

# **EGYPTIAN SECURITY CONCERNS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

**LONG TERM STRATEGY GROUP**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper uses Egyptian military history and an analysis of modern Egyptian elite national security discourse to suggest potential Egyptian perceptions of recurrent external threats. This effort was undertaken on the assumption, developed in a separate memorandum, that Egyptian security fears may be part of a set of factors that could drive the development and character of Egyptian nuclear weapons, should such weapons be developed by Egypt. This effort was undertaken with the full knowledge that any findings generated would at best be preliminary and suggestive, particularly because Arabic-language material could not be utilized and the range of material used was relatively narrow, confined to works by or about Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat. An initial range of fears was identified and used to generate some hypotheses about the character of nuclear weapons and force postures with which the fears might be associated.

The fears identified fell into two categories: geographic areas of danger and functional problems.

Geographically, material from both the history of Egypt and the discourse of modern Egyptian leaders revealed recurrent land threats to the Nile River/Suez area from the Sinai in the east, and along the Libyan coast in the west. Of these two threats, the eastern approach represented the dominant threat. Again and again, from the time of the Arab conquests through the Crusades, the Mongol invasions, the Ottoman period, the French invasion at the end of the 18th century, and in the 20th century, Egypt has been invaded overland through the Sinai Peninsula. The 1956 and 1967 wars obviously involved invasions from the east.

Offensively, Ali Bey al-Kebir, an 18th century Ottoman ruler in Egypt, invaded eastward at the expense of the Ottoman Empire into Mecca, Palestine, and Syria, and in the 19th century, Mohammad Ali also invaded eastward into the western Arabian coast and down to Yemen. In part, this was motivated by fears of British use of bases at Aden to threaten Egypt from the east. The eastern land approaches have been militarily critical to Egypt for thirteen centuries.

Functionally, the modern period has been dominated by surprise and pre-emption. Egypt was the target of surprise attacks in 1956 and 1967, and Sadat concluded he too must use surprise tactics in his land attack at the beginning of the 1973 war. That conflict also demonstrated the value of narrowly planned, rehearsed attacks to the Egyptian army. The need for surprise also informed Egyptian plans for its 1977 clash with Libya.

The discourse of Nasser and Sadat showed that the geographic concentration of threats to Egypt from the east was in their minds. Nasser was particularly vocal about eastern invasions of Egypt. In his *Philosophy of a Revolution*, Nasser claimed that modern Egypt is a product of invasions extending as far back as the Romans, the Muslim conquest, and “the waves of Arab migrations that followed.” He continued to cite more aggressive invasions such as the Crusades that led to a “tyrannical feudalism” and the Mongols who “ravaged in their conquest of the old Islamic Capitals.” Nasser also referred to the French invasion through the east in a list alongside the encroachment of European converters, and to the Mongols in the Draft Charter of the United Arab Republic. According to Nasser’s close confidant, Muhammad Heikal, Nasser considered Egypt’s legitimate historic reach to extend as far east as Syria due to Thutmose III, Saladin, and Muhammad Ali – major influential Egyptian actors. Heikal pointed out that Nasser respected

Allenby's campaigns during the First World War, and thus learned a respect for and need to protect "Egypt's two lines of defense – the first from Gaza to Beersheba, and the second...along the Sinai passes."

Sadat made his share of references to historical threats to east Egypt. In a speech in 1971, Sadat referred to Egypt being exposed to invaders as far back as the Tartars and the Crusaders, in an effort to emphasize the need for Egypt to ally itself with its eastern Arab neighbors (Syria most importantly) to counter a pattern of invasion by outside forces. He also stated in a 1972 speech that Egypt should be vigilant against the historical Israeli ambition (supported by major international powers) to extend its reach from the Nile to the Euphrates. In his autobiography, Sadat revealed that the losses of 1967, and the intensive planning before the 1973 conflict, taught him that the vital pieces of the Sinai were al-Arish – the region's capital and most populous city, also strategically located on the Mediterranean coast for easy naval access – and Al-Qantara East – a city hugging the northeastern side of the Suez Canal whose capture would most likely mean capture of the Canal. Sadat also gave voice to the fear that motivated the offensive operations of Mohammad Ali, the fear of foreign bases in Aden.

References to the importance of surprise were also made by Sadat in regard to the 1967 attack on Egypt. Israel, he said, had the benefit of ten years of planning for a surprise, and he concluded that "he who wins the first twenty-four-hour encounter will surely win the entire war."

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# I. INTRODUCTION

This paper provides data and analysis that attempts to answer the question: what might Egypt's nuclear weapons doctrine look like, were such weapons developed? There are many factors that will affect Egyptian nuclear weapons policy, including levels of indigenous technological knowledge, access to foreign technology, guidance from other countries, the organizational politics of the security forces, and Egyptian civil-military relations. Most people would agree, however, that Egyptian threat perceptions would also have a major impact on Egyptian nuclear weapons policy. Threat perceptions, at bottom, are subjective. Fears are not always objectively justified to others, but matter a lot to those who are frightened. Threat perception can be based on painful experiences people have lived through or what they have been taught to fear. Therefore, this paper will try to identify what an external understanding of historical Egyptian national and pre-national experiences might suggest would be the major threats to Egyptian national security. But the paper will also draw on Egyptian elite discourse to attempt to understand the concept of strategic threat from their perspective. The working assumption of this paper is that nation-states such as Egypt have collective historical memories that serve to bind the nation together and provide shared lessons that often translate into policy, particularly under conditions of uncertainty, in which it is hard to characterize objective threats, but easy to act on the basis of what "everyone knows." It is through identifying these lessons, fears, and perceived threats from the Egyptian perspective that we can best anticipate their future conduct. In practice, when this paper refers to "Egyptian perceptions," it will be referring to the thoughts and biases of Egyptian leaders or their close confidants as revealed in their public statements and biographies.

Section II will explore the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology employed in this paper. To provide context on Egyptian perceptions and an idea of what an external observer might assess as Egypt's most persistent threats, Section III will provide a historical overview of Egyptian military history in the period spanning the Arab Conquest in the 600s AD to the 1977 border skirmishes with Libya, and will introduce the three major issues that dominate Egyptian collective history: 1) geographical threats, 2) the importance in Egyptian threat perception of military preemption and surprise, and 3) the need for self-sufficiency. Section IV provides evidence from modern Egyptian discourse – the speeches of Nasser and Sadat, and autobiographies and memoirs from other major Egyptian leaders – to assess the threats subjectively perceived by Egyptian leaders. The Appendix presents two reference maps – the first presents strategic points of the Sinai Peninsula, and the second presents a series of range rings that depict distances from Egypt in terms of potential missile ranges. The authors of this paper did not begin with a preconceived idea of which issues were important to Egyptians. Those issues emerged independently from the review of Egyptian history and Egyptian discourse. To some extent, the emergence of the same themes from two separate approaches suggests that these themes are likely to be of some significance.





## II. METHODOLOGY

As noted in the introduction, this paper looks first at Egypt's recorded history and then at the discourse of modern Egyptian leaders. Unlike the military historical texts, which at least in English are limited in number, there is an almost infinite amount of discourse written by Egyptians. Which discourse does this study assess? We chose to study English-language translations of primary sources generated by major post-revolution Egyptian leaders, mostly Presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar al-Sadat, but also works by Egyptian individuals who had influence on the politics or military actions of the post-revolution era, such as Mohamed Heikal and high-ranking military officials. These works include written papers, memoirs, autobiographies, and speeches. By looking at the national discourse, this paper identifies how Egyptian leaders perceived every major Egyptian military engagement. These methodological choices have positive and negative consequences.

### HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE-BASED APPROACH

Most accounts of Egyptian history cite the Arab Conquest as the earliest watershed moment that, by introducing Islam, determined modern Egyptian identity. Because of this, this paper looks at events from the Arab Conquest until 1977, another watershed moment and the last major Egyptian military engagement to date.

The paper places special emphasis on the major modern military engagements undertaken between 1952 (the Egyptian revolution) and 1973, a span of time during which Egypt was ruled by Egyptians and was militarily active. Between 1952 and 1973, Egypt participated in a number of conflicts, comprising a major part of its modern military engagements that were initiated or controlled by native Egyptians – as opposed to imperialist or colonial occupiers. This may be of importance since wars fought by or against foreign empires might be seen by Egyptians today as not reacting to threats to Egypt, but rather threats to Ottoman or French or British interests. The engagements fought in this modern period also involved weapons and capabilities more relevant to threats in the future.

However, focusing on a period of time which stops 40 years ago and does not take into account the effects of the following 40 years of peace on the Egyptian military may be misleading. As Roger Owens and others have pointed out, the last 40 years were a period in which Egypt may have felt threatened but actually accumulated little or no overt military experience. This must have had some impact on how Egyptians perceive threats. It may lead them to place a higher priority on problems of subversion, insurgency, and infiltration, rather than traditional military threats. Thinking along these lines, another potential contemporary development, the advent of an Iranian nuclear weapons capability, might create a need for an Egyptian nuclear deterrent, but not a nuclear battlefield combat capability. But in some ways this debate is not relevant to the question of this paper, which is how might the Egyptian understanding of its military experience on the battlefield over large spans of time tell us why and how Egypt *might employ* nuclear weapons if it acquired them.

The focus on the discourse of the Nasser and Sadat eras also downplays the Sunni/Shiite divide rather than making it the focus of the analysis. In the speeches and memoirs of the first Egyptian

presidents and their close confidants, they mention quarrels with other Islamic states, including Iran, Libya, and Saudi Arabia, but never in the strict and divisive Sunni/Shiite terms used in more recent discourse. It is true that Sadat had disdain for the policies of Khomeini in Iran after the fall of the shah. Observers today claim that Egypt would be one of the first nations to participate in a nuclear arms race in response to Iran's nuclear ambitions. This paper asks how Egypt might think about using nuclear weapons if it acquired them. The issue of the Sunni/Shiite divide is not irrelevant to that question should Egypt feel compelled to use nuclear weapons against Iran, for example. But the approach of this paper also allows us to analyze more broadly what fears, threats, or rivalries have *historically* plagued Egyptian leaders and affected decisions made *when they were most militarily active* (in the pre-1973 era). This analysis will show that the Sunni/Shiite divide is a sub-set of a more general fear of hostile ground threats or incursions from the east. This paper's historical approach also has the potential to reveal geographic vulnerabilities that have been recurred over time. By itself, this approach cannot tell us how Egyptians have perceived threats, as opposed to what we observe as the objective threats to Egypt. Hence, there is a need for a complementary effort to capture subjective Egyptian perceptions of threats. The paper tries to do this by analyzing Egyptian discourse on threats, as discussed in the following section.

