

Egyptian-Sudanese relations amidst power struggles in the Middle East and Horn of Africa

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Abstract

This chapter examines historically the factors that have shaped Egyptian-Sudanese relations. It argues that Egypt's influence on Sudan's foreign policy has waned because of Egypt's diminished influence in the Middle East, and its loss of hydro hegemony as the regional order of the Nile basin came to be based on power relations between downstream and upstream countries.

Introduction

The modern political history of Sudan began with the Turco-Egyptian invasion of 1820 by Muhammad Ali Pasha who aspired to build an Egyptian empire. The goals of the invasion were to obtain slaves for military conscription, extract gold, and control the Nile Valley and Red Sea trade (Sanderson 1963; Robinson 1925). Sitting at the confluence of the Blue and White Niles, Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, was founded by Muhammad Ali around 1820 as a permanent military camp (Hamdan 1960). Egypt's first period of domination over Sudan ended in 1885 when Muhammad Ahmad Ibn Abdullah, who proclaimed himself the Mahdi (Dekmejian and Wyszomirski 1972), led a Sudanese Mahdist rebellion to capture Khartoum, overthrew Muhammad Ali's rule and established Mahdiyya (1885-1898), or the Mahdist State. However, Egypt's rule over Sudan was restored with the Anglo-Egyptian invasion of Sudan in 1898 which defeated the Mahdist state and declared a joint regime known as the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in 1899. The Condominium rule lasted until 1956 when Sudan gained its

independence (Daly 2003a). Until then, control of Sudan expanded Egypt's influence from the shores of the Mediterranean deep into Sub-Saharan Africa.

Colonization tied Sudan to a purely exploitative relationship with Egypt that regarded Sudan as part of an Egyptian homeland. In fact, Egypt regularly demanded of Great Britain during that time that Egypt and Sudan should be unified under the "Egyptian crown" (Abushouk 2010: 220). For example, on 28 June 1924, the leader of Egypt's nationalist Wafd Party, Prime Minister Sa'd Zaghlul Pasha, stated in the Egyptian Chamber of Deputies,

This is our situation in respect to the Sudan: We spend money there, we shed blood there, we endure hardships there, and our fathers endured such before us, and we draw life from that river which pours forth from the highest reaches of the Sudan. In any case, it is impossible, unless we were a lifeless people, that we leave one speck of the Sudan for others (Mills 2014: 11).

In other words, a refusal to relinquish its colonial rule over Sudan was key to Egypt's strategic development as a geopolitical entity. For Egypt, mastery of the region came from its the control of the sources of the Nile and Sudan's resources (Crabittès 2016). And as John Waterbury correctly notes, "The Egyptian outlook on the Sudan has traditionally been colonialist ... backed by its heavy military preponderance" (Waterbury 1979: 11). Egyptian nationalists claimed that Egypt's rule in Sudan developed Sudanese welfare and advanced its educational and infrastructural capacities (Powell 2003). As such, Egypt maintained a paternalistic attitude towards Sudan that made it difficult to establish normal relations between the two states. Even after its independence Sudan remained within Egypt's sphere of influence in the Nile Basin.

1. Egypt-Sudan Relations after Independence

Sudan gained independence on January 1, 1956, and became the first independent country in sub-Saharan Africa (Hasabu and Majid 1985; Warburg 2003; Daly 2003b). At independence, Sudan was a parliamentary democracy. The overthrow of King Faruq of Egypt on July 25, 1952 by army officers, known as the Free Officers Movement, and the demise of the British empire made Egypt dominant in the Nile basin. Soon after they seized power in Egypt, the Free Officers decided to build the High Dam, one of the biggest dams in the world, close to the border of Sudan. To secure the flow of the Nile waters, Egypt shaped and contained the behavior of its weaker southern neighbor. However, post-independence Egypt-Sudan relations have mostly been uneasy and at times antagonistic.

Colonial history and anti-Egyptian popular sentiments constituted a form of political capital for the Sudanese elite and escalating tension with Egypt was a source of popular legitimacy, particularly for democratically elected Sudanese governments. Ironically, the rulers of republican Egypt have been able to maintain stronger relations with Sudanese military governments than democratic ones.

