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Eberhard Kienle

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Egypt – A Fragile Power

By Eberhard Kienle

Eberhard Kienle is research professor at the *Centre national de la recherche scientifique* (CNRS) and teaches politics at SciencesPo, Paris

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AL Arab League

AMIO Arab Military Armaments Organisation

ARE Arab Republic of Egypt

ARF	Arab Revolutionary Front
ASU	Arab Socialist Union
AU	African Union
AUC	American University in Cairo
CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics
CD	Chamber of Deputies
CEDEJ	Centre d'Études et de Documentation Économique, Juridiques et Sociales
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
CERI	Centre d'Études Internationales
CNRS	Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
EI	
EO	Economic Organisation
FAR	Federation of Arab Republics
FDI	Foreign direct investment
FEP	Free Egyptians Party
FF	Ford Foundation
FJP	Freedom and Justice Party
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale
FNP	Future of the Nation Party
GA	General Assembly (of the United Nations)
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Index
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IS	Islamic State
ISI	Import substitution industrialization
LE	<i>Livre égyptienne</i> (Egyptian pound)
MB	Muslim Brothers

MEJ	Middle East Journal
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MESC	Middle East Supply Centre
MFO	Multinational Force and Observers
NA	National Assembly
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NBE	National Bank of Egypt
NDP	National Democratic Party (alias, Arab Socialists)
NU	National Union
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OLP	
PCDNP	Permanent Council for the Development of National Production
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PLA	Palestine Liberation Army
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
PM	Prime Minister, or President of the Council of Ministers
PPP	Purchasing power parity
QIZ	Qualifying Industrial Zone
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCC	Revolutionary Command Council
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
SCC	Supreme Constitutional Court
SCJ	Supreme Council of the Judiciary
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
TFP	Total factor productivity
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organisation
UAR	United Arab Republic

UN	United Nations
£	Pound sterling
£E	Egyptian pound
\$	US dollar
€	Euro

Introduction

Straddling the Suez Canal, yet linking Asia with Africa, home to some one hundred million people, and allegedly the heir to one of the oldest civilizations, Egypt to this very day is considered a major player and power in the Middle East, if not beyond. At present no other state in the geographical area stretching from Morocco to the Arab Peninsula and Iran, commonly seen as the historic heartland of Islam, has a population or a standing army that in numbers equal those of Egypt. The founder of the Arab League (AL) in 1945 and a major actor in the first Palestine War in 1948/49, it became a fervent advocate of Arab nationalism, non-alignment, and third world emancipation under Gamal Abd al-Nasser and his fellow Free Officers who overthrew the monarchy in 1952. Even more quickly the new ‘revolutionary’ government decided to build the Aswan High Dam, still among the largest dams in the world, to irrigate vast swaths of land and generate electricity for new and expanding manufacturing industries. To fund the ambitious development project, Nasser in July 1956 announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal, thus challenging Britain and France who in the autumn together with Israel attacked Egypt. After altogether four major wars, Nasser’s successor, Anwar al-Sadat, in 1979 signed the first peace treaty between an Arab state and Israel and thereby significantly de-escalated one of the world’s major regional conflicts with superpower involvement. Condemning the ‘separate peace’, the AL suspended Egypt’s membership until Sadat’s successor, Husni Mubarak, managed to create the conditions for its return to Cairo. Through active diplomacy and even military action, Egypt has also tried to influence events throughout the Middle East, illustrated historically by its opposition to the Baghdad Pact and precipitation of the Yemen War and currently by its involvement in Palestine, Libya, Sudan, and the Nile Valley.

Simultaneously Egypt has been credited with considerable soft power derived from its cultural life, educational institutions, and place in religious thought. At least since the late 19th century Egypt has emerged as one of the major cultural centres of the Arabic speaking parts of the world. Egyptian authors, movie directors, actors, singers, musicians, sculptors, painters, journalists have been popular not only in the Middle East but also in the wider world. Taha Hussayn, Yusuf Idris, Albert Cossery, Ala al-Aswany, Umm Kulthum, Yusuf Shahin, and many others have become household names in Europe and America, not to mention Naguib Mahfuz who in 1988 was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Its newspapers, broadcasters, publishers, and cinematographic industry as well as its universities and expatriate teachers have contributed to shape the ideas and values of generations of Arabs and of many others in the global south. Its footballers and football clubs have gained global recognition. In the religious domain, the *salafiyya* reform movement around Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (not to be confused with Salafism in its early 21st-century meaning) have left a lasting imprint on Muslim thought and practice. At the same time, Al-Azhar continues to exert a strong influence on the minds and practices of many Sunni Muslims around the world, even though its appeal may have somewhat waned over the recent decades. Though largely shared by the broader public and skilfully cultivated by Egyptian officials, the tale of Egypt’s strength reflects wishes, hopes, and fears rather than reality.

A major caveat applies to the importance of the armed forces whose size in numbers – according to the World Bank some 800,000 troops in 2017 – has never really been matched in terms of training and equipment. In spite of large domestic military industries much hardware like aircraft and tanks are imported or produced under foreign license. It is certainly true that towards the end of the October war in

1973 the Egyptian army managed to cross the Suez Canal eastwards and got a foothold on the Sinai peninsula that since the June war in 1967 had been occupied by Israel. However, soon afterwards Israeli forces crossed the Canal westwards and moved a fair bit towards Cairo. Though prepared by the 1973 war, the peace treaty in 1979 and the subsequent Israeli withdrawal from Sinai were ultimately a diplomatic achievement much helped by the United States. In the first Palestine war as well occasional success had been balanced by numerous deficiencies and failures. In the Suez war in 1956 the Egyptian armed forces had been severely battered by Israeli, French, and British forces until the US and the USSR imposed a political solution favourable to Egypt. Military performance on later occasions such as participation in the Kuwait war in 1991 was not rated very highly by observers and allies. The effects of recent plans to reorganize the armed forces to meet challenges other than a war with a major power like Israel remain to be seen.

Egyptian diplomatic initiatives and activities were often successful, for Egypt as well as for actors among whom it mediated. However, in many cases diplomacy was not chosen as the primary vehicle to defend Egyptian interests and therefore failed to be as effective as it could have been. At the same time, Egyptian diplomacy suffered from the lack of many of the resources that are needed to back it up. Ultimately they were limited to the geographical location of the country as well as the related strategic rents and considerations that could flow from that. Throughout most of the period under review Egypt was unable to offer its counterparts material or symbolical rewards in exchange for its demands or for proposed solutions in mediation efforts. It was even less able to mobilize the means that would have enabled it to play the ambitious role of a regional power that it wanted to be.

Only in some periods did Egypt embody (rather than share) values that would offer it some clout on others who shared them. The heydays of the non-aligned movement in the mid and late 1950s were one such period. Much less so those of Arab nationalism from the mid-1950s to the late 1960; no doubt many Arabs considered Egypt and Nasser as their leader, but as many opposed them, quite apart from the fact that the adulators of one nation often find it difficult to get along with the defenders of other nations.

In no period, though, did Egypt have the economic including financial resources to underscore its diplomatic activities. Obviously, these shortfalls also limited investment in the other foreign policy instrument, the armed forces, but these effects have mostly been compensated for by large scale military aid first from the USSR and then from the US and their respective allies. In almost every single fiscal year Egypt spent and consumed more than it produced and earned, a development that entailed endemic external imbalances and repeated balance of payments crises; as so often, the external deficits were closely related to the inability of successive governments to balance their own books and the budget deficits they used to run. From the 1960s and especially from the 1970s onwards public debt increased to unsustainable levels; frequently predominant, the share of foreign debt in overall public debt created new external dependencies. On several occasions Egypt had to apply for loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that were conditioned on austerity measures and related reforms.

The macroeconomic difficulties have gone hand in hand with many characteristics of what has frequently been called a 'developing country', a euphemism that behind preoccupying economic and social indicators sees a frequently unconfirmed trend towards 'development' seen as improvement. In Egypt like elsewhere, fiscal and external imbalances on the one hand and poverty and maldistribution on the other reinforce each other in a partly circular relationship between causes and effects.

In spite of the numerous uncertainties about income levels, some seventy per cent of Egyptians live in poor, even extremely poor, material conditions with little hope to escape the poverty trap. Since the 1970s most families have managed to survive only thanks to remittances from large-scale labour migration to the major oil and gas producing countries, moonlighting, energy, and food subsidies at home, and food rations. The overwhelming part of the ever-growing population has been poorly educated and trained. For decades most public universities have struggled to reconcile teaching large numbers of students with inadequate means, methods, and budgets. In the absence of library funds poorly paid university teachers rely on a few, often outdated, textbooks that sometimes they produce themselves. Like their counterparts in primary and secondary schools they reduce to a minimum the knowledge they transfer in their lectures and courses to force students to take additional private lessons. Over the decades enrolment in primary and secondary schools has permanently risen, the quality of education remains poor and teaching techniques privilege rote over critical thought and active participation. If per capita income and human development indicators have risen since the 1940s, they have remained those of a lower income and then of a lower middle income country. More importantly, they remain averages that fail to reflect the actual distribution of wealth and opportunities, as do surprisingly low Gini coefficients. Moreover, all indicators show important differences related to gender, age, and geographical part of the country. Poverty, ill-health, and lack of education remain endemic features that affect the population at large and with it the labour force as well as the armed forces.

Matters have been further complicated by the decreasing importance of Egypt's main asset, its 'strategic' location on the banks of the Suez Canal and more generally at the geographical centre of the Middle East and North Africa. In part, technological progress has reduced the role of the Canal for the transport and redeployment of military hardware. For instance, the range of cruise missiles and military aircraft has considerably increased. Economically, the Canal and the Sumed (Suez-Mediterranean) oil pipeline built in the 1970s, are challenged by the attractiveness of alternative routes around the Cape of Good Hope and even through the Panama Canal; with climate change the Arctic route from America and Europe to Japan may further strengthen such competition. Successive enlargements of the Suez Canal and the inauguration of the 'new' Suez Canal under President Sisi in 2015 also need to be seen in the context of currently low oil – and fuel – prices that have reduced the cost of sailing longer distances, and transit tolls for the Canal that have remained largely steady.

Even in the area of soft power sailing often, including the past decades, not been as smooth as it was in the days of Umm Kulthum and Radio Cairo (Sawt al-Qahira). With time Syria produced more popular television series than Egypt, a development that, however, came to an end with the current fighting. In spite, and partly because of, continued domestic political conflict and its international dimensions, Beirut has re-emerged as a cultural capital with far less censorship constraints than Cairo. Though also suffering from an acute lack of political and intellectual freedom, universities and other knowledge-producing, media, or cultural organizations in the Emirates and Qatar steal the show thanks to their material resources. Long and frequently seen as an ideological arm of the Egyptian state, Al-Azhar in spite of recent reforms and developments continues to be challenged by alternative providers of religious truth and moral advice.

In the light of these trends, the perception of Egypt as a major power seems to largely draw on momentous decisions that some of its leaders took in the past. No doubt, the demonization of Nasser as an implacable enemy of Israel further contributed to the narrative of a strong Egypt, even though historians

have for long produced a far more nuanced picture of this period and his policies. Nor was it unaffected by the widespread claim and illusion that contemporary Egypt was the direct heir of the 'ancient Egypt' of the Pharaohs, the hieroglyphs, the Valley of the Kings, and the Temples of Abu Simbel.

In reality, though, Egypt is a fragile power that rests on feet of clay. Partly even its remaining strength derives from the growing fear among its international supporters that it is too big to fail and therefore needs to be supplied with solid crutches. This being said, some of the past developments and achievements already referred suggest that Egypt is and has been more than just another lower income country and that it differs considerably from most member states of the Arab League and indeed from numerous 'developing countries'.¹

The present volume primarily seeks to illustrate and explain the fragile strength that has marked Egypt since independence, an objective that cannot be attained without extending the discussion to some developments that have unfolded since the early 19th century. In the light of its strengths and weaknesses independent Egypt from the monarchy to today appears as a state that is far more consolidated than many of its Middle Eastern neighbours, but also far less so than most of its European counterparts. The discussion proceeds from the detailed analysis of events and developments spanning the past seventy-five years that may simultaneously be read as a history of contemporary Egypt.

Defining Independence, Identifying Strength

Contrary to appearances, Egypt did not become an independent state when Britain in 1922 unilaterally declared it independent as the very declaration left important policy area in the hands of the British. The same applies to the bilateral treaty signed in 1936 which reduced but failed to abolish British prerogatives in Egypt, in particular but not exclusively along Suez Canal in an area commonly referred to as the Canal zone. Events during World War Two soon illustrated continued heavy handed British interference in Egyptian affairs.

Without ignoring the impact of decisions made in 1923 and in 1936 and other developments unfolding over these decades, it seems more reasonable to date the independence of Egypt to the period between the end of World War Two in 1945 and the new treaty with Britain signed in 1954. The end of World War Two is relevant because henceforth Egypt's full independence definitely became the scenario that dominated political calculations and action in London as much as in Cairo. No doubt, Britain as represented by its successive governments continued to try and limit such independence but exhausted by the war and faced with the dynamics of decolonization worldwide it was difficult to ignore such a prospect. The evacuation treaty signed in 1954 marks the end point of this period of transition and, in spite of a few caveats, the definite beginning of Egyptian independence.

Egypt's strengths and weaknesses may be observed at each of the three levels that together form a state or, more generally, a political entity: a given territory, its population, and a political regime that runs their affairs.

Composed of institutions, mechanisms and individuals, a political regime may be said to comprise the various procedures regulating (i) the selection, sometimes election, of the rulers; (ii) the relations among the rulers; and (iii) the ways in which they act on the territory and the rest of the population which for

rhetorical convenience, in spite of many caveats, may be called the ruled.² In that sense, the political regime differs from the frequently used notion of ‘the regime’ that, often pejoratively, designates a more or less (in)formally structured group of rulers or individuals associated with the exercise of power. The rulers in principle monopolize the means of physical coercion, but the monopoly is neither necessarily legitimate in the sense of being endorsed and respected by all the ruled, nor necessarily uncontested. The rulers normally form a government or, in American parlance, an administration which officially speaks on their part but whose members may be less powerful than rulers who remain outside it. The political regime impacts on politics in the sense of activities and exchanges among the rulers, among the ruled, and between the rulers and the ruled. Through the rulers and the politics it fosters, the political regime simultaneously impacts on policies in the sense of trains of measures implemented to define norms, distribute resources, or otherwise affect the fate of the ruled.

The population of a state primarily comprises the permanent inhabitants or nationals of the territory; they are citizens if they enjoy the appropriate negative and positive liberties including the capacity to collectively, freely, and regularly select and deselect and thus elect their rulers. Under certain conditions we will return to below, the population may form a nation, a constellation that may consolidate and strengthen the state. The territory, finally, is in principle delineated by internationally recognized borders which, however, may be approximate, ill-defined, or even broaden into frontier areas outside effective government control.

In the case of Egypt, the territory dominated by successive political regimes and rulers established in Cairo has not undergone radical changes since the beginning of the 19th century. In actual fact, except for sparsely inhabited areas the same territory had been largely ruled from Cairo for a much longer time, though at times by political regimes that were far more divided internally. Ever since, the arable areas of the Nile Delta and Valley and the Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts have delineated the territory of Egypt. For a long time, the rulers in Cairo could not exercise the same degree of control over the Eastern desert and the Sinai peninsula which, however, were of little economic interest before crude oil was produced in commercial quantities. In actual fact, the desert borders of Egypt were only delineated in the first half of the twentieth century. Remaining contested areas such as the Halaib triangle at the border with Sudan and the islands of Tiran and Sanafir off the southern shores of Sinai were relatively small, even if they could stir political passions. As the population of Egypt by and large inhabited the core territory along the Nile and the coastlines, it continuously fell under the domination of the successive rulers in Cairo.

Together such geographical and demographic continuity, the latter obviously marked by the succession of generations, have been a considerable asset. Exceptions such as the occupation of the Sinai by Israeli troops from 1967 to the early 1980s were temporary. Obviously the British occupation lasted for much longer but it did not fragment it geographically. No part of the territory and population broke away through secession or was added through military occupation or the like.

Major changes only occurred at the level of the rulers and the political regimes they established, obviously sometimes with important consequences for politics and policies, domestic as well as foreign. In July 1952 the military coup mounted by the Free Officers put an end to the monarchy and soon led to the establishment of a republican regime. Over time the latter underwent substantial transformations, reflecting mainly the policy choices of the successive presidents and the body that after the 2011 briefly

acted as head of state. Presidents no doubt were not alone in defining policies which at any rate heavily depended on domestic and external conditions beyond their control. However, they had or provided themselves with the necessary means to conduct policies they considered, sometimes wrongly, appropriate. With one exception they managed to survive in power and to implement their policies to a fair extent over one or several decades, even against countervailing forces and without convincing results. The exception was Muhammad Mursi, the only non-military and elected president, who failed to grasp the precariousness of his position.

The one leg carrying the relative strength of the Egyptian state has been the capacity of successive rulers to conceive and implement sometimes ambitious policies. Put differently, the rulers managed to sufficiently harness the institutions, actors, and mechanisms that form the political regime as well as other forces inside and outside the country to bring about important transformations beyond the ones generally known. Between 1930 and 1952, in the days of the monarchy, prime ministers, councils of ministers, and the palace, rarely in the good books of history, laid the foundations for industrialization for domestic consumption (frequently referred to as import substitution industrialization) and ultimately implemented new welfare policies. Provocatively one might even add that in the 1948/49 war the monarchy attained part of its objectives when it occupied the Gaza Strip and therefore a part of Palestine. In the 1950s the republican government under Gamal Abd al-Nasser apart from building the Dam enacted the first land reform, established the first heavy industries, replaced the old political parties with a single party, brought an end to British domination, mobilized large scale Arab support for Egyptian policies towards Europe and the United States, obtained substantial aid from both the US and the USSR, and built and expanded a large public sector that basically dominated the economy from the early 1960s onwards. In the Suez War following the nationalization of the Canal Nasser managed to transform into a diplomatic victory the military defeat at the hands of the far superior British, French, and Israeli forces. In the 1970s his successor Anwar al-Sadat presided over Egypt's first partial military victory over Israel and then signed the first peace treaty between an Arab country and Israel; simultaneously he transformed the single into a dominant party and strongly encouraged private sector growth within the state directed economy. Husni Mubarak implemented large scale economic reform negotiated with the IMF and the World Bank that temporarily reduced budgetary and external imbalances; he also managed to re-establish close links with other Arab states that had been severed after the peace treaty with Israel. It is true that some of these policies were heavily contested and only temporarily or partly crowned with success, that they often originated in the failure of previous policies, and that they did not enable Egypt to become the high income regional power that Egyptians would like it to be. However, the failure to meet the ultimate or more modest objectives was not necessarily the result of state or, more precisely, government weakness. The tasks were immense and the odds substantial.

Such capacity to implement policies and to change course, often against vested interests and opposition, was premised on the availability of various human and material resources such as education, organizational skills, equipment, administrations, embassies, troops, and the like. Often such capacity involved repression through the use of military force abroad and the famous Weberian monopoly of the means of physical coercion at home.³ However, it also involved co-opting others through the distribution of material and symbolical assets, convincing them, and legitimating action with regard to broader values and norms shared with others whose support was needed to implement these policies.⁴ From a slightly different angle one could say that 'despotic power' was accompanied by 'infrastructural power' exercised through institutions such as schools or social services.⁵

The softer methods to obtain compliance could often build on the relatively strong ties of solidarity that gradually emerged among the inhabitants of the country and their loyalty to it. Based on a growing sense of sharing the same identity as Egyptians, these ties formed the other leg on which began to rest the relative strength of the Egyptian state. Deliberately fostered in some periods by the rulers, in particular from the latter part of the 19th century when nationalisms conquered the world, these ties were also the, often unintended, consequence of state-building activities that through taxation, conscription, legislation, and the administration of justice united individuals under the promises and threats of a common fate. In other words, the population over the past two centuries has developed into an ‘imagined community’⁶ and thus into a ‘nation’ of sorts. This community being roughly coextensive with the state, the latter displayed features of a ‘nation-state’, thus contrasting with many of its counterparts in the Middle East and the broader global south which have largely remained ‘territorial states’. In that respect, Egypt has much in common with other older political entities like Tunisia and Morocco, and differs from more recent creations such as Libya, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.⁷ Unsurprisingly in this light, the ties of solidarity contributed to weaken the rulers when their action, like in 2011, seemed no longer in consonance with the demands of the ‘people’.

This being said, the imagined community failed to alleviate or reduce vertical cleavages that continued to divide the population into smaller solidarity groups built on family, ‘tribe’, space, variety of language, and religion (in terms of practices rather than faith). The latter continued to exist, at times deepen, under the overall umbrella of the broad tents of Egyptians cultivating the same Egyptian nationalism epitomized – and extolled – by the ecumenical iconography of the Wafd Party’s cross and the crescent. No doubt, political centralization and attempts at nation-building did not lead to the degree of societal homogenization and solidarities as they did in those European countries where the process was underpinned by the dynamics of the capitalist and industrial ‘revolution’.⁸ Unlike Western Europe and its settler states around the world, Egypt and most of the Middle East were affected, but not as deeply transformed by these economic and attendant societal dynamics.

Islamist attacks against Christians at various points in time; the fighting between insurgents and government forces that has rocked Northern Sinai since the late Mubarak years; government attempts to ‘ex-communicate’ the Muslim Brothers and the deliberate killing of many of them after the 2013 coup no doubt illustrate deep societal divisions, but so far they have not – yet – destroyed the community of Egyptians or threatened the survival of the Egyptian state. They have not precipitated generalized violence between loyalty groups or civil war as they have done in Syria for instance. Nor have they led sub-state loyalty groups to colonize the political regime or parts of it to the same extent as in neighbouring states. Though strong and pervasive, (neo)patrimonial dynamics in the sense of the (mis)use of public resources for private ends or the interests of loyalty groups, often considered a hallmark of politics in the global South, had to compete with formal and institutional dynamics.⁹ Similarly, the military defeat in 1967 and its consequences have illustrated the ultimate resilience of social ties and state institutions.

The Historical Formation of Fragile Strength

Unlike numerous other countries in the ‘Arab world’ and in the broader ‘global south’ once occupied and dominated by the European powers (or Japan), Egypt has for long been a largely stable political entity that progressively morphed into a state and a community of loyalty or nation. From the early 19th century

onwards the decline of the Ottoman Empire allowed successive local rulers, albeit still formally subservient to the Sublime Porte, to formulate their own policies domestically and abroad, develop increasingly autonomous institutions, expand economic capacity, and foster, first implicitly and without intention, a sense of distinct identity among the country's inhabitants.¹⁰

Ottoman decline strengthened the hand of the local rulers all the more as the other major powers – in particular France and Britain – for a variety of reasons only occasionally and, by and large, slowly began to strengthen their presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. Put differently, the increasing void created by Ottoman weakness was only gradually filled by the global rise of the other European powers. In the last third of the century debt recovery action by mainly West European creditors limited the fiscal and economic choices of the local rulers and weakened the institutions they had built without destroying them. Military occupation in 1882 led to indirect rule by the British while legally Egypt remained part of the Ottoman Empire until 1914. External interference prompted popular opposition and thereby strengthened a sense of Egyptian identity, even though Egyptian nationalism as defended by Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid coexisted alongside and often in the shadow of broader loyalties to the Ottoman Empire, the Muslim *umma*, or the Arab nation. If Britain imposed economic policies coherent with its own interests, it also pushed for the development of infrastructures, in particular communications, that served these policies and broader British strategic concerns. The purely formal accession to independence in 1922 validated the claim to nationhood and simultaneously called for additional attempts at state building that inevitably clashed with the preferential treaty with Britain and the continued presence of British troops. In brief, the international dynamics that marked the age of historical imperialism had a considerable impact on the formation and consolidation of state and nation in Egypt, the country's politics and economy, and in turn again on its relations with the outside world.

Thanks to its political institutions and sense of identity independent Egypt repeatedly succeeded in exploiting its strategic location to benefit from the dynamics of international conflicts. During the Cold War, for instance, it used to its advantage the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States to obtain external support and to influence its regional environment and even world politics; attempts by the United States to use decolonization as a means to replace in their former spheres of influence its NATO allies Britain and France afforded it additional leverage.

In spite of such efforts Egypt nonetheless to this day remained part of the 'developing world' and never managed to emulate 'emerging' countries and economies like South Korea (a much used comparison by Egyptians themselves). Possibly the very geographical location that enabled it to obtain external support and strategic rents also limited its efforts. In particular in periods of détente between the US and the USSR and after the end of the Cold War the relative loss of leverage translated into increasing economic and political dependency; matters were further complicated by the cost of decades of conflict with Israel. As a consequence, economic choices and development strategies had to be adapted to externally determined opportunities and constraints, leading to a succession of policies that relied more or less heavily on state intervention on the one hand and private capital and markets on the other, but ultimately all failed. These policies, the lack of resources, and expenditure that generally exceeded revenues necessarily had repercussions on domestic politics and foreign policy.

As discussed below, developments since the early 19th century, difficult economic conditions, and attempts to overcome them also favoured the emergence and continuity of authoritarian rule. Sometimes

seen as a means to expedite decisions and their implementation, such rule has, however, important and debilitating drawbacks. Decisions themselves are heavily influenced by the whims of the rulers, even if they are not primarily meant to serve the latter's interests. The absence of consultation, participation, transparency, and consensus negatively affects the quality and adequacy of policies, not to mention their acceptance. In many other cases, the lack of checks and balances simply allows rulers to replace common with their own interests as it happened in particular under Sadat and his successors. More recently, the Sisi administration no doubt managed to build the 'new' Suez Canal in record time, but never evaluated costs and benefits which turned out to be different from expectations.

Neither Pharaohs nor Mamluks

While the fragile strength of independent Egypt cannot be explained independently of processes unfolding since the early 19th century, there is no compelling reason to extend the search beyond this period into earlier centuries or even millennia. This is not to deny that developments in the early 19th century followed on the heels of the Napoleonic 'campaign' or rather invasion of 1798; that earlier politics and infighting in France as much as in Egypt precipitated or facilitated the invasion; and that the latter reflected the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of other European powers over a much longer period of time. Nor is it to claim that Egypt had not earlier seen the emergence and durability of states defined as political regimes established over a given territory and its population. However, the possibility to trace origins back to yet earlier origins does not alter the fact that the contemporary Egypt state has grown out of a specific constellation: an international power vacuum in the Eastern Mediterranean that allowed the winner in the struggle for power over Egypt to strengthen his position and temporarily keep external forces at bay.

Seen from that perspective it is not particularly relevant to trace the contemporary Egyptian state or the beliefs and practices of its inhabitants back to earlier centuries or even millennia. In any case, efforts of that sort would probably defeat the most able genealogists, whether they focus on the transmission of genes or ideas. No doubt, the most famous pyramids, royal tombs, temples, and other remnants of Ancient Egypt are located in the territory of the contemporary Egyptian state. However, location does not necessarily involve physical descent or cultural filiation, even though it does not exclude it. Over the centuries the territory of the contemporary Egyptian state has absorbed numerous immigrants who to various degrees mixed and mingled with the population they found upon their arrival. Like in most other countries, the inhabitants at any point in time were not, or not only, the physical or spiritual descendants of earlier inhabitants.

One of the events frequently referred to by many Egyptians is the conquest of the country by the Arabic-speaking Muslims that they themselves consider their predecessors. The invaders led by 'Amr b. al-'As in 640 AD, the year after their arrival, built a new town called Fustat, today a part of Cairo, but then melted into the indigenous population which increasingly adopted their language and their religion. A fair number of Christians resisted intermarriage and religious conversion but adopted Arabic as their language, thus reducing the use of Coptic to liturgical purposes. The survival of Christianity and Judaism notwithstanding, the population of Egypt in terms of cultural practices and genetic origin considerably changed in and after the 7th century.

Similar developments unfolded after later conquests by other Muslim protagonists, the French, and the British, as they had unfolded earlier when Greek, Roman, and Persian forces invaded the country. Established in 332 BC by Alexander called the Great, the city of Alexandria became home to numerous immigrants whose natural language was Greek, even though many of them, like their fellow inhabitants, were no doubt multilingual. Like Alexander, the Ptolemies who ruled the country for the next three centuries hailed from Macedonia and further contributed to its however partial Hellenization. Mark Anthony, who in 36 BC conquered Egypt, arrived at the head of a Roman army whose officers and soldiers probably lived as little in a social vacuum as he did himself. Except for a brief period of Persian occupation in the early 7th century Egypt until the advent of Amr b. al-‘As remained a part of the Roman and Byzantine Empires with the material, physical, and intellectual exchanges that this involved.

The subsequent Muslim dynasties or rulers also came from outside Egypt. Ahmad Ibn Tulun, who took power in 868, was of central Asian origin. The Abbasid caliphate that in 905 put an end to Tulunid rule and took direct control of Egypt had its capital in Baghdad. The successors of the Abbasids, the Fatimids, originated from the Maghrib; the only Shi’is ever to rule Egypt, they in 969 laid the foundations of the city of Cairo, in the close vicinity of Fustat. Salah al-Din, the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty, who took power in 1171 was born in Tikrit on the Euphrates in today’s Iraq. The Ayyubids soon imported Mamluk soldiers, formally slaves, who overthrew them in 1250. The Mamluks were largely recruited from Western Asia and further to the East; Baibars, the first Mamluk Sultan of Egypt, hailed from the Urals in today’s Russia. Finally, the Ottomans who entered Egypt in 1516 and formally remained its sovereigns until 1914 quite obviously were foreigners as well. And so was Mehmed Ali whom they appointed pasha of Egypt in the early 19th century and whom they later allowed to pass on his rights and privileges to his descendants, thus establishing the dynasty which the British finally elevated to royal status.

The various Muslim rulers like their non-Muslim counterparts brought their troops, friends, families, and supporters to Egypt and more generally initiated smaller or larger population movements across its borders. Simultaneously they propagated, partly imposed, new cultural practices. Many of them originally were not Arabic-speakers and they often practiced different versions of Islam.

In the 19th century increasing numbers of Ottoman nationals from other parts of the empire settled in Egypt; in the second half of the century also increasing numbers of Europeans settled in the country for reasons we shall return to later. Legislation promulgated in 1926 and 1929 facilitated the access to citizenship for former Ottoman citizens living in Egypt. In particular from the mid-19th century thoughts and ideologies that had originated in Europe entered public debates and politics in Egypt. Liberalism, nationalism, socialism, communism, etc. contributed to shape the intellectual and political life, even though at times they were adapted and reinterpreted in line with local concerns and perceptions.

Such lack of demographic or cultural continuity undermines claims that for instance try and explain the almost uninterrupted succession of authoritarian forms of rule as the heritage of the pharaonic or, in its more overtly military version, Mamluk past. Alexander, the Ptolemys, and the Romans were no less authoritarian than Mehmed Ali and his dynasty. None of them were the descendants of the Pharos or the Mamluks.

Dismissing arguments based on heritage is not meant to support arguments which claim that visible continuities are the effects of never changing structural features. Again with regard to authoritarian rule,

one might seek the explanation in the need to build and maintain large-scale irrigation schemes which, in line with the assumptions of ‘Oriental Despotism’, would necessitate decisive, heavy-handed, even despotic government action.¹¹ However, the question remains whether complex arrangements for irrigation on the one hand and authoritarian rule on the other in Egypt are causally related and, if so, in what sense and direction. One wonders whether a despotic government was needed to build the Nilometer on Roda island in Cairo and decide when to divert water into the Khalij and the adjacent fields. At any rate, historically authoritarian rule has existed outside hydrological societies and complex irrigation systems have existed independently of authoritarian rule and administered by collective, representative bodies.

Narrating the History of Independent Egypt

In the process of analysing the fragile strength of independent Egypt, the volume also challenges some wide-spread historical narratives. Thus it confirms and shows that the country’s recent history cannot be understood as the transition from a politically and economically liberal monarchy to an authoritarian and socialist republic which after the Nasserist period reverted to a liberal order of sorts. It also takes issue with the claim that Islamist forces in particular prevented fully fledged political liberalization and democratization. At the same time, the volume illustrates the inconsistencies of an alternative narrative that describes a dynamic that led from a ‘backward’, exploitative, semi-capitalist monarchy to a progressive, egalitarian, and ‘modern’ republic. Emphasizing differences in terms of equality and social justice rather than in terms of political participation, the second narrative has frequently served to legitimate the 1952 coup and the ‘achievements of the revolution’. Though on slightly different grounds, it challenges the first narrative that, apart from expressing sympathy for the monarchy, primarily came to delegitimize Nasserism and to defend the subsequent turn to a different type of authoritarianism with greater leeway for private business.

The term ‘recent history’ appears more to the point than the much used and abused notion of ‘modern history’ that in one way or the other implies a dichotomy with ‘pre-modern’ periods or with ‘tradition’. Though a commonplace distinction in public debates and part of the academic literature, such a dichotomy has for long been shown to be a vision of the spirit. Defined as a capacity to reflect and adapt, modernity has characterized a great many historical periods other than the centuries following the European Enlightenment. Defined as the period starting with Enlightenment, modern times have frequently and substantially differed from the mix of economic, societal, and political feature such as the increasing spread of capitalism, reason, and forms of – ultimately participatory and democratic – rule, that are supposed to define them.

By way of explaining the fragile strength of Egypt the volume will confirm a reading of history that differs sharply from the two above narratives based on discontinuities rather than continuities.¹² In a nutshell, it will show that under the monarchy the political regime and the economy were not overall liberal, even though they displayed a variety of liberal features. In actual fact, these liberal features have been seized upon by the proponents of the competing narratives to debunk or defend the monarchy. No doubt, competitive elections did take place under the monarchy and opposed a variety of parties and candidates. However, various, largely informal obstacles restricted eligibility to a small fraction of by and large wealthy and educated Egyptians who could buy votes or otherwise influence results. Nor was parliament entirely elected, the sole legislator, or able to resist dissolution by the King whose far-reaching

powers afforded the political regime important authoritarian features. In particular in the period after World War Two, deep state and other conspiracies as well as street politics dominated the scene, and led to much violence in the form of assassinations or rampages such as the ‘burning of Cairo’ in February 1952. Similarly, the quasi-absence of public sector industries and the importance of markets in the allocation of resources have been well established. However, these features coexisted with conditions of servitude in the countryside and large-scale cronyism that are difficult to reconcile with a sensible definition of economic liberalism. Politically, the monarchy was a hybrid regime that preceded the definition of this category in the political science literature.¹³ Economically, it was marked by political capitalism and partly relied on non-capitalist forms of primary accumulation. In both respects, it remained heavily influenced by British interests as reflected in the 1923 constitution, preferential treaties favourable to Britain, and British interference beyond the limits set by the treaties. Largely forgotten, however, policy makers in the late monarchy amended fiscal and social policies to enhance at least to an extent the living conditions of the destitute majority of the populations.

The military coup that in July 1952 put an end to the monarchy (formally abolished in 1953) established a political regime that over the years turned increasingly repressive. Reflecting standard definitions of authoritarianism, the Free Officers around Nasser restricted pluralism, at times heavily, but did not destroy or abolish it entirely.¹⁴ Political parties were replaced by a single party and elections reduced to competitions among its members who, however, often strongly disagreed with one another. Simultaneously, the new rulers increasingly intervened in the economy, by way of regulation, planning, public investment, and the transfer of private sector companies into state ownership. Increasingly also, they defined themselves as socialists, even though they failed to agree on the precise definition of what it meant; in practice reduced to economic planning, public ownership of larger companies, and the extension of welfare policies and benefits, it differed markedly from socialism as practised elsewhere in the world, even though within a decade or so the 1952 coup led to important political and economic change.

Words and deeds reflected the concerns of people shaped by social origins and positions that in spite of exceptions and overemphasis in some of the literature differed considerably from those of the politically and economically dominant categories under the monarchy. Rather than from families owning large amounts of land and capital, the new rulers originated from the ‘new’ or ‘rising intermediary classes’ that due to socio-economic transformations in the previous decades had increasingly come to the fore. With the 1952 coup, after lengthy fermentation, individuals and groups from these classes that at the moment of writing would be called ‘(lower) middle classes’ gate-crashed into politics, with the caveat, though, that they did not necessarily represent these classes or consistently favour them through their policies. Ever since Egypt has been largely (though not exclusively) ruled and governed by people from this social background and the ‘state class’ or ‘state bourgeoisie’ that emerged from it.¹⁵ Ever since Egypt, with the partial and brief interruption of the 2011 protests and their immediate aftermath, has also lived under more or less far reaching transformations of the political and economic regime that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s.

In the early 1960s the ambitious state-controlled development strategies epitomized by the construction of the Aswan High Dam, a five-year plan supposed to help double national income within ten years and measures to increase the standard of living such as higher wages and benefits led to two successive balance of payment crises, growing public debt, and austerity measures. The gap between expenditures

and revenues widened all the more as the US and the USSR in spite of their continued competition for strategic footholds in the Cold War reduced their material support for Egypt. The defeat in the 1967 June war further added to the economic difficulties, prompted important popular protests, and pushed Nasser to take some steps to timidly grant some additional leeway to the private sector. These steps in a sense prefigured the more far-reaching but still limited and selective 'open-door-policy' or *infitah* pursued after 1974 by Anwar al-Sadat, who became president after Nasser's death in 1970.

Supposed to surmount the economic difficulties through increasing, but controlled foreign investment and private sector involvement, Sadat's open-door policy pushed up economic growth but thereby prompted another severe balance-of-payments crisis, and an important rise in public debt; initially planned austerity measures were postponed when in January 1977 large-scale rioting reminiscent of the 'burning of Cairo' broke out.

In the eyes of Sadat economic liberalization could not succeed without a solution to the conflict with Israel. A satisfactory and permanent settlement of the conflict in turn depended on support from the United States, who alone would be able to extract concessions from Israel. At the same time, only US and other 'Western' investment and aid would allow Egypt to overcome its economic difficulties. Egypt's partial success in the 1973 October War indeed prompted US mediation and ultimately led to the 1979 peace treaty with Israel. Intermediary steps such as the Sinai disengagement agreements produced some of the expected economic results, not least because the 1973 war had allowed the major oil producers to significantly raise the price of oil, increase their own revenues, employ foreigners including Egyptians, and invest part of their profits abroad. In spite of its relative growth, the private sector continued to operate in the shadow of the public sector and government; its most successful companies and entrepreneurs were closely related to the latter.

The emergence of diverging interests as a result of private sector growth and higher income differentials called for a greater semblance of political pluralism that could accommodate the single party. Lip service to political liberalization and democracy was also essential to obtain US and broader 'Western' support. Sadat therefore in the second half of the 1970s decreed the end of the single party and the creation of a few successor parties, all heavily controlled by the government. Other accompanying measures quickly made sure that participation remained heavily contained. Sadat relaxed repression as little as he abandoned the public sector, thus truncating economic liberalization and simply updating or 'upgrading' authoritarianism¹⁶ until he overtly reverted to repression shortly his assassination in 1981. In his attempts to manage pluralism to his own advantage, Sadat relied on Islamists to combat the left and increasingly invoked religion to legitimate his government and policies, a choice that many considered irreconcilable with the treaty with Israel.

In the first decade of his presidency Mubarak sought to find a *modus vivendi* between the advocates and opponents of both *infitah* and the peace treaty with Israel. Though analytically separable, the two issues in the political debate by and large collapsed into one as the opponents of *infitah* also opposed the treaty. The issues were all the more easily conflated as Sadat had conceived the rapprochement with Israel and the US as a precondition for the success of his new economic policies. Partly the balancing act was facilitated by substantial budget support from the US; partly it was facilitated by an oil price that until the mid-1980s allowed Egypt in various ways to benefit from the oil revenues of major Arab producers, even though they opposed the treaty with Israel. Simultaneously, a degree of political decompression as

illustrated by the 1984 parliamentary elections helped to stabilize the Mubarak government without exposing it to the uncertainties of democratization. The political regime remained authoritarian while economic liberalization remained selective; the public sector and welfare policies devised under Nasser and Sadat continued to be challenged, even eroded, but remained a defining feature of the economic and social order. However, the fragile equilibrium collapsed with the rapid and steep fall of oil revenues in 1986 that after another balance-of-payments and debt crisis led to the 1991 accords with the Bretton Woods institutions.

In his second decade as president Mubarak implemented the programmes of macroeconomic stabilization and structural adjustment negotiated with the IMF and the World Bank. Implementation was facilitated by the participation of Egyptian troops in the 1991 Kuwait war (to liberate the country from the Iraqi occupation in 1990) that led to a substantial relief of foreign debt. Entailing far larger growth of the private compared to the public sector than in the 1970s, the reforms also strengthened competition in various areas of economic activity but in many respects failed to replace government controlled allocation of resources by market mechanisms. Political capitalism or cronyism including private monopolies and oligopolies often replaced those of the public sector; the public sector itself survived large-scale privatization that excluded, among others, companies controlled by the armed forces. In short, selective economic liberalization once again failed to produce a liberal economy.

The economic reforms went hand in hand with political de-liberalization in the sense of new and partly additional restrictions to political and civil – or positive and negative – liberties. Various such restrictions were a response to challenges by Islamist groups which, as already in earlier periods, resented their exclusion from the normal avenues of political representation and participation. While some of them, though not the MB, resorted to violence, their exclusion and repression were mainly motivated by the desire of the Mubarak government to remain in power. Exclusion and repression were the fate of all opponents, which undermines any claim that Mubarak acted in defence of democracy. However, many of the new restrictions to liberties were directly related to the economic reforms. Austerity measures imposed by stabilization threatened to entail popular grievances as they did in 1977. Privatization and private sector growth deprived the government of existing control mechanisms which had all been tailored to a public sector economy. For instance, journalists in privately owned media could no longer be censored by a government decision to sack them or move them to the gardening desk. Similar to earlier developments under Sadat, these restrictions disprove the claim that economic liberalization ipso facto fosters political liberalization, a causal relation that only applies under specific conditions.¹⁷

In the first decade of the new millennium Mubarak embarked on a series of measures that seemed to strengthen political participation and other liberties, including convoluted constitutional amendments that allowed more competitive presidential elections in 2005 but not afterwards. The attempts to pass off as political liberalization measures that simply reintroduced authoritarian rule through the backdoor ended as soon as ended the pressures for political reforms in Arab countries that the US had deployed after the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington DC. Nor did the constitutional amendments arrest the political rise of Mubarak's entrepreneur son Gamal, whom he groomed as his successor. The simultaneous new stab at economic liberalization also failed to strengthen liberties; economically it largely benefited a group of businessmen around Gamal and thus reinforced cronyism instead of markets.

The large-scale protests in 2011 temporarily united various constituencies that in spite – and because of – repression had gained strength over the preceding decade and opposed Mubarak’s policies, authoritarian rule, and attempts to pass on power from father to son. Mubarak’s departure, though, was as much the work of the military top brass who for years had felt alienated by policies under their (former) fellow officer. These policies had favoured private sector tycoons at the expense of their own business interests, allowed Gamal to transform the dominant party into a potential counterweight to the armed forces, and sought to propel him to the helm of the state. His purely civilian career helped as little as Mubarak father’s obstinacy to remain in power in spite of the protests. Claiming to act hand in hand with the people, the officers showed Mubarak the door and established the – unelected – Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) as the country’s key decision making body. The role that the armed forces as the central component of the *ancien régime* played in Mubarak’s demise sits uneasily with the claim that he was brought down by a revolution.

Having sided with the protesters against their former colleague, the SCAF had little choice but to promise a transition to democratic government, especially as, unlike its predecessor, the Obama administration strongly came out in favour of this course of action. Distrusting the decentralized mode of organization and action as well as the democratic projects of the initial authors of the protests, the SCAF was not averse to an alliance of sorts with the Muslim Brothers (MB), who soon emerged as the major civilian political force. In the eyes of the military, they were a structured and hierarchical force that could contribute to impose order, provided they were kept out of the armed forces and the latter insulated against their influence. After winning the first free parliamentary and presidential elections since the beginning of the republic, the MB agreed to an arrangement under which the armed forces were basically removed from any oversight by civilians. The elected government under President Muhammad Mursi accepted a state within the state in an attempt to form an alliance with the military that would allow them together to marginalize other political forces. However, only months later their ways parted; as the army and its allies sought to prevail within the uneasy alliance, Mursi attempted to concentrate basically all constitutional powers in his own hands, thus prompting renewed large-scale protests which in turn threatened the viability of the army’s earlier project to share power with the MB.

In early July 2013 the armed forces removed Mursi and appointed the chief justice as interim president. Mursi, numerous Muslim Brothers, and others were arrested and later tried in court. A large number of Muslim Brothers who continued to protest after the coup were massacred on a public square in Cairo. Facing endless accusations and trials, Mursi died in court in early 2019. Already in early 2014 the leader of the coup, Abd al-Fattah Sisi, had won the presidential elections with an overwhelming majority thanks to a variety of factors including repression and propaganda, but also the rapid decline in the popularity of the MB, whom many Egyptians, including former MB voters, by that time considered incompetent and sectarian. Though elected, his administration rapidly turned into one of the most repressive Egypt has ever known. The brackets of the Arab spring protests were closed and authoritarian rule was firmly re-established. Economic policies continued to strike a balance between private and public sector, though at the expense of Mubarak-era cronies and to the benefit of military-controlled companies and their private sector associates.

Revising Received ‘Wisdoms’

The preceding account illustrates various continuities across periods that have been established and sometimes been excessively reified in part of the literature. Thus the end of the monarchy as a political regime did not coincide with the end of economic policies that relied on, or at least allocated an important role to, the private sector. Conversely, the advent of the republic and the ‘revolutionary regime’ under the Free Officers did not mark the beginning of state intervention and étatism in economic policy. However timidly, the role of the private sector began to be strengthened already under the allegedly socialist Nasser, even though it was only under Sadat that the shift acquired momentum. Here and elsewhere, breaks with the past were accompanied by continuities, not least those pertaining to the authoritarian exercise of power.

Emphasizing authoritarian features, the preceding paragraphs are not intended to belittle the participatory and even democratic processes that marked various periods, nor the politically liberal convictions of many actors. In spite of many shortcomings, various elections under the monarchy were truly competitive and produced parliamentary majorities, and governments different from the previous ones. Similarly, numerous participants in the 2011 protests sought to build a new political order that would rest on competitive elections and the respect of human rights.

As the following chapters show in greater detail, many of the authoritarian traits of the monarchy, including its constitution, were the direct or indirect product of foreign, in particular British, interference in Egyptian politics since the 19th century. The 1952 coup swept away the monarchical regime because the erosion of its domestic power and legitimacy was no longer compensated by the ability of an exhausted post-war Britain to support it or to push it towards reforms. The Free Officers and Nasser turned increasingly authoritarian by ‘reaction’ rather than ‘filiation’ as they felt threatened by the remnants of the *ancien régime* whom they considered in league with hostile foreign powers and forces. Simultaneously, though, they were also convinced that economic development and ‘modernization’ to catch up with the ‘developed’ world justified authoritarian rule. The mechanisms of control and repression established under Nasser were inherited by his successors who in spite of policy differences continued to defend the interests of the armed forces. The continuity was briefly interrupted by the 2011 protests which, however, brought down a president and temporarily weakened the political regime rather than lastingly replacing it. The continuity of authoritarian rule was also encouraged by other factors including substantial external aid and support for successive rulers who made the most of Egypt’s ‘strategic’ location. Important rents that directly accrued to the governments further buttressed them vis-à-vis domestic challengers, actual or potential.

The available evidence undermines arguments that reduce authoritarianism to specific ‘mentalities’, the absence of democratic values or of democrats, or the allegedly authoritarian nature of Islam as a doctrine or as a set of institutions. Nor does it support the claim that authoritarianism was an attempt by ‘secularists’ or ‘modernizers’ to fight Islamists or ‘traditionalists’ intending to establish their own authoritarian or even totalitarian rule. Although little love has been lost between Islamists and secularists – ultimately few in number, their conflicts have never drawn the major battle lines in Egyptian politics. More relevant have been differences between Islamists and non-Islamists, including many practicing Muslims. However, the main divide has been between, on the one hand, the armed forces and those who managed to enter into an alliance with them, and, on the other those who failed to join the alliance or found themselves excluded and therefore missed the gravy train. Religious practice and ideology were secondary. No doubt Nasser in spite of his earlier links with the MB had little sympathy for the

'Islamization' of politics and society. On a famous occasion in 1958 he even publicly ridiculed the idea that women should veil themselves in public. However, Nasser knew when to invoke religion, if only symbolically, for instance when during the Suez War in 1956 he addressed Egyptians from the minbar or chair of Al-Azhar. Heavily relying on Islamist groups to combat the left, his successor Sadat fostered the ideological currents whose followers assassinated him in 1981. Mubarak permanently tried to reconcile opposing ideological currents and frequently accommodated activities and demands by Islamists, provided they did not emanate from organizations like the MB whom he deemed dangerous. In part the three presidents responded to ideological and normative changes that they did, and could, not control, not least because they unfolded on a global scale. However, their supporters included numerous Islamists in the sense of advocates of the reorganization of public and private life in accordance with values and norms they themselves considered Islamic.

Finally, the decades since the end of World War Two also illustrate the failure of successive economic policies to raise production and revenues to the level of consumption and expenditure, generate the resources necessary to play the role of a regional power or even 'catch up' with the 'developed' countries. Even progress towards the UN millennium and later sustainable development goals is rather uneven. As a matter of course, those who devised and implemented these policies often succeeded in making them work for themselves and their supporters. Under the monarchy large landowners never lost out; in the last decade of Mubarak's presidency well-connected group of entrepreneurs around his son Gamal considerably benefited from government policies and subsidies. However, neither the private sector-based economic order under the monarchy, nor the increasingly étatist policies pursued by Nasser, nor the open-door policy under Sadat, nor the more far reaching economic reforms under Mubarak in the 1990s brought the country closer to anything that could be called sustainable development.

Though undoubtedly weakening Egypt, such failure should simply not be taken as another effect of its fragile strength – or weakness. The failure of policies in the areas of growth, distribution, or 'development' is at least as much the result of global developments and indeed relations of power that except in a few fortunate places favour the development of underdevelopment rather than development in any meaningful sense.

Presentation of the volume

Reflecting the importance of history, yet emphasizing particular issue areas, the volume proceeds chronologically as well as thematically. Preceded by a summary of relevant historical developments from the origins of the contemporary Egyptian state in the power struggles following the short-lived French invasion in the late 18th century to independence in the wake of World War Two, the main chapters dedicated to the monarchy (1945–52), the republican regime under Naguib and Nasser (1952–70), the Sadat years (1970–81), the Mubarak presidency (1981–2011), the aftermath of the 2011 protests under the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), and President Mursi (2011–13), as well as the Sisi presidency (since 2013), are subdivided into sections in some ways misleadingly titled political change, economic developments, and external relations. Other issues such as broader societal and cultural transformations are only discussed to the extent that they contribute to explain Egypt's fragile strength. Primarily pragmatic, the chronological delimitation of these periods is not intended to overstate the role of individual presidents who in spite of their strong position always had to rely on support from other actors and broader constituencies. Nor is it meant to play down the numerous and strong continuities that link

them to one another. These continuities, rightly emphasized in part of the literature, will appear throughout the volume.¹⁸

Under the heading ‘political change’ the volume will broadly distinguish between developments affecting the ‘polity’ or ‘political regime’, ‘politics’ and ‘policies’, as well as the major actors and their social background. The order in which these developments are discussed may differ from chapter to chapter, depending on the degree to which those in one area contributed to shape those in others. The ‘political regime’ is understood as the formally established framework of institutions and processes within which the various actors interact and try to impose or negotiate policies; in spite of an institutionalist slant of the general argument, the term ‘institutions’ is generally used in the more narrow sense of common language (in particular those established under constitutions like assemblies, cabinets, and the like). ‘Politics’ refers to the interactions among actors that in a Simmelian perspective range from violent conflict to close cooperation, including repression and executions on the one hand and alliances and demonstrations of support on the other. The concept of ‘policies’ naturally includes ‘economic policies’ focusing on the creation and distribution of wealth; eloquently summarized in Harold Laswell’s definition of politics as ‘who gets what, when, how’, these policies are at the heart of politics.¹⁹

Largely in order to avoid repetitions, economic policies including distributional policies that are often considered as social policies, are discussed together with their effects in the sections titled ‘economic policies and developments’. The choice has the additional advantage to analyse these policies together with changes in the creation and distribution of wealth which they affect, though not always determine on their own. They nonetheless need to be understood as political decisions and in the context of political developments that prompted such decisions. For its part, the concept of ‘external relations’ includes cross-border interactions among state and non-state actors, even though for pragmatic reasons the focus will largely rest on the successive Egyptian governments as actors and targets of such interactions.

Sources

References are largely limited to secondary sources, where possible with priority given to sources in English that are easily accessible. Some aspects of the argument have primarily been covered by earlier scholarly work, which means that these references more difficult to access. Primary sources are only referred to in those instances where no secondary sources are available. The fact that the majority of sources referred to are in English should not minimize the importance of writings in other languages, in particular in Arabic. Needless to say that the notes mention only a fraction of the relevant literature, which is vast and continues to grow almost exponentially.

An important caveat concerns statistics and other figures which, depending on sources, often diverge considerably for the same indicator and period. The observation also applies to figures, sometimes even definitions (or the absence thereof), provided by the same agency or organization in different circumstances or moments in time. In spite of a long tradition of systematic statistical surveys beginning in the 19th century and internationally recognized capacity in this area, figures for Egypt – as for any other country or entity – have been a battleground opposing a variety of economic and political actors as well as specialists. The lack of transparency of successive authoritarian governments has not enhanced the credibility of some figures; the major source of statistical materials in Egypt since the 1960s still operates under the name of Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) and is generally

headed by a (former) military officer. Similar reservations apply to figures provided by external donors and international bodies which in many ways have to rely on figures produced by government agencies. In various instances the only option was to indicate a range of figures or rough averages; luckily, the uncertainties do not affect overall trends. The Egyptian government generally provides figures for fiscal years different from calendar years (for instance: 1977/78); international organizations such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) often show them for calendar years (for instance: 1978).

In between the lines the text inevitably reflects the cumulative effects of the ten happy years of my life that I could spend in Egypt as a student, as an academic, and for some years as a programme officer of the Ford Foundation. Innumerable encounters, debates, and discussions in Egypt and abroad have helped me to draft it. As many visits to grocery stores, workplaces, and cafes, rides on taxis, buses, and trains, hours in classrooms, cinemas, and theatres, have left their indelible traces and marks.

Transliteration

In order to render the volume as readable as possible names and terms in Arabic are by and large spelled in line with common English usage. In all other cases transliteration simplifies as much as possible the general rules adopted by the Middle East Journal (MEJ). As a result, transcription does not reflect Egyptian pronunciation; assembly, for instance, is translated as ‘majlis’ rather than ‘maglis’.

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¹ For comparisons also see the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), 2020 published every two years by the Bertelsmann Foundation, Guetersloh: www.bti-project.org.

² The definition by and large follows the classical definition given in Duverger, 1948.

³ Weber, 2019.

⁴ Gerschowski and Merkel, 2011.

⁵ Mann, 2012.

⁶ Anderson, 2006.

⁷ According to the distinction made by Korany, 1988; for detailed comparison, see Anderson, 1986. The 'imagined community' also seems to be increasingly marked by the use of Egyptian 'dialect(s)'; see for instance Doss, 2011.

⁸ On nationalism and the economic and social transformations produced by 'bourgeois-liberal capitalism' in Europe, see in particular Hobsbawm, 1988, 14, 178; Hobsbawm, 1992. Hobsbawm does not reduce these transformations to 'print capitalism' on which focuses Anderson, 2016. The impact of the industrial as part of the capitalist revolution is emphasized by Gellner, 2006

⁹ For such limits to patrimonialism see in particular Bach and Gazibo, 2012.

¹⁰ The argument explicitly avoids any reference to 'modernity' and therefore differs from other attempts to account for the emergence of a 'state' and 'state'-wide solidarities frequently reduced to a 'nation'. Safran, 1961 argues from the perspective of a disappointed modernization theorist. Somewhat less explicitly and more optimistically, Goldschmidt, 1988, shares the assumption of an evolution towards 'modernity'.

¹¹ Wittfogel, 1957.

¹² Roussillon, 1998.

¹³ See e.g. Mufti, 2018.

¹⁴ Linz, 2000

¹⁵ Waterbury, 1991.

¹⁶ Heydemann, 2007.

¹⁷ Kienle, 2001.

¹⁸ Roussillon, 1998.

¹⁹ Laswell, 1936.

²⁰ Wucher King, 1989; Goldschmidt, 2013.

The Formation of Contemporary Egypt

The contemporary Egyptian state emerged from the encounter of two long term developments – the decline the Ottoman Empire and the simultaneous but gradual rise of Western European powers, in particular Britain and France. The twin trends in the early 19th century favoured, the latter of the two already in 1840 arrested, the emergence and consolidation of an independent political power in Cairo able to impose itself, establish institutions, and implement policies of its own choice; together with its ramifications, state-building favoured the emergence of solidarities among the ruled that finally constituted them as an Egyptian ‘nation’. From the 1870s and 1880s, European financial domination and British military occupation tended to weaken Egyptian institutions, but – unintentionally – strengthened nationalist feelings and projects. If Britain contributed to shape political and economic developments in Egypt until and even beyond the demise of historical imperialism after World War Two, its action permanently involved the accommodation or even repression of institutions and solidarities that had been formed and strengthened before the occupation.

Political and Economic Developments from the Early Nineteenth Century to the End of World War Two

The history of Egypt like all history is a contested area marked by disagreements over details as much as broader trends and their origins. Nonetheless, the most convincing reading of events locates the beginnings of the contemporary Egyptian state roughly at the intersection of two long term developments – the decline of the Ottoman Empire, of which Egypt was formally a province (eyelet, later vilayet), and the parallel rise of the (other) European powers, in particular Britain and France. The twin processes temporarily created a power vacuum of sorts in the Eastern Mediterranean and thus a specific constellation in the ‘international system’ that allowed a new actor to emerge. Both trends in the early 19th century encouraged, the latter – European expansionism – then arrested the emergence of a political power in Egypt able to sideline competitors, establish institutions associated with a state, and implement policies of its own choice; together with their ramifications, the state building activities pursued by Mehmed Ali and his successors over time encouraged the emergence of solidarities that are commonly associated with a ‘nation’. After successfully exploiting the tailwinds of Ottoman decline, the successive rulers in Cairo from about 1840 faced the headwinds of European expansionism that in the 1870s and 1880s brought Egypt under European, in particular British control, and contributed to shape it well beyond decolonization.

The changes in the balance of power blatantly appeared in July 1798 when the Ottoman Empire failed to defend Egypt against the invasion by French troops under Napoleon Bonaparte. Nor were immediate Ottoman attempts to reconquer Egypt crowned with success. Conflicts among the Mamluk groups who de facto ruled the country and put up resistance further facilitated the ‘*Expédition d’Égypte*’. The invasion nonetheless failed to transform Egypt into a French possession and its immediate contribution to the imperialist project remained limited to the production of knowledge about Egypt that was published in the meticulously researched and beautifully illustrated volumes of the famous *Description de l’Égypte*. In August 1801 the French invaders were defeated by the British who could count on important Ottoman reinforcements; a few months later French troops returned to France on British vessels. For a moment Egypt had become the theatre of the exacerbating competition among the major powers for influence in Europe, the Mediterranean, and worldwide. In Europe the French revolution had shaken the conservative political order that increasingly had to accommodate the rising forces of capitalism; in the Mediterranean the Europeans sought to exploit the decline of the Ottoman Empire without precipitating its demise; what came to be known as the ‘Eastern Question’ obviously had vast implications for communications with

Asia and Africa and imperialism at large. Though victorious, the British soon left Egypt as well and concentrated on Europe where the Napoleonic Wars challenged more immediately and fundamentally the balance of power among the major actors.

For the following seven to eight decades Egypt escaped occupation by European forces; for some four decades it also escaped other, more indirect, forms of European domination through unequal treaties and growing external debt. As conflictual as before the French invasion, the divisions among the various established Mamluk and Ottoman forces on the ground gradually allowed a new contender, Mehmed Ali (Muhammad Ali), to strengthen his position. Born in Kavala in Macedonia, Mehmed Ali was a young officer in the Ottoman forces that in 1801 disembarked with the British; he rose rapidly through the ranks, became their commander, and in 1805 against many odds managed to have himself appointed governor (*wali*) of Egypt. Over the following years he marginalized other political forces, defeated his Mamluk opponents, and in 1811 almost theatrically massacred their survivors at the Cairo citadel. Though never a sovereign himself, he managed at great cost for his subjects to build the institutions of a state, not least strong armed forces, and generate the revenues to fund, maintain, and strengthen them. In their own ways his successors continued to build on his legacy, with varying success, but especially in an international context that already towards the end of Mehmed Ali's rule turned far less favourable.

If neither the international power vacuum in the Eastern Mediterranean, nor the emergence of Mehmed Ali may be seen as the unavoidable results of the course of history, they nonetheless laid the ground for developments that have heavily contributed to shape Egypt socially, economically, culturally and politically. They led to a succession of developments that – again without being preordained by some hidden hand of history – produced a degree of path dependency and therefore left a lasting imprint to this day. These developments cannot be said to have determined the shape of contemporary Egypt, but the latter can be understood far better and more easily in their light. In particular, they strongly contributed to the – relative and fragile – strength of Egypt as a state, an economy, and a nation in the sense of a community of solidarity. Ultimately they go a long way in explaining the halfway location of Egypt on the continuum between consolidated nation states in Europe (a term that applies to some European states) and less consolidated territorial states such as Syria, Iraq or, Libya.

Favourable external conditions

To a considerable extent the trajectory of Egypt towards an increasingly independent and consolidated political entity was premised on the weakness of central government in the peripheral parts of the Ottoman Empire.¹ The territory that corresponds to the contemporary state of Egypt became a province of the Empire in the early 16th century when the Empire at least formally expanded its rule from Asia into parts of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Though represented by a governor, the Sultan in Constantinople remained a remote and lofty sovereign. The troops that his government, the Sublime Porte, maintained in Egypt, like the governor himself, were far more difficult to control than their counterparts in more easily accessible provinces in Western Asia or Eastern Europe. Nor were Ottoman troops as strong as the Mamluks, formally slaves, who remained the major military force in the land since they had taken de facto power in the 13th century.² Without any particular ties of loyalty towards their Ottoman suzerains, they formed a variety of 'households' headed by *beys* that competed with each other; only temporarily did their conflicts result in the victory of one faction able to establish something like a central government. If these divisions indirectly strengthened the Ottoman suzerains, they also weakened their hold over the country; the infighting entailed human and material losses, incoherent policies, the failure to address public health issues like the plague, and heavy taxes to fund predatory warriors, not to speak of the disastrous effects on the legitimacy of the Porte unable to guarantee the security and welfare of its subjects.

Most plausibly, the French intended to stay when they landed at Abu Qir close to Alexandria, even though the almost immediate destruction of their fleet by the British changed the game.³ Egypt was an enormous granary (as already in the past), conveniently located to control the Eastern Mediterranean as well as the movements of goods and persons between North Africa and Asia on the one hand and between Europe and Asia, Australia, and Eastern Africa on the other. The occupiers explicitly requested Egyptians to switch loyalty and support from the Ottomans and the Mamluks to themselves, not to prepare for independence.

Indirectly, however, the occupation contributed to the later rise of a relatively strong central government in Cairo and the emergence of an increasingly independent and consolidated political entity. During their short presence the French attempted to further reduce and crush what power and influence the Mamluks and the Sultan still held. Having lost the Battle of the Pyramids, the surviving Mamluks largely withdrew to the Southern parts of Nile Valley, generally referred to as Upper Egypt (or the *Sa'id*). Laws and regulations were amended or replaced with obvious effects on the population, not least with regard to property rights and taxation. Though heavily contested, the new rules reduced the Ottoman presence to a mere claim to sovereignty. As early as October 1798 a large rebellion erupted in Cairo, was violently repressed by the occupiers and its leaders summarily executed. Contestation further united the inhabitants, thus creating new or strengthening existing solidarities and a sense of 'us', the Egyptians, against 'them', the foreigners.

The chances for Egypt to emerge as an increasingly independent polity further improved when the British expelled the French without staying on themselves.⁴ Before occupying Egypt in earnest in 1882 the British only returned in 1807 when they briefly established a foothold in Alexandria. They left after their entreaties failed to establish the Mamluk faction of Alfi Bey as a client to run the country and guarantee their own supply with grain during the Napoleonic Wars.

As to the Porte, it was no doubt willing, but unable to re-establish control over Egypt. On the ground, its representatives and troops were divided into different loyalty groups; frequently the officers and soldiers were not paid. Though an Ottoman officer himself, Mehmed Ali was still one among others, and probably already forged his own plans. Ottoman influence and capacities further declined in 1807 when the overthrow of Sultan Selim led to a succession crisis that dragged on for some ten years. If the Porte in 1810 was still strong enough to reject Mehmed Ali's demand to declare Egypt as '*serbest*' and thus a politically largely independent province like Algeria, it had to turn to Mehmed Ali to fight the Greek rebellion in the 1820s that later led to Greek independence. Though ultimately defeated by the British at Navarino, the Egyptian navy provided essential support for the Porte.⁵

To cut short a long story, Egypt could emerge and consolidate as an independent polity because the Ottomans and their allies were too weak to govern it effectively and defend it against the French; the French were too weak to prevail against the British; and the British subsequently were too busy fighting in Europe. Continued Ottoman decline combined with the competing attempts of the rising Western European powers to control the Eastern Mediterranean worked out in ways that for several decades saved Egypt from direct occupation and, for a shorter period of time, from indirect forms of domination. The international power vacuum allowed a strong government to emerge in Cairo, to consolidate itself in spite of various vicissitudes, and to pursue state and, later, nation building policies.

The situation of Egypt therefore differed considerably from that of other parts of the Ottoman Empire. Of the appointees or vassals of sorts who enjoyed similar independence from the Porte, the Dey of Algiers was deposed by the French who occupied the country as early as 1830. The Bey of Tunis escaped French domination till 1881 but controlled a rather limited territory. Those of Tripolitania, part of today's Libya, and the Hijaz, part of today's Saudi Arabia, did not dispose of sufficient human and material resources to

assert themselves. In actual fact, it was Mehmed Ali who ultimately established Ottoman rule over the Hijaz. As one author pointed out, only 'Egypt's resources were sufficient to render the country independent...'⁶ an aspect we shall return to below. Conversely, in Western Asia and Eastern Europe Ottoman rule was by and large exercised far more directly, leaving less room for the local representatives of the Porte to emancipate themselves.

The centralization of power domestically

In the early years following the departure of the French various political forces contended for power in Egypt. To an extent the situation recalled the divisions and infighting that with some exceptions had torn apart the country prior to the invasion. In an uncertain environment Mehmed Ali managed to navigate strong interests and forces, including the then Ottoman governor. He first forged strong ties with civilian constituencies, in particular merchants and religious scholars (*ulama*) who financially and ideologically supported him, but also some Mamluks. Not without reluctance and ambiguity, the Porte in 1805 created Mehmed Ali a *pasha* and appointed him governor of Egypt, first and for decades on an annual basis. As such he had to send to Constantinople annual financial tribute and upon request provide the Sultan with Egyptian troops. Within a decade he marginalized, defeated, or massacred his opponents and thus established himself as the – domestically – uncontested ruler of Egypt. His relative popularity and his later – apocryphal – glorification as Egypt's first and foremost nationalist leader led Arabic-speakers to naturalize him as Muhammad Ali, even though he never expressed himself in Arabic.

Contrasting with earlier Mamluk infighting, the growing centralization of power – and repression – enabled Mehmed Ali to extract surplus from his subjects in the form of tax and labour, increase government revenue, build the institutions of a state, implement 'public policies' in various domains, and boost economic production. Many of his decisions served the creation of large army and navy copied on the European, in particular French, model, intended to bolster his rule, reduce challengers, potential and real, as well as extract additional surplus from occupied lands. Military concerns, in turn, reinforced policies in other domains and attempts to build appropriate institutions.⁷ By default rather than design, these policies and institutions contributed to the emergence of a 'political field' or arena coextensive with the territory and population of Egypt and thereby laid the ground for the emergence of a community of solidarity – an 'imagined community' – of Egyptians.⁸

Policies and Institutions

Reflecting the demise of his opponents and other opportunities and constraints, Mehmed Ali devised policies and institutions proceeded in stages, sometimes reinforcing or adapting earlier choices.⁹ Keenly aware of European needs he early on established a government monopoly on the trade with grain that Egypt already under Roman rule had produced in abundance. Soon afterwards he began to redefine rules of taxation and property rights, especially with regard to agricultural land, but also in urban settings. A systematic land survey in 1813 produced a new cadaster. Both tax farmers and peasants (*fellahin*) lost control and revenue that were transferred to government agencies; his former allies, the *ulama* lost control over *waqf* land. In the second part of the decade infrastructural and irrigation works including the Mahmudiyya Canal linking Alexandria to the Nile (following the trace of an earlier canal) further increased the extraction of agricultural surplus, as did the introduction of long staple cotton in 1821 that largely fed British textile industries.

Later, the dam that Mehmed Ali and his successors had built between 1843 and 1863 at Qanatir, north of Cairo, where the Nile divides into the Damietta and Rosetta branches, allowed to permanently regulate and raise downstream water levels and thus to improve irrigation and yields in the Delta. As a result, the traditional winter crops like wheat, barley, and barseem (clover) could increasingly be complemented

with summer crops, not least raw cotton that fetched high prices on global markets. Efficient patterns of crop rotation including fallow periods allowed to maximize output. Other summer crops included maize, rice, broad beans, and vegetables. Nonetheless, throughout the 19th century the country continued to heavily depend on the extent of the annual Nile flood that originating in the Ethiopian mountains reached it around July.

Drawing the lessons from his military involvements which we shall return to below, Mehmed Ali in 1823 began to form a large conscript army and build a new navy. Combined with new technology and organizational patterns the reforms would soon prove successful. Numerous factories were established, in the early years of his reign primarily to meet military needs, then to promote import substitution more generally, in particular in textiles, but also to produce for export markets. Government monopolies played an important role in the economy. Military considerations also gave a crucial impetus to educational and public health policies, physically illustrated by new hospitals and schools. Successive reorganizations of the administration were based on specialization, the division of labour, formal hierarchies, and the penetration of the entire country. In the late 1820s Mehmed Ali appointed a Consultative Council (*Majlis al-shura*) to advise his government. Numerous Egyptians like Rifaat (Rif'at) al-Tahtawi were sent abroad on study missions and numerous engineers, educationalists, physicians, agricultural experts, military officers, and other experts were recruited from Europe, among them a fair lot of Saint-Simonians. Defined by the wish to 'catch up', the policies were a text book case of 'defensive modernization' – modernity being equalled with Europe. Many of them were partly successful, even though later developments and constraints arrested industrial and military ambitions. However, Mehmed Ali also heavily relied on family members and friends, some of them from Kavala, whom he appointed to positions of influence; after much initial reluctance he later registered in their name land that initially they only had the usufruct of.

'Development' policies of the sort could be implemented all the more effectively as Egypt was a country with important human and material resources. The fertile soils of the Nile Valley and Delta allowed it to produce more food than it consumed and to cultivate other cash crops. At the crossroads of Asia and North Africa as well as the Mediterranean and the Red Sea it was home to many long distance merchants. In the early 1840s Cairo alone counted some 250,000 inhabitants, growing to 300,000 by the early 1860; roughly over the same period the population increased from 4.3 to 5.6 million (only three per cent of whom, however, were literate). In principle, the numbers allowed to impose *corvée* (forced) labour and, later, conscription to form an army of 80–130,000 men,¹⁰ even though it led to a shortage of labour elsewhere. Both the *corvée* and conscription came largely at the expense of the peasants and other poor. For years the *corvée* even included women and children;¹¹ as late as in the 1860s it supplied the manpower needed for digging the Suez Canal. After an initial exemption conscription was extended to Copts.

Deeply unpopular, and often resisted or evaded, both institutions more than created a sense of shared victimhood which in turn created solidarities against the government among all those who were within its reach and lived within the borders of the country.¹² They obviously dovetailed with other forms of coercion ranging from tax collection to vaccination campaigns and the administration of justice. At the time they seemed far stronger than the more 'positive' sense of loyalty developed by native Egyptians who were recruited into the lower echelons of the state pyramid as the expanding administration could no longer be run with Ottomans only.

Military action and expansionism

No doubt, the will to use Egyptian wealth profitably and to further increase it through cheap inputs such as raw materials and lucrative markets were one of the factors at the origin of Mehmed Ali's policies in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Nile Valley, and the Red Sea.¹³ In his eyes expansion was a means to

strengthen Egypt and its independence. ‘In none of his letters did the *wali* mention the value of conquest as lying in conquest itself. It was always posited in terms of what conquest could add to Egypt’s financial situation’.¹⁴

For quite some time Mehmed Ali circumvented Ottoman requests to fight the Wahhabis in the Hijaz who had taken control of the Holy Muslim cities of Macca and Madina and thus threatened the legitimacy of the Sultan as ‘guardian of the (two) holy places’. However, he obliged in 1811 when his position in Egypt seemed consolidated and when he realized the advantages for Egyptian merchants who had always supported him. His sons Tusun (who died during the campaign) and Ibrahim commanded the troops. He recalled Egyptian troops only in 1818 after they had decimated the Wahhabis. A few years later, the Sudan campaign in 1820–22 served to control trade along the Nile and the Red Sea, to extract gold (which turned out to be of low quality), and to capture slaves for a slave army. The subsequent dispatch of the Egyptian navy to Greece only occurred on request of the Sultan and in 1827 ended in the defeat at Navarino.