## **DISCOURSE-BASED APPROACH**

In order to get at the mindset of those making decisions in the authoritarian, post-revolution Egyptian state we must rely on the documents that these leaders produced. This paper makes use of English-language translation of public speeches and autobiographical and biographical works generated by or about Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar el-Sadat, the two leaders active in the period 1952-1973. It pays special attention to speeches delivered by these two men to military audiences on the assumption that they might have spoken more directly to operational military concerns when addressing these audiences, so that these speeches may indicate what they wanted to do to motivate the military to develop capabilities relevant to the question of this paper. We also took into account other major speeches, however, because discussions of the conflicts were not limited to speeches to the military, and non-military speeches often contain other useful information not found in speeches addressing soldiers.

This approach has the potential to reveal what two modern Egyptian leaders – Nasser and Sadat – wanted Egyptians to be concerned with when they thought about their national security. The autobiographies, accounts, written works, and speeches of major Egyptian leaders during the Nasser and Sadat regimes were the best sources for understanding the perceptions of decision-making Egyptian leaders, who acted with advice from trusted advisors and officials, including Mohamed Heikal and Field Marshal Abdel Ghani el-Gamasy. It is important to note that because these are political and public documents, and are not from classified sources, they only show what the leaders wanted to convey to their audience – possibly as justifications for defeats, successes, or getting involved in military engagements to begin with. Though this might mislead us, it does mean that these documents provide important insights of a particular kind: most of the audiences are Egyptians, so whatever appeals made by the Egyptian leaders in these primary documents reflect not only their public justifications for their actions, but also what they perceive is the *best* public justification for their actions. Therefore, at the very least, these documents can help us identify how Egyptian leaders appealed to a collective mentality or accepted national

logic to justify going to war. It is with words that men are led and governed, and it is the words of these men that were used to motivate Egyptians to military action. It is reasonable to infer that concerns that recur in this discourse reflect, and were meant to address, the real fears of the audience.

On the other hand, words can certainly be used to conceal and misdirect. These sources may have been intended to draw our attention away from real fears. Autobiographies and memoirs, of course, have the potential for the author to skew events and decisions – deliberately or not – to portray themselves more favorably. But although a writer can attempt to retrospectively cover up mistakes, he can less easily direct the attention of his audience away from their real fears. There are large costs involved in misdirecting scarce defense resources by motivating one's own people to work on false problems.

Memoirs and speeches are paradigmatic examples of rhetoric. In addition, the meanings of words are ambiguous, and their meaning to their intended listeners may be different from how we – as non-Egyptians – understand them. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that we are reading these words in translation, and the translators' understanding of the texts may differ from their original intent. In this paper, we tried to cut through the rhetoric and ambiguity to catch recurring themes in Egyptian strategic discourse, such as the involvement of the international community and the importance of geography to the Egyptian political and military elite.

Finally, several cautions are in order: The sources used may not be reflective of the full range of discourse on the subject of threats, and at least one obvious line of analysis is deliberately avoided in this report. Despite its relevance to today's Egyptian regime, a discussion of the Muslim Brotherhood, its history, and its potential future actions will not be found in this paper. Instead, due to a proliferation of speculative literature on the trajectory of the Muslim Brotherhood at the Egyptian helm, this paper is consciously taking a different approach by helping predict future actions taken by those who identify themselves as Egyptians. A central assumption of this paper is that all Egyptians – including those in the Muslim Brotherhood – have a collective historical narrative that links them and their decisions.

Another option for researching Egyptian threat perception would be analyzing all media output leading up to, during, and after the major Egyptian military engagements. The approach taken in this paper is not as comprehensive and detailed as a media-based approach. The media, however, would not be as reliable an indicator of ideas that affect decisions as primary documents generated by leaders, because during the time analyzed the media was not usually a well-informed source. Due to restraints on press freedom and much information being kept secret, the media may have had a daily account of the thoughts of everyday Egyptians during the various wars and military engagements, but would not reflect the inner workings of the leadership. In addition, the media might well be less coherent and generally unhelpful in discerning patterns, due to the natural proliferation of accounts with ranging theses – all of which could be revised on a daily basis.

Last but not least, although the approach described in this section was initially thought to be the most useful method for researching an issue of this kind, it should be considered tentative pending the fuller use of Arabic-language materials.



# **III. HISTORICAL CONTEXT**




## **LOCI OF GEOGRAPHIC THREATS**

Throughout its history, Egypt was invaded many times. Most of those invasions originated from the east. Egypt did face threats from its other flanks, by sea, from the north, and from the west, with just one incursion from its southern neighbors.

## Arab Invasion of Egypt (600s)



### Legend

-  Site taken by land or sea
-  Estimated land route
-  Enemy actions from the east

The Arab Conquest, a noted feature of Egyptian cultural history, was an example of an eastern invasion. Egypt had been under Roman control since the age of Augustus, and with the creation of the Byzantine Empire, was transferred to Byzantine control with the rest of Roman lands in 330 CE. In 639, Muslim armies began their expansion from the east – prompted by the founding of Islam three decades before – taking Babylon and conquering the Syrian territory, venturing by land over the Sinai to Cairo to threaten Egypt’s Byzantine hold.<sup>12</sup> The Muslims would defeat the

<sup>1</sup> McGregor, Andrew. *A Military History of Modern Egypt: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Ramadan War*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006, 12.

Byzantine forces in Egypt, whose link to Constantinople had been hampered by the preceding Muslim activity in the eastern deserts.<sup>3</sup> The most important consequences of the Arab conquest of Egypt were the introduction of Islam to the territory – which spread in large part thanks to “large-scale Arab immigration,” poll taxes, and other measures undertaken by the Arab leadership – and the transfer of Egypt’s capital from Alexandria to Fustat (modern-day Cairo).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Vatikiotis, P.J. *The History of Egypt, Second Edition* (Baltimore, MA: The John Hopkins University Press, 1980), 12.




<sup>3</sup> Thompson, Jason. *A History of Egypt: From Earliest Times to the Present* (Cairo, Egypt: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 167.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 167-169.

## Fatimid Invasion of Egypt in 969



### Legend

-  Site taken by land or sea
-  Estimated land route
-  Enemy actions from the west

The Arabs ruled Egypt for four hundred more years under four different Sunni caliphates, the last of which being the Abbasids, who were overthrown by the Shia Fatimids. These Shiite Arab rulers developed a presence in Tunisia to serve as a base from which “to wrest control of the Islamic world from the Abbasids.” In 969, the Fatimids thus invaded Egypt from the west, from Tunisia, one of the few invasions of Egypt from the west. This was the first step on their way to the Islamic center in Baghdad.<sup>5</sup> Once in control of Egypt, the Fatimids developed Cairo, making it a real military capital, complete with significant defenses and appropriate palatial abodes for the caliphs.<sup>6</sup> The Fatimids were also the first to develop Egypt’s capacity as a link for international trade and introduced slaves into the armed forces, providing Egypt with the Mamluk caste, who would eventually rule Egypt via individual Mamluk leaders from 1250 until the Ottoman conquest in 1517.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 176.





## Crusader Invasions of Egypt (1097-1254)



### Legend

- ✕ Defeat or end of campaign
- Site taken by land or sea
- ➡ Estimated retreat route
- ➡ Estimated land route
- Enemy actions from the east
- Enemy actions from the north

Before the last Fatimid caliph in Egypt died and control of the territory went to an independent Arab sultan from Syria, Saladin, the Crusaders struck. They first organized at Constantinople, attacked the Turks in Anatolia, took Syria in 1097 and then Jerusalem two years later, and continued from their eastern origin to threaten Egypt overland.<sup>8</sup> The Crusades were an effort to establish four “Crusader states” across Syria and Palestine to control Christian holy sites: the

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 182.

County of Edessa in northeast Mesopotamia, the Principality of Antioch to its south, the County of Tripoli in modern-day Lebanon, and the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in what is today Israel and Palestine.<sup>9</sup> In 1164, the then-King of Jerusalem, Amalric, invaded Egypt overland from his base in Jerusalem, with “fighting rang[ing] from the Delta as far south as al-Babayn in Middle Egypt.”<sup>10</sup> Other Crusaders added to the invasion by laying siege to the port of Alexandria, and Amalric proceeded to extend his reach to Bilbays, leaving the road to Cairo open, which was only closed to Amalric following the mobilization of military support from other Arab leaders.<sup>11</sup> In 1218, the Fifth Crusade “invaded Egypt through the eastern Delta,”<sup>12</sup> landing at Damietta and threatening the rest of Egypt by land – serving as an instance of northern naval invasions to Egypt proper. The Seventh Crusade was led by the Franks in 1249-50 and struck again by sea at Damietta, proceeding to Mansura, where they were forced to retreat to Damietta due to the valiant performance of the Mamluk soldiers.<sup>13</sup> Overall, the Crusades were a religious and territorial threat to Egypt that used both the east and the north as bases from which to attack.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 184,




<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 190.

## Mongol Invasion of Egypt (1260-1323)



### Legend

-  Defeat or end of campaign
-  Site taken by land or sea
-  Enemy actions from the east

The Mongol threat in the 1250s, when the Mamluks were in control of Egypt, also came from the east: “The Mongols had swept out of their homeland, overrunning China, Central Asia, Russia, and much of Central Europe...they invaded Syria and Mesopotamia, capturing Baghdad in 1258...Aleppo and Damascus fell the following year.”<sup>14</sup> The Mamluks defended their land from Mongol incursion successfully, defeating the Mongols at Ain Jalut in 1260 and eventually “chas[ing] the survivors out of Syria,”<sup>15</sup> securing the territorial integrity of the Mamluk empire until the Portuguese bottlenecked the Red Sea.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 190.





