in Syria, like its counterpart in Sudan before, succeeded in defaming Nasserism. It could expose the corruption of the Nasserite elite and its security apparatus in Syria, besides its policy of repression. Western propaganda, which intensified before the secession and after Nasserism had finished destroying the Syrian Left, also contributed to strengthening the influence of the secessionists.**

**The Syrian secession dealt a significant blow to Nasserism. Syria’s withdrawal from the union signified the ending of confidence in Nasserism’s leadership of Arab nationalism, especially since the regime of Abdel Karim Qasim was still in power in Iraq. Unity was a predicament for Nasserists, politically and even economically. However, it was largely an obligatory predicament, dictated by the**

political dynamics of the region as a whole. Getting out of that predicament created a deeper one. In addition, the outrages triggered by the Syrian coup were striking at the heart of Nasserite ideology. In addition, the secession markedly attenuated Nasserism's ability to disseminate and promote its demagoguery in the Arab world.

With the coup taking place, Abdel Nasser implicated himself further by stating, *"There are those who may think that I will seize this chance to declare the dissolution of the United Arab Republic. I hold accountability for every Syrian, every Egyptian, and every Arab within this homeland. I take on the responsibility for this republic and its unity."* He further asserted, *"I will never announce this under any circumstances, regardless of the challenges we encounter. I have resolved to support these regions and safeguard the populace by deploying armed forces from Cairo. Brothers, the troops commenced their movement, the fleet set sail, and the aircraft took off, transporting paratroopers. There were 2,000 paratroopers to land in Latakia, but what happened? This small movement was able to eliminate the basis of the national elements."*

The failure of his troops to crush the coup made his position even more awkward.<sup>[240]</sup> Therefore, he was obligated to change his confident tone but could never save face: *"You know that I made a decision a few days ago that Arab unity between Egypt and Syria would not turn into a military operation."* I ask all the popular forces that are committed to the United Arab Republic and Arab unity to realize now that national unity within the Syrian homeland occupies the first place." This is despite his repeatedly describing the coup as reactionary and working for colonialism. *"I have asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the United Arab Republic not stand in the way of Syria's membership in the Arab League."*<sup>[241]</sup> Nasser also expressed regret for agreeing to unification, accusing nationalists in Syria and the Syrian people of pressuring him,

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<sup>[240]</sup> The entire parachute brigade he sent to Latakia was captured, and the operation failed. Hamroush, Op. cit., pp. 91-92.

<sup>[241]</sup> These phrases were taken from Nasser's addresses in the immediate aftermath of the Syrian secession.



thus portraying himself as a victim,<sup>[242]</sup> holding the Syrians accountable for the failure from beginning to end. Thus, he was getting rid of all accountability and, at the same time, trying to contain his new opponents by adopting them. He began to threaten and make promises when he felt able to destroy the secessionist government. However, after becoming certain of his inability, he tried to actually contain the coup without explicitly adopting it. Rather, at the same time, he continued to criticize the secessionist government, confirming his belief in unity.

As a major defeat for Nasserism, the secession was a strong incentive to seek alternative successes at home and abroad. It was one of the grounds behind the new measures directed against the dominant class in Egypt. Additionally, it prompted Nasserism to turn against Imam Ahmad, encouraging the coup against him and entering the war in Yemen. The secession also prompted the

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<sup>[242]</sup> For example, Nasser said after the secession, *“In 1958, all the Syrian parties and all the blocs in the Syrian army came and met me and asked me to accept unity. At that time, I did not accept, explaining to them that unity is difficult; it is a tangible issue that all the enemies of the Arab world, including those opposed to Arab nationalism, reactionism, and colonialism, will unite to destroy. Unity is a material thing, not a moral thing. When it is established, the enemies will find a target to which they will direct their stabs. I told them in those days in January 1958, or on January 15, 1958, in particular, that we should wait five years, try economic unity, military unity, and cultural unity, and then move on to constitutional unity. They told me, ‘Syria is in danger and at risk of being lost. By rejecting unity, you are contradicting everything you have said about Arab nationalism and Arab unity. Unity is the only solution to save Syria.’ I told them that the people here in Egypt cannot forget the Arab people who stood with them in 1956; they cannot forget the Syrian people who stood with them when they broke the oil pipelines when the British, French, and Israelis attacked us. I told them that the Arab people here in Egypt cannot accept that the Arab people in Syria will be harmed; therefore, I accept this unity. I accept this challenge despite knowing the difficulties I will face. I embrace it, aware of the obstacles and hardships that lie ahead. I express this understanding because I recognize that each participant will strive to fulfill their interests when unity is achieved. There was a contradiction of interests, a difference in the goals of politicians, and a disparity in the objectives of capitalists. Each one seeks unity for a specific interest; nevertheless, they are unanimous on unity. The politicians—I don’t say the people—were unanimous on unity, but everyone had their motivation.”*

*Source: President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s speech in the Jomhoriyya Square regarding the secession of Syria, September 29, 1961.*

Nasserite regime to intensify its media campaign on colonialism, depicting the failure of unity as the consequence of external conspiracies rather than admitting self-defeat. This approach, i.e., attributing failure to conspiracies of colonialism and reactionary forces, had consistently been employed by Nasserism.

### **The Tripartite Unity talks** <sup>[243]</sup>

Following the 1963 coup in Syria and Iraq, the Baath Party regained its influence in both countries. Subsequently, the new governments expressed their desire to pursue unity with Egypt. In order to achieve this officially declared goal, negotiations were held between the three countries during 1963. A review of the negotiations file shows that none of the three governments wanted unity except under their leadership. For Nasserism, the previous lesson had profound effects, as Nasser finally made it clear that he did not want unity with the Baathist government in general.

### **The Palestinian Issue**

The Palestinian issue has been important to the Egyptian regime for a variety of reasons. First, the challenge posed by the existence of an expansionist Jewish state to the interests of Arab regimes. Second, the significant consideration given by the Arab nationalist movement to this issue made it a major driver for its growth in the 1930s and 1940s. In addition, it was the decisive factor in the development of the idea of Arabism in Egypt. There is no doubt that the Arab nationalist movement has been exerting tremendous pressure on the Nasserite regime. Third, the establishment of Israel led to the evacuation of many Arab populations from Palestine, who subsequently became refugees in the neighboring Arab countries, creating a security and political challenge.

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<sup>[243]</sup> The unity talks were published in Cairo in 1964.

Therefore, the July 1952 government could not evade indefinitely addressing this issue. Initially, it took a completely negative stance, as was manifested in its early statements, which did not mention the issue of Palestine. Naguib also decided frankly that the issue of Palestine did not concern him, and accordingly he stated, *“Israel did not appear as a point on our agenda. Our interest was focused on liberating Egypt.”*<sup>[244]</sup> The issue was also not mentioned in the program of the Liberation Rally in 1953. Then, in 1954, Abdel Nasser reduced the military budget by five million pounds. Moreover, he stated to Richard Crossman, a British politician in the Labor Party, according to the latter’s assertion, that *“he does not concern himself with Israel but rather focuses on internal development in Egypt. He expressed the belief that Israel poses no threat to Egypt, except in light of Egypt’s current economic and social weaknesses.”*<sup>[245]</sup> Nasserism soon overcame the negativity of the pre-1952 governments regarding the Palestinian refugee issue in the Gaza Strip. It attempted to find a direct and inexpensive solution through the Sinai Project. Then, an attempt was made for a final reconciliation with Israel in the Paris negotiations of 1954.<sup>[246]</sup> Then an attempt was made for a final reconciliation with Israel in the Paris negotiations of 1954. However, it did not succeed in either of them. Popular uprisings in the Gaza Strip aborted the former attempt, and Israel’s intransigence aborted the Paris negotiations. The failure of Nasserism’s endeavor appears to have given the latter a bitter lesson while also revealing the reality of the regional power balances. For instance, the Nasserite regime discovered that the 1949 armistice did not mark the end of Zionist ambitions. This is despite Arab regimes’ recognition of Israel in

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<sup>[244]</sup> My Word for History, p. 113, and Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, The Story of Suez, p. 22.

<sup>[245]</sup> Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, Op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>[246]</sup> The American government proposed two projects in addition to this one, the Jazeera Project and the Johnson Project, to settle refugees in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. Both Syria and Jordan agreed, but the resistance of the Palestinian people prevented the implementation of the two projects. Abdel Qader Yassin, Suspensions about the Palestinian Revolution, p. 101.

practice, according to statements of that armistice. The two sides, the Arab and the Israeli, agreed on a ceasefire decision at the lines where the 1948 war ended, which stayed in effect until June 4, 1967. This was considered a recognition by Arab regimes of the legitimacy of the State of Israel, according to international norms. <sup>[247]</sup> In September 1955, Israel occupied the Auja area in the south of the Gaza Strip, which was a demilitarized neutral zone according to the 1949 armistice agreement, with an area of 145 square kilometers. Furthermore, it continued to occupy the area even after its withdrawal from Sinai and Gaza following the 1956 war. All that the Nasserite regime did was file a protest at the United Nations.

Despite this de facto appeasement, Nasserite propaganda was thoroughly anti-Israeli, in keeping with the tendency of the Arab nationalist movement. Indeed, not a single Arab country was an exception to this rule. It even began to convince Arab masses that the government was preparing and equipping armies to liberate Palestine by force and return the refugees to their homes after the destruction of the Zionist state. Abdel Nasser often used threats to confront Israel and those behind it. Israel was depicted in the propaganda as a group of weak and helpless gangs that could not withstand the mighty Arab armies. In short, Nasserite propaganda presented its regime in an extremely hardline and radically anti-Zionist form, which was the only image that could satisfy the Arab masses. Even though propaganda cannot be considered the basic component of the Nasserite perspective on the Palestinian issue. This issue can only be elucidated by analyzing the official statements and positions, which were formed by the officers' government through trial and error between 1952 and 1955. Initially, this idea emerged as a general and abstract concept, but it gradually became defined in alignment with the evolution of Nasserism itself.

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<sup>[247]</sup> Mahmoud Riad, the long-time foreign minister of Nasserite Egypt, held this view. *Memoirs of Mahmoud Riad (1948-1981)*, pp. 24-25.

The initial steps of the Nasserite government reflected its general idea regarding the Palestinian issue. Negotiations with the West and Israel to address both aspects of the issue, refugees and borders, represent an attempt to seek a compromise by adjusting the outcomes of the 1948 war. In 1955, after the Nasserists failed to find such a solution, Abdel Nasser openly announced his idea. At the Bandung Conference, he stated that he believed the United Nations' 1948 offer could be considered a satisfactory solution.<sup>[248]</sup> Afterward, Nasserite Egypt was committed to the UN resolutions, with Abdel Nasser reiterating this stance multiple times.<sup>[249]</sup>

In 1965, the Tunisian President Bourguiba presented a compromise proposal to achieve permanent peace and stable relations between Arab countries and Israel. He proposed a detailed project for the eventual resolution of the Palestinian question, which included executing the partition resolution made by the United Nations in 1947.<sup>[250]</sup>

After Bourguiba announced his proposals, official Arab media rushed to call him a traitor and an agent, and Arab regimes declared their adherence to the resolutions of the Arab summits and their refusal to recognize, reconcile, and coexist with Israel. The first Arab Summit conference was held in January 1964 on the occasion of Israel's repeated attempts to divert the trajectory of the Jordan River and issued the following decisions:

1. Establishing a unified Arab command led by Lieutenant General Ali Amer.

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<sup>[248]</sup> Mahdi Abdel Hadi, *The Palestinian Question and Political Solutions Projects (1934-1974)*, p. 251.

<sup>[249]</sup> Bourguiba (Ibid.) mentioned the following statement by Gamal Abdel Nasser to the French magazine "Realité": "*And when the organization (i.e., the Palestine Liberation Organization) completes its preparations, we will begin working to implement the United Nations resolutions regarding Palestine and the rights of the Arabs in Palestine*"... "*A nation that seeks to impose the resolutions of the United Nations is not an aggressor*," pp. 258-259.

<sup>[250]</sup> Op. cit, pp. 242-264.

**2. Preparing studies to divert the trajectory of the Jordan River in Syria and Lebanon.**

**3. Signing the Joint Arab Defense Charter. The latter obligated all the signatories to consider any attack on the 1949 armistice lines as an aggression against all of them.**

**4. The establishment of the “Palestine Liberation Organization” was contingent upon the stipulation that any operations undertaken by the fedayeen would require the consent of the unified Arab leadership. Additionally, the participants reached a consensus to refrain from actions that might provoke Israel and not to give it a pretext to initiate hostilities prior to the Arab side finalizing its preparations for conflict.**

**The second conference was held in September 1964. A decision was made to immediately begin diverting the trajectory of the Jordan River in Syria and Lebanon. In the third conference in September 1965, most Arab leaders announced that they could not allocate additional funds to the unified Arab leadership. The conference also made a decision calling for Arab solidarity and peaceful coexistence between different Arab political systems. Consequently, it called for working to solve the problems that existed in Arab countries. Such as the problem of Yemen and the Iraqi campaign against the Kurds. At this conference, the unified Arab leadership was frozen, and its work was paralyzed.<sup>[251]</sup>**

**In actuality, the summits did not offer a specific alternative to Bourguiba’s subsequent proposals. However, there was the decision to form the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) while shackling it, which was a purely pro forma alternative. Freezing the situation was preferred by Arab regimes over battles with uncertain results and better than peaceful solutions that must provoke widespread popular protests.**

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<sup>[251]</sup> Saleh Saeb Al-Jubouri, *Op. cit.*, pp. 445-448.



In fact, Bourguiba differed from the rest of the Arab rulers in one basic thing: he was more frank and clear in expressing their aspirations. He presented a compromise solution that was largely consistent with Nasserite ideology, as well as ideal for Arab regimes as a whole. However, it was a solution that the latter could not embrace openly at the time. The masses were enthusiastic and hostile to Zionism and to any concession, no matter how small, toward Israel. Arab regimes themselves were obligated to further inflame this nationalist fervor in the context of presenting themselves as enthusiastic. Bourguiba openly exposed this contradiction: *“I have always adhered to the language of sincerity; however, the leaders showed much greater understanding during the talks than they did before the masses.” “These leaders, to be cheered, tend to appear very nationalistic. Therefore, they appeal to the emotions of the masses, promising to fulfill their hopes overnight. As soon as a leader tries to devise a compromise, he finds himself hampered in his actions and methods of conduct.”*<sup>[252]</sup> *“The Arab countries are unable to carry out any offensive operation at present for two reasons: the first is that they are not prepared to confront war, nor are they amenable to the principle of infiltration by guerrilla Palestinian resistance fighters from the sons of Palestine.”*<sup>[253]</sup> Bourguiba proceeded to expose the Arab summit’s decisions: *“Our plan aimed at one of two things. Either that Israel would submit to the decisions of the international organization, which is the most distant, and allow the return of the refugees and give up part of the occupied land. Thus, the facts of the problem will be changed in favor of the Arabs by establishing a free Palestinian state that would be the starting point for the upcoming battles for the final solution. Otherwise—which is the closest—Israel would insist on its rejection, weakening its position in the international arena due to the dwindling number of its supporters and the embarrassment its friends would inevitably feel in continuing to support it despite its departure from the legitimacy of the United Nations. Thus, the Arab position would be the strongest if we use force to implement international law.”*<sup>[254]</sup> *“I believe that the official figures who rushed to express their condemnation did so in order to*

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<sup>[252]</sup> Mahdi Abdel Hadi, Op. cit., p. 247.

<sup>[253]</sup> Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>[254]</sup> Ibid., pp. 254-255.

*please the United Arab Republic for internal reasons that are not unknown to anyone.*"<sup>[255]</sup>

The Tunisian president also dispatched a letter to Abdel Nasser conveying the same message: *"You told me in your own words during our conversation regarding that issue (meaning the Palestine issue) that you had stirred up a wave of anger when you declared at the Bandung Conference that what the United Nations had proposed in 1948* <sup>[256]</sup> *could be considered a satisfactory solution. I replied that I was ready to take bold positions in this regard and added jokingly, I hope that the mouthpieces of Radio Cairo and the Voice of the Arabs will not attack me then."* *"The plan that I proposed in Jericho, Jerusalem, and Lebanon, and then explained and clarified in successive statements, does not differ in essence from the position that you announced in 1955. I presented this same plan in the address that I gave at the first meeting of the leaders of Arab states in Cairo in January, 1964."* *"It (his plan) did not differ in essence from the position that you briefly expressed in your recent statements to the magazine 'Réalités.' And the 'Opera Monday' news agency, as you said, meaning that the Arabs are satisfied with what the Africans and Asians demanded in 1955 about a return to the United Nations resolutions regarding the issue of Palestine."* <sup>[257]</sup>

Moreover, Bourguiba commented, in an address, on Abdel Nasser's attack on his proposals, saying, *"while I consider that the implementation of these resolutions is just a stage toward the final solution, what is understood from the statements of the Egyptian president is that the international resolutions represent the maximum rights that the Arabs and Palestinians can demand. The journalist representing the French magazine (Réalités) was alerted to this point. He said, Let us assume for a moment—even if that is unrealistic—that Israel accepts the return of the Arab refugees and that the resolutions of the United Nations can be implemented; thereafter, there will inevitably remain the entity of the State of Israel in the midst of the Arab homeland. Do you accept that? The answer was (meaning Nasser's answer): The African and Asian nations said at the Bandung*

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<sup>[255]</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

<sup>[256]</sup> Resolution 194 was issued in 1948 by the General Assembly regarding the internationalization of Jerusalem and the return of Palestinian refugees. "Arab Affairs" Magazine, p. 276.

<sup>[257]</sup> Mahdi Abdel Hadi, Op. cit., p. 252.

*Conference that they accept the implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations, and the Arab countries agree with them on that.”*<sup>[258]</sup>

In summary, Nasserism did not go further on the Palestinian issue than the United Nations did and had no different plan.

This signifies that Nasserism (and all Arab regimes) took a purely defensive position toward Israel, and destroying the Zionist state was never one of its *actual* projects.

In mass propaganda, the essence of the discourse was very different from that of the official positions. The most plausible explanation for this disparity is that the regimes were terrified of the Arab nationalism movement, which was still powerful when Bourguiba announced his project. Arab regimes during that period undoubtedly sought to diminish Israel’s power to the greatest possible degree in order to lessen the threat it posed to them. Nevertheless, achieving this objective proved to be beyond their capabilities. The matter required mobilizing Arab masses and implementing radical social reforms that would enable the preparation of a strong economy and an army capable of defeating Israel. In actuality, despite the fiery propaganda, violent threats, and banging the war drums, Arab regimes, including the Nasserite one, did not take effective practical steps to confront this powerful enemy.

Nasserite propaganda was pretending to prepare for launching a war against Israel, along with broadcasting enthusiastic songs and anthems that stirred the sentiments of the populace. It was also promising the Palestinians that they would recover their land soon. Nevertheless, and in reality, it was not serious about implementing its moderate proposals regarding the Palestinian issue.

Contrary to the official Nasserite propaganda disseminated between 1955 and 1967, Nasserism did not actually prepare its armed forces to confront Israel, whether offensively or defensively.

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<sup>[258]</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

Despite pretending to possess the most powerful army in the Middle East and boasting through dazzling military parades, the army was more akin to scout units until the year 1967. The 1967 war exposed this fact blatantly. The army consisted of elements mostly unfit for combat, with the majority of soldiers being illiterate, poorly trained officers, and leadership focused mainly on leisure. The structure of the army itself did not qualify it for engaging in real military operations in terms of organization, training systems, and operational plans. Despite the availability of Soviet military supplies, the training was inadequate to prepare fighters, and maintenance and repair operations were not carried out properly. Besides, officers were immersed in widespread leisure, especially during the Yemen War. <sup>[259]</sup> Soldier training did not aim to prepare fighters but rather servants suitable for providing personal services to leaders and carrying out civilian tasks.

The anticipated military preparations for a confrontation with Israel, which the regime pretended to be organizing, did not take place. In fact, the Nasserite authority was merely feigning readiness for a war whose timing had not yet been specified. It was pretending to possess the largest military force in the Middle East and that it was about to crush the enemy. This was contrary to the statements of its men in front of representatives of other countries, as well as their public declarations in critical moments. One of these critical moments was the Syrian government's announcement in late 1966 of its desire to wage war against Israel to prevent it from forcibly diverting the trajectory of the Jordan River. Such act obligated the Nasserists, who were taken aback by this call, to express their extreme discomfort publicly and to disavow the national responsibilities they had previously assumed immediately. At those moments, the Boss had to admit his impotence. For example, on

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<sup>[259]</sup> The memoirs of Muhammad Fawzy, the former Minister of War, in his book "The Three-Year War," are a document that bears witness to the state of the Nasserite army until 1967. Refer also to the book by Saleh Al-Jubouri mentioned above.

**June 26, 1962, Nasser announced before the Palestinian Legislative Council that he had no plan to liberate Palestine: *“I cannot say that I have a plan to liberate Palestine. If I tell you now that I have a plan to liberate Palestine, I will be deceiving you, and I will have become a politician, not a nationalist who deals in politics. Anyone who says today that he has a plan to liberate Palestine is deceiving you.”***

**In fact, the Soviet arms deal in 1955 was primarily aimed at defensive objectives as a reaction to the Israeli assaults on Gaza during the same year. Prior to this, the Nasserite government reduced the military budget. Later, the weakness of Nasserism became manifest in 1964 when Israel finished diverting the trajectory of the Jordan River. In return, Arab countries decided to undertake a counter-diversion operation. However, Israeli planes raided the work sites, forcing Arab regimes to halt the project to avoid a full-scale war.** <sup>[260]</sup>

**There is no question that the disintegration of the army’s structure was not only due to a lack of will to fight. Some factors were related to the corruption of the military leadership, which enjoyed strong influence in the state’s authority as a whole, its narrow vision, and professional incompetence. It was also related to the regime’s exaggeration in maintaining a smoothly led army by excluding educated individuals as much as possible from its ranks and handing over leadership positions to trustworthy personnel. Moreover, there was a lack of vision within the military leadership regarding the idea of launching a future war against Israel, as this was not a real goal on the Nasserite agenda. This does not negate Nasserism’s aspirations to break Israel. However, aspirations are one thing, and realistic possibilities are another.**

**Nasserism’s reluctance to confront Israel was manifest in several instances. The most significant of these was its failure during the Syrian unity period to oppose Israel’s operation to divert the trajectory of the Jordan River, while Syria alone managed to halt**

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<sup>[260]</sup> Trevor N. D. Bowie, *The Elusive Victory*, p. 263.

this project by force in 1953. The 1963 Charter on the same subject was also not effectively implemented.<sup>[261]</sup> Additionally, despite the joint defense pact between Arab countries, neither Egyptian nor Syrian aircraft protected Jordan when Israel assaulted the Jordanian town of Samu on November 13, 1966, which served as the headquarters for Palestinian refugees and PLO fighters. This self-defeating behavior surpassed even the inherent weakness of the regime itself.<sup>[262]</sup> This self-defeating behavior surpassed even the inherent weakness of the regime itself.

In 1966, a military coup took place in Syria, and a leftist Baathist government seized power and decided to prepare to declare war on Israel immediately. This leadership could have attracted the sympathy of Arab masses and was also a threat factor that would drag Nasserism into a losing battle with Israel. It seems that this last factor was actually realized as part of the 1967 disaster.

The newspapers and other media outlets in Egypt launched a severe attack on the Syrian government, accusing it of recklessness and adventurism. The official argument was that the Arabs were not yet prepared for war. This argument was always the excuse used by Nasserism to cover up its failure to prepare for the inevitable collision with Israel.

In addition to its helplessness and complacency, Nasserism simultaneously prohibited Palestinian guerrillas from working across Egyptian borders or in the Gaza Strip to carry out operations against Israel. Rather, security services used to arrest and torture these guerrillas in Egyptian prisons. There was always a fear of provoking Israel at a time when Egypt was not yet ready. This argument seems entirely reasonable. Actually, Nasserism did not prepare itself to fight Israel and therefore was not ready to confront the consequences of guerrilla operations. Israel completed the

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<sup>[261]</sup> Shibli Al-Aysmy, in the Arab Revolution, p. 4.

<sup>[262]</sup> Saleh Al-Jubouri, Op. cit., pp. 447-448.



process of diverting the trajectory of the Jordan River in 1964. Thus, it exposed the inability of the Arab regimes to stop this process. Consequently, 30 Palestinian organizations were formed in Kuwait, reflecting the Palestinian people's thirst for struggle after they despaired of Nasserism and the Arab regimes in general.<sup>[263]</sup> The growth of "Fatah," formed in 1958, pushed Arab countries, led by Egypt, to establish "the Palestine Liberation Organization" (PLO). The goal was to block the path of organizations independent of Arab regimes, to place the responsibility of liberating Palestine on the shoulders of the Palestinian people, and to ensure these regimes' control over the Palestinian struggle in order to avoid provoking Israel so much. Nasserism succeeded in making its loyalist Ahmad Shuqairy the head of the organization. Therefore, it presented itself as a fighter against Zionism. Of course, it did not forget to impose all possible restrictions on this organization. Despite the Arab countries' funding the PLO, it did not succeed in blocking "Fatah" or even in competing with it. Arab regimes were eventually obligated to invite "Fatah" to join the PLO in 1969, waiving a condition imposed by Yasser Arafat, namely that he be the head of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Fatah, which declared itself in 1965, played a significant role in implicating Nasserism in the 1967 war, as will be addressed.

Arab regimes were content to take a negative position toward Israel, represented by an economic boycott that was never fully implemented. Moreover, they refused to recognize Israel diplomatically and avoided direct dealings with it in international organizations and sporting events. Meanwhile, Israel was preparing to eliminate Palestinian resistance and subjugate Arab regimes themselves.

Nasserism's stance on the Palestinian issue was both objective and subjective. Objectively, it was challenging for a weak and backward

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<sup>[263]</sup> Abdel Qader Yassin, *Doubts about the Palestinian Revolution*, pp. 62-63.

regime to confront a stronger and more advanced one (Israel) without modernizing and mobilizing resources. Subjectively, the regime lacked the efficiency to utilize its limited material energies due to political and cultural backwardness. Muhammad Hassanein Heikal aptly described this situation by stating, *“The difference between Israeli strategic thought and Arab strategic thought is that the Israelis play chess, while the Arabs play backgammon.”* The actual work to achieve a compromise, i.e., the Nasserite ideas, encountered a strong counter-factor in the enthusiasm of the Arab nationalist movement for the Palestinian cause. The final solution to the problem posed a challenge for Arab regimes, as the presence of an external enemy justified their corruption and the suffering of the masses. It also allowed them to maintain national unity. Moreover, external challenges served to justify classless slogans, delay the resolution of social issues, and suppress internal conflicts. Israel, too, used the Arab enemy to solidify its artificial entity.

### Arab Liberation Movements

After the Egyptian-Syrian unity in February 1958, Imam Ahmad bin Yahya sent a letter to Abdel Nasser, which read, *“From the Commander of the Faithful, Al-Nasser Lidin Allah, Imam Ahmad bin Yahya Hamid Eddin, King of the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen, to His Excellency President Gamal Abdel Nasser. I consulted the stars, and after long calculations, it became clear to us that your star is gaining on the stars of others and overshadowing them. For this reason, we want to join you, and my boy, Al-badr, is on his way to you to discuss matters and convey our opinion.”* <sup>[264]</sup>

This letter summarizes the character of the entire Imamate rule, which, in its details, was something more hideous than words can describe. This situation led to the outbreak of social conflict in northern Yemen, which witnessed some uprisings. Most of them were led by army officers in order to put an end to the rule of the

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<sup>[264]</sup> Abdullah Jazilan, *The Secret History of the Yemeni Revolution*, p. 12.

**Imamate, especially after World War II. Officers trained in modern weaponry played the largest role in the progressive movement.**

**The 1948 uprising was the most prominent of these revolts, during which the officers were able to seize power for twenty-five days.**<sup>[265]</sup>

**Despite its unpopularity, Nasserism remained friendly and supportive of the Imamate. Abdel Nasser wrote to Imam Ahmad in 1955, congratulating him on his success over a coup attempt headed by a group of enlightened officers who advocated placing his brother as Imam. Ahmad successfully thwarted the coup and executed its leaders.**<sup>[266]</sup> **This congratulatory gesture was not just a diplomatic act; the Voice of the Arabs radio openly condemned the coup government before its defeat.**<sup>[267]</sup>

**A few years later, there was unity between Egypt, Syria, and Yemen.**<sup>[268]</sup> **Friendship was established between the Boss of Nasserism and the Imam of Yemen, but these relations were stronger with the Crown Prince of Yemen, Al-Badr. In fact, the Egyptian military mission in Yemen during the period of unity supported Al-Badr against the revolutionary officers.**

**The honeymoon between Nasserite Egypt, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia continued from the July 1952 coup to the early 1960s. Then the estrangement came from Imam Ahmad, who believed, for some considerations, that he had to support Abdel Karim Qasim against the Nasserists. In addition, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the nationalization measures in Egypt in July 1961, as well as Nasserite socialism as a whole. Furthermore, he wrote poems satirizing**

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<sup>[265]</sup> To find some details, refer to Muhammad Yahya al-Haddad's "The Political History of Yemen," pp. 379-384.

<sup>[266]</sup> Abdullah Jazilan, *Op. cit.*, p. 14; Ahmad Hamroush, *The Story of the July 23 Revolution*, part three, p. 200.

<sup>[267]</sup> Muhammad Yahya Al-Haddad, *Op. cit.*, p. 391.

<sup>[268]</sup> Interestingly, it was not only the Nasserists who supported Imam Ahmad, but the Yemeni Communists also supported what they referred to as the Imam's progressive role during the fifties. Fred Halliday, *Op.cit.*, chapter three.

socialism. Henceforth, Nasserism started to support the republican opposition in Yemen, especially after the Syrian secession in 1961. This coup shook Nasserism's national image, but it swiftly found an alternative in the republican opposition in North Yemen. So, it adopted the right wing of this opposition, headed by Abdul Rahman Al-Baydani, who and his men in Yemen and abroad were granted important facilities in Cairo and lavished with money by the Nasserite apparatus. While the radical officers who were actually preparing to seize power did not enjoy any support.<sup>[269]</sup> A group of officers from various political orientations prepared a plan to seize power without resorting to any external force on the basis that Egypt, from which they had taken the green light, would help them at the appropriate time. Their plan actually succeeded, and Imam Al-Badr was overthrown in September 1962.

The Egyptian intervention in Yemen was intended to compensate for the lost influence in Syria. It aimed to achieve an external victory that Nasserism believed would be easy and sufficient to offset the consequences of the Syrian secession, albeit only partially. Moreover, Nasserism was seeking to extend its influence in the Arab region in the context of its then-raging conflict with Arab nationalist parties and the regime of Abdel Karim Qasim. The intervention commenced with a solitary company consisting of 62 to 190 soldiers, which subsequently expanded as Nasserism progressively engaged with 70,000 soldiers.<sup>[270]</sup>

The Egyptian intervention in Yemen was a controversial issue within the Nasserite regime and was criticized by more conservative elements within the elite. Official propaganda depicted the intervention as merely an application of the principle of helping the revolution against reactionarism in the Arab world.

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<sup>[269]</sup> Abdullah Jazilan, Op. cit.

<sup>[270]</sup> Ahmad Hamroush, Op. cit., quoted from Gamal Abdel Nasser himself, p. 234.

Nasserism's role in Yemen was actually complex. Nasserism initially supported the Imam against the radical officers until its interests required a different position. The overall role of Nasserism did not differ much from its role in Syria, as the intervention favored the Republicans in general to establish the nationalist image of Nasserism. However, in reality, it accompanied the destruction of nationalist and progressive trends. It supported tribal trends such as Al-Baydani, Al-Amri, Al-Iryani, and Al-Numan against radical Republicans like Abdellah Al-Sallal and Abdellah Jazilan. Nasserite intelligence pursued and eliminated communists, radical Republicans, and Arab nationalists who formed peasant councils, seizing land from large landowners. The elimination of revolutionary elements began after the formation of the first Republican ministry. Nasserism dealt with its opponents in Yemen via exile, defamation, detention in Cairo, and sometimes execution.<sup>[271]</sup> It did not work to establish a strong central state, but rather encouraged tribes to use bribes.<sup>[272]</sup> It also did not focus on arming the Republican Army, but seized Soviet weapons sent to it multiple times.<sup>[273]</sup> After suffering bitter defeats in 1964,<sup>[274]</sup> Nasserism sought a compromise between Republicans and Royalists. It made concessions to Saudi Arabia in 1965 to end the war and eventually submitted to its conditions, withdrawing in 1967. The outcome was the control of right-wing elements over the government, especially after the 1967 coup that ousted Abdellah Al-Sallal with the support of Abdel Nasser.

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<sup>[271]</sup> Fred Halliday, *Op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>[272]</sup> The bribes distributed to the tribes during the Yemeni war amounted to 60 million pounds sterling, according to Ahmad Hamroush (*Op. cit.*, p. 231).

<sup>[273]</sup> Fred Halliday, *Op. cit.*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>[274]</sup> The losses amounted to 10,000 dead, according to Hamroush, *Op. cit.*, p. 261. While Halliday (*Op. cit.*) stated that they amounted to 15,195 dead in the period from October 1962 to June 1964, p. 111.

From North Yemen, Nasserism's influence spread to the south as well. While Britain assisted royal tribes in the north, Nasserism supported the National Front forces in Aden, which were fighting the British occupation. This support only began after Britain provided arms to royalists in the north, while Nasserism previously offered no arms to southern revolutionaries. It initially failed to gain British recognition for the republic; therefore, it helped the southern insurgents. The support began in 1963 when the royalist offensive intensified and continued successfully until 1964. Thereafter, the National Front shifted to the left, and its fighting elements began to embrace Marxism and advocate revolutionary principles. Since the start of this shift, Nasserism stopped supplying the National Front with weapons and even invited some of its leaders to Cairo for dialogue, where they were arrested for months.<sup>[275]</sup> In response to the National Front, Nasserism founded the "Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen," which it armed and recruited from tribal sheikhs and their allies.

As a result, the primary purpose of Nasserism in South Yemen became to avoid the emergence of a radical government following independence, which appeared inevitable. To do this, it encouraged the sheikhs and pressed the National Front to join the South Yemen Liberation Front under their banner.<sup>[276]</sup> However, the result was opposite to what it aimed for, as a radical leftist government was established in the south after four years of armed struggle.

In short, Nasserism's role in Yemen cannot be explained by direct ideological motives but rather by the Nasserite regime's interests. The course of this role was to work to reach a compromise accord between the forces of modernization and Yemeni reactionism. It is

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<sup>[275]</sup> Fred Halliday. *Op. cit.*, p. 212. Refer also to Vitaly Naumkin, *The Struggle of the National Front for Independence - South Yemen and National Democracy*, part II, chapter four, where the author discusses in detail the relationship between Nasserite Egypt and the National Front in South Yemen.

<sup>[276]</sup> Vitaly Naumkin, *Op. cit.*,



noteworthy that Nasserism never worked to achieve its peaceful vision of Arab unity despite the presence of tens of thousands of its soldiers in Yemen. It did not even propose this idea to the Yemeni people. Instead, it encouraged the tribes according to a traditional colonial principle: divide and conquer. The final outcome has been the establishment of a reactionary, pro-Saudi rule in northern Yemen. The end result of this system was the rapid transformation of Yemen from a pre-capitalist society to a dependent, backward one, which represents a modernization step in light of the circumstances of “Arabia Felix.” However, this step, along with other measures, contributed to diverting the path away from radical transformations that were possible. This becomes clear when comparing what happened in northern and southern Yemen in terms of the level of modernization. If Nasserism contributed to saving the Yemeni Republic from total collapse, it also contributed to eliminating, or at least weakening, the progressive currents and the popular movement. Thus, it prevented the emergence of a new, more democratic regime. However, if it unintentionally contributed to the success of the National Front in the south, this does not deserve any credit, as Imam Ahmad also did the same.

As a result, it is essential to present both the events and their justification.

Regarding Algeria, matters did not reach the point of Nasserism’s military intervention, nor did they require a distinct direct Egyptian role. In the context of its antagonistic position toward old colonialism, Nasserite Egypt provided financial, military, and training assistance to Algerian rebels. In fact, Egyptian weapons were arriving in Algeria by sea and via Libya in agreement with the Senussi king and with British encouragement.<sup>[277]</sup> The revolutionaries also obtained weapons from other Arab and some European countries.<sup>[278]</sup> Furthermore, the training of Algerian

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<sup>[277]</sup> Ahmad Hamroush, *Op. cit.*, p. 383.

<sup>[278]</sup> Joan Jelebi, *The Algerian Revolution*, p. 135.

militants took place in several countries, including Tunisia, Morocco, Iraq, and East Germany.<sup>[279]</sup> These countries were competing to provide support for the revolution. However, the main source of weaponry was the French enemy's firearms, which the revolutionaries were seizing and reached 75% of their weapons sources until November 1957.<sup>[280]</sup>

### **Arab Regimes**

Nasserism's interaction with the Arab regimes was not driven by aspirations of imperialism, contrary to the image sometimes projected by Western propaganda. As previously analyzed, Nasserism's theoretical stance toward the Arab regimes did not view them as enemies of Arab unity or Nasserism itself, except the regime of Abdel Karim Qasim, which was more leftist, democratic, and hostile to the West than Nasserism.

The Nasserite period witnessed fierce media battles between many parties on the Arab scene. The communist movement, the nationalist movement, regimes, colonial powers, and Zionism were involved. Nasserism established alliances with various parties to preserve its survival. As for Arab regimes, they agreed and disagreed with this or that party to varying extents. In certain instances, the situation escalated to a level of estrangement when it was perceived that a particular regime posed a direct threat to its leadership within the Arab world, especially in the case of Abdel Karim Qasim's Iraq. It consistently prioritized direct or indirect domestic interests over any other concerns. Moreover, its policy was entirely defensive, at least in terms of content. It attacked the communist and nationalist movements from this perspective. It also did not present itself to the world as a spiritual message (even its socialism was labeled Arab

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<sup>[279]</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>[280]</sup> Ibid., pp. 134-135 (it is clear that there is a typographical error in the reference where it mentions the year 1975).

socialism). Meanwhile, it did not have the possibility of bringing the so-called Arab nation into its fold. This was demonstrated in the Syrian unity, the Yemen war, and its stance on the Palestinian issue, in addition to the secession of Sudan.

Nasserism's position toward other Arab regimes was the flip side of its position toward radical revolutionary movements in the region. It has already been noted that all conservative Arab regimes stood behind Nasserism during the reactionary wave it led in the Levant in 1958/1959.

Nasserism, to a certain extent, openly opposed puppet regimes as part of its broader resistance to the concept of forming a joint alliance with the West.<sup>[281]</sup> However, during the formation of the Baghdad Pact, it allied with Saudi Arabia and Yemen,<sup>[282]</sup> the most backward and barbaric Arab regimes at the time, forming what was known as the "Southern Belt," in addition to Syria. Later, it rejected the Islamic alliance project led by Saudi Arabia. Most of the time, it stood against traditional colonialism, choosing for others what it chose for itself. Moreover, in order to preserve its political independence, it strived to help realize the independence of the largest number of countries. In a more practical sense, it required eliminating the hotbeds that constituted a threat to its political independence, as well as the phenomenon of traditional colonialism from the international scene.

Meanwhile, Nasserism strove to overcome any strong regional adversary, the most significant of which was the regime of Abdel Karim Qasim. In addressing the latter, Abdel Nasser held discussions with King Hussein, thereby restoring the severed

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<sup>[281]</sup> Even though Nasserists allied with the Nuri Al-Saeed regime in 1954/1953 and with Saudi Arabia from the beginning of the 1952 coup until the Yemen War.

<sup>[282]</sup> Despite its social backwardness and barbarism, the Imamate regime refused to submit to colonial domination, and the Imam diversified its sources of weapons, concluding an arms deal with the Soviet Union in 1956. Some circles in Yemen refused to be satisfied with American aid and called for balancing it with relations with the Soviets.

relations with Jordan. He also reconciled with King Saud. Furthermore, Nasser did not express any objection to the deployment of British military forces in Kuwait, which was intended to counter Qasim's aspirations to annex it to Iraq. <sup>[283]</sup> Abdel Hamid Al-Sarraj, the Syrian Minister of the Interior during the period of unity, also plotted, with Nasser's approval, a bloody coup against Qasim. But it was violently crushed by the Iraqi Communist Party, with the blessing of the Iraqi government. In actuality, the regime of Abdel Karim Qasim represented a frightening specter for Nasserism. It presented itself to the Arab peoples as an anti-colonial regime, more radical, democratic, and less authoritarian than Nasserism, an attractive Iraqi version of Bonapartism. However, it was vulnerable because of the extreme political polarization in Iraq, in addition to the weakness of Iraq's position in the Arab world compared to Egypt's strong influence.

After Qasim, the governments of Syria and Iraq proposed to Egypt a project of establishing a tripartite unity. However, Nasserism's response was extremely negative. Eventually, it was consolidated into an explicit rejection on the pretext of the Baath Party being in power <sup>[284]</sup> since the latter was a strong and annoying opponent, as viewed by Nasserists.

Nasserism's alliances with Arab regimes went through several stages. It began with the Egypt-Saudi Arabia axis in confronting the idea of a defensive alliance with the West. After signing the evacuation agreement in 1954, Egypt and Iraq allied. This was followed by the formation of an alliance between Egypt, Syria, Saudi

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<sup>[283]</sup> Hamroush, *The Story of the July 23 Revolution*, part three, p. 170.

<sup>[284]</sup> Minutes of the Unity Discussion Sessions.

Hamroush (Op. cit.) cited a few comments by Abdel Nasser on the issue of the proposed tripartite union: *"If the Baath party is ruling Syria and the union will be with it, then I am not prepared to discuss it at all."* He also declared that he feared applying the Arab proverb, "I am with my brother and I am against my cousin." During the discussions, Heikal wrote an article entitled "I object," in which he attacked the Baath party, which was broadcasted 12 times on Egyptian radio, pp. 119-128.

Arabia, Jordan, and Yemen to confront the Baghdad Pact project. Subsequently, the unification with Syria took place, which was succeeded by the Yemen War. Thereafter, Arab summit conferences called for by Abdel Nasser were convened to confront Israel's projects to divert the trajectory of the Jordan River. The summit conferences ended without any tangible results, under the slogan of "the unity of Arab ranks." At a later moment, the slogan of "unity of purpose" appeared in 1965/1966 in confronting the new imperialism's campaign in the region and the Third World in general. Finally, the slogan of "the unity of progressive forces" was presented. A stage of cooperation also began between Nasserism and some loyal Arab groups that adopted the Nasserite ideology. Moreover, there was collaboration with some small leftist groups, including the Sudanese Communist Party. The same period witnessed more rapprochement and cooperation between Nasserism and the tribal and conservative forces in North and South Yemen. Therefore, exerting intense pressure on the leftist trends in both countries. In addition to confronting the left wing of the Syrian Baath Party. Despite the leftist orientation of the propaganda, conciliation was done with businessmen in Egypt. The hardening of slogans came along with the deterioration of Nasserism's force and its feeling of vulnerability. Hence, radical slogans were raised as a cover for the actual course of reality.

It is noticeable that Nasserite propaganda tended more toward the Left since the mid-1960s. This was associated with economic collapse and the beginning of the disintegration of the regime. It served as a mechanism of self-defense and an attempt to justify failure and defeat by external factors. The slogan of "the unity of progressive forces" was raised after the liquidation or weakening of the main bodies of radical currents in the Arab region, which was supported by Arab regimes in power at that time.

Following the 1967 defeat, Nasserism once again reintroduced the slogan of "the unity of Arab ranks" to align with the actual reality. At the Khartoum Conference in 1967, Arab regimes reconciled,

**Egyptian forces withdrew from Yemen, Nasserite intelligence stopped inciting instability in the Arab East, and Nasserism refrained from confronting the most conservative Arab regimes. Instead, friendship blossomed between Egypt and Saudi Arabia after dividing their influence in Yemen during the Khartoum Conference.**

**Nasserite Egypt then aligned with the most conservative Arab regimes and became one of the doves in the official Arab political arena.**

**Nasserism was—objectively—in the same trench with conservative Arab regimes. Despite this, it strived to maintain its autonomy. Meanwhile, it did its best to suppress Arab revolutions to safeguard these regimes of which it was a part. It took the visage of a middle ground between conservative regimes and radical organizations. However, at critical moments, it often came into harmony with its notion, joining and spearheading the former.**

## **2. Nasserism Facing Colonial Powers**

**Under the Nasserite rule, Egypt achieved direct but incomplete political independence. It was reasonable for the government to strive to preserve this achievement and, consequently, to resist any attempt to undermine its independence. As a consequence, Egypt faced the repercussions of the 1956 war, which, nevertheless, contributed to diminishing British dominance over the Suez Canal. These defensive strategies encompassed supporting the pursuits of colonized countries in their struggle for political independence.**

**Nasserism not only refused to join the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower Doctrine, but it also worked in every way to thwart them. It formed something resembling an alliance with Syria, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia, which it referred to as the Southern Belt in opposition to the Baghdad Pact, or the Northern Belt. Moreover, its opposition to the Pact had an impact on the rise of the national opposition in Jordan and even its success in seizing the ministry in**



1957. Additionally, it succeeded in besieging the Iraqi regime, which fell by the 1958 revolution. It is noteworthy that the Baghdad Pact was opposed by all Arab regimes concerned, except for the Iraqi regime itself, and even Israel was opposed to its establishment.

After the Suez War, the United States introduced the Eisenhower Doctrine, which involved providing economic aid to Middle Eastern countries to help them resist communism. These countries were also expected to be open to US military intervention when necessary to counter any communist threat. The wording of the doctrine was provocative to the regimes in the region. It indicated the existence of a “vacuum” in the Middle East after Britain’s withdrawal from the Suez Canal. In return, the Soviets proposed a counter-project. It stipulated that the four major countries would refrain from exporting weapons to the Middle East in exchange for the United States’ stopping the project of establishing a military alliance in the region. Three Arab countries agreed to the Eisenhower Doctrine: Libya, Iraq, and Lebanon, while Saudi Arabia and Yemen had reservations. Israel did not respond, while Jordan only verbally agreed. <sup>[285]</sup>

Nasserism headed the countries that rejected the Eisenhower Doctrine. It launched a massive media campaign against it and supported the national opposition movements in the Arab East, putting pressure on the governments of Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. The Eisenhower Doctrine was suspended under the resistance of nationalist organizations, mainly the Baath, as well as Nasserism and the Saudi government.

In Lebanon, a civil war erupted following the assassination of a Nasserist journalist in Beirut, while the Lebanese army played a calming role, contenting itself with separating the warring factions. President Camille Chamoun was compelled to resign under pressure from the United States, paving the way for General Shehab to rule

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<sup>[285]</sup> Ahmad Abdel Rahim Mustafa, Op. cit., p. 123.

**Lebanon, which witnessed a political-military balance. With Shehab, the Rashid Karami government came, which withdrew Lebanon's approval of the Eisenhower Doctrine. During the Lebanese Civil War, Nouri Al-Saeed decided to enter Lebanon to support the Lebanese Right. After he issued intervention orders to the army, the soldiers mutinied, and the Iraqi revolution finally erupted. Therefore, Nouri Al-Saeed's regime ended, with many things, including the Eisenhower Doctrine. Nasserism supported the Shehab government in Lebanon and, initially, the Iraqi revolution.**

**Following the so-called Iraqi revolution, the Middle East Defense Alliance project finally failed. The main role in its failure, as well as the Eisenhower Doctrine, was played by nationalist movements in the Arab East, in alliance with Nasserism and the Saudi government. In addition to the tacit complicity of Israel, which was opposing the establishment of that alliance. Its government was fearful of the militarization of Arab countries and the enhancement of their ties with the West. It was expected that this could undermine its unique position in the region as a strategic Western stronghold. As for Nasserism, its position was in the context of defending its political independence. In this regard, it benefited greatly from the nationalist movement in the Levant and Iraq.**

**Not content with a purely defensive stance in the face of colonial attempts to deprive it of political independence, Nasserism, especially following the 1956 war, embarked on a measured offensive with limited objectives. Its feeling of danger was not confined to the borders but also where traditional colonialism existed or where puppet governments were found, particularly where Israel was involved in extensive activities in Africa. Therefore, it established strong relations with many of these governments, opened markets for its exports, and found it easier to penetrate countries more closely linked to the West. One of the primary goals of the Egyptian orientation toward Africa was to balance the influence of Israel, but its most important goal always remained to resist traditional colonialism. Nasserism provided loans**

and limited financial aid to some African countries and national liberation movements with moderate social orientations. It also trained fighters from these movements militarily in Egypt, supplied them with weapons, granted political refugees the right to political asylum, directed special radio stations in local African languages, etc.

Nasserism always stopped at the limits of directly assisting anti-colonial movements, but it did not provide assistance to the same extent to leftist liberation movements. It also refused to provide assistance to radical revolutionary movements hostile to moderate or reactionary regimes. For instance, Nasserism and all African countries refused to represent the Cameroonian revolutionaries at the 1960 African Conference in Addis Ababa. Muhammad Fayek, the Nasserist Minister of Information until 1971, commented on this position with complete frankness: *“The real reason lies in the desire of other revolutionary countries, led by Egypt, for collective revolutionary action in Africa to be directed in this era against colonialism and not against African governments, whatever their orientation.”* <sup>[286]</sup>

The orientation of Nasserite policy abroad was fully embodied in its position on the Congo crisis. Nasserite Egypt, along with many African countries, supported the resistance movement led by Lumumba. Ghana was the most enthusiastic country for him, along with Libya and Morocco, against Belgian colonialism. Twenty African countries supported Tshombe, who was considered Belgium’s collaborator, backed by white mercenaries from Europe and South Africa. Egypt and other countries persisted in assisting Lumumba’s supporters following his death at the hands of Tshombe’s forces, which subsequently controlled large portions of the country. Subsequently, a moderate, but not a puppet government was established, including Lumumba and Tshombe’s supporters in one coalition. While some radical elements continued to control some areas to establish a revolutionary government.

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<sup>[286]</sup> Muhammad Fayek, Abdel Nasser and the African Revolution, p. 165.

However, Nasserism refused to help this movement, considering *“what was happening during this period in the Congo in terms of conflict and fighting its internal affairs,”* although the coalition government expelled Lumumba’s radical supporters. Nasserism began to assist the revolutionaries again after the American-Belgian invasion in 1964. From the Nasserite perspective, the Congolese people were not merely facing a government that did not represent them, but rather facing a direct colonial invasion that *“cannot be tolerated, otherwise it would be a waste of many of the values and principles that were announced in Cairo only days ago when the Second Non-Aligned Conference was held and before it the Council of Heads of State of the Organization of African Unity.”* Tanzania and Brazzaville adopted the same Nasserite stance, with the latter once again cutting off supplies to the rebels following the withdrawal of the invading army. The Congolese president ousted Tshombe from the government, promising to get rid of foreign forces from his country. Muhammad Faiq added that Nasserism’s assistance to Lumumba was indecisive. In September 1960, Belgium withdrew its forces from the Congo after the United Nations intervened directly in favor of the United States, leaving Lumumba without backup. His government fell, and he was killed while being completely dependent on Egyptian troops.<sup>[287]</sup> Nasser’s decision indicated that he did not wish to support the Soviet position against the United States.<sup>[288]</sup>

The support provided by Nasserism to African national liberation movements was predominantly political rather than material.<sup>[289]</sup> Its main objective was to challenge the established colonial presence and the influence of Israel. Similarly, Nasserism’s position on national liberation movements in Asia and Latin America followed this approach, although it placed a stronger emphasis on Africa.

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<sup>[287]</sup> Ibid., chapter five.

<sup>[288]</sup> Anwar Abdel Malik, Op. cit., p. 178.

<sup>[289]</sup> Refer in this regard to Yahya Al-Zayat, A Study of Egyptian Strategy 1954-1982.

**It is clear that in its efforts to oppose direct colonization, Nasserism did not extend its reach significantly. It was mainly concerned with propaganda and political and diplomatic support, with little material assistance commensurate with Egypt's limited economic and military resources. However, the economic and military role of Nasserite Egypt was never commensurate with the volume of revolutionary statements it issued and the number of conferences it attended.<sup>[290]</sup> Moreover, it spared words for radical movements hostile to established regimes.**

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<sup>[290]</sup> A comparison between the roles of Nasser's Egypt and Israel in Nkrumah's Ghana:

**1. The role of Israel:**

- In 1957, a trade agreement was signed with Ghana, followed by a comprehensive agreement in various fields, including commercial and technical activities.

Israel relied on the following raw materials imported from Ghana: cocoa, coffee, tobacco, wood, and precious stones, in exchange for re-exporting these same materials manufactured in Ghana, in addition to building materials, electrical equipment, and metal tools.

- Israel's exports to Ghana in 1965 amounted to \$5.348 million, compared to imports of \$0.875 million. In 1971, exports amounted to \$3.103 million, compared to \$0.847 million in imports.

- Israel held several trade fairs in Ghana in addition to participating in the Ghana International Fair in 1967 (the year of Nkrumah's fall).

- Until 1968, Israel signed 5 agreements with Ghana out of 60 agreements with African countries.

- Israel provided Ghana with loans amounting to \$20 million, in addition to grants and donations.

- Israel established projects in Ghana based on Israeli technology (airports, ports, roads, one hundred cooperative farms, poultry farming) and also participated in establishing a shipping company.

- Agreement for cooperation in the field of irrigation and training of Ghanaian missions in various agricultural fields.

- Sending experts in the fields of medicine, education, economy, youth, organizing trade unions, art, and culture.

- On the military level: Supervising the management and training of pilots, police, and navy since 1961.

- Training members of youth organizations on weapons.

### **3. The Political Independence of Nasserite Egypt**

The political independence of a state logically or theoretically begins with eliminating direct foreign political influence. However, it faces continuous threats that are addressed and considered in the state's foreign policy. Political independence is achieved by asserting the state's will toward other states at the strategic level. In this scenario, the state acts based on its own will rather than external circumstances. It also resorts to leveraging these circumstances to its advantage and may even contribute to creating them. In essence, direct political independence represents the autonomous status of the state. On the other hand, actual independence is the realization of this status in the global political landscape. In political terms, real independence manifests as a strong connection between strategy and tactics, where specific policies are formulated and directed toward achieving a predetermined strategy. Strategy is not just a set of general slogans or abstract statements but a comprehensive vision that can be translated into practical plans and decisions for implementation. Indeed, real political independence cannot be attained without a well-defined strategy, corresponding tactics, and a resolute will to accomplish it.

**Did Nasserism achieve Egypt's real political independence?**

Just as Nasserism utilized socio-political contradictions in Egypt and the Arab world, it also took advantage of international contradictions. In Egypt, it capitalized on the conflict between

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#### **2 . The role of Nasserite Egypt:**

The volume of trade exchange in 1965 amounted to 1.5 million Egyptian pounds (3.705 million dollars).

- Educational missions to Egyptian universities.
- Missions from Al-Azhar.

Reference: Issam Mohsen Al-Jabouri, Arab-African Relations 1961-1977, pp. 265-270, pp. 408-409.



politically impotent powers, while on the global stage, it navigated between major active powers, finding itself in the East-West Cold War theater.

Following World War II, the Cold War intensified between the West and the Soviet Union. It spread to the Middle East with efforts to establish a US-led military alliance. However, the Arab nationalist movement in the 1940s and 1950s disrupted Western plans, compelling Arab governments to reject that project and even triggering political transformations in some Arab regimes. It also provided an opportunity for Arab dominant classes in certain countries to make gains at the expense of colonialism by utilizing popular movements. This situation allowed the Soviet Union to find allies in the Middle East.

Soviet diplomacy chose to align itself with the most influential regimes in the region, even at the expense of more radical currents. Therefore, the door to the East was opened once again for the Soviets after they had lost their good relations with Saudi Arabia. Arms deals were made with Egypt, Syria, and Yemen. In addition, cultural and commercial connections were established with Egypt and Syria. Nasserism leveraged the Arab nationalist movement and the East-West contradiction, balancing between both sides to foster economic growth and uphold political independence.

This neutral trend did not arise after the 1952 coup. Rather, it appeared as an idea and a strong tendency before that. Large landowners in the 1920s and 1930s called for tighter dealings with the Soviet Union. The expansion of this trade continued until the signing of the 1948 agreement, which established Egypt and the Soviet Union as the most favored countries in their trade relations.<sup>[291]</sup> The trade exchange between the two countries expanded until the United States suspended economic aid to Egypt in 1952, before the “Free Officers” coup. The increasing inability to

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<sup>[291]</sup> Fouad Al-Morsi, *Egyptian-Soviet Relations*, p. 242.

sell cotton was the main motivation for increasing trade with the Soviet Union, in addition to the desire of some dominant class blocs to leverage international contradictions. This desire was evident in the demand of some representatives of these blocs to conclude a non-aggression agreement with the Soviet Union in 1951. The Wafd government even requested to purchase weapons from the Eastern Bloc in 1951 and 1952. The Minister of War signed some contracts in 1951 to import weapons from some countries, including Czechoslovakia. On January 23, 1952, the Egyptian foreign minister informed his Soviet counterpart that the Egyptian government intended to purchase Soviet armaments.<sup>[292]</sup> The same government also decided to conclude a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union in 1952, which was scheduled to be concluded on January 26. However, the Cairo fire, followed by the dissolution of the Wafd Ministry, halted this step. Moreover, the slogan of “We befriend those who befriend us, and we are hostile to those who are hostile to us” was presented in the House of Representatives and received a positive response both within the council and from the general public. This slogan was subsequently embraced by Nasserism.

Official circles in Egypt justified the new neutral approach of the dominant class by arguing that rejecting communism did not necessarily preclude dealing with socialist countries.<sup>[293]</sup> This shift toward the East was accompanied by the beginning of Americans supplanting British influence in the economy.

After the July coup, Nasserism did not deviate from this general trend. Despite the British agreement, the alliance with the United States, and the dedication to fighting communism in coordination with Nouri Al-Saeed, it firmly rejected the proposal of establishing a military pact with the West. Instead, it promoted a stance of neutrality from the outset and focused on increasing economic

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<sup>[292]</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>[293]</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

collaboration with the Soviet Union. These were the same trends of the final Wafdist government. It also resorted to purchasing armaments from the Soviets. Thus, Nasserism implemented the idea of neutrality, which enabled it to strengthen its internal influence and also allowed it to play an external role that did not reflect its real power. By utilizing Soviet military and economic assistance, Nasserism could resist colonialism in Asia and Africa. In addition, it collaborated with the Arab nationalist movement to overthrow the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower Doctrine. This trend also included the achievement of political independence from both global camps. Resisting colonialism abroad did not aim to substitute it with Soviet dominance. Rather, it aimed to create a balance between the two global parties to achieve the greatest degree of autonomy for Egypt. Nasserism strived for several years to achieve this balance. The neutrality of the non-aligned countries played an effective role in stopping some of the projects of imperialist alliances and contributed to realizing direct political independence for many colonies.

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Despite the incomplete direct independence (conditions for Israel's withdrawal in 1956), Nasserism did not develop a coherent political strategy. Its ideas remained mere slogans without a specific plan to achieve them. Moreover, its foreign policy was reactive to the actions of others. In 1956, during the first real clash with the West, the Nasserists were unprepared for war or resistance, despite the enemy forces mobilizing in Cyprus. The location of the aggression was not determined even after air raids began, despite receiving information from abroad confirming the intention of a tripartite aggression. Thereafter, Syrian unity took place in response to pressure from the Syrian populace and then its ruling elite. The Yemen War was also a predicament dictated by the circumstances

of the Syrian secession. Moreover, the 1967 mobilization was in response to Israeli threats to Syria and pressure from Jordan, Syria, and the “Palestine Liberation Organization,” hoping for similar results to those of the 1960 operation.<sup>[294]</sup> These were the most important events in Nasserite foreign policy.

Among the reasons for these successive predicaments was Nasserism’s persistent goal to realize external successes that would enhance its prestige domestically. In addition to achieving its leadership of Arab regimes to preserve its security in the face of these regimes. It was also using them for playing cards with the two global camps. These predicaments expressed the sharp contradiction between the visage that Nasserism was obligated to take, i.e., the revolutionary image, and the reactionary content of its counter-revolutionary policy. In light of this contradiction, slogans were launched for domestic consumption without a long-term and real implementation plan. However, the regime sometimes had to swallow its slogans due to these contradictions.

Ultimately, playing with irrationality cannot be entirely rational.

In confronting Israel, Nasserism lacked, even in terms of propaganda, a clear idea about the fate of this state, even if the Egyptian army entered Tel Aviv. More significantly, Nasserite Egypt did not develop any plan to confront Israel, neither in the long nor the short term, on the political, military, propaganda, or economic levels. Even with regard to partial problems, it acted in a random and undetermined manner. Muhammad Hassanein Heikal acknowledged this: *“We, in general, do not have a specific vision of the*

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<sup>[294]</sup> The mobilization in Sinai took place as a response to the Battle of “Al-Tawafiq,” a Syrian village where a large-scale battle took place between Syria and Israel. The conflict ended with the destruction of some Israeli settlements and the Syrian village, in addition to the downing of two Israeli planes. Moreover, Israel lost 250 military personnel, according to Arab sources.

*Arab-Israeli conflict and how it will ultimately be resolved.*"<sup>[295]</sup> The most prominent of these problems was the issue of diverting the trajectory of the Jordan River, regarding which the Arab governments took reluctant and unplanned positions. As for the army, it was never equipped to fight a real war, either offensively or defensively.

Despite raising high-sounding slogans regarding Arab unity, Nasserism did not specify a plan or a project to work toward achieving these slogans.

It is noticeable that on a global scale, Nasserism mainly allied with moderate or wavering forces like itself. It even worked to preserve these powers, whether at the level of Arab countries or the Third World. More significantly, it strongly confronted the radical currents in the Arab world that could have played a role in developing an Arab national strategy. Even cooperation with the Soviets was, firstly, partial; secondly, with a state that had become strongly inclined toward a compromise with the West, especially during Khrushchev's era (1957-1964); and thirdly, it was never a true alliance.

The reactive approach was built on trial and error, demonstrating a lack of political strategy. This approach crystallized in moderate and reactive slogans such as "We befriend those who befriend us, and we are hostile to those who are hostile to us," as well as "positive neutrality and non-alignment." In practical terms, the general Nasserite policy was defensive and short-term, aiming to maintain direct independence. This was done by depending on the dynamics of major powers rather than prioritizing self-reliance in the first place. This was evidenced by the fact that after the Arab nationalist movement was suppressed, these dynamics were shaken, leading to Egypt's political independence being severely undermined during

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<sup>[295]</sup> An interview with Muhammad Hassanein Heikal conducted by Muhammad Awda and Philip Galab, *The Story of the Soviets with Egypt*, edited by Philip Galab (he interviewed Heikal in 1974), p. 153.

**Sadat's reign. What is worse is that Nasserism destroyed domestic forces that could have potentially launched a path to true autonomy, particularly the communist movement. Therefore, it achieved direct independence by utilizing international contradictions more than creating a strong internal foundation for a purely autonomous Egyptian policy. While Soviet arms counterbalanced Western economic aid prior to 1966, Nasserism went so far as to permit the Soviet Union to have a direct military presence in Egypt after 1967. Moreover, important decisions were also made in consultation with both parties and in accordance with the balance of power between them. Therefore, the achieved independence was contingent on the balances of the major powers and their relations with each other, and this is what made independence lose its genuine meaning: autonomy.**

**As is the case with any institution lacking a strategic program, Nasserite policies were caught in the conflict among major powers, sometimes aligning with the West and other times with the East. However, the ultimate outcome favored the former, which is quite understandable. Nasserism achieved victories over imperialists, but they were tactical rather than strategic, such as the Baghdad Pact issue, which was a significant victory. On the other hand, the strategic victories in favor of the West included the destruction of the communist movement in Egypt and the Levant, as well as the contribution to the downfall of the Iraqi Communist Party. At one point, it nearly eradicated the radical wing of the revolution in South Yemen, similar to what happened in the North. Furthermore, Nasserism played a crucial role in undermining the Arab nationalist movement. The Soviet Union's gains from Nasserite policies were primarily tactical, such as establishing close relations with Egypt, Syria, and Yemen, or gaining military facilities. However, the losses were more substantial, as it prevented the establishment of radical regimes in the region that could have been strategic allies for the Soviet Union,**



except for the National Front's success in South Yemen, which Nasserism failed to prevent.

The independence of Nasserite Egypt can be considered as a limited form of freedom that did not encompass genuine self-reliant will.

A country cannot attain political independence while depending on importing weapons and meeting all its technological needs. Moreover, it is significantly dependent on loans and aid for its economic projects, while half of its population is sustained by American wheat aid.

It seems that achieving real political independence in our contemporary world is only possible for countries that have an independent, self-reliant, and internally cohesive socio-economic structure. This was lacking in Nasserite Egypt because the state generally overextended itself in its foreign policy. Foreign policy is the other side of domestic policy, and the loss of an independent strategic orientation on the external level reflects its loss on the internal level as well. To complete this vision, light will be shed on the Nasserite socioeconomic policy in the next chapters.

A concluding remark regarding Nasserite foreign policy is that this approach only marginally diverged from the overall *American line*. The elimination of direct, traditional colonialism was an American goal after World War II, intending to implement the open-door system so that the United States, which was the strongest economically, could inherit the colonies of Britain and France. <sup>[296]</sup>

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<sup>[296]</sup> It is well known that American intelligence included a "Nasserite" wing, i.e., one that supported Nasserism, and among its members were Miles Copeland and Kermit Roosevelt. In the words of Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, this wing saw that Abdel Nasser was "*anti-traditional colonialism and anti-communism, and therefore the United States should understand his motives and help him within certain limits,*" as reported in "al-Ahram," 10/24/1988.

Thus, for example, Algerian revolutionaries were supplied with arms under tacit American support. In addition, the United States largely and practically sided with Nasserism in the 1956 crisis. It was only in the case of the Congo, where Nasserism began to assault American prestige without restraint, that the United States began to resent its support for Third World liberation movements. Nasserism's position on the Congo crisis possibly influenced the United States' approach to the situation in Yemen. After the Yemeni coup, the United States initially supported the republic. It also welcomed the Egyptian intervention to eradicate the royal opposition on the condition that Egypt withdraw after completing its mission, while ensuring that the Saudi regime would not be affected by the civil war there. However, the United States eventually sided with the Saudi position in 1964, influenced by the Congo crisis and the significant growth in relations between Egypt and the Soviet Union.<sup>[297]</sup>

Moreover, in 1964/1965, the United States, for certain reasons, decided to initiate a widespread offensive in the Third World to capitalize on the diminishing influence of Europe.

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### **Chapter Three: The Economic Policy**

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It is clear from Heikal's aforementioned article that American intelligence personnel were in close contact with senior state officials, and Abdel Nasser was closely dealing with their most important representative in Egypt, Kermit Roosevelt, until 1956.

<sup>[297]</sup> Ahmad Youssef Ahmad, *The American Policy and the Attempt to Contain the Revolution in North Yemen: 1962-1967*. Published in *American Policy and the Arabs*, p. 238.

**THE FIRST VALUE IN THE SUCCESS OF ANY ECONOMIC PROJECT IS THE HUMAN BEING. THE ECONOMY IS NOT THE CREATION OF A BANK AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A FACTORY, BUT RATHER THE CONSTRUCTION OF A HUMAN BEING AND THE MOBILIZATION OF SOCIAL ENERGIES IN A PROJECT DRIVEN BY A CIVILIZATIONAL WILL**

**Malek Bennabi**

**Politics serves as a concentrated manifestation of the economy. On the other hand, the economy reflects politics at its moment of determination. Consequently, the Nasserite general policy was embodied in its economic plans. By analyzing the economy, one can reveal the mask behind which the Nasserite general policy was concealed. This signifies that on the economic ground, the real issues become more apparent. Moreover, direct independence is subjected to precise and thorough testing. Therefore, the essence and core of the previously addressed contradiction between the content and form of Nasserite ideology can be revealed.**

**The Nasserite elite played a crucial role in various aspects of economic activity. From its perspective and that of its allies among the theorists of the period, it liberated the country from imperialism by nationalizing foreign companies and restricting the activity of foreign capital. It also aimed to accomplish the industrial revolution via its five-year plan, etc.**

**The overall economic policies of the Nasserite government will be reviewed, analyzing them to discover their general nature based on their components, mechanisms of action, and outcomes.**

**It is a plausible idea to start by reviewing and analyzing the structure of the Egyptian economy at mid-century.**

### **1. The State of the Economy on the Eve of the Coup**

The Egyptian economy exhibited characteristics typical of a dependent and backward economic structure in a distinctive manner, evident in the following aspects:

**First: structural disruption:**

**1. Sectoral disruption**

Up until 1952, agriculture in Egypt was the predominant sector of production. Nevertheless, the investments it received were quite small, especially when compared to the capital influx in other fields that supported agriculture and other economic activities. The financial activity was considerable as well, and the trading sector held a prominent role in the overall economic structure. Moreover, the distortion within the productive sector remained in favor of agriculture:

Charles Issawi estimated the social wealth in Egypt in 1939 at 1,200 million pounds, distributed as follows:

**Table (1)**  
**Distribution of Egypt's national wealth <sup>[298]</sup>**

Branch	Value in million pounds
Foreign property and Egyptian deposits abroad	100
Lands	660
Residential houses	170
Industry and trade	130
State property	140
Total	1200

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<sup>[298]</sup> Charles Issawi, Egypt at Mid-Century, p. 84.

Issawi added that the nominal value of this wealth had tripled after the end of the war.

This table shows, despite the inaccurate method used by Issawi, the extent to which agriculture predominated in the economy.

The following table gives a general idea of the uses of the surplus:

**Table (2)**

**Distribution of the social surplus between 1939 and 1953**  
(amounted to one third of the national income) <sup>[299]</sup>

luxury consumption	%38
Real estate recruitment	%34
Liquid and semi-liquid investments	%15
Productive investments	%14

It is obvious that a small fraction of the surplus was directed to productive investment, while the majority of it was directed to other areas, a considerable portion of which is tied to real estate activity. The following table shows how investments were distributed among the sectors:

**Table (3)**

**Distribution of investments between 1948/49-1952/53** <sup>[300]</sup>

Sector	Investments ( %)
Agriculture	11.6
Industry and electricity	29.8
Transportation	16.1

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<sup>[299]</sup> Sameer Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale*, p. 33.

<sup>[300]</sup> Hansen B. and Marzouk G., *Development and Economic Policy in U.A.R. Egypt*, p. 8.

Housing	31.8
Services	10.8
Total	100

This table illustrates that agriculture received a fraction of investments that did not correspond to its contribution to surplus production, which amounted to 35% during the same period. As a result, agriculture had been a net source of accumulation in the rest of the sectors.

Meanwhile, the role of the productive activity as a whole was relatively diminishing within the economic structure:

**Table (4)**

**Contribution of different sectors to the added value in 1953 in millions of pounds <sup>[301]</sup>**

Agriculture	272.8
Industry and electricity	75.7
Transportation	71.6
Financial services	20.8
Commerce	129.4
Housing	57.7
Construction	20.3
Government Administration	110
Other services	106.3
Total	864.6

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<sup>[301]</sup> Patrick O'Brien, *The Revolution of the Economic System in Egypt*, p. 388.