In 1831, Egyptian troops invaded the lands that today are known as Syria. Led by Mehmed Ali’s son Ibrahim (who unlike his father liked to express himself in Arabic), Egyptian troops in successive campaigns even seized parts of Anatolia and marched on to Constantinople; after the Porte’s defeat in the Battle of Nezib in 1839 the Ottoman navy surrendered to Ibrahim. Throughout these years the Porte could only prevail thanks to Russian and British military as well as French diplomatic support. In the agreement of Kutahya in 1833 it obtained a truce of sorts by appointing Ibrahim on a yearly basis as *wali* of the provinces he had conquered. As a result, Mehmed Ali and his son controlled basically all trade routes in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea. Now at the height of his power, the Pasha had a military and merchant navy, ‘colonies’ for the economic development of Egypt, but no legal sovereignty’.¹⁵ The question remains, though, whether Mehmed Ali sought to strengthen his own position within the Empire, possibly acquire such sovereignty alongside the ‘colonies’, or even to topple the Sultan. As so often in history, hegemonic designs and economic logic may have reinforced one another, but may also have existed alongside each other.

The gradual imposition of external constraints

External constraints built up first in the late 1830s when Britain under the liberal Palmerston ministry pushed for free trade and, together with the Ottoman Empire, sought to contain and even reverse the expansionist policies pursued by Mehmed Ali.¹⁶ Free trade threatened Mehmed Ali’s ambitions as it entailed an end to state-owned monopolies in Egypt and to Ottoman import tariffs from which Egypt benefited as part of the Empire. The Porte, it seems, endorsed free trade not only because it was too weak to oppose it, but also because the effects would weaken Mehmed Ali; for Britain it made more sense to ally itself with the declining Empire than with the ambitious Mehmed Ali. In the summer of 1838 the two parties signed the Treaty of Balta Liman that from 1840 onwards was supposed to apply to Egypt. Possibly negotiations were speeded up after March 1838 when Mehmed Ali sought complete independence from the Porte and even proposed to pay for it. Mehmed Ali first refused to abide by the treaty but its tariff effects quickly affected local industries and craftsmen, many of whom went out of business. The treaty divided by ten Ottoman import tariffs for some goods; larger state-owned factories, however, seemed to decline already earlier as considerations of patronage and co-optation prevailed over considerations of efficiency and production. State monopolies were to be terminated, but in some cases survived for a few more years.¹⁷ The major effects of the treaty were not the destruction of existing industries, but the obstacles that it put in the way of establishing new ones for almost a century.

In July 1840 the European powers met in London and signed the Convention for the Pacification of the Levant which threatened Mehmed Ali with reprisals should he continue military action against the Sultan.

A month later France, initially critical of Balta Liman, signed the convention, depriving Mehmed Ali of any remaining hope of external support. In August the Sultan addressed an ultimatum to Mehmed Ali, requesting the evacuation of most of Syria. When Mehmed Ali refused, British and Ottoman troops landed in Beirut, while British vessels took position off Alexandria. Officialising the new balance of power, the Ottoman *firman* (edict) of 1841 established Mehmed Ali as the ruler of Egypt and Sudan for life; his title was hereditary and in Ottoman tradition would pass on to whoever at a moment of succession was his oldest male descendent. In the process, the *firman* delineated the borders of Egypt which included all the populated areas of the Nile Valley and Delta but less desert areas and a shorter coast line. Egypt subsequently expanded to its current size through a number of treaties, sometimes imposed on its neighbours. The British pushed the border with the then Ottoman Empire (today's border with Israel) east of Sinai in 1907; the border with Italian-occupied Libya was drawn in 1925.¹⁸ Simultaneously, the *firman* emphasized Ottoman suzerainty, with the obligation for Egypt to respect all international treaties signed by the Empire including Balta Liman and to cut its army to 18,000 men, which spelled the end of Egyptian expansionism.

However, the loss of decision-making power in the economic sphere did not at that stage call into question the effects of centralization and continued efforts at state building. Mehmed Ali's successors inherited an administration, an army, reduced in size but well organized, and even an economy that allowed them to assert and consolidate their rule.¹⁹ Ibrahim only briefly ruled the country in 1848 after illness prevented his father from presiding over its destiny; he died in the same year, survived for another few months by his ailing father. His uncle Abbas (and grandson of Mehmed Ali) who came to power in late 1848 further invested in infrastructure, even though, prudent and circumspect, he did not commit Egypt to the Suez Canal project. In 1851 he contracted Robert Stephenson to build the first Egyptian railway line that, inaugurated in 1854, would soon link Alexandria to Cairo and necessarily also serve British interests; he also paved and improved numerous roads, including the one from Cairo to Suez. He built Abbasiyya, a new extension to Cairo, which housed government administrations and military installations. Under the constraints of the Balta Liman treaty he partly reformed the remaining monopolies but refused to abolish them completely. Though closer to the Porte than Mehmed Ali, he in 1851–2 successfully resisted Ottoman attempts to weaken his position. Externally he continued to benefit from the yet undecided balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean, internally from the absence of any domestic challengers, except for disgruntled members of his own family whom he had alienated.

Assassinated in 1854, Abbas was succeeded by Said, one of Mehmed Ali's sons, who in 1856 in spite of British and Ottoman reservations granted de Lesseps the concession to build the Suez Canal. He invested in other infrastructure, construction, and administrative reform projects to 'modernize' the country and in particular Cairo. Once again the idea was to further strengthen the position of the dynasty and the country as a key resource for the former to draw on. However, unlike his predecessors Said began to rely heavily on foreign loans which he largely obtained from European banks. Although the capacity to borrow initially reflected a degree of creditworthiness, matters increasingly escaped control and mortgaged the future of the regime and the country. Said rationalized conscription, definitely ended monopolies, and opened Egypt to large-scale European immigration.²⁰ In 1858 he promulgated a new land law which to all intents and purposes introduced private ownership of land. At the time no independent landed class emerged as Abbas in the tradition of his predecessors bestowed land on members of the royal family and friends to obtain their loyalty. However, another step had been made to tie to the country first some and then growing numbers of its inhabitants.

Ismail who succeeded Said in 1863 continued to invest heavily in infrastructure to expand irrigated land on which two to three annual crops could be harvested.²¹ As Mehmed Ali priority he gave priority to cash crops, in particular cotton that thanks to the decline of production during the American Civil War fetched high prices on the world market. Simultaneously, the construction of the Suez Canal and related expenses

further increased Egyptian public debt, especially as the end of the American civil war and the return of American producers led to the collapse of the cotton price. Curiously laid into the hands of Napoleon III, the arbitration in 1864 of a dispute with the Paris-based Canal company became as costly as the transformation of Cairo into a European-looking capital for the pompous inauguration ceremonies of the Canal in 1869. For the occasion, an Opera House was built and inaugurated with Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto*; two years later, in December 1871, it featured the premiere of Verdi's *Aida*, though in the absence of the composer. While seeking complete independence from the Ottomans, Ismail in 1867 only obtained the honorific but hereditary title of khedive which nonetheless elevated him to a symbolically higher status than other provincial rulers. More consequential was the creation in 1866 of the first Egyptian diet or parliament of sorts. Though selected in 'guided', indirect elections that hardly enthused the – male – voters, the Consultative Assembly of Delegates (*Majlis shura al-nawwab*) established a new link between the ruler and strategically important constituencies, not least in the countryside. In the best of parliamentary traditions worldwide, the Assembly was supposed to help resolve the fiscal crisis.

Under Abbas and his successors Egypt underwent important sociological change that further consolidated it as a political entity. In this period the rather sharp division of the country into a small group of privileged identifying largely through language and descent with the Ottoman Empire and the vast majority of the others began to weaken. Whether Muslims or Christians, the latter overwhelmingly spoke Arabic but also Greek, Maltese, and other languages. Abbas began to appoint individuals from wealthier agrarian and educated urban backgrounds to the higher echelons of the army and bureaucracy, thus creating upward social mobility that gradually broadened 'the Ottoman elite in Egypt at the beginning of the nineteenth century into the Ottoman-Egyptian elite of the middle years, and finally, at the turn of the century and beyond, into an Egyptian elite'.²² Among the social climbers was Ahmad 'Urabi who in 1881 would lead the opposition and then the insurrection against foreign interference and occupation. Though limited to a limited circle, the process contributed to bridge the cleavage between those at the top and the many others at the bottom and thus to the emergence of an Egyptian 'nation'. This being said, the khedivial cabinets, the military top brass remained Ottoman preserves while many popular representations continued to depict the dynasty and its retainers as foreigners even when they spoke Arabic.

Foreign Domination

The considerable independence that the successive rulers of Egypt had managed to obtain from the major global powers and to defend over some seven decades came to an end in 1876.²³ The growing number and role of Europeans in the country necessarily reinforced the impact of the capitulations, agreements under which the Porte over centuries had agreed to grant a variety of privileges to the subjects of other powers. Simultaneously, the large amounts of debt that Said and Ismail had contracted from European creditors could no longer be honoured. 'By 1876 [Egypt's international debt] stood at just over £(sterling)68 million, necessitating annual interest payments of nearly £5,700,000, or some 60 per cent of what were then believed to be the country's yearly revenues Like the leaders of the Ottoman Empire and many large states in Latin America, Said Pasha and Ismail Pasha had taken advantage of the fast-growing capital markets of London and Paris to borrow increasingly large sums of money both in support of their own dynastic ambitions and for the development of their country's infrastructures in terms of railways, canals, and ports which they believed necessary for future economic progress'.²⁴ Vanity of the rulers, dubious banking practices, and the arbitration by Napoleon III did the rest. Various attempts to scrape through failed to restore solvency, including the sale in 1875 of the Egyptian shares in the Suez Canal company for £4 million to the British treasury. With the support of their respective governments, the creditor banks imposed the creation of the Caisse de la dette publique in May and the Dual Control regime in November 1876. Managed by four commissioners, one of them Evelyn Baring, created Lord Cromer in 1892, the Caisse handed over money paid by the Egyptian government to the banks. Established under the

Goschen-Joubert agreement, Dual Control put two controllers general, one British, the other French, in charge of government revenues and expenditure.²⁵

The establishment of Dual Control and the following Commission of Inquiry into Egypt's finances led to a far-reaching reform programme elaborated by Britain and France. Including the transfer of much of the Khedive's own wealth to the public purse, it also created the position of prime minister intended to remove the Khedive from policy making. Including a British and a French minister, the newly formed government under Nubar Pasha (Nubar Nubarian) in August 1878 prepared various measures to balance the books that were heavily contested in the country. Presenting himself now as the defender of Egyptians against the 'European government', the Khedive recalled the Assembly to debate and amplify popular concerns. Nubar's cause was not helped by the 'mixed courts' that he had established in 1876 with the consent of the capitulatory powers to streamline the administration of justice which was fragmented between Egyptian and numerous foreign consular courts. The 'mixed courts' drew considerable opposition as they seemed to strengthen the role of foreigners on the bench as well as in the court room. With the support of military officers, many of them decommissioned for budgetary reasons, the Khedive in early 1879 replaced the 'European' with a purely Egyptian ministry and proposed to the Assembly a draft constitution and electoral law alongside a less punitive schedule for the repayment of external debt. Thanks to the 'coerced' cooperation of the Ottoman Sultan, Britain and France forced Ismail to abdicate in favour of Tawfiq, his eldest son. In June 1879 Ismail on the royal yacht *Mahrusa* sailed into his Italian exile.

However, Dual Control did not replace the existing Egyptian administration nor the broader institutional framework established by Mehmed Ali and his successors. Rather it was embodied by agencies that were added to the existing institutions to complement and supervise them. In many visible ways the Egyptian government and its ramifications continued to exist and deal with the inhabitants and their concerns. Against budgetary and other odds, the state-like structures built over the 19th century remained in place and more or less continued to function. However, contested, subsequent institutional innovations imposed by foreigners such as the creation of the office of prime minister remained embedded in the existing institutional framework or compatible with it.

Simultaneously the Dual Control regime and its ramifications further strengthened the sense of foreign domination felt by a growing part of the population and their perception of 'us' disempowered Egyptians struggling against 'them' powerful Europeans. Numerous Egyptians suffered from fiscal policies entirely devoted to the interests of foreign creditors. On the back of the earlier identity-generating side effects of state building and however limited attempts at nation-building the process reinforced an imagined community of Egyptians and thus something like an Egyptian nation. Related debates were launched, relayed, and amplified by an increasingly lively press including the *Al-Ahram* newspaper established, precisely in 1876, by immigrants from the Levant. A politicized public debated, deliberated, demonstrated, defended interests, often passionately, but in its majority converged towards the legitimacy of the Egyptian cause.

Budget cuts under Dual Control downsized the Egyptian armed forces by almost two thirds of their numerical strength. As a result, yet larger numbers of military officers were decommissioned and lost (part of) their salaries. In September 1881 a protest demonstration of officers in front of Abdin Palace in Cairo put Tawfiq and his foreign backers on the defensive. For a year, a coalition of interests by and large united the victims of austerity, military and civilian. Many of them saw themselves on the receiving end of an Ottoman ruling group almost naturally in league with other foreigners and supported by some wealthy Egyptians, often of Levantine descent; under the slogan 'Egypt for the Egyptians!' they rallied around Ahmad 'Urabi, one of the few 'native' Egyptian officers who had risen to prominence in the armed forces.²⁶ Briefly echoed in the Assembly in early 1882, the conflict culminated in violent riots

between ‘Egyptians’ and ‘foreigners’ in Alexandria in June. The British shelled the city from the sea and then disembarked troops; first routed by the Egyptians at Kafr al-Dawwar, their subsequent victory at Tall al-Kabir initiated some seventy years of military occupation. Even though there was little overt opposition after ‘Urabi’s defeat, occupation, and some of its repressive excesses like the executions after the Dinshawi incident in 1906 could only reinforce bonds of solidarity that united ‘Egyptians’ against ‘foreigners’.²⁷ Partly from within broader debates about responses to external challenges, not least the role to be played by religious teachings and institutions, new nationalist voices emerged, ranging from the Muslim scholars Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abdu to the Watani (Homeland) Party of Mustapha Kamil and the Umma (Nation) Party around Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid and the Jarida Group.²⁸ Ironically, one might say, the debt administration and the occupation had succeeded in reshaping and ‘colonizing’ minds, perceptions, passions, and practices to an extent that challenged domination.²⁹

Often referred to as the ‘veiled protectorate’, the occupation did not immediately and entirely affect the British preference for indirect rule based on prudence as well as considerations of cost. Even the British military presence was only perpetuated when the Mahdist revolt in Sudan seemed to require it. After Baring, now Sir Evelyn, returned to Egypt in 1883 as the British agent and consul general (representative of the British government, relabeled high commissioner in 1914 and ambassador after formal independence), British action became more interventionist. However, even then Nubar, reappointed prime minister, managed to reach a deal under which Egypt assisted the British against the Mahdists in exchange for greater freedom of action in some areas of domestic policy. Although, the number of British officials increased considerably, by 1887 only 366 had joined the Egyptian administration, only 39 of whom occupied higher positions; British troops in the country did not exceed 5,000 British men.³⁰ At the same time, France and other creditor countries continued to restrict or complicate British action in Egypt, in part through the Caisse. In 1899, the fiction of an Anglo-Egyptian condominium over Sudan was institutionalized and maintained.³¹ Policies markedly changed only after 1888: ‘Though he may not have fully realized it at the time, Baring’s actions and arguments between 1883 and 1887 had helped to place Egypt on a path along which the only logical destination was not self-government but annexation. In other words, the country would now be subject to the familiar colonial process by which the more reforms were implemented, the more further reforms were seen as absolutely necessary; and that the more extensive these reforms became, the more Baring and the British believed that they could only be executed by European personnel’.³²

In 1892 Tawfiq died and was succeeded by Abbas II or Abbas Hilmi, his more independent-minded eldest son. Already two years later, the British forced Abbas to dismiss his under-secretary of war, Muhammad Maher (Mahir) and thus reminded him of his subordinate status. Abbas continued to support nationalist opponents from behind the scenes and, riding one of his hobby horses, encouraged Neo-Mamluk architecture that, contrasting with much of the European inspired buildings of the period, stressed something like an Egyptian identity.³³ In 1907 the British presided over definite delineation of Egypt’s border with the Ottoman Empire, incorporating the entire Sinai. At the beginning of World War One and the formal establishment of the British protectorate, London replaced Abbas with his more pliable uncle Kamal Husayn. After his death in 1917 the latter was succeeded by Fuad (Fu’ad) who in 1922 became the first King of Egypt. However, even under the unveiled protectorate the British continued to rule through Egyptian institutions and Egyptians. Without strengthening his domestic position, Kamal’s formal elevation to the status of Sultan made him an equal of the Sultan in Constantinople and thus symbolized the final break with the Ottoman Empire; the whiff of sovereignty attached to the title underlined Egyptian separateness.

On the ground British policies, largely identified with Cromer, considerably reduced public debt and increased government revenue on the back of additional emphasis on cotton exports, associated infrastructures, and a rural order dominated by large landowners. Completed in 1902, the old Aswan dam

(not to be confused with the larger Aswan High Dam built under Nasser) close to the Sudanese border improved irrigation throughout the year and increased yields in the entire Nile Valley. Storing the latter part of the annual flood, it allowed the nutrient-rich mud carried by the water to pass and to fertilize the land as had been the case for centuries and indeed millennia.

However, the British further weakened Egypt in at least three crucial respects. Cromer reduced the education budget to a pittance – one per cent of government expenditure in 1902. Restricted to fee paying students, secondary education was limited to an intake no larger than the needs of the administration, largely to avoid a literate class of potential agitators. Cairo University was established by Egyptians, officially in 1908, with the help of private donations. Convinced of the benefits of free trade and partial to business interests at home, the British also failed to support the emergence of manufacturing industries, even though they did not necessarily discourage it actively.³⁴ Both policies would have a long term political and economic impact. Finally, growing British involvement eroded the policy-making capacity of Egyptian administrations, at least until a new Assembly was – partly – elected in 1913.³⁵

Towards Limited Independence

After World War One numerous Egyptians, certainly the overwhelming majority of the literate minority, began to demand more forcefully the departure of the British and full independence.³⁶ They took heart from the ‘fourteen points’ that according to US President Woodrow Wilson should govern the international order after the war. In November 1918, a few days after the armistice, several public figures around Saad (Sa’ad) Zaghlul requested a meeting with the British high commissioner, Sir Reginald Wingate, to press the cause of independence. The government in London, however, refused to meet them and to allow them to attend the Paris peace conference where they intended to defend their cause. For reasons of his own, partly to play to the popular gallery, the Sultan himself supported the demands. The initiative quickly mobilized large numbers of Egyptians who signed ‘powers of attorney’ (*tawkilat*) entitling the ‘delegation’ (*wafd*) to represent the ‘nation’. The British found the necessary pretexts to deport Zaghlul to Malta, thus prompting large-scale demonstrations, frequently referred to as the (first) Egyptian revolution. For the first time women, mostly from well-to-do families, demonstrated in public and acted collectively. Workers who since the late 19th century had begun to form still-illegal unions played an important part in the protests and organized larger strikes. Ultimately the British allowed Zaghlul to travel to Paris, though at a time when the die was cast. As the peace conference failed to grant independence to Egypt, popular contestation continued more or less uninterrupted for the following years. After the recommendations of the Milner mission Britain in February 1922 nominally granted Egypt independence but retained full control in four ‘reserved’ areas: the security of communications of the Empire, the defence of Egypt, the protection of foreign interests and local minorities, and affairs of Sudan. Decisions in all other areas were left to the Egyptian authorities which could rely on the however weakened administrative apparatus that had continued to work during the ‘veiled protectorate’. Under the 1923 constitution drafted by Egyptians, but endorsed by Britain, Sultan Fuad became King of Egypt, a title that rhetorically at least seemed to promote him to an equal of His Britannic Majesty. Although British troops remained in the country, sustained and organized collective action had won Egyptians a first victory over their occupiers.

The 1923 constitution also inaugurated the first period of institutionalized participatory politics in which a variety of political parties competed for seats in parliament and thus for influence over policy making. The members of all earlier representative bodies had been appointed by the rulers or elected indirectly; the bodies themselves had played a consultative role. Henceforth, however, putative representatives of the people turned electorate had to vie for votes. By implication, contradictory debates, deliberation, and mobilizations reinforced a feeling of common destiny, in spite, and partly because, of the many limitations and shortcomings of the process ranging from illiteracy to vote buying and rigging.

Appealing to Egyptians of most social backgrounds, the nationalist Wafd under Zaghlul emerged as the major political party and throughout the 1920s and 30s won all general elections save one. Suspicious of participatory politics that might throw into question his own privileges, the King nonetheless managed to keep the Wafd outside government or to cut short the tenure of its prime ministers. Exploiting his constitutional powers to the full and even overstepping them, he preferred to govern with minority parties like the Liberal Constitutionalists or his own cronies. Rhetorically at least all parties enjoying some popularity were nationalist in the sense of anti-British; this applies in particular to the new organizations that from the late 1920s emerged among the less well-to-do classes, even if the Muslim Brothers and Young Egypt emphasized other identities as well. The King's choice of prime minister in 1930, Ismail (Isma'il) Sidqi, with his own nationalist rhetoric closed down parliament and through a new constitution further accentuated the authoritarian traits of the political regime; his resignation in 1933 led to the restoration of the 1923 constitution. The Sidqi period also strikingly illustrates the limits of the allegedly 'liberal' features of the monarchy.

Economically, the post-war ferment led to initiatives to 'develop' the country.³⁷ Already the 'Commission pour le commerce et l'industrie' formed in 1916 called for the industrialization of Egypt and government support for such policies. Frequently inspired by considerations of economic nationalism, these initiatives naturally contributed to further strengthen national feeling, even though their success was limited and they often turned out to be far less nationalistic than they appeared. Established in 1920 by Talaat (Tal'at) Harb to fund national industries, Bank Misr by the late 1920s happily funded joint ventures between Egyptian and foreign owners of capital. Contrary to received wisdom, Egypt at the time was not a battlefield on which nascent 'national' capital systematically challenged foreign capital. Competition rather opposed various local investors who linked up with foreign investors and simultaneously sought to mobilize state controlled resources to prevail over similar such alliances.³⁸ A major, heavily authoritarian, push for state intervention was made by Ismail Sidqi appointed just after the Great Depression. His efforts benefited from the autonomy to set trade tariffs that Egypt after the expiry of restrictions since Balta Liman recovered in the same year. Combining high import dues with other types of regulatory intervention, his showpiece was a state-guaranteed private sector sugar monopoly. He also gave his blessing to the 'piastre plan (*mashru' qirsh*)', a scheme launched by Young Egypt to establish, via public subscription, industries owned by the people. In due course a factory was opened that produced tarbushes, the headgear worn by Ottoman gentleman that had become a symbol of Egyptianness when top hats, boaters, and Homburgs began to invade the country.

Continued widespread opposition to the British presence in 1936 led to the negotiation and signature of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Alliance.³⁹ In spite of some British concessions the treaty did not establish Egypt as a state that could be called independent. In three of the four 'reserved' areas the treaty maintained large British prerogatives. With regard to the security of the communications of the Empire and the defence of Egypt proper it entailed the progressive relocation of British military personnel to the Canal zone; the closure within eight years of the British naval base in Alexandria; and peace time limits to the number of British military personnel, which was not to exceed some ten thousand troops and four hundred Royal Air Force (RAF) pilots. However, there were no restrictions on British use of Egyptian air space, even in peace. In the event of war, no limits would apply to the numbers of British military personnel; Egyptian infrastructures such as railway lines and roads would be at their disposition; and on British request the Egyptian authorities had to impose martial law and censorship. With regard to Sudan, the treaty allowed the return of Egyptian troops but simultaneously endorsed the 1899 Anglo-Egyptian Condominium Agreement that in actual fact provided no more than a symbolic role for Egypt. Concluded for an initial period of twenty years, the treaty could in practice have remained in force forever as decisions about the future of the bilateral 'alliance' that it established would necessarily be the subject of any renegotiation or new treaty (and thus involve British consent).

Nonetheless, the treaty transferred full responsibility for domestic policing and security issues to the government of Egypt, including the security of foreigners and minorities. Egypt was allowed to abolish all legal privileges for foreigners granted under the capitulations. The 1937 Montreux convention signed by Britain and all other capitulatory powers duly abrogated the capitulations; the Mixed Tribunals that under the latter adjudicated legal disputes involving foreigners ceased to exist in 1949, ten years before the date established by earlier agreements.

Among the advances were also the exchange of ambassadors (in lieu of high commissioners) and British support for Egypt's membership in the League of Nations. Egypt would be free to sign international treaties provided they did not contradict its treaty with Britain. In spite of its limitations, the latter therefore strengthened the decision-making powers of Egyptians in some areas.

During World War Two the British greatly reinforced their military presence in the country. As authorized by the 1936 treaty, Britain basically reoccupied Egypt and required its government to take onerous measures ranging from censorship to logistical support and the adaptation of the economy to the war effort. The events strengthened nationalist sentiment and in some quarters led to more or less open support for the axis powers led by Germany which advanced on Alexandria and bombed Egyptian airports. In this context the British got increasingly concerned about the pro-axis sympathies in and around government. In February 1942 British tanks surrounded Abdin palace in Cairo, while the British ambassador, Sir Miles Lampson, forced King Faruq to choose between abdicating or appointing Mustapha al-Nahhas as new prime minister. Leader of the Wafd since the death of Zaghlul, Nahhas unambiguously supported the allied war effort that a few months later led to the victory at Al-Alamayn.

While humiliating the King, the pillar of Britain's presence in Egypt, the measure also dented the nationalist credentials of the Wafd Party that after decades of opposition and ostracism was put in charge – and accepted. Weakening the most powerful domestic actors in Egyptian politics, the incident ultimately also weakened the British position – an outcome encapsulated in the metaphor of the three-legged stool.⁴⁰ It strengthened the extra-parliamentary and more ideologically minded forces that recruited from less well-off constituencies and that would increasingly challenge the monarchy before its demise in 1952. In an attempt to reduce domestic pressure, the Wafd ministry in September 1942 legalized trade unions; rather than repressing them as did its predecessors, it henceforth attempted to instrumentalize them. However, the law included numerous restrictions and did not apply to agricultural labourers and government employees. Moreover, martial law imposed during World War Two and again during the Palestine War heavily restricted industrial action.⁴¹

Partly because of British heavy-handedness, partly because of the burden it placed on Egyptians, the war considerably strengthened Egypt as an imagined community, even though it weakened the Wafd that traditionally spoke on its behalf. Simultaneously, the war led to an increase in investment in manufacturing industries and infrastructures as well as to inflation from which suffered in particular the less well off. Both trends would contribute to shape the post-war period.

In different ways and within limits, the conditions that prevailed in the Eastern Mediterranean in the first six to seven decades of the 19th century provided the possibility for a relatively independent political regime to emerge in Egypt and to consolidate. Elementary state building activities such as monopolizing the use of force, levying taxes, and imposing conscription could be – and were – pursued with considerable success, as were at times more ambitious projects of regional expansion and state sponsored economic development at home. Continuously dominating the inhabited parts of Egypt, the rulers through the policies they pursued and the institutions they created shaped the lives and conduct of the population and its generational descendants. Largely by default, partly through co-optation the shared exposure to the same institutions and therefore shared experience created solidarities among the subjects, be it in

opposition to the rulers. The process was well advanced by the time foreign interference, hitherto brief or limited, substantially increased with the debt administration and military occupation of the country. Such interference more than anything else favoured – which is not to say accomplished – the emergence and construction of a community of solidarity or ‘nation’ above and beyond visible differences such as faith and religious practice. It also strengthened bonds between some of those of ‘indigenous’ and ‘Ottoman’ origin or complexion, both groups now being dominated by Western Europeans.

Especially in the second half of the 19th century the relative success at state building was marred by a visible and gaping resource gap. Projects, ambitions, and the very attempt to ensure the independence of the rulers consumed more resources than the country produced. The result was the debt crisis in the late 1870s that led to heavy foreign interference and military occupation. Foreign domination further affected resources available for Egyptians as it entailed numerous constraints on policy-making, on top of debt-related financial transfers to the creditors. It heavily pushed the country onto a path of externally defined (under)development. Obviously, this is not meant to belittle Egyptian attempts to remedy this situation, nor to ignore some ‘positive’ fallouts from foreign domination such as infrastructure that embellished it. Nor does the observation answer the broader question why some parts of the world including Egypt found it difficult to resist European expansionism. The following chapters will illustrate how the historically constituted relative strengths – in terms of institutions and community of solidarity – and pervading weaknesses – in terms of resources – have influenced political and economic developments in Egypt and its external relations after World War Two when the quest for formal political independence could no longer be arrested and succeeded.

¹ For the role of the Ottomans in Egypt, see for instance Sayyid-Marsot, 1984; Sayyid-Marsot, 2007; Crecelius, 1998; Fahmy, 1998; Hanna, 1998. For the Ottoman Empire, see Holt, 1966; Incilik, 1977; Findley, 1980.

² On the Mamlouks, see for instance Sayyid-Marsot, 1984, 1–23; Sayyid-Marsot, 1989, 67ff; Hanna, 2014; Crecelius, 1998.

³ For the invasion and occupation, see for instance Dykstra, 1998; Laurens, 1997.

⁴ For a detailed account, see Sayyid-Marsot, 1984, 36–74; Fahmy, 1998.

⁵ On the balance of power between the Sultan and Mehmed Ali, see Sayyid-Marsot, 1984, 196–207.

⁶ Sayyid-Marsot, 1984, 196.

⁷ Fahmy, 1998.

⁸ ‘Political field’ in the sense of Zubaida, 2001, 145, which corresponds to ‘arena’ preferred by Sluglett, 1976; ‘imagined community’ as defined by Anderson, 2006.

⁹ Marsot, 1984, 100–195; Fahmy, 1998. For social and economic conditions and policies in the 19th century see also: Richards, 1982; Shaw, 1962; Tucker, 1985; Issawi, 1982; Owen, 1969; Owen, 1993; GREPO, 1977; GREPO, 1982; Cuno, 1992; Delanoue, 1982; Baer, 1962; Baer, 1969; Holt, 1968.

¹⁰ Toledano, 1990, 113.

¹¹ On *corvée* and conscription, see Fahmy, 1998, Sayyid-Marsot, 1984, Ehud Toledano, 1990, 18ff, 188ff.

¹² See Fahmy, 1997, 268, ‘Nevertheless, the army did unwittingly contribute to the rise of Egyptian nationalism by homogenizing the experience of tens of thousands of Egyptians over a period that exceeded twenty years by instilling in them the feeling of hatred of the “Ottomans”...[who commanded the troops]’.

¹³ Sayyid-Marsot, 1984, 196–231; Fahmy, 1998; Ibrahim, 1998.

¹⁴ Sayyid-Marsot, 1984, 197.

¹⁵ Sayyid-Marsot, 1984, 231.

¹⁶ For details, see Sayyid-Marsot, 1984, 232–248; Fahmy, 1998; Owen, 1993.

¹⁷ See Sayyid-Marsot, 1984; Fahmy, 1998.

¹⁸ Ellis, 2018; Owen, 2004.

¹⁹ On the direct successors Abbas and Said, see Toledano, 1990, 1–35; Hunter, 1998.

²⁰ On the growing numbers and influence of foreigners in Egypt, see also Ilbert, 1996.

²¹ On the period of Ibrahim, see Hunter, 1998; Owen 1993.

²² Toledano, 1990, 22; process accompanied by increasing replacement in official documents of Turkish by Arabic.

²³ For details, see Owen, 1993; Owen, 2004; Landes, 1958.

²⁴ Owen, 2004, 95, referring to Hamza, 1944, appendices II and III, and to Cromer, 1908, 11.

²⁵ For Dual Control and events leading up to it, see Landes, 1958; Owen, 1993.

²⁶ For politics in the late 1870s, the ‘Urabi revolt, and British occupation, see Schoelch, 1981; Reed, 1998; Daly, 1998; Tignor, 1966.

²⁷ Deeb, 1979, 2.

²⁸ On nationalism and these debates, see: Hourani, 1983; Gershoni and Jankowski, 1986; Wendell, 1971; Baron, 2005; Reid, 2002; Elsadda, 2012.

²⁹ Mitchell, 1988.

³⁰ Owen, 2004, 237–241.

³¹ Daly, 1986.

³² Owen, 2004, 233

³³ Owen, 2004, 273, referring to Raymond, Alleaume, and Leclant, 2000, 401; Raymond, 2001; Reid, 2002, 239–242.

³⁴ Owen, 2004, 305–315.

³⁵ On British policy, see Daly, 1998; Owen, 2001, 239–242; on Cairo University see Reid, 2002.

³⁶ For the period after World War One, see: Sayyid-Marsot, 1977; Vatikiotis, 1991; Deeb, 1979; Botman, 1998; Baron, 2005; Schulze, 1981.

³⁷ For economic policies in that period, see Wahba, 1994, 24–69; Owen and Pamuk, 1998, 30–50; Beinin, 1998a.

³⁸ See Vitalis, 1995, xii–xvi, 26, 179ff.

³⁹ For details on politics and external affairs in the 1930s and during World War Two, see Vatikiotis, 1991, Part IV; Botman, 1998; Sayyid-Marsot, 1989.

⁴⁰ Warburg, 1985.

⁴¹ See Tignor, 1984, 223ff.

The Monarchy

Far less 'liberal' than generally assumed, the monarchy no doubt displayed the drappings of a parliamentary democracy, but in actual fact was dominated by the King, his associates as well as owners of land and capital. After 1945 it faced growing challenges from within less affluent but increasingly educated and politicized constituencies that felt disenfranchised in terms of both political participation and distribution of wealth. Even in the economic sphere the limits that cronyism and the quasi servitude of agricultural labourers in a largely rural economy imposed on the scope of markets entailed numerous illiberal features. In spite of some foreign policy achievements, in particular the establishment of the Arab League, the monarchy's inability to obtain complete independence, to negotiate the departure of remaining British troops, and to avoid defeat in the first Palestine War further weakened it domestically. Oscillating between authoritarian and repressive responses on the one hand and a modest degree of redistribution and support for manufacturing industries on the other, the King and the other – propertied – groups dominating the monarchy were finally overthrown in the 1952 military coup. While able to mobilize the resources to implement limited economic and social reforms, the monarchy was unable to ensure its own survival; however, its demise as a political regime had no impact on the survival of Egypt as a state and as a community of loyalty, often abbreviated as a 'nation'.

Political Change

The end of World War Two did not immediately have a major impact on the monarchy as a political regime. However, the allied victory gave additional impetus to the demands for full political independence vigorously expressed since the 1919 'revolution' that unfolded in the wake of World War One. The British themselves had implicitly recognized their inability to retain permanent control over Egypt when in February 1942 they forced the King *manu militari* to appoint a wafdist ministry under PM Nahhas. While the ousted cabinet had sympathized with the axis powers, Germany, Italy, and Japan, the Wafd incarnated opposition to British domination and had been established in 1919 precisely to that purpose. In essence, the British only managed to hold on to Egypt by subcontracting indirect rule to a party that accepted the arrangement out of expediency, but conviction. Partly discrediting the Wafd, the move ended up strengthening more principled opponents of the British presence in Egypt, not the British.

Once guns around the world had fallen silent, Britain's position in Egypt became increasingly tenuous; for Egyptians hostile to the axis the last reason to accommodate occupation had disappeared and a new post-imperialist and post-colonial world seemed within easy reach. Promised or even advocated by powerful voices among the victorious allies themselves, the independence of foreign dominated countries appeared all the more tangible as the war had exhausted the European powers and led to the rise of the new superpowers. As Britain and France precariously tried to cling on to the remnants of their crumbling colonial empires, the US and the USSR entered into a fierce competition for global influence that quickly spread to these countries. Ultimately ending up in new forms of domination, the expansion of the spheres of influence of the US and the USSR was premised on the demise of European imperialism and, accessorially, on claims to defend self-determination and freedom, even though the two superpowers defined them differently.

In Egypt the domestic balance of power under the surface of institutional continuity progressively shifted against the actors and forces whom the majority of Egyptians considered allies or even stooges of the British. First among them was the King who represented a dynasty that the British, in spite of the events of 1942 and earlier interference, consistently shored up since they had occupied Egypt in 1882. Supposed to enact the new form of indirect rule established by the 1923 constitution, the King already then had to rely on British support to impose himself. The geographical origins of the dynasty and its 'Turkish'

background further affected its legitimacy and allowed opponents to depict it as a mercenary enterprise in the service of imperialism rather than the 'nation'. The other prime target of discontent were those large-scale owners of land and capital who had thrown in their lot with the Palace, benefited from its patronage, and in return provided it with a social basis of sorts. Some of them the King had appointed to the seats – two fifths of the total – that he could fill in the Senate from where, in turn, they influenced legislation and supported the monarchy. Other major owners of land and capital were not necessarily direct allies of the Palace, but their interests were intimately tied up with the monarchy as a political regime. Though wedded to property and compromised by the 1942 events, the Wafd under Nahhas won an apparent rather than real landslide victory in the 1950 general elections. More and more challenged by the new groups and organizations like the MB that began to emerge from the late 1920s onwards, the new Wafdist government unilaterally declared full independence. The three-legged stool had become more shaky yet.

However, in spite of deepening political divisions, instability, and violence the monarchy produced a number of policies intended to bring about noticeable economic and social change. Some of these policies showed bigger results than the powerful and enduring caricature of the monarchy as a corrupt, dysfunctional, and backward regime would have it. The declining legitimacy of the King, the Wafd, and other established parties and their numerous shortcomings had not weakened them and the political regime to an extent that prevented political initiative and action.

The Political Regime

After World War Two the political regime formally remained governed by the 1923 constitution that had established Egypt as a parliamentary monarchy; temporarily replaced in 1930, the 1923 constitution had been reinstated in 1935.¹ On paper the 1936 treaty had reinforced its reach and weight as it ended British privileges in the 'reserved areas' other than the security and defence of the Suez Canal. Numerous events including the 1942 incident nonetheless reminded Egyptians of the continued presence of the British and their impact on the polity, politics, and policies. Above and beyond such impact and interference, the sweeping powers enjoyed by the King made of Egypt a monarchy with a constitution rather than a constitutional monarchy.

Although the constitution did not invest the King with sovereignty, it granted him important powers that, sometimes ambiguously phrased, weakened the checks and balances that it established in parallel. The King certainly exercised executive powers 'through' the council of ministers', but remained their ultimate depository; ministers needed to obtain the confidence of parliament, but were at the same time appointed and revoked by the King. Laws had to be voted by parliament, but it exercised its legislative powers 'jointly' with the King. In addition, the King could declare martial law, a declaration that he had to submit to parliament only after a fortnight. The frequently invoked 'liberal' character of the monarchy was further contradicted by other provisions that for instance recognized Islam as the religion of the state. If the constitution in a slight contradiction recognized the fundamental liberties including the freedom of belief and worship, it nonetheless included a variety of caveats that left the definition of these liberties to subsequent legislation and limited their extent with references to public order. Failing to provide for the equality of men and women it allowed the electoral law to deny the latter the right to vote and stand for election. Coherently, in this sense, it restricted access to the throne to the male descendants of Mehmed (Muhammad) Ali. It also left personal status issues in the hands of the various religious authorities which, unsurprisingly, were socially conservative and gender biased. Interestingly though, outside state institutions all languages had legal status, for instance in private commercial and legal transactions, even though Arabic was declared the official language.

Legislative powers were vested simultaneously in the King and in the two houses of Parliament; executive powers were also vested in the King, even though they were exercised through the Council of

Ministers and all royal decisions had to be countersigned by the Prime Minister (PM, terminologically correct the President of the Council of Ministers) and the minister most directly concerned. However, they were not responsible to Parliament but to the King who also appointed higher civil servants and military officers. The King moreover acted as supreme commander of the armed forces and had the right to dissolve parliament.

In spite of provisions recognizing the independence of the judiciary in principle, details were again left to subsequent legislation. The most obvious infringement on the separation of powers was the provision allowing the King to appoint two fifths of the members of the Upper House, the Senate. (*Majlis al-shuyukh*) The remaining seats in the Senate and all seats in the Lower House, the Chamber of Deputies (*Majlis al-nuwwab*), were filled by election. Eligibility to the Senate was conditioned on administrative or military rank or property. In practice these provisions were meant to strengthen an alliance between the Palace and the propertied classes, in particular large landowners.

The short-lived 1930 constitution imposed by the then PM Isma'il Sidqi had maintained most of the provisions of the 1923 document. However, it enabled the King to appoint 60 per cent of the senators and it introduced two-stage elections for the Lower House; the first remained governed by universal male suffrage, but the eligibility in the second was restricted to owners of a certain amount of land or other property. While fundamental liberties continued to be recognized in principle, the public prosecutor could ask the Court of Appeals to suspend newspapers for up to three months. The 1930 constitution was abrogated in 1934 and the 1923 constitution was reinstated in 1935.

One innovation of the 1930 constitution was the appointment of the highest Muslim authorities including the Shaykh al-Azhar by the King, an issue was left in limbo as legislation called for by the 1923 constitution had never been passed. After the return to the 1923 constitution, the formal link between the rulers and the Muslim authorities was again weakened, a state of affairs that prevented neither King nor ministers from seeking to influence the latter. Dar al-Ifta, the office of the Mufti, had been affiliated to the Ministry of Justice since the late 19th century, be it only because it had to endorse death sentences issued by the ordinary courts. Nonetheless, government influence on Muslim authorities and the areas left to their appreciation was as limited as it was indirect. Government influence on the Christian authorities including the Pope and Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church was basically limited to the effects of minority status. Religious doctrinal issues and personal status issues such as marriage and divorce remained outside the remit of direct government action.

The period after 1945 did not witness many changes to the formally established institutions. The main innovation was the creation of the State Council in 1946 that in many ways resembled the French *Conseil d'état*. Neither explicitly anticipated, nor precluded by the constitution, the State Council became the highest administrative court which until the creation of a Supreme Court in 1969 (see below) formally at least exercised judicial control over the constitutionality of legislation.² At the same time, though, the Palace abundantly used the sweeping powers granted by the constitution to influence the workings of the institutions, erode checks and balances, rule by decree, or amend legislation. Beginning in the early 1930s, broadcasting was and remained a state monopoly.

All their shortcomings notwithstanding, the institutions established under the 1923 constitution and subsequent legislation (or earlier legislation endorsed by the constitution) channelled much of the political activity in the country, partly on the ground, partly as a focus of debate; by implication, it strengthened Egypt as the 'political field' or 'arena'³ within which Egyptians competed for power and resources. Through cooperation and conflict unfolding within its confines, this arena in turn strengthened the perception of a common destiny and thus of Egypt as an imagined community and nation.

The Major Actors and their Social Background

Continuity also marked the political personnel that populated the formal political institutions. Enthroned in 1936 upon the death of his father, King Faruq had attained legal majority but not necessarily the maturity that would have helped him to discharge his duties. He continued to surround himself with courtiers who, removed from any oversight and transparency, continued to plot anything from business and political deals to smear campaigns and assassinations. He and his family members remained among the latifundists of the country, owning some 500,000 feddan of agricultural land.

Parliament remained dominated by the same two categories of people as before: major owners of land and capital on the one hand side, and middling peasants and (to a lesser extent) earners of salaries with a degree of formal education on the other; the latter have frequently been referred to as 'effendis' (as individuals) or the 'effendiyya' (as a social category). According to one source, 60 per cent of the deputies elected in 1950, were landowners and some 14 per cent owners of capital.⁴ Hardly any member of parliament belonged to less privileged professional and income groups such as small peasants, agricultural labourers, workers, employees, lower ranking civil servants, small-scale merchants, or manufacturers. Men from these social backgrounds could vote but exclusion mechanisms based on wealth, education, and status generally prevented them from standing for election which meant that, if at all, they were represented by deputies who did not actually share their material interests.⁵

The higher echelons of the administration, the judiciary and the armed forces were dominated by the same categories of people that dominated parliament. The major exception were the beneficiaries of new rules governing the recruitment of military officers in the wake of the 1936 treaty with Britain. The treaty allowed Egypt to increase the size of its armed forces which in turn prompted the government to recruit cadets from less well-to-do backgrounds.⁶ The results would prove to be as fateful as those of similar decisions in the mid-19th century that led to the rise of 'Urabi.

The middling peasants and medium landowners in Parliament generally were members of the Wafd, which also attracted the majority of voters from these backgrounds. However, since the 1930s, the Wafd had lost the support of numerous, though far from all, major owners of land and capital. Some of those who left joined or supported the smaller parties in parliament, the Liberal Constitutionalists and the Saadistists (Sa'adists). Over the same period increasing numbers of effendis deserted the Wafd, largely to join or support new parties and political organizations that were not represented in Parliament. Unlike the established parties, the latter put greater emphasis on ideology, or at least on specific values they thought Egyptians should adhere to. The large-tent Wafd stood for no more than the vaguely defined defence of the nation that boiled down to the departure of the British. The other established parties remained even less precise. In contrast, the MB, Young Egypt, and the various leftist groups in spite of gaps and inconsistencies in their platforms had more specific ideas about what an independent Egypt should look like morally, socially, economically, and politically.

In spite of its decline in popularity, the Wafd remained the largest party represented in Parliament and the established party with the largest organization across the country. Since its inception it maintained a dense network of contacts and collaborators in towns and villages who spread its message and mobilized support. This infrastructure had survived internal power struggles and the split that led to the creation of the Saadist (Sa'adist) Party in 1937. School teachers, mayors, notables, and others endowed with social capital propagated its truth, went from door to door and organized meetings. Various local and regional layers of responsibility formed a pyramid with at its top the High Command.

Conceived as a large tent for all those fighting British domination, be they Muslims or Christians, the Wafd was nonetheless heavily divided into factions based on local ties and partly contradictory interests.

Latifundists like Fuad (Fu'ad) Serag al-Din and the middling peasants earned vastly diverging incomes, not to speak of small peasants, sharecroppers, and agricultural labourers; in addition, many of the former were ultimately urban rather than rural based. Industrialists and other owners of larger sums of capital demanded policies that repeatedly collided with the priorities of major landowners, even though many of them owned land themselves and invested savings that had originated in agricultural activities. They frequently disagreed with small-scale manufacturers, merchants, and service providers who employed little if any staff (see below). Civil servants and employees, by and large living on limited incomes, the *effendiyya*, formed yet other – urban – interest groups of sorts, even though by origin and family it was closely connected to small owners of capital and land. Independently of their wealth and family background, professionals, intellectuals, and higher civil servants attempted to build status on formal education. Alongside the middling peasants and owners of land, the *effendiyya* has generally been seen as one of the historic pillars of the Wafd that, however, increasingly crumbled as a result of disappointment and desertion. Like the majority of peasants who owned or rented small plots of land, industrial workers formed part of the party's constituency but hardly played a role in its decision-making bodies.

Over the years a deepening rift developed between the party hierarchy as represented in the High Command and the rank and file, the former concentrating considerable wealth in their hands, the latter rather little. Personal ambitions added to such diversity, even though they did not all take a turn as dramatic as the conflict between the party chairman and PM Mustapha al-Nahhas and another influential member of the High Command, Makram Ebeid (Ubaid). Nahhas dismissed Ebeid who responded with the publication of his Black Book in which he presented detailed accusations of corruption against the former. Partly overlapping sub-organizations such as the left leaning Vanguard; the Blue Shirts, a militia of sorts; the student organization; youth committees; trade unions; and irregular units fighting the British in the early 1950s recruiting from these backgrounds amplified such internal divisions or produced new ones.⁷

The Saadist Party that had split off from the Wafd and the Liberal Constitutionalist Party formed in 1922 also displayed some social diversity, even though they were largely identified with segments of the wealthier classes. Much smaller in terms of members and supporters, they both repeatedly formed or participated in ministries. Led by Ahmad Mahir and Mahmud Fahmi Nuqrashi, the Saadists emphasized their wafdist origins and heritage by naming their party after Saad (Sa'ad) Zaghlul, the historic leader of the Wafd. No doubt related to their primarily urban base, they exerted a particular, though not exclusive, attraction on owners of capital. Founded by the then PM Adli Yakan, the Liberal Constitutionalist also attracted disappointed wafdist, in particular from large land owning backgrounds. Beneath and beyond their governing body and central office they only maintained a rather modest infrastructure across the country. The Ittihad (or Unity) Party established by the Palace and the People's Party established by Isma'il Sidqi were short lived groupings that had disappeared already prior to World War Two.⁸

Established in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna in Ismailiyya,⁹ the Society of Muslim Brothers (MB, *Jama'at al-ikhwan al-muslimin*) who soon transferred their seat to Cairo, were the most influential among the new, extra-parliamentary forces in the period after 1945. Defining itself as a society (*jama'a*) seeking to strengthen – Egyptian – society through Islamic morality and appropriate action, it claimed to be more than just another party (*hizb*) that would only contribute to deepen political divisions. In contrast to the ecumenical established parties, the MB excluded Christians from membership and, should the opportunity arise, from government positions. To all intents and purposes, the MB nonetheless quickly became the most efficiently organized political organization in the country and played a significant part in its political struggles.

By the end of World War Two the organization's top-down structure with various degrees of membership had coagulated into a General Guide (sometimes referred to as supreme, *Al-murshid al-'amm*) who presided over two bodies of senior brothers, the larger (General) Consultative Council (*Majlis al-shura*), a

sort of parliament comprising some 150 members, and the smaller (General) Guidance Bureau (sometimes translated as Council, *Maktab al-irshad al-'amm*), a sort of executive comprising some 12–20 members. The latter was elected by the former whose members seemed to be co-opted more than elected. Considerable secrecy surrounded the deliberations and decisions of both. The Consultative Council also elected a secretary general from among the members of the Guidance Council who headed the administration and its various departments. The organization also maintained shock troops, a secret branch involved in assassinations and other acts of violence, and armed units that fought in the Palestine War and then against the British in the Canal Zone.

In spite of variations over time and a degree of diversity, the leaders, members and followers of the MB primarily, though not exclusively, originated from two partly overlapping categories of people. The ones owned small amounts of land or capital (or both); effendis, the others earned limited incomes as professionals, lower ranking employees, and civil servants or as students aspired to such income; yet others combined these sources of income personally or within their family. Though accounting for perhaps a half of the members, Brothers from a rural background seemed less active than those from an urban background. Hasan al-Banna himself was the son of a local imam who simultaneously worked as a self-employed watchmaker, with enough income to spend some of his time reading and writing religious texts. In their vast majority the MB were laymen; those formally trained in religious institutions were a minority. In the second half of the 1940s they counted hundreds of thousands, at some stage perhaps even a million people. Though among the earliest members of the organization, workers largely shunned it in the subsequent years. By definition male, the Brothers nonetheless set up a women's branch, the Muslim Sisters, which, however, mobilized no more than a few thousand members.

The MB vigorously campaigned for the full political independence of Egypt under a political and social order based on its own understanding of Islamic values and norms and thus the centrality of *shari'a*. Though hostile to socialism (and communism) and defending private initiative, the MB insisted on social justice, a theme particularly emphasized by Sayyid Qutb and his circle whose relations with al-Banna were frequently strained (for later developments see below). In spite of an internal organization far more streamlined than that of the Wafd, the MB suffered from similar internal divisions that would soon come to the fore.

The second most influential organization was Young Egypt (*Misr al-fatat*),¹⁰ also established as a society, but later rebranded as a party. Its leaders, members, and followers largely hailed from the same social background as the MB or, more precisely, their urban constituency. Founded in October 1933 by its long-time leader Ahmad Husayn (not to be confused with the minister), a former graduate of the Cairo law school once close to the Wafd, Young Egypt ideologically adhered to a version of Egyptian nationalism that, far more militant than that of the Wafd, also called for the unity of all Arabs and Muslims. It nonetheless advocated an economic nationalism focusing on Egypt, combined with policies in favour of the less well-off. The organization was run by the Jihad Council (*Majlis al-Jihad*), *jihad* meaning any sustained effort, not necessarily 'holy war'); the Council was chaired by the founder-leader. No less hierarchically structured than the MB, the organization referred to its ordinary members as soldiers (*junud*) and its ranking members as fighters of a however defined *jihad* (*mujahids*). The former term clearly had military, the latter at some stage probably religious connotations. Ranking members formed the militia of the Green Shirts (*Al-Qamis al-akhdar*; pl. *qumsan al-khudra*) that was, however, banned in 1938. Illustrating the fascist leanings of the organizations, the Green Shirts inspired the Blue Shirts soon formed by the Wafd which in World War Two nonetheless opposed the axis powers. Experiencing ups and downs ranging from repression to co-optation, Young Egypt changed its name to National Islamic Party in the late 1930s and to Egyptian Socialist Party (not to be confused with its communist namesake in the early 1920s) in 1948. Largely opportunistic to attract first supporters of the MB and then of the left, each of the names nonetheless emphasized one of the party's three main concerns – the defence of Egypt,

Islam, and the effendiyya – which were only approximately reflected in its motto ‘God, Fatherland, and King’. Gradually toning down references to Arab solidarities, the party increasingly stressed Islamic values and norms that seemed more popular at the time. Although the organization primarily acted outside Parliament, its vice president Ibrahim Shukri stood and obtained a seat in the 1950 elections.

Leftist political organizations were smaller and organizationally less developed than the MB and even Young Egypt. Beginning in the early 1920s, their history was marked by factionalism, sometimes elitism, and government repression. They began to reconstitute themselves in the context of anti-fascist mobilizations of the 1930s but only in 1958 united in the new Egyptian Communist Party (see below). As a matter of course, their atheism, real or alleged, did not help to attract sympathizers in an overwhelmingly pious population.¹¹ These deficits were partly compensated for by trade unions close to the left, in particular to the communists of the ‘New Dawn’ (grown out of the Peace Partisans) that played an increasingly active role after World War Two. This being said, the left in general and the unions in particular appealed to constituencies such as workers in government services and in the larger companies, students and intellectuals that compared to the overall population remained relatively small; nor were these constituencies natural supporters of the left, as amply illustrated by the students and even workers who adhered to the MB or unions that it sponsored.

Although the MB, Young Egypt, and leftist groups rhetorically invoked broader Muslim, Arab, or class solidarities, their political action remained largely restricted to Egypt. Only the MB had found followers in other countries who, however, in organizational terms largely acted independently. Only some leftist groups at times had non-Egyptians among their representatives. In actual fact, the external borders of Egypt and nationality conferred by Egyptian law remained the criteria defining political inclusion and possibilities of participation.

Naturally, openly political organizations did not monopolize the aggregation and representation of interests. A growing number of trade unions, not all on the left, defended the rights and interests of workers, though primarily of those employed in larger or medium-sized companies (which remained comparatively few and did not employ the majority of workers, see below). Though initially often close to political parties, they tended to emancipate themselves from the latter over the years.¹² Muslim and Christian religious authorities, in particular the Shaykh al-Azhar, the Mufti, and the Pope (and Patriarch) of the Coptic Orthodox Church, weighed in to defend conservative morality and the established social and economic order, not always without additional partisan motives. Numerous associations and organizations defended more specifically defined group interests. The Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Egyptian Industries, established in the early 20th century and in the early 1920s respectively, spoke on behalf of merchants, industrialists, and employers more generally. Social and feminist activists such as Fatma Nimad Rashid, Duriyya Shafiq, Zaynab al-Ghazali as well as Ahmad and Aziza Husayn invigorated or created associations such as the Egyptian Centre for Social Studies, the Egyptian Feminist Party established by in 1944 and Bint al-Nil established in 1948.¹³

Politics

Between 1945 and the end of the monarchy male Egyptians had twice the opportunity to vote in elections to the Lower House of Parliament. Largely (but not entirely) boycotted by Wafdists in response to the dismissal of Nahhas, the January 1945 elections ended in victory of the Saadists who garnered almost half and the Liberal Constitutionalists who won almost a third of the seats. In the subsequent elections in January 1950, the last to be held before the 1952 coup, the Wafd resurged and with 228 out of 319 seats, once again, obtained an overwhelming majority.

However, under the constitution elections only had a limited impact on the formation and duration of cabinets. The King appointed and dismissed prime ministers at a sustained and rapid pace. In the short period from 1945 to 1950 the position was occupied by Ahmad Mahir, a Saadist (not to be confused with his brother Ali Mahir); Mahmud Fahmi Nuqrashi, another Saadist; Isma'il Sidqi from his own but defunct People's Party (remembered for his dictatorial rule in the 1930s); again Nuqrashi; Ibrahim Abd al-Hadi, another Saadist; and Husayn al-Sirri, an independent. The victory of the Wafd in the 1950 elections duly but only temporarily led to the appointment of the Wafd leader Mustapha al-Nahhas, to be followed by Najib (Naguib) al-Hilali, another independent; once more al-Sirri; and again al-Hilali. Only Nahhas had won a clear majority in parliament; except for the successors of Mahir and Nuqrashi, who were assassinated, the appointments reflected the whims and the will of the King.¹⁴

In terms of electoral appeal, the Wafd remained the dominant force that it had been throughout the earlier decades of the monarchy. However, election results reflected less and less the political preferences of increasingly disenchanted and jaded population. The turnout in the 1950 elections was only 56 per cent. All parties represented in parliament at one moment or another had schemed with the Palace or the British or both to be associated to the exercise of power or benefit from public funds and thereby compromised themselves in the eyes of the public. The smaller parties all too happily associated themselves with the King to form minority governments or sideline parliament. In 1942 the Wafd, whose entire *raison d'être* was to end British occupation, allied itself with Britain against the King. However, after its victory in the 1950 elections it quickly cozied up to the King in an exchange of various favours. An aggravating factor was that the established parties including the Wafd were dominated by small groups of people who ran them top down without much internal consultation or participation.

The important powers vested in the King, the leeway he had to confer part of them onto ministers and to withdraw them again, the general asymmetry between executive and legislative branch, and the resulting lack of transparency encouraged collusion, co-optation, and corruption. Dubious appointments and transactions enriched the ones or the others. Cronyism led to the purchase of faulty military equipment that marred the performance of Egyptian troops in the Palestine War. Rumours and accusations targeted the King, his staff, and elected politicians including Nahhas and his wife. The King's habit of playing cards in the Automobile Club in downtown Cairo, gambling in casinos around the world, changing mistresses and generally dissipated and dissolute life style further eroded the legitimacy of his government and the political regime as such.¹⁵

Growing numbers of Egyptians turned their back on the institutions supposed to channel politics and on the people and parties that monopolized them. Beneficiaries were the political groups and organizations emerging outside parliament that, partly reluctant to call themselves parties, seemed to cater to the needs of the disillusioned and more generally those of the less well off whose vote had little impact on their condition. Some of these groups and organizations recruited primarily, others accessorially, from among workers employed by larger industrial and utilities companies who formed a nascent working class. They established or influenced a growing number of trade unions. Other organizations primarily recruited from the numerically far larger constituencies of small scale owners of land and capital on the one hand and lower ranking employees and civil servants with limited incomes on the other. They all expressed their grievances and demands through demonstrations, protests, and, as far as the unions were concerned, strikes. Some of them at times sought to ingratiate themselves with established politicians and the Palace who in turn tried to instrumentalize them; such rapprochements did not prevent them from setting up shock troops and armed militias, attacking property and people, and even assassinating them – modes of action that they shared, though, with some of the 'mainstream' actors. Such competition together with established relations of dominance and their erosion shaped the daily lives of Egyptians and their options to act and react.¹⁶

As early as April 1945, union activities and strikes became again a common form of contestation often relating direct material grievances to the political situation and the 'national' cause. Though in some cases established in the early decades of the 20th century, unions had only been formally legalized by PM Nahhas and the Wafd in 1942, though with numerous restrictions. The – temporary – end of martial law after World War Two encouraged industrial action and led to a steep rise in strike action.¹⁷ Another major form of contestation were street demonstrations. From February 1946 onwards Cairo repeatedly became the theatre of large student marches against the British and the King. While coordination between students close to the MB and the left did not always succeed, attempts to unite leftist students and workers in February 1946 led to the creation of a joint committee that temporarily coordinated action.¹⁸ Before long the protests led to direct confrontation with the British in the Canal zone (see section on external relations).

In reaction as well as in anticipation, the powers to be increasingly resorted to the usual arsenal of legal and illegal repressive measures at their disposal.¹⁹ Returning to the office of Prime Minister in 1946, Isma'il Sidqi excelled in arresting large numbers of students, workers, trade unionists, and other opponents, closing down newspapers and stifling the freedom of expression. History repeated itself during the Palestine War when martial law was reimposed and after the Cairo Fire in early 1952; repression on the at latter occasion also thwarted the creation of a federation of all trade unions. The Wafd that temporarily returned to office in 1950 followed in the same steps; PM Nahhas and his interior minister, Fuad Serragaldin (Fu'ad Sarraj al-Din), clamped down on leftists, deported the communist activist Henri Curiel, and, unsuccessfully though, tried to reinforce censorship and other restrictions on political activities.²⁰

Simultaneously extra-judicial killings were on the rise, some of them commissioned and committed by government forces, others by parts of the opposition. Between 1945 and 1952 two prime ministers were assassinated: Ahmad Mahir in early 1945 and Mahmud Fahmi Nuqrashi in December 1948. Mahir had just signed the – rather late – declaration of war against the axis powers; Nuqrashi had just banned the MB who stepped up opposition, allegedly assassinated the Cairo police chief, and after the strong performance of their irregular brigades in the Palestine war increasingly looked like a challenge to the government's monopoly of the means of physical coercion. In between, in January 1946, the minister of finance, Amin Osman, was assassinated because of his alleged sympathies for Britain. In February 1949 it was the turn of Hasan al-Banna, whose death exacerbated internal divisions within the MB. Two attempts on the life of the Wafd leader Mustapha al-Nahhas failed, though.

Political violence culminated first in 1951–52 in a guerilla war against British personnel and property in the Canal zone (see below). Action was led by the Liberation Battalions (or Squads) that, roughly 1,000-strong, recruited extensively but not exclusively among the MB and forcefully entered the scene after Nahhas had unilaterally abrogated the 1936 treaty. Radically opposed to the MB, his government sent auxiliary police to retake control of the area and also formed its own volunteer battalions. After an attack in January 1952 on their base at Tall al-Kabir, British forces stormed the headquarters of the Egyptian auxiliary police in Ismailiyya whom they accused of conniving with the insurgents. Some 40 Egyptian police and three British soldiers were killed in the attack. The incident immediately led to demonstrations and a general strike throughout the country. On 26 January, the morrow of the attack, Cairo became engulfed in violent riots that focused on foreign, especially British, owned property and symbols of 'Western' life style like bars and nightclubs. Known as the 'Cairo Fire' or the 'Burning of Cairo', the rampage set ablaze most of the downtown area, led to the death of more than twenty people, the renewed imposition of martial law, and the dismissal of Nahhas. To this day competing narratives lay the blame at the door of a variety of actors, in particular the MB, Young Egypt, and the Palace.²¹

In the overall deleterious and repressive political climate opposition groups frequently met and acted clandestinely. The secret activities most consequential for the future of the country were those of the Free Officers who from 1949 onwards met to overthrow the monarchy. In their eyes the latter was to blame for the defeat in the Palestine War, a defeat that once again illustrated its proximity to the British and its inability to obtain full independence. Seen as corrupt and mercenary, the monarchy had to be replaced by a new type of government able to achieve full independence and bolster it through economic development, an objective that also involved what today would be called human development. Though not the only clandestine group in the armed forces, the Free Officers quickly became the focus of such activity. Counting some one hundred members in 1952 with an inner circle of about ten, the group largely consisted of officers recruited after the 1936 military reforms already referred to.²²

By and large the Free Officers hailed from the same social backgrounds as the leaders, members and supporters of the extra-parliamentary political organizations with whom they entertained close contacts. Many of them including Gamal Abd al-Nasser (Nasir) and Anwar al-Sadat temporarily sympathized with the MB; while Nasser soon opposed and repressed them, Sadat remained more ambiguous as shown by his later career. During the Palestine war some Free Officers even joined the irregular units formed by the MB. Some like Khalid Muhieddin (Muhi al-Din) increasingly showed their leftist leanings and defended leftist positions. They nonetheless agreed to privilege solidarity among themselves over loyalties to political organizations or ideologies. In December 1950 they elected Nasser as their chair; in early January. Their influence and popularity within the armed forces were confirmed in early January 1952 when Muhammad Naguib (Najib), an older and more senior general officer, was elected president of the Officers' Club, an officially constituted corporatist body supposed to give the officers some limited voice in matters concerning them as a profession.²³

Policies

Policies and debates about their merits and shortcomings in many ways reflected those pursued and conducted since the promulgation of the 1923 constitution. A central question remained that of 'reform' – promoting economic and human development and overcoming, as it was put, destitution, disease, and ignorance – and the ways in which it involved the adoption, adaptation, or rejection of foreign models.²⁴

Economic and social policies discussed in detail below remained largely inspired by the belief in limited government action, private entrepreneurship, and markets as the major instrument to allocate resources. Like all markets, the latter were politically constructed and in actual fact they were biased in favour of some actors, in particular large land owners, and at the expense of others such as agricultural labourers. Also, as a spillover primarily of the war economy, étatist considerations and regulatory intervention were stronger than in the 1920s. Social policies in the broader sense including employment, conditions at work, health, and education were little developed, leaving much to private initiative, private means, and the private sector. Nonetheless, the extent of poverty, destitution, and their ramifications; explicit popular demands and collective action; as well as tactical considerations gradually led to increasing state regulation and intervention in these areas as well.

Measures concerning cultural, family, and gender issues remained morally conservative. Matters of personal status remained under the jurisdiction of the different religious authorities, be they Muslim or Christian, that in spite of some initiatives largely escaped government intervention. Family planning pioneered by Aziza Husayn and others was not officially endorsed and therefore remained outside government concerns. Reflecting the hybrid nature of the political regime, a fair degree of pluralism animated other debates as well but with a few exceptions failed to translate into major policy changes.

An area of major change was the administration of justice. Put in motion by the Montreux Convention of May 1937, the process led to the closure in 1948 of the mixed and consular courts where foreign judges applied foreign law on Egyptian soil (see above, history). In the process, the court system and legislation had to be revised and unified. The complex undertaking also led to the creation of the State Council (Majlis al-dawla, see above) and the drafting of a new civil code that in some respects was closer to Islamic principles of law than previous legislation. Both the State Council and the civil code remain associated with the Council's long time president Abd al-Razzaq Ahmad al-Sanhuri.²⁵ In the process legislation governing religious endowments (waqfs, plural awqaf) was also streamlined.²⁶

Other legislation extended government control over foreign run schools in 1948, partially abolished tuition fees in secondary schools in 1949 and extended schooling to six full years in 1951. Higher education continued to be expanded in terms of student numbers and universities; after the formal establishment of Cairo University in 1925 and the University of Alexandria in 1942, the government in 1950 created the University of Ain Shams north of downtown Cairo. Much energy was also devoted to consolidate the rocky reorganization of al-Azhar as a fully-fledged university that had started in the 1920s.²⁷

Economic Policies and Developments

At the end of World War Two the Egyptian economy displayed many of the features that it had shown before, but it was no longer the same. Economic activities continued to be dominated by the private sector, be it in agriculture, manufacturing industries, or services. As earlier, private sector dominance was not matched by the concomitant development of markets – a hiatus that we will encounter again in later periods and that seriously dents the allegedly 'liberal' nature of the economy. Private monopolies, quasi-monopolies, and oligopolies flourished alongside numerous ties of nepotism and cronyism between owners of capital or land on the one hand and politicians and officials on the other. The palace, ministers, and civil servants happily granted formal and informal privileges to their private sector protégés and allies, but by law and decree they also set prices for commodities and factors of production to reduce social and political tensions. Major land owners were heavily represented in parliament and government, while the King and his family were also major land owners. Conversely, numerous agricultural labourers and tenants in actual fact continued to live in conditions of servitude, even though they received meagre wages and their drudgery was formally governed by contracts. The economy remained largely agrarian and highly dependent on the proceeds of cotton exports. Nonetheless, industries and services that had expanded during the war to cater to domestic and British military needs, stood their ground and expanded. At the same time, the state maintained the strengthened regulatory role that the British had asked it to play during the war and used it less timidly to influence the allocation of resources in general and to initiate social policies in particular.²⁸

Two years after the end of the war the 1947 census counted a population of some 19 million people, 67 per cent of whom lived in areas officially defined as 'rural', the others in areas defined as 'urban'.²⁹ Already then, though, many 'rural' areas became ever more densely populated and increasingly 'urban' in terms of physical and economic features – a trend that accelerated over the following decades. Some 534 people lived in one square kilometre of the rather small part of the country that was inhabitable (and that obviously excluded the vast deserts to the east and west of the Nile Valley). Population growth stood at some 1.8 per cent per annum (p.a.) in the decade to 1947 but in the following ten years reached averaged at 2.4 per cent; it reflected an incomplete demographic transition marked by a decline in the death rate since about 1900 but without a parallel decline in the birth rate. Family planning was a subject of debate, but not of policy. Life expectancy at birth was a little more than 38 years.³⁰ Some 55 per cent of the male population was employed or economically active while the participation of the female population in the

workforce stood at only 8 per cent. Also in 1947, 88 per cent of adult women were illiterate, against 66 per cent of adult men.³¹ Some 124,000 inhabitants were citizens of Greece, Italy, Britain, or France, the countries with the largest numbers of expatriates in Egypt.³²

In the second half of the 1940s and the early 1950s the economy as such seemed to recover rather quickly from the broadly negative effects of the war (the sale of locally produced commodities and services to British troops had been more than outweighed by trade losses and related issues such as the depreciation and non-replacement of capital goods as real GDP grew by some 4-7 to 5 per cent a year.³³

However, real GDP per capita only rose by about 3 per cent a year, probably even less after 1950.³⁴ Most likely, real GDP per capita in 1952 was about the same as in 1914 – roughly E£(Egyptian pound)45 in 1954 prices. The picture was not much different in terms of GNP which at constant 1954 prices amounted to E£732 million in 1945 and to E£1,007 million in 1952.³⁵ Heavy inflation in and after World War Two hurt in particular the vast majority of the population that lived in conditions of severe poverty. According to one source ‘many amongst the poorer classes will remain partially naked’.³⁶ In the same period gross fixed investment amounted to no more than 12–13 per cent of GDP, almost covered by a savings rate of some 12 per cent.³⁷ In the period 1945–54 the growth of total factor productivity amounted to 1.3–3.4 per cent annually, depending on methods; it represented some 43 per cent of output growth.³⁸

In the late 1940s and early 50s some 4 million Egyptians out of a total workforce of 7 million worked in the primary sector, only some 560,000 in the industrial sector.³⁹ The figure for the latter included mining and quarrying which, however, remained a small area of activities as no oil or gas were yet produced in commercially significant quantities. In 1947 8.9 per cent of the workforce were employed in the industrial. Agriculture accounted for some 35 per cent of GDP, industry for some 13 per cent, and services some 21 per cent.⁴⁰

With no more than a few rainy days per year, agriculture basically remained confined to the irrigated areas of the Nile Valley and Delta. In the absence of major land reclamation projects elsewhere deserts continued to amount to some 96 per cent of the country’s surface. Once among the granaries of the Roman Empire, Egypt remained the ‘gift of the Nile’ that Jacques Berque correctly redefined as ‘gift of the peasant’.⁴¹ Thanks to efficient patterns of crop rotation including fallow periods, winter crops like wheat, barley, and barseem (clover) continued to alternate with summer crops like maize, rice, broad beans, vegetables, and raw cotton, the country’s major source of export proceeds.

In 1947 a total of 5.7 million feddan (one feddan = 1.038 acres) were cultivated and a total of 9.13 million feddan were cropped, the difference reflecting multiple crops in the same year.⁴²

A large part of the land belonged to relatively few latifundists, most of whom lived in Cairo, Alexandria, and a few other towns, but often maintained lavish country houses on their estates. Around 1950 ‘some 0.4 per cent of all owners controlled 33 per cent of the cultivated area, but...a mere 2,000... owned 20 per cent of this land.’⁴³ At the bottom of the pyramid, 2.2 million out of a total of 2.8 million owners of land were in possession of less than 2 feddan, one feddan less than was considered the minimum for a family to survive. Half of these small holders owned less than a third of a feddan.⁴⁴ According to a largely concurring estimate, 12,000 families owned 35 per cent of agricultural land, while 2.5 million families each owning five feddan or less controlled another 35 per cent of the land; some 60 per cent of the rural population were landless.⁴⁵ To make a living, many small holders at great financial sacrifice tried to rent additional land; some simultaneously worked on larger estates alongside landless labourers remunerated at subsistence level. Their lives bore no resemblance to the romanticized cliché of the strong and healthy *fellah* (which simply means peasant) who donned in his *galabiyya* (long shirt or robe) and turban for

nationalists and tourists alike epitomizes the soul, purity, and dignity of Egypt. The middle ground between the latifundists and the small holders was occupied by peasants owning or at least holding some 11–50 feddan; frequently referred to as the ‘rural middle class’ or the ‘second stratum’, they lived in relative comfort, accumulated social and political capital, and were often seen as the people most closely associated with the authors of the 1952 coup and their policies (see below).⁴⁶

Established in earnest in the 1920s, expanded first in the early thirties and again during World War Two, manufacturing industries overwhelmingly substituted for imports or otherwise catered for the domestic market. As the war interrupted supply routes for imports, the Egyptian market and the considerable numbers of British troops and officials stationed in the country had to be supplied by locally produced goods. The Middle East Supply Centre (MESCC), established by the British in 1941, soon co-sponsored by the US, played an import role in coordinating production and distribution across the Middle East and provided precious advice and logistical support to local producers (it was reduced in size and finally wound down after the war).⁴⁷

Low productivity in the agricultural sector, a poorly educated, largely unskilled labour force in generally bad health, and the low quality inputs that it produced constrained industrialization.⁴⁸ Moreover, most manufacturing activity took place in small and medium-sized enterprises, a feature that continued to mark the industrial sector over the subsequent decades and that limited economies of scale. In the late 1940s and early fifties some 150,000 establishments employed no more than a total of 300,000 people, compared to about 264,000 people in companies with ten or more employees. Of the latter companies some 80 per cent nonetheless employed less than fifty persons; only about 2 per cent of all companies employed more than 500 persons.⁴⁹

Moreover, the government until the late 1940s mainly used trade tariffs to raise revenue. With some exceptions, import tariffs were not designed (or amended) to encourage the growth of particular industries; focusing on consumer goods for the domestic market, ‘import substitution industrialization (ISI)’ thus continued to play the role that it had historically played.⁵⁰ The most important protective measure was an import ban on long-staple cotton that, apart from being Egypt’s major export commodity, also fed local textile industries. Duties for capital goods were only reduced in 1949–1951,⁵¹ at a moment when local industries needed to enlarge their product range to survive or expand and when the ‘easy phase’ of import substitution industrialization had reached its limits.⁵²

Nonetheless, manufacturing flourished until the late 1940s as cotton fetched high prices on the world market, raised the disposable incomes of all those associated with the trade, and allowed them to buy industrial products. When growth slowed the government in 1949 established the Industrial Bank to provide additional credit to manufacturing industries.⁵³ Manufacturing output grew at the high rate of some 10 per cent in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but it accounted for less than 10 per cent of exports. In 1951 the upturn engendered the project of a large iron and steel factory at Helwan on the southern periphery of Cairo; construction, however, only started in 1954, after the demise of the monarchy.⁵⁴ The upturn in manufacturing was also palpable in service industries like banking and insurance. On the other hand, extractive industries remained small. Oil was first struck in 1908, the same year as in Iran, which unlike Egypt quickly became a major producer; in 1945 only some 1.3 million tons were produced, climbing to 2.2 million tons in 1952.⁵⁵ Largely to improve faltering infrastructures, the government in 1947 drew up a five-year investment plan that, however, remained largely a plan.⁵⁶ Planning only became a major feature of economic organization in the late 1950s.