Soon after Sudan's independence, mistrust and resentment between the two states prevailed when the new Sudanese parliamentary government threatened the interests of Egypt by challenging its domination over the Nile waters. Looking to secure more of the Nile waters, the Sudanese parliament demanded the abrogation of the 1929 Nile Water Agreement (NWA), which was signed between Egypt and Great Britain, on behalf of the Sudan, and refused to consent to Egypt's High Dam at Aswan. Egypt was favored over other riparian countries, such as Ethiopia, which supplied up to 80 percent of the Nile waters, as being an important agricultural asset and its Suez Canal was vital to British ambition. According to NWA, Sudan

only received 4 billion cubic meters of river water compared to 48 billion cubic meters being granted to Egypt. But Egypt was able to extract Sudan's compliance with occasional threats to use military force, boycott Sudanese exports, and worsen the living conditions of Sudanese resident in Egypt (Abdalla 1971: 333-34).

Only after the military takeover by pro-Egyptian General Ibrahim Abboud (who served in the Egyptian military before independence), which deposed the pro-Western anti-Egyptian Umma government in 1958, could the United Arab Republic (Egypt) conclude the 1959 Water Agreement with the Republic of the Sudan to the exclusion of other countries in the Nile basin (Deng 2007). The Agreement was met with huge social opposition in Sudan. Abboud, whose rule lasted until 1964, needed Egyptian support for Sudan's first military regime at a time of severe economic difficulties and intense domestic struggle for power. Abboud hoped that good relations with Cairo would secure financial assistance from the World Bank for Sudanese hydro-infrastructure projects. Egypt also needed a new legal regime that would respond to the demands of the financiers of the Aswan Dam (Saleh 2008: 39-41). The 1959 Agreement effectively enforced the provisions of the 1929 Agreement and granted both states larger quotas of the river flow (with Egypt taking 55.5 billion cubic meters and Sudan 18.5 billion cubic meters of the total 84 billion cubic meters, with 10 billion lost to evaporation). Crucially the Agreement secured Egypt's hydro-hegemonic position by reinforcing Egypt's claim to "natural and historic" rights in the Nile, and constrained and limited Sudan's future demands for more water and irrigation development. In addition, the 1959 Agreement sanctioned Egypt to construct the High Aswan Dam, which was completed in 1970, and other projects on the Nile which submerged the old Sudanese town of Wadi Halfa and displaced tens of thousands, mainly Nubians but including Sudanese living in the border region (Wiebe 2001: 737). The Aswan High Dam was Egypt's road to national development and economic power, providing energy and regular water for its agriculture and protecting Egyptians from the dangers of floods

and droughts (Shama 2013: 27). Moreover, this Agreement allowed Egypt to monitor the use of the Nile water in Sudan (Deng 2007).

The overthrow of the military regime of Ibrahim Abboud by the “October Revolution” of 1964 ushered in a four-year period of parliamentary democracy. Sudan’s interim civilian government declared its support for the pro-Nasser revolutionaries in Yemen’s civil war and other revolutionary movements in Africa, and continued to follow Cairo’s lead in world affairs (Howell and Hamid 1969). Sudan-Egypt relations reached new heights when President Ja’far al-Numeiri came to power in a military coup on 25 May 1969. The Numeiri regime identified itself as pan-Arab, modeled on Nasser’s revolution in Egypt, while Egyptian support helped Numeiri to consolidate his rule. A special relationship flourished under Egypt’s President Anwar Sadat when Sudan and Egypt in February 1974 signed an agreement on their political and economic integration, followed by a joint defense agreement, the strongest defense agreement between Egypt and any other country (Khālid 2003: 173). This mutual agreement was prompted by an unsuccessful coup against Numeiri which Libya’s President Muammar Gaddafi was accused of backing (Ogunbadejo 1986: 38-39). A stalwart USA ally during the Cold War, Numeiri was the only Arab leader to stand by Sadat after Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979. Sudan’s warm relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia made Sudan the second largest African recipient of US aid after Egypt. For many subsequent years, good relations with Egypt were essential for Sudan to secure US assistance and avoid regional and international isolation.

Nevertheless, Egypt-Sudan relations hit a new low after the ascent to power of Brigadier Umar Hasan al-Bashir, who ousted the civilian government of Sadiq al-Mahdi in a bloodless military coup on June 30, 1989. The seizure of power by the National Islamic Front (NIF), which referred to itself as the Inqaz al-Watani (the National Salvation, a military-Islamist regime) revolution, marked a turning point in Sudan’s foreign policy, particular vis-à-vis Egypt,

which still had the power to isolate the Sudanese regime during the turbulent 1990s and early 2000s.