The data above shows the size of the productive sector in the economy and the tendency of the so-called tertiary sectors, i.e., trade, services, and infrastructure, to grow at the expense of the goods-producing sector. The relative net share of agriculture <sup>[302]</sup> in the value added has been declining since the 1930s in favor of the tertiary sectors and, to a much lesser extent, industry. <sup>[303]</sup>

The railroad network was well developed relative to the rest of the economy, with 14 km for every 100 square kilometers of inhabited areas. This ratio was close to that of Europe. Charles Issawi commented on the development of railways in Egypt, stating, *"It is uncertain whether any region in the world enjoys what Upper Egypt enjoys in terms of railways."* The value of state investments in this field until 1949 amounted to approximately 42 million pounds, and the length of railways in the mentioned year was 4270 km, in addition to 1400 km for the private sector and 2832 km of unused lines, some of which were established during World War II for military purposes, <sup>[304]</sup> while road and river transport were not at the same level of development; their use was generally limited.

It is observed that the electrical sector was unable to meet most of the requirements of other sectors, so some factories were obligated to purchase private generators, resulting in an increase in expenses. <sup>[305]</sup> Electricity was also not distributed into the countryside, and its low output was one of the obstacles to industrial growth following World War II.

This was not the case with buildings and construction, since real estate investment had reached a substantial level in comparison to the overall size of the economy as a whole: 30 million pounds in

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<sup>[302]</sup> That is, after deducting the costs of sectors that do not produce added value.

<sup>[303]</sup> According to Robert Mabro, *The Egyptian Economy 1952-1972*, pp. 29-39.

<sup>[304]</sup> Issawi, *Op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>[305]</sup> O'Brien, *Op. cit.*, p. 44.

1950.<sup>[306]</sup> This branch absorbed the majority of investments (refer to Table 3), and a significant portion of industrial revenues was poured into the tertiary sector. The rate of profit in industry before the Second World War was 13% of capital, which increased to 20% after the war.<sup>[307]</sup> However, the growth rate of industrial capital did not increase in the period from 1939 to 1945 but rather reached a negative rate, and in the period from 1945 to 1950, it grew by 5% per annum.<sup>[308]</sup>

Internal and external trade were also appealing fields for capital, but they were quickly becoming saturated.

The flow of capital into agriculture encountered substantial obstacles, driven by factors such as widespread large-scale land ownership, the fragility of industrial capitalism, an abundance of inexpensive agricultural labor, and strong peasant demand for land rentals. These elements together hindered agricultural progress. The large-scale transfer of capital to agriculture necessitated the growth of industrial capital to the extent that it could absorb the surplus agricultural labor. However, the industrial sector, with its many problems and the control of major monopolies, was difficult to expand. Therefore, businessmen turned to spending increasingly on luxury consumption and investment in buildings and real estate, especially since the period following the Second World War had witnessed successive migrations from the countryside to the cities, creating a great demand for housing.

Speculation on land, crops, and securities was also active.

Thus, it is clear that the Egyptian economy was characterized by a distortion in favor of sectors not producing added value at the

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<sup>[306]</sup> Issawi, Op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>[307]</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>[308]</sup> Amr Mohi Eddin, Evaluation of the Manufacturing Strategy in Egypt and the Available Alternatives in the Future.

expense of capital accumulation in industry and agricultural production.

### **Distortions and imbalances in the productive sector**

The predominance of agriculture in production compared to industry can be demonstrated.

The effective agricultural workforce in 1952 amounted to approximately three million permanent workers, while the industrial workforce amounted to about 0.8 million, comprising industry, electricity, construction, and storage. The most significant economic characteristic of that era was the dominance of agriculture within the overall productive activities. However, the picture is incomplete without considering the role of cotton in the country's economy as a whole. It played a significant role in the overall economy, encompassing production, trade, and manufacturing. In addition, it served as the country's primary crop. Between 1950 and 1954, approximately 1.765 million feddans—equivalent to about 20% of the cultivated land—were dedicated to cotton.<sup>[309]</sup> Additionally, cotton ranked as the leading export crop during this period:

**Table (5)** <sup>[310]</sup>

Year	Cotton share in exports (%)
1885-1889	81
1890-1894	80
1895-1899	88
1900-1904	87

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<sup>[309]</sup> Mabro, Op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>[310]</sup> Hazem Saeed Omar, Cotton in the Egyptian Economy and the Development of Cotton Policy, p. 54.

1905-1909	91
1910-1914	93
1935-1939	79
1940-1944	77
1951-1952	81
1952-1953	89

As a result of cotton's availability, the feed, oil, and soap industries were established to replace imports.

Being the first commercial crop, followed by sugarcane, cotton played a critical role in meeting the country's import demands. It was also the leading sector in the economy. To facilitate its export, a respectable railway network was established, and the port of Alexandria was expanded and developed during the era of Muhammad Ali.<sup>[311]</sup> Subsequently, the fodder, oil, and soap industries were introduced to replace imports, which were encouraged by cotton availability. The chemical industry was introduced after World War II, primarily to replace imported fertilizers used for cotton cultivation. The state also focused on reclaiming lands, establishing extensive irrigation and drainage networks, and constructing bridges. However, cotton hindered the growth of the textile industry due to its high price and quality. The Cotton Law, which prohibited the import of cheap cotton from abroad, also contributed to this hindrance.

Large merchants and moneylenders played a significant role in rural communities because of their engagement in the financing and trading of this export crop. Peasants turned to borrowing money, anticipating paying off their debts and interest after selling cotton.

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<sup>[311]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 31.

**This state of affairs enabled moneylenders to seize thousands of feddans from them. Moreover, lands owned by large landlords were also subjected to mortgages. During the years marked by falling cotton prices, they confronted the risk of losing their properties.**

**The entire growth process depended on the value of annual cotton exports. From its proceeds, the country's debts were paid, banks were established to finance its cultivation and trade, and financial speculation, trade, and brokerage flourished based on the production and marketing of cotton.**

**Furthermore, this export crop played a fundamental role in linking the country's economy to the global market. It served as a bridge via which foreign capitalist monopolies penetrated the domestic economy and adapted it to their demands. Cotton cultivation, primarily for export, also contributed to the economy's high level of monetization.**

**Because all economic activities depended on this export crop, the overall production was characterized as a single-crop economy.**

**Regarding the industrial sector, it accounted for 5% of the gross national product in 1937. Then its contribution rose to around 9% in 1947 and reached about 8% in 1952, excluding the extractive industry, electricity, gas, and water.<sup>[312]</sup> The table below outlines the key components of the industry along with their relative weights in 1947, a year that witnessed a significant resurgence of the industry:**

**Table (6)**  
**Main industrial branches in 1947 <sup>[313]</sup>**

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<sup>[312]</sup> These percentages were calculated based on data from Issawi, Mabro & Radwan, and O'Brien.

<sup>[313]</sup> Issawi. Op. cit., p. 144.

Branch	Number of companies	Power (thousand horsepower)	Capital (£ million)(*)	Labor	Output (in million pounds)	Added value (in million pounds)
Food	6,260	183	14.846	88,157(**)	6.668.2	14.342
Textile	12,400	63	12.644	144,654	4.735.8	22.431
Cotton ginning and pressing	84	25	7.800	21,328	1.6289	2.988
Chemicals	310	7	7.059	16,646	1.1068	2.549
Metal products	1,512	6	5.698	17,895	4.865	2.148
Tobacco	61	1	4.826	9,822	2.9717	5.622
Water, gas and electricity	41	114(***)	4.405	5,318	5.484	4.090
Petroleum Products	2	3	1.763	3,611	3.830	1.045
Other metal products	963	21	3.364	15,636	4.137	1.830
Paper and printing	543	11	2.106	1,1321	4.077	1.912
Clothes and shoes	1,998	-	1.405	8,746	3.162	1.143
Leather and rubber	415	3	1.083	4,672	2.938	0.803
Mining and prospecting	31	18	0.918	6,362	4.656	4.418
Equipment(****)And transportation equipment	55	-	0.713	2,543	0.418	0.273
Wood and furniture	1,713	3	0.693	8,538	2.035	0.973
Miscellaneous	355	1	0.585	2,287	2.054	0.396
Total	25,343	465	69.908(*****)	367,336	208.770	66.963

\*The value of the Egyptian pound at that time was slightly higher than the value of the pound sterling.

\*\*Including handloom workers +10,000 wool spinning workers.

\*\*\*Of which 88 thousand are electricity, 24 thousand are hydroelectric, and 1000 are gas.



\*\*\*\*What is meant by machines here are durable goods such as refrigerators, stoves, etc.

\*\*\*\*\*Except for oil extraction.

### **General features of the Egyptian industry in the mid-century:**

Most industries were designed to substitute imported consumer and intermediate goods. Given the late emergence of modern Egyptian industry, the difficulty of its establishment, and the foreign competition, no project intended or aimed at export had much chance of success. The domestic industry substituted for many imports in the late 1940s. Domestic manufacturers represented 70.5% of the total supply in 1947<sup>[314]</sup> and 86% of the market's needs for nondurable consumer goods in 1945.<sup>[315]</sup> However, the overall extent of total substitution was lower than this percentage. The overall level of total substitution was lower than this percentage. Replacing consumer and intermediate goods automatically leads to higher consumption, which, in turn, drives an increase in the importation of equipment goods.

The role of the manufacturing industry in reducing the absolute volume of total imports was insignificant. The latter's share of GDP increased from 11.8% in 1945 to 24.2% in 1950 and then to 26.4% in 1952.<sup>[316]</sup> There may have only been a drop in potential imports.

A bias toward light manufacturing industries characterized the Egyptian industry at mid-century, e.g., In 1947, the contribution of mining amounted to 4.4 million pounds out of the total value added in the whole industry.

The value added amounted to 66.93 million pounds, including cotton ginning and pressing, electricity, water, and gas (7 million

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<sup>[314]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 256.

<sup>[315]</sup> Sameer Radwan, Capital Formation in Egyptian Industry and Agriculture 1822-1967, p. 244.

<sup>[316]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., 253.

pounds). The contribution of mining amounted to less than 7% of the value added in the industry as a whole, even after deleting the last branches. This tendency was accompanied by Egyptian industry's reliance on imported intermediate materials, particularly mineral raw materials, despite being operated practically independently of the domestic mining sector.

The manufacturing industry itself was characterized by some features:

**\*Bias in favor of consumer industries:**

**Table (7)**

**Relative distribution of value added in industry (%)** <sup>[317]</sup>

Item	1950	1952
Consumer	72.8	69.8
Intermediate	23.8	25.2
Capitalist <sup>(*)</sup>	2.2	3.8
Other	1.2	1.2

**\*Often meant: transportation and durable goods industry rather than capital goods.**

While Mahmoud Metwally mentioned the following percentages: 74%, 24%, 2% respectively. <sup>[318]</sup>

The largest branches of the consumer industry were the food and textile industries (refer to Table 6). In 1952, the value added by these branches amounted to 65% of the overall industrial value added. <sup>[319]</sup> The cumulative investments in the spinning and weaving branches in the years following World War II amounted to

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<sup>[317]</sup> Mustafa Al-Saeed, *Industrial Development in the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Strategy for Satisfying the Basic Needs of the Population (1952-1970)*.

<sup>[318]</sup> The Historical Origins of Egyptian Capitalism and Its Development, p. 173, quoted from: Charles Issawi, *Egypt in Revolution*, p. 237.

<sup>[319]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, *Op. cit.*, p. 137.

approximately 40% of the total industrial investments.<sup>[320]</sup> Moreover, about 70% of the industrial workers were employed in the two sectors mentioned, as shown in Table 6.

The significance of the bias toward these two sectors is that the link between industry and agriculture was stronger than its link with mining. However, that link was extremely weak because the textile industry, the largest industrial branch, did not stimulate the domestic production of cotton. The latter was primarily produced for export. This connection can, therefore, be considered accidental. This view is supported by the fact that the textile industry in Egypt was established before the spinning industry.<sup>[321]</sup> In addition, a large part of agricultural raw materials was being imported. Thus, the focus on textiles and food production created a significant imbalance in the economic structure. These industries were established and expanded to replace imports. Therefore, they remained the most important umbilical cord linking the domestic industry to capitalist economies and established its dependency, especially since the industry as a whole had imported most of its equipment goods.

This bias held additional implications as well. The metal industries were then more technologically advanced, necessitating a higher intensity of capital and a higher level of skill in the workforce. The deficiencies in this sector contributed to an overall perception of backwardness in Egyptian industry.

\*The modern Egyptian industry, despite its late emergence, was characterized by its monopolistic nature and stagnation, as is the case in the entire underdeveloped world:

Table (8) <sup>[322]</sup>

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<sup>[320]</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>[321]</sup> Issawi, Op. cit., p. 148.

<sup>[322]</sup> O'Brien, Op. cit., p. 39.

Annual production volume of one company	Total output of companies of the same size in 1950
1000 pounds or more	276.9 million pounds
1000-500 pounds	3.1 million pounds
Less than 500 pounds	1.9 million pounds

**Table (9)**

**Degree of capital concentration in 1950 <sup>[323]</sup>**

Capital Categories	companies' percentage (%)
Less than 50 pounds	81.4
50 -99 pounds	4.6
100 -199 pounds	4.3
200 - 499 pounds	5.5
500 - 999 pounds	2.1
1000 - 1999 pounds	2.1
2000 pounds or more	1.2

Additionally, there were 1,000 companies with capital exceeding 10,000 pounds each.<sup>[324]</sup> Furthermore, 9.1% of shareholders held 61.7% of the total shares. While 49.5% owned only 12.1% of the shares' value. Moreover, 1,145 individuals invested a total of 65 million pounds in companies.

The Egyptian industry also benefited from a strong customs protection system, which encouraged it to raise its pricing and boost its profit rate, reaching 20% annually after the war. The industry

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<sup>[323]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, Op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>[324]</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

depended on itself for financing and did not usually resort to banks for financial support.<sup>[325]</sup> It also witnessed the phenomenon of mergers and the formation of cartels under pressure from both the Federation of Industries and the government. In 1950/1951, a single cement cartel was formed. However, a small factory was established in 1950. In the tobacco industry, the Eastern Company dominated nine other companies.<sup>[326]</sup> The two textile companies also entered into a cartel agreement. Additionally, a union was formed for cotton ginneries. Agreements of a cartel nature were also established among the four cotton presses, along with various other operations.<sup>[327]</sup>

Therefore, the industry was stagnant and did not undergo any notable development processes, especially since it had specialized in producing goods for which demand was highly inelastic, such as textiles and foodstuffs. Additionally, high customs duties were imposed on imports of these goods. The Egyptian industry was very backward compared to the European or American industry,<sup>[328]</sup> despite its strong position in the domestic market, confirming the absolute importance of these factors for its protection. Moreover, the monopolistic nature of the industry compensated for the backwardness of the branches that relied on domestically produced raw and intermediate materials. For example, Egyptian milk cost more than imported milk, and the price of Egyptian cotton was higher than that of cotton produced abroad. The wrappers were also

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<sup>[325]</sup> Issawi, Op. cit., p. 160.

<sup>[326]</sup> Ibid., pp. 160-161.

<sup>[327]</sup> Muhammad Duwaidar, The Egyptian Economy between Backwardness and Development, p. 223.

<sup>[328]</sup> Industrial worker productivity at 1937 prices (in pounds sterling):

Egypt	Britain	Germany	US
1944=56	(1935)	(1936)	(1937)
1947=74	264	294	595

Issawi, Op. cit., pp. 160-165.

very expensive because they were made from domestic products. A wrapper costs a third of the price of the chocolate and half the price of the raw materials for cosmetics, cement, and preserved vegetables and fruits.<sup>[329]</sup>

\*The Egyptian industry also witnessed a very strange phenomenon, which is the monopoly of management by a small number of directors, as aforementioned.

## **2. Labor Distribution**

The population of Egypt in 1952 was approximately 22 million. In the 1950s, 56% of the urban population was unemployed or semi-proletarian, while 79% of the rural population was destitute or semi-destitute peasants.<sup>[330]</sup> According to Sameer Amin's estimate, the unemployment rate accounted for two-thirds of the total labor force among the general populace.<sup>[331]</sup> In 1947, total employment was estimated to be 6.995 million at best,<sup>[332]</sup> i.e., less than 70% of the labor force and 31.5% of the adult population aged over 15 years.

This is an inaccurate percentage if it is taken into account that a significant percentage of workers were non-permanent. It becomes more evident if agricultural workers, who numbered more than 2 million in 1952,<sup>[333]</sup> are taken into account. They worked an average of 150 days per year, while 42% of them were unemployed.<sup>[334]</sup>

The distribution of labor was highly tilted in favor of tasks that used muscle energy:

### **Table (10)**

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<sup>[329]</sup> Ibid., pp. 160-164.

<sup>[330]</sup> Mahmoud Hussein, *Class Struggle in Egypt from 1945-1970*, p. 60 (from the table).

<sup>[331]</sup> *Accumulation on a world scale*, p. 366.

<sup>[332]</sup> Robert Mabro, *The Egyptian Economy (1952-1972)*, p. 312.

<sup>[333]</sup> Atiya Al-Sayrafi, *Itinerant Workers*, 1975, p. 71.

<sup>[334]</sup> Ibrahim Amer, *Land and Farmer*, p. 156.



### Labor Distribution in 1952

Agriculture	%56.1
Industry	%10
Construction	%1.6

The number of transport workers in 1947 was 203.3 thousand, and the number of workers in trade in the same year was 590.4 thousand. <sup>[335]</sup>

In 1952, the total number of industrial workers amounted to 650,000. Among them, 250,000 were employed in larger establishments with more than 10 workers, <sup>[336]</sup> contributing 87% of the industry's added value. <sup>[337]</sup> The remaining 400,000 were engaged in smaller workshops, each employing fewer than 10 workers. <sup>[338]</sup>

Thus, the distribution of labor was characterized by the following features:

1. A significantly high rate of overt and disguised unemployment.
2. Concentration of labor in the most backward sectors.
3. Variation in the skill level of workers.

### 3. Income distribution

In the mid-twentieth century, the distribution of income in Egypt reflected the predominance of trading activities, including real estate rental, and this also directly explains, at least partially, the severe social crisis that emerged in that period.

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<sup>[335]</sup> Robert Mabro, Op. cit., p. 312.

<sup>[336]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, Op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>[337]</sup> Muhammad Duwaidar, Op. cit., p. 421.

<sup>[338]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, Op. cit., p. 173.

**Table (11)**

**Distribution of national income according to main sources (%)**<sup>[339]</sup>

Year	Land and building rent	Profits and Benefits	Income from work	Government revenue
1937-1939	28.7	36.5	31.2	3.6
1942	18.7	42.4	35.6	3.3
1945	21	40	36.8	2.2
1950	21	38	38	3

**The level of income:**

**In 1952, government employees made up 9.6% of the workforce and earned 8.6% of the total income.**<sup>[340]</sup>

**While workers' incomes were as follows (1952 = 100):**

**Table (12)**<sup>[341]</sup>

Year	Real wage	Cost of living per worker
1948	88	95
1949	89	99
1950	98	103
1951	100	98
1952	100	100
1953	118	124

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<sup>[339]</sup> Abdel-Mughni Saeed, *Where is the Egyptian Economy Headed*, p. 18.

<sup>[340]</sup> Mabro, *Op. cit.*, p. 339.

<sup>[341]</sup> Hansen & Marzouk, *Op. cit.*, p. 139.

Industrial workers got a modest portion of the value added, amounting to approximately 45% within the manufacturing industry, equating to 33.5 million pounds. In contrast, the portion received by industrialists and shareholders was approximately 41.5 million pounds.

By calculating these percentages of the GDP, the share of industrial workers becomes slightly more than 4% (although they constituted around 10% of the workforce in 1952). The share of industrial profits also becomes approximately 5%.<sup>[342]</sup>

Most of the rents went to the large landowners and real estate owners. Habashi estimated the value of the rents in 1939 at 59.5 million pounds for land and buildings, or 28% of the national income, of which large landowners received 21%.<sup>[343]</sup> Both Sameer Amin and Mahmoud Metwally estimated that in 1950, the annual income of owners of more than 20 feddans amounted to 134 million pounds.<sup>[344]</sup>

Total profits and interests included, in addition to those of major traders, speculators, brokers, and all trading activities, the net revenues of industrial capital, which represented a small portion of these percentages.

In summary, the bulk of the income was provided to investors and workers in non-value-added activities. Real estate leasing and financial activity were taking the lion's share. Conversely, the sector of industry as a whole, including shareholders, businessmen, and workers, received only a small proportion of the total national income. This distribution directly reflected the size of each social power in purely economic terms.

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<sup>[342]</sup> These ratios were calculated based on data from Mabro & Radwan, O'Brien, and Mahmoud Metwally, and they include all manufacturing industries, including water, gas, and electricity.

<sup>[343]</sup> Issawi, *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>[344]</sup> *The Historical Origins of Egyptian Capitalism*, p. 176.

#### **4. Role of foreign capital in the economy**

Prior to the 1930s, the majority of shares in industrial and commercial companies were held by foreign investors. Nevertheless, since Bank Misr began its operations, domestic capital has been playing an increasing role in industrial activity. Between 1933 and 1948, its proportion of new investments amounted to 78.7%. Meanwhile, it accounted for 39.3% of the total invested capital.<sup>[345]</sup> That rise was bolstered by the capital influx from the global market to Western Europe after World War II. Additionally, foreign entrepreneurs hesitated to invest in Egypt due to political instability. However, foreign capital still constituted 60.7% of company investments and generated substantial profits that were transferred abroad.

Regardless of size, foreign capital controlled important and sensitive sectors of the economy, including banks, with Bank Misr falling under foreign ownership after 1939.<sup>[346]</sup> Banks in Egypt were primarily focused on financing the cotton trade, the most crucial sector of the economy. The Suez Canal also remained under foreign ownership. Additionally, foreign capital dominated large industrial companies, particularly those manufacturing intermediate goods and transportation industries. These were more modern industries requiring high capital intensity relative to traditional industries like food and textiles. However, there was still a significant presence of foreign capital in the latter sectors.<sup>[347]</sup>

#### **Second: The uneven and combined development**

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<sup>[345]</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>[346]</sup> Ibid., chapters six and seven.

<sup>[347]</sup> To understand the extent of the presence of foreign capital in Egypt in the middle of the century, refer to Mahmoud Metwally's book, mentioned above, chapter seven - Mahmoud Metwally, *The Penetration of Foreign Capital in Egypt* - Rashed Al-Barrawy, *The Truth of the Recent Coup d'état in Egypt*, pp. 60-64.

The economy was characterized by significant variations in levels of advancement across various sectors, as well as disparities within individual branches:

**Table (13)**

**Productivity per unit of workforce in the basic sectors (1952)** <sup>[348]</sup>

<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>63.4 units</b>
<b>Manufacturing industry</b>	<b>153 units</b>
<b>Construction</b>	<b>168.7 units</b>

Within the same industrial sector, productivity varied based on establishment size. Establishments with larger capital or workforce were distinguished by their higher productivity compared to smaller ones.

**Table (14)** <sup>[349]</sup>

<b>Annual worker productivity in pounds (of value added)</b>	<b>companies' size by number of workers</b>
<b>180</b>	<b>49-10 workers</b>
<b>271</b>	<b>499-50 workers</b>
<b>345</b>	<b>500 workers or more</b>

This is for medium and large industries (more than 10 workers per employer), but regarding small industries, the disparity was wider. Small plants employed about 60% of the number of

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<sup>[348]</sup> These percentages were derived based on data from: Robert Mabro, Patrick O'Brien, and Mahmoud Metwally, references previously mentioned.

<sup>[349]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, Op. cit., p. 174.

industrial workers<sup>[350]</sup> and contributed a third of the added value in the manufacturing industry.<sup>[351]</sup>

Productivity within the agricultural sector itself varied between a very small number of large farms that relied on advanced machinery and small farms that relied on manual and animal labor.

The uneven growth favored major capitalist monopolies, especially those with foreign capital dominance. Unlike many underdeveloped countries, the export sector in Egypt, particularly cotton, was not the most advanced, except for some large farms. It was even more backward than the small manufacturing industry, relying on primitive agricultural tools that Egyptians had been using for thousands of years. The use of artificial fertilizers was a novelty but minimally used by small peasants. The quality and high productivity of the Egyptian soil, along with land consolidation policies, faced serious socio-political challenges. Throughout the occupation era, successive governments focused on increasing the productivity of agricultural land and expanding its areas. However, they neglected to improve the productivity of individual agricultural workers by modernizing the production process. As a result, cotton agriculture continued to employ a large number of workers.

Development was also characterized by a combined nature. Sectors from various historical eras were intertwined. While the country experienced significant growth in modern industry, numerous small workshops had been operating using primitive means of production. For example, handlooms were still common in popular neighborhoods, small towns, and rural areas. Agriculture also remained largely primitive, relying on small-scale commodity and self-sufficiency production. Alongside manual labor-intensive agriculture, there were advanced farms employing wage labor to

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<sup>[350]</sup> Small industry employed 400,000 out of 650,000 industrial workers in 1952. Mahmoud Metwally, *Historical Origins*, p. 173.

<sup>[351]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, *Op. cit.*, p. 116.



cultivate thousands of feddans. These contradictions persisted side by side. In major cities like Cairo and Alexandria, there was significant commercial growth and financial activity, with the establishment of major banks and a thriving stock exchange. However, barter and seasonal markets remained important in rural areas and small towns. In addition to imported luxury goods and their domestic substitutes, primitive forms of life continued to shade most of the country's population, especially in the countryside. Even middle -and lower- class households used means of living that belonged to both the modern era and the era of Mamluk and Ottoman domination.

The coexistence of multiple historical eras was evident in social, economic, and cultural activities. The railway network transported cotton produced through manual labor, while water purified using modern methods was transported in medieval carts in small towns. Soldiers in the army, who came from primitive farming backgrounds and never encountered modern machinery, carried rifles manufactured in Europe. These contradictions and juxtapositions were ultimately in service of a limited activity: the production and export of cotton to Europe.

### **Third: The backward nature of the socio-economic structure as a whole**

The mode of production can be defined, in the broadest sense, as the social form of the production process. It is how people create social wealth.<sup>[352]</sup> Therefore, a transition from one mode of production to another represents a fundamental change in the method of creating social wealth. Regarding the notion of the capitalist mode of production, it fundamentally entails production via waged labor.

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<sup>[352]</sup> The author discussed this concept in detail from his perspective, in collaboration with the researcher, Sherif Younis, in a study entitled The Logical Formation of the Concept of Mode of Production.

**This constitutes the essence of the matter. The difference between what the worker produces and what he obtains is known as surplus value. It is necessarily the core of the social surplus in the capitalist mode of production. The surplus value is realized in a certain mode of distribution: rent, interest, profit, and salaries, plus wages. It also determines the mode of exchange between production and consumption. Ultimately, the extent to which the capitalist mode of production prevails is determined by the proportion of surplus value that makes up the social surplus. This is the only essential measure. Commercial capital is considered capitalist only to the extent that it constitutes a stage of the cycle of industrial capital in a Marxist sense. Therefore, Maurice Dobb was reasonable when he emphasized that there has never been a stage of commercial capitalism. Rather, “*we must trace the beginning of the capitalist stage in the changes that occur only in the mode of production.*”** <sup>[353]</sup>

**In the mid-century, the conditions of Egyptian agriculture with regard to production modes were as follows:**

**Table (15)**

**Distribution of agricultural labor in 1947** <sup>[354]</sup>

Type of work	Workforce percentage
Employers	15.3
Self-employed or working for relatives	50.5
Employees and users	0.25
Workers, craftsmen and children	33.3

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<sup>[353]</sup> Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, p. 25.

Refer also to chapter one, pp. 13-47, where he discussed in detail the concept of capitalism.

<sup>[354]</sup> *The Agricultural Issue*, p. 87. Our confidence in the author’s statistics stems from his rational approach to analysis, reliance on valuable sources, and lack of exaggeration.

Unemployed	0.25
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It is worth noting that the 33.3% included agricultural wage workers and semi-serfs who practiced the labor-service system. The latter form of exploitation was more common, especially among fixed workers. In this system, the peasant worked on the lord's land some days of the week and on his land other days. In Egypt, it took the following form: the peasant worked for the landowner in return for a "wage" in the form of a plot of land that he possessed and used for an agreed-upon duration.

Table (16) <sup>[355]</sup>

**Modes of utilizing agricultural land in Egypt in 1952**

Cultivation Method	% of land area
Cultivated in a sharing method. It is the land of large landowners and worked by poor and destitute farmers	20
Rented for cash by poor peasants	24
Smallholdings farmed by their owners	10.7
Cultivated by work service system	8.2
Area of 5 feddans (3-7): Cultivated by owners plus waged workers	12.7
Tenanted by capitalist farmers and farmed by waged labor	16
Capitalist farms owned by large landowners.	8.2
Total	99.8

The study mentioned above indicates that the volume of wage labor in agriculture in 1952 was 45% of the total workforce. <sup>[356]</sup>

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<sup>[355]</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

**However, it is important to note the following:**

- 1. This percentage includes fixed workers and semi-serfs, who were the majority.**
- 2. The number of working days for an agricultural worker was fewer than for a small peasant.**

**Taking these points into consideration, this percentage could be significantly reduced.** <sup>[357]</sup>

**The data shows that approximately one-third of the soil was cultivated in a capitalist mode. In addition, the role of wage labor in agriculture was generally less than a quarter of the total agricultural workforce. Therefore, the predominant modes of production in agriculture were small commodity production, family production, <sup>[358]</sup> and transitional forms between feudalism and capitalism. Large landowners cultivated approximately 20% of their land in a capitalist method, while the remaining 80% was rented out, primarily to small farmers, often via intermediaries such as merchants. This was the primary method of exploitation by the large landowners.** <sup>[359]</sup>

**The capitalist mode of production was limited in the Egyptian countryside in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. However, it is difficult to determine the exact extent of its role in the production of surplus. This raises the topic of the prevalent modes of production during that period. The status of the industry as well as its role in**

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<sup>[356]</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>[357]</sup> Mahmoud Abdel Fadeel mentioned a remark, quoting Gabriel Saab, denoting that lands farmed under the sharecropping system were classified as holdings cultivated on Dhimma (i.e., by the owner). Source: Economic and Social Transformations in the Egyptian Countryside (1952-1970), p. 37.

<sup>[358]</sup> It is a mode in which the small peasant cultivates his land with the help of his family to meet the family's needs within the framework of natural production.

<sup>[359]</sup> Sayyed Marei, Agrarian Reform and the Population Problem in Egypt. The reader can refer to the details of that process in Asim Al-Dessouki's book, Large Agricultural Landowners and Their Role in Egyptian Society (1914-1952), pp. 65-67, pp. 149-167.

production and the economy as a whole has already been discussed. There was a sizable sector of small industry employing 400,000 workers in 1952. Most of those plants were managed by their owners with the assistance of one or two workers. Craftsmanship prevailed in many of these workshops, aligning with the small commodity production mode and family production.

The economy reached a high degree of monetization. Even agricultural production was mostly directed toward the market, whether foreign or domestic. However, a significant portion of agricultural production remained for personal consumption by fallahs, especially grains.

Large landowners also engaged in extensive commercial and financial activities. Their activities included leasing land to mostly poor peasants, lending to them at usury, and trading in cotton and grains. These commercial activities do not negate but rather confirm that the mode of production in most of these lands was the mode of simple commodity production.

The cities experienced significant financial activity, encompassing trade, lotteries, and stock speculation. The banks primarily supported foreign trade and did not play a substantial role in financing industrial projects.

Small peasants were being exploited by large landowners and middlemen in the form of high land rents. In addition, merchants, moneylenders, and monopoly industrialists were also taking advantage of them. The prices of manufactured goods were high under the protection of large monopolies, further squeezing the peasants.

In general, economic supremacy in urban areas was held by commercial capital. Industrial capital in underdeveloped Egypt is considered part of commercial capital rather than the other way around. In a capitalist economy, commercial capital generally serves as a component within the cycle of industrial capital. It realizes the average rate of profit that is ultimately determined by industrial

capital. However, commercial capital in underdeveloped countries, including Egypt, is not subject to industrial capital in the same way due to a fundamental reason: industrial capital is reproduced under foreign incentive, i.e., via the pressure of the global market. Dependency aligns the underdeveloped economy, including industrial capital, with the capitalist markets. This relationship can be termed a “subordinate dependency.” This situation contrasts with the interconnectedness among economic entities across all countries. This process is primarily created via international exchange. The latter forms the basis for the export of capital or constitutes one of its components. Exchange is the domain of commercial capital, a process that is enhanced by a significant portion of the social surplus being generated outside the capitalist sector. This signifies that surplus value is not the sole or primary component of social surplus. In mid-20th-century Egypt, additional sources of surplus were derived from sectors characterized by small-scale commodity production and a mixed mode of semi-commodity and semi-subsistence production. As a result, the profits generated by industrialists were not exclusively based on surplus value. Instead, it was also acquired from pre-capitalist surplus through the exchange process. This had been facilitated by the monopolistic nature of the industry. This scenario, to a certain degree, detracts from the capitalist character of the large industry, which found itself dealing in the market with producers who were mostly employed in small production units. This contributed to the commercialization of industrial capital, which will be further discussed.

The prevalence of large-scale land ownership in rural provinces was associated with the widespread use of commercial exploitation methods. These included renting in kind and cash, sharecropping, speculating in agricultural land, cotton trade, and land leasing. Consequently, commercial capital also became dominant in the countryside. Although the small-scale commodity mode of production was the most widespread, its operations were subject to commercial capital. The latter acted as a mediator between the

direct producer and both the global and domestic markets, as well as between that producer and the main means of production, specifically land owned by large landlords. The dominance of large-scale real estate ownership reflected the supremacy of commercial capital. This class, often detached from village life, primarily engaged in mediation activities. The most important one was land leasing, leveraging its monopoly on ownership. It showed no commitment to any role regarding the fallahs, assumed no responsibility, and was only concerned with obtaining returns regardless of the mode of production practiced on its land. In short, members of this class were generally not directly involved in the mode of production that took place on their properties, except when they personally managed their farms. In these situations, large landowners established a specific relationship with the fallah, represented by their participation in the costs and returns. They were, in addition to being owners, merchants in a sense. As for the few capitalist farms, they did not make a significant contribution to agricultural production. The rural rich, on the contrary, were relatively closer to the capitalist owners. However, they practiced sharecropping on a large scale and other pre-capitalist methods of exploiting the peasants, such as usury.

Eventually, the state was protecting the entire structure.

Although Kharaj, the ancient state's portion of the surplus, has vanished, the revenue generated by the modern state has been utilized to bolster an export-driven and progressively commercialized economy. Nevertheless, this semi-modern system still retains relics of oriental feudalism or the Asiatic mode of production.

The situation can be summarized as follows:

1. The small-scale production mode was widespread in the countryside, in particular.
2. The capitalist agricultural sector was fragile.



3. Both large industry and capitalist farms, in addition to their weakness, were obtaining a significant part of the pre-capitalist surplus.<sup>[360]</sup>

4. The economy had made significant progress toward monetization.

5. The primary role of banks was financing foreign trade.

6. Commercial capital controlled not only productive capital but also small bourgeois production. This category includes banking capital, capital employed in service sectors, and various intermediary businesses. Specifically, industrial capital did not include banking capital, nor did it significantly contribute to the domestic capitalist production cycle. It is important to note that Paul Baran asserted that *“the banks established by the British in Egypt, India, and Latin America in the second half of the nineteenth century were merely large clearinghouses.”*<sup>[361]</sup> This description applies to almost all Egyptian banks in the mid-century in general. The only exception was Bank Misr during the 1920s and 1930s.

7. Commercial capital has been serving as an umbilical cord connecting the backward Egyptian economy, which was compelled to integrate into the world market, and that market itself. This has been its main activity, along with the role played by foreign trade in the total exchange and overall economic activity.

8. In this last sense alone, the capitalist mode of production was dominated from the outside through commercial capital. At home, however, industrial capital did not dominate commercial capital,

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<sup>[360]</sup> Monopolistic entities in capitalist countries acquire more than just the surplus generated by their workers. However, this excess stems from the surplus produced in smaller units, indicating that it also originates from within the capitalist sector, in addition to the surplus derived from pre-capitalist forms abroad. The scenario mentioned here existed during the emergence of capitalism in the West; however, this occurred in the context of an actual transition to capitalism. But this transition is now being held back, i.e., combined development is creating a stable situation.

<sup>[361]</sup> The Political Economy of Development, p. 304.

and the latter did not belong to the capitalist system but was capital of a dual nature, pre-capitalist and capitalist at the same time. So, its main role remained that of distant trade, followed by its weaker role in internal exchanges. Above all, wage labor did not predominate in the domestic workforce, and it did not produce the majority of the surplus.

9. For all of these reasons, it is impossible to track the presence of a dominant mode of production in Egypt throughout the middle of the century. The Eastern or Asian mode of production was broken down, leaving only vestiges of generalized or individual serfdom. Capitalist production was submissive to commercial capital, unable to subjugate small-scale production, making no significant contribution to surplus production, and failing to provide for a major section of the people. The surplus was distributed in the form of rent, profits, interest, and government income. (refer to Table 11).

The rent, for the most part, did not belong to the capitalist type, as it was mainly paid by small producers who were being pressured by large real estate owners. Most of the interest and profits flowed to commercial and financial capital, while their principal source was the work of small producers, alongside wage workers. The state's revenue was primarily derived from indirect taxes, the majority of which were paid by the lower classes, which included wage workers and small landowners. The majority of the surplus originated from the work of small producers; therefore, this process is directed and controlled by commercial rather than industrial capital. The control is not limited to seizing the largest part of the surplus. Rather, its most crucial element lies in the enhanced autonomy of commercial capital, that is, its pivotal role in directing the process of producing and distributing surplus.

So, the surplus had been generated through the production process but extracted by various forms of intermediation, such as exchange and usury. Moreover, production had been largely influenced by global market demands through commercial capital,

with exchange playing a pivotal role in regulating production. Likewise, the consumption patterns in the modern sectors of society had been primarily influenced by foreign factors through commercial capital. Consequently, the industry mainly emerged with the aim of import substitution.

In summary, it is the process of engagement with the global market via commercial capital that determines the modes of consumption, distribution, exchange, and production. These four elements do not form a single cohesive whole. In this context, the function of production is altered, becoming contingent upon exchange, distribution, and consumption. The independent variable is the exchange relationships with the global market, which perpetuates underdevelopment by reproducing the dependent pattern of consumption.

Underdevelopment was mainly driven by foreign invasions from capitalist countries targeting pre-capitalist communities. Alongside other contributing factors, Indigenous liability also played a role in this transformation. This situation was linked to the interests of a domestic class whose activity has been predominantly parasitic, a class whose interests have been consistent with the Underdevelopment of Development itself.<sup>[362]</sup> Consequently, in order to sustain its natural movement, it has not been necessary to be directly linked to the global market through treaties, occupying armies, or direct foreign oversight.

This framework, which includes multiple modes of production, encompasses diverse cultures, and is characterized by the dominance of circulation over production, can be referred to as *the structure of underdevelopment*.<sup>[363]</sup>

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<sup>[362]</sup> This term was coined by André Gunder Frank and refers to a type of development of a society that combines capitalist and pre-capitalist relations.

<sup>[363]</sup> In collaboration with Sherif Younis, we analyzed our “Structure of Underdevelopment” concept in a study with the same title.

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The modernization of Egypt has been an ongoing process since the era of Muhammad Ali. Both engagement and re-engagement with the global market distinguish this process. It is characterized by a paradoxical nature of development. Advancement continues alongside the enduring presence of backwardness. This is characterized by limited and dependent industrialization, as well as uneven and combined development, where different sectors of society experience varying levels of growth. For example, the education sector produces well-educated individuals who often migrate abroad due to the market's inability to absorb them. The industry also faces constant crises, operating at a fraction of its capacity due to the weak domestic market and limited export opportunities. Furthermore, the different branches of industry do not integrate except to a negligible extent. The development of medicine has resulted in a population explosion because it was not accompanied by a rational, modern culture. This pattern of growth in constant crisis applies to all components of society.

### Crisis and Growth

At the end of World War II, British camps had trained 200,000 individuals, including 80,000 skilled and semi-skilled workers. Additionally, there was a significant surplus of approximately £450 million held by Britain,<sup>[364]</sup> and a well-established railway network.

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<sup>[364]</sup> The fate of Sterling Balances in brief:

1. Egypt's post-World War II debt to Britain = 450 million pounds.
2. In June 1947, the balance reached 356 million pounds (96 million pounds were recovered between 1945 and 1947). It was agreed to release 20 million, another 10 million immediately, 15 million to meet Egypt's commitment to purchase arms, and another one million for January 1946 expenses. Thus, the balances decreased to 310 million in December 1948.

The period from 1939 to 1953 was advantageous for the global exchange of materials exported by underdeveloped countries. For instance, the price of Egyptian cotton surged significantly from 10.78 riyals in 1939 to 177 riyals in 1951 (with one riyal equaling 20% of an Egyptian pound).<sup>[365]</sup> Simultaneously, the cost of capital goods declined, driven by Britain's implementation of austerity measures and price controls.<sup>[366]</sup>

Following the war, the Egyptian industrial sector underwent considerable expansion. The industrial capacity increased by 23% between 1946 and 1947. While the war period experienced a significant expansion in productive capacity, it was accompanied by a net reduction in the overall value of fixed capital, which includes machinery, equipment, and fixed facilities. This is attributed to the cessation of imports of machinery and equipment. The post-war period also witnessed a significant expansion in capital accumulation in the industry. A substantial process of replacement

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3. In March 1949, it was agreed to release 12 million pounds of credit and make payments of dollars worth 5 million pounds during the year 1949. Additionally, the value of fertilizers imported from Chile and the quantity of goods imported from England by Egypt increased to 8 million pounds, and the balance was used to pay for the facilities of the Egyptian Oil Fields Company.

4. The March 1951 agreement provided for the release of 150 million pounds, with 25 million to be released immediately upon signing. Approximately 14 million would be immediately and unconditionally convertible into dollars, with 10 million to be converted every year for nine years. An additional 5 million (conditional) would be released each year up to a total of 35 million.

5. After the 1956 war, the remaining balances were transferred to France and England to compensate for the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company. This was done through Britain freezing Egyptian assets and rights, including sterling balances. Most of these balances were later transferred as compensation for the nationalization on May 14, 1958. This process involved multiple payments that continued until 1963, ultimately reducing the balances to zero (various sources).

<sup>[365]</sup> Hazim Saeed Omar, *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>[366]</sup> After the end of the war, Britain reduced the prices of machinery and equipment to compensate for the deflation that occurred during the war. Emmanuel A., *Unequal Exchange*, page 83.

and renewal had taken place, and new companies had been established. The domestic industry became able to meet the country's needs for alcohol, sugar, cigarettes, salt, and flour. It also no longer needed external financing for the cotton, shoe, cement, soap, beer, furniture, sulfur, and vegetable oil industries. New industries were also introduced: rubber and General Motors automobile assembly in 1936, then Ford in 1949. In addition to the manufacture of plastic products, there was also assembly of refrigerators, fertilizers, and various durable goods and chemicals. During the same period, there was an expansion in non-traditional industries in Egypt, such as paper, glass, cement, copper, iron, and pharmaceuticals.<sup>[367]</sup> Charles Issawi noted that the steel industry was introduced, with production reaching 25,000 tons in 1949, 32,000 tons in 1950, and 52,000 tons in 1951.<sup>[368]</sup> Additionally, an industry for separating metals from black sand was established in the late 1930s.<sup>[369]</sup>

The industry also identified a vast number of unemployed individuals in urban areas who were willing to work for considerably lower wages. Meanwhile, the dominant class held significant accumulated wealth and readily available investment surpluses, largely stemming from the rising land rents of that period.

However, since 1949, the industry had encountered a severe crisis that reached its peak in 1951/1952. This crisis was manifested in several ways: 1. Unemployment, where the employment rate in 1947 was 100% of industrial workers, but by 1950 it dropped to 87%.<sup>[370]</sup>

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<sup>[367]</sup> Robert Mabro, Op. cit., p. 221.

<sup>[368]</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>[369]</sup> "Al-Watan" Egyptian Newspaper, Black Sands: From Neglect to Production - A Recent Study by Dr. Ahmad Sultan: A Dream Delayed for 90 Years.

<sup>[370]</sup> O'Brien, Op. cit., p. 398.

Amr Mohi Eddin, Op. cit.,

Mohammad Roshdy presented the following table:

2. Depression resulted in the closure of thousands of workshops and factories. 3. Increasing difficulties in production marketing, which pushed businessmen to reduce prices and working hours and increase inventory.<sup>[371]</sup> The industrial growth rate also witnessed a significant decrease. It dropped from an annual average of 8% during the period from 1946 to 1951 to 3.1% in 1952 and further decreased in 1953 to 1%.<sup>[372]</sup>

In 1950, industrial capacity experienced a 56% increase compared to the period of 1930 to 1934. Subsequently, it grew at an annual rate of 7% in 1951 and 8% in 1952 before dropping to 1% in 1953.<sup>[373]</sup> In 1951, only 11 new industrial and commercial companies were founded, with a total capital of 1,512,500 pounds. In addition, the capital of the existing companies saw an increase of only 6,477,089 pounds.<sup>[374]</sup> The savings rate exceeded the investment rate during the same period. In 1951, private sector investments in

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Number of employees(%)	%	Industrial establishments in thousands	Year
100	100	22.216	1944
116	112	26.741	1947
97	88	19.522	1950
86	16	3.445	1952

(Economic development in Egypt, part two, p. 188).

<sup>[371]</sup> Issawi, Op. cit., p. 142; T. Th. Shaker, Issues of National Liberation and the Socialist Revolution in Egypt, p. 90; Fawzy Girgis, Studies in the Political History of Egypt since the Mamluk Era, p. 21; Amr Mohi Eddin, Op. cit.,

<sup>[372]</sup> Sameer Radwan, Op. cit., p. 200, table 5.18.

<sup>[373]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>[374]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, The Historical Origins of Egyptian Capitalism and Its Development, p. 176.



industry amounted to 2.1 pounds; in 1952, 1.8 pounds; and in 1953, 1.3 pounds.<sup>[375]</sup> The savings rate itself also decreased:

Table (17) <sup>[376]</sup>

Year	Savings rate / GDP (%)
1939	5
1942	23
1944	29.1
1950	13

It is not enough to address this crisis by simply focusing on the political aspect. In fact, the industrial crisis exacerbated the severity of the political crisis by resulting in widespread unemployment and price increases. Moreover, real opportunities for industrial growth could have helped alleviate the political crises. The crisis was essentially socio-economic. While the political crisis did play a role in the mid-century Egyptian industry crisis, its direct impact was limited compared to its indirect effects, such as deterring private foreign capital and hindering its inflow. The political crisis was, more significantly, a reflection of a deeper crisis within the overall social system. The industrial crisis was chronic and only exacerbated in the middle of the century due to the growth of its own contradictions, in addition to other factors. The Egyptian industry has always required political stability and a strong state to overcome its problems. This indicates an underlying socio-economic vulnerability. The crisis of 1949 was resolved in 1954/1955 thanks to strong state intervention rather than industrialist measures, highlighting the need for assistance from outside the industry.

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<sup>[375]</sup> Op. cit., p. 277.

<sup>[376]</sup> Issawi, Op. cit., p. 90.

The decrease in industrial investment and production growth rate coincided with a significant increase in real estate investment, which reached 30 million pounds in 1950. <sup>[377]</sup> This indicated the limited direct impact of the political crisis. Ironically, the 1947 crisis in capitalist countries concluded with the commencement of international tension during the “Korean boom” that lasted for several years. On the contrary, that boom had the opposite effect on Egyptian industry and even played a detrimental role in industrial growth. While capitalist countries experienced a tangible recovery since 1949, the crisis grew in Egypt from this very date. Moreover, the Korean War resulted in an improvement in the exchange rates for raw materials produced in underdeveloped countries. During that time, the prices of Egyptian cotton experienced a dramatic increase. As a result, landowners achieved an unprecedented rise in their income. However, this did not result in a recovery in the industry; instead, it increased the demand for imported goods and, therefore, stimulated competition with domestic production.

**Table (18)**  
**Percentage of imports and exports to GDP at factor cost**  
**prices(%) <sup>[378]</sup>**

Year	imports	Exports
1947	19.4	16.3
1948	26.2	11.2
1949	23	17.6
1950	24.2	19.6
1951	30.2	21.7
1952	26.4	16.8

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<sup>[377]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[378]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 253.

**This, of course, constrained the expansion of Egyptian industry due to a lack of demand. The Korean boom also increased the demand for real estate in cities as a result of increasing migration from the countryside. So, capital flowed into the housing sector at an unprecedented rate. The rise in prices of agricultural raw materials resulting from the war was another disaster for the industry, as it relied on importing a significant proportion of intermediate materials. In addition, the rise in the prices of domestic cotton contributed to an increase in costs. The rise in the price of Egyptian cotton came at a time when cotton traders and large landowners, who were revived by the war, did not constitute the main effective demand for industrial products. Instead, the demand was formed by middle-income urban residents, mainly those who did not benefit from the rise in prices of raw materials. The industry had to raise its prices in the face of stable, or in fact, decreasing, purchasing power due to the continuation of inflation, as consumers faced high prices for imported and even domestic food commodities. The competition of imported goods with the domestic industry, which was favored by large landowners, resulted in the closure of thousands of workshops and factories.<sup>[379]</sup>**

**At the same time, export challenges persisted due to competition in the global market. This led, especially after the decision to leave the sterling bloc in 1947, to a shortage of hard currencies. In addition, there were difficulties in withdrawing sterling balances from Britain, exacerbating the problem.**

**The unbalanced growth of the various sectors during the war also played a role in the intensification of the industrial crisis. The weakness of the electricity sector, which requires advanced technology, played a major role in the crisis. Companies were obligated to import special electric generators, leading to a cost**

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<sup>[379]</sup> Tariq Al-Bishri, *Op. cit.*, p. 198.

increase. Most advanced industries also suffered from a shortage of skilled labor, which hindered the growth of new industries. The war period witnessed a large expansion in industrial capacity without a parallel expansion in technical education and energy facilities. Consequently, the industry faced significant obstacles following the war.

The significant decrease in the rate of foreign capital inflows was also a fundamental factor in exacerbating the crisis. In addition to the decision to exit the sterling bloc, this reluctance played a major role in deepening the hard currency deficit. Moreover, the Egyptian industry lacked the expertise provided by foreign capital. The production of durable goods, chemicals, and intermediate industries were promising sectors for the growth of the Egyptian industry at the time. They required expertise that the domestic industrialists were deficient in. So, the matter was not only related to financing. That is why industry executives started to call for state assistance. Economists also highlighted that the state was not acting seriously enough to support the industry, despite taking several measures, including, for example,<sup>[380]</sup>

1. Increasing customs duties on industrial imports in 1930 and 1949.
2. Reducing railway transport fares for domestic industry.
3. Providing industry with low-interest loans.
4. Contributing 50% of the capital of the Industrial Bank after the 1949 crisis.
5. Conducting research regarding the steel and chemical fertilizer industries as well as a research project to construct a dam on the Nile.

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<sup>[380]</sup> O'Brien, *Op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

Mabro & Radwan, previous reference, p. 77, p. 85.

**6. Several other measures were taken to give preference to domestic over foreign industry.**

**However, these measures were inadequate to stimulate industrial growth to its maximum potential. Although the customs tariff issued in 1930 was high, it was not as high as in other countries, such as Turkey, and it was not entirely fair to the industry. For example, imported raw hides were taxed at 15%, while leather products were taxed only at 8%.<sup>[381]</sup> The state also demonstrated a bias toward the industry regarding taxation. In 1945, while the industry provided 20 million pounds, agriculture provided only 5 million. This is even though the revenue generated from agriculture was four times that of the industry.<sup>[382]</sup> The state also failed to enact the necessary legislation for industrial activity. For example, it did not define an organized method for industrial credit and did not develop legislation regarding trademarks. Moreover, there were other challenges, including high establishment costs and the complexities of securing permits for machinery imports. Additionally, transport costs within the country for imported goods were lower compared to those for domestically produced goods.<sup>[383]</sup>**

**There is no doubt that all these direct factors played varying roles in the growth of the industry's crisis. However, the significance of the industrial crisis remains unclear. The Egyptian industry experienced growth under extraordinary circumstances and constantly necessitated such conditions: foreign capital, high customs protection, and a state that controlled most factors of production, including a portion of the capital itself, without being able to overcome its problems independently. This crisis was not solely related to economic or accidental factors. If it was purely economic, the industry could solve these problems on its own, and if**

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<sup>[381]</sup> Sameer Radwan, Op. cit., p. 183.

<sup>[382]</sup> Issawi, Op. cit., p. 170.

<sup>[383]</sup> Sameer Radwan, Op. cit., p. 183.

they were social obstacles, it could even deal with them if they were from without. In fact, this crisis exposed the fragility of the Egyptian industry's structure. It is rooted in the socio-economic structure of industrial capital. The latter was unable to solve its problems and relied on the state, especially with the decline in foreign capital inflow. The industry during that period failed to propose radical solutions, form a strong political party, engage in political struggles, or gain support from the peasant class. Further exploration in the following pages will shed more light on these issues.

The social crisis in the Egyptian countryside appeared to be exploding from within, unlike the industrial crisis, which seemed to be the result of completely external obstacles, such as the control of large landowners over political power,<sup>[384]</sup> the tax system, the shortage of hard currency, etc. Since its crisis added more fuel to the social conflict, and given its increasing inability to take off under the existing conditions at the time, as well as the fact that industrial growth was the most suitable area for increasing domestic production and absorbing unemployment, etc., it enjoyed the sympathy of most business circles as a lifeline for the regime in light of this stagnation. Therefore, it was believed in most political circles of the dominant class that industry should henceforth enjoy some pampering.

## **2. The Government of the Coup and its Economic Policy:**

### **A starting point:**

The coup was not a surprise to virtually anyone. However, the officers assumed that their coup instilled some apprehension among the dominant class. Consequently, their leaders issued reassuring statements and behaved in a manner that showed concern for the interests of the social system. Laws restricting freedoms were

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<sup>[384]</sup> Let's recall how large industrialists resisted the repeal of the Cotton Act - refer to the first section

enacted, parties were dissolved, communist organizations were liquidated, the labor movement was curbed, trade unions were subjugated, and the 1954 agreement with Britain was concluded. In addition, specialized committees were formed to research industrialists' problems, in which they participated, and the state played an active role in revitalizing the ailing economy. While the fears of businessmen were allayed, not everything was resolved smoothly.

The officers had no preconceived concepts regarding a well-defined socio-economic policy. Therefore, they resorted to trial and error, indicating that the regime was moving based on its inertia. The Nasserite elite began to act according to external balances as long as it did not threaten its existence. The early years following the coup were marked by an extremely random economic policy, reflecting the spontaneous and experimental tendency of the Nasserite bureaucracy to act as a tool of the dominant class that was not fully conscious of itself. The economic policy proceeded in a direction imposed by harsh facts, represented by the economic, political, and social crisis. The officers found that ensuring the smooth sailing of the ship had become the main driving force for all their actions since they seized power. This was achieved by appeasing or suppressing various parties through complex calculations and experimental procedures. During the early years, specific directions for Nasserite economic policy consolidated after learning about the social reality and its structure.

## The Economic Policy in the 1950s

### 1. The early years

Modern industry emerged in Egypt during Muhammad Ali's efforts to establish a family empire. Its decline coincided with the weakening of state power, both processes deeply influenced by colonialism, which began with the erosion of the state's authority. Modern industry began to grow rapidly again in the 1920s,



supported by the occupying authority, which promoted the establishment of certain industries in Egypt and the underdeveloped world as a whole. This does not negate that some state measures or even the “struggles” of some industrialists (Talaat Harb, for example) were not entirely in line with colonial plans. Before the 1920s, the state played a major economic role in favor of the dominant class, which back then was mainly represented by large landowners. The notable development since the 1920s, particularly in the 1930s, was its limited support for the emerging segment of the dominant class. However, the deep differences between these two intertwined blocs hindered their reconciliation. Therefore, industrialists considered that the expansion of their businesses necessitated state intervention, as long as it was strong enough and not subject to what was referred to as “agrarian logic,” which hindered the state’s support of industry and, in turn, limited its potential to serve as an effective mediator. That state of large landowners could not strive to take all the necessary measures to indefinitely support the industry. Doing so would have required redistributing the social surplus in favor of industrialists and at the expense of the agrarian aristocracy. The sufferings of the lower classes also obligated the state to act as a palliative for those who had become “useless” categories, that is, the type that Lord Kitchener had not preferred. Therefore, the government did provide some crumbs, especially during the 1940s, to the employees in general. However, the landed aristocracy, constrained by its interests, could not overly appease the hungry at the expense of the established families. As a result, it offered only the most basic support, despite the growing misery that threatened to destabilize the entire system. Ultimately, the aristocracy failed to recognize the looming threat of its own downfall. Therefore, it found no justification for sacrificing its enormous revenues as a ransom for the regime. Instead, it was ready to give a few or even a lot of grants, but not from its pocket. That is why the industry continued to pay substantial taxes, increased by the final Wafd government, which

represented the last resort for the fractured political regime. The industrial crisis, plus the increasing discontent of the suffering masses, created a rising tendency for state intervention. However, this tendency had always remained only partially realized because the state was under the control of aristocratic families.

The Bonapartist regime wielded absolute authority, constrained solely by its connection to the overall social system. It was also capable of performing any actions as long as this connection was preserved. Furthermore, it took all essential measures to ensure that the system operated under its command. Because it was no one's true ally, it was ultra-conservative and radical at the same time, confusing the casual observer. Moreover, the system was driven by its inertia, moving in a way that suited the interests of a small elite of bureaucrats; thereby, Bonapartist power was free, fast-moving, and highly sensitive. That power could resolve a conflict of this kind. However, it was not necessary for its very existence. A contradiction between large landlords and industrialists frequently appeared and was resolved without a Bonapartist government. The history of European capitalism is replete with conflicts between industrialists and landlords. However, the conflict within the camp of the system was not sufficient to bring about a political balance on the social level. Therefore, Bonapartism was not the product of the contradictions within the dominant class. This contradiction in the Egyptian case did not play a direct role in the success of the "Free Officers" coup. That is because the industrial capital in Egypt was politically feeble, unable even to form a political party, and had little political influence. However, the crisis of the industry in the early 1950s contributed, to some extent, to the escalation of the social conflict. This crisis was not solely a product of that contradiction, as many economic factors had played major roles in its generation, as addressed before. Therefore, the success of the coup d'état cannot be attributed solely to economic or economic-political factors. Rather, it is explained by the political factor alone, i.e., the political crisis. By tracing the sequence of events, the officers did not seize

power to address the economic crisis in a *Prussian* manner but to resolve the political crisis in a *Bonapartist* fashion. Consequently, their economic policy served as a means to navigate beyond that crisis on behalf of the system as a whole and, in doing so, to advance their interests. This underlying concept forms the basis of the entire analysis of the Nasserite policy, which will be examined in detail.

The political crisis was exacerbated by the threat to the regime posed by the intelligentsia and lower classes. An economic crisis alone does not necessarily require Bonapartist-style power unless it turns into a unique political crisis, while the contradictions within the dominant class often find some resolution within the same class.

The officers' governments immediately targeted the most dangerous elements to the future of the system: the king, communists, and the workers' movement, via direct and indirect measures such as agrarian reform. Subsequently, they began removing obstacles to the private sector, particularly industrial capital, by implementing various measures:

1. Foreign investors are permitted to contribute up to 51% of the project's capital, while the remaining shares are offered for public subscription to Egyptians for one month. After that, foreign buyers will have the right to purchase the unsold shares.<sup>[385]</sup>
2. Providing tax exemptions for new companies for 7 years.
3. Exempting profits from new share issues of existing companies from taxes for 5 years.
4. Exempting 50% of undistributed profits from profit tax.
5. Increasing the state guarantee for the Industrial Bank to 5 million pounds.

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<sup>[385]</sup> Law 138 of 1947 was repealed in July 1952. O'Brien, Op. cit., p. 97.

This law limited the percentage of foreign capital participation in joint companies to a maximum of 49% and set the ratio of the number and wages of foreign workers.

**6. Mandating companies with capital exceeding 10 thousand pounds to join the Federation of Industries.**

**7. Authorizing industrial chambers to impose fees on member companies to fund technical and legislative research programs.**

**8. Ensuring a stable energy supply for the establishments.**

**9. Guaranteeing profits for certain companies and interest payments on debts for others.**

**10. Lowering customs duties on raw materials and raising them on manufactured consumer goods.**

**11. Compelling all companies to join industrial chambers.**<sup>[386]</sup>

In 1954, the minimum share price was reduced from four pounds to two pounds per share to promote investment in the industry. Furthermore, shareholders were granted new rights, including the ability to hold emergency meetings and review company accounts. That same year, regulations were introduced limiting individuals to chairing no more than two companies while having the right to serve on the boards of six companies.<sup>[387]</sup> This law was later amended in 1957 to allow one person to chair one company's board and be a member of two other companies' boards. This aimed to eliminate administrative monopolies favoring large companies, foster new company development, secure the existing companies' future, and encourage public share purchases. In addition, the directors' maximum annual wage was set at 2,500 pounds, with a maximum bonus of 10% of net profit after distributing 5% to shareholders. Moreover, the retirement age for directors was set at sixty.<sup>[388]</sup> The state also acted to provide electrical power, warehouses,

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<sup>[386]</sup> O'Brien mentioned all these decisions, *Op. cit.*, pp. 97-99.

<sup>[387]</sup> In 1946, the government issued a law stipulating that no person may combine membership in the managing board of directors of more than two companies or be a member of the board of directors of more than 10 companies. Mahmoud Metwally, *Op. cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>[388]</sup> O'Brien, *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

transportation equipment, roads, and facilities. Additionally, from 1952/1953 to 1956/1957, the government spent 39% of its total investments on infrastructure such as transportation and electricity, while directing the remaining 61% to irrigation, drainage, and land reclamation.<sup>[389]</sup> The government also encouraged the establishment of a synthetic rubber factory in 1956, imposing high customs protection and giving the project a loan at a reduced interest rate. It also guaranteed its entire production, with certain specifications, and exempted the company from profit tax. It also contributed 45% of the industrial capital invested during the period from 1954 to 1956.<sup>[390]</sup> Military factories were also converted to produce civilian durable goods in 1956.

To encourage foreign capital, the government granted it the same facilities as domestic capital, in addition to the right to transfer 10% of the registered capital in the original currency annually. Foreign capital also became entitled to re-transfer the entire capital abroad after 5 years. The government also decided to repeal Law 136 of 1948, which stipulated that foreign companies would not be allowed to exploit Egyptian oil.

In light of the growing food crisis and deteriorating soil productivity, the state increased its expenditures on irrigation and drainage to the extent that it almost constituted its total investment in agriculture:

Table (19)

Fixed capital formation in agriculture, irrigation, and drainage  
(in million pounds)<sup>[391]</sup>

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<sup>[389]</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>[390]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, Op. cit., p. 280.

<sup>[391]</sup> Sameer Radwan, Op. cit., p. 130.

Year	Fixed capital formation in agriculture as a whole	Fixed Capital Formation in Irrigation and Drainage
1952	0.7	5.3(*)
1953	8.4	8.00
1954	12.6	11.5
1955	17.8	12.00
1956	12.6	10.2
1957	9.6	7.6

\*This discrepancy, where capital formation in irrigation and drainage is higher than in agriculture as a whole, is due to the fact that net accumulated capital in the animal husbandry sector fell by 6.5 million pounds in 1952 at 1960 prices.

During that period, the government did not make any significant changes to crop distribution, but it began to encourage farmers to go beyond cotton cultivation. It raised the prices of wheat purchased from them to encourage its cultivation, and the food subsidy system continued. The government embraced the High Dam project that had been set by previous governments and began to think about its implementation to provide more water for irrigation and electricity.

The state also took several legislative measures in favor of workers to calm the violently suppressed labor movement and provide a suitable environment for investment. The minimum wage for industrial workers was raised from 12.5 to 25 piasters per day, and the daily wages of agricultural workers were also raised. Workers also obtained new rights regarding annual and sick leave and health care. The dismissal of workers was also subject to new, more specific regulations. However, these measures were only partially implemented.<sup>[392]</sup> The government also took several

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<sup>[392]</sup> O'Brien, Op. cit., pp. 255-256; Mabro, Op. cit., p. 235.

measures regarding foreign trade. More stringent regulations were enacted regarding the importation of luxury goods and the use of hard currencies for all imports. A licensing system was also established for imports from the sterling bloc. Furthermore, exporters to hard currency countries, especially the United States, were granted the right to keep a portion of those currencies in their possession. Consequently, this led to the emergence of dual pricing for the Egyptian pound. The government actually approved the existence of dual pricing for the pound. Consequently, its exchange rate was reduced by 35% and later officially reduced by 19% in 1962 to encourage exporting and foreign transfers.<sup>[393]</sup>

It is noticeable that the government's encouragement of private capital was accompanied by its role as an investor, especially in industry. Encouraging the private sector was not enough from the point of view of entrepreneurs. The Federation of Industries demanded that the state guarantee profits for all companies, which is a very strange demand and makes capital lose much of its legitimacy before the state. The authorities sought not to enhance the profits of industrial capitalists but rather to foster the industry itself in order to boost the domestic product and reduce unemployment. Additionally, the Federation of Industries made a peculiar request that the state abstain from investing so as to avoid competing with the private sector. The state contributed half of the industrial capital; therefore, implementing this demand would result in reducing industrial investments by half. The state only intervened when the private sector had refrained from acquiring shares offered by new companies; consequently, the government was obligated to purchase them.<sup>[394]</sup> This signifies that its intervention in

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<sup>[393]</sup> Hansen & Marzouk, *Op. cit.*, pp. 196-198.

The exchange rate of the pound against the dollar fell within a few years after 1952 from \$4 to about \$2.6, then to \$2.3.).

<sup>[394]</sup> The officers established the "Permanent Council for the Development of National Production" in 1952, which prepared studies for production projects and presented them to businessmen.



investment was not for the purpose of competing with capital but rather was a consequence of its reluctance to buy shares.

The government's efforts were not directed at supporting industrialists but focused on bolstering industrial production. This was the heart of the conflict between the two sides. Private capital prioritized the development of traditional industries with quick capital turnover, such as textiles and food production. Instead, the state, based on studies conducted by the "Fixed Council for the Development of National Production," which was created to investigate the viability of various projects, focused on developing "heavier" industries, such as cement, rubber, fertilizers, and other intermediate industries, with a slower capital cycle.

The market was saturated with traditional consumer commodities, while the country relied on importing intermediate and equipment goods. This is why any industrial expansion under the existing system was economically preferable to intermediate industries, which were the focus of most state industrial investment during the period from 1952 to 1956. Businessmen were unable to establish this objective with their means.

Table (20)

State-contributed industrial investments (1952-1956) in millions of pounds <sup>[395]</sup>

Industry	Total capital	State share
Iron and steel	11.4	4.2
Fertilizers	8	5.6
Cement	2	0.4
Paper	1.2	0.6
Railway equipment	0.5	0.2
Mines and mining	0.5	0.4

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<sup>[395]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, Op. cit., p. 279.

Total	23.6	11.4
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**Table (21)**

**Private investments in the industry from January 1954 to October 1956 in millions of pounds <sup>[396]</sup>**

Industry	Capital
Mines and mining	1.49
Spinning and weaving	1.025
Chemicals	2.290
Food	0.200
Electricity	0.080
Total	5.085

Despite the increase in private sector profits, its investments did not generally increase at the same rate relative to state investments (annual average):

**Table (22) <sup>[397]</sup>**

**Comparison between the size of private and state sector investments in millions of pounds**

Year (Average)	Private investments	State investments
1948-1950	76	30
1954-1956	90	69

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<sup>[396]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[397]</sup> Hansen & Marzouk, Op. cit., pp. 225-228

State investments increased by approximately 130%, while those of the private sector only increased by about 17%.

Moreover, bank deposits increased from 217 million pounds in 1952 to 233 million in 1953, while banks increased their cash reserves from 17% to 22.5%. Insurance companies also increased theirs to 62.5%, keeping only 15% in the form of shares. This meant a deterioration in the rate of private investment.

Additionally, private capital increasingly turned to investing in the building sector:

**Table (23)**

**Real estate investment volume (mainly housing) in millions of pounds <sup>[398]</sup>**

Year	Investments
1950	30
1954	40
1955	42.5
1956	51.4
1957	54.4
1958	59
1959	43

The investment rate in real estate reached 47.3% of total private investments.

**The domestic capital situation can be summarized as follows:**

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<sup>[398]</sup> Collected from the following three references:

Issawi, Op. cit.,  
Mahmoud Metwally, Op. cit.,  
O'Brien, Op. cit.,

1. There was a generally low tendency to invest.
2. There was a low tendency to invest in industry.
3. There was more investment in real estate.

Moreover, the influx of foreign capital was not substantial. Despite the enactment of encouraging laws, only five million pounds were invested in joint-stock companies in the years from 1953 to 1955.<sup>[399]</sup> However, the net foreign capital received was less, resulting in a negative figure:

**Table (24)**

**The development of the annual volume of foreign investments in Egypt in millions of pounds**

Year	Investment value
1952	+2
1954	-0.3
1958	+1.5

From 1952 to 1961, the volume of foreign capital invested in Egypt amounted to 8.7 million pounds, not including the profits that were reinvested.<sup>[400]</sup>

The hopes of the dominant class for the influx of U.S. capital diminished. Foreign capital was reluctant to invest in Egypt due to political instability and the Nasserite regime's refusal to enter into alliances with the West, indirectly leading to the Suez War in 1956. Moreover, foreign companies demanded protection against nationalization and expropriation, the right to withdraw capital at any time, and other conditions. Foreign banks and insurance

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<sup>[399]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, *The Penetration of Foreign Capital into Egypt* (1).

<sup>[400]</sup> F. A. Lutskevich, *Abdel Nasser and the Battle for Economic Independence* (1952-1971), p. 20, footnote 3, quoted from al-Ahram newspaper, 1/26/1961.

companies also pressured the government regarding the financing of foreign trade. Private foreign capital was not entirely independent of its government in its relationship with Nasserism, so it participated in pressuring the government to align with the Western camp.

In summary, neither the demand for industrial projects nor a sizable influx of foreign capital resulted from the state's capital-encouraging efforts. Although the state proceeded to invest more in the industry, fixed capital increased at a slower rate than it had before the coup:

Table (25)

Net accumulation of fixed industrial capital in millions of pounds at 1960 prices <sup>[401]</sup>

Year	Accumulated capital	Year	Accumulated capital
1948	29.9	1954	18.1
1949	36.2	1955	39.4
1950	32.4	1956	33.00
1951	29.7	1957	2.1
1952	24.4	1958	22.7
1953	11.9		

Note: This data does not include transportation, storage, electricity and construction.

The industrial growth *rate* did not progress but even deteriorated from its pre-coup level

Table (26)

Industrial production index (excluding electricity)

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<sup>[401]</sup> Sameer Radwan, Op. cit., pp. 98-99.

Year	According to Mabro <sup>[402]</sup>	According to Hansen & Marzouq <sup>[403]</sup>
1952	100	100
1953	103	102
1954	112	109
1955	119	119
1956	130	128

Amr Mohieldin also provided the following figures:<sup>[404]</sup>

**Industrial capital growth rate:**

1945-1950 5% per annum

1952-1955 14% throughout the period (= less than 5% per annum – the author)

1955-1959 5.2 per annum

**Industrial production growth rate:**

1945-1950 6.4% per annum

1952-1955 15% throughout the period

1955-1959 25% throughout the period

According to Fouad Morsi, the growth rate of industrial production reached the following percentages:<sup>[405]</sup>

1939-1949 = 6%

1954-1949 = 4%

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<sup>[402]</sup> The Egyptian Economy from 1952 to 1972, p. 227.