Even beyond agriculture economic activities were dominated by the private sector. ‘Before the 1952 Revolution, public ownership of industrial establishments was limited to a petroleum refinery, the

Governmental Press, a few newly established military factories, and a number of workshops belonging to various Ministries'.⁵⁷ In addition, the railways and a number of utilities were publicly owned. In 1950 the private sector employed 92 per cent of the labour force, accounted for 84 per cent of total output, and for about 75 per cent of gross fixed capital formation.⁵⁸ Legislation passed in 1951 even established the privately owned National Bank of Egypt as the country's central bank, even though these functions were exercised by government appointees.⁵⁹ In the late 1940s the contribution of government and publicly owned companies public stood at about 13–16 per cent of GDP (compared to 20 per cent immediately after World War Two).⁶⁰

Owners of cultivated land used were overwhelmingly Egyptians. Numerous manufacturing and service companies were entirely or partly owned by foreigners, largely nationals of the former capitulatory powers.⁶¹ Nonetheless, according to one authoritative source '[i]n 1948 foreign capital in Egypt was estimated at approximately E£100 million, at current stock-exchange quotations; this represented a substantial diminution in real terms from the pre-war figure'.⁶² The same author stated that 'whereas the Egyptian share in the total capital of joint-stock companies operating in Egypt in 1933 was only 9 per cent, it rose to 47 per cent in companies established in 1934–9, 66 per cent in those established in 1940–5, and 84 per cent in those established in 1946–8'.⁶³ Perhaps only reinforcing this trend, the Nuqrashi government passed legislation requiring that 51 per cent of the capital of joint-stock companies be owned by Egyptians who also had to hold the majority of seats on their boards.⁶⁴

Nor were the last years of the monarchy dominated by a conflict between 'modernizers' investing in industries and services and supposedly old-fashioned landowners. No doubt, tax laws in spite of various amendments, in particular in March 1951, largely benefited land owners. Similarly, land reform was advocated by a number of industrialists, though also by some large land owners without industrial interests; the Saadist senator Muhammad Khattab advocated it in parliament, the land owner Mirrit Ghali in his writings. However, other industrialists feared that increases in the land tax would lead to increases in corporate tax.⁶⁵ Moreover, much capital invested outside agriculture was accumulated by landowners who sought to diversify their portfolios (many of them, though, looked for quick returns and preferred real estate to manufacturing). At the same time, major industrialists like Ahmad 'Abbud owned large rural estates. In any case, partly diverging interests did not prevent urban business people like 'Abbud from joining the Wafd party in which land owners like Fuad Seragaldin (Fu'ad Sarag al-Din) played a leading role.⁶⁶

Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s Egypt as a country failed to produce the resources that it consumed. After 1945 the balance of trade showed a sizable deficit; imports of wheat, other foodstuffs, and capital goods cost more than earned exports, largely because of volumes rather than terms of trade that, including for cotton, were rather favourable.⁶⁷ In 1950 raw cotton continued to account for some 85 per cent of exports, a figure that only gradually declined to 45 per cent in 1970.⁶⁸ Cotton prices, though, varied heavily in line with demand; halved at the end of the 1920s, they remained low until they temporarily doubled in the early 1950s during the Korean war.⁶⁹ The continued decline in the annual growth of total factor productivity from about 4.4 per cent in the war years to less than 3.5 per cent in the early 1950s did not help.⁷⁰

Various receipts improved the balance of payments which nonetheless also remained broadly negative, and would remain so in subsequent periods.⁷¹ These receipts included payments by the foreign-owned Suez Canal company which, in spite of revisions of the initial concession (see below), only transferred a limited share of its income to the Egyptian state; in 1950 these payments amounted to some 10 per cent of total receipts in the balance of payments, as compared to 17 per cent in 1960, after the nationalization.⁷²

Egypt could also draw on the sterling assets that it had accumulated during World War Two. During the war years it spent some 100 million Egyptian pounds on imports, but earned some 550 million Egyptian pounds for services including supplies to the British forces. At the end of the war Egypt had accumulated the equivalent of some 425–450 million Egyptian pounds in sterling assets in the UK. Ultimately delayed payments for earlier services, the assets reflected no productive activity at the moment they were transferred and thus may be considered a rent.

Reimbursement nonetheless suffered from diverging interests and related disagreements. Britain released the amounts only gradually as the war had exhausted it economically and confronted its own budget crisis. If the two sides successfully negotiated Egypt's departure from the sterling area that became effective in July 1947, Britain soon suspended earlier guarantees that sterling and thus Egyptian assets in the UK would remain fully convertible. Under these conditions, the devaluation of sterling by some 30 per cent in 1949 considerably reduced the actual amount owed to Egypt. Britain also used the issue to put pressure on Egyptian prime ministers or support them (see below). Following partial agreements in 1947, 1948, and 1949, a final agreement in July 1951 allowed Egypt to withdraw all its remaining assets over 13 years.⁷³

At the time, balance of payment difficulties were not primarily related to the government budget which, in line with the limited scope of public policies, remained by and large balanced. Public external debt remained low. During World War Two the government redeemed an important part of its external debt, largely thanks to receipts for the sale of services and goods to the British armed forces stationed on its territory. Another part of public external debt, largely in sterling, was converted into domestic debt. By June 1951 public debt, entirely domestic except for some US loans, stood at roughly E£175 million, corresponding to one year of government revenues and one fifth of national income.⁷⁴

Though fragmentary at best, calculations and estimates of income distribution agree that poverty, destitution, and inequality were salient features in the period following World War Two. Inequality was particularly pronounced in rural Egypt where some sources put the Gini coefficient at 0.61. Other, more specific indicators that today would be condensed into the Human Development Index (HDI) were no less alarming.⁷⁵

In this context some measures were introduced to protect agricultural labourers and to establish more cooperatives that provided a variety of services to smallholders. Unlike their successors under Nasser, these early cooperatives operated on a voluntary basis; by 1948 some 50 per cent of peasants adhered to a voluntary cooperative. In 1946 a five-year programme of social and economic change was adopted. Initiated in 1942, the creation of social centres in the countryside gained considerable momentum. Other pieces of legislation introduced or increased food subsidies, price controls, and wages. Attempts were made to improve public health through vast vaccination programmes and the supply of drinking water, to reduce adult illiteracy, and to raise levels of formal education. The Wafd government that came to power in 1950 briefly included the dedicated reformers Ahmad Husayn as minister of social affairs and Taha Husayn (no family ties), already a famous writer, as minister of education. The former managed to get an ambitious social security bill through parliament; legislation drafted by the latter made secondary education free of charge. A minimum wage and compulsory accident insurance were introduced in the industrial sector. Where others had failed, the new government managed to substantially increase the land tax for larger holdings and the maximum rate for income tax. The decisions were nonetheless part of longer term trend in which government expenditure for education for instance rose from less than 6 per cent in the 1920s and upper single digits in the 1930s and early 40s to 10–13 per cent in the late 1940s. This being said, in the fiscal years 1945/6–1951/2, governments spent between 13 and 32 per cent of the budget on measures to combat inflation, but only 0 to 8 per cent on the promotion of economic development and social welfare.⁷⁶

Still, the five-year programme adopted in 1946 remained largely declamatory as only part of the allocated sums was disbursed. Voluntary initiatives to redistribute agricultural land were tentative, piecemeal or symbolic. Ahmad Husayn's social security bill was never properly implemented. Nor was the minimum wage imposed effectively, in part because of internal divisions within the Wafd. In spite of the changes income from land remained taxed at a far lower rate than income from capital gains and labour. Trade unionists and striking workers were repeatedly the victims of arrests and other forms of repression, in particular under PM Sidqi in 1946 and again after the Burning of Cairo in 1952, but also under the Wafd. Land rents exploded in the late 1940s and early 1950s leading to violent incidents in the countryside in 1951. Taxation still failed to substantially reduce inequality or increase government revenue. It overwhelmingly relied on indirect rather than direct taxes and therefore was regressive; only the income tax introduced in 1939 was progressive but accounted for less than 5 per cent of total tax revenue.⁷⁷ One authoritative source summed up the last years of the monarchy as a period of 'half-measures of reform' and 'development without growth', concluding that in spite of serious efforts the redistribution of wealth remained marginal in terms of ambitions as well as results.⁷⁸

Nonetheless, the 1946 plan and the measures taken by the Wafd government together with the 1947 laws on foreign capital and the 1949 creation of the Industrial Bank illustrate the 'étatist' regulatory role that the state on various occasions attempted to play and partly did play under the monarchy.⁷⁹

External Relations

The Main Issues

Under the monarchy the major foreign policy objective was to achieve full independence as a regional heavyweight. In other words, it was to end British prerogatives not only in Egypt but also in Sudan, a territory that most Egyptians considered to be rightfully governed from Cairo. For that purpose, the 1936 treaty with Britain and ideally the 1899 Condominium agreement over Sudan had to be abrogated and all British troops had to be withdrawn from both countries.⁸⁰ More secretly, the politically dominant actors often saw some advantages in the British presence that consolidated their own position vis-à-vis the rising extra-parliamentary forces. Not always did their nationalist statements reflect the hesitations that under the pressure of the MB, Young Egypt, and others they could not vent. In that sense, their quest for independence collided with their wish to guarantee the survival of a political regime that suited their interests. Contested at home, the dynasty and other major representatives of the monarchical order, often disagreeing among each other, were caught between the Scylla of renouncing crucial external support and the Charybdis of losing domestic legitimacy. In private, the King in spite of numerous misgivings occasionally showed British officials how useful he could be for their own policies.⁸¹ Simultaneously, the King, ministers, and the various political forces represented in parliament sought to (re)establish Egypt as a regional power, be it only to defend its independence against encroachments by others, in particular the British. Pursuing regional ambitions entailed thwarting similar attempts by the pro-British Hashemite monarchies in Iraq and Jordan and, prophylactically, by the emerging State of Israel. Mostly, though, the latter was seen as an imperialist bridgehead, a threat to decolonization, and an offense to Arab nationalist aspirations.⁸²

The Quest for Independence: Egypt and Britain

As the 1936 treaty was heavily biased against Egypt, the foreign policy of the Palace and successive ministries primarily focused on relations with Britain and full independence. In this struggle the Egyptian position seemed stronger after World War Two which Britain had only won with the help of its allies, empire, and colonial troops. Materially exhausted, Britain experienced power cuts and food rationing. In

1945 it had to negotiate a loan of \$ 3.75 billion with the US that earlier had discontinued the lend-lease agreement in force during the war; the 1947 convertibility crisis made it impossible to change sterling into dollars, and in 1951 the UK balance of payments was in deep crisis.⁸³ Partly out of necessity, partly out of conviction, the Labour government under Prime Minister Clement Attlee that was elected in July 1945 and replaced the war time coalition government under Winston Churchill began to reassess Britain's role in the world. It initiated the process of decolonization that as early as 1947 led to the independence of India and Pakistan. In other parts of the world imperial retreat was nonetheless supposed to remain more limited, and close ties were to be maintained with the new states in the Middle East and Africa.⁸⁴ Attlee and his foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin, hoped that with the help of development aid and greater respect these states would become friendly partners rather than angry dependents. For them such a policy involved major political and economic reforms at the expense of the dominant forces in these countries; the assessment introduced a dose of ambivalence into their support for the King and the wealthy parliamentarians in Egypt that mirrored the latter's ambivalence towards the British. Simultaneously, the major winners of the war, the US and the USSR, pushed for decolonization, be it only to replace Britain and France and to add their former possessions to their own spheres of influence in the emerging Cold War.

Upon Egyptian request the Labour government as early as 1945 agreed in principle to revise the 1936 treaty and in 1946 entered into negotiations with Cairo.⁸⁵ With regard to respect, the Egyptians no doubt welcomed the removal of Lord Killearn, formerly Sir Miles Lampson, the long-time British ambassador who in 1942 had forced the Wafd government on King Faruq. However, they also noticed that Britain continued to keep enough troops in the country to repeat the feat if necessary. Most of them were deployed in the Canal zone which in actual fact extended up to Tall al-Kabir in the West and ended about a hundred kilometres east of Cairo. The remaining units were stationed in other parts of the country, including Alexandria and the very heart of the capital itself where they occupied the Qasr al-Nil barracks, later to be demolished to enlarge today's Tahrir Square. The matter was all the more complicated as the Labour government hesitated whether to continue and consider Egypt a key element in Britain's future global strategy. As for development aid, even limited to technical support, it did not escape the Egyptians that nobody in London quite knew how to fund it.⁸⁶

Bilateral talks starting in 1945 led to the Sidqi-Bevin draft agreement of October 1946, named after Bevin and the then Egyptian PM Ismail (Isma'il) Sidqi who conducted the negotiations. Under the protocol Britain would have definitely moved all troops to the Canal zone (as already agreed in the 1936 treaty), while Egypt would have continued to abide by the treaty and thus maintained close military cooperation with Britain. The status of Sudan would have continued to be governed by the 1899 agreement. The terms of the protocol prompted strong popular protests in Egypt that led to the resignation of Sidqi in December 1946. His successor, Nuqrashi, put an end to the negotiations and the agreement was never ratified; instead Nuqrashi took the issue to the United Nations, but failed to obtain expected US support. Britain nonetheless evacuated the Qasr al-Nil barracks in central Cairo and began to move its troops to the Canal zone, even though at levels that far exceeded the roughly 10,000 men agreed on in 1936.

From February 1946 to the early 1950s popular mobilization against the British and the monarchy repeatedly led to large-scale protests throughout the country, not least by university and secondary school students in Cairo (see above).⁸⁷ The first Arab-Israeli war in 1948–49 further heightened anti-imperialist sentiments, and this all the more so as it failed to produce the results that official propaganda had assigned to it. Britain, the mandatory power, appeared as a major culprit, not least because one of its former foreign secretaries had issued the 1917 Balfour Declaration which had called for the establishment of a 'national home for the Jewish people' in Palestine. The fact that the British presence in the Canal zone complicated Egyptian troop movements towards the Sinai did not help. Claims that the Egyptian armed forces went to

war unprepared with inadequate and faulty equipment added to the sense that King Faruq, his associates, and other established politicians were in league with the British.

Against this backdrop another attempt was made in 1950 to sort out bilateral differences. As negotiations again ended in failure, prime minister Nahhas on 8 October 1951 unilaterally abrogated both the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty and the 1899 Anglo-Egyptian Condominium agreement on Sudan. The Egyptian government henceforth considered illegal the presence of British troops on its soil, including the Canal zone, and proclaimed Faruq King of Egypt as well as Sudan. It comes as no surprise that under these circumstances Egypt was not receptive to British plans for a new anti-Soviet collective security scheme, the Middle East Command, that would have associated a number of states including Israel, possibly even the US.⁸⁸ Nor were bilateral relations much helped by the victory of the Conservatives in the British parliamentary elections of late October 1951. Winston Churchill who after six years in opposition became prime minister again and his foreign secretary Anthony Eden were even less sympathetic to Egyptian demands than the preceding Labour government.

After the unilateral abrogation of the 1936 treaty guerrilla forces known as the Liberation Battalions began to attack British installations and troops in the Canal zone. Emerging in 1950, these roughly 1,000-strong groups which recruited extensively (but not exclusively) among the MB and students close to it forcefully entered the scene after Nahhas had unilaterally abrogated the 1936 treaty. Radically opposed to the MB, his government sent auxiliary police to retake control of the area and also formed its own volunteer battalions. British personnel and property were attacked, leading to dozens of casualties while in Cairo pro-British politicians were assassinated. Events culminated in January 1952 in the Ismailiyya incident and the Burning of Cairo (see above).

Bilateral relations were further strained by the limitations that Britain imposed on the transfer of the sizable reserves of some £400–600 million that Egypt had accumulated over the years, largely by supplying and servicing British forces stationed during World War Two. After Egypt in 1947 left the sterling area Britain only agreed to small transfers in stages until a new agreement was signed in July 1951. In response to the unilateral abrogation of the 1936 treaty the new Churchill government blocked transfers and only resumed them later to shore up ministries it considered trustworthy. The Egyptian government also pushed for an agreement with the Suez Canal Company signed in 1948 that marginally increased the number of Egyptians on the company board, significantly increased the number of Egyptians in high-ranking positions, and provided for the reinvestment of larger parts of the profits in Egypt.⁸⁹

Shaping the Regional Environment: The Arab League

The other, partly related, concern for the Egyptian monarchy was to regulate to its own advantage relations with its neighbours and in particular its Arab neighbours.

As early as March 1945 mainly Egyptian efforts led to the establishment of the Arab League (AL), an inter-governmental organization whose other founding members included Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, and Saudi Arabia.⁹⁰ PM Nahhas had begun to consult other Arab governments in 1943 and presided over the preparatory committee which in October 1944 approved the Alexandria Protocol from which the AL covenant was distilled; from its inception, the AL was open to all other Arabic-speaking states that would acquire independence in the process of decolonization. The creation of the AL thus preceded the creation of the United Nations organization (UN) as the successor of the defunct League of Nations; supposed to include all independent states worldwide, the UN only saw the light of the day in October 1945. According to its founding charter, the AL was to guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of its member states, promote their interests, foster cooperation among them, and further

strengthen their close reciprocal ties.⁹¹ Reflecting Egypt's ambitions and relative strength vis-à-vis other Arab governments at the time, the AL was headquartered in Cairo; under a tacit agreement its secretary general was to be an Egyptian, a tradition that would only briefly be interrupted in the 1970s and 1980s. The new post-imperialist global order that began to take shape was the moment not only to acquire full independence but also to establish Egypt, finally, as the dominant regional power that it sought to be since the 19th century.

Emphasizing the independence of its members, the AL diminished the attraction of the more far reaching projects to unite Arab states promoted by the Hashemite monarchies in Iraq and Jordan. King Abdallah of Transjordan (later Jordan) sought to extend his reign to Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine; first mooted in the 1920s, the Greater Syria project regained some momentum in the 1930s. Nuri al-Said (Sa'id), long-time prime minister of Iraq, in his 1943 Blue Book advocated the unity of the entire Fertile Crescent; under the scheme Transjordan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria would form one single state and then an 'Arab league' with Iraq and possibly other countries; the Jews in Palestine and the Maronites in Lebanon would enjoy a degree of autonomy.⁹²

Seen from Cairo these more ambitious projects threatened Egypt's regional ambitions and, by implication, the additional domestic legitimacy that it would confer upon its rulers; they also threatened to strengthen the British on whom the Hashemites heavily depended. Distrusting the Hashemites whom they had expelled from the Hijaz in the 1920s, the Saudis naturally preferred the Egyptian approach. The final consensus on the latter no doubt reflected the general realization that it was the only project acceptable to all, including many actors in the Fertile Crescent itself. Also, policy makers in London who over the 1940s gradually began to embrace the idea of Arab cooperation and unity remained agnostic as to the precise form of such cooperation; they welcomed the creation of the AL, even though they continued to privilege relations with Baghdad and their initial optimism was not borne out by later developments.⁹³

An increasingly important objective for the various Arab governments was to thwart the emergence of the State of Israel or to contain its influence. While the vast majority of Arabs was opposed to the creation of the new state, their governments were no less, if not more, afraid of secondary effects; war might unsettle the fragile balance of power among them while defeat might further reduce their own, declining legitimacy. Like their Egyptian counterparts, most Arab rulers were challenged from 'below'; the Ba'ath and other new parties tried to speak on behalf of the same rising social groups and classes as the MB or Young Egypt. The new parties considered the incumbents self-interested guardians of an unjust order that only survived thanks to imperialist support which in turn implied the betrayal of the Palestinian cause. Largely implicit hopes that inter-governmental cooperation through the AL would help to contain such challenges were soon to be disappointed; nor did such cooperation at the time resemble anything like the Holy Alliance in reactionary 19th-century Europe.

Closely related to Jewish immigration to Palestine, itself a product of rising anti-Semitism in Europe, the steady rise of Arab nationalism from the 1930s⁹⁴ had increasingly created a situation in which events and developments in one Arab country affected other Arab countries. Taking various forms and advocated by a variety of actors, Arab nationalism was a common ideological denominator rather than a fully fledged ideology propagated by one single organization. Strongest in the Levant, it increasingly took hold in Egypt. As a growing number of Arabic speakers began to conceive of themselves as one single community of loyalty or 'nation', they increasingly considered state borders irrelevant for political action. Like-minded individuals and groups supported each other across state borders, so that conflicts within one Arab country were echoed in other Arab countries. Similarly, action by the imperialist powers in or against one country sparked reactions elsewhere. French attempts in 1945 to remain in Lebanon and Syria met as much opposition outside the two countries as would soon British attempts to stay in Iraq, Jordan,

or Egypt. Yet more sensitive were developments in mandatory Palestine which led most Arabs to support its indigenous population against the Jewish settlers arriving from abroad.⁹⁵

Bilateral Relations with Arab States

Relations with individual Arab countries were largely determined by the challenges they posed to Egypt's regional ambitions, the opportunities they offered in these contests, and the way they positioned themselves. Among AL members Iraq and (Trans)Jordan were by and large seen as competitors, while Saudi Arabia was considered an ally; Lebanon and Syria were potential allies as long as they resisted Iraqi and (Trans)Jordanian ambitions.

Among the countries not yet formally independent, Sudan occupied a special place in Egyptian policies. Many, possibly most, Egyptians continued to consider it a part of Egypt, but the Sudanese themselves remained far less than unanimous on the subject. While Britain as early as 1946 openly advocated the independence of Sudan, the Sidqi government in 1951 proclaimed King Faruq also King of Sudan. Egyptian regional ambitions aside, the practical importance of Sudan resided in its upstream location on the river Nile which supplied Egypt with basically all the sweet water it consumed; nor was the Nile Valley less fertile in the relatively sparsely populated Sudan than in Egypt. Understandably, Cairo worried that an independent Sudan might question its 1929 exchange of letters with London that allocated the bulk of the Nile waters to Egypt (see above).

Potential Challengers: Ethiopia, Iran, and Turkey

Another country relevant to Egyptian regional ambitions was Ethiopia, the most important upstream riparian on the Nile after Sudan. Bilateral relations were old and multifaceted. The first Ethiopian bank established in 1906 was closely related to the (privately owned) National Bank of Egypt (Al-Bank al-ahli al-masri). The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church with some 40 to 50 million members remained until 1959 under the ultimate jurisdiction of the Coptic Orthodox patriarch in Alexandria, an arrangement that obviously created opportunities for the exercise of soft power.⁹⁶ Consulted as little as Sudan in 1929, Ethiopia moreover posed a potential threat to Egyptian hydraulic interests.

However, at the time potentially the most resourceful and influential non-Arab actors in the wider neighbourhood were Turkey and Iran. Both were populous countries, in the crosshairs of global players, and endowed with comparatively important economic resources: Iran was a major oil producer, Turkey a growing industrial power. From late 1945 onwards Turkey found common ground with Iraq, opposed as they both were to the USSR and Kurdish activism that they saw encouraged by the USSR. Their emerging alliance of sorts extended to Transjordan, another challenger of Egyptian primacy in the AL and supporter of British- and US-inspired collective security schemes in the Middle East. Unlike Turkey which after World War One quickly succeeded in expelling foreign military forces, Iran was partly and temporarily occupied by British and Russian troops which only left after World War Two. Though a victim of historical imperialism like Egypt, Iran also sought to establish itself as a regional power; in spite of their many differences, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and the elected governments shared that objective. Considering the – Persian – Gulf as its natural zone of influence, Iran pursued interests that were not identical with those of Saudi Arabia, then a major ally of Egypt as well as the US. No doubt a political project, the earlier marriage of the Shah with King Faruq's sister Fawziyya ended in 1948; contracted in 1939 when the two countries established diplomatic relations, it seemed an unhappy relation throughout and the divorce did not necessarily affect bilateral relations. More problematic for Egypt was that Turkey and Iran quickly recognized the new State of Israel. Iran attracted great admiration when the new Prime minister, Mohammad Mosaddegh, in early May 1951 nationalized the British-owned oil industry. His visit to Cairo in November led to various bilateral agreements including the sale of oil, and

galvanized anti-imperialist sentiments. However, King Faruq and the Nahhas ministry treaded carefully, and the visit remained without lasting effects; nor did the Free Officers who ruled Egypt from July 1952 till the overthrow of Mosaddegh in August 1953 build on it.⁹⁷

Confronting Israel

In late November 1947 the UN General Assembly (GA) passed Resolution 181 endorsing the partition of Palestine into two independent states with Jerusalem and its surroundings including Bethlehem as a *corpus separatum* under international administration; few at the time, the Arab members of the GA opposed the resolution.⁹⁸ The subsequent chain of events – the civil war of sorts between Arab Palestinians and Jewish immigrants; the proclamation of the State of Israel on the last day of the British mandate in May 1948; the first Palestine War that followed on its heels; the recognition of Israel as an independent state by most UN members including the USSR and the US; and its own admission to the UN in 1949 by a two thirds majority in the GA – posed the single most important foreign policy challenge to Egypt and the other Arab governments. Diplomatically, they had failed to convince UN members to endorse the creation of a Jewish state in part of mandatory Palestine. Militarily, they had failed to reach their publicly announced war aim which was to prevent the creation of that state. In both respects, disagreements about actual war aims proved to be devastating. King Abdallah of Transjordan primarily sought to thwart the emergence of a Palestinian state and to incorporate its territory into his own kingdom; he secretly negotiated with the leaders of the future Israeli state. In contrast, King Faruq of Egypt precisely intended to prevent such an outcome, for fear it would strengthen Abdallah, the Hashemites at large, and ultimately the British. In spite of strong anti-Zionist feelings and mobilization at home, the Egyptian PM disagreed with the *va-t-en-guerre* King and advised against going to war. The Syrian government vigorously opposed the creation of Israel, but basically had no military means to influence events. Non-governmental forces which participated in the war such as Egyptian MB battalions in spite of their military performance were too small to make a difference.⁹⁹

Fighting ended with the establishment of the Israeli state but not of its Palestinian counterpart. Israeli troops occupied part of the territory that it was supposed to encompass as well as West Jerusalem, prompting many Palestinians to flee to neighbouring countries; Transjordanian forces occupied the Westbank and East Jerusalem, thus transforming Transjordan into Jordan. The *corpus separatum* of Jerusalem never saw the light of day. Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip, and soon used it to speak on behalf of the Palestinians. In terms of domestic legitimacy, though, the outcome was disastrous as most Egyptians and in particular younger military officers had sought to prevent the emergence of the Israeli state. The adoption by the AL of an additional agreement on defence and economic cooperation in 1950 hardly changed matters.

Positioning Egypt in the Cold War: Relations with the USA and the USSR

Britain's decline as a global power and the intensification of the Cold War led the Palace and successive ministries, all propertied and conservative, almost naturally to move closer to the US. More resourceful than Britain, the US had never occupied an Arab country and therefore seemed untainted by historical imperialism; nor were they at the time as unambiguously supportive of Israel as they were later. For the top brass of the monarchy, the USSR was no alternative; it had not yet come round to accept 'bourgeois' regimes in the third world as viable partners and, as one British official put it, King Faruq knew only too well that there were no monarchs on the other side of the iron curtain.¹⁰⁰ In early May 1950 Egypt and the US signed a Point Four agreement governing bilateral cooperation in various areas including financial assistance. The agreement preceded the Tripartite Declaration of 25 May 1950 by which Britain, France, and the US publicly at least sought to strengthen the fragile armistice between Israel and its Arab neighbours and to limit the supply of arms. In the end, Egypt received no US military aid but erratic

amounts of economic aid, ranging from \$(US dollars)9 million in US financial year 1946 to \$100,000 in 1951.¹⁰¹

¹ For the constitutions, see Vatikiotis, 1991; Deeb, 1979, chapters 3 and 4; Sayyid-Marsot, 1977.

² Nathalie Bernard-Maugiron, 2003, 35ff

³ For the role and definition of such an arena, see Sluglett, 1976. Institutionalism in nature, the concept is in many ways similar to the 'political field' as defined by Zubaida, 2001.

⁴ Kandil, 2012, 8f, as referred to by Ikram, 2018, 21.

⁵ For political parties and their social bases under the monarchy see Deeb, 1979, 311ff, 420ff; Jacob M. Landau, 1953, in particular part II. See also Botman, 1998; Goldschmidt, 2000.

⁶ Aclimandos, 2005, 68–93; Joel Gordon, 1992, 41.

⁷ For the Wafd, see for instance Deeb, 1979; Beinin and Lockman, 1998, 310ff, 395–417; Botman, 1998; Vitalis, 1995; Sayyid-Marsot, 1977; Sayyid-Marsot 2007.

⁸ On the Saadists and Liberal Constitutionalists, see Deeb, 1979, 257–370; Botman, 1998, Saayid-Marsot, 2007.

⁹ For the Muslim Brothers in this period see in particular Mitchell, 1969; Deeb, 1979, 379–388, two authors on whom the following paragraphs are drawn heavily; Elshobaki, 2009.

¹⁰ For Young Egypt, see Deeb, 1979, 373ff; Jankowski, 1975.

¹¹ For the Egyptian communists, see Botman, 1998, 296ff; Beinin and Lockman, 1998, 310–362.

¹² For trade unions in this period, see Beinin and Lockman, 1998, in particular 285–417; Goldberg, 1996.

¹³ See for instance Botman, 1998, 303f; Sayyid Marsot, 2007.

¹⁴ For the interplay of elections, parliament, cabinets, and the King, see Botman, 1998, 304ff; Vatikiotis, 1991; Sayyid Marsot, 2007

¹⁵ See for instance Gordon, 1992, chapter 1.

¹⁶ See for instance Hammad, 2016.

¹⁷ See in particular Beinin and Lockman, 1998, 395–417.

¹⁸ For the student protests, see Abdallah, 1985; Beinin and Lockman, 1998, 310–417.

¹⁹ See Tripp, 1998.

²⁰ Botman, 1998; Sayyid Marsot, 2007; Vatikiotis, 1991; Beinin and Lockman, 1998, 395

²¹ For the Burning of Cairo and contending explanations, see Gordon, 1992, chapter 1; Kerboeuf, 2005; Botman, 1998, 305ff; Sayyid Marsot, 1985, 104f; Beinin and Lockman, 1998, 395–417; Vatikiotis, 1991, 360–374; Weeks, 2011.

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- ²² Gordon, 1992, 109–126
- ²³ On the Free Officers, see in particular Gordon, 1992, chapter 2; Vatikiotis, 1961.
- ²⁴ On reform, see Roussillon, 2018.
- ²⁵ Hill, 1988.
- ²⁶ Barbar and Kepel, 1981.
- ²⁷ See Vatikiotis, 1991, 377ff; Reid, 1990.
- ²⁸ For economic developments under the monarchy, see Wahba, 1994; Tignor, 1984; Owen and Pamuk, 1998; Mabro and Radwan, 2018.
- ²⁹ Egypt, Ministry of Finance and Economy, Population Census of Egypt, 1947; Waterbury, 1983, 42f.
- ³⁰ Denis, 2011, 75–110; Fargues, 2011; see also: Fargues, 2000; Robinson and El-Zanaty, 2006.
- ³¹ Waterbury, 1983, 44.
- ³² Tignor, 1984, 254f referring to the 1947 census quoted above.
- ³³ Hansen and Nashashibi, 1975, 11–15; Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 43; Ikram, 2018, 84; Mead, 1967, 270ff focuses on GNP.
- ³⁴ Hansen and Nashashibi, 1975, 14.
- ³⁵ For per capita GDP, see Hansen and Marzouk, 1965, 3, table 1-1; for per capita GNP see Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 42f; Tignor, 1984, 216f estimates that national income per capita fell by some 10 per cent between 1913 and 1939 and by another 10 per cent till 1945.
- ³⁶ Tignor, 1984, 216 quoting a British official in Egypt.
- ³⁷ O'Brien, 1966, 25; Ikram, 2018, 87.
- ³⁸ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 183ff.
- ³⁹ Waterbury, 1983, 43.
- ⁴⁰ Figures derived from Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 47; these rough figures exclude electricity, construction, transport, trade, housing, and utilities.
- ⁴¹ Berque, 1972.
- ⁴² Waterbury 1983, 42.
- ⁴³ Waterbury, 1983, 267; for work and life on a large estate, see: Abaza, 2013.
- ⁴⁴ Buettner and Klostermeier, 1991, 88; see also Ireton, 1998.
- ⁴⁵ Tignor, 1984, 218 referring to Radwan, 1977.

⁴⁶ Waterbury, 1983, who also draws attention to the distinction between ‘owning’ and ‘holding’, the latter referring to the surface cultivated by one individual or family. For the ‘second stratum’, see Binder, 1978, who refers to the bracket between 20 and 50 feddan; for a critical discussion of the concept see Waterbury, 1983, 272ff.

⁴⁷ On the MESC, see Wilmington, 1952.

⁴⁸ O’Brien, 1966, 26ff.

⁴⁹ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 93, 115–129, including discussion of methodological difficulties of such estimates.

⁵⁰ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 239; in addition, an export tax on raw cotton implicitly had the effect of an import tax on cotton textiles.

⁵¹ For rates and details, see Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 49–64.

⁵² Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 240.

⁵³ For details, see O’Brien, 1966, 13–30; Waterbury, 1983, 60; Vitalis and Heydemann, 2000; Wilmington and Evans, 1971; Paul Kingston, 1991.

⁵⁴ Waterbury, 1983, 64f; Mabro and Radwan, 1973, 214.

⁵⁵ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 34.

⁵⁶ O’Brien, 1966, 33.

⁵⁷ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 96.

⁵⁸ O’Brien, 1966, 61.

⁵⁹ O’Brien, 1966, 93.

⁶⁰ Issawi, 1963, 119; O’Brien, 1966, 60; Ikram, 2018, 92.

⁶¹ Abdulhaq, 2016.

⁶² Issawi, 1963, 237.

⁶³ Issawi, 1963, 238 referring to an estimate by Abd Allah Abaza, published in: Barawi, 1952, 65.

⁶⁴ For the 1947 laws, see Wahba, 1994, 43–47.

⁶⁵ Tignor, 1984, 235ff.

⁶⁶ O’Brien, 1966, 314; Tignor, 1984, 240f; Vitalis, 1995, xii–xvii, 26f, 172ff, 215f.

⁶⁷ Issawi, 1963, 221f, 231ff; O’Brien, 1966, 57; Waterbury, 1983, 199.

⁶⁸ Ikram, 2018, 113.

⁶⁹ Waterbury, 1983, 51.

⁷⁰ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 183ff.

⁷¹ Ikram, 2018, 112.

⁷² Issawi, 1963, 231ff.

⁷³ For the sterling crises and their effects, see Louis, 1984, 10–15. At the end of World War Two E£1 corresponded roughly to £ 1 and **US \$**; after the 1949 devaluation E£1 exchanged for \$2.87; see Mabro and Radwan, 1976, xi.

⁷⁴ Issawi, 1963, 236f, 284; Mead, 1967, 380f. The IMF only provides a figure for 1944 when total public debt in terms of gross general government debt stood at 16.9 per cent to GDP, see IMF DataMapper, retrieved 21/5/2020.

⁷⁵ Waterbury 1983, 208 referring to Abdel-Fadil, 1975, 4–12; Radwan and Lee, 1986; Hammad, 2016.

⁷⁶ O'Brien, 1966, 49–51, 99; Johnson, 2004, 72; Issawi, 1963, 93–108; Tignor, 1984, 230ff, 237, 283f; Beinin and Lockman, 1998, 291ff.

⁷⁷ For land rent and taxation, see Waterbury, 1983, 224, 264.

⁷⁸ Tignor, 1984, 230–242, 243ff; for the land tax see also Vitalis, 1995, 181.

⁷⁹ See in particular Wahba, 1994, 43–47.

⁸⁰ See Louis, 1984; Cohen and Kolinsky (eds), 1998.

⁸¹ See Louis, 1984, 692f.

⁸² For a comprehensive, frequently concurring, analysis of independence, regional ambitions, and Israel in Egyptian foreign policy at the time, see: Doran, 1999. See also Louis, 1984.

⁸³ Louis, 1984, viii.

⁸⁴ Louis, 1984, viii.

⁸⁵ For the negotiations and related issues see Louis, 1984; Louis and Brown (eds), 1999; Vatikiotis, 1991, 360–374; Balfour-Paul, 1991, 1–48; Smith, 2012; Doran, 1999, 44ff.

⁸⁶ Louis, 1984, 15–35, 692, 715, 720.

⁸⁷ For details, see Abdallah, 1985, 62–79.

⁸⁸ For details see Louis, 1984, viii, 583, 731f.

⁸⁹ See Kunz, 1991; Ramière de Fontanier, 2018; Karabell, 2003.

⁹⁰ First sketched out by the 1944 Alexandria Protocol, the AL established in 1945 had little in common with a British suggestion made in 1942 to establish a grouping of the same name, see: Louis, 1984, 128–146.

⁹¹ For the text of the charter, see Khalil, 1962, 56–60; for the Alexandria Protocol, see Khalil, 1962, 53–55.

⁹² See for instance Hourani, 1983, 294; Louis, 1984, 313 ff; Kienle, 1994, 1–30.

⁹³ Louis, 1984, 103–172; Balfour-Paul, 1991, 29; Louis and Brown, 1999; Doran, 1999.

⁹⁴ Hourani, 1983, 291ff; Gershoni and Jankowski, 1995.

⁹⁵ Roger Owen, 1983; Gershoni and Jankowski, 1995; Kienle, 1990, 1–30.

⁹⁶ Binns, 2016; Meinardus, 1999.

⁹⁷ Sternfeld, 2015; Ramazani, 1975; for the domestic situation in Iran at the time, see: Azimi, 2009, 272; Fawcett, 1986; Hale, 2013; Abou-El-Fadl, 2018.

⁹⁸ For relations between the Arab states on the one hand and the emerging Israeli state on the other, see Shlaim, 2000, 38, 77ff, 184; for Egypt in particular: Doran, 1999, chapter 5.

⁹⁹ On the battalions, see Yapp, 1991, 136; Abdallah, 1985, 62–98; Botman, 1998, 304.

¹⁰⁰ Louis, 1984, 692f; Golan, 1990.

¹⁰¹ Sharp, 2018, 23f.

The 1952 ‘Revolution’, the Rise of Nasser, and the Republic until his Death

Often referred to as the ‘1952 revolution’, the military coup staged by the ‘Free Officers’ in many ways reflected the malaise of constituencies, rising in numbers and resolve, that today would be labelled ‘(lower) middle classes’. Many of the officers, including Nasser as their emerging leader, hailed from these constituencies and subsequently implemented distributional policies that established them as the social base of the new republican regime. Once conflicts among the officers were sorted out, Nasser replaced Naguib at the helm of the state where he remained until his death in 1970. Frequent disagreements among his allies and supporters notwithstanding, the affirmation of authoritarian rule, its institutions and practice, reduced pluralism far beyond what it was under the monarchy and entailed heavy repression of opponents such as the Muslim Brothers and communists. Successive land reforms, waves of nationalizing private sector industries weakened the old propertied classes, while the expansion of the bureaucracy and investment in health and education directly increased the disposable incomes of regime supporters. Simultaneously, the allocation of important resources to industrialization, largely for domestic markets, and large infrastructural projects such as the Aswan High Dam not only established public sector workers as another pillar of the new order; industrialization also profoundly changed the economy, first consistent with government intentions to strengthen independence and help Egypt to catch up with the ‘developed’ countries in the North, but then through the accumulation of unsustainable debt to weaken it even before the 1967 defeat dealt a final blow to the strategy. Nonetheless, in terms of institutions, social background of the rulers, role of the military, and economic strategies, decisions and developments in the 1950s and 1960s have shaped Egypt to this very day. Nasser and his allies and supporters also managed to pursue an ambitious foreign policy illustrated by a treaty ensuring full independence, the departure of all British troops, the transformation of military defeat in the 1956 Suez War into a political victory, support from both the US as well as the USSR, and a domineering, sometimes dominant, role in broader Arab politics. Partly thanks to its authoritarian nature, the government succeeded in mobilizing considerable human and material resources for its policies at home and abroad, but for the same reasons it failed to critically assess the risks of these policies and thereby transformed strength into weakness. The balance-of-payment crises of the 1960s and the 1967 defeat are cases in point. Once again, however, Egypt as a state and a community of loyalty survived the challenges.

Political Change

In the early hours of 23 July 1952 the Free Officers with the help of a few thousand troops occupied the headquarters of the armed forces in Cairo, official buildings including the state broadcasting service, and other strategic locations such as major squares and bridges. On 26 July they forced King Faruq (Farouk) to abdicate in favour of his infant son Ahmad Fu’ad (Fuad) and to leave the country. On the same day the royal yacht *Mahrusa* set sail to take him from his summer residence in Alexandria to his Italian exile. In spite of a few blunders which could have jeopardized their action – Anwar al-Sadat went to see a movie and almost missed the boat – the officers swiftly took control of all major infrastructure and government offices.¹

The officers were moved by a number of grievances that converged towards the need to put an end to the monarchy. They were highly critical of its conduct of the 1948/49 Palestine war; in their eyes the King had entered hostilities without adequate preparation of the armed forces whose action was further impaired by corrupt procurement contracts, faulty equipment, and ineffective weapons. For them Egypt’s defeat in 1949 was a corollary of the close relationship between the monarchy and the imperialist powers, in particular Britain, whom they suspected of ultimately siding with Israel. From their perspective the *nakba* (disaster) was a strong reminder that only a new political regime entirely independent of the imperialist powers could guarantee the future and strength of Egypt. Such independence was unthinkable

as long as the country was run by the King, the large landowners, and some capitalists whom they considered British stooges. These concerns were expressed in the Six Principles of the Revolution that the officers published soon after taking power.²

The coup heralded a revolution of sorts that unfolded over subsequent years and in spite of an uneven pace of change and a number of continuities transformed the political regime, politics, and policies. The leaders of the Free Officers immediately formed the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) that would henceforth govern the country. In formal terms the monarchy was nonetheless given a temporary reprieve to reassure sceptics at home and abroad, to allow the new masters to consolidate their position, and to sort out their own personal ambitions and political differences. The RCC created a shaky Regency Council to reign in the stead of the King but directly appointed the new prime minister supposed to translate the revolution into practice. Other changes were to follow over the years. As prime minister the officers chose an old hand, Ali Mahir (not to be confused with his brother Ahmad), who had already held the same position under the King and whose cooperation, they hoped, would enhance their popularity among other former supporters of the monarchy. To be seen in the light of their own, far more modest social background, the choice also illustrated the limits of the revolution that they envisaged at that stage. The institutional shake-up ipso facto affected politics, even though in this area as well far more change was to come. Shortly after the coup, the RCC unveiled new policies like the land reform that, still within the limits referred to, entailed a major break with the past; retrospectively they, too, were followed by additional and more far-reaching change.³

The Dominant Actors and their Social Background

To a large extent the advent of the Free Officers reflected the slow but inescapable rise of the social groups that hitherto had been excluded from the corridors of power.⁴ By and large they came from the very social groups that from the late 1920s had given rise to the new political organizations outside parliament. Unlike the middle-aged or elderly civilians dominating politics under the monarchy, the far younger Free Officers were not born into the major landed or capitalist families of the country. Some were the scions of provincial notables who like the Muhi al-Dins (Muhieddines), Al-Amrs, and Al-Baghdadis owned comfortable amounts of land, but still far less than the major latifundists. Others were the sons of the 'rural middle class' owning some 25 – 50 feddan, merchants, manufacturers, entrepreneurs, professionals, or civil servants with roughly similar or lower incomes. Nasser's father, for instance, for some time was a postmaster in Alexandria. In many cases, their families were able to send them to secondary school but not to university; Nasser spent only one term reading law. For them the most accessible institution of higher education was the military academy that from 1936 admitted more easily able candidates from modest backgrounds. Like most of the officers of his generation the older Naguib (Najib) hailed from a more affluent background, in his case a family of career officers; however, he mainly remained a figurehead that would soon be dropped.⁵ Reflecting the overall composition of the officer corps, the Free Officers were by and large Muslims, a feature that also distinguished them from their propertied predecessors who included a fair number of non-Muslims.

Attempts to form an alliance of sorts with former supporters of the monarchy considered to be receptive to the 'modernizing' aims of the 'revolution' were progressively abandoned. Prime minister Ali Mahir resigned two months after taking office; his opposition to the land reform illustrated basic disagreements between the Officers and the former politically and economically dominant classes. The divide deepened throughout the 1950s, in many ways because of different views about economic policies and related property issues (see below). Nonetheless, the officers selectively co-opted civilians who were intimately related to the old political and social order such as Ali Sabri and Sayyid Mar'ai (Sayed Marei) whom they appointed prime minister and minister of agrarian reform, respectively.⁶

Unsurprisingly, the new rulers created conditions that guaranteed the officer corps an enviable social position based on numerous entitlements and lastingly established it as the mainstay of the political regime. Though often from behind the scenes, military officers have heavily influenced, if not determined, Egyptian politics ever since. No doubt those playing an active political role always remained a minority, but a strong esprit de corps reinforced by representations, material privileges, and professional ‘inheritance’ over generations strengthened the loyalty of the others. With the growth of the public sector from the mid-1950s (former) officers increasingly occupied managerial positions in larger companies and the broader administration supposed to run the economy. Officers were and remained at the core of what some authors called a ‘state bourgeoisie’.⁷ The rise to prominence of military officers in high-ranking political, administrative, and economic positions would only every now and then be – partly – dented in the decades to come.⁸

Be it only to fill the numerous positions in the bureaucracy and in the public sector that both began to grow quickly, the officers naturally recruited numerous civilians beyond the survivors of the old regime already mentioned. In their attempt to ‘modernize’ and ‘develop’ Egypt, the new rulers hired increasing numbers of engineers who often rose in the hierarchy.⁹ Most civilian personnel originated from the same social strata as the officers themselves. Parts of these strata were the key constituency of support of the new order that also benefited from economic and social policies (see below). Nonetheless, it seems that the Free Officers accommodated rather than furthered the interests of the rural middle class; they saw its role as that of an intermediary with the less affluent parts of rural society, not that of a policy-maker.¹⁰ Simultaneously, the rulers broadened their social base through distributive policies aimed at the peasants and workers which were also intended to improve output and spur economic development. Part and parcel of building and consolidating this social base was a strategy of legitimation that emphasized and overstated the humble origins of the Free Officers. Social mobilities in the Nasser period, upward, downward, and static, are one of the themes of Naguib Mahfuz’s (Najib Mahfuz) novel ‘Miramar’ published in 1967.

The Political Regime

The social background and the political project of the Free Officers had a considerable impact on the political regime that grew out of the ad hoc arrangements made after the coup. Two other factors influenced the new institutional architecture: the fear that supporters of the old political and economic order might try and overthrow the new rulers, and the divisions among the latter that reflected ideological differences as well as personal ambitions. On the first count, institutions had to pre-empt any interference by the ‘reactionaries’ and their alleged imperialist allies abroad. Individual remnants of the old regime like Sayyid Marei or Ali Sabri could be useful for a variety of reasons ranging from their skills to pure political expediency. However, the comeback of the owners of large amounts of land and capital as a group or force had to be pre-empted. The objective ruled out an electoral democracy which could have enabled them to return through the backdoor of the popular vote. On the second count, Nasser as the rising star among the officers increasingly marginalized the RCC as a collective decision-making body and concentrated power in his own hands.

Excluding the supporters of the old order naturally had to go hand in hand with harnessing support for the new regime. Nasser and his supporters opted for institutions inspired by the principles of ‘democratic centralism’, even though they never pursued anything like communist policies. The institutions had to appear participatory, even democratic, but simultaneously guarantee the top-down elaboration and implementation of policies. The centrepiece would soon be an overarching political mass organization or single party. Established in 1953 in a sort of trial run, the Liberation Organization (*Hay’at al-Tahrir*, also translated as Liberation Rally) in 1956 morphed into the National Union with sections in neighbourhoods and work places; in 1962 it developed into the corporatist-inspired Arab Socialist Union with a host of

suborganizations (see below). According to one author, Egypt at the time was a populist authoritarian-modernizing state, a categorization further confirmed by economic and social policies.¹¹

After the 1952 coup matters were first formalized by a series of constitutional declarations (I'lan dusturi)¹² intended to be replaced later by a fully-fledged new constitution. In steps these declarations abrogated the 1923 constitution, abolished political parties during a vaguely defined three-year transitory period, and endorsed the dominant role of the RCC which delegated only part of its legislative and executive powers to the Council of Ministers. Rather summarily the document recognized fundamental liberties and recognized the independence of the judiciary. However, nowhere did it clarify the relations among the various constitutional powers (or 'branches of government') or their position vis-à-vis the subjects of what in principle still remained a monarchy; elections were none of its concerns. Formally abolishing the monarchy, the constitutional declaration of June 1953 established the republic and the office of president of the republic, though, again, without any provision as to his (s)election.¹³ Together these documents established a political regime without formal checks and balances that by this very fact could easily turn more authoritarian than the monarchy. A constitution inspired by the principles of liberal democracy that began to be drafted from early 1953 quickly fell victim to disagreements among the officers; it was shelved in the summer of 1954 as were parliamentary elections planned for the same year.¹⁴ A new and comprehensive constitution was finally promulgated in 1956 but superseded by a new document adopted in 1964.

The 1956 constitution¹⁵ defined Egypt as a 'democratic republic' that was part of the 'Arab nation'; Islam was its 'religion of state' while sovereignty was vested in the people. In principle, it guaranteed all fundamental liberties, though alongside explicit duties such as the participation in the defence of the country. The 1956 constitution guaranteed private enterprise and property within the limits of general welfare and legislation to limit the size of land holdings. It was the first such document that dwelled extensively on the social and economic rights of Egyptians, in particular the right to work, health and education. It was also the first constitution to stress the role of the state in economic development, including planning, and the provision of social justice.

Executive powers were concentrated in the hands of the President of the Republic who appointed and dismissed ministers and who chaired the Council of ministers; the office of prime minister was abolished. Only individual ministers, not the Council, were responsible before the new National Assembly (NA). The President was the Supreme Commander of the armed forces, appointed high ranking officers and civil servants, and could declare the state of emergency. Consisting of a single chamber, the Chamber of Deputies (CD, *Majlis al-nawwab*) had to approve the state budget; the CD had to share its legislative powers with the President who could also dissolve it and in various cases govern by decree. The newly created National Union (NU, *Al-ittihad al-qawmi*) that replaced the Liberation Organization nominated all candidates for elections to the CD; the NU itself was to be organized by a presidential decree. The constitution recognized the independence of the judiciary, though again without defining its prerogatives vis-à-vis the executive and the legislature. It explicitly ruled out any discrimination between men and women; the law on political liberties passed in the same year for the first time in the history of Egypt granted women the right to vote and to stand for election, though within the limits implied by the role of the NU. Finally, it endorsed and ring-fenced all decisions previously made by the RCC that henceforth ceased to exist. The document was endorsed by a referendum held in parallel with another referendum to 'elect' Gamal Abd al-Nasser President of the Republic for an initial six-year term. Subsequently, the CD would present a single candidate to be endorsed by referendum. The trend to limit the choice of voters transformed elections to an instrument of acclamation supposed to legitimate the unelected and reduce pluralism, except where the authorities found it expedient to allow it to survive.

Later in 1956, the Suez War launched by Britain, France and Israel highlighted attempts to redraw the demographic boundaries of the polity. Prompted by the nationalization of the Suez Canal, itself prompted by US and British opposition to a World Bank loan for the Aswan High Dam project (see below), the war led the Egyptian government to deprive many Jewish Egyptians of their citizenship, partly under earlier amendments to the law of nationality. In the aftermath of the war some 20,000 Jews including (by that time former) Egyptian citizens left the country under deportation orders or allegedly voluntary arrangements. Property of French and British residents was confiscated, a measure applied to Jews and non-Jews alike.¹⁶

A new provisional constitution was promulgated shortly after the merger with Syria in February 1958 which established the short-lived United Arab Republic (UAR, *Al-jumhuriyya al-'arabiyya al-mutahhida*, see below). Similar to the 1956 constitution, the document defined the new state as a 'democratic republic' that was part of the 'Arab nation'; possibly to rally as many Syrians as possible it remained silent on religion. A few summary provisions formally recognized some fundamental freedoms while others, no less summarily, referred to social rights and social justice, and to economic planning as a responsibility of the state. Private property, though, seemed to be guaranteed independently of its contribution to general welfare, possibly as a gesture to some Syrian supporters of the UAR, possibly reflecting the hasty drafting of the document. The text also continued to remind nationals of their duties, in particular to defend their country.

The new 'unitary' state remained a presidential republic with all executive powers vested in the President and thus in Gamal Abd al-Nasser. Roughly the same as under the previous constitution, these powers now included the – optional – appointment of vice-presidents and their later dismissal. Elections as a means to select rulers and representatives did not figure very prominently in the new document. It remained mute on the process governing selection of the President who even determined the number of deputies in the unicameral parliament, the only condition being that half of them had to be appointed from the existing Syrian and Egyptian assemblies. Incidentally, it was only in 1960 that the 600 deputies – two thirds from Egypt, one third from Syria – were all installed and Anwar al-Sadat was 'elected' speaker. The NU was extended to Syria where all other parties had to dissolve. The constitution provided for an independent judiciary but once again failed to define its powers vis-à-vis the other constitutional bodies. Two executive councils with no actual powers were established, one for Egypt, the other one for Syria, but later abolished. In late September 1961 a military coup in Damascus put an end to the UAR and left the constitution in tatters.

In May 1962 the government-convened National Congress of Popular Forces issued the Charter of National Action (*Mithaq al-'amal al-watani*); although a programmatic rather than constitutional document, it refocused government action and amended the institutional framework. In a reaction to the collapse of the UAR blamed on bourgeois reactionaries in Syria, the Charter further emphasized 'socialist' principles which, however, remained rather vague. Neither the preparatory committee, nor the Congress itself could agree whether the aim should be the 'Arab Socialism' or of the 'Arab' application of socialism; after lively debates two complementary but contradictory resolutions were passed (see also below). Thanks to the fudge the Charter replaced the NU with the new Arab Socialist Union (ASU, *Al-ittihad al-ishtiraki al-'arabi*), a more thoroughly structured organization inspired by the principles of corporatism. Supposed to unite the 'working forces' – peasants, workers, soldiers, intellectuals, and 'national' capital – it comprised at some stage some 7,000 sections and five million members. The ASU incorporated the trade unions and established a Socialist Youth Organization, but never actually soldiers and officers. In the same – now explicitly – corporatist spirit the Charter provided for half of the seats in parliament to be filled with 'workers and peasants', two categories of people whose definition was also left conveniently vague (see also below).¹⁷ In September 1962 a new constitutional declaration established a – short-lived – Presidential Council around Nasser.

A new provisional constitution promulgated in March 1964 continued to refer to the country as the UAR; defining it as 'democratic' and 'socialist', the document in line with the Charter reserved half of the seats in the National Assembly for workers and peasants. Like its predecessors, it remained firmly authoritarian and concentrated all powers in the hands of a few. The Presidential Council was morphed into the ASU executive, reemphasizing the role of the President of the Republic as *primus sine paribus*. The text also recognized Islam as the religion of state. In 1969, the Supreme Council of Judicial Bodies was established to oversee the judiciary which had shown its disapproval of government policies (see below). Created in the same year to examine the constitutionality of laws, the Supreme Court (*Al-mahkama al-'ulya*) was largely clawless. Throughout the period, liberties in principle guaranteed by the constitutions were in actual fact severely limited by the state of emergency that with a few interruptions remained in force from 1958.

Politics

If the officers' determination to marginalize the remnants of the old order and to monopolize power necessarily entailed formal restrictions on political participation, the successive constitutional changes illustrate that the new regime itself was affected by shifting balances of power among its representatives and thus by politics in the sense of cooperation and conflict among them. This being said, the changes tended to further restrict already limited pluralism and thus reduce the space within which politics could unfold. Defined by limited rather than absent pluralism, the authoritarian nature of the political regime became more pronounced over the years.¹⁸ Nonetheless, decision-making under Nasser as well as his successor Sadat remains a subject of debate and speculation.

From the 1952 coup until 1954 the new regime was riven by a deepening divide between Gamal Abd al-Nasser, the increasingly dominant figure in the RCC, and Muhammad Naguib, the elder officer co-opted by the Free Officers for his moral authority. PM since the resignation of Ali Mahir, President of the republic since the abolition of the monarchy a year later, Naguib was widely credited with the intention to return power to civilians under a new constitution that began to be drafted in early 1953 but never saw the light of day. The power struggle came to a head in February 1954, led to successive episodes in which the one or the other side prevailed until Nasser in November got the RCC to dismiss Naguib and place him under house arrest.¹⁹

Other divisions appeared among the officers and their supporters. Abd al-Hakim Amr carved out for himself a basically unassailable position as minister of defence and *de facto* head of the armed forces. In spite of the omnipresence of the secret services, and partly because of it, the sheer size of the state apparatus and its affiliated organizations favoured the emergence of 'power centres', in particular in the 'deep state'. Supposed to consolidate Nasser's rule, the ASU, formally headed by the less than consensual Ali Sabri, displayed its own internal divisions, only reinforced by the creation of a secretive 'Vanguard' around him and other, often competing, members with a predilection for plotting and intelligence gathering. In the case of the armed forces, it was only the defeat in the 1967 war that allowed Nasser to re-establish control; he managed to blame the disaster on Amr who then allegedly committed suicide. More generally, formal hierarchies often failed to reflect actual hierarchies that heavily rested on informal ties. Thus Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, the head of the government controlled press conglomerate Al-Ahram, merged as one of Nasser's closest advisors who inspired numerous decisions and policies.

From the outset conflict also marked the relations between the government and other political forces. In the months following the coup a number of representatives of the old regime were arrested and convicted in show trials. Soon afterwards Nasser fell out with the MB loyal to the *murshid* Hasan al-Hudaybi, then with other MB as well; after various disagreements and arrests the organization was officially outlawed in January 1954. No doubt to exploit their divisions, Nasser in February visited the tomb of their founder,

Hasan al-Banna. Mass arrests, show trials, and death sentences followed after a MB opened fire at Nasser during a public rally in Alexandria in late October. The assassination attempt helped to sideline Naguib conveniently accused of encouraging MB activities. By late 1953 the officers had also arrested and tried numerous communists, even though others managed to regroup and act clandestinely. In both cases, the officers put loyalties among themselves higher than loyalties towards forces they had earlier sympathized with. Repression against communists temporarily eased in the late 1950s, but soon resumed again, with both developments related to foreign policy considerations (see below); on the occasion of Khrushchev's visit to Egypt in 1964 a modus vivendi was found under which the Communist Party dissolved and many of its members joined the ASU. In the early 1960s, after the collapse of the UAR, the iron fist came down on the remains of the former dominant classes who were suspected of disloyalty and plotting. The assassination of an ASU member in the village of Kamshish in 1966 led to the creation of a Committee for the Liquidation of Feudalism that after various excesses was disbanded a year later. At times thousands of (alleged) political opponents were held in prisons and prison camps across the country. Trying to survive side by side, detained Muslim Brothers and leftists forged ties that subsequently encouraged some of the latter to embrace Islamist positions.

Marginalized and persecuted by the officers with whom they competed for power and influence, the MB were increasingly unable to accede to medium and higher ranking position in the administration and in the growing public sector. As a result, they turned or reverted to the private sector. Later, in the 1970s, many among them benefited from policies that allowed the private sector to expand. Many also migrated to the major oil producing countries where for many years they could combine profit and security from persecution.

As the space for politics narrowed, deliberation, debate, and decisions involved shrinking circles of people around Nasser and his close confidantes. The institutions and processes that seemed to govern formal political participation in actual fact prevented it. Much appreciated by Nasser for the direct link they seemed to establish between him and the 'people', referenda never failed to produce the intended outcome. For instance, in the twin referendums held in 1956 to approve the new constitution and to 'elect' the only candidate, Nasser, as President of the Republic the turn-out and the 'ayes' amounted to between 99 and 100 percent. Nasser obtained a similar landslide victory in the 1965 referendum held to 're-elect' him under the new constitution.

Under the constitutions and the electoral laws in force from 1956 only members of the NU, later the ASU, who survived a tightly run vetting process could stand in parliamentary elections. For the first time in the country's history, though, women could vote and stand for election. In spite of strong conservative opposition, six women competed in the 1957 parliamentary elections; two of them won seats. However, already a year later the first parliament elected after the 1952 coup was dissolved and replaced with the new UAR assembly, largely hand-picked by the President.

The parliamentary elections in March 1964 and January 1969 were governed by the provisions of the 1962 Charter. In each constituency therefore the ASU leadership fielded two candidates, one of them at least a worker or a peasant; additional candidates could be, and were, nominated by ASU members. Moderately competitive, the two-round elections (with a run-off between the most successful candidates) involved more than 1,700 candidates who ran for 350 seats, 10 additional seats being filled by the presidential appointees. In 1969, however, less than 10 per cent of the elected seats went to candidates not officially selected by the ASU leadership.

Restrictions on eligibility, though, did not prevent heated debates in the successive assemblies, not even in the hand-picked UAR parliament. The same was true for the NU and the ASU all of whose members

obviously claimed to support the President. A case in point was the preparation of the 1962 Charter discussed above.

Consistent with the restrictions on formal political participation, prime ministers were not elected but initially selected by the RCC, and later by the President. Ali Mahir who already in September 1952 resigned over the land reform was replaced by Muhammad Naguib, the senior ally of the Free Officers. In the power struggle among the officers that came to a head in early 1954 the position changed hands several times. In February Nasser replaced Naguib, in March Naguib replaced Nasser, and in April Nasser definitely removed Naguib from all offices including that of PM. Nasser remained PM until September 1962 when he appointed Ali Sabri, to be followed in October 1965 by Zakariyya Muhieddine (Muhi al-Din), and in September 1966 by Muhammad Sidqi Sulayman. From June 1967 to his death in September 1970 Nasser himself acted as PM. It goes without saying that all incumbents belonged to the NU.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the government left the production and propagation of religious norms in the hands of the various Muslim and Christian authorities as long as they went along with its overall policy choices. The effects of such normative pluralism remained obviously circumscribed as Muslims tended to speak to Muslims and Christians to members or followers of their own church. Moreover, legislation as well as custom basically prevented religious conversions, thereby limiting the attraction that religious authorities could exert on other creeds. In any case, these authorities progressively lost much of their autonomy and therefore the ability to challenge government policies beyond matters that could be easily declared religious. After closing the religious (*shari'a*) courts in the 1950s, the government in 1961 established its control over al-Azhar and thus influenced its doctrinal and normative production. Similar changes affected the office of the Mufti, Dar al-Ifta' (Ifta'), which was the other major authority able to issue *fatwas* and thereby give advice on Islamic law.²⁰ Muslim preachers were state employees, controlled by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (officially the Ministry of Endowments or *awqaf*). Despised by the ulama, Sufi orders (*tariqa-s*) lost support or remained discrete.²¹ In legal terms the Christian churches remained independent but in actual practice the government regulated their activities as much as those of the Muslim authorities. The relative difference in treatment may have been a remnant of Ottoman policies which left a degree of autonomy to some non-Muslim millets – religious authorities rather than the 'communities they spoke for, or simply the share of Christians in the total population which throughout the centuries never exceeded or even reached 10 per cent. In their vast majority Christians observed the prescriptions of the Orthodox Coptic Church; in the 1960s the other churches such as the Anglicans altogether had no more than some 40,000 followers.

Roughly at the same time, other actors as well were prevented from raising their concerns in public. All newspapers were nationalized in 1961, thus transforming the government monopoly over broadcasting into a monopoly over the media in general that was further reinforced with the beginnings of – state – television in 1960. Most larger private companies were also nationalized in the early 1960s (see below); in the process private sector organizations like the Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Egyptian Industries morphed into annexes of the public sector and government, a fate that trade unions had met already far earlier. Already regarded with suspicion, legislation passed in 1964 restricted the freedom of action of private voluntary organizations which today would be defined as civil society. Henceforth they were answerable to the Ministry of Social affairs which even appointed some of their board members.

Throughout the 1950s and 60s the limits to pluralism were also reinforced by Nasser's charismatic personality which strengthened his legitimacy and in one way or the other reduced that of his critics and opponents. The place Nasser occupied in the hearts and minds of Egyptians and thus in the country's politics is probably best illustrated by popular reactions to his resignation in the wake of the 1967 defeat.

Though not always spontaneously, hundreds of thousands of Egyptians marched through the streets of Cairo to ask him to stay in office, a call he quickly heeded.

This being said, the late 1960s also saw important protests driving home to Nasser and his government that it was held accountable for the 1967 defeat. The mild sentences passed down by military tribunals in March 1968 on allegedly incompetent officers sparked protests and demonstrations. Students mobilized on different occasions throughout the year and obtained some government concessions. The war of attrition with Israel (see below), initiated by Nasser, repeatedly led to popular anger at a government unable to defend the country. Discontent in the judiciary in the summer of 1969 prompted the ‘Massacre of the Judges’ (*Madhbahat al-qada*); objecting to mandatory membership in the ASU and emphasizing political liberties, numerous judges, including the elected representatives of the Judges’ Club, were dismissed, to be reinstated only under Sadat. It was this unrest that prompted the government to decree the institutional changes referred to above.²²

Policies

Initially marked by some continuities with government action and debates under the monarchy, policies in most areas changed considerably between the advent of the Free Officers in 1952 and Nasser’s death in 1970. Though far from unilinear, the changes progressively strengthened the role of the state in the organization of the economy, including the production of goods and services, and in most other walks of life – a trend that only began to be timidly reversed in the late 1960s. Most of the policy decisions reflected perceived needs and opportunities that successively arose from the convergence and divergence of interests between the new rulers on the one hand and other domestic as well as external actors. In spite of some obvious, even declared, preferences, such as that for planning, these decisions cannot be seen as the mere result of a blue print or even a long term strategy that the Free Officers or Nasser and his other supporters would have conceived and implemented from the outset. Sympathizing with different political forces and trends, the officers agreed on the need for change in principle rather than on the precise form of such change. With regard to foreign capital, for instance, the officers first relaxed restrictions introduced under the monarchy before nationalizing much of it after the 1956 Suez War which also initiated or reinforced a variety of other measures against foreigners. Similarly, the land reform they decreed in September 1952 had been the object of public and parliamentary debates for years (see below). Seen from that angle, the advent of the Free Officers was a revolution only to the extent that it brought to power people from a different social background. In all other respects it remained a coup d’état that, only over a decade or so led to important transformations in terms of politics, policies, and the polity as such.

From the outset, and increasingly so over time, policies were inspired by the will to control the ruled, be it for the sake of the political project carried by the rulers or simply for them to remain in power and benefit from its exercise. Much was invested in means and techniques to repress unwelcome thoughts and activities, ranging from censorship to eavesdropping, denunciations, the crushing of demonstrations and strikes, arrests, torture, political (show) trials, and executions. Invented in the early 1960s, ‘political isolation’ was a comparatively benign measure to remove ‘reactionaries’ from political and administrative responsibilities so that they could not harm the new political order. Unsurprisingly, the preoccupation with control also had effects on the institutions, be it only that it strengthened police forces, secret services, and censorship agencies.

Policies in many domains were inspired by a concept of ‘modernization’ shared with modernization theory that at the time dominated the academic study of ‘developing’ countries and with much of policymaking around the world.²³ Such modernization, seen as a necessary condition for development, independence and strength, was supposed to act as a transformative force on numerous objects ranging from the economy to education, dress, mentalities, and ultimately the state and the nation. As discussed

below, ‘modernization’ of the economy first and foremost meant industrialization and, as a corollary, the ‘production’ and training of ‘modernizers’ such as engineers even beyond the absorptive capacities of the expanding industries.²⁴ In the area of education, it more generally entailed heavy investment in primary, secondary, and tertiary education with rapidly growing numbers of pupils and student, in absolute terms as well as relative to the total population. After its ‘nationalization’ in 1961 al-Azhar was transformed into a fully fledged university that trained physicians and engineers as well as *ulama* (‘*ulama*). With regard to dress and its implications for personal, professional, and national identity, it led to a host of positive and negative incitements that for instance pushed male civil servants to wear a suit rather than the *galabiyya*, the long, wide shirt then (and still today) donned by peasants and poorer urbanites.

Nonetheless, many social norms propagated, reproduced or simply endorsed by the government tended to adapt or limit the search for ‘modernization’. As in other nationalist contexts, government sponsored cultural production sought to root the ‘modern’ nation in the glories of the past.²⁵ Keenly aware that the vast majority of Egyptians were pious and practicing, partly believers themselves, the Free Officers and their allies never sought to combat religion or abolish religious authorities. Rather they sought to control and instrumentalize them by reducing their autonomy. Soon after the 1952 coup they nationalized the Muslim religious endowments and issued new rules governing the administration of their Christian equivalents. For reasons of legitimacy and expediency they left the religious authorities in charge of doctrinal, liturgical, and personal status matters, as long as their decisions did not enter into conflict with the principles of government policy. The values and norms that Egyptians adhered to thus remained considerably influenced by teachings – and the reproduction of earlier teachings – of the conservative *ulama* educated at al-Azhar and the equally conservative hierarchy of the Orthodox Coptic Church formed in the monasteries. This remains true even though the ultimate absence of a single ultimate doctrinal authorities for Muslims – not even al-Azhar – provided for a degree of pluralism among the *ulama*. Also, alternative religious doctrines and practices such as Sufism in spite of their popularity were frowned upon, discouraged, and even repressed. Consistent with this overall attitude, the government did not hesitate to legitimate its action in religious terms, for instance during the 1956 Suez War when Nasser spoke to the Egyptians from the *minbar*²⁶ of al-Azhar.

As personal status and family law remained in the hands of religious authorities, it comes as no surprise that among Muslims it was far easier for men than for women to initiate divorce and that for Orthodox Copts it was only allowed in specific circumstances. Similarly, in matters of inheritance Muslim women continued to be disadvantaged compared to men. More broadly, the legitimacy of sexual practices and their impact on human bodies was defined in line with the teachings of Christian and Muslim authorities. As a result, officially propagated norms and government legislation outlawed homosexuality and abortion. In 1953 and 1965 official bodies were created to examine population growth; however, advocates of family planning failed to convince their opponents who expected a natural decline in the birth rate as a consequence of economic development and ‘modernization’. Only isolated and small initiatives to encourage birth control emerged on the ground²⁷ (obviously at the time birth control was a sensitive issue in many other countries as well, including in Europe and North America). An issue where the government broke with tradition, though without translating rhetoric into effective policy, was female genital mutilation which part of the Christian clergy and Muslim *ulama* continued to endorse.

Nationalists have often claimed that Nasser completed the ‘modernization’ and nation-building drive initiated by Mehmed – in their eyes Muhammad – Ali, or that the latter staged the dress rehearsal for the former. No doubt, each of them in his own way exploited a favourable international constellation to invest heavily in state-building and economic independence, an investment that in turn involved control over events beyond their borders. However, beyond these basic similarities big differences appear in terms of aims as well as outcomes. Mehmed Ali’s contribution to nation building was by default or unintended

consequence. Unlike Nasser, he never pursued any explicit nation-building strategies, nor welfare policies as their partial corollary.²⁸

Economic Policies and Developments

The Period 1952–1959

Like many of their contemporaries, the Free Officers were convinced that government and thus the state had to play an important role in the economy. In newly independent states only the state appeared to have at its disposal the legitimacy and material resources needed to meet the challenges of development supposed to undergird political independence and to close the economic gap with the former imperialist masters. The view was shared by many specialists of various ideological persuasions in the ‘developing world’ of the global south as well as in the ‘developed’ countries of the global north. Facing challenges such as reconstruction after World War Two, political actors in the north frequently agreed, whether they positioned themselves on the right or on the left. Far from being socialists or even communists, the Free Officers by and large assumed that new infrastructure and heavy industries were the key to economic improvement. The choice seemed further justified as geographical and productivity constraints limited a substantial increase in agricultural output.²⁹ Nasser’s search for an ‘industrial renaissance’ summed up a development strategy that moreover established narrative continuity with Mehmed Ali’s (by now definitely renamed Muhammad Ali) earlier project and thus provided nationalist legitimacy. In the eyes of the officers, only the state could mobilize the necessary capital for such an enterprise which initially was supposed to support and guide rather than to weaken and replace the private sector.³⁰ Over the decade, domestic dynamics and external relations led to additional emphasis on government intervention in the economy and the growth of the public relative to the private sector.