<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>16</sup> McGregor, 21-22.

## Portuguese Invasion of the Red Sea (1513-1541)



### Legend

-  Site taken by land or sea
-  Estimated water route
-  Enemy actions from the east
-  Extent of the Mamluk (-1517) and Ottoman (1517-1541) Egypt

The Mamluk Empire extracted the bulk of its revenue from trade that was the result of Egypt's strategic position as the overland link in the international trade network that proceeded from the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea, overland through Egypt, and by sea again to the Mediterranean and the European continent. In 1513, just four years before the Ottomans conquered Egypt, the Portuguese saw another opportunity to monopolize international trade, after their discovery of the Cape of Good Hope. They sought to control traffic into the Red Sea and conquered Kamaran Island at the Sea's mouth.<sup>17</sup> The Portuguese proceeded to block foreign trade from passing

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 18.

through the Red Sea. Only in 1541, after the Ottomans had overthrown the Mamluks in Cairo and the Yemeni governor prevented a Portuguese fleet from traveling farther into the Sea than the ports of Suakin and Massawa, were the Arabs able to control the trade in the region.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 31.



easily taking Damascus and Jerusalem – opening the eastern land avenue to Cairo.<sup>20</sup> Ottoman rule lasted in Egypt for centuries until the British invasion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and ultimately shaped the fundamentals of the Egyptian colonial experience.

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<sup>20</sup> Thompson, 205.



## French Invasion of Egypt in 1798-1801



### Legend

-  Site taken by land or sea
-  Estimated land route
-  Estimated water route
-  Enemy actions from the north

The Ottoman period was one mostly of outward conquest as opposed to inward defense (see **Egyptian Offensive Campaigns**), with a few notable exceptions. In 1798, the French decided to invade Egypt. France determined that conquering Egypt would deprive Britain of its “overland communications with its most prized colonial possession, India, from which the British had ousted the French a few decades earlier.”<sup>21</sup> The French first attacked from the north by sea, landing in Alexandria, marching to the Delta, and battling a Mamluk army at Shubra Khit on the

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 219.

banks of the Nile.<sup>22</sup> A naval accompaniment followed the land assault down the Nile to Imbaba near Cairo, where Napoleon's army defeated the Ottoman Mamluks in the famous Battle of the Pyramids, securing control of Egypt for the French.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> McGregor, 36-38.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 38.

## Ottoman and British Invasion of Egypt (against French) in 1801



### Legend

-  Site taken by land or sea
-  Estimated land route
-  Enemy actions from the north
-  Enemy actions from the east

The Ottomans joined with the British to reinvade Egypt and wrest it from the hands of the French. Ottoman armies attempted to invade by land from the east but were stopped at Acre by Napoleon's expedition to Syria. They then undertook another sea invasion of Egypt from the north, landing in Alexandria but were defeated again by the French.<sup>24</sup> Eventually, a massive Anglo-Ottoman-Mamluk force marched from Rosetta, Syria, and Qusair and met outside of Cairo to fight the French, forcing them to withdraw from the capital while a British force in Alexandria forced the French out of Egypt.<sup>2526</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Vatikiotis, 44.

<sup>25</sup> McGregor, 45-6.






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<sup>26</sup> Bruno, Vincent J. *The Parthenon: Norton Critical Studies in Art History* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company 1974), 133.

## British Invasion of Egypt in 1882



### Legend

-  Site taken by land or sea
-  Estimated land route
-  Estimated water route
-  Enemy actions from the northeast
-  Enemy actions from the north

Almost a hundred years later in 1882, Egypt was still under Ottoman rule but European economic influence began to spread to Egypt, leading to internal unrest. This unrest “threatened the security of the Suez Canal and the collection of the debt” and thus “alarmed Britain and France.”<sup>27</sup> As a show of force, a joint British-French naval force invaded from the north by sea and landed in

<sup>27</sup> Thompson, 251.

Alexandria.<sup>28</sup> After a singularly British bombardment of Alexandria failed to overthrow the Egyptian revolutionaries, the British navy landed in Port Fuad, seized both sides of the Suez Canal zone to “preserv[e] their link with India,”<sup>29</sup> and invaded Egypt by land from Ismailia in the east. This led to the British occupation of Egypt, transferring control of the nation from one imperial power to another.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> McGregor, 166.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 168-9.

## World War I: Ottoman Invasions of Egypt



### Legend

- ✕ Defeat or end of campaign
- Sites taken by land or sea
- ➔ Estimated land route
- Enemy actions from the East

During the First World War, Egypt was a British protectorate and thus was the object of several threats and Ottoman invasion attempts to restore the Ottoman hold on Egypt. The Ottomans created a plan “to avoid the ancient ‘invasion road’ along the Sinai coast” – and by extension avoid the range of artillery from the British navy – and instead take a “300 km route through the desert to the Canal.”<sup>31</sup> In 1915, the Ottomans succeeded in crossing the Sinai desert from the east

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 204.

and made it as far as the western coast of the Suez Canal, but were repelled by British defense forces, which for two years built defenses along the canal zone to defend against more threats of invasion from the east.<sup>32</sup> The British succeeded in keeping Egypt from Ottoman hands and also eventually defeated the Ottoman empire – and with it more Ottoman threats to Britain’s hold on Egypt – at the end of World War I.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 205.






<sup>33</sup> Thompson, 271.



## World War I: Sanusi Invasion of Egypt



### Legend

-  Defeat or end of campaign
-  Site taken by land or sea
-  Estimated land route
-  Estimated retreat route
-  Enemy actions from the west

During World War I, Egypt also faced a threat from the west: the Sanusi, “a highly organized Muslim religious brotherhood with expansionist designs,” who sought to spread orthodox Sunni Islam across North Africa.<sup>34</sup> They attempted a two-pronged expedition: 1) “through the Libyan Desert to the Nile,” capturing oases as far into Egypt as the Kharga Oasis, and 2) with

<sup>34</sup> McGregor, 207.

“conventional confrontations with the British along the Mediterranean coast,”<sup>35</sup> which reached Mersa Matruh – both, however, being land invasions of Egypt from the west. The former was pushed back by the Egyptian army – or left to the dangers of the desert – and the latter defeated by British naval forces. The British were successful in maintaining the territorial integrity of Egypt throughout the First World War.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 208.

## World War II: Italian Invasion of Egypt



### Legend

- ✕ Defeat or end of campaign
- Site taken by land or sea
- ➔ Estimated land route
- Enemy actions from the west
- Enemy actions from the south

The Second World War saw its share of invasions of Egypt as well. During the war and British occupation, Egypt included the Sudan, which meant that Italy's conquest of Ethiopia and Libya allowed it to "threaten Egypt from two directions,"<sup>36</sup> southeast and west. And indeed they did: "The Italians delivered their attack from Ethiopia into British Somalia in June 1940, threatening

<sup>36</sup> Thompson, 282.

Sudan; in September they invaded Egypt from Libya.”<sup>37</sup> The conquest of British Somalia in particular threatened Egypt in two ways: (1) from the Red Sea, when Italy had access for several war months to strategic ports off of the Horn of Africa, and (2) by land, after the remaining enemy military position between Italy’s strategic ports in Ethiopia and Sudan, French-held Djibouti, had fallen to the Axis that year.<sup>38</sup> Within a couple months, however, the British had recovered Somaliland and succeeded in countering Italian attacks originating from Libya.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 282.

## World War II: German Invasion of Egypt



### Legend

-  Site taken by land or sea
-  Site struck by air
-  Estimated land route
-  Enemy actions from the west
-  Enemy actions from the north

The Italians were pushed back to Benghazi by British forces, but Germany sent General Rommel and the Afrika Corps in 1941 to invade from the west, from the Axis base in Libya.<sup>39</sup> Rommel would try to invade Egypt twice from the west. After being pushed back to Tobruk by the British in 1941, Rommel attacked again in 1942 and recaptured Tobruk – leaving the path to Cairo open.<sup>40</sup> Simultaneously, the Germans launched an air attack on Alexandria, meant to weaken the

<sup>39</sup> McGregor, 229.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 234.

British position on the Delta.<sup>41</sup> The British Allied forces, however, were able to push Rommel back into Libya once more after defeating his forces at al-Alamein, just outside of Alexandria, and “the last Axis forces in North Africa were forced to surrender in Tunis in May 1943.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 236.



strategic port town of Al-Arish in the Sinai in the course of defending themselves from Egyptian incursions. Israel was forced to withdraw from the Sinai in 1949 when the British declared that if the Israelis did not withdraw, the British would have no choice but to “invoke their security treaty with Egypt and commit combat forces against the Israelis.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Pollack, Kenneth M. *Arabs At War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002, 23.



## 1956 Suez Crisis



### Legend

-  Site taken by land or sea
-  Site struck by air
-  Estimated land route
-  Enemy actions from the east
-  Enemy actions from the northeast

In the post-revolution era, Egypt was invaded twice through its eastern flank, due in large part to the renewed importance of the Suez Canal in the international community and the new Israeli state in the region. In 1956, Egypt was presented with another invasion from major powers from its eastern flank when in response to President Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal that same year, the British, French, and Israelis launched a joint attack to recover the Canal in the wake of what they perceived as a usurpation of international shipping rights. Israel took a land approach to Egypt through the Sinai – conquering the whole peninsula from al-Arish in the

north to Sharm al-Sheikh in the south – while Britain and France bombarded Egyptian defense positions in Port Said from the air and landed reinforcements by sea via the north of the Suez.<sup>45</sup> A ceasefire was eventually imposed due in large part to pressure from the United States, “halting the invasion in its tracks.”<sup>46</sup> Overall, Egypt suffered a major military defeat, and its position was only salvaged as a result of pressures from the international community, but Britain and France did experience humiliation at their forced withdrawal and Nasser was able to claim a political victory by blaming the follies of imperialism. The most militarily victorious party was Israel. While it did withdraw from the Sinai, it was able to recover its “freedom of navigation through the Straits of Tiran to its port of Eilat,” and attempted to hold on to Gaza and the southern-most port of Sinai, Sharm al-Sheikh, “until it was persuaded to evacuate by U.S. pressure.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> McGregor, 253-255.