<sup>[403]</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>[404]</sup> Evaluation of the Manufacturing Strategy in Egypt and the Available alternatives in the future.

<sup>[405]</sup> This Economic Openness, p. 27.

1956 =6%

However, the crisis was overcome after cotton prices fell sharply in the mid-1950s and Korea's boom was wiped out. Import restrictions also played a role in reducing the demand for luxury goods. In general, the new monetary policy and the decrease in cotton prices led to a decline in the demand for imported goods, a rebound in the textile industry, and an increase in the exports of manufactured goods.

Table (27)

Value of manufactured exports in million pounds <sup>[406]</sup>

Year	Value
1951	35.3
1953	35.3
1955	39.1
1958	70.6

Note: This was a temporary situation, as increased imports of capital goods and food offset the effect of increased exports, as will be seen later.

The profit rate of private industrial companies rose from 20% in 1952<sup>[407]</sup> to 35% in 1958/1959.<sup>[408]</sup> This was due to the above-mentioned incentive measures, the growing monopolistic structure of the industry, and the end of the Korean boom. However, this détente had a certain significance. Industrial sales and profits increased; that is, it abated in the sense understood by the

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<sup>[406]</sup> Mabrou & Radwan, Op.cit., p. 289.

<sup>[407]</sup> Hansen & Marzouk, Op. cit., p.138.

<sup>[408]</sup> T. Th. Shaker, Issues of National Liberation and the Socialist Revolution in Egypt, p. 101. Adel Ghoneim, "al-Taliaah" Magazine, November 1966 issue. Belyaev & Primakov, Op. cit., p. 13, quoting from The Egyptian Voice to Socialism, p. 464.



merchant-industrialist, the owner of capital.<sup>[409]</sup> Supported by state measures, the expanding monopolistic structure of the industry, and falling cotton prices, industrialists managed to secure additional profits unrelated to production within their factories. This suggests that the surge in profit rates was disproportionate to a rise in worker productivity. From 1952 to 1960, the profit rate increased by 75%, while productivity increased by 3.5% per worker.<sup>[410]</sup> This relatively modest rate of increase in productivity is not sufficient to explain this increase in the profit rate, given that the employment rate did not significantly rise during that period. The crisis, however, remained unresolved from the perspective of the genuine industrialists, especially the managers. In the initial years preceding the 1957-1960 plan, the declining rate of industrial investments showed no signs of recovery. Furthermore, the process of industrial development remained faltering throughout the period, exacerbated by the absence of any substantial inflow of foreign capital.

The general inclination that developed following World War II to create intermediate industries and the production of durable commodities like assembly automobiles, refrigerators, plastics, fertilizers, paper, copper, iron, glass, steel, chemicals, and cement was greatly aided by state policy. Most of these industries were not produced in Egypt before the war. Nevertheless, the weight of textiles in the industry remained almost the same, encouraged by the declining world cotton prices, which promoted its export as manufactured goods in order to maximize added value. Thus, the

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<sup>[409]</sup> The merchant-industrialist is a term used to describe an industrialist who relies heavily on mechanisms other than extracting surplus value from workers to generate profits. This can include depending on high customs protection, state support, and monopolies; neglecting research, innovation, and development; focusing on industries with inelastic demand; and exploiting small plants. Their operations are often supported by pre-capitalist or foreign surplus sources. Additionally, they may engage in stock market manipulation, commercial fraud, and swindling.

<sup>[410]</sup> Hansen & Marzouk, *Op. cit.*, p.133.

textile industry's growth rate was nearly the same as the industry's overall growth rate.<sup>[411]</sup>

As a consequence of the government's policy of promoting industrial capital, the standard of living of the lower classes continued to deteriorate, and government reforms failed to improve it; for example, the level of employment did not increase significantly:

**Table (28)**

**Industrial employment rate (1947 = 100)** <sup>[412]</sup>

Year	Rate
1947	100
1950	87
1952	95
1954	95
1956	92
1957	98

During the 1957-1960 plan, the 1947 rate was surpassed, reaching 114 in 1960. However, laws regarding wage increases, social security, etc. were not fully enforced. Moreover, the slow land distribution under the Agrarian Reform Law resulted in a gradual decrease in the proportion of rural landless individuals. Additionally, health services continued to deteriorate, and the government offset its expenditures on service facilities by raising indirect taxes, which disproportionately burdened the lower classes compared to direct taxes.

**Table (29)**

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<sup>[411]</sup> Mabrou & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 148.

<sup>[412]</sup> O'Brien, Op. cit., p. 398.

**Public expenditure on social services in millions of pounds** <sup>[413]</sup>

Year	Expenditure
1950/51	79.9
1955/56	105.5
1958-1960	114.8

**Table (30)** <sup>[414]</sup>

**Development of indirect taxes in million pounds**

Year	Indirect taxes
1952/1953	62.5
1957/1958	98.1
1959/1960	90.4
It was then increased by more than 60% in 1963	

The Nasserite government strived to encourage industrial capital. However, the latter seemed unresponsive. Despite the state's contribution to new projects, the industrial growth rate did not exceed its pre-coup rate until the mid-1950s. Capitalists preferred traditional industrial ventures and real estate investments, which offered guaranteed and swift profits, albeit not always the highest, over projects encouraged by the government, such as intermediate industries. The Nasserite government did not place significant barriers to the expansion of consumer industries in the early years. However, there was a notable decline in the growth rate of these industries, which decreased significantly, especially in food products. Textiles were an exception; however, their growth rate also exceeded the low general rate of industrial growth by a

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<sup>[413]</sup> Ibid., p. 357.

<sup>[414]</sup> Ibid.

negligible percentage, less than 1% of the rate of increase, meaning that there was a real reluctance of individual capital to invest. This is because the domestic market was no longer capable of expanding at rapid rates for consumer industries under the prevailing conditions at that time. This is because the Egyptian industry was specialized in producing goods for which demand was not significantly elastic, impeding its expansion at high rates. From an entrepreneur's perspective, the industries promoted by the state lacked assurance of success. Foreign capital did not flow, and the state's guarantees were no longer reliable because *the state itself was no longer reliable*. The authorities also incarcerated several prominent business figures in the context of the process of consolidating its domination, alongside the nationalization of the sugar company in 1954. During those years, a crisis of confidence between the state and businessmen was formed, which later led to resounding clashes.

The primary outcome of the new authority's policy was the promotion of industrial interests and the widening of the social gap. The government built its hopes on the positive response of capital to its appeals and encouragement, expecting that massive investment would result in increased employment rates, market expansion, higher wages, etc.

The reluctance of capital was not a psychological problem but rather a plausible perspective from the merchant-industrialist's side. The state itself did not succeed in all its projects, which cost enormous sums. The point will become clearer by noting that the state itself did not succeed in realizing its ambitions after nationalizing private industrial capital. It is useless to talk here about the selfishness of private capital that prefers its interests over the public good, as described by Nasserite propaganda. Rather, this is how a market economy works. Numerous experiences in underdeveloped countries have proven that the degree of success in achieving high rates of growth within the framework of the same social structure has always been accompanied by the extent of

foreign capital's participation. The reluctance of domestic private capital was influenced by two factors: the first was the reluctance of foreign capital, attributed primarily to the new regime's failure to fully present the obligations of loyalty to the West on the political level and even its inability to do so in light of the dynamics existing at the time. The second factor was increasing the state's interference in the activities of private capital. This was mainly a consequence of the reluctance of foreign investment to flow to Egypt. Additionally, the regime's growing tensions with Western countries exacerbated the situation, leading to a further decline in individual capital activities. Mahmoud Metwally considered the recovery of private investments in 1955 a result of the Czech arms deal, while it is more plausible to consider it a result of the 1954 treaty with Britain and the resumption of American aid. The decline in investments in 1956 was linked to the tension accompanying the arms deal, recognition of China, nationalization of the canal, and then the war.

**Table (31)**

**Private investments in million pounds** <sup>[415]</sup>

Year	Investment volume
1952	87
1953	76
1954	84
1955	103
1956	81

This is supported by what happened later, following the partial political victory of 1956, which certainly surpassed the victory of the arms deal in 1955. Since 1956, the Nasserite regime became reliant

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<sup>[415]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, *The Historical Origins of Egyptian Capitalism and Its Development*, p. 279.

on international dynamics, was no longer exposed to Israeli threats, and gained great public support in the Arab world. However, the behavior of capital was contrary to Metwally's expectations, in light of his previous conclusion.

During the early years, the officers' conviction about the critical importance of industry as a lifeline to the escalating social crisis was definitively formed, especially since unemployment increased dramatically and people's high hopes for a boom were far more than realized. The government built its propaganda on aspirations that quickly evaporated. The large gap between promises and achievements was an incentive to give great consideration to the demands of the masses. The escalation of the nationalist movement in the Arab region during the 1956 aggression turned this consideration into real terror. Additionally, the growing strength of the communists added to this terror, as well as the growing crisis of confidence between the state and businessmen. This crisis came to light when the government nationalized the sugar factories owned by Muhammad Ahmad Abboud and closed the Alexandria Stock Exchange due to fluctuations in cotton prices caused by speculation. It also issued decisions that would restrict imports and reduce the area planted with cotton.<sup>[416]</sup>

For all of this, the government began to lean more toward interfering in private capitalist activity and industrial investment in particular and providing bribes to the lower classes. These became the fixed lines of economic policy from now on.

Finally, most researchers view the years between 1952 and 1956 as a period of unrestricted business.<sup>[417]</sup> Private companies were not subjected to many restrictions during that period, but the state was not far from intervening. The state reduced the power of administrations, participated in the management of certain

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<sup>[416]</sup> O'Brien, *Op. cit.*, p. 62, p. 108.

<sup>[417]</sup> For example, *Ibid.*, p. 94, and Mahmoud Metwally, *Op. cit.*, p. 257.

companies, bought shares, restricted imports, etc. While it had granted the industry many advantages, it intervened in the affairs of the private sector to a much greater degree than before the coup. Therefore, this period was not similar to the pre-coup years. Contrariwise, it saw a relatively large role for the state in economic activity and was not a fully liberal period.

## **2. The government's tendency to radicalize**

The consequences of the 1956 conflict resulted in substantial political gains for Nasserism on a global scale and significantly enhanced the Soviet Union's influence in the Middle East, which became a staunch supporter of the Nasserite leadership. The country's frontiers also became protected from Israeli assaults. Perhaps most importantly, it finally lifted the regime out of popular isolation. The reform policy that began in July 1952 did not do much in this regard, as the dissolution of the parties, the 1954 agreement, the secession of Sudan, and the suppression of patriotic elements remained stuck in the populace's minds. Furthermore, the factors that contributed to the political successes of Nasserism led to a substantial growth of the Arab nationalist movement in the region, particularly the increased influence of the Baath Party, which notably expanded throughout the Arab East. Communist organizations also grew in Egypt, the Levant, and Iraq. It was not enough for Nasser to go along with the Arab masses by adopting most of their slogans, such as "the cooperative socialist democratic society," for instance. The economic situation in Egypt was not going well, which threatened to exceed the popular aspirations of the regime's framework. Moreover, following the 1956 war, the economic situation was getting worse. French and British banks refused to finance the cotton crop to pressure the government. Therefore, they exposed the country to great risks and increased the apprehensions of domestic capital. The latter turned more toward real estate investments and trading activities. Additionally,



businessmen proceeded to export capital abroad. Social differences were also widening. Besides, the regime continued to refuse to establish an alliance with the West, and its official rhetoric became closer to that of the Arab nationalist movement. The general unrest in the region, along with the continued reluctance of foreign capital to flow in and the deterioration of the relationship between foreign corporations and companies and the government, all led to an increase in the dread of domestic capital. This obligated the authorities to take more stringent measures to achieve the proposed economic goals and to confront the risk of an explosion of social conflict.

### The Nationalization of Foreign Companies

After the nationalization of the Suez Canal, and in the context of the British and French campaign to reclaim or internationalize it, the Anglo-French banks refused to finance Egyptian cotton, dealing a heavy blow to the government. Consequently, the government was obligated to impose guardianship in November 1956 on those banks and the Anglo-French corporations, companies, and agencies. It then forced the foreign banks to transform into Egyptian joint-stock companies within a few years. This was followed by a similar decision regarding insurance companies and commercial agencies.

The refusal to finance cotton was not the first conflict between the Nasserite regime and foreign banks. Since the coup, these banks were increasingly cautious about industrial projects and virtually exclusively focused on financing cotton exports.<sup>[418]</sup> They also increasingly resorted to withdrawing deposits from the domestic market.<sup>[419]</sup> While foreign capital did not play a positive role in favor of government projects; it also did not take a neutral position. Thus, it aggravated the government's concerns about its position on

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<sup>[418]</sup> Metwally, Op. cit., p. 274.

<sup>[419]</sup> Ibid., p. 275.

financing cotton in 1956 as a punitive measure for nationalizing the Suez Canal. The government decided to retaliate, not only in self-defense but also as a punitive measure for England and France. Most importantly, the Nasserists identified the opportunity to take over foreign companies for immediate gain.

The nationalization did not carry any direct risks. On the contrary, it saved millions of pounds. Nationalized companies contributed 35 million pounds to the funding of the 1957-1960 industrial plan, a significant amount compared to the contribution of private foreign capital to new projects prior to nationalization. It provided Egypt with almost one contribution, which was financing cotton exports, while the dream of more inflow evaporated, especially after the Suez War.

The nationalization process extended to the Belgian companies after the Congolese government expelled the Egyptian ambassador on December 1, 1960. Furthermore, the government nationalized all Belgian interests in Egypt, which appeared to be a protest against the assassination of Lumumba.<sup>[420]</sup>

Foreign monopolies continued to dominate in the petroleum sector. In addition, American and German capital persisted in some companies. In 1958, Abdel Nasser canceled the open-door policy he had launched in 1952 and tightened restrictions on foreign capital, although he did not issue a decision prohibiting its inflow. The most important of the new conditions was that its role would be limited to investing in fields in which Egypt lacks technical expertise.<sup>[421]</sup> In the same year, Law 138 of 1947, which had been repealed following the July 1952 coup, was reinstated. The share of foreign capital in joint ventures was limited to a maximum of 49%, and the number and wages of foreign employees were also set.

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<sup>[420]</sup> Mabro, *Op. cit.*, p. 197.

<sup>[421]</sup> O'Brien, *Op. cit.*, p. 268.

Achieving economic independence was not among the officers' objectives when they nationalized foreign capital. The role of foreign capital was clear from the beginning. However, it did not appear to the coup leaders to be a tool of colonial control until after the 1956 war, when it did not positively respond to the government's plans. Moreover, the July Knights did not hesitate in the early years of their rule to issue legislation and statements reassuring the imperialists. At that time, Egypt was known to Western investors as the cheapest country in the world in terms of labor and the lowest in terms of taxes.<sup>[422]</sup> The economic and national demands of the public formed a common element between the policy of appealing to foreign capital without aligning with a Western military alliance and the subsequent decisions regarding Egyptianization. These demands were ultimately represented by the latent threat to the stability of the new regime, motivating it to achieve the highest rate of GDP growth and employment. This would be achieved either by adopting an open-door policy or nationalizing foreign capital while preserving the facade of national independence. The Nasserite regime was initially backed by the United States and Britain during the period from 1952 to 1955. However, tensions between the two parties began to arise in 1955/1956 and thereafter, out of sheer necessity rather than patriotic motivations. In reality, the United States could have steered events in a different direction, at least partially, with some foresight. However, it failed to appreciate the status and potential of the Nasserite government. It did not comprehend the nature and scope of the commitments that bound this government to various societal powers and their respective pressures. In short, the United States did not realize that Nasser could not, even if he wanted to, be entirely subject to it.

The government depicted the nationalization of foreign corporations, companies, and agencies as a final blow against imperialist economic domination. However, this has nothing to do

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<sup>[422]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, *Egypt in the Era of Abdel Nasser*, p. 90.

with economic independence or dependence. The American economy itself, which is not only independent but also dominant, has been infused since its inception with foreign capital, the share of which has gradually declined. What matters is the status of the economy as a whole in the world market, which will be analyzed later.

### **Pressuring Private Capital**

When the policy of encouraging private capital failed, it became inevitable for Nasserism to exert pressure to achieve the desired growth, as the state had already utilized all its capabilities. This policy actually started after the 1956 war, especially since the nationalist tide had spread and more radical slogans were put forward. The Nasserite regime also resorted to using nationalist slogans, building closer ties with the Soviet Union, and increasing media attacks on imperialism. All this made individual capital more reluctant to listen to the government's recommendations.

When the government put the High Dam bonds up for sale, no one bought them, which was frustrating and awkward for the authorities. The situation potentially escalated into a state of war between Nasserism and businessmen. Thus, the policy of pressure and coercion on the part of the authorities toward them began:

\*The "Economic Corporation," formed in 1957, was granted the right to own a percentage of shares in certain companies. The government also had the right to interfere in the activities of companies and in appointing administrators under the pretext of owning a percentage of shares, even if they were small. The economic corporation also had the right to buy shares from any company.

\*It was decided that a single individual could chair one company's board and be a member of two companies' boards.

**\*It was decided not to sell the Egyptianized companies to private capital. The economic corporation continued to grow until the state sector became the main source of accumulation in the industry.**

**\*Agricultural and cooperative banks were nationalized in 1958.**

**The government began to tighten its grip on banks, particularly Bank Misr. The bank was then obligated to contribute to certain projects, especially intermediate industries, while it was more inclined toward consumer industries, particularly textiles. The government resorted to appointing Bank Misr directors to tighten control over it. After the nationalization of foreign banks, the government was able to control the banking system and consequently the funding of its economic plans.**

**\*It was decided that no bank should contribute to the ownership of more than 25% of the capital of any company.**

**\*In response to the surge in housing investments, the authorities decided in 1958 to lower housing rents by 20%.<sup>[423]</sup> Consequently, the outcome was a decline in real estate investments from 59 million pounds in 1958 to 43 million pounds in 1959. Moreover, in 1956, it was decided to subject the construction or renovation of buildings to an official licensing system if the value required exceeded 500 pounds.**

**\*Importers were subjected to an import licensing system, and further restrictions were imposed on importing luxuries.<sup>[424]</sup>**

**\*The proportion of profits allocated to shareholders should not exceed the previous year's distribution by more than 10% (in 1958, 40% of profits were distributed to shareholders). Furthermore, 5% of the profits designated for shareholders were to be invested in government bonds to keep them involved in the business as long as possible. Shareholders opted to sell their shares in the market,**

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<sup>[423]</sup> O. Brien, Op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>[424]</sup> Hansen & Marzouk, Op. cit., P.195, p. 197.

resulting in a decrease in their prices. Consequently, the government was obligated to increase the percentage of the profit distribution to a maximum of 20% of the profits allocated in the previous year.

**\*The state purchased 25% of the shares of companies operating in land reclamation.**

**\*The Minister of Industry decided to subject the establishment of new factories to the official licensing system to counter the proclivity of businessmen to invest in consumer industries.**<sup>[425]</sup>

**\*The government resorted to implementing some reforms in the monetary system, including giving the president the authority to determine the size of the gold cover. Commercial papers were also included in the cover, and it was decided to “rationalize” control over foreign exchange. The minimum capital requirement for banks was increased to half a million pounds, and banks were required to be in the form of joint-stock companies.**<sup>[426]</sup> In 1957, the National Bank refrained from lending to the government, citing fears of inflation. In response, the government passed a law compelling the bank to make foreign exchange available. It was also mandated that individuals could not serve on the boards of more than two banks.<sup>[427]</sup>

These decisions exacerbated the crisis of trust between the government and businessmen. Each side was “right” from their perspective, aligning with their self-interest and possibilities. The government’s strict measures resulted in capital flight abroad, prompting the cancellation of fifty-pound and one-hundred-pound banknotes in 1959 to combat money smuggling. Businessmen turned to commercial and speculative activities to evade industrial capital laws. Furthermore, factory owners also resorted to overestimating the exhaust proportion and the required reserves.

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<sup>[425]</sup> O’Brien, *Op. cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>[426]</sup> Muhammad Rushdi, *Economic Development in Egypt*, part two, p. 235.

<sup>[427]</sup> Ismail Sabry Abdullah, *Organization of the Public Sector*, pp. 262-263.

The businessmen's worry was exacerbated by rising newspaper attacks on capitalism and exploitation in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Some officials were even viciously attacking businessmen.<sup>[428]</sup>

It became evident that a new scapegoat was being pushed forward. In the Nasserite perspective, all failure was to be blamed on the businessmen who were being asked to do more than they could afford. The government's increasingly stubborn stance on capital heralded a harsh clash, for which they prepared their way. Huge amounts of deposits were withdrawn from the banks, and the hoarding of cash spread rapidly, pushing the government to resort to more stringent policies. For example, it imposed guardianship on the Commercial Bank of Egypt because of its expanding activity in smuggling capital abroad.<sup>[429]</sup>

A dialogue of the deaf took place between the state and industrialists. The former demanded what the merchant-industrialist could not provide. Meanwhile, it could not create a suitable environment for genuine industrialists. On the other hand, industrialists demanded from the state what it could not give, insisting that it be theirs, although they could not bring it under their control.

In the absence of foreign capital, Nasserism was unable to maintain the development process within the same social framework except by taking the initiative, implementing social reforms, and suppressing businessmen. The Egyptian-Syrian unity under Nasserism, taking into account Syrian businessmen, helped postpone the anticipated conflict that was expected to arise following the Suez War.<sup>[430]</sup> Nasserists were then obligated to temporarily tolerate businessmen and be content with gradually undermining

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<sup>[428]</sup> O'Brien, *Op. cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>[429]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, *Op. cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>[430]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287 - O'Brien, *Op. cit.*, p. 135.



their influence. Additionally, the American aid that started to flow to the regime after the unification fortified the Nasserists' resolve. Therefore, it increased their ability to delay the anticipated conflict due to concerns about its effects on unity. However, neither unity nor American assistance could fully prevent the crisis once the events were set in motion.

### **3. The industrial plan: 1957-1960**

After the Suez War, the state took control of a significant portion of bank deposits and expanded its ownership to dozens of large economic firms. Additionally, numerous entities came under its ownership under the supervision of the "Economic Corporation." The government aimed to implement a plan to boost the annual industrial production growth rate from 6% to 16% and increase the industry's contribution to the gross domestic product from 11% to 19%. This ambition seemed modest compared to the achievements of East Asian countries, Japan, the Soviet Union, and Germany during the same period. An investment of 330 million pounds was allocated to the industry to achieve the desired growth rate. Another objective was to employ 120,000 new workers in the industry, as the employment level had remained lower than that of 1947 until that moment.

The Nasserite government was optimistic about appealing to private foreign capital, despite having nationalized most of its companies and corporations after the 1956 war. It relied on stabilizing Egypt's relations with Western countries, particularly after unification with Syria. Additionally, it was optimistic that its restrictive measures on private capital would give positive results. However, the financing shortage had been a considerable challenge. Foreign private capital did not flow in, despite resolving compensation issues for foreign companies in 1958-1959.<sup>[431]</sup> and

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<sup>[431]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, Op. cit., p. 91.

enhancing relations with capitalist countries. That is, the media criticism of colonialism and imperialism persisted even during the 1958/1959 Crusade against Communism and propaganda targeting the Soviet Union. Moreover, the 1956 war was not far from the memory of the Arab masses, and the Iraqi revolution was captivating. Even after Abdul Karim Qasim confiscated it, he continued to raise national slogans and represented a strong challenge to Abdul Nasser in the Arab East. Therefore, a media attack on imperialism was still necessary, especially after the Iraqi Revolution, since Nasserism was obligated to maintain its Arab national image. Additionally, the conflict between the state and businessmen intensified, resulting in lower than expected turnout. Moreover, the government was unable to provide its designated share of the capital. It was supposed to contribute 61%; however, it could only contribute 30-40%, while banks and companies provided the bulk. <sup>[432]</sup>

By 1960, only 43% of the targeted investments were realized, encompassing 80-90 million pounds in completed projects. <sup>[433]</sup> However, Mabro & Radwan estimated that a portion of this amount had been invested prior to 1957 and counted as part of the plan's investments.

The targeted growth rate was also not achieved:

Table (32)

Index of industrial and electricity production <sup>[434]</sup>

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<sup>[432]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>[433]</sup> Mabro & Radwan estimated it at 90 million (p. 97), while Duwaidar (The Egyptian Economy between Backwardness and Development) estimated it at 78.3, invested in large companies (p. 473). Mabro & Radwan believe that 83 million pounds is all that was invested in completed projects. Sameer Radwan added that this amount includes 6.2 million pounds invested in the mining sector.

<sup>[434]</sup> Hansen & Marzouk, Op. cit., p.193.

Year	Industrial production index
1952	100
1955	115
1957	130
1958	144
1959	148
1960	161

This table shows that the annual growth rate of industrial production amounted to 6.5% during the period between 1957 and 1960, which is only 0.5% higher than it was between 1952 and 1956. The impact of this shortfall could have been significantly more severe if not for the decisions regarding nationalization, which ensured that the government's share of the investments, estimated to be between 30% and 40%, was primarily secured. In comparison, the private sector contributed 60%.<sup>[435]</sup>

In 1960, the government was compelled to abandon its plan due to its clear failure. Consequently, it opted to incorporate the remaining targeted projects into a more comprehensive plan to be executed between 1960 and 1965. The government also had to arrange for more sources of funding and financing from the beginning, especially since the end of the 1950s witnessed social contradictions that were on the verge of exploding.

#### **4. General Results of the Economic Policy in the 1950s**

##### **\*Growth and performance efficiency**

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<sup>[435]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 97.

Between 1945 and 1951, the gross national product saw an annual growth rate ranging from 5% to 7%. This rate decreased to 4.5% from 1951 to 1954. However, it increased again to 4.7% during the period from 1953/1954 to 1962/1963.<sup>[436]</sup> Following the Suez War, the growth rate exceeded the levels recorded before the war, albeit only slightly. Regarding this point, Hansen, Mabro-Radwan, O'Brien, Marzouk, and Mead agreed. In general, it was not a very low growth rate, but it did not greatly exceed the rate prior to 1952. National output per capita rose after the coup, but at a much lower annual rate of increase during 1950-1960 than during 1945-1950, at constant prices:

Table (33)

National production per capita in pounds at 1954 prices<sup>[437]</sup>

Year	Production per capita
1945	38 pounds
1950	45.8 pounds
1957	44.5 pounds
1960	49.5 pounds

The contribution of various sectors to the achieved growth was less than their relative sizes in the economy in favor of the industrial sector:

Table (34)<sup>[438]</sup>

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<sup>[436]</sup> The National Planning Institute estimated it at 2.5-2.9% annually during the period from 1952/53 to 1956/57. Quoted from Ali Al-Geritli, *The Economic History of the Revolution (1952-1966)*, p. 194.

<sup>[437]</sup> O'Brien, *Op. cit.*, p. 399.

<sup>[438]</sup> Calculated on the basis of data from O'Brien, *Op. cit.*, p. 388, and Mabro, who relied on the Hansen/Mead group, *Op. cit.*, p. 258.

Sectors' contribution to added value in 1952 (%)		Contribution to growth achieved from 1952-1960 (%)
Agriculture	31.5	22.8
Industry and electricity	8.75	24.8
Transportation	8.3	11.6(*)
Financial services	2.4	-
Commerce	15	15.6
Housing	6.7	4.7
Government management	12.7	-
Other services	12.3	14.4
Building	2.3	2.5

\*This high percentage is due to the Suez Canal works.

However, this period experienced a decrease in the rate of net accumulation of industrial capital, a fact that contradicts the initial impression given by traditional statistics but is perfectly illustrated by Sameer Radwan's approach:

Table (35)

Capital formation rate in Egyptian industry (in million pounds)

[439]

Period	Fixed capital accumulation during the period
1945-1950	122.99

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[439] Calculated based on Sameer Radwan's data, at 1960 prices, and after calculating a consumption rate of 6.25% for machinery, 2% for buildings annually, and this does not include transportation, electricity, construction, and storage.

1952-1956	126.8
1957-1960	58.1

During this period, the industry witnessed a clear trend toward diversification, and the relative size of the intermediate goods industry, which was highly capital-intensive, increased in relation to the overall industry. The contribution of the following industries to the overall added value in the industry increased from 25.5% to 33.3%: wood, paper, rubber, chemicals, petroleum, non-metallic products, basic metals, and metal products, at the expense of traditional Egyptian industries. However, the textile industry continued to expand at the same rate. Conversely, the durable goods' contribution to the added value of the industry decreased from 3.6% to 3.1%.<sup>[440]</sup>

During that period, the country did not witness the emergence of highly advanced industries such as electronics, automatic control equipment, modern machines, etc. Instead, it continued to rely on importing all types of equipment goods.

The characteristics of industrial development and import substitution remained consistent, although the rate of imports for manufactured consumer goods saw a decline:

Table (36)

Rate distribution of industrial imports (%)<sup>[441]</sup>

Year Industry	Nutritional	Consumer	Intermediate	Investment industries(*)
1950	23	22.2	40.3	14.6
1960	21.3	14.5	39.4	24.8

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<sup>[440]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 139.

<sup>[441]</sup> Mustafa Al-Saeed, Op. cit., p. 220.

**\*Such as communication services, consumer staples, financials, energy, health care, information technology, materials, and utilities.**

**In summary, the changes that occurred in the industry were as follows:**

**\*There was an increase in the degree of diversity, especially in intermediate goods. However, the sector did not experience revolutionary changes such as the emergence and growth of the capital goods industry, a substantial development in productivity, or large leaps in production growth rates. During that period, the savings as a percentage of the national product did not significantly increase, while the investment rate rose slightly. Notably, the investment rate surpassed the savings rate as a percentage of the national product. This gap was filled by foreign loans and aid, which in 1957-1958 amounted to large figures:**

**Table (37)** <sup>[442]</sup>

Country	Loans in million pounds
Germany	44
France	12
Japan	10
Switzerland	3
Total	69

**These loans were equal to 25% of the hard currency income and constituted the source of 30% of the total financing of the 1957-1960 plan.**

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<sup>[442]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, Op. cit., p. 86.



**Table (38)**  
**Proportion of savings to Gross Domestic Product** <sup>[443]</sup>

Year	Savings rate (%)	Year	Savings rate (%)
1953/1952	11.9	1966/1965	14(*)
1956/1957	13.4	1967/1968	8.2
1960/1961	14.2	1969/1970	10.6
1962/1963	11.6	-	-

\*At that time, the stock of goods was recorded as savings.

In addition, Britain's sterling balances were exhausted, and Soviet support played a major role in absorbing export products, especially cotton and rice.<sup>[444]</sup> Moreover, overall, dependency on foreign financing increased. The 1957-1960 plan revealed that the weakness of financing sources was a major obstacle, and the country remained unable to secure its hard currency resources. Cotton remained the main export crop, while its prices were declining in the world market due to the development of the synthetic fiber industry and production methods in capitalist countries, which reduced the rate of exhaustion. Furthermore, dependence on foreign countries extended beyond capital alone to include food and consumer goods in general. The sterling balance was already exhausted primarily for importing these items, in addition to compensation for Suez Canal shares. Simultaneously, the distribution of the surplus continued to heavily favor the real estate sector, trading activities, and luxury consumption. In summary, the efficiency of the economy did not improve after the measures of the officers' government; instead, it

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<sup>[443]</sup> Mabro, Op. cit., p. 287.

<sup>[444]</sup> The Soviet researcher Lutskevich estimated that in 1955-1956 socialist countries saved Egypt from an economic disaster, while trade with the same countries deteriorated in 1958 due to the return of relations with the West (Op. cit., p. 135).

worsened. The economy expanded in size while retaining all its fundamental imbalances. Moreover, this growth came at a high cost in terms of outcomes, making future self-sustaining growth more challenging.

The Nasserite economic policy further attenuated the performance of the economy. Measures to encourage private capital were counterproductive, obligating the authorities to fund the investment process themselves, while they lacked sufficient resources. Meanwhile, Nasserite measures, such as tax breaks, subsidies for new industries, etc., impacted the growth of state resources. This was only partially offset by the nationalization of foreign economic entities. In addition, the devaluation of the Egyptian currency did not result in any gains. Export prices deteriorated, and import burdens increased without this being offset by a significant rise in export value. In fact, the devaluation of the pound over the years 1952-1962 was a compulsory measure, reflecting the actual market forces.

#### **\*Increasing the severity of social contradictions**

The Nasserite government took procapitalist measures, most of which were not undone by the draconian measures taken after the Suez War. In addition, it encouraged mergers between companies while granting miners stronger and more permanent monopoly rights.<sup>[445]</sup> This led to a massive boom for businessmen, including traders, contractors, shareholders, and intermediaries of all kinds, at the expense of poor workers, peasants, and employees. This can be illustrated in the following data:

Table (39)

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<sup>[445]</sup> O'Brien, Op. cit., p. 262, p. 263.

**The rise in the rate of profit and salaries during the period 1954-1959 <sup>[446]</sup>**

Industry	Increase in profit rate (%)	Salary increase
Textiles	14	%3
Construction	30	
Food industries	37	

The annual profit rate in 1957/1958 for the food industry was 38.8%, and for textiles, it was 25.5%. Meanwhile, the workers' cash income rose annually during the period 1952-60 by only 2.9%. <sup>[447]</sup> Between 1952 and 1960, the workforce's income share from value added in entities with over 10 employees decreased from 40.6% to 33.4%, then to 34.8%, 34.1%, 30.6%, and ultimately to 31.7%. <sup>[448]</sup> This was in contrast to the situation in the years preceding the July coup. During the period from 1939 to 1950, the proportion of salaries and wages in the national income rose from 31.2% in 1939 to 35.6% in 1942, to 36.8% in 1945, and 38% in 1950. <sup>[449]</sup> It is evident, according to the sequence of events, that the relative decrease in workers' incomes since the July coup was linked to the economic policy of the coup government.

Table (40)

**The percentage of wages and salaries to value added in the manufacturing industry (10 workers or more) <sup>[450]</sup>**

Year	Number of establishment workers
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<sup>[446]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, Op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>[447]</sup> Hansen & Marzouk, Op. cit., p.143.

<sup>[448]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 235.

<sup>[449]</sup> Abdel-Mughni Saeed, Where is Egypt's economy heading?

<sup>[450]</sup> Hansen & Marzouk, Op. cit., p.136.

	10-49	50-499	500 or more
1951	%49	%40	%38.9
1960	%35.1	%29	%32.7

In 1960/1961, the revenue of the business sector (which includes public companies with a minimum of 51% state ownership) was LE 63,458.9 million, while the employees' income amounted to LE 11,928 million. In short, class differences reached a deep abyss in the late 1950s.<sup>[451]</sup> It became evident that Nasserism encouraged businessmen at the expense of the lower classes, despite the social reforms provided to the latter, particularly agrarian reform and the expansion of education. The failure to attain a high increase in added value and to create significant domestic sources for accumulation, along with other factors, raised concerns about the outbreak of a mass movement, especially in the aftermath of Egyptian-Syrian unity. This fear prompted Nasserism to launch a harsh media campaign against radical nationalist forces and the Left in the Arab region. On the contrary, it practically took care to appease the West. Nevertheless, the press was pointing out the underlying factors of discontent. For example, it raised what was known as the intellectuals' crisis,<sup>[452]</sup> the conditions of itinerant workers, peasants, and employees, and intensified its attack on capitalists, exploitation, large landowners, etc. While the populace's discontent was exaggerated, the accusations against businessmen were exonerating the government. Consequently, the latter undertook substantial reform measures in the subsequent period.

### **\*Growth of the state economic sector**

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<sup>[451]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, Op. cit., p. 309.

<sup>[452]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, Op. cit., p. 233, and Anwar Abdel Malek, Op. cit., pp. 199-224.

**The 1950s concluded with the creation of a large state sector controlling the banking system and a substantial portion of the productive apparatus. Although it could not achieve a leap in the efficiency of economic performance, it was the only savior from generalized devastation. However, it was not a radical solution to the system's crisis but rather an expensive painkiller.**

**The state economic sector was formed in the context of Nasserism's pursuit to maintain the stability of its authority via several mechanisms, including mitigating the severity of socio-economic crises. Its purpose was not to serve the interests of industrialists but to foster the sector's development. The aim was to improve the productive apparatus in order to reduce unemployment and stop the deterioration of the standard of living, as envisioned by planners.**

**The small inflow of private foreign capital played a positive role in the growth of the power of Nasserite rule. The 1956 conflict gave it an opportunity to virtually eradicate this capital, despite the poor resulting economic performance. The economy eventually declined, while the ruling clique's political dominance increased.**

**\*\*\*\*\***

### **The Economic Policy in the 1960s**

#### **The Five-year development plan**

**Following the failure of the 1957-1960 plan and the escalating social crisis, the government resolved to mobilize all available resources and dedicate its energy to overcoming the obstacles to its economic agenda during the 1950s. It called upon economic experts from abroad and at home to formulate a comprehensive development plan to double the national income every ten years.**

Despite the disappointing failure of the government's new plan, its propaganda continued to boast of great unrealized achievements. However, it gained great ideological support from left-wing theorists.

In order to emphasize the plan's achievements, the Nasserite media had no objection to admitting the failure of the 1950s. However, it did not forget to hold businessmen accountable. The five-year plan, in contrast, was considered one of the new miracles discovered by Nasserite media and was described as an industrial revolution. In addition to the nationalization measures, there was also a plan for comprehensive national development that—allegedly—achieved a step on the road to socialism.

Despite significant Western support for its projects, the five-year plan's alleged success was portrayed by Nasserite media and ideology as a sufficient justification for imperialism to launch its aggression against Egypt in 1967 via Israel.

Setting aside the “public” ownership of the means of production during the Nasserite era, the 1960-1965 plan did not include a step toward a classless society. As shall be seen shortly, it was not even a step toward an advanced or independent economic structure. Additionally, it was not, in purely technical terms, an airtight plan, even within the framework for which it was conceived.

There was a lack of a comprehensive national planning approach, as well as a deficiency in the planning process as an art and technique. The plan did not incorporate any strategies to enhance the quality of economic sectors or social institutions; rather, it focused solely on one objective: increasing national income. Furthermore, the plan did not constitute a genuine strategy for boosting national income, as it failed to outline specific goals apart from investments. Instead, it relied on *expectations* and *aspirations*

that were anticipated to be met through quantitatively determined investments in sectors rather than specific projects.<sup>[453]</sup>

When the plan was initially drafted, the Joint Committee for Economic and Financial Problems, composed of leading economists, estimated that the national income could be doubled in twenty years with an annual growth rate of 3.5%. However, the National Planning Committee and the Ministry of Guidance decided to amend the plan to implement it on a revolutionary basis, aiming to double the national income within ten years by achieving a growth rate of 7% annually, based on expectations of increased available resources.<sup>[454]</sup>

The entire plan focused on one primary objective: increasing the national income. First, the targeted growth rate was set, and subsequently, the plan was designed with the expectation of achieving that rate.

As a result, the interests of consumption-hungry audiences were prioritized more than in any other country, as noted by Patrick O'Brien.<sup>[455]</sup> Projects were not preselected but rather approved based on the amount of added value they could produce per unit of capital or their role in providing hard currency.<sup>[456]</sup> Furthermore, the feasibility of projects varied from one administration to another.<sup>[457]</sup>

Projects were proposed by various departments, not developed by a centrally responsible authority. For example, when the Minister of Planning rejected a project submitted by another minister on the grounds of a lack of resources, the latter could obtain approval from

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<sup>[453]</sup> O'Brien, *Op. cit.*, p. 202, p. 203.

<sup>[454]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139 - Mabro, *Op. cit.*, pp. 189-194 - Hansen & Marzouk, *Op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>[455]</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

<sup>[456]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, *Op. cit.*, pp. 190-191.

<sup>[457]</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.



the President of the Republic on the grounds that the Minister of Planning was exaggerating the costs. This is a glaring example of fumbling. Consequently, projects were not chosen to serve a general development goal, but rather, private initiatives by ministers and officials in various sectors played different roles. In addition, projects that were expected to produce the highest rate of added value were prioritized.

Resource mobilization was addressed in the same way. Responsibilities for resource management were fragmented and fell on the shoulders of different sector officials.

No alternative system for pooling resources was established to replace the open market system, which had no longer been open after the government's measures in the late 1950s. Export, import, savings, and goods flow figures were only projections, not concrete targets. Centralized control over investment allocation was largely theoretical. Planners did not implement effective measures to guide producers toward meeting production goals. Additionally, these goals were established for entire sectors rather than individual projects.

Despite the nationalization and centralization of the banking system, placing it under state control, the nationalized units continued to operate as they did previously, dealing with the market in violation of the government's orders.<sup>[458]</sup>

Thus, this five-year plan revealed that a central market economy does not eliminate the chaos of production.

### The plan's objectives and expectations

The government's immediate objective was to achieve a growth rate of 40% in the gross national product within five years, i.e., 7% per

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<sup>[458]</sup> O'Brien, Op. cit., pp. 201-205.

annum. Achieving this goal required an investment of EGP 1636.4 million at 1959/1960 prices, to be allocated as follows:

**Table (41)**

**Planned investments for various sectors in the five-year plan in millions of pounds** <sup>[459]</sup>

Sector	Investment volume
Manufacturing industry	384.4(*)
Mining	52.4
Electricity	138.5
Agriculture	383.2
Transportation - Transfer - Storage	269.2
Housing	140
Public utility	47.6
Services	101.7
Inventory	120
Total	1637

\*57% of it is allocated to intermediate goods industries.

The planners did not specify definite means of financing the projects but *expected* the following sources:

-Foreign loans contribute one-third of investments.

-The private sector contributes 70% of domestic investment sources in the first two years of the plan, 55% at its end; additionally, it would realize 80% of the expected increase in the national income between 1960 and 1965. <sup>[460]</sup>

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<sup>[459]</sup> Mabro, Op. cit., p. 183.

<sup>[460]</sup> Ibid., p. 289.

The government should contribute the rest, based on the income from the Suez Canal and other government revenues. According to this conception, the planners expected to achieve the following:

1. Adjusting the relative weights of sectors in the national product as follows:

**Table (42)**

**Expected changes in the composition of the national product during the years (1960-1965) <sup>[461]</sup>**

Sector	Change in its contribution (%) to the national product
Industry(*)	From 21.2 to 30
Agriculture	From 31.2 to 28.5
Other sectors	From 47.6 to 41.5

\*Electricity included.

2. Achieving a surplus in the balance of payments at the end of the plan amounting to 40 million pounds by increasing exports and reducing imports. <sup>[462]</sup>

3. Achieving a total net import substitution of 117 million pounds.

4. Achieving the following growth rates for industry and agriculture:

**Table (43)**

**Target annual growth rate of industry and agriculture during the 1960-1965 plan <sup>[463]</sup>**

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<sup>[461]</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>[462]</sup> Hansen & Marzouk, Op. cit., p. 309.

<sup>[463]</sup> Amr Mohi Eddin, Fathy Abdel Fattah, Mabro (references previously mentioned).

Sector	Target annual growth rate
Industry	%14.5 instead of 6.5% in 1960
Agriculture	%5.2 instead of 2.5% in 1960

It was also decided to start implementing a new plan from 1966-1970.

The planners determined not to change the existing manufacturing pattern, i.e., import substitution, with the expectation that the balance of payments would improve as a result.

The government faced significant financial difficulties since 1964, forcing it to cut investments and halt construction that had not made significant progress in its establishment.<sup>[464]</sup> In 1964/1965, the plan was not completed as expected, so it was decided to extend it for another three years. Then its completion was abandoned, and the 1967 war halted any thoughts of developing new plans.

All the predictions have come out the opposite:

1. The required growth rate was not achieved, officially estimated at 6.5% per year.<sup>[465]</sup> The same source estimated the increase in national income during the mentioned period at 37.1%.<sup>[466]</sup> However, Hansen-Marzouq estimated the annual growth rate to be less than that: 5.7% per year, and they determined the growth rate of the sectors' output during the plan as follows:

Table (44)

Annual growth rate of economic sectors during the 1960-1965 plan according to Hansen-Marzouq<sup>[467]</sup>

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<sup>[464]</sup> Ali Al-Geritli, *The Economic History of the Revolution 1952-1966*, pp. 188-189.

<sup>[465]</sup> Ali Sabri, *The Years of Socialist Transformation and Evaluation of the First Five-Year Plan*, p. 57.

<sup>[466]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>[467]</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 297.

Sector	Annual growth rate (%) in the five-year plan period
Agriculture	1.7
Industry and electricity	9.3
Building and construction	11.3
Transportation	11
Trade and financial	6.2
Others	5.9
Gross National Product	5.7

As for the manufacturing industry alone, the growth rate, according to the estimate of Mabro-Radwan, sympathetic to Nasserism, was 50% over the entire period at constant prices, i.e., 8.5% annually.<sup>[468]</sup> This rate is 0.8% less than the estimate of Hansen-Marzouq. Note that the planners *expected* a growth rate of 15% annually for industrial production.

The plan ended in an economic disaster. While the GDP growth rate reached 8.7% at current prices in 1963/1964, it began to deteriorate subsequently. In 1965/1966, it fell to 4.4%, then nearly zero in 1966/67 and -1% in 1967/1968, according to official statistics. The latter figure at constant prices for 1964/1965 was -2.5% instead of -1%.<sup>[469]</sup>

The situation was more worrisome because, despite not achieving more than 60% of the anticipated growth in the industrial sector, products started to accumulate in warehouses in the mid-1960s.

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<sup>[468]</sup> Calculated based on compound interest according to the data of Mabro & Radwan on the industrial production index. *Manufacturing in Egypt (1839-1973)*, p. 120.

<sup>[469]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

This indicated the reemergence of the previous crisis, which erupted between 1949 and 1953.<sup>[470]</sup> Mabro & Radwan suggested that the rise in production rates during the plan was partially an outcome of prior investments made between 1955 and 1960, as returns on industrial investments do not materialize immediately—a perspective that holds validity.<sup>[471]</sup> Nevertheless, the remark leads to its opposite. Some investments from the plan may deliver results only after its conclusion, rather than during its execution. However, this remark does not favor the Nasserite plan, as the subsequent period witnessed crisis, recession, and deterioration in the growth rate, including industrial output.

The following percentages of the planners' forecasts for production growth in the different sectors were realized according to the plan:<sup>[472]</sup>

**Table (45)**

Sector	Achieved/targeted production growth (%)
Services	135
Industry	55.4
Agriculture	13.1

Although the rate of implementation of investments in these sectors was:

**Table (46)**

**Actual investments in relation to their target**<sup>[473]</sup>

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<sup>[470]</sup> Ibid., p. 151, p. 207.

<sup>[471]</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>[472]</sup> T. Th. Shaker, Op. cit., p. 113 (footnote).

<sup>[473]</sup> Lutskevich, Op. cit., 53.

Sectors	Percentage (%)
Services	125
Industry	90.8
Agriculture	101.1
High Dam	208.5
Irrigation and drainage	75.4

These stark discrepancies between actual outcomes and predictions, despite the implementation of a high percentage of planned investments, reflect the extent of poor planning and operational disruptions.

2. The composition of the national product did not change much, and the desired predictions were not achieved.

The contribution of agriculture decreased from 31% to 28% of the gross national product, while the share of industry and electricity only increased from 20% to 23%.<sup>[474]</sup>

The manufacturing industry accounted for 21% of the gross national product, up from 18%. Meanwhile, the contribution of the tertiary sector, including trading, infrastructure, and services, to the GDP saw a notable rise. Between 1952/1953 and 1959/1960, it stood at 42.2% and increased to 47.8% during the period from 1959/1960 to 1969/1970.<sup>[475]</sup> This occurred despite Egypt being categorized as a developing country, starting with a low level of industrial development. This differs from the situation in capitalist countries. There, the tertiary sectors tend to grow at a higher rate than the overall economy for reasons that are different from the causes behind the same phenomenon in underdeveloped countries.

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<sup>[474]</sup> Fathi Abdel Fattah, *The Contemporary Village*, p. 109.

<sup>[475]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, *Op. cit.*, pp. 258-259.



Contrary to the media hype, fixed capital accumulation in the industry was very modest:

Table (47)

Industrial capital accumulation (in million pounds) <sup>[476]</sup>

Year	Fixed capital accumulation in industry	Annual accumulation	Annual investments in industry
1945-1950	122.9	20.15	26
1952-1956	126.8	25.36	43
1957-1960	40.3	10.07	53
1961-1965	88.2	17.64	60

The achieved level of diversification within the industry was significantly lower compared to the 1950s. <sup>[477]</sup> Fresh capital was directed toward enhancing existing branches instead of establishing new ones. Import substitution in the 1950s was more effective in terms of quality compared to the 1960s.

3. Meanwhile, the trade and payment imbalance deteriorated as imports surged by 59%, whereas exports rose by only 24% during the plan's period. <sup>[478]</sup>

Table (48)

Exports and imports in millions of pounds (1965) <sup>[479]</sup>

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<sup>[476]</sup> Calculated using data from Sameer Radwan (at constant 1960 prices, after deducting 2% annual consumption for buildings, 6.25% annual consumption for machinery, excluding storage, transportation, electricity, and construction), and other references.

<sup>[477]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 142.

<sup>[478]</sup> This result was derived based on constant prices for the year 1959/1960, using data from Mabro & Radwan, Ibid., p. 61, p. 253.

<sup>[479]</sup> Lutskevich, Op. cit., p. 42.

	Base year 1959/1960	As planned (expected)	As realized at 1959/1960 prices
Exports	189	229.2	228.6
Imports	225.9	215	313.5
Overall Account	36.9-	14.2+	84.9-

The increase in imports relative to the national product increased as follows:(%)

Table (49) <sup>[480]</sup>

Year	Imports as a percentage of GDP (%)
1960/1961	16.50
1965/1966	21.10

Moreover, the share of consumer goods in total imports rose from 24.9% in 1959/1960 to 26.4% in 1965. <sup>[481]</sup> Their proportion of imports to the total supply also increased from 4.7% to 6%. These changes are attributed to the increase in imports of foodstuffs, particularly wheat and flour. However, the replacement rate of consumer goods did increase during the same period, but its effect faded due to the increase in food imports, which negated the growth of the consumer industry, as well as the dreams of the planners. <sup>[482]</sup>

The share of intermediate goods from total industrial imports increased from 50% to 52.4%, but it decreased relative to total

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<sup>[480]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 253.

<sup>[481]</sup> Karima Korayem, The impact of external factors on price increases in Egypt.

<sup>[482]</sup> During the period, the percentage of manufactured consumer goods in total imports decreased from 14.5% to 11%. Amr Mohi Eddin, Evaluation of the Manufacturing Strategy in Egypt and the Available Alternatives in the Future.

imports from 39.4% to 38.2%. This is attributed to the proportion of food products in imports increasing during the same period from 21.3% to 27.15%.<sup>[483]</sup> In fact, the degree of dependence on importing intermediate goods rose during the plan. Not to mention the continued reliance on importing capital goods, despite the decrease in their contribution to total imports from 24.8% to 23.5%. This was a proportional decrease resulting from the significant rise in food imports.

Instead of the surplus of 40 million pounds expected by the planners in the balance of payments, the exact opposite happened. There was a deficit at the end of the period, reaching 417 million pounds.<sup>[484]</sup> Most of this deficit was created during the plan years. From 1949 to 1958, the annual deficit in the balance of payments was 20 million pounds, while from 1958 to 1965 it reached 75 million pounds.<sup>[485]</sup> Moreover, the rate of the deficit in the balance of payments as a percentage of the national product rose from 1% in the early 1950s to 6% at the end of the plan.<sup>[486]</sup> This increasing deficit was mainly due to the trade deficit, signifying that it was closely linked to the domestic economic transformations rather than external factors.

Table (50)

Development of the trade balance deficit in millions of pounds<sup>[487]</sup>

Year	Deficit
1960	34.7
1961	74.8

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<sup>[483]</sup> Amr Mohi Eddin, Op. cit.,

<sup>[484]</sup> Ali Sabry, Op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>[485]</sup> Ali Al-Geritli, The Economic History of the Revolution (1952-1966), p. 125.

<sup>[486]</sup> Amr Mohi Eddin, Op. cit.,

<sup>[487]</sup> Lutskevich, Op. cit., p. 41.

1962	142.6
1963	171.6
1964	180
1965	142.6
1966	202.2

Since 1966, the government has been obligated to severely cut imports to address the balance of payments crisis, at the expense of economic growth.<sup>[488]</sup> This reduced the trade deficit in 1968 to only 19.3 million pounds and even achieved a surplus of 46.6 million pounds the next year and a deficit of only 10.9 million pounds in 1970. However, the deficit eventually began to increase again.<sup>[489]</sup> This temporary surplus in the trade balance was the result of a sharp cut in imports, which did not last long, at the expense of economic growth. While it was not the result of improved performance, some of the Nasserists are boasting about it. The following table clearly illustrates this fact:

**Table (51)**

**Development of total Egyptian exports and imports in millions of pounds<sup>[490]</sup>**

Year	Exports	Imports
1952	150.2	277.6
1960	191.6	225
1966	263.1	465.4
1969	323.9	277
1970	331.1	342

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<sup>[488]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., pp. 69-70.

<sup>[489]</sup> Lutskevich, Op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>[490]</sup> Ibid., p. 174, from table 31.

The trade deficit rate increased during the Nasserite period as follows:<sup>[491]</sup>

Table (52)

Annual average	Million pounds	% of GDP
1952-1955	31.9	4
1956-1960	47.6	4.7
1961-1965	147.5	8

4. Regarding financing, the realized external share in the plan investments amounted to 23% and 27.5% if the High Dam is included, while the expected share was 33%. According to Sameer Radwan, external financing constituted 23.6% of the total investments during the period from 1960/1961 to 1967/1968. In the first year of the plan, it was planned to invest EGP 350 million, of which only 90 million were spent because the private sector did not rush to participate. This reluctance played a role in prompting Nasser to nationalize large companies. Nevertheless, the private sector contributed approximately 40% of the total investments. 70% of this amount was spent on construction, which alone accounted for 40-50% of the plan's total investments.<sup>[492]</sup> In addition, the Suez Canal's revenues contributed 390.3 million pounds in hard currency, equivalent to 25% of the overall investments.<sup>[493]</sup> One can imagine how things would have gone if the state relied solely on internal sources, especially since the US food aid, most of which was loans on easy terms, amounted during the plan's years to a

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<sup>[491]</sup> Muhammad Fakhri Makki, Structural Changes in the Egyptian Balance of Payments (1952-1976).

<sup>[492]</sup> Ali Sabry, Op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>[493]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, Op. cit., p. 81.

considerable amount of money, about one billion US dollars.<sup>[494]</sup> This saved a lot of hard currency for the regime: the equivalent of almost all Suez Canal revenue, i.e., 25 percent of the volume of investments from 1960 to 1965. These hard currency savings were indeed deposited into the investment account, as they had to be deducted from investment resources if they were not provided in the form of American assistance. Although they were officially loans, they practically functioned as aid. Their payment was deferred for the long term, with negligible interest, and most of it was repaid in Egyptian pounds, whose value subsequently declined. Consequently, the net contribution of the domestic economy to the total investments during the entire plan's period was approximately 47.5%. However, if the Suez Canal's share is subtracted, this figure drops to 22.5%.

Despite massive foreign aid and Suez Canal revenues, the government was unable to provide all the originally approved financing and funding, i.e., £1,636.4 million, and £1,513 million was invested,<sup>[495]</sup> with a deficit of £123.4 million (8%). In 1964/1965, it opted to increase indirect taxes and raise prices. Furthermore, a considerable amount of the capital allocated was misappropriated by the private sector as part of the expenses.<sup>[496]</sup> In addition, there was the embezzlement of the bureaucrats, as shall be seen elsewhere.

Thus, the financing problem persisted, the role of domestic savings in investment diminished, and the government was unable to increase it, despite its complete control over the banking system and major economic entities. It did not take effective measures to increase the size of these sources of financing. On the contrary, it greatly encouraged individual and public consumption. Real individual consumption increased by 34%, and public consumption

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<sup>[494]</sup> Lutskevich, Op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>[495]</sup> Ali Sabry, Op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>[496]</sup> To find out some details, the reader can refer to Ali Sabri's book mentioned above, pp. 101-103.

increased by 77% during the plan period. Most of this increase was due to the growth of unproductive and unnecessary labor in the government apparatus and the increase in allocations for security and the rest of the state apparatus. The rate of individual consumption also rose as a result of the socialist policy adopted by the state in the early 1960s in response to the demands of the masses that had been suppressed during the 1950s. It was also necessary to market the production of durable goods, which rose rapidly and was associated with an increased thirst for consumption among the public. The Yemen war also played a significant role in the financing crisis, with a total cost of around 500 million pounds. The war was not just an incidental factor in the economic downturn but was necessary to compensate for the Syrian secession, and nationalist slogans turned it into a predicament. In fact, it was a necessity and a predicament for the regime itself, with all its components and socio-political dysfunction. Additionally, the new businesses were unable to absorb significant numbers of workers, thus obligating the government to employ a large number of university and middle school graduates in government offices as an alternative. The percentage of workers in the industry increased by only 11%, from 10% to 11.1% of the total new workforce.

### **Performance during the plan implementation**

#### **Criticisms of the plan's performance:**

1. 1. There was no single body to effectively coordinate between the different sectors. The state institutions also remained separate and operated independently.<sup>[497]</sup> For example, no binding price policy was set for the sectors. So, there was not always harmony between the prices of raw materials and those of manufactured goods. Additionally, the establishment of projects often overlooked the availability of essential factors of production. For instance, factories

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<sup>[497]</sup> Ali Sabry, Op. cit., pp. 96-97.



were set up without ensuring the presence, adequacy, or accessibility of the required raw materials.

2. Only 1% of industrial investment was allocated to the establishment of the building materials industry, despite the anticipated rise in the demand for these materials in an economic development plan costing 1.5 billion pounds.<sup>[498]</sup>

3. The annual plan was completed 6-9 months after its scheduled date.<sup>[499]</sup>

4. There was excessive interest in creating grand facades and huge buildings, as well as prioritizing quantity over quality. It seemed that the Nasserists' desire to prove the correctness of their decision to nationalize companies was a strong incentive to demonstrate the success of their industrialization plans, despite the objective difficulties. This led them to focus on appearances, which is the easiest route. For instance, the attempt to establish an aircraft industry while the country was unable to establish any equipment goods industry resulted in a factory costing 80 million pounds without any success.<sup>[500]</sup> Similarly, the attempt to manufacture missiles with the assistance of German experts also failed.<sup>[501]</sup> Despite Abdel Nasser's pretense that Egypt could produce anything from a needle to a missile, the reality was different. The celebration of the launch of al-Qaher and al-Zafer missiles, claiming distances of 350 km and 600 km, respectively, was contradicted by Saad El-Din El-Shazly (Egypt's chief of staff during the 1973 War) in his memoirs. He mentioned that the maximum range of the missile was only 8 km, and during the 1973 October War, Egyptian forces were concerned that the missiles might strike their positions before

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<sup>[498]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 99, p. 101.

<sup>[499]</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>[500]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>[501]</sup> Refer in this regard to Saad El-Din El-Shazly, October War Memoirs, chapter nine.

reaching the enemy.<sup>[502]</sup> This negates Nasser's pretenses about these missiles. This high-cost attention to appearances and media hype about the investment is another reflection of the enormity of the political dimension of the operation itself.

The plan culminated in an economic disaster. By 1965, agricultural production started to decline at a rate of 0.45% annually.<sup>[503]</sup> Simultaneously, idle capacity in the industry attained a substantial level. For example, in 1966, it reached 10-20% in state textile factories. However, in some cases, this figure escalated to as high as 40%, and in extreme instances, even 70%.<sup>[504]</sup> Administrations increased working hours and returned to the practice of arbitrary dismissal of workers.<sup>[505]</sup> Moreover, the authorities raised prices and increased indirect taxes. Individual consumption also began to decline.<sup>[506]</sup> Furthermore, the growth rate of the total domestic product deteriorated. Moreover, the balance of payment deficit increased, and the crisis of surplus production worsened in some branches of the industry.

The Nasserite plan failed to fulfill the aspirations of its planners. Anyhow, these were not great dreams but modest ambitions. However, even these modest goals far exceeded the actual capabilities of Nasserism. In contrast, other backward countries, especially in South America, India, Iran, and East Asia, achieved much more growth and progress.

Nasserism's failure to achieve its simple economic ambitions is attributed to reasons that are essentially purely Nasserite, such as:

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<sup>[502]</sup> October War Memoirs, pp. 48-49.

<sup>[503]</sup> T. Th. Shaker, *Op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>[504]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, *Op. cit.*, p. 169 - Mabro & Radwan, quoting the Egyptian economist Lotfi Abdel Azim, stated that idle capacity had reached 10-15% for the industry as a whole in the mid-sixties, *Op. cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>[505]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, *Op. cit.*, p. 193.

<sup>[506]</sup> T. Th. Shaker, *Op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.

**1. The economy was not run according to market mechanisms or based on purely or predominantly economic considerations. Rather, it was limited to a reformist political horizon in response to social pressures without working to confront them radically. Thus:**

**2. This horizon was inherently connected to the Nasserite elite's liberation from both the dominant class and the West, without eliminating the material basis for their indirect dominance in the economy, institutions, and culture.**

**The first reason directly led to multiple consequences:**

**\*The squandering of a significant portion of resources on bribery policies, such as the formal employment of unemployed individuals.**

**\*Secondly, it hindered a necessary process for real development, namely the control of individual capital. It left the private sector controlling construction, trade, agriculture, and road transportation, except for the railways. Moreover, the parasitic private sector was left unchecked. The private sector was even granted new concessions in the countryside and maintained excellent relations with the state apparatus, which contradicts the central economic policy and necessarily hinders it.**

**\*The formulation of a limited developmental plan focused on achieving a mere quantitative increase in national income in the short term. There was no interest in revolutionizing the socio-economic structure to give rise to better results in the long term.**

**The second reason played a direct role in creating an element of gambling and a spirit of impulsiveness in developing and implementing the plan. It was also an effective factor in the spread of bribery, favoritism, and influence peddling, besides all forms of bureaucratic embezzlement. In addition to the misappropriation of state resources by the private sector, most of which was trading, the spending of a huge fund on security agencies, and the bureaucratic extravagance of state agencies and their personnel. Not to mention**

the extravagance in foreign adventures and the various costs of the policy of national grandiosity.

As pampered as the Nasserite regime had been globally in the Plan period, its failure to achieve its goals was extreme. Additionally, its “achievements” paled in comparison to those of countries that were under the overwhelming dominance of the West. While the pampering had led to the Nasserists’ arrogance, it ultimately contributed to the short lifespan of their development operation and their inability to repeat it. Surprisingly, in general, Third World countries experienced greater economic growth in proportion to the expansion of the West’s direct influence. Economic liberalism and the dominance, or at least the strong presence, of foreign private capital yielded much better results than a centralized economy. Complete centralization, called socialism, also gave rise to better economic outcomes than semi-socialist systems like Nasserism.

In summary, the Nasserite factor, i.e., the nature of the regime, significantly contributed to the failure of its economic policy. Nasserism’s failure differs from that of many underdeveloped countries attempting development. In all cases, the failure stemmed from the inability to overcome underdevelopment. However, the pure Nasserite failure also included an additional element: the weakness of the growth achieved within the framework of underdevelopment itself, compared to other underdeveloped countries directly governed by client governments.<sup>[507]</sup>

### **3. A General Analysis of the Nasserite Economic Policy**

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<sup>[507]</sup> For more analysis of the 1960-1965 plan, refer to Hansen & Marzouk, Op. cit., Ali Al-Geritli, The Economic History of the Revolution, Goudah Abdel Khaleq, A Study of the Egyptian Experience During the Period 1960-1974, and Ali Sabry, Op. cit.,

**IRONICALLY, AFTER YEARS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION, THE COUNTRY IS ESSENTIALLY BACK TO SQUARE ONE, WITH THE GROWTH RATE OF TOTAL OUTPUT INCREASINGLY DEPENDENT—ALBEIT THROUGH DIFFERENT MECHANISMS—ON THE RATE OF INCREASE IN EXPORTS.**

Sameer Radwan

It may be argued, and it has already been argued, that if the Nasserite regime could not increase production growth rates to a greater degree than what was achieved in other backward countries, then the quality of growth would have been different. The development quality was different. The Nasserite pattern, especially during the 1960-1965 plan, was—allegedly—independent, unlike the dependent pattern in most backward countries that did not follow the Nasserite path. This perspective has been implicitly addressed in the context of discussing the economic policies of Nasserite Egypt. This topic will be completed during the general evaluation of that policy.

### **First: Development Policy** **Agricultural Policy**

In addition to the scarcity of systematic studies on the agrarian question in Egypt, most research has focused on it as a problem of peasant poverty or the unequal distribution of agricultural property.

It is more methodologically sound to approach the agrarian question by focusing on the role of pre-capitalist production relations in agriculture in impeding the overall development of society. By adopting the former perspective, its uniqueness is negated, and it becomes intertwined with various other questions, such as industrial and commercial concerns. In short, the problem of poverty exists throughout society and can only disappear in a highly developed or wealthy society. Thus, the agrarian question

disappears with its distinctive specificity, as do all “questions” as subjects related to the mode of production. Thus, the agrarian question disappears with its distinctive specificity, as do all “questions” as subjects related to the mode of production. Therefore, regarding the case of Egypt, an unlikely solution is expected in the foreseeable future. This assertion has been validated by historical events, such as the distribution of 10% of agricultural land to peasants during the Nasserite era, which alleviated some of the land distribution disparities but did not significantly improve the overall standard of living for rural populations. Conversely, the next era of open-door policies witnessed an increase in remittances from overseas workers, leading to improvements in rural living standards and higher wages for agricultural laborers. However, the backwardness of Egyptian villages persisted and became more complex, and the issue of peasant poverty as a whole remained unresolved.

Classical theories define the agrarian question as the persistence of pre-capitalist relations that impede the expansion of rural markets, keep agricultural laborers from transitioning to industry, and deter capital investment in agriculture. In Europe, this issue was addressed via either land distribution to peasants (e.g., France) or by transforming large landowners into capitalists or leasing their lands to capitalists (e.g., Germany). Industrial capitalism at times went so far as to advocate for the abolition of private real estate ownership to eliminate the substantial rents that ultimately reduce the profits of industrialists. As for the problem of poverty in Nasserite Egypt, it was not limited to rural areas but involved urban centers as well. There was no peculiarity of the village in this regard, except in the level of poverty, which was more severe than in the cities.

The obstacles to the development of productive forces can be summarized as follows:

**1. The spread of pre-capitalist production relations, particularly represented by the small-scale production mode, also led to another factor: the fragmentation of agricultural land.**

**2. The import substitution manufacturing pattern perpetuated the weakness and backwardness of the industry, consequently leading to its inability to absorb surplus population.**

**3. The consumption mode being imported signifies that the domestic market has been demanding the most recent products created by others, regardless of genuine needs and priorities. In addition, there has not been consideration of the climatic and socioeconomic context. This reliance has been fueling the desire to develop an import substitution industry.**

**4. Widespread unemployment, supported by a high population growth rate, results in a cheap labor force.**

**5. The dominance of a pre-modern culture and the gluttony of the wealthy classes.**

**These issues have been confined neither to pre-capitalist production relations nor to peasant poverty. Instead, they intersect at the state of dependency-underdevelopment that has been characterizing Egyptian society as a whole. However, they have been most pronounced in the countryside, where uneven and combined growth in Egypt has made agriculture the least developed and most backward. The influence of pre-capitalist production relations in hindering societal progress has been quite marginal compared to the impact of the process of underdevelopment on overall growth. The latter has ultimately been epitomized in the characteristic composition of the dominant class and its social system. Underdevelopment is not specifically linked to the agrarian question but to the system as a whole, characterized by what can be termed inferior dependency, which is the essence of underdevelopment. Eventually, the special role of the agrarian question in hindering the growth of underdevelopment can be discussed. However, the concept of the agrarian question here is narrowed to the low**



position of the village in the structure of underdevelopment. Therefore, there is no longer an agrarian question in the conventional understanding.

The expression of the “agrarian question” can only be understood within the framework of the existence of possibilities for capitalist growth that are partially realized in society but hindered by the pre-capitalist relations of production in agriculture.

However, the first concept mentioned above is useful in understanding the agricultural issue in Egypt. The poor distribution of property had threatened the social order in the period preceding the 1952 coup (refer to Section I), and this was where the agrarian question lay, from the perspectives of both the ruling class and its opponents, albeit with different starting points.

Underdevelopment is, in fact, a broader concept than just the agricultural issue. The topic should not be approached simplistically. In actuality, underdevelopment necessitates a reevaluation of old concepts, including the European model and others. The historical trajectory of Egypt has its unique characteristics and is connected to the broader path of human history, albeit in a general sense.

In the context of the emergence of underdevelopment in Egypt, the agrarian problem, in its conventional sense, represented only one aspect. This issue has consistently been linked to the broader concept of underdevelopment of development, meaning growth with the perpetuation of backwardness. Moreover, it was essential for this type of growth, and therefore, it did not pose a challenge to it. However, there is no agrarian issue in terms of a distinct status of the countryside that hinders the overall progress of society, especially when recognizing that the current growth is the advancement of underdevelopment rather than the growth of capitalism. As seen before, the hindrance to the growth of underdevelopment in Nasserite Egypt resulted from the political dilemmas that the July Knights had to find a solution for. These

included the reluctance of foreign capital and Nasserism's involvement in external problems, etc. Consequently, the revolt of the masses led, on the economic level, indirectly, to the hindrance of the underdevelopment of development without being able to present a progressive alternative. Therefore, *relative stagnation*, instead of relative independence, was one of the impacts of Bonapartism on the economic structure. The dominant class paid a high price to maintain its existence in the infrastructure (the economic level) while losing its political presence in the July coup. If one talks about the agrarian question in a much broader sense, that is, the situation that holds the countryside responsible for impeding the development of society, we will immediately discover that this impediment is not the agrarian question itself but the whole question of inferior dependency. It is now obvious that the agricultural issue is an implicit component of the underdevelopment-dependency issue.

In the next pages, the Nasserite policy toward the countryside will be analyzed in order to shed further light on its socioeconomic consequences.

### **1. The agrarian reforms**

Several successive blows were dealt to the agrarian aristocracy and large landlords in general. The most famous was the law of September 9, 1952, which targeted the aristocratic families. Then, the law of 1958 set the maximum family ownership at 300 feddans, followed by the nationalization of lands owned by foreigners and the reduction of the maximum individual ownership from 200 to 100 feddans in 1961. In 1966, the "Feudal Liquidation Committee" was established as a precautionary measure in anticipation of the social conflict that was likely to emerge in the countryside. The law of 1969 was enacted in response to the rise of the popular opposition movement that followed the defeat in 1967. Most of the nationalized and confiscated lands were allocated to small tenants. This policy favored small landowners

while disadvantaging those who owned more than 50 feddans. Additionally, owners of 20 to 50 feddans gained considerable advantages, and their position further solidified following the decline of aristocratic landlords and influential families.