Policies pursued after the coup soon entailed major transformations of the Egyptian economy which over time came closer to a revolution than the 1952 coup itself. As early as September 1952 the new rulers decreed a land reform that reduced maximum levels of ownership to 200 feddan per person.³¹ Partly the reform was intended to break the economic and political power of the large landowners. Partly, it was intended to prompt them to invest the compensation they received in the industrialization and thus in the ‘modernization’ of the country (it is not entirely clear why such reinvestment appeared politically less dangerous than the control of land and agriculture). Finally, it was supposed to redistribute agricultural land and thereby to contribute to social justice. Only one out of these objectives clearly was an economic one.

The 1952 land reform resulted in the expropriation of some 450–460,000 feddan; compensation amounted to 40 per cent of the market value of the land and was paid in government bonds carrying 1.5 per cent annual interest over long periods of maturation.³² As one author put it, ‘[G]iven these delays and the overall terms of compensation... it is no wonder that these bonds did little to promote industrial investment.’³³ Beneficiaries of land redistribution were sharecroppers and small holders who had to join government run cooperatives that supplied inputs and credit, marketed the produce, and regulated cultivation, for instance, by imposing certain patterns of crop rotation. Beneficiaries in actual fact had to buy the land from the state which owned it until the last instalment was paid. The reform also reduced land rents and established minimum wages for agricultural labourers. Much land was temporarily rented out before it was actually sold to the final beneficiaries.

The 1952 land reform, the expropriation of some 110,000 feddan of waqf land in 1957, additional ceilings on land holdings in 1961 and 1969, and similar such measures by the end of the 1960s led to the redistribution of a total of 750,000 feddan. In all, these successive expropriations accounted for 16 per cent of Egypt’s agricultural surface and led to the redistribution of 13 per cent of that surface. The major

beneficiaries were the 94 per cent of small holders owning up to 5 feddan who before the 1952 reform controlled some 35 per cent of agricultural land, but 52 per cent by the mid-60s.³⁴

While the actual impact of the 1952 reform on ownership remained limited, it lastingly weakened the economic and political position of the large landowners and fostered serious doubts about the future of property rights among the propertied classes at large. In actual fact, it marked the beginning of the growing estrangement between the new government and the private sector. The process was further exacerbated as the government never clearly defined the boundaries between the private and public sector and thus failed to alleviate uncertainty in the minds of private owners of capital. At the same time, the reform considerably extended state control over agricultural production; though formally still private entrepreneurs, peasants were henceforth regimented by the newly established cooperatives under state control. It also reinforced policies dating back to the monarchy to protect farmers as well as consumers introduced price controls for inputs as well as outputs.³⁵

Policies vis-à-vis the private sector were contradictory in many other respects as well, or at least they created that impression among owners of capital. Once in power, the Free Officers made a number of decisions that reassured the private sector, ranging from higher protective tariffs to the 1954 company law that strengthened shareholders vis-à-vis company directors. The same applied to the violent repression in August 1952 of a strike involving some 10,000 workers at the Kafr al-Dawwar textile factory of the Misr Group that at the time was privately owned. Several workers were killed and two strike leaders were tried and executed. However, other decisions in the early and mid-50s troubled private owners of capital. Legislation to protect workers' rights and improve social insurance and the nationalization in 1955 of the 'Abbud conglomerate (including the monopolistic sugar company) met with their concern. Amendments to the trade unions law outlawed strikes but encouraged workers to join trade unions which by now were state controlled. The new constitution promulgated in June 1956 emphasized the role of the state in the economy.³⁶

In the year of the coup the new government also established the Permanent Council for the Development of National Production (PCDNP) which was to oversee economic development largely defined as industrialization. The Council which still included private sector representatives in July 1953 presented a plan for the allocation of public investments. Large-scale public sector involvement in infrastructure and heavy industries began with the construction of a hydraulic power station that allowed electricity to be produced from the old Aswan Dam. Soon it was epitomized by the iron and steel factory at Helwan built in 1954 as a joint venture between the public sector, the West German company DEMAG and some private Egyptian investors. In July 1956 the government established the Ministry of Industry and appointed the energetic Aziz Sidqi to run it. In 1957 the PCDNP was replaced by the Economic Planning Committee in which the private sector was no longer represented. The Committee implemented the new Industrial Plan, a euphemized laundry list of projects spanning the period until 1960. The Plan anticipated total industrial investment of some E£114 million, 90 million of which were still to be provided by the private sector; ultimately some 30–40 per cent of the total amount were publicly funded. The hiatus between the expected contribution of the private sector and the absence of consultation together with disagreements among various government agencies further prevented the emergence of a coherent mixed economy. It was no doubt consistent with Nasser's vision of 'controlled' capitalism within a 'socialist, democratic and cooperative society', in which socialism did not exclude private property.³⁷

Probably the most serious blow to private sector confidence came as a corollary of the Suez War in 1956. No doubt the tipping point towards the emaciation of the private and the domination of the public sector, the war has sometimes been seen as the break between two economic and development strategies that, however, was not publicly vindicated before the early 1960s.³⁸ In January 1957 the government 'Egyptianized' companies owned by French and British citizens as well by Jews independently of their

nationality. Initially supposed to be sold off to private Egyptian investors, the assets ultimately remained under government control and became part of the public sector; after lengthy negotiations, the Egyptian government in 1959 agreed to pay compensation to the former owners.³⁹ Some producers and service providers hoped to benefit from the misfortunes of their foreign and Jewish competitors or even buy up their companies. The majority, though, saw in the events another proof of the government's indifference to property rights. They increasingly invested in real estate that yielded profits in the short term rather than in industries that yielded profits in the longer term. In the late 1950s, private companies moreover reinvested ever-smaller parts of their profits and began to pay out ever-larger parts as dividends to their shareholders – a trend that later prompted the government to cap dividends by law. Government controls on changes to the size or the product range of existing companies further eroded private sector confidence and investment.⁴⁰

In order to manage the expanding public sector, the government in January 1957 established the Economic Organization (EO). The EO quickly became the umbrella or holding company for basically the entire public sector, including participations of the state in private sector companies. According to an authoritative source the EO by 1960 controlled 64 companies with assets worth E£80 million; major private companies like Bank Misr and the wider Misr Group were forced to work closely with the EO. Also in 1957, new banking legislation brought the National Bank of Egypt (NBE), the still privately owned central bank, under closer government control and other banks closer under the control of the NBE. In February 1960 Bank Ahli and the Misr Group as well as the NBE were nationalized, to be followed in June by all newspapers; the Misr Group, though, remained outside the EO. Compensation once again remained well below market value. The central bank functions of the NBE were transferred to the new central bank, the Bank of Egypt. As the private sector shrank in relative size it increasingly turned into a sector dominated by small enterprises, devoid of major companies.⁴¹

Entirely consistent with the role that according to the Free Officers the state should play in the economy, the growth of the public sector greatly benefited from the conflictual relations that Egypt entertained with the major European powers. Though harmful to Egyptian interests in various respects, these conflicts allowed the government to expropriate foreign owners of capital with great ease or supplied a useful pretext for policies that otherwise would have been more difficult to implement. The EO was the point at which the Free Officers' étatist instincts and convictions intersected with history and, at least to an extent, with serendipity. The belief or claim that domestic capital was in league with foreign capital soon also facilitated the nationalization of Egyptian held assets and thus to further weaken what remained of the Egyptian bourgeoisie, increasingly seen as an internal enemy.

Seen in the light of its major objectives, it comes as no surprise that the land reform did not establish the agricultural sector as the principal beneficiary of public investment. To the contrary, investment increasingly focused on manufacturing and infrastructure which until about 1973 thrived on transfers of benefits and savings from agriculture.⁴² Investment in agriculture largely focused on the extension of cultivated land which was at the heart of the much-cherished self-sufficiency in food production. Apart from producing electricity for new industries, the Aswan High Dam served that purpose, as did large scale land reclamation as in the New Valley in the Western desert and in the 'Tahrir (Liberation) directorate' (*Mudiriyyat Tahrir*) on the western fringes of the Delta.⁴³ However, such 'horizontal expansion' did not meet expectations and after earlier critical remarks Nasser in 1969 declared it an outright failure.⁴⁴ An increase in productivity was largely sought through attendant measures such as the establishment of cooperatives supposed to rationalize the use of land, machinery, and other inputs by small holders; a bias in the redistribution of land in favour of more efficient middling peasants served the same purpose, or at least had similar effects. In spite of the adjustments required by the land reform, agricultural output did not fall after 1952, even though it stagnated; it picked up after 1957, but at levels insufficient to meet growing demand.⁴⁵

Manufacturing industries as well as services continued to focus on the domestic market, not on increasing or diversifying exports, even though some attempts were made in the early 1950s.⁴⁶ However, unlike in the days of the monarchy, import substitution moved into new areas, in particular heavy industries – a process frequently described as its ‘deepening’ phase.⁴⁷ According to some observers, Egyptian policymakers neglected the use of imports, for instance of raw materials, to increase exports – a choice that strengthened East Asian economies.⁴⁸ In actual fact, ‘the last decade of life for the private sector in industry was also the decade of highest tariff incentive for import-substituting industrialization’.⁴⁹ Increasingly, though, other forms of government intervention such as planning and public ownership reduced the role of tariffs.⁵⁰ As a matter of course, the latter also reflected other concerns such as the growing need for imported foodstuffs at affordable prices – which in turn held wages down and thus fed into the viability of factories.

Simultaneously the government invested to maintain and improve infrastructure. A new swing bridge was built across the Suez Canal in 1954; destroyed in the 1956 war, it was rebuilt in 1963, but again destroyed in the 1967 war. In the early 1960s the road network (except in desert areas) was as dense as in Eastern European countries. Alexandria, Port Said, and Suez were major sea ports, even though in terms of equipment they somewhat lagged behind other large Mediterranean ports. Various smaller ports dotted the Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts.⁵¹

The government also began to design large-scale infrastructure projects. It revived an older project from the late 1940s to build a large dam a few miles south of the old Aswan dam. Initially negotiations for an important World Bank loan made good progress; Egypt even agreed to draconian conditions such as the exclusion of communist countries from tenders and renounced new loans without Bank approval. However, in 1956 the Bank under the influence of the United States and Britain, its major shareholders at the time, reneged on an initial pledge of support, prompting the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the Suez War. Thanks to Soviet financial support, construction work began in 1960 (for the international aspects, see below). Once completed in 1971 at a total cost of some \$820 million (including the power station and irrigation facilities), the new dam allowed to irrigate land downstream throughout the year, to reclaim an additional 1.2 million feddan of agricultural land, and to grow everywhere downstream more than one crop a year. Already since the completion of the power station in 1960, it allowed to generate increasing amounts of electricity – ultimately 10 billion kwh – that covered the needs of the entire country at the time and would satisfy additional needs arising over a ten-year period. Its agricultural and industrial aspects combined illustrated Egypt’s capacity to spur economic development, impressed its friends and foes around the globe, and strengthened the belief in the transformative powers of ‘modern’ technology.⁵²

Critics of the dam raised a number of issues including the amount of water that evaporated from Lake Nasser, its storage area. According to recent studies, losses through evaporation amount to 10 per cent of the water stored, but no more than 4 per cent of the annual river flow below Aswan.⁵³ They also focused on the increasing salinity of irrigated soils which, however, was caused by the absence of appropriate drainage systems, not by the dam itself.

The construction of High Dam also led to the resettlement of some 100,000 people living in the area to be flooded and to the displacement of the temples of Abu Simbel that would also have disappeared in the new lake. Numerous other archaeological sites disappeared in the lake. The overwhelming majority of the people who lost their homes were Nubians whose natural language, Nubian, was different from Arabic. It heavily affected their material living conditions and strengthened their sense of exclusion which the inauguration of the impressive Nubian museum in Aswan in 1997 could not compensate for.

The expropriation of British and French owners of capital after the Suez War and of Belgian investors after Brussels intervened in Congo in 1960 did not reflect a general hostility to foreign capital. In the

immediate aftermath of the coup, in July 1952, the Free Officers even scrapped legislation passed in 1947 that limited foreign ownership of joint stock companies and the number of foreigners on their boards. Subsequent laws granted tax holidays to foreign investors and allowed them to repatriate part of their profits – measures that were not crowned with much success, though. The Helwan iron and steel plant was built with the help of foreign capital and technology. Even after the Suez War the government continued to look for foreign investments, in particular in the oil sector, provided they came on terms consistent with its perceived needs and interests.⁵⁴

Figures and Trends

The policies pursued during the 1950s were necessarily reflected in measurable outcomes, as was the absence of policies, in particular in the area of family planning. The total population increased from roughly 20 million in 1952 to some 26 million in 1960, while demographic growth rising from 1.8 to 2.4 per cent p.a.⁵⁵ In 1960 some 37.8 per cent of the population lived in ‘urban areas’, roughly as many as under the last census under monarchy conducted in 1947.⁵⁶ In 1960 life expectancy at birth stood at a little more than 48 years.⁵⁷ The illiteracy rate slowly decreased from 77 per cent in 1947 to some 70 per cent of the total population in the late 1960s.⁵⁸ In 1960 work force participation stood at some 49 per cent for the male and 5 per cent for the female population, in both cases less than in 1947.⁵⁹ According to available official but no doubt massaged sources, unemployment throughout the 1950s amounted to only 1 per cent of the workforce.⁶⁰

Economic growth at the moment of the 1952 coup was slower than in the early post-war years, possibly even negative.⁶¹ In the first years after the coup GDP per capita continued to either fall or grow at the same slow rate as in the last two years of the monarchy.⁶² However, GNP per capita rose by about 2.5 per cent p.a. in the mid-1950s and by some 4.5 per cent p.a. in the late 1950s.⁶³ According to another source, GDP growth per capita picked up from 1957 to reach some 3–3.5 per cent p.a.⁶⁴ The increase partly reflected higher investment which from that very year on raised gross fixed investment to GDP from about 13 to 19 per cent annually.⁶⁵ Between 1952 and the end of the decade the investment ratio reached some 13.5–14 per cent, while the savings ratio reached some 12–12.5 per cent of GDP.⁶⁶ Roughly in parallel, total factor productivity continued to grow, but at a rate that itself continued to decline to less than 3 per cent p.a.⁶⁷ The – official – inflation rate for consumer prices stood at 0.33 per cent in 1960.⁶⁸

State sponsored industrialization and the expansion of government led to the decline of the share of agriculture in GDP. In the financial year 1955/56, in the early days of these transformations, agriculture, industries (including manufacturing as well as mining), and services (including government and thus the military) accounted for 34.3, 17.4, and 21.1 per cent of GDP respectively. By 1973, their share in a continuous trend changed to 26.3, 21.3, and 26.2 per cent respectively. Average sectoral growth rates in this period amounted to 3.1 per cent for agriculture, 5.9 per cent for industries, and 6.0 per cent for services. Ultimately reflecting this trend and the priority given to industry, the number of cultivated feddan by 1960 reached 5.9 million, only 0.2 million more than in 1947; still, the number of cropped feddan reached 10.2 million, about one million more than in 1947.⁶⁹

The contribution of government and publicly owned companies rose from 13–16 per cent of GDP under the monarchy to 35 per cent in 1959 and 60 per cent in the early 1960s, reflecting in part the nationalization of the Canal and other foreign-owned companies.⁷⁰ The share of public in total industrial investment rose from 5 per cent in the financial year 1952/53 to about one third in the financial year 1958/59; the share of public in gross fixed investment rose from around 15 per cent in 1950 to about 40 per cent in 1956.⁷¹ As a result of the subsequent nationalizations the share of foreign capital became marginal.

The current account and balance of payments remained negative, as already under the monarchy. The government imposed increasingly strict foreign exchange controls and used various rents to cover part of the deficit. In 1955 Britain accepted to amend the bilateral agreement governing Egyptian sterling assets to better meet Egyptian demands, but during the Suez crisis it temporarily blocked the transfers; they ended in 1959 when the assets were exhausted.⁷² Thanks to the nationalization of the Canal the government henceforth perceived the full amount of royalties (but also had to run and maintain it). According to most sources, public debt remained low in the early 1950s, but then rapidly increased; in 1954, it amounted to roughly 18 per cent, in 1960 to 35–40 per cent, and in 1970 to 51 per cent of GDP. Though in principle referring to gross general public debt as defined by the IMF, these figures may not account for part of the external public debt which in the late 1950s may have reached \$850 million, which translated themselves into about 35 per cent of GDP at the time; the major creditors were the US, West Germany, and the USSR.⁷³

Over time the policies pursued after the coup affected in various ways the distribution of wealth which, however, were not revolutionary. Some at the top were on the losing side, in particular those concerned by expropriations at the low compensation rates already referred to. Some at the bottom benefited from the redistribution of land and from rises in wages and salaries in the expanding public sector. However, considerable inequality persisted; according to one source, in 1958 domestic servants who accounted for 12 per cent of the total population earned some E£21 p.a while the wealthiest 3 per cent of the population had an annual income of E£845.⁷⁴

The Period 1960-1970

Policies

Drafted in the late 1950s, the first (and – as it would turn out – only) comprehensive Five-Year Plan entered into force in 1960 but was quickly superseded by more far-reaching measures to ensure government control over the economy. While the plan continued to pay tribute to the private sector and to markets, the ‘July decrees’ issued in 1961 (in actual fact a series of laws and decrees) and subsequent decisions basically transferred all larger companies to the public sector and moreover significantly reduced the role of markets in the allocation of resources. The 1962 Charter of National Action further strengthened state intervention to achieve the twin objectives of accumulation and redistribution, henceforth embellished it with additional socialist rhetoric and decorum.

Under the Plan conditions were to be created that would allow Egypt to double its GDP within ten years. Though again without much consultation, the initial objective was for private savings to cover 55 per cent of all investments and even 64 per cent of industrial investments. The Plan also assumed that price mechanisms would continue to play an important role in the allocation of resources once investment targets had been set. Largely relying on new projects and on stronger state control over existing companies, the increase in industrial output – similar to that in agricultural output – would be achieved through ‘horizontal’ expansion rather than productivity gains.⁷⁵

The increased development efforts proved to be unsustainable as early as early as 1962 when the country experienced a first balance-of-payments crisis, to be followed by another one in 1965 that led to painful fiscal retrenchment. As already in 1962, the Egyptian government in summer 1966 sought IMF support, but this time abandoned the plan. The second five-year plan starting in 1965 was immediately extended by two years, but scrapped altogether after the 1967 June War; subsequently planning was reduced to successive one-year plans. In the end, 1965 marked the end of the combination of the twin objectives of accumulation and redistribution.⁷⁶ The 1967 defeat deprived the government of most of its remaining

financial and administrative resources and thereby spelled the end of the policies initiated earlier in the decade.

The war entailed important human and material losses that weakened the economy. Some 10–25,000 Egyptians had died in the war; numerous others were wounded or displaced. The air force, much other military equipment, and substantial infrastructure had been destroyed, while the Sinai and its oilfields were occupied by Israel. The Suez Canal was blocked by sunken ships and the standoff between Egyptian troops on its western and Israeli troops on its eastern bank. The 1969–70 war attrition brought more losses and destruction, including Israeli air attacks deep inside Egypt, for example against the (largely military) Abu Za'bal industrial area north of Cairo in February 1970.

Revenue from the Suez Canal was lost until Israeli troops withdrew further east and traffic resumed in 1975. Royalties amounted to E£168 million and thus to 7.6 per cent of GDP in the financial year 1966/67 that ended just before the war; Arab aid seemed to replace them, but not the incremental rise they would have seen due to an increase in traffic.⁷⁷ Oil revenues from the Sinai were also lost until the Israeli withdrawal; interestingly, though, other discoveries allowed Egypt to increase its crude oil production in the years concerned (see below).

Only six years earlier, the 1961 'July decrees' marked the culmination of étatist economic policies that have commonly been associated with Nasserism and more specifically with its claim to incarnate 'Arab socialism'. Officially supposed to establish a 'socialist, democratic and co-operative society', they provided for the partial or complete nationalization of some 360–400 companies in the areas of manufacturing, utilities, finance, commerce, transport, and communications; they moreover transferred the Alexandria cotton exchange into public ownership. Additional companies specializing in pharmaceuticals and construction were nationalized in 1963 and 1964. The private sector was completely eliminated from banking, insurance, and import trade; it lost almost all its footholds in medium and heavy industries, export trade, and transport.⁷⁸ By implication, its activities were by and large restricted to retail trade, small scale manufacturing, real estate, and agriculture; in agriculture, though, ownership was almost completely separated from control. The exemption of retail trade and small scale manufacturing from nationalization reflected the support that the government expected and received from small owners of capital who unlike 'exploitative' big capital were part of its traditional social base.

Once again, compensation was minimal. The former owners received negotiable bonds at 4 per cent interest that were redeemable after 15 years. The value of the bonds was calculated on share prices in the Cairo stock exchange in July when they had reached the bottom. In 1964 all land expropriated under the 1952 land reform was declared public, meaning that its former owners could no longer redeem the bonds they had received at the time; in other words, compensation was reduced to the interest they had received over 12 years.⁷⁹ Contradicting the Five-Year Plan approved a year earlier that still assumed strong private sector participation in economic development, these measures betrayed a hidden agenda in the eyes of some, a policy merely built on improvisation in the eyes of others; the government may also have, belatedly, drawn the conclusion that cooperation with the private sector would lead nowhere.

The July decrees and subsequent legislation established various rights and benefits for workers such as the reduction of the working week from 48 to 42 hours without pay cuts, as well as a minimum wage and ceilings on higher salaries. In the public sector which now included all larger firms it enshrined the principle of profit sharing in the form of transfers to social security schemes and productivity-related bonuses. Finally, it included workers' representatives on company boards, first in the public and then in the private sector. It goes without saying that these representatives were selected by government agencies rather than elected by the workers. According to Nasser, 'workers' included all those who earned a wage or a salary, including the president of the republic. However, these measures in practice concerned no

more than one sixth of the formally employed, those in the civil service, the public sector, and the few remaining private companies of sufficient size. Simultaneously, taxation became more progressive and large incomes came to be taxed up to 90 per cent. Still, income tax produced no more than 5 per cent of total tax revenue;⁸⁰ ‘earned incomes’ continued to be ‘taxed more highly than unearned, and rents from land largely escape[d] taxation, while the exemption level for the progressive income-tax appears to have been set at too high a level for such a poor society’.⁸¹

The decrees also established a lower ceiling on land holdings, 100 feddan per nuclear family, which led to the additional expropriation of some 214,000 feddan, soon to be followed by the transfer of yet another 200,000 feddan into public ownership. The reduction of the ceiling to 50 feddan per person in 1969 entailed the expropriation of some 30,000 feddan more. From 1961 almost all owners and tenants of agricultural land were forced to join cooperatives; by 1963 some 87 per cent of agricultural land was exploited under their aegis.⁸² However, as late as in the mid-60s it still appeared that ‘[m]ost rural families are untouched by [the land reform] and remain either landless or without insufficient land to produce anything more than the most meagre subsistence’.⁸³

Yet more frequently than those of the 1950s, distributional policies in the 1960s have been described as part of a ‘social contract’ between the rulers and the ruled in which the latter relinquish political participation and other liberties to obtain material benefits. If there is no doubt about improvements in the standard of living of some parts of the population – largely the officers and the civilians employed by the state and the public sector, the simultaneous consolidation of authoritarian rule was the result of the usual interplay of repression, co-optation, and legitimacy rather than part of a contract in which the ruled would have explicitly and collectively consented to the arrangement. No doubt, a glance at politics in the 1950s and 60s shows lengthy periods without any major contestation or protests. However, protests were not altogether absent, nor was harsh repression as illustrated by numerous politically motivated arrests and trials.

Additional measures to weaken the private sector and private property followed after the collapse of the UAR. Nasser and his supporters saw the coup in Damascus as a plot fomented by the old dominant classes of Syria in league with the ‘West’. In their eyes the Egyptian bourgeoisie, or what remained of it, could easily be tempted to follow the Syrian example and try to bring down his government and the entire political regime. Consequently, the ‘reactionary’ forces in Egypt had to be definitely destroyed economically as well as politically. In punitive anticipation the government thus sequestered the assets of several hundred people whom it considered its enemies and decreed their ‘political isolation’ which meant their removal from any public office.⁸⁴ According to Nasser himself, 7,300 persons lost property under the various expropriations of land and company assets in the early 1960s.⁸⁵

In December 1961, with the establishment of the Supreme Council for Public Organizations as a supervisory body all nationalized and other public sector companies passed under the supervision of thirty-nine General Organizations, each of which was responsible for certain economic sectors such as spinning and weaving, chemicals, and the like. The EO and Misr Group were formally dissolved and included into the general lot. Henceforth, the success of an enterprise would be judged by its ability to meet strategic needs, reduce imports, provide employment, meet domestic demand at low cost, and promote regional development. Central planning would replace competition among public entities; competitiveness no longer was a criterion. Some twenty authorities were put in charge of the various types of utilities while banking was consolidated into five companies with specific sectoral responsibilities.⁸⁶ In spite of such concentration, the majority of industrial establishments remained small-scale enterprises. Of those who in 1961 employed ten or more people still 78 per cent employed fewer than 50 people; only 2.7 employed more than 500; precise figures changed over the subsequent decades, but the trend remained the same.⁸⁷

In May 1962 the Charter of National Action further emphasized the turn towards an economic strategy built on a strong public sector, central planning, welfare policies, corporatism, and socialist drappings (see also section on political developments); it nonetheless endorsed the private sector and private ownership of land managed through cooperatives. However, also in May 1962 the ambitious development drive led to a first balance-of-payments crisis, to be followed by a second one in 1965. The 1962 crisis could only be surmounted thanks to a stand-by loan from the IMF; Egypt had to devalue the pound but ignored the other conditions attached to the loan. The situation was aggravated in 1965 when the US ceased to supply wheat at preferential rates; the results were food shortages and a rise in inflation.⁸⁸

Far reaching central planning, a large and equally unaccountable public devoid of competition among its constituent parts, and the confusion between economic and social objectives of state intervention highlighted some of the ills that, though avoidable in principle, have affected the Egyptian economy ever since. Criteria for decisions were vague,⁸⁹ commodity prices were increasingly fixed by the government, which complicated adjustments between supply and demand,⁹⁰ and ever-growing numbers of people were recruited by government and public sector companies, thus leading to costly and inefficient overstaffing.

Emphasis on the public sector was timidly reduced after the June defeat which compounded the difficulties of the development strategy chosen in the early 1960s and entailed some measures to encourage private enterprise. Even then, however, only few attempts were made to attract foreign capital, mainly for joint ventures in the pharmaceutical and petroleum industries. The share of foreign in private capital remained negligible.⁹¹

Figures and Trends

By 1960 when the World Bank began to publish its World Development Indicators the population had grown to some 26 million people, 37.8 per cent of whom lived in 'urban areas';⁹² by 1966 it reached some 30 million people.⁹³ Population growth in the early 1960s amounted to 2.4 or 2.75 per cent p.a, but then declined steadily to 1.9 or 2.2 per cent in the early 1970s.⁹⁴ In 1960 life expectancy at birth was a little more than 48 years, rising to about 52 years in 1969.⁹⁵ In 1960 work force participation stood at some 49 per cent for the male and 5 per cent for the female population, in both cases less than in 1947; as in the 1950s, unemployment allegedly did not exceed 1 per cent.⁹⁶ By 1969 the illiteracy rate had dropped to some 70 per cent of the total population, from 77 per cent in 1947.⁹⁷

The various sources agree that real growth rose in the early 1960s, then flattened, turned negative after the 1967 war and picked up moderately towards the end of the decade. One source put annual growth at 5–6 per cent of GDP in the fiscal years 1959/60–1964/65 and 3.3 per cent thereafter with the exception of 1966/67 when both total and per capita growth turned negative.⁹⁸ Another source puts the average annual growth for the sixties at 2.82 per cent.⁹⁹ Yet another one records negative growth till 1968 and then an improvement to roughly 2 per cent in 1969. Measured in PPP, GNI per capita declined from \$711 in 1966 to \$686 in 1969.¹⁰⁰ As a matter of course, these figure include officially recorded inflation of less than 1 per cent in 1960, 9 per cent in the mid-60s and a little less than 4 per cent in 1970.¹⁰¹

From 1959/60 to 1963/64 the investment ratio may have increased from some 14 to 20 per cent while the savings ratio remained at 13 per cent, with obvious effects on the balance of payments. According to the same source after the June war the investment ratio fell to less than 12 per cent and the savings to some 9 per cent.¹⁰² Another author calculated for 1970 a resource gap in which savings covered only two thirds of investments, compared to 80 per cent in 1965, 90 per cent in 1955, and an excess of savings in 1950.¹⁰³ Accordingly, gross fixed capital formation increased from 11.5 per cent of GDP in 1960 to 15.4 per cent in 1966, but then fell to 12.3 per cent in 1969 and 10.9 per cent in 1970.¹⁰⁴ Put differently, after the June war the share of investment in GDP reverted to that in the late 1940s (see also above).¹⁰⁵ Moreover,

between the financial years 1963/64 and 1969/70 the rate of growth of total factor productivity (TFP) further declined, possibly to the point that TFP itself declined in comparison to the years before.¹⁰⁶

These developments were obviously reflected in the balance of payments. In 1960/1 the total deficit still amounted to no more than 1 per cent of GDP, but in 1963/4 net imports alone accounted for 7 per cent of GDP. In 1962 new import tariffs were introduced to further protect domestic industries and rein in the balance-of-payments deficit; however, exports remained insufficient to avoid the balance-of-payments crises of 1962 and 1965. In 1962 the government managed to negotiate a stand-by loan worth E£20 million from the IMF which temporarily gave it some breathing space. History almost repeated itself in 1965 but Nasser ultimately rejected IMF conditions. After 1965 the balance-of-payments deficit declined significantly, but the trade balance showed an excess of imports over exports of some 50–55 per cent every year. Public revenues stood at some 30 per cent and public expenditure at some 40 per cent to GDP; defence spending, however, amounted to some 5 per cent of GDP. Public debt increased at the rate shown in the preceding section; within the limits of accuracy already referred to, external public debt (under the circumstances roughly equal to external debt at large) increased to E£1.8 billion in 1970 and thus 42 per cent of GNP.¹⁰⁷ Even though sources disagree about precise figures, currency reserves fell considerably in the early 1960s before they were partly reconstituted later in the decade.¹⁰⁸

In 1960 agriculture still accounted for 54 per cent of employment; industries accounted for about 10 per cent and services for 36 per cent.¹⁰⁹ According to another, roughly concurring source, the agricultural sector still employed roughly 4 million people, now out of a total workforce of some 7.3 million; the industrial sector employed some 713,000.¹¹⁰ In terms of GDP, agriculture now accounted for 30 per cent; manufacturing industries for 20 per cent, extractive industries for 4 per cent, and services for some 20 per cent.¹¹¹ Compared to 1955/6, the share of agriculture thus had declined by some 4 per cent, that of industries (manufacturing and extractive) increased by some 7 per cent, and that of services remained stable.

By 1965 some 11 per cent of the workforce were employed in manufacturing industries, up from some 9.8 per cent in 1960 and 8.9 per cent in 1947; some ten years of investment focus on the sector had not much affected its share in total employment. Agriculture lost some two percentage points, while services each gained one percentage point.¹¹² In terms of GDP the share of agriculture slowly decreased after 1960, with industries and services accounting for the balance.¹¹³ However, from 1966 onwards manufacturing accounted for 20–30 per cent of merchandise exports every year.¹¹⁴

In the field of agriculture, land reclamation reportedly increased the share of arable land from 2.57 per cent of the entire territory in 1961 to 2.84 per cent at the end of the decade, but yields failed to increase at any significant rate and grew more slowly than the population.¹¹⁵ Agricultural production per capita even decreased from 1966 to 1986.¹¹⁶ Already in 1965 local wheat production amounted to no more than 1.27 million tons as compared to 1.23 million tons imported from the US which stopped its shipments that very year.¹¹⁷

Industrial output began to grow before the start of the first five-year plan, but it also began to decline before its end. Contrary to some claims, increasing state intervention in the economy in the 1950s was not an obstacle to such growth. Similarly, the decline was a result not of additional nationalizations and state intervention in the early 1960s, but of increasing balance-of-payments difficulties which prevented the government from importing the necessary supplies.¹¹⁸ Sterling reserves had been drawn down in the late 1950s and could no longer fund the raw materials, semi-finished products and capital goods from abroad needed for the industrial projects.¹¹⁹ The production of crude oil increased from 2.2 million tons in 1952 to 20 million tons in 1971,¹²⁰ but remained insufficient to generate large rents, also because the price of oil remained relatively low.

Consistent with the July decrees and subsequent measures the public sector further expanded at the expense of the private sector. 'Industrial investment became almost exclusively a government activity undertaken by the various organizations of the public sector' which oscillated between E£50 and E£100 million per annum.¹²¹ The share of the private sector in total investment declined from 17.3 per cent in 1961/62, to 9.7 per cent in 1962/63 and to 6.3 per cent in 1963-4.¹²² Domestic credit to the private sector fell from 16.9 per cent of GDP in 1960 to 13-15 per cent in the mid-60s and a little less than 12 per cent in 1970.¹²³ By 1965 the public sector represented 'nearly 40 per cent of total output, 45 per cent of domestic savings, and 90 per cent of gross domestic capital formation'.¹²⁴ In the late 1960s the public sector accounted for some 64 per cent of value added in manufacturing industries.¹²⁵

In spite of the land reform and the transfer of many private assets into public ownership inequality remained a constant feature. Public expenditure on social services rose from 8.1 per cent of GNP in 1950/51 to 8.4 per cent in 1959/60 and 12.5 per cent in 1962/63.¹²⁶ In budgetary terms, the increase was more modest, from 5.6 per cent of current government expenditure in 1951/52 to 6.1 per cent in 1964/65. In 1958/59 the officially calculated Gini coefficient improved to 37 for rural and 40 for urban areas; in 1964/65 it only slightly fell to 35 for rural and remained at 40 in urban areas,¹²⁷ roughly the same as in the late 1950s. Some 70 per cent of the landless population earned about E£3.5 per year, at the time the equivalent of \$8.4 (excluding own consumption of agricultural produce) and thus 220 times less than middling peasants owning 20 feddan.¹²⁸

Nonetheless, human development continued to improve over the 1960s, even though it was not yet systematically measured by the HDI. Progress in terms of literacy already referred was accompanied by a significant rise in the numbers of pupils and students enrolled in educational institutions. From the early 1950s to 1965/66 these figures increased at all levels more quickly than the total population; in particular primary school enrolment more than doubled and university enrolment almost trebled.¹²⁹

External relations

The Main Issues

After the 1952 coup the foreign policy of Egypt was by and large dominated by six major concerns that partly reinforced each other and whose importance changed over time. Mainly defensive or emancipatory, they all converged towards the overarching objective of achieving and preserving political independence which in the eyes of the new rulers could not be disassociated from economic development and ultimately independence; though expansionary, even the quest for regional influence had a defensive dimension.

First and foremost among them was the abrogation of the 1936 treaty and the withdrawal of British troops, the primary tool that could be used to restrict Egyptian independence. For most Egyptians, complete decolonization also involved the departure of the British from Sudan and Egyptian sovereignty over that country. The issue involved intense exchanges with Britain which remained Egypt's most important foreign interlocutor up to the 1954 evacuation treaty that led to the departure of all British military personnel in spring 1956.

A *second* major preoccupation were the various attempts by 'Western' powers, initially Britain (and partly France), but increasingly the US, to establish military alliances with Middle Eastern states that would contain Soviet and strengthen their own influence. Seen from Cairo, these alliances, epitomized by the 1955 Baghdad Pact, amounted to the perpetuation of imperialism by other means and threatened to import the Cold War into the region. Until 1958, when the fall of the Iraqi monarchy made them obsolete, these schemes strongly shaped policies towards Britain, France, and the US on the one hand, and Middle Eastern states on the other. After Stalin's death in 1953 and Khrushchev's recognition of 'bourgeois

national forces' in the 'third world' as valid partners these policies increasingly led to a rapprochement with Moscow and its allies.

A *third*, permanent, concern was to contain Israel as an actor able to shape the regional environment and to challenge more narrowly defined Egyptian interests. No doubt the concern could culminate in the wish and in plans to destroy Israel; these were however frequently far-fetched and rather rhetorical – an aspect that obviously looked quite different in Israeli eyes. Israel could become a regional player, even power, reducing Egypt influence. In addition, many Egyptians quite rightly suspected it of trying to occupy Sinai; some of them regretted that Egyptian troops in the 1948–9 war only temporarily managed to occupy part of the Negev. Clashes along the cease-fire line and the Suez War launched by Britain, France, and Israel in late October 1956 reinforced Egyptian concerns.

A *fourth*, again permanent, concern was to establish Egypt as the major regional power whose assent would be indispensable for any major action to succeed, whether it emanated from other Middle Eastern states or from global players. The ambition challenged the great and the super powers as well as geographically close competitors such as Turkey, Iran, and Israel. Within the AL the matter frequently led to conflicts with conservative governments, in particular Hashemite Iraq supported by Britain and the US; however, it also created tension with other champions of the progressive cause such as the Syria and post-Hashemite Iraq. In his 'Philosophy of the Revolution' Nasser himself eloquently expressed the objective by putting Egypt at the centre of three partly overlapping circles of alliances including the Arab, the Muslim, and the African countries.¹³⁰ Expansionary in the sense of seeking power and influence over other actors, the objective was nonetheless defensive as well; as so often, the use of force and influence aimed to avert potential dangers arising from beyond the country's borders.

A *fifth* concern was to avoid alignment on either of the two superpowers and to exploit their mutual competition to strengthen Egypt and its independence. Illustrated by the 'Czech arms deal' announced in late September 1955 and the roughly contemporary application for World Bank funds to build the Aswan High Dam, the balancing act that was not always easy to reconcile with the second objective floundered in the mid-1960s when the US stopped playing the game. The same concern also prompted Egypt to join forces with Yugoslavia and India to establish the non-aligned movement that began to take shape at the Bandung conference held in April 1955.

A *sixth* concern, pursued from the mid-1950s, was to obtain the financial and technical resources to further economic development and, ultimately, to catch up with the major economically developed countries in the northern hemisphere. In turn, economic development was to underpin the international position of Egypt. Again illustrated by the search for funds to build the Aswan High Dam, the matter was central to the relations with potential donors; such fund and expertise raising alternatively suffered and benefited from the competition between the Cold War camps. In the case of the Aswan Dam, the USSR stepped in after the US, its allies and therefore the World Bank reneged on earlier promises.

These concerns animated Egyptian foreign policy in the roughly eighteen years between the 1952 coup and Nasser' death. By implication, they contributed to shape the country's external or international relations which, as a matter of course, were also, and heavily so, influenced by the interests and policies of foreign actors and external forces. As illustrated by the objectives themselves, they were often responses and reactions to the latter, in particular to Britain, the US, the USSR, and the overall dynamics of capitalism. In that sense, they illustrate the continued twin inequality, perceived and real, in terms of resources and power that already previously marked the relations between Egypt and the outside world. Relatively well-endowed with resources useful to defend its interests vis-à-vis other Arab states, Egypt generally was at a disadvantage to defend its interests against stronger actors and forces in the Northern hemisphere. It therefore sought to put an end to such imbalances, which inevitably entailed tensions with

the beneficiaries of the status quo. Needless to say that the underlying interests rested on perceptions which themselves were formed by the historical experience of the people who pursued them.

Although little is known about the decision-making process, the individuals directly involved seemed to have been few: Nasser himself, a decreasing number of free officers and a few confidantes; chief among them, Hassanayn Haykal (Heikal) in his memoirs insisted on the key role of Nasser and his tendency to ponder and make key decisions on his own.¹³¹ The decision-making process does not seem to have been highly formalized or institutionalized; the foreign ministry was an implementer rather than a decision maker.¹³²

Naturally, foreign policies in Egypt as elsewhere were also influenced by emotions of decision makers and the interactions among them, and more generally by the workings of the political regime and thus of institutions. These caveats notwithstanding, an account of events and developments illustrates the impact of these concerns and the ways in which they reinforced or mitigated each other.

Issues and Events

The Abrogation of the 1936 Treaty

Once in power, the authors of the 1952 coup sought to replace remaining British privileges in Egypt by bilateral relations among equals, complete the process of decolonization, and thus achieve complete political independence. They soon abandoned claims on Sudan that sat uneasily with their own emphasis on decolonization and independence. Already in February 1953 they reached an agreement with Britain under which a newly elected Sudanese assembly would decide whether the country would itself become independent or unite with Egypt. In 1956 the assembly voted for independence, a result that was duly recognized by Egypt. In October 1954 Egypt and Britain reached another agreement that terminated the 1936 treaty and superseded its earlier unilateral abrogation by PM Nahhas (see above). British forces were to evacuate the Canal zone, but would be allowed to return in case of conflict in the Middle East, a clause that led to some debate in Egypt. In Nasser's eyes, the immediate departure of British troops was more important than their potential later return that a stronger Egypt would be able to resist anyway. The last British troops left Egypt on 7 June 1956, a few months earlier than scheduled.¹³³

Opposition to Cold War Alliances with Britain and the US

In spite of the negotiated solutions for Egypt and Sudan, Nasser's policies did not lastingly endear him to the British government. Nor was Nasser unaware of the latter's plans – codenamed Rodeo – to reoccupy parts of Egypt outside the Canal zone should it consider this necessary. The British government did not appreciate Nasser's opposition to the collective defence schemes that it continued to promote for the Middle East, increasingly in cooperation with the however sceptical US. A Middle East Command or even Middle East Defence Organization was to replace bilateral arrangements such as the 1936 treaty and defend the area against communism. In a strange misunderstanding of Nasser's aims, objectives and sensitivities that reflected most Egyptians' experience of foreign domination, some quarters in London thought he would accept or even join such schemes. Self-deception went as far as the expectation that Egypt would join a regional defence arrangement including Israel.

Egyptian opposition to such projects came to a head in January 1955 when Nasser strongly and forcefully opposed the establishment of the newly announced military alliance between Iraq and Turkey. Building on agreements in the wake of World War Two (see above) earlier, the Baghdad Pact seemed all the more unacceptable as Turkey in the meantime had joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In this context the US and Britain in February tried to push Israel to make territorial concessions to Egypt

and Jordan; untimely in Egyptian eyes, Plan Alpha was vigorously opposed by Israel and abandoned. In the wake of the Baghdad Pact, also signed in February, Nasser concluded a defence pact with Syria, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia, even though the latter was a close US ally. Egyptian opposition and its repercussions across Arab countries left Iraq as the only Arab member of the pact. It marked the beginning of the 'Arab Cold War' in which 'conservatives' around Iraq and soon Saudi Arabia opposed 'progressives' around Egypt and later Syria and post-Hashemite Iraq; the former relied on the US and NATO, the latter by and large sought closer relations with the USSR and to promote non-alignment.¹³⁴ Ultimately the Baghdad Pact collapsed with the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958.

Seen from Cairo, such projects emptied the 1954 treaty with Britain, allowed the former imperial power and its allies to return through the backdoor, reverse the process of decolonization, and deprive Egypt of its independence. Initially the Baghdad Pact (later to morph into the Central Treaty Organization – CENTO) was signed by Turkey and Iran. They were quickly joined by Pakistan, Iran, and Britain, all bent on defending the 'northern tier' and Middle Eastern states against the USSR. Britain moreover sought to ensure its continued access to Iraqi oil. Even though the US did not formally adhere to the scheme, they had strongly encouraged it and thereby underlined their growing involvement in Middle Eastern affairs which ultimately sidelined Britain. Egypt's relations with the signatories deteriorated sharply. Iran moreover recognized Israel in 1959 and supplied it with oil; moreover both Teheran and Ankara in various ways joined Israel's emerging strategy of building an 'alliance of the periphery' to encircle the Arab countries.¹³⁵

In the early 1950s, though, Nasser and his colleagues still pinned hope on the US as a potential ally in their quest for political independence and economic development. The Truman administration seemed to live up to such promise; even under the more sceptical Eisenhower disagreements about defence issues could be played down. During his visit to Cairo in May 1953 Eisenhower's Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in May 1953 reiterated the wish for a collective defence scheme to emerge in the area. Nasser's opposition prompted the US and the UK to fall back on arrangements for the 'Northern Tier', but differences still seemed to be manageable.¹³⁶

Early Tensions with Israel

Nasser's policies towards Israel were influenced by a variety of considerations, some of which ultimately focused on other issues. No doubt, he and the vast majority of Egyptians considered Israel an illegitimate state – generally referred to as the 'Zionist entity' – that had been created by imperialist fiat against the will of the Arabs in order to divide and control them even after the official end of decolonization. However, according to his own account, he could find some common ground with one of his Israeli counterparts while his unit was encircled by Israeli forces at Faluja, north-east of Gaza, during the first Palestine War.¹³⁷

Lingering since the 1949 ceasefire, the conflict with Israel was only temporarily defused by the 1950 Tripartite Declaration.¹³⁸ In 1951 the UN Conciliation Commission conceded defeat, unable to mediate between the Israeli and Arab governments. Differences, perceived or real, over borders, regional ambitions, foreign policy alignments, and partly statehood itself continued to play out in the minds and on the ground. Many Israelis feared for the existence and survival of their state, many Egyptians for their newly won independence threatened by what they considered a bridgehead of imperialism.

Discrete bilateral contacts after the July coup in 1952 led to results. Subsequently Egypt allowed some Palestinian *fidayin* operating in the Gaza Strip to attack targets in Israel; in general, though, it curbed rather than encouraged such action.¹³⁹ Partly in response, partly with an eye on Sinai Israeli forces in February 1955 attacked Gaza and in August Khan Yunis. The many casualties among Egyptian military

personnel further strengthened Egyptian hostility to US- and UK-promoted collective security arrangements; instead Egypt soon after the attack signed a defence agreement with Syria.

In July 1954 Israeli agents had planted bombs in foreign-owned businesses in Egypt, apparently to delegitimize the Egyptian authorities. In Israel the affair led to the resignation of defence minister Pinhas Lavon, in Egypt to the trial and execution of two of the agents who were Jewish Egyptians. Egypt also reinforced the blockade of the Strait of Tiran which controlled access to Eilat, Israel's only port on the Red Sea.

Communist Military and Capitalist Development Aid

The Gaza incidents, the supply of French arms to Israel in contravention of the Tripartite Declaration,¹⁴⁰ and the Baghdad Pact seem to be at the origin of negotiations between Egypt and the USSR that in September 1955 had sufficiently advanced to announce a major arms deal in which Czechoslovakia acted as a sort of middleman. According to some sources, Nasser first attempted to buy weapons from the US which, however, continued to respect the Tripartite Declaration and simultaneously moved increasingly closer to Israel. In turn, the 'Czech arms deal' further alarmed Israel and established the first strong bonds between Egypt and the USSR. Henceforth, the dynamics of the Cold War would increasingly align Israel on the US and its allies while leaving an unenthusiastic Egypt little choice but to fall back on the Warsaw pact.¹⁴¹

Initially, the Czech arms deal did not seem to affect the readiness of Britain and the US to provide financial resources for the construction of the Aswan High Dam through government grants and a World Bank loan. In their strategy to catch up with the major industrialized countries and to strengthen thereby political independence, Nasser and his supporters almost naturally submitted the Aswan project to the World Bank then dominated by the US and to a lesser extent by Britain. Officials from Egypt, Britain, and the US met to examine the project in November 1955 and a loan offer was made in December. Fears that Egypt would drift into the orbit of the USSR even prompted Eden, now prime minister, to lobby president Eisenhower and Dulles to provide funding more rapidly. However, the mood in London and Washington changed in early 1956 as Nasser continued to challenge and undermine the Baghdad Pact. London blamed Nasser for dissuading King Husayn of Jordan from joining it and for pushing him to dismiss General Sir John Glubb, a British officer, who till March 1956 commanded the Jordanian armed forces, then known as the Arab Legion. Probably Egypt's decision to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in late May 1956 did not help either. On 19 July 1956 Dulles, with British backing, announced that the US no longer supported the project,¹⁴² thus dealing a – temporary – blow to Nasser's balancing act between the Cold War camps.

Non-Alignment

Coherent with attempts to escape Cold War logics, policies towards other parts of the world aimed at strengthening such equidistance and independence. Consolidating the three partly overlapping 'circles' of Arab, African, and Muslim allies served precisely that purpose. Even though the Arab circle soon became the centre of attention, Nasser deployed considerable efforts to improve or maintain close relations with the global South in general. In 1953 the declared objective was global 'neutrality' and the rapprochement with Asian and African states.¹⁴³

Together with President Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia and Prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India Nasser at a meeting on the Yugoslav island of Brioni in July 1956 formally established the non-aligned movement. The movement had begun to take shape after the 1955 Bandung conference which Nasser attended together with the representatives of many other states. The loosely organized but rapidly

growing group of states reluctant to choose between the Cold War camps convened its second conference in Cairo in October 1964.

Consistent with the search for closer ties with Asia and Africa, Egypt managed to settle the disputes over the partition of the Nile waters with Ethiopia and Sudan in the mid- and late 1950s.¹⁴⁴ So far the issue had been settled by an exchange of letters between London and Cairo in 1929 that, without consulting other riparians, allocated 48 billion cm³ to Egypt and only 4 billion m³ to Sudan, at the time governed under the 1899 Anglo-Egyptian condominium agreement.

Under the new 1959 agreement with Sudan, an annual 55 billion cm³ were allocated to Egypt and 18 billion cm³ to Sudan (a total amount higher than in 1929 had been calculated), allowing the former to fill Lake Nasser, the storage area of the Aswan High Dam, that reached into Sudan, and the latter that of the Rosaries Dam on the Blue Nile. Future claims by other riparians were to be deducted proportionally. Nasser also cultivated relations with other African countries such as Ghana, independent since 1957, where Kwame Nkruma emerged as a like-minded leader; Nkruma even married an Egyptian. In 1963 Egypt was among the founding members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU); in July 1964 it hosted its second congress.

Nationalizing the Suez Canal

Seeking an alternative to fund the Aswan High Dam and economic development at large, Nasser in his speech in Alexandria on 26 July 1956 to celebrate the anniversary of the King's departure into exile announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal.¹⁴⁵ Royalties paid by vessels passing through the Canal would no longer be collected by the private foreign *Compagnie universelle du canal maritime de Suez*, but by the new state owned Suez Canal Authority. By implication, the profits would no longer be paid in the form of dividends to the shareholders, chief among them the British government which since 1875 owned some 44 per cent of the shares; rather they would flow into the coffers of the Egyptian state which could use them for development projects such as the Aswan Dam. Even allowing for the promised compensation, Egypt would greatly benefit as the Canal was highly profitable. Under the revised profit-sharing formula of 1955 the Egyptian government received \$21.7 million while the foreign shareholders cashed another \$23 million.¹⁴⁶ Even as Nasser was delivering his speech, Egyptian officials took over the canal and the Egyptian offices of the company. When the latter in September from its Paris offices decided to withdraw the pilots who continued to navigate the vessels through the canal the Egyptian government managed to replace them overnight with Egyptian personnel who, together with remaining Greek colleagues, ensured uninterrupted traffic.¹⁴⁷

Arab Legitimacy and Arab Support

Achieving complete political independence, thwarting foreign-dominated military alliances, navigating the Cold War, containing and confronting Israel, as well as pursuing regional ambitions called for attempts to increase the influence of Egypt beyond its borders. In order to mobilize support, Nasser emphatically claimed to defend the interests of all Arabs and tried to cultivate and enhance his legitimacy as their spokesman. Instruments of soft power played a major role in this strategy. In 1954 the 'Voice of the Arabs' broadcasting station beefed up its programmes and capacities; numerous Egyptian school teachers sent to other Arab countries contributed to the same effort.¹⁴⁸ Various testimonies by Nasser's collaborators seem to confirm the largely pragmatic, though possibly voluntarist, considerations behind his 'Arab turn'. Even then Egypt as a concept and entity was never completely dissolved in the broader 'Arab nation'; various rhetorical devices and policies continued to reassure Egyptians that they existed in their own right, even during the period of the United Arab Republic (UAR); incidentally, references to Islam were hardly used to gain influence abroad.¹⁴⁹

The recourse to Arab nationalist rhetoric substantially changed relations with the other Arab states and with their inhabitants. Egyptian emphasis on Arab solidarities worked both ways: rebranded as profoundly 'Arab', Egypt could more easily obtain broader Arab support, but it could also be expected to grant such support to other Arabs. Nasserist movements, parties and cells mushroomed throughout the Arab countries, not least among army officers. Egypt's stature was particularly reinforced among those Arabs who felt threatened by the old imperialist powers or the US and their allies. Many of them like the Ba'this in Syria and Iraq hailed from similar social backgrounds as Nasser and the Free Officers. They concurred that independence hinged on development, two aims impossible to achieve as long as owners of land and capital were in power.¹⁵⁰ They looked to Egypt as a model and Nasser as a saviour, even though they also feared his predominance. Like in Egypt they saw themselves squashed between the bourgeois rock of the economically and politically dominant families and the leftist hard place of the atheist Communist Party; in their eyes the former were stooges of European and American imperialism while the latter took their orders from Moscow. In Syria these cleavages exacerbated the 'Struggle for Syria' vividly depicted by Patrick Seale that ultimately took the country down a third road, the one that temporarily ended in the UAR (see below).¹⁵¹ The 'Struggle' was all the more divisive as many Syrians thought that their state was an artificial entity that the British and the French after World War One had arbitrarily carved out of the wider Arab 'homeland' and 'nation'.¹⁵² It almost naturally escaped them that unity with Egypt as a much older and consolidated state could entail other difficulties.

The Suez Crisis

Britain and France immediately after the nationalization of the Suez Canal responded with economic sanctions. These included the freeze of Egyptian sterling assets, other currency holdings, and aid; the US adopted similar measures, though more selectively. Britain and France quickly began to prepare military action against Egypt while the US attempted to de-escalate the crisis, proposed the internationalization of the Canal and insisted on a negotiated solution. However, its efforts at mediation and those by others including Australia bore no fruit.¹⁵³

For Britain and France, the nationalization of the Canal was only the straw that broke the back of the long-overcharged camel. In strategic terms, it was far less problematic than the earlier military withdrawal from the area. In legal terms, the Canal company was, in spite of its Paris offices, an Egyptian company that the Egyptian government could nationalize, and this all the more as it promised compensation to its foreign shareholders, including the British government. Nasser also pledged to respect the 1888 Constantinople convention which was generally interpreted to guarantee free passage to vessels of any nationality, including Israeli ships. Finally, the concession was to expire in 1968, after which ownership of the company would revert to Egypt anyhow.

More important was that over the years Nasser had become Eden's *bête noire*, accused of plotting against the Baghdad Pact and the Iraqi monarchy. Britain and the US were also worried about what they called the defence of the Middle East a possible Soviet foothold in Egypt, a fear that had already led them to renege on the loan for the Aswan Dam.¹⁵⁴ In addition, the British government feared the nationalization of the Canal would endanger the sterling exchange rate and the viability of the sterling area (in actual fact, it was the subsequent war that threatened its survival).¹⁵⁵ At the same time, the French government accused Egypt of supporting the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN) in its struggle for the independence of Algeria, then still officially a part of France. Many in and around the Israeli government complained about guerrilla infiltrations from the Gaza Strip, sought to expand into Sinai, and control the Straits of Tiran; they feared Egypt would become too strong, intended to topple Nasser who had not met their expectations, and envisaged to establish a new political order in the Middle East.¹⁵⁶

At a meeting in Sèvres near Paris in late October Britain, France, and Israel agreed on joint action. Israel was to invade the Sinai upon which Britain and France would seize control of the Canal and present the Israelis and the Egyptians with an ultimatum. They would be requested to withdraw to either side of the Canal to guarantee the freedom of navigation. The blow to Nasser would be sufficiently serious to overthrow his government. Feeling the heat, Egypt, also in late October, signed a defence pact, now with Syria and Jordan, which, however, remained of symbolical value.

On 29 October 1956 Israeli troops entered Sinai, duly prompting the joint British-French intervention and ultimatum. The British and French air forces attacked Egyptian military airports and dropped paratroopers. The city of Port Said at the northern entrance of the canal was largely destroyed in the attack that came to be known as the tripartite aggression or the Suez War. However, the initial differences about the ultimate objectives of the operation quickly resurfaced as the US in line with its earlier emphasis on negotiations put pressure on all three attackers. In particular, it took no action to stop the rapid fall of sterling vis-à-vis the dollar that was partly exacerbated by Britain's economic difficulties after World War Two and partly reinforced them; in actual fact, the US used the depreciation to push Britain to stop the war. The US also refused to supply Europe with oil after the closure of the Canal and attacks on pipelines led to considerable shortages. Thus Pro-Egyptian activists cut the Tapline, the pipeline that pumped crude oil from Saudi Arabia to Saida in Lebanon.¹⁵⁷ Britain had to dip into its dollar reserves to buy oil, which further weakened its currency.

The USSR remained cautious throughout the crisis and suggested to coordinate its response with the US; only when fighting was about to stop it issued a possibly propagandistic threat to launch missiles against London and Paris. On 6 November all parties agreed to accept a UN sponsored cease fire. British and French troops evacuated Egypt by the end of the year; the Israelis only left in spring after additional diplomatic pressure. The Canal was dredged quickly and reopened in April 1956.

The outcome of the war did not improve relations between Egypt and its attackers. The Egyptian government sequestrated the property of French and British citizens, companies, and other legal persons. The initial intention was to 'Egyptianize' these assets in the sense that they would be transferred, actually sold, to new Egyptian owners; ultimately, however, they were nationalized. The measure did not apply to Israelis simply because there was no Israeli property in Egypt. However, Jewish foreigners and stateless persons alongside Jewish Egyptians suffered from harassment, commercial boycotts, internment, and deportation under state security decrees (see section on political developments).

Some of these measures were rescinded after Egypt, France, and Britain in April 1958 reached an agreement over the assets of the Suez Canal company and financial issues related to the war. Under the agreement the Egyptian government was in charge of company assets and liabilities in Egypt, while the company as represented by its Paris office was in charge of assets and liabilities outside Egypt; over the years the assets had grown through efforts at diversification in view of the end of the concession in 1968. The Egyptian government paid compensation amounting to £28.3 million, at the time roughly \$85 million at the official exchange rate or two years of profits from the Canal. The total cost of the Aswan High Dam was estimated by the World Bank at \$1.2 billion;¹⁵⁸ at the time the amount corresponded to roughly 15 years of profits from the Canal and about six times the government's development budget.¹⁵⁹

Internationally, the outcome of the war did not end the influence of Britain and France in the broader Middle East, but what remained henceforth was conceded by the US and the USSR. As the superpowers transformed the military victory of the great powers and Israel into political defeat; the war consecrated Egypt's position in the Middle East and in particular its influence in Arab politics and public opinion. The end of the Suez Crisis also marked the end of an interlude during which the dynamics of the Cold War, though always present, ceased to directly determine the external relations of Egypt. For a moment the

issue of independence from the former imperialist power came back to the fore, in conjunction with the conflict with Israel.

Navigating the Cold War and Regional Ambitions after Suez

If Cairo appreciated the US position in the Suez War, the US obviously continued to harbour concerns about growing Soviet influence in Egypt. Soon bilateral relations were further strained by the Eisenhower Doctrine, a declaration issued in January 1957 by the then US President promising to defend Middle Eastern countries threatened by 'international communism'. The declaration fuelled the Arab Cold War; welcomed by 'conservatives', it was condemned by the 'progressives'.¹⁶⁰ Among the latter, Nasser in spite of his vociferous opposition to foreign intervention and dislike of communists at home continued to seek support from the US and the USSR alike. To shore up his position he continued to try and extend his influence in other Arab countries.

The United Arab Republic

Heightened Cold War tensions led the leaders of the Syrian Ba'th Party and their allies in the armed forces to seek Nasser's protection. The international situation and its repercussions weakened their fragile hold on power and exacerbated fears that their circumstantial communist allies, alias competitors, might try and turn the tables on them, thus prompting a conservative bourgeois backlash, a US intervention or both. Some other officers supported them simply to shut up the civilian politicians whom they accused of useless squabbling. For the Ba'this and their officer allies only a union with Egypt could tip the internal balance of power against the communists and the conservatives and their potential external allies; it would also allow them to implement their policy choices which converged with those made by Nasser.¹⁶¹

Nasser's growing Arab legitimacy thus showed its first glaring effects in Syria, the country that various Arab governments had tried to dominate, as had their predecessors including Mehmet Ali. The novelty was that this time the initiative to include the country in a larger entity was taken by Syrians. On 31 January 1958 a group of Syrian officers and the Syrian government flew to Cairo to finalize a plan to unite the two countries in one single state. Conceived and prepared rather precipitously in the months before the fateful journey, the project found particular support among Syrian 'progressives' whose social and economic outlook was close to Nasser's. Obviously the latter also appreciated the bilateral agreement on reinforced military cooperation of 1957 meant to counter pressures by the US, the UK, and their regional allies after the Syrian government had appointed a new chief of staff allegedly sympathetic to the USSR.¹⁶²

Nasser remained cautious as his policy had primarily been to mobilize other Arabs in support of Egyptian interests. The latter naturally included the search for regional influence, be it only to reduce the influence of competitors. However, he was well aware of the domestic politicking that motivated his Syrian interlocutors and the factional nature of Syrian politics, even though he had never before visited the country. On the other hand, the union had the obvious advantage of thwarting the advent of a government closer to the USSR or the US, limiting the impact of the Cold War and thereby strengthening Egypt's independence. When the Syrians accepted his draconian conditions such as the dissolution of political parties (which in Egypt already had been dissolved), inducing the Ba'th, Nasser acceded to their demand and on the occasion of a joint session of the two governments in Cairo on 1 February proclaimed the United Arab Republic (UAR).

If economic and social policies met some of the expectations of the Ba'this and their allies, they were nonetheless implemented with little attention to conditions prevailing in Syria. This all the more as Nasser soon sidelined most Syrian advocates of the union, partly because he did not trust them, partly because so

far authoritarianism seemed the best bet anyway to nip in the bud potential challenges to his rule.¹⁶³ Disappointment and opposition in Syria grew after the July decrees which further alienated owners of land and capital; they supported the military coup that on 28 September 1961 put an end to the UAR. Initially supposed to weaken such ‘conservative’ forces, the coup was even endorsed by many Ba’this like Salah al-Din Bitar who had pushed for union in 1958.¹⁶⁴

Progressives against Conservatives

In spite of his initial reservations about the union, Nasser saw the coup in Syria as a challenge to his authority not only as the Arab leader par excellence but also at home. On the second count, he tightened his grip on Egypt to forestall any similar challenge to his rule from what remained of the Egyptian bourgeoisie (see above). On the first count, he launched a propaganda war against the new Syrian leaders which continued even after a more accommodating government was formed in Damascus in 1962.¹⁶⁵

More generally, Egyptian worries and action focused on the ‘conservatives’ and their Cold War allies. No doubt, the conservatives had been weakened by the July 1958 coup that had brought down the Iraqi monarchy and with it the rather rhetorical Arab Federation that it had created with its Jordanian cousins in response to the UAR. Nonetheless, the conservatives were not defeated. Invoking the Eisenhower Doctrine, President Chamoun (Sham’un) of Lebanon on the morrow of the coup in Iraq had asked for US support. Immediately American marines disembarked in Lebanon; two days later, British troops were airlifted to Jordan at King Husayn’s request.¹⁶⁶

The major culprit Nasser found in Saudi Arabia, by then the only major remaining force on the conservative side. Forgotten were the pleasant days he had spent at the royal palace in Riyadh in 1954; Saud had just succeeded on the throne the deceased Abd al-Aziz and invited Nasser to stay on after he performed the Hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca that a Muslim in principle is required to undertake once in his life).¹⁶⁷ Similarly forgotten was the important loan that Saud had granted Egypt immediately after the Suez War.¹⁶⁸ The conflict paralyzed the AL which became a sounding board of inter-Arab divisions rather than a forum for cooperation.

In September 1962, just a year after the Syrian secession, Nasser decided to support a ‘progressive’ military coup in Sanaa (San’a) that transformed Northern Yemen from a monarchy into a republic. The move would enhance his Arab legitimacy, afford him an opportunity to benefit from the planned British withdrawal from Aden and the South of Yemen, and put pressure on Saudi Arabia that supported conservatives and ‘reactionaries’ in other Arab countries. The ensuing war against the Yemeni monarchists supported by Saudi Arabia put a heavy burden on the Egyptian treasury and the Egyptian armed forces. In spite of various reconciliation efforts, it continued until November 1967 when Egypt, exhausted by its defeat in the June War, withdrew its last troops from the country. As a result, the new republic of South Yemen acceded to independence at a moment when Nasser had to abandon all hopes to enlist it against Saudi Arabia and even courted the latter to share the financial burden of the 1967 defeat.

Progressives against Progressives

Bilateral relations with Iraq failed to improve after the 1958 coup. Nasser feared that the alliance that the new strongman, Abd al-Karim Qasim, tried to form with the Iraqi communists and the USSR would encourage Egyptian communists to lift their heads, redirect Soviet support towards Iraq, and give one of the superpowers, in this case the USSR, a foothold in an Arab country. Encouraged less by Nasser than by his conflict with Qasim, the unsuccessful but bloody 1959 Mosul revolt further strained bilateral relations and reinforced repression against supporters of Nasser.¹⁶⁹ In late June 1961 Qasim’s threat to annex the newly independent oil-rich Kuwait led Egypt to send troops to the country, alongside forces from

‘conservative’ Saudi Arabia and Jordan as well, and ‘imperialist’ Britain. In complete contradiction to the AL Charter, the occupation of Kuwait would have significantly enhanced financial resources at the disposal of Qasim and his ability to challenge the predominance of Egypt.

However, after blaming the break-up of the UAR on Saudi Arabia Nasser withdrew his troops. Considering that the Syrians had stabbed him in the back, the conservatives in Saudi Arabia and Jordan played a part in the plot, and that Qasim in Iraq intended to replace him as chief representative of the progressives, Nasser found it expedient to retire into the splendid isolation of Egypt as the valiant, steadfast but betrayed standard-bearer of Arab unity. Rhetorically he replaced the slogan of ‘unity of ranks’ (*wihdat al-sufuf*) with the more modest aim of ‘unity of purpose’ (or objectives, *wihdat al-ahdaf*) which limited inter-Arab cooperation to progressive forces; changing alliances with progressives as well as conservatives produced the subsequent avatars of ‘unity of action’ and ‘unity of struggle.’¹⁷⁰

Relations with Iraq and Syria temporarily improved in spring 1963. In February a group of officers including Ba’this and other Arab nationalists toppled Qasim in Iraq. In March a coup in Syria brought to power officers close to the Ba’th and other groups riding on the Arab nationalist tide. Egypt re-established diplomatic relations with Syria that had ended with the UAR in 1958. New unity negotiations began between the three countries. Afraid that a union only of Syria and Iraq would lack legitimacy and anger Nasser, the Syrian Ba’this hoped that together with their Iraqi colleagues they could tip the balance in their own favour; for his part, Nasser thought the Iraqi Ba’this – not involved in the 1961 secession – and his own supporters in both countries would make matters work out in his interest. According to minutes published in Egypt (the only ones available) Nasser dominated the tripartite talks and largely shaped the agreement in principle reached in April.¹⁷¹

However, in Syria the Ba’this steadily strengthened their position inside and outside government and in July purged the Nasserist officers. Faced with a second secession of sorts, Nasser returned to the 1961 script of condemning and isolating Syria, though without major attempts to overthrow its government. He continued to pin some hope on the new government in Baghdad where his sympathizers seemed to be stronger; a new coup in late 1963 led by Abd al-Salam Arif purged the Ba’this and concentrated power in the hands of officers sympathetic to Nasser. After Abd al-Salam Arif’s accidental death in 1966 his brother Abd al-Rahman Arif continued to pursue unambitious foreign policies. He also supported a new unity scheme with Egypt that, however, never materialized. After yet another coup and the advent of a new Ba’thi government in 1968 bilateral relations deteriorated again.

Between Conservative Rocks and Progressive Hard Places

Egypt’s relations with the ‘conservatives’ improved on the occasion of the first summit of the AL states in January 1964.¹⁷² Faced with the completion of an Israeli project to divert part of the waters of the river Jordan, the governments of Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia feared that the Ba’this in Syria, eager to demonstrate their commitment to the Arab cause, would provoke a war with Israel which nobody was ready for. For Egypt the summit was the device to create a large consensus around the dangers of military action and to counter Syrian attempts to exploit such inaction; by implication the summit would reaffirm the centrality of Egypt in Arab affairs. In this spirit, and to bide for time, the Cairo summit agreed to create the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the AL-recognized representative of the Palestinians, the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) as its military branch, and a unified Arab command under an Egyptian officer stationed in Jordan. Ahmad Shuqairi, close to Egypt, was made the first secretary general of the PLO. Subordinating Palestinian activities to the interests of the AL states, the authority of the PLO was, however, permanently challenged by independent *fidayyin* groups which attacked Israeli targets from Jordanian and Syrian soil. These groups joined and dominated the PLO only

after the 1967 war. Saudi Arabia naturally seized the summit to end Egyptian involvement in Yemen, but only succeeded after Egypt's defeat in the 1967 war.

Superficially, relations with 'progressive' Syria also improved after the Cairo summit adopted measures that the Ba'this could claim to have inspired. However, Nasser remained extremely concerned about Syria's attitude in the conflict with Israel. In 1966 yet less compromising Ba'this took power in Damascus who openly challenged Nasser's cautious policies. In order to defend his own legitimacy Nasser decided to support Syria against Israeli attacks, even when the latter were actively provoked by Syria; to avoid a disastrous war he simultaneously sought to contain Syrian initiatives. In November 1966 both motivations led him to sign a new defence agreement with Syria which many in Israel saw as a portent of aggression. In the same logic Nasser in May 1967 expelled the UN forces that had been stationed in the Sinai since the 1956 war; simultaneously the Egyptian navy blocked access to the Gulf of Aqaba and thus to Eilat. Meant to defend his reputation against Syrian criticism, the decisions prompted Israel to attack its Arab neighbours in June and finally led to their crushing defeat.

Soon after the summit relations with Saudi Arabia and Jordan also deteriorated again. In 1966 King Faysal sought to establish the Islamic conference, an alliance of sorts of Muslim countries. Jordan adhered to the initiative that Nasser, possibly unlike Faysal, saw as a challenge to the Egyptian dominated AL. Relations between Nasser and King Husayn further suffered from differences over the role of the PLO in Jordan; fences were partly mended in late spring 1967. Egypt therefore entertained tense or ambiguous relations with most countries able to fight or fund the June war. The only exception was Iraq which has no common border with Israel. The hopes to use the Cairo summit to reassert its regional influence failed to materialize. Further to the west, Egypt in the 1963 desert war took the side of Algeria against Morocco; two years later, Nasser broke with President Habib Burguiba (Burqiba) of Tunisia who in his 1965 Jericho address called on the Palestinian to find a territorial compromise with Israel and turn their attention to development issues.

Balancing the Superpowers

From the Suez War until the mid-1960s Nasser in spite of repeated disagreements and tensions managed to maintain working relations with the US and the USSR. For almost ten years, therefore, Egypt escaped dependency on one of the superpowers. In 1958, for instance, Nasser visited Moscow twice to obtain grants worth \$175 million for the Aswan Dam and \$100 million for the supply of Soviet arms.¹⁷³ In the same year, with the American hotelier Conrad Hilton on his side, he opened the Nile Hilton Hotel in Cairo which became one of the major venues for foreign visitors and local grandees. A year later, the Ford Foundation (FF), then close to the US administration, opened an office in Cairo. More importantly, 1959 marked the beginning of regularly shipments of large quantities of US wheat to the UAR (maintained for Egypt after 1961); they only ceased in 1966 when the US thought Egypt had moved too close to the USSR.¹⁷⁴ In 1962 and as late as 1966 Egypt successfully applied for IMF loans (see above).¹⁷⁵

The balancing act succeeded because Egyptian positions and policies, by accident rather than by design, gave a degree of satisfaction to the US as well as to the USSR. In the eyes of the US the creation of the UAR in February 1958 checked communist influence in Syria. The subsequent coup in Baghdad which temporarily strengthened the Iraqi communists only confirmed the usefulness of the UAR and Nasser. For its part, the USSR welcomed the UAR because it took Syria out of the orbit of the Iraqi monarchy and its European and US backers; the formal dissolution of the Syrian communist party in 1958 seemed a price worth paying. Moscow was obviously pleased by the coup in Iraq which seemed to compensate it for the losses incurred in Syria, even though it led to a crackdown on communists in the UAR. The USSR valued its relations with Egypt even more after the 'secessionist coup' in Syria brought to power a 'bourgeois' government and, roughly at the same time, Qasim in Iraq distanced himself from the communists.