<sup>46</sup> Pollack, 39.

<sup>47</sup> McGregor, 257.

# 1967 Israeli Invasion of Egypt



## Legend

-  Site taken by land or sea
-  Site struck by air
-  Estimated land route
-  Estimated route by sea
-  Enemy actions from the east

In 1967, Israel experienced a clash with Syria over its hope to expand northward, launching air attacks on Syria. At the time, Egypt had a military defense pact with Syria, and, after being deceptively informed by several actors (the Soviet Union included) that Israel was building a troop presence on the Syrian border ready to invade, President Nasser responded by sending a

small contingent of the Egyptian army to the Sinai immediately after demanding the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers from the area.<sup>48</sup> Israel first surprised Egypt with a massive air campaign, raiding Egypt's airfields and crippling the Egyptian air force all across eastern Egypt. Then, Israeli ground forces invaded by land from the Gaza Strip, capturing the Sinai using similar routes to those taken during the 1956 campaign and advancing as far as Al-Qantara, Ismailia, and the Suez Canal due to an early Egyptian retreat from the peninsula three days after the war began.<sup>49</sup> The prime example of an eastern invasion, the 1967 war served as a humiliating defeat, one that would rock the Egyptian military and leadership to its core (Nasser even tried to resign immediately following the defeat and was forced to stay in power by mob-like crowds). Israel, on the other hand, gained significant land from the 1967 campaign, which they would defend throughout the subsequent war of attrition with Egypt from 1967 to 1970 and would eventually cede back to Egypt in its 1973 offensive.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 268-70.

## 1977 Libyan Invasion of Egypt



### Legend

-  Site taken by land or sea
-  Site struck by air
-  Estimated Egyptian land route
-  Egyptian actions
-  Enemy actions from the west

Egypt did suffer another invasion from the west in its post-revolution era, with its “four-day border war with Libya in 1977.”<sup>50</sup> Having experienced some minor clashes with Libyan forces along the border, then-President Sadat ordered a build-up of forces at the Mersa Matruh airbase on the Mediterranean coast in preparation for any offensive action taken by Muammar Qaddafi’s forces. Although Egyptian officials at the time claimed that Egypt had hoped to invade Libya and

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 283.

overthrow the Qaddafi government, the major part of the fighting occurred when an Egyptian counterattack responded to Libyan forces' "harassing raid" against as-Sollum, an Egyptian border town in the north.<sup>51</sup> The Egyptians "penetrated fifteen miles into Libya" and ended up retreating, resorting to air strikes on strategic locations across Libya instead, until Sadat called for a ceasefire as a result of American objections to a campaign meant to overthrow a head of state.<sup>52</sup>

In conclusion, Egypt experienced approximately ten invasions or threats from the east, five from the west, three from the north (from the Mediterranean), two from the north and east simultaneously, and one from the south.

## **EGYPTIAN OFFENSIVE CAMPAIGNS**

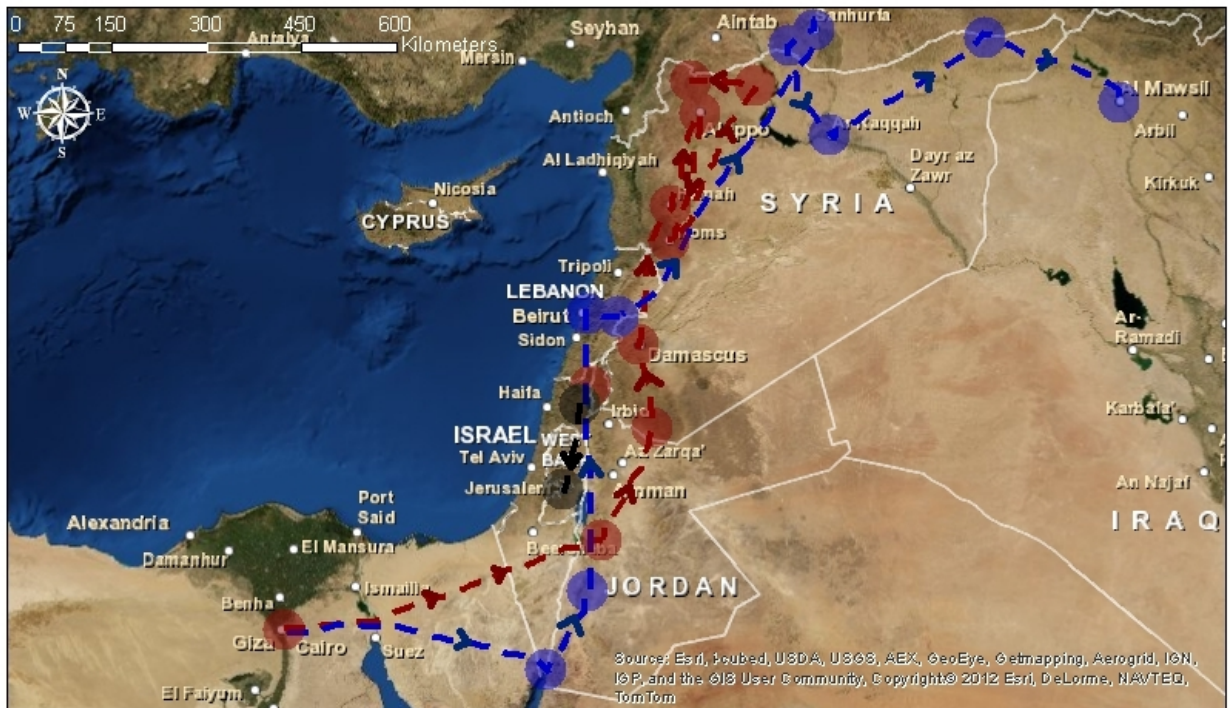
The biggest successes for Egyptians or Egypt as a territory rarely occurred in reaction to invasion; instead, Egypt or its handlers gained the most from a proactive approach to its surrounding territories, most notably those undertaken by Muhammad Ali but also those undertaken by other Ottoman, British, or Arab expansionist actors. This is relevant to Egyptian threat perceptions, since Egyptian expansion often led to foreign military action against Egyptian forces.

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<sup>51</sup> Pollack, 134-135.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 135-136.

## Saladin's Conquests under the Ayyubid Dynasty (1171-1193 CE)



### Legend

-  Site taken by land or sea
-  Estimated land route
-  Conquest of Syria (1175-1176)
-  Conquest of Mesopotamia (1182-1185)
-  Battle of Hattin and Capture of Jerusalem (1187)

The Fatimids were in control of Egypt at the time of the first Crusades and “spent [most of] their energies in repelling invasions,”<sup>53</sup> at a time of much chaos in the country. More offensive – and more successful – maneuvers were carried out shortly after in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, when Saladin, “often the hero of present-day Egyptian-Islamic-Arab nationalism,” hoped to counter Crusade invasions against Muslims, and so expanded his reach to Syria and Mesopotamia in order to use it as a base to further “strike at the infidels of Europe.”<sup>54</sup> He held these areas and in fact held against Crusade incursions in general from around 1170 to 1191.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Marsot, Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid. *A History of Egypt: From the Arab Conquest to the Present*, second edition. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 23.

<sup>54</sup> Vatikiotis, 17.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.



After the Saladin dynasty, Egypt was ruled by the Mamluks, who extended their reach east to the Arabian Peninsula – even Yemen “was obliged to send tributary presents from time to time to Cairo” – west to Libya and Tunisia, and south to Sudan.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the Mamluks created an empire at that time that competed with the Ottoman and the Persian Safavid empires in the region.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>57</sup> Thompson, 204.



## Ali Bey al-Kebir Conquests (1770-1771)



Ottoman Egypt saw quite a bit of regional conquest as well. During the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Ali Bey al-Kebir, Ottoman head of Egypt, expanded at the expense of the Ottoman Empire to Mecca, Palestine, and Syria.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, his success had been because he had been duplicitous in his response to a distress signal from the Hashemite ruler of Mecca who had “appealed to the sultan” to send help, which the sultan instructed should come in the form of Ali Bey’s “expedition to restore him.”<sup>59</sup> Instead of helping, he appointed a Mamluk ruler to the head of Mecca, in effect taking over the very land he was instructed to restore. Ali Bey retreated, but his actions foreshadowed those of his soon-to-be-successor Muhammad Ali.











<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 216.

## Muhammad Ali's Conquests (1805-1848)



### Legend

-  Site taken by land or sea
-  Estimated land route
-  Estimated water route
-  Conquest of Wahhabi territory (1814, 1818)
-  Conquest of Nubia and northern Sudan (1820)
-  Conquest of Athens (1827)
-  Invasion of the Levant (1831)
-  Land awarded (Crete - 1830)
-  Defeat (Battle of Navarino - 1827)
-  Extent of influence

Muhammad Ali began his conquests with permission from the Ottomans, first against the Wahhabis in Arabia, a fight that allowed him to expand to Yemen.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, after not too long, “he became master of the entire western Arabian coast from Aqaba in the north to Mocha in the south.”<sup>61</sup> Ali then turned his independent attention to Egypt’s southern flank, conquering Nubia

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 226-7.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 227.

and northern Sudan.<sup>62</sup> Still under official tutelage of the Ottoman Empire, Ali responded to a request by the Ottoman sultan to squelch a rebellion in Greece. However, due to an oversight on the part of the sultan's foreign policy, Ali's forces in Greece were defeated at the hands of the British navy.<sup>63</sup> Ali, "furious over the outcome of the Greek adventure, which he had never welcomed anyway," and convinced he was not given enough recompense for having taken this reactionary approach and made such a sacrifice for the Ottoman sultan, "resolved to take Syria by force" from the Ottomans.<sup>64</sup> In 1831, Egyptian forces took Palestine, Lebanon, and Acre, leaving "the road to Istanbul...open."<sup>65</sup> His expansionist ambitions, however, became too much of a threat for the European powers, who eventually intervened, forcing Egypt to "withdraw from Crete, Syria, Arabia, and Yemen" and draw down its military significantly.<sup>66</sup> The lesson, perhaps, from Muhammad Ali's exploits was attack first, but avoid overreaching, and don't anger the giants.