The number of small landowners (less than 5 feddans) and the proportion of land they owned also increased:

**Table (53)** <sup>[508]</sup>

Year	Number of owners of less than 5 feddans (in millions)	Land area (in million feddans)
Prior to the 1952 reform	2.642	2.122
After the 1952 reform	2.814	2.781
After the 1961 reform	2.919	3.172
After the 1965 reform	3.033	3.693

The 1952 law impacted intermediary tenants and large tenants in general.

However, these reforms failed to reduce land rent; instead, it increased, as previously explained (refer to part I, chapter II, agrarian reform).

Subsequent reforms were implemented in response to the escalating social conflicts that threatened the stability of the regime, but their limitations were evident. Only a small percentage of land

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<sup>[508]</sup> The table was compiled from data from Muhammad Duwaidar, *Op. cit.*, pp. 344-345, and Belyaev & Primakov, *Op. cit.*, p. 145.

was distributed to peasants, 10%, acquired by a limited number of families, while large landowners enjoyed significant privileges.

However, these regulations increased the ownership base without considerably raising the peasants' standard of living. The laws led to the expansion of the small property base without significantly improving the peasants' standard of living. These laws encouraged the spread of small private property with its illusions, which formed a strong pillar of a highly authoritarian state. The latter was consistently eager to preserve and safeguard that property using all possible means while curbing the tendency of large landowners to amass more land. This policy led to a reduction in the average size of their holdings, while the overall proportion of their ownership significantly increased. The state was enthusiastic about small property ownership insofar as the Nasserite Charter, as well as statements by Abdel Nasser, emphasized that one of the most important principles of the state and the revolution is that cultivated land should be privately owned. The state remained stringent despite the fragmentation of land as a consequence of its reforms, which resulted in a loss of 10-20% of land area due to divisions, boundaries, and irrigation canals.<sup>[509]</sup> In addition, using agricultural machinery was expensive due to this phenomenon. In fact, the Nasserite elite was not more afraid of the large landowners than it was concerned about small ownership, i.e., the useful class that Lord Kitchener preferred.

## **2. The Bureaucracy in the Countryside**

The Egyptian bureaucracy has been playing a traditional role in the countryside for thousands of years. However, this role has diminished greatly since the mid-19th century. However, with the rise of Nasserism and the issuance of agrarian reform laws, it has grown again, albeit in a different form and with a different horizon

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<sup>[509]</sup> Sayyed Marei, Op. cit., pp. 180-181.

than its old role. The expansion of the base of small land ownership allowed the state to invade the village again in the form of an extremely powerful authority, alongside the large landowners. Through its control over the village bank, the marketing network, agricultural associations, and the agricultural cycle, it attained a role that exceeded that prior to the 1952 coup. The agricultural policy aimed at protecting the ownership of the small peasant without protecting the peasant himself. On the contrary, it increased his burdens toward the state. He was compelled to grow certain crops, and under the pretext of protecting him from the merchant, the state played the role of both the merchant and the usurer. It also subsidized fertilizers, fodder, and excellent seeds, but mainly granted them to the large landowners while it bought the crops at low prices, burdening small peasants.

It also provided loans to fallahs, but while the large landowners were not forced to return their debts, small peasants were sometimes obligated to pay money in addition to their entire crop to cover the cultivation costs. The state significantly influenced the accumulation process in rural areas, primarily benefiting large landowners and high-ranking bureaucrats. Meanwhile, it extracted a considerable surplus for the benefit of the metropolis, the burden of which fell on small landowners.<sup>[510]</sup> In short, the growth of bureaucratic dominance in the countryside was a consequence of the expansion of the base of small property.

### 3. Transformations in modes of production

Government officials placed great importance on agricultural policy, starting from a fixed and well-defined point: the supreme importance of the village in supporting and strengthening the authority of an all-powerful state. In pursuing these policies, they

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<sup>[510]</sup> For details, refer to Mahmoud Abdel Fadeel, Op. cit., chapter five, and Karima Korayem, Op. cit.,

implemented seemingly contradictory approaches. Some supported traditional production relations, while others fostered capitalist production relations. Some aimed to maintain small property roles, while others exacerbated social contradictions within the village. The Nasserite regime has been characterized as a Bonapartist government with indirect ties to the dominant class. Essentially, it represented the existing regime. Nasserism, as a moment in the movement of the dominant class, did not have the historical mandate to address the agrarian question and should not be judged solely on this basis. However, its agrarian policy was one of the mechanisms used by the dominant class to exploit peasants and for the bureaucracy to secure its share of the surplus.

Talking about pre-capitalist relics is insufficient to describe the state of the Egyptian village. Rather, the most significant question is why these relics were very large and what their role is in the overall structure. What is the significance of their existence?

**The changes that occurred in the modes of production after the 1952 coup:**

**Role of wage labor in agriculture:**

**Number of temporary workers: 1,850,514 in 1961, distributed as follows:**

**Table (54) <sup>[511]</sup>**

Possession category	%of workers (temporary)
Less than 5 feddans	45
5-20 feddans	29.6
Over 20 feddans	25.2

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<sup>[511]</sup> Agricultural Census of 1961.

The majority of temporary workers who were actual proletarians, as opposed to fixed workers who are considered semi-serfs,<sup>[512]</sup> were working on small farms that primarily relied on family labor, while large farms employed a small percentage.

Conversely, the distribution of fixed workers was as follows:<sup>[513]</sup>

**Table (55)**

Possession category	Number of fixed workers in thousands	
Less than one feddan	6.797	%23.9
1-2 feddans	34.824	
2-3 feddans	45.869	
3-4 feddans	42.800	
4-5 feddans	37.800	%34.5
5-10 feddans	109.000	
20 feddans	98.000	
50 feddans	89.000	%41.6

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<sup>[512]</sup> Agricultural workers in Egypt during the Nasserite period were divided into the following categories: the Tamli, the Agri, the Murabie, the Mukhamas, the cultivator by half, and the like-cultivator. For instance, the Tamli situation: He lives on the estate, has no fixed wage, earns less than a worker residing on the estate, and receives a plot of land not exceeding one feddan, which he plants with wheat and clover. As per the rent contract, he plants wheat and clover, not cotton. He also performs general work on the estate, such as assisting guards in fighting thieves and strengthening bridges. He can receive his wage in the form of land, one or two feddans for a year, without paying rent. The Agri comes from neighboring villages and works for cash wages. The cultivator, by half, grows all the crops on the owner's land with his own fertilizer and seeds, receiving half the crop without having to pay any tax.

Agri is a temporary worker.

Source: The Egyptian magazine "al-Fallah," by its founder, Mahmoud Anis, January 1898 issue and February 1898 issue.

<sup>[513]</sup> The agricultural Census of 1961.



100 feddans	91.500	
Over 100 feddans	70.000	

It is noticeable in this table that fixed workers were concentrated mainly in large holdings, which is explained by the prevalence of a semi-feudal and semicapitalist mode of production on these farms.

The author of “The Agrarian Question” mentioned that wage labor represented 55% of the agricultural workforce after the Nasserite reforms. This figure included all the destitute peasants who worked on other people’s land, meaning that it included semi-serfs. The changes in the modes of production in agriculture after 1952 were modest and commensurate with the rise in the share of wage labor. The latter increased from 45% to 55% of the workforce, considering the previous reservation. Indeed, the technology used by wage labor was not entirely distinguished. Most likely, the number of working days for the worker decreased after 1952, as evidenced by the deterioration of their wages and the increase in their rate of migration to cities. Since it is impossible to obtain direct and conclusive measures of the extent of the transformations that took place in the mode of production in agriculture after 1952, another indirect indicator will be attempted.

**Table (56)**

**Evolution of the proportion of land area of the tenure categories<sup>[514]</sup>**

Possession category (feddans)	% of land area in 1950	% of land area in 1961
Less than one feddan	1.8	3.4

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<sup>[514]</sup> Mahmoud Abdel Fadeel, Op. cit., p. 30.

From 1-2	5.5	8.1
From 2-3	6.1	10.4
From 3-4	5.4	9.1
From 4-5	4.4	6.8
From 5-10	13.3	17.7
From 10-20	11.5	12.5
From 20-50	12.9	11
From 50-100	9.4	7
More than 100	29.7	14

The expansion in the number and size of smallholdings coincided with a nationwide decrease in the average holding area, which dropped from 6.13 feddans in 1950 to 3.79 feddans in 1961.<sup>[515]</sup> As a result, smallholdings became increasingly dominant, while larger holdings diminished. This resulted from transferring portions of large estate lands, previously cultivated by systems blending serfdom and capitalism, to the landless for small-scale, commodity-mode, or family-mode production. The situation was exacerbated after the 1969 reform as well, with the liquidation of more large holdings. Moreover, the preferred method of investment for large landowners throughout the Nasserite period had been to rent their land as small plots on sharecropping or in other forms.

The following observations illustrate the relationship between the Nasserite agricultural policy and the growth of the role of wage labor in agriculture, mainly on small farms, in addition to the questionable spread of capitalist farms:

1. The laws forbade the leasing of more than 50 acres by a single individual.

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<sup>[515]</sup> Adel Hussein, *Op. cit.*, part two, p. 1603.

**2. The sharecropping system was not abolished until the 1961 law. However, its prohibition was not practically implemented.**

**3. The agrarian reform imposed restrictions on the right of its beneficiaries to dispose of their lands, which hindered primitive accumulation within this sector of land.**

**4. The laws did not prohibit the labor service system.**

**In return:**

**1. Some farms operating under the labor service system were liquidated.**

**2. The sharecropping system was later abolished only on paper.**

**3. The rental value was officially reduced. However, this was only implemented in a few situations in practice. The majority of the leased land was rented to small farmers or in partnerships.**

**Ultimately, the Nasserite agrarian reforms did not lead to the growth of capitalist agriculture nor the elimination of the disadvantages of large landownership, represented mainly by the large rent paid.**

**Finally, the Nasserite agricultural policy did not achieve significant transformations in favor of the capitalist mode of production. The July 1952 regime allowed pre-capitalist relics to continue in the countryside. Its policy even contributed to obstructing the growth of large farms capable of employing wage labor. The legitimate question now is why these relics have not vanished. Before and during the Nasserite era, there were no factors that stimulated the complete and genuine capitalization of the countryside. The industry did not absorb the surplus labor force. Moreover, the surplus agricultural labor curbed the growth of agricultural mechanization and the development of the production process. Consequently, preventing the extinction of small farms, including lands granted in exchange for labor service. The problem boils down to the backwardness of productive forces at the general national level, as there had been insufficient incentive for this**

process. The dominance of long-distance trade over the economy and economic dependency ultimately prevented the full capitalization of the countryside. The tendency to introduce machinery and capitalist farms grew in the era of openness as new sources of surplus from abroad, mainly remittances from overseas workers, appeared. In addition to the shrinking of agricultural labor due to the immigration of millions of Egyptians, the decline of the old export sector, cotton, and the erosion of parts of the agricultural land area.

Ultimately, irrespective of how much the capitalist mode of production has expanded throughout Egypt, this tends to be *capitalistique*, an expression used by Maxime Rodinson. In this context, the capitalist figure is not a genuine industrial capitalist but rather a merchant-industrialist. The surplus that comes from outside the capitalist sector, either from pre-capitalist modes of production or from abroad, serves as a primary source of profits derived from the circulation operation rather than the production process. Consequently, speculation, fraud, smuggling, and similar activities are essential methods for profit generation. Therefore, the capitalist entity becomes primarily an intermediary means for acquiring commercial profits in the pre-capitalist sense of the term.

This situation has always existed in modern Egypt, and the state has always played a fundamental role in this process of distribution. So the pre-capitalist relics are not just remnants but an essential part of the economy, which includes developed capitalist entities. The alternatives to these relics, i.e., revenues flowing from abroad, play a pivotal role in giving this essential character to the economy. Therefore, the weak link remains not the alleged agrarian question but the issue of dependency and underdevelopment.

#### **4. Promoting the export sector**

Nasserism did its best to expand agricultural exports. It reduced the area of land planted with cotton due to low external demand. Instead, it expanded the textile industry to substitute cotton in exports and satisfy domestic needs. Nevertheless, it was moderately successful in both attempts. It was moderately successful in both attempts. Additionally, it partially replaced cotton with onions and rice. However, these attempts were insufficient to significantly increase exports, prompting a focus on the petroleum sector, although decisive results were not achieved until the era of Sadat. Economic plans did not prioritize aligning agriculture with internal demand (e.g., wheat instead of cotton), as Egypt could obtain wheat almost for free from the United States. However, the country needed the hard currency that cotton exports provided, leading to a food crisis after the cessation of American aid. Encouraging the export sector maintained a strong connection between the domestic economy and the international market, despite most exports shifting to the Soviet Union. This temporary change in export destinations did not fundamentally alter Egypt's position in the international division of labor.

## 5. Developing agricultural production

The Nasserite policy did not achieve the rate of agricultural growth that it aimed for.

Table (57) <sup>[516]</sup>

Period	Agricultural output growth rate (%)
1939-1960	1.8
1939-1949	1
1949-1954	0.8

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<sup>[516]</sup> Amr Mohi Eddin, “al-Taliaah” Magazine, March 1968 issue.

1955-1960	3.5
1965	3

During the same period, this rate reached 5% in India and 7% in Japan.

The government also paid attention to increasing the crop area, which rose by 17% throughout the period, from 9.2 in 1947 to 10.92 million feddans in 1973.<sup>[517]</sup> Fertilizer use and improved irrigation technologies also increased the production of some essential crops:

Table (58)

Development of feddan productivity<sup>[518]</sup>

Year (Average)	Cotton	maize	Wheat
1935-1939	100	100	100
1945-1949	104	88	82
1950-1954	92	90	94
1960-1964	109	100	121
1965-1969	120	150	120

The growth rate of overall agricultural productivity per feddan decreased from +6% between 1939 and 1949 to -4% in 1954, followed by a rise to +15% in 1960 compared to 1955.<sup>[519]</sup> Meanwhile, labor productivity experienced an annual increase from

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<sup>[517]</sup> The Agrarian question (without the author's name), p. 165.

<sup>[518]</sup> According to the index based on data provided by Ali Al-Gereitly, Twenty-Five Years - An Analytical Study of Economic Policies in Egypt, p. 318, quoted from the Central Bank of Egypt's bulletin.

<sup>[519]</sup> Amr Mohi Eddin, a research paper submitted to the first annual scientific conference of Egyptian economists.

1.5% to 2%.<sup>[520]</sup> Moreover, progress in the net area of land reclamation remained limited. Bulldozing and transforming some areas into construction land also led to the erosion of extensive regions. Furthermore, some lands turned fallow as a result of the backwardness in the drainage system. Therefore, the overall cultivated area did not show a substantial increase during the Nasserite period.

However, the increase in agricultural production was mostly driven by the expansion of exportable items, which resulted in a worsening of the food problem,<sup>[521]</sup> particularly in the 1960s. The crop area of rice, sugarcane, fruits, and vegetables, which are exportable goods, increased, while cotton, whose world prices decreased, did so, in addition to wheat and corn. Muhammad Duwaidar<sup>[522]</sup> observed a decline in the area of land cultivated with crops that are considered essential for low-income people, such as barley, maize, beans, wheat, and cotton, of course, in favor of new export goods, especially rice, fruits, vegetables, and onions. The overall crop production volume increased; however, the rates of increase were higher for crops assigned for export:

Table (59)

Item	Rate of production increase (%)
Rice	22.4
Reed	6.3
Onions	4.4
Wheat	2.2

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<sup>[520]</sup> Mabro, *Op. cit.*, p. 262.

<sup>[521]</sup> Ali Al-Gereitli, *Op. cit.*, p. 318, quoted from the Central Bank Bulletin.

<sup>[522]</sup> The Rentier Trend in the Egyptian Economy (1950-1980), p. 54.



<b>Barley</b>	<b>1.6</b>
<b>Beans</b>	<b>0.6</b>
<b>Lentils</b>	<b>0.2</b>

**The final result was a very weak development of agricultural production forces.**

### **End results of the agricultural policy**

**These can be summarized as follows:**

**1. The means of production in agriculture experienced development in the form of using tractors and irrigation machinery. Consequently, technological dependence deepened, since the means of production were imported, while few were assembled in domestic factories.**

**The expansion of machinery use was limited, as large farms decreased in size and the surplus of agricultural labor continued to grow.**

**2. The limited increase in demand for machinery and the growth of the fertilizer and pesticide industry further deepened the dependence of the manufacturing industry on the global market. This increased the interconnectedness of agriculture and industry with the global market.**

**3. Agricultural production favored exportable products, leading to a growing shortage of food without economic considerations. The main market for these products was the Comecon, with arms deals and special political relations influencing economic policy.**

**4. The majority of the agricultural surplus ended up in the pockets of large landowners and statesmen. They lavishly consumed imported or import-substituted goods, engaged in speculation, and**

participated in trade. Only a small fraction of this surplus was channeled into import-substitution industrial projects.

5. The supreme state bureaucracy achieved its most crucial objective in the village. That is creating a conservative situation based on a reactionary big landlord and a conservative small owner. In addition, the bureaucracy dominated in partnership with big landlords, guaranteeing part of the surplus in the pockets of senior statesmen.<sup>[523]</sup>

### Industrialization Policy

#### \*Structural changes in the manufacturing industry

The overall structure of the manufacturing industry underwent several modifications. Consumer industries maintained their position by generating the majority of the industry's added value and accounting for approximately 50% of industrial investments. In contrast, the intermediate goods industry experienced remarkable growth, particularly in chemicals such as fertilizers, pesticides, alcohol, and paints, at the expense of consumer industries, especially food. Meanwhile, the durable goods sector realized the highest growth rate:

Table (60)

Shares of industrial sectors in value-added production <sup>[524]</sup>

Year	1952	1960	1966/1967
Sector			

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<sup>[523]</sup> For further study of the effects of Nasserite agricultural policy, refer to K.V .Galavanis-Bandli Galavanis, *Sociology of Agrarian Relations in the Middle East – the Continuity of Family Production*, pp. 79-117.

<sup>[524]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, *Op. cit.*, p. 139 (this table was transferred with modification of the division).

<b>Traditional consumer</b>	<b>%70.9</b>	<b>%63.6</b>	<b>%60</b>
<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>%25.5</b>	<b>%33.3</b>	<b>%33.5</b>
<b>Durable goods and transportation</b>	<b>%3.6</b>	<b>%3.1</b>	<b>%6.5</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table (61)**

**Industrial investment structure from 1957-1964/1965 <sup>[525]</sup>**

<b>Industry</b>	<b>% of total industrial investment</b>
<b>Traditional consumerism</b>	<b>31.9</b>
<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>49.6</b>
<b>Durable goods</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Industrial training centers</b>	<b>0.1</b>
<b>Other industries</b>	<b>8.4</b>

**The emergence of industries of intermediate goods was not merely the result of a planned decision. This spontaneous tendency of capital began as early as the late 1940s, as already mentioned. Rather, it was an outcome of the almost complete import**

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<sup>[525]</sup> Ibid., p. 152 (the table was transferred with the branches re-divided).

The researchers aimed to explore the link between customs tariffs and structural transformations within the industry but arrived at a different conclusion. They did not identify a consistent correlation or trend. In fact, during the 1960s, customs duties in Egypt primarily served to generate government revenue rather than as a protective measure for the domestic industry. The state invested approximately 90% of industrial capital, nationalized import trade, and imposed control over the quantity and types of imported goods. The removal of customs duties on machinery in the 1950s might have hindered the development of Egypt's machinery industry had there been a genuine inclination for capital investment in that sector.

substitution of consumer goods. The latter placed a priori limits on the steady growth of the industry, causing it to stumble from time to time, especially because of the narrowness of the market for the optimal size of the modern industrial production unit. Therefore, the trend toward more import substitution has been automatic for the approach of industrialization in Egypt. Moreover, this kind of expansion represented the ideal arena for the underdevelopment of development during the Nasserite era. It proceeded under a spontaneous inherent tendency of individual capital, which did not find a compelling substitute in the coup government for the private foreign capital, whose inflow had virtually ceased.

**Table (62)**

**Percentage of import substitution in some goods** <sup>[526]</sup>

Item	Substitution rate (%) in 1947	Item	Substitution rate (%)	
			1947	1966/1967
Food	95.8	Wood	30.9	68.8
Beverages	77.8	Paper	40.4	65.3
Tobacco	97.7	Rubber	30.7	60.8
Textiles	73	Non-electrical machines	0.4	14.3
Ready-made clothes	69.7	Chemicals	53.8	61.2
Furniture	90.2	Oil	35.3	74.4
Printing	93	Essential minerals	16.2	65.4
Leather	88.7	Metal products	42.5	80.9

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<sup>[526]</sup> Ibid., p. 256 (the table division was modified to articulate the increase in tangible replacement during the period 1947-1966/1967).

Non-metallic products	73.9	Transport equipment (assembly)	8.3	43
		Electrical machines (assembly)	-	46

The industry in general did not become the leading sector, contrary to what Mabro & Radwan claimed.<sup>[527]</sup> They defined this based on the size of industrial output, which exceeded 20% of the gross domestic product in 1965. However, this measure is fictitious. Upon using it again, it will be found that Argentina and Iran are more industrialized than the United States. The industrial output as a percentage of the gross domestic product in the mid-seventies reached 32, 30, and 25, respectively. Nevertheless, in the two aforementioned countries, not all production was subordinate to industry as in developed economies. This was particularly evident in Nasserite Egypt, where the manufacturing industry in all its fundamental areas—encompassing textiles, food, fertilizers, and durable goods—remained unable to propel and invigorate the overall economic structure. Moreover, the role of the export bias in primitive agriculture in general continued. Interest in this sector was an alternative to the production of food materials needed for industry and consumption, so the food industries were unable to stimulate structural change in agriculture in their favor.

Furthermore, the industry as a whole failed to stimulate a radical development in the pattern of education and scientific research, nor did it promote the creation of an equipment manufacturing sector. It did not even modify the pattern of consumption to suit the capabilities and conditions of society. It also failed miserably to direct the social surplus, as shall be seen later. The tendency was

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<sup>[527]</sup> Ibid., p. 68. Adel Hussein repeated the same idea in “Abdel Nasser and the Economic System - A Response to Opponents and Critics,” pp. 24-46.

always and increasingly in favor of activities that did not produce added value. Industry could not make the other sectors center around it, nor could it center on itself, nor did it inaugurate a direction of sectoral equilibrium growth, so that imbalance and disintegration remained prominent features of the economy.

The revised structure of the Egyptian industry confirms two additional facts: First, the existing pattern of dependent consumption continued to deepen. This was evidenced by the enormous growth in the production of originally imported durable goods (washing machines, cars, etc.) in an environment that was unable to maintain, develop, or even use them perfectly. Second, the industry failed to develop agriculture (almost no real production of agricultural machinery), which was the largest sector of the productive economy in that era.

Some partial conclusions are: First, the textile sector continued to grow at the same rate as the whole industry, or slightly higher, far exceeding the rate of population growth, replacing imports by more than 90%. In fact, textiles not only replaced imports, but also partially replaced cotton exports throughout the Nasserite period, maintaining their relative size in industrial output. Second, the expansion of the intermediate industry was very costly. It resulted, in terms of labor and added value, in worse results than those expected if the industry's structure had not been changed after 1952, with the same degree of expansion. Mabro & Radwan estimated the losses as follows:

-Growth in industrial employment: 122%.

-Growth that could have been achieved: 149%.

The added value increased by 10.9%, less than the percentage that would have been achieved in the case of the aforementioned premise. Regardless of these results, the most important thing is to discover what obligated the government to adopt this policy, which is a trend toward diminishing returns (in terms of value), while its

ultimate goal was to increase income. Poorly conducted feasibility studies, mismanagement, insufficient skilled labor, and the inability to fully operationalize new establishments resulted in diminishing returns. In addition to the decision to uphold a consumption-driven approach, resorting to mass bribery exacerbated the situation. In conclusion, the structural transformations within the industry resulting from Nasserite policies were heading toward the exacerbation of underdevelopment and dependency. This was represented in the domestic industry being centered around that in advanced countries, and its inability to promote overall economic activity. The substitution of imported intermediate goods faced challenges due to the limited size of the domestic market. The development of large-scale processing industries could not coexist with the socio-economic framework that existed, indicating that these structural changes may herald a new crisis. When the market is saturated with consumer and intermediate import substitutes, the only feasible expansion shifts to export-oriented production. Thus, an increased bias towards the export sector results. This is unless there is a demand for new types of consumer and intermediate products, which also might not succeed in stimulating new expansion. Import substitution as a whole became an obstacle to further vertical and horizontal substitution, leading to a payments crisis.

### **\*The Growth**

Despite the impression created by Nasserite media outlets of huge leaps in industrial progress and the intensity of this perception among most intellectuals, the industry's actual position in the domestic economy did not undergo the radical shift depicted. Despite the boast of erecting a massive industrial edifice, objective data demonstrate the fiction of Nasserite industrialization and reveal the reality of the Egyptian industry's tiny role in the economy, notwithstanding the famed five-year plan. This was the



product of both Nasserism's incompetence and its limited ambitions. In actuality, Nasserists paid less attention to the industry than government propaganda pretended.

**Table (63)** <sup>[528]</sup>

Year	Annual growth rate of industrial output (%)
1952-1956	6
1957-1961	6.5
1960-1965	8.5

These rates are modest when compared to those attained in other underdeveloped countries or those governed by client regimes not claiming to be revolutionary or socialist. For instance, the Iranian manufacturing industry experienced an annual growth rate of 14% during the Shah's reign. <sup>[529]</sup> Meanwhile, it reached 16-35% annually in East Asia during the 1960s. Furthermore, the overall production growth rate in these countries ranged from 7% to 10% per year. <sup>[530]</sup>

The industry did not receive a percentage of the total investments that aligned with the objectives announced by a government claiming to establish an industrial foundation in Egypt. Its share of investments amounted to the following:

**Table (64)**

**Industry's share of investments (%)**  
**(Annual average)** <sup>[531]</sup>

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<sup>[528]</sup> According to the data of Mabro and Mabro & Radwan.

<sup>[529]</sup> Fred Halliday, *Preludes to the Revolution in Iran*, p. 189.

<sup>[530]</sup> Sameer Amin, *Unequal Development, A Study of the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism*, p.166 .

<sup>[531]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

Year	%
1952/1953-1956/1957	23.8
1957/1958-1959/1960	25.7
1960/1961-1964/1965	26.6
1969/1970-1971-1972	27.4

The rate of increase in worker productivity was also not tangible, reaching a maximum of 1.2% during the years 1960-1965. The government's efforts to encourage workers to increase production did not succeed due to objective factors. These factors included the growth of surplus labor and idle capacity during the 1960s due to mismanagement and a shortage of spare parts. The shortage of skilled labor also played a significant role in hindering the increase in productivity, while the government did not seriously try to provide it. One of the main reasons was the government's response to the ambitions of the intelligentsia. To satisfy them, it expanded theoretical and university education at the expense of technical education. Despite the idle capacity and almost constant productivity, the accumulation of commodity inventories due to weak purchasing power was widespread. This is despite the improvement in the conditions of the middle classes during the early 1960s. The framework of industrial development did not align with the scale of the domestic market. In addition, Nasserism did not pursue a policy to maximize market expansion. Furthermore, the attempt to export the few designated products to the global market on a large scale proved unsuccessful. Moreover, the increase in working hours combined with widespread disguised unemployment meant that there was something unique in the economy. The idle capacity in industry, the commodity inventory crisis, and the production shortage crises were inextricably intertwined. These phenomena indicate that the industrial crisis was complex: *a crisis of overproduction and a crisis of underproduction, a capitalist crisis,*

*and a pre-capitalist crisis at the same time.* The issue included, among other things, the absolute chaos of production: uneven and competing administrations, severe imbalances in workers' skills and capital intensity, and highly uneven growth.

In 1952, industry and electricity represented less than 10% of the gross domestic product, and the government aimed to raise this percentage to 30% by the end of the 1960-1965 plan; however, it did not succeed in more than doubling it:

Table (65)

The contribution of industry and electricity to the GDP(%) <sup>[532]</sup>

Year	%
1956/1955	13.8
1961/1960	20.9
1965/1964	22.7

These rates remain modest for a country whose rulers pretended to carry out an industrial revolutionary leap. In contrast, the contribution of industry to the GDP in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay reached between 26 and 32%, despite their being underdeveloped countries. <sup>[533]</sup>

The industry's share of the workforce remained limited, hovering around 10 percent, reaching 11 percent in the mid-1960s. However, taking into account the disguised unemployment, this figure must be lower. It is also significantly lower when considering only the large industry, in which employment was less than 4% of the total in 1952 and 7% in 1965, including surplus labor. Moreover, part of the latter moved from agriculture to the tertiary sectors.

Table (66)

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<sup>[532]</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>[533]</sup> Victor Volsky, *The Capitalist Model in Latin America*.

### Comparison between the rate of employment growth and the rate population growth <sup>[534]</sup>

Year	Rate of actual workforce growth (%)	Rrate of population growth (%)
1960	1.23	2.38
1966	1.22	2.54
1976	2.6	2.31

This table illustrates that Nasserite industrialization, in addition to the tangible rise of non-value-added sectors, was unable to raise the growth rate of the workforce. Only in the era of openness and the returns of workers abroad did the employment rate more than double and exceed the population growth rate, which is a conundrum worthy of examination.

Another point worth mentioning is that the impact of industrial growth on agricultural employment was also minimal. In the case of balanced growth within a modern economy, the workforce in industry is expected to increase, resulting in a corresponding decrease in agricultural employment. It is a phenomenon found in all developed countries, unless an exceptional circumstance occurs, such as a massive expansion of the area of cultivated land. However, Nasserite development did not lead to the aforementioned phenomenon:

Table (67)

Development of the number of workers in agriculture in millions <sup>[535]</sup>

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<sup>[534]</sup> Abdel Nabi El-Toukhi, Analysis of Changes in the Characteristics of the Workforce in Egypt (1947-1974).

<sup>[535]</sup> Ibid.

Year	Agricultural labor
1947	4.086
1960	4.406
1966	4.468

Between 1966 and 1970, the area of cultivated land increased by 701,000 feddans, which included regions within the Tahrir Directorate. The growth in cultivated land does not account for the corresponding increase in the number of agricultural workers unless farming methods remained stagnant. Therefore, advancements in industry had little impact on agricultural development during this period.

The number of agricultural workers subsequently declined, even though the area of cultivated land remained nearly unchanged. That was because peasants fled to Gulf countries and Libya to work instead of working in domestic factories. Ultimately, the industry failed to significantly absorb labor and was unable to address the surplus labor force effectively.

However, during that period, there was an increase in the role of industry in exports, as shown in the table below:

Table (68) <sup>[536]</sup>

Year	Share of manufactured goods in exports (%)	Share of textile exports alone in exports (%)	Share of raw cotton in exports (%)
1952	6.7	3	87.3
1953	8.9	3.3	85
1955/56	19.1	5.8	72.8

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<sup>[536]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 287.

1959/60	18.1	9.7	70.8
1960/61	19.7	11.3	64.4
1961/62	25.6	12.9	58.8
1962/63	21.6	11.1	52.5
1963/64	24.4	13.9	49.2
1964/65	24.7	14	55.9
1967/68	31.2	19.6	44.5
1969/70	29.5	16.7	49.1
1971	33	18.6	51

It is evident that the industry began to play an increasingly important role in exports. However, focusing solely on quantities may lead to misleading conclusions. Therefore, it is important to analyze this phenomenon:

1. The reduction in cotton's share in exports consistently outpaced the increase in the share of manufactured goods, with the primary distinction being attributed to rice exports. The share of yarn and textiles in total industrial exports was also very large. Mabro-Radwan described this phenomenon as *export substitution*. The state allocated a significant portion of yarn and textiles production for export due to the deterioration in the prices of raw cotton. Therefore, the area allocated for rice cultivation for export was increased at the expense of the area planted with cotton. In addition, the successive decrease in cotton prices contributed to the decline in its share in the value of exports in favor of rice and textiles. Calculating its role in terms of the quantities exported shows that the decline was partly due to price changes.

2. Additionally, the phenomenon of export substitution had a significance unrelated to economic independence. With cotton as its main commodity, the economy was becoming increasingly unsustainable in the global market. This prompted the government

to attempt to expand new export-producing sectors. While it did not achieve great success in this area, it maintained the existence of an important export sector. In summary, a portion of the industrial production was designated for export, especially textiles, as a reaction to the decline in global cotton prices, which necessitated the need to diversify exports.

It is noteworthy that the growth of industrial exports was not solely a result of industrial development and increased competitiveness in the international market. Most exported products were directed to the Comecon markets under payment agreements. This policy saved the state hard currency that would have been required for imports from capitalist countries. Given the poor quality of many of Nasserite Egypt's manufactured exports, which included a large portion of poor handicraft products, this arrangement involved a political element. Nasserism had special relations with socialist countries at the time, as well as the quality standards in those markets being modest.

The overall goal and trend of development aimed to increase the absolute size of GDP. Industry, due to the high marginal cost of investment in other sectors, was the most favorable area for achieving this goal. However, the focus on industrial development was insufficient to achieve a high GDP growth rate, which peaked at 5.7% during the 1960-1965 plan (in Japan, growth rate was 14% during the same period). The optimistic projections in economic plans were never fully realized, highlighting a stark contrast between reality and propaganda, which was creating an illusion of an industrial revolution.

It will now be a question of its social structure rather than industry as a producing art. In the pages that follow, this will become evident.

### **3. The horizon of import substitution**



**The Egyptian industry encounters a crisis following each extraordinary circumstance. Nevertheless, it is also required to grow once more, thereby reproducing its crisis on an expanded scale. It has already been discussed how the social structure of the industry, i.e., the essence of industrial capital, essentially commercial, was the underlying factor behind its crisis. This was evident in the industry's struggles due to the import substitution approach, which focused on producing consumer goods, followed by intermediate commodities. Nasserism's "feat" that deceived intellectuals was to facilitate a shift from the import substitution of consumer goods to that of intermediate goods, in addition to durable commodities. This shift appeared as if there was a tendency toward what was described by some as the economy's self-centeredness, or the attainment of economic independence. In order to draw accurate conclusions, the significance of this transition should be analyzed. The objective tendency to introduce the intermediate goods industry into Egypt, especially following the Second World War, has been addressed. It is now plausible to address the following inquiry: Can the process of import substitution for intermediate goods serve as a preliminary step toward the subsequent import substitution of capital goods in order to resolve the issues of underdevelopment and dependency?**

**A. The production of capital goods does not inherently indicate progress. The development of individuals and production methods that enhance economic efficiency in the global market ensures a balanced relationship with it, promotes a high quality of life, and enables innovation and equitable interactions with others.**

**B. Economic independence is not achieved by importing an integrated economic structure. Rather, it is realized by establishing it domestically based on the special circumstances of each community. It should also stem from the societal needs at each stage of social development. Import substitution in Nasserite Egypt further reinforced the dependent consumption model. Even with the implementation of the third phase—substituting capital goods—the same dynamic would remain unchanged. The substitution process is**

never fully completed, as new goods continuously emerge and integrate into the consumption structure, reigniting the import substitution cycle after periods of stagnation during market saturation. However, it is time to start all over again with the transformation of the consumption mode in the West and its passing to the underdeveloped countries. Therefore, substitution never ends if dependency and the dominance of commercial capital continue. Import substitution ultimately reflects the subordination of production to the prevailing mode of consumption through exchange. Therefore, each successive phase in the substitution process represents a deeper subordination of production to the existing consumption mode and signifies the entrenchment of the dominance of exchange over the entire economy.

C. The subsequent step is incomplete and incompetent. However, it is a forward step, thanks to the continuous development of the capitalist economy, as mentioned earlier. That is because newer and more technologically advanced industries are being established. However, it remains a step forward within the context of underdevelopment, not its negation. This implies reintegrating into the international market on its terms, proceeding from a position of inferiority. Indeed, every production process requires reproduction. Therefore, backwardness should reproduce itself as it is, but in a new form, based on the changes in the global market. That is to be able to re-engage in that market. This kind of economic growth is what is referred to as the underdevelopment of development.

D- The Nasserite movement was also quantitatively inadequate to optimally reintegrate the economy into the international market. Specifically, the progress made was small compared to the significant development of the international market. It was also not comparable to the steps taken by underdeveloped countries at the time, such as India, Latin America, and East Asia. Thus, Nasserite Egypt remained an underdeveloped country, in addition to being backward compared to other underdeveloped countries that were at the forefront of the Third World in terms of economy.

**That was the price paid by Egypt for the Nasserite coup. This event ultimately highlighted the impotence of the popular revolutionary movement and the ruling class's inability to suppress it. As a result, Egypt has ceded its prominent position among underdeveloped countries to others.**

### **\*Motivations of Import Substitution**

**First, in the short term, the government's objective horizon was narrow due to its connection to the social system and its indirect ties to the dominant class, which benefits from the backward economic structure. The goal of industrial development was limited to increasing national income without revolutionizing the economic structure. Therefore, the government focused on establishing and encouraging projects that aligned with the prevailing consumption mode, substituting imports of consumer goods to meet effective demand. The dominant class could not expand the import substitution industry beyond domestic demand due to limited foreign market access for Egyptian products. The only option was to establish more industries to replace imports, focusing on durable and intermediate goods.**

**Second, in the long term, organic changes in capitalist societies led to the transfer of industries to underdeveloped countries and the opening of markets to some of their products. This stimulated export industries in some underdeveloped countries, excluding Egypt, since the late 1960s. This organic change dictated the need to expand the capitalist world's overseas markets for capitalist goods at the expense of consumer goods, a trend that began several decades prior to Nasserism. Therefore, capitalist countries encouraged consumer industries in underdeveloped countries while restricting their products' domestic competition. This encouraged the growth of import-substituting industries in underdeveloped countries.**

**\*The role of the import substitution approach in promoting the underdevelopment of development**

A. This policy resulted in limited industrial growth in quantity, and the government's attempts to expand the market were only partially successful.<sup>[537]</sup> The distribution of purchasing power remained overwhelmingly in favor of the dominant class, the middle classes, and the intelligentsia. In order to satisfy the demands of the aforementioned sections, the government encouraged the growth of the durable goods industry.

**Table (69)**

**Increase in the consumption of some durable goods in the period 1960-1965**<sup>[538]</sup>

Refrigerators	215.5%
Washing machines	390.1%
Heaters	1540.9%
Stoves	115%

While the consumption of essential food commodities increased significantly but much less during the same period:

**Table (70)**<sup>[539]</sup>

Wheat	%29.4
Maize	%40.9
Beans	%35
Lentils	%14

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<sup>[537]</sup> These included the expansion of installment sales and lending to employees to finance the sale of state sector products.

<sup>[538]</sup> T. Th. Shaker, Op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>[539]</sup> Ibid.

The government's housing policy primarily focused on creating appropriate housing for senior officials and statesmen, with a small number of units allocated to middle-level officials and workers.

The mode of consumption that existed promoted import substitution, which favored the consumption patterns of the dominant class. This development pattern hindered industrial growth, as the domestic market could not support many modern industries, which necessitated large-scale production beyond the capacity of the Egyptian market to absorb in order to be cost-effective. As a result, some industries failed, some were not established, and idle capacity emerged in many sectors.

B. Adopting the import substitution strategy for an extended period revealed that attaining a balance of payments surplus or merely reducing the deficit and avoiding foreign financing was an illusion. Furthermore, substituting consumer goods with domestic products led to increased imports of equipment and intermediate goods. Regardless of its impacts on economic independence, the immediate outcomes of the import substitution approach were unfavorable. This policy might have helped alleviate the potential payment deficit. However, the mitigation came at a significant cost. Mustafa Al-Saeed estimated the cost of saving one dollar by manufacturing yarn at 55.9 piasters in 1960, which increased to 69.7 piasters in 1966, and for textiles in 1966, it amounted to 85 piasters.<sup>[540]</sup> On average, substituting one unit of imports required importing goods worth 630 pennies.<sup>[541]</sup> Moreover, the value added compared to the total product value was minimal<sup>[542]</sup> due to high costs, small plant sizes, a deficiency of skilled labor, and poor management. It should also be remarked that the dollar was priced at approximately 40 Egyptian piastres during that period. Relying on the existing

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<sup>[540]</sup> Mustafa Al-Saeed, Op. cit.,

<sup>[541]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 271.

<sup>[542]</sup> For example, the waste rate in the cotton textile industry in Egypt was estimated at 12% and in England at 5% (during the 1960s). Hazem Saeed Omar, Op. cit.

mode of consumption necessitated that foreign technology had to be constantly transferred and re-imported, even though it was not always suitable for the domestic community.<sup>[543]</sup> However, because technology was developing so quickly in capitalist countries, it was not possible to import it immediately because of its high cost. So, import substitution was not complete, and foreign goods remained superior to their Egyptian counterparts. Luxury goods continued to be imported from abroad by suitcase traders and smugglers of all kinds, despite legal obstacles.

For the import substitution to be final, *a domestic economy must precede technology, not catch up with it*. This is crucial in the issue of development. Establishing industries without research, innovation, and technology production perpetuates dependency and ultimately leads to failure.

Both technological and financial dependency deepened, as shall be seen in detail later. The trend toward increased imports of capital goods meant that the Egyptian market for these products was expanding, in keeping with the organic change taking place in the structure of the capitalist system in Western Europe, North America, and Japan.

C- Import substitution leads to the introduction of modern industry, but it does not mean the industrialization of the economic structure as a whole. Only imported finished goods are manufactured using the latest technology, while the domestic economic sectors are only modernized to a minimal extent. While the first sector is always developing because it is constantly importing from abroad, the second sector remains backward. This is what happened in Nasserite Egypt. The steel industry, the assembly of durable goods, and tractors were introduced, while agriculture remained primitive, and small industry remained extremely

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<sup>[543]</sup> Refer to Ismail Sabry Abdullah, "Technology Strategy," and Ismail Sabry Abdullah, *Toward a New Global Economic System*, pp. 226-233.

backward, such as bakeries, most dairy products, wood-based production, knitting, leather industries, etc. While automobile production expanded and railroad cars were installed, the donkey continued to be the primary means of transportation in the countryside. Despite the construction of the High Dam to operate large factories with electricity, the main source of energy in the country remained the muscles of humans and animals. In contrast to the increase in the number of industrial workers by several hundred thousand, the number of unemployed increased more and more, the number of clerical workers multiplied more than once, and even the industry itself became saturated with surplus labor.

Regarding luxury consumption, considering the standard of living of the vast majority of the population, while millions of people still lived in huts in villages and towns, individuals from the middle and even lower classes started to aspire to own durable goods. Consequently, the mode of combined consumption significantly deepened within the same social section.

The intertwined capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production in agriculture and industry continued, including traces of Eastern or state feudalism, which characterized the socio-economic structure as a whole. The import substitution policy promoted the manufacturing of import-substituting goods, which led to incentivizing the import of intermediate and capital goods, as well as export agriculture. Therefore, this policy stimulated external and, hence, internal exchange. As a result, the underdevelopment of development took place through the process of exchange.

In this context, the relationship between the countryside and the urban did not change fundamentally. Moreover, the position of the countryside in the socio-economic structure did not change, remaining at a lower status, meaning that the agrarian issue continued as discussed before.

Regarding small industries, no radical changes took place during the Nasserite era. A limited number of them disappeared, such as



the hand-woven textile industry, copper bleaching workshops, and others. Limited new branches emerged, such as workshops for repairing new durable goods, such as refrigerators, televisions, and washing machines. However, the relative size of most branches of these industries, such as wood, leather, printing, and ready-made clothes, did not change except to the narrowest extent. The small industry as a whole experienced a relative decline in terms of its share of added value in industry until 1963/1964, when it began to achieve tangible growth again. This situation reflects the following:

1. The progress achieved in the 1960s was inadequate to stimulate a substantial growth of new small industries centered around the emerging large ones of intermediate and durable goods. This was primarily because the expansion of such industries was limited, largely due to the narrowness of the domestic market.

2. In conclusion, small industries, despite the significant discrepancies in the technical levels of their means of production, maintained a state of harmony with large industry. They operated alongside each other with minimal overlap, and no substantial change occurred in their relationship.

### **\*The magic of industry**

During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, industrial expansion emerged as a crucial requirement for the Egyptian economy, which was struggling under the weight of a severe crisis. Therefore, the Nasserite authority exerted its utmost energy, which was already limited, to foster industrial growth. However, its attempts faced a series of setbacks. The failures and the pressing need for progress together led Nasserists to rave in the name of industry.<sup>[544]</sup>

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<sup>[544]</sup> The renowned economist Ali Al-Geritli recorded the same observation: “*The propaganda apparatus went too far in glorifying the victories achieved by the development plan, especially in industry*” (The Economic History of the Revolution, p. 188). In December 1965, the parliament demanded that the media take care not to exaggerate in highlighting

Industry, as it is, became a symbol of success and a source of pride and dignity. Celebrating the achievements of the Egyptian industry then stood in stark contrast to the history of what was known as a single-crop economy. Despite the lack of a strong relationship between the two issues, it became a means of proving the success of the Nasserite policy. The matter was intertwined with mystical ideas about industry. For Nasserists, industry has been the standard of progress and progressiveness, and it is synonymous with economic autonomy. Particularly, the steel industry has been evidence of a major industrial renaissance. Even the failed 1960-1965 plan has been characterized as an attempt to establish an independent economic construction because, according to Nasserite propaganda, it focused on industrialization.

The concept of industrialization is frequently conflated with that of the industry. The former refers to the modernization of the entire economic structure, whereas the latter relates to a single sector of the economy in any country. It is possible to be just islands, even large ones, isolated from the rest of the economic structure. This has been found in some underdeveloped countries. It is insufficient to cite figures of investment and growth in industry or the number of factories as proof of an industrial revolution, advancement, or progressiveness. Nasserite propaganda used this deceptive approach, while the populace received it with admiration. It is interesting to note in this regard that the share of industry in investments increased after 1965, i.e., after the failure of the famous five-year plan. It reached 39% in the early days of Sadat's era. In addition, a company was established that is technologically superior to the steel factory, namely the aluminum complex. The latter was included in Nasserite plans that were not implemented. Moreover, the industrial investments in the 1960-1965 plan were less than what

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the advantages and gains of socialism in a way that would distance them from reality (Ibid.).

was specified for them by 10%;<sup>[545]</sup> Sameer Radwan estimated them at 20-25%.<sup>[546]</sup>

Industrial growth in an underdeveloped country represents a significant step toward enhancing commodity production and expanding the domestic market. However, this alone is inadequate to transform the society into the ranks of advanced countries. For this transformation to occur, the community must first overcome its backwardness by revolutionizing the social structure. Subsequently, it should implement economic policies that aim not only to increase national income but also to transform the production process and fundamentally develop the socio-economic structure.

Advanced economies have been transforming into post-industrial economies at the expense of industry since World War II. This is something that the supporters of a high proportion of industry in the economy do not understand.<sup>[547]</sup>

Nasserism accused businessmen of neglecting industrial investment, leading the state to almost monopolize the industrial development process on behalf of the social system. However, despite spending to the maximum of its capacity and borrowing at high rates from abroad, it could not surpass individual capital in

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<sup>[545]</sup> F. A. Lutskevich, Op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>[546]</sup> Sameer Radwan, Op. cit., p. 207

<sup>[547]</sup> Share of industry in GDP for some capitalist countries:(%)

Country	1960	1973
US	28	25
West Germany	31	26
Britain	23	20
Canada	26	21
Austria	26	21
Holland	34	28

**Reference:** Muhammad Abd Al-Shafee, The Issue of Industrialization in the Third World within the Framework of the New Global Economic Order, pp. 317-318.

the 1930s and 1940s. The Egyptian socio-economic system, in reality, fell short of achieving true industrialization or even its ambitions toward that goal. Furthermore, the dominant class and its state apparatus, along with other objective factors, lacked the capabilities of capitalism, as they did not consist of professional entrepreneurs but rather groups of landlords and money holders who were generally more adept at engaging in various trading activities, especially the short-term ones.

#### **\*Diversification of production**

Nasserite Egypt improved its position in the ranking of underdeveloped countries, advancing from 15th to 8th place regarding economic diversification. Instead of relying heavily on cotton, various crops and industrial products were added.

The dependence on a single or primary crop has historically been a defining feature of many underdeveloped economies. Diversification emerged as a strategic approach to reduce these countries' dependence on the export of one main crop, thereby minimizing their vulnerability to fluctuations in global market prices. The goal was to enable these economies to export a variety of commodities instead. However, this concept did not originate as a preemptive strategy. Rather, it appeared after policies were practiced or trends toward export diversification began to take place.

Nasserite Egypt faced successive decreases in world cotton prices by working to readapt itself to the needs of the global market. It partially replaced cotton exports with textiles, rice, and onions. Additionally, it substituted imports of consumer goods, which was a necessary step.

Several observations will be highlighted in this regard:

First, not all underdeveloped economies are characterized by the phenomenon of a single main crop. Diversification in itself does

not signify economic development but rather indicates the adaptation of the economy to the global market in a more dynamic manner.

Second, the reliance on a single crop only signifies a strong dependence on the international market and its fluctuations, which impacts decision-makers and poses a threat of recurring economic crises, but it does not directly indicate the backwardness of the economy.

Third, diversification in Nasserite Egypt began to decline in the early 1960s, after peaking in the 1950s. The system failed to fulfill its re-adaptation to the global market, which was previously supported by foreign aid. However, once the aid stopped, it became evident that the regime needed to adapt more effectively by establishing additional export industries.

Fourth, diversification in Nasserite Egypt did not lead to increased economic cohesion. Instead, the phenomenon of disintegration persisted, with a significant separation between agriculture and industry and among various industrial sectors.

Fifth, there is no direct correlation between the policy of diversification in general and independence, whether absolute or relative. This process was carried out with direct support from capitalist and socialist countries. It did not reduce technological or financial dependency, nor did it offer an alternative consumption mode; rather, it reinforced the dependency on the consumption mode that existed. In summary, export diversification attempted to bring the Egyptian economy in line with the global market, and it slightly succeeded in doing so. But it did not come with an internal revolutionizing of the socio-economic system, either in a bureaucratic way like the Soviet Union and China or in a capitalist one like South Korea.

## **Second: The General Tendency of the Accumulation Process:**

## **Prologue**

**The examination of the accumulation process reveals the fundamental nature of the internal dynamics of the socio-economic structure. It is not merely a quantitative process but encompasses three axes: the mechanisms, the general rate, and the general tendency of accumulation, along with its outcomes.**

**The socioeconomic structure determines the shape of this process. Its evolution depends on the characteristics and extent of social changes, as well as the overall economic policy of the regime and government, which also encompasses the sociopolitical dynamics.**

**Addressing the accumulation process here aims to identify the internal nature of the socio-economic structure and its transformations.**

**Since Egypt had begun to integrate into the international market, the economic growth process has been following a specific path characterized by:**

- 1. Continuously attempting to develop a strong export sector.**
- 2. Adapting the domestic industry to meet global market demands by gradually transitioning from traditional industries to modern ones focused on export promotion or import substitution.**
- 3. Maintaining the growth of the pre-capitalist sector, represented mainly by the small-scale production pattern in agriculture and industry.**
- 4. An increasing trend of the economy toward monetization and the expansion of external and internal commodity exchange.**
- 5. Significant growth in commercial, service, and banking activities.**
- 6. Constantly creating and recreating a consumption mode that mimics the Western one without an effective sorting process.**

**All this is summed up in:**

**\*Creating, re-creating, and developing a strong export sector.**

**\*Shaping, reshaping, and enhancing a consumption mode that is consistent with global market trends.**

**\*Creating, adapting, and re-adapting a class of owners and businessmen who supervise these two processes.**

**The accumulation works to serve these operations, which are ultimately moments in a single process. That is forming and reforming the domestic economy to meet the global market requirements.**

**This trend of expansion has resulted in the growth of the tertiary sector at a rate that exceeds that of the overall economy.**

### **Mechanisms of the accumulation process**

**The primary origin of accumulation is the surplus generated within production units.**

**In Nasserite Egypt, the growth rate of the sectors producing added value was lower, contrary to popular belief, than that of the overall economy. This signifies that the sources of accumulation shrank relative to the total size of the economy. This does not, of course, negate that the size of these sources increased quantitatively, as is evident from the figures of added value.**

**However, the significant thing is the changes that took place regarding the direct material sources of accumulation, which were represented, according to their importance before the coup, in:**

- 1. Land rent, usually paid by small peasants.**
- 2. Profits from trading activities: banks and trade.**
- 3. Industrial profits.**
- 4. Foreign capital, the size of which was greatly decreased.**
- 5. The State resources: direct and indirect taxes, etc.**



**The role of industrial profits, trading activities, and land rent as sources of accumulation increased. However, most of them were flowing to the housing sector, while the role of private foreign capital significantly decreased. The fundamental change that occurred after the coup in the sources and mechanisms of the accumulation process was represented by the unique role of the Nasserite elite.**

**The Nasserite government began to play an active role in directing the accumulation process immediately after the coup. It issued decisions and laws encouraging businessmen to invest their wealth, especially in industry. Moreover, its reform measures included increasing the pension fund, raising the state's share in investments, particularly in agriculture and irrigation, and later in industry. Additionally, it aimed to bridge the widening gap between the targeted accumulation rate and businessmen's investments. The state launched several initiatives, inviting private investors to get involved, particularly with the High Dam project. Furthermore, it sought to assume the role previously held by foreign capital in attracting domestic capital, such as ensuring marketing for specific projects and providing financial support, especially as the influx of private foreign capital decreased markedly.**

**The Suez Canal nationalization in 1956 and subsequent nationalizations strengthened the state's hold on the accumulation process. A sizable state sector was established that served as a key source of accumulation for the 1957-1960 industrial plan.**

**Once the new governing power stabilized internally and on the international scene, foreign capital began to enter the country. However, this process was facilitated by the state, which played a crucial role in spending this capital. Therefore, borrowing emerged as the primary mechanism for that influx of capital.**

**The fourth role of the state was indirect. The new bureaucratic authority and its policies led to a huge growth in the state sector. This has resulted in the spread of corruption on an unprecedented**

scale. The state sector became, as will be seen later, a cash cow for both the private sector and government officials. The widespread misappropriation diverted substantial amounts of surplus to trading activities, in addition to raising livestock, farming, and other fields. Some of that surplus was also transported overseas. The state's economic intervention in the 1960s played a key role in directing capital. Therefore, it was plausible for the private sector to flow to those areas that were allowed to operate and expand their activities under individual control.

In the 1960s, the state invested 90% of industrial capital while continuing to perform the traditional economic role of the state in Egypt, i.e., sponsoring the irrigation and drainage process and land reclamation.

Regardless of the direction of the accumulation process, the Nasserite authority played an instrumental role in its management, in addition to its contribution to generating surplus. This took the form of indirect taxes, squeezing small peasants, foreign loans, and direct taxes on its economic sector. Despite this role, the savings rate did not rise, revolving around 12.25% throughout the Nasserite period, while the investment rate exceeded this figure.

Table (71)

Savings rate / investment rate (%) <sup>[548]</sup>

Year	Savings rate/Investment rate (%)	Year	Savings rate/Investment rate (%)
1952/1953	87.1	1960/1961	93.1
1953/1954	99.6	1961/1962	65.6
1954/1955	81.5	1962/1963	65.2
1955/1956	92.6	1963/1964	63.6

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<sup>[548]</sup> Sameer Radwan, Op. cit., p. 209.

1956/1957	101.1	1964/1965	80.5
1057/1958	88.1	1965/1966	69.4
1958/1959	77.8	1966/1967	96.1
1959/1960	102.6	1967/1968	79.2

**This gap was bridged by foreign loans.**

**The failure of the state to raise the savings rate despite its expanded role can be linked to its inherent characteristics. This included maintaining a costly security apparatus, engaging in outdoor adventures, and being closely tied to preserving the outdated social system. Furthermore, its conservative framework hindered any efforts to dismantle the parasitic wealthy social groups. Its role in accumulating and channeling social surplus was limited to filling a gap created by the decline in foreign capital, which resulted in the inaction of domestic private capital. Despite government efforts, the accumulation rate did not surpass levels prior to the coup. The Nasserite government failed to achieve the investment rate reached by East Asian countries, particularly Japan, which accumulated 30% of its national income for decades following World War II, or even industrialized capitalist countries. Various methods of surplus wasting went on. They stemmed from both pre-coup practices, such as inefficient resource use, extravagant expenditures by the ruling elite, and capital flight, and new mechanisms created by the Nasserite elite. The latter included excessive government spending on administrative offices, overseas medical care, bonuses for officials, expenses related to the presidency and security services, mismanagement of economic entities, overstaffing in the bureaucracy, and other forms of Nasserite extravagance, which also involved exhausting the labor force.**

**The state did not fully gather the generated surplus or the potential one due to the aforementioned reasons. Furthermore, it**

did not effectively allocate the collected surplus, instead wasting a significant portion on itself and other areas. Hence, the state's running on behalf of the dominant class was characterized by:

1. It was on behalf of large real estate ownership and domestic capital, as well as foreign private capital.

2. It was on behalf of both the system's long-term and short-term interests. Long-term, it stimulated the process of accumulation. While short-term, it occasionally provided part of its resources to the intelligentsia and the lower classes, i.e., when it restricted the process of accumulation from the point of view of the existing social system.

It is worth noting that under Nasserite rule, the accumulation process was not always performed in the interests of the impoverished. In the 1950s, the share of workers and peasants in the social surplus significantly decreased, while in the 1960s, the opposite happened following social reforms. Furthermore, the surplus was redistributed in favor of bureaucrats, landowners, and middlemen, and educated people and industrial workers benefited to some extent. At the same time, most large industrialists lost their capital, and agricultural workers were squeezed out, while small peasants' incomes improved after land reform installments were abolished. The overall accumulation rate remained relatively stable, with producers' share remaining constant throughout the period.

The state began to play the role of organizer, adjusting the rate of accumulation according to the circumstances and balancing the relationship between future interests and the regime's long-term interests. It did not forget, via its senior officials, to secure a respectable share for itself. This control and connection process was made possible by its Bonapartist character and the weakness of the dominant class in the economy. In short, the mechanisms of the accumulation process during the Nasserite period underwent partial changes:

1. The role of foreign capital as a source of accumulation continued, with relative growth in the 1960s, in the form of conditional loans, along with American and Soviet aid.

2. The surplus continued to be transferred from the countryside to the metropolis, with small peasants bearing a heavy economic burden without compensation.

3. The relative distribution of employment remained largely unchanged.

### General Rates of Accumulation <sup>[549]</sup>

The overall accumulation rate remained unchanged relative to the potential and even the actual surplus size. This was due to the persistence of the aforementioned mechanisms of accumulation, despite the expansion of the intermediary role of the state as well as its involvement in surplus generation.

The *optimal* rate of accumulation is considered to be that rate of social surplus most compatible with the rate of consumption that is appropriate in the existing socio-economic conditions. In Nasserite Egypt, the accumulation rate was much lower than the total surplus ratio, with most of it going toward luxury consumption and squandering. The state, which played a significant role in achieving accumulation, was also accountable for squandering it.

Throughout the Nasserite period, the domestic savings rate hovered around 12.25%, <sup>[550]</sup> while the investment rate was around 15% of the gross national product per annum, <sup>[551]</sup> resulting in an

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<sup>[549]</sup> What is meant by accumulation rates is the volume of accumulation:

1. For the potential surplus
2. Regarding the actual surplus
3. Regarding the investment rate

<sup>[550]</sup> Calculated based on data provided by Hansen & Marzouk, Op. cit., citing Plan Follow-up Reports and the United Nations Statistical Yearbook.

<sup>[551]</sup> Calculated based on data provided by Sameer Radwan, Hansen & Marzouq, Mabro.

annual growth rate of 4-5%. Consequently, the output distribution between investment and consumption remained stable. Remarkably, in a certain period, the rate of increase in consumption outpaced the rate of increase in production. In the early 1960s, the total consumption rate surpassed the growth rate, with consumption increasing by 46.9% from 1960 to 1965, while the gross product increased by 37.1% according to official estimates,<sup>[552]</sup> or 31.5% according to Hansen's estimate.

The government bridged this gap by borrowing from abroad, with US wheat aid playing a significant role.<sup>[553]</sup>

Table (72)

Annual borrowing rate at current prices<sup>[554]</sup>

Period	1948-1950	1954-1956	1960-1963
Borrowing rate	6 million pounds	32 million pounds	67 million pounds

Thus, borrowing from foreign sources funded a portion of the investment and another portion of the consumption, especially wheat. The state played a decisive role by depending on abroad rather than primarily developing domestic resources. This represented its alternative to gathering the potential surplus. The latter certainly exceeded the actual surplus, and its rate outperformed that of investments and savings by minimizing waste and resource mismanagement. This fact alone indicates that Nasserism did not carry out a progressive transformation in the socio-economic structure.

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<sup>[552]</sup> Ali Sabry, Op. cit., p. 81, p. 56 (respectively).

<sup>[553]</sup> Based on his estimate of the annual growth rate of output during the five-year plan period. Quoted from Mabro, Op. cit., p. 255.

<sup>[554]</sup> Hansen & Marzouk, Op. cit., table 8.7.

**Drowning in debt wasn't waiting for an end. On the contrary, the borrowing rate was increasing, and the state's plans ended with the threat of economic catastrophe. Therefore, the state's role in amassing the surplus did not lead to a real increase in the rate of general accumulation nor to a radical change in its social sources, as already seen. This is confirmed by recalling that the pressures of debt and the balance of payment deficit hampered the development process until the growth rate reached a negative ratio in 1967, meaning that the relatively high rate of general accumulation during the five-year plan compared to the period immediately preceding it, i.e., 1955-1960, rapidly relapsed, especially with the cessation of American aid.**

**The general rate of accumulation is linked to the mechanisms of its process. The process of mobilizing surplus was carried out via groups of large landowners, contractors, brokers, and adventurers of all kinds. In the forefront was the special role of bureaucrats closely linked to individuals from these groups, economically and politically. Furthermore, these belonged to a corrupt state apparatus that operated with backward and reactionary mechanisms and whose ambitions were limited to mere survival and the pacification of social and political conflict. This phenomenon was associated with a pronounced tendency toward luxury consumption, both among the dominant class and high-ranking officials, alongside a significant increase in the expenditure on a security state apparatus. Furthermore, the dominant class was unable to effectively allocate the remaining surplus, portions of which were squandered during the investment process itself. The mismanagement was accompanied by another process that was organically linked to it, which was the squandering of the labor force. For instance, the rate of increase in employment was less than the rate of increase in the population, and the opposite did not happen until after the fall of Nasserism. The proportion of the working population to the total population also decreased:**

**Table (73)**



### **Ratio of workforce to population** <sup>[555]</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Ratio of employment to population (%)</b>
<b>1947</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>1960-1965</b>	<b>30.1</b>
<b>1966-1970</b>	<b>28</b>

**As for value-added-producing labor, its share of total employment shrank as follows:**

**Table (74)** <sup>[556]</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Value-added-producing labor in total employment (%)</b>
<b>1959/1960</b>	<b>67.2</b>
<b>1965/1966</b>	<b>66.6</b>
<b>1969/1970</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>1974</b>	<b>63.2</b>

**Additionally, the proportion of workers in agriculture and industry declined slightly, from 60.8% in 1947 to 60.75% in 1960 to 60.6% in 1966.** <sup>[557]</sup>

**The rate of absorption of labor by industry also reached its lowest rate during the Nasserite period:**

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<sup>[555]</sup> Based on the data of: Mabro, Abdel Nabi El-Toukhi (two references previously mentioned).

<sup>[556]</sup> These figures were extracted based on data from Mabro, Abdel Nabi El-Toukhi, and other sources. By value-added labor, it is meant labor in the fields of material production: agriculture, industry, transportation of goods, and construction.

<sup>[557]</sup> Calculated based on data mentioned by Fathi Abdel Fattah, the Contemporary Village, pp. 110-111.

**Table (75)**

**Rate of absorption of labor force by industry:**

Period	Annual rate (%)
1937-1960	20 <sup>[558]</sup>
1960-1970	18 <sup>[559]</sup>
1960-1965	16 <sup>[560]</sup>

Furthermore, the employment rate declined relative to the supply of the labor force, indicating that open unemployment was rising.

**Table (76)**

**Employment rate relative to labor supply<sup>[561]</sup>**

1947	%90
1960	%73
1970	%63

**Outcomes of the accumulation process**

The processes of surplus accumulation and expenditure were characterized by significant waste and squandering. The overall tendency of accumulation can be assessed by analyzing the distribution of total investments alongside the growth rates of fixed capital across different sectors. In a country whose rulers claim to

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<sup>[558]</sup> Based on the data of Mabro, Op. cit.,

<sup>[559]</sup> Based on the data of Mabro, Ibid.

<sup>[560]</sup> Based on data from the Ministry of Planning. Quoted from Abdel Nabi El-Toukhi, Op. cit.,

<sup>[561]</sup> Based on the data of Amr Mohi Eddin, Evaluation of the Industrialization Strategy in Egypt and the Available Alternatives in the Future - Abdel Fattah Qandil, a study presented to the Second Annual Scientific Conference of Egyptian Economists - Mabro, Op. cit.,

be undergoing rapid development and that has a large population, the general tendency of accumulation should favor sectors that produce added value, especially considering that this country does not significantly export services. If the actual and the potential surplus are utilized, the service sectors should receive the essential minimum. Consequently, the maximum possible surplus would be allocated to the accumulation process. Thereby, the highest possible rate of growth is attained.

The general tendency of the accumulation process reflects the movement of the entire economy's structure, determining the function of each sector in absorbing the generated surplus, the overall activity of the owning class, and the general nature of economic growth. Analyzing the direction of the accumulation process reveals the depth of economic policy transformations and the extent of social changes. Figures alone are not useful without an analysis of the economic structure and its operational mechanisms. Therefore, analyzing the general trend of accumulation involves putting the meat on the bones to understand the economy's movement and mechanisms. The phenomenon characterizing the economy in modern Egypt is summarized as combined, backward growth. In terms of accumulation, the reproduction of backwardness is marked by the increasing relative expansion of the non-value-added economic sector, alongside its absolute expansion. In contrast, the productive sector did not witness significant accumulation in technology production establishments or in meeting basic needs. Instead, accumulation in the value-added sector focused on import substitution and export production establishments.

Many exaggerations were made about the quality and rate of development during the Nasserite era, and perceptions were also raised about the alleged bureaucratic role in building an industrial edifice. This will be analyzed below:

Throughout the Nasserite period, the rate of fixed capital formation in the industry was much lower than the rate of net profit:

**Table (77)** <sup>[562]</sup>

Year	Fixed capital formation rate in industry (%)
1945	-2.5
1946	3.6
1947	7.4
1948	12.3
1949	13.2
1950	10.5
1951	8.7
1952	6.7
1953	3
1954	4.4
1955	9.2
1956	7.1
1957	0.4
1958	4.5
1959	4.3
1960	2.4
1961	0.1
1962	3.8
1963	6
1964	2.3

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<sup>[562]</sup> Calculated based on the data of Sameer Radwan, Op. cit.,

1965	2.7
1966	3.8
1967	1.5

The profit rate from 1945 to 1950 was about 20%, increasing to approximately 35% after 1952.

In agriculture, where the rate of profit was higher than in industry, the rate of fixed capital formation reached the following percentages:

**Table (78)** <sup>[563]</sup>

Year	Rate of accumulation (%)
1952	0.1
1953	1.6
1954	2.3
1955	3.2
1956	2.2
1957	1.6
1958	1.5
1959	2.7
1960	2.9
1961	3.3
1962	7.4
1963	7.4
1964	8.4
1965	5.4
1966	4.3

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<sup>[563]</sup> Calculated based on the data of Sameer Radwan, Ibid.

1967

3.8

The relatively high rate of accumulation in the 1960s is mainly attributed to the investments in the High Dam. Assume that the profit rate in agriculture was 20% (a modest rate). Also suppose that the proportion of capital components such as machinery, raw materials, wages, etc., the rate of accumulation of circulating capital, which was allocated to raw materials and other production services, and variable capital, which is allocated to wages, was equal to the rate of accumulation of fixed capital mentioned above; it becomes clear that a considerable portion of surplus was transferred annually from agriculture or dissipated. This portion amounted to approximately 100 million pounds per year. This figure is supplementary to a percentage of the overall circulating and variable capital, based on their share of the total capital. When the same criteria are applied to the industry, the following amount was annually transferred, along with another proportion of the total circulating and variable capital:

Table (79)

The amount of surplus wasted or transferred annually from the industrial sector in millions of pounds  
(at constant 1960 prices) <sup>[564]</sup>

Year	Value per year
1945-1950	31.6
1952-1956	60.7
1957-1960	98.00
1961-1965	85.00

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<sup>[564]</sup> Calculated based on Sameer Radwan's data, and on the assumption that the annual profit rate = 20%.

To be fair, consider that a portion of the agricultural surplus was likely being consumed by small landowners, who owned 35% of the land in 1952, which rose to 57% later. However, it was less than the proportion of land they owned, as the small size of the majority of holdings did not enable peasants to produce a surplus, except for the medium landowners, who could produce a limited amount. In this way, the consumption and waste of businessmen and landlords, along with their investments in trade activities, were very large. Additionally, it is significant to note that the state was also engaged in similar practices: luxury consumption and extensive investment outside of value-added sectors.

**Table (80)**

**Sector shares of investments at current prices (annual average%)**  
[565]

Year	1952/1953- 1956/1957	1957/1958- 1959/1960	1959/1960- 1964/1965	1965/1966- 1966/1967
Agriculture	11.4	14.9	23.4	21.8
Industry	23.8	25.7	26.6	27.4
Electricity	5	4	7.4	17.1
Transportation	14.1	18.8	19.3	13.4
Housing	32.5	23.1	10.7	12.5
Services	9.8	12.1	10	6.3
Other	1.8	1.4	2.6	1.5

Relying only on the table gives misleading results. A considerable portion of the investments in agriculture and industry did not represent entirely new capital but were instead partially allocated for replacement and renewal. Considering this observation leads to the following paradoxes:

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[565] Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 62.



**Table (81)**

**Annual formation of fixed capital in the manufacturing industry  
in million pounds at 1960 prices <sup>[566]</sup>**

Year	Annual investments	Annual net accumulation	Machines only
1945-1950	26	20.5	8.2
1952-1960	43	20.4	9.7
1957-1960	53	14.6	6.4
1961-1965	60	18.6	10

**Table (82)**

**Accumulation in agriculture and animal husbandry at 1960 prices  
(in million pounds) <sup>[567]</sup>**

Annual net accumulation		Annual investments		Year
Without animal husbandry	Total	Without animal husbandry	Total	
6.2	5	5.6	32.3	1945-1950
9.3	7.9	15.1	32.7	1951-1955
8	10	19	32	1956-1960
38	40	52	78	1961-1965

**If this method of calculation is applied to all sectors, a more realistic picture of the trends of accumulation will be obtained instead of the misleading picture given by the traditional tables of**

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<sup>[566]</sup> Calculated based on the data of Sameer Radwan, Op. cit.,

<sup>[567]</sup> Calculated based on data from Sameer Radwan, Ibid., and other references.

the distribution of investments and GDP. The criterion that is often used, which is the role of different sectors in realizing added value, is also inaccurate, but it nevertheless shows a clear trend for the growth of services, the largest of the tertiary sectors:

**Table (83)**  
**Sectors' shares in achieving GDP (%)** <sup>[568]</sup>

Year	Agriculture	Industry and electricity	Construction	Communication	Commerce	Housing	Facilities	Services
55/1956	34.4	13.8	2.3	6.0	11.0	7.3	-	21.1
60/1961	31.5	20.9	2.8	7.3	11.4	6.4	0.5	19.9
64/1965	29.7	22.7	4.7	8.9	8.6	3.8	0.4	21.1
67/1968	29.0	22.0	3.8	5.5	8.3	5.5	0.5	24.2

The large gap mentioned above between the rate of accumulation in agriculture and industry and the rate of profit indicates that the bulk of the surplus was directed to non-value-added activities, in addition to waste and luxury consumption by the ruling elite and the dominant class. It is not reasonable to assume that the profits of the non-productive sector, which was not considered here, were transferred to the productive sectors, for the simple reason that the net rate of accumulation, regardless of its source, was determined. It was assumed, to be fair, that its only source was the same sector, agriculture or industry. Within the framework of this assumption, the rate of profit remained several times higher than the rate of accumulation.