In response to these events and building on his increasing domestic legitimacy, Nasser released many Egyptian communists from jail, only to clamp down on them soon again. The chapter was closed in 1964 when Khrushchev visited Egypt to celebrate the completion of the first stage of the Aswan High Dam. The Communist Party 'voluntary' dissolved in 1965, with many of its members joining the ASU. On the occasion of the visit the USSR and Egypt relaunched bilateral military cooperation, but the former remained committed to a political solution of the conflict with Israel. In spite of some ambiguities, the USSR sought to avoid the 1967 war¹⁷⁶ and abstained from military aid during the hostilities; as already in the Suez crisis, it only stepped up to the plate late in the day, warning Israel not to push its luck too far, but leaving Egypt no happier than in 1956. Once the war was over, the USSR rearmed Egypt, sent some 4,000 military advisors (numbers later increased), but refused to sign a formal treaty and continued to insist on a political solution.¹⁷⁷

Under Naguib and Nasser Egypt received wildly varying amounts of US economic aid that reflected the ups and downs in bilateral relations. In 1953, for instance, when the US banked on the Free Officers, it received more than \$12 million; in 1955 US aid even grew to \$66 million. It fell to \$1 million in 1957, the year of the Eisenhower doctrine, but with the beginning of subsidized wheat supplies rose to between \$44 million and \$200 million p.a. in the period 1959–1965, then fell again to \$12 million in 1967 and naught in the years to 1972. Reportedly Soviet military and civilian aid from 1955 to 1975 totalled \$6.8 billion, including major loans in 1958, 1963, and 1964, part of which were never repaid. The USSR, the Warsaw Pact countries, and mainland China also represented a growing share in Egypt's foreign trade after 1952 and began to dominate it after the Suez War.¹⁷⁸ According to one source, in the late 1950s and early 1960s 'the USSR helped industrialize Egypt, while the US helped fed its workforce...Nasser had succeeded in diversifying his dependency, thereby increasing his room for manoeuvre'.¹⁷⁹ However, Egypt received no significant additional aid from the USSR when it had to substantially reduce public expenditure in 1965; the new leaders in Moscow – Kosygin, Podgorny, and Brezhnev – were more sceptical about Egypt than Khrushchev whom they replaced in 1964.¹⁸⁰

The 1967 War with Israel

The most immediate cause of the 1967 war were the increasing challenges to Nasser's Arab legitimacy discussed earlier. In 1965 Palestinian fighters belonging to al-Fatah, at the time still outside the PLO, launched their first cross-border attack into Israel. While Jordan and Egypt tried to prevent such raids, Syrian leaders encouraged them; at the same time, Israel frequently tested Syrian responses on the Golan. Israeli counter-attacks ultimately challenged Nasser's own position. How could he stand by while Syrian Ba'this began to take action to liberate Palestine and suffered from Israeli retaliation? As earlier in the run-up to the UAR, he was trapped by his quest for Arab legitimacy and leadership. For the same reasons he endorsed the call for the destruction of Israel issued by the 1964 Arab summit in Alexandria, the first official collective statement to that effect. Largely meant to play to the Arab gallery, the rhetorical hyperbole of death and destruction, the expulsion of the UN force from Sinai, and the blockade of Eilat were taken by some Israelis at face value and served others as a pretext for expansion.¹⁸¹

According to most accounts, the possibility that these act and decisions could prompt a large-scale Israeli attack was underrated almost until the last minute.¹⁸² The miscalculation was all the more fateful as Egypt was far from ready to wage a major war; various officials made statements to that effect. By 1967 the economic catch-up strategy pursued since 1952 had not strengthened Egypt sufficiently in economic terms. To the contrary, the strategy had increasingly run into difficulties and Egypt faced the numerous challenges discussed earlier. It was also unlikely that its major ally, the USSR, would provide sufficient support, be it economic or military. Khrushchev's successors were less amenable to Nasser's policies; to address growing economic difficulties they even advocated fiscal retrenchment.¹⁸³

The rest of the story is quickly told. On 5 June the Israeli air force attacked Egypt and within a few hours destroyed most Egyptian aircraft on the ground. Three days later Israeli forces had occupied the entire Sinai and reached the Suez Canal. On the Eastern front Israel swiftly occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem. On 9 June the Arab belligerents accepted a cease fire; after Soviet threats of intervention fighting on 10 June also stopped on the Syrian front. Egypt alone counted several thousand dead and injured. Apart from suffering heavy military losses and the destruction of part of its infrastructure, it also lost a large junk of its territory and related revenues from the production of crude oil and royalties from the Suez Canal (see above). The Sinai oil fields of Abu Rudais and Ra's Sudr returned under Egyptian control only in 1975, the year that also saw the reopening of the Suez Canal. According to one source Egypt lost some \$350 million per year in revenues from royalties, oil, and tourism; Arab compensatory aid reportedly amounted to no more than \$250 million per year.¹⁸⁴ Foreign policy decisions that Nasser had taken to defend his position inside and outside Egypt substantially weakened him, his government, and his country.

The Aftermath of the Defeat

The 1967 defeat entailed yet greater dependency on external actors and concomitantly reduced foreign policy options. Rebuilding the armed forces and the infrastructure of the country heavily depended on the Soviet Union and the wealthier Arab countries; at the Khartoum summit in late August and early September 1967 the latter agreed a support package for their defeated neighbours including an annual \$300 million. In turn, Egypt agreed to withdraw its last troops from Yemen in the autumn of the same year. To all intents and purposes, the Khartoum package prepared by conservative oil producers prevented for a long time any major challenge to their growing importance in Arab politics. By insisting on a political solution to the conflict they signalled their opposition to the three 'nos' – no negotiations, no formal peace, and no recognition of Israel – that have generally been remembered of the conference decisions.¹⁸⁵

The summit led to another reconciliation between Nasser on the one hand and Husayn and Faysal on the other, but not with the rejectionist camp represented by the PLO, Syria, Iraq, and Algeria. Relations with the rejectionists remained all the more strained as Egypt, officially still the UAR, and Jordan accepted Security Council Resolution 242 voted in November 1967; the resolution called for the recognition of Israel by the Arab states; the Israeli withdrawal from (the) territories occupied in the war;¹⁸⁶ the end of the state of war; the freedom of navigation in contested waters (like the Straits of Tiran at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba); the just settlement of the refugee issue; the establishment of demilitarized zones; and the appointment of a UN special envoy – Gunnar Jarring – to implement the ceasefire and explore a definite negotiated solution.¹⁸⁷

The absence of any additional progress led to the war of attrition in which Egyptian forces from spring 1969 onwards attacked Israeli positions on the Eastern bank of the Canal. Heavy Israeli retaliation deep into Egypt prompted the USSR to increase its military aid and even to become directly involved in the conflict; assuming responsibility for Egyptian air defences, the USSR dispatched additional personnel which soon amounted to 15–20,000 troops and advisors. In July 1970 Nasser returned from an extended visit to Moscow which nonetheless continued to insist on a political solution and refused the supply of offensive weapons. As a result, Nasser in December 1969 accepted the Rogers Plan named after the then US Secretary of State to renew the ceasefire and restart the Jarring mission. After Israel rejected the Plan, Egypt in June 1970 accepted the second Rogers initiative for a ceasefire which finally came into force in August.

In the late 1960s Nasser sought to reconcile King Husayn and the *fidayyin* who had taken over the PLO and increasingly formed a state within the Jordanian state. Since at least 1967 Husayn had been critical of

independent *fidayyin* activities that in March 1968 led to the battle of Karama (Karamah); a Jordanian town near the Allenby (now King Husayn) bridge across the River Jordan, Karama at the time basically served as a key position to Fatah, by then itself a member of the PLO. Much celebrated by Fatah which together with Jordanian troops repelled an Israeli attack to arrest Yasir Arafat, the battle also highlighted the exposure of Jordan which had already earlier suffered from Israeli incursions. In 1969 Nasser negotiated a first agreement to rein in *fidayyin* activities which failed to hold. In September 1970 King Husayn's troops attacked *fidayyin* positions and Palestinian camps after the PFLP hijacked four passenger aircraft and diverted them to Zarqa airport in Jordan. After nine days of heavy fighting an emergency AL summit in Cairo managed to obtain a ceasefire to be followed by an agreement between the belligerents. Exhausted by the negotiations, Nasser died of a heart attack on 28 September.

Finally, the 1967 defeat also led to a timid rapprochement with Iran which was further consolidated in 1968 when the Ba' this toppled the pro-Egyptian Arif government in Iraq and began to challenge Iran as well as Egypt.¹⁸⁸

¹ Gordon, 1992, chapter 2.

² The Six Principles were: fighting colonialism and its Egyptian supporters, ending feudalism, an end to private monopolies and the control of the state by private interests, achieving social justice, establishing strong armed forces, and democratic government without censorship.

³ Events and developments in the 1950s and 1960s have been described and analyzed in numerous publications that cannot all be cited here. Classics which necessarily reflect the historical context of their own production include: Abdel-Malek, 1968; Binder, 1978; Berque, 1972; Ayubi, 1980; Ayubi, 1995; Lacouture and Lacouture, 1956; Baker, 1978.

⁴ See Waterbury, 1983, 277, 297; Gordon, chapter 1.

⁵ See Gordon, 1992, chapter 2; Be'eri, 1970, 311f, whose sample however includes officers other than the Free Officers; see also Vatikiotis, 1961.

⁶ For Mar'ai, see Springborg, 1982.

⁷ See Waterbury, 1991.

⁸ See Sayigh, 2012.

⁹ Moore, 1994.

¹⁰ Waterbury, 1983, 277, 297, partly confirming, yet partly differing from Leonard Binder, 1978.

¹¹ Hinnebusch, 1985.

¹² 'Constitutional declaration' in the Egyptian context refers to a relatively summary document establishing the essential features of the constitutional order for a limited period of time.

¹³ For constitutional developments, see: Bernard-Maugiron, 2003, 20ff; Godchot, 1957; Brown, 2002, in particular 78ff; Boyle and Sharif, 1996. For the texts of the constitutions themselves, see: *Al-dasastir al-misriyya 1805–1971, Cairo, Markaz al-tanzim wa al-mikrufilm, 1977*. For documents in translation, see Khalil, 1962.

¹⁴ Bernard-Maugiron, 2003, 20ff; Khalil, 1962, 498ff.

¹⁵ For the document, see Khalil, 1962, 499ff.

¹⁶ For consequences for foreigners and Jewish Egyptians see Laskier, 1995, 573–619, in particular 579 and 582ff; Beinin, 1998b.

¹⁷ For the successive mass organizations and the Charter, see Gordon, 1992, 80ff; Waterbury, 1983, 315ff; Ayubi, 1995, 209ff; for the corporatist aspects in particular: Bianchi, 1985.

¹⁸ For this definition of authoritarianism, see Linz, 2000.

¹⁹ For details, see for instance Vatikiotis, 1991, 384ff.

²⁰ See Zeghal, 1999; Gesink, 2014.

²¹ Gilsenan, 1973 who compares the success of one *tariqa* to the decline of others.

²² Brown, 2008, 133–149; Botiveau, 1989; Jacquemond, 1988; al-Khudairy, 2008.

²³ For this aspect, see Moore, 1994.

²⁴ Moore, 1994.

²⁵ See for instance Danielson, 1997, even though the main concern of the book is a different one.

²⁶ The *minbar* is the elevated ‘chair’ of stand in the mosque from which the Friday sermon or *khutba* is pronounced.

²⁷ Fargues, 2011, 55.

²⁸ For a detailed critique of the nationalist view of Mehmet Ali, see Fahmy, 1997, 12–18.

²⁹ O’Brien, 1966, 302f, 307f.

³⁰ See for instance Waterbury, 1983, 57ff.

³¹ For details of the land reform, see O’Brien, 1966, 76ff, 166ff, 243ff, 286, 294; Waterbury, 1983, 67, 266ff; Saab, 1967; Abdel-Fadil, 1980.

³² For details see Waterbury 1983, 67.

³³ Waterbury, 1983, 67.

³⁴ Waterbury, 1968, 266f.

³⁵ O’Brien, 1966, 231; Waterbury, 1983, 57–82.

³⁶ For details, see O’Brien, 1966, 73ff; Waterbury, 1983, 67.

³⁷ For details, see O’Brien, 1966, 70, 84ff, 158, 310, 314; Waterbury, 1983, 66f.

³⁸ Owen and Pamuk, 1998, 127–149.

³⁹ For details, see Waterbury, 1983, 68f.

⁴⁰ For details, see O’Brien, 1966, 87ff.

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- ⁴¹ For details, see O'Brien, 1966, 93f, 126; Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 68; Waterbury, 1983, 69–72 who also refers to Abdel-Malek, 1968, 111.
- ⁴² Waterbury, 1983, 86.
- ⁴³ Waterbury, 1983, 64f.
- ⁴⁴ Waterbury, 1983, 297, 300.
- ⁴⁵ Buettner and Klostermeier, 1991, 84–99; Owen and Pamuk, 1998, 129f.
- ⁴⁶ O'Brien, 1966, 80.
- ⁴⁷ See especially Waterbury, 1983, 9, 60.
- ⁴⁸ Ikram, 2018, 115ff.
- ⁴⁹ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 62; see also O'Brien, 1966, 71.
- ⁵⁰ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 240; O'Brien, 1966, 13ff.
- ⁵¹ For details of infrastructure, see O'Brien, 1966, 26ff.
- ⁵² For details, see Waterbury, 1983, 65–67, 112 referring to Hansen and Marzouk, 1965, 321.
- ⁵³ Sadek, Shahin, and Stigter, 1997.
- ⁵⁴ For details, see Waterbury, 1983, 128; Vitalis, 1995, 216.
- ⁵⁵ See Fargues, 2011, 44; the coup took place in between the censuses of 1947 and 1960. In 1947 the population amounted to 19 million and demographic growth to 2.42 per cent p.a. In 1960 the population had reached 26 million, with a rate of growth of 2.44 per cent p.a.
- ⁵⁶ World Bank (WB), World Development Indicators (WDI), retrieved 23/5/2019.
- ⁵⁷ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.
- ⁵⁸ Waterbury 1983, 44: 56.6 per cent of the male and 83.8 per cent of the female population were illiterate (figures for 1969 but close to 1967).
- ⁵⁹ Waterbury, 1983, 44.
- ⁶⁰ Ikram, 2018, 89.
- ⁶¹ Mabro and Radwan, 1973, 45.
- ⁶² Ikram, 2018, 86, referring to Hansen and Nashashibi, 1975.
- ⁶³ Mabro and Radwan, 1973, 43; Waterbury, 1983, 210.
- ⁶⁴ Ikram, 2018, 86f.
- ⁶⁵ Ikram, 2018, 86f.

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- ⁶⁶ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 45.
- ⁶⁷ Mabro and Radwan, 1973, 183f.
- ⁶⁸ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.
- ⁶⁹ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 44; Waterbury 1983, 42.
- ⁷⁰ Issawi, 1963, 119; O'Brien, 1966, 60; Ikram, 2018, 92.
- ⁷¹ For figures, see Waterbury, 1983, 62, 165.
- ⁷² Ikram, 2108, 112f referring to Mead, 1967.
- ⁷³ IMF DataMapper, retrieved 30/05/2019; Waterbury, 1983, 31; Issawi, 1963, 283f–285; Ikram, 2018, 124.
- ⁷⁴ Issawi, 1963, 120, referring to **Tiers Monde, July-September 1961 and April-June 1961**.
- ⁷⁵ O'Brien, 1966, 84, 122, 158f, 302f, 307f; Waterbury, 1983, 72f.
- ⁷⁶ Waterbury, 1983, 8, referring to Hirschman, 1979; also Waterbury, 1983, 93ff, 121.
- ⁷⁷ Mabro, 1974, 179; the lower figure of E£95 million given by Hansen and Nashashibi, 1975, 18f may refer to the financial year 1959/60.
- ⁷⁸ For details, see O'Brien, 1966, 130, 147, 311; Waterbury, 1983, 73, referring also to Issawi, 1963; Waterbury, 1983, 78; Mabro, 1974, 129; Abdel-Malek, 1968 .
- ⁷⁹ O'Brien, 1966, 208ff.
- ⁸⁰ O'Brien, 1966, 124ff, 136, 253–6, 299ff; Mabro, 1974, 128; Waterbury, 1983, 75, 78f, 227; Oron, 1966, 580ff.
- ⁸¹ O'Brien, 1966, 300f.
- ⁸² O'Brien, 1966, 294; Waterbury, 1983, 266, 286; Buettner and Klostermeier, 1991, 84–91.
- ⁸³ O'Brien, 1966, 295.
- ⁸⁴ For details, see O'Brien, 1966, 132.
- ⁸⁵ O'Brien, 1966, 208.
- ⁸⁶ For the successive reorganization of the public sector, see O'Brien, 1966, 173, 182; Waterbury, 1983, 80, 117.
- ⁸⁷ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 93.
- ⁸⁸ Waterbury, 1983, 95.
- ⁸⁹ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 71ff.
- ⁹⁰ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 70ff.
- ⁹¹ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 71ff; Waterbury, 1983, 167.

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- ⁹² WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.
- ⁹³ Fargues, 2011, 44.
- ⁹⁴ Calculations differ partly; see WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019 and Fargues, 2011, 44.
- ⁹⁵ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.
- ⁹⁶ Waterbury, 1983, 44; Ikram, 2018, 89.
- ⁹⁷ Waterbury 1983, 44: 56.6 per cent of the male and 83.8 per cent of the female population were illiterate (figures for 1969 but close to 1967).
- ⁹⁸ Mabro, 1974, 166; Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 43.
- ⁹⁹ Diwan and Akin, 2015, 34.
- ¹⁰⁰ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019; slightly different figures in Waterbury, 1983, 210 still confirm the trend.
- ¹⁰¹ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.
- ¹⁰² Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 46 .
- ¹⁰³ Waterbury, 1983, 30f, 38, 93f.
- ¹⁰⁴ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019; Waterbury 1983, 113.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ikram, 2018, 87.
- ¹⁰⁶ Mabro and Radwan, 1973, 46, 183.
- ¹⁰⁷ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 46, 96, Ikram, 2018, 93f; Waterbury, 1983, 30f, 38, 93ff, 114ff.
- ¹⁰⁸ According to Waterbury, 1983, 30f from E£62 million in the 1960s to E£16 million in 1961; according to the WDI reserves minus gold rose from \$49 billion in 1962 \$74 billion in 1970. the exchange rate depreciated over the period concerned, see Mabro, 1974, x.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ikram, 2018, 91.
- ¹¹⁰ Waterbury, 1983, 43.
- ¹¹¹ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 47 who once again count separately utilities, transport, trade, housing, and construction; Bush, 1999, referring to relevant World Bank World Development Reports (conflating services, commerce, utilities etc.).
- ¹¹² Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 47; Waterbury, 1983, 195, who adds some caveats.
- ¹¹³ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 47; Ikram, 2018 (conflating services and commerce, utilities, etc).
- ¹¹⁴ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.
- ¹¹⁵ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019; O'Brien, 1966, 202f, 307f.
- ¹¹⁶ Ireton, 2011, 408.

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- ¹¹⁷ Waterbury, 1983, 199.
- ¹¹⁸ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 86, 238.
- ¹¹⁹ Mabro and Rawan, 1976, 207.
- ¹²⁰ Mabro, 1974, 41ff.
- ¹²¹ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 68.
- ¹²² Mansfield, 1965, 142; also: Mabro and Radwan, 1973, 113.
- ¹²³ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.
- ¹²⁴ Waterbury, 1983, 81 referring to Radwan, 1974, 207; slightly different figures in O'Brien, 1966, 188 confirm the trend.
- ¹²⁵ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 96.
- ¹²⁶ O'Brien, 1966, 297.
- ¹²⁷ Waterbury, 1983, 211, 218 referring to Hansen and Marzouk, 1965, 190.
- ¹²⁸ Waterbury, 1983, 208f, referring to 'Abd al-Fattah, 1975, 118f.
- ¹²⁹ Waterbury, 1983, 222.
- ¹³⁰ Nasser, 1955.
- ¹³¹ Heikal, 1986, 117.
- ¹³² See Hinnebusch and Shama, 2014; Shama, 2014, 8.
- ¹³³ For an overview, see Yapp, 1991; McNamara, 2004.
- ¹³⁴ See Kerr, 1971; Gerges, 1994; Golan, 1990; Little, 2010.
- ¹³⁵ See Alpher, 2015; Shlaim, 2000, 186–217.
- ¹³⁶ See also Heikal, 1986, chapter 4.
- ¹³⁷ Nasser, 1955.
- ¹³⁸ For a detailed account of this period, see Shlaim, 2000, chapters 2–4.
- ¹³⁹ Shlaim, 2000, 84.
- ¹⁴⁰ France in 1954 (possibly as early as 1953) began to supply Israel with weapons and agreed to train Israeli air force pilots. At the same time, though, France maintained a degree of military cooperation with Egypt which only ceased after Nasser at the 1955 Bandung conference called for the independence of Algeria; for details see: Papastamkou, 2014; for later French arms supplies, see: Vaisse, 1989.
- ¹⁴¹ For an overview of these developments, see for instance Yapp, 1991; McNamara, 2004.

¹⁴² For developments leading to the Suez Crisis, see Kyle, 1989; Bowie, 1989; Hewedy, 1989; Kunz, 1989; Farnie, 1969.

¹⁴³ See Jankowski, 2002, 38ff, 55ff.

¹⁴⁴ Swain, 1997, 675–694, in particular 679.

¹⁴⁵ Claims that Nasser wanted to nationalize the Canal anyway may seem plausible in the light of the celerity with which he acted but cannot be substantiated.

¹⁴⁶ See Kunz, 1991, 72–74 and note 8 quoting a report by the Suez Canal company; total revenue from royalties in 1955 amounted to \$93.5 million. See also Hansen and Tourk, 1978; ‘Nationalization of the Suez Canal Company’, 1957.

¹⁴⁷ On these developments, see Karabell, 2003; Yapp, 1991, Louis and Owen, 1989.

¹⁴⁸ See for instance Tsouparas, 2016.

¹⁴⁹ See Gershoni and Jankowski, 1995; Jankowski, 2002, 38ff, 55ff; Nasr, 1996.

¹⁵⁰ Devlin, 1976; Rabinovich, 1972 ; Batatu, 1999; Dam, 1978; Kienle, 1990, 1–30.

¹⁵¹ Kerr, 1971; Seale, 1986 .

¹⁵² Seurat, 1980.

¹⁵³ For the Suez crisis and war, see Louis and Owen, 1989; Shlaim, 2000, 143–185.

¹⁵⁴ Hourani, 1989.

¹⁵⁵ Kunz, 1989, 215–232, in particular 216.

¹⁵⁶ See Shlaim, 2000, 143–185.

¹⁵⁷ Kandiyoti, 2012, 66.

¹⁵⁸ World Bank, 1972.

¹⁵⁹ Calculated from figures provided by O’Brien, 1966, 328, and Mabro, 1974, 111.

¹⁶⁰ For events and developments see for instance Kerr, 1971; McNamara, 2004.

¹⁶¹ On the run-up to the UAR, see Kerr, 1971; Seale, 1986; Jankowski, 2002. For a partly different view, see Mufti, 1996, 87ff, who emphasizes a Ba’thi strategy to grasp power in Syria, independently of policy convergences with Nasser or the influence of the Cold War on the calculations made by the different actors.

¹⁶² Kerr, 1971; Seale, 1986; Jankowski, 2002; Little, 2010.

¹⁶³ On the workings of the UAR, see Jankowski, 2002.

¹⁶⁴ On the end of the UAR, see Kerr, 1971; Jankowski, 2002.

¹⁶⁵ For a detailed account, see Kerr, 1971.

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- ¹⁶⁶ For these events, see Little, 1996; Husayn, though, had not officially endorsed the Eisenhower doctrine.
- ¹⁶⁷ Heikal, 1986, 49.
- ¹⁶⁸ Owen, 1989, 365.
- ¹⁶⁹ For the Mosul revolt and Iraq after the revolution, see Batatu, 1978; Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 2001; Tripp, 2007.
- ¹⁷⁰ See Ginat, 1997.
- ¹⁷¹ For extracts, see Kerr, 1971, 48ff. For events, see Kerr, 1971; Rabinovich, 1976.
- ¹⁷² For a detailed account of events, see Kerr 1971.
- ¹⁷³ Golan, 1990, 54.
- ¹⁷⁴ Owen, 1989, 370; Hinnebusch and Shala, 2014, 75–103, in particular 79.
- ¹⁷⁵ Waterbury, 1983, 95, 399f.
- ¹⁷⁶ Golan, 1990, 60ff.
- ¹⁷⁷ Golan, 1990, 60ff.
- ¹⁷⁸ Sharp, 2018, 23f; Waterbury, 1983, 70, 396ff; Owen, 1989, 373.
- ¹⁷⁹ Waterbury 1983, 404
- ¹⁸⁰ Waterbury, 1983, 96.
- ¹⁸¹ For a detailed account of the war and events that led to it, see Shlaim, 2000, 229–250; O’Ballance, 1972.
- ¹⁸² E.g. Yapp, 1991, 417.
- ¹⁸³ Waterbury, 1983, 77, 96ff, 99ff.
- ¹⁸⁴ Dessouki, 2008. The figure may be conservative in the light of other calculations referred to above. According to Hansen and Nashashibi, 1975, 3–24, in particular 18f, Egypt in 1967 earned E£95 million in royalties which equalled about \$300 at the official exchange rate.
- ¹⁸⁵ On the summit and its decisions, see Meital, 2000; for an English translation of the decisions: Moore, 1974, 788; on USSR support, see Golan, 1990, 58–81; Waterbury, 1983, 391–405.
- ¹⁸⁶ The French version of the resolution referred to the Israeli withdrawal ‘from the occupied territories’, while the English version referred to withdrawal ‘from occupied territories’. Israel preferred the latter, the Arab states the former wording.
- ¹⁸⁷ For developments after 1967 see for instance Tschirgi, 1989, 67–76; Quandt, 2005.
- ¹⁸⁸ Shama, 2014, 115–117.

The Republic under Sadat

Faced with the losses of the 1967 defeat that further illustrated the shortcomings of the earlier public sector-based development strategy, Sadat in 1971, a few months after assuming office, sidelined his opponents and soon signalled broader policy changes supposed to guarantee economic survival and revival. A former Free Officer, Sadat banked on foreign aid and investment, largely from the major capitalist countries, that involved a definite settlement of the conflict with Israel; the latter, in turn, he thought to achieve through the 1973 war intended to break the stalemate in place since 1967 and to prompt Israel to withdraw from the Suez Canal and the Sinai peninsula. As the war thanks to broader international developments and US diplomatic involvement produced some of the expected outcomes, Sadat initiated his 'open-door policy' or *infitah* which consisted of partial and selective economic liberalization. The war-related rise in the price of oil boosted revenues in the major oil producing countries that partly ended up in Egypt in the form of investment or other transfers. The external realignment from the USSR to the US and its allies together with economic change and increasing social diversification at home contributed to a partial overhaul of the political regime that in spite of some seemingly 'democratic' reforms came down to a redefinition of authoritarian rule. Soon economic reform entailed a new balance-of-payments deficit as well as growing public debt together with their inevitable effects in terms of distribution and legitimacy. At the same time the peace process and treaty with Israel alienated other constituencies on which Sadat had partly relied, in particular Islamist organizations. Once again, policies supposed to strengthen the country and the government ultimately weakened both, and even led to the assassination of its president by Islamist opponents in 1981. Still, the political regime survived, and so did the broader state and 'nation'.

Political Change

Nasser died of a heart attack in late September 1970, a few hours after negotiating an end to the heavy fighting that in Jordan opposed King Husayn's troops to Palestinian forces under Yasir Arafat. The news of Nasser's death came as a shock to most Egyptians who had been kept in the dark over the gradual deterioration of his health. Once again, hundreds of thousands of people, millions according to some sources, thronged the streets of Cairo, this time to accompany him on his last journey. Departing from the former seat of the RCC, originally the royal boat house, on the Gezira island in the River Nile, the funeral procession crossed the Qasr al-Nil Bridge to Tahrir Square, carrying Nasser to Manshiyyat al-Bakry mosque in the Abbasiyya district where he was buried. Appointed vice president in 1969, Anwar al-Sadat, became acting president before he was duly 'elected' a few weeks later.

Chosen as vice president precisely because he lacked followers and influence, Sadat needed to assert his authority before attempting to overcome the crippling legacy of the 1967 defeat and earlier overly ambitious development policies. A few months after assuming office he crushed opposition from within the ruling circles, an event generally referred to as his 'corrective movement' or even 'revolution'. Victorious, he quickly announced some measures of political decompression and gradually abandoned the unity scheme; instead he embarked, first quietly, then more vigorously, on a major policy shift that within a few years would profoundly affect external and economic affairs. Through a series of measures later summarized as his 'open-door policy' or *infitah*, Sadat intended to selectively involve foreign and domestic private capital in the economic revival of the country. In order to attract aid and investment from abroad, he sought to break the stalemate in the Arab-Israeli conflict and find a permanent settlement acceptable to both parties and possibly other Arab actors as well. Ending the conflict, he thought, implied a radical realignment away from the USSR towards the financially more potent capitalist countries and in particular the US who in his eyes were the only power able to exert sufficient influence on Israel. The

new economic and foreign policies did not entirely go to plan, ramified into other policies, and in various ways affected the political personnel, institutions, and politics.

Policies

Policy changes first appeared in the 1971 May decrees intended to rein in the secret services and to establish a modicum of rule of law. Known first as the Corrective Movement (*Harakat al-tashih*) and later as the Corrective Revolution (*Thawrat al-tashih*), the decrees followed on the heels of the showdown with Sadat's opponents who defended the legacy of Nasser and enjoyed some Soviet support.

Other measures soon pushed further the timid revision of economic policies that Nasser had made before his death. As early as 1971 the Sadat administration began to court private, in particular foreign, capital, even though in earnest it did so only with the launch of *infitah* in the wake of the 1973 war with Israel (see below). Confirming in essence Sadat's hopes, the October War broke the political stalemate, involved the US in the search for a settlement, and led to negotiations culminating in the 1979 peace treaty (see section on external relations). However long and arduous, the negotiations created favourable conditions for foreign capital and aid to flow to Egypt. US involvement had been much facilitated by Sadat's decision in 1971 to expel some ten thousand Soviet advisors, a move that signalled an important shift in Egyptian foreign policy. Soviet arms supplies during the fighting in 1973 visibly did not shake US trust in Sadat's earlier assurances that his war aims were limited (see below). Published in the early spring of 1974, the October Paper explicitly vindicated the reorientation of foreign and economic policy towards the major capitalist countries and private sector growth.

While attracting aid and investment, *infitah* quickly entailed unsustainable levels of budgetary and external deficit as well as debt. Already in 1977 Sadat was forced to enter into negotiations for an IMF loan which was conditioned on a programme of macroeconomic stabilization and thus on austerity measures. In the face of major opposition and riots he backtracked from the agreement, but economic and social policies were heavily affected by the decline in available resources.¹

As part and parcel of his efforts to rebuild and shore up support, Sadat in the latter part of his presidency more and more emphasized references to Islam. Legislation was passed to prevent Egyptians, Muslim and Christian, from consuming alcohol in public during Ramadan and on Muslim holidays; the law did not apply to any non-Egyptians, no doubt in an effort not to deter solvent foreign visitors. Similarly, he began to pray in public and sign off documents as Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat rather than simply as Anwar al-Sadat. The vaguely phrased 'Law of Shame' (literally: 'shameful conduct') passed in 1980 legitimated additional restrictions on religious grounds; it also established a special court, the Court of Values, with far reaching powers to adjudicate these matters.²

The Dominant Actors and their Social Background

The showdown in May 1971 led to purges and to the arrest of a number of influential officials, most famously Ali Sabri, Sharawi Goma (Sha'rawi Gom'a) and Sami Sharaf. Sociologically, the Sadat administration nonetheless continued to be run by officers and their civilian allies who hailed from the same social background as did their predecessors under Nasser. A Free Officer himself, Sadat had been promoted general by Nasser who himself always remained the colonel he had been at the moment of the 1952 'revolution'. Military officers remained the backbone of the political regime, even though they were less prominent at the level of cabinet ministers.³

As *infitah* took shape, entrepreneurs and their avatars increasingly began to stride and populate the corridors of power. The new economic policies, the laws that codified them, and favours bestowed by

Sadat and his associates allowed them to use their skills and networks to accumulate capital. Politicians and high ranking civil servants, sometimes referred to as the 'state bourgeoisie', entertained close relationships with entrepreneurs and owners of capital, the new '*infitah* bourgeoisie'.⁴ In the 'shadow' of the state on which it heavily depended, the *infitah* bourgeoisie enjoyed privileged access to resources and kickbacks that define political capitalism or, more crudely, nepotism, cronyism, and corruption.⁵ Various 'fat cats' like the engineer and founder of the Arab Contractors, Osman Ahmad Osman, managed to make themselves indispensable and to be co-opted into the ruling circles. However, their rise never threw into question the preponderance of the officers, even if the latter were less visible.⁶ In what has been called the 'political dole',⁷ the government also rewarded particular constituencies such as public sector workers with bonuses and docile professional syndicates with land or money to build their headquarters, not to speak of the large entitlement programmes for the military and police.

The emergence of the 'infitah bourgeoisie' first enlarged and strengthened the social basis of the Sadat administration. However, it soon led to tensions with the initial components of this basis, in particular with those who, employed by the state or the public sector, lived on wages and salaries rather than business profits and income from capital. These tensions were only partly alleviated by the cash that sometimes flowed from the pockets of the ones into those of the others. The new economic policies also increased social diversification and differentiation in the country at large and thus contributed to institutional changes.

The process of diversification and differentiation reflected a variety of new interests and demands that had to be reconciled by the rulers. New cleavages emerged not only between the public and the private sector but also within the latter, segmenting it into actors who in terms of capital, skills, and political connections had better or fewer chances to benefit from *infitah*; connections frequently replaced capital as no business could flourish without government authorizations or loans from banks that were still overwhelmingly state owned. The private sector became increasingly heterogeneous; hitherto essentially consisting of small scale producers and service providers such as barbers, retail shops, and workshops, it soon included larger companies, entrepreneurs, and professionals turned businesspeople. As a matter of course, their profits grew at different rates, the ones earning far higher incomes and increasing their wealth far more rapidly than the others. Nor did the nouveau riche always get on with the remnants of the old bourgeoisie that after its demise under Nasser tried to make their comeback. Workers and employees also became more diverse. The private sector generally offered none of the benefits such as employment-related health care and pensions common in the public sector. On the other hand, highly qualified personnel in the private sector could sometimes earn far higher salaries, though without the employment guarantees that applied to public sector employees. In the end, inequality grew considerably, with a small minority of haves surfing above the majority of have-nots.

The Political Regime

The new policies and their preparation strengthened the case for institutional changes that also helped Sadat to operationalize and symbolically underline and the break with the past. Partly these changes played to the US and wider donor gallery whose support was needed to obtain aid and investments, partly they were supposed to channel the increasing social diversification and related interests produced by *infitah*; in the latter sense, they contribute to illustrate how policies may reshape institutional arrangements and political regimes.⁸ Though intended to enhance Sadat's domestic and international legitimacy, an exercise that soon proved to be acrobatic, they never aimed at meaningful political liberalization or democratization as it has been claimed. They were an early exercise in refounding or 'upgrading' authoritarian rule through Potemkinian illusions.⁹

Promulgated in September 1971, a year after Sadat came to power, the new constitution continued to define Egypt simultaneously as 'socialist' and 'democratic'. It continued to emphasize social and economic rights, outlaw 'exploitation', defend public ownership of some industries, limit private land holdings, and reserve for workers and peasants half of the seats in all 'elected' assemblies. In the tradition of its Nasserist predecessors, the 1971 constitution also guaranteed work, health services, free education at all levels, and social insurance for all; it moreover emphasized state planning, state support for cooperatives, profit sharing with workers, and popular control of the means of production. Though changing the 'UAR' into 'Arab Republic of Egypt (ARE)', the new document continued to define Egypt as an integral part of the 'Arab nation'.

Simultaneously, though, the new constitution broke with the past. Not without tension with some of the above provisions it protected private property, restricting nationalizations and sequestrations to cases defined by law and adjudicated by the courts. It also further formalized a modicum of political decompression initiated by the Corrective Movement of May 1971. Like its predecessors, the new constitution recognized personal and political liberties in principle, but left details to future legislation. New emphasis on the sovereignty of the people and the separation of powers nonetheless seemed to strengthen these promises. While combining features of Nasserist and liberal inspiration, it also put additional emphasis on religion that contradicted the latter. To the traditional provision recognizing Islam as the 'religion of the state' it added another one establishing *shari'a* as 'a major source of legislation', though without defining its content.¹⁰

In order to strengthen the rule of law, the new constitution established administrative courts. Legislation passed in 1972 enhanced the independence of the judiciary and guaranteed the irrevocability of judges; the judges dismissed in 1969 were reinstated. The constitution also laid the basis for the creation of a court whose specific responsibility would be to examine the constitutionality of legislation. A law promulgated in 1979 finally established the Supreme Constitutional Court (*Al-mahkama al-dusturiyya al-'ulya*); composed of irremovable justices selected in transparent procedures that limited political interference, it replaced the government-dependent Supreme Court established in 1969.¹¹

This being said, the 1971 constitution once again provided for a strong president whose tenure was initially limited to two six-year terms. It also created a Supreme Council of Judicial Organizations headed by President of the republic and the office of the Socialist Prosecutor who could act outside the ordinary courts. Initially, members of parliament had to be members of the ASU which in spite of the May events still remained part of the political regime. The constitution also established new administrative subdivisions of the country, largely to strengthen constituencies close to Sadat and to weaken the ASU.

However, in 1975 Sadat allowed members of the ASU to form 'platforms' (*manabir*, plural of *minbar*) which under the party's broad tent could develop their own ideological and political identity. An initial process of selection and consolidation endorsed four such platforms which roughly corresponded to the right, centre, left, and Nasserists. Subsequently the latter two were merged into one; now labelled 'organizations' (*tanzim*, pl. *tanzimat*), the three survivors were asked to field candidates for the elections to the People's Assembly in October and November 1976. Under new legislation passed in 1977 the ASU was dissolved and the organizations officially became parties. Sadat himself presided over the centre party which in its successive reincarnations remained the dominant party until the fall of Mubarak in 2011. Sadat also selected the leaders of the two other organizations which then morphed into minor parties; Khalid Muhieddin (Muhi al-Din) was asked to chair the left and Mustapha Kamil Murad the right. Restrictions that applied to the creation of parties under the 1977 law were reinforced after Fuad Seragaldin (Fu'ad Sirag al-Din) in February 1978 tried to re-establish the Wafd. Operating as the New Wafd, the party did not survive a tailor-made referendum held in May on a new law to 'protect the

internal front and social peace' that barred politicians active under the monarchy from standing for election, thus reintroducing a procedure of 'political isolation'.

After another rigged referendum in 1979, in May 1980 Sadat amended his 1971 constitution in an attempt to reduce opposition to his policies and to placate Islamists, two objectives that had also inspired the 'law of shame' promulgated four months earlier. The effects of *infitah* had culminated in large scale riots in January 1977, and the peace process leading to the 1979 treaty with Israel was condemned by Islamists and leftists alike. At the same time, the treaty reduced the importance of lip service to democracy as it showed that Egypt was on the right side of history anyway; in contrast, further emphasis on *shari'a* could possibly limit Islamist opposition to the treaty.

New language slightly reduced references to socialism as a guiding principle and further strengthened references to Islam. For instance, the objective of ending class differences was replaced with that of narrowing income gaps.¹² At the same time, *shari'a* turned from 'a' to 'the primary source' of legislation.¹³ The amendments also put a definite end to the single party and explicitly acknowledged pluripartism. However, simultaneously an upper house of parliament, the Consultative Council (*Majlis al-shura*), was created to replace the ASU as a check on the lower house. Half of the members of each of the houses still had to be peasants or workers; some seats were reserved for women; a third of the members of the upper house were to be appointed by the President of the republic. The latter's position was further strengthened by a provision that allowed him to be 're-elected' indefinitely as sole candidate.¹⁴ Against his veto legislation could only be passed with a two thirds majority. Again appointed by the President, the PM could only be removed by parliament provided its vote was confirmed in a popular referendum; if the referendum was lost, parliament would be dissolved. More eloquently yet than the 1971 constitution, the amendments illustrated the pervading concern to reconcile an appearance of political liberalization with the continuity of authoritarian rule. The Socialist prosecutor remained in place, and so did the Supreme Council of the Judiciary. Formally recognized as an independent power, the press was regulated by another intrusive supreme council.

Politics

Naturally, the transition from Nasser, the new policies, and some of the institutional changes met considerable opposition from the defenders of the status quo. Sadat's clash with Sabri, Goma, and Sharaf was only the earliest and most dramatic example. *Infitah* and the rapprochement with the US threw into question the earlier public sector-based development strategy and social policies associated with it. Numerous advocates of what had come to be known as 'socialism' and the 'achievements of the revolution' inside and outside the ASU felt alienated by the changes. Simultaneously, Sadat encouraged a degree of openness to mark the difference with his predecessor and give the political regime a new lease of life. Debates about policies and institutions became far more lively and public than in the past. The deliberations of the drafting committee for the 1971 constitution are one example; the public scrutiny of the October paper published in early 1974 is another.¹⁵ Politics became yet more animated from the moment the ASU began to recognize different platforms among its members and to morph into several new parties.

Often depicted as the beginning of a however unsuccessful or blocked transition to democracy, the constitutional and institutional changes in the mid-1970s had at least the merit to moderately enliven parliamentary elections. Still restricted to the candidates endorsed by the ASU in October 1971 and ultimately 'elections without choice',¹⁶ they now regulated a competition of sorts between the candidates and policy preferences of the various platforms or organizations. The 1976 parliamentary elections nonetheless ended in a large victory of the centrists, the Arab Socialists chaired by Sadat's prime minister Mamduh Salim, who obtained more than 80 per cent of the seats. The Socialist Liberals under Mustapha

Kamil Murad on the right and the National Progressive Unionists, generally referred to as Tagammu', under Khalid Muhieddin on the left together obtained fewer than twenty seats; the remaining seats went to independents. The single party had merely been replaced with a dominant party, and the results in general reflected the preferences and calculations of Sadat and his supporters rather than those of the voters. The additional dose of competition nonetheless changed the role of elections in the sense that they allowed more easily to take the temperature of the country, and this all the more as the official results continued to be published – and produced – by the government. It also allowed the latter to divide critics and opponents, to recompense or punish the ones or the others, dominate them through uncertainty, and decorate itself with a democratic fig leaf. No pluralism came to adulterate presidential elections which remained referenda to confirm the single candidate, Sadat. In October 1970 the official turnout and approval rate stood at 85 and 90 per cent, respectively. In 1976 they rose to above 95 per cent. Referenda produced similar results.

The trend was confirmed by the parliamentary elections that took place in June 1979 after Sadat had dissolved the 1976 assembly. Governed by the June 1977 law on political parties and the April 1979 twin referendum on the peace treaty and constitutional reforms, the exercise resulted in a crushing victory of the National Democratic Party (NDP, alias Arab Socialists) which took over 80 per cent of the seats. Other parties including the new Socialist Labour Party created in 1978 by Ibrahim Shukri, already active in Young Egypt, together obtained less than 10 per cent of the seats. A dozen seats went to independents.

Under the constitution prime ministers and ministers continued to be chosen by the President. Mahmud Fawzi appointed PM in October 1970 as well as his followers Aziz Sidqi in January 1972, Abd al-Aziz Muhammad Higazi in September 1974, and Mamduh Salim in April 1975 were all members of the ASU; in office from October 1978 till May 1980, Mustapha Khalil was a member of its successor organization, the NDP. From March 1973 to September 1974 and after May 1980 Sadat was President and PM.

In the media and broader public *infitah* prompted heavy and controversial debates among the supporters of Sadat as well as between them and their opponents.¹⁷ Challenged by the defenders of Nasser's legacy and more generally those on his left, Sadat looked for support from elsewhere, in particular from the emerging '*infitah* bourgeoisie' and from Islamists whose fortunes were again on the rise at the time.¹⁸ Support from the former was relatively easy to obtain as they were and remained dependent on the government. Support from the latter, however, required the respect of values and norms they considered Islamic and thus the 'Islamization' of policies referred to earlier. If the MB remained outlawed, they temporarily enjoyed some reprieve. Sadat had particular sympathies for the Islamic Group (*Al-jama'a/al-gama'a al-islamiyya*) which competed against leftist groups in the universities. Student elections were regularly rigged in favour of Islamist candidates and ended in their victory.

Soon, however, *infitah* and the negotiations with Israel stirred a degree of opposition that could not be contained by the rather artificial new parties and the other spaces of expression that had opened up or widened. When in January 1977 the balance-of-payments deficit led the government to seek an IMF loan, the austerity measures prompted popular protests of a size not seen since the days of the monarchy. Three days of demonstration and riots in Cairo and throughout the country entailed considerable destruction and buried the agreement with the IMF. In the eyes of many, negotiating the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai was already a daring departure from established practice and principle; signing the 1978 Camp David accords and the 1979 peace which isolated Egypt from its Arab partners and forfeited Palestinian rights was a step too far (see below). Related in actual fact as well as in popular perceptions, *infitah* and relations with Israel led to the irreversible estrangement between Sadat and many Egyptians on all sides of the political spectrum. The issue of Palestine further alienated those Islamists whom the government had courted since the mid-1970s; the advent of the new Islamic republic in Iran and its potential impact on Egypt it brought to an end their tactical honeymoon.

Naturally, opposition to the rapprochement with Israel also played out in favour of other Islamist groups who for years had openly resorted to violence. Thus the group *al-Takfir wa Hijra* (roughly translated as Excommunication and Emigration) attempted a coup d'état in 1974; in 1977 the minister of religious affairs was kidnapped and later assassinated; in June 1981 violent clashes between the Islamic Group and Copts occurred in the Cairo neighbourhood al-Zawiyya al-Hamra and led to death and destruction.

Rising contestation was countered by a further increase in repression more generally which culminated in September 1981. Overnight Sadat had more than 1,500 people arrested whom he considered opponents or simply critics. Hitting right, left, and centre, the list included his former advisor Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal; the Wafdist Fuad Seragaldin; the leader of the Socialist Labour Party, Hilmi Murad; the *murshid* of the MB, Omar (Umar) Tilmisani, and numerous other MB. Alongside other Coptic clerics, the Pope and Patriarch, Shenouda III was suspended from office and banished to a monastery.

Trying to benefit from the deleterious situation, a group of junior military officers who, according on source, adhered to the Islamic Group or the Islamic Jihad on 6 October attacked the presidential tribune during the military parade celebrating the anniversary of the 1973 war. Led by Khalid al-Islambuli they killed Sadat and several guests of honour at close range before they were overpowered, arrested, and later tried and executed. The assassination was to coincide with an uprising in Asyut, south of Cairo, which was quickly put down by loyalist troops but nonetheless cost many lives.¹⁹ The events culminating in Sadat's assassination vividly illustrated that the very limited pluralism allowed by the formal institutions was unable to channel political demands and action, whether or not they are considered illegitimate. Put differently, Sadat's version of authoritarianism had failed.

Economic Policies and Developments

In the immediate aftermath of Sadat's inauguration the Egyptian economy stumbled along as it had since the 1967 defeat. On the eve of the 1973 October war Sadat told his close advisors that the coffers were empty and that the government was unable even to settle its next debt instalment or buy wheat.²⁰ He expressed his hope that the war would prompt the wealthier Arab governments to grant Egypt additional and more permanent support. When the guns had fallen silent he noted, disillusioned, that Arab support just about covered the additional expenses incurred by the war. Still, the war helped Sadat to reach his long-term aim to break the stalemate with Israel and thus to come closer to a settlement of the conflict which he considered a precondition for attracting investments and foreign aid and thus rebuild and strengthen Egypt economically as well as politically. The war helped to reach this aim all the more as the expulsion of Soviet advisors a year earlier had separated the conflict with Israel from the Cold War and signalled that Egypt pursued objectives ultimately reconcilable with the interests of the US, a necessary condition to obtain its support and that of its wealthy Arab allies (see below).

For Sadat attracting foreign investment involved a degree of economic liberalization that soon came to be known as 'open-door policy' or *infitah*. Economic liberalization would *ipso facto* end Egypt's dependency on the USSR and initiate a strategic rapprochement with the US, the only power able to end the conflict with Israel on terms acceptable to Egypt. Simultaneously, external capital and know-how would upgrade the Egyptian economy and with the reintroduction of competition make the public sector more competitive. It does not seem that *infitah* was prompted by domestic owners of capital who exploited the shortcomings of the state-centred development strategy under Nasser.²¹ In the end, though, *infitah* helped to attain the foreign policy, but not the economic goals.

Among the first steps towards *infitah* was law 65/1971 granting foreign investors various advantages, establishing free zones, and encouraging joint ventures with public sector companies which, however, due to the continued conflict with Israel remained largely without effects. In August 1973 the 'Dialogue

Paper' drafted within the ASU discussed Egypt's political and economic options in a changing world marked by superpower détente and signalled the possibility of broader change. The first major venture to attract foreign capital was the Sumed pipeline that Egypt began to build in December 1973, shortly after the October War, with financial aid from Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, and Kuwait. From 1977 the pipeline allowed to pump crude oil unloaded on the Red Sea coast through relatively safe desert areas to the Mediterranean from where it was shipped to customers in Europe. Though only inaugurated after the reopening of the Suez Canal in 1975, the pipeline remained useful as the ever-growing size of tankers exceeded the capacities of the canal.²²

Ultimately *infatih* began with Sadat's October Paper published in the March 30 Declaration that in rather general terms suggested a reform of the ASU, a carefully balanced rapprochement with the capitalist part of the world as well as cautious economic and political liberalization.²³ By March 1974 active US involvement to negotiate the Sinai disengagement accords (see below) already illustrated the political rapprochement with Egypt that Sadat considered essential for the success of his strategy. The prospects looked all the more promising as the October War had led to a steep rise in the oil price that in turn led to an increase in public and private revenues in the major oil producing countries; these revenues could be recycled and invested elsewhere, hopefully in Egypt.

However, rather than generating additional resources, engendering sustainable growth, and raising living standards, *infatih* increased the balance-of-payments deficit and public debt, thus further weakening the country. Short term gains and survival were bought on credit, without any tangible collateral other than strategic location and political independence. Only a few years after inaugurating a major policy change Sadat like his predecessor had to turn to the IMF for help. Initial loan conditions prompted the January 1977 riots which probably helped Sadat to renegotiate the agreement in 1978, further helped by the wish of IMF shareholders to preserve the peace process with Israel.

As early as June 1974 new legislation began to translate *infatih* into practice. Law no 43/1974 allowed (non-Egyptian) Arabs and other foreigners to invest in many areas hitherto reserved to the public sector; these included banking, hitherto a preserve of the public sector. With the aim of promoting exports an investment authority was set up that examined and approved projects. Those approved enjoyed important tax holidays, the right to freely import inputs and equipment and, within limits, the possibility to repatriate earnings. Approved joint ventures with the public sector were automatically considered private companies in which workers did not enjoy the rights and benefits of the public sector. Simultaneously, free zones were established in Port Said and other places. To meet the concerns of foreign investors, law 43 was amended by law 32/1977 that further eased currency restrictions and in particular allowed the repatriation of benefits (and other assets in case of liquidation) at a higher exchange rate more advantageous to the investors. The new law also generalized some of the advantages and guarantees offered to foreign investors and joint ventures. In 1975 a presidential decree opened up to 49 per cent of the capital of public sector companies to private investors. A law passed in the same year abolished the public sector holding companies or General Organizations and required individual public sector companies to compete again with one another and the private sector in order to make profits. The law also heavily reduced employment guarantees and workers' rights in these companies. In 1978 the government set up the National Investment Bank to extend loans to public sector companies.²⁴

Investment figures only picked up from March 1977, with projects focusing on tourism, banking, and investment firms rather than manufacturing; two thirds of the capital raised was Egyptian. However, reduced restrictions on imports funded through the remittances of increasing number of Egyptians working in oil countries that were supposed to encourage such investment soon damaged local industries producing for the domestic market; in actual fact, they contradicted important substitution policies that had not been abandoned yet. Another blow to manufacturing was the decision by which Sadat in March

1976 terminated the bilateral treaty of friendship and subsequently the preferential trade agreements under which many Egyptian SMEs exported to the USSR low value-added goods that were not competitive in other markets (see also below). Also, those parts of the private sector that benefited from *infitah* remained heavily dependent on the public sector which, for instance, was the main customer of building contractors like Osman Ahmad Osman (whose business at any rate was a legal hybrid). Ultimately, growth after 1973 was prompted not by *infitah*, but by the increasing availability of rents which irrigated it.²⁵

When Sadat came to power the population had reached more than 30 million people, but demographic growth declined to around, possibly below, 2 per cent in the decade to the 1976 census. The latter counted more than 36 million Egyptians of whom 56 per cent lived in 'rural areas'; the number of people per square kilometre of habitable land had grown from more than 500 in 1947 to more than 1,000. The census inaugurated a decade of bigger demographic growth that averaged almost 2.8 per cent per year. Rising slowly but steadily, life expectancy in 1970 reached 52 years and 59 years in 1981.²⁶ The illiteracy rate continued to fall; depending on sources, it amounted to between 56 and 62 per cent of the total population in 1976, but again much higher for women.²⁷ Also in 1976, workforce participation stood at 50 per cent for the male and 9 per cent of the female population, still roughly the same as in 1947.²⁸ In spite of – or because of – *infitah* unemployment rose from about 4 per cent in 1970 to some 6 per cent in 1976.²⁹

According to one source, real economic growth reached 5.6 per cent of GDP in 1970, 9.0 per cent in 1976 and 7.3 per cent in 1981.³⁰ However, another source put average growth of real GDP in the period 1971–80 at 4.32 per cent, compared to 2.82 per cent in the period 1961–70.³¹ In constant 2011 prices, GNI per capita in PPP reportedly stood at \$709 in 1970, less than in 1966; it then grew, first steadily, then erratically, to reach \$1,040 in 1981.³² Gross fixed investment as part of GNP picked up from 12–14 per cent in the early 1970s to 31 per cent in 1975, but with a resource gap of almost 86 per cent; in 1979, savings accounted for only one fifth of investments.³³ Total factor productivity constantly declined over the 1970s. Inflation, which in 1970 stood at 3.76 per cent, from the mid-70s onwards reached 10–12 per cent, even 25–30 per cent.³⁴

In 1970 agriculture accounted for some 26.3 per cent of GDP, down from 29 per cent in the mid- and late 1960s; industries for 21.3 per cent, roughly the same as in 1964/65, and services 26.2 per cent, up from 24.2 per cent in 1967/68 and 21.1 per cent in 1964/65.³⁵

In 1976 out of a total workforce of some 10.2 million people some 4.8 million worked in agriculture, 1.3 million in manufacturing industries; thus agricultural employment had increased by some 20 per cent since 1947, while industrial employment had more than doubled. Throughout the 1970s manufacturing industries accounted for some 11–13 per cent of employment.³⁶

Completed and inaugurated in January 1971, the Aswan High Dam in early 1972 and in the 1980s prevented major crop failures that the low water level of the Nile threatened to cause.³⁷ However, its effects on the extent of the total cultivated and cropped surface are more difficult to assess, no doubt because of parallel developments such as other land reclamation projects. Depending on cut-off dates, the cultivated surface grew or receded between the early 1970s and the latter half of the 1980s.³⁸ One author puts the total cultivated surface in 1976 at 5.7 million feddan, roughly as much as in 1947, but 200,000 feddan less than in 1960; only the cropped surface (including areas cropped several times per year) rose slightly from 9.1 million feddan in 1947 to 10.7 million feddan in 1976.³⁹

At any rate, productivity and production in newly reclaimed as well in as 'old' lands increasingly suffered from underinvestment in drainage systems that should have complemented irrigation projects. As irrigation water was not evacuated from the fields, the salinity of soils increased to the point of reducing fertility; frequently postponed under Nasser, the costly investment was basically scrapped under Sadat,

only to be resumed later with time horizons for completion being postponed from the late 1990s to the second decade of the 2000s. As late as 2017 high salinity levels still afflicted some 35 per cent of cultivated lands.⁴⁰ Similarly, productivity seems to have suffered from the small size of many plots; *infitah* led to the re-emergence of larger estates, but mostly in areas of land reclamation.⁴¹

Ultimately per capita production of foodstuffs continued to fall as the agricultural sector funded investment elsewhere (see above). In the early 1970s Egypt permanently and to this day became a net importer of food, increasingly transforming the old and much cherished objective of self-sufficiency into an unattainable dream.⁴² From around 1974 onwards local produce was more and more replaced by imports, in particular wheat from the US which also encouraged the consumption of meat that in turn entailed other crop changes. Though settled at preferential prices, wheat imports exacerbated the current account deficit.⁴³ In the words of one specialist, the 1970s and 1980s remained a period of agricultural neglect.⁴⁴

At the beginning of Sadat's tenure manufacturing industries also merely stumbled along; even the production of crude fell from 350,000 b/d in 1970 to 150,000 b/d in 1975. Once launched, *infitah* led to an increase in investments in areas like real estate and banking, but not in manufacturing. Oil production also gradually picked up and by 1980 reached 600,000 b/d; income from oil rose from 1.5 per cent of GDP in 1970 to more than 12 per cent of GDP in 1977 and 28 per cent in 1981.⁴⁵

More generally, rents played an ever-increasing role in the Egyptian economy. Certainly, grants and loans from Arab countries remained modest and covered only a small part of the cost of the 1973 war and subsequent reconstruction (see below). However, in 1975 the reopening of the Suez Canal, closed since the 1967 war, gave a boost to government revenues. Henceforth royalties would again amount to some 5–10 per cent of annual GDP and an even larger proportion of government revenues.⁴⁶ The Israeli withdrawal from Sinai also led to a further increase in domestic oil production and in revenues that were simultaneously boosted by the steep rise in the oil price in 1973. As negotiations with Israel made progress, Egypt from 1978 received important US economic and military aid (see below). With *infitah*, the economy at large benefited from Arab investments that ultimately recycled revenues directly or indirectly derived from the sale of hydrocarbons. Simultaneously, the oil boom allowed Egypt to send growing numbers of workers abroad who could not be employed at home. Their remittances from 1977 to 1989 amounted to more than 6 per cent and sometimes up to 12 per cent of annual GDP, then declined to some 4–6 per cent till 2010.⁴⁷ Expanding income from tourism after the 1979 peace treaty with Israel may also be considered rent as these services were sold at far higher prices than they were produced.⁴⁸ To the extent that the late 1970s marked the transition from import substitution to export-led growth,⁴⁹ they did so with the help of rents, not agricultural production of manufacturing.

Infitah notwithstanding, the balance between the public and the private sector was not radically tipped in favour of the latter. In 1973 government and the public sector accounted for 40 per cent of GDP, as compared to 13 per cent in 1952; by 1981 their share had climbed to 50 per cent. Public investment in 1970 amounted to no more than 12 per cent of GDP, but it increased to 27 per cent of GDP in 1978.⁵⁰ According to one estimate, public sector investment in the years 1971–1990 on average amounted to 18.4 per cent of GDP, compared to 9.6 per cent for private sector investment.⁵¹ Conversely, domestic credit to the private sector rose from about 12 per cent of total credit in 1970 to 19 per cent six years later.⁵² The share of the private sector in gross industrial production rose from some 25 to 30 per cent between 1972 and 1978.⁵³ Similarly, general government final consumption which had risen from 15.5 per cent to GDP in 1960 to 22.3 per cent in 1970 decreased to some 17 per cent in 1981. This being said, these figures may be flawed as law 43/1974 considered all public private ventures as part of the private sector. Confirming hopes, foreign direct investment increased from 0.7 per cent of GDP in 1977 to almost 7 per cent in 1979

but in the 1980s fell to 3–4 per cent.⁵⁴ After many years thus, the share of foreign capital in the economy rose again.

As a combined result of the October war and *infatih*, the annual balance-of-payments deficit increased rapidly to more than 15 per cent of GDP where it remained throughout the Sadat presidency, with peaks up to 20 per cent.⁵⁵ Partly because of food imports the visible trade deficit rose from less than 5 per cent of GNP in the 1960s to 10–30 per cent in the 1970s. The quandary is eloquently summed up by one of the specialists of the period: ‘After the October War Egypt borrowed about US \$ 1.5 billion in short term credits sometimes bearing interest rates of 15–17 per cent. These credits were generally rolled over every 90 to 180 days. They contributed to aggregate debt servicing that reached 40 per cent of all visible and invisible exports in 1975. In 1976 Egypt fell behind in its repayment of short-term debt.’⁵⁶

In late 1976, less than three years into *infatih*, the increase in the balance-of-payments deficit prompted the government to seek a stand-by loan from the IMF which was granted conditional on the introduction of austerity measures. As usual these included the devaluation of the currency and cuts in imports and government expenditure, including in subsidies such as those for bread. On the morrow of their announcement in January 1977 mass demonstration developed into street riots lasting several days; often referred to as ‘bread riots’ they cost more than 70 lives in Cairo alone. Apparently surprised and shaken, the government rescinded rises in commodity prices but not rises in salaries and wages, and suspended the talks with the IMF; in June 1978 it finally negotiated a loan of \$720 million under the Fund’s extended facility programme. ‘The message seemed to be that the best way to deal with tough conditions was to avoid them until the IMF softened them’.⁵⁷ In other words, Egypt managed to convince the Fund that it was too big to fail.

Partly the balance-of-payments deficit reflected the budget deficit that rose constantly from E£5 million in 1970, the bottom point of the gradual drop from the mid-1960s onwards, to E£560 million in 1974, some E£1.5 billion in 1977 and more than E£3 billion in 1979. Public revenues did not rise much above 30 per cent to GDP, but public expenditure in some years rose to more than stood 50 per cent to GDP. Increasing to 12–18 per cent of GDP in the 1970s, defence expenditure no doubt weighed heavily on the budget; however, expenditure primarily exploded because of growing subsidies for food and energy. Hitherto amounting to less than 10, often less than 3 per cent of total current expenditure, they represented more than 30 per cent of it after 1974, rising to almost 60 per cent in 1980.⁵⁸

As a result, total public debt increased from 51.3 per cent to GDP in 1970 to 102.7 per cent of GDP in 1978 and 134.3 per cent of GDP in 1982.⁵⁹ External public debt quintupled (including the effects of the depreciation of the Egyptian pound), rising from 42 per cent to GNP in 1970 to 107 per cent in 1978. The debt service ratio that in the 1960s did not exceed 25 per cent reached 65.5 per cent in 1978. These figures exclude some \$4–5 billion that Egypt in the mid-70s owed to the USSR and other communist countries.⁶⁰ In the process, total currency reserves fell from \$74 billion in 1970 to \$43 billion in 1977 but recovered to \$71 billion in 1981; throughout the second half of the 1970s they covered just about 1.7 months of imports.⁶¹

In spite of the changes brought by *infatih* the officially calculated Gini coefficient for 1974/5 stood at 0.35 for rural and 0.37 for urban areas, not much different from earlier periods.⁶² Legislation passed in 1978 moderately rationalized taxation and enhanced government revenue. Direct taxes on income, profits, and capital gains began to account for 15–20 per cent of annual total government revenue. Still, regressive indirect taxes continued to account for the rest, and income tax itself failed to rise much beyond the accustomed 5 per cent.⁶³ The ratio between income from labour and capital pointed towards growing income inequality.⁶⁴ Pauperization was partly addressed through rising food and energy subsidies which, however, benefited all Egyptians. Expenditure for social services including health, education, and

insurance grew nominally but in real terms remained at the level of the mid-1960s. Enrolment in educational institutions nonetheless continued to rise; at university level, it almost trebled between 1969–70 and 1976–77. Expenditure for pensions that in 1970 amounted to some E£43 million also rose substantially, to reach some E£320 million in 1980.⁶⁵

External Relations

The Main Issues

Faced with the stalemate after the 1967 defeat, Sadat thought that only another war would allow Egypt to produce the momentum for serious negotiations towards a mutually acceptable accommodation with Israel. Far from an end in itself, the settlement would allow Egypt not only to retake Sinai but also to attract aid and investments that in turn would contribute to its economic development and possibly advance remaining regional ambitions.

No doubt Sadat's calculations were heavily influenced by Moscow's continued emphasis on a political rather than a purely military solution. The limited support he got from Moscow would hopefully allow to achieve such limited war aims but probably not a decisive victory. Critical and distrustful of the USSR, Sadat also came to the conclusion that a political solution depended on the good offices and will of the United States that alone were in a position to persuade, coax, or pressurize Israel in the right direction. Within a few years he radically, though not without initial caution, realigned Egypt's foreign policy from the USSR to the US. The shift would also give access to the far more plentiful resources controlled by the US, the other major capitalist countries and the wealthy Arab oil producers.

Close relations with the US therefore became the most immediate foreign policy objective that would help to attain the two other main goals, the settlement with Israel, and support for reconstruction and economic development. For Egypt external resources had become a question of survival rather than autonomy and independence. No doubt Sadat also sought to preserve as much as possible of Egypt's regional influence, but accepted to contain it within the limits acceptable to the US. At the regional level, he sought to create a dynamic that would encourage other Arab actors to come to terms with Israel. Sadat's choices put an end to any attempt to exploit the bipolar nature of the Cold War, a strategy that obviously was difficult as with the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty détente between the US and the USSR had begun to take shape. Focusing on one major actor and a clearly established hierarchy of objectives, the foreign policy of Egypt became less complex than it was in the 1950s and early 60s.

As already under Nasser, the individuals directly involved in foreign policy decisions were few; highly centralized and largely informal, the process primarily involved the president and his close, handpicked collaborators, even though, again, it unfolded within a political system that necessarily contributed to shape it.⁶⁶

Realignment

Central as they continued to be after Sadat's inauguration, relations with the USSR remained bedevilled by the same disagreements that had marked them under Nasser and in particular after the 1967 defeat.⁶⁷ Sadat initially sought Soviet support to reconquer the Sinai with military force as the prelude to negotiations with Israel. In contrast, Moscow held that more limited military action would suffice to break the stalemate, also because it would allow the superpowers to step in and push for a political solution. Far from altruistic, the plan would establish Moscow as one of the guarantors of the agreement and thereby increase its regional influence. Though keen on showing support for the Arabs and the broader 'third world', the USSR also intended to encourage the beginnings of détente and to redefine relations with the

US. Nor was Moscow, which sent Prime Minister Kosygin to attend Nasser's funeral, reassured by the purge of close collaborators of the latter. In order to salvage what it could, it tried to formalize relations through a treaty of friendship and cooperation, a move that it had resisted so far. Signed on 27 May 1971, the treaty failed to produce any tangible effects. Increasingly exasperated by the Soviets, Sadat in July 1972 decided to expel the roughly 20,000 Soviet military personnel and advisors. The USSR obliged even before the deadline, and moreover recalled its ambassador. A modicum of military cooperation was re-established later in the year, but the basic disagreement over how to settle the conflict with Israel remained.

Although preparations for the 1973 could not be kept secret, the precise timing of military action remained unknown even to the USSR.⁶⁸ After attacking on 6 October, Egyptian and Syrian troops initially gained ground; the latter moved into Israeli occupied territory on the Golan Heights, while the former crossed the Suez Canal along which Israel had erected heavy fortifications known as the Bar-Lev line. A few days later, though, the Israeli army counter-attacked on both fronts, routing the Syrians and, on 15 October, crossing the Canal westwards, practically occupying Suez and in a position to march on Cairo. As a result, Egypt's third army of some 20,000 troops was encircled on the Eastern shores of the Canal. Unlike in 1956 and 1967 the USSR shipped and airlifted military equipment to Egypt, first on a limited scale, but in far larger quantities once Israeli troops had regained the initiative on the Sinai. However, the USSR also pressed Sadat to accept a ceasefire; only in last days of the war it issued warnings to Israel and took steps that raised concerns of direct superpower confrontation. Finally, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 338 jointly prepared by the USSR and the US calling for a ceasefire as of 22 October (it entered into force two days later) and the implementation of Resolution 242 of 1967. In December the USSR and the US jointly convened the Geneva conference which, however, Syria decided not to attend.

Even though the USSR co-sponsored the ceasefire, only the US was in a position to prevent the Israelis from pushing their advantage too far. Seizing the opportunity, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, reassured by Sadat's earlier messages, embarked on his 'shuttle diplomacy' and managed to negotiate the two disengagement agreements Sinai I signed in January 1974 and Sinai II (also called the Sinai Interim Agreement) signed in September 1975. Under these agreements, Israeli and Egyptian troops first withdrew from the Canal, and Israeli troops later deeper into Sinai. These achievements further convinced Sadat to put all Egyptian eggs into the US basket.

Egypt and the US re-established diplomatic relations in April 1974, paving the way for an official visit by President Richard Nixon to Cairo in June. In 1978 Egypt for the first time received US military aid (to be used for the purchase of US equipment or services) that in the US fiscal year 1979 amounted to \$1.5 billion and from 1983 settled around \$1.3 billion annually (see also below).⁶⁹ Soon Egypt and the US began to hold joint military exercises. US economic aid, discontinued in 1967, increased from around \$1 million in 1972 and 1973 to \$370–550 million in 1975 and 1976, more than \$900 million in 1977 and 1978, and about \$1.1 billion in the early 1980s.⁷⁰ In the aftermath of the 1978 Camp David accords (see below) the US became Egypt's most important source of aid, (for a time) its major trading partner, practically sole supplier of weapons, and the provider of about one fourth of its grain; according to the same source 'at the peak of its influence the Soviet Union had never had so many points of leverage'.⁷¹

In parallel, relations with the USSR deteriorated to the point that Egypt in 1976 denounced the 1971 treaty of friendship and cooperation; the bilateral estrangement led not only to the economic consequences discussed above but also a unilaterally declared ten-year moratorium on military debt owed to the USSR. As negotiations between Egypt and Israel stalled, the USSR in 1977 together with the US issued a statement to reconvene the Geneva conference, but Egypt and Israel rejected the idea to keep the USSR at arm's length. Contacts between Egypt and Israel mediated by Morocco and Romania also failed to yield results. After the US accepted Israeli proposals that hollowed out earlier commitments and Syria

continued to drag its feet, Sadat decided to travel to Jerusalem in November and talk directly to its leaders. Egypt's rapprochement with Israel finally prompted the USSR to focus its support on Syria and the PLO; in 1978 it even refused to reschedule Egypt's military debt. The mutual alienation came to a head in 1980 when Egypt broke off diplomatic relations with the USSR.⁷²

In September 1978, Sadat and the Israeli Prime minister Menahem Begin signed the Camp David accords (named after the official retreat of the US president near Washington where they were negotiated before being signed at the White House), witnessed by the new American President Jimmy Carter who had taken office in January 1977. The accords established two 'frameworks', the one for peace in the Middle East in general and the other for a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in particular. Apart from introducing and contextualizing the latter, the former also called for a degree of Palestinian autonomy and the creation of a self-governing authority but left out the question of Jerusalem. Subsequent negotiations between Palestinians, Israel, Egypt, and Jordan would determine the limits of 'full autonomy', a term proposed by the Israeli side to preclude the creation of a fully-fledged Palestinian state. Condemned by many Arabs as an Egyptian betrayal of their cause, the accords particularly aggrieved Palestinians as, without their consent, they put the future of their country in the hands of non-Palestinians. Though negotiating from a position of weakness, Sadat possibly intended, ultimately in vain, to use the provisions on Palestine to strengthen his and Egypt's position in inter-Arab politics. The Camp David accords soon led to the 1979 peace treaty, the first between an Arab state and Israel.

The Political Settlement with Israel

The 1979 treaty ended the state of war in return for the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai that was completed in April 1982, except for a small area around Taba on the Red Sea; Taba reverted to Egypt only in 1989, following an arbitration procedure that entailed special arrangements for Israeli tourists.⁷³ Under the treaty the two parties established fully fledged diplomatic relations and endorsed the former border between Egypt and Mandatory Palestine as their common border. Egypt accepted restrictions to its military presence in Sinai and the deployment of a UN force which, however, morphed into the US-led Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) to avoid a Soviet veto. The treaty moreover recognized the right of free passage for Israeli vessels through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran. It also provided for the sale of Egyptian crude oil to Israel and an end to the Egyptian boycott of Israel. Some fifty additional agreements fleshed out the document and aimed at normalizing bilateral relations.

Soon Israeli tourists began to flock to Egypt and to meet Egyptians in hotels, trains, and cafes, a development that led to numerous human encounters most of them never anticipated. Conversely, though, only few Egyptians crossed the border as cumbersome vetting procedures at home discouraged them and Israel was far too expensive for most of them. In 1978, for instance, the Israeli GNP per capita amounted to some \$3,500, while the Egyptian GNP per capita amounted to no more than \$390. Tourism seems to have peaked in the late 1990s, with some 450,000 Israelis visiting Egypt, but rapidly declined after the beginning of the second Palestinian intifada in 2000.⁷⁴ Apart from the sale of Egyptian oil trade relations remained modest; according to one source imports from Israel in 2000 represented some 0.3 per cent of total Egyptian imports. Initially the two sides also launched several joint agricultural projects,⁷⁵ and Israel established a small research centre for the humanities and social sciences in Cairo.

However, the planned normalization of bilateral relations soon ran into trouble, to the extent that for many Egyptians the term 'normalization' came to stand for betrayal. Formally correct relations at state level failed to translate into the growth and improvement of exchanges at other levels, be they personal, economic or cultural. One reason was that other Arab capitals and their largely government-controlled media condemned the rapprochement, in particular after the Sinai II and even more so the Camp David accords. However, the reticence of Egyptians also reflected decades of sustained government efforts to

form a public opinion hostile to Israel. Nor were matters helped by Israeli policies in the aftermath of the peace treaty; as early as July 1980 Israel formally annexed East Jerusalem and proclaimed Jerusalem its eternal capital. In June 1981 the Israeli air force destroyed the nuclear reactor *Osiriak* (or *Tammuz*) that Iraq was building with French support. Many Egyptians felt that by binding their own hands the peace treaty encouraged Israeli expansionism towards other Arab countries.