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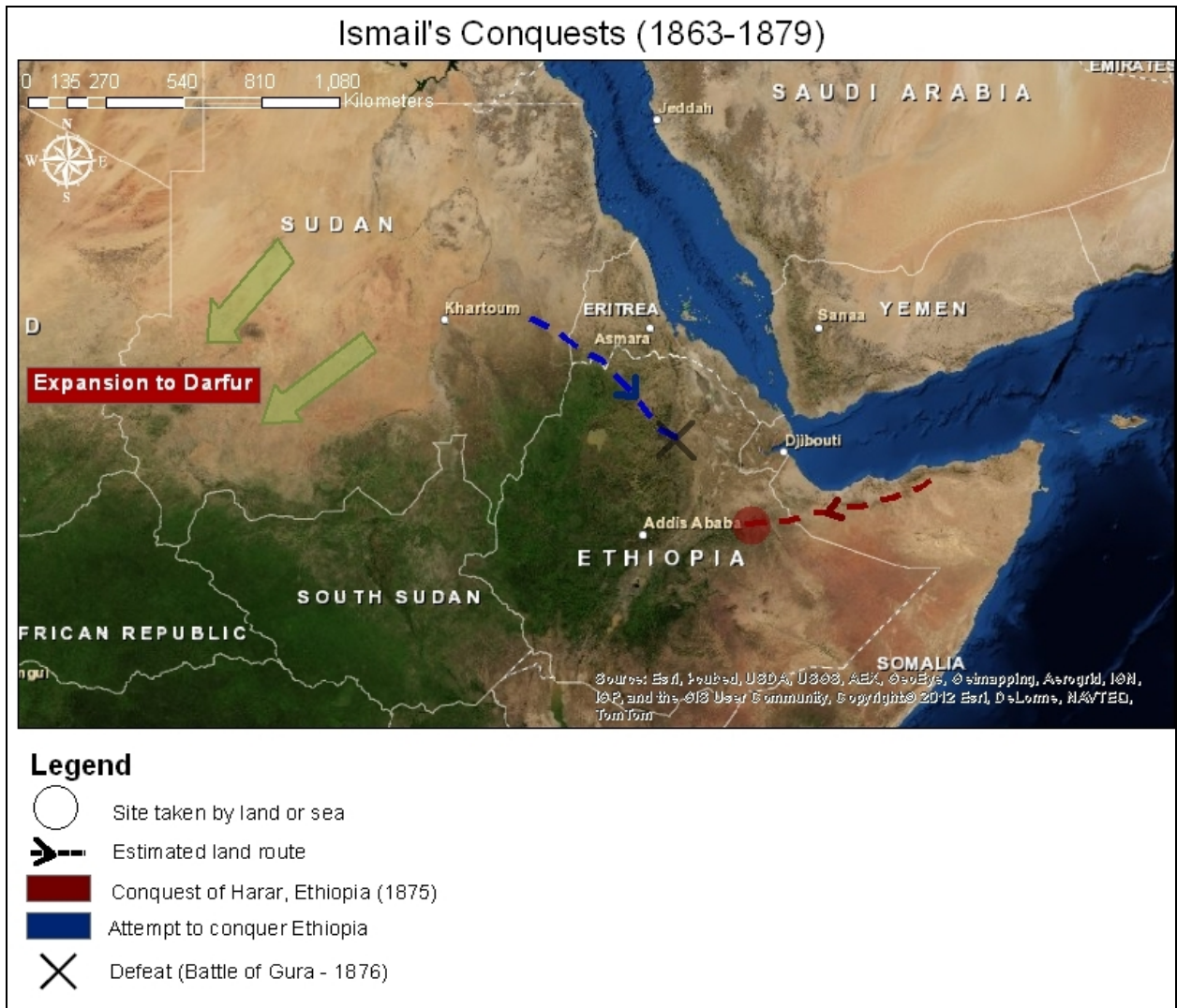
<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 232-3.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 233.



One of Ali's successors, Ismail, seemed to have learned this lesson, confining his conquests to the Arabian region: extending the Egyptian hold on the Sudan, to Somalia, and the Red Sea.<sup>67</sup> It was the building of the Suez Canal – Egypt's fundamental link to the "giants" of Europe and the world – that was to be his demise, when Britain, now with significant interests in keeping the Canal and its surroundings fiscally responsible, deposed Ismail and installed his pro-British son in 1879.<sup>68</sup> Not three years later, Britain invaded Egypt.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 251.

## **SURPRISE AND PRE-EMPTION IN THE MODERN ERA**

The British occupation provided some limited lessons teaching the value of preemption or preventive wars. During the first year of Cromer's rule in Egypt, an expedition in reaction to a rebellion mounting in the Sudan was defeated, resulting in the loss of large sections of the Sudan.<sup>70</sup> Learning from this defeat, however, a new British administration set its eyes on re-conquering Sudan in the 1890s as "part of a much larger strategy...of gaining complete control of the Nile from its headwaters to the sea."<sup>71</sup>

Not many expansionist policies followed this foray and consolidation of control over the Sudan, however. Even during World War I, Britain's main role in Egypt was to defend it – and Egypt was particularly vulnerable to Ottoman attacks meant to re-conquest the territory. Likewise, the lack of a consensus for an outward offensive plan during World War II – due in large part to anti-British sentiment and sympathy toward the Axis on the part of regular Egyptians – gave Italy and Germany the opportunity to invade Egypt. It was not until 1948 that Egypt took a military lead again.

Although Egypt took the initiative in 1948 to invade Israel with its Arab allies, the war was not successful, an exception perhaps to the expansionist efforts of Egyptian rulers past, due to the Egyptian military being young, untrained, unprepared, and ruled by a newly (legally) independent Egyptian leadership.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, by most measures, 1948 was not a surprise attack; the Arab countries had been very vocal about their military opposition to a Zionist state in the region, which allowed Israel to prepare itself.

In 1956, the involvement of Israel in the Suez Crisis was particularly unexpected and consequential for the Egyptians, who lost significant territory as a result of Israel's land invasion. The aggression from Britain and France was on the other hand somewhat expected due to Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal that sparked widespread, international disapproval. But the extent of British and French incursions into the Suez area shocked Egypt and the world at large. Egypt ended up winning a political war, some claim, when Britain and France were pressured by the international community to withdraw, but in all military terms, Egypt was significantly defeated by British and French air superiority and Israeli aggression by land, all of which Egypt was unprepared to battle against and already had the disadvantage of responding to a surprise (and effective) set of attacks.

In the 1962-67 Yemeni war Egypt took an operationally defensive approach to increasing its influence in that country. Egypt elected to take part in this conflict, and entered it on the side of the rebels who had recently taken over and were being forced to defend their revolution from a

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 289.

guerrilla faction of the old imam's regime. Therefore, Egypt had to undertake counterinsurgency and defensive tactics alongside the revolutionaries that were overall unsuccessful due in large part to the guerrillas having the advantage of striking first and using surprising tactics.

1967 was yet another instance of a reactive Egypt: Egypt came to the aid of Syria when Egypt received (false) information<sup>73</sup> that Israel was building a military presence on the Syrian border. With some of its troops diverted to Syria and even more in the Sinai in preparation for a land invasion by Israel, Egypt was again caught by surprise by devastating Israeli air strikes.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, Egypt knew little about Israel's extensive plans for this war, which left Egypt with even less land and overall served as the epitome of military failure in Egyptian national consciousness.<sup>75</sup>

In 1973, Sadat took the lessons of the previous two major wars, having observed firsthand how Egypt suffered from being the *surprised* as opposed to the *surpriser*, and specifically set out to catch Israel off guard by attacking during a Jewish holiday. The war of 1973 then underscored the first-strike and surprise advantage by turning out to be one of the modern successes by Egypt on the battlefield.

The confrontations with Libya in 1976 and 1977 were the results of a mutual distrust between Sadat and Muammar Qaddafi, the Libyan leader. Having significantly built up Egyptian forces on the border, Egypt made the first move, catching a Libyan border force off-guard with an invasion and occupation of a few border towns.<sup>76</sup> Although Egypt decided not to advance further and instead agreed to a ceasefire, it had already shown its preemptive capability to a threatening state.

## **THE NEED FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

The need for self-sufficiency is related to the relationship of Egypt to its imperial masters throughout its post-Arab Conquest existence. As Marsot claims in her preface, Egypt was a land of ruled people for so long ("Egyptians through the ages have had to cope with alien rulers" so much so "that a truly national government could be said to exist only after 1952"<sup>77</sup>) that the dangers of being ruled became part of the Egyptian national collective consciousness, as reflected in official discourse. Indeed, at least six different empires or foreign peoples ruled Egypt from the 600s to its formal independence from Britain in 1922, and as Marsot notes, British influence continued to reign supreme over the Egyptian monarchical government until the July 1952 revolution.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 312.

<sup>74</sup> McGregor, 272.

<sup>75</sup> Pollack, 60-62.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 132-133.

<sup>77</sup> Marsot, ix.

Having been conquered and ruled by foreigners for so long carried along with it the consequences of being a part of another entity outside of itself. Often, Egypt's fate was tangled up or sacrificed for other nations' interests, leaving Egypt economically, militarily, and politically depending on another nation. In addition, its time under foreign rule offered Egypt a firsthand account of how foreign rulers maintained their successful and respected regimes, the primary lesson being that dependence is risky.