This disparity clearly highlights the trend in the accumulation process and the actual role of the productive sector within it. Rather than being a central driver of capital accumulation, it primarily functioned as a source of surplus. A significant portion of this

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<sup>[568]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 62.

surplus operated outside the production process. Ultimately, there was an expanded reproduction of a distorted economic structure, in which production, objectively, served as an intermediary link within the circulation process. Industrial capital, in this structure, appears as a genuine part of trading capital that operates in all intermediate activities, including the leasing of real estate. Eventually, the destination of the accumulation process in Nasserite Egypt was trading activities.

Significant growth in the tertiary sectors, if not underpinned by adequate growth in the productive sectors, is cancerous, i.e., at the expense of the potential production process. This form of growth was experienced in Nasserite Egypt as a result of the underdevelopment of development; for its perpetuation, the regime had some accountability. For instance, the expansion of the services sector was predetermined to serve the political purposes of the ruling elite. Research confirmed that a third of the increase in income directed to the services facilities during the Nasserite period was mainly due to the increase in the number of office staff.<sup>[569]</sup> This pattern of capital accumulation was associated with a rise in unemployment, surplus labor, and marginal activities on a vast scale.

The bottom line regarding the general tendency of the accumulation process in Nasserite Egypt is that it did not proceed in such a way as to achieve the highest possible rate of growth overall. Conversely, it hindered the growth of productive sectors, affecting both capital and labor. Meanwhile, intermediary activities emerged alongside the marginalization of the population. Consequently, this resulted in a massive waste of both the surplus and the labor force.

This last point reveals that Nasserism could not and did not even try to mobilize the *potential* surplus. In light of the hideous squandering of the actual surplus, it is impossible to expect the

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<sup>[569]</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

**mobilization of the potential one, especially since the growth of unemployment proceeded at a rapid pace not due to increased mechanization but to weak economic growth. The backward-reactionary character of Nasserite economic policy was then becoming quite evident. The development of productivity in industry and agriculture during that period, as has already been addressed, was extremely low.**

### **The role of the state in determining the general direction of accumulation**

**The above data highlights a specific idea: the state did not change the general tendency of accumulation but made some partial adjustments. The most important change was shifting accumulation from the housing sector to the High Dam and widening and deepening the Suez Canal. In the field of industry, the Nasserite government encouraged and pushed the transition from the conventional consumer sector to the durable and intermediate commodity sector. Additionally, it dealt effective blows to the housing construction activity. Its decision in this regard was an alternative to its inability to mobilize more actual and potential surplus and invest it in the areas it believed were necessary. This initiative could have a progressive significance if this restriction had been made in favor of a development process capable of giving better outcomes in the future; thereby, the upcoming housing problem would be solved in the context of general development. The missing role, which could have led to significant change, is the pressure to change the pattern of consumption and, more importantly, the dominant culture in favor of a rational, more open, and critical one. Placing the economy ahead of politics, or at least in line with it, while fighting parasitism, corruption, and consumerist foolishness was also necessary. This required, first and foremost, the resignation of the Nasserite government.**

**In summary, the accumulation process was not entirely capitalist. However, its underlying mechanisms remained interconnected, combining both capitalist and pre-capitalist elements. Thus, the growth pattern reflected the underdevelopment of development. Exploiting peasants was the primary source of surplus, while the growth of industry represented the rise of the merchant-industrialist phenomenon. The state provided its economic sector as a gift to parasites, thieves, and brokers. Despite the apparent increase in wage labor, many workers became disguised as unemployed, parasites on the state sector, or owners of small businesses, most of which were commercial or non-productive.**

### **Third: Mechanisms of Reproducing Underdevelopment**

#### **Prologue**

**The Nasserite economic policy, particularly during its peak period of political and social prominence from 1960 to 1965, has been thoroughly analyzed. It was determined that this policy exemplified a phenomenon referred to as the underdevelopment of development. Furthermore, it was observed that economic growth during this period was constrained when compared to:**

**1. The accomplishments that were realized over the two decades of development in various underdeveloped countries through direct investment by foreign private capital.**

**2. The aspirations, or rather, the hopes, of the Nasserite elite.**

**But now the mechanisms by which this development process took place are addressed.**

**First, the transformations that took place in the Egyptian economic structure during the period were:**

**1. The monetary character of the economy grew, especially in those areas where the simple form of exchange had not yet disappeared.**

**2. The degree of reliance on a single crop for export declined, with yarn and textiles, as well as other agricultural exports, partially replacing it.**

**The economy became more diversified, yet the monoculture of exports had not disappeared as a feature.**

**3. The industry's import substitution policy resulted in difficulties with financing and the balance of payments.**

**4. The phenomena of unemployment and marginalization became more prominent. Moreover, the commodity production sectors could not absorb a sizable portion of the surplus labor. Therefore, a large portion of it turned into disguised unemployment in the government and the state economic sector.**

**5. The fundamental feature of underdeveloped economies remained as before, even becoming more profound, which is the uneven and combined character of development.** <sup>[570]</sup>

**Undoubtedly, significant blows were dealt to overt forms of imperialist control, exemplified by the Suez Canal Company, as well as the stringent terms associated with loans and aid frequently imposed on backward countries. Nevertheless, this did not help surpass the process of underdevelopment of development.**

**It should be highlighted that the imperialists could not have ceased, in the context of the existing political and economic dynamics, from playing the principal role in perpetuating underdevelopment in Nasserite Egypt, albeit in more subtle ways.**

**Egypt's modernization has been ongoing since the era of Muhammad Ali, including engagement and re-engagement with the global market. However, it has always been a process of the underdevelopment of development. There has been a limited and**

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<sup>[570]</sup> The phenomenon of uneven and combined development also exists in capitalist systems. However, it is continuously being surpassed, reproduced, and surpassed again. In contrast, in underdeveloped systems, it is a constant phenomenon, deeply rooted in the foundations of the system.

dependent industrialization, as well as uneven and combined development, in the sense of a discrepant pattern of growth for various societal sectors. Examples include education, which produces well-educated individuals who migrate abroad because the market is unable to absorb them. The industry has been characterized by a constant crisis and operates at a part of its capacity due to the narrowness of the domestic market and the difficulty of exporting. In addition, its various branches do not integrate to a significant extent. The advancement of medicine contributed to a population explosion because it was not accompanied by the transformation to a rational and modern culture. The same applies to all components of society: *growth in constant crisis*.

#### **A- Reproduction of the dependent consumption mode**

This topic was previously addressed during the analysis of the role of import substitution. The persistence of the dependent consumption model can be attributed to the largely unchanged social structure.<sup>[571]</sup> This was further reinforced by Nasserite economic policies, which sought to boost income within the same framework of that era.

#### **B. Reproducing the Structure of Underdevelopment**

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<sup>[571]</sup> Certainly, dependent consumption involves the use of useful goods in terms of objects. However, consumption as a pattern is not formed and reconstituted according to the rest of the local conditions: the production structure, the characteristics of the environment, and the cultural heritage. Therefore, its development is not consistent with and reflective of a general social development but rather a complex and dissonant one. Commodities are created without a parallel advancement in cultural practices or production methods. Products manufactured within a European context, characterized by specific socio-economic conditions, frequently fail to meet the needs of individuals residing in environments shaped by distinct heritages and realities. This discrepancy results in significant social fragmentation and feelings of alienation.



### **\*Persistence and Deepening Technological Dependency**

Most researchers overlook that Nasserism implemented its industrial initiatives with the direct support of Western capitalist states and institutions. However, to depict itself as an enemy of imperialism, it exaggerated the role of Soviet assistance in this regard while downplaying the considerable support received from Western sources. The extent and methods by which the dominant class relies on Western technology will be explored here, with a particular focus on the analysis of Soviet scholar F. A. Lutskevich, who was sympathetic to Nasserism.

Up until 1960, the Egyptian industry depended entirely on technology imported from capitalist countries. Throughout the five-year plan, these countries supplied between 60 and 70% of Egypt's equipment and machinery needs. The share of these countries decreased after 1967, reached 40% in 1968, increased to 43% in 1969, and then to 44% in 1970, without considering the machines and raw materials needed for complete factories.<sup>[572]</sup> The uses of capital loans during the five-year plan were summarized by the Soviet scholar as follows:

1. The United States initially financed the purchase of food products from its domestic market. However, beginning in 1960, it paid increasing attention to financing industrial projects. That year, it provided a loan to Egypt to expand the Edfina food factories for preserved foods. In 1962/1963, it provided the cellophane factory with three million dollars. It also invested 30.6 million dollars to establish a power plant west of Cairo with a capacity of 261 thousand kilowatt-hours. Additionally, American companies provided the necessary expertise and technology for paper and television factories, the power plant in the west of Cairo, and oil exploration operations. Additionally, from 1952 to 1965, the United States played a significant role in the development of infrastructure

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<sup>[572]</sup> F. A. Lutskevich, Op. cit., p. 91, p. 92.

in Egypt, accounting for 65% of the roads constructed, totaling 4,600 km, 29% of the schools, and 27% of the hospitals and other healthcare facilities. It also funded the Nubian monuments rescue initiative. In addition, it contributed to the reclamation of 220,000 feddans, which represented 17% of the total reclaimed land during the Nasserite era. In 1966, equipment and machinery represented 20.6% of imports from the United States, while in 1970, they constituted 37% of them.

2. West Germany significantly contributed to financing the industrial development in Nasserite Egypt. Alongside Italy, German companies provided expertise, making them the leading contributors to the country's industrial growth during that era. Germany contributed to the establishment of various industries, including providing 20% of the capital for the Iron and Steel Company, Kima Company, North Cairo Power Plant, Assiut Power Plant, and another in Damanhour. In addition to a factory for assembling transport vehicles and buses, diesel companies, and small passenger cars. They also developed railway lines, electrified the Helwan-Cairo line, built a shipyard in Port Saeed, created a fertilizer factory in Aswan, explored oil, established textile factories, built plants for pumping potable water and irrigation, and developed irrigation systems in Kom Ombo. Additionally, they helped build a large number of bridges on the Nile and other structures. In 1964, there were three thousand experts from West Germany in Egypt, mainly working in military factories.<sup>[573]</sup> In 1956, Egyptian military factories started contributing to the production of durable goods and other items. The share of machinery imports to total imports from Germany at constant 1960 prices was:

Table (84)

Year	Ratio of machinery imports
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<sup>[573]</sup> Ibid., p. 107. Abdel Nasser also referred to this.

1966	55
1970	43

Following the severing of political relations and aid in 1965, deals between the Egyptian government and German firms continued via Swiss and Spanish companies, which were financed by German entities.

3. Italy: Italian companies have played a significant role in providing machinery, technology, and capital to various sectors, including automobiles (e.g., Fiat), petroleum, petrochemicals, textiles, chemicals, and the food industry. In addition, they played a key role in reclaiming 290,000 feddans, a project launched in 1959 under an official economic cooperation agreement. Machinery constituted approximately 20% of Egypt's imports from Italy.

4. Other capitalist countries: Britain, France, Switzerland, and Japan, contributed to supplying the textile, chemical, cement, pharmaceutical, and food industries with technology. In 1968, machinery constituted 40% of Egyptian imports from Britain, while it constituted 35-40% of imports from Japan during the period from 1961 to 1966.

The value of imports of machinery and equipment amounted to the following (in million Egyptian pounds):<sup>[574]</sup>

Table (85)

Country Year	Capitalist	Socialist
1961	44.9	21.1
1966	71.1	47.4
1969	30.1	25.3

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<sup>[574]</sup> Ibid., p. 90, p. 138.

<b>1970</b>	<b>40.7</b>	<b>31.8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>186.8</b>	<b>125.6</b>

In addition, Nasserite Egypt relied on capitalist countries for the import of almost all organic chemicals, wool, dyes, and pharmaceuticals.

Regarding the High Dam crisis, it had a purely political nature.

There is no doubt that the West's contribution to the development of Egyptian industry remains limited compared to its contribution to more loyal countries, such as those in Latin America, East Asia, and Iran. The industrialization process in Egypt and the underdeveloped world as a whole was in complete harmony with the effects of the third industrial revolution in the capitalist world, represented by the massive development of the highly sophisticated goods industry that needed to expand overseas markets.

Regarding Soviet support in the field of industry, it aimed to encourage the same pattern of import substitution development, i.e., to perpetuate underdevelopment. Its orientation did not differ at all from Western support.

### Areas of Soviet technical assistance

Building materials industry.

Caustic soda.

Cotton spinning.

Radio and TV assembly.

Assembly of railway cars and motorcycles.

Mining.

Flour and rice mills.

**Porcelain**

**Oil refining.**

**Electricity facilities.**

**The High Dam.**

**Land reclamation.**

**Steel, starting from 1968/1969.**

**The mining and machinery industry accounted for the largest share of Soviet loans to industry (93%).** <sup>[575]</sup>

**About 20% of the industrial investments, including the High Dam power plant, under the 1960–1965 plan were financed by Western loans, whereas 25% were financed by Soviet loans.**

**In summary, Nasserism could lessen its reliance on Western technology. Nevertheless, a partial alternative was to rely on importing from Eastern Europe rather than focusing on producing it domestically. Both sources of technology contributed to the perpetuation of underdevelopment. The benefits to the country's economy might have included better means of repaying Soviet loans and lower interest rates on them, which were quantitative gains.**

**The technological dependency was associated with the overall underdeveloped economic structure. Furthermore, it was exacerbated by the growth of the economy and the marked uneven and combined development.**

**About 20% of the industrial investments, including the High Dam power plant, under the 1960–1965 plan were funded by Western loans, whereas 25% were financed by Soviet loans.**

**1. Growth in the size of the modern sector is dependent on technology imports.**

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<sup>[575]</sup> The Soviet researcher did not specify what he meant by machines, but most likely he meant the assembly of tractors, means of transportation, and some types of motors..

2. Large-scale and long-term import substitution implied profound dependence on the global market, i.e., on capitalism.

3. Relying on ever-more-advanced imported technology makes it more difficult to break free from dependency.

**\*Persistence of financial dependency:**

In 1948, foreign capital represented 60% of the existing investments in joint-stock companies. Meanwhile, the public debt had been completely liquidated, and Egypt had large sterling balances in Britain. Only two years later, Egypt began receiving American aid. After a few more years, it exhausted all its sterling balances and started receiving aid and loans from various sources. Despite the nationalization of foreign investments, developed countries continued to back Nasserism, with only brief interruptions after the 1956 conflict. Additionally, Western assistance was resumed following the establishment of the Egyptian-Syrian union, making Egypt one of the top aid recipients in the world.

After the nationalization of foreign companies in 1957, private foreign capital through direct investment was supplanted by loans, which became the dominant form of foreign capital.

Therefore, the share of foreign capital in new investments declined from 16% in 1948 to 8.8% between 1952 and 1954 due to the reluctance of private foreign capital to flow in. However, it rose again to reach 27.5% during the years between 1960 and 1965.<sup>[576]</sup> due to an increase in the rate of borrowing. However, the direct participation of foreign capital did not completely disappear in establishments that required foreign expertise, such as steel and pharmaceuticals, although it was limited.

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<sup>[576]</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

There was a tendency for the proportion of direct foreign participation in new companies to decrease:<sup>[577]</sup>

From 1934 to 1939, it amounted to 53% of the total capital.

From 1940 to 1945, it reached 34%.

From 1946 to 1948, it reached 16%.

While the proportion of direct foreign contribution in 1952/1953 and throughout the 1950s reached 8.8%.<sup>[578]</sup>

However, loans replaced foreign direct investment and even surpassed its contribution to new projects:

Table (86)

**Total loans from capitalist countries, excluding short-term loans and US food aid (in millions of pounds, at fixed prices)<sup>[579]</sup>**

Loans	1/1/1961	1/1/1963	11/1/1967(*)	1/1/1970
Total	420.7	610.4	1515.9	1647.6
Total capitalist countries	214.2	369.9	772.8	852.4
US	68.1	87.6	297.8	297.8
Germany	41.1	72.5	122.8	141.9
Italy	34.3	79.6	133	142.5
Japan	17	17	21.2	21.2
England	5.4	25.4	11	13.7
France	10	10	33.9	33.9
Holland	5	5.3	6.7	6.7
Switzerland	4	4	6	5

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<sup>[577]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, Op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>[578]</sup> Sameer Radwan, Op. cit., p 208, p. 247.

<sup>[579]</sup> Lutskevich, Op. cit., p. 97 (from table 29).



<b>Sweden</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>14.4</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Others</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>28.4</b>
<b>World Bank</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>24.6</b>	<b>24.6</b>
<b>International Monetary Fund</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>89.7</b>	<b>120.3</b>

**\*Taking into account the change in the exchange value of the pound in 1963.**

**Therefore, Egypt's debt in 1970 amounted to \$3,789.48, not including military debt, which amounted to \$1,700 million. By 1965, U.S. food aid (soft loans) amounted to \$1.278 billion. When accounting for the Soviets' forgiveness of one-third of the \$1 billion loan for the High Dam, along with a significant portion of the arms debt, the aid and overall debt figure increases substantially. Consequently, Egypt's total debt, excluding waivers, free assistance, and short-term loans, amounted to \$6,827.51 billion. However, it was agreed that the value of food assistance would be refunded in Egyptian pounds.**

**Table (87)**

**Development of the volume of US aid (million dollars) <sup>[580]</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Aid</b>	<b>Food according to law 480</b>
<b>1952-1958</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>84.3</b>
<b>1959</b>	<b>71.7</b>	<b>57.2</b>
<b>1960</b>	<b>110.9</b>	<b>80.9</b>
<b>1961</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>102.3</b>
<b>1962</b>	<b>258.9</b>	<b>217.3</b>

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<sup>[580]</sup> Ibid., p. 100. The table was transferred with modifications and errors corrected.

1963	472.9	429.3
1964	170	170
1965	55.6(*)	37

\*Estimated

American aid significantly increased, starting in 1959, the year Nasserism began its crusade against communism in the Middle East, and Soviet help also poured in. According to F. A. Lutskevich, American aid in 1958 was only 780 thousand pounds, rising in 1959 to 25.6 million pounds (according to the table, it was more).<sup>[581]</sup> According to a serious researcher, the total American aid to Egypt in the period from 1961 to 1968 amounted to 1734.46 million dollars.<sup>[582]</sup>

The majority of these loans were provided at moderate interest rates, ranging from 5% to 7% before 1963 and from 3% to 5% thereafter. Additionally, Swedish loans were offered without interest. Transactions involving American wheat followed the American Law 480. The program began in 1955, offering an interest rate of 0.75 percent, along with a grace period of three years and a repayment schedule spanning 30 to 40 years. Additionally, 75% of the repayments were to be made in Egyptian pounds.<sup>[583]</sup> Lutskevich clarified that, according to the 1958-1960 agreement, 50 to 70% of the market value of the surplus food products supplied to Egypt was designated as loans, with a repayment period of 30 years at an

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<sup>[581]</sup> Abdel Nasser and the Battle of Economic Independence (1952-1971), p. 100.

<sup>[582]</sup> Mervat Sobhi, American Economic Aid to Egypt 1958-1961 and Its Impact on the Egyptian Economy, p. 258, quoted from: Sayyed El Nagger, Foreign aid to United Arab Republic, instate of national planning UAR 1965.

<sup>[583]</sup> Lutskevich, Op. cit., p. 98.

According to Adel Hussein, the value of the American food loans under Act 480 was used as follows: 45% for lending to the Egyptian government, 21% as loans provided by the Export-Import Bank as an agent of the American government, and 34% for American government spending (p. 257).

interest rate of 4% per annum. In the agreement for the years 1962 and 1963, 85% of the value of these products was designated as loans, with the repayment period extended to 40 years and the interest rate reduced to 0.75%. Some of this assistance was offered for free, encompassing food supplies and financial support for various service establishments. He further explained that the majority of loans from Western sources were of a long-term nature, with 73% having durations of 30 to 40 years (pp. 100-102).

Despite Nasserism's efforts in the development process, it was unable to increase the domestic savings rate, which remained around 12.25% throughout the Nasserite period, as mentioned earlier.

Given that 200 million pounds of sterling balances were utilized between 1952 and 1962,<sup>[584]</sup> which were unavoidably saved from other government expenses, it becomes clearer how incapable Nasserism was of building up a surplus.

In addition to support from capitalist countries, there was also support from socialist ones. Soviet and Eastern European loans amounted to the following:

Table (88)

Volume of loans from socialist countries to Egypt, India and China (in million dollars)<sup>[585]</sup>

Debtor country	Creditor country		
	Soviet Union	Eastern Europe	Total
Egypt (until 1971)	1198	641	1839

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<sup>[584]</sup> Ali Al-Geritli, *The Economic History of the Revolution*, p. 129.

<sup>[585]</sup> Adel Hussein, *Op. cit.*, part one, p. 158.

<b>India (until 1971)</b>	<b>1593</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>1975</b>
<b>China (until 1961)</b>	<b>1750</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>1750</b>

The foreign share in the 1960-1965 plan, which was the most significant development initiative ever undertaken by the Nasserite regime, reached 27.5%. This figure was projected to represent 45% of the total investments. Additionally, the proportion of foreign assistance for the industry reached 45%.

**Table (89)**

**Foreign aid in the five-year plan (in million pounds) <sup>[586]</sup>**

<b>Investments</b>	<b>Total investments</b>	<b>Total Aid</b>	<b>From socialist countries</b>	<b>From capitalist countries</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1513</b>	<b>417.4</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>207.4</b>
<b>Agricultural production(*)</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Industry(**)</b>	<b>516.5</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>Transportation</b>	<b>294.2</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>347.3</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>18.4</b>

\*Includes irrigation, drainage, and the High Dam.

\*\*Includes High Dam power plant and power lines.

In contrast to other Third World countries, the latter as a whole depended more during the same timeframe on their domestic savings, which accounted for 85%. <sup>[587]</sup>

The increased tendency to depend on external loans was due to:

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<sup>[586]</sup> Lutskevich, Op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>[587]</sup> Adel Hussein, Op. cit., part one, p. 712.

**1. The considerable waste of resources and the overall elevated expenses.**

**2. The regime's inability to effectively harness domestic savings, and instead, it squandered the surplus. In addition, its wasteful public spending reached 20% of GDP in 1960 and increased to 26% in 1965.**

**3. Foreign capital refrained from making direct investments in the Egyptian market except within the narrowest limits.**

**Soviet support also played an indirect role in pushing capitalist countries to assist Nasserite Egypt. However, the significant amount of Western aid cannot be solely justified by this factor, which may be considered one of the reasons for the favorable conditions of capitalist loans. The conditions for exporting technology and capital to Egypt during the period from 1952 to 1967 were more favorable than before. However, they were directed only to areas that ultimately serve the cycle of industrial capital in capitalist countries in a specific sense. This included stimulating the development, or, more accurately, the *growth*, of the Egyptian economy while maintaining its backwardness and even intensifying it through industry substituting imports and the infrastructure facilities required for this purpose. Additionally, the American wheat aid significantly helped cover up the escalating food gap. The latter mainly resulted from the import substitution policy and the export bias in agriculture, which required a major change in crop composition to be modified.**

**The significance of Western aid in supporting Nasserism became evident when imperialist economic pressures began in the mid-1960s. These followed the severing of diplomatic relations with West Germany in 1965 and the subsequent reduction of American aid in the same year (refer to Table 87). In 1966, Egypt became unable to meet its obligations in hard currencies. Consequently, it deferred these payments with the consent of France and Italy for 3 years and extended the repayment period to 7 years. Meanwhile, it was**

obligated to sell a third of its gold balance to pay its debt installments. This is clear in Table 90, and as mentioned by Lutskevich (p. 99). In the year 1967/1968, Egypt ceased all debt payments to the United States, Germany, Britain, the Common Market countries, and other capitalist countries, but it resumed paying them again starting in 1971.<sup>[588]</sup>

Beginning in 1966, imports shrank for the same reason. This shows how strong the relationship between export growth and investment growth had been, unless there was a special circumstance, such as massive foreign subsidies.

### Bankruptcy of Nasserite Egypt

Egypt experienced a persistent shortage of hard currency throughout the Nasserite era. The country frequently depleted its foreign exchange reserves in the mid-1960s, rendering it incapable of meeting its obligations for interest and principal payments on foreign debts. This situation exemplifies the concept of state bankruptcy. Foreign exchange reserves covered only one to two months of imports, and sometimes not even a day. Borrowing was done quickly, or part of the gold reserves was sold to secure hard currency. In 1966, the government also resorted to severely cutting imports (refer to Table 51).

In 1962, Abdel Nasser declared that the value of the gold balance was 65 million pounds, which is about accurate (it was actually 174 million dollars). This was the greatest amount for the gold balance

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<sup>[588]</sup> Lutskevich, Op. cit., p. 99.

Despite all these facts, Adel Hussein, a researcher and supporter of Nasserism, believed that *“the executed development was achieved amidst the success of neutralizing external pressures to a large extent, and therefore its rates depended primarily on internal factors.”* Thus, he completely ignored the facts, followed the footsteps of Nasserite propaganda, and relied on a fictitious logic. Source: Abdel Nasser and the Economic System: A Response to Opponents and Critics. “Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi” Magazine, Issue 35, January 1982, pp. 24-46.

throughout the Nasserite period, sufficient to finance more than two months of imports at the time.

In a serious study by Hansen-Nashashibi, it was stated that until the end of 1961, the cash reserve was 136 million pounds,<sup>[589]</sup> covering the state's imports and external obligations for 6 months at that time. The gold balance in 1962 amounted to 61 million pounds. Then, the foreign exchange balance became zero in 1962; the gold balance became the only monetary cover.<sup>[590]</sup>

**Table (90)**

**Egyptian cash reserves in the 1960s in millions of dollars, calculated on the basis of World Bank data and denominated in Egyptian pounds, rounding off fractions:**<sup>[591]</sup>

Year	Total reserve		Cash reserve		Golden Balance	
	In dollars	Denominated in pounds	In dollars	Denominated in pounds	Dollar denominated	Denominated in pounds
1960	267	102	90	34.6	177	68
1961	204	78.5	29	11.1	175	67.3
1962	223	97	49	21.3	174	75.6
1963	216	93.9	42	18.2	174	75.6
1964	224	97.4	84	36.5	140	60.9
1965	194	84	54	24.3	140	60.9
1966	157	68	63	27	94	40.9
1967	196	85	102	44	94	40.9
1968	187	81	75	32.6	112	48.7

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<sup>[589]</sup> President Gamal Abdel Nasser's address at the popular celebration in al-Gomhoriyya Square on the tenth anniversary of the revolution on 7/22/1962.

<sup>[590]</sup> Bent Hansen and Karim Nashashibi, Foreign Trade Regimes and Economic Development.

<sup>[591]</sup> Total reserves (includes gold, current US\$)-Egypt, Arab Rep.



1969	145	63	51	22	94	40.9
1970	165	71.7	74	32	91	39.5

**Note 1:** Continuous borrowing was employed to address the recurring issue of bankruptcy, which resulted in the cash balance not reflecting a zero value in the table. However, this situation was acknowledged in Nasserist officials' statements, as will be discussed further.

**Note 2:** The average value of monthly imports in 1965 was approximately 62 million dollars at 1959/1960 prices.

**Note 3:** The exchange rate of the Egyptian pound in the 1960s ranged between 2.3 and 2.6 dollars. In this table, it is calculated based on 2.6 before 1962 and 2.3 later. These were the official prices of the pound.

Salah Nasr<sup>[592]</sup> stated that economic difficulties prompted Abdel Nasser to assign him to travel to Rome in 1967 to conclude a loan. He was able to pave the way for a ten-million-dollar loan. He added that following the 1967 war, the state treasury had only a few dollars left. This led Abdel Nasser to ask him to meet with King Saud to demand a loan of ten million dollars. The king, who was residing in Egypt at the time, agreed.

Moreover, Dr. Ali Negm, a former governor of the Central Bank of Egypt, stated that *"in 1964, the state treasury did not have any foreign currency, and the country depended on the Soviet Union for its imports of wheat and other essential food commodities, which were supplied entirely in exchange for Egyptian cotton and primary raw materials."* He also mentioned that this situation compelled the state to sell 15 tons from its gold reserve, valued at ten million dollars.<sup>[593]</sup> According to him, the gold reserve originally totaled 154 tons, worth approximately 100 million dollars or 43.5 million pounds. However, Abdel Nasser declared in 1962 that the value of that reserve was 65 million pounds, indicating

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<sup>[592]</sup> Head of the General Intelligence Directorate from 1957 to 1967. Source: Revolution, Intelligence, and Setback, pp. 179-180.

<sup>[593]</sup> Amr Sabeh, Abdel Nasser, The Yemeni Revolution, and Egypt's Gold Reserves.

that it was partially eroded.<sup>[594]</sup> Upon review, Ali Negm's calculations appear inaccurate. The value of 15 tons of gold at that time amounted to 16.561 million dollars. This discrepancy raises inquiries regarding the fate of the remaining funds.

**\*Role of Foreign Trade:**

**Table (91)**

**Geographical distribution of Egyptian foreign trade in millions of pounds**<sup>[595]</sup>

Year		Socialist countries	Capitalist countries
1950	Export	20.6	119.3
	Import	14.5	147.2
1955	Export	40	72
	Import	13.5	137.7
1960	Export	102	55.8
	Import	64.2	133.4
1965	Export	120.1	75.6
	Import	90.4	224.4
1970	Export	202.9	66.9
	Import	115.7	157.7

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<sup>[594]</sup> President Gamal Abdel Nasser's address at the popular celebration in al-Gomhoryya Square on the tenth anniversary of the revolution on 7/22/1962.

<sup>[595]</sup> Lutskevich, Op. cit., Appendix 3, Appendix 4.

It will be focussed on the geographical changes in foreign trade with capitalist and socialist countries, as these changes form the basis of the question raised about independence and dependency.

**It is evident that foreign trade partially shifted toward socialist countries, especially since 1955/1956. Before discussing the significance of this shift, it should be highlighted that the share of socialist countries in Egypt's foreign trade seemed to be less than indicated by the figures. This is because imports of arms from the Soviet Union were not accounted for in the foreign trade statistics. Furthermore, the loan installment payments and related costs for the arm were offset by goods that were recorded as exports. Figures for imports from both groups also appear to be less than they were, especially those from capitalist countries. This discrepancy is due to the omission of machinery and equipment imports for industrial complexes in Egypt's customs statistics.<sup>[596]</sup>**

**This increasing shift toward the East began in 1955/56 when the Soviet Union entered as a buyer of rice and cotton stocks, two crops that were suffering from a recession due to the narrowness of their foreign markets. Thus, the Soviets saved Egyptian exports to a large extent from stagnation. The arms deal of 1955, followed by other deals, was an important factor in the growth of Egyptian exports to the Soviet Union, especially since it had dealt with the payment agreement system whereby imports were paid for with other goods. The Soviets resorted to reselling some of their Egyptian cotton imports in Europe at the lowest prices. This represented an indirect gain for Nasserite Egypt in the short term.**

**The trade balance, regardless of armament imports from socialist countries, was always in Egypt's favor, except for only two years during the period from 1952 to 1970.<sup>[597]</sup>**

**Cotton exports to capitalist countries declined due to the fierce competition of synthetic fibers and the downturn of the textile industry in Europe in the period from 1960 to 1967, which led to a**

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<sup>[596]</sup> Lutskevich mentioned this remark, Op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>[597]</sup> Muhya Ali Zaitoun, An applied study of some aspects of Egypt's trade relations with the socialist bloc and the rest of the world. Annual Scientific Conference of Egyptian Economists, Cairo, March 25-27, 1976.

drop in cotton prices. Therefore, Nasserism exported it to Eastern Europe.

**Table (92)**

**Capitalist countries' share of Egyptian cotton exports (%)** <sup>[598]</sup>

Year	Cotton exports to capitalist countries
1952/1953	64.6
1964/1965	28.4
170/1971	27.7

Thus, Egyptian cotton exports were saved from complete stagnation. Despite the Soviet market, this did not prevent cotton prices from continuously deteriorating. The cotton market crisis prompted the government to reduce the area under cultivation by 18% during the period 1952-1965. The Soviet Union's commitment to settle its debts with cotton and other goods was the sole factor that prevented a sharp decline. Moreover, Nasserite Egypt relied on socialist countries as the primary purchasers of its exports of manufactured goods, especially yarn and textiles, which represented the most significant portion of its industrial exports. Additionally, exports of these two categories of commodities to capitalist countries amounted to the following proportions:

**Table (93)**

**Share of the countries of the International Textile Agreement (mostly capitalist) in Egyptian textile and yarn exports** <sup>[599]</sup>

Year	Yarn exports (%)	Textile exports (%)
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<sup>[598]</sup> Lutskevich, Op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>[599]</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

1962	46.6	21.8
1965	28.2	25.3
1969	27.6	31.4
1970	25.8	27.8

The share of yarn in total exports to these countries declined, whereas the proportion of textiles rose after Egypt joined the International Agreement on Textile Products. This agreement enabled capitalist countries to import textile products from underdeveloped countries under specific quotas to support their industry. However, as competition led to a decline in the textile industry in Western Europe, these quotas were subsequently reduced.

The general structure of exports to socialist countries:

Table (94) <sup>[600]</sup>

Year Goods	1965	1970
Agricultural	%74.8	%62.2
Industrial	%25.2	%32.8

Which was almost similar to the structure of Egyptian exports as a whole:

Table (95) <sup>[601]</sup>

Year Goods	1965	1970
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<sup>[600]</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>[601]</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<b>Agricultural</b>	<b>%74.2</b>	<b>%69.2</b>
<b>Industrial</b>	<b>%25.8</b>	<b>%30.8</b>

**Manufactured exports constituted approximately 20% of Egypt's total exports to capitalist countries in the period from 1952 to 1970.**

**The aftermath of the 1967 war experienced a significant decline in trade relations with capitalist countries, primarily due to the withdrawal of their financial assistance to Egypt. This was particularly evident with Germany, which ceased its support in 1965, and the United States, which followed suit after 1967. The ever-increasing free currency crisis reached its peak during that period due to the occupation of Sinai, with its mines that were one of the sources of hard currency. Additionally, the burdens imposed by the warfare further strained the economy, despite Egypt receiving compensation for its losses resulting from the Suez Canal's closure, as agreed upon by the countries at the Khartoum Conference. Furthermore, Egypt's inability to meet its debt obligations to capitalist countries in 1967–1968 played a crucial role in the decline of commercial exchange with these countries.**

**A notable transformation in the geographical distribution of Egyptian foreign trade became apparent beginning in 1955, favoring the bloc of socialist countries, particularly the Soviet Union. These countries not only imported Egypt's primary agricultural product, cotton, but also accounted for a growing and substantial share of industrial exports, particularly yarn and textiles, during the studied period. The terms of trade with these countries were more advantageous compared to those with capitalist countries. While global pricing was frequently applied, transactions were often conducted by payment agreements, which proved to be more favorable for Egypt.**

**Meanwhile, the structure of trade with capitalist countries remained unchanged during that period, since they did purchase a**

larger proportion of Egyptian manufactured goods despite a notable growth in their overall export share. <sup>[602]</sup>

### **The Significance of Foreign Trade Transformations**

At first glance, the persistent growth of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe's share of Egypt's foreign trade during the Nasserite period looks to be evidence of an increasing degree of trade independence from the international market. Foreign trade, in terms of its commodity composition and geographical distribution, expresses the nature of the internal structure of the economy. Additionally, political factors frequently influence the formation of these structures. As seen, the economic structure of Nasserite Egypt did not undergo significant changes, particularly regarding the ongoing issue of underdevelopment. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct an internal analysis of Egyptian foreign trade to unmask the significance of those changes:

1. Egypt has been suffering from a hard currency crisis since the late 1940s, which worsened during the Nasserite period despite receiving significant foreign aid. The crisis is primarily caused by limited export opportunities for Egyptian products and the economy's slow response to global market changes, as well as focusing on import substitution policies, which exacerbate the situation. Western loans and aid partially solved the problem, but there was no escape from resorting to borrowing from the Soviet bloc and seeking its assistance, especially since it was better able to absorb Egypt's stagnant exports under the payment agreement system. This allowed Egypt to partially replace hard currencies with raw materials and manufactured goods to meet some of its economic

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<sup>[602]</sup> There is no doubt that price changes limit the possibility of accurately assessing the true changes in the structure of exchanges. However, focusing on geographical changes primarily during a single period minimizes the impact of price changes.



**growth needs by tilting the geographic distribution of foreign trade toward socialist countries.**

**2. The export sector had been suffering from limited opportunities in the global market due to various reasons related to the latter. Consequently, the Egyptian economy struggled to effectively replace its main crop, cotton, in line with developments in that market. Attempts were made to diversify production, but the pattern of diversification did not align with the demands of capitalist markets, which are essential for maintaining stable relationships. Throughout the period under consideration, the composition of Egyptian exports to capitalist countries remained virtually constant. However, a significant shift occurred in its composition for the Soviet bloc, specifically the replacement of textiles and rice with raw cotton. This change caused the Egyptian exports to this bloc to resemble its overall composition. This indicates that the export substitution process was not well-suited to the changes in capitalist markets, as cotton, rice, and textiles had easier access to socialist countries. The latter, which supported Nasserism, repaid loans via payment agreements that required them to acquire goods, many of which were not suitable for export to capitalist markets. Meanwhile, consumer industries in socialist countries experienced notable growth, leading to a heightened demand for raw materials from underdeveloped communities. This was reflected in the substantial increase in exports of raw materials from these countries to the Comecon group. It experienced a rise of 192% from 1960 to 1967. In comparison, the Comecon group's imports of industrial products from these countries grew by only 3.7% during the same period.<sup>[603]</sup>**

**3. On the contrary, the trade balance showed a deficit toward capitalist countries in all years, reflecting the export sector's inability to adapt to their markets' demands. Significant American assistance, especially in the form of grains, largely offset this deficit.**

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<sup>[603]</sup> Ramzi Zaki, *The External Debt Crisis - A View from the Third World*, p. 501.

This explains that the cessation of American wheat aid in 1965 severely exacerbated the hard currency problem and worsened the economic crisis. This also highlights the role of the *political* factor in addressing the poor performance of the economy, which was exposed after the cutoff of U.S. wheat and German aid in 1965.

Table (96)

Trade balance deficit with capitalist countries in millions of pounds <sup>[604]</sup>

Year	Deficit value
1952	63.7
1955	65.7
1960	77.6
1965	148.8
1970	90.8

4. The relationship between structural changes in the economy and transformations in foreign trade: The internal mechanism that drove the process of diversifying production and developing Egyptian industry has been previously analyzed. This internal mechanism was, in its essence, an external drive represented in changes in capitalist markets resulting from the third technological revolution. This led, among other factors, to a decline in demand for the traditional raw materials of underdeveloped countries. Furthermore, the extensive manufacturing of technology with a tendency for capital to migrate to highly advanced industries explains the relatively large wave of industrialization observed in underdeveloped countries during the two decades of development, as well as the shift toward import substitution. In Nasserite Egypt,

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<sup>[604]</sup> Lutskevich, Op. cit., p. 83.

the development process aimed to increase income and provide foreign currencies. However, the feeble demand for Egyptian industrial exports, in addition to other reasons, pushed the state toward expanding the import substitution industry. Nevertheless, the recession in traditional Egyptian exports persisted.<sup>[605]</sup> Furthermore, the import substitution process fostered a demand for technology exports from capitalist countries, rather than solving the problem of Egypt's balance of payments. The main conclusion is that the structural transformations experienced in Egypt have been a mere response to the dynamics of the capitalist market. They have not been a starting point for various transformations that occurred in relations with this market, especially in terms of trade. This is a matter of great importance regarding the relationship between the economic changes that took place and independence and dependency.

Structural transformations were consistent with the general character of the new international division of labor, despite the growth of economic relationships with socialist countries, which themselves dealt with capitalism on market terms. Furthermore, the expansion of import substitution was consistent with the aforementioned division. In contrast, the role of cotton declined relatively in favor of textiles, rice, vegetables, and fruits, which was consistent with that division, albeit to a limited extent. However, this gap did not indicate a trend toward economic independence. Instead, it reflected poor economic performance and its failure to adequately respond to the demands of the process of underdevelopment of development. This situation was not conducive to revolutionizing the economy but rather a consequence of its

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<sup>[605]</sup> During the “decades of development,” the share of manufactured goods in the exports of Third World countries, especially East Asian countries, increased and amounted to one-third of the increase in exports in the period 1960-1975. These manufactured goods included clothing, textiles, iron and steel, chemicals, electrical and non-electrical appliances, and transportation equipment. Muhammad Abd Al-Shafee, *Op. cit.*, pp. 241-244.

relative impotence. For precisely this reason, Egypt's export industry remained in crisis during the Nasserite era. This could have led to a disaster had the aid of socialist countries not greatly contributed to saving the country from ruin, in addition to the important role of American food subsidies. Despite these and other aids, the performance of Egyptian exports remained the Achilles heel of the Egyptian economic system. In terms of quantity, their volume did not increase significantly throughout the period, and in terms of quality, the structure of goods allocated for export was not radically modified to suit the needs of the global market. <sup>[606]</sup>

**Record number of amount and price of Egyptian exports in dollars <sup>[607]</sup>**

Table 97 (1953=100)			Table 98 (1963=100)		
Year	Quantity	Value	Year	Quantity	Value
1953	100	100	1963	100	100
1955	90.8	111.1	1964	96.7	106.8
1957	93.9	134.3	1965	102.4	113.2
1959	107.7	104.6	1967	90	117
1961	114.5	103.6	1970	113	123
1962	77	97			

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<sup>[606]</sup> Advanced countries enacted protectionist measures against imported textiles from underdeveloped countries after the volume of these exports had increased significantly. This measure forced these countries to readjust their economies to the demands of capitalist markets. (e.g., they resorted to expanding the production of electrical and electronic devices, etc.). Countries that could not adapt quickly enough, such as Turkey, suffered from stagnation. This was also the case of Nasserite Egypt, which could partially replace cotton with other export goods and was unable to significantly increase the volume of its exports. Perhaps nature added additional reasons, as Egypt does not have large reserves of mineral wealth. Muhammad Abd al-Shafee, *Op. cit.*, pp. 254-257.

<sup>[607]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, *Op. cit.*, pp. 280-281.

### **C. The Illusion of Relative Independence and Progress**

The Nasserists and their proponents describe the status of the Egyptian economy during the Nasserite period as independent. They base their argument on the tilt toward the East that the period witnessed and on what they deemed an extensive manufacturing process.

It has been established that the structural changes in the Egyptian economy occur within the context of the global division of labor, influenced by capitalist countries. Consequently, its dynamics have primarily been responses, indicating complete dependency. What was added during the Nasserite period was an inefficient performance to the extent that it hindered the process of reintegrating the economy in the global market. This is very different from relative independence. This inefficiency was mainly represented in the limited process of export substitution compared to other countries, such as East Asia and oil-producing countries, despite the unique degree of diversification achieved in the Egyptian economy. Political factors played a crucial role in this regard. For instance, the Western prohibition on weapons supply to Egypt compelled it to expand its exports to socialist countries in return for armaments. This inhibited the incentive for adopting an export substitution strategy that might be aligned with the demands of the global market. Additionally, the reluctance of private foreign capital to flow in was an additional factor that hindered the process of readjustment to the international market.

The weak performance of exports, despite their relative diversity, led to the expansion of borrowing on a large scale. The socialist countries offered more favorable terms than those offered by capitalist countries, especially with regard to the method of repaying loans and the price of imports. Therefore, Nasserism, under pressure from the weak performance of its exports, resorted to these countries to partially obtain technology and loans, although its basic orientation toward capitalist countries remained.

This orientation toward socialist countries, in turn, contributed to maintaining Egypt's export performance in a state of relative deficit, leading to significant stagnation. This indicated the economy's inability to adapt to the transformations in the global market. *This reflects the extent of economic stagnation, not the level of its independence.* This becomes evident when connecting the stagnation of foreign trade to the direction and mechanisms of the development process, as previously analyzed. Can this stagnation be described as relative independence? Can one speak of improving the conditions of dependency? Isolation, or weak relations with the international market, has nothing to do with independence; rather, it signifies isolation. Economic independence involves engaging in the creation and transformation of the international market on an equal footing. By setting aside theoretical concepts such as independence and dependency and being content with concrete facts, it is clear that the Egyptian economy during the Nasserite era had become in a diminished position within the global market. It became less effective, less capable of adapting, and increasingly reliant on foreign support. Significantly, Egypt's share of world exports as a whole deteriorated from 1% in 1949 to 0.3% in the 1960s to 0.2% in the early 1970s.<sup>[608]</sup> The size of Egypt's foreign trade relative to the gross domestic product:

Table (99)  
Foreign trade % of GDP <sup>[609]</sup>

Year	%	Year	%
1945	19.9	1957/1958	33.9
1947	35.7	1960/1961	30.4
1950	43.7	1963/1964	37.7
52/1953	43	1966/1967	29.4

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<sup>[608]</sup> Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>[609]</sup> Ibid., p. 253.

1955/1956	38.5	1969/1970	25.5
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There is no doubt that the nationalization of most foreign capital and the elimination of the manifestations of direct foreign domination give the impression of improving the conditions of dependency. However, it is evident that direct dependency also has its advantages for the backward economy. Underdevelopment is essentially a dependent structure, and the underdevelopment of development is ultimately a dependent growth. Consequently, its optimal situation lies in its reintegration into the global market with maximum possible flexibility. Under Nasserite rule, Egypt's relationship with the global market likely shifted in its favor via various factors, including the receipt of significant subsidies, a decreased risk of exploitation, and potentially alleviating the likelihood of a decline in terms of trade. However, these gains had their opposites. The reluctance of foreign private capital to flow in impeded the readjustment of the export sector to the global market, obligating the state to borrow at increasing rates that were disproportionate to the degree of growth in the modern sector. The heavy debts put the state under marked pressure, the effects of which were felt in the aftermath of the five-year plan. Hindering the economy's integration into the global market is not an advantage unless it is linked to its opposite: to reintegrate from an equivalent position. This entails reestablishing a more cohesive economy, starting with changing the mode of consumption so that it targets satisfying essential domestic needs and concluding with the establishment of a foundation for the creation of advanced technologies. Nasserite policy never had this objective (the Egyptian economy is assessed here from the perspective of its interests as an underdeveloped economy).

However, the argument for relative independence finds some ground. The declaration of rebellion and theoretical hostility to imperialism was not a ploy agreed upon by all parties. After the



officers' coup, the Egyptian state gained a great degree of autonomy. Although the socio-economic structure itself remained backward and dependent, the political system no longer relied on three legs, as had been pointed out by Lord Killearn. Conversely, it became led by an elite of patriotic bureaucrats. One can speak of relative independence in this sense alone. However, Bonapartism in Egypt operated internally with semi-dead parties but externally faced fierce challenges. It achieved a high degree of freedom of movement at the domestic level, granting it the appearance of a tiger. However, abroad, it could not obtain the same thing except within legal and formal limits, so it merely took on the appearance of a paper tiger.

Although the economy remained underdeveloped, it experienced almost continuous growth and underwent limited structural changes. Ultimately, the Nasserite era was not particularly remarkable, aside from being characterized by economic stagnation. That is, its dynamism as a dependent system deteriorated as its growth continued via mechanisms that ultimately boil down to the process of international exchange, i.e., from outside. In short, it lacked the autonomy to reconstruct itself. The whole issue can be summarized in a few words: in terms of the form, the Nasserite authority played the primary and direct role in reproducing underdevelopment in Egypt. However, the indirect and more profound role was played by the capitalist countries. The latter was experienced in the form of financing, supplying technology, and dominating the world market, which represented their indirect role in their control of the leading sector of the world market economies. The final mechanisms for reproducing underdevelopment were *international exchange* (primarily imports), *borrowing*, and *requesting subsidies*.

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Through the previously implemented policies, the Egyptian social system has been maintained with some adjustments. However, it would have been demolished in favor of another alternative system under the following scenarios:

**First scenario:** The nationalization of large commercial capital, big real estate ownership, the contracting sector, and the main transportation. Furthermore, the expropriation of the funds and assets belonging to the dominant class.

**Second scenario:** Encouraging comprehensive development and overcoming the growth of backwardness in order to truly modernize the system and achieve sustainable development within the framework of a free market economy. This was the best option, from the writer's perspective, for the sake of modernization and development.

It would also be possible to overcome backwardness if the government strived to encourage the following:

This necessitated prioritizing technical education over commercial and general secondary schools, as well as emphasizing technical institutes over traditional colleges. Additionally, directing efforts toward eradicating illiteracy and expanding the development of labor rehabilitation centers.

2. Following a manufacturing policy aiming to satisfy basic needs instead of an import substitution policy.

3. Initially, encouraging labor-intensive, instead of capital-intensive, industry to actually overcome the problems of poverty and unemployment and to expand the market.

4. Using loans and subsidies to encourage modern small industries instead of supporting the rich in the countryside and wholesalers.

5. It would have been more beneficial for growth to convert agrarian reform lands into large agricultural cooperatives rather than fragmenting holdings and to eliminate all types of land leasing.

**6. Selling the state economic sector to domestic or foreign private investors instead of the nationalization policy. Additionally, taking the necessary measures to encourage private investment. These could include simplifying licensing procedures, providing industrial zones and lands for projects, guaranteeing the marketing of industrial products, and even ensuring profit for factories.**

**7. Mobilizing social surplus and directing it toward expanding the domestic market and investment instead of wasting and squandering it. The Nasserite elite squandered the surplus luxury of its members, foreign adventures, and security tools, in addition to projects aimed at showing off. The project to manufacture cars, planes, and missiles before establishing the necessary scientific base for them helped dispel much surplus. In addition.**

**However, the liquidation of the social system as a whole was not possible under the political dynamics of the Nasserite period, i.e., thanks to the Bonapartist state itself. It was also not on the agenda of the July knights, nor was it consistent with their interests and culture.**

**In reality, Nasserite economic policy did not deserve a declaration of imperialist siege and war, as the Nasserists depicted. On the contrary, the economic structure of Nasserite Egypt had remained dependent on imperialism, especially at its pinnacle, i.e., from 1961 to 1964, without receiving its full backing. However, it was never subjected to a decisive attack or a real siege, despite its pretensions to be so. Rather, the imperialist countries exerted their pressure from 1956 to 1958 and from 1965 to 1967 in response to the political regime before launching the final offensive in 1967. That is, Nasserism, first, had not been rejected most of the time by the West. Second, it had never been rejected for economic reasons. Third, it had not been fully accepted.**

**The political conflict with the West did not coincide with absolute economic harmony, and as previously seen, economic imperialist**

support was not achieved in its optimal form even during the days of openness, from 1952 to 1958.

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### **Part Three: Nasserite Socialism**

**HIS VOICE TREMBLED AS HE DELIVERED HIS ADDRESS TO ONE  
OF THE ARMY UNITS IN ABBASIYÁ IN APRIL 1959. THE  
WORDS CAME OUT OF HIS LIPS IN A SLURRED MANNER AS HE  
SAID: I WILL ELIMINATE THESE AGENTS AND TEACH THE  
COMMUNISTS A LESSON THEY WILL NEVER FORGET**

Taher Abdel Hakeem

Ultimately, it became evident that Egypt's direct political independence was not genuine. Instead, it could be viewed as a reactionary form of independence. The country failed to establish itself as a significant player in international politics or a global power. Regarding economic policy, it is now obvious that Nasserism did not work to achieve economic independence. It also became evident how Nasserite policies were merely a confused extension of the policies of the preceding governments. It has also been observed previously that Nasserite ideology contained a contradiction

between its form and content. This contradiction was explicitly manifested in its overall policy, evident in the disparity between its populist rhetoric and the official political program. This contradiction was more prominent in the field of economic policy. The latter had been manifesting in practice as the negation of Nasserism's theoretical pretensions.

This chapter examines the Nasserite policy at its logical conclusion, focusing on its overall outcomes. It explores the Nasserite stance toward the social system and its connection to the overall social structure. This analysis will decisively reveal the specific ways in which the Nasserite policy influenced the social system.

It is noticeable that Nasserite ideas become less consistent as they deal with more concrete issues. Nasserism was unable to conceal itself much in the area of foreign policy, although it did have a fair degree of flexibility to maneuver. In contrast to its clarity with other countries, it struggled to explain or justify its fluctuations to the populace. Its domestic policy was less flexible, struggling to maintain consistency because it had to deal with more mass-specific situations where supporting particular social groupings became a crucial and unavoidable issue. If this policy is analyzed in its direct relation to social powers, it becomes clear which side it was expressing or allied with. This explains the large doses of demagoguery regarding the social nature of the regime and the class nature of the ruling elite in particular. For the same reason, the contradictions and imbalances were most apparent in this area.

On the social level, Nasserism was required to pursue either a policy that favors poor social groups, a policy that favors businessmen and large landowners, or a compromise that would not exceed its affordability. If one recalls the circumstances surrounding the July 23, 1952, coup, the demands of the poor and their implicit threat to the social system should be taken into account. This reminds one of the contradiction between the pro-social system

content of Nasserite ideas and their somewhat anti-system form, especially in the 1960s. Nasserism had no choice but to provide tangible social gains to the intelligentsia and the lower classes to avoid explosions that might have dire consequences. However, this policy cannot be isolated from its position toward the dominant class. The evolution of this issue will be analyzed below.

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## **Chapter One: Social Reform and its Limits**

A senior American envoy to Egypt reported prior to the July coup: “*A program of social reform must be implemented that will liquidate the revolutionary situation without affecting the foundations of the existing system.*” The Nasserists followed this formula.

Social reforms were necessary to absorb social conflicts. They served as an indispensable basis for demagogic propaganda, which for this reason was not entirely demagogic. However, these reforms were not radical. Since Nasserism needed to offer the masses enough to quiet them down or to keep them calm, it was plausible in this case to direct its support to the groups most capable of causing unrest or to expand those groups considered “useful,” in Lord Kitchener’s sense. The state needed to provide economic resources to implement the reforms so that they would not all be done at the expense of the dominant class. Therefore, its economic policy was directed toward maximizing its ability to increase national income. Since this policy had limited success and the dominant class had a great capacity for resistance, the reforms achieved did not provide much. Therefore, they often included deceptive measures and illusory steps and were sometimes accompanied by new pressures on certain groups of the poor, the “non-useful” groups that did not pose a significant potential threat to the system.

## 1. Supporting small ownership

The initiative to promote small ownership focused on fostering or expanding a class of small property owners, particularly in the countryside and even within urban areas. This involved transforming impoverished individuals into small property owners and enhancing the circumstances of existing small owners to some extent.

### Real estate ownership in the countryside

*“We must encourage social and economic reforms, even against the wishes of our friends, the property owners,” suggested the Manchester Guardian on 23 February 1946, regarding the situation in Egypt at that time. The officers quickly adopted this policy. Other agrarian reforms, in addition to the 1952 Agrarian Reform Law, led to an increase in the number of small landowners. The same purpose was one of the goals and outcomes of the land reclamation projects:*

Table (1)

The development of the number of owners of 5 feddans or less <sup>[610]</sup>

Year	Number of owners in millions
1952 prior to the law	2.642
1952 after the law	2.841
1965	3.033

The average area of small plots of land also increased.

Table (2)

Average ownership less than 5 than 5 feddans <sup>[611]</sup>

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<sup>[610]</sup> Fathi Abdel Fattah, *The Contemporary Village*, p. 27.



Year	Property area
1952	0.8 feddans
1965	1.2 feddans

**Table (3)**

**Average property area 5-10 feddans** <sup>[612]</sup>

Year	Average area
1952	6.6 feddans
1965	7.9 feddans

The increase in the average area of ownership for this category was not due to the distribution of land. Rather, the Agrarian Reform Law played an indirect role by encouraging this segment of farmers to buy land from large landowners.

The government not only designated a portion of land but also focused on pest control and advising farmers on optimal land use and irrigation techniques. Additionally, it ensured access to clean water and enhanced transportation networks in rural areas.

In order to preserve small-scale real estate ownership, the state provided loans to farmers by guaranteeing the crop rather than the land. <sup>[613]</sup>

The number of smallholders and the average area of land they owned increased, but their incomes did not rise to the same degree. <sup>[614]</sup> while the state handed over small plots of land to some peasants, it exercised deadly oppression over them: the cooperative marketing

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<sup>[611]</sup> Mabro, Op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>[612]</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>[613]</sup> Mahmoud Abdel Fadeel, Op. cit., p. 210.

<sup>[614]</sup> Some details are presented by Anwar Abdel Malik, Op. cit., pp. 97-98.

of cotton made substantial profits by buying cotton from the small owners at low prices and exporting it at much higher prices,<sup>[615]</sup> and the state's seizure of a percentage of grains brought it a large income.<sup>[616]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally noted and recorded that the collapse in the income level of small farmers began in 1962. He also noted that the state discriminated between small and large landowners in providing excellent seeds and subsidized fodder according to a special law. Outside the law, the agricultural cycle was imposed on the small owners so that they would grow cotton and sugar cane, crops that did not bring them high profits due to state exploitation as mentioned above, while large landowners increasingly turned to growing fruits. This distinction becomes clearer when noting that agricultural taxes were levied on the land itself rather than on agricultural profits. For instance, a feddan of cotton was taxed the same as a feddan of bananas. Moreover, livestock was entirely exempt from taxation.

The small plot of land was not a net gain for the small farmers but rather formed the material basis for the growth of state dominance and tyranny over them.

In general, supporting small agricultural ownership is a typical act for a conservative regime, especially for a Bonapartist authority in such a society at that moment. If the peasantry enjoys stability, it serves as a strong bulwark of security against the forces of social revolution. The conservative peasant's shift from non-ownership to ownership represents a significant improvement in his life, signaling change for the better from his perspective. Land ownership gives him something of great importance: a sense of security with some hope for the future. On the other hand, this ownership is a practical

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<sup>[615]</sup> For some details, refer to Jamie Mustafa Jamie, *Cooperative Marketing of Cotton in the Arab Republic of Egypt*, pp. 157-176.

<sup>[616]</sup> Karima Korayem discussed the details of this issue in *Distribution of Income between Urban and Rural Areas in Egypt 1952-1975*. Mahmoud Abdel Fadeel did the same, *Op. cit.*, chapter five.

constraint because it limits his ambition and always puts him in a state of need and debt, tying him to his creditor, who had primarily been, in this case, the state. For all this, and in addition to the state's need to maintain the class of large landowners in the countryside, Nasserism included private real estate ownership in its socialist ideology, under the demagogic pretext of "the Egyptian farmer's ability to work creatively." Furthermore, the notion of private land ownership within that ideology encompasses both small-scale and large-scale ownership. However, the reform was not radical even within the framework of preserving private property. Nasserite reform cannot be compared, for example, to the Japanese reform after World War II or the Korean reform. The countryside did not witness a social revolution. In the context of comprehensive backwardness, the limited reform was not a revolutionary step but rather a narrow-minded process with a specific purpose: expanding the class of small peasants, not eliminating large land ownership in general. It should also be noted that Nasserism did not put forward the principle of "land to those who cultivate it," a slogan that includes a revolutionary change in property relations.

In this sense, the Nasserite agrarian reform cannot be considered a peasant revolution. On the contrary, it blocked the path to a potential peasant rebellion. Significantly, the agrarian reform was not carried out with peasant participation, who were never allowed to seize the lands of the large landowners. This might directly lead to the outbreak of a peasant uprising. Recall the Nasserite government's attitude toward the peasant movement that accompanied the news of the 1952 land reform law. Peasants believed that the officers had declared a peasant revolution, and many of them refused to pay land rents one month before the law was issued. Some of them even began preparing to seize the lands they cultivated. In response to this movement, the government issued a strongly worded warning to *"those with extremist tendencies"* from *"spreading chaos among the peasants."* It also warned against not paying their obligations to the landowners. It considered this a

serious matter that *“would compel the leadership to take decisive steps and be obligated to strike with an iron fist at the hands of both the instigators and those who have ceased fulfilling their obligations alike.”* <sup>[617]</sup>

It is not sufficient to describe Nasserism’s undemocratic method of implementing agrarian reform as a passing mistake or a blemish. The relationship between this approach and the overall nature of the regime and its reformist horizon should be considered. The apprehension of “chaotic” or, rather, revolting, expressed a very clear fact, which is the existence of its opposite, the counter-revolution. In this case, the latter had been embodied in the Nasserite authority, which fiercely confronted what it had deemed chaos.

It is worth noting that the expansion of the smallholder base had been accompanied by a deterioration in the conditions of agricultural workers:

**Table (4)**  
**Actual wage of agricultural laborer** <sup>[618]</sup>  
**Standard - Unit**

Year	Wage	Year	Wage
1951	11	1959	8.4
1952	10	1960	?
1953	10	1961	8.4
1954	10.2	1962	?
1955	7.1	1964	9
1956	6.4	1965	10.8
1957	7.7	1971	10.9
1958	7.3		

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<sup>[617]</sup> Abdel-Azim Ramadan, *The Social and Political Conflict in Egypt*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>[618]</sup> For more details, refer to Mahmoud Abdel Fadeel, *Op. cit.*, pp. 116-127.

Although a minimum wage for agricultural workers had been set in 1952 at 18 piasters for a man and 10 piasters for a woman or child, this limit was never implemented. Rather, their wages deteriorated after the agrarian reform due to the spread of small holdings at the expense of large ones; therefore, there was a decline in demand for agricultural laborers. The surplus of these laborers rose from 42% before the 1952 law to 47% in 1954.<sup>[619]</sup> The Nasserite authority had paid little attention to these laborers, who were considered the most suffering among the categories of agricultural workers, unlike the small landowners, intellectuals, and industrial workers. This can be explained in light of the case of Nasserite Egypt, as support for small property was not directed toward the interests of the rural poor, as agricultural laborers were the poorest in the country in general. Rather, it was directed toward supporting the social system through expanding the conservative small landowners' class. Egyptian agricultural workers had always been a politically weak class with few aspirations, to the extent that they could not and did not make a significant effort to organize unions. Therefore, the government did not fear them. It was only in 1964 that the state announced the establishment of unions for agricultural workers.<sup>[620]</sup> This was merely an addition to the socialist facade and a component of the organized propaganda, never reflecting any level of labor pressure. These unions also became new means of embezzlement and misappropriation by Nasserite corrupt trade unionists, security personnel, and contractors.

### Small property in the urban

Nasserism's stance on small urban property was paradoxical. It provided low-interest loans to craftsmen and small traders while

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<sup>[619]</sup> Ibrahim Amer, Op. cit., p. 156.

<sup>[620]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, Op. cit., p. 208.

offering subsidized raw materials. Yet, it fell short of effectively delivering this support. The dominance and expansion of large commercial capital in urban areas perpetuated the subordination of small proprietors to powerful owners. These larger owners served as intermediaries between the small traders and the state. Small traders were compelled to purchase goods from wholesalers at inflated prices, while authorities mandated that they sell their products at fixed rates. After the nationalization of credit banks, large merchants began serving as intermediaries between the banks and small traders rather than using their own capital for lending. This shift boosted their profits while widening the economic disparity between them and small traders, as well as artisans.<sup>[621]</sup>

To satisfy consumers' thirst, the government established numerous consumer associations that sold goods at set prices, competing fiercely with small retailers. However, it provided large traders with an opportunity to mediate between these associations and small traders, enabling both parties to trade for subsidized goods on the black market.

The reduction in housing rents also led to a decline in returns for small and large landlords in urban areas.

Small urban properties did not receive the same state attention as rural properties, as they did not serve the role of the conservative peasant in the countryside. Consequently, small landowners in cities, particularly merchants, were discontent. For instance, Cairo experienced violent clashes between them and wholesalers during the Chamber of Commerce elections. Furthermore, small merchants and craftsmen attended Muslim Brotherhood meetings. As much as they were unable to fulfill their interests, they resorted to grumbling. However, under Nasserism, these individuals were able to make some gains via black market trading, especially during the shortages of essential goods in the 1960s. They capitalized on

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<sup>[621]</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

government subsidies for consumer goods. This trend became more prevalent with the onset of Nasserism's collapse, starting in the mid-1960s.

## **2. Industrial workers**

Small proprietors may create social disruptions, but workers have the potential to challenge the very foundation of the social order. A government representing smallholders remains compatible with the existing system. In contrast, a workers' government inherently opposes and negates the system as a whole. The industrial workers in Egypt during the period from 1945 to 1952 had not only carried a revolutionary energy but were also a real threat to the system. They formed, along with the urban intelligentsia, the main revolutionary forces during that period.

Nasserism was successful in expanding the base of small ownership and providing small landowners with mostly symbolic rewards. However, it was impossible in all respects to convert industrial workers into small landowners. It was also difficult to deceive them outside of very specific bounds, since the worker was receiving a definite salary, and his immediate interest therefore remained quite clear and definite.

During the period from 1952 to 1962, Nasserism did not offer large bribes to workers. It indeed raised their rights to vacations, medical treatment, and injury compensation, in addition to increasing the minimum wage from 12.5 to 25 piasters per day and issuing a law prohibiting arbitrary dismissal. However, in practice, these reforms were not implemented except in the state sector, which expanded with the nationalization of foreign investments in 1957. The government based its hope for improving the conditions of industrial workers on the policy of encouraging private capital to increase its investment and, consequently, achieving an increase in demand for the workforce. Nonetheless, workers' earnings experienced a marginal rise, less than 3% annually, and even



decreased during the period between 1957 and 1960, coinciding with the implementation of the industrial plan:

**Table (5)**

**Development of industrial workers' incomes** <sup>[622]</sup>

Year	Real income in pounds per year	% of added value
1957	144	37
1960	134	30

The average income of a manufacturing industry worker alone fell from 139 to 130 pounds per year, <sup>[623]</sup> while the average income of an extractive industry worker fell from 290 to 238 pounds. <sup>[624]</sup>

In comparison, the rate of wage increase during the period from 1946 to 1952 was about 6% annually, and the total increase amounted to 45.5%. <sup>[625]</sup>

Since social inequality had increased as a result of the economic policy of the 1950s, Nasserism began to consider workers' conditions more seriously. The old decision regarding the minimum wage was enforced, especially with the nationalization of most industrial capital. Another significant milestone for the interests of workers was the appointment of a large number of construction workers and the decision to give them pensions in 1961. <sup>[626]</sup> Additionally, it was

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<sup>[622]</sup> Muhammad Duwaidar, *The Egyptian Economy between Backwardness and Developing*, p. 476.

<sup>[623]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[624]</sup> Ibid., p. 575.

<sup>[625]</sup> Calculated based on data from Hansen & Marzouq (Op. cit.,) and Muhammad Rushdi (Op. cit.,), the development of wages at constant prices was lower, reaching only 33% during the mentioned period, according to Hansen and Marzouq. Mabro reached a similar result for the change in nominal wages, showing a 45% increase in the period in question. (Ibid., p. 235).

<sup>[626]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, Op. cit., p. 134.

decided to distribute 25% of the profits of state sector companies to their workers, 10% of which was distributed in cash, and, of course, the management had the largest share. Afterward, workers' salaries began to rival those of junior office workers:

**Table (6)**

**1952/1953-1966/1967** <sup>[627]</sup>

Category	Income increase rate%
Workers	44
Office workers	8

**Table (7)**

**Actual increase in workers' incomes: Standard** <sup>[628]</sup>

Year	Income (standard)
1952	100
1960	123
1963/1964	153
1966/1967	140

The workers were also given more health care and additional services in the fields of transportation, housing, etc., so far as the increase in their income exceeded the increase in productivity:

**Table (8)**

**Annual rate of change in wages and productivity in all industries during the period from 1939 to 1961/1962**

**(Industries employing 10 workers or more, % composite ratio)** <sup>[629]</sup>

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<sup>[627]</sup> Mabro, Op. cit., p. 338.

<sup>[628]</sup> The actual increase was calculated based on data provided by Mabro & Radwan, quoted from the National Bank's bulletin. Op. cit., p. 188.

Year	Weekly wage 1	+ 1 Participation in industry profits 2	Hourly wage + marginal benefit cost 3	2 Adjusted for changes in the cost of living 4	3Adjusted by the wholesale price index of industrial production 5	Productivity per hour 6
37/1938	12.8-7.9	12.8-7.9	12.8-7.9	0.5+-1.5-	1--3.1-	1
47-1960	4.4	4.4	5.5	3.8	3.4	4.7
52-1960	2.9	2.9	4.7	3.5	3.9	4
59/60-61/62	0.5	3-2.5	4.7	3-2.5	6.8	6.2

The phenomenon of wage growth exceeding productivity growth in most sectors and in the economy as a whole was most evident during the first half of the 1960s:

Table (9)

The relationship between the increase in average wages and salaries and the increase in productivity

During the period from 1960 to 1965% <sup>[630]</sup>

Branch	Average wage & Salary increase	Increase of work productivity
Agriculture	46	10
Industry	22	10
Energy	29	40.5
Transportation	20	34.4
Total production	39	17.7

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<sup>[629]</sup> Hansen & Marzouk, Op. cit., p. 143

<sup>[630]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, Op. cit., p. 167, citing statistics from the Ministry of Planning.

Total Services	26.4	19
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Nasserism focused primarily on the workers in the state sector, the most organized, where they are concentrated in large units. Industrial workers did experience some gains compared to other poor classes. However, it should be noted that these gains were modest rather than significant. The workers remained impoverished, and the working class did not transform into a labor aristocracy. An exception was for opportunist unionists and political organization leaders among the workers.

Table 7 shows that workers' incomes began to decline once more in the mid-1960s. During this time, there was also a rise in the number of working hours. Moreover, on May 21, 1965, the "leaders of the labor movement" issued a constitution that required workers to allocate 5% of their designated profits toward social services. This allocation was to be invested over a period of five years to enhance efficiency. Additionally, workers were mandated to dedicate at least one hour of work each day if they were employed for 42 hours per week and were barred from making any further economic demands for the subsequent two years. This constitution was followed by making overtime compulsory and other measures. However, the policy of indiscriminate hiring of unemployed individuals resulted in an overabundance of personnel within governmental companies and the administrative apparatus, leading to a decrease in the workload for certain employee sectors. This situation, which often escalated to a state of neglect in various organizations, enabled numerous workers to seek additional jobs in the private sector or engage in personal commercial and craft activities. This phenomenon had existed before but became very rampant during the Nasserite period. Furthermore, many small proprietors were employed in public institutions as laborers and office staff. Consequently, there emerged a noticeable proportion of employees belonging to small owners. Due to surplus labor,

bureaucratic mismanagement, and safeguards against arbitrary dismissal, many employees were able to break free from the exploitation of wage labor to do additional work in their private businesses at the expense of their official working hours. Therefore, they received salaries without providing an equivalent amount of their labor power.

Certain advantages for workers were fake. For example, allocating 25% of the profits to *employees*, not to the *workers*, did not ensure that the latter party would receive a considerable portion of these profits. In actuality, this allocation primarily served as a substantial source of extra income for the administrative personnel, while another portion was utilized to provide services to all employees collectively.