Summed up as ‘cold peace’, the situation was marked by unofficial but officially tolerated, at times encouraged, boycott of joint activities and organizations, including the agricultural projects and the Israeli research centre. Matters were epitomized by direct passenger aircraft flights from Cairo to Tel Aviv that on the Egyptian side were operated by Air Sinai (on the Israeli side by EL AL), a subsidiary of Egyptair established for the sole reason to prevent the mother company from falling under the AL boycott of Israel. Air Sinai planes were entirely painted in white and carried no logo, label, or name. Their appearance dovetailed with the discretion by which its flights used to be announced at Cairo airport. Unlike for other flights, no verbal announcement was made; on the departure screen and on tickets they appear to this day under the mysterious ‘4D’.

A subtle, amusing, and instructive illustration of the situation is the 2007 documentary ‘*Salata Baladi*’ (‘An Egyptian Salad’) by Nadia Kamel which shows the tribulations of an Egyptian family who discover they have Jewish relatives in Israel whom they finally decide to visit. Closer to the majority view, the unsubtle 1992 movie ‘*Al-Hubb fi Taba*’ (‘Love in Taba’) directed by Ahmad Fu’ad tried to drive home that dealings with Israelis were fraught with considerable dangers. On their return from a vacation in Taba, a group of Egyptians lads find out they are infected by HIV.

The Search for Foreign Aid and Investment

From the outset Sadat sought to mobilize external resources to rebuild, strengthen, and economically develop Egypt; to the extent possible he tried to reconcile such efforts with remaining regional ambitions which, however, amounted to squaring a collapsing circle. An early attempt to attract foreign and in particular Arab capital, law 65 of 1971, failed to meet expectations not least because Sadat had also declared 1971 ‘the year decisions’ concerning Israel, a declaration that hardly reassured investors.⁷⁶ Also in 1971 Egypt joined the Libyan-promoted Federation of Arab Republics (FAR) that had grown out of Muammar al-Qaddafi’s (Mu’ ammar al-Qadhafi’s) 1969 initiative to form an Arab Revolutionary Front (ARF). As a third partner, the arrangement first included Syria, later Sudan. Affording Qaddafi a much-desired place on the frontline with Israel, the FAR would have given its poorer members no less valuable access to Libyan oil revenues. However, the scheme fell apart as early as 1973 when Qaddafi sent some 30,000 Libyans to march on Egypt to consolidate the agreement, an initiative incompatible with Sadat’s – and Egypt’s – will to call the shots; as a consequence, the October War was fought without Libyan troops. Henceforth an empty shell, the FAR was formally disbanded in 1977 after hostilities on the Egypto-Libyan border briefly crystallized deeply diverging views about policies towards Israel.

Once the 1973 war was fought and the rapprochement with the US under way, the moment had come to take further earlier, timid policies of economic liberalization. Published some six weeks after the Sinai I agreement, the measures sketched out in the October Paper (that was part of the March 1974 Charter) were expected to attract private investment from abroad. Such investment was all the more important as budget transfers of some \$500 million from Arab governments in the immediate aftermath of the war only just about covered war related damages.⁷⁷ Simultaneously, economic liberalization would also – and did – improve Egypt’s image in the US where private enterprise and markets were particularly cherished.

The situation was particularly promising as the oil price had steeply risen with the 1973 war and Arab oil producers and their business associates needed to re-invested their profits. In October 1973 the

Organization of Arab Oil Producing Countries had decreed an embargo against a number of countries, including the US, Canada, Japan, the UK, the Netherlands, Portugal, Rhodesia, and South Africa. Officially meant to discourage support for Israel, the embargo in the broader global economic context of the time (in particular a global rise in oil consumption and the devaluation of the US dollar) even after its end in March 1974 helped to lastingly increase the price of oil from roughly \$3 to \$12 per barrel. For a few years and within limits Egyptian hopes to benefit from the recycling of these profits through remittances as well as aid and investment were borne out. The first tangible result was the 1973 agreement under which Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar formed a consortium with the state-owned Egyptian petroleum company to finance the Sumed pipeline; inaugurated in 1977, the pipeline allowed to pump oil from Suez to the Mediterranean and thus to replace the Suez Canal that, however, by that time had reopened.⁷⁸ Between the end of the October War and September 1977 Arab states allegedly paid out some \$4.4 billion in loans to Egypt and pledged another 3.9 billion. However, their response to the balance-of-payments crisis in 1975–6 was limited to \$2 billion, just about one fifth of what Sadat claimed was necessary for Egypt to recover after the 1973 war.⁷⁹

However, Arab aid and investment soon suffered from the very quest for peace that was supposed to attract it. Although peace in general guaranteed returns on investment, its particular features departed from the position defended by most Arabs, including wealthy governments and private investors. Syria never signed a second disengagement agreement and like Libya, Algeria, Iraq, the PLO, and South Yemen already parted ways with Egypt in 1977. In response to the Camp David accords and the peace treaty the Arab League imposed a variety of sanctions on Egypt. After the treaty the AL also ‘suspended’ Egypt’s membership and moved its headquarters to Tunis. Except for Oman and Sudan, all Arab states cut their diplomatic relations with Egypt with repercussions ranging from propaganda wars to a – however selective – economic boycott. Established as late as 1975 with funds from the UAE and Qatar, the Arab Military Armaments Organization (AMIO), a major arms manufacturer, turned into a purely Egyptian endeavour that had to find resources elsewhere. In the process Egypt most crucially lost the budget support it had received from the wealthier Arab states; part of its trade with Arab countries was also affected, but not the export of migrant workers.⁸⁰ The losses could only be compensated for by the US, the other major capitalist states, and their private investors.

Broader Fallout

The broader fallout from Egypt’s realignment were closer relations with precisely these actors and allies, ranging from Western Europe to Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo).⁸¹ No doubt to negotiate additional material and diplomatic support from the US, Sadat in 1977 militarily propped up the Mobuto government which was challenged by armed opposition groups. Building on the timid rapprochement of the late 1960s, Sadat as early as 1971 went to Iran, then a close ally of the US; interestingly he visited Teheran on a stopover to Moscow which was still his major source of external support. Iran soon supplied Egypt with oil and then helped to dredge the Suez Canal after the 1973 war. Diplomatic relations were broken off in April 1979, in the wake of the Iranian revolution that overthrew Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. In March 1980 Sadat invited him to settle in Egypt where he died a few months later to be buried in the Rifa’i mosque in Cairo, alongside various members of the former Egyptian royal family. The mosque had already served as the temporary burial place for his father, Reza Shah, the first Pahlavi emperor of Iran who died in exile in South Africa in 1944 and whose body was transferred to Iran only in 1951. In the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war Egypt from the beginning supported Iraq, no doubt to end its own suspension from the AL and to obtain renewed Arab financial aid, but also to replace imperial Iran as a key US ally. Egypt’s turn to the US and its allies, however, failed to lead to much improvement in its relations with Turkey.

¹ On the new policy orientations see below and Hinnebusch, 1985; Waterbury, 1983; Cooper, 1982; Ayubi, 1995; Baker, 1978; Solé, 2013.

² On these issues see Lippman, 2016.

³ For details, see Sayigh, 2012.

⁴ See e.g. Waterbury, 1983, 257.

⁵ See for instance Waterbury, 1983, 256f.

⁶ On the social background of Sadat, his circle, and his supporters, see Hinnebusch, 1985; John Waterbury, 1983; Moore, 1986; Cooper, 1982.

⁷ Waterbury, 1983, 238ff.

⁸ On such linkages, see King and Le Galès, 2011.

⁹ See Heydemann, 2007.

¹⁰ Bernard-Maugiron, 2003, 25ff.

¹¹ Bernard-Maugiron, 2003, 50ff; Boyle and Sherif, 1996; Brown, 2002, 78ff.

¹² Brown, 2002, 84.

¹³ Brown, 2002, 84.

¹⁴ Brown, 2002, 84.

¹⁵ Brown, 2002, 80ff.

¹⁶ In the very sense of Hermet, Rose, and Rouquié, 1978.

¹⁷ See for instance, Waterbury, 1983, 130–138.

¹⁸ For such broader developments, see Ajami, 1981.

¹⁹ See Kepel, 1986. Among the many publications dedicated to Islamist groups and activities in this period, see also Ibrahim, 1996.

²⁰ Waterbury, 1983, 128, quoting Sadat.

²¹ For causes and rationale, see also Waterbury, 1983, 430.

²² For details, see Waterbury, 1983, 125–130.

²³ For details, see Waterbury, 1983, 356f.

²⁴ For details, see Waterbury, 1983, 131ff, 118ff, 138f; 170; Fahmy, 1989.

²⁵ Waterbury, 1983, 145–148, 150ff, 188, 203.

²⁶ See Fargues, 2011, 44; Waterbury, 1983, 41f; WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

²⁷ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019; Waterbury, 1983, 44, with 43 per cent of men and 71 per cent of women being illiterate.

²⁸ Waterbury, 1983, 44.

²⁹ Ikram, 2018, 89.

³⁰ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

³¹ Diwan and Akin, 2015, 34.

³² WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

³³ Waterbury, 1983, 37f, 113; WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

³⁴ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019; Waterbury, 1983, 115 .

³⁵ Mabro and Radwan, 1976, 47; remaining areas of activities account for the balance.

³⁶ Waterbury, 1983, 43, 195.

³⁷ Buettner and Klostermeier, 1991, 84–99.

³⁸ Referring to slightly different periods, Buettner and Klostermeier, 1991, 84–99 mention an increase up to one fourth of cultivated land while data the WB data base retrieved 23/5/2019 indicate a decline in cultivated areas from 2.85 to 2.5 per cent of the country's total surface.

³⁹ Waterbury, 1983, 42.

⁴⁰ El-Ramaly et al., 2019, 7; Ireton, 2011.

⁴¹ Waterbury, 1983, 300.

⁴² Buettner and Klostermeier, 1991, 95.

⁴³ Mitchell, 1995, 135 ; Bush, 1999, 27; for wheat imports, see also Waterbury, 1983, 37.

⁴⁴ Bush, 1999, 26. See also Sadowsky, 1991 who concludes that since 1973 attempts at agricultural reform have been defeated by the various beneficiaries of subsidies.

⁴⁵ World Bank, World Development Indicators, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁴⁶ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁴⁷ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁴⁸ According to Owen and Pamuk 1998, 254 and Wahba, 1994, table 7.5 revenues from oil, royalties, tourism, and remittances between 1974 and 1981 rose from about 25 to 65 per cent of current account receipts.

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- ⁴⁹ Waterbury, 1983, 11.
- ⁵⁰ Ikram, 2018, 92–95.
- ⁵¹ Diwan and Akin, 2015, 37.
- ⁵² WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.
- ⁵³ Waterbury, 1983, 163.
- ⁵⁴ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.
- ⁵⁵ Ikram, 2018, 114.
- ⁵⁶ Waterbury, 1983, 409.
- ⁵⁷ Waterbury, 1983, 411.
- ⁵⁸ Waterbury, 1983, 114, 214; WB, WDI referring to SIPRI data for defence spending; Ikram, 2018, 93.
- ⁵⁹ IMF, Data Mapper, retrieved 30/05/2019, again referring to gross general government debt.
- ⁶⁰ Waterbury, 1983, 30f, 396ff.
- ⁶¹ WB, WDI, retrieved 28/5/2019.
- ⁶² Waterbury, 1983, 211; for an illustration of the life of the majority of Egyptians in an urban context, see Wikan, 1980.
- ⁶³ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019; Waterbury, 1983, 224.
- ⁶⁴ On inequality, see also Abdel-Khalek and Tignor, 1982.
- ⁶⁵ Waterbury, 1983, 218f, 222.
- ⁶⁶ Hinnebusch and Shama, 2014, 82f.
- ⁶⁷ For more detailed accounts, see for instance Golan, 1990; Waterbury, 1983; Tschirgi, 1989.
- ⁶⁸ On the 1973 war, see Shlaim 2000; Tschirgi, 1989; Quandt, 2005, Golan, 1990.
- ⁶⁹ Sharp, 2018, 23f.
- ⁷⁰ Sharp, 2018, 23f.
- ⁷¹ Waterbury, 1983, 404.
- ⁷² Golan, 1990, 106f; Shlaim, 2000, 352–371.
- ⁷³ For more detailed accounts see Hinnebusch and Shama, 2014; Quandt, 2005; Tschirgi, 1989; Shlaim, 2000.
- ⁷⁴ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003.

⁷⁵ See for instance Hassanein, 2018, 3.

⁷⁶ Waterbury, 1983, 127ff.

⁷⁷ Waterbury, 1983, 127ff; Waterbury also provides a detailed account of these policies and their effects.

⁷⁸ Waterbury 1983, 130.

⁷⁹ Waterbury, 1983, 417f.

⁸⁰ For details, see Dessouki, 2008, 174–79; Lavy, 1984.

⁸¹ For details see Hinnebusch and Shama, 2014, 90ff.

The Republic under Mubarak

In the first decade of his presidency starting in 1981, Mubarak, another military officer, sought to manage and reduce domestic conflicts created by the economic and foreign policy choices of his predecessor. Including the 1984 parliamentary elections that were less rigged than previous ones, his attempts benefited from continued transfers of rents from major oil producing countries and other external, in particular US, support. However, the steep fall in the oil price in 1986 soon reduced such transfers, led to yet another balance-of-payments and debt crisis; these were followed by new economic reforms, first by stealth, then under the 1991 twin programmes of macroeconomic stabilization and structural adjustment with the IMF and the World Bank. More intrusive than earlier agreements under Nasser and Sadat, the agreements involved the growth of the private relative to the public sector way beyond its expansion under *infatih*, including the privatization of public sector companies; it also involved numerous other measures of economic liberalization as advocated under the then version of the Washington consensus and consistent with the principles of globalization. Though emptied of part of their substance by government procrastination, the reforms, as well as new transfers of rent and cuts in public debt, re-established fragile macroeconomic balances but failed to contribute to sustainable and inclusive development. Together with renewed domestic conflict between various Islamist groups and the government, including much political violence on both sides, economic reforms entailed new and partly additional restrictions on liberties and thus further de-liberalized the authoritarian regime established under Nasser. A new round of private sector-friendly reforms in the early 2000s fuelled by short-lived domestic gas rents further strengthened the crony capitalist tendencies of earlier such reforms. The combined effects of economic reforms; rejuvenation of authoritarian rule without enhancing participation; and a degree of external pressures for political change prompted increasing popular contestation in the 2000s that in the context of a global economic downturn culminated in the large scale protests in 2011 and the decision of the armed forces to withdraw their support from Mubarak. The Mubarak government had the capacity to implement ambitious policies and manage external pressures. It fell without bringing down the political regime; it would not have fallen without popular contestation, which is another illustration of Egypt's strength as a community of solidarity.

Political Change

In what looked like the repetition of events eleven years earlier, the deceased incumbent's little known deputy was 'elected' without much delay in a popular referendum as provided by the constitution. And again the new president in some crucial respects reassessed past policies in order to define appropriate alternatives. Unlike Sadat, though, Husni Mubarak initially did not seek to push the country in an entirely new direction; rather he tried to find some common ground between those defending and those opposing *infatih* and its foreign policy implications. However, ten years later the mixed results of these attempts and declining transfers of rents, themselves prompted by a fall in the price of oil, forced him to embark on a new set of economic policies to arrest decline and avoid bankruptcy. Negotiated with the IMF and the World Bank in 1991, these policies focused on macroeconomic stabilization and structural adjustment; to an extent they involved 'institution reforms' to implement these policies. In some respect they partially met expectations, in others not at all. Together with the exacerbating and increasingly violent conflict between the government and its Islamist opponents these policies led to new restrictions on liberties through repressive policies buttressed by legislation and associated institutional changes. For almost a decade the restrictions partly strengthened, partly updated authoritarian rule to adapt to new conditions, opportunities, and constraints, many of them related to the new economic policies. As the government prevailed over its domestic challengers and economic reforms showed some – limited – success a domestic détente of sorts opened up new spaces of debate and political action, strengthened by external pressures. In spite of Mubarak's efforts to contain these dynamics, they ultimately eroded his rule; they

brought about his downfall when the armed forces lost confidence in his ability to manage the 2011 protests and dropped him in order to save the political regime they had built and consolidated since 1952.¹

The Major Actors and their Social Background

Sociologically Mubarak and his close collaborators hailed from the same background and strata that had carried the republic from its beginnings. Like Nasser and Sadat, Mubarak and his inner circle were military officers or apparatchiks of the former single party now called the National Democratic Party (NDP). The armed forces remained the ultimate pillar on which rested the political regime. In the 1980s, under defence minister Abd al-Halim Abu Ghazala, they seemed to escape government control, recalling the situation in the 1960s. They also became more prominent in the economy, with benefits spreading to most officers; probably as a result of economic difficulties and reforms in the early 1990s, some such benefits were slashed, even though the armed forces remained a strong economic actor. In order to balance their influence Mubarak began to strengthen the police in terms of equipment and numbers. By 2010 police and other security services may have grown to 1.4 million people, about 1.5 times the strength of the armed forces and their reserves; the budget of the ministry of the interior caught up with the defence budget. This being said, military officers occupied many key positions in the ministry of the interior, the domestic secret services; many provincial governors and heads of civilian state agencies were also military officers. Generous benefits and entitlement schemes were extended to mould the police into a second, heavily pampered pillar of the political regime.² Still, in reputational terms the police never equalled the armed forces; for most Egyptians, the latter remained glorious defenders against foreign enemies, while the former ultimately were corrupt agents of repression – a perception that again marked the 2011 protests and their ramifications.

Civilian beneficiaries of infitah co-opted under Sadat also continued to be part of the ruling circles. Their numbers and weight further increased with the large-scale economic reforms that started in earnest in 1991 and entailed far bigger changes than those of the 1970s. They became yet more prominent after Mubarak in 2000 appointed his business man son Gamal to positions in the NDP. First a simple member of the party leadership, he advanced in 2002 to the influential post of Secretary of the Policy Committee. From there he stuffed the party and the government with a cohort of business people and promoters of crony capitalism disguised as economic reform. Owning the one a large steel company and the other an equally large construction company, Ahmad 'Izz and Ahmad al-Maghabbi, were only two examples among others. At some point it seemed that party positions and ministries including health, transport, housing, and so on went to business people active in the sectors concerned.³

Intended to reform and strengthen the party, the appointments opened up rifts with the 'old guard' represented by people like Safwat Sharif, the Secretary General, Zakariyya Azmi, the head of Husni Mubarak's office and Yusuf Wali, the minister of agriculture, who were not necessarily more altruistic. Though not without difficulties, the officers managed to keep the fort, including in the economic sphere where civilians frequently competed with military industries and cronies. These tensions came to a head in 2011 when the majority of officers withdrew their support from Mubarak who in their eyes not only mismanaged the protests but for long had conceded too much influence to his son and his supporters.

Over many years the civilian owners of capital seemed to join forces with the technocrats in charge of implementing the economic reforms including Yusuf Butrus-Ghali, Mahmud Muhi al-Din, and Ziad Baha al-Din. While creating the conditions under which the former could prosper, the latter nonetheless reasoned in terms of the general rather than the individual good; towards the end of Mubarak's rule, their relations became more strained, as did, for different reasons, those between the government and its party on the one hand and many among their traditional supporters on the other whose welfare in terms of salaries, benefits, and services depended on the state.⁴

Institutions

Formally the workings of the political regime continued to be governed by the 1980 constitution; at the same time, amendments to the text, its interpretation by the SCC, and legislation had diverging effects on the institutions and on liberties.

In order to illustrate his capacity to reconcile a politically divided country, Mubarak in May 1984 called parliamentary elections which, by general consent, were less rigged than all previous elections. This being said, the 1984 elections were an attempt to moderately improve political representation, not participation. Under a new electoral law the former 176 two-member constituencies were replaced with 48 multi-member constituencies with a total of 448 seats; as usual, the president appointed another ten members of parliament. Party lists replaced individual candidacies.

However, following rulings by the SCC, the electoral law had to be amended twice in the 1980s. First the Court struck down the allocation of all seats to party lists; then it declared unconstitutional new provisions that in the 1987 elections offered a small number of seats to independent candidates. As a result, all seats hitherto reserved for party lists were again allocated to two-member constituencies, one of them still required to be a worker or a peasant; party candidates had to compete for these seats alongside independent candidates. Both rulings did not invalidate the decisions made by the unconstitutionally elected assembly. As a result, the nomination by the assembly of Mubarak as the sole candidate in the 1987 presidential elections and his new term in office remained unaffected.

Largely due to US pressures for political reform (see section on external relations), the presidential elections in September 2005 were held under complex and curious constitutional amendments approved by referendum in May; in practice they allowed more than one candidate to stand in 2005 but simultaneously set conditions that in future elections would disqualify any competitor to the official candidate.

As soon as US pressures subsided a new amendments passed in March 2007 put an end to the supervisions of presidential and parliamentary elections by the judiciary, a rule that even as long as in place suffered from numerous exceptions and contortions. Henceforth elections were supervised by a newly created body that could be more easily controlled, even though it continued to include judges. A new law passed in the same year ended the male monopoly of judicial appointments, but only about a hundred women were appointed judges, a figure that corresponds to only about 1 per cent of the total number of judges.⁵ In legal terms, the independence of the judiciary remained fragile under Mubarak, even though in practice it often was considerable. The reestablishment in 1984 of the Supreme Judicial Council abolished by Nasser was window dressing as were the elections in the same year. Subsequently Mubarak repeatedly tinkered with the independence of the courts, including the SCC⁶ (see also below).

The last institutional development was Mubarak's decision in February 2011 to appoint a vice president, as the constitution empowered him to do; a last ditch attempt to contain the Arab spring protests, the decision had little effect and was quickly overtaken by events.

Throughout these years many of the subordinate state institutions began or continued to crumble as available resources declined steadily. Turned into sponges to absorb poorly qualified – and poorly paid – graduates to reduce unemployment, government agencies lost capacity to conceive or even implement policies. In the course of the economic reforms some administrations considered vital were beefed up to ensure more efficient tax collection or approval of investment projects. They received up-to-date equipment and some of their higher-ranking civil servants were paid salaries that corresponded to those of private sector executives. However, the emergence of these islands of – relative – efficiency further

deprived other parts of the administration of resources and demotivated their agents. Simultaneously, numerous parallel donor activities by individual foreign governments or multilateral organizations established close ties between them and individual ministries or administrations and by implication contributed to reduce the overall coherence of the state apparatus.⁷

Politics

Under the constitution and the power and influence of the armed forces which it reflected formal political participation remained narrowly circumscribed. The presidential ‘elections’ in 1981, 1987, 1993, and 1999 again consisted of two stages: the nomination of the sole candidate by the lower house, the People’s Assembly, and his (never: her) subsequent endorsement by popular referendum. The process was as circular as it had been under Sadat with various formal and informal mechanisms producing parliamentary majorities in favour of the President.

Following the 2005 constitutional amendments, ten candidates were allowed to stand. According to the official results, Mubarak obtained more than 88 per cent of the vote; his most successful competitor, Ayman Nur of the Tomorrow Party (*Hizb al-ghad*), was credited with a little more than 7 per cent of the vote. Official figures put the turnout at some 23 per cent only. Nur alleged heavy vote rigging and requested a rerun of the elections, no doubt the reasons why he was soon tried in court, sentenced to five years in prison and only released in 2009. Scheduled for 2011, Mubarak’s next re-election fell victim to the Arab spring. Had matters gone to plan, it might have paved the way for the election of his son Gamal six years later, thus transforming a presidency for life into a presidential monarchy.⁸

At the level of parliament, the 1984 elections to the lower house, the People’s Assembly, in spite of some improvements, ended in a resounding victory for the NDP which obtained 88 per cent of the seats, corresponding to 70 per cent of the votes that according to the official count had been cast in the ballot. The Wafd obtained the remaining 12 per cent of seats for some 15 per cent of the votes. The other parties that fielded candidates obtained less than 8 per cent of the vote and therefore no seats in the assembly. The official turnout was put at some 43 per cent.

Subsequent elections to the People’s Assembly in 1987 and 1990 were held after the SCC had struck down the electoral law that advantaged party candidates (see above). Such judicial activism of sorts and government respect for court rulings still reflected the temporary political decompression that had set in with the 1984 elections. In 1987 almost 80 per cent of the seats went to members of the NDP, allegedly corresponding to some 70 per cent of the votes cast. Some 12 per cent of seats went to members of the Islamic Alliance formed by the Socialist Labour Party, the Liberal Socialists, and the Muslim Brothers; officially outlawed, the latter were barred from fielding their own list. Another 7 per cent of the seats were credited to the New Wafd, while the remaining ones went to independents. The official turnout was put at some 50 per cent. The 1990 elections were boycotted by the New Wafd, the Liberal Socialists, and the Socialist Labour Party which opposed the new mode of election. They resulted in another victory of the NDP or, technically speaking, members of the NDP who, including alleged ‘independents’, obtained some 77 per cent of the seats. The official turnout was put at some 44 per cent but in actual fact, as usual, was not more than half of that.

After 1990 the Assembly was again renewed at the usual five year intervals, in 1995, 2000, 2005, and 2010. Held in a period of political de-liberalization (see below), the 1995 elections with an official turnout of 48 per cent produced an assembly in which a record 94 per cent of deputies were members of the NDP. Only a little more than 70 per cent had been explicitly backed by the NDP; the others had prevailed over the ‘official’ party candidates but immediately joined its parliamentary group. The results showed that the broad tent accommodated too many different actors all seeking a formal link with the President who was

at the same time the chair of the party. The party leadership and organization were no longer able to mediate between the various interests ranging from right to left and the many individuals and groups trying not to implement specific policies identified with the party but simply to get their part of the cake. In a sense, pluralism within the party had reached new heights, even though it was generally based on the narrow interests of a growing number of people who considered the NDP a useful vehicle to advance them. Many of them invested part of the money they had made thanks after the new wave of economic reforms after 1991 and hoped a seat in parliament would bring additional returns.⁹

After yet another SCC ruling the 2000 elections to the lower house unfolded in three stages from October to November; consisting as before of a first round and a run-off, each stage concerned roughly a third of the governorates. Though complicated, the arrangement satisfied the court's request that the elections had to be systematically supervised by members of the judiciary whose numbers were limited. With a turnout of some 20–30 per cent, members of the NDP nonetheless obtained more than 80 per cent of the seats; candidates backed by other parties obtained no more than 4 per cent of the seats, the remainder going to independents.

The elections in 2005 like the presidential elections earlier in the same year occurred in a period of strong US pressures for political reform (see below). Again held in three stages, from November to December, they still allowed members of the NDP to garner some 70 per cent of the seats. However, the first stage of the elections also resulted in the victory of 88 members of the banned MB who had to campaign as independents; in other words, the historical challenger of the military dominated governments and their party won 20 per cent of the seats. US pressures notwithstanding, the government blatantly rigged the second and third stages of the elections, thus limiting the number of MB deputies in the new assembly.

The rules were again partly revised for the elections in November and December 2010. On the occasion, 64 seats reserved for women were added to the 444 elected seats in the assembly. Together with the 10 appointed members the new assembly thus counted 518 members. Like in 1995, members of the NDP won more than 90 per cent of all elected seats; the remaining ones went to members of other parties and independents; one among the latter was a Muslim Brother, compared to 88 five years earlier. More than ever the results confirmed Alain Roussillon's earlier observation that in Egypt elections serve to designate not the majority but the opposition.¹⁰

Over the years the government legalized and tolerated an increasing number of parties that were allowed to maintain offices and newspapers. However, the process was always arduous, long, and uncertain as applicants had to show that their party platforms were neither similar to those of existing parties, nor based on criteria such as religion or class. Some parties managed to obtain official recognition after lodging an appeal with the SCC. Numerous formal and informal restrictions, selective repression and co-optation of individual members, and attempts to split them ensured that legalized parties remained small and weak. Most of them never managed to obtain a seat in parliament, others occasionally a few.¹¹

In addition, elections to the upper house, the Shura Council, were conducted every three years, each time to renew one half of its elected members; one third of its altogether 264 members continued to be appointed by the President. Their results by and large reflected those of the election to the People's Assembly, with an overwhelming majority for candidates of the NDP.

In most cases, the election results were obtained with the help of heavy and sometimes elaborate rigging ranging from stuffed ballot boxes to their replacement on the way from polling to 'counting' stations (each of which covered several polling stations). Only in the 1984 elections and in the first stage of the 2005 elections did rigging seem to be less pervasive and endemic. One may add that rigging was not the privilege of the NDP or the ministry of the interior that officially conducted the elections. Frequently

individual candidates mobilized their supporters, friends, and family to intimidate competitors, stuff ballot boxes or allow the dead to vote. Though much resisted by the government, judicial supervision no doubt helped to address part of the issue but because of the sheer size of the task and various restrictions ultimately failed to prevent fraud.

More than rigging on the day of voting, the results, however, reflected the structural advantages of the NDP and Mubarak and thus the authoritarian nature of the political regime. In more or less hidden ways, they received government funding while the creation and the activities of other parties were severely curtailed. Applications for the establishment of new parties were processed slowly and often rejected on the basis of restrictive legislation; their members were intimidated and divisions within them were exploited by the secret services; radio and television, both government controlled, allotted them little air time during election campaigns and entirely ignored them in between. For lack of funds they frequently had to print their newspapers in government-owned print houses and use the distribution circuits of the state-run press, arrangements which in practice frequently boiled down to censorship.¹²

Considering the overwhelming majority that the NDP commanded in the People's Assembly, it is not surprising that all prime ministers were chosen from among its ranks. Implementers rather than decision-makers, most of them had a limited say over policy choices, even though Mubarak seemed to consult more broadly than Sadat. Appointed in January 1982, Ahmad Fuad Muhieddin (Ahmad Fu'ad Muhi al-Din) was followed by Kamal Hasan Ali in July 1984, Ali Lutfi Mahmud in September 1985, Atif Sidqi in November 1986, Kamal Ganzuri (al-Janzuri) in January 1996, Atif Ebeid ('Atif Ubayd) in October 1999, and Ahmad Nazif in July 2004; the latter survived until the fall of Mubarak in January 2011.

Outside the formally established institutions politics likewise continued to be shaped by authoritarian rule. After initial political decompression the Mubarak administration, especially from the 1990s onwards, restricted and closely managed the freedoms of expression, assembly and association in line with its needs and interests. Anything from the legalization and activities of parties to the repertoire of protests available to opponents was heavily shaped by laws, regulations, extra-judicial repression, propaganda, and ultimately government hegemony. For organizations to be legalized or tolerated, they had to be unappealing to the public; the only partial exception was the MB discussed below. No political activities left of the Tagammu' were tolerated. Strapped into its Procrustean bed, opposition provided a small democratic fig leaf for the rulers; as the latter needed well-dosed opposition, it (somewhat) paradoxically stabilized their position.¹³

The government nonetheless never managed to establish complete control and always had to deal with dissent and opposition in one form or another. It persistently failed to harness the various parts of the political regime itself in ways that would have allowed to reduce dissent and opposition from within, let alone from without. It even had great difficulty to harness the very forces supposed to impose itself on its opponents and society at large. In February 1986 some 25,000 poorly paid and poorly treated auxiliary police went on a rampage in central Cairo. It took the army three days to quell the riots which resulted in more than a hundred deaths. Though more discretely than in the past, 'power centres' of various shapes and sizes emerged and affected the coherence of government action. Only eight years into his presidency Mubarak found a way to replace the minister of defence, Muhammad Abd al-Halim Abu Ghazala, who not unlike Amr in the 1960 controlled the armed forces which, as a matter of course, had their own periodicals and allies in the government media. Judges often challenged government decisions and developed considerable 'judicial activism', partly through the Judges' Club.¹⁴ As illustrated by some of the election results, the NDP increasingly disintegrated into a hotchpotch of factions built around personal, family, local or ideological loyalties that competed for influence, resources, and presidential support. Once appointed, Gamal Mubarak sought to transform the party into a more centrally organized

and efficient support base for the government but by that very fact alienated many of the old guard and even more so the military establishment.

Government attitudes towards the MB, officially banned, oscillated between toleration and repression. Considering the Brotherhood its major challenger, the Mubarak administration opted for ambiguity in order to follow its activities more easily than if they had been conducted entirely underground. Allowing MB members to run in the elections to the governing bodies of the professional syndicates which organized and to an extent regulated various professions ranging from engineers and physicians to lawyers no doubt helped to gather information about them and round them up at a later stage. However, when candidates suspected to belong to the MB began to win these elections, the government changed the law to impose unrealistic turnout thresholds and put some of the syndicates under tutelage.¹⁵ As already earlier in the late 1940s and early 1950s the MB were also divided internally; like the ASU or NDP, they suffered from the large tent syndrome, exacerbated by internal secrecy and authoritarianism, as well by as government attempts to further exacerbate the rifts. In 2009–10 attempts to draft a coherent policy platform further accentuated divisions within the MB that focused on policy as much as on strategy.¹⁶

The conflict between the MB and other Islamists on the one hand and the government on the other only to an extent reflected the growing normative divide between advocates of a religious and a ‘secular’ order that no doubt had been fuelled by Muslim perceptions of exclusion, marginalization, and domination by non-Muslims.¹⁷ If the government camp included some secularists and many more ordinary practicing Muslims, it also comprised people who shared the views of Islamists without joining their organizations or voting for them. For many Egyptians supporting the one or the other camp was not a normative or ideological but a pragmatic issue. As the authoritarian governments that succeeded each other since the 1952 coup restricted access to power and scarce resources to their most trusted constituencies, those left by the wayside turned to their opponents among whom the MB were the most organized and potentially successful. The choice seemed all the more understandable as initially and even later the governments recruited support from the same social backgrounds as the MB but was partly unable, partly unwilling to co-opt everybody to the same extent (see above). Together with the deepening global divide between haves and have-nots, apparent winners and losers, limited co-optation and the exclusion of many people from the distribution of government-controlled resources, ever more important in a still étatist economy, continuously strengthened the MB and other Islamist groups and by implication fuelled the conflict with the government. Under pressure from its opponents, the latter increasingly adopted their language and some of the policies they demanded, itself contributing to the emerging hegemony of however vaguely defined as the dominant reference of discourse and action.¹⁸ Naturally, the trend further accentuated divisions between Muslims and Christians (see also below).¹⁹

Islamists nonetheless also continued to resort to considerable physical and psychological violence. Intimidation and social pressure in many, especially less affluent, neighbourhoods and at the work place served to coerce people into wearing ‘Islamic’ dress, growing beards, praying in public, and avoiding alcoholic beverages. In other cases, judicial procedures were used to impose such norms, for instance in the court case brought against the academic Nasser (Nasr) Hamid Abu Zayd. Convicted of apostasy, he was forcefully divorced from his wife in 1995, a decision that forced them into exile.

Islamists other than the MB repeatedly attempted to assassinate their critics and government representatives. Then minister of the interior, Zaki Badr, narrowly escaped in 1989, as did one of his successors, Hasan al-Alfi, in 1993. Less lucky, the intellectual Farag Foda (Faraj Fuda) was killed in 1992. The author and Nobel laureate Naguib (Najib) Mahfuz was stabbed in 1994, but survived. President Mubarak himself was targeted while on an official visit to Addis Abeba in 1995. Churches were attacked, often with casualties among the worshippers and passers-by. Other preferred targets were tourist sites like the temple of Hatshepsut in Luxor in 1997. From the mid-1990s matters degenerated into large and

frequent armed encounters between Islamists and the police in Upper Egypt; escalating into heavy handed repression and acts of retaliation they left innumerable people dead. The events in Upper Egypt have frequently been explained as an outcome of its historically endemic socio-economic marginalization which seemed further exacerbated by the economic reforms of the 1990s. However, as most Islamists have advocated economic liberalization and minimalist social policies, events may again be better understood as a conflict between those who captured the state and those who failed to do so.

In the last years of Mubarak's presidency similar events occurred in Northern Sinai where armed Islamist groups took advantage of more than a decade of growing alienation and conflict between Bedouins and the government. In the early 2000s militants attacked tourist locations and even fired rockets at Eilat in Israel and Aqaba in Jordan. The events led to the use of force on both sides culminating in harsh government repression; it removed a vast stretch of land from effective government control and strengthened cooperation between Bedouins and armed Islamists. The latter grew in numbers from early 2011 when the armed forces concentrated on politics and the police were shaken and reorganized (see also below). The events also led to new attacks against churches such as that in Alexandria on New Year's day 2011 which left more than twenty people dead.²⁰

Though often able to rely on restrictive laws and decrees, the government frequently, even endemically, resorted to physical violence when dealing with its opponents or challengers. To an extent both types of repression were a response to violent acts perpetrated by, mainly Islamist, opponents, but in many other cases they formed the two pillars of a more generalized and prophylactic policy of control and domination. Human rights abuses and outright torture were standard features of police and secret police practice.²¹ Atrocities committed by 'security' forces in the last decade of Mubarak's rule ultimately fuelled the 2011 protests. During police raids opponents and critics curiously fell from balconies. Others were tortured to death in police custody like Khalid Sa'id, a young Alexandrian arrested in June 2010. In the aftermath of his murder hundreds of thousands of people adhered to the Facebook group 'We Are All Khalid Sa'id'; many also repeatedly joined groups of protesters dressed in black who silently stood on the shores watching the Nile or the sea.

The large-scale economic reforms that after some earlier attempts began in 1991 (see section on economic developments) entailed diffuse social tensions that often manifested themselves tangibly in and around factories and in the trade unions even though they remained government controlled. Careful to reduce the impact on public sector workers on permanent contracts, the government managed to limit overt industrial action but not discontent. In the countryside, however, changes to land tenancy over time deprived many people of the equivalent of an employment contract. Law 96 of 1992 allowed land owners to charge tenants much higher amounts of rent for the plots they laboured. Those refusing or unable to pay could be evicted. After a transition period the law definitely entered into force in 1997. Though in principle only applicable to rented land, it was frequently invoked to question property rights, in particular those of beneficiaries of the successive land reforms.²² Protests and resistance by the victims met with heavy-handed repression that from October 1997 led to numerous arrests, injuries, and deaths throughout the country; figures for 1998 show 627 arrests, 289 injured, and 20 deaths.²³

In the same decade, the government reluctantly gave in to a global trend fostered by the dynamics of globalization and allowed new civil society organizations, most of them recent creations, to emerge and advocate for human rights, the rule of law, and democracy. Like the many thousand existing associations that implemented health, educational, or development projects or simply united people of specific origins, areas, professions, or needs these new organizations largely fell under restrictive legislation enacted under Nasser, including the law on associations. Often with external support – always suspicious in the eyes of the government – they slowly managed to carve out for themselves a place in public debate and advocacy. They included organizations known beyond the boundaries of Egypt such as the Ibn Khaldun Centre (but

see also below), the Cairo Institute for Human Rights, the Nadeem (Nadim) Centre for the Victims of Torture, and the Hisham Mubarak Centre for Human Rights Support.²⁴ Attempts to replace the old with a new law that would restrict foreign funding and channel it through a government controlled organization failed to convince the SCC and came to naught. In the last decade of Mubarak's rule small but active independent trade unions were created by tax inspectors and other professions, again in spite of numerous obstacles, and began to challenge the monopoly of still the state controlled (General) Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions (*Al-ittihad al-'amm ni niqabat 'ummal Misr*). Obviously politics in its basic form as negotiating solutions to individual and collective challenges or 'problems' was, as ever, all pervasive down to the grassroots level.²⁵

From Growing Contestation to the Arab Spring

From the early 2000s an increasing number of actors and forces ever more consistently and forcefully challenged authoritarian rule. Grievances caused by current and earlier economic policies were reinforced by signs that President Mubarak groomed his son as his successor. In spite of its efforts, the Mubarak administration ultimately failed to contain these activities which ultimately led to its demise. Events outside the country further fuelled anger at the government. In the eyes of many Egyptians it stood quietly by as Israel tried to repress the Second Intifada that began in September 2000 and as the US-led coalition invaded Iraq in 2003 to topple President Saddam Husayn. 'Regime change' in Iraq was part and parcel of the same US concern as was pressure on Mubarak and other Arab governments to embark on political liberalization. Considering authoritarianism as a major cause of terrorism and in particular the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush and his neoconservative advisors thus contributed to limit repression in Egypt and to weaken the foundations on which rested its government (see below).

Israeli repression of the intifada was heavily condemned in Egypt and mobilized many people, students in particular. US threats against Saddam Husayn led to the hitherto largest demonstrations against Mubarak and his policies. In complete disagreement with the neoconservative argument, protesters who in late February 2003 gave vent to their anger in Tahrir Square in central Cairo and tore down Mubarak posters considered authoritarian rule in Egypt and the US intervention in Iraq as two sides of the same imperialist coin. Only the hidden hand of the MB who at one time filled a stadium with some 100,000 protesters helped the government to transform a subsequent demonstration into an orderly march leaving al-Azhar mosque after the Friday prayer. In the aftermath of Saddam Husayn's demise the protests culminated in the emergence of the loosely organized Egyptian Movement for Change or 'Kefaya' ('Kifaya'; 'Enough') which from its first manifesto called for democratic change; including numerous public figures like Tariq al-Bishri and George Ishac (Ishaq), it regularly organized peaceful demonstrations over the following years.

Simultaneously, other public protests mushroomed throughout the country with people demanding the repair of drinking water pipes or salary rises. Strikes and other forms of industrial action rose steadily, in particular after the Nazif ministry was formed in 2004 and began to implement another round of business-friendly reforms (see below). They included several large-scale strikes such as those by the textile workers in Mahalla al-Kubra in the Delta. With the spread of industrial action independent trade unions began to form; led by Kamal Abu Aita, the real estate tax inspectors asked for theirs to be officially recognized in 2008, but in vain. It is in the same context that civil society organizations grew in numbers, visibility, and capacity. Soon other initiatives emerged alongside Kefaya to defend more specific causes. The April 6 Movement, for instance, first entered the stage in 2008 to support a major strike in Mahalla al-Kubra; if its call for a general strike on that day found little echo, the movement continued to strengthen and play a part in the 2011 protests.²⁶

However, defenders of different causes often failed to coordinate activities with each other; as a result, contestation remained fragmented in terms of concerns, actors, numbers, and places. The organizational capacities of most groups were limited. Also, the vast majority of Egyptians in spite of their various grievances never participated in any sit-in, strike, or demonstration. Nor had the various agencies of repression become ineffective. Depending on circumstances they continued to act swiftly and effectively. During a protest in 2008 at the professional syndicate of journalists in Abd al-Khaliq Tharwat Street in downtown Cairo, for instance, plainclothes policemen dispersed any more or less fortuitous gathering or encounter of more than two people even on Talat (Tal'at) Harb Square several streets further south.

Increasing unease on the one hand and mobilization on the other led to a joint call by young opposition activists to demonstrate against police violence and arbitrariness on 25 January 2011, the annual national holiday dedicated to the police renamed Day of Anger (similar names were given to subsequent days of protest). Most of them belonged to youth groups like the 'April 6 Movement' and 'We Are All Khalid Sa'id', others to larger organizations like the Democratic Front Party, and the Popular Campaign in Support of Muhammad al-Barada'i, the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency who hoped to lead the transition; many young MB joined the protests, but not the more established members. On later occasions football ultras forcefully supported the protests; in the very last days also Salafis appeared on the square.

The turnout by far surpassed the expectations of the organizers who primarily considered the event as one among others that would ultimately lead to substantial change. In Cairo rapidly growing marches converged from all sides to the downtown area where Tahrir Square which for the following eighteen days became the main theatre and symbol of the protests. Large demonstrations also took place in Alexandria, Suez, Mansura, and many other towns. The activists immediately set up the 25 January Youth Coalition to coordinate activities on the square and beyond. Specific demands such as the resignation of the minister of the interior, an end to the state of emergency, and the release of political prisoners rapidly converged towards the departure of Mubarak and a new constitution. Similarly, slogans like 'Bread freedom, and dignity' (or 'social justice') turned into 'Leave (*Irhal!*)' and 'The People want the fall of the regime'.²⁷ Various other political forces like Kefaya, the Popular Association for Change, the Tomorrow Party, and Democratic Front Party supported the protests; others like the hierarchies of the MB, the Wafd, and the Tagammu' first hesitated and even later remained ambivalent. The MB organized their own activities in a part of the square, including public prayers involving Muslims only; temporarily they entered into negotiations with the remains of the Mubarak administration which, however, ended with the latter's fall.

Repression and government control of the media had limited the publication of the call to protest to the virtual space, in particular the Facebook site of 'We Are all Khalid Sa'id'. The major tools to mobilize, prepare, and coordinate were mobile phones and computers which gave access to the internet which the authorities repeatedly attempted to block – once successfully for a full five days. However, electronic means of communication, often glorified by observers, were only effective and successful because those who used them could draw on the reciprocal 'real' ties and bonds that they had established over years – a decade – of joint action at smaller scales. Some of the protesters had acquired organizational and political know-how and knowledge in civil society organizations that had employed or trained them; many others were students, teachers, professors, intellectuals, civil servants, employees, independent trade unionists, or members of opposition parties who drew on their own educational and occupational skills and experience. Similarly, techniques to circumvent and confront the police were learnt 'on the job', and quickly so. Gas masks and onions became the standard equipment to alleviate the effects of teargas.

The January protests mobilized unprecedented numbers of people, though perhaps not the magical million that protesters claimed had repeatedly thronged Tahrir Square. No event since the death of Nasser had

mobilized as many people in the streets of the capital. No earlier protest had been as long, lasting, and peaceful as the protests on Tahrir Square. It culminated in the most momentous political development since the 1952 coup – the temporary end to authoritarian rule. For a moment it seemed to have profoundly changed relations of power. Politics which for decades had been dominated and structured from above now seemed to be dominated and structured from below.

The largest open space in the heart of Cairo, Tahrir Square was and remains a strategic and symbolically fraught location. On its south-eastern end rises the impressive Mugamma (Mujamma'), the main administrative complex where Cairenes apply for passports and foreigners renew their tourist visas. Its eastern flank is occupied by the old main campus of the American University in Cairo (AUC); its northern end by the Egyptian Museum. Only a few streets or steps away are the office of the prime minister, various ministries including the interior, the two houses of parliament, state television, and the headquarters of the NDP. The ministry of foreign affairs occupied a palace on its south-western flank before it moved to new premises that remain within walking distance. In addition, the square is at the intersection of two of the three metro lines and of major south-north and east-west thoroughfares. Under the monarchy its western end was occupied by the Qasr al-Nil barracks which accommodated British troops. The barracks were razed in the late 1940s soon before the space, hitherto Ismailia (Isma'iliyya) Square, was officially dedicated to (national) liberation, in Arabic *'tahrir'*; under Nasser they were replaced by the headquarters of the Arab League and the Nile Hilton Hotel.²⁸

Although mobilization peaked and ebbed, protesters physically occupied Tahrir Square day and night till Mubarak resigned. Protesters spent hours and days on the square where they prepared food or bought it from street peddlers who quickly arrived. They ate, drank, debated, and performed on the square. They set up tents and slept in turns to defend it against the police and supporters of the Mubarak government. They also set up field hospitals on the square and in adjacent streets. Repeatedly ecumenical prayers were performed by Muslim imams and Christian priests. People collectively cleaned the square of rubbish as a prelude to the planned clean-up of the country at large. Protests frequently extended to the nearby areas and the surroundings of the various state agencies located there.

The protests no doubt owed some of their success to those that had earlier ousted President Zin al-Abdin Bin Ali in Tunisia. A week before the occupation of Tahrir Square, on 17 January, Bin Ali had left for Saudi Arabia where he lived in exile until his death in 2019. His departure gave heart to the people gathering on Tahrir Square, some of whom waved Tunisian flags. However, the 'contagion' or 'domino effect' was premised on shared grievances that under similar economic and political conditions inspired similar responses and solutions. In that sense the Arab spring was a replay of the late 1980s when the Communist governments of Eastern Europe fell one after the other.

Some of the protesters struggled to make ends meet and longed for the improvement of their living conditions. Most, however, came from economically more privileged backgrounds; recalling societal dynamics already described by Alexis de Tocqueville in *L'ancien régime et la révolution*, they no longer accepted the unaccountable rule by others whom they considered their equals, not their superiors.²⁹ Some workers who had joined the crowds on Tahrir Square expressed their sense of marginalization and isolation in a sea of better-off protesters.³⁰ Conversely, they were far more prominent in other places, in particular in industrial towns like Suez. Their role was also crucial towards the end of the stand-off when on 9 and 10 February industrial action shut down many of the larger companies. The protests illustrated the convergence in time and space of the grievances of various categories of actors and interests that partly but not entirely overlapped.³¹

The contestation was first met with heavy-handed, but ultimately unsuccessful attempts to quell them. From the beginning police used batons, tear gas, and water cannons, while the protesters answered by

throwing stones and finally beat back the police. Curfews were declared, but largely ignored by the protesters and not actually implemented. Numerous clashes occurred between demonstrators on the one hand and police and supporters of Mubarak on the other hand. On various occasions defenders of the old order used live ammunition, mainly to intimidate and disperse protesters, but also in targeted killings. Many women were the victims of sexual harassment, though not only at the hands of government supporters. Army personnel at times subjected arrested female protesters to – illegal – virginity tests. Protesters were temporarily disappeared as Wael Ghanem (Wa'il Ghanim), an information technology specialist closely involved with the Khalid Sa'id Facebook group. A week into the protests, on 2 February, supporters of Mubarak attacked Tahrir Square on camel and horseback, wielding swords, sticks, and whips.

Some protesters in turn attacked official buildings and set ablaze police cars. In the early days of the protests a spectacular fire torched the huge multi-story NDP headquarters. However, the overwhelming majority of protesters peacefully occupied the Square or demonstrated in the streets. No doubt, they also put some hope in the Obama administration in the US that from 31 January onwards supported their demands, repeatedly drawing criticism from the Egyptian government. Others protected the Egyptian Museum from looting, an initiative that dovetailed with widespread local initiatives to set up self-defence groups to protect people and property.

Increasingly on the defensive, Mubarak and his administration began to embark on a series of limited concessions. On the third day of the protests, they allowed into the country Muhammad al-Baradai who soon appeared on Tahrir Square. Two days later, a new cabinet was formed under PM Ahmad Shafiq, a former minister and army general with a largely non-partisan reputation; Omar Sulayman, a former spy chief, became Mubarak's first ever vice-president (VP). While rejecting calls for his own resignation, Mubarak then promised reforms that would be implemented by the new PM. In a televised address on 1 February he announced that he would not stand for re-election in September. A few days later, the entire NDP leadership resigned and the uncontroversial Hussam Badrawi became secretary general. In another televised speech on 10 February Mubarak simply announced that he had delegated some powers to his new VP. Repeatedly Mubarak's reluctance to offer meaningful concessions reinforced the protests; it clearly prompted the massive march on 11 February that ended in front of the presidency in Heliopolis. Later the same day Sulayman announced that Mubarak had stepped down, handing his powers over to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), a newly formed body without any constitutional legitimacy. Celebrations in Tahrir Square continued till late into the night. The day after protesters physically and metaphorically cleaned the square. The few who tried to stay on were evacuated by the army, but the square filled up again on later occasions.

The rise and success of street politics could not conceal the crucial role of the armed forces. The key event often interpreted as military support for the 'revolution' was the deployment of tanks in the streets of Cairo a few days after the beginning of the protests. Greeted with slogans such as 'The people and the army hand in hand', the soldiers fraternized with protesters. Field marshal Hussayn Tantawi, the minister of defence, paid a visit to Tahrir Square where he assured protesters that the armed forces would not use force. Contradicting signs such as threats to evacuate the square and the failure to protect protesters against the attacks on 2 February have often been ignored; they may well have illustrated the ambiguity of the armed forces or dissent within them.

In actual fact, the protests enabled the majority of high-ranking military officers to remove Mubarak who ever more openly groomed his son as his successor, a decision that challenged their own role and privileges. A civilian businessman allied with other beneficiaries of economic reform, Gamal Mubarak appeared to them as a competitor who would reduce the role of the armed forces in the economy, which already then extended well beyond military industries in the narrow sense of the term. In the process

numerous officers and former officers would have lost lucrative appointments or advantages for private sector companies controlled by their friends and family. His new generation of crony capitalists threatened their established crony networks. Gamal also posed a political danger as he had begun to restructure the NDP and to transform it into a power centre outside the armed forces; recalling similar attempts by ASU leaders under Sadat, such marginalization of the armed forces had to be stopped before it went too far.

The most obvious break with the past was the resignation of the president of the republic who bowed to the will of the 'people'. Nasser's resignation in 1967 had been a tactical ploy to regain popular support for his continued stay in office. In contrast, Mubarak became the first and so far the only Egyptian president who resigned, and definitely so. Though largely seen as a victory for the protesters, it allowed the armed forces to strengthen their own legitimacy and position in the struggles yet to come (see below). His departure came at the price of some 840 deaths and 6,000 wounded, overwhelmingly amongst the protesters. Far lower than the more than 400,000 deaths caused by the Syrian conflict since 2011, the figures were very disturbingly high by Egyptian standards.³²

Policies

In his first decade as president Mubarak sought to balance the competing views and interests laid bare by the policies of his predecessor. A cautious negotiator and administrator seemed to have replaced an emotional and sometimes flamboyant leader. Discussed in greater detail below, economic policies continued to follow the principles of *infitah*, but initially avoided to push changes much further. Emphasis on norms considered Islamic continued to shape and reshape policies; in spite of occasional attempt to contain its effects, the trend gained additional momentum as it fell on increasingly fertile popular ground in a domestic and global context heavily influenced by identity issues. In his foreign policy, Mubarak sought to find a balance between the peace treaty with Israel and improved relations with the other Arab states. A distinction was made between peace and normalization, the former meaning the absence of war, the latter referring to all exchanges beyond mutual recognition and diplomatic relations; never popular in Egypt, normalization was further hampered by Israeli policies towards other Arab countries (see below). Soon bilateral relations came to be labelled as 'cold peace', a term that rather accurately describes them to this day.

Matters changed towards the end of Mubarak's first decade when Egypt once again faced a worrying balance-of-payments, budget, and debt crisis. Some fifteen years after the beginnings of *infitah* the need for additional economic reforms began to top the government agenda. In the late 1980s the government entered into negotiations with the Bretton Woods institutions to negotiate agreements on macroeconomic stabilization and structural adjustment. Remembering the 1977 riots, the government dragged its feet and finally abstained from the reforms requested by the IMF and the World Bank, though without any clear alternative. It finally approved the IMF and Bank conditions in 1991 after a new round of negotiations and an important cut in its foreign debt. A reward for Egypt's participation in the 1991 Kuwait, debt relief made the reforms a little more palatable and helped to improve their results (see below). This being said, Mubarak's second decade began with economic reforms of a size and impact that had not been seen since the aftermath of the Suez War. The difference was that the new, private sector-oriented reforms that went way beyond the changes under *infitah* were intended to undo the étatist reforms of the 1950s and 1960s. However, like the latter and like *infitah*, the new reforms and their broader ramifications once again aimed at reconciling expenditure with revenues at the levels of both government and national accounts.

The 1990s were also a period in which the government took measures to – further – contain or restrict liberties.³³ Some measures were primarily part and parcel of the increasingly violent conflict between the government and various Islamist groups or, more precisely, the former's attempts to reconquer the

geographical and political terrain it had gradually lost to the latter (see above). One illustration of these attempts is the 1996 decision to extend government supervision of preaches in state run mosques to private mosques, many of them mere prayer rooms. Another illustration is the decision two years later to silence oppositional *ulama* at al-Azhar.

Most measures, though, were of ‘dual use’. Amendments to the penal code in 1992 allowed to arrest, convict, and sentence to death more easily Islamists who attacked police stations or assassinated police officers, Christians, or intellectuals critical of their views. However, at the same time its catch-all definition of ‘terrorism’ allowed to arrest and try any protester who ‘damaged’ public property or spaces, for instance during a demonstration or strikes. Simultaneously, the jurisdiction of the Supreme State Security Courts (not to be confused with the SCC) was extended to cases hitherto heard in ordinary courts; increasing numbers of civilians were even tried in military courts. From 1994 onwards the state of emergency in force uninterruptedly since the assassination of Sadat (and most of the time before) was renewed not only for one single year but for three consecutive years. Legislation introduced in 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998 imposed new restrictions on the media. The 1964 law on associations and its 1999 successor were used to harass civil society organizations that defended human rights and advocated political reform; the 1999 law was quashed by the SCC in June 2000 but matters returned to the no less restrictive 1964 law. In July 2000 the government closed down the Ibn Khaldun Centre (see also above), arrested its director, the sociologist Saadeddin (Sa’ad al-Din) Ibrahim; two years later he and other staff members were condemned to several years in prison on spurious charges. Against a popular myth, Egypt thus convincingly demonstrated that (selective) economic liberalization may entail additional restrictions to liberties rather than political liberalization.

Other new restrictions were imposed on formal political participation. Apart from the 1995 parliamentary elections (see above), local and student elections ended in results that reflected government intervention far more than voter preferences. From 1993 elections to the boards of the official trade unions and professional syndicates were heavily rigged and conducted under new, more restrictive, legislation supposed to create more docile majorities. From 1994 university deans and village foremen (*umdas*, often translated as mayors) were appointed rather than elected.

Some of the measures further reduced liberties that authoritarian rule had already limited previously. In part they sought to contain the MB and stifle other Islamist groups that seemed on the rise. In part they sought to pre-empt and reduce opposition to the large-scale economic reforms that started in earnest in 1991 (see section on economic developments). Austerity measures as well as economic liberalization in the sense of strengthening private capital entailed material losses for numerous Egyptians. Even without dismissals of workers on permanent contracts, public sector employment contracted while the new tenancy law allowed landowners to expel landless peasants. In part the restrictions also sought to catch up with the new conditions created by these reforms and, more broadly, globalization, which provided the overall context for these reforms. Thus some of the new restrictions enabled the government to extend its control to the new, private media that escaped existing, partly implicit and undeclared, mechanisms of censorship. In public sector media, for instance, the government could simply mothball troublesome journalists and transfer them to the gardening page; in privately owned media it had no such authority and had to threaten them with fines or prison.³⁴

Least affected by such de-liberalization were the ordinary courts of justice which, within the limits sketched out above, continued to enjoy considerable independence. When judges ruled in favour of the prosecution or other government claims, they frequently did so out of ideological proximity rather than dependency or fear. Apart from a world view built around order, hierarchy, and nationalism they also shared the social backgrounds with the military establishment. However, many judges, in particular in the higher courts, at times even in the special courts, ruled against the government and even dismissed

charges against alleged terrorists. Only when it referred cases to the military courts did the government regularly obtain the convictions it sought. The State Council and the SCC, especially under Chief Justice Awad al-Murr, repeatedly sought to protect and reinforce liberties, for instance when ruling against party lists in parliamentary elections.

In the late 1990s a few measures moderately strengthened some liberties. A new but probably double-edged decree was issued to fight female genital mutilation. New legislation allowed Muslim women to divorce more easily. Still cautious in personal status matters, the government, however, condoned new restrictions on divorce introduced by the Coptic Pope Shenouda (Shanuda) III in 2008. Ultimately US pressures in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in 2001 forced Mubarak to ease repression slightly; it is in this context that he concocted the 2005 amendments to the constitution (see also below). However, such decompression did not survive the end of US pressures a few years later. The new round of economic reforms initiated by the Nazif government appointed in 2004 (see below) did nothing to strengthen liberties. To the contrary, new restrictions were decreed or otherwise implemented, including the 2007 constitutional amendments and the heavy rigging of the 2010 parliamentary elections.

Coherent with the principles of authoritarian rule, freedom of expression remained also limited in the arts as government censors continued to impose conservative moral prescriptions, partly in an attempt to reconcile the contradictory claims of what they considered the simultaneous need to be modern and authentic.³⁵ At times the boundaries of the permissible shrank, at times they expanded, for instance when in the last Mubarak years police torture could be openly addressed in a movie. Like minds, bodies did not cease to be censored by strict laws of sexual conduct. The arrest of some fifty people on the Queen Boat in Cairo in 2001, a gay venue, is one example among many; sexual harassment and persistent criminalization of extra-marital relations and abortion are others.³⁶ At the same time, growing official support for family planning reduced pressures on married couples, even though its effects on demographic growth remained debatable. In this context, Cairo in 1994 hosted the UN conference on population and development.³⁷ Figures seem to indicate that in the last decade of Mubarak's rule female genital mutilation began to recede at least to an extent; 97 per cent of women were victims of this practice in 2003, dropping to 87 per cent in 2015.³⁸

Economic Policies and Developments

Under Mubarak economic policies and, more broadly, economic change followed a pattern that in spite of various constant features was far from linear. While his first decade in power was marked by considerable continuity with the Sadat period, the programmes of macroeconomic stabilization and structural adjustment negotiated with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in 1991 entailed important transformations. Reforms prescribed or inspired by the Bretton Woods institutions nonetheless stalled in the late 1990s before they regained some momentum in the early 2000s, albeit under different conditions and in different garb.

The First Decade

In the 1980s economic policies remained by and large shaped by Sadat's earlier failure to rein in the balance-of-payments deficit and public debt and thus to reconcile expenditure with revenues. A variety of piecemeal measures to cut or postpone expenditure helped the country to stumble along as different forms of rent and external support provided precarious support. However, the steep fall in the oil price in 1986 and its repercussions reduced not only Egypt's own oil revenues but also public and private transfers from the major oil producing countries including grants, remittances, and investments.

The price of oil rose up to June 1980 when it peaked at \$120 per barrel (and led to the second ‘oil crisis’ or ‘shock’, the first one occurring in 1973). It then fell constantly to \$24 per barrel in March 1986. Unable to absorb the fiscal consequences without jeopardizing its domestic legitimacy, the government entered into negotiations with the IMF. A first attempt to reach an agreement in 1987 failed because of Egyptian hesitations, no doubt fuelled by the memory of the 1977 riots that had put a temporary end to Sadat’s negotiations with the IMF. In actual fact, selective measures to liberalize the economy were taken as early as 1986 when the minister of agriculture, Yusuf Wali, reduced government control over prices and crops and encouraged the emergence of larger estates in land reclamation areas.³⁹

The government finally reached an agreement with the IMF and the World Bank in 1991. By that time, Egyptian troops had taken part in the liberation of Kuwait which Iraq had occupied in 1990. In recognition of these efforts, the Paris Club of major donor governments cancelled and restructured some \$19.6 billion out of the total of \$48 billion external debt, which reduced annual debt service by 2 per cent of GDP. Arab states wrote off another \$6.6 billion and the US bilaterally wrote off an additional \$7 billion in military debt.⁴⁰ As a consequence, the government could meet more easily IMF and World Bank conditions; it embarked on economic reforms of a size and impact that had not been seen since the aftermath of the Suez War and that sought to undo this earlier shift towards étatism.

The Reforms of the 1990s

The reforms like those negotiated by other countries in similar quandaries comprised two major components: a programme of macro-economic stabilization designed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that was accompanied by a stand-by loan to address the balance-of-payments deficit, and a programme of structural adjustment that increasingly involving the IMF alongside the World Bank to lastingly strengthen growth. Tackling deficits and fostering growth would also help to service public debt, avoid additional debt, and possibly even reduce debt.⁴¹ Agreement with the IMF was reached in May 1991 and with the World Bank in October. The stand-by initial loan was followed by an extended fund facility loan in 1993 and another stand-by loan in 1996; IMF involvement ended in May 1998.⁴²

Assuming a strong link between external and budgetary imbalances, stabilization included cuts in public expenditure and attempts to raise additional revenues. Public investment was to decrease from 11.5 to 5.4 per cent of GDP, and energy and food subsidies from 5.2 to 1.6 per cent of GDP; in the longer term the public wage bill was also to shrink significantly. Simultaneously, new fees were introduced for government services as well as new indirect levies such a general sales tax. Fiscal retrenchment went hand in hand with the tightening of monetary policy. Real interest rates turned positive, which in actual fact involved an increase by more than 20 per cent, thus trading inflation for additional austerity. Finally, stabilization involved the devaluation of the Egyptian pound and the unification of its various exchange rates.⁴³ Devaluations in October 1991 and again in 1992 reduced its official exchange rate to the dollar from 0.86 to 3.38,⁴⁴ but failed to dry up the black market.

For its part, adjustment primarily focused on the growth of the private relative to the public sector, a choice that even in the eyes of some World Bank officials neglected other issues, in particular measures to ensure competition and to prevent the replacement of public with private monopolies.⁴⁵ The advocates of reform considered that only the private sector could allocate factors of production efficiently and redirect the economy towards the export-led growth they sought to encourage. They also assumed that in a private sector-based economy the allocation of resources was by definition governed by market mechanisms. The centrepiece was law 203 passed in June 1991 to privatize more than 300 public sector companies; implemented sluggishly, the law also left untouched the railways, the four major banks, the Suez Canal, and military-owned companies which apart from arms and ammunition produced anything between cement and consumer goods. In parallel, commodity prices were ‘liberalized’ through the abolition of

regulations that, allegedly at least, restricted returns on private investment and market competition. The same applied to the cost of labour which not least privatization and attendant legislation helped to lower. Financial sector reforms were supposed to remove the allocation of credit from political considerations and to rationalize it even though the major banks remained publicly owned. The measures also included cuts in import tariffs as well as the removal of non-tariff restrictions and investment controls. In June 1995 Egypt joined the World Trade Organization (WTO). Deregulation was supposed to strengthen markets, but insufficient attention was paid to regulate these markets and to prevent their capture by politically connected entrepreneurs. In spite of the creation of a social fund, the reforms also entailed a distributional bias in favour of the latter and against the formally employed – or unemployed;⁴⁶ the bias obviously extended to the landless peasants affected by the new tenancy law (see above).

Common features notwithstanding, the reforms of the 1990s differed from the earlier *infitah* policies in terms of intentions as well as in outcomes. While both were inspired by large macroeconomic imbalances, home-made *infitah* rather cautiously opened up some new areas of activity to the private sector but ultimately retained a strong public sector; it also soon sought to recycle Arab oil rents whose very collapse in the late 1980s reinforced the need for stabilization and adjustment. Pushed by external actors in a period of globalization, the more ambitious reform agenda of the 1990s had a larger impact on the growth of the private sector, even markets, and exports, in spite of government resistance to maintain control and social piece. It also had broader effects on lives, expectations, and strategies of people who had to position themselves vis-à-vis market mechanisms.⁴⁷

The Last Decade

In the late 1990s enthusiasm for economic reforms subsided but re-emerged a few years later as a global economic slump affected growth in Egypt. Calls for additional reforms coincided with the political rise of the president's businessman son Gamal (see section on political change). Gamal surrounded himself with people of his kind such as the iron and steel magnate Ahmad Izz ('Izz) who promoted the cause in the NDP and in parliament. In 2003 the Egyptian pound was floated, basically halving its value to almost 7 to the US dollar. In the same year a new labour replaced the old one passed in 1981 and introduced additional flexibility' in the labour market.

New reforms started in earnest in 2004 with the appointment of Ahmad Nazif as prime minister. A businessman himself, Nazif presided over a cabinet dominated by his likes such as Rashid Muhammad Rashid at trade and industry; many of them owned businesses in the area they were responsible for. The cabinet also included reform-minded technocrats such as Yusuf Butrus Ghali at finance and Mahmud Muhi Al-Din (Muhieddin) at investment who were economists defending the then version of the Washington consensus. Although initially entrepreneurs and economists agreed on policies, the former's cronyism later collided with the latter's belief in markets.

The Nazif ministry unified the foreign exchange rates, further cut taxes, subsidies, and average trade tariffs; liberalized the financial sector; and privatized some twenty companies, including one of the four major banks, the Bank of Alexandria; it also provided various support measures for manufacturing industries which, however, largely benefited politically well-connected companies. Though home-made, the measures by and large sought to encourage private sector investment, reduce government expenditure, boost export and thus to deepen the reforms of the 1990s. In 2007–2008 Egypt was hit by the large-scale rise in food prices worldwide (to be followed by another peak in 2010-11) and the global financial crisis. Even though its banks and therefore credit were less exposed internationally, the Nazif ministry quickly produced a stimulus package that amounted to some 2 per cent of GDP.⁴⁸

The economic (and political) weight of politically well-connected entrepreneurs and their companies increased in the early 2000s. Many, though not all, larger private firm belonged to businessmen close to the government and benefited from tailor-made legislation and discretionary advantages. Taxation, subsidies, permits, and licenses all strengthened their position vis-à-vis other, less well-connected firms and new market entrants. Once again, economic reform in particular strengthened certain components of the private sector and produced markets that were heavily biased in favour of government cronies.

The new reforms coincided with additional revenue from rent. The production of natural gas significantly increased from the late 1990s and in particular in the early 2000s, roughly when the production and export of oil declined. Part of the gas was exported, including to Israel, and contributed to Egypt's 'Dutch disease' as it strengthened the Egyptian pound. By 2012, however, production declined and Egypt soon became again a net importer. Further complicated by attacks against the pipeline, exports to Israel came to a halt; Egypt reneged on agreements with international companies and in some cases had to pay penalties (see below). In 2018 the government signed an agreement to import and partly re-export gas from Israel which began to exploit its new gas fields in the Mediterranean. Soon afterwards Egypt's new Al-Zohr gas field, also in the Mediterranean, came on stream, possibly enabling it again to export gas.⁴⁹

Domestically the government could easily fund energy subsidies. Entrepreneurs, many of them close to the president or his son, thus quickly and heavily invested in energy-intensive industries such as steel and cement. 'According to some estimates (in 2007), 45 factories received up to 65 per cent of the total energy subsidies allocated for the industrial sector, which constituted about 25 per cent of the total energy subsidy'; yet, private businesses paid only tax amounting to 6 per cent of government revenues.⁵⁰

Contrary to some initial (and later) claims, the reforms of the 1990s and 2000s failed to improve economic performance and conditions beyond the budget and external deficit as well as public debt. Even improvements in these areas were partly due to other developments such as the debt cut by the Paris Club in 1991 or a temporary nature. Nor did the reforms transform the Egyptian economy into a liberal market economy. No doubt, changes went further than those implemented under Sadat. The private sector was no longer seen as a complement or add-on to a basically public sector-dominated economy but, rhetorically yet reluctantly, as the engine that would pull Egypt out of chronic underperformance into a future of sustained growth. However, the change in the overall balance between private and public sector remained limited. The role of markets in the allocation of resources grew far less than statements by officials and the Bretton Woods institutions seemed to indicate. Politically connected entrepreneurs or 'crony capitalists' dominated the private sector, heavily restricting market entry and competition.

The population continued to grow rapidly; the first census under Mubarak in 1986 counted some 48 million Egyptians; a decade later they were 59 million, and by 2006 their number exceeded 72 million. Demographic growth in the decade prior to the census again accelerated to an annual average of more than 2.7 per cent before it gradually declined to a little less than 2 per cent per year until 2010. Life expectancy rose constantly from 59 years in 1981 to more than 70 years in 2010. By 1988, the constantly rising literacy rate had reached some 44 per cent, rising to 72 per cent in 2010, with the rate for women still about ten per cent lower than the average.⁵¹ In the Delta in particular, the distinction between urban and rural areas, though officially maintained, became increasingly blurred, giving way to what one author called the Egyptian 'rurapolis'.⁵² Informal neighbourhoods (*'ashawiyyat*) and townships grew at a quicker pace than ever, a process that also transformed Cairo into the immense agglomeration that it is today.⁵³

Total labour force participation since 1989 has amounted to 46–50 per cent.⁵⁴ Officially recorded unemployment, some 5–6 per cent in the early and mid-1980s, rose to 8–10 per cent at the end of the decade where it remained until 2010.⁵⁵ Female and youth unemployment has been far higher, amounting to 18–26 per cent of the female work force and 26–33 per cent of youths.⁵⁶ As public sector employment

stalled and the formal private sector failed to create sufficient jobs, economic reforms from the early 1990s led to the rapid growth of informal employment. The long-term trend particularly penalized women and university graduates who traditionally were well represented in the public sector.⁵⁷ In 2010 some 43 per cent of those de facto employed outside agriculture seemed to work in the informal sector.⁵⁸

GDP in current US dollars rose steadily from \$23.5 billion in 1980 to \$115.3 billion in 1989; at the beginning of stabilization in 1992 it fell sharply to \$44.1 billion, before gradually rising to \$104 billion in 2000. In the years after 2004 cheap natural gas led to a gradual rise to more than \$300 billion. With numerous ups and downs, inflation, partly an indirect mode of taxation, in the 1980s oscillated between 10 and 25 per cent but then fell to some 3–4 per cent in the late 1990s; in the early 2000s it rose again to reach some 11 per cent in 2010.⁵⁹

Real annual GDP growth was erratic. According to one source, it oscillated between 7 and 9 per cent in part of the 1980s and less than 1 per cent in 1992, after the onset of stabilization.⁶⁰ Another source put real GDP growth at 3 per cent annually in the period 1981–90, compared to 4.3 per cent in the previous decade; it then increased on average by 2.5 per cent annually in the period 1991–2000 and by 2.9 per cent annually in the period 2001–10.⁶¹ In the late 1990s, it occasionally reached 7–8 per cent, then declined gradually to 3.2 per cent in 2003. Natural gas production pushed it up to 7.2 per cent in 2008, but it fell to 1.8 per cent in 2011. Calculated in PPP, per capita GDP in constant US dollars steadily rose from \$5,228 in 1980 to about \$11,000 in 2011.⁶²

From the early 1980s to the early nineties gross fixed capital formation accounted for some 25 per cent of annual GDP, with peaks up to 35 per cent; domestic savings accounted for only about half of these amounts. From the early 1990s to 2011 gross fixed capital formation declined to 15–20 per cent of GDP, but domestic saving covered two thirds of the amount or more. Total factor productivity slightly rose till the mid-1990s, but then began to decline again to less than 1 per cent in the first decade of the 2000s.⁶³

In 1980, shortly before Mubarak came to power, agriculture accounted for 18 per cent of GDP, down from 29 per cent in 1970; manufacturing industries for 12 per cent and extractive industries for 25 per cent; and services for 45 per cent of GDP. Towards the end of Mubarak's second decade, in 1997, the share of agriculture dropped to 16 per cent of GDP; that of manufacturing industries rose to 25 per cent while that of extractive industries decreased to 7 per cent; services now reached 53 per cent of GDP.⁶⁴ Also in 1980, agriculture accounted for 42 per cent of employment, industries for some 21 per cent, and services for 37 per cent.⁶⁵ The share of industries increased over the years; after 2003 it climbed to 24–27 per cent of total employment, at the expense of agriculture.⁶⁶

With financial support from the UAE the government in 1997 launched the Tushka project which diverted part of the Nile waters to the southern stretches of the New valley in another attempt to green the desert. Initially intended to reclaim some 500,000 feddan and settle up to 16 million people, the project with a cost of some \$70 million soon stalled; it was revived under president Sisi but with uncertain effects. Further north, the Salam Canal that passed under the Suez Canal carried Nile water to northern Sinai to irrigate additional plots of land. In the process the share of agricultural land in the total surface of the country increased from some 2.5 per cent in the early and mid-1980s to some 3.6 per cent in 2010 and later.⁶⁷ However, Egypt remained a net importer of food.