## **ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE OR VULNERABILITY**

History shows the typical pattern of colonized societies as economically dependent on their foreign rulers. Early Arab rulers saw opportunities for exploiting the land and people through heavy taxation. The Arabs encouraged conversions to Islam by offering a choice between that and a poll tax and also imposed land taxes, a lucrative tax connected to the productivity of the land.<sup>78</sup> The Fatimids and later the Ottomans invaded Egypt in part because of the promise of such large revenue from a very populous territory.<sup>79</sup> Although during their (relatively) short rule, the Fatimids reformed the taxation system left by the previous Sunni Arab regime, the Mamluks, who followed the Fatimids, returned to an exploitative revenue-collection system.<sup>80</sup> The Ottomans in turn did not let up from taking advantage of the population and its territory: Muhammad Ali "extract[ed] everything he could from the country to support his [military] schemes."<sup>81</sup>

Once the Suez Canal was built, all of a sudden Egypt, which had benefited from being an entrepot for international commerce for centuries,<sup>82</sup> became a party to an internationally controlled (but Egyptian-manned) trade route with its revenue shared among imperial powers (with only 15 percent going to Egypt).<sup>83</sup> Although the Canal was technically in Egyptian land, Egypt itself saw very little of the revenues from it until Nasser nationalized the Canal in 1956, when Egypt created its own overseeing agency and claimed all its revenue.<sup>84</sup>

Egyptians saw themselves suffering from dependence under foreign rule, but also learned from their rulers the importance of self-sufficiency: that building a territory's capacity is as important a way of defending from outside threats as building a well-oiled military capacity. Early empires in

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>81</sup> Thompson, 231.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>84</sup> Marsot, 18, 26.

Egypt, from the Arabs to the Fatimids to the Mamluks to the Ottomans, recognized the need to build the territory's self-sufficiency and thus invested heavily in building Egyptian infrastructure such as roads, canals, and other public works.<sup>85</sup> Muhammad Ali also invested in creating new industries for Egypt, including introducing the cotton crop, textiles, sugar, and munitions all the while taking steps to ensure that Egypt was safe from the "threat of foreign competition."<sup>86</sup> The empires themselves had interests in building the capacity of Egyptian land to produce profits, be more easily manageable, and be more easily defensible. These efforts also had the effect of building the autonomous capacity of Egypt; simply put, because of early investments such as these, Egypt was more and more able to exist in a vacuum should it need to in instances of siege or military blockades. Economic self-sufficiency was one aspect of a broader concern for self-sufficiency that also encompassed a military self-sufficiency and a political (decision-making) one – all of which combine to create a full and defensible nation-state, as the Egyptian leaders opined in their discourse.

### **MILITARY DEPENDENCE OR VULNERABILITY**

Another factor in the self-sufficiency pattern was years of military dependence on its foreign rulers, including being caught in the middle of conflicts for reasons not always essential to Egyptians' everyday existence and relying on foreign rulers for security. The former case appeared in myriad religious wars in Egypt's early history, between Sunni and Shia during the Fatimid rule and the losses incurred by Egypt during Crusader conflicts, such as when the city of Fustat was set on fire "as part of a scorched-earth policy to make it of little use to the Crusaders."<sup>87</sup> Egypt also suffered from ruler infighting, as was prevalent during the Mamluk rule, when Egypt experienced almost 300 years of unstable changes of leadership under the one "Mamluk" umbrella, changes of leadership that had no legal basis but rather were dependent upon military superiority.<sup>88</sup>

In a way, this Mamluk phenomenon was one that Egypt learned throughout its history, as over time it was controlled by different empires based solely on the encroaching actor's ability to militarily overcome forces in Egypt. This contributes again to the idea that Egypt should build its own abilities, to be self-sufficient in every way that could defend against foreign rule or invasion – including economic self-sufficiency, but most importantly for the purposes of this paper, military self-sufficiency.

Indeed, Egypt had to depend on defense from an outside entity for most of its existence. There was a pattern going as far back as Fatimid rule (and as recently as British rule) that Egyptians

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<sup>85</sup> McGregor, 141.

<sup>86</sup> Thompson, 229.

<sup>87</sup> Marsot, 24.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.



were denied membership in soldiering for their nation, in their own army. This made Egyptians even more directly dependent on foreigners – sometimes not even of the same ethnicity as their rulers – and for their physical safety, no less. Indeed, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the “Egyptian” military was non-Egyptian and reserved instead “to a specific group of people: Turk, Kurd, or various other minorities within the Muslim world.”<sup>89</sup> It was not until the rule of Muhammad Ali that Egypt created its own non-imperial army, seeing as he did not want to “rely on the remaining Ottoman forces in Egypt,” composed of the first crop of native Egyptians.<sup>90</sup>

World War I was another example of Egypt caught in an outside conflict: although Egypt was not that militarily involved in the conflict, actions taken outside of its territory that fell the Ottoman Empire sealed its fate in transitioning from Ottoman rule to British rule. Again, Egypt learned that its dependence for defense (and barring from fighting themselves) led it to be ruled completely by another foreign power. In neither World War I nor World War II was the Egyptian army, now containing native Egyptians, much involved in defending its territory.<sup>91</sup> Instead, the integrity of Egypt depended on the British army, which defended against Ottoman incursions during WWI and Italian and German incursions during WWII.<sup>92</sup>

After the 1952 revolution, when Egypt began its first self-rule since the Middle Ages. At this time, the environment of the world was more and more divided between two great powers in the Cold War. Although Egyptian leaders claimed Egypt was nonaligned, the fact that Egypt had to rebuild its capabilities did lead it to call for aid, including most notably military aid, from other countries. In his early years, President Nasser attempted to cultivate relationships with both the US and the USSR, eventually accepting arms from the Soviet Union.<sup>93</sup> The rest of Nasser’s rule was colored by Egypt becoming more and more aligned (and dependent on) the USSR, as evidenced by the extent and timing of arms sales from the Soviet Union coinciding with (and almost determining the fate of) major wars undertaken by Egypt. When Sadat took over as President, he was still faced with the same challenges of military arms deals as his predecessor. He eventually decided to deal almost exclusively with the West or Arab states on a less desperate basis as opposed to the Soviet Union on the eve of military commitments.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>90</sup> Thompson, 230.

<sup>91</sup> McGregor, 206-207.

<sup>92</sup> Thompson, 271, 282.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 296.



## IV. EVIDENCE FROM THE DISCOURSE

### GEOGRAPHIC THREATS

Both Nasser and Sadat in their discourse allude to the importance of land in the Egyptian psyche: Nasser points to the Nile as the “artery of life of our country”<sup>94</sup> and Sadat numerous times refers to the land as an inherent part of being Egyptian. Sometimes these references refer to, as Nasser did, the nature of the land to sustain the Egyptian people agriculturally and economically; other times they refer to the emotional and spiritual connection of individuals to the land, the territory of Egypt proper and other lands that Egyptians hold dear (e.g., the Sinai Peninsula).<sup>95</sup> These approaches to the perception of the Egyptian “land” deem the land as vital for the maintenance, growth, and spiritual wellbeing of Egyptians.

The primary documents by or about Nasser and Sadat refer most often to the three invasions (or invasions considered possible) that occurred during their overlap: the 1956 Suez Crisis, the 1962-67 Yemeni War, and the 1967 defeat. The two presidents do refer to Egypt’s longer history of being invaded. Often, especially in the speeches, these references are rather generic in nature, referring to the invasions in passing rather than with specifics of their geographic importance – although the mention itself is notable for measuring how much invasions factor into the national discourse on security. For example, Nasser exclaimed in a 1963 speech, “We have for 7,000 years been exposed to invasions and expeditions...but...have the invading armies, has imperialism been able to change the nature of this people? Never!”<sup>96</sup> Equally generically, Sadat referred to the government’s learned mandate to “protect the integrity of [the] homefront”<sup>97</sup> and to never “cede an inch of our land.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Nasser, Gamal Abdel. *The Philosophy of the Revolution*. Buffalo, NY: Economica Books, Smith, Keynes & Marshall Publishers, 1959, 76.

<sup>95</sup> El-Sadat, Anwar. *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography*. New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977, 271. (Hereafter referred to as *In Search*)

<sup>96</sup> Nasser, Gamal Abdel. “Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser on the occasion of the High Dam celebrations at the Aswan Popular Rally, January 9, 1963.” Information Department, Cairo: National Publication House Press, 1963, 5.

<sup>97</sup> El-Sadat, Anwar. “The Battle and the Overall War: Statements from January 3, 1971 to June 3, 1971.” The Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, 45.

<sup>98</sup> El-Sadat, Anwar. “Address by President Anwar el-Sadat to the people of the Sudan. Khartoum, March 28, 1971.” The Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, 302.

Nasser was particularly vocal about eastern invasions of Egypt, however. In his *Philosophy of a Revolution*, Nasser claimed that modern Egypt is a product of invasions extending as far back as the Romans, the Muslim conquest, and “the waves of Arab migrations that followed.”<sup>99</sup> He continued to cite more aggressive invasions such as the Crusades that led to a “tyrannical feudalism”<sup>100</sup> and the Mongols who “ravaged in their conquest of the old Islamic Capitals” but who were defeated by the Egyptians northeast of the Sinai.<sup>101</sup> Nasser also referred to the French invasion through the east in a list alongside the encroachment of European converters and the Mongols in the Draft Charter of the United Arab Republic.<sup>102</sup> According to Nasser’s close confidant, Muhammad Heikal, Nasser considered Egypt’s legitimate historic to extend as far eastward as Syria due to the conquests of Thutmosis III, Saladin, and Muhammad Ali.<sup>103</sup> Nasser thus considered the east arguably the most important – at the very least the most historically vulnerable – Egyptian frontier. Indeed, Heikal expounded on this by pointing out that Nasser respected Allenby’s campaigns during the First World War, and thus learned a respect for and need to protect “Egypt’s two lines of defense – the first from Gaza to Beersheba, and the second...along the Sinai passes.”<sup>104</sup>

Sadat also made references to historical threats to east Egypt. In a speech in 1971, Sadat referred to Egypt being exposed to invaders as far back as the Tartars and the Crusaders, in an effort to emphasize the need for Egypt to ally itself with its eastern Arab neighbors (Syria most importantly) to counter a pattern of invasion by outside forces.<sup>105</sup> He also stated in a 1972 speech that Egypt should be vigilant against the historical Israeli ambition (supported by major

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<sup>99</sup> Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, 50.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>102</sup> Nasser, Gamal Abdel. *United Arab Republic Draft of the Charter, presented by President Gamal Abdel Nasser at the Inaugural Session of the National Congress of Popular Powers on the evening of 21st May, 1962*. Information Department, United Arab Republic: Al-Shaab Printing House, May 21, 1962, 17.