The migration of thousands of small proprietors and their children into industry had the effect that a considerable percentage of wage earners became a “useful” class in the sense previously stated by Lord Kitchener. Salaries without actual work were considered rewarding by these workers, as was the case for new workers of semi-proletarian origin. This class served as a solid foundation for Nasserite trade unionists and a useful safety valve for the regime in state-owned corporations.

### **3. Attempting to address the unemployment problem**

According to Sameer Amin, two-thirds of Egypt’s potential labor population was unemployed in 1960.<sup>[631]</sup> A foreign researcher reported that 2.988 million people, or 37% of the urban labor force, were unemployed in cities in 1961–1962. The figure would rise to 4.1 million, or 51% of the labor force, if the quasi-proletariat were

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<sup>[631]</sup> Accumulation on a Global Scale, p. 366.

included.<sup>[632]</sup> In addition to the educated, such as teachers, the non-technical labor sector was also affected by unemployment.

This issue was not resolved by the government policy in the 1950s. Additionally, the growing number of people moving from rural to urban areas put significant strain on the authorities. Consequently, it became apparent that many unemployed people were becoming homeless and quasi-proletariat, leading to serious social instability and threats to public safety. Since the early 1960s, the Nasserite government increased the recruitment of unemployed non-technical personnel. Furthermore, in 1962, university tuition fees were eliminated. This change enabled tens of thousands of children from intellectuals, civil servants, merchants, and others to register annually.

One of the measures was reducing working hours in July 1961 to 42 hours per week, with factories working three shifts. This resulted in the recruitment of 28,000 new workers, accounting for approximately 4% of the total industrial workforce. Meanwhile, overtime was banned, leading to dissatisfaction among workers, and holding two jobs was also forbidden. These measures clearly indicate that the reduction in working hours was intended more to address unemployment than to enhance workers' conditions.. The reduction in working hours by 4% was accompanied by an increase in the number of industrial workers by 16%,<sup>[633]</sup> indicating the effect of canceling both overtime and combining two jobs, in addition to hiring surplus workers.

Employment offices were established to help the unemployed find jobs. Companies, utilities, and government offices employed a large number of individuals. Consequently, the proportion of surplus labor in some companies exceeded 50%. Between 1965 and 1967, the workforce in the coke and antibiotic factories, the power generation

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<sup>[632]</sup> Anwar Abdel Malik, Op. cit., p. 185 (from the table).

<sup>[633]</sup> Hansen & Marzouk, Op. cit., pp. 135-143

station, and the lubricants factory in Suez experienced a twofold increase. While the Coke and chemicals factory in Helwan was designed with an initial workforce of 585 employees, this number rose to 967 by 1965, leading to an additional cost of 68.4 thousand pounds. In 1967, the number of employees reached 1100, including 250 office workers, 750 laborers, and 100 engineers and technicians.<sup>[634]</sup>

During this period, the proportion of salaries and wages relative to production rose to 30%, surpassing 25% in the United States and even lower levels in Western Europe. Additionally, the profit margins of nationalized companies declined, partly due to factors like disguised unemployment.

The primary sector that absorbed the new workforce was the government administration. The number of civil servants rose from 325,000, which constituted 9.6% of the workforce in 1952, to 1.035 million, making up 15.4% in 1966.<sup>[635]</sup> This specifically refers to permanent staff.

Some workers were transformed into disguised unemployed. Moreover, a large number of office workers were added to the workforce as surplus labor, in addition to thousands of messengers in all institutions and sectors. Nasserism provided these people with low salaries, which can be seen as a kind of subsidy. Thus, a new social class was formed that resembled the Roman proletariat. However, instead of bread and games (Panem et Circenses in Latin),<sup>[636]</sup> Nasserism provided them with meager salaries along with artistic opium in the form of long concerts, the presentation of which in the media became a tradition throughout the 1960s. It is then bread and games, but in a special Nasserite guise.

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<sup>[634]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, Op. cit., p. 202.

<sup>[635]</sup> Mabro, Op. cit., p. 339.

<sup>[636]</sup> In ancient Rome, the state provided periodic food aid to the homeless (the proletariat in the original sense of the word) and also allowed them to watch sports matches for free.



The Nasserite approach to reducing the unemployment problem, which Nasserism never solved, was a method that is not only unsound but also reactionary. Surplus labor was a substitute for unemployment benefits for all the unemployed and for creating real jobs. In addition to distorting a large sector of workers by placing them in fictitious jobs, Nasserism avoided putting restrictions on itself. Unemployment benefits were not given to the unemployed in general, and the labor offices accepted limited numbers.

Of course, not all new works in Nasserite Egypt were fictitious, but a very large percentage of them were.

In short, employment in Nasserite Egypt was more policy than economy.

Despite all efforts, the unemployment problem was not solved. The workforce proportion to the population had decreased during the 1960s from 30.1% to 28%. Furthermore, the employment rate of the labor force supply had decreased from 73% to 63% in the same period, whereas it was 90% in 1947 (refer to Tables 73 and 76 in Chapter Two).

#### 4. Civil servants

State office workers are generally very conservative in their tendencies, similar to the peasant class. However, this was not a sufficient reason to add hundreds of thousands of them to surplus jobs during the Nasserite era, but it was enough reason to deprive them, except for the high ranks, of any real increase in their incomes:

Table (10)

Government office workers and their share of income <sup>[637]</sup>

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<sup>[637]</sup> Mabro, Op. cit., p. 339.

Year	Their ratio of total employment	Their share of national income%
1952	9.6	8.6
1966/1967	15.4	13

The average nominal income of an office worker increased from 240 pounds per annum in 1952 to 323 pounds in 1966/1967, while the real income did not rise.<sup>[638]</sup> This nominal increase certainly went to senior employees, whose incomes increased considerably. Moreover, university graduates who are office workers received good salaries, and their percentage of the total number of employees also increased.

Consequently, the government and state economic sector administrations absorbed a portion of the surplus labor force. However, this did not result in a decrease in unemployment or an increase in the effectiveness of the administrative apparatuses, but, conversely, it declined. Additionally, Unemployment as a phenomenon remained largely unaffected, despite a reduction in its potential scale.

The composition of the workforce was significantly affected by the Nasserite employment policy. The proportion of non-productive labor to total employment increased, and even a sector of workers became a burden on the production process. This composition is unbalanced in a country whose rulers and their supporters claimed to be building a developed economy. Nasserism was unable to shift the surplus workforce into productive or effective activities. This inability had arisen from Nasserism's reformist horizon and its failure to formulate a real development plan, mobilize all the potential surplus, and persuade the masses to build the country.

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<sup>[638]</sup> Ibid., pp. 339-340.

## **5. Education Policy**

During the Nasserite era, manual labor was not preferred by the middle classes, especially the educated. Firstly, because of their traditional aversion to this type of work, and secondly, because it was not readily available. Graduates and office workers have been attractive models for Egyptians in general. In addition, the state paid generous salaries to university graduates. Therefore, the ambition of the children of intellectuals focused on entering universities, where they could then work freely or find a high-ranking job. These people formed the backbone of the patriotic parties prior to the 1952 coup and were leaders in the patriotic movement as a whole. Moreover, intellectuals have been the most interested group in political affairs in general.

Nasserism found in the wide-open universities an excellent means to appease the politically concerned and worrisome children of the intelligentsia and the middle strata in general. In 1955, after dissolving the student unions, university fees were reduced by 30%. Scholarships were also provided to outstanding students. Then, in 1962, university fees were abolished. These measures fulfilled most students' aspirations. The state also committed itself to providing jobs for university graduates with good salaries, as well as for graduates of technical schools. There is no doubt that some of the children of poor peasants and workers were also able to enroll in universities.

Additionally, the state paid attention to primary and secondary education, but to a much lesser extent:

**Table (11)**

**Increase in the number of students (record number) <sup>[639]</sup>**

Year	Primary- Preparatory	Secondary	Technical	University	Preparing teachers
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<sup>[639]</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

1952	100	100	100	100	100
1970	298	264	*814	425	126

\*This large increase is mainly due to growth in the number of commercial secondary school students and future junior office workers.

The table illustrates the changes in the education pyramid. University education had grown at a faster rate compared to primary education, despite persistent widespread illiteracy and a rise in the number of illiterate individuals (see Table 13). The following table further emphasizes the significance of these findings.

**Table (12)**  
**Supply and demand for labor in basic occupations in thousands\***<sup>[640]</sup>

Occupation Type	1965/1966			1969/1970		
	Supply	Demand	Surplus	Supply	Demand	Surplus
Academic and scientific	234	219	14.8+	312	302	10+
Middle technical	366	393	27-	484	568.4	84.4-
Clerical professions	322	241.9	80+	365	328.6	36.4+
Skilled labor	821	1027.9	206.9-	873	1367.7	494-
Ordinary employment	6444	5676.1	768+	7332	6214.5	1,117.5+
Total	8187	7558.1	606+	9366	8781.2	585.5+

\*We have adjusted these numbers as much as possible and they are not completely consistent in the cited reference.

This table shows that the labor surplus was shrinking for university graduates, while the deficit in skilled workers was

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<sup>[640]</sup> Nazih Nasif Al-Ayyubi, Education Policy in Egypt, al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo, 1978, p. 63.

increasing, and unemployment rose significantly for ordinary labor. The shortage of skilled labor, as the table shows, was due to weak supply and increasing demand, while the weak surplus of university graduates is explained by the increase in employment in clerical work, as well as academic and scientific professions. The reversal of the educational pyramid affected the composition of labor in administrative and economic activities. The proportion of university graduates working in this field reached 14%, compared to 5% for technicians. On the contrary, in developed countries, the proportion of university graduates to technicians during the same period was approximately 1/4. <sup>[641]</sup>

The following notes on the education policy in Nasserite Egypt can be added:

1. The attainment of semi-free education and the growth of higher education, particularly, were not performed as part of a general enlightenment process. This is demonstrated by the consistently high illiteracy rates and the rising number of illiterate people. The latter phenomenon has not been significantly affected by the bureaucratic methods applied to literacy and education. <sup>[642]</sup> This indicates the narrow-minded reformist nature of Nasserite education policy and reflects the absence of popular participation. <sup>[643]</sup> The education curriculum was not developed; rather, religious education was expanded, and religion was made a basic subject in schools. Al-Azhar University was even converted to teach modern sciences along with Islam. The separation between theoretical and technical education also continued, with an emphasis on memorization rather than understanding. There has also been a

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<sup>[641]</sup> Ibid., p. 10 (these figures are from the 1970s, but they reflect the change in the educational structure that occurred during the Nasserite period).

<sup>[642]</sup> Ibid., pp. 78-79. Refer also to table 13.

<sup>[643]</sup> Let us recall how illiteracy was eradicated in a few years in the Soviet Union (see: al-Taliaah magazine, June 1973 issue, review of M. Zinoviev and A. Pleshakova's book, How was Illiteracy Eradicated in the Soviet Union? p. 134).

separation between scientific and literary education, as well as neglect of experience and scientific research. Moreover, there has been a focus on indoctrination, while no critical curricula were provided to students.

Nasserism also imposed a totalitarian consciousness on society. For example, it compulsorily taught its ideology in schools. The aim was to present the Nasserite era as a time of light in contrast to the darkness of the previous era. The authorities projected the era prior to 1952 in a much-distorted image. They provided students with fictitious events such as the rumor of corrupt weapons in the 1948 war, the myth of the Abbas Bridge massacre, and many others. The authorities were keen to deepen the students' loyalty to the regime and its Boss by various means.

Moreover, Nasserism placed an unenlightened officer at the head of educational institutions until the early 1960s. In contrast, its tenure began by dismissing 60 university professors and teachers because of their democratic ideas. Additionally, Nasserism did not extend the duration of compulsory education beyond six years, which is insufficient for producing individuals qualified to pursue a specific profession. One of the most prominent factors in the spread of illiteracy is the continuous drop-out from education at a noticeable rate. This has not been effectively addressed, which requires improving the standard of living and solving numerous social problems. In the heyday of Nasserism in 1965, 78% of children were enrolled in primary education, while the rest remained outside the process. Then, only 28% of this proportion went to preparatory education, and 79% of those who completed this stage went to secondary education. In the end, 15% joined universities and higher institutes.<sup>[644]</sup> There is no doubt that the drop-out rate was higher before 1952 (in 1951/1952, only 42.5% of school-age children had primary education). In short, the education

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<sup>[644]</sup> "Al-Taliaah" Magazine, February 1966 issue, p. 48.

policy increased the number of educated people as a justification for granting them relatively good salaries and their subsequent absorption into the Nasserite administration. Thus, the expansion of education was proceeding as part of the process of social control and what was called the dissolution of class differences.

**Table (13)**

**The development of the illiterate population size in Egypt (10 years and above) from 1897 to 2006 in millions and percentage:<sup>[645]</sup>**

Censuses	Illiterate		learner	
	Number	% of population	Number	% of population
1897	9.3	95.2	0.5	4.8
1907	10.6	94.6	0.6	5.4
1917	9.9	92	0.9	8
1927	12.5	88.2	1.7	11.8
1937	12.8	87.8	1.8	12.2
1947	12.1	77.2	3.6	22.8
1960	12.6	69.7	5.5	30.3
1976	15.1	56.2	11.8	43.8
1986	17.1	49.6	17.4	50.4
1996	17.6	39.4	27.2	60.6
2006	17	29.6	40.4	70.4

**2. The university attracted many middle-class people, especially children of the intelligentsia, while the children of workers and peasants did not constitute a significant percentage of the students.**

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<sup>[645]</sup> Ali Muhammad Magdi, *Evolution, The size of Illiteracy and its Rates in Egypt In the Period 1897- 2006*, p. 597. Source: The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics.



In a study conducted at Cairo and Al-Azhar Universities in 1966, it was revealed that the vast majority of students belonged to families of It turns out that the vast majority of students come from families of professionals, small employees, and clerks.<sup>[646]</sup> Thus, the structure of university students changed so that the children of the middle classes occupied most of the places instead of the children of large landowners, businessmen, and senior employees.

3. Throughout the Nasserite era, the quality of education declined steadily.<sup>[647]</sup> The number of teachers declined relative to the number of pupils, and the quality of the teachers themselves deteriorated. Moreover, the number of pupils per class increased. All of this was reflected in the quality of graduates, as the education system had not been aligned with the developmental capabilities and needs of society. It was also not implemented within the framework of a comprehensive developmental policy. This reveals the concern of Nasserite education policy, which was the graduation of the largest number of troublemaking intelligentsia from the university to “nationalize” the class struggle. It is worth mentioning that a new phenomenon emerged during the late Nasserite era. This was the *illiteracy of the educated*, manifested in the low educational and cultural standard of university graduates. Many of these individuals were not originally qualified for higher education or had only received a nominal higher education. In reality, the university has transformed into a large kuttab (elementary school).

4. The universities became completely subject to the state and lacked any autonomy. Security controlled the fate of university professors based on reports from the State Security Investigations about their intellectual tendencies and what they provided to their students. Professors were even used by security to control students and direct their tendencies and activities. Despite the state’s

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<sup>[646]</sup> Nazih Naseef Al-Ayyubi, Op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>[647]</sup> Mabro, Op. cit., pp. 240-245.

complete control over the education process, it did not direct it in a manner consistent with the real economic needs of the labor market, leading to a deficit in certain specializations and a substantial surplus in others. Education is one of the areas where the dominance of policy over the economy has been most evident since the Nasserite period.

## **6. Other Reforms**

- **Health services:** The Nasserite government established many hospitals and sanitary units. In practice, free treatment was only provided on a limited scale, and the government provided extremely poor health services. The health policy was characterized by the state not being as concerned about preventive medicine as it was about curative medicine, except for vaccination against certain diseases, according to the recommendations and plans of the World Health Organization. This resulted in the persistent spread of traditional endemic diseases in Egypt, such as schistosomiasis, filariasis, malaria, etc. For example, eradicating schistosomiasis at the time required the development of irrigation and drainage systems, i.e., a comprehensive development of agriculture. That was called for in public health books in Egypt and taught in medical colleges. Moreover, the state did not establish effective systems for the prevention of industrial diseases, which have been widespread and require the development of means of production and construction. Malnutrition diseases, especially among children, also continued to be widespread. All of these phenomena are deeply linked to the level of technology and the standard of living, which did not witness significant development during the period. Health development was performed in aspects that required simple efforts. The development of science in the world in general, such as the spread of free vaccinations and antibiotics and the decrease in their prices, contributed greatly to reducing the childhood mortality rate and therefore increasing the population at a rapid rate. However,

this was not met with a cultural change that gave rise to a decrease in the birth rate in developed countries. The same phenomenon applies to almost all Third World communities. It is considered one of the phenomena of combined development. Advanced medicine in the field of childcare and the treatment of infectious diseases was integrated into a culturally underdeveloped society. This resulted in a disparity between the birth rate and the death rate, causing a population explosion. The increase in the number of children relative to the growth of the workforce placed more burdens on society as a result of the demographic imbalance. Nasserism tried to address the problem by calling for direct birth control without creating the material basis for its actual implementation, i.e., the development of the productive forces and the Cultural Revolution.

Despite the expansion in establishing medical colleges, they did not significantly contribute to the field of scientific research. Rather, they persisted in relying on research conducted in the West. No systems were established to advance the scientific research process in universities.

One of the major crimes committed by the Nasserite health system was the practice of injecting schistosomiasis patients without sterilizing the syringes, which led to the widespread transmission of the hepatitis C virus. This was not merely individual faults but a critical flaw in the health system. The system suffered from insufficient oversight of injection practices, inadequate sterilization processes, and limited sterilization capabilities. These shortcomings stemmed from a fundamental lack of genuine health consciousness at the core of the system.

**-Housing:** The Nasserite government built luxury, medium, and popular housing units. Their number did not exceed 10 thousand units annually, most of which were delivered to high- and middle-level employees. Housing rents were also reduced twice, in 1958 and 1961, by 20% and 35%, respectively. The reduction in rents, in addition to the state's inability to build a sufficient number of

housing units, played a major role, along with the increasing migration from the countryside to the cities, in exacerbating the housing crisis. Despite the state's seizure of large-scale industries, it failed to allocate sufficient attention to the building materials sector in relation to the demands of its own projects.

The state established numerous consumer associations to market state-sector goods at low prices. It also set prices for some essential goods, including medicines, which were reduced in the early 1960s. Key reforms implemented by the state included granting annual bonuses to government employees and compensating farmers for losses suffered during the 1961 cotton harvest.<sup>[648]</sup> The government also implemented some other general reforms, such as introducing clean water to numerous villages and providing electricity to minor cities, among others.

However, these reform steps were partially offset by a significant increase in indirect taxes:

**Table (14)**  
**Value of indirect taxes**<sup>[649]</sup>

Year	Value in million pounds	% of GDP
1952/1953	62.5	7.5
1957/1958	98.1	8
1969/1960	90.4	6.6
1963/1964	148.3	7.9
1964/1965	238.5	10.8
1969/1970	418.5	14.1

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<sup>[648]</sup> Ali Sabri, *Years of Socialist Transformation*, p. 47.

<sup>[649]</sup> Mabro, *Op. cit.*, table 8-3, pp. 272-273.

Mabro also recorded that 50% of the volume of spending in the services sector was directed to the construction of government buildings, hotels, and private services.<sup>[650]</sup>

Statistics indicate that the share of salaries in national income increased during the 1960s. However, taking into account the big increase in the salaries of senior statesmen, it becomes clear how false these statistics are. Except for industrial workers, the income of the poor did not significantly increase.

## **7. The Army**

The creation of a strong national army was among the famous six Nasserite principles.

Nasserism did not offer any suggestions about reforming the structure of the army. The importance of analyzing its structure stems from it being the principal stronghold of the July regime and the most important fortress of the Nasserite bureaucracy. The type and extent of the changes that took place in the army serve as a gauge for the depth of the transformations witnessed by the political system after the July 1952 coup. That is because the army is the core of the state, especially if it belongs to a third-world country. The structure of the army largely reflects the nature of the political power, along with the evolution of the social system and the characteristics of the dominant class. The fundamental transformations introduced into the army were the expulsion of some of the sons of the landed aristocracy from the officer ranks and the promotion of officers from the middle strata who had established the “Free Officers” organization. The significance of this change included the seizure of the army by the purely military bureaucracy from the hands of the large landowner class, or, more clearly, those who represented its interests or were affiliated with it.

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<sup>[650]</sup> Ibid., p. 286.

However, Nasserism kept many of the sons of the dominant class in the army.<sup>[651]</sup>

The organizational structure of the military institution did not change much, as the backbone of the army remained composed of professional officers and non-commissioned officers. After the February 1968 demonstrations, the state established the Central Security Service, which was entirely dedicated to internal repression and deliberately composed of elements with a primitive culture, as a solid machine for absolute repression: an army of conscripts under the Ministry of the Interior.

Although official texts approved the participation of soldiers in power, the entire army remained apolitical. No branches of popular political organizations were formed within the army, nor did the military obtain the right to vote. This is a continuation of the isolation of the army from the people as a distinct war machine, along with concerns regarding the emergence of enlightened ideas among the military.

The functional relationships within the army remained constant. The same old approach of preparing a narrow-minded officer who obeys commands, who is more concerned with showmanship, and who is incapable of assuming responsibility persisted. Additionally, the army relied mainly on illiterate soldiers and was cautious to exclude university graduates unless in the most limited circumstances. The relationship between the soldier and the officer remained the same. However, following the defeat of 1967, educated people were permitted to join the army in large numbers in order to confront the Israeli aggression and occupation of Sinai, after the intelligentsia had been virtually subdued.

Among the fatal weaknesses was the mixing of political and military authority in the army (for example, the positions of Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief were sometimes

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<sup>[651]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, Op. cit., p. 287.

combined, along with the overlap of other positions within the military command). Added to this was inadequate training and a lack of maneuvers after 1954, as well as the gross neglect of the air force and its independence from the army, as neither the navy nor the air force was under the chief of staff.

Nasserism failed to prepare the army adequately to encounter Israel effectively. It relied on foreign countries for weapons instead of developing its own arms industry. The focus was not on achieving an industrial revolution or producing nuclear weapons for strategic security. Nasserism signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, while Israel did not. Biological weapons were disposed of on Shedwan Island, and missiles had a limited range of 8 km, despite claims of greater capability.

The Nasserite army remained unskilled. Except for the introduction of some educated people into the officer corps, the military colleges accepted the country's lowest achievers. The promotion system continued to be based purely on seniority rather than merit. This is besides nepotism, favoritism, the prevalence of cronyism, etc., in addition to the inadequate training and maintenance of weapons and the backward method of calling up reservists.<sup>[652]</sup>

The army remained a machine isolated from the people, arrogant, weak in combat effectiveness, corrupt from within, and characterized mainly by showmanship capabilities. It was used mostly to show off and demonstrate the strength of Nasserism to the Arab masses.

The fact that this machine remained conservative and resistant to developing itself as a war apparatus is significant. It was formed in a way that suited the backward regime in place, which is narrow-minded and has poor skills. In addition, the ruling elite is

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<sup>[652]</sup> Muhammad Fawzy, the former Chief of Staff and then Minister of War, discussed the state of the army before the 1967 defeat in detail in his memoirs, part one.



characterized by cultural backwardness, a primitive way of managing the country, and the depth of its corruption. All this has induced group and gang fighting in ways that do not sufficiently serve its general interests.

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In conclusion, the Nasserite reform was limited, narrow-minded, and reactionary in its essence and overall context. The authorities were eager to implement the type and extent of reforms necessary to *nationalize* the social conflict. It resorted to absorbing social forces with radical aspirations, expanding the base of conservative small property owners, and managing the intelligentsia, while maintaining the officers as a distinct group and relying on them as a bulwark of the regime.

This judgment was made through analyzing Nasserism's reformist policy, which included some benefits and incentives for the lower classes. However, the validity of this judgment becomes more apparent when analyzing the other side of the coin, namely, Nasserism's attitude toward the dominant social strata, such as large landlords and businessmen.

Nasserism implemented its limited and reactionary reforms under socialist slogans. Its measures against large landowners and businessmen were used to support this demagoguery. Thus, a strong foundation for its revolutionary propaganda was established. This matter is analyzed below.

## **Chapter Two: The Clash with Large Landlords and Businessmen**

Beyond the blow to the regime's scapegoating of large agricultural landowners, a careful observer of the evolution of Nasserite

economic policy in the period after the 1956 war could not help but expect a clash between the state and large private capital.

As already reviewed in the previous chapter, the relationship between the two parties proceeded in a closed circle of estrangement, distrust, and suspicion. It is noticeable that the media attack on businessmen escalated clearly in the late 1950s, and loud voices were raised in newspapers and official circles loyal to the government, accusing them of exploitation and selfishness.<sup>[653]</sup> It is unreasonable and unjustifiable to assume that there was a principled position on the part of the government against private capital. Public opinion was extremely dissatisfied with the deterioration of the standard of living, the increase in class differences, and economic failure, in addition to the atmosphere of increasing repression that the country experienced after the union with Syria. However, it can be expected that the government was pleased with this campaign against businessmen. This campaign placed all the blame on them, holding them solely accountable for the economic failure and the deterioration of the standard of living, which included, at least formally, exonerating the government. Since the latter could not depend on repression alone, it had to offer some crumbs to the masses after the massive crackdowns following the 1956 war, unification with Syria, and the failure of economic policy in the 1950s in order to mitigate the dangers of discontent.

A series of nationalizations began in 1960. Initially, Bank Misr, Khedivial Steamship Company, and Cairo's internal transportation company were nationalized. Private capital at that time was receding; stock prices were falling, and smuggling of domestic currency abroad was increasing. All this occurred despite the improvement of relationships with capitalist countries and the arrest of many members of the Communist Party. This position of

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<sup>[653]</sup> O'Brien, *Op. cit.*, pp. 162-167.

private capital was a response to the government measures in the period between 1958 and 1960.

Businessmen were extremely terrified by the nationalization of Bank Misr and were all waiting for the next blow to hit them. This was followed by the nationalization of newspapers to strengthen the government's control over the media amid the escalating conflict between the government and businessmen. The newspapers were nationalized under the pretense that they were complicit in capitalism and distorting the facts.<sup>[654]</sup> Following the nationalization of Bank Misr, stock market prices collapsed once again. This prompted the government to assert that it had no plans for any further nationalizations, but to no avail. Hardly another year passed when a new wave of nationalizations took place. Numerous major and medium-sized companies were nationalized, and guardianship was imposed on the properties of a large number of old politicians.<sup>[655]</sup> Charitable endowment lands were also confiscated in 1962, followed by the lands owned by foreigners in 1964.<sup>[656]</sup> These nationalization waves extended until 1964. The stock exchange was then closed, foreign agencies for individuals were abolished, and the state came to control, at least officially, foreign trade.<sup>[657]</sup>

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<sup>[654]</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>[655]</sup> In October 1961, according to some narratives, some old politicians and members of the dominant class approached the government with a request to end military rule. However, the government not only seized the assets of hundreds of them but also arrested them (O'Brien, Op. cit., p. 171). The Political Isolation Law was then issued for those who had "corrupted political life," who were included in the guard lists, and those arrested after July 1952, except 1257 people to whom the Agrarian Reform Law was applied. The law stipulated a suspension of political rights for ten years.

Reference: al-Taliaah magazine, July 1965 issue.

<sup>[656]</sup> O'Brien, Op. cit., p. 106.

<sup>[657]</sup> Refer to Mahmoud Murad, Who was Ruling Egypt. It includes the texts of the July 1961 laws, the names of the nationalized companies, and the names and number of shares of the shareholders in them.

**In actuality, there is no single and clear-cut rationale that explains all the nationalization and guardianship decisions made in the early 1960s.**

**Private capital in Egypt did not receive the maximum support that the state could offer in general. Other countries, such as Japan and Brazil, had granted significant support to the private sector. For instance, the Japanese government had initiated and overseen projects and subsequently sold them to the private sector once they proved profitable. This approach was different from the demands of Egyptian entrepreneurs in the 1950s, who sought assured profits for all projects to stimulate investment. However, Nasserism did not extend this guarantee to all projects, limiting it to those sponsored by the state. Even in these cases, the state played a role similar to that of the Japanese government, but it did not sell its shares to the private sector after the projects were established and became profitable. Additionally, Abdel Nasser refused to privatize Egyptianized companies in 1957. The government lacked the resources to implement a policy similar to Japan's, so it had to pressure the private sector to participate, as the latter had the necessary resources, while the state sought a quick solution to the economic crisis and to boost industrial growth.**

**Furthermore, the state struggled to generate more resources from the toiling classes, particularly small peasants, who typically represent a source of accumulation in the early stages of industrial growth. However, the state squeezed the peasants as much as it could and imposed huge indirect taxes, but this was not sufficient. Therefore, the government turned to engaging private capital, sometimes utilizing promises and at other times employing threats. It exerted partial control from the outset over Bank Misr by appointing its administration before nationalizing it. In the late 1950s, the government tightened pressure on businessmen, leading to a decline in the potential for capital to invest in housing at that time. The government also tightened its control over foreign exchange, restricting investment and expansion in consumer**

industries for traditional goods. All of this led to a further retreat of private capital.

When the government decided to implement its five-year plan, it realized the need to tighten control over Bank Misr, the largest repository of domestic savings. In 1959, it accounted for 40% of all banking activity, with deposits reaching 100 million pounds.<sup>[658]</sup> The bank refused to invest in the government's plan, and its negotiations with the government that took place were of no avail. Instead, it focused on expanding in the textile industry rather than in heavier industries. Therefore, the state accused it of selling shares on the stock exchange, which was the official justification for its nationalization.

The government aimed to make its new development plan from 1960 to 1965 successful and avoid further failure, even if it necessitated sacrificing some businessmen to prevent a more serious social conflict. Hence, the Cairo Internal Transport Company was nationalized under the pretext that it was not delivering adequate services to the capital. Meanwhile, the government's justification for nationalizing the tea and medicine trade was that merchants were raising prices, which actually fell following its nationalization. The Khedivial Steamship Company was nationalized for halting operations without government permission and refusing to comply with wage legislation enacted in 1953.<sup>[659]</sup>

Thus, the immediate motivations for the nationalization decisions were dispersed. In addition, the government did not declare that it had adopted the project of social revolution but rather announced partial objectives each time.

The failure of the first year of the five-year plan severely provoked the officers' government against businessmen, with

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<sup>[658]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, *The Historical Origins of Egyptian Capitalism and Its Development*, p. 216.

<sup>[659]</sup> O'Brien, *Op. cit.*, p. 169, p. 264.

investments amounting to little more than 25 percent of the originally planned amount. While light industries rebounded, more capital-intensive industries, such as steel, declined. Moreover, businessmen did not purchase High Dam bonds, and therefore, the plan was threatened with veritable failure. Hence, Nasserists had to either reconsider their policy or go back to the barracks. The optimal solution, which could secure the stability of power and the regime, was to sacrifice more businessmen to obtain sufficient sources of internal funding on the one hand and to hold them accountable for economic failure on the other. Therefore, nationalization decisions were issued in July 1961, accompanied by offering relatively large crumbs to the poor. Shortly after the announcement of socialist transformation, the Second Agrarian Reform Law was enacted, housing rents were reduced by 35%, and the interest rate that farmers were paying in installments for the land distributed to them according to the First Agrarian Reform Law was also reduced. In return, the interest paid by the state to the owners of nationalized lands was reduced. It was also decided that state sector employees would be granted 25% of annual profits, and they would be allowed to participate in state company boards of directors with four elected members, 2 representing workers and 2 representing office staff. Working hours were also set at 42 hours per week.

The state notably increased subsidies for the lower classes starting in 1960, in contrast to the 1950s. However, this occurred despite the fact that its economic policy had not yet yielded optimal results. Between 1952 and 1965, the economy faced its toughest challenges from 1960 to 1962. This downturn was primarily due to the failure of the first year of the 1960-1965 economic plan and a disastrous cotton crop in 1961-1962. In response, the government compensated farmers for the affected cotton in the context of the new reformist policy.

The deterioration in the standard of living during the 1950s, the growing social divide, and the escalation of repression posed a threat

of a popular uprising in the near future. Consequently, Nasserism had no choice but to implement a relatively extensive reform program.

In the aftermath of Syrian secession, a new wave of nationalizations took place as part of finalizing the events of 1961. This wave sought to suppress any ambitions among Egyptian businessmen to replicate the developments occurring in Syria. A third motivation may be added, which was Nasserism's desire to validate its assertion that businessmen in Syria were accountable for the failure of unity by punishing their counterparts in Egypt. Nasserism capitalized on the Syrian secession, which received backing from local businessmen, to take control of significant firms. This move was further facilitated by the decline in the public reputation of capitalists in Egypt. Alongside the nationalization measures, in October 1961, the assets of 167 affluent families were placed under guardianship.<sup>[660]</sup> The process of nationalization proceeded. However, it encompassed entities that had not represented a threat to the authorities or their funding resources. These ecomprised 400 residential buildings in July 1963,<sup>[661]</sup> 77 bakeries in 1962, 21 more bakeries in 1963, along with 167 mills and 79 rice mills.<sup>[662]</sup>

The nationalization decisions were accompanied by arresting a large number of businessmen and placing their assets under guardianship. Zakaria Mohieddin, Vice President at the time, interpreted this as a preventive measure, while some accounts stated that thirty senior officers from wealthy families submitted a request to the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces after the Syrian secession to put an end to the dictatorship and restore democratic freedoms and parliamentary life. The number of detainees reached

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<sup>[660]</sup> Mabro, *Op. cit.*, p. 201.

<sup>[661]</sup> Hrair Dekmejian, *Egypt Under Nasir*, p. 131

<sup>[662]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, *Op. cit.*, pp. 131-132.



600 people in mid-November 1961, who were released on February 13 and 14, 1962.<sup>[663]</sup>

The simplicity of the initial phase influenced the subsequent expansion of nationalization operations. Numerous retired officials and high-ranking employees reaped the rewards of these processes. Additionally, there were emerging trends among the ruling elite advocating for more nationalization. Raising socialist slogans also gained the regime an extended popular base that was pressuring for more nationalization. Consequently, the Nasserite grassroots were enthusiastic about more socialism. In addition, public opinion became strongly hostile to large owners and businessmen, prompting the authorities to become stricter against them. Nationalization also greatly intensified the animosity between Nasserism and individuals of the dominant class. Consequently, more nationalization operations and the imposition of punitive guardianship were carried out, bolstering the authority of the supreme bureaucracy. Moreover, these successive operations were leveraged in propaganda as evidence of the socialist policy and character of Nasserism. Socialist revolutionary slogans were also necessary to counter the socialism of the Baath and the communists in the Arab East.

This explains why some of Nasserite slogans and measures were completely unjustified when measured against the size, strength, and potential for growth of the revolutionary movement in Egypt. The Arab masses in the Levant were more leftist and could only be led by adopting the slogans of the Baath and Communists. The nationalizations were not only of economic content and purpose. Rather, they greatly supported the propaganda, which had a double effect. It served its role as a public palliative perfectly, but at the same time, it gained the regime wide popularity. This was evident especially in the bases of the political organization created by the

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<sup>[663]</sup> Anwar Abdel Malik, *Op. cit.*, pp. 171-172.

government, which, apart from many opportunistic individuals, attracted a broad section of enthusiastic youth. In return, these bases put effective pressure on the authorities to take more radical steps against businessmen, especially in the early 1960s. It is noteworthy that the government did not employ socialist revolutionary slogans to justify its measures against businessmen prior to July 1961. Following the first year of the 1960-1965 plan and the emergence of the threat of economic ruin, along with the Syrian secession, it resorted to adopting a more leftist stance in its propaganda.

It is also conceivable that some Nasserist leaders not only used their socialist ideas as propaganda but also believed in them but had to deceive the public as well as themselves. This demonstrates the significant influence of objective forces on Nasserism and how it ultimately resulted from the pressures of social powers. Tensions came to a head between Nasserism and the wealthy, who had been the backbone of the social system to which it had belonged in the final analysis, due to the political balance that led to the Nasserite coup. In actuality, the nationalization of lands, economic entities, and assets was not essential for the economy but rather for political purposes. Ultimately, it was a purely Bonapartist-Nasserite characteristic. The clashes of the early 1960s cannot be explained by a single simple factor, as events followed a complex path. Broadly speaking, this clash can be described as a manifestation of the contradiction between *the economic interests of a dominant class characterized by greed, narrow horizons, and weakness* and *the political interests of the same class* that require changes in the social structure to be maintained, sometimes leading to the wealthy being sacrificed as scapegoats.

This general contradiction was the indirect cause of the clash between Nasserism and the wealthy. However, this result reveals a third fact behind this clash: Nasserism did not work for the sake of pure principles but for the interests of the ruling bureaucracy first and foremost. Therefore, the contradiction between the immediate

interests of the dominant class and its political elite lies behind the clash in the early 1960s. At that time, *the state was stronger than civil society, politics was stronger than the economy, the ruling elite was stronger politically than the dominant class, and the political system was stronger than its social base*. This factor serves as the direct monetary explanation for the events, which potentially encompasses the various direct factors mentioned above. The aforementioned moment was not an unexplained coincidence. Rather, it was the result of the complex course of socio-political struggle that had taken place since 1945 on the domestic level, along with the dynamics in the Arab region as a whole.

Occasional circumstances forced a conservative class, represented by its tool, to play the role of a popular revolution, albeit via a spontaneous mechanism. However, this was the deep content of the clash between Nasserism and the wealthy, which was achieved via the mediation of diverse elements. Nasserism, as a result of specific political interactions, created unique circumstances for the dominant class. It was alienated from its state apparatus. Furthermore, the political interactions that culminated in the restricted underdevelopment of development through the free market economy necessitated its intervention in the form it took.

Unlike any of the Third World's ostensibly revolutionary regimes, even the Bonapartist ones, Nasserism implemented a very distinct set of social reforms. For example, this extent of social reforms and nationalization was not carried out by the regimes of Bourguiba and Nimeiry. Nasserism emerged in the context of a revolutionary movement in Egypt that was hostile to imperialism and Zionism and had an emotional connection to the nationalist movement in the Arab East and Sudan. This movement was rapidly escalating and aspiring to a leading Egyptian role in unifying Arab countries. Additionally, Egypt was facing a deep social divide.

No regime in the underdeveloped world faced responsibilities of this magnitude. The Syrian regime, for example, faced a stronger

nationalist movement than its counterpart in Egypt, but it was a movement that put more pressure on the Egyptian government than it did on the Syrian government. The social gap and economic crisis in Syria were not as severe as in Egypt. Instead, both Syria and Iraq witnessed a noticeable economic recovery following World War II. Oil production increased in Iraq, and vast areas of land were reclaimed in Syria.<sup>[664]</sup> The dominant class in Syria also succeeded in holding Nasserism accountable for the failure of the unity attempt in front of the Syrian populace, giving the impression that it had done its duty.

Other underdeveloped countries experienced more significant social transformations, especially in the field of agricultural ownership. The agrarian reform in South Korea and Taiwan was radical, setting the maximum ownership at 2.5 acres. However, these countries did not carry out such transformations under revolutionary slogans, nor were they obligated to undertake political and ideological adventures. Rather, they achieved their growth with the support of private foreign capital and absolute American protection that went as far as waging a costly war in Korea. On the contrary, Nasserism inaugurated an era of nationalizing giant foreign economic entities after the failure of Mosaddegh in Iran. Furthermore, it enacted important labor legislation and suppressed many disloyal individuals of the dominant class in the context of consolidating its political authority. It also raised costly socialist and revolutionary slogans, was involved in an Arab unity project and the Yemen war, and was obligated throughout the period to oppose direct colonialism. All of this reflects the difficult conditions it faced, which played a major role in scaring away foreign investments and domestic businessmen.

The nationalizations that took place from 1961 to 1964 had a significant negative impact on the wealthy. Additionally, these

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<sup>[664]</sup> Muhammad Jabir Al-Ansari, *Transformations of Thought and Politics in the Arab East (1930-1970)*, p. 98.

actions led to a deep ideological crisis within the Marxist Left camp. However, the beliefs of the Islamists remained unshaken. Rather, the most radical trend emerged at the hands of Sayyid Qutb, who resorted to takfir (accusing others of being disbelievers) of the entire Nasserite regime and even the whole society.

In fact, the ideological turmoil that occurred among the Marxist left constituted a phenomenon that cannot be separated from the path of the Nasserite regime. The latter had raised socialist slogans that went beyond the ideology of the Communist Party itself, intentionally to some extent. This unrest, along with other minor factors, contributed to the dissolution of the Communist Party and the capitulation of most of its prominent leaders to Nasserism.

### **Chapter Three:**

#### **State Encroachment versus Private Sector Power**

With the proclamation of the July 1961 laws, the Nasserite regime officially embraced socialism. Gamal Abdel Nasser initially announced the slogan. On this occasion, the official political organization was rebuilt under the name of the Socialist Union, and then the “National Charter” was issued in 1962. The government recognized May 1 as an official workers’ day and an official holiday for the first time in Egypt. Ironically, while socialism was being declared, socialists had been imprisoned and tortured. Furthermore, the term “communism” remained linked in official propaganda with disbelief, treason, and collaboration with foreign states. Additionally, the Anti-Communism Department within the Ministry of Interior remained active and committed in its efforts. Ultimately, when the shortcomings of his “experiment” became apparent, Nasser expressed regret that he had been striving to build socialism in the absence of socialists.

The knights of July 1952 were not the first authority to introduce a policy of state intervention in economic activity in modern Egypt at this level. Muhammad Ali was a pioneer in this respect in terms of time and extent. Egypt's history has consistently displayed a pattern of reactionary responses. Each time the private sector expands, the government initiates a counter-revolution to reassert its dominance over the economy. This phenomenon is a key characteristic of the Asiatic mode of production in its most unadulterated form within Egypt. The state has been interfering in economic affairs since 1939, a century following the defeat of Muhammad Ali's regime.<sup>[665]</sup> From 1949 to 1952, the government exempted most imports of machinery and raw materials needed for industry from customs duties while raising the same taxes on imported finished consumer goods.<sup>[666]</sup> It also intervened to determine the area of land planted with cotton, agricultural rents, and the prices of some goods. It also introduced an import licensing system during the late 1940s. Moreover, in 1935, the government developed a five-year plan to reform the infrastructure and then devised a new plan in 1947. Few projects from the second plan were implemented, which focused on research to develop the iron, steel, and chemical fertilizer industries.<sup>[667]</sup> Moreover, from 1945 to 1952, the government contributed 20% of the domestically collected fixed capital.<sup>[668]</sup> Despite these efforts, the "agrarian logic" toward industry remained dominant.

Consequently, the state had a propensity to increase its level of intervention. However, following the July coup, the ownership

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<sup>[665]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, *Op. cit.*, p. 60. In fact, state intervention began again in 1914, but it became effective in the interwar period. Since 1939, this intervention has become decisive (refer to O'Brien, *ibid.*, pp. 67-91).

<sup>[666]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>[667]</sup> O'Brien, *Op. cit.*, p. 76, p. 85.

<sup>[668]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83, and pp. 67-91.



structure was altered via the aforementioned nationalization in 1952–1953, 1960–1964, and 1964.

While the policies implemented between 1960 and 1964 significantly impacted many affluent individuals, they did not eliminate substantial private ownership. In fact, large sectors of capital continued to grow and flourish. These included numerous contracting companies, wholesale trade, export trade, and the entire land transport sector except for the railways.

The large landowners were never liquidated as a class, and they continued to have a strong influence in the countryside, as well as in the metropolis, supported by their ownership of a respectable proportion of agricultural land. Additionally, notables, including brokers and smugglers of imported goods, continued to operate on a large scale.

The number of landowners of 20 to 50 feddans increased from 22,000 in 1952 to 29,000 in 1965. At the same time, the total land area they owned grew from 654,000 to 815,000 feddans, displacing the aristocracy whose lands were nationalized. The number of owners of 20-200 feddans increased from 31,000 in 1952 to 39,000 in 1965, and the area of land they owned increased from 1.521 million to 1.628 million feddans.<sup>[669]</sup> These official figures do not take into account lands registered under fictitious names or in the names of children and relatives.<sup>[670]</sup> In addition to this increase, large landowners enjoyed special advantages from the government, such as loans from the state funds:

Table (15)

Loans provided to farmers in million pounds <sup>[671]</sup>

Year	Loan value
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<sup>[669]</sup> Mahmoud Abdel Fadeel, Op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>[670]</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>[671]</sup> Mabro, Op. cit., p. 121.



1952	16
1954	18
1956	18
1958	25
1960	37
1964/1965	65
1966/1967	86
1968/1970	81

Around 80% of these loans went to large landowners and were not returned to the state. In 1962, the debts of large landowners to the state amounted to 60 million pounds, while in 1974 they reached approximately 100 million pounds.<sup>[672]</sup> A law was enacted in 1961, the year socialism was declared, exempting these loans from interest.<sup>[673]</sup> Moreover, large landlords lent a portion of these loans to peasants at higher interest rates while investing some of them in private firms in the cities.

The laws also stipulated that owners of 15 feddans or more were granted the right to purchase high-quality seeds from the state, while those owning five or more heads of cattle were eligible for insurance coverage and access to subsidized fodder.<sup>[674]</sup> However, poorer landowners were deprived of these privileges. In addition, most of the subsidized fertilizers were provided to large landowners, with annual subsidies amounting to LE 80 million in the early 1970s.

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<sup>[672]</sup> Fouad Morsi, *This Economic Openness*, p. 276. Belyaev & Primakov reported that 75% of the outstanding debt in 1965 was held by large landlords, *Op. cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>[673]</sup> O'Brien, *Op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>[674]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, *Op. cit.*, p. 212.

**[675] Large landowners did not refrain from reselling the selected fodder and seeds to smaller farmers on the black market.**

Moreover, the state did not impose taxes on livestock traders or profits from agricultural production, being satisfied only with a tax on land whose area was almost fixed. As a result, the overall share of real estate and building taxes dropped to 5.5% of the total taxes and fees after the five-year plan, compared to 9.5% in 1952.<sup>[676]</sup> In addition, the system of compulsory agricultural crop delivery disproportionately benefited large landowners while disadvantaging small farmers. It required a fixed production quantity per feddan to be delivered, regardless of the size of land ownership. A consistent quantity of production per feddan was required to be delivered, irrespective of the size of land ownership. However, for rice, the compulsory delivery was set at 1,417 kg per feddan for the first five, increasing to 1,653 kg for each additional feddan thereafter.<sup>[677]</sup> Therefore, the small farmer did not have sufficient basic food items for his consumption, especially grains, while the large owner had the same percentage of production but a much bigger quantity, allowing him to sell grains on the black market, especially in the countryside, at high prices. Thus, Nasserite policy stimulated the formation of a large black market for food. Large landowners were also able to influence the agricultural cycle so that significant parts of their lands were not included. Consequently, small owners bore the burden of growing unprofitable crops, such as cotton, after its global prices fell and after the policy of compulsory delivery was enacted. Additionally, large landowners continued to enjoy strong influence within the state apparatus. They directly controlled these apparatuses in the countryside and forged close relationships with officials.

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<sup>[675]</sup> Fouad Morsi, *Op. cit.*, p. 227.

<sup>[676]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>[677]</sup> Refer to some details in the book by Mahmoud Abdel Fadeel mentioned above, pp. 163-167.

Although Nasserism sacrificed consecutive groups of businessmen and large landlords for the system as a whole, the large landowners, except for aristocratic families, did not receive the same treatment as industrialists. Conversely, the Nasserite period represented a golden age for landowners possessing between 20 and 100 feddans, as well as wholesalers, which will be discussed further. During this era, they amassed significant wealth, allowing them to thrive well into the period of economic liberalization (openness), which commenced in 1968.

It is noticeable that Nasserism relied heavily on small landowners in the countryside to maintain socio-political stability. However, large landowners were also preserved for the same purpose. This class played a crucial role in the village, maintaining strong relationships with peasants. Unlike the agrarian aristocracy that was eliminated, large landowners provided income opportunities for various marginalized groups in the countryside, such as itinerant workers, day laborers, and the unemployed. If the 1952 reform led to a clear deterioration in the incomes of agricultural and itinerant workers, what about a radical agrarian reform that completely eliminates large properties? It threatens to trigger a broad revolutionary wave in the countryside, especially since Nasserism had not developed plans that could absorb this outcome. They also upheld traditional norms and acted as a buffer against the cultural revolutionization of the countryside, making them essential for controlling the peasantry. Therefore, the Nasserite bureaucracy needed the support of these large landowners to govern the countryside effectively. The liquidation of this class would open the way for the peasants to play a larger role in the village apparatuses, or at least to represent themselves before the authorities, and there was a high potential for the lower classes to rebel. Large-scale unemployment would ensue, as many marginalized people had been dependent on the large landowners for breadwinning, such as itinerant workers, day laborers, servants, the unemployed, the

homeless, the disabled, etc. Robert Mabro<sup>[678]</sup> added that implementing radical agrarian reform and expropriating urban properties on a large scale would strip regime-affiliated individuals of their assets, such as officers, technocrats, government officials, and landlords. If the 1952 reform led to a clear deterioration in the incomes of agricultural and migrant workers, a radical agrarian reform that eliminates large-scale property ownership threatens to trigger a large-scale revolutionary wave in the countryside, especially since Nasserism had no plans to absorb this outcome. This is how large-scale land ownership played the role of an indirect instrument of repression, the link between Nasserism and small-scale land ownership, through which the state ensured the continued conservatism of the countryside, village bodies, and even agricultural workers' unions. Moreover, large real estate holdings had generally constituted an important social reserve for the ruling power when social contradictions erupted. They were used as a scapegoat several times (1952, 1958, 1961, 1964, 1969).<sup>[679]</sup> The bogeyman of feudalism was also used in propaganda before and after every agrarian reform movement to blame forces that had been established in popular consciousness before the July coup rather than as a result of its policies.

Significantly, after the assassination of Salah Hussein in Kamshish in 1966, Nasserists, under pressure from the regime's bases and the intelligentsia, formed what they named the Feudal Liquidation Committee. This was composed of army officers. The Nasserists refused to hand over the reins of this matter to their technical apparatus or even their political organization.

Nevertheless, some large landowners were exposed to harassment by Nasserists. For example, the Faqi family was harassed in 1966, along with some other remnants of the real estate aristocracy. Occasionally, police repression was practiced against those who

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<sup>[678]</sup> Op. cit., p. 202.

<sup>[679]</sup> In 1958, a law was issued to make the maximum family ownership limit 300 feddans.

were affiliated with senior politicians prior to July 1952. All this, of course, made relations between landowners and Nasserists more problematic, since the state generally had praised them in private and chastised them in public, avoiding extreme confrontation with them, unlike with capitalists.

In addition to their beneficial role for the Nasserite authority, a real attempt to liquidate this class would have greatly upset the regime. This class was (and still is) extremely powerful and also armed in most parts of the “natural” leaders with significant moral influence in the countryside. It is also important to note that the revolutionary movement between 1945 and 1952 was not particularly strong in rural areas. Moreover, this class had an enormous influence on the centralized state apparatus. Although it was not rivaling the power of the super-bureaucratic elite, its elimination would have required major changes in the state apparatus, meaning that a terrible clash would have been inevitable.

For all this, Nasserism preserved the large landowner class.

In urban areas, large merchants and brokers were protected by state institutions. Trade was not nationalized, except for cotton and lumber. When a decision was made to nationalize wholesale trade, the apparatuses did not carry it out, despite being issued by the head of state. Wholesalers held significant influence within the Nasserite regime, with many state officials involved in this activity. Notably, a large number of state employees worked in trade and brokerage. The profits of wholesalers in Cairo alone in 1964/1965 amounted to 24 million pounds, and their annual turnover reached 120 million pounds. There were only 219 wholesalers,<sup>[680]</sup> who managed 600 million pounds.<sup>[681]</sup> The contracting sector remained strong. Despite the nationalization of most large companies, many

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<sup>[680]</sup> Mahmoud Metwally, *The Path of Egyptian Capitalism after 1961*, “Al-Kateb” Magazine, Issue 139, quoting the Minister of Supply, Fouad Mori.

<sup>[681]</sup> Fouad Morsi, *The Control of Capitalist Production Relations*, “al-Taliaah” Magazine, December 1975.

contracting operations continued to be conducted by private subcontractors and delivered by nationalized firms. For example, subcontractors carried out a substantial portion of the construction in the 1960-1965 plan, accounting for 40-50% of the plan's total investments.<sup>[682]</sup> Additionally, the largest contracting company in Egypt at the time had its foreign branches remain proprietary to the Osman family, while its domestic branch was nationalized. This enabled the family to benefit from the nationalization decision to the maximum extent. While the local branch monopolized and subcontracted most of the state operations, the foreign branches benefited from the exchange with the domestic one. Furthermore, despite efforts to nationalize the contracting sector, it was not fully implemented due to challenges in monitoring capital and registering subcontractors.

The private sector retained control over 92% of land transport operations, resulting in financial losses for the state due to the preference for car transport over railways. While most industrial capital was nationalized, some large private companies, especially in the food and textile industries, remained operational.

**Table (16)**

**Comparison between the size of the private sector and the state sector in the textile industry for large companies with 50 workers or more in 1965/1966**<sup>[683]</sup>

Sector	Number of employees in thousands	Production (in million pounds)	Annual salaries (in million pounds)
State sector	437.437	250.693	83.550
Private sector	42.198	15.219	7.906

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<sup>[682]</sup> Ali Sabri, Op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>[683]</sup> Bogo Slojazinski, the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt and its Policy Toward the Private Industrial Sector, Iraqi "Arab Horizons" Magazine, Issue 24, December 1975.

**A large number of small workshops and factories remained owned by big businessmen. It is a common phenomenon in Egypt for one businessman to own several small businesses.**

**Businessmen in Nasserite Egypt enjoyed a very lenient tax system. As mentioned earlier, gardening and livestock trading remained exempt from taxes, as did private schools, car garages, etc. Business taxes did not exceed 2 million pounds annually, despite the provisions of the progressive tax law, while the working classes bore most of the direct taxes (individual income taxes in 1970 amounted to 325 million pounds), and the stamp tax amounted to 30 million, in addition to indirect taxes. State companies also bore most of the revenue tax.**

**The blows directed by Nasserism at businessmen aiming to absorb the political effects of social contradictions did not prevent the private sector from expanding once more. Nevertheless, the actions of the private sector after the nationalization movement saw considerable growth in mediation, smuggling, and various non-value-added activities. Nasserism directed its blows at businessmen and landlords in the context of an integrated process to absorb social conflict for long-term political purposes and short-term economic objectives. Therefore, these blows were constrained by their purpose and remained confined within the framework of reform, which in such a case is usually not consistent with itself or with the situation of society in general. Therefore, it did not inaugurate a developmental process at the level of society. For all this, Nasserism's blows to businessmen were neither complete nor consistent with the official slogans raised throughout these events.**

**When it comes to the industrial sector, one cannot help but recall the expression of Kohachiro Takahashi,<sup>[684]</sup> who described the large**

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<sup>[684]</sup> Maurice Dobb & Paul Sweezy, et al., *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, p. 128.



factories before the Industrial Revolution in England as a node in commercial capital. In that period, commercial capital dominated industrial capital, while in capitalist society, the opposite is true, as industrial capital dominates commercial capital. Therefore, the victory of industrial capital was the final triumph of capitalism. In backward Egypt, the commercial character of the industry has been apparent since its inception. Industrialists did not strive to advance their industries technologically. Instead, they remained stagnant under the shield of high customs duties, enjoying substantial profits. Moreover, most of their revenues were not reinvested in production but were primarily directed to the circulation field. With nationalization, this phenomenon deepened, as the nationalized sector became a *cash cow* for mostly middlemen businessmen who gradually merged with senior statesmen. This removed the thin veneer that separated industry from commercial capital and suggested that there was a distinct block of industrial capitalism. Senior statesmen and businessmen became direct thieves of state companies, and the industrial sector, which before its nationalization was self-financing, became financially dependent on the state and its banks. Its debts increased year after year, especially after the failure of the 1960-1965 plan.

If most of the large-scale industry was nationalized and became state-owned, this reminds one, along with all of the above, of the Royal Workshops <sup>[685]</sup> that merchants in England established before the Industrial Revolution in alliance with the state. The state sector in Nasserite Egypt had almost the same content, except that production here was carried out with less seriousness. Merchants and brokers neither officially nor individually owned shares in the state sector. Consequently, they played no part in overseeing its surplus production, a responsibility assumed entirely by the state. Bureaucratic roles increasingly became the primary stronghold for the emerging class of bureaucratic businessmen. This is precisely

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<sup>[685]</sup> Ibid.

why the Nasserite elite was unable to protect this cash cow for an extended period.

Despite repeated setbacks faced by businessmen, it cannot be concluded that large-scale capitalism was eradicated. As is evident from the earlier analysis, the major private sector remained strong. By 1966, the private sector accounted for the following percentages across various areas of economic activity:

- Agriculture: 92 %
- Extractive industry: 12 %
- Manufacturing industry: 40%
- Energy: -----
- Domestic trade: 86%
- Banks and insurance: -
- Transportation: 48%
- Health: 25%
- Personal service: %78
- Wholesale trade: approximately 100%
- Export operations: 25%
- A large percentage of land transport: 92% of this sector excluding railways.

In addition to subcontracting, scrap metal trading, brokerage, gardening, livestock breeding and trading, and the continued existence of import offices, etc. In actuality, the large private sector continued to play an effective role in producing and distributing the surplus while the state pushed it toward non-value-added activities as a consequence of its reform policies. The private sector's share of national income reached 60% in 1962/1963. These figures are based on official data, excluding the size of the black market, shadow

industry, and the profits of manpower contractors, brokers, subcontractors, and others. <sup>[686]</sup>

Throughout the 1950s, the supremacy of large private capital was unquestionable. Nevertheless, controversy arose regarding the extent of its existence after the July 1961 proceedings and beyond until 1964. During this period, industrialists, in particular, suffered from state interventions and nationalization of their wealth. <sup>[687]</sup> However, private capital as such was not liquidated; rather, talk quickly began about the “new class.” The government was obligated to carry out a new agrarian reform in 1969 as a response to the growth of the influence of the private sector and the beginning of renewed discontent among peasants. Between 1965 and 1967, and later following the 1967 defeat, the state’s concessions to the dominant class were partly a response to its pressure, exerted both directly and via its significant influence within the state apparatus.

This issue is summarized as follows:

1. Strikes against businessmen and large landlords did not result in the liquidation of the dominant class. Rather, the outcome was the attenuation of some of its blocs and members. The government had followed this policy in the context of pushing the growth of underdevelopment without private foreign capital, in addition to the alienation of the dominant class from its state apparatus.

2. Specific sectors that bore the brunt of the blow were the agrarian aristocracy and large industrialists, while the rural rich, private trade, and subcontractors as a whole experienced tremendous growth.

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<sup>[686]</sup> The above information is from various references, including Anwar Abdel Malik, *Op. cit.*, p. 350, quoted from “al-Ahram” journal, June 30, 1962 and Belyaev & Primakov, *Op. cit.*, p. 204.

<sup>[687]</sup> Private industrial capital began to grow again in 1963/1964 at a rate higher than the general industrial growth rate in several sectors. Refer to Ghali Shukri, *The Counter-Revolution in Egypt*, pp. 40-41.

3. The private sector quickly absorbed this blow and regained its vigor a few years later, following the conclusion of nationalizations. After 1964, Nasserism did not undertake new nationalizations, except for an agrarian reform implemented in 1969.

4. The nationalized sector functioned with mechanisms that were inconsistent with the market economy. An important change also occurred, as it became a direct and significant source of surplus for merchants, brokers, bureaucrats, landlords, and others, specifically, for the unproductive segments of the dominant class, which laid a solid foundation for an unprecedented parasitic orientation of the economy in modern Egypt. Nasserism effectively eliminated the majority of industrial businessmen, allowing more parasitic groups to emerge. Yet it failed to provide a superior alternative. While it managed to make some progress toward development, this was achieved with considerable challenges, and it imposed various barriers that hindered further growth.

Ultimately, Nasserite socialism was unique. The state sector primarily worked for the benefit of the private sector, even if it provided cheap services to the masses or sold its products at reduced prices, etc. The result of its work as a whole served the system that was practically ruled *from below* by businessmen and large landowners. The existence of Bonapartist authority confirms and does not deny this fact. The role of the state in the Nasserite period was analyzed at all levels, showing that it ultimately served the longer-term interests of the same social system.

## **Conclusion**

Nasserite authority did not manifest as either a regular bourgeois government or a workers' government. In addition, military rule was not a Western ploy, as the officers were not a puppet government in the conventional sense. Actually, Nasserism took the form of a supra-class government, involving all classes while being against them at the same time. Everyone participated in the

government formally, but no one was allowed to have the final say except the ruling elite.

Despite numerous nationalizations and conflicts with the wealthy, the ruling elite never concluded its rivalry with this class. The only group that suffered a knockout blow was the agrarian aristocracy, headed by the royal family. It is understood that the latter was the perfect scapegoat for the system as a whole, as all the currents, trends, and responsible circles agreed at the time. Despite the grants provided to industrial workers and the intelligentsia, Nasserism was never representative of them. Moreover, the grants were also accompanied by severe repression. The peasants were subjugated, and the agricultural workers were suppressed without offering significant bribes, thanks to their political weakness. On the other hand, the groups that benefited effectively were the contractors, brokers, big merchants, rich farmers, and, above all, the supreme bureaucracy. The Nasserite elite secured such substantial “protections”<sup>[688]</sup> for themselves that they became exceedingly privileged and markedly superior to society as a whole.

Based on the above, it can be determined that Nasserism was formed by an elite of senior statesmen with a unique function: an instrument of the dominant class because it did not liquidate it or eliminate its control from below, but a rebellious instrument.

This is precisely the *essence* of Nasserism.

## **SECTION THREE**

### **Nasserism Realized**

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<sup>[688]</sup> The protections were originally levies imposed by Janissary groups in the Ottoman era on merchants and craftsmen in exchange for protecting them from other groups.

**CONSCIOUSNESS IS SOMETHING THAT IT (THE WORLD) HAS  
TO ACQUIRE, EVEN IF IT DOES NOT WANT TO**

Karl Marx

The study of Nasserism began with the formation of the Nasserite authority between July 1952 and March 1954. This period represented Nasserism at the moment of its pure existence, or the first stage of its logical formation. However, this stage of the analysis did not stop but moved on and progressed to examine the structure of the Nasserite regime from within. That is Nasserism in essence, as was fully crystallized in the previous chapter. The analysis is carried out by examining the *notion* of the regime, or Nasserism, in its complete reality.

It has become clear that Nasserism did not genuinely overcome the regressive and dependent social structure. Additionally, ideologically, it manifested in a revolutionary manner. This discrepancy between content and form represents a contradiction that implies unity. Ultimately, Nasserism constitutes one entity, and understanding it requires an exploration of its entirety. Nasserism has proven to be not just a form of governance but also a broad political line. However, the latter was practiced under slogans that contradicted its true nature, a contradiction that has been previously examined. The subsequent logical step is to complete the analysis of its essence. Subsequently, it should analyze the notion, meaning Nasserism in its most concrete existence. At this moment, it will be exposed how the Nasserite elite acted in favor of the regime through its interests. The 1952 coup, the various policies of its government, all its positions toward different circumstances, and its way of expressing itself are moments of a comprehensive *totality*. Nasserism was not merely an activity that realized abstract

concepts, nor was it a collection of good and bad deeds. Rather, it was a *whole*, and at every moment, it faced the world only as such. The above analysis has implied this totality. Now it will be brought out explicitly.

The notion of Nasserism is not as idealistic as it presents itself. It has become evident that Nasserite ideas were primarily slogans with a demagogic nature. In practice, they often manifested as a revolution within the counter-revolution or, at best, a compromise between the two. Therefore, its genuine notion will be recognized as it objectively exists.

The exposition of the notion of Nasserism should begin with the question: Who are the Nasserists?

From the outset, the Nasserists viewed the state apparatus as their own gain and strived to retain control. Their policies veered left or right while prioritizing their authority. This analysis will delve into how they solidified their presence within the state apparatus and its relation to the social order they upheld.

Nasserism will be scrutinized in a final analysis.

## **Part One: The Nasserite Elite**

Following the coup, officers became increasingly dominant within the government. The nucleus of the “Free Officers” was the one that held control, and it was the wing that was most strict on the issue of the army’s return to its barracks. They sought to establish an all-powerful authority not subordinate to any social power. These were the elements led by Gamal Abdel Nasser. Most Nasserists deny this, as they claim that Gamal, along with Khaled Mohieddin and Youssef Siddiq, had supported democracy. However, they overlook the fact that if he truly supported democracy, he should have demanded free elections and the return of the army to its



barracks after declaring the republic. He should have also approved the draft of the 1954 constitution instead of discarding it.

The aforementioned nucleus was joined by many other army officers, police officers, then educated officers (military intelligentsia), government officials, and later, some worker leaders and many intellectuals. Some businessmen and large landlords approached or joined the new elite and were known as the National Capitalists, one of the components of the alliance of the working people's forces, according to the Charter. Since Nasser's victory over Naguib in March 1954, the Nasserite clique began to grow and organize itself by distributing its members within the state apparatus, organizing their interests together, and making agreements and compromises between them. In addition, they established their political organization.

Initially, the "Free Officers," led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, took full control of power while suppressing various political factions. Officers from wealthy families, democratic officers, supporters of Muhammad Naguib, artillery commanders, and others were dismissed from the army. The ruling clique after the coup was primarily formed from the "Free Officers" organization, and then others were recruited from other officers after the organization was dissolved.<sup>[689]</sup> The criterion for joining the Bonapartist nucleus was loyalty to the new political system: Bonapartism. Loyalty to the state apparatus and its authority was the most decisive factor in nominating new members, as long as the elite deemed them necessary.

The selection process was based on mutual trust between the elite and their followers. The allocation of new members within the Bonapartist-Nasserite clique depended on the dynamics within the elite and the level of trust established. For example, at the beginning, Colonel Abdel Hakeem Amer was promoted to the rank

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<sup>[689]</sup> Hamroush, *The Story of the July 23 Revolution* (2), pp. 143-144.

of major general and appointed commander of the army, which was unacceptable in an institution governed by strict rules for promotions. This measure led to the disruption of the seniority system in the army and aroused hidden resentment.<sup>[690]</sup> Some junior officers also infiltrated sensitive positions in the state thanks to their special relationship with the leadership, and some junior officers were granted influence over their seniors. Loyalty to the leadership or the more powerful faction within the elite ensured greater influence. Demonstrating loyalty to the leadership was the path taken to fulfill the interests of elite members, particularly officers and senior statesmen. This strategy was applied across all governmental institutions, where loyalty was expressed by endorsing leaders' decisions, composing confidential reports against rivals, and exhibiting personal fidelity to influential figures within the ruling clique.

This process ended with the independence of the state bureaucracy from the dominant class, i.e., the establishment of Bonapartist rule in its Nasserite form.

It is now evident that Nasserism, at the beginning of its “logical” existence, had existed solely as a concept in the minds of the “Free Officers.” Over time, it transformed into a distinct social category rooted in its association with this idea. Consequently, it appeared as though thought itself had the power to shape reality. Conversely, this concept was a reflection of reality in more than one sense, albeit it took a form that aligned with their consciousness and culture after they had seized power, and thanks to their success in appropriating the state apparatus and utilizing it for their interests. On the other hand, the “Free Officers,” who, like all human beings, were aspiring to achieve a better status, decided to seize power and reconstruct the system themselves. In fact, the balance of political power had created a suitable ground for the emergence of this idea or

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<sup>[690]</sup> Refer to Ahmad Hamroush, *Op. cit.*, (2), pp. 148-150.

possibility. The officers presented themselves as saviors of all classes because it would elevate them socially to a better status. From a third party, some of the “trustworthy people” supported the idea of Bonapartism because it aligned with their interests. Finally, a few individuals joined the Nasserite elite based on pure intellectual conviction in the slogans raised by the new authority and out of a desire to rebuild the country. Most of these individuals were intellectuals who joined the elite after Nasserism had crystallized.

The status of officers within the elite was excellent. They held the most prestigious positions and had the upper hand in public institutions for two reasons:

\*The strong relationship between the Nasserite nucleus of the “Revolutionary Command Council” and the “Free Officers” as a whole, along with most other officers, provided a greater opportunity to gain “trust” among many officers.

\*The second reason is related to the pressure exerted by some army officers on the government. Many officers from outside the “Free Officers” organization participated in the coup and then in the power struggle (1952-1954). They formed a pressure force, albeit not organized in a political form, compelling the leadership to give them a good part of the pie, at least to ward off the danger of another coup.

Within the clique, distinct power factions could naturally emerge due to various factors. These included differing social backgrounds, the conflicting interests of diverse state institutions, the interplay of elements within social groups, varying levels of loyalty and personal trust, and the differing ambitions of elite members. Furthermore, the drive for ascension often sparked rivalries among individuals seeking the leaders’ favor or, at times, led to confrontations with the leadership itself. This explains why the Nasserite elite lacked cohesion, as it was divided into numerous factions with differing perspectives on various matters, competing for positions, status, and advantages under different justifications. Additionally, some

members pursued their interests, even to the detriment of the general interests of the elite. Keeping the clique as cohesive as possible required the leadership to carry out small coups from time to time in order to maintain the equilibrium between various power centers: small blows to both the Nasserite Right and Left, as well as to overly opportunistic elements. Consequently, the atmosphere of relations within the elite was characterized by a spirit of conspiracy, intrigue, and small coups within and against each other.

The clique was an artificial, closed caste. The Nasserite bureaucracy enjoyed only utilitarian ties between its members and was distinguished from other social forces by its unique and particularly parasitic social function. It reminds us of the *Mamluks* from a certain angle: a group of professional military guards and servants of the dominant class and its system, and the king in particular, from outside the classes, who monopolized power by force in exchange for substantial fees. They did not belong to any particular family or lineage.

The Nasserite bureaucracy was not just an administrative apparatus. The statesman was no longer just an administrator but also exercised a social function related to the social division of labor. It was no longer possible for anyone who knows the art of administration to become a senior statesman. Rather, it became a condition for joining the bureaucratic elite that one should believe in Bonapartist rule, be loyal to it, and be able to provide significant services to the regime. Promotions within the ranks of the elder statesmen were no longer based solely on competence and loyalty to the social system. It also became necessary to have loyalty to the elite, who even decided which candidates would join it. That is, the bureaucratic elite became self-appointed, and in this, it also resembled the *Mamluks*. The elite no longer included only the men of senior management but also senior military personnel, administrators of the state's economic institutions, leaders of the official political organization, and some journalists and "official"

intellectuals. Thus, there was a truly closed caste, not just an elite that monopolized the experience of managing the state.

The members of the Nasserite elite were not merely technocrats, as some authors have suggested. Instead, the primary criterion for adding new members to the elite was not professional competence, but rather the ability to consolidate Bonapartism. It is significant that the vast majority of the elements that initially cheered the anti-communist slogans later drummed up support for Nasserite socialism and joined the Liberation Rally, then the National Union, followed by the Socialist Union. Most of them later attacked Nasserite socialism. They also welcomed cooperation with the Soviet Union and then attacked it. In short, the bureaucrat's loyalty was only to his social faction, and he never adhered to a principle or a doctrine, with rare exceptions. While he opposed the bureaucracy, he only turned into a businessman with interests that went beyond the Nasserite regime.

If loyalty to the Bonapartist-Nasserite elite was the criterion, or the rationale, of that elite's reconfiguration, what power was the latter based on?