1.2.Egypt: Containment of the Islamist Sudan in the 1990s

Like previous military generals, Bashir, himself a graduate of the Egyptian military academy, needed Egypt's support to consolidate his rule and quell the opposition. Bashir made his first foreign visit to Egypt which was the first state to recognize his government. Egypt's support was crucial for Bashir during a subsequent intense civil war in Sudan.

Later, however, the Egyptian leaders found that the coup was masterminded by the Islamists of the NIF that evolved into the National Congress Party (NGP). Relations between the two states deteriorated when Sudan declared itself to be an Islamic Republic and Bashir's Islamist foreign policy led him to an alliance with Hasan al-Turabi, who saw the Iranian revolution as a model (Burr and Collins 2003). Egypt's fear of Sudan exporting its Islamist ideology in the region coincided with Sudan's new alliance with revolutionary Iran and a resurgence of the militant Islamic Group (al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya) in Egypt during much of the 1990s. The regional realignment gave Iran a foothold in Egypt's southern borders. As Egypt's tourism industry was devastated by militant groups' attacks on tourists, Cairo watched with alarm as Khartoum imposed strict sharia law on Muslims and Christians alike, hosted Al-Qaeda's Osama Bin Laden, and provided refuge and training to militant Egyptian Islamists, and under the pretext of *Jihad*, declared a brutal war with the south of Sudan (De Waal and Salam 2004).

In 1990, Egypt and Saudi Arabia were likewise alarmed by a Sudan-Libya agreement reached between Bashir and Gaddafi (Simons 1996: 277). The Sudan-Iran alliance was strengthened when Bashir was internationally isolated for supporting the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and lost US military and financial assistance. Iran became Sudan's most important ally

in the region when the two states reached a security pact by which Tehran provided Khartoum with oil, weapons, and financial assistance to buy weapons from China (Tekle 1996: 503-04).

Meanwhile Sudan's relations with neighboring African countries were damaged when Ethiopia, Uganda, and Algeria accused Sudan of helping rebels and training militant groups from their countries. To counter Iran, Egypt and Saudi Arabia backed Eritrea in its conflict with Sudan. The anti-Bashir states in the region increased their support to the south Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLA) and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), formed in 1989 of Bashir's opponents who included political parties, trade unions and some officers of the Sudanese armed forces (Hassan 1993). With material aid from the USA and its allies, the SPLA increased its military capacity and strengthened its political and military alliance with opposition groups in northern Sudan (Haywood 2014: 151-52). Such developments weakened the Bashir regime, and alienated Sudan from its Arab and African neighbors, and cut the regime off from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and foreign investments (Kevane and Gray 1995: 274). Sudan-Egypt relations got palpably worse when a Sudanese-backed militant Islamist group in 1995 attempted to assassinate then Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak as the latter attended an African summit in Addis Ababa. Egypt accused the Sudanese leader Hasan al-Turabi while Ethiopia severed diplomatic relations with Sudan. Egypt managed to have the United Nations Security Council impose sanctions on Sudan which the USA added to its list of State Sponsors of Terrorism (up to the present) (Woodward 2016: 30-31). In 1998, the USA bombed the Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum in response to al-Qaeda's dual attacks two weeks earlier on US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. Mubarak endorsed the US claims that Sudan was using the factory for manufacturing chemical weapons, and accused the Bashir regime of harboring terrorists trying to topple the Egyptian government (*Associated Press*, 30 September 1998).

Egypt's material and diplomatic powers succeeded in containing Sudan throughout the 1990s. When the tension between Egypt and Sudan led to a flare-up of an older border dispute, Egypt showed its readiness to use military force. In 1992 a Canadian oil company received a concession from Sudan to conduct oil exploration in the disputed "Hala'ib Triangle" region, an area administered by Sudan but claimed by Egypt. Cairo swiftly deployed its troops to annex the area (Barltrop 2011: 115). Sudan complained to the United Nations Security Council but failed to restore its sovereignty over the region.