<sup>103</sup> Heikal, Mohamed. *Autumn of Fury: The Assassination of Sadat*. London, UK: Andre Deutsch, Ltd., 1983, 60.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>105</sup> El-Sadat, Anwar. “Address to the Nation by President Anwar el-Sadat, May 14, 1971.” The Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, 140-141.

international powers) to extend its reach from the Nile to the Euphrates,<sup>106</sup> which very much implicates the territorial integrity of mainland Egypt, even without the Sinai.

Nasser and Sadat did refer to other, non-eastern geographic threats, however. At the very beginning of an article in *Foreign Affairs* magazine, Nasser mentioned how the British were able to occupy Egypt through bombing and later landing in Alexandria in 1882 – a northern vulnerability.<sup>107</sup> He reiterated this point in a 1963 speech, when he described the first invasion by the British that ended in their occupation as a set of attacks that started in Alexandria – but then underscored the multi-directional British approach by citing that they then “came stealthily” from Suez, a very vulnerable point.<sup>108</sup> A young Sadat, writing immediately after the 1952 Revolution, referred to Egypt’s western vulnerability during World War II: the 1940 Italian attack from Libya<sup>109</sup> and the attack two years later by Rommel from the Western Desert.<sup>110</sup>

In terms of post-revolution geographic threats, speeches and autobiographies noted how the Suez Crisis in particular revealed how vulnerable Egypt was territorially.<sup>111</sup> Sadat mentioned in his memoir that Egypt was surrounded – “the Israelis were attacking our front, the British and French our rear”<sup>112</sup> – during the Suez Crisis. Nasser stated in another speech that the Egyptian army had to “withdraw from [Egypt’s] borders with Israel to the Canal Zone” in order to preserve their forces, which cites the extent of eastern territory lost during this conflict.<sup>113</sup> In a speech in 1962, Nasser claimed that the 1956 aggression “prove[d] that a powerful army is a necessity” in order to counter big threats with intense interests in the eastern territory of Egypt.<sup>114</sup> Heikal supported this by claiming that Nasser “realized that Egypt’s security depended on...the land bridge to Asia,

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<sup>106</sup> El-Sadat, Anwar. “Address to the Nation, January 13, 1972.” The Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, 10.

<sup>107</sup> Nasser, Gamal Abdel. “The Egyptian Revolution,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 33 Issue 2 (January 1, 1955): 199.

<sup>108</sup> Nasser, “Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser on the occasion of the High Dam celebrations.”

<sup>109</sup> El-Sadat, Anwar. *Revolt on the Nile*. London, UK: Allan Wingate Publishers, Ltd., 1957, 22-23. (Hereafter referred to as *Revolt*.)

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>111</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 32-40.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>113</sup> Nasser, Gamal Abdel. “Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser at the International Labourers’ Day Festivities.” May 1, 1964. Information Department, Cairo, U.A.R. The National Publications House, 8.

<sup>114</sup> Nasser, tenth anniversary of the revolution, July 26, 1962, 7.

which meant that he must have an eastern policy.”<sup>115</sup> The east was especially important given, as Sadat claimed, “the strategic importance of the Suez Canal” as an economic asset for the international community but also as a military, naval, and air base for the British and whosoever occupies the banks of the Canal.<sup>116</sup> This adds to a pattern of fear of Egyptian land being invaded and unable to be properly defended, held, or sustained, especially from the east – but also through Egypt’s naval vulnerability in the north and connection to the rest of North Africa from the west, as Nasser pointed out when he said that Egypt was “threatened from Cyprus as well as from Libya.”<sup>117</sup>

Apart from the frequent reference to the Suez Crisis as an invasion of major powers to Egyptian soil, Nasser also made a point in a 1962 speech of rejecting military bases on any territory – most notably Yemen – from which other countries could launch attacks on Egyptian interests, from the Sinai to Suez to Egypt proper: “Our policy is against military bases and imperialism; against British colonialism in Aden, in the Occupied South, in the Arab Gulf and in other parts of the Peninsula.”<sup>118</sup> This once again reflected his concern over Egypt’s eastern vulnerability.

Sadat, for understandable reasons, was much more vocal about the 1967 war than Nasser and specifically referred to the conflict’s role of further highlighting the geographic vulnerabilities of Egypt by ceding significant plots of land – the Gaza Strip, the Sinai, and the eastern bank of the Suez Canal, all in the east – to the hands of Israel.<sup>119</sup> In his autobiography, Sadat revealed that he learned from the losses of 1967 and during the preparation for the 1973 war that the vital pieces of the Sinai were al-Arish – the capital, most populous city, and one located on the Mediterranean coast for easy naval access – and Al-Qantara East – a city hugging the northeastern side of the Suez Canal whose capture would most likely mean capture of the Canal.<sup>120</sup> Gamasy underscored this concern over these bases in his memoir, where he claimed that a major failure of the 1967 war was withdrawing Egyptian forces to the Suez Canal and leaving significant military strongholds, including al-Arish, in the Sinai open to Israeli incursion<sup>121</sup> – a similar strategy as

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<sup>115</sup> Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 60.

<sup>116</sup> El-Sadat, *Revolt*, 104.

<sup>117</sup> Nasser, Gamal Abdel. “Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser at the opening meeting of the second session of the National Assembly.” Cairo, November 12, 1964, 11.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>119</sup> El-Sadat, Anwar. “Announcement of Peace Initiative,” National Assembly. February 4, 1971. The Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, 6 and 14.

<sup>120</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 243.

<sup>121</sup> Gamasy, 38.

Nasser's during the Suez Crisis, which resulted in Israeli occupation of the Sinai.<sup>122</sup><sup>123</sup> The strategic importance of al-Arish was heightened during 1973 when the US used the occupied city to replenish Israeli weapons supplies.<sup>124</sup> Additionally, after the 1973 war, Sadat stated clearly to his Israeli foes that an invasion of the Sinai would be considered equal to an invasion of the Egyptian mainland and defended accordingly,<sup>125</sup> showing that an invasion from the east dominated leaders' concerns.

Despite an eastern focus, modern-day military engagements did sometimes underscore other geographic vulnerabilities. In preparation for the 1973 war, Sadat secured an agreement with Libya – one that the Libyan leader would back out of, endangering Egyptian success – that took into account the real possibility that Israel would attack and/or claim the port of Alexandria: in an event such as this, Libya would allow the port of Tobruk to be used by Egypt as a replacement origin for supplies.<sup>126</sup> This showed an understanding of – and indeed a big concern over – the northern coast's vulnerability to outside forces.

Overall, the discourse overwhelmingly favored discussions of threats from the east, with a couple passing mentions of historic western incursions and potential northern threats. Threats from the south were notably absent from the discourse – except for one mention of Sadat objecting to a Communist revolution in a “country sharing my borders”<sup>127</sup> – especially given how both Nasser and Sadat saw the Sudan as a strong Arab ally.<sup>128</sup><sup>129</sup>

## PREEMPTION AND THE ADVANTAGE OF SURPRISE

Much of the discussion of preemption or surprise is confined to events in the post-revolutionary period, specifically the effects of surprise by enemies in 1956, Yemen in 1962-67, and 1967.

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<sup>122</sup> Heikal, Mohamed Hassanein. *The Cairo Documents: The Inside Story of Nasser and his Relationship with World Leaders, Rebels, and Statesmen*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1973, 105.

<sup>123</sup> Gamasy, 13.

<sup>124</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 260.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

<sup>126</sup> El-Sadat, Anwar. *Those I Have Known*. New York, NY: Continuum Publishing Company, 1984, 46. (Hereafter referred to as *Those*) Alexandria was never hit by the Israelis so although Libya backed out of this agreement, Egypt was still able to claim success in 1973 even without its contingency plan for Tobruk.

<sup>127</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 284.

<sup>128</sup> El-Sadat, *Revolt*, 17.

<sup>129</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 311.

Some references to major pre-revolution and expansionist figures, such as Muhammad Ali, do occur, but these are not found with a positive connotation assigned to their expansionist ambitions. Instead, mostly the modern Egyptian leaders refer briefly to their influence in building the Egyptian state and infrastructure, and their major exploitation of Egyptians to fund their ambitions or stay in power.<sup>130131</sup>

Throughout many comments on the 1967 war, Sadat mentions the importance of acting first, as opposed to the reactionary responses of the Egyptian military under Nasser's rule. This is connected to the Suez Crisis and to a specific doctrine, per se, of Nasser's expressed through a comment he made in a speech in 1964: that Egypt "never started attack(s)," but instead Egypt's "task was always to answer to those who attacked us."<sup>132</sup> This highlights the perceived weakness of a military response as opposed to the upper hand that accompanies a first attack – as in the case of 1973.

Again, Sadat emphasizes in discussions about 1967 that Nasser made a mistake in simply reacting to Israeli action rather than taking the time to prepare and strike first. In historical accounts as well as in Sadat's memoirs, the 1967 war was perceived as having been "won" by Israel in the first 24 hours, despite several claimed Egyptian recoveries and "successes" of the following couple days. This led Sadat to create a motto suggesting that "he who wins the first twenty-four-hour encounter will surely win the entire war."<sup>133</sup> Because of this, it became extremely important for Egypt to take decisive action in the first day "to tip the balance in our favor within the first twenty-four hours,"<sup>134</sup> the easiest way of which was for Egypt to strike first. Sadat explicitly stated that the 1973 war "proves that we have learnt our lesson and have been able to calculate events, draw up plans and take the initiative both politically and militarily, for the first time since the establishment of Israel."<sup>135</sup>

Related to the idea of striking first – an important consideration in a nuclear doctrine – is the importance of the element of surprise. According to Sadat, Israel not only had the advantage of surprise in 1967, but also that of 10 years of planning to secure the right environment for their

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<sup>130</sup> El-Sadat, *Revolt*, 16.