When the officers seized power, they were able to realize great ambitions for themselves. With the declaration of their rule, a new regime was established: the Nasserite Republic. Their leadership was fully formed during the period between July 1952 and March 1954. The leaders most prepared and willing to exercise Bonapartist governance, that is, supreme bureaucratic ruling in the name of the social order, were chosen by the new elder statesmen. From that moment on, the inclusion of new elements was subject to the extent of the elite's need for them and their willingness to integrate into this new system. Under these circumstances, it was not possible to establish clear and direct formal rules for individuals to join the new elite. Therefore, the trust of the Nasserite leadership was the fundamental criterion.

Thus, based on the political balance, a small nucleus emerged—a leadership via which the elite was formed from top to bottom, following the same rationale imposed on society as a whole.

From the beginning, Nasserite elite officers proceeded to spread into important positions in the state apparatus.<sup>[691]</sup>

The highest ranks in the army were attained by loyal officers, while some of them were distributed in various security organizations. Additionally, it was also easy for security officers to declare their allegiance to the new authority and for some of them to be deployed in important civilian positions. 500 officers were transferred to high positions in the state during the period from 1952 to 1964.<sup>[692]</sup> Loyal elements also infiltrated all media outlets: radio, newspapers, publishing and translation houses, cinema, and theater. Newspapers were nationalized in 1960 and attached to the “National Union.” The Ministry of Culture was established in 1957, headed by an officer. In 1964, the Public Transport Authority was placed under the supervision of the Military Criminal Investigation Service (MCIS). Nasserist officers also infiltrated the football, equestrian, tennis, and swimming federations. For example, Abdel Hakim Amer became head of the Football Federation, Hussein Shafei became head of the Equestrian Federation, Ali Sabry became head of the Swimming Federation, Magdy Hassanein became head of the Tennis Federation, Ali Shafiq became head of the Boxing Federation, etc. Some officers were also appointed to ambassadorial positions. During the period from 1952 to 1962, the number of military ambassadors increased from only two to dozens (in 1962, all Egyptian ambassadors in Europe were officers except for three). Furthermore, in 1962, the number of officers occupying senior roles within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs rose to seventy-two out of a total of one hundred positions.<sup>[693]</sup> Similarly, in state-owned

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<sup>[691]</sup> Ahmad Hamroush discussed this beginning in some detail, *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

<sup>[692]</sup> Anwar Abdel Malik, *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>[693]</sup> Hamroush, *Abdel Nasser’s Society*, p. 133.



companies, the majority of the former directors were ousted and succeeded by Nasserist officers, along with Nasserist civilian personnel. Nasserists also dominated the unions and cultural associations, as loyalty was the criterion that often took precedence over professional competence in all these roles. Regarding the special status of officers, in 1964, less than 1% of the country's university personnel were officers, yet they were concentrated in specific positions: the presidency of the republic (20%), the Ministry of Interior (83.67%), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (9.31%). In addition, they held the position of governor in 22 out of 26 governorates and 6 out of 11 of the presidencies of public institutions. However, their number or percentage was not large in sectors that required specific technical skills, such as banks and industrial companies. <sup>[694]</sup>

The closed Nasserite caste did not have a coherent structure. It was formed in a heterogeneous manner, with multiple levels, cliques, and varied blocs having conflicting interests. The most influential and powerful groups included the intelligence, military, and security personnel, followed by the leaders of the political organization, unions, and major economic agencies. At the bottom were the directors of government companies. Even within the elite, politics took precedence over the economy, and political power did not necessarily reflect the interests of the government company officials, as some analysts suggested. Instead, they were merely tails of the main body of the Nasserite elite and not influential enough to impose their perspectives. However, this politically weak faction within the Nasserite elite, meaning the companies' directors, played a significant role in dismantling the overall elite and its regime. They could leverage the vast state economic entities in collaboration with the private sector. Many of them became millionaires and business owners, while the most powerful members of the elite, including Abdel Nasser himself and most senior military and

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<sup>[694]</sup> Hrair Dekmejian, *Egypt under Nasser*, pp. 220-222.



security officials, did not achieve the same thing. It is the cunning of history!

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## **Part Two: Bureaucratic Corruption and Embezzlement**

The Nasirite bureaucracy declared its supremacy over all governing bodies and decided to act as the deputy of the dominant class. Consequently, it was anticipated that this deputation would entail certain expenses. The shift from the position of a compliant servant to that of a rebellious one had to ensure benefits for the supreme bureaucracy. Instead of ordinary salaries, senior bureaucrats aspired to special royalties and levies. Through their rebellion, they forcibly acquired the entire state apparatus. The ruling Nasserists, being human beings, were not mere do-gooders. They were based directly on nothing other than their control of the state apparatus. Consequently, their interests were represented by what could be obtained through this apparatus.

Gaining status, power, and influence were among the most important benefits for Nasserists, especially senior leaders. Not to mention the material gains and benefits those members of the group received.

The most important forms of gains of the Nasserite elite and its allies in the private sector included:

### **1. Increasing the privileges of senior state officials**

-Each member of the “Revolutionary Command Council” was granted a monthly allowance of 500 pounds, a telephone line, and a diplomatic passport. Their privileges also included luxurious rest houses, villas, and luxury apartments here and there at a symbolic or free rent, in addition to enjoying various free services and using

luxury cars.<sup>[695]</sup> The allowances were subsequently reduced, and even Muhammad Naguib's salary as president was reduced by half, from 500 to 250 pounds, in agreement with him. However, when Abdel Nasser assumed the presidency, the salary was restored as before, along with extra allowances.

President Gamal Abdel Nasser's house in Cairo was demolished and rebuilt on an area of 13,400 square meters, with 1,300 square meters dedicated to two-story buildings. Additionally, there are scattered rest houses throughout the metropolis.

The privileges of senior officers were increased to a level that exceeded the percentage increase in the income of any other category.<sup>[696]</sup>

For the first time, representation allowances were granted to some ranks as follows:

General: 1350 pounds per year

Brigade: 750 pounds annually

Brigadier General: 375 pounds annually

-Salaries and allowances were increased for all officers in terms of type, value, and rate. There was now an education allowance, a training allowance, a translator allowance, travel allowances, etc., along with government loans that are not entirely refundable. Promotions also accelerated, and officers gained access to membership privileges in numerous clubs and facilities for traveling overseas for medical treatment. Housing and residence allowances were increased, and they obtained facilities for reserving luxury apartments and cars, paying their prices in installments. The retirement age was also raised for senior ranks.<sup>[697]</sup> Through the recommendations of Field Marshal Amer and other senior

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<sup>[695]</sup> T. Th. Shaker, *Op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>[696]</sup> Mabro, *The Egyptian Economy from 1952-1972*, p. 341.

<sup>[697]</sup> Hamroush, *Op. cit.*, pp. 127-128.

commanders, numerous officers and cronies were granted access to guarded apartments and other benefits.

-Senior state officials also received other privileges: the transportation allowance for the ministry's undersecretary was increased to 20 pounds, then to 75 pounds per month. The first undersecretary of the minister was offered 150 pounds as a transportation allowance, in addition to 150 pounds as a representation allowance.

-Shortly after the coup, a resolution was enacted to stop using government vehicles (600 in total). However, after several months, their usage was reinstated, and the number of cars was significantly increased. Consequently, their annual consumption reached 20 million pounds by the end of the period. Additionally, the upper salary limit was elevated to 1/40, as estimated by Adel Ghoneim,<sup>[698]</sup> and 1/55, according to T. Th. Shaker.<sup>[699]</sup> Furthermore, in 1961, a resolution was passed to increase the maximum annual total income for the director's position from 2,500 pounds to 5,000 pounds.

-Between 1962 and 1967, the services and the business sector, which includes public companies with a minimum of 51% state ownership, experienced the following changes:

A 161% rise in senior roles, accompanied by a 230% increase in their income

A 145% growth in specialized roles.

A 128% increase in technical positions.

A 145% rise in administrative jobs.

-The number of those appointed to the position of director general also reached 1,400 people.<sup>[700]</sup>

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<sup>[698]</sup> "Al-Taliaah" Magazine, February 1968.

<sup>[699]</sup> T. Th. Shaker, Op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>[700]</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

The phenomenon of growth in the number of administrators and surplus labor was particularly prominent in the spinning and weaving sector. The number of administrators and specialists increased by 300%, while the number of skilled and ordinary workers, technicians, and supervisors increased by 160%. Furthermore, the proportion of administrators and specialists among the total workforce rose from 1.59% to 4%.<sup>[701]</sup>

The number of ministerial appointees also increased significantly, reaching 700 people shortly after the fall of Nasserism, in 1974.<sup>[702]</sup>

-The Nasserite period also witnessed the phenomenon of multiple positions for a single individual.<sup>[703]</sup> It was common for one individual to hold so many positions, such as Kamal al-Din Hussein and Abdel Hakim Amer, that he had no time to even think about all of them. Each position was allocated special compensation and allowances. Among the issues raised in the 1950s was the involvement of some members of parliament in the Tahrir Directorate project. This violated the law preventing a member of parliament from engaging in another job in state institutions.

## 2. The expenses allocated to the leaders of the political organization and members of parliament amounted to the following:

250 pounds per month as a work nature allowance for the governorate secretary.

150 pounds per month as a work nature allowance for the department secretary.

27 pounds per month as a work nature allowance for the assistant secretary of the department.

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<sup>[701]</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>[702]</sup> "Rose Al-Youssef" Magazine, 7/21/1975.

<sup>[703]</sup> Hamroush, Op. cit., p. 123.

**350 pounds per month as a work nature allowance for the Secretary General of the Governorate.**

**165 pounds per month as car expenses for the secretary and assistant secretary.**

**This is in addition to the full-time allowances.<sup>[704]</sup> These were large amounts by the standards of that period.**

**Moreover, the member of parliament was paid 75 pounds per month, which was later increased to 125 pounds. He was also given preference over other citizens when making installment reservations for the “Nasr” car. Additionally, they were also given preference for residential units in state buildings.<sup>[705]</sup>**

**3. In addition to these regulated benefits, embezzlement of funds from government companies and institutions by numerous state officials became widespread and scandalous.<sup>[706]</sup>**

**-Senior state officials directly embezzled millions of pounds, redirecting them to private activities. Notable scandals included embezzlement and various forms of corruption within the Tahrir Directorate, where the official involved was shielded by the president himself, alongside numerous other scandals.**

**One of the well-known mechanisms of embezzlement was mentioned by two defendants, who were accused of embezzling 10,770 pounds from a consumer complex that they were supposed to use to buy vegetables and fruits. They argued before the court that the work was carried out in the complexes as follows: the employee would issue receipts for the money he received on the condition of purchasing specific goods. These receipts would be returned to him**

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<sup>[704]</sup> “Al-Akhbar,” Egyptian newspaper, 5/29/1971.

<sup>[705]</sup> Hamroush, Op. cit., p. 635 of the 1992 edition.

<sup>[706]</sup> The book by Muhammad Abdel Salam, Attorney General in the Sixties: Hard Years—Memories of an Attorney General, is filled with names, dates, and details of major corruption cases that were officially recorded, yet the perpetrators were not punished despite the knowledge of higher authorities.

when the equivalent value of the money in goods was supplied. Consequently, the embezzling employee could forge receipts, sign them, and claim that he had written them for the money he received and that he retrieved them after delivering goods at their value. So, he would use the receipts in his possession as evidence of his clean hands.<sup>[707]</sup>

Here, one should recall a case of embezzlement of public funds in which the assassination of Judge Kamel Lutfallah occurred one day before the scheduled hearing. The anticipated verdict was to sentence a high-ranking government official to imprisonment, as the judge had declined to comply with the directives from influential power centers to exonerate the defendant. Tragically, he was murdered by being pushed from the roof of his villa in Cairo.

-Many senior officials worked as intermediaries between the state and the private sector by exploiting their roles and influence. Among the examples is the chairman of the board of directors of a public sector company. He was Ali Sabri's son-in-law when he was prime minister. He utilized his influence based on his marriage connection to the prime minister. Therefore, he accepted a bribe of 13,000 pounds from a major merchant in return for leveraging his influence to obtain a waiver of import licenses worth 100,000 pounds for this merchant. At that time, the import operations were restricted to the state and prohibited for the private sector. The verdict was issued on June 29, 1964, convicting three defendants and acquitting the rest, including the prime minister's relative.<sup>[708]</sup>

Other forms of exploiting positions and influence were practiced to facilitate the interests of cronies and relatives.

- Manipulation of bids, tenders, procurement, and sales records in coordination with or without the private sector, as well as falsifying accounts of expenses, budgets, and financial resources. Corrupt

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<sup>[707]</sup> Ibid., chapter four.

<sup>[708]</sup> Ibid., chapter two.

individuals have become accustomed to burning documents and records indicating embezzlement and manipulation in the budgets of various institutions.

-Falsifying companies' budgets so that they appear to be making profits, while they had actually been losing, in order to justify the disbursement of incentives and bonuses, the majority of which went to directors and administrators, along with bribing the accountants who falsify the accounts. This falsification was sanctioned by the relevant ministers.<sup>[709]</sup>

-Profiting by manipulating travel allowances and additional payments.

-Manipulating endowment funds by direct theft and other forms of corruption, including handing over funds from charitable endowments to senior officials to spend them on political matters that are confidential and cannot be disclosed.

-Another method of leveraging the state sector was to employ trained workers in factories owned by some companies' administrators and directors at low wages in exchange for granting them long vacations from the state company. Certain administrators also utilized state-owned factories for specific intermediate processes within their industries. This was particularly noticeable in contracting companies, where state-owned equipment was used in the operations of private sector contractors.

-Forming real gang networks, including senior employees, contractors, merchants, suppliers, and officials in the Socialist Union and in the so-called sovereign positions in the state, who used to steal state resources in devious ways and distribute them among their members.

- Seizing part of the donations for the war effort.

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<sup>[709]</sup> Ibid., chapter four.



**-Many of the artifacts of Muhammad Ali's family were stolen, including money placed under guardianship. Some senior state officials bought some facilities placed under receivership at low prices. Some senior officers also seized palaces and villas belonging to the deposed royal family.**

**-Many officers engaged in various forms of corruption. This included bringing home appliances such as refrigerators, televisions, and air conditioners from Aden via Yemen and transporting them to Egypt to sell them on the black market. Some also smuggled gold bullion and jewelry abroad.**

**4. The private sector dealt with the state sector as its cash cow in cooperation with statesmen. Among the methods for this were:**

**-Cooperation among capitalists, large landowners, and members of the Nasserite elite enabled them to accumulate enormous wealth at the expense of the state sector and its revenues. The embezzlement was not limited to specific institutions but encompassed all state entities: the army, security services, civil services, political organizations, companies, state-affiliated institutions, and even sports clubs. Statesmen, businessmen, and large landowners extracted state funds and the public sector to an unprecedented extent. In addition, near-direct subsidies were provided by the state to the large private, nationalized sector, especially large landowners.**

**-Merchants, brokers, large landowners, and contractors, from within and outside the elite, reaped most of the profits. During the 1960-1965 plan, subcontractors received work worth 720 million pounds, averaging 144 million annually. They made substantial profits, much of which was attributed to overpricing. Ali Sabry noted that in the third year of the five-year plan, construction costs increased by 25% compared to the first year, with most of the**

increase going to subcontractors.<sup>[710]</sup> According to his estimation elsewhere, subcontractors carried out 80% of the construction work in the five-year plan.<sup>[711]</sup> This scenario persisted throughout the Nasserite era, with contractors reaping significant profits.

In addition to these means, some state funds allocated for commodity subsidies were seized. The subsidy was not only directed to necessary consumer goods but also to goods that were considered luxury according to the standards prevailing in Egypt during that period, including fine flour for making sweets.

Among the scandalous phenomena at the time was the seizure of cheap goods from government consumer associations by traders in collusion with government officials and selling them on the black market for their own account.

-Merchants acted as intermediaries in the exchange of state sector products. By the mid-1960s, the resale volume of these products to other state companies amounted to 200 million pounds.<sup>[712]</sup> This figure excludes the commissions obtained by brokers and intermediaries operating between these companies and the private sector.

-The state set the prices of goods produced by its companies, but it had not set the prices of all raw materials purchased from the private sector, except for a few, such as cotton. This policy contributed to the decrease in the rate of profit achieved by the state sector in favor of the private sector.

-Through contracts between the state industrial sector and the private sector, low-quality intermediate products produced by the private sector were supplied to state factories via bribery.

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<sup>[710]</sup> Op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>[711]</sup> Quoted from Adel Hussein, Abdel Nasser and the Economic System, a Response to Opponents and Critics, "Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi" Magazine, Issue 35, January 1982, footnote 24.

<sup>[712]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, Op. cit., p. 215.

**-Another widespread game involved selling incomplete state sector products to the private sector at high prices so that they could be completed and sold on the black market. In this case they were not included in the private sector's production quotas.**

**- The statute that prohibited state companies from doing business with a certain merchant was circumvented. Establishing a committee on reinforced steel in 1969 is one instance that generated controversy in parliament. This committee uncovered numerous scams, including contracts formed between state companies and certain private merchants associated with specific individuals involving the registration of 16 fictitious brokers.**

**Scrap dealers acquired numerous products from the state sector, which they later sold as finished goods.**

**-Banks were not immune to businessmen's exploitation. Contractors who owned private building land, often relying on their connections with senior officials or holding senior positions themselves, borrowed from banks using personal or land guarantees. They used these loans to finance their construction projects. Therefore, they used these loans to finance construction operations they were carrying out.<sup>[713]</sup> Dealers also obtained state sector products as scrap to be sold later as finished goods.<sup>[714]</sup>**

**-In terms of foreign trade, the state officially reserved the exclusive right to import or manage it via its own channels. However, this policy was not enforced, as import licenses were instead sold to the private sector. Businessmen, via directors of state companies, concluded private deals abroad. Additionally, private export and import offices continued to operate despite official**

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<sup>[713]</sup> "Al-Taliaah" Magazine, August 1973 issue.

<sup>[714]</sup> T. Th. Shaker mentioned other data about the leveraging of the state by wholesalers during the Nasserite era. Op. cit., pp. 126-127.

prohibitions.<sup>[715]</sup> Moreover, individuals continued to engage in agency work for international firms while operating from within state-owned commercial companies.<sup>[716]</sup>

Smuggling acted as a means of bringing in banned goods, with the Gaza Strip alone witnessing the smuggling of 140 tons of clothing during the summer and escalating to 400 tons in the winter.<sup>[717]</sup>

Among the violations discovered by the aforementioned parliamentary committee in 1969 were those related to foreign trade. Cases were discovered in which imports were made by the state sector at prices much higher than world market prices. This practice was conducted in return for commissions that, in certain instances, reached 40% of the total deal value and, in the majority of cases, were deposited in overseas banks.<sup>[718]</sup> One of the most egregious examples is what the former attorney general mentioned: *“I remember that, while I was an undersecretary for the Ministry of Justice, I was invited to visit the company’s factories. Investigations No. 115, 243, and 81/1966, the inventory of public funds, recorded astonishing facts, including that a global tender was held to supply Roman Ball parts. It resulted in the necessity of assigning the operation to a Japanese company that had submitted the lowest prices and provided all the guarantees. However, a group of supervisors of the company’s affairs, headed by its financial and commercial director, decided to award the tender to a German company, the ‘Fag’ company, and a supply order*

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<sup>[715]</sup> Abdel-Mughni Saeed, *Where is the Egyptian Economy Headed?* p. 78. Muhammad Abd Al-Salam, the attorney general in the sixties, provided a practical example of this in his memoirs in 1964: A covert arrangement between the chairman of the board of directors of a public sector company and a businessman who was the son-in-law of Ali Sabri, the then prime minister. (Ibid., chapter two).

<sup>[716]</sup> Saad Eddin Ibrahim’s article in “Intellectual Issues” magazine, book four, 1986.

<sup>[717]</sup> Belyaev & Primakov, Op. cit., p. 216, quoted from “al-Taliaah” magazine, June 1966.

<sup>[718]</sup> “Al-Taliaa” magazine, issue of August 1973.

In its February 1967 issue, the magazine presented a full dossier on black market activity in Nasserist Egypt, including the special role of the state sector as a source of profits for speculators and black market traders.

*was issued to it at a price 26,000 pounds higher than the Japanese company's price, to be paid in hard currency.*" <sup>[719]</sup>

-Most production was distributed by private traders, so a large part of the subsidized production leaked to the black market, especially clothing and food. For example, the private sector handled 93% of the textile trade, or 120 million pounds. Among what leaked to the black market was reinforced steel, which the state sold for 350 pounds per ton, while traders resold it for 700 pounds. Another instance is nails, which were sold by the state for 10 piasters per box, while traders sold them for 100 piasters. <sup>[720]</sup>

-Officials collaborated with wealthy rural individuals in exploiting the peasants by various unregulated methods. The village bank and agricultural cooperatives were misused by large landowners in partnership with officials. Official publications revealed numerous cases of corruption, exploitation of peasants, and land smuggling from the Agricultural Reform Committees' inventory. Additionally, large landowners received low-interest loans from the village bank, which they then lent to impoverished farmers at usury. They were also provided with subsidized seeds and fodder, some of which they resold to small farmers on the black market. The exploitation also included the manipulation of fertilizer and crop supply quotas.

The social disparity in the countryside was so stark that it provoked the Nasserite regime's base and even the more far-sighted elements of the ruling elite and political apparatus. They saw that

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<sup>[719]</sup> The advisor added, *"I remember that when I was an undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice, I was invited to visit the company's factories. The first thing that caught my attention was that the car parts were stored in boxes, many of them broken and left in hundreds in an empty lot attached to the factory without any real guard, which opens the door wide to theft or to claiming it as a cover for embezzlement. What I expected came true. The company's assets were not inventoried from its inception until 1965. When the inventory was conducted in that year, it revealed a deficit of about one million pounds. This amount disappeared by magic, and its origin was not known specifically."* Muhammad Abd Al-Salam, Op. cit., chapter six.

<sup>[720]</sup> Ibid.

**the peasant class might act unless the state acted, which it did in its way after the assassination of Salah Hussein.**

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**The process of accumulating private wealth varied among the elite, depending on their position and relationships, whether within or outside the elite.**

**It is noticeable that many influential and senior political leaders of the Nasserite elite, including Nasser himself, did not prioritize accumulating substantial fortunes, at least on the surface. This can be explained by the fact that these leaders represented the elite as a whole and held significant power, making them visible to the masses. They primarily relied on their regulated incomes, which were not sufficient to make them millionaires. Attaining high positions provided political influence and status, but using these positions for personal wealth accumulation was detrimental to the bureaucratic elite. Senior leaders generally behaved with discipline, with some exceptions like the infamous field marshal's group, which had negative consequences for the regime.<sup>[721]</sup>**

**Nasserist leaders typically engaged in legal activities or limited corrupt practices to avoid public discontent.**

**Many Nasserists may have had good intentions, as they actually believed that they were building socialism and achieving a social and economic revolution. Some were shocked by the 1967 defeat and revelations of power secrets.**

**However, it is significant that senior leaders did not prioritize combating corruption and bureaucratic embezzlement. They also did not care about eliminating the corrupt elements supported by some leaders or those who influenced the political organization or**

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<sup>[721]</sup> For some details, refer to Ahmad Hamroush's book, Abdel Nasser's Society, pp. 214-215.

the army. These senior leaders included the head of state, who violated the constitution and the law by overtly supporting Magdi Hassanein, the official responsible for the Tahrir Directorate project, along with his colleagues during the 1957 parliamentary elections. In addition to the prime minister, the ministers of the interior, supply, economy, irrigation, transportation, and others from the 1960s.<sup>[722]</sup> This signifies that these leaders were themselves at the head of the corruption system or turned a blind eye to it for the sake of maintaining power.

Despite harsh repression, talk of bureaucratic embezzlement was not muted. Even the official apparatus repeatedly addressed this phenomenon. It was always the talk of society, using special terms such as the “new class.” Trials and liquidations of some of the most corrupt elements were carried out. The individuals who were most involved in stealing were second- and third-ranking personnel, such as administrators and directors of companies and economic organizations.

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The motive behind the course of Nasserism was the direct relationship between the ruling elite and its policies, which were driven by their interests as a totality.

Nasserism represented the indirect interests of the dominant class. However, this makes it an authority essentially suspended in midair,

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<sup>[722]</sup> Refer to the book by Muhammad Abdel Salam mentioned above. For more information on this topic, readers can refer to the memoirs of Abd Al-Latif Al-Baghdadi, particularly chapter one titled “The National Assembly Crisis.” Al-Baghdadi offers a comprehensive account of the pressures that the president exerted on parliament to prevent the conviction of Magdi Hassanein and other members. Ultimately, the Tahrir Directorate project, despite being a governmental initiative, was considered a private project to safeguard those involved. The parliament’s stance led two members of the Revolutionary Command Council, Kamal Eddin Hussein and Al-Baghdadi, to consider resigning from their parliamentary roles.



a situation that cannot exist in practice. Nevertheless, every authority inherently reflects the interests of a particular group that supports it. Consequently, no one represents the long-term interests of a class without simultaneously addressing the immediate or direct interests of a specific group. Most importantly, there is no representation or mere expression of one power on behalf of another. Rather, there is a convergence of interests to one extent or another.

The group that Nasserism explicitly represented was the elite that controlled the state apparatus. Nasserism can be seen as a situation where the super bureaucracy ruled in favor of the social system while taking and extracting a price. This represented a pivotal moment in its logical and actual trajectory, not as an anomaly or divergence, but as its genuine existence or notion. The bureaucratic elite was responsible for creating Nasserite ideology and policies, beginning with the “Free Officers” and culminating in the establishment of a unique elite. In fact, all these instances expressed the existence of the elite from beginning to end. The coup itself represented an organization of officers who constituted the nucleus of the forthcoming elite.

Nasserite robbing, both legalized and illegal, was a direct interest expressed by Nasserite policy, aiming to maintain social order in a way that supported the stability of Bonapartist authority.

Therefore, Nasserism was essentially a manifestation of the immediate interests of the new ruling elite. This elite served essentially as a facade for the dominant class. Nevertheless, this facade embodied a specific social faction with its interests and was successful in advancing its objectives to the fullest extent. Thus, what was indicated in the first section has now become manifest. Meaning the relationship between the officers’ coup and their private interests, which began with seizing the state apparatus and has now become clear: seizing a tangible share of the revenues of this apparatus and the gross domestic product in general. The

process of embezzlement and misappropriation contributed to the transformation of many members of the Nasserite elite into businessmen or real estate owners. Meanwhile, there was an increasing overlap between the interests of Nasserite statesmen and those of businessmen. Moreover, a large sector of businessmen themselves became statesmen. Thus, Nasserite corruption gradually restored harmony between the state and the dominant class. Consequently, it disrupted the direct material basis of Nasserism's existence. In fact, it represented a basis for the negation of Nasserism. This harmony grew as Nasserism succeeded in maintaining a state of social equilibrium. Furthermore, the old political balance (1952-1954) was surpassed by liquidating the political forces expressing various social powers. In this way, the Nasserite elite established a strong basis for its continued rule. At the same time, it was indirectly undermining this rule. Under the guise of social peace, "nationalization of class struggle," and social reform by bribing intellectuals and industrial workers, statesmen were able to build bridges with businessmen and large landlords without disturbance. In this way, the dominant class was reorganizing itself around its immediate interests, while the poor had to settle for crumbs.

Furthermore, although Nasserite propaganda and policies failed to halt the emergence and continuation of political expression from the dominant class, they were largely effective in co-opting the leftist and Islamic opposition. Nasserism was not completely stable, but over time, it began to make way for the return of businessmen to power. This was despite the resistance of the Nasserite leadership, which was more pure in expressing the interests of the state apparatus, despite the resistance of the regime's bases that clung to a leadership that itself was increasingly besieged even within the state apparatus itself. It seems that Nasser himself was aware of this fact, as he often referred to the reactionary influence in the Socialist Union and the state apparatus. His feeling grew in the mid-1960s about the strength of what he called the counter-revolution, which,

according to him, was organizing its party in the face of the disorganized revolutionaries. On this pretext, he established the Vanguard Organization in 1963.

Ultimately, the social biases of the Nasserite authority are summed up by the fact that the first beneficiaries were the supreme bureaucracy, followed by parasitic capitalism in its various forms, large merchants and the rural rich, and finally the educated and workers of large industry. Other categories received scraps, but the majority of the unemployed and disenfranchised received very little.

Through all the aforementioned methods of corruption and influence peddling, numerous bureaucrats were transformed into businessmen and large holders of wealth. Furthermore, this class gradually tightened its grip on the state apparatus from within as well as from outside.

In addition, members of the “new class” were also able to smuggle stolen funds abroad.

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### **Part Three: Nasserism in History**

Nasserism held sway over a significant period of modern Egyptian history. As mentioned, it governed in the name of the overall system, articulating its interests through those of the bureaucratic elite. In this sense, it represented the long-term interests of the dominant class.

The dominant class in modern Egypt never aimed to carry out a bourgeois revolution, but, on the contrary, it fiercely opposed the national democratic movement. Nasserism, as discussed in previous chapters, did not achieve revolutionary goals. Politically, it did not bring about a democratic revolution or achieve full political independence. In essence, it did not fulfill the stages of the bourgeois

revolution as some authors had envisioned. Economically, it only experienced limited growth, falling short of what could have been accomplished under a client regime. Politically, it did not bring about a democratic revolution or achieve full political independence. In essence, it did not fulfill the stages of the bourgeois revolution as some authors had envisioned.

The role played by Nasserism in history or the outcomes of its policy as a whole can be summed up as follows:

1. Temporarily suppressing all political forces, particularly leftist and Islamic groups.

2. Dealing severe blows to the communist and Arab nationalist movements in the Arab East.

3. A partial social reform, including the liquidation of the agrarian aristocracy, was a material basis for the dismissal of the radical opposition for a long period. This deprived the masses of any potential revolutionary leadership in the immediate term, playing a major role in their acceptance of Nasserism.

4. State ownership had increased significantly, and the state's role in the economy as a whole had expanded. This was a historical regression, as private ownership and a free market economy are typically considered the foundation for progress far superior to state control over civil society. This historical regression was later crystallized.

5. The creation of new businessmen via the state apparatus led to the formation of a powerful oligarchy of businessmen-statesmen. This "new class," as it was described, is more parasitic than the wealthy who had received the blows. Thus, Nasserite policies resulted in the distortion of the composition of the dominant class. In addition to the liquidation of major industrialists in the context of its socio-economic reforms, the size of the blocs working in the fields of trading increased. This is with those who have been making

profits from commercial fraud, speculation, brokerage, black market trade, smuggling, currency, drug, and antiques trade, etc.

6. Nasserite policy deliberately and unintentionally increased the distortion of the composition of the industrial working class. By increasing disguised unemployment, alleviating the workload, and pushing many workers to engage in individual and seasonal activities, such as sidewalk trade, an old phenomenon in Egypt was reinforced: the representation of workers by administrators and technocrats from the state bureaucracy, rather than socialist intellectuals.

7. At the Arab and global level, Nasserism provided a shining model for moderate nationalist movements, which contributed to their strengthening.

8. It indirectly facilitated the political annexation of the Middle East by the United States, as it contributed to the dismantling of direct colonialism in the region while failing to offer a genuinely independent alternative system.

9. Nasserists have contributed to severe ideological upheaval across the Arab world by using agreed-upon slogans and concepts with new meanings that suit them.

10. Its policies severely undermined the concept of private property in favor of state ownership, even though it had constantly been infringed upon. It did not instill a genuine sense of public ownership in individuals. Thus, Nasserism undermined the concept of property in general, making all wealth permissible, including state property. Changes in income distribution led to the growth of surplus labor, parasitic activities, trading activities, bureaucratic theft, and corruption. This further separated work from income, property from ownership returns, and investment from profit. Consequently, weakening the idea of rights and people's sense of belonging to a specific social structure. This sense worsened greatly during Sadat's era.

**This role partially curbed the immediate interests of businessmen and large landlords while preserving their long-term interests. This represented a counterblow to the revolutionary process that had been brewing nationwide in the middle of the century. Nasserism was a mechanism of the order's response to the revolution, a compromise between opposing social forces. However, it favored the dominant class in the long run.**

**For this reason, Nasserism is considered a process of counter-revolution, along with that led by Sherif Pasha and Khedive Tawfiq against Urabi and later the liberal forces against the 1919 revolution. Nasserism emerged as the culmination of the counter-revolutionary process from 1945 to 1952, led by the king and the liberal parties. Nasserite policy as a whole followed a conservative path and did not fundamentally challenge the existing system. It aimed to bring the rebellious masses back into the regime's fold. To achieve this goal, it implemented partial reforms alongside severe repression and mass indoctrination, ultimately replacing the political regime with a new, more repressive, brutal, and reactionary one.**

**Nasserism, ultimately, functioned as a counter-revolution in a unique form. It was objectively serving as a tool for the dominant class, not self-conscious but believing that it was leading a genuine revolution. Prior to the July coup, the bureaucracy operated as a mere tool within the confines of a developing country in the modern age, serving directly the dominant class. Following the coup, it assumed an additional and distinct role. Instead of merely managing the state, it began overseeing the functioning of society itself. This new role represented the specific function of a Bonapartist regime, manifested in the Nasserite form, where the bureaucracy transformed into an objective instrument of the dominant class.**

**Although it objectively became the leader of society, it was still working toward maintaining the existing system with some modifications in its favor. Indeed, its interests were also at the peak**

of their realization, meeting with those of the social system. Consequently, the bureaucracy transitioned from being merely a tool to assuming a position of authority between 1952 and 1954. This development represents a further manifestation of the previously noted contradiction between the content and the form of Nasserism. Nasserism as content is a tool, and as form, it is complete authority. Thus, the same contradiction extended from Nasserite ideology to Nasserite politics to Nasserism as a notion.

However, in the course of realizing its notion, Nasserism won the hearts of the Arab masses more than any leadership in modern Arab history. In this context, it found itself carrying out practices that had a great impact on the masses and even inspired artists and writers to create. This explains the renaissance of theater, cinema, and literature in the 1960s despite repression. However, ultimately, the shock of the defeat in 1967 came as a devastating thunderbolt over their heads:

1. It dealt severe insults to traditional colonialism, the most important of which was the nationalization of the Suez Canal. This successful operation broke a certain psychological barrier in the Third World after the failure of Mosaddegh's attempt in Iran. Then came the political partial victory of 1956 and the subsequent nationalization of European companies in 1957. In this context, it greatly inflamed the already raging national sentiments and realized apparently dazzling victories for the people, even though this served its purposes and even served the new imperialists: the Americans.

Nasserism also turned to the Soviet Union to obtain arms and capitalize on international contradictions to improve the terms of Egypt's relationships with the West and to export its stagnant products to Eastern Europe.

This was a rupture in the West's long-standing monopoly over the Arab East, after the dissolution of the unique ties between the Soviet Union and Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. Nasserism's recognition of the People's Republic of China also represented a real



opposition to Western dominance over the East and tangibly affected the West's prestige. Regardless of the actual impact of these measures, they represented a significant moral shift in the political life of the Arab world. They involved a blatant challenge to the West, something that greatly impacted the sentiments of the Arab masses, giving them false feelings of victory and strength, despite the limited material impact of these policies and their short-term nature.

The extremist nationalist slogans and reckless threats against the West, in addition to refusing to share in a military alliance, played a major role in igniting the enthusiasm of the masses and giving them a fictitious feeling of pride and dignity. Despite the demagogic and populist character of the Nasserite discourse, it struck a sensitive chord with the masses. Speaking in this manner was new to the Arab world. Before, Arab leaders' addresses did not have this extreme character, and the language of national grandiosity did not reach this level. This was highly captivating for the populace, particularly since the reaction of the West was not vigorous. Rather. On the surface, it appeared as if Nasserism could confront the global community as a major power that safeguards rather than threatens.

Nasserite discourse after 1955 was characterized by extreme hostility toward Israel, deluding the masses into thinking that the state was preparing to crush it and those behind it. This language played a major role in the severe frustration that afflicted the populace as a consequence of the humiliating defeat of 1967.

2. The extreme insults directed at the concept of private property had a great impact on the feelings of the impoverished public. For the benefit of the entire socioeconomic structure, Nasserism targeted Egypt's richest people, first driving out the king himself and then confiscating the royal family's assets. In this way, it avenged the tormented masses of those who were so hated. The insult to private property represented by the pashas was something new and unique in Egypt since the rise of Muhammad Ali. Despite the limitations of

actual measures, it significantly impacted the masses because it insulted something that seemed invincible.

3. Nasserism adopted populist and extremist nationalist slogans that had never been raised in Egypt before, except outside the regime and within much narrower circles. Words such as “freedom,” “socialism,” “unity,” etc., were written everywhere, which was very exciting in a society with deep social divisions. Despite the conservative content of Nasserite ideology, its embrace of leftist slogans inflamed the hearts of the impoverished and garnered overwhelming support. However, this support was pressuring it.

4. In the context of self-preservation, and even with the support or tacit approval of the Americans, despite all the outcomes, certain Nasserite practices captivated the masses, who had long endured feelings of inferiority and failure. Syrian unity, despite its failure, seemed like an attempt that revived great memories, and sending the Egyptian army abroad to support the republic in Yemen tickled the feeling of national grandiosity.

All of these practices, especially when supported by absolute repression, led to a significant and entrenched rise in the popularity of Nasserism among Arab publics.

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It is clear that Nasserism was simply a clique with a nucleus of army officers, the “Free Officers,” that surrounded itself with other officers, elements from the state bureaucracy, opportunist elements, and a few naïve idealists, creating an elite in the form of a closed caste. Under the guise of revolution, this elite took control of Egyptian society and its state apparatus. In reality, it squandered society’s potential, confiscated the initiatives of its members, and destroyed its dynamic forces, paving the way for parasitic groups to take control of the country. Its adventure ended up returning the

masses to the system's fold after the latter was modified to become more parasitic and reactionary. In addition to Egypt's defeat against its strategic enemy, Israel, and its relegation to the American fold. Its adventure also led Egypt to suffer defeat by its strategic enemy, Israel, and it was ultimately brought into the American camp.

The way the July Knights managed the military and handled the May-June 1967 crisis was a reflection of their culture and the way they managed the economy, the state, and the country as a whole. It reflected a pre-modern culture that influenced their mindset, lacking an understanding of the importance of modern sciences and holding disdain for reason, along with a deficiency of demonstrative thinking. In addition to arrogance and a sense of false power and delusional grandeur stemming from their military background, there was short-sightedness, narrow-mindedness, and randomness in decision-making. This led them to prioritize trustworthiness over experience, sanctify their inflated egos, and focus on their interests. Furthermore, corruption and favoritism prevailed, reflecting the typical issues of despotic regimes.

## **SECTION FOUR**

### **The Fall of Nasserism**

**THE THING IN ITS ABSOLUTE DETERMINATENESS THROUGH  
WHICH IT IS "THIS" THING, IS THUS THE ABSOLUTELY  
DISSOLUBLE THING**

Hegel

## **Prologue**

1. The earlier analysis uncovered a fundamental contradiction within Nasserism, specifically between its content and form. While its ideology seemed to reflect a distortion or confusion of thought, an examination of its policies highlighted a clear disconnect between the officially stated principles and the actual practices. Ultimately, this contradiction culminated in its most pronounced form. Nasserism, as the rule of a supreme bureaucracy representing the dominant class, was revealed to be just a moment in the course of the existing social system. It could only be realized under demagogic rhetoric, with the counter-revolution disguising itself as a revolution in the form of Bonapartism. This contradiction became fully exposed when the notion of Nasserism became apparent: the Nasserite elite governing as usurpers while portraying themselves to the world as knights. Once this reality was firmly established, resolving the aforementioned contradiction became achievable.

2. In mid-May 1971, Sadat, with the help of members of parliament and under the protection of the Republican Guard and other organizations, was able to overthrow the Nasserists from power. From that point forward, the era of pure supreme bureaucracy concluded and was supplanted by the governance of wealthy bureaucrats who wielded control over the state apparatus. Just as Nasserism came with an easy coup, it was overthrown by an even simpler one. Evidence of this is that the Nasserist leaders fought Sadat in their last battle by submitting their resignations from their posts rather than resorting to violence.

Out of the haze and debris of May 1971, Sadatism emerged from the bowels of Nasserism, or the government of the oligarchy emerged from the depths of bureaucracy, just as a caterpillar emerges from a cocoon. This happened because -as Hegel rightly said- *“the being as such of finite things is to have the germ of decease as their being-within-self: the hour of their birth is the hour of their death.”* <sup>[723]</sup>

It is interesting to note that several prominent figures from the Vanguard Organization, the covert Nasserite organization, participated in the May 1971 coup: Muhammad Ahmad Sadek (the Minister of War), Al-Leithi Nasif (the Commander of the Republican Guard), and Mamdouh Salem (Governor of Alexandria). In addition, the closest associate of Abdel Nasser himself, Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, was also involved. They followed Abdel Nasser’s deputy and companion. This fact only illustrates how Nasserism fell into the hands of some of its sons.

The fall of Nasserism was followed by many changes in Egyptian politics, both domestically and externally. The counter-revolution, which had been disguised under moderate slogans, started to bare its teeth, tearing up the old image and openly rejecting the revolutionary slogans. However, things were not the same as they were prior to July 23, 1952. In twenty years, much water was washed away. The dominant class has returned to political power burdened with an exhausting Nasserite legacy of political, social, and cultural transformations, albeit not revolutionary ones.

3. In fact, the May 1971 coup was not a surprise to almost anyone, just like the July 1952 coup. Nasserism had been in its twilight phase since the mid-1960s, and the factors leading to the demise of the Bonapartist regime were growing due to its contradictions. Nasserism had arisen in the course of the regime’s crisis. Socio-economically, it achieved regressive changes, particularly in the

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<sup>[723]</sup> Hegel’s Science of Logic, 249.

production relations, which maintained the existing system in a state of structural turmoil. Consequently, it resulted in a regression to a condition akin to Oriental despotism. If the political crisis had produced Bonapartism at a specific moment, Nasserism, due to its desire to continue, was removing the objective basis for its existence. It began to clip the nails of the political forces whose balance formed the appropriate soil for the officers' coup. It suppressed the patriotic movement and eliminated all forms of its independent existence, along with the parties of the dominant class. However, its men, i.e., the statesmen, began to integrate day after day into the ranks of that class, thanks to their privileged position in the state apparatus and society after the 1952 coup. This integration, where the interests of the new rulers were intertwined with those of the social system, along with the state apparatus's position at the head of society, benefited business interests, undermining the political balance that allowed a small group of officials to seize power overnight. Nasserism politically repressed all classes and raised slogans about socialism and justice. However, the prevailing ideology among the populace, who have been immersed in religion and superstition, remained that of the dominant class. The method of training political and military cadres remained unchanged and was further reinforced by Nasserism. The merging of members of the dominant class with Bonapartist officials resulted in a gradual shift of actual power from pure bureaucratic hands to the hands of businessmen-statesmen in a peaceful manner. Consequently, Nasserism came to its end. It is the cunning of history.

In order to maintain its survival, Nasserism, which failed to establish a cohesive socio-economic structure, utilized moderate slogans internationally as well. Its calculations were based on capitalizing on international contradictions and getting involved in external problems that it was unable to handle on its own. Ultimately, it fell captive to its demagoguery and left itself vulnerable to a severe earthquake represented by Western pressures in the period between 1964 and 1967.

Moreover, Nasserism depended significantly on the prestige of its leader instead of establishing a solid material foundation for the stability of its political system. Therefore, the death of Nasser represented a great blow.

In explaining the fall, Nasserists and their supporters resorted to different explanations. Attempts among Marxists to prove the inevitability of Nasserism's fall are not lacking, but they never rose to the level of a comprehensive, objective analysis. In most cases, Nasserism's fall was attributed to coincidental or partial factors or many scattered, disparate, and unrelated causes. These attempts were characterized by exaggerated abstraction. Others depicted the issue as a conflict between good and evil. Although he was a strong opponent of Nasserism, Fouad Morsi, for example, did not regard Sadatism as anything more than a son of sin. He never explained its emergence as a reasonable consequence of Nasserism itself.<sup>[724]</sup> This reasoning finds its roots in the faith that many left-wing intellectuals have in Nasserism. Consequently, they tend to attribute its decline not to internal, essential factors, but rather to external or coincidental elements, all while attempting to portray it in the best possible image.

Many of these analyses consider the demise of Nasserism as a decline in specific policies rather than a collapse of a particular category of power, along with all its associated practices. Certain Nasserite policies, in the broadest sense, were characterized by the pursuit of the direct interests of primarily pure statesmen, albeit at the expense of various other social powers. As for politics in the narrow sense, it changed more than once, as seen previously, during the Nasserite period. Indeed, the policies that later became associated with the name of Anwar Al-Sadat were practiced in the early 1950s and reused in the mid-1960s, despite the leftist rhetoric at the level of official propaganda during that period.

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<sup>[724]</sup> Refer to Fouad Morsi, This Economic Openness.



Sadatism cannot be considered, in essence, as a result of mere coincidence or isolated mistakes. Rather, it must be regarded, like any other historical phenomenon, as the result of the phenomenon that preceded it, even if it is its opposite. On this basis, Sadatism is a consequence of Nasserism.

## **Part One: The Collapse of the Regime**

### **\*Collapsing from Within**

#### **The Crisis**

The economic reform policy was the strongest material support for Nasserite rule and ideology. In the early 1960s, the state provided many benefits to the impoverished, especially industrial workers. However, things did not go as planned. Despite substantial foreign aid, the 1960-1965 plan did not succeed in achieving many of the hopes that the government had built on it, as analyzed before. The economic failure was reflected in the standard of living. The 1960-1965 plan was terminated without being completed, as not all of its projects were finished. It was extended for an additional three years, but the funding crisis compelled the government to halt or postpone the projects that had not been completed, and of course, the second Five-Year Plan project was canceled.

During the five-year plan, the gross domestic product experienced an average annual growth of 5% to 6%. However, in the fiscal year 1967/1968, it saw a decline of 1%, which, when adjusted for constant prices, amounted to a decrease of 2.5%.<sup>[725]</sup> Furthermore, the investment rate in the national product fell from 17.7% in 1964/1965 to 11.9% in 1967/1968.<sup>[726]</sup> Moreover, the accumulation of modern product stock commenced in 1965:

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<sup>[725]</sup> Mabro & Radwan, Op. cit., p. 67.

<sup>[726]</sup> Sameer Radwan, Op. cit., p. 208.

### **The inventory of some products in late 1966**

Televisions	20 thousand devices
Refrigerators	3321 devices
Washing machines	5819 devices

**In 1965, land productivity began to decline annually by 0.45% due to the state's neglect of drainage projects. The country's demand for food imports also increased significantly, while per capita consumption of essential commodities began to decrease in 1966/1967:**

### **Per capita consumption decline rate in 1966 <sup>[727]</sup>**

Rice	%18.4
Lentils	%17.7
Vegetables	%5.2
Kerosene	%2.3
Textiles	%9.5

**Consumption declined significantly in the next year, <sup>[728]</sup> and as a result of the Nasserite employment policy and the cancerous expansion of the non-value-added producing sector, the monetary purchasing power of the masses increased without a corresponding increase in commodity output, leading to the growth of the black market.**

**The year 1964/1965 witnessed a significant rise in prices. According to the Central Bank report, the wholesale price index rose from 453.2 in December 1964 to 486 in December 1965 (1939 =**

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<sup>[727]</sup> T. Th. Shaker, Op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>[728]</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

100), while the cost of living index rose from 338.6 to 377.1.<sup>[729]</sup> During the same period, the outcomes of the housing policy began to appear and then worsened as the housing crisis emerged. The per capita share of services also began to deteriorate, especially in the fields of education, health, and social services. In addition, the state was unable to provide its social benefits at the same level.

**Price indices during the Nasserite era (1959/1960 = 100)** <sup>[730]</sup>

Year	Wholesale prices				Implicit price deflator of national income (***)
	Cost of living(*)	General Index(*)	Dairy products(**)	Meat and fish(**)	
1960/1961	101	100	103.2	101.9	100
1961/1962	100	102	105.9	109.1	100
1962/1963	98	101	109.1	106.9	101.7
1963/1964	100	102	119.6	107.5	104.2
1964/1965	110	108	140	167.5	106.9
September 1966	130	125	190.4	205.6	

Sources: International Monetary Fund, International Financial Statistics, and National Bank of Egypt, Economic Bulletin, No 19, 1966, pp. 388 ff.

\*Average period.

\*\*The index number listed for each fiscal year is the end of December figure for the calendar year listed. For instance, the index for 1960/1961 is the index for December 1960.

\*\*\*National income at current prices divided by national income at constant prices for the year 1959/1960.

In contrast to the deterioration in the conditions of the poor, businessmen made large profits at the expense of the state economic

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<sup>[729]</sup> “Al-Taliaah” Magazine, February 1967 issue, month’s reports, p. 76.

<sup>[730]</sup> Andreas S. Gerakis, United Arab Republic: A Survey of Developments During the Five-Year Plan, 1960/61-1964/65, p. 464.

sector. The mid-1960s witnessed a great recovery in wholesale trade, brokerage business, and contracting activities, which gained big profits during the five-year plan. The private industrial sector expanded at a rate surpassing the overall industrial growth, indicating that the crisis imposed a heavier burden on the state sector and, consequently, on the general population.

The failure of the 1960-1965 plan resulted in substantial deficits in both trade payment balances. In addition, most Western aid was cut off in 1964/1965, and the burden of the Yemen war was heavy. All this obligated the government to stop paying its debts to the West, especially since the export sector could not grow significantly. Therefore, the country faced a marked external and internal deficit that was accumulating with no end in sight. The state also became heavily indebted and burdened by its reform laws, including employing the unemployed, hiring graduates, and providing many free facilities. It finally realized that the intrinsic potential of domestic capital is not enough to keep it going, so it began to carefully consider inviting foreign private capital again.

### **The resurgence of social conflict**

Before, Nasserism held businessmen accountable for poor economic performance. One can recall the intensity of the assault against capitalism at the beginning of the 1960-1965 plan, which was carried out in the context of justifying the failure of the 1957-1960 plan and the deterioration of the living standards of the general public at that time. During the years from 1960 to 1965, when it led the development process on its own, Nasserism became less capable of accusing capitalism of being accountable for economic shortcomings. Nevertheless, it never acknowledged its failure. On the contrary, it insisted on claiming the success of its economic plan and socialism. Instead of directly blaming capitalism, Nasserism attacked what it referred to as reactionism, counter-revolution, and the encroaching Right.

Despite this, the harsh realities were clear for all to see: the social contradictions that the 1961 measures had mitigated were regaining their strength. In addition to an economic crisis that was intensifying, it pushed the social conflict back to the forefront of events. The public also began to grow weary of Nasserism as a whole and no longer considered it the desired solution. News of the rampant corruption within the state apparatus, especially in the army, was not hidden. On the contrary, they were so widespread that some of the regime's bases had confronted corruption. For example, the assassination of the Socialist Union member Salah Hussein by the Fiqi family in 1966 prompted the state to ease censorship on newspapers under pressure from the regime's journalists. So, the peasants' issues were raised in the newspapers, and Nasserist writers actively called for the liquidation of the large landowners and the distribution of land to peasants, revealing the suffering of the itinerant workers and exposing the role of the contractors, etc. More significantly, the mid-1960s witnessed some popular uprisings: in Damietta in 1965, Port Saeed in 1966, Helwan in 1966, and Kamshish in 1966, in addition to the funeral of Mustafa Al-Nahhas, in which demonstrators raised anti-Nasserite slogans and in which, according to Rifaat Al-Saeed's estimate, ten thousand citizens participated,<sup>[731]</sup> while Mahmoud Hussein estimated them at tens of thousands.<sup>[732]</sup> Some members of the dissolved Egyptian Communist Party also began to reorganize themselves, and many leftist circles became active even within the Socialist Union itself. Increasing numbers of educated people joined the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood as an expression of their rejection of Nasserism, and the Islamic call even adopted more radical slogans than before.

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<sup>[731]</sup> Mustafa El-Nahhas, The Politician, The Leader, and the Fighter, "al-Taliaah" magazine, September 1975 issue.

<sup>[732]</sup> Class Struggle in Egypt, p. 243.

**On the other hand, businessmen began to strike back at Nasserism. The 1960s witnessed a rapid marriage between statesmen and businessmen, with many Nasserists becoming businessmen and vice versa. This created a strong material basis for the collapse of Nasserism and facilitated the penetration of liberal economic ideas into the state apparatus. Nasser's frequent assaults on what he termed the counter-revolution and the encroaching Right, along with his claim that the right-wing party was organizing itself effectively, merely reflected his perception of the growing political power of businessmen and their capacity to persuade the public. The resurgence of social conflict was associated with the division of the Nasserite bureaucracy into left and right. The leftist sectors supported socialist policies, represented by senior statesmen who held the highest positions, while the right-wing began to criticize the failed reform policies and demanded their complete abandonment in favor of an open market economy. For example, in a session of parliament in December 1965, proposals were submitted to review free education at the university, implemented in 1962, and the policy of appointing graduates. Some also suggested reducing salaries and raising prices.**

**However, these proposals faced strong criticism from the majority of members and were replaced solely by an increase in gasoline prices. Prime Minister Zakaria Mohieddin also suggested adopting an open policy toward the West to solve the problem of financing and the payment deficit, along with adopting a pragmatic economic policy that would put the interests of the economy ahead of those of politics. However, he was compelled to resign due to strong opposition within the Nasserite elite. In 1965, in a special session to discuss housing policy, the Minister of Housing announced his opinion that the private sector should be encouraged to build housing, as the crisis had worsened.**

**Nasser frequently highlighted the infiltration of what he called the counterrevolution into the Socialist Union, since many of its members had become businessmen, and large landowners had**

almost entirely taken over its rural administrative and political apparatus. Following the establishment of the Youth Organization, it became widely accepted among the Nasserite grassroots that the Right controlled the Socialist Union, while the Left controlled the youth organizations.

**The state's position:** In the face of actual social and emerging political polarization, the Nasserite leadership continued to utilize contradictions, trying to tighten its control over events. Since it could no longer offer much on the economic level, it began to pay more attention to its political apparatuses and tools of repression. Under the pressure from the economic crisis and new social dynamics, it was obligated to abandon, to a large extent, its reform policy. Therefore, it stopped nationalization operations and the imposition of guardianship in 1964 and 1966, respectively. In addition, the government resorted to raising prices. So, by December 1965, it had raised them by 100 million pounds. However, Abdel Nasser announced in his address on December 21, 1965, that this was not enough and that he wanted 150 instead of 100 million pounds. In addition, he claimed that the price increase was a global phenomenon and that it was impossible, in light of the state crisis, for prices to return to what they were in 1961 (does this not remind one of the discourse of the Sadatists later on and the governments that followed?). In addition, working hours were practically increased for state sector workers. Nasser also decided to practice an open policy again, but with some timidity. In a press interview in 1966, he announced his welcome to foreign capital and that he would not mind its entry into Egypt. In the same year, it was decided to establish a free zone in Port Saeed that would be open to foreign capital and without customs duties. Priority was given to sorting, cleaning, and blending, in addition to paying special attention to transit trade. The objective was to improve the balance of payments. However, a strong opposition to the project arose from the reformist faction within the regime as well as the Nasserite grassroots, meaning the Nasserite Left. This prompted Nasser to



declare that the establishment of the free zone *“is not a departure from socialism, as stated in some publications, and that the door of ijihad is open in socialism and that the only prohibition is the exploitation of man by man.”* Eventually, the project was halted due to the 1967 defeat. Here, one has to recall that the working forces of the people in Nasserite ideology include non-exploitative capitalism. Based on that, in addition to Nasser’s previous definition of socialism, a system of socialist capitalism can be created! The state also announced its willingness to cooperate with the World Bank again. In 1966, George Woods, the director of the bank, visited Cairo and declared that the drought period with Egypt had come to an end. He stated that the bank was prepared to contribute to financing new initiatives. He also mentioned that he *“agrees with the Cairo government regarding the necessity of the recent economic measures for the future of the Egyptian economy.”*<sup>[733]</sup> During the discussions that were held, the projects that the bank would finance were reviewed, with interest rates set at 0.75% for infrastructure facilities and 5.5% for productive projects.

However, the government could not withdraw all the gains that the impoverished had previously been granted at once, but it did not provide anything worth mentioning either. Instead, Abdel Nasser began to demand that the masses produce instead of philosophizing. In December 1966, he declared, *“The first item of philosophy is production, and if we produce after that, we will philosophize as we want.”* Moreover, the authorities arrested many Nasserist workers and intellectuals, teachers at the “Higher Institute for Socialist Studies,” and some members of youth organizations in 1966. The student unions had been frozen in 1965 and were not resumed until 1968. Some Communist Party members who did not agree with the party’s decision to dissolve itself were also re-arrested. At the same time, the Muslim Brotherhood was brutally liquidated in 1965, leading to a significant decline in Nasserism’s popularity. The Wafd

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<sup>[733]</sup> “Al-Taliaah” Magazine, February 1966, Month’s Reports, pp. 103-105.

**Party figures who participated in Al-Nahhas' funeral were also arrested.**

**Despite this retreat from the July 1961 policy and the direct repression of the unorganized popular opposition, Nasserite propaganda at the same time moved to the left. The attack on the so-called counter-revolution and reactionism intensified, youth organizations were established based on the 1962 Charter, and some Marxists were allowed to work within the Socialist Union, media, and newspaper institutions. This period also witnessed the control of the so-called Nasserite Left over the leadership of many state agencies in a way that had not existed before, after eliminating some opposition members of the "Revolutionary Command Council." This occurred alongside the infiltration of elements opposing reformism (the Nasserite Right) within the same agencies. The significant decline of reformist policies prompted the state authority to cover it up with a facade of leftist propaganda. It seemed to strike a balance between practice and propaganda. The exaggeration of this facade was indicative of the regime's tendency to disintegrate. This propaganda resonated with the more fervent youth against the regime's actual policy, prompting the regime to intensify its repressive measures. Additionally, it was not unusual for newspapers and magazines to be crowded with talk about the socialist utopia that had been created in Nasserite Egypt, accompanied by harsh criticism directed against the bureaucracy, the so-called new class, and corruption, among other issues.**

**This contradiction was evident in two positions:**

**First: After the killing of Salah Hussein and the rise of the Fiqi family's influence in Menoufia, the agricultural issue was brought up in the Nasserite press. Criticism was aimed at property relations and the agrarian reform laws that had been previously implemented. The authorities were urged to eliminate the class of large landowners and address the issues of itinerant workers.**

Influenced by these campaigns and the discontent among the regime's supporters, Abdel Nasser decided to establish the "Feudal Liquidation Committee" that harassed the Fiqi family. The committee placed 100,000 feddans under guardianship and expanded its operations to the state's economic sector. However, the committee's final results were disappointing, and its work was halted prior to the 1967 war. The state even began returning the lands to their original owners.

Secondly, Abdel Nasser was pressured by the regime's grassroots, which reflected implicit popular discontent or regime disintegration in the long term. So, he issued a decision to nationalize wholesale trade in 1966 within three years. However, this decision was not implemented, so he renewed it in October 1967 with the promise of implementation within 18 months, which also did not happen. Facing internal fragmentation, Nasserism intensified its media assaults on hostile forces abroad, referred to as reactionary and imperialist. It focused on achieving external accomplishments as a compensatory mechanism for its failure at home.

The decline of Nasserism can now be identified as follows: The economic policy proved to be unsuccessful in achieving the aspirations on which it was built. On the contrary, it led to economic stagnation and exacerbated its deficit. Ultimately, it demonstrated the inability of the economy to integrate into the global market optimally. Additionally, its need for "new blood" became apparent, as expressed by senior statesmen at the time and by Sadat later on. This demand intensified within the state apparatus, particularly from the mid-1960s. The failure of Nasserism exacerbated social contradictions, leading to a deterioration in the standard of living for the lower classes and an increase in the power of large landlords and businessmen, their feeling that time is on their side, and their belief that they therefore hold the strategy most consistent with the social order and its interests.

**This was accompanied by a fundamental transformation that affected the bureaucracy, with many of its members developing close relationships with businessmen, as previously noted. As the economic crisis deepened, the lower classes started to express their worries more strongly, and social conflict began to emerge. Nasserism itself began to fragment under this conflict, with various factions within it participating: pure bureaucrats, statesmen-businessmen, the regime's devoted followers, and Nasserist intellectuals. In order to stop the growing internal strife, the leadership looked for foreign triumphs and conflicts.**

### **\*Collapsing from Outside**

#### **The 1967 War**

**There is no doubt that Nasserism was not in perfect agreement with the West, nor was it always at odds with it. It appeared in the context of achieving political independence for Egypt and the countries of the Middle East from French and British occupation without being entirely supplanted by direct American dominance. In this way, the United States—indirectly—achieved half of its objective, given that the local regimes could not themselves fill what was considered a vacuum.**

**This is precisely why the 1967 war cannot be understood apart from the context of American policy. The war, as all available data indicate, was carried out with direct American blessing. Regardless of the verified facts of American support for Israel, the course of the relationship between Israel and the United States from the mid-1960s demonstrated that the latter endorsed the Israeli strike. <sup>[734]</sup>**

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<sup>[734]</sup> Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol declared after the war that he had received reassurance regarding the protection of the American fleet for Israel. It had been positioned near the Israeli coast before the war. This was based on direct assurances from US President Johnson. The latter also ordered Richard Helms, the director of the CIA before the war, to cooperate with Israel in arranging military operations against Egypt.

**This does not negate that the choice to engage in warfare was ultimately made by Israel. However, it is impossible to comprehend the events in the Middle East without taking into account the interests and strategies of the major powers, especially the US and the USSR, both globally and in the Middle East. It is also crucial to understand the nature of the relationships between these states and the local powers.**

**The war at that particular time occurred within a specific context of international relations and the overall dynamics in the Middle East, in addition to its local motivations in Israel.**

### **Global conditions in the mid-1960s**

**The United States' foreign policy in light of the results of World War II, proceeded based on:**

- 1. Replacing the old colonialism and exerting control over Europe itself.**
- 2. Overthrowing socialist regimes, particularly the states of the Soviet Union.**
- 3. Preventing more socialist revolutions.**

**Consequently, the USA, for example, refrained from assisting France during the Indochina War and its conflict in Algeria, as was its well-known stance in the 1956 war in the Middle East. Additionally, it planned to reunify Germany as a strategic move against the Soviet Union. Furthermore, it established military alliances for the same purpose and adopted a policy of absolute hostility toward the People's Republic of China.**

**However, the absolute American superiority over Europe and the Soviet Union did not last. In the period extending from the end of the war until the late 1950s, this superiority was broken. The Soviets became able to produce nuclear weapons and excelled in the field of guided missiles, and the Warsaw Pact became a formidable military**

force. As for Western Europe, it succeeded in removing the consequences of the war and transformed into an economic power competing with the United States. China also achieved remarkable economic development and became a military power to be reckoned with.

These changes in the balance of power led to several significant results:

1. International détente: The Cold War began to end in 1959, with the visit of the first Soviet official to the United States. This was then demonstrated practically in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. It was shown that the American strategy of overwhelming deterrence was neither possible nor useful. On the contrary, it was proven that preventing nuclear war was possible and positive for both sides. The United States replaced this policy with the policy of “flexible attack,” which included the possibility of launching a limited nuclear war in Europe. As for the Third World, it relied mainly on local powers, such as Israel, South Africa, Iran, and South Vietnam, which America began to arm. Regarding Europe, arming Germany was postponed, while a dialogue between the two German states started in 1966, and economic relations between the two parts of Europe began to grow. In short, the principles of the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party triumphed. <sup>[735]</sup>

2 The split in NATO: During the Cold War years, France was the most hostile Western country toward the Soviets, as they were the ones who contributed the most to supporting national movements in the French colonies, particularly in Indochina. For example, France threatened to sever its relations with the Soviet Union if it recognized the interim government of Algeria and actually carried out its threat. Additionally, it trained the West German military on its territory, which was considered an extremely hostile action by the Soviets at the time. However, following the liberation of most of

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<sup>[735]</sup> Refer to Amin Shalabi’s book “The American-Soviet Entente (1963-1976).”



**the French colonies and the breakdown of undisputed American superiority in the late 1950s, France's situation underwent a fundamental transformation. Germany regained its position as a major economic power and a possible adversary. While Britain did not lose everything in the war, it still had some playing cards and allied with the United States. In the face of these developments, France began to seek to form its nuclear force, refusing to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which was the same position as China. Therefore, Gaullism emerged as a call for Europe's independence from the United States. So, De Gaulle started to adopt balanced measures and policies toward the two superpowers and a moderate policy toward the Third World. He opposed American intervention in Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, the Congo, and Cyprus and even announced France's withdrawal from the military wing of NATO in 1967. Then he established strong relations with Eastern Europe and "non-aligned" countries in the Third World, such as Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.**

**3. The Sino-Soviet split: Due to conditions similar, in general, to France's situation toward the United States, China proceeded in 1964 to launch a series of media attacks on the Soviet Union. This stimulated a major split within the communist parties around the world and a deep ideological crisis within the communist movement as a whole.**

**In light of these three results, the United States launched a large-scale assault in the Third World in the mid-1960s, aiming to restore its lost overwhelming superiority. It decided to leverage the Sino-Soviet split and the atmosphere of peaceful coexistence with the Soviets to finalize its acquisition of the European colonies, especially rebellious France; to tighten the blockade around China; and to mitigate the consequences of the Cold War by bringing down the moderate regimes in Asia and Africa. The American assault was manifested in:**

- Direct military intervention in the Congo.**



**- Organizing military coups in Nigeria, Dahomey, Upper Volta, and Central Africa in 1965/66. Three of these countries severed relations with China following the coup. The United States also organized a coup in the Congo-Kinshasa against the pro-French and pro-Belgian government (Tshombe) led by Mobutu and in Ghana. The CIA also organized a bloody military coup in Indonesia against Sukarno in 1966, in which hundreds of thousands of Maoist communists were killed. Guatemala also witnessed a pro-US coup in 1965, followed by Greece in 1967.**

**- In 1965, a white republic was established in Rhodesia by Britain, supported by the United States. Moreover, American armament increased in Brazil, South Vietnam, Israel, Iran, and South Africa in order to exercise the tactic of limited war.**

**The Vietnam War escalated, with the number of US troops gradually increasing from 32,000 in 1964/1965 to 527,000 in 1966.**

**The Economist described the essence and purpose of this American attack, saying,**

***“The shape of the world in 1945 was not satisfactory and always involved the danger of an alliance between the communist East and the backward South against an isolated West. The task of the mid-1960s is to arrive at a new balance of power. It is an opportunity that must not pass.”***

**The Middle East has historically been one of the most important regions of international conflict. Consequently, the United States decided to reorganize the situation there. Additionally, since March 1967, the area between Tehran, Casablanca, and Mogadishu has been referred to as “the troubled triangle.” Therefore, American President Johnson formed a committee to supervise the subjugation of this triangle to the United States.**

**In this context, the American attack in the Middle East started.**

### **Trends in the Middle East Conflict:**

**The relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union in the Middle East during the period of nationalist ferment in the region after World War II has already been discussed. The violent conflicts among various currents and forces subsided in the 1950s following the establishment of Egyptian-Syrian unity in 1958. The Arab communist movement was severely damaged, the Baath Party suffered severe blows, the situation in Lebanon was settled in favor of the Shihabi regime, and Nasserism triumphed over other currents in the region. Regarding the major powers, Soviet influence in Egypt, the Levant, and Yemen was curtailed, while the United States did not relinquish its strong influence in most Middle Eastern countries.**

**When the situation in the region had relatively calmed down in 1958, the threat to the interests of both countries diminished. On the one hand, the Baghdad Pact project had failed, allowing the Soviet Union to eliminate the risk of a military siege near its southern borders. On the other hand, efforts to establish radical regimes in the Arab East, especially in Iraq, failed. Nasserism, in particular, played a significant role in this regard, providing stability in the Arabian Gulf. Despite the unresolved Palestinian issue, a state of tranquility was achieved thanks to the presence of the emergency forces in Sinai. Except for the American Hawk missile deal with Israel in 1962, American policy tried to establish a kind of balance in its dealings with Arab regimes and Israel, meaning giving all parties the same treatment. For example, it did not adopt Israel's objectives and even played a direct role in thwarting Israel's plans for Sinai in 1956/1957.**

**The American strategy in the Middle East during the mentioned period had three objectives.**

- 1. Ensuring Israel's safety as a major regional ally.**
- 2. Eliminating the influence of both the Soviets and the Western European countries in the region.**
- 3. Ensuring the flow of oil to the West.**

The Anglo-French influence in the Middle East was greatly reduced, especially after 1956.

### The Middle East in the late 1960s

#### 1. The rise of the Arab nationalist movement

In the late 1960s, the region experienced a new wave of Arab nationalism activity, especially in Syria. In response to Israel's completion of the Jordan River diversion project in 1964, Syria attempted to carry out a reverse diversion in its territory. This prompted Israel to strike the diversion areas in Syria, forcing it to halt working on them.<sup>[736]</sup> Afterward, the border between Syria and Israel witnessed increasing clashes. At the same time, the Syrian regime was gradually moving to the left. In early 1965, a decision was issued to nationalize 160 companies and institutions, and foreign trade was also nationalized. In response to a strike by leading merchants, landowners, and clergy, soldiers and armed laborers suppressed them, and eight of them were executed. At the end of the year, the National Command of the Baath Party expelled some ministers who later called themselves the Regional Command, but the left wing of the party, with the support of the Communist Party, carried out a counter-coup in February 1966 and arrested members of the National Command of the party. The new rulers formed a government involving two ministers from the Communist Party, and Khaled Bakdash was allowed to return to Damascus.<sup>[737]</sup> This leftist government enjoyed great popular sympathy and was accompanied by the formation of a broad, loyal popular movement.<sup>[738]</sup> Among the measures of this government was imposing new prices on oil companies, which increased their revenue from oil transport operations, and Lebanon received a

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<sup>[736]</sup> Saleh Al-Jubbouri, Op. cit., p. 447.

<sup>[737]</sup> Muhammad Nasr Mahanna, The Soviets and the Palestine Question, p. 39.

<sup>[738]</sup> Arie Bober, The Other Israel, pp. 215-218.

similar increase.<sup>[739]</sup> The government also announced its adoption of the idea of a popular liberation war against Israel and actually opened hundreds of volunteer and military training centers, announcing that it would shift from defense to attack. The leadership also adopted the idea of launching an immediate war against Israel to liberate Palestine. In this context, it provided Palestinian resistance fighters with weapons and allowed them to operate from Syrian territory. To make its military plan successful, it called on Arab countries to join the war and even criticized Nasserism, accusing it of failing to achieve this goal.

After the leftist Baath coup, Syria was subjected to harassment from most neighboring countries, including Israel, which launched repeated raids against it throughout 1966 and 1967 by air, sea, and land (July 1966, August 1966, April 1967). Moreover, Israeli threats to declare war against Syria continued, and it actually mobilized its forces on the Syrian border in September 1966.

Under these circumstances, the Nasserite government launched continuous media campaigns against the left-wing Baath government in Syria. Abdel Nasser himself even proceeded to denounce the Baath Party, describing it at times as reactionary and at other times as adventurous.

During the same period, Jordan made several attempts to undermine Syria from within. Turkey did the same, and the Sixth Fleet moved near the Mediterranean coast. In addition, Saudi Arabia funded right-wing opposition movements in Syria but failed to remove the Baath left from power. A large number of right-wing opponents were arrested in July 1966, and a coup attempt was thwarted in late 1966. At the same time, Jordan and Israel mobilized their forces on the Syrian borders, and Colonel Bromage, who was commanding the Saudi army at the time and was General Glubb's top aide, visited Jordan.