During the 1990s, Egypt kept the Sudanese regime isolated regionally and internationally, politically and economically. Egypt also undermined regime security in Khartoum by supporting the Sudanese opposition. Fearing Egypt's military response, Sudan failed to implement its threat of using the Nile water flow as a weapon against Egypt (Adar and Check 2011: 52). As a non-permanent member in the UN Security Council, Egypt succeeded from January to April 1996 to have the Security Council require Sudan to extradite suspects in the attempted assassination of Hosni Mubarak, impose travel and diplomatic sanctions on the Bashir regime and members of the Sudanese armed forces, and later impose an air embargo on Sudan Airways, which shut Sudan off from airline manufacturing industries. Bashir realized that Sudan had not gained economic and material benefits from its alliance with Iran and other anti-Egyptian states. The only way for Khartoum to manage its deteriorating economy and status as an international 'pariah' after years of isolation was to mend its relations with Egypt. Only then could Bashir de-escalate its conflict with the USA and secure funds from the wealthy Gulf states. To seek relief from Egypt's increasing regional and international pressure, Bashir had to reduce his hostility towards Mubarak. Furthermore, the Bashir regime believed that Egypt could use its strong ties to the USA to remove Sudan from the USA's list of terror states.

Relations with Egypt improved in 1999, when Khartoum transferred to Cairo a suspect in the attempted assassination of Mubarak. To win the support of Egypt and the USA, Bashir cut

ties with Hasan al-Turabi, removed him as the secretary general of the ruling party, and later arrested him. The removal of al-Turabi was also essential to holding peace talks with the SPLM/A that later led to the peace process in Kenya (De Waal 2004).

Egypt rallied the Gulf Arab states and other African countries behind Bashir's new alignments. While they previously supported rebels in Sudan, now Ethiopia, Eritria and Uganda tried to make peace with Sudan because they were themselves embroiled in wars. Sudan re-established contact with the USA and the latter unfroze the assets of the owner of the Shifa pharmaceutical factory. And in September 2001, with Egyptian support, the UN Security Council voted to lift its sanctions on Sudan.

For decades, Egypt could exert considerable influence on Sudan's post-independent political developments because the former had various kinds of power. Egypt had the largest and strongest military in the Middle East and the Nile basin. Egypt has a history of centralized rule that allowed for state institutionalization and a high degree of national identity and social homogeneity – unlike Sudan which failed to maintain a centralized post-colonial state in a long history of civil wars (Elnur 2009). Their superior force, coercive diplomacy, and strong relations with world powers gave the Egyptian elites influence over Sudan's internal and external politics, and effectively kept Sudan as an important and compliant part of Egypt's sphere of influence. Yet Egypt's influence soon diminished due to domestic and geopolitical alignments in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa.

2. Egyptian hegemony in transition: Egypt's Hydro Hegemony in the Nile River Basin

In the past decade, Sudan's foreign policy towards Egypt has become more assertive with the decline of Egypt's historic position as the Nile basin hegemon. Egypt's control over transboundary water flow has been contested in a hydro political landscape that has emerged in the Nile basin since late 1990s.

In their conceptual framework of hydro hegemony, Mark Zeitoun and Jeroen Warner focused on transboundary river and water basin interactions, exploring how states get how much of the water when they share a river (Zeitoun and Warner 2006). They suggested that hydro hegemony, or control over water, is gained, maintained and changed based on three pillars: (1) geography (upstream versus downstream country); (2) hard power such as military strength; and (3) material power, such as infrastructural, economic and technical capacity, that allows even downstream states to exploit river resources. A subsequent revised analysis of hydro hegemony by Mark Zeitoun and Ana Elisa Cascao argued that hydro hegemony is based on four pillars: geography, material, bargaining, and ideational powers. Ideational power is mainly bound up with narrative and assumption (Zeitoun and Cascao 2013).

Geographical power is derived from the presence of natural resources within the country's borders. In the Nile basin Egypt has the least favorable geographical location as a downstream country. Egypt's water resources, crucial foundations of its national security and sustainable development, enter its territory from Sudan. Until recently, the Aswan High Dam gave Egypt the capacity to regulate the river's flow more than any other state in the region and maintain water security within its borders. Moreover, being a conduit to Asia, Africa, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean, which are connected by the Suez Canal, allowed Egypt to influence and interact with important geopolitical regions. When it was a strong regional actor for much of the 1950s and 1960s, Egypt had a unique geostrategic influence in the Middle East, Africa and the Islamic world. But declining domestic and international power has left Cairo struggling to rise to new challenges posed by regional actors in the Middle East and growing asymmetric relations in the Nile basin. If Egypt's geographical position was once an opportunity it is now a handicap.