<sup>131</sup> Nasser, "The Egyptian Revolution," 200-201.

<sup>132</sup> Nasser, Gamal Abdel. "Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser on the occasion of the Sixth Union Day celebrations held in Cairo, February 22, 1964." Information Department, Cairo, U.A.R., 13.

<sup>133</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 244.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>135</sup> El-Sadat, "Glorious Days of October," 19.



surprise attack and subsequent victory,<sup>136</sup> something that he brought with him in spending significant time planning offensives for 1973. Indeed, acting first, preemptively, and by surprise is rewarded in the international community, as Sadat claimed was the case with the 1967 war when, despite having said that it would not stand for aggression, the United States kept silent account when Israel was the first to attack.<sup>137</sup> For the 1973 war, Sadat and his military officers spent some time thinking of the best surprise method to attack Israel's holdings on the Sinai, settling on the Yom Kippur holiday. Surprise also came in the form of unexpected fighting methods from using high-pressure water pumps to build bridges, to using rope ladders to climb the Israeli defense line,<sup>138</sup> to having a significant tank presence<sup>139</sup> – all of which caught the enemy off guard in the same way that 1967 caught Egypt completely off guard.

## **THE NEED FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

### **ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE OR VULNERABILITY**

Economic independence was an important asset to the first Egyptian Presidents, or, as Sadat claimed, “a free country's real independence is more a matter of economic independence than political slogans.”<sup>140</sup> They mentioned this in discussions of the exploitative economic policies of Egypt's foreign rulers or, later, the pro-British Egyptian government. According to Nasser, the “system of foreign rule was built on” an exploitative feudalism harkening back to Egypt under Muhammad Ali.<sup>141</sup> Ali monopolized Egyptian land and resources, using revenues for personal military engagements, and instituted himself and his hereditary line as absolute rulers.<sup>142</sup> After this Ottoman exploitation, Nasser claimed that the British continued the pattern and “sapped the strength and the moral energies of Egypt” by forcing Egyptians “to pay the cost of occupation” and suffer from a mostly outward-looking trade that favored British and other foreign

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<sup>136</sup> El-Sadat, Anwar. “Address by President Anwar el-Sadat to the University and Higher Institute Professors at Cairo University,” January 8, 1971. The Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, 131.

<sup>137</sup> El-Sadat, Anwar. “Address by President Anwar el-Sadat at the Popular Rally held in Assiut,” January 11, 1971. The Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, 189.

<sup>138</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 250.

<sup>139</sup> El-Sadat, *Glorious Days*, 4.

<sup>140</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 213.

<sup>141</sup> Nasser, “The Egyptian Revolution,” 200-201.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 200-201.

companies.<sup>143</sup> The post-independence, pro-British Egyptian government bolstered a ruling class, the landowners, at the expense of the *fellahin*, who were exploited, suffering from “debts, poverty, ignorance and disease.”<sup>144</sup>

Nasser and Sadat both took lessons from this lengthy period of foreign exploitation in Egypt’s history, coming to the conclusion that “autonomy in financial matters” was a crucial component of securing a state’s sovereignty. Such autonomy depended on “liberating the financial and economic resources of the state and administering them in the interest of national reconstruction.”<sup>145</sup> A nation’s security, furthermore, depended on a lively infrastructure capable of sustaining itself through a crisis.

Both leaders took steps during their tenures to secure this economic independence. For example, Nasser pointed to the nationalization of the Canal as the major reason for the Suez Crisis, but claims in the UAR charter that it was necessary for Egypt to realize its “independence and achieve progress by making use of one of [its] own national resources.”<sup>146</sup> He was going to use the new revenues from the Canal to build the much-needed High Dam on the Nile, aimed to control flooding, contribute to electricity, and divert water for agricultural purposes.<sup>147</sup> In addition, following the Suez Crisis, Nasser’s speeches equate the motives behind the military aggression to those of the post-invasion economic blockade, which hit Egypt hard economically and forced it to build its public sector and control the means of production internally.<sup>148</sup><sup>149</sup><sup>150</sup> He continued in many speeches to emphasize the importance of building Egypt’s capacity to sustain itself, citing how war “becomes a comprehensive war, not only against imperialism alone, but for

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>144</sup> El-Sadat, *Revolt*, 17.

<sup>145</sup> Nasser, “The Egyptian Revolution,” 201-202.

<sup>146</sup> Nasser, *United Arab Republic Draft of the Charter*, 82.

<sup>147</sup> Heikal, *Cairo Documents*, 68.

<sup>148</sup> Nasser, Gamal Abdel. “Speech delivered by President Gamal Abdel Nasser on the occasion of the eleventh anniversary of the Revolution, July 22, 1963.” Cairo: Information Department, Al Shaab Printing House, 14.

<sup>149</sup> Nasser, Gamal Abdel. “Address by President Gamal Abdel-Nasser on 22/2/61 (20.30 hrs), February 23, 1961.” In *Speeches delivered by President Gamal Abdel-Nasser in the Northern region on the occasion of celebrating the third anniversary of the proclamation of the United Arab Republic: February-March 1961*, 54. Information Department.

<sup>150</sup> Nasser, “Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser at the International Labourers’ Day Festivities,” 8.

scientific, economic, cultural, political and military self-power.”<sup>151</sup> It is not enough for Nasser to react against imperialism. Seeing as the Suez Crisis was mostly a political success not a strictly military one, Nasser claimed Egypt has to be prepared for sustaining itself in the face of a hostile world that hopes to curb Egypt’s power through military means *and* through other similarly imperialistic and equally crippling means (such as the embargo). In line with this, he claimed that Egypt’s “foreign policy is in the service of [its] internal policy”<sup>152</sup>; in other words, independence can only be successful with a focus on internal capacity-building in all spheres of industry and military and only in that way can a nation achieve “self-power.” This same inward approach can be found in Nasser’s domestic economic policies that cut Egypt off from foreign investment and in Nasser’s reaction to the 1967 defeat – as told by other actors – that a restructuring of the military was necessary. Indeed, Nasser warned that being susceptible economically can lead to other military dangers, such as when some Syrians accepted money to turn on their own Arab brethren in 1956.<sup>153</sup>

In discussing how he learned from the 1967 defeat to craft his 1973 comeback, Sadat clearly advocated that Egypt should not depend on anyone or anything else, underscoring Nasser’s efforts after the economic blockade following the Suez Crisis to make Egypt self-sustaining and prepare for a “comprehensive war.” Sadat reused the term “comprehensive war” to call his planned Egyptian comeback and called for using every possible asset of Egypt to prepare for the war effort: in industry, culture, mass psyche, mass media, etc. Specifically, he called for preparing the country economically for all the needs and potential issues of battle and possible invasion:

I had based my plan on the assumption that the entire territory from Alexandria to Aswan would be an actual battlefield. Each factory, each power station, and so forth, had alternative plans for operation during the war. We had to make sure that all services could continue to operate, even if only partially, should they be hit during the fighting.<sup>154</sup>

For the 1973 war, Sadat searched for every possible conventional and unconventional weapon at his disposal – including the mass media – and made it a point of only using what was already in Egypt’s possession (as opposed to relying on arms deals that never came from the likes of the

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<sup>151</sup> Nasser, Gamal Abdel. “Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser on the 8th anniversary of Education Day at the Liberty Palace in Gezira, December 15, 1962.” Information Department, Cairo, U.A.R., 1962, 9.

<sup>152</sup> Nasser, “Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser at the opening meeting of the second session of the National Assembly,” 7.

<sup>153</sup> Nasser, Gamal Abdel. “Historical Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser on the occasion of the Fourth Anniversary of the Union, February 22, 1962.” Information Department, Cairo: The National Publications House Press, 1962, 22.

<sup>154</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 241.

USSR during the 1967 war).<sup>155</sup> In short, Sadat made elaborate plans for 1973 utilizing what he claimed was every Egyptian strength, in a way that Nasser was not able to do in 1967 – and all without relying on the fickle outside forces that Sadat claimed contributed to the defeat. Indeed, Sadat mentioned in his “Glorious Days” article about the 1973 war that it served as the first time that Egypt was able to see “a military battle accompanied by a comprehensive vision of all its combat, political and psychological requirements” – in other words, the first total war on the part of the Egyptians.<sup>156</sup> Sadat’s account of his preparation for 1973 in the wake of 1967 and the military officers’ accounts that concurred with the long, elaborate planning show that in Egypt’s most recent military highlight, Egypt used every tool available to it and did not hesitate to wait for whatever tool it felt was worth waiting for, learn it, and apply it with contingency plans.

## **MILITARY DEPENDENCE OR VULNERABILITY**

Another product of centuries of imperial rule was the nonexistence or immaturity of a native Egyptian army. As mentioned in the historical context section, an absence of a native Egyptian army until the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the lack of significant investment in building up the natives’ military capabilities afterwards led Egypt to depend on the protection of their foreign rulers. Nasser and Sadat saw the historical effects of this and determined that modern Egypt had a mandate to build its military capability and self-sufficiency.

Indeed, Nasser claimed that only the inhabitants of the Middle East, Egypt included, should defend the territory, seeing as “no outside forces can defend this soil as effectively as the people who live here.”<sup>157</sup> Both he and Sadat refer to historical instances to support this claim – and the claim that the imperial presence had specifically stunted Egyptian military development. Nasser cited how the British imperial forces dissolved the first Egyptian army created by Muhammad Ali and set up a “token force” headed and controlled by the British army.<sup>158</sup> In the period leading up to World War II, Sadat referred to the story of the removal of army chief of staff and native Egyptian, General Aziz El Masri, who had served as the first major, post-independence actor to build Egypt’s military services, creating a project of internally manufacturing armored cars, adopting German (