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<sup>[739]</sup> Fouad Morsi, *The Israeli Political Economy*, p. 67.

Jordan also witnessed an obvious escalation of nationalist opposition. West Bank Palestinians proceeded to arm themselves, fedayeen attacks against Israel increased, and demonstrations were held to protest the renewed premiership of Wasfi Tal. The rise of opposition led Eshkol to threaten in 1966 to enter Jordan if a Nasserite coup took place there. Saudi Arabia also sent 20,000 troops in mid-1967 to protect the king from Jordanian-Palestinian masses. The Syrian ambassador was then expelled from Jordan in response to Syria's encouragement and support for the national opposition.

Under Sharon's leadership, Israel attacked the Fedayeen in retaliation for their attacks from Jordan on November 13, 1966, destroying an entire hamlet. The fact that the people of the border villages rejected the government's help and requested guns instead shows how public opposition has escalated. Numerous sizable protests calling for arms to oppose Israel were also held in the West Bank. At one point, the government was forced to impose a curfew in Nablus when some army and police officials joined them.

Libya witnessed a similar rise in national opposition, represented by street demonstrations, the blowing up of oil pipelines, and various other protest actions. The public demanded the abolition of foreign bases. <sup>[740]</sup>

In 1964, the National Front in South Yemen declared armed struggle against the British occupation, and its operations escalated rapidly.

Moreover, the Arabian Peninsula also witnessed some less intense revolutionary activities.

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<sup>[740]</sup> "Al-Taliaah" Magazine, June 1965 issue, month's reports, pp. 119-120.

Interestingly, some Greek opposition movements emerged, raising the slogan “The Nasserite-Greek Path,”<sup>[741]</sup> rejecting American military bases and Greece’s continued membership in NATO.

One of the most significant manifestations of the new rise of Arab nationalism was the declaration of the establishment of the Fatah organization and the start of military operations in January 1965. This had a major impact on the entire region, as Palestinians had formed a special leadership that raised the slogan of armed struggle and challenged both Israel and the Arab regimes. None of the Arab regimes allowed the guerrillas to operate from their territories, except for the Atassi regime in Syria in 1966/1967.

The rise of Fatah and the onset of military resistance against Israel in its name were significant factors in the Arab nationalist movement, serving as key reasons for Israel’s offensives against Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. Fatah also caused considerable embarrassment to Nasserism, which was still pretending to the Arab world that it was preparing to liberate Palestine but that the moment had not yet arrived. In reality, Nasserism was being drawn into a conflict with Israel by Fatah’s actions against it.

### The growth of both the Soviet Union’s and France’s influence

Arab-Soviet relations substantially improved in the early 1960s, following the stabilization of the Middle Eastern situation in 1958/1959. Trade with Egypt and Syria, in particular, expanded, as did the sale of weaponry to them. In addition, the size of the Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean increased. Until 1963, the Soviet Union had no naval vessels, but by 1966, it possessed 20 warships, which expanded to 30 vessels prior to the June War in

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<sup>[741]</sup> Refer to Lutfi Al-Kholi, 5 June - Truth and the Future, p. 52.

1967.<sup>[742]</sup> Since 1964, ties with Egypt were strengthened as a result of Nasserism's position toward the Congo crisis.

Arab-French relations also experienced significant development in the mid-1960s, especially since Israel had adopted the United States' position toward de Gaulle and had defamed and attacked the French president. Furthermore, the Middle East witnessed an increase in the number of countries supporting de Gaulle's policies against American domination, such as Egypt, Syria, Algeria, and Cyprus. In terms of trade exchange, Arab countries came to occupy the second place in France's trade, while Israel occupied the 49<sup>th</sup> place.<sup>[743]</sup>

### **3. Israel**

Until the mid-1960s, Israel did not achieve many of its strategic goals. The United States had prevented it from attaining much as a result of its victory in 1956 over Egypt. So, it began to rely on German aid and reparations to develop its economy. However, it faced significant economic challenges from 1965, especially with the conclusion of the German reparations. In 1966, the budget deficit reached approximately 300 million dollars. Furthermore, the unemployed reached 70 thousand, and some estimated it to be higher.<sup>[744]</sup> This was in addition to the emigration of numerous individuals abroad and a fall in the size of investments, as well as a decline in the rate of foreign capital inflow. The year 1966 also witnessed a significant decrease in the growth rate. Thus, Israel experienced an economic crisis. The crisis may have contributed to the rise of the Right over the labor Left, as evidenced by the

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<sup>[742]</sup> Atef Al-Ghamry, *The Secrets of the Setback-from Conspiracy to Accord*, p. 103.

<sup>[743]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251

<sup>[744]</sup> Unemployment was estimated at more than 10% of the labor force in 1966 and at 20% in the development areas and among African and Asian Jews. David Downing & Gary Herman, *War without End, Peace without Hope*, p. 127.



November 1965 elections. In these elections, the Left, represented in the Mapai-Ahdut Haavoda coalition, was re-elected with a narrow majority, 49%, down from 72%, while the Right made considerable gains, with the Herut Party and the Liberal Party receiving 26 seats. The Right was advocating for a preemptive war against Arabs, and the Herut newspaper even asserted the necessity of expanding Israel's territory from the Nile to the Euphrates. As noted by newspapers and political analysts, the atmosphere of war in Israel intensified in 1966 and 1967 in response to the expansion of Fatah operations and following Atassi's coup in Syria. It is noteworthy that the statements threatening war were directed against Syria in particular. For example, Peres declared that *"calm will not return to the Syrian-Israeli armistice line unless Israel strikes hard enough to convince the Syrians that there is no point in provoking us."* Eshkol also declared in May 1967 that *"a serious confrontation between Syria and Israel is inevitable."* A short while later, Rabin declared that *"Israel's reaction will be different from the retaliatory actions it carried out in the past against Jordan and Lebanon."* Other threats were made to occupy Damascus and bring down the Syrian regime.

Israel has historically responded to external threats with strong retaliatory measures, driven by a perceived psychological vulnerability both as a community and as a state. By the mid-1960s, it recognized the importance of engaging in military action to ensure its internal security. Specifically, Israel was increasingly worried about the management of the Jordan River's water resources and initiated a project to alter the river's course during the 1950s. In the 1960s, its leaders continued to declare their insistence on continuing the diversion process even if it led to armed conflict.<sup>[745]</sup> It consistently sought to seize adjacent Syrian regions to ensure a continuous water supply. For example, in 1964, it dispatched its tractors to demilitarized lands to cultivate them. Moreover, it escalated its provocative measures against Syria following the

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<sup>[745]</sup> Ali Muhammad Ali, *The Jordan River and the Zionist Conspiracy*, pp. 223-225.

resolutions of the Arab Summits in January and August 1964, which aimed to redirect the trajectory of the Jordan River, particularly after the escalation of military operations by Syria and its actual efforts to modify the river's trajectory.

Thus, Israel was heading toward war again, having digested what it had achieved before: Umm al-Rashrash in 1949, al-Auja in 1955, and then the terms of its withdrawal from Sinai in 1957. It was able to achieve a new leap on the road to its strategic goals, especially since it had become clear that a new step was not only possible but also necessary for its continued growth, development, and stability. Several factors were prompting Israel to consider war: primarily its strategic goals, followed by its internal crisis, guerrilla operations, the leftist regime in Syria, and finally global dynamics influenced by a new American offensive in the Middle East during the mid-1960s.

#### **4. The United States and the Middle East**

Israel has become of great importance to the United States since the latter adopted the theory of limited war. Israel is the most stable regime in the Middle East and is also the most efficient economically and militarily. In addition to its capabilities, Israel can play a significant global role for the United States.

The mid-1960s were an ideal time for the United States to put Israel to the test, especially since the former had determined to thoroughly infiltrate the Middle East. It began, in cooperation with West Germany, to provide large shipments of weapons to Israel, its client states, and the Islamic alliance countries. It provided weapons to Jordan in 1964 on the condition that the latter pledged not to cross the river, in exchange for the Zionist lobby in Congress not objecting to the deal. It also provided a deal to Saudi Arabia and another to Iran. Moreover, the United States supported the Islamic alliance project, if it did not instruct it. This project angered both Egypt and Syria, compelling Saudi Arabia to back down.

The U.S. position on the Yemen war changed dramatically. In 1962, the Kennedy administration recognized the Republic of Yemen and did not oppose Egyptian intervention despite the objections of Saudi Arabia and Jordan. In 1965, however, it began attacking the Egyptian presence there. In addition, it provided military aid to both Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni monarchists to confront the Nasserists. At one point, American airplanes conducted a show of force over Saudi Arabia to warn Nasser against attacking its territory.<sup>[746]</sup> It seemed to have decided to escalate the fighting to further embroil and exhaust Nasserism.

The extent of the change can also be seen in the comparison between the US attitude toward Egypt in 1956 and May 1967. In 1967, it proposed an international force to storm the Straits of Tiran and force Nasser to retreat.

### **5. Nasserism in the Mid-1960s**

Over ten years, Nasserism established a network of relationships with moderate national movements and independent governments throughout the Third World. It also focused its policy on taking advantage of the Cold War between the two superpowers. Consequently, it became accustomed to receiving aid from the East and the West while maintaining its sensitive position in the Middle East among various Arab tendencies. Regarding Israel, Nasserism formulated its policy based on not recognizing this state and instead verbally opposing it. In the shadow of peace, it enjoyed favorable relations with major powers from 1956 to 1965, allowing it to play a prominent role in the Middle East and achieve stability and equilibrium among various political forces in the region.

During this period, it could win the loyalty of the Arab masses and nationalist and communist currents. It assumed undisputed

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<sup>[746]</sup> Ahmad Abdel Rahim Mustafa, Op. cit., p. 162.

leadership of the Arab nationalist movement, setting itself tasks it could not accomplish, foremost of which was liberating Palestine.

However, significant changes took place in the region during the aforementioned 10 years, in addition to the breakdown of Nasserite economic policy internally and the weakening of its political system. In contrast to Nasserism's inability to achieve the aspirations of the Arab revolution, alternative forces emerged, the most important of which was the Fatah organization. Despite its military feebleness, its emergence expressed the fragility of the Arab regimes, especially Nasserism. The Atassi government in Syria also played a substantial role in exposing the weakness of the same regimes. Significantly, Nasserism was extremely reluctant to confront this challenge to its leadership. For instance, it confronted Israel's diversion of the Jordan River by calling for summit conferences, placing the responsibility on the shoulders of the Arabs in general, despite its claims to lead them all. In contrast, the Atassi government called for popular war, shelled Israeli settlements with artillery, and allowed "Fatah" to operate from Syria. Thus, it seized the leadership of Arab nationalism from Nasserism. The Fatah organization's military operations across the Jordanian and Syrian fronts and the West Bank residents' demands for arms created a situation that put Arab regimes in a very embarrassing position.

It was clear that the emergence of Fatah had gradually pushed Nasserism to intensify its media attack on Israel. Additionally, Syrian pressure on Egypt was increasing, even within the summit conferences. Syria, influenced by the idealism and zealotry of the Baath left, specifically the Atassi government, found itself entangled in the conflict. However, it was ill-prepared to face Israel and lacked genuine intent to engage in the confrontation. It took a shameful position during the Israeli raid on Jordan in November 1966, as its forces did not move an inch, which prompted Wasfi Al-Tal to attack Syria and Egypt: Egypt: *"You promised us air protection in such cases."*<sup>[747]</sup>

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<sup>[747]</sup> Trevor N. Dupuis, *The Elusive Victory*, p. 265.

**It is significant that after the bloody battles between Syria and Israel in March 1967, Abdel Nasser announced that he would not fight over a tractor incident on the border. In April 1967, Israel shot down six Syrian planes in a large-scale air battle, and Nasser responded by saying that he would not fight unless Israel launched a comprehensive offensive.<sup>[748]</sup>**

**Interestingly, the two Western-friendly governments in Saudi Arabia and Jordan exerted media pressure on Nasserism to push it to close the Straits of Tiran. The presence of the international emergency forces in Sharm el-Sheikh and on the eastern Sinai border was one of the topics of the war of words between Jordan and Nasserite Egypt throughout 1966/67. King Hussein sent Nasser a letter that read: *“Although you are Nasser, you are not launching Fedayeen raids from Egyptian territory, and you know that the emergency forces separate your borders from the Israelis. Besides, you send me men from Fatah to carry out operations from the Jordanian border, yet you do not want to help me, and you do not even want to close the Strait of Tiran to Israeli shipping.”***

**This embarrassment pushed Nasser to carry out his military demonstration in May 1967. He was also eventually obligated to conclude a mutual defense agreement with the Atassi government, which he had often described as adventurous. Afterward, his attacks on the Baath Party eased, then stopped.**

**Israel also succeeded in implicating Nasserism. Its attacks on Syria and Jordan left only a choice between confrontation and retreat, which Nasserism would not allow until the very end.**

**Nasserism led to the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which was granted a radio station in Cairo in March 1965. Despite the approaching danger, it did not attempt to prepare itself for the coming war, despite Nasser’s repeated admission that he was not ready to confront Israel. The army’s corruption was at**

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<sup>[748]</sup> Memoirs of Yitzhak Rabin, pp. 143-144.

**its peak, and the military leadership was not prepared to make any reforms, as it could not even imagine the nature of the coming war with Israel and how close its hour was.**

**It was previously noted that the royalist victories in Yemen in 1964 intensified the rise in Egyptian losses. Instead of supporting the radical forces in North and South Yemen, Nasserism followed a policy that made its position even more difficult. Therefore, it offered reconciliation to Saudi Arabia in 1965 to no avail. This is because the latter found that its opportunity had come to implicate Nasserism further, with clear American support.**

**Despite the apparent moderation, significant difficulties emerged in Nasserism's relationship with the West in 1964/1965. The United States launched a major campaign against the independent countries of the Third World. Countries in the Middle East, particularly Egypt and Syria, were included, as well as countries reliant on England and France. Furthermore, Nasserism was unable to maintain a neutral stance against this American aggression in the Third World, nor could it, as a nationalist regime, avoid the repercussions of the American assault.**

**The mid-1960s witnessed a deterioration in relationships between Nasserite Egypt and the United States, especially after the latter intervened in the Congo. In 1964, Nasserism provided weapons to the Congo, and a demonstration in Cairo, consisting of members of the Socialist Union, burned the American Library. Egyptian forces then shot down an American plane that entered Egyptian airspace "by mistake," prompting Johnson to threaten to cut off food aid to Egypt. On December 23, 1964, Abdel Nasser responded with his fiercest attack on the United States, criticizing its role in the Congo and defending Egypt's involvement in Yemen. On January 26, 1965, the US House of Representatives responded by cutting off wheat aid to Egypt. However, President Johnson canceled the decision the next day under the pretext of delaying dealing with Abdel Nasser. In late 1965, a considerable quantity of wheat was sent, and Johnson**



consented to provide wheat to Egypt through the Food for Peace initiative for an additional three years. This decision sparked a wave of hostility against Egypt in the United States. Moreover, following the upsurge of media battles, wheat assistance was entirely halted in 1966.

Relations with West Germany worsened after it recognized Israel in May 1965 and signed an arms agreement with that country. As a result, Arab countries cut ties with West Germany. Abdel Nasser further warned of recognizing East Germany if the deal proceeded. He met with the East German chancellor in Cairo, which resulted in the cutting off of West German aid to Egypt. Nonetheless, Abdel Nasser did not officially acknowledge East Germany until 1969. Additionally, the arms agreement between Germany and Israel was abandoned due to concerns that Arab countries might acknowledge East Germany.

As a result, relations between Nasserite Egypt and some key Western countries worsened.

The situation of Nasserism in the mid-1960s is summarized as follows:

1. Economic failure and the growth of internal discontent and opposition stimulated Nasserism's tendency to achieve external victories, despite its weak capabilities in this regard. This explains, at least in part, the rise of its anti-Western tone.

2. The aforementioned international dynamics resulted in substantial Western pressures, initially economic and then military, via Saudi Arabia in Yemen and subsequently Israel.

3. The surge of nationalist sentiment in the Arab East posed significant challenges to Nasserism. Consequently, it was obligated to pledge support for Syria against Israeli attacks. Nevertheless, it consistently sought to dissociate itself from this commitment, openly criticizing the radical regime in Damascus throughout 1966 and 1967.



**4. Saudi Arabia severely exhausted the Egyptian army in Yemen.**

**5. Israel decided to strike, especially against Syria, while the United States decided to eliminate the nationalist regimes in the Middle East, including Nasserism.**

### **The War and the Defeat**

**In early 1967, President Johnson asked Ambassador Julius Holmes to prepare a study on Soviet penetration into the Middle East, which encouraged action in this region.<sup>[749]</sup> The shift in the US position over ten years from trying to establish balanced relations between Israel and the Arab regimes, even the moderate ones, to always tipping the scales in Israel's favor and betting on it was the most prominent in US policy in the Middle East. This was the result of changes that occurred in international relations, as mentioned earlier.**

**However, the 1967 war cannot be examined without considering Israel's interests and circumstances, which necessitated a strike against Arab countries, particularly Syria, at that time. It is insufficient to observe the events between April and June 1967, a period marked by the dynamics of the region's shift towards war. Underlying this sequence of events were profound issues in the strategies of Israel and the United States. Nasserism implicated**

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**<sup>[749]</sup> It seems that recent developments indicate that the United States supported an offensive against Egypt, excluding Syria and Jordan. Conversely, Israel was more interested in striking Syria and seizing the West Bank. However, it is possible that Israel decided to assault both as a package deal with the United States.**

**For further information on the U.S. position, refer to:**

- Marwan Behiri, "American Politics and the Middle East: From Truman to Henry Kissinger," in American Politics and the Arabs, pp. 49-73.**
- Mustafa Alawi, American Behavior in the May-June 1967 Crisis, in American Politics and the Arabs, pp. 127-138.**
- Muhammad Hassanein Heikal published some documents confirming this in The Thirty Years War.**

itself, and other Arab governments contributed to its implication by calling for the withdrawal of the emergency forces and the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba. Nevertheless, it was certainly aware that it could not fight Israel, and the latter was aware of this as well.<sup>[750]</sup> Regardless of the presence of an Israeli military build-up in Syria, a matter that was debated, Israel had repeatedly threatened it, and military battles, sometimes large-scale, took place between them during the months preceding the 1967 war.

Syrian movements were more fearful of Nasserists than of Israel. Therefore, Abdel Nasser frequently attacked the Atassi government. However, he was eventually obligated to conclude a mutual defense agreement with Syria. Additionally, he resorted to making revolutionary declarations in late 1966 in order to preserve his moral influence in the Arab world by demonstrating his ability to continue leading the nation. David Downing and Gary Herman commented on this behavior, saying, *“Suddenly, Arab unity became a reality. Even Jordan and Saudi Arabia recognized Nasser’s leadership. The Egyptian president, intoxicated by the euphoria of his sudden emergence from despair, discovered new life in the old rhetoric. He silently hoped that Israel would refrain from launching an attack and that no one would incite it to do so, despite his continuous provocations.”*<sup>[751]</sup> Consequently, his apprehensions regarding the Baath government’s haste became a reality.

Regardless of the validity of a conspiracy element, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan did their best to implicate Nasserism in mobilizing the army and expelling the emergency forces. Additionally, there was a complete disparity between Nasserite statements and slogans and the ability to achieve them. If one recalls Nasser and his men’s passionate speeches and cutting words prior to the war, he will realize the gravity of this situation. The Boss, who

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<sup>[750]</sup> In an interview with Yitzhak Rabin on December 22, 1967, he told Haaretz that Nasser had deployed his forces to the brink of war without actually intending to go to war and that Israel was aware of this. Arie Bober, Op. cit., pp. 69-70.

<sup>[751]</sup> David Downing & Gary Herman, War without End, Peace without Hope, p. 138.

vowed to strike Israel and those supporting Israel, was commanding an army that appeared to be deliberately equipped to be defeated. The gap between slogans and the ability to achieve them clearly reveals the nature of the Nasserite regime. The reality of Nasserism was fully revealed to the masses during the June 1967 war. Even if we consider the military demonstration in May 1967 as a mere predicament, Nasserism's falling into such a trap and failing to escape from it in any way expresses the extent of its internal weaknesses and its tendency to be deceived in this manner. This was not the first predicament of its kind, as it was preceded by the Yemen predicament. The great role played by prestige, slogans, and deception becomes clear if one contemplates King Hussein's position on the May 1967 crisis. The king had no ability or interest, at that time, in fighting Israel. Despite the pressures he was exposed to internally since the mid-1960s, he remained consistent with himself for a long time. He even severed his relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1966 and made every effort to overthrow the Atassi regime. However, as the battles between Israel and Syria escalated, nationalist sentiments in Arab countries grew, and Nasser felt compelled to ride the new nationalist wave. The king offered his assistance to Syria before deciding to form an alliance with Nasserism in May 1967, fearful of the consequences of the situation. When King Hussein landed in Jordan after reconciling with Abdel Nasser, he reportedly told one of his men, "Today I am done with my life insurance." <sup>[752]</sup>

Despite this, Nasserists did not anticipate being defeated in this humiliating way. Rather, Abdel Nasser imagined that international circumstances would favor them again, as had happened in 1956, that the military demonstration would stop short of disaster, or that the outcome would be similar to the results of the mobilization operation in 1960. He also believed that, given the context of 1967, with his military demonstration, he could revive his waning

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<sup>[752]</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

**influence and perhaps even hoped to reverse the repercussions of the 1956 conflict. However, all the circumstances in which he found himself for a whole decade were pushing him toward provoking Israel. He was compelled to swallow his rhetoric and ultimately faced the consequences of his actions.**

**He demanded that emergency forces withdraw only from the international borders, not from the Gaza Strip or Sharm el-Sheikh. The proposal was denied since those forces' tasks were the same: patrol borders rather than engage in combat missions. As a result, there was no point in withdrawing or redistributing some of them. Therefore, Nasserism faced two difficult choices: either to remove the emergency forces completely or to rescind the call for their partial withdrawal. Adopting the second alternative was challenging after all the statements made, the mobilization of forces, and the stirring up of public opinion, among other factors.**

**In fact, Nasserism is accountable for the defeat of June 1967. The way in which the May crisis was dealt with was by shouting, threats, and the desire to delude the masses into believing that victory was imminent. In addition to the feverish desire to achieve external victories, even if they were imaginary, to compensate for internal impotence. Moreover, the regime's compulsion to embrace slogans it raised without being able to implement them reflects the internal rationale of the structure of the political system, specifically the contradiction between the content and form of Nasserite ideology.**

**On this particular issue, the rhetoric and threatening slogans blatantly contradicted the lack of intention or desire to go to war. The Nasserite rule was characterized by extensive corruption that contributed to the army's inability to engage in true military battles. Moreover, Nasserism's response to pressures from both Arab nationalist forces and conservative Arab governments led to its involvement in the war. This resulted from its assumption of leadership in Arab nationalism without having the material foundation necessary to fulfill its slogans. Furthermore, the**

confusion within the nationalist movement significantly influenced Nasserism's involvement in the war.

Finally, the war and defeat demonstrated the profound discrepancy between Nasserite propaganda and its actual practice. The revelation of military weakness, demagogic propaganda, open lies, and widespread corruption resulted in the demise of the Nasserite myth that the masses had long believed in. The pinnacle of Nasserite contradiction was exposed in the military statements during the war. They were inconsistent with, or even antagonistic to, the realities along the line until the signs of defeat became obvious.

The defeat of June 1967 was the culmination of the Nasserist regime as a whole. It was not merely a military defeat that any country might suffer, but a defeat of the very essence of the regime. This explains the series of retreats that followed on all fronts, the abandonment of grandiose slogans, and the adoption of realistic policies. The leader's rhetoric subsequently shifted to a pragmatic and realistic tone, reflecting the true capabilities of the social system as a whole.

## **The End**

### **Prologue**

Although Nasserism had done its best to avoid war, all circumstances were forcing it to play the role of a fighter against Israel. Furthermore, while it was busy in the preparation of goblins, it was surprised by their appearance in reality rather than in fiction. In doing so, Nasserism led itself to a great loss: it did not win and did not fight, forfeiting both victory and martyrdom.

With the announcement of Nasserism's defeat in June 1967, Egypt was saddened by grief. However, large landowners and businessmen believed that their time had arrived. Consequently, rumors

circulated condemning the Soviet Union's position, and the public began to criticize Nasserism as a whole. This persuaded calls for resignation, particularly as the primary faction of the Nasserite bureaucracy had lost its standing in the war, leading to a decline in the regime's overall prestige.

The defeat did not materially destroy the Nasserite bureaucracy but rather weakened its military wing, which was the main pillar of the regime. More importantly, it shattered its prestige in the Arab world, proving the failure of the philosophy of the regime. Zionism triumphed over Nasserism at the pinnacle of its maturity in the form of the Arab socialist state, not just as a military defeat. The defeat revealed the deterioration of the system and its false grandiosity.

Since the early 1950s, elements of the Nasserite bureaucracy had merged with businessmen and landlords. Therefore, by the mid-1960s, statesmen-businessmen controlled most of the state apparatus, the army, the political organization, and the economy. However, the majority of the regime's senior leadership did not indulge in corruption and wealth accumulation for reasons already discussed. Nor did many ordinary Nasserists indulge in these activities. The regime thus became internally divided into left Nasserists and right Nasserist-businessmen, or later Sadatists. The increasing dominance of Nasserist businessmen, along with the unsuccessful Nasserite economic reforms, resulted in a rising demand within the ruling group itself to dismantle Nasserite socialism. This aligned with a notable and substantial objective reality: the long-term interests of the dominant class were getting closer to its immediate interests. This class started to reorganize itself and present alternatives to the populace, who gradually abandoned the Nasserite ideology and even began to partially agree with the proposals of businessmen, especially concerning foreign policy. In short, the lower classes were no longer able—as they had been prior to the 1952 coup—to play an independent and substantial role as they had done before. They no longer represented a significant pressure on the regime. In short, the socio-political



struggle is back, but the political dynamics were then in favor of the dominant class. Reformism and the slogan of the just tyrant no longer found many supporters. Thus, the overall interests of businessmen no longer conflicted much with their individual interests. Consequently, Bonapartism in its Nasserite form no longer found solid ground.

The defeat had a significant impact, as Nasserism faced a very difficult practical test and suffered a humiliating blow. In fact, it was one of the easiest military defeats in modern history.

Businessmen, large landlords, and their allies from the Nasserite clique found their opportunity in the defeat to intensify their attack on Nasserism. They were able to find the appropriate ground because most of the masses had lost confidence in the regime with all its orientations and had become more receptive to the criticism of its enemies, who were represented most of all by businessmen.

Meanwhile, the groups of the new Marxist Left began to grow slowly outside the Nasserite framework.

After the defeat, Dayan sat waiting to hear Nasser's decision to surrender. After the defeat, Dayan sat waiting to hear Nasser's decision to surrender. While at home, the dominant class was rubbing its hands, as Nasserism seemed to have fallen for good. In a speech on June 9, 1967,<sup>[753]</sup> Nasser announced that he was stepping down from all his official positions, recommending that Zakaria Mohieddine, a notoriously right-wing figure, be made president. In his address, the boss mentioned things that never happened: he claimed that the enemy had fought beyond its capabilities and that America and Britain had intervened directly, that *"the enemy was operating with an air force three times greater than its normal force, and that the army had fought "terrible battles with tanks and planes." "Our armed forces moved to our borders with an effectiveness that was witnessed by the enemy before the friend." The precise calculations of the enemy's strength showed us*

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<sup>[753]</sup> The address was posted in Egypt, Arabism and the July Revolution.



*that our armed forces, with the level of equipment and training they had reached, were capable of repelling and deterring it.” “The enemy amassed no less than four hundred aircraft on the Jordanian front alone.” “The nature of the desert did not allow for a complete defense, especially with the enemy’s superiority in the air.” “We waited for the enemy from the east, and it came to us from the west.” “We responded to the ceasefire decision in light of the assurances contained in the last Soviet draft resolution submitted to the Security Council and French statements that no one could achieve any regional expansion on the basis of the recent aggression.” He added, “We had many national, Arab, and international factors before us... President Johnson and the Soviet Union asked us not to be the first to open fire...” Our armed forces in Sinai were forced to evacuate the first line of defense.” “The Arab nation is capable of removing the effects of aggression.” “I am proud of this generation of revolutionaries (meaning his generation)... “They achieved the evacuation of colonialism, the social revolution, the High Dam, and the industrial launch, and there is still a major role required of general Arab action, and I am confident that it can perform it.”*

Although it was an address announcing his resignation from all official positions, it also included promises of victory: *“We cannot hide from ourselves that we have faced a serious setback in recent days, but I am confident that all of us can overcome our difficult situation in a short period. Although we need a lot of patience, wisdom, moral courage, and dedicated work ability.”* This indicates that the leader was not actually stepping down. He also shifted the blame to foreign powers, maintaining that the regime was still intact. Additionally, he indirectly denied personal accountability by stating, *“I am willing to take accountability,”* as if he were not truly accountable. Later, he accused some military officers of being accountable and put them on trial. The significance of handing over power to Zakaria Mohieddin was seen by the masses at the time as a complete surrender to the enemy.

The events surrounding the mass demonstrations on June 9 and 10 are widely recognized. However, their deeper significance warrants greater attention. The crowds went out demanding the return of Abdel Nasser. Yet, their call was not for Nasser as a person or the defeated leader he had become. Rather, they sought the continuation of the struggle against the enemy, symbolized by

the ideals and imagery associated with Nasser. This situation illustrates the contradiction between the content and form of Nasserism. The general populace clung to the form of Nasserism, which they perceived as revolutionary, while simultaneously rejecting its underlying content: the perpetuation of underdevelopment, authoritarianism, and vulnerability to Israel. Their protests were, in essence, a rejection of these substantive issues, and in their attachment to the form of Nasserism, they expressed profound opposition to its intrinsic, reactionary, and counter-revolutionary essence. The populace's desire for Nasser's return was contingent upon his ability to fulfill the promises encapsulated in his slogans. Consequently, the demonstrators on June 9 and 10 were, in effect, protesting against the authentic Abdel Nasser, the leader who had faced defeat and disillusionment. This reality is underscored by the fact that, upon receiving the news of the defeat, these individuals directed their sharp criticism towards the Nasserite regime, targeting its institutions and policies. They sought the realization of the slogans while simultaneously aiming to dismantle the very essence of the Nasserite regime.

There were many exaggerations among the populace about the alleged legendary strength of the Israeli army and its fictitious heroism. In fact, millions of Egyptians, in the context of extreme self-flagellation, took pride in the leaders of that army as if they were their own. For example, many people pretended that Moshe Dayan himself was originally from their town (Mansoura, Damietta, etc.). Furthermore, numerous tales circulated about the Sinai Bedouin's betrayal of the Egyptian army and officers being cowards. Painful anecdotes were also created about the Boss and his close associates. All of this was painful, putting severe pressure on Nasserism, compelling its leader to exert maximum effort to rebuild the army and attempt to restore the collapsing regime.

Although the discrepancy between rhetoric and practice became clear following the defeat, the demonstrations on June 9 and 10 brought the dominant class back to its senses. The state of political

balance achieved in 1952 reappeared, but in a completely different context, with increasing political polarization between social forces and the expansion of their independent powers at the expense of the political system and Nasserism, which had always sought to suppress the political independence of all classes in society.

That is why the latter continued to rule while sitting on a barrel of gunpowder.

As for the intelligentsia and the lower classes, Nasserism lost all its prestige and was no longer fit to play a leadership role in society. Here Nasserism is meant as a practice, that is, as a realized policy and as a ruling elite. Their adherence to Abdel Nasser was only because he was the leader who raised revolutionary slogans for a whole decade, and more importantly, there was no leadership on the Egyptian or Arab scene that presented itself as an alternative.

For the dominant class, Nasserism became a dead letter, especially after the dismantling of the luxurious and corrupt military elite. The army's reconstruction was subsequently carried out on an authentic combat basis, primarily at the battlefield, with a focus on active readiness for the forthcoming war. Concurrently, the state apparatus was becoming increasingly disintegrated and subjected to bitter criticism among the populace.

Among the most important opposition groups were the judges. Their criticism of Nasserism intensified following its defeat. They condemned corruption and the structure of the government, raising liberal slogans. Meanwhile, the Nasserite authority exerted continuous pressure on them to join the Socialist Union. However, a few accepted, while the vast majority refused. What made the relationship between them and the Nasserists worse was that the judiciary during that period began to issue rulings not suiting the rulers' desires. These included acquitting the Fiqi family in the crime known as the Kamshish case, convicting a police officer for smuggling gold bars, which was considered a challenge to the Minister of Interior, acquitting Mahmoud Abdel Latif Abdel

Gawad, the lawyer, of the charge of conspiring to overthrow the regime, and acquitting Ambassador Muhammad Ibrahim Souka of the crime of espionage with a foreign country. What made matters worse was that the General Assembly of Judges had issued, on March 28, 1968, a statement, of which three thousand copies were printed, and then another ten thousand were distributed to those interested in public affairs. The statement included judges' public declaration of their refusal to join the Socialist Union as well as their insistence that non-specialists not be involved in carrying out the judiciary's duty. It also stated, *"Achieving the solidity of the internal front necessitates the removal of all obstacles to citizens' freedom and the securing of individual freedom in terms of opinion, speech, assembly, criticism, and suggestion, as well as upholding the rule of law."* This statement marked a final break between Nasserism and the judiciary. The conflict between the two sides culminated in the success of the independenceists against Nasserist candidates in the March 1969 Judges' Club elections. This result prompted Nasser to commit what was later known as the "Judicial Massacre" on August 31, 1969, and to appoint the members of the Judges' Club administration.

In the end, the ruling elite no longer held many cards.

### The escalation of social conflict and attempts to overcome it

Nasser's return to the presidency on June 10, 1967, did not mean the end of the uprising. On the contrary, it was a significant turning point in the trajectory of the socio-political struggle that had been escalating since the mid-1960s. The uprising of June 9 and 10 dealt a significant blow to businessmen. Nevertheless, it did not result in the return of the masses to their work, nor did it extinguish the aspirations of the dominant class to seize power. Following the defeat, the dominant class began to perceive Nasserism not as a temporary substitute for the revolution but as an obstacle to its immediate interests, as the revolutionary period appeared to have come to an end for the foreseeable future. The populace no longer

perceived Nasserism as a superior alternative to the governance of the old Pashas. Rather, a dead alternative to their rulership, albeit still preferable to the impending rule of the new Pashas. Despite the masses' adherence to Abdel Nasser on a personal level, the main motivation for the uprising stemmed from an unconscious and emotional desire to reject defeat and capitulation. Nasser was restored to power and compelled to put his slogans into action. This was evident in the rhetoric of the June 9/10 uprising. He returned to the weakest position he had held since his coup, and his ability to maneuver and leverage social contradictions was no longer what it had been before. In June, the masses were unable to fill the vacuum that had formed after the defeat of Nasserism. Consequently, Nasser's reinstatement was viewed as a temporary barrier against the rule of the new Pashas. That is because Nasserism could have assimilated its revolutionary slogans through him as a person.

The dominant class in Nasserite Egypt cannot be described as an organized party, as Nasser frequently described it. However, it manifested its political presence through semi-organized entities. Since 1964, it had formed large factions in the parliament, highly cohesive groupings in the Socialist Union, particularly in the countryside, as well as strong and influential groups resembling mafias in state institutions, such as the army, the media, and the judiciary. In addition to its cliques in social clubs. The popular social groups did not have organized political representation. However, they expressed themselves through unorganized labor movements, student gatherings, and other small circles. Their voices were also represented within the Socialist Union, particularly through the governmental youth organization, as well as the student unions after 1967. In addition, there were semi-public leftist cells.

It was previously mentioned that the social system in Egypt had been moving with its inertia since July 1952. It may be added, based on the previous analysis, that the Nasserite bureaucracy itself, after June 1967, had also begun to move with its inertia, meaning that it no longer had the initiative.

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Following the defeat, Nasserism had to abandon many of its revolutionary slogans and adopt more realistic policies. The principal shift was to avoid getting involved in situations that did not fit its *policies and purposes*. Moreover, it was obligated to become more modest, even in terms of its actual objectives, because it had become too weak to defend its position on a wide front as it had before the defeat.

The defeat and the uprising of June 9 and 10 strengthened the direct Soviet presence in the Middle East, particularly in Egypt and Syria. However, this presence was founded on defeated regimes that were gradually deteriorating, the most important of which was collapsing. i.e., Nasserism. On the contrary, the balance of power shifted in favor of the United States, owing to the victorious Israel and the rise of more conservative Arab regimes, such as Saudi Arabia, at the expense of independent ones, particularly Nasserism, which made significant political concessions with the approval of the Soviet Union.<sup>[754]</sup> The relationship between Israel and the United States had strengthened significantly, marked by open and almost unconditional support. Furthermore, an unprecedented level of collaboration between them was reached.

While Nasserism had essentially recognized its political defeat, it attempted to refute it through propaganda.

1. One of the significant events was the outcomes of the Arab States Conference held in Khartoum in August 1967. Abdel Nasser abandoned the slogan of “Unity of Progressive Forces” that he

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<sup>[754]</sup> The Soviet Union feared “extremism” in the Arab world, especially from the Left. Rather, it supported Nasserism in its demand for a peaceful solution and its policy of restraining the more radical Arab regimes, especially the Atassi government. Leftist extremism would place greater responsibilities on the Soviets and implicate them in situations that did not suit their strategy. Therefore, the Soviet Union supported the entirety of the post-1967 Nasserite policy.



raised one year before the defeat and returned to the line of “Arab solidarity,” regardless of the nature of the regimes. The Egypt-Saudi axis was also reformed. Additionally, Abdel Nasser asked King Hussein to deal with the United States and go with it to the end in the hope that it would return the occupied West Bank to him. He also called on the Arab countries to resume pumping oil that they had stopped after the war. Moreover, he tried to neutralize the USA by flirting with its interests along the way.<sup>[755]</sup> This indicated that Arab regimes would directly play a role equivalent to Israel’s role for the United States. In Khartoum, Abdel Nasser also addressed the issue of Yemen by reaching a compromise with Saudi Arabia. They agreed that the Egyptian forces would withdraw from there, with Saudi Arabia not interfering in Yemen’s affairs.<sup>[756]</sup> It was also agreed that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait would pay 110 million pounds sterling annually to the confrontation countries. Belyaev and Primakov commented interestingly on the reconciliation between Nasserite Egypt and Saudi Arabia at the Khartoum Conference as follows: *“King Faisal was smiling reservedly while dictating the terms of providing the material aid that Cairo, Amman, and Damascus desperately needed. He did not try to hide that he had flown to the Sudanese capital in order to obtain the surrender of the Egyptians in Yemen.”*<sup>[757]</sup>

2. In November 1967, Nasser accepted Security Council Resolution 242, reversing the decisions of the Khartoum Conference, which explicitly stated the legitimacy of Israel’s existence as a state.<sup>[758]</sup> The foreign minister justified this acceptance

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<sup>[755]</sup> Muhammad Hassanein Heikal’s idea, an idea that he espoused and defended often, can be found in his book “The Road to Ramadan,” p. 110.

<sup>[756]</sup> Before the Egyptian troops withdrew, they had suppressed the radical groups supporting Abdullah Gazilan in favor of the less radical Al-Sallal. After the withdrawal, a military coup occurred that replaced Al-Sallal with Al-Iryani. Nasserism immediately backed him, despite power being taken by an elite group of tribal republicans. This appears to have been at least the implicit content of the resolution agreed upon at the Khartoum conference. For details, refer to Fred Halliday, *Op. cit.*, pp. 114-126.

<sup>[757]</sup> *ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>[758]</sup> Text of the resolution:



before parliament by arguing that Egypt had already recognized Israel in 1949 when it signed armistice agreements with it and later repeated the same idea to a foreign journalist. The consequences of Nasserite Egypt's acceptance of Resolution 242 were that the official and leftist Arab press raged against it, and its influence in the Arab world declined sharply, especially in the Levant and Iraq. This position was even criticized by radical elements in Egypt, including some of Nasserism's bases.

3. Thereafter, the slogan of liberating Palestine was dropped from the Nasserite lexicon and replaced by a more realistic one: "Removing the consequences of aggression."

4. Regarding the rejection of utilizing religion in international politics, Nasserism waived it. After the new alliance with Saudi Arabia, Nasser started calling for the unity of Muslims with Christians against Israel under the pretext of the danger of Zionism to Islam and Christianity.

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**The Security Council:**

1. Affirms that the achievement of the principles of the Charter requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and requires the application of both of the following principles:

A. Withdrawal of armed forces from territories occupied in the conflict.

B. Termination of all claims or states of belligerence and respect for and recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats and acts of force.

2. It also emphasizes the need to:

A. Ensuring freedom of navigation in international waterways in the region.

B. Achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem.

C. Ensuring regional immunity and political independence for each state in the region through measures including the establishment of demilitarized zones.

D. Ceasefire.

3. Requests the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative to the Middle East to establish and maintain contacts with the states concerned with a view to finding an agreement and assisting efforts to achieve a peaceful and acceptable settlement in accordance with the provisions and principles of this resolution.

4. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the progress of the efforts of the Special Representative as soon as possible.

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On the other hand, the Palestinian resistance movement was growing quickly, and the Palestine Liberation Organization had achieved a great degree of independence from Arab regimes. Instead, it became capable of leading military Arab action against Israel in 1967 and 1968. For instance, in March 1968, it significantly contributed alongside Jordanian forces to the “Battle of Karamah,” causing considerable embarrassment for Nasserism, which was one of the motivations for launching the War of Attrition.

New forces began to emerge from within and outside the body of Nasserism. Numerous Marxist groups were formed, and veteran Marxists experienced a resurgence. A substantial number of leftist Nasserist students and intellectuals became active in youth organizations, playing a crucial role in resisting the advance of right-wing ideologies and even applying pressure on Nasser himself. On the other hand, liberals were actively countering the socialist discourse and the influence of the Soviet Union, with their circles spreading within the political organization and beyond. This was quite evident in the Judges’ Club and the Bar Association. The authorities also released some Muslim Brotherhood members, who spread out, preaching a new order and collaborating with the rising Arab knight, Saudi Arabia, supported by a religious mania that has been growing and spreading among the masses in general. Salafism and superstition also began to spread among the populace, including the famous incident of the apparition of the Virgin Mary, the rumor that gripped people’s hearts and minds for weeks about the presence of hairs from the Prophet Muhammad’s head in every Mushaf (Quran book), and the widespread superstition that the 1967 defeat was the regime’s punishment from God for its torture of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1965/1966.

The propaganda of the Right, in the context of that era, generally focused on the need to align with the West and abandon socialism

and Arab nationalism. The ideas of Arab nationalism and socialism had not yet taken root in the consciousness of the population, especially since they were slogans that had not been realized and were not particularly beneficial to them. No doubt, Nasserite socialism had failed, and no one could prove otherwise, especially since commodity shortage crises, rising prices, and unemployment were notable phenomena. In addition, the Soviet Union's position was not in line with what the masses expected, which cost it much of its reputation in the region.

Because the masses had clung to Abdel Nasser as president and held him *captive* to his slogans, everyone held their breath waiting for the first expected event: the results of the trials of the air force commanders, the scapegoats who were presented to take accountability for the defeat. The verdicts did not match the gravity of the charges, so students and workers went out in February 1968, and bloody clashes with the police took place. The demonstrators threw stones at Abdel Nasser's headquarters for the first time on February 25 and achieved a "military" victory over the police. Ultimately, they quieted down after receiving promises to address all their demands, which were:

1. Retrial of the Air Force commanders.
2. Realizing political freedoms.
3. Arming the masses.

The defendant airmen were retried promptly. Subsequently, the well-known March 30 statement was issued. Additionally, the Socialist Union was dissolved and restructured by elections for the first time. It was also decided to make student unions truly elective for the first time since 1952. They were dissolved months after the 1952 coup, and until 1959, they were formed by appointment. From 1959 to 1970, they were elected but under the supervision of pioneers from the teaching staff who were members of the official political organization. Additionally, these unions were stripped of the right to engage in political activity. It was not until 1969 that this

oversight was decided to be eased. Censorship of the press was also released. For the first time since the 1952 coup, the principle of elections was also practiced in trade unions. However, most of the statement's provisions were never implemented.

A few months later, an even larger uprising came in November 1968, but Nasser had created special repression squads, the Central Security, enabling him this time to achieve a “military” victory over workers and students. The demonstrators' slogans this time focused on popular war, reflecting the strong influence of the New Leftist groups, in addition to economic reform. The most prominent thing that the masses saluted was the struggle of the Palestinian guerrillas. However, Nasserism was compelled, despite its military victory, to make significant concessions in order to prevent further uprisings. These included freedom of the press and the initiation of a public dialogue within the political organization and in the universities. Then, parliament formed a special committee to review the laws and legislation that included what touched on political freedoms, recommending the following:

1. Judicial bodies should have a prominent role in overseeing matters that affect the people.

2. Some members supported abolishing state security legislation, while others proposed revising Law 119 of 1964 to limit the duration of custody and define cases of detention while ensuring the right to appeal.

3. Determining the period during which the state of emergency is imposed.

However, some old and new communists, members of youth organizations, and others were arrested and tortured.

In order to distract people from the real issues, the government had created committees for popular defense, known as Citizens' Committees for the Battle, as an alternative to arming the people.

**While the young leftist forces partially benefited from the release of freedoms, the new and old Pashas benefited more. Political isolation was lifted, and some political prisoners who were considered right-wing were released, with the Muslim Brotherhood playing a role in strengthening their propaganda against the government. The ideas of businessmen became more powerful within the apparatus of power as well, with many senior statesmen adopting the slogan “Correcting Errors,” meaning the need to change the socialist policy and free the private sector. Meanwhile, the state economic sector was subjected to severe criticism in the newspapers from an economic perspective. Many aspects of administrative shortcomings and corruption were exposed, thus striking at the heart of the most important material foundations of Nasserite socialism. Official economists also publicly adopted the call to liberate the private sector to increase national income, raising the slogan “the necessity of subjecting everything to the growth of production,” meaning ending reform policies.**

**Businessmen had a lot to gain:**

- 1. Allowing the private sector to export all traditional goods since 1968.**
- 2. Allowing the private sector to carry out independent import operations, in addition to many other granted facilities in this regard.**
- 3. Allowing banks to open foreign currency accounts for those working abroad (5/8/1968).**
- 4. Allowing entities other than banks to deal in foreign exchange and travelers’ checks.**
- 5. Allowing holders of investment certificates issued against shares of some companies to borrow from commercial banks with the guarantee of these certificates.**
- 6. Permitting individuals to import passenger cars.**

**7. Permitting individuals to import without currency conversion within the limits of 3,000 pounds for personal use (elevators, car spare parts, agricultural machinery, etc.).**

**8. A decision was issued to facilitate the import of passenger cars for personal use or gifts.**

**9. Customs tariffs were reduced on some consumer goods, and guardianship procedures were greatly eased, especially on lands that were subject to the procedures of the Feudal Liquidation Committee. Additionally, some members of the aforementioned Al-Fiqi family were released.**

**10. In 1969, a decision was issued to reserve 80% of the seats in agricultural cooperative societies for those who own 10 feddans or less, instead of 5 feddans or less. Additionally, membership was banned for illiterate people, who made up 80% of villagers.**

**11. Stopping the prosecution of several cases against individuals accused of preparing and carrying out reprisals against members of the Socialist Union.**

**12. Allowing American and Italian capital to invest in the petroleum sector on more favorable terms than before. Egypt also joined the Arab-French Bank in 1970, which was dedicated to financing trade between France and Arab countries.**

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**Nevertheless, some reform measures were enforced, particularly the agrarian reform law enacted in July 1969, which limited individual agricultural ownership to 50 feddans and family ownership to 100 feddans. Additionally, a decree was introduced in 1968 aimed at nationalizing contracting companies and wholesale trade; however, this initiative was not put into practice. Moreover, in response to criticism from leftist intellectuals, the criteria for defining a peasant were revised, changing the threshold from owning 25 feddans or fewer to 10 feddans or less.**

**The essential significance of these advantages granted to the private sector was the rise of Nasserist (later Sadatist) businessmen, or, more definitively, the direct influence of the wealthy within the power apparatus, which increased at the expense of pure bureaucrats, also known as the bureaucratic Right vs. the bureaucratic Left.**

**The essential significance of releasing some political freedoms lies in the reduction of Nasserism's control in favor of all classes. Large landlords and businessmen were politically the most powerful and organized. Moreover, they could penetrate the state institutions. The failure of Nasserism politically and economically crystallized in the 1967 defeat. This defeat, plus the economic crisis, paved the way for the emergence of an alternative ideology. The solution that was increasingly accepted by public opinion, and of course on the level of the social system and its proponents as a whole, was the perspective of the dominant class: openness to the international market, a settlement with Israel, and economic liberalism, besides adopting an Islamic ideology.**

**The popular struggles became more in favor of the dominant class. While these struggles worked to weaken Nasserism and shake its bases and prestige, they did not transform this influence in favor of the masses, especially since they did not form an effective party. It is noteworthy that a considerable segment of the lower classes became temperamentally inclined toward the slogans of the affluent, contrasting with the situation in the period prior to the 1952 coup, which had witnessed the growth of an independent mass movement from the system's parties. This change was among the most prominent "achievements" of Nasserism. It could bring broad sectors of the people back to the bosom of the social system, of which Nasserism itself was an illegitimate daughter.**

**For instance, it is noteworthy that the issue of the struggle against Israel was not radically brought up by the Left. Rather, it was primarily restricted to the issue of the territories occupied in 1967,**



reflecting the harshness of the military defeat. Official propaganda effectively influenced the public's mindset in this way. Moreover, both the official and clandestine Left adhered to the same trajectory. From 1967 onwards, the concepts of war and peace were confined to regaining the territory and eliminating the consequences of the June aggression, nothing more. Nevertheless, this issue put great pressure on Nasserism, especially since Israel had not responded to the peace settlement initiatives, pushing the former to actively prepare for war. The failure of successive peace initiatives incited the students, leading them to raise extremist patriotic slogans and demand that the authority engage in combat as the only means to escape the consequences of the defeat. These factors, alongside the growth of the activities of Palestinian organizations, pushed the Nasserite authority to launch what is known as the War of Attrition. During this war, some victories were achieved over the enemy, along with many defeats. However, the mere fact that the military attacks the enemy, regardless of the outcome, is seen by the masses as a victory.

Despite the spreading of the tendency to self-flagellation, the drums of war were beating louder among students, motivated more by despair than by hope. The funeral processions for those killed in battles were occasions to chant the slogan that frightened Nasserism: "People's War and Masses' Armament."<sup>[759]</sup> One of the largest of these demonstrations was the funeral of Abdel Munim Riad, the Chief of Staff, which Israel Radio described as follows: *"The funeral of Abdel Munim Riad, the Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Army, turned into a demonstration of hatred against Israel. Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians marched in the heart of Cairo, chanting for retaliation. All the efforts of the security authorities to restore order to the funeral went*

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<sup>[759]</sup> This slogan was put forward by leftist groups, but in a technical context. It referred to guerrilla warfare and grassroots militias. This is distinct from its political sense. For instance, in Vietnam, it signified mobilizing all capabilities and involving all the masses in the struggle through various military, political, and economic forms, focusing all the masses' activity around the issue of national liberation. Nevertheless, the slogan of popular war in its technical sense was frightening to the Nasserite authority, as it directly involved the training and arming of the populace.

*down the drain, and the crowds penetrated the ranks of the military police time after time.” Abdel Nasser walked at the head of the funeral procession, with the high command of the Egyptian army beside him. Arab countries were represented by the chiefs of staff of the Jordanian, Iraqi, and Syrian armies. After the religious celebration held for Riad in Cairo, thousands continued to demonstrate in the streets, chanting, “Gamal... Gamal... give us the weapon... we want to go to the canal.”<sup>[760]</sup>*

The war of attrition ended with Nasser’s acceptance of the famous Rogers Initiative, as is well known, without protests from students. However, this decision sparked a renewed wave of hostility in the Arab world against Nasserism, which may have been one of the United States’ objectives in proposing the initiative.<sup>[761]</sup> Earlier, Abdel Nasser made another significant concession when King Hussein claimed to represent him, offering Israel access to the Suez Canal in exchange for the removal of the consequences of aggression. This statement was made in mid-1969, and the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs reiterated the declaration.<sup>[762]</sup> It is noteworthy that the Egyptian public did not voice any opposition to the acceptance of Security Council Resolution 242, the Rogers Initiative, Sadat’s Project in 1971, or any other peaceful initiatives, including the Camp David Accords in 1979. This absence of protest is particularly remarkable when compared to the enthusiastic patriotic demonstrations that took place from 1968 to 1973. These demonstrations concealed profound frustration and despair, channeling anger towards the overall social system without offering a clear alternative. The discontent primarily targeted the authorities’ failure to address the issue of land occupation either via peaceful negotiations or military action. Furthermore, after the cannons stopped firing in October 1973 without a decisive victory,

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<sup>[760]</sup> Lutfi Al-Kholi, Op. cit., p. 391.

<sup>[761]</sup> Refer in this regard to Ahmad Abdel Rahim Mustafa, Op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>[762]</sup> Mahmoud Riad’s memoirs, p. 155.

the true shift in public sentiment became evident as the populace grew more conservative.

## **Part Two: Sadat's Coup**

The previous section can be summarized as follows:

1. There was a gradual merging of statesmen and businessmen within the Nasserite elite, leading to a growing hostility toward socialist policies.

2. Social conflict had been ongoing since the mid-1960s and intensified after the 1967 defeat, primarily within the dominant class and its social system.

3. Nasserism began to lose its influence in the Arab world following the 1967 defeat.

4. Nasserism had been weakening under the impact of its failures and its inability to achieve new successes, both at home and abroad. The military defeat exacerbated this weakness, compelling it to make important concessions to various social classes, especially to the dominant class with its new factions.

5. Nasserism has, in essence, forfeited its justification for existence among all social classes. The final asset it possessed was the figure of Nasser himself, who represented the legacy of its slogans and reformist policy, despite the fact that he was already experiencing a decline prior to June 1967.

Nasser's death hastened the disintegration of bureaucratic authority. The public regarded him as responsible for the regime's successes, yet he was not held accountable for its shortcomings and failures, a perception significantly influenced by his personality. Sadat's role as Nasser's deputy eased the transition to Sadatism.

The authority underwent two significant changes:

**1. Shifting policies and slogans, including the abandonment of socialism, alignment with the West, and appeasement with conservative Arab regimes and Israel.**

**2. Alteration in the composition of the ruling elite was evident. The growing interrelationship between state officials and businessmen, leading to their mutual transformation, had undoubtedly served the interests of both the emerging and established pashas while undermining bureaucratic authority.**

**Following Nasser's death, various factions of the Nasserite Left continued to hold power. They comprised many of the leading figures who had never allied with businessmen, individuals whose professional responsibilities precluded such alliances, and those who adhered strictly to Nasserite ideology, believing that it remained quite popular. These Nasserite categories did not enjoy special respect among the masses after Nasser's death because their shortcomings were well known, such as repression, torture, and demagoguery. Nor were they clearly distinguished from the other groups sharing power—the new oligarchy or the Nasserite Right.**

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**According to the balance of power within the ruling elite, Sadat came to power after the death of Abdel Nasser.<sup>[763]</sup> From this moment on, the influence of the pure Nasserists, or the Nasserite Left, in power significantly diminished. Although Sadat had not yet represented a specific bloc in power, this weakness was his main source of strength when chosen as head of state. He was not known to adopt a particular perspective before, but after his “election” as president, he gradually decided to join the party that would preserve his throne, i.e., the Nasserite Right. Sadat, relying on the Right, was in a stronger position because he was more “realistic” or**

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<sup>[763]</sup> Details are available in Mohammad Hassanein Heikal, *Autumn of Wrath*, chapter four.

more consistent with the new sociopolitical dynamics. The following disputes emerged between the two parties, the pure Nasserists and Sadat:

1. Disagreement over the appointment of the prime minister: Sadat appointed Muhammad Fawzy, winning his opinion.

2. Disagreement over the rate of removal of guardianship arose. Sadat achieved a complete victory and received wide support within the state apparatus, leading to the quick lifting of the guardianship measures.

3. A controversy arose over extending the ceasefire period according to the Rogers Plan. The Nasserists' opinion prevailed, so the ceasefire was theoretically canceled, while Sadat never actually resumed fighting.

A dispute arose over Sadat's initiative in 1971, which was almost identical to Dayan's project. <sup>[764]</sup>

5. The decisive disagreement came regarding the unity project with Libya. Nasserists rejected this project for fear that rebuilding the state institutions would lead to their exclusion, while Sadat insisted on it for the same purpose, especially since Nasserists had actually been planning to remove him.

Following the advice of Mohammad Hassanein Heikal, Sadat, since his address on May 16, 1971, had leveraged the regime's oppressive heritage to defame and expose the leftist Nasserite elite. Therefore, he encouraged the media to attack the dictatorship and oppression, heralding a truly democratic life. Thus, Sadatism, which had potentially existed, met with a man who agreed to give it his name while he was in the highest position of the state. His

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<sup>[764]</sup> The initiative included Israel withdrawing from the east of the Suez Canal, and creating a demilitarized zone there, Egypt reducing its forces west of the canal and then opening the Suez Canal to maritime navigation within six months. The Americans and some Israeli officials welcomed the initiative, but Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir rejected it outright.

extraordinary opportunistic abilities distinguished him and were almost untainted by a history of practicing oppression and making harsh decisions. Rather, he was a friend to everyone, even Abdel Nasser himself. Consequently, Sadat's strength until that point had lain in his ability to embrace the reformist legacy of Nasserism while denouncing its oppressive police legacy. Since Nasserists had occupied the highest official roles, they rightly bore the burdens while not reaping the fruits of the advantages that were attributed by the masses to Abdel Nasser alone, who had already died.

The fundamental conflict between Sadat, who depended on business bureaucrats, and Nasserists revolved around the question of power. Nasserists were committed to preserving their influence and method of governance, which involved the political suppression of society alongside the promotion of populist Nasserite rhetoric. In contrast, the bureaucratic right aspired to establish itself as the ruling class, seeking direct control over governance. Nasserists erroneously believed that Nasserite ideology remained in its formative stages, although the governing elite had been progressively aligning itself with the immediate interests of bureaucratic businessmen since the mid-1960s. This elite was led by Gamal Abdel Nasser and his devoted followers until 1970. Some of them failed to grasp this reality and continued to promote slogans that surpassed the regime's actual capabilities, even after this fact had become apparent to the populace. Conversely, others, including Sadat, opted to collaborate with and adopt the strategies of the businessmen.

Sadat easily eliminated the Nasserist faction with remarkable success, encountering minimal public opposition. Furthermore, he garnered substantial temporary support from both Marxist leftist groups and rising Islamic movements as a result of this coup.

### **Part Three: Sadatism and Nasserism**



**The fall of Nasserism signified the conclusion of the bureaucratic elite's rule in Egypt, indicating a profound transformation. This event also represented the wider disintegration of nationalist movements throughout the Arab world, which Nasserism had previously influenced and manipulated to its benefit. Nasserism effectively countered leftist and radical nationalist movements across various Arab countries, including communism, the Baath Party, and the Muslim Brotherhood. Conversely, Sadatism inflicted a more substantial setback on Nasserism and its leftist intellectual supporters, resulting in a swift deterioration of the educated Arab elite, many of whom had, to some degree, aligned themselves with Nasserism. The emergence of Nasserism was rooted in the inability of Egyptian political forces to realize their potential, while Sadatism arose from the inherent weaknesses of Nasserism itself.**

**Sadatism exhibits several characteristics in common with the Arab revolutionary movement. Firstly, it is radical and explicit, particularly in its opposition to the Left. Secondly, it articulates social forces that are largely self-declaring. Thirdly, Sadatism conveys the interests of the social classes it represents in a straightforward manner. In these respects, Nasserism stands in stark contrast to Sadatism.**

**Nasserism embraced the modified concepts of the Arab Revolt. However, as an ideology, it potentially encompassed Sadatism. Undoubtedly, Nasserism ultimately represented the interests of the dominant class. Yet it also embodied the rule of that class's bureaucracy. This provided a solid foundation for the subsequent emergence of Sadatism. However, what is being focused on now is that it encompassed Sadatism *within its ideology*. While attempting to negate the substance of the Arab Revolution's ideology, Nasserism adopted its form as its image. If this trajectory is extended or adjusted, Sadatism can be perceived as a corrective revolution, in a figurative sense, emerging from within the Nasserite**



framework itself. Sadatism, in essence, embodied the direct rule of businessmen-statesmen, and its defining idea was the open declaration of this fact. While Nasserism, as a political system, was a mediation between the dominant class and its social order. Sadatism did not appear explicitly in May 1971; rather, it began to take shape with the gradual decline of Nasserism from the mid-1960s, and especially after the 1967 defeat.

The declaration of direct rule by bureaucratic businessmen signified the gradual resolution of the ideological contradiction inherent in the Nasserite regime. This was evident in numerous domains:

1. The decline and eventual eradication of extremist nationalist rhetoric, replaced by the slogan of “unity of Arab ranks” and a revival of Egyptian regionalism. This concept distinctly reflects the interests of the dominant class in contemporary Egypt.

2. The spread of conservative religious ideologies, intertwined with superstitions, aligned with the growing reliance of authorities on religious rhetoric. Sadat’s regime subsequently supported Islamic movements, opposing rationalism and even moderate secular ideas with a Nasserite character. In addition to proclaiming the establishment of a state of science and faith led by the “Faithful President,” Muhammad Anwar Sadat.

3. Anti-Zionist and anti-colonialist propaganda steadily faded, as did Nasserism’s support for moderate national liberation movements, including anti-racist groups in Africa.<sup>[765]</sup> Nasser gradually sought to neutralize America in the Middle Eastn following Hassanein Heikal’s plan, and Sadat followed suit, ultimately making the United States Sadat’s closest ally in Egypt.

Sadatism represented the governance of a particular oligarchy, which included diverse merchants, drug traffickers, contractors,

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<sup>[765]</sup> Refer to Ahmad Youssef Al-Qurei, *The July 23 Revolution and Decolonization in Africa (1952-1967)*, p. 58.

brokers, black market operators, speculators, currency traders, and large real estate owners. These groups, referred to as “Fat Cats” by the media at the time, either had close connections to high-ranking officials or were bureaucrats themselves. The doctrines of Sadatism were clearly defined and summed up in the policy of both external and internal openness,<sup>[766]</sup> which began in September 1971 with the approval of the Arab and Foreign Investments Law.<sup>[767]</sup> This was followed by a proclaimed assault against socialist and secular beliefs, as well as a general rejection of rationalism. In contrast to Nasser’s approach to co-opting the intelligentsia, Sadat adopted a harsh stance toward it, with contempt for the nouveau riche.

The path was cleared for direct and open reactionaryism. All moral and physical barriers to the exploitation of parasitic businessmen were removed. However, it did not completely open the door to certain groups of businessmen, especially the old ones who did not become statesmen under Nasserism or did not establish close relationships with the Nasserite elite, who were then represented in the “New Wafd” party.

The ultimate assessment of the fall of Nasserism is the evolution of the counter-revolution from a concealed state to an overt one. Consequently, Nasserism was thoroughly exhausted. This is precisely why Sadatism can be viewed as the hidden jewel of Nasserism, which had been embedded within it from the very beginning. Nasserism represented a genuine counter-revolution that eradicated all elements and forces of the popular revolution via direct violence and suppression after its coup in 1952. It positioned itself as a clear alternative to the revolution while simultaneously

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<sup>[766]</sup> Nasserism followed the same policy immediately after the 1952 coup. However, it was closely connected to a larger process of tightening the bureaucracy’s control over power and suppressing businessmen and large owners politically and economically when necessary. It proceeded to practice this policy again since the mid-1960s, due to disappointment with its socialist approach.

<sup>[767]</sup> T. Th. Shaker, Op. cit., pp. 132-133.

serving as a veiled alternative to the counter-revolution, exhibiting overt hostility toward any popular movements. The contradiction between its content and form was not absolute. Yet, Nasserism was heavily adorned with a lot of makeup and retouches made of expensive materials.

The rise of Nasserism relied on the political balance of social forces. It did not stem from its inherent strength but rather from the collective weakness of others.

Therefore, the social system began to operate with inertia. Following Nasserism's fall, it reverted to its usual trajectory, in identity with itself.

### **The Significance of Sadatism**

Sadatism was essentially a reconciliation between the dominant class and its tool, the bureaucratic elite. It was also a reconciliation between the content and form of the official ideology. Nasserism was not abolished but rather surpassed in the Hegelian sense of the word.

Prior to 1952, blocs of the dominant class had held the state's authority. After the July coup, statesmen ruled the whole society, including the dominant class. However, since May 1971, statesmen and most of the dominant class members have become one entity. The distinction between statesmen and businessmen has disappeared, and the pure Bonapartists were eliminated in favor of Sadat's ruthless oligarchy. Consequently, there was no motivation for proposing a revolutionary ideology to cover up the new ruling conservative elite. After July 1952, it was necessary for the regime to present an ideology representing a compromise between revolution and counter-revolution. Following May 1971, this was no longer necessary, as the counter-revolution succeeded in eliminating the specter of the independent and radical popular movement.

**In fact, the fall of Nasserism, or its transformation into Sadatism, does not negate the fact that it achieved a lot for the dominant class in the long run. It could bring the masses back into the fold of the social system, costing the Arab revolutionary movement dearly, despite the heavy burdens it placed on the dominant class. Many blocs of businessmen and large landlords were sacrificed, a high degree of economic stagnation was realized, and foreign adventures caused other heavy losses, but in return, a great strategic gain was achieved for the social system.**

**The Nasserite era revealed a deep rift within Egyptian society: between the dominant class and its system, between the social system and the political system, and between the economy and politics. The Sadat era marked the return of the system to identify with itself, as the counter-revolution regained its authentic form without shame, no longer needing the veil of Nasserite ideology. Therefore, the Sadat era marked the end of the system's division against itself and the alienation of the dominant class from its bureaucratic tool, which ultimately united. Eventually, it can confidently be said that the dominant class, despite its structural changes, has returned to and reconciled with itself.**

**While Nasserism represented the negation of the previous regime, Sadatism was the negation of Nasserism. The dominant class regained its authority, but in a more intricate state. Instead of the governance of large landowners, it became a rule of a hybrid class: the powerful wealthy, or a class that is a combination of wealth and politics. In essence, Sadatism negated Nasserism while retaining it. The former regime was the rule of wealth. On the contrary, Nasserism was the rule of politics. whereas Sadatism embodies a complex of wealth and politics.**

**However, the ruling oligarchy does not have the virtue of honesty. Rather, it practices deception and lies, but only within the limits in which every social system divided into strata necessarily moves.**

However, the Egyptian system has not finally reconciled with itself. Sadat's coup brought about the rule of the oligarchy, while non-bureaucratic or non-oligarchic businessmen remained out of power. They are expected to demand their share of the pie, supported by increasing international pressure.

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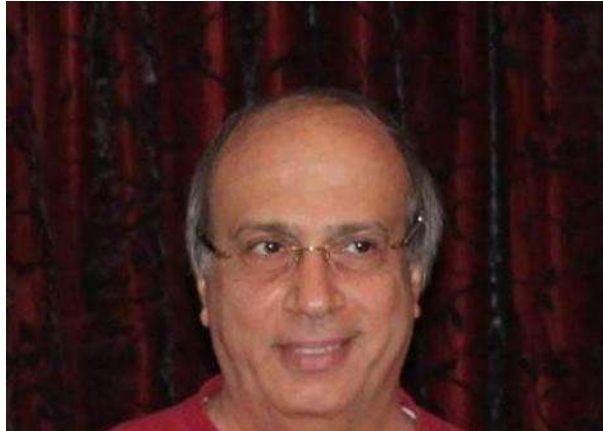
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## **The author's most important books and research:**

**(Some are printed and all are available online in Arabic unless otherwise specified)**

**\*On Bonapartism (1986)**

**\*On the Phenomenon of Dependency (1986)**

**\*A General Analysis of the Egyptian Communist Movement (1994)**

**\*The Situation of the Intelligentsia in the Modern Egyptian Social Structure (1996)**

**\*Nasserism in the Counter-revolution (or “The Left, Nasserism and the Counter-revolution” in the printed version) (2002)**

**\*Islamic Centralism - Islam's View of the other (2006)**

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**\*Beyond the Tragedy of Kamelia Shehata (2010)**

**\*A Different Reading of the Uprising of January 18 and 19, 1977 (2011)**

**\*Critique of the Egyptian Revolution (1) (2011)**

**\*The Path and Prospects of the Egyptian Revolution (2011)**

**\*The Roots of Arab Racism (2012)**

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**\*Why do We Hate Political Islam? (2014)**

**\*Critique of the Egyptian Revolution (3- Al-Sisi and His Men) (2016)**

**\*Research on Linguistic Issues in the Qur'an (2017)**

**\*Utopia of the Permanent Revolution - First published in Arabic in November 2019 - Translated (by the Author) into English in April 2024**

**\*Marxism is the Philosophy of the State, not the Proletariat (2020) (Arabic and English)**

**\*The Failure of State Socialism to Achieve the Goals of the Revolution (English)**

**\*Marxists and Nasserists - an Example of the Confusion in the Marxist Mindset**

**\*The Phenomenon of Religious Mania in Egypt (2023) [Arabic and English]**

**\*Zionist Massacres Against Palestinians (2024) [Arabic and English]**

**Co-written works:**

**\*The Dilemma of the “New Arab Thought” – Reply to Adel Hussein (1986)**

**\*Lenin’s Approach to Imperialism (1988)**

**\*Parasitic Capitalism - a Third Perspective (1988)**

**\*The Structure of Underdevelopment (1988)**

**\*The Logical Formation of the Notion of the Mode of Production (1991)**

**\*Beyond the Soviet Bureaucracy (1991)**

The book analyzes the Nasserite regime in Egypt, which emerged in 1952 until its major transformation in 1971 from a system of supreme state bureaucracy to a system ruled by a class of statesmen-businessmen. The book analyzes the Nasserite regime as a stage in the history of the Egyptian national state. This is in contrast to the prevailing view that sees Nasserism as a revolution against a previous situation that represents a historical break and that its llapse occurred as another historical break, as it consider Sadatism a counter-revolution. Rather, it considers Nasserism a counter-revolution to an escalating revolutionary movement that was taking place in Egypt during the period from 1945 until the “” coup in 1952. The book reveals what it considered to be the contradiction between the reality of Nasserism and the image it presented itself to the world, refuting the its role in stimulating Arab nationalism, its role in industrializing Egypt, and in achieving social justice and socialism. It also reveals the roots of its successive failure to achieve its ambitions, and the high cost incurred by society due to the nationalist and revolutionary populist slogans. Finally, the book reveals the objective role of Nasserism in achieving the efforts of the dominant classes in Egypt to return the revolutionary masses to the regime’s fold, emasculate the Arab nationalist movement, and liquidate the old colonialism in preparation for the United States to take over the Middle East. It also addresses the structural changes in the dominant classes as a result of Nasserite policies. The book does not adopt any conspiracy theories, nor does it stop at condemning Nasserism, but rather analyzes the mechanisms of the transformations that took place and their paths according to Egcapabilities and potentials during that period