The growing share of manufacturing in GDP went hand in hand with an increase in value added to some 16–18 per cent, compared to only 13–14 per cent in and after the mid-70s.⁶⁸ Though with important fluctuations, manufacturing products from the late 1980s (and until 2017 at least) accounted for 30–55 per cent of merchandise exports per year, compared to only 8.5 per cent in 1981.⁶⁹

Rentierism remained a dominant feature of the Egyptian economy throughout these years, even though revenues from hydrocarbons ultimately declined. The production of crude oil increased from about 600,000 b/d in 1980 to some 800,000–1 million b/d in the period 1985–96; however, by 2006 it sunk back to the level of 1980.⁷⁰ Already in 2004 Egypt had become a net importer of oil, even though for a few years it continued to export occasionally. Reflecting the price of oil, revenue from its sale fell from more than 28 per cent of GDP in 1981 to about 14 per cent in 1988/89; in spite of important fluctuations it settled around 10 per cent or less from the mid-1990s to the fall of Mubarak.⁷¹ Income from the sale of natural gas remained below 1 per cent of GDP till 2004; however, it rose to 1.8–2.5 per cent of GDP in the period 2005–2013, before it decreased considerably.⁷²

Another major source of rent were remittances from expatriate workers which depended on the oil price, the economic health of the major hydrocarbon producers, in particular the GCC, Iraq, and Libya, and their political goodwill. From the 1980s they amounted to more than 6 per cent, and sometimes up to 12 per cent, of annual GDP, then declined to some 4–6 per cent towards 2010.⁷³ Royalties from the Suez Canal remained another important contribution, reaching about \$2 billion in 2000 and between \$4.5 and \$5.3 billion a decade later, corresponding to 2–3 per cent of GDP. From the mid-2000s onwards tourism became a major source of foreign currency, accounting for up to 20 per cent of exports.⁷⁴

If the private grew relative to the public sector, the changes were not as profound as one might read into the reforms announced in 1991. It has been calculated that public sector investment in the years 1991–2000 on average amounted to less than 14 per cent of GDP, compared to an annual 18.4 per cent of GDP in the period 1971–90. Throughout the 1990s private sector investment on average amounted to less than 5.6 per cent of GDP, compared to 9.6 per cent in the preceding period. Public investment included various infrastructure such as the Cairo metro inaugurated in 1987 (thanks to a French loan), new roads and bridges and the like. The relationship was only inversed in the period 2001–10 when public investment declined to an average of 8.2 per cent of GDP, while private investment rose to an average of 10.3 per cent of GDP.⁷⁵ These figures dovetail with the share of the private sector in domestic credit granted by Egyptian banks, at the time themselves largely publicly owned. From some 26 per cent to GDP in the 1980s, this share rose to 30 per cent in the mid-1990s, and almost 54 per cent by 2003.⁷⁶ Public sector revenues in the 1980s exceeded 40, then 30 per cent of GDP; for the rest of Mubarak's tenure they still stood well above 20 per cent. Public sector expenditure to GDP until the early 1990s was up to 20 per cent higher than these figures, then decreased to a more modest level, but in the mid-2000s again exceeded revenue to GDP by up to 10 per cent.⁷⁷ To stop at least some of the gaps Mubarak from early on appealed to donations and often twisted the arms of wealthy businesspeople, for instance after the 1992 earthquake.⁷⁸

In the private sector foreign capital played an increasing role. After a remarkable rise from 0.7 per cent of GDP in 1977 to almost 7 per cent in 1979, foreign direct investment fell to 3–4 per cent in the 1980s and 1–2 per cent in the 1990s; it temporarily rose to 5–9 per cent of GDP with the windfall from gas in 2005–8 but in 2010 again below 3 per cent in 2010.⁷⁹ Total FDI stocks, though, rose steadily from \$2.2 billion in 1980 to \$11 billion 1990, almost \$20 billion in 2000, and \$50 billion in 2007.⁸⁰

When Mubarak came to power the balance-of-payments deficit stood at more than 15 per cent to GDP; it rose to some 20 per cent in the late 1980s. With important ups and downs, the current account on average showed an annual deficit of 5 per cent to GDP till the end of the 1980s, a surplus of up to 8 per cent till 1997, and then again a deficit of up to 3 per cent. After gas exports in 2003–2008 produced a short-lived surplus of up to 4 per cent, the account returned to a moderate deficit of 2 per cent till 2010. Throughout the 1980s Egypt's budget deficit stood at some 20 per cent of GDP. By 1996/7 the reforms brought it down to 2 per cent of GDP; however, in the 2000s it began to rise again, in some years up to 10 per cent

to GDP. Defence spending nonetheless decreased to 6–8 per cent to GDP in the 1980s to less than 3 per cent in 2000.⁸¹

Total public debt,⁸² which by 1982 had risen to 134 per cent of GDP, in the following years decreased to some 90 per cent of GDP, but in 1991 again reached 128 per cent of GDP. As a result of the decision by the Paris Club and subsequent reforms, it steadily decreased to some 74 per cent of GDP in 2001; after ups and downs, it reached 69–70 per cent in 2010. In figures, external public debt stood at \$20 billion in 1981 and at \$48 billion in 1991, on the eve of the Paris Club cut. It amounted to some 80 per cent of GDP in 1990, 29.3 per cent in 2000, and 16.6 per cent in 2010.⁸³ The decrease nonetheless went hand in hand with a steep rise in domestic debt.⁸⁴

Total currency reserves which in 1981 stood at about \$71 billion increased with the reforms of the 1990s. Covering a little less or more than 2 months of import in the 1980s, they covered more than 10 months in 1998 and more than 6 months till 2010. If in 1980s they amounted to less than 8 per cent, and sometimes less than 5 per cent, of external debt, the ratio climbed to almost 60 per cent in 1998 and after fluctuations even 100 per cent in 2010.⁸⁵

As far as standard measures are concerned, policies pursued under Mubarak seemed to slightly reduce inequality; between 1990 till the end of his rule the GINI coefficient oscillated between 31 and 33, slightly lower and thus slightly more ‘egalitarian’ than under Sadat.⁸⁶ First published in 1990, the Human Development Index (HDI which includes indicators for long and healthy life, knowledge, and decent standard of living) seemed to confirm optimistic views; on a scale from 0 to 1 it continuously increased from 0.546 in 1990 to 0.665 in 2010; according to a retrospective calculation it stood at 0.45 in 1980 and 0.50 in 1985.⁸⁷

However, the exploding number of studies that discussed the effects of economic reforms on income distribution and poverty were far from unanimous.⁸⁸ Clearly, the distribution of agricultural land remained highly unequal. 56.3 per cent of the land belonged to 95.8 per cent of landholders who each owned less than 5 feddan. Another 9.7 per cent of the land belonged to 2.3 per cent of landholders each of whom owned between 5 and 10 feddan. 8.5 per cent of the land belonged to 0.1 per cent of landholders who each owned 100 feddan or more. The remaining area belonged to less than 2 per cent of landholders each owning between 10 and 100 feddan.⁸⁹

If officially recorded unemployment had risen only slightly since 2006, underemployment had increased substantially in that period, while real wages also decreased. Public sector employment fell, while employment in the formal private sector showed ‘continued weakness’. Reflecting a longer trend, female participation in the labour force declined from 27 per cent in 2006 to 23 per cent in 2012.⁹⁰

Taxation continued to exacerbate inequalities; in spite of various reforms including the 2000 comprehensive tax law it remained regressive. From the late 1990s direct taxes on income, profits, and capital gains rose to 19–29 per cent of total annual government revenue, but the share of indirect taxes rose to 20–27 per cent.⁹¹ Low ceilings of 20–25 per cent made direct taxes themselves regressive.

Hovering around 20–22 per cent, the widely propagated poverty headcount endorsed by the government and its external supporters left out a larger share of the poor than it included.⁹² Three times as many Egyptians fell under the more realistic poverty line of the PPP equivalent of \$5.50 (constant 2011 dollars) a day; they were 77 per cent in 1990, 80 per cent in 1995, and 70 per cent in 2012.⁹³

External Relations

The Main Issues

Convinced that peace with Israel was the only viable option, but equally convinced that he had to mend fences with other Arab countries, Husni Mubarak presented the 1979 treaty as an inherited constraint that he could not renege on. If successful, the balancing act could even reinforce Egypt's position as a mediator between the Arab rejectionists on the one hand and Israel and its allies on the other. Continued peace with Israel would ensure vital political, military, and economic support from the US and other major capitalist actors. Stronger relations with the major Arab oil producers, themselves closely tied to the US, would have similar economic benefits, while stronger relations with all Arabs could always be an asset in the continued pursuit of remaining regional ambitions. A rapprochement between them and Israel could ultimately reduce the need for Egyptian mediation, but at least in the meantime it could enhance Egypt's role and access to Arab resources. The gamble paid off to an extent, but at the price of keeping the peace cold, a much criticized compromise formula that was nonetheless preferable to the alternatives. As under Sadat foreign policy was nonetheless guided by the need to ensure the survival of the country rather than its independence or its influence abroad.

Maintaining and Strengthening the Alliance with the US

Throughout first decade of Mubarak's presidency the US continued to provide military and civilian aid at the levels negotiated with Sadat. However, in the late 1990s the two sides agreed to reduce the amounts of civilian economic aid and to focus on trade and investment instead. In this spirit they signed a Partnership for Economic Growth and Development in 1995 and a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement in 1999. Economic aid dropped from a little more than \$1 billion p.a. until 1987 to roughly \$600k in the 1990s; after 2000 the amount repeatedly dropped to no more than \$300–400k. Unaffected by the decision, US military aid continued to reach about \$1.3 billion p.a.⁹⁴

In the light of such disbursements, it is not difficult to understand that Egypt in 1990 condemned the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and then sent some 40,000 soldiers to participate in the US-led liberation of the country – incidentally the only time Mubarak dispatched troops abroad. In turn, the US supported a deal under which Egypt obtained substantial debt relief from its international creditors. As early as November 1990, the US cancelled \$6.7 billion in military debt. Soon after the war the Paris Club cancelled 50 per cent of Egypt's debt (government debt owed to other governments), gradually reducing it from some \$48–55 billion to some \$20 billion; part of the relief, though, covered war-related military expenditure as well as losses in workers' remittances and receipts from tourism.⁹⁵ Debt relief also involved economic reforms to be negotiated with the IMF and the World Bank already discussed which further tied Egypt to the US and the other key actors of international capitalism. Consistent with these reforms Egypt in 1995 joined the World Trade Organization (WTO).

This being said, Egypt repeatedly opposed the US or showed its displeasure. In 1982 Mubarak with reference to Egyptian sovereignty refused a request to develop the Ras Banas airbase on the Red Sea for permanent US use. In December 1994 Mubarak met with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and President Asad of Syria to support the latter's position in the peace process with Israel that had been relaunched at the 1991 Madrid Conference; at the time Syria became increasingly marginalized by faster progress on the PLO and Jordanian tracks. In April 1995 Egypt declared its refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as long as Israel would not sign it; instead it campaigned to keep the entire Middle East free of nuclear weapons. If Egypt signed in the end, it did so only under additional US pressure. In 1997 Egypt boycotted the MENA-wide conference on economic cooperation with Israel in Doha even though it had attended earlier such conferences in Rabat in 1994, Amman in 1995, and in Cairo itself in 1996. Unlike Washington, Cairo also advocated an international conference to find a definite and lasting solution to the

remains of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In 2000 the arrest and trial on phony charges of Saadeddin (Sa'd al-Din) Ibrahim, an American-Egyptian sociologist and public intellectual, created additional tensions.

In the early 2000s Mubarak came under increasing US pressure to implement political reforms.⁹⁶ The neoconservatives in the Bush administration viewed the attacks against the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 ultimately as a result of political conditions in Arab countries marked by authoritarianism and human rights abuses. Differences were exacerbated when Cairo opposed the US-led military intervention in Iraq in March 2003 and President Bush's Greater Middle East Initiative in April 2004; seen from Washington, opposition to the overthrow of Iraqi President Saddam Husayn contradicted Egyptian claims to play a major role in the fight against international terrorism. Though without any proof, the Bush administration accused the Iraqi President of both the production of weapons of mass destruction and support for international terrorism. Additional disagreements focused on the subsequent political process in Iraq and the early withdrawal of US troops.

Aware of the bilateral balance of power, Mubarak changed track after Bush's re-election in November 2004 and attempted to please and appease the US by improving relations with Israel. From 2004 onwards Egypt established Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZ) which ever since have been allowed to export products with Israeli inputs to the US without any significant tariffs or quota restrictions (initially 11 per cent of all inputs had to be manufactured in Israel; later the share was reduced). In 2015 QIZs allegedly produced 45 per cent of all Egyptian exports to the US that then amounted to a total of \$1 billion. If the free trade agreement that Egypt sought to conclude with the US never materialized, the QIZs considerably increased the volume of bilateral trade.⁹⁷

The new approach was successful as the US agreed to compensate Egypt for losses incurred in the 2003 Iraq War and abstained from criticizing the conduct, results and repressive ramifications of the 2005 presidential elections. Neoconservative policies had lost some of their shine when Iraq descended into turmoil; the victory of Hamas in the 2006 elections in Palestine further eroded US commitment to democracy in the Middle East.

Renewing and Strengthening Relations with other Arab States

In line with his general strategy Mubarak deployed numerous efforts to improve bilateral relations with other Arab actors.⁹⁸ Egypt consistently supported Iraq in the war against Iran that lasted from 1980 to 1988, thus demonstrating its commitment to what many Arabs considered an Arab rather than simply Iraqi cause. In the latter parts of the 1980s Egypt and Iraq were also reported to jointly develop the Badr missile until US pressure put an end to the project. In 1983 Mubarak seized the expulsion of the troops loyal to Yasir Arafat from Tripoli in Northern Lebanon to mend fences with the PLO (Arafat and his close supporters had already been evacuated from Beirut after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982). Ultimately Mubarak managed to convince his Arab counterparts to relocate the AL back to Cairo. In 1989 it returned to its historical headquarters between Tahrir Square and the river Nile; by then all Arab states except Libya had re-established diplomatic relations with Egypt.

Also in 1989 Egypt joined the short-lived Arab Cooperation Council with Iraq, Jordan, and North Yemen, probably to benefit from future Iraqi oil revenues. However, when Saddam Husayn for similar reasons occupied and annexed Kuwait in summer 1990, Mubarak decided to join the US-led coalition to liberate Kuwait. Fighting the defender of the Arabs against Iran was highly unpopular in Egypt, even though the Iraqi government had reacted to earlier criticism of the occupation by expelling large numbers of Egyptian expatriate workers. However, the decision prompted the US and its European allies to substantially reduce Egypt's unsustainable foreign debt. Similarly, it pleased the wealthy members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) who could provide investments, aid, and jobs for Egyptian expatriates.

Workers' remittances amounted to some 6–15 per cent of Egypt's GDP in 1977–1994, 3–7 per cent in 1995–2015, and 10 per cent in 2017.⁹⁹ Alongside Syria, which also supported Kuwait against Iraq, Egypt now joined the equally short-lived Damascus Group that sought to trade its military potential against financial aid from the GCC.

Relations with the UAE and especially Saudi Arabia became all the stronger as they too persecuted the MB. Relations with Qatar on the other hand deteriorated significantly as Doha emphasized its independence from the other GCC members. Cairo accused Doha of supporting the MB and of protecting and promoting the Egyptian Islamist preacher Yusuf al-Qardawi who lived there in exile. Egypt also complained about news coverage on the influential Al-Jazeera television channel, and was in turn accused of a plot to overthrow the emir of Qatar. Another foreign policy priority was Libya which at times was one of the most important destinations for Egyptian labour migrants.¹⁰⁰ Economically relations suffered after 1991 marked by UN sanctions after the Libyan government was considered responsible for planting a bomb on an American aircraft that exploded above Lockerbie in Scotland. However, Egypt managed to establish itself as Libya's indispensable conduit to the outside world and thereby to pursue some of its regional ambitions; it duly benefited from the investment when sanctions were lifted in 2003. As earlier marked by the Nile water issue, relations with Khartoum were also affected by internal divisions, differences in Sudan, and the role of Islamists in and around government. Over many years Islamists such as Hassan al-Turabi was closely associated to the exercise of power in Sudan; presidents Jaafar (Ja'afar) al-Numayri and Omar al-Bashir at times heavily relied on their support. Relations reached a nadir in 1995 when Egypt accused Sudan of an attempt to assassinate Mubarak while he was on a visit to Adis Abeba.

Firmly on the side of the PLO and Fatah, Mubarak had little sympathy for Hamas which he saw as nothing more than a branch of the MB. Increasing political violence on the Sinai was entirely blamed on Islamists (see above). The relative success of the MB in the Egyptian parliamentary elections of 2005, the success of Hamas in the 2006 elections in Palestine, and its 'coup' in the Gaza Strip in 2007 strengthened Mubarak's resolve to fight Islamists at home and abroad. Egypt ever more strictly controlled its border with the Gaza Strip, and as early as 2009 began to build a steel wall.¹⁰¹

In the end Egypt sided with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the US against Iran, Syria, the Lebanese Hizb Allah, and Hamas. In 2006 the Mubarak administration blamed Hizb Allah for sparking the summer war in Lebanon by abducting two Israeli soldiers; visibly surprised that many Egyptians celebrated Hizb Allah for standing up against Israel, it ultimately paid lip service to the resistance capacity of the Iranian ally.

Cold Peace Continued

Convincing other Arabs to re-establish relations with Egypt in the early 1980s involved defending Arab causes, in particular the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel with Jerusalem as the divided capital of both, and the withdrawal of Israel from all other territories that it had occupied in 1967. While openly challenging the positions of successive Israeli governments, these objectives were construed as compatible with a restrictive interpretation of Egypt's commitments under the peace treaty. Except where clearly beneficial for Egypt, relations with Israel were to be limited to the bare minimum.¹⁰²

The endeavour was further complicated as Egyptian public opinion, never enthused by the 1979 treaty, turned even more hostile over the years. Israel's annexation of the Golan in December 1981 (as already the annexation of East Jerusalem a year earlier), its occupation of Southern Lebanon and Beirut in 1982, and subsequent involvement in the massacre of Palestinians in the camps of Sabra and Shatila made it difficult to defend the treaty. The bombing of the PLO headquarters in Tunis in 1985, the repression of the first Palestinian intifada in and after 1987, and the permanent increase in the number of Israeli settlers on the West Bank further aggravated matters. The visit that Ariel Sharon, soon to become prime minister,

in late September 2000 paid to the area in Jerusalem known to the ones as Temple Mount (where stood the first and second Jewish temples until the latter was destroyed by the Romans) and the others as the *Haram al-Sharif* (where several hundred years later Muslim rulers built the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa mosque) and the repression of the subsequent Second Intifada reinforced Israel's reputation as an aggressive and expansionary neighbour.

After the massacres of Sabra and Shatila Egypt recalled its ambassador to Israel and further restricted already limited exchanges. In 1983 and 1984, for instance, it refused Israeli participation in the Cairo book and trade fairs. Trade in any case remained largely limited to the oil that Egypt under the treaty exported to Israel; even QIZs established in the 2000s did not entail a quantitative leap (see above). Mubarak also consistently refused to visit Israel, except for the funeral of Prime Minister Izhak Rabin assassinated in 1995. Nonetheless, diplomatic relations survived, borders remained open, and passenger flights continued to operate between Cairo and Tel Aviv.

After the Kuwait war Egypt supported the Madrid conference held in late October and early November 1991; co-sponsored by the US and the USSR, it was intended to settle the conflict between Israel and its other immediate Arab neighbours – Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the PLO. Giving some substance to US promises, the conference mainly grew out of the recognition that Palestinians and the broader Arab public had supported Saddam Husayn because he claimed to defend their cause. Together with parallel negotiations conducted in Norway, the conference paved the way for the Oslo accords that Israel and the PLO signed in 1993 and 1995, as well as the peace treaty that Israel and Jordan signed in 1994. Egyptian mediation on various occasions facilitated discussions between the parties.

Reflecting his difficulties with the US (see above), Mubarak towards the end of 2004 decided to improve relations with Israel. Egypt released Azzam Azzam, an alleged Israeli spy convicted several years earlier, and appointed a new ambassador to Tel Aviv, thus filling a position that it had left vacant since the beginning of the Second Intifada. At the same time, it agreed to set up the QIZs with Israel, a decision strongly supported by the US (see also above).

Relations with Other Countries

Consistent with its alignment on the US, Egypt cultivated its relations with the non- and post-communist parts of the world, in particular Europe, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, as well as inter-governmental and private anchors of global capitalism and its expansion. As a matter of course, such proximity never prevented disagreements or tensions with these actors and forces, be it only that their interests never completely converged. In 1995 Egypt attended the Barcelona Conference and subscribed to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership that sought to extend globalization to the southern shores of the *mare nostrum* and yet to strengthen EU influence in these areas. In 2001 Egypt signed an association agreement with the EU governed by the principles of the partnership which entered into force in 2004 and was followed by other, similar agreements.

Seeking to reduce friction internationally as much as domestically Mubarak re-established diplomatic ties with Moscow in July 1984. Reflecting the gradual decline of the USSR as a superpower, the scope of bilateral relations remained however limited, even when Gorbachev attempted to open up to new partners in the Middle East and beyond. In the 1990s several high level visits marked the relations with the new Russian authorities who in 2000, to Mubarak's satisfaction, even put the MB on their list of terrorist organizations. Both sides also agreed to limit Iranian nuclear ambitions and to oppose the 2005 Cedar revolution against the Syrian presence in Lebanon.¹⁰³ Having mended fences with the AL, Egypt was also readmitted to the OAU, later to become the African Union. The relations most marked by tension

remained those with Iran and its few Arab allies; Egypt nonetheless in the 1990s mediated between Turkey and Syria which hosted members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The Withdrawal of External Support

By the beginning of February 2011 foreign governments hitherto sympathetic to Mubarak began to criticize his handling of the protests. On 4 February 2011 President Obama publicly asked Mubarak to make 'the right decision'; at the same time the press reported contacts between US and Egyptian officials to persuade Mubarak to stand down; on 9 February FM Ahmad Abu al-Ghayt publicly rejected US demands to lift the state of emergency and accused the US of trying to impose its will on the Egyptian people.¹⁰⁴ According to some rumours, the US administration from the early days of the protests intensified contacts with the MB that it had initiated during the 2005 parliamentary elections.¹⁰⁵ Be this as it may, it quickly established a working relationship with a variety of actors, including the MB. Like later the SCAF that represented the top brass of the armed forces, the US administration may have sought an alliance of sorts with the most organized civilian force in the country. In the best of cases, the US could have their cake and eat it: while the departure of Mubarak saved them the stigma of supporting repression, an understanding between the officers and the MB would guarantee the stability of a nominally democratic Egypt and continued US influence in the Middle East.

¹ On the authoritarian features of the political regime see also Kassem, 2004; Ferrié, 2008; Brownlee, 2007; Stacher, 2012; Soliman, 2011; Kienle, 2001; Pawelka, 1985; Krämer, 1986; Schlumberger, 2007; Roussillon, 1996; Pratt, 2006. Exploring the potential for a transition from authoritarianism: El-Mikawy, 1999; Rutherford, 2008 (emphasizing a possible transition from authoritarianism).

² For details, see Sayigh, 2012.

³ On cronyism under Mubarak see, for instance, Roll, 2010; Diwan and Schiffbauer, 2016 (focusing on the period 2003–10), Gobe, 1999; Sadowski, 1991; El Tarouty, 2015.

⁴ Kienle, 2001; Soliman, 2011.

⁵ On institutional changes and the judiciary in this period, see Brown, 2016.

⁶ Kienle, 2001, 124ff; Brown, 1997; Bernard-Maugiron, 2008; Jacquemond, 1994; Botiveau, 1986; Mustafa, 2009.

⁷ For such dynamics of disintegration, see Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 2014.

⁸ For presidential monarchies, see Owen, 2012.

⁹ On the 1995 elections, see Gamblin, 1997; on elections under Mubarak, see also: Farag, 2010; Ben Nefissa and Arafat, 2005.

¹⁰ Roussillon, 1990. On aspect of parliamentary life under these conditions, see Dupret, 2014.

¹¹ See Dunne and Hamzawy, 2017.

¹² See for instance Kienle, 2001; Hamdy, 2004.

¹³ On the impact of authoritarian rule on oppositional activities, see Albrecht, 2013.

¹⁴ Sayyid, 2009; Abdel Fattah, 2008; Moustafa, 2008; Said, 2008.

¹⁵ See for instance Leenders, 1996; Longuenesse, 1995; Lübben, 2008.

¹⁶ See Hamzawy and Brown, 2010; Tammam, 2010; Elshobaki, 2009; al-Awadi, 2004; Aclimados, 2010.

¹⁷ A line of thought already developed by Ajami, 1981.

¹⁸ On the workings and inherent pluralism of this ‘system’ of reference, see Ferrié, 2004; Dupret, 2012; Haenni, 2005.

¹⁹ El-Khawaga, 1994.

²⁰ See Brownlee, 2013; Guirguis, 2016.

²¹ See the annual reports on Egypt by Amnesty International, London, and Human Rights Watch, New York, N.Y.

²² For details, see Bush, 1999, 117ff, 143ff.

²³ Bush, 1999, 143ff, referring to figures from the Land Center for Human Rights, Cairo. For broader changes affecting rural life, see Hopkins and Saad, 2004.

²⁴ In this abundant literature see for instance Sayyid, 1993; Kienle, 2011.

²⁵ See Singerman, 1995; Harders, 2002; Bayat, 2013; Ismail, 2006.

²⁶ On protests prior to 2011, see for instance: Gunning and Baron, 2013; Alexander and Bassiouny, 2014, 29–126; Beinín, 2010; Korany and al-Mahdi, 2012; Shehata, 2012; Duboc, 2011; Armbrust, 2019.

²⁷ For the protests and related events, see – among many others – Gunning and Baron, 2013; Shehata, 2012; Sholkamy, 2012; for slogans also Carle, 2016. For the occupation of public places, see also Tripp, 2013; Lacroix, 2016; Tadros, 2016.

²⁸ Owen, 1997/8.

²⁹ Tocqueville, 2011.

³⁰ Interviews, Cairo, Halwan, 2011, 2012.

³¹ See for instance Shehata, 2012; Bishara, 2012; Bishara, 2018; Sika, 2017.

³² Figures according to annual reports published by Amnesty International and the United Nations.

³³ For details, see Kienle, 2001, chapter 4.

³⁴ The explanation differs partly from that given by Posusny, 1997, who sees restrictions to liberties as a response to actual industrial action and social unrest

³⁵ For cultural policies and developments, see for instance Armbrust, 1996; Haeri, 2003.

³⁶ See for instance: Amar, 2011.

³⁷ On family planning, see: Fargues, 2011.

³⁸ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

³⁹ Ireton, 2011, 434ff; Sadowsky, 1991.

⁴⁰ Ikram, 2018, 282ff; Bush, 1999, 29–62.

⁴¹ For the basic components and thrust of such reforms, see for instance: Richards, Waterbury, Cammett, and Diwan, 2013; Fischer, 2012; Williamson, 2008; Woods, 2006. For the responses of Egyptian actors, see Awad, 1991.

⁴² For the reforms in Egypt and their impact, see: Harrigan and El-Said, 2010; Kheir El-Din, 2008; Ikram, 2018, 282ff; Bush, 1999, 29–61; Weiss and Wurzel, 1998; Diwan and Akin, 2015; Blin, 1993 who also suggests a too-big-to-fail calculus on the part of Egyptian decision makers.

⁴³ For details, see Ikram, 2018, 282ff.

⁴⁴ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁴⁵ Ikram, 2018, 296.

⁴⁶ Harrigan, 2010, 4.

⁴⁷ Elyachar, 2005.

⁴⁸ For details of the reforms after 2003 and their effects, see Ikram, 2018, 300–308; Kheir El-Din, 2008.

⁴⁹ Springborg, 2018, 163–170; Adly, 2017.

⁵⁰ According to the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights and the Egyptian Ministry of Finance.

⁵¹ Fargues, 2011, 44; WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019 differ slightly but confirm the trend.

⁵² Denis, 2011, 76.

⁵³ Séjourné, 2011; Singerman and Amar, 2006.

⁵⁴ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁵⁵ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁵⁶ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁵⁷ Assaad, 2009; Assaad and Krafft, 2015; see also Handoussa and Potter, 1991.

⁵⁸ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁵⁹ IMF DataMapper and WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁶⁰ IMF DataMapper, retrieved 30/5/2019.

⁶¹ Diwan and Akin 2015, 34.

⁶² IMF DataMapper, retrieved 30/5/2019.

⁶³ Ikram, 2018, 88, 307; WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁶⁴ Waterbury, 1983, 202; Bush, 1999, 26, referring to relevant World Bank World Development Reports.

⁶⁵ Ikram, 2018, 91.

⁶⁶ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁶⁷ Kotb et al., 2000; WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁶⁸ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁶⁹ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁷⁰ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁷¹ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁷² WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁷³ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁷⁴ Sammartin, 2011.

⁷⁵ Diwan and Akin, 2015, 37; WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁷⁶ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁷⁷ Ikram, 2018, 93; WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁷⁸ Soliman, 2011, chapters 4 and 5.

⁷⁹ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁸⁰ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Geneva, <http://inctadstat.unctad.org/wds/TableViewer/tableView.aspx> (retrieved 13/7/2019).

⁸¹ Harrigan, 2010, 4; WB, WDI, retrieved 27/3/2020; IMF DataMapper, retrieved 27/3/2020.

⁸² Figures again refer to gross general government debt as defined by the IMF.

⁸³ Diwan/ Akin, 2015, 35; Ikram, 2018, 127, 282ff; Bush, 1999, 29–62; IMF DataMapper, retrieved 23/5/2019; WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁸⁴ See also Soliman, 2011, chapter 4.

⁸⁵ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁸⁶ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019 .

⁸⁹ UNDP, 1990; WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁸⁸ See for instance: Rouchdy and Assaad, 1991; Cardiff, 1997; Datt, Jolliffe, and Sharma, 2001; Korayem, 1996; El-Laithy and Nassar, 2000; Bayat and Denis, 2000.

⁸⁹ Bush, 1999, 40.

⁹⁰ See Assaad and Krafft, 2015; Said, 2015.

⁹¹ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁹² E.g. Ikram, 2018, 104ff; as to the various poverty lines see: Sabry, 2009.

⁹³ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019; with partly diverging figures, see also El-Laithy and Nassar, 2000; Bush, 1999, 60f.

⁹⁴ Sharp, 2018, 23f.

⁹⁵ See e.g. Ayalon, 1993, 345ff.

⁹⁶ For these developments, see Shama, 2014, 162ff, 183.

⁹⁷ Hassanein 2018, 3; Shama, 2014, 168f.

⁹⁸ For additional details, see Shama, 2014; Hinnebusch and Shama, 2014; Dessouki, 2008.

⁹⁹ WB, WDI, retrieved 29/05/2019,

¹⁰⁰ See Tsouparas, 2018; Kerr and Yassin, 1982; Richards, Waterbury, Cammett, and Diwan, 2013.

¹⁰¹ On Egypt and Hamas, see also Seurat, 2015.

¹⁰² For additional detail, see Shlaim, 2000, chapters 9–12; Shama, 2014; Hinnebusch and Shama, 2014.

¹⁰³ See, for instance, Issaev, 2016.

¹⁰⁴ Reuters, New York Times, 4-11 February 2011; for a more detailed account, see Shama, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Johnson, 2011; Frampton, 2018.

The Participatory Republic under the SCAF and Mursi

If the protests in early 2011 were among the largest ones of the ‘Arab spring’, they amounted less to (another) ‘revolution’ than to a temporary, in retrospect possibly tactical, retreat of the armed forces from the front line of politics. However unconstitutionally, the top brass of the armed forces constituted the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) that henceforth considered itself as the provisional, yet highest political authority in the land. Nonetheless, for the next two and a half years Egypt was a country of debates, competing constitutional projects, initiatives, politics, and unseen energy. Untainted by the usual rigging and interference, parliamentary and presidential elections resulted in majorities for actors and forces that had been marginalized and repressed under the old regime. The Muslim Brothers (MB) and Salafists won landslide victories; for the first time in Egyptian history a MB, Muhammad Mursi, was elected President of the Republic in 2012. In the process, most of the initial protesters and their parties were marginalized. However, in spite of various arrangements with the MB the armed forces continued to heavily influence the course of events, even after Mursi dissolved the SCAF. Though elected, Mursi and the MB soon became the objects of large popular protests as well, partly because of their policies, partly because of their own attempts to monopolize power. Protests in June 2013 formed the prelude for another military coup that ended the interlude of elected government. Sociologically the MB shared numerous traits with the armed forces with whom in actual fact they competed for support since they fell out with one another in the 1950s. Socially conservative, their policies were private sector-friendly and included numerous budget cuts and austerity measures, partly in view of IMF support; however neither the public sector nor the welfare state were dismantled. More openly than ever, external relations reflected the need to find the resources and support to keep the country afloat. Resources were exhausted, state capacity asymptotically approached collapse, but however weakened institutions survived, and so did the representation of Egypt as an imagined community.

Political Change

The SCAF

The relations between the remaining components of the old regime, in particular the armed forces, on the one hand and the protesters and their fledgling organizations on the other had a heavy impact on politics at large, on the institutions, and on policies or their absence in terms of structured and intended courses of action; obviously, the same applies to the dynamics among status-quo forces and their challengers which permanently evolved as well. For a longer period than ever before the fate of institutions was directly linked to changing balances of power among the various actors and forces, a development that explains its discussion side by side with politics.

Politics and Institutions

Following the celebrations of Mubarak’s resignation most protesters left Tahrir Square which nonetheless filled up again whenever the ‘revolution’ seemed in danger. Elsewhere in the country as well, the level of popular mobilization remained high, with numerous demonstrations, strikes, and other protests, sometimes planned, on other occasions spontaneous. In the early days of March 2011 thousands of Egyptians stormed the headquarters of State Security (*Mukhabarat amn al-dawla*), one of the main secret services, opened the archives, and took their files; nonetheless State Security was soon re-established as National Security (*Qita’ amn al-watani*).

Power formally passed into the hands of the self-constituted Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). In a statement released on the morrow of Mubarak's departure, it committed itself to elections and the transfer of power to a civilian government. It soon issued a summary 'constitutional declaration' that replaced the repeatedly amended 1971.¹ The declaration formally established the SCAF as the temporary successor to the President of the republic; it also confirmed all international treaties and agreements signed by Egypt, including the peace treaty with Israel. Chaired by Field marshal Hussayn Tantawi, Mubarak's last minister of defence, the SCAF comprised some twenty of the highest ranking officers, including the commanders of the army, navy, air force, air defence, and the various military zones. In its composition it thus differed considerably from the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) formed after the overthrow of the monarchy in 1952 (see above); nor did its name refer to the 'revolution' that it repeatedly claimed to protect. In March, the SCAF appointed a new government; headed by prime minister Essam ('Issam) Sharaf, it included several personalities historically critical of Mubarak such as Ahmad al-Borei (Bur'ai), Maged Osman (Majid 'Uthman), Gouda (Jawda) Abd al-Khaliq, Samir Radwan, and Hazim al-Beblawi (Bablawi). The state of emergency was lifted. The NDP was dissolved by a court ruling. All other institutions including the Courts remained in place, even though in practice their workings were affected by the partial collapse of the old regime and the transition to a yet undefined new political order.

As early as March 2011 the SCAF promulgated a new party law that still prevented the creation of parties based on class or religion, but in practice was not enforced. Consequently, the MB established their Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) soon to become the most structured actor alongside the armed forces. The *Da'wa* organization set up the Nur (Light) Party and thus established political Salafism, long present but ignored, as political force; other Salafis set up smaller parties. In no time at all some 80 new parties came into existence, repeatedly split, merged, added new members, excluded old ones, and formed more or less short-lived alliances with their counterparts, in general for electoral and other tactical reasons. At times more than a hundred parties existed alongside each other, most of them devoid of resources, infrastructure, electoral platforms other than slogans, and ignored by the broader public.

Elections to the Lower House of parliament, the People's Assembly, were held from late 2011 to early 2012, again successively in three geographical zones, each time with a run-off. Two thirds of the 498 elected seats were reserved for party lists with a minimum number of female candidates, the remaining third for candidates running as independents; ten deputies were appointed by the SCAF acting on behalf of a yet unelected President of the republic. One half of all elected seats was again reserved for 'workers' and 'peasants'. The elections were supervised by an electoral commission largely formed of judges.

In order to win seats allocated to lists, parties established alliances such as the Democratic Alliance dominated by the FJP (initially with the Nur Party); the Islamist Bloc around the Nur Party; the Egyptian Bloc, largely formed by the Free Egyptians Party, the Social Democratic Party, and the Tagammu'; and the Revolution Continues Alliance established when the Egyptian Bloc admitted candidates who were 'remnants' (*fulul*) of the Mubarak administration. The New Wafd ultimately ran on its own. With a turnout of some 54 per cent, the elections resulted in the victory of the Democratic Alliance which obtained some 37 per cent of the votes cast for party lists, corresponding to 235 seats. The Islamic Bloc won some 30 per cent of the votes and thus 123 seats. The New Wafd obtained about 9 per cent of the votes, corresponding to 41 seats; and the Egyptian Bloc obtained less than 9 per cent of the votes, translating into 34 seats. All others obtained fewer than 10 seats and less than 7 per cent of the vote. Some 15 former NDP members were elected as independents. A little later, from late January to late February 2012 Egyptians voted for the 180 elected seats in the Upper House or Shura Council; the remaining 80 deputies were to be appointed by the future president of the republic. Together with their respective allies,

the FJP obtained 105, the Nur Party 45, and the New Wafd 14; none of the others obtained more than nine seats.

The election victory of the MB and the Nur Party marked the beginning of an open struggle over the future shape of the country's institutions;² in their attempts to tailor them to their own interests, the winners increasingly alienated other actors and forces and in particular the armed forces which, independently of their opinion of the MB, sought to maximize their own independence. Already in June 2011 the SCAF had amended legislation to allow the justices of the SCC to fill vacancies on the bench in complete independence. The newly elected Lower House quickly voted a law reducing the powers of the SCC and modifying its composition, de facto dismissing justices critical of the MB. Often seen as the response of justices appointed under Mubarak, the SCC in June declared unconstitutional legislation under which the house had been elected; seen from another angle, the Court remained with its earlier jurisprudence under Mubarak when it twice threw out electoral laws that privileged party over independent candidates. The Upper House survived but soon faced similar legal challenges.

While still in session, in March 2012, the Lower House elected a constituent assembly supposed to draft a new constitution. Reflecting the Islamist majority in parliament, the assembly was dominated by supporters of the MB and their Salafi allies. Other political forces occupied just about a third of the 100 seats; only 6 of them were occupied by women and 5 by Christians. Denouncing an Islamist takeover, many of its members began to boycott the deliberations. Considering unconstitutional the presence of deputies among its members, the State Council dissolved the assembly a month later. In early June the various political forces agreed on convening a new constituent assembly that would be more representative than the previous one. Again including members of parliament, it was also challenged in court; however, in the absence of a final ruling it managed to complete its task later in the year.

Presidential elections were held in May 2012 with a run-off in June. The first round opposed five main candidates: Muhammad Mursi, Abd al-Mineim (Min'im) Abou al-Futuh, Ahmad Shafiq, Amru Musa, and Hamdeen (Hamdin) Sabahi. Mursi represented the FJP formed of the MB after its first choice, Khayrat Shater (Shatir) had been disqualified like a number of others. Abd al-Futuh had fallen out with the rest of the MB hierarchy during the programmatic debates in 2009 and expelled from the organization. Shafiq had been Mubarak's last PM and was largely seen as a man of the old regime, as was Amru Musa, former foreign minister and secretary general of the Arab League. A veteran oppositional figure, Sabahi attempted to mobilize Nasserists and the left in the broader sense. With an official turnout of 46 per cent, Mursi won 25 per cent of the vote, Shafiq 24 per cent, Sabahi 21 per cent, Abou al-Futuh 17 per cent, and Musa 11 per cent. By and large candidates and commentators agreed that government interference was minimal and that rigging mainly reflected power struggles at the local level, opposing as so often in the past competing candidates and their supporters. Far less transparent, however, was the rest of the process, once the polling stations had closed. It took the authorities a week to announce the results of the second round. Benign explanations emphasized technical difficulties, more critical voices feared that the results were doctored by the SCAF. With 51.7 per cent of the votes Muhammad Mursi narrowly won against Ahmad Shafiq who obtained 48.2 per cent; the turnout was 52 per cent.

In mid-June 2012, between the election of Muhammad Mursi as President of the republic and his inauguration, the SCAF issued a new constitutional declaration. Until the promulgation of a new comprehensive constitution, the SCAF alone would have legislative powers, make military appointments, and decide on matters concerning the armed forces; its chairman would ex officio be the minister of defence. The declaration allowed various actors including the SCAF to challenge decisions by the constituent assembly; these decisions would moreover be subject to judicial review by the SCC. The

SCAF granted itself the power to appoint yet another constituent assembly should the existing one fail to agree on a new constitution. In other words, the democratically elected President was supposed to preside over a political regime whose constitution was neither promulgated nor even drafted.

Initially in particular some ministers and members of the SCAF consulted, in some cases extensively, with protestors, their coordinating bodies, and numerous other actors and forces. However, the SCAF also resorted to outright repression. In October 2011 it violently crushed a peaceful demonstration by Coptic youths in front of state television on the Nile corniche; in reference to the location the events are known as the Maspero massacre that left more than twenty people dead. Shortly afterwards, in November, SCAF clamped down on local civil society organizations and some foreign organizations. Offices were closed, people arrested and tried under fears and pretexts that recalled authoritarian practices under Mubarak.

The Major Political Actors and their Social Background

Although protests over time abated, they continued with ups and downs in various physical and virtual venues; within the dynamics already mentioned, they mobilized by and large the same people as before. Individuals who, elected or not, occupied positions in the formally established institutions sociologically resembled those in office under Mubarak, if they were not the same. The members of the SCAF were high-ranking military officers from the same background as Mubarak who, while in power, had appointed and promoted many of them. They further extended their domination over other 'security' services, state agencies, and state-owned enterprises; ever more openly the military saw itself as the 'custodian' of the country.³ Like the members of the Shafiq and Sharaf cabinets, the officers ultimately hailed from the classes that had carried the republic since its beginnings and from the avatars of these classes. The same applied to many of the protesters who in one way or another joined government, entered formally established institutions or in other ways supported them. Soon heavily represented in the elected assemblies, the MB also largely remained an organization of middle income groups; it remained strong among its initial constituencies and their avatars. In spite of the temporary rise of some independent trade unionists like Kamal Abu Aita, workers and trade unionists remained marginal in the institutions.

Policies

The contentious and more participatory nature of politics which gave voice to actors who hitherto had little say was reflected in the policies designed and partly implemented by the new governments. In order to satisfy the demands of those who had joined the protests at least partly for material reasons, salaries, benefits, and subsidies were increased, even though the politics of the period had a negative impact on economic output, productivity, and therefore revenue. The expansionary budget policies necessarily increased budget and balance-of-payments deficits, as well as public debt. Decrees partly legalized the independent trade unions that had germinated and emerged after 2000. Associations and other civil society organizations faced fewer obstacles than before but continued to be watched closely by the SCAF, not only in November 2011. Nor did arbitrary arrests and similar extra-judicial repression come to an end. Legislation promulgated in 2012 granted the *ulama* of Al-Azhar greater say in the selection of the Shaykh al-Azhar and even the Mufti of Egypt; by implication it eroded the 1961 law that established state control over Muslim religious authorities.⁴

The Mursi Presidency

The short Mursi presidency continued to be marked primarily by competing attempts to exploit opportunities, limit damage, marginalize others, and participate in decisions affecting the country. Only

partly channelled by the rather tentative institutional framework that had emerged under the SCAF, profound disagreements over policies, constitutional arrangements, and ultimately the locus of power dominated the scene. The institutions themselves remained contested and in flux, as much shaped by politics as shaping it. The context favoured neither the implementation nor even the formulation of ambitious or coherent policies, even though, necessarily, a variety of measures were made and implemented.

Politics and Institutions

While Mursi was the first President of Egypt to be democratically elected, he won – or was declared victor – with a slim majority in the run-off between the two survivors of the first round of the ballot. In any case, many voters cast their vote in his favour to avoid Ahmad Shafiq whom they identified with the ancient regime. In the eyes of those who simply considered Mursi the lesser evil the MB remained a secretive organization, an impression that was not dispelled by appointments and procedures that soon marginalized, even excluded, other forces. Unsurprisingly, Egyptian politics remained as contentious as they had been since the last days of the Mubarak government, even though the battle lines had been partly redrawn. Many protesters who had opposed Mubarak now opposed the MB, reinforced by some of Mubarak's former supporters who, defending the *ancien régime*, had opposed the MB either for ideological reasons or because they were competitors for power and spoils.

Once in office, Mursi had to navigate institutions that, old or new, were endorsed or established by the SCAF, and (un)governed by a constitution yet to be drafted. In an attempt to tip the domestic balance of power in his own favour, he quickly reinstated the Islamist-dominated Lower House that had been dissolved by the SCC. When the SCC blocked the move, he repealed the constitutional declaration issued by the SCAF in mid-June. Under a new constitutional declaration he assumed all legislative powers himself, as well as the right to form a new constituent assembly should the current – second – one be unable to complete its task. Formed by the now defunct Lower House, the sitting assembly enjoyed Mursi's support, but it remained threatened by court rulings; some of its members resigned over the summer and autumn, very much for the same reasons as those who had left the previous body.

Partly impatient with constitutional checks and balances, partly as a response to his opponents who exploited these mechanisms, Mursi on 21 November 2012 issued a new constitutional declaration under which he concentrated all powers in his own presidential hands. His decisions were no longer subject to judicial review; the constituent assembly and the Upper House, the Shura Council, could no longer be dissolved by court action. Smelling a coup d'état in disguise, his opponents took to the streets in numbers similar to those of January 2011 and marched onto presidency in Heliopolis. As the move alienated some of Mursi's own supporters, the constituent assembly accelerated its deliberations and produced its draft in the very last days of the month. In early December Mursi supporters surrounded the SCC expected to rule on the legitimacy of the constituent assembly. Although the court suspended its proceedings, a referendum was held in which the text was approved with a two thirds majority, though at a turnout of no more than 33 per cent; it was promulgated in December. New parliamentary elections were called for April 2013 but then postponed to October.

Defining Egypt as a part of the Arab and Islamic *umma*, the constitution again established Islam as the religion of the state and *shari'a* as the major source of legislation, except for personal status matters of Christians and Jews. Unlike earlier texts, however, it provided a summary definition of *shari'a* based on the sources of law and the jurisprudence recognized by Sunni Islam. The constitution left such definitory powers with Al-Azhar whose independence it recognized and whose head – the Shaykh al-Azhar – was

elected by its senior scholars. The constitution recognized fundamental liberties in principle, but often subject to subsequent laws; it also introduced restrictions based on morally conservative and religious criteria including the notion of blasphemy. It ultimately subordinated the equality of men and women to *shari'a*. Various other provisions sought to strike a balance between capitalist principles and social rights and 'justice'.

With regard to the political regime, the constitution maintained a bicameral parliament composed of the Chamber of Deputies (Majlis al-nawwab) and the Shura Council. It innovated by slightly limiting the weight of the president of the republic. It restricted his tenure to two terms of four years each. Resembling those under the 1980 amendments to the 1971 constitution, his powers were subject to approval by the Lower House in essential matters such as the appointment and dismissal of the PM and ministers and the declaration of the state of emergency. He could refer legislation back to parliament but not dissolve parliament without a popular referendum. In a nod to the armed forces, it continued to allow the trial of civilians in military courts. Through the creation of a National Defence Council it even excluded the armed forces including senior appointments and budgetary issues from parliamentary control. An additional National Security Council also included the military top brass. Placed under the authority of the President and Supreme Commander, the minister of defence and commander-in-chief of the armed forces had to be a military officer. It guaranteed the independence of the judiciary and the irrevocability of judges in principle. However, it restricted the jurisdiction of the SCC and reduced the numbers of its justices under criteria that worked out against MB critics. The supervision of elections was left to a special commission to be formed by the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, itself under government authority.

Initially the MB and the armed forces seemed to have found a modus vivendi that was built around the mutual non-interference in the domains each side considered its own preserve. Certainly, Mursi disbanded the SCAF and replaced the top brass of the armed forces; in particular he retired Tantawi and replaced him with Abdel Fatah (Abd al-Fatah) al-Sisi, the then head of military intelligence. However, he allowed the armed forces to run their own affairs, to keep and run the companies they owned and controlled, and even to escape parliamentary and thus MB control. In return he expected them to refrain from intervening in domestic policies and non-military appointments.

From the beginning, though, the arrangement was not without strains, reinforced by Mursi's foreign policy choices that included a rapprochement with Iran. Contrary to military claims, both sides tried to quell the Sinai insurrection but differed in their assessment of the extent to which the Hamas government in Gaza was involved (see below). Then the huge protests in November 2012 illustrated the limits of the popularity enjoyed by Mursi and the MB. To an extent the armed forces now wondered whether the MB could provide them with the mantle of civilian legitimacy they needed; to an extent they saw an opportunity to rid themselves of a partner that only history had thrust upon them.

During the following months the various actors assessed their relative strengths against the backdrop of an ever-deteriorating economic situation. The Mursi administration, the armed forces, and the SCC each had their legal arguments, their concepts of legitimacy, their vision of Egypt, and their interests, all of them shaped by their social background and historical experience. In the context of 2012 and 2013 the constellation favoured an entente between the Court and the officers to the detriment of the MB. The truce came to end in June 2013 when the SCC ruled unconstitutional the composition of the assembly that had drafted the new constitution and the law under which the Upper House had been elected. In early July the armed forces led by Sisi toppled Mursi and pre-empted the elections planned for October. New foreign

policy statements by Mursi including his call in June for a military intervention against Asad in Syria may have further prompted the officers into action.

The coup was preceded by large-scale popular protests that begun on 30 June, the anniversary of Mursi's inauguration. Led by the *Tamarrud* (Resistance) movement established in April, the protesters included many people who had demonstrated against Mubarak in 2011. By late June *Tamarrud* claimed to have collected almost 30 million signatures demanding Mursi's resignation, an interim administration headed by the Chief Justice of the SCC, a government of technocrats, the dissolution of the Upper House, and a new constitution. Resembling the protests in early 2011 and in November 2012, the events also recalled the *tawkilat* movement that the Wafd had organized in 1919 against British rule. Supported by the armed forces, secret services, foreign actors including the UAE, and later even the Yasir Burhami of the Nur Party, the Tamarrud movement nonetheless expressed widespread concerns about MB attempts to 'steal the revolution'.

People thronged Tahrir Square, the streets around the presidency, central Alexandria, and the centres of many provincial towns. The band 'Cairokee' gave two anti-Mursi concerts in front of the presidency. Smaller counter-demonstrations of MB supporters gathered in front of the Rab'a Adawiyya mosque in Nasr City, on al-Nahda Square close to Cairo University, and in a few other places. Though overwhelmingly peaceful, the protests led to various clashes and many deaths, as well as to an attack on the MB headquarters in the Muqatam district that left the building devastated. In a number of locations volunteer services appeared to protect women against sexual harassment. On 1 July the military issued an ultimatum granting the government 48 hours to find an adequate response to popular demands. Emphasizing his legitimacy as elected president, Mursi refused, but several ministers resigned. On 3 July Sisi announced that Mursi had been removed from office.

The Major Actors and their Social Background

A member of the MB Guidance Office, Mursi was the first president of Egypt elected by general suffrage. A former deputy to the Lower House, he became president of the FJP, the political party established by the MB in 2011. Arrested together with other MBs in the early days of the January protests, he escaped from prison and became one of Omar Sulayman's interlocutors before Mubarak stepped down.

Once elected Mursi appointed Mahmud Makki, an Islamist-leaning judge, as vice-president who, however, resigned in December 2012. He also appointed a new prime minister, Hisham Qandil, who resigned after Mursi was toppled. His cabinet included MB, Salafis, and other Islamists as well as unaffiliated technocrats. Sisi whom he made Minister of Defence clearly was not a MB, but visibly Mursi hoped to establish a working relationship with him.

The MB by and large remained an organization that recruited – in particular its upper echelons – from the same middling income and professional groups as previously and the ones into which these had partly morphed over the decades. They increasingly included small and medium owners of capital, many of them with degrees in engineering or the natural sciences. Even the more successful among them such as Hasan Malik never managed to amass the fortunes of the crony capitalists close to the Sadat and Mubarak governments. Some larger owners of capital joined the Egyptian Business Development Association established after the fall of Mubarak by the MB and Malik; however, such affiliations remained largely tactical. Reflecting its hierarchical structure, the organization remained dominated by middle aged and older men, leaving little place to younger MBs who repeatedly challenged the gerontocrats.

At the time, the MB's major ally, the Nur Party, seemed to recruit its leading members and apparatus from similar backgrounds as the MB; however, on various occasions it demonstrated its ability to mobilize among the destitute. Grown out in 2011 of the *Da'wa* (Call) officially established in Alexandria in 1977 by members of the Islamic Group (*Al-gama'a al-islamiyya*) that did not join the MB, the Nur Party more than the MB emphasizes divine rather than popular legitimacy. The largest political party recruiting among Egyptian Salafis whose number has continued to grow since the mid-2000s, it entertains a difficult relationship with the many Salafis who consider that they should not participate in politics.⁵

As a matter of course the MB and the Salafis had to coexist with the armed forces and the actors that sided with them, who were no doubt affected by some new appointments but sociologically did not change much. These limits also appear in the longevity of Abdel Maguid ('Abd al-Majid) Mahmud, already chief prosecutor under Mubarak, who was replaced only in November 2012.

Policies

The MB government designed or at least announced policies in a number of areas, but it hardly had the time to implement, let alone to assess and recalibrate these policies. Discussed below, economic and social policies largely revolved around attempts to reconcile deficit spending with fiscal retrenchment; the former helped to stabilize the government in the very short term but the latter, closer to MB policy preferences, took precedence as budgetary and external deficits as well public debt rose.

The fiscal situation inevitably impacted on foreign policy which, as already under previous governments, was generally crafted to increase revenue in all possible forms. Ideally, the objective was pursued through the rapprochement with like-minded governments that for their own reasons promoted – or tolerated – similar values. However, the scarcity of solvent governments of that sort called for a more comprehensive approach that often resembled squaring a circle; attempts to simultaneously cultivate ties with the US and improve relations with Iran were a case in point.

The domestic translation into practice of values that it considered Islamic was another area of concern for the Mursi administration, even though it was a lesser preoccupation than the attempts to make ends meet. The government introduced *sukuk*, often translated as Islamic bonds (see below), attempted to reduce the sale of alcoholic beverages, and otherwise tried to emphasize its Islamic nature. Mursi, for instance, did not attend the inauguration of the new Orthodox Coptic Pope and patriarch Twadros II in November 2012, but delegated his prime minister.

Siding with capital rather than labour, the Mursi administration had little sympathy for the independent trade unions; rather it threw its lot in with the old state-related official trade unions which it hoped to control in very much the same way as had done previous governments. It never finalized a draft law on trade union rights approved at cabinet level after the January 25 uprising had still not been ratified. Reportedly Egypt witnessed a sharp increase in labour and other social protests, with 1,354 protests recorded in March 2013 alone compared to 864 protests in the previous month.⁶

Economic Policies and Developments

Policies under the SCAF

When the SCAF formally assumed power in February 2011 economic activities had considerably diminished as a result of more than two weeks of continuous protests in many parts of the country. Widespread strikes, especially in the last few days, necessarily affected output and distribution, as had numerous other sit-ins, demonstrations, and other forms of collective action after 25 January; benefiting from the – temporary – easing of repression such action continued to affect output until the coup in July 2013. Most importantly perhaps, many Egyptians mentally and intellectually focused on the political future of the country – the transformation, survival, or end of its political regime – rather than on the production and sale of commodities. For many, the end of the Mubarak administration and the political regime over which he presided were the preconditions for the economic revival of the country. As one owner of a medium-sized company put it, it was worth his while to leave his factory and protest on Tahrir in order to rid the country of crony capitalists who prevented other producers from entering the market.

No less importantly, though, the protests coincided with a period in which the Egyptian economy in addition to its endemic flaws began to show additional signs of decline. The situation after the departure of Mubarak was the result of longer-term developments that were only exacerbated by the effects of the protests. The latter, it may be reiterated, to an extent reflected these flaws which policies under Mubarak had exacerbated rather than attenuated (see above). Insufficient job creation, the inequitable distribution of income and wealth, and unsustainable growth based on limited gas reserves were only the most salient results of these policies.

To reduce popular mobilization, legitimate its own rule, and find some economic breathing space the SCAF and its successive cabinets resorted to deficit spending. The choice appeared all the more justified as externally generated resources also declined; FDI for instance declined from a little less than 3 per cent of GDP in 2010 to -0.20 per cent in 2011.⁷ With the priority of shoring up living standards policies and expenditure focused on what remained of the Egyptian ‘welfare state’ that had been continuously eroded over the decades: public employment, public sector wages, and the provision of limited health services as well as education. In June 2011, Prime Minister Ahmad Shafiq granted public sector and government employees on permanent contracts (which excluded many public sector workers) a monthly minimum wage of E£700; a minimum wage had already been requested by an earlier court ruling that the Mubarak administration had chosen to ignore. A similar minimum wage for the private sector was agreed by the National Wages Council, but it was not binding. Beyond these measures and their ramifications policies were marked by considerable continuity with the Mubarak period.

The SCAF steered away from open support for private sector interests which many Egyptians by now identified with the crony capitalists around Husni and especially Gamal Mubarak. Many of the politically connected entrepreneurs lost their clout as they sooner or later faced corruption charges and in some cases ended up in prison, even though their companies by and large survived and some of them ultimately returned to run them.⁸ Seeking to attract investors, the SCAF simultaneously refrained from rolling back the reforms that had been implemented since the early 1990s. Ministers dragged their feet on the renationalization of several companies that had partly or wholly been sold off to foreign investors. They ignored several court rulings that requested their return to public ownership. Legislation governing foreign capital remained untouched. To pass the buck, possibly also because of their concept of sovereignty, the officers avoided to seek IMF assistance, a move that many others advocated.

Policies under Mursi

In order to stem the decline Muhammad Mursi soon after taking office explored the possibility to obtain a stand-by loan from the IMF. To meet the preconditions he in December 2012 signed various decrees that

reduced energy and food subsidies. As a result, the price of electricity, various hydrocarbon products and some foodstuffs increased heavily, even though subsidies remained a substantial part of the budget. The government also raised the sales tax, the corporate tax, and income tax for some higher incomes, while reducing it for lower and for some middle incomes. The measures were quickly rescinded after they threatened to revive popular protests against Mursi's attempt in November to marginalize other state institutions (see section on political change). While temporarily ensuring social peace, the decision delayed *sine die* the approval of the \$4.8 billion loan supposed to be part of a larger \$15 billion international support package. In February 2013 Mursi announced a new economic reform program that again sought to reconcile a more balanced budget and IMF support with social spending and political expediency. The programme included a tax on gains from initial public offerings in the stock market which was also rescinded after protests, this time launched by investors. Ultimately, Mursi postponed the agreement indefinitely, helped by politically motivated loans and grants worth several billion US dollars. The amounts, largely from Qatar, exceeded existing Saudi support that for inverse political reasons soon dried up.⁹

In principle, the MB had no fundamental reservations about IMF conditions which dovetailed with their vision of a private sector-based market economy and a balanced government budget.¹⁰ They quickly set up the Egyptian Business Development Association led by their entrepreneur member Hassan Malik which even attracted some members of older associations that had been close to the ancien régime;¹¹ possibly to help their own cronies, the creation of effective anti-trust mechanisms was not more of a priority than under Mubarak. However, Mursi and the MB made no major attempt to reduce the size of the public sector; while they saw it as a support base of their political opponents, they also understood that dismantling it could play into the latter's hands. Plans for additional privatizations were abandoned as the courts continued to hand down rulings that requested the renationalization of companies privatized under Mubarak. Probably aware of the hiatus between its own ideological preferences and private sector capacities, the administration even planned to heavily invest in infrastructure like the railways, electricity production, and the Suez Canal. In October 2012 the government launched the Suez Canal Corridor project to establish new industries along the canal with the help of private-public partnerships. The armed forces failed to place one of their companies as the general contractor for the project, but otherwise managed to defend their various industries and other interests.

Coherent with these choices, the Mursi administration maintained the welfare function of the state which ideally it sought to replace with a combination of minimal services, private initiative, and the allegedly natural trickle-down effects from higher economic growth in a liberalized economy. According to election platform of the FJP, the political party created by the MB, public expenditure would primarily have to depend on growth; social expenditure was moreover part of everybody's individual or family responsibility. Government could possibly contain its efforts within the limits of *zakat*, the amount Muslims are supposed to spend on charity; depending on circumstances, the rate reaches 2.5 to 20 per cent of the value of assets or transactions. However, Mursi treaded carefully in order to avoid additional protests of a population saw its living conditions erode and that historically had become accustomed to benefits that, albeit insufficient, considerably exceeded the levels of *zakat*. Such prudence inspired not only the – limited – redistribution of the tax burden and attempts to rein in subsidies, but also wage and allowance increases in the public sector, including a rise in the minimum wage decreed under the SCAF.

More generally, measures to 'Islamize' the economy did not go beyond attempts to restrict or tax the sale of alcoholic beverages and a law to introduce *sukuk* (sovereign Islamic bonds), though alongside classical bonds. Nor did significant changes affect other aspects of regulation including tariffs.

Figures and Trends from the SCAF to Mursi

Policies under the two governments differed with regard to macroeconomic imbalances; while the SCAF could still allow them to grow, Mursi had to deploy additional efforts to rein them in (as at that point the SCAF might have done). However, the short tenure of both governments, the delay after which policy decisions show results, and nonetheless a considerable degree of continuity make it basically impossible to discuss effects separately. Except for the rapid fall below zero in the early months of 2011, real GDP growth settled at around 2 per cent in the latter part of the year. It reached 2.2 per cent in 2012 and 3.3 per cent in 2013. Even per capita GDP in PPP seemed to continue to rise, albeit at a modest rate. Inflation dropped from 11 per cent in 2011 to 7.3 per cent in 2012. However, gross fixed investment, which had reached 17–19 per cent of GDP in 2006–2010, dropped to 13–14 per cent in 2012 and 2013.¹²

Deficit spending increased not only the budget deficit, but also affected the balance of payments, public debt, and currency reserves. Public sector revenue stood at some 20–25 per cent of GDP; the budget deficit reached 10 per cent to GDP in 2011 and 12 per cent in 2013. Public sector salaries together with subsidies and debt service amounted to 70–80 per cent of the budget. The current account deficit further deteriorated from 2 per cent in 2010 to 6 per cent in 2011 and 3 per cent in 2012. External public debt remained below 15 per cent of GDP, but total public debt increased from about 69 per cent of GDP in 2010 to 80 per cent in 2012. Total currency reserves decreased from \$35.2 billion in 2010 to \$26.6 billion in late 2011; they further decreased to \$15.6 billion in late 2012; they covered no more than two and a half months of imports compared to more than six and a half months in 2010.¹³

Public spending, though, did not stop unemployment from rising from plus or minus 10 per cent in the period 2006–2009 to 13 per cent in 2013 when three quarters of the unemployed were between 15 and 24 years old. In the same year some 70 per cent of Egyptians continued to fall under the poverty line of \$5.5 PPP per day.¹⁴ Aggregating a variety of long-term trends, the HDI continued its gradual increase already referred to, while the GINI coefficient remained roughly constant. The Gini coefficient seemed to remain relatively constant at 31.¹⁵

External Relations

The SCAF

After assuming power on 11 February 2011 the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) emphasized continuity in foreign policy.¹⁶ The SCAF immediately announced it would respect all international agreements signed by previous Egyptian governments, including the peace treaty with Israel. Such continuity reflected the interests of the armed forces which had been the major component of the *ancien régime* and for decades had thrived on US support. At any rate, faced with political contestation and uncertainty at home, the SCAF was not in a position to prioritize foreign policy or even initiate major changes. Certainly, to an extent it had to accommodate popular demands for Egypt to reassert some of the independence lost under Sadat and Mubarak. Nor could it ignore the foreign policy preferences of important domestic constituencies: combining ideological with material considerations the MB sought to strengthen ties with Qatar and Turkey, the Salafis with Saudi Arabia. However, in the end policy was determined by the immediate economic survival of the country.

With regard to Egypt's immediate neighbours, continuity first appeared in additional attempts to reconcile Fatah and Hamas in Palestine or at least de-escalate tensions between them. In May 2011 the two organizations signed a reconciliation agreement on terms similar to those in 2009 which, however,

remained as ineffective as the earlier one. Egypt also continued to mediate between the Israeli government and the competing Palestinian authorities in Ramallah and Gaza. In October 2011 Egyptian efforts contributed to the swap of about a thousand Palestinians jailed in Israel for the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit held by Hamas since 2006.

When Egypt in March 2012 stopped exporting natural gas to Israel both sides presented the matter as a non-political issue. Built in the early 2000s, inaugurated in 2008, and operated as a joint venture of Israeli and Egyptian companies, the underwater pipeline from al-Arish in Sinai to Ashkelon in Israel at some point supplied about 50 per cent of gas consumed in Israel. Over time, though, Egyptian production declined, with important effects on the Egyptian economy itself. After repeated sabotage to the feeder pipeline from the Sinai gas fields ascribed to disgruntled locals, Islamist insurgents, or both (sabotage that also affected exports through another pipeline to Jordan), a commercial dispute seemed to deliver the final blow to an arrangement that had never ceased to draw criticism from opponents to ‘normalization’. Subsequent litigation ended in favour of the Israeli company.

In the wider Middle East, the SCAF like earlier Mubarak sought to cultivate relations with the GCC governments able to offer various forms of economic support. As always, relations at times suffered from anger about the treatment of Egyptian migrant workers or pilgrims. In one such dispute Saudi Arabia in April 2012 temporarily closed its embassy in Cairo and withheld financial support that it had pledged previously. In total, GCC governments pledged several billions of US dollars to prop up Egypt but sometimes postponed or cancelled transfers for reasons of economic and political conditionality.¹⁷

Pursuing policies that reassured its US and European partners did not prevent the SCAF from challenging them in the same areas in which Mubarak had tried to limit their influence. Suspicious of civil society organizations, in particular those funded by foreign donors, the SCAF in November 2011 raided and closed the offices of various Egyptian and foreign non-governmental organizations defending human rights and promoting political reform. Representatives and employees of the organizations were tried (partly *in absentia*) for illegally receiving foreign funds and interfering in Egypt’s internal affairs. The legal basis of the accusations was no more convincing than in the case of Saadeddin Ibrahim in 2000 (see politics section). On other occasions, the SCAF seemed to bow to domestic political expediency. In September 2011 thus it failed to stop demonstrators from storming the Israeli embassy; to an extent history repeated itself a year later, under Mursi, when demonstrators managed to scale the walls of the US embassy.

Relations with the US, Western Europe, and the other OECD countries nonetheless remained close and globally friendly. Egypt continued to benefit from the – however – limited funds of the Deauville Partnership that the OECD administrated on behalf of the G7 in order to assist Arab countries in what was seen as a transition from authoritarian rule. Other support was equally welcome. In September 2011 the Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan paid an official visit to Egypt, accompanied by a delegation of business people; FM Ahmed Davotoglu even anticipated a strategic alliance between the two countries.

The Mursi Presidency

In the tradition of his predecessors, Mursi used foreign policy to keep the country economically afloat and, to the extent possible, create conditions that would favour economic development in the longer term.¹⁸ His task was complicated by his own distrust of the diplomatic service which he considered loyal to the old regime and the military; he much relied on newcomers such as his informal foreign minister,

the businessman 'Issam al-Haddad. After some seventeen months of political uncertainty and related economic decline, investment, aid, trade, and the export of surplus labour had become even more pressing concerns. Similar continuity transpired in his quest for broader political support from beyond the borders that could ensure his own survival in power, even though such support was not always sought from the same sources as before; repeatedly the expectations of these sources were difficult to reconcile with one another and involved delicate balancing acts that could fail. Under the conditions prevailing at the time, independence from decisions made by external actors and regional influence could only be long-term concerns.

Initially relations with the US seemed to ensure economic as well as broader political support. Building on the first formal contacts with the MB established on the occasion of the 2005 elections, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton in June 2011 announced that the US were happy to talk to all parties in Egypt, including the MB. In April 2012, a few months before the presidential elections, the MB sent a delegation to Washington that seemed to explain their policies and objectives with some success. In principle the US endorsed Egypt's request for a stand-by loan from the IMF which Mursi began to negotiate after his election. However, the rapprochement with the MB did not weaken the close ties that Washington entertained with the armed forces. No doubt, the attempt in September 2012 by some Salafis to enter the US embassy in protest against a film featuring the prophet Muhammad raised concerns. These ties strengthened as US officials gradually got disenchanted with other MB policies and the way they exercised the power they claimed to have. In the run-up to Sisi's coup, Washington, allegedly President Obama himself, in vain attempted to push Mursi to strike a compromise with his opponents.¹⁹

Mursi's election did not overly disturb Israel which no doubt relied on its proximity to the armed forces, as well as the US which generously funded the latter. The MB administration repeatedly endorsed the 1979 peace treaty, possibly out of a similar assessment of its limited options, possibly because the MB had gradually come to accept the treaty. Mursi supplied the Gaza Strip with fuel and cultivated exchanges with Hamas officials, but never managed or attempted to prevent the armed forces from destroying tunnels that connected the territory to Egypt. In August 2012, as already the year before, insurgents attempted to cross into Israel, entailing casualties and a military response. Israel pushed for more effective action but none of the incidents had lasting consequences. In November Mursi brokered a truce between Hamas and Israel that ended a week of fighting and was much appreciated in Tel Aviv as well as in Washington.

At the same time, relations with two other major regional US allies – Saudi Arabia and the UAE – deteriorated quickly and sharply, even though Mursi as early as July 2012 visited Riyadh. Both ruling families had for decades been hostile to the MB whom they suspected of undermining their rule. It remains unclear to what extent they nevertheless lived up to some of their pledges of support. In terms of financial support, Qatar provided a degree of compensation, partly because it was closer to the MB, partly because it sought to underline its independence and compete with Saudi Arabia for influence. Altogether, Qatari support may have amounted to some \$7.5 billion in grants, loans, and currency deposits in the Egyptian Central Bank.²⁰

Relations with Sudan warmed up as Mursi indicated he might rescind control over the disputed Hala'ib Triangle on the common border close to the Red Sea; already accused of planning to settle Palestinians in Sinai, Mursi ultimately left the question in limbo. He nonetheless exchanged visits with his Sudanese counterpart, Omar al-Bashir, who was already under two arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court in the Hague for crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur. In addition, the US accused him of supporting international terrorism. No doubt Mursi in spite of some ideological proximity

with Bashir and his Islamist supporters was much concerned about the partition of Nile waters, especially as the Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia came closer to completion.

Relations also improved with Turkey and Iran which, to varying degrees, could provide diplomatic, ideological, and economic support. The Turkish Prime minister partly built his quest for regional influence on support for Islamist forces, be they in opposition as in Syria or in government as in Egypt. For its part, Teheran sought to end its international isolation, an objective which dovetailed with Mursi's hope to contain Saudi Arabia. Foreign minister Nabil al-Arabi publicly considered Iran a friendly state, two Iranian warships were allowed to sail through the Suez Canal, and commercial flights were resumed. Mursi hosted his Iranian counterpart Mahmud Ahmadi Najad and in turn attended the non-aligned meeting in Teheran in August 2012. Preparations were made to re-establish diplomatic relations but failed to produce results; neither the Egyptian armed forces nor the US supported the initiative. No such objections applied to China, where Mursi also travelled in August 2012, accompanied by a group of Egyptian businesspeople. In spite of earlier hesitations about the MB, Russia promised economic and technical cooperation; in his short period in office Mursi met Putin twice.

¹ For constitutional and legal developments from 2011 see Brown, 2012; for politics and political forces, see Rougier and Lacroix, 2016.

² For details, see Brown, 2013.

³ See Sayigh, 2012.

⁴ For details, see Brown and Ghanem, 2017.

⁵ On contemporary Salafism in Egypt, see Stephane Lacroix, 2016.

⁶ See for instance [Al-Ahram Online 7/6/2013](#)

⁷ WB data base, retrieved 23/5/2019.

⁸ Adly, 2017.

⁹ For the platform and policies, see Kienle, 2015.

¹⁰ Marshall, 2015, who, however, thinks that marginalization in the new Suez Canal project considerably exacerbated tensions between Mursi and the armed forces.