Egypt's material power vis-à-vis its southern neighbors is derived from its military as well as its economic and technological powers. Egypt possesses one of the biggest armies in the

region and, therefore, the ability to mobilize its military power against any interference by other upstream states in the flow of the Nile. However, republican Egypt did not actually have to use military power to protect its waters. Nasser's confidant, Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, once wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that, "Fortunately, with the political conditions and technological limitations in Central and East Africa, this threat (tampering with the Nile waters) is unlikely to materialize. Politically friendly Sudan provides Egypt with an additional degree of security" (Heikal 1977: 715). Moreover, Egypt could continue to enjoy influence and supremacy as certain upstream states suffered structural weaknesses owing to proxy wars, economic and political instability, and lack of international support for developing their economies. In a sense, Egypt could remain the Nile basin hegemon by profiting from political instability in upstream states such as Ethiopia and the larger basin region. Until recently the upstream states did not make much use of the river. They effectively ceded monopoly over it to Egypt. But such is no longer the situation as rapid population growth and the need for development have let upstream countries to assert their claims to the Nile.

Bargaining power refers to an actor's capability to control the rules of the game and set agendas. Egypt's former dominance of the Nile was entrenched in colonial agreements when in 1929 Great Britain recognized Egypt's "historical and natural rights" over the river basin (Crabitès 1929). Egypt's bargaining power stems from the status quo that institutionalized its veto power in the 1929 and 1959 water agreements with the Sudan and the support for these agreements by powerful states and international financial institutions, like the IMF, World Bank and African Development Bank (Waterbury 2008). Egypt also deployed a "securitization tactic" (water as a national security issue) to enforce its hegemony by mobilizing regional and international support against any state that tampered with the Nile waters (Jacobs 2012: 137; Rubin 2014: 90-91). For many decades, it was evident that Egypt influenced the terms of negotiations and agreements because it offered incentives to weaker parties in the basin to

comply with Egypt's goals. In short, bargaining power gave Egypt influence, authority and legitimacy in the Nile basin.

Egypt derived ideational power from its ability to shape, impose and manipulate perceptions and ideas about the Nile. In fact, there was a knowledge gap between riparian states and Egypt that enabled the latter to monopolize the production and dissemination of knowledge of the Nile. Thus, Egypt could impose its ideas and narratives on relevant states and determine the agenda, discourse and timing of negotiations and projects in the Nile basin (Awulachew 2012: 230).

2.1. The decline of Egypt's hydro hegemony

Egypt's hydro hegemony has declined, partly because of domestic political, ideological and economic transformation, and partly because of changes in the balance of power in the Middle East, a growing symmetry in power relations in the Nile basin, and great power competition in the Horn of Africa. Two developments have been especially important in this regard.

Firstly, with the death of Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1970, Egypt departed from pan-African ideas of liberation, regardless of how paternalistic Egypt had been towards African countries. Egypt under Nasser offered a home to African exiles and a base, material, logistic and political support for Africa's fighters (Akinsanya 1976). By supporting nationalist movements in Africa during the 1950s and 1960s, Egypt tried to enlarge its anti-imperialist front against the British and gain influence in then newly independent African states. However, Egypt lost its leadership position in the Arab world after the humiliating defeat in the 1967 war against Israel. As Egypt became the poorest Arab state (by per capita income), it ceased to be a model for development in Africa. As a result, Egypt's ideational power also dwindled. Under Anwar Sadat (1970-81), Egypt shifted towards the West and thereby received aid from USA, obtained material benefits

for his regime and military, and gained access to international financial institutions. Egypt made peace with Israel and broke with the Arab and the African worlds. In fact Sadat dissolved the African Affairs Bureau and supported US-backed movements in Africa. Egypt's projection of power ended with its economic collapse and deepening dependency on Gulf states.

Other international events took their toll. The end of the Cold War marginalized Africa's position. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait divided the Arab world between those who supported the US led campaign to liberate Kuwait and those who rejected it. Egypt increasingly relied on its military power for fear that upstream states might tamper with the Nile's water. Sadat is remembered for threatening to use military force against Ethiopia in 1978 when he stated,

(a)ny action that would endanger the waters of the Blue Nile will be faced with a firm reaction on the part of Egypt, even if that action should lead to war. As the Nile waters issue is one of life and death for my people, I feel I must urge the United States to speed up the delivery of the promised military aid so that Egypt might not be caught napping (Kendie 1999: 141).

After Sadat, Mubarak was preoccupied with maintaining regime security and his hold on power (Shama 2013). Egypt showed little enthusiasm for the African Union and viewed Africa through a security prism, especially after Islamists took power in Sudan and the attempted assassination of Mubarak in Ethiopia. Mubarak stopped attending African summits (with the exception of Abuja in 2005) (Landsberg and Van Wyk 2012: 245). But during those summits, Ethiopia mobilized Nile basin countries over the need to review the 1929 and 1959 Nile water agreements. Lacking foreign policy agenda and occupied with grooming his son to succeed him, Mubarak relied on his intelligence services in his relations with African states. He showed little interest in economic integration with African countries, and the Nile basin countries in particular (Tawfik 2016). With its diminished influence, Egypt had barely any role in negotiations that led to the independence of South Sudan. Indeed, South Sudan's secession

marked the end of Egypt's influence in Sudanese politics and the beginning of challenges over hydro-cooperation from a new upstream state, South Sudan.

Secondly, a new order emerged in the Nile basin based on power relations between upstream and downstream states. Nile basin states increased their cooperation while Egypt refused to join new initiatives regarding the distribution and utilization of the Nile waters. The result was to raise the power of upstream countries. The Nile basin Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA), signed in 2010 by Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, and Burundi, enhanced the bargaining power of the upstream states, granting them autonomy in deciding Nile projects without prior consent of Egypt (Salman 2013).

In response Egypt froze its membership in the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) that was formed in 1999 to develop the river in a cooperative manner. The NBI was the first cooperative agreement that included all riparian states, including Ethiopia and Egypt. By pulling out of the NBI, Egypt preempted the possibility of cooperation or negotiation with Ethiopia, which supplies more than 85 percent of the Nile waters annually. Egypt did not reach any cooperative agreement with the river basin states; nor did it try to find an alternative agreement to the cooperative framework established by other riparian states. Egypt's apprehension over losing its former veto power lies behind its reluctance to participate in new water treaties. Egypt appears not to have noticed that the time had passed when its 1929 and 1959 agreements with Sudan allowed Egypt to be the hegemon of the Nile basin. Facing a changed balance of power Egypt has lost its bargaining power and past capacity to dictate to other actors.

Meanwhile, the upstream riparian states' increased material power through their recent economic and political ascendancy has facilitated their higher utilization of the Nile waters. They have raised their ideational power by different arguments. They asserted their right to water utilization for development (Egypt's rationale for building the Aswan High Dam) of which they were deprived under restrictive colonial agreements. They stressed the importance

of the Nile for famine prevention. And they held out better prospects for peace and regional integration through hydropower projects that would bring electricity and prosperity to millions of Africans in the river basin and beyond. Egypt finds itself on the defensive, bereft of effective discursive responses.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that shifting regional dynamics in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa have shaped Egypt-Sudan relations and their foreign policies. Egypt's present geopolitical position in the Middle East and Africa reflects its harsh political and economic realities. Under Nasser's leadership and his Pan-Arabic ideology, Egypt was a political and economic power. In the 1950s and 1960s, Egypt's strength stemmed from its policy of developing a welfare state in which the state drove development in heavy industry and large-scale infrastructure, the most important of the latter being the Aswan Dam. The combination of a strategic geographic position (at the nexus of Africa and Asia), military might (that drew upon its close ties with the USSR), and diverse economic, cultural and ideological resources gave Nasser's Egypt sweeping regional influence. As it positioned itself as the liberator of the Arab world, founding the Arab League and assisting anti-colonial and social movements, Egypt shaped the conduct of its neighboring states in line with its own goals, even to the extent of threatening the stability of Arab monarchies (Mann 2012). After its crushing and humiliating defeat by Israel in 1967, however, Nasserism lost its hegemonic influence.

Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, switched from Egypt's populist, statist, and welfarist economic model to market liberalization and privatization which favored the interests of his ruling coalition (Handoussa and Shafik 1993). In foreign policy Sadat pursued an alliance with the West. His 'peace diplomacy' and alliance with the West and the Arab oil states brought direct military assistance (of 1.3 billion dollars per year) from the USA, IMF loans, and Arab capital – all of which signaled the dismantling of Nasser's diplomatic and economic legacy.

Yet Sadat's economic strategy did not improve economic conditions for the majority of Egyptians. Instead, it burdened Egypt with high levels of debt, a widening income/wealth gap between rich and poor, and the virtual elimination of its industrialization. The passing of Nasserism ceded Egypt's influence over the regional order to the Gulf states. The Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia, used its oil wealth and political influence to reward "moderate states" and support Islamist movements. Under Sadat and Mubarak, Egypt's foreign policy was increasingly subservient to the West and the Arab Gulf States, and Egypt's diplomatic role was limited to facilitating negotiations between Hamas and Fateh, and Hamas and Israel.

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