¹¹ See, for instance, Saif and Ghoneim, 2013.

¹² WB, World Development Indicators, retrieved 23/5/2019; IMF Data Mapper, retrieved 25/3/2020.

¹³ Figures differ but agree on the trend: Saif, 2012; Ikram, 2018, 93, 120 ; WB, World Development Indicators, retrieved 23/5/2019; IMF DataMapper, retrieved 30/3/2020, which definitely refers to gross general government debt.

¹⁴ WB data base, retrieved 23/5/2019; a small decrease compared to earlier years remains difficult to explain.

¹⁵ Diwan and Akin 2013; WB, World Development Indicators, retrieved 23/5/2019.

¹⁶ For details, see Shama, 2014, chapter 5.

¹⁷ See for instance Farouk, 2014.

¹⁸ For a more detailed account of this period, see Shama, 2014, 215–234.

¹⁹ Kirkpatrick, 2018.

²⁰ Farouk, 2014.

The Republic under Sisi

Several months after removing Mursi from office, Sisi had himself elected president under a new constitution which he and his supporters soon considered insufficiently authoritarian and then amended. The pluralism and politics that from January 2011 had pervaded all walks of Egyptian life were stifled by systematic surveillance and severe repression, to an extent never experienced under Mubarak. Shortly after the coup some thousand or more Mursi supporters were summarily shot dead in the public square they occupied, no doubt the bloodiest act of domestic political violence since independence. The armed forces and secret services dominated institutions and policy making more openly than any time after the late 1960s. In alliance with private firms run by (former) officers, their friends, and family, military-owned companies, and conglomerates also played a larger role in the economy than before. The Sisi administration sponsored large infrastructure projects like the ‘new’ Suez Canal and a new capital city even as it received support first from the World Bank and then from the IMF which both in principle emphasize limited government involvement in the economy. Unavoidable after financial transfers from major oil producers dried up, the IMF package helped, once again, to re-establish macroeconomic balances but not to put the economy on the path of sustainable development; as usual, fiscal measures came at the expense of welfare policies in the broader sense. The search for additional resources and the diversification of their sources remained the major preoccupation of foreign policy, often alongside the partly countervailing distancing vis-à-vis actors that, allegedly, (had) supported Mursi and the MB, initially including the US. In many ways the political regime and its social base, politics, and policies, including economic policies, remained the avatars of the order first established in the 1950s and 60s. The failure to formulate and implement different economic policy, though, now and previously, was as much a result of external and global conditions beyond the reach of the Egyptian government. Within these parameters a capacity to implement policies remained broadly intact. Beyond, it is again, and increasingly, rhetorical rather than real, with the growing erosion of Egypt as an imagined community through domestic political violence, only balanced by the strength that comes with claims and perceptions that Egypt is too big to fail.

Political Change

On 3 July 2013 General Abd al-Fattah Sisi in an – initially – bloodless coup removed President Mursi from office and announced the move in a televised address, surrounded by his supporters, including the Shaykh al-Azhar and the Orthodox Coptic Pope and patriarch. Mursi and numerous other MBs were arrested and later tried. Unlike Mursi in November, Sisi succeeded in concentrating all powers, for the simple reason that he could rely on the armed forces. Curiously, it seems, Mursi assumed that his earlier concessions had placated the armed forces, even though there were numerous signs to the contrary. Sisi and his officer colleagues quickly issued yet another constitutional declaration and installed an interim president who appointed a new civilian government.

The 2013 coup rapidly led to a new form and intensity of authoritarian rule that reduced liberties and restricted politics even more than under Mubarak. Justified as a means to definitely defeat the MB, repression soon targeted all political actors and forces that did not support the coup; with obvious effects on politics in general even those who had opposed the MB were branded as MB supporters and thus as ‘terrorists’. The degree of repression was not the only aspect in which the new political regime differed from that preceding the 2011 protests. It also relied yet more heavily on the armed forces which at the same time obtained new privileges. In a nutshell, it was the return with a vengeance of the armed forces that under Mubarak had lost some of their influence to other forces, in particular politically well-connected, civilian owners of capital. As a result, policies pursued under Sisi and his supporters also

differed from those under Mubarak; economic policies, for instance, sought to combine the ‘orthodox’ retreat of the state in some regards with the expansion of its role in other respects.

Institutions

As the armed forces concentrated all powers in their hands, they also began to reshape the institutions to their own advantage. In selective respect of the 2012 constitution the ‘general command of the armed forces (*Al-Qiyadat al-‘amma lil-quwwat al-musalahha*)’ called upon the Chief Justice, Adly Mansur, to act as interim president of the republic. By virtue of a constitutional declaration issued on 8 July Mansur dissolved the Upper House (the Lower House had been dissolved before, see above), formally assumed all legislative and executive powers, and put a – reshuffled – National Defence Council in charge of all matters pertaining to the armed forces. He appointed Muhammad al-Baradai (al-Barada’i) vice president and Hazem Beblawi (Hazim Bablawi) prime minister; the former soon resigned. Two committees, one comprising jurists and another one comprising politicians, were formed to draft and endorse in great hurry a new constitution. Almost as a matter of course, the state of emergency was reintroduced and renewed regularly since.

Promulgated in early 2014, the new constitution granted to the president of the republic roughly the same powers as had done the 2012 document. The appointment and dismissal of the government or individual ministers, rule by decree, and the declaration of the state of emergency had to be approved by the henceforth unicameral parliament, the Chamber of Deputies (*Majlis al-nawwab*). Again, the president could refer legislation back to parliament, but not dissolve the latter without a popular referendum. His own tenure remained limited to a maximum of two terms of four years each. In principle, the constitution guaranteed the independence of the judiciary and the irrevocability of judges; the independence of the SCC was even reinforced as the justices henceforth freely elected the Chief Justice and his deputies. Appointments in other courts and the regulation of their activities, however, were largely left to subsequent legislation and the Supreme Council of the Judiciary (SCJ) whose membership and workings were also governed by an ordinary law. The same applied to the State Council. The supervision of elections was again entrusted to a special committee composed of senior judges selected by the SCJ.

Military affairs were the preserve of the National Defence Council chaired by the president of the republic who was the Supreme Commander of the armed forces; at least half of members of the Council were high-ranking military officers. In addition, a National Security Council was formed to formulate longer-term strategies. Commander-in-chief of the armed forces, the minister of defence had to be a military officer. Within the armed forces, a Supreme Council – an avatar of the former SCAF – was set up. Civilians could still be tried in military courts, if indicted of offenses targeting the armed forces. Other bodies established by the constitution included the Central Bank and various state audit agencies. The constitution also defined Egypt as part of the Arab nation and established Islam as the religion of state; the principles of *shari’a* remained the major source of legislation, though without the narrow definition given in the 2012 document; personal status issues of Christians and Jews remained unaffected. Al-Azhar continued to be independent. The constitution recognized all fundamental liberties, including the right to establish associations and NGOs. The freedom to worship was nonetheless restricted to the three ‘Abrahamic’ religions, and the state regulatory body imposed on the media. Morally conservative values and an attempt to balance capitalism with social rights again permeated the constitution.

The recognition of fundamental liberties remained largely rhetorical as illustrated by heavy, generalized repression. In part such repression was governed by legislation and decrees that contradicted the letter of the constitution and the spirit that some of its authors hoped to infuse it with. As early as September 2013, the government abrogated legal safeguards against the unlimited detention of suspects; two months later it outlawed public protests. Both measures to all intents and purposes survived the promulgation of the

constitution a few months later. In December 2017 a new law basically closed the roughly one thousand independent trade unions that had emerged since the last Mubarak years. In 2017 and 2019 two successive NGO laws heavily restricted civil society activities; under heavy fines government approval was needed for establishing organizations, many of their activities, and receiving foreign funds; surveillance and supervision by government agencies were endorsed or reinforced. Rather than defending liberties, Sisi sought to strengthen his own position as president. Legislation passed in 2017 allowed the president to choose senior judges including the president of the Court of Cassation and the State Council, thus significantly reducing the independence of the judiciary.

Never satisfied with the 2014 constitution, Sisi had the document amended in early 2019. The amendments lengthened presidential terms of office by two years; they allowed the incumbent, in this case Sisi himself, to be re-elected for a third term and to appoint vice presidents. They established a Supreme Council of Judicial Bodies chaired by the president, recalling a similar body created by Nasser; its members were the heads of these various 'judicial bodies' – for instance the State Council or the Court of Cassation, henceforth selected by the president himself. They moreover empowered him to select the Chief Justice of the SCC from among its five most senior justices and reduced the prerogatives of the State Council. They finally re-established the Upper House (Shura Council), roughly in its previous form. No less importantly, they appointed the armed forces as the guardians of the constitution, endorsed their right to choose the minister of defence, and extended the jurisdiction of military courts. Nonetheless, the document reserved 25 per cent of seats in parliament for women.

Politics

Unapologetically repressive, the armed forces and their civilian allies immediately took measures to quell all dissent. In addition to Mursi, they had thousands of MB and alleged sympathizers summarily arrested and imprisoned. In response, the MB called for peaceful protests, even as other Islamist groups called for armed resistance. As a result more thousands of MB, their friends and family occupied the square in front of Al-Rab'a al-'adawiyya mosque in Madinat Nasr, a Cairo neighbourhood which is home to many MBs but also to many army officers. On 14 August the army and police attacked the protesters killing some 800–3,000 people, including women and children, depending on sources.¹

Repression forced many MB into exile. Some went to Europe, others to Qatar and Turkey whose leaders had supported the Mursi administration. Mursi himself was charged with a number of offenses ranging from breaking out of prison in January 2011 to killing protesters, spying for foreign powers, and leaking official documents. Initial sentences including death in one case and prison for life in another; appeals and other cases were still ongoing when Mursi in June 2019 died during a court hearing.

Repression also strengthened the appeal of the armed Islamist groups, commonly referred to as jihadists which had earlier emerged and which continued to grow in the northern Sinai (see above). Initially linked to al-Qa'ida, they largely operated under the name of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis; in 2014 they switched allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) and called themselves its 'Sinai Province'. The gas pipeline linking Egypt to Israel was blown up several times after 2011, again in February 2020.

Assassinations and bomb attacks by the insurgents and arrests, torture, and extra-judicial killings by government forces often led to skirmishes and even battles. While official claims that the insurgents received support from Hamas-ruled Gaza remain unsubstantiated, the conflict prompted Sisi to seek US and Israeli assistance (see below). Increasingly assassinations and bomb attacks were also carried out in the rest of Egypt where they targeted high ranking officials including the chief prosecutor, police stations and churches. In one of the most devastating attacks, in December 2016, a bomb planted in the Butrusiyya

church in Cairo next to the Coptic cathedral in Abbasiyya caused more than 20 deaths. A recurrent feature, violence against Christians was closely related to the clampdown on most Islamist groups.²

From early on government suspicion and persecution included political and civil society activists of all shades, intellectuals, journalists, and students – potentially everybody who could be suspected to be critical of the government.³ Among the few exceptions were the Salafis of the Nur Party who had switched support from the MB to Sisi, thus providing him with a religious fig leaf; by implication, the new alliance showed that the stakes were power and access to resources, not ideology.⁴ Censorship, government control of the media, a cyber law criminalizing innocent activities, verbal violence against opponents, attempts to tarnish their reputation, arbitrary arrests, political (mass) trials, the imprisonment without trial of tens of thousands of people, forced disappearances, and torture reduced politics to the emptiness of a shell.⁵ Deputies who defied or criticized the government were expelled from parliament. Pressure was put on the popular committees that at the local level had sprung up with the 2011 protests. Civil society organizations were prevented from convening round-tables and meetings, scheduling public lectures, or publishing research or policy papers. Among the many victims was Giulio Regeni, a PhD student conducting fieldwork who in February 2016 was abducted by ‘security services’, tortured to death, and his body dumped by the roadside. In December 2019 police raided the offices of Mada Masr, the last remaining critical media, whose site, however, had already earlier been made basically inaccessible for readers in Egypt. In early 2020 Shady Habash, a student in his early twenties, died in prison after two years of detention without trial for having written a song critical of the president. Such repression notwithstanding, the Arab Network for Human Rights Information counted 505 social and labour protests in Egypt in 2017 alone.⁶

Initially at least, repression was facilitated by the deep disappointment of many voters with the preceding MB government that had initiated poorly prepared policies only to reverse them, marginalized other forces, and attempted to monopolize power, even though it may have seen these attempts as legitimate self-defence. Exploiting such dissatisfaction, the new rulers blamed acts amalgamated the MB with violent groups and branded them as terrorists, an accusation quickly levelled at most other opponents or critics of the regime, be they Islamists or not.

Under these conditions it is not surprising that in January 2014 the new constitution was easily approved by referendum. This being said, official figures seemed more credible for the turnout, put at less than 40 per cent, than for the ‘ayes’ that allegedly amounted to 98 per cent of the vote. The same applies to the presidential elections in May 2014 in which Sisi stood after an officially orchestrated campaign of alleged popular support. He won some 96 per cent of the vote against 3 per cent for Hamdeen (Hamdin) Sabahi, a leftist politician who already stood in 2012. Once again, the landslide was marred by an official turnout of less than 50 per cent. Sisi took office in early June 2014. He was re-elected in March 2018 with 97 per cent of the vote against less than 3 per cent for Musa Mustapha Musa, with an official turnout of 41 per cent. Musa was a token candidate pulled out of the hat after the other competitors including Ahmad Shafiq, the former chief of staff Sami Anan (‘Annan), Khalid Ali, and Anwar Ismat (‘Ismat) al-Sadat, the nephew of the former president, had been discouraged, disqualified, or even arrested.

Elections to the new parliament were held from October to December 2015 with a turn-out of 28 per cent. Of the total of 596 seats 568 were elected, the remaining 28 deputies were appointed by the president of the republic. 448 seats were filled by majority vote in constituencies ranging from one to four seats, if necessary in a run-off vote. 120 seats were reserved for party lists (or alliances) with quotas for underrepresented categories of persons such as women, Christians, and youths. A list won all seats in one of the four electoral regions (roughly Greater Cairo and surroundings, East Delta, West Delta, and Central and Upper Egypt), if it obtained more than 50 per cent of the vote in the first round or the majority of

votes in the run-off. Roughly ten candidates competed for each individual seat alongside seven lists partly formed by different parties.

The elections produced no clear majority, if not that of deputies who had run as independents and won some 350 of the elected seats. Repression and restrictions notwithstanding, numerous political parties continued to compete against each other. The largest winners among the parties were the Free Egyptians Party (FEP, *Hizb al-masriyyin al-ahrar* founded and funded by Naguib Sawiris), the Future of the Nation Party (*Hizb mustaqbal al-watan*, FNP), and the New Wafd who obtained between several and a few dozen seats. Some other parties won between 10 and 20 seats, a dozen more parties fewer than 10 seats. Many parties had joined more or less shaky and ephemeral common lists. One of them, 'For the Love of Egypt' (*Fi Hubb Masr*) around the FNP and FEP was a secret service initiative.⁷ Candidates left of the centre including the Social Democrats won no more than token seats. The Nur Party got eleven seats, probably as a reward for ditching the MB. As already before 2011, numerous party members were elected as 'independents', which was perfectly legal but complicated headcounts. The assembly included more Copts and more women than any previous one. To an extent the fragmentation reflected Sisi's decision not to re-establish a dominant party which, like the NDP under Gamal Mubarak, could have developed into a power centre of sorts. After the elections his supporters including the FNP nonetheless promoted the creation of the unstable 'Alliance to Support Egypt' that was supposed to provide him with a parliamentary majority; though heavily courted, neither the Neo-Wafd nor the Free Egyptians joined.

The Major Actors and their Social Background

Sociologically Sisi, his government, and his close collaborators hailed from the same background as the vast majority of their predecessors since the 1952 coup. By and large, their welfare depended on salaries or other government-controlled resources that allowed them to increase the flow of such resources. More than ever they emphasized the role of the armed forces as custodians of the state.⁸ Many members of the former NDP resurfaced, supported Sisi, and won seats in parliamentary elections; rather than the revival of the former dominant party, the development illustrates that Sisi managed to draw support from the very forces that supported Mubarak. This being said, Mubarak and his closest political allies in the armed forces, the police, the bureaucracy, and the NDP were sidelined and failed to make a comeback. After January 2011 many of them were tried in court, including 'Izz, Rashid, and Nazif. Trials frequently dragged on, even in cases in which ultimately charges were dropped. Mubarak himself was arrested, tried, convicted in lower courts but acquitted in 2017; when Mubarak died in late February 2020, Sisi decreed three days of mourning. His sons Gamal and Alaa ('Ala) also faced a variety of charges and spent time in prison; an acquittal in early 2020 seems to have put an end to the judicial saga. Sisi also marginalized many of the former Mubarak cronies; those who resurfaced later did so in business but not in politics. Even economically, their role somewhat declined as Sisi preferred to rely on companies owned by the armed forces or their members and family. As earlier, the Sawiris brothers remained careful in their dealings with the rulers. Patronage did not disappear, it simply followed different rules.

From the outset a heterogeneous mix of forces opposed to, or disappointed by, the MB, the broader social basis of the Sisi government has been largely held together by nationalist and anti-MB rhetoric. The removal of the MB has served the material interests of various groups that the ancient regime in spite of policy shifts had co-opted over decades; though partly disappointed by the former military-led governments, these groups had lost positions and patronage when the MB took over, put its own people in command, and privileged its supporters and cronies, be it through interest peddling or policies. The framing of the MB as a terrorist organization and the launch of large 'national' projects such as the 'new' Suez Canal have catered to preoccupations with security and development that are shared by a majority of Egyptians independently of their social background. Some more gender-sensitive policies than in the past (see below) seem to have increased support from among women. However, simultaneously economic

policies discussed below have created more losers than winners; the losers include many of those who in 2013 supported the coup. The question is whether and when economic concerns and material loss weigh more heavily in people's minds than security issues and the distant and hypothetical rewards of large-scale projects.

Policies

Economic and foreign policies discussed below primarily revolved around the mobilization of, largely external, resources to keep the country afloat, dissatisfaction at bay, and the rulers in power. Especially thanks to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, these attempts until 2016 shored up a country that its supporters considered too big to fail, as well as its government. The subsequent agreement reached with the IMF was intended to ensure longer-term macroeconomic stability, though with immediate austerity-related welfare losses supposed to be reversed in the longer term. However, progress in terms of external and budget deficits as well as public debt as usual seems disconnected from anything like sustainable and inclusive development. IMF requirements moreover sat uneasily with simultaneous government emphasis on the role of the public sector, in particular its military components. Concomitantly, foreign policy also sought to limit external support for opposition in Egypt, in particular but not only the MB, and to combat real or alleged supporters of the MB abroad.

In spite of continuities other policies as well partly differed from those under Mubarak. As we have seen, most liberties were restricted even more severely than before the 2011 protests. With the MB in mind, Sisi called for the 'renewal of religious discourse', an objective that involved rewriting textbooks for schools and additional checks on preachers. These efforts led to conflicts with Al-Azhar whose independence had been strengthened by the 2012 law; its Senior Scholars' Council and the Shaykh al-Azhar, Ahmad al-Tayyib, resented infringements on their core mission but also opposed the ideas defended by Sisi. In 2017 the latter sought to repeal the 2012 law, but two years later settled on a compromise. Sisi's approach to religion seemed more ecumenical than that of most of his predecessors. Like them, he presented himself as a practicing Muslim; in public his wife wore a headscarf, a practice introduced by the wife of his otherwise repudiated predecessor. At the same time, though, he happily attended church services and partly relaxed restrictions on the construction of new churches. He also tightened and more consistently implemented legislation to prevent the sexual harassment of woman. So far without success, he sought to outlaw provisions that allow husbands to unilaterally divorce their wives. Nonetheless, government policies remained morally conservative, even though censors authorized a movie depicting a homosexual relationship.

Verbally at least Sisi promoted altruistic values such as self-sacrifice for the public good. He repeatedly admonished Egyptians including his ministers and staff to work harder and avoid squandering resources, for instance by walking to work when public transport failed or became more expensive. As already Mubarak, he put some pressure on owners of capital, not always successfully, to cough up money for common causes, including the Long Live Egypt Fund (*Tahya Masr*) created in 2014 to invest in development and social welfare. He allegedly halved his own salary, while the Egyptian armed forces 'donated' money to the country.

Economic Policies and Developments

When taking power in July 2013 Sisi and his allies were confronted with the same challenges as Mursi a year earlier. The budgetary and external imbalances had not improved as consumption and expenditure continued to exceed production and revenues. For decades, broader economic development had been fragmentary at best; hardly ever had growth been sustainable (or indeed sustained and sufficiently strong) or even inclusive. Neither were jobs, and even less so decent jobs, created in sufficient numbers, nor did a

transition occur to higher value-added products. Human development showed some but insufficient progress. With the coffers empty, the search for aid and investment understandably remained the major short-term objective shaping economic policy – as well as foreign policy (see below).

In terms of foreign aid, the ouster and persecution of the MB earned Sisi the support of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, but also Kuwait, who together, depending on sources, pledged and provided some \$20–30 billion in grants and loans. While the transfers by far exceeded the those that Qatar had provided to the Mursi administration, they dried up and basically ceased towards 2016, not least due to the falling oil price.⁹

Consequently, it became ever more urgent for Egypt to reach an agreement with the IMF that would enable it to obtain more easily support from other sources. As a precondition the Fund required deep cuts in energy subsidies – some 30 per cent – which took effect in July 2014 when smart cards were introduced to distribute the – limited – quantities of subsidized fuel. Reportedly, though, subsidies creepingly increased, possibly by 300 per cent till August 2015.¹⁰ Another precondition was the devaluation of the Egyptian pound in early 2015 by some 7 per cent; in early November 2016 it was floated and depreciated from the equivalent of 8 to 18 to the dollar. The immediate effect was the steep rise in the price of imported goods that accounted for much of the food, raw materials, energy, and intermediary supplies consumed in the country. Already two months earlier, in September, the government had decided to replace the sales tax with a value-added tax (VAT).

The IMF extended facility loan of \$12 billion was agreed in November 2016, shortly after the floatation of the pound; its last tranche of \$2 billion was approved in 2019. It was accompanied by about \$1 billion additional funds from the World Bank.¹¹ As already in the 1990s, the IMF focused on measures to improve macroeconomic balances. Under the agreement the government was also required to allocate around 1 per cent of GDP to social measures targeting specific social groups including women, youths, and the elderly. Structural reforms by and large emphasized additional support for the private sector. These broader concerns were broadly shared by the Country Partnership Agreement that Egypt had signed with the World Bank in 2015 for the period ending in 2019. The agreement with the IMF allowed Egypt to obtain additional loans of some \$3 billion from the World Bank and \$7–8 billion from other bilateral and multilateral donors. Negotiations for a new IMF loan to be granted in 2020 are currently under way.

In order to attract foreign capital, the government already in March 2015 invited potential international investors to a conference which ended in important pledges of aid and investment ranging from some \$36 billion to more than \$60 billion; other pledges followed after the conference.¹² A new investment law passed at the same time provided legal encouragement. Whatever the pledges, FDI to GDP picked up from 1.4 per cent to GDP in 2013 to 3.4 per cent in 2017, but obviously did not account for the balance.¹³

Where Mubarak in the 1990s only dragged his feet, Sisi attempted to combine IMF and World Bank support with overt government intervention in the economy and a strong public sector. Earlier legislation that over decades had selectively liberalized the Egyptian economy remained in place. However, people and firms that under Mubarak had benefited from political connections lost at least part of such protection. Within the public sector firms owned and controlled by the military and other ‘security agencies’ began to play an ever-growing role in the civilian economy, producing more consumer goods and building new roads and infrastructure as before. Many of them formed joint ventures with private firms in Egypt and abroad. Companies owned by (former) officers and their relatives also greatly benefited from these developments. New legislation made it impossible to challenge contracts awarded by government agencies in administrative courts. Military companies enjoy numerous advantages ranging from the forced labour of conscripts to tax exemptions and the complete removal of the military budget from oversight by parliament or public audit agencies. Interim President Mansur signed decrees allowing

government agencies to award contracts without tenders; legislation passed in April 2014 immunized government contracts against appeals in courts and in actual fact further strengthened the position of military-related firms. In the absence of precise figures, it remains unknown whether they have crowded out other companies or compensate for the hesitations of a cautious private sector. Estimates of the share of the military in the economy vary between 20 and 40 per cent of GDP.¹⁴ At any rate, the internal composition of both the private and public sector has changed compared to earlier periods, as has the balance between the two sectors.

The role of military-owned and related companies was particularly obvious in the large scale projects that Sisi launched in the tradition of the Aswan High; they played a prominent part in a package called ‘Vision 2030’ inspired by the Saudi Vision 2020 and similar GCC development plans. Projects included the construction of the ‘new’ Suez Canal, in actual fact the digging of a second canal alongside much of the old canal which simultaneously was broadened and deepened. Roughly doubling the capacity of the Canal from 49 to 97 vessels per day, the project was completed in 2015 at a cost of some \$8 billion, partly collected through public subscription. On the occasion Sisi sailed to the tribune of honour aboard the ‘Mahrusa’, the former royal yacht (which in actual fact resembles a smaller ocean liner).¹⁵ Another project was the construction of a new administrative capital some fifty kilometres east of Cairo, in the direction of Suez.¹⁶ Estimated at anything between \$45 and \$300 billion, the scheme, including the highest skyscraper on the African continent (345 m), has taken some shape since work started in 2016. Eight more new cities are planned in other parts of the country. Similarly, Sisi revived the Tushka project to claim new agricultural land in the Nile Valley. Numerous roads and bridges were built, and agreements were signed for facilities including a nuclear power plant in cooperation with Russia (see below). Investment in infrastructure may have reduced power cuts that were frequent under Mursi, provided they had not been the result of malignancy. Some 850,000 housing units were supposed to be built in record time but apparently were not.

The transformative effects of infrastructural and ‘mega-projects’ launched without proper feasibility studies remain in the dark. The initial main contractor for the new capital, a company based in the UAE and closely related to its ruling family, withdrew early in the process; in 2017, a Chinese company also withdrew, apparently in another reassessment of economic viability and likely profits. Numerous buildings have been erected, including a huge mosque, an equally huge orthodox Coptic cathedral, and a yet bigger presidential palace. However, house prices are unaffordable for most of the 6.5 million prospective inhabitants, in particular poorly paid civil servants; similarly, the issue of public transport in and to the new capital remains unresolved. The sale of desert land to contractors hardly raises the amount needed to build the city, except perhaps in those cases where Egyptian contractors are forced to buy and otherwise invest. In the end the new capital may be just another new town built since the days of Sadat in the desert around Cairo.¹⁷ The increase of traffic through the Suez Canal did not meet expectations; the slower growth of international trade, the transformation of globalization into ‘slowbalization’, and the diversion effects of the enlarged Panama Canal had not been taken into account (for figures see below).

More generally, ‘hardware’ such as concrete and mortar is not necessarily a catalyst for long term development, in particular in the absence of investment in human resources. Even in newly built schools and universities old-fashioned curricula based on learning by rote destroy rather than enhance human capital. Government hostility to any manifestation of criticism and indeed independent thought has not helped either. Under these conditions it does not come as a surprise that no shift from low to high value-added products has occurred or is in the offing. It is no less surprising that factor productivity remains low in all sectors.

Similarly, little progress had been made to reduce inequality and poverty that in different forms and intensity have plagued Egypt throughout the decades, with devastating effects on individual lives as well

as on economic development. Some of the figures quoted below may seem partially reassuring, but serious doubts persist as to their veracity, in particular concerning poverty. Most social and distributive measures were piecemeal and limited-in-scope decisions in 2014 and 2019 to increase certain minimum salaries in the public sector, in particular for civil servants. Incidentally, the government also set a maximum salary for civil servants amounting to E£42,000 per month, but faced with considerable resistance failed to impose it, in particular in the army and police.¹⁸ Financial commitment to the new pension schemes Karama and Takaful remained insufficient. Public health and education suffered from budgetary cuts, leaving the country ill-prepared for the – hitherto possibly limited – spread of the Covid-19 epidemic in 2020 which the government in many instances sought to combat through censorship.

Rather the figures illustrate that even before the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 government policies did not allow to surmount the major economic challenges including the creation of sufficient (not to mention decent) jobs for an ever-growing population (consolidated figures for the impact of the pandemic are not yet available). Growth has not reached the 8 per cent threshold widely considered necessary to create jobs for the roughly 700–800,000 new labour market entrants per year. As a matter of course, the ratio unrealistically assumes that growth translates into employment which frequently is not the case; the hydrocarbon sector in Egypt and elsewhere is only one case in point. The attempt to further reduce public sector employment may aggravate matters as the Egyptian private sector historically failed to replace the jobs that disappeared.¹⁹ Finally, rents continue to play an important role in the economy, with the associated risks such as Dutch disease and the whims of unpredictable rulers in labour importing countries.

If at all there has been development since 2013, it remained unsustainable, even without taking into account ecological aspects. The environment continued to degrade, challenges of global warming like the rising sea level ignored. To give only one example, CO₂ emissions more or less constantly rose from roughly 0.6 tons per head in 1960 and 1970 to 1.1 tons in 1981, and 2.4 tons in 2010. After 2010 they only decreased by some ten per cent, largely due to a decline in economic activity.²⁰ This being said, economic performance under Sisi has been heavily influenced by structural features and constraints that have (been) formed over more than two centuries. In actual fact, Sisi like his predecessors is part and parcel of the country's history that explains as much as the choices of individual presidents such disappointing outcomes.

In the meantime, the population grew to 84 million in 2015 and more than 100 million in 2020. Annual population growth increased to 2.4 per cent in 2013 but fell again to some 1.9 per cent in 2017. Life expectancy continued to rise, if slowly, to 71 years in 2013 and 71.6 years in 2017. Population density reached about 1,500 people per square kilometre in the Nile Valley and Delta, compared to 500 in the Netherlands, Europe's most densely populated county. The population of Cairo and its agglomeration alone reached some 19.6 million, compared to 3.6 million in 1960. The overall non-gendered literacy rate declined from its 2013 peak of 75 per cent to 71 per cent in 2017.²¹

Officially recorded unemployment decreased from about 13 per cent to less than 12 per cent but among youths remained at 26–30 per cent. According to estimates, informal employment in 2017 continued to amount to 52 per cent of total employment.²²

Real GDP growth increased from 1.8 per cent in 2011 to 5.5 per cent in 2019; the heavy devaluation of the Egyptian pound in 2016 temporarily entailed an inflation rate of almost 30 per cent and in dollar terms reduced total GDP to about \$302 billion. Per capita GDP in PPP of constant US dollars rose only moderately from some \$11,000 in 2011 to roughly \$12,000 in 2018. After 2013 gross fixed capital formation oscillated around 13–15 per cent of GDP, compared to 28 per cent in the period 1987–1991, and 19 per cent until 2001 (and against a world average of 23 per cent in 2014). The savings ratio, though,

fell from a little more than 10 per cent in 2013 to less than 7 per cent in 2017.²³ Total factor productivity remained as low as in 2011, declining to what it was in the mid-1950s.

The declining oil price and other adverse developments notwithstanding, rents continued to play an important role in the economy. Remittances rose from some 6 per cent of GDP in 2013 to 10 per cent in and after 2017²⁴ (figures for the period after the outright collapse of the oil price in early 2020 and related losses of income and jobs are not available yet); royalties from the Suez Canal remained roughly stable in absolute terms – some \$4.5–6 billion per annum, corresponding to 1.5–1.6 per cent of GDP in the years 2014–16 and about 2 per cent in 2019; contrary to expectations, the ‘new’ canal failed to increase revenues beyond \$5.7 billion in 2018. Tourism remained volatile, amounting to 2.2 per cent of GDP in 2014/15, and only half that amount a year later, and some 5 per cent in 2019.²⁵

The current account which was already negative in 2013 continued to show a deficit between 1 and 6 per cent per annum.²⁶ The budget deficit first remained at around 12 per cent of GDP, but after 2017 fell to some 8 per cent in 2013/14. Interestingly, defence spending under Sisi further decreased to below 2 per cent to GDP, even though arms purchases increased by 215 per cent between 2013 and 2017. Total public debt increased from about 84 per cent to GDP in 2013 to 96.9 per cent in 2015/16; external public debt stood at 7.8 per cent and domestic debt at 89.1 per cent. Nonetheless, total currency reserves which in 2013 covered less than three months of imports by 2017 covered almost six months of imports; in the same period they rose from about 35 to 44 per cent of external debt.²⁷

Figures confirm the important, even growing, role of the public sector in the economy. Under Sisi government revenues continued to account for about 20 per cent or more of GDP and public expenditure for about 30 per cent or more. Food subsidies increased by 0.5 per cent of GDP as energy subsidies were cut from about 6 to 3.3 per cent of GDP between 2013/14 and 2015/16. The share of domestic credit to the private sector climbed by 2019 again to some 33 per cent to GDP, but remained well below the 54 per cent in 2003. Public and private investment each dropped to some 5–6 per cent of GDP in 2016. The savings ratio dropped to below 7 per cent of GDP.²⁸ In the World Bank’s ‘Ease of doing business’ index Egypt remained in the bottom league; in 2019 it ranked 120 out of 190 countries, against 94 in 2011 and 141 in 2006.²⁹ Nonetheless, foreign direct investment rose from 1.45 per cent in 2013 to 3.41 per cent of GDP in 2017, largely to revive hydrocarbon production. Total FDI stocks by 2017 attained \$109 billion (compared to a GDP of some \$235 billion).³⁰

After 2013 the officially calculated Gini coefficient remained in the lower thirties, at 31 in 2016.³¹ The ratio of wages to GDP continued to sink. Historically consistent, taxation hardly helped the cause of equality as about one half to two thirds continued to originate in indirect taxes including excise duties. The rest originated in direct taxes, largely levied on companies; no more than 5–8 per cent was income tax. Income from labour was taxed more heavily than from capital. The effects of the new VAT were necessarily regressive, even though it included a variety of exemptions for the least well off; only minor attempts were made to raise additional tax from high incomes, property, or capital.³² As to the HDI, it continued its constant rise to 0.696 in 2017.³³ However, numerous more specific indicators remained preoccupying; thus the percentage of stunted children remained in the range of 20–35 per cent recorded since the late 1980s. Rather surprisingly, the percentage of Egyptians living on less than \$5.50 at PPP allegedly dropped in 2015 to 61 per cent.³⁴

External Relations

The Main Issues

Under President Sisi foreign policy has come to focus on two main objectives. The first was to consolidate, strengthen, and ‘secure’ his rule in a context of domestic uncertainty. None of his predecessors who at times felt embattled at home used foreign policy as openly as Sisi for such purposes. Partly out of spite, partly out of fear, Sisi not only stepped up repression at home, but also tried to combat, snub, or sideline external actors who to various degrees had maintained working relations with the MB, including the Obama administration.³⁵ Conflating the security of his government with those of the country, the policy was rationalized as part of the fight against international terrorism. The second major objective was, once again, to ensure the economic survival of the country and to promote economic development in the longer term. Considering the economic difficulties, the quest for independence from decisions made outside the country has in many ways become or remained a rhetorical exercise. The quest for regional influence has been moderately more successful, but only in areas and places where Egyptian interests converged with those of more resourceful actors.

Misgivings about earlier ties with the MB aside, Sisi understood the need to maintain good working relations with the Obama administration, even though it criticized Egypt’s human rights record and between 2013 and 2015 withheld some military aid. Relations with the US thrived again as soon as Donald Trump was inaugurated as president in 2017. During Obama’s tenure Sisi never visited Washington once; the only time he met with Obama was in September 2014 at the UN in New York. In contrast, in 2017 and 2018 alone he met with Trump five times. The latter not only publicly admired Sisi’s elegant shoes when they met in Riyadh in May 2017, but he also fully embraced Sisi’s claim that domestically and internationally the fight against terrorism had to be given absolute priority, at the price of crushing non-violent opposition and suspending fundamental liberties. Still, even after Trump’s election victory Congress cut some military aid out of concerns for human rights and the fate of civil society organizations.³⁶

Displeased with the Obama administration and keen to exploit changing global equilibria, Sisi more than Mubarak sought to diversify alliances and sources of support. Relations improved in particular with Russia which made all possible efforts to prove wrong Obama who had called it a ‘regional power’. From the beginning of the contestation in 2011 it shored up the embattled Assad government in Damascus; in 2015 it even stationed fighter aircraft at the Humaimim air base in the north of the country which fought on the government side, occasionally even against the EI. Together with Iran, Hizb Allah, and other allies, it enabled Assad to retake much of the territory he had lost in the internal conflicts after 2011. Russia was no less determined and successful in Ukraine where the Maidan protests in Kiev in February 2014 first seemed to weaken its position. After pro-Russian President Victor Yanukovich had to resign, Moscow armed militias in the Eastern parts of the country that opposed the rapprochement with the EU; in late February and March 2014 it sent troops to the Crimea and then annexed it, thus amputating Ukraine of part of its territory. Closely related to the Syria issue, the intervention in Ukraine reinforced the message that Russia was a reliable ally which never abandoned its partners. Consistent with its global ambitions, Russia generally tried to strengthen ties with other countries, not least in the Middle East, a policy that dovetailed with Egypt’s attempts to diversify its own external relations. No doubt, Sisi also appreciated that unlike the US and Europe, Russia never berated him on the respect for human rights and democratic procedures.

The Quest for ‘Security’

From the US, its major partner in the area of security cooperation, Egypt has managed to obtain military aid that since 1983 roughly amounts to \$1.3 billion per year while economic aid had decreased substantially (see above). For the sake of comparison, total revenue in the 2018–19 budget amounted to some \$50 billion (E£990 bn at an exchange rate of 17.5:1), with expenditure projected to reach \$74 billion (E£1,400 bn). Since 2012, the US Congress has partly conditioned aid on the respect of human

rights and democratic procedures; consequently, up to about 20 per cent of allocated funds have at times been withheld for non-compliance. After years of hesitation Egypt in 2018 accepted that sensitive electronic components of US supplied weapons may only be maintained by US personnel; while enhancing performance and future access to advanced weapons, the agreement may also limit Egyptian autonomy.³⁷

In parallel, the Sisi administration has signed contracts with Russia to buy fighter planes, helicopters, and surface to air missiles. Another agreement seems to allow Russian military aircraft to use Egyptian air space and vice versa.³⁸ Important contracts have also been signed with French companies which, through government-guaranteed export loans, supplied Egypt with frigates and fighter aircraft.

Alongside Israel, the US also provided technical and operational support in the fight against armed groups in Northern Sinai that had already begun under Mubarak and after 2011 increasingly attracted Islamist fighters from Egypt and abroad; commonly referred to as jihadists, these groups included Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis which in 2014 claimed allegiance to the Islamic State (see above).³⁹ In response to the attacks against Israeli soldiers and border installations in 2011 and 2012, Tel Aviv approved Egyptian military deployments in Sinai beyond the restrictions of the 1979 treaty. According to various sources, Israeli helicopters and drones have backed up Egyptian forces since 2018.⁴⁰

Such – largely secret – military cooperation was part and parcel of a broader convergence of views between the Sisi and Netanyahu governments. Both sought to contain Hamas which after 2007 definitely dominated the Gaza Strip. Both claimed that Hamas posed a threat to the security of their countries, partly because of its relations with other actors such as Iran, partly because of the armed attacks that it carried out or condoned. The Sisi government considered it as a close ally of the MB that alongside the jihadists became the main targets in its self-declared war on terrorism. Soon the Egyptian army broadened the buffer zone with the Gaza Strip to a full kilometre which involved the destruction of numerous homes on the Egyptian side of the border; similarly, it flooded or otherwise destroyed tunnels linking the Gaza Strip to Egypt. Unable to dislodge Hamas, the Sisi government nonetheless continued to mediate between it and the OLP. It also brokered successive ceasefires between Hamas and Israel, and hosted a conference to raise some \$4 billion for the reconstruction of Gaza.

Relations with Iran were heavily burdened by the latter's support for Hamas, its earlier proximity to the Mursi administration, and its general hostility to allies of the US; however, if they deteriorated, they did not take the bellicose turn that marked relations between Iran and Sisi's resourceful backers in the Gulf after the advent of Salman as King of Saudi Arabia in January 2015 and his son Muhammad bin Salman as minister of defence. In need of economic support, Egypt joined an informal and partly contradictory entente that united Saudi Arabia, the UAE, other Sunni Arab governments, Israel, and the US against an Iranian-led camp predominantly consisting of Shi'i forces. Egypt subscribed to claims that Iran intended to produce nuclear weapons, failed to respect the July 2015 'nuclear' accord with the permanent members of the Security Council and Germany ('P5+1'), sought to extend its influence in Arab states, for this purpose backed Hizb Allah and Hamas, and threatened the supply of oil to the rest of the world. After 2015 Egypt also sided with Saudi Arabia and the UAE which accused Iran of supporting the Huthi rebels in Yemen; however, it refused to dispatch troops, no doubt remembering Nasser's misfortunes a few decades earlier, and remained sceptical of the plan to establish a 'Middle Eastern NATO', a new collective security scheme that its allies and the US wanted to include Israel.⁴¹

Tensions also rose with Qatar that had shored up the Mursi administration and allegedly continued to promote international terrorism. In the process, the Al-Jazeera office in Cairo was closed and some of its staff were arrested. In June 2017 Sisi endorsed the boycott that Saudi Arabia and the UAE imposed on their fellow GCC member for failing to toe their anti-Iranian and anti-MB line. Probably their concerns

were heightened by Qatari support for Syrian rebels close to the MB who opposed President Asad. They all agreed on the need to fight the MB, even though they differed, sometimes strongly, as to the part Asad could or should play in that endeavour.

Relations with Turkey, Mursi's other ally, followed the same trajectory, and this all the more so as Ankara admitted many Egyptian MB who fled the 2013 coup. They rapidly descended into verbal warfare over alleged support for terrorism, punctuated by various other expressions of hostility. Naturally Turkey's close ties with Qatar did not help. Though temporarily downgraded, diplomatic relations between Ankara and Cairo nonetheless survived.

In Libya the priority of the Sisi administration was to fight Islamists whom they considered close to the MB or otherwise hostile. More generally, it sought to influence events in a neighbouring country rich in hydrocarbons, traditionally with a large number of Egyptian labour migrants – some 700,000 in 2011 (that obviously fell after the beginning of internal wars in Libya).⁴² Like in Syria, the 2011 protests and their repression had deepened societal cleavages and weakened a government with a limited social base. Unlike in Syria, foreign air strikes delivered it the death knell, brought down the entire political regime, and allowed rival armed groups to thrive on its ruins. Qaddafi fled and was later killed without ever standing trial. In this context Egypt established close ties with groups amenable to its interests and able to confront its adversaries. In 2015 after the abduction and summary execution of some twenty Egyptian migrant workers, all Christians, it bombed alleged positions of the Islamic State that had claimed responsibility for the massacre. It strongly backed Khalifa al-Haftar, the self-appointed field marshal of the Libyan National Army who became the strongman of the Eastern parts of the country. However, Haftar's possibly temporary success owes as much or more to support from Saudi Arabia and the UAE whose interests converge with those of Egypt. Incidentally, Haftar also counted Islamist fighters among his supporters, though not of the variety that had fallen in disgrace in Egypt.

Nor did ties with Sudan suffer from President Omar al-Bashir's domestic alliance with Islamists. Sisi met Bashir several times and never supported the protests that in 2019 led to the latter's downfall. Under Sisi Egypt continued to criticize, even oppose, the construction of dams on the river Nile south of its border; at the very least the storage lakes would have to be filled slowly to reduce the impact on Egypt. Egypt remained particularly concerned over the Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia which had never been a party to the agreements governing the allocation of the Nile waters. After repeated tensions and fears of military action Egypt and Ethiopia expected to reach an agreement in early 2020. It remains to be seen whether the dependence of the three states on Saudi support and intense US-sponsored negotiations in early 2020 will lead to a lasting agreement. New large-scale reforms initiated by Sisi are likely to make the Egyptian armed forces more flexible and capable to intervene abroad more rapidly and effectively.⁴³ Such intervention would, however, damage Sisi's diplomatic successes in Africa, symbolized by his election in 2019 to the presidency of the African Union (AU), the successor of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which is headquartered in Addis Ababa.

The Quest for Renewed Economic Growth and Development

In spite of considerable disagreements with the Obama administration, Sisi and his government continued to look to the US as their major economic partner next to the European Union (EU). Direct economic aid had been progressively reduced over the years, from more than \$1 billion p.a. in the period 1979–1987 to between \$130k and \$230k after 2013.⁴⁴ However, in terms of trade and investment the US generally played a lesser role; in 2014, for instance, it accounted for no more than 4.2 per cent of Egyptian exports against 9 per cent for Italy. Similarly, in 2016 it accounted for some 13.7 per cent of foreign direct investment in Egypt against 41.2 per cent from the UK. Non-EU countries including Russia and China

accounted only for a fraction of trade and investment.⁴⁵ Obviously, the US administration also continued to heavily influence funding decisions made by the ifis.

With the EU the Sisi administration negotiated a new ‘partnership’ agreement for the period 2017–20, supposedly to promote sustainable economic and social development, good governance, rule of law, human rights, migration policies, and cooperation in matters of security and counterterrorism. The document explicitly endorsed Egypt’s ‘Sustainable Development Strategy – Vision 2030’, a general blueprint inspired by the far more ambitious Saudi Arabian Vision 2030. In and around 2018 EU (excluding member states) assistance to Egypt amounted to an annual €1.3 bn,⁴⁶ roughly the amount of US military aid.

Sisi also turned to Russia whose financial capacity was far more limited. In November 2015 the two sides signed an agreement to build Egypt’s first nuclear power plant. Located in al-Dabaa (al-Dab’a) near Marsa Matruh on the Northern coast, the plant is built by Russian companies and financed through a government loan of the equivalent of \$25 billion over 35 years. Russian companies invested in the new industrial zones along the Suez Canal and in hydrocarbon production. Tourism also loomed increasingly large in bilateral relations as Russians seemed less fearful than Europeans to spend their holidays in the seaside resorts of a politically tense country. In late October 2015 the explosion of a Russian passenger plane after taking off from Sharm al-Shaykh cost more than two hundred lives and temporarily interrupted the inflow of Russian tourists; some diplomatic friction arose when Moscow blamed the incident on terrorists operating in Egypt. Modest in comparison, loans from China for infrastructural and industrial projects nonetheless amounted to some \$3.3 billion in the period 2010–17.⁴⁷ Interested in the Belt and Road initiative, Egypt in 2014 signed with China a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement; Sisi visited China six times between 2013 and 2020.⁴⁸

The largest amounts of support were granted by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait which between July 2013 and early 2016 provided some \$23 billion in grants, loans, aid in kind, and deposits in the Egyptian Central Bank.⁴⁹ Their action temporarily stabilized the Egyptian economy and allowed the government to postpone recourse to the IMF. The sums were substantial even compared to Qatari support under Mursi that had reached some \$7.5; actually, all loans from Qatar had been reimbursed by July 2016.⁵⁰ Companies from the GCC countries were also expected to invest in Egypt. In March 2018 Riyadh announced an official investment envelope of some \$10 billion for the southern parts of Sinai in connection with the Neom project of a megacity on Saudi soil; a bridge across the Gulf of Aqaba was to link the Saudi and Egyptian areas of the scheme.⁵¹

Possibly in return for such largesse Egypt in 2017 returned to Saudi Arabia the two islands of Sanafir and Tiran at the entrance of the Gulf of Aqaba. Egypt had occupied the islands in 1949 with Saudi consent for reasons that after the peace treaty with Israel no longer applied.⁵² Apparently approved by Israel, the decision led to large scale demonstrations in Egypt and a protracted battle in its courts which the government largely ignored. Unlike his predecessor, Sisi thus managed to relinquish control over territory that most Egyptians considered Egyptian. At any rate, the need for Saudi support and Egyptian returns seemed to explain King Salman’s extraordinarily long five-day visit to Cairo in April 2016 as it earlier explained the choice of Riyadh as the destination of interim President Mansur’s first visit abroad.

The quest for economic resources manifested itself in numerous other agreements and initiatives. In March 2015, for instance, Egypt held a large-scale international conference to attract foreign investments. In August of the same year President Sisi in the presence of numerous foreign officials such as President Francois Hollande of France opened the ‘new’ Suez Canal to be flanked by new industrial zones for which some of these investments were sought. In November 2016 the IMF approved a stabilization programme built around a \$12 billion loan supposed to improve Egypt’s macroeconomic performance. In

2018 the governments of Egypt and Israel allowed private companies to enter into a ten-year agreement worth \$15 billion to supply Egypt with Israeli natural gas, thus inverting earlier arrangements that came to a halt in 2012 (for details see also economics section).

¹ According to Human Rights Watch the death toll amounted to 817–1,000 people; see also Brumberg, 2013.

² See also Brownlee, 2013.

³ See the annual reports by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International; Stacher, 2020; El-Meehy, 2017.

⁴ Lacroix, 2016.

⁵ For instance, on 24/3/2014 a first degree court in a mass trial sentenced 529 alleged members of the MB to death; In 2016 some 40,000 people were held on political grounds (BBC, 6/5/2016);

⁶ Mansour, 2018; also: Sayigh, 2016.

⁷ Bahgat, 2016.

⁸ See also Aclimandos, 2015.

⁹ Springborg, 2018, 175.

¹⁰ Sayigh, 2016.

¹¹ IMF DataMapper, retrieved 30/5/2019; Springborg, 2018, 175.

¹² Sayigh, 2016.

¹³ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

¹⁴ Sayigh, 2015; Marshall, 2015; Morsy, 2014; Adly, 2014; Saif and Ghoneim, 2013; Adly, 2017.

¹⁵ Mansour, 2018; also: Sayigh, 2016.

¹⁶ On the new capital, see: Dunne, 2016; Helene Sallon, “Sissy City”- un mirage en construction, in: *Le Monde*, 30/6-1/7/2019; Mansour, 2018.

¹⁷ The most successful project was that of Heliopolis (Misr al-gadida) built at the beginning of the 20th century but for ages an integral part of Cairo. As a matter of course the entire urban development of Cairo since the 7th century may be seen as the successive construction of new settlements next to existing ones.

¹⁸ Adly, 2014; Ramadan and Adly, 2016.

¹⁹ According to Sayigh, 2016 Sisi’s economic strategy rested on three pillars: foreign funding, mega projects, and administrative reform – including cuts in public sector employment much of which the president considered redundant.

²⁰ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.

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- ²¹ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019; Springborg, 2018, 185.
- ²² WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019; Sayigh, 21/1/2016; Ikram, 2018, 91.
- ²³ Springborg, 2018, 184; WB, WDI, retrieved 23/6/2019; IMF DataMapper, retrieved 30/5/2019.
- ²⁴ WB, WDI, retrieved 22/5/2020
- ²⁵ IMF, 2018; Reuters 4/1/2020.
- ²⁶ IMF DataMapper, retrieved 27/3/2020.
- ²⁷ IMF DataMapper, retrieved 30/5/2019; according to IMF, 2018 gross public debt (government budget, National Investment Bank, and social insurance funds) amounted even to 103 per cent of GDP in 2016/17; WB, WDI, retrieved 27/3/2020; Mansour, 2016; Sayigh 2016.
- ²⁸ Ikram, 2018, 92, 95, 98; WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019; IMF DataMapper, retrieved 30/5/2019; IMF, 2018.
- ²⁹ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019; World Bank, 2019. It is worth remembering, though, that the index is highly controversial and that it was subject of a major manipulation scandal in 2018. Besides, it is ironic to note that Egypt ranked better in the year of Mubarak's departure than at the height of the businessmen cabinet under PM Nazif.
- ³⁰ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Geneva, <http://inctadstat.unctad.org/wds/TableView/tableView.aspx> (retrieved 13/7/2019).
- ³¹ Ikram, 2018, 109; WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.
- ³² Ikram, 2018, 99ff; Adly, 2014.
- ³³ UNDP, 1990; WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.
- ³⁴ WB, WDI, retrieved 23/5/2019.
- ³⁵ See for instance his interview with the Washington Post, 3/8/2013.
- ³⁶ See e.g. Sharp, 2018; CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System) 22/8/2017.
- ³⁷ Sharp, 2018, 15ff.
- ³⁸ Sharp, 2018, 14f; on the broader bilateral dynamics, see Notte, 2018.
- ³⁹ See Ashour, 2015.
- ⁴⁰ See Sharp, 2018, 10, referring to 'Secret Alliance: Israel Carries Out Airstrikes in Egypt, With Cairo's O.K.', in: The New York Times, 3 February 2018.
- ⁴¹ On Egypt and its Arab and Red Sea neighbours, see Ehteshami and Murphy, 2013; Fawcett, 2019; Mason, 2017.
- ⁴² De Bel-Air, 2016.
- ⁴³ Springborg and Williams, 2019.
- ⁴⁴ Sharp, 2018, 23f.

⁴⁵ Central Bank of Egypt, Position Document, Vol. 57. (2016–17). In 2018 the countries from where Egyptian imports originated were: US 12%, China 8%, Germany 6%, Russia 5%. Major destinations of Egyptians exports were: Italy 12.5%, US 5.5%, China 1.5%, Russia 0.5%, according to www.bridgat.com.

⁴⁶ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/egypt_en/1156/Egypt%20and%20the%20EU, retrieved 7/12/2018.

⁴⁷ [Le Monde 15-16/9/2019](#)

⁴⁸ On China and the Middle East, see Ehteshami and Horesh, 2020.

⁴⁹ Egyptian minister for investment [Ashraf Sharaf to Reuters, 2/3/2016](#); for details see also Farouk, 2014.

⁵⁰ [Reuters 1/7/2016](#).

⁵¹ [Financial Times 5 March 2013](#).

⁵² For details see Dzurek and Schoefield, 2001.

Conclusion

Under the monarchy, successive cabinets and the King in spite of generally limited ambitions, important external constraints, and considerable domestic challenges managed to formulate and partly implement policies in a variety of areas. Like in any other country, such capacity was the product of institutions that allowed the rulers to translate their decisions with – relative – efficiency into change on the ground. It was reinforced by the existence of a community of loyalty and solidarity that was by and large co-extensive with the population of the state.

The various hierarchical levels and specialist branches of the bureaucracy such as ministries, police forces, or tax offices in spite of their shortcomings contributed to the implementation of these policies. Those in power and office also established new agencies such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and its social centres in the countryside that in many ways broke new ground and brought tangible relief and services to many Egyptians. Through positive and negative incentives ranging from sanctions and benefits to taxation, tariffs, and loans for manufacturing industries government mobilized and harnessed actors and limited resources. Much of the same applies to other policy areas such as the unification of the court and legal system in the wake of the Montreux Convention. Probably less initiatives succeeded than got bogged down and petered out, but those which succeeded attest to – limited – policy making capacity.

At the same time, limited government action spurred on numerous groups and associations – civil society organizations in today’s language – to conceive projects that in the broader sense were intended to promote human development in the country. Their implementation and their impact on minds and on the ground attest to the effectiveness of solidarities among Egyptians of different social backgrounds and thus to the, however relative, strength of society.

Increasing contestation no doubt reflected the declining legitimacy of the rulers and the entire political regime dominated by large-scale owners of land and capital – a process that contributed much to the 1952 coup. However, even the opponents remained loyal to the Egyptian state and ‘nation’ which for them had an existence independently of the monarchy. This applies also to many actors and forces who defended causes larger than Egypt such as the unity of all Arabs or all Muslims. Then as later, such broader causes frequently did not replace loyalties to Egypt which remained the innermost of a series of concentric circles.

In the area of foreign policy, decision makers succeeded in persuading, even convincing, their Arab counterparts to adhere to the League of Arab states, to abandon alternative projects, and to keep the League in existence. The King and his supporters who decided to take part in the Palestine War attained at least part of their objectives. Certainly, insufficient equipment, deficient weapons, and a host of other issues affected military performance and ultimately led to defeat – and later the 1952 coup. However, in the early days of the war Egyptian troops had advanced rapidly towards Beersheba (Bir al-Sabh) as well as Gaza (Ghaza). Though unable to prevent the emergence of the Israeli state, an objective possibly less central than generally assumed, participation in the war allowed Egypt to defend its legitimacy as a defender of the Palestinian cause against challenges from its Arab allies-cum-competitors. Egypt was not happy that King Abdullah (Abdallah) of Transjordan managed to occupy and annex the West Bank and East Jerusalem and thus a large part of the initially envisaged Palestinian state – a territorial aggrandizement that enabled him to rebrand his kingdom as that of Jordan. Still, Egypt successfully defended the Sinai and occupied another part of Palestine, the Gaza Strip. That the outcome failed to content the Egyptian MB and younger officers is another question.

The major foreign policy area where the monarchy failed to get its way were relations with Britain. In spite of repeated Egyptian efforts to end the 1936 treaty, including its unilateral denunciation in 1951, the British continued to occupy the Canal zone and stuck to the other provisions of the document. Nor did important popular mobilization culminating in armed struggle, encouraged and supported by PM Nahhas and the Wafd, help to dislodge the occupiers. Part of the explanation is that Britain in spite of its post-war decline in military and diplomatic terms remained far stronger than Egypt. The other part of the explanation resides in the ambiguity that many mainstream politicians and the King felt towards Britain. While demanding full independence, they also feared the rise of the extra-parliamentary organizations and more generally the social forces they gave voice to. Though apparently never surmounting the 1942 affront, the King in private tried to explain to – sceptical – British representatives that supporting his regime was in their own best interest. From an Egyptian point of view, the other major failure was the ultimate British refusal to accept the annexation of Sudan, a project that was nonetheless difficult to reconcile with Egypt's own quest for independence and the worldwide dynamics of decolonization.

The least of resilience and strength was displayed by the political regime as such which for much of the second half of the 1940s merely limped along before it quietly fell in the 1952 coup and expired. However, its collapse by no means affected the survival of Egypt as a state. The borders, territory, and population remained the same while administrations and other subordinate state agencies continued to work. Nor did the demise of the old regime affect the survival of Egypt as a community of solidarity, even though it perpetuated deep social conflict, with the only difference that cards were reshuffled between the formerly privileged and the formerly underprivileged. Repression and some violence notwithstanding, Egypt faced nothing like a civil war and, unsurprisingly, nothing like secession.

The establishment of the republican regime in 1952 first illustrates that the monarchy in spite of some strengths had become too weak to command the loyalty of crucial actors. The 'three-legged stool'¹ began to shake when the British were no longer able to support the Palace as they had in the past and the latter found it more difficult to balance lack of legitimacy and limited co-optation with repression. The survival of the new regime till the death of Nasser and ultimately till the departure of Mubarak (not to mention its return of sorts under Sisi) testifies to the ability of the Free Officers, their allies, and successors to establish a set of institutions, practices, and policies that were functional enough to withstand the tests of time, be it thanks to their adaptability. No doubt, institutions like the single party and 'democratic centralism' as well as policies like the nationalization of private enterprises had been tested in other places before or were simultaneously advocated elsewhere. However, they took root in Egypt, with the obvious caveats that apply to any institutional and policy transfer which always reflects local conditions as well. Neither the 1967 defeat, nor major earlier and subsequent economic challenges such as those in 1965 or in the early 1970s brought down the house or, when faced with opposition, impaired the capacity to mobilize and rally large numbers of Egyptians. Largely erected by people from the rising, educated salariat (which obviously included the younger military officers), themselves often from a background of small or medium owners of land or capital, the new institutions and practices owed much of their longevity to the benefits they provided to these social groups and to policies that strengthened them and their stakes in the new order.

Nasser and his domestic allies managed to partly implement ambitious policies, even if and when they were based on problematic assumptions, insufficiently sensitive to needs and constraints on the ground, or otherwise failed to produce the expected results. At home, they succeeded in repressing their major opponents, in particular the MB, and in reducing other critical voices to the limits of pluralism reconcilable with authoritarian rule. They broke the political and economic power of the defenders of the old regime through successive land reforms and nationalizations of private sector companies. They invested heavily in 'development' projects such as the heavy industries, the Aswan High Dam, electrification, and land reclamation. Moreover, they launched and expanded distributive and social

policies that enhanced human resources, reduced some inequalities, and broadened support for the new political regime, in particular among peasants and government and other public sector workers.

Internationally, the Nasser administration negotiated full independence from Britain and, for a considerable length of time, avoided complete dependency on either of the two sides in the Cold War. While prompted or facilitated by factors beyond Nasser's control, the nationalization of the Suez Canal contributed to raise resources for the construction of the Aswan Dam and broader economic development. In another illustration of state capacity, the nationalization did not affect navigation, neither at the moment of the decision in July 1956, nor in September when the company withdrew the foreign pilots who steered the vessels through the canal. Finally, Nasser managed to foster Arab nationalism without weakening the sense of the Egyptians to form a very special part of that larger concentric circle of collective identity.

However, the political regime also suffered from the shortcomings common (but not exclusive) to authoritarian rule; based on top-down decision making and implementation, it lacked mechanisms and capacity to critically assess policy aims and results. It facilitated the rapid growth of the public sector and the launch of the Five-Year-Plan, but it failed to anticipate or mitigate associated risks such as balance-of-payments crises. In the area of foreign policy, it led to major miscalculations with long-term consequences such as the establishment of the UAR and the lack of responsiveness to Syrian demands, the military intervention in Yemen, and the 1967 war with Israel. In the short term, though, none of the misfortunes or mistakes had devastating effects on the Nasser administration, the political regime or the basic ties of solidarity among Egyptians, not even their ultimate loyalty to their rulers. Most strikingly, such resilience was illustrated by the 1967 defeat that led to the Israeli occupation of the Sinai and its oil fields, the closure of the Suez Canal, the destruction of the entire air force, and many human casualties.

In the end, Nasser's policies weakened Egypt economically and internationally, reducing in both areas its capacity to catch-up with the major capitalist (and imperialist) powers which inspired these very policies. However, they did not weaken Egypt as a community of solidarity, nor did they entail the collapse of state institutions.

The changes that under Sadat marked policies and in particular the vast economic and external reorientation known as *infitah*, the political regime and politics all originated in a – realistic – perception of weakness and vulnerability prompted by the 1967 defeat and earlier policies. If the fundamental features of the political regime established under Nasser were to survive, some of its less basic, peripheral, aspects had to evolve. The dominant role and the welfare of the social forces that so far had carried the republican regime could only be protected by new economic and foreign policies able to generate the material resources necessary to achieve this objective. Even the more modest aim of keeping Egypt afloat required such new policies.

The new policies were successful to the extent that Egypt managed to wage the 1973 war sufficiently well to negotiate a political settlement with Israel and to obtain considerable amounts of foreign aid and investment. In the process it could reopen the Suez Canal and retake possession of the territory occupied by Israel, including the Sinai oilfields. Various difficulties notwithstanding, the government and the broader state apparatus managed to identify and mobilize, domestically as well as internationally, the means to operate the shift in economic and foreign policy and to use the 1973 war to that purpose. As under Nasser, the government's bid to strengthen Egypt could draw on sufficient intellectual, technical, organizational, and institutional resources at home and from abroad to make it work to an extent and for some time. In his dealings with the IMF in the late 1970s Sadat for the first time succeeded to drive home to Egyptian interlocutors that the country was too big to fail, or at least too valuable for their broader aim

to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the 1973 war the government could, once again, count on the effectiveness of nationalist sentiment and propaganda.

However, the government failed to make the new policies sustainable economically and politically; their design failed to pre-empt developments that undermined their very objectives, they were captured by politically connected entrepreneurs and crony capitalists, and their success depended too heavily on factors beyond the government's control. Within a few years *infitah* produced a number of economic drawbacks, in particular a new balance-of-payments and debt crisis, that could only be resolved with the help of the IMF. No less surprisingly, the negotiations and the peace treaty with Israel strengthened domestic opposition that ultimately culminated in the assassination of Sadat. The sad irony was that Sadat himself had first encouraged oppositional Islamists to turn against the left, before they turned against him. As under Nasser, a more participatory political regime might have helped to avoid these unintended consequences. For a time half full, the glass began to empty. Once again, policies meant to strengthen Egypt actually weakened it.

In spite of considerable, sometimes violent, opposition throughout the 1970s and the inability of the armed forces to spot the plot that killed Sadat, the events illustrate the resilience of the political regime and of basic solidarities among Egyptians. Neither the assassination, nor the harsh repression in its aftermath, nor the succession at the helm of the state degenerated into large scale violence or anything like civil war.

After the drop in the oil price in the mid-1980s put an end to rent transfusions from abroad Mubarak reluctantly embarked on a significant policy shift that again owed more to constraints than to choice. Primarily aimed at balancing the books, the shift entailed economic reforms that were more far reaching than those of the 1970s, but also measures to buttress them politically. From 1991 programmes of macroeconomic stabilization and structural adjustment negotiated with the IMF and the World Bank were adopted in the hope to overcome widening external and budgetary imbalances, to reduce public debt, and to generate the growth necessary to ensure survival, welfare, and regional ambitions.

As in the 1970s, the government mustered and mobilized sufficient domestic and external resources to translate planned reforms into policies that achieved some of the intended outcomes. Austerity measures entailed important, highly unpopular budget cuts that in particular affected public sector employment and direct as well as indirect government contributions to the welfare and living standards of numerous Egyptians; parallel attempts to raise revenue such as the regressive sales tax applied additional pressure on many incomes. Though technically a – major – component of adjustment rather than stabilization, the privatization of public sector companies further accentuated the trend. The losers included part of the traditional constituencies of the government, in particular government and other public sector workers. Though temporarily, these measures helped to improve macroeconomic indicators and demonstrated government capacity. It is true that in the broader sense structural adjustment failed to produce inclusive and sustained growth; it neither created enough jobs or otherwise reduced want, nor initiated a transition to the production of commodities with higher added value. However, such failure was less a result of a lack of capacity than of the underlying assumptions of such programmes – devised in Washington rather than in Cairo – and a lack of will in Cairo where the main aim was to use the reforms to cater to the needs of government cronies.

Crony capitalism at home and external support for the allegedly ‘market-oriented’ reforms consolidated the government and the political regime until 2011 when a combination of economic and political developments led to the demise of the former and a crisis of the latter. Authoritarian rule that had helped to implement the reforms came to be undermined by some of their distributional effects but also by opposition to this very type of rule. Nonetheless, the political regime was never even actually overthrown.

In and after the protests, its major component, the armed forces, continued to influence events; only two and a half years later they would claw back what they lost and establish a political regime yet more authoritarian than the one presided over by Mubarak. In other words, capacities in terms of policy-making went hand in hand with regime resilience and thus a capacity to survive.

More importantly perhaps, Egypt survived a government and political regime that in spite of their capacities were unable – and in various ways unwilling – to resolve its most pressing and basic development issues. Attested precisely by the protests in 2011, Egypt also survived as a community of solidarity: in spite of repression and divide-and-rule policies common to authoritarian governments they bottom-up organized sustained, peaceful collective action at a large scale and left the fate of their deposed leaders in the hands of the courts.

In the years after Mubarak's departure repeated and pervasive contestation ranging from civil disobedience to demonstrations and strikes obviously affected the workings of state agencies. For the first time since the 1950s, and in many ways for the first time ever, their procedures, measures, deficiencies, representatives, and staff were held to public account. No policy decisions were made in this period whose implementation would have tested state capacities, except for Mursi's half-hearted attempts to rein in the deficit. However, the day-to-day business of government never ground to a complete halt, nor did the wider state apparatus disintegrate. Trains continued to run (except when the rulers decided to prevent protesters from travelling to Cairo), pensions were paid, passports issued, and children continued to be taught at school. Economic growth slowed down, thus continuing a decline that had set in before 2011 and partly reflected the effects of the 2008 global financial crisis. Nonetheless state and non-state actors by and large managed to maintain a positive rate of growth, albeit insufficient to meet the country's challenges.

No doubt, continued popular mobilization, often with diverging objectives, entailed a degree of instability, not least at the level of the political personnel. However, protests remained largely peaceful and government responses under the SCAF and under Mursi were not marked by the violence seen in some neighbouring countries. Armed conflict in northern Sinai and deep political divisions throughout the country notwithstanding, the situation did not degenerate into anything like a civil war as it did in Syria and Libya.² In other terms, conflicts over interests, norms, and the future of the country remained, at least in this period, cushioned by basic bonds that still tied Egyptians to one another.

The advent of Sisi marked the return of overtly authoritarian rule unencumbered by checks or balances. In this context, his administration has illustrated its capacity to carry out ambitious projects such as the construction of the 'new' Suez Canal and an equally new capital east of Cairo. As Mubarak earlier, Sisi has mustered and harnessed the necessary human and material resources to implement a highly unpopular programme of macroeconomic stabilization under the aegis of the IMF. Once again attempts to rein in budget and external imbalances as well as public debt come at the price of austerity.

One major caveat is that the technical capacity to implement, build, and construct new large infrastructure projects has not been paralleled by a similar capacity to identify needs and justify expenditure. Work on the 'new' Canal and the new capital have not been preceded by sound feasibility studies; stalling construction work in the new capital and lower than expected revenue from the Canal illustrate the frailty of the projects and the broader attempt to project strength.

So far, the Sisi administration has nonetheless managed to convince or rather persuade the majority of the population of its capacity and legitimacy, to establish the hegemony of its world view, and to mobilize people for its policies. The question is for how long it will be able to gloss over exacerbating societal

cleavages such as those separating many Christians from many Muslims. The repression and ostracism of the MB has only reinforced a trend that continuously weakens the bonds of solidarity among Egyptians.

Worse, the new cycle of economic reforms has failed to address the seminal distributional and development issues. There are no signs, nor any historic precedents in Egypt or elsewhere, that reforms of this type will improve the material living conditions of the majority of the population and lead to sustained and inclusive development. Difficulties are compounded by the brain drain and disaffection which are the inevitable result of repression. Such failure puts additional stress on the fabric of society as it further erodes solidarities among individuals and groups. While temporarily strengthening macroeconomic performance, the reforms are unlikely to overcome the flaws that have historically marked the Egyptian economy including low factor productivity, lack of employment, the predominance of low value added products, and the almost permanent gap between expenditure and revenue, further exacerbated by the ambition to be recognized as a regional power. More than ever, Egypt's strengths remain fragile and increasingly depend on the perception of others that the country is too big to fail.

This account period by period illustrates that since World War Two Egypt has had a number of assets that set it apart from other countries that sought and later enjoyed complete political independence as commonly defined (which as a matter of course is a purely legal definition). A reasonably coherent and developed set of Institutions – in shorthand: ‘state institutions’ – allowed the government to exercise the monopoly over the physical means of coercion and to implement policies. The country formed a distinct political arena which channelled the competition for power and other interactions among the various players and by implication created bonds among them, be they based on cooperation or on conflict. The players themselves all belonged to, and drew their legitimacy from the same overarching community of solidarity or imagined community, even though until the mid-1950s there remained some doubts as to who was part of this community and who was not.

However, these assets or strengths have been relative strengths only. In many respects they have been truncated by the effects of foreign interference and domination starting with the Treaty of Balta Liman in 1838, even though it is by definition impossible to know what Egypt would look like without such domination. Part of their deficiencies may well have resided in the limited time frame in which they had formed or were formed: some three to four decades before the Treaty of Balta Liman came into effect, some seven to eight decades before the imposition of Dual Control and the subsequent military occupation.

At the same time, these assets were limited and eroded by a shortage of resources and the patterns that governed their distribution within the country. As an economy, Egypt throughout the 19th and 20th centuries never produced the wealth produced by its European counterparts (with the obvious caveat that in much of that period GDP or GNI was an unknown concept). Under the monarchy, after as well as before 1945, it was concentrated in the hands of a small minority of owners of land and capital. Wealth brought with it privileged access to other resources, educational and social, even though some of the less wealthy increasingly had access to education. As economic ‘development’ and social policies in the broader only occasionally and gradually emerged as areas of government intervention, related expenditure remained limited and the books balanced. The republican regimes far more heavily invested in both areas, though in different ways and to different extents. Despite all efforts, the country has not managed to climb out of the lower middle income bracket. Nor has the internal distribution of wealth and other resources become lastingly more egalitarian and defeated widespread poverty, even though it plays out in favour of groups different from those under the monarchy. In the early 1960s the cost of policies for the first time greatly exceeded the available financial resources and led to a first phase of fiscal retrenchment. Ever since, governments have found it difficult, indeed often impossible, to reconcile revenue with expenditure. No doubt plans to catch up with the major economic powers and social policies in the

broader sense have contributed to these imbalances, but so have military expenditure, the exponential growth of ‘security’ agencies, and fiscal advantages like subsidies and tax cuts for well-connected people and support constituencies of the rulers. Nor have matters been improved by debt service.

In many ways, therefore, the maldistribution of resources and life chances, the overall shortage of resources, and the fragile power of Egypt flow from a lack of accountability and the authoritarian exercise of power. Still, it should not be forgotten that even after full – legal – independence conditions, developments, and policies in Egypt have not been determined by Egyptians alone. They have been as much shaped by external opportunities and constraints, in particular those that in the international economic and political order apply to actors who have to rely on more limited resources than others. None of the broader economic strategies or, more modestly policy packs, pursued since 1945 have lastingly strengthened Egypt as a country or even the global influence of its governments. This applies to the considerable degree of economic liberalism (but earlier caveats apply) under the monarchy as much as to state-centred development under Nasser, the limited recourse to private capital and markets under Sadat, macroeconomic stabilization and structural adjustment and its avatars under Mubarak, and yet another mix of public and private sector, centralized allocation of resources and markets, under Sisi. No doubt, lack of accountability has affected outcomes in all cases, and so has no doubt the particular design of these policies. The question remains, though, whether external constraints did not condemn and thwart them anyway. From that point of view, it is only rational for a government to argue that its country is too big to fail.

¹ Warburg, 1985.

² See Kienle and Sika, 2015.

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In 2016 some 40,000 people were held on political grounds (BBC, 6/5/2016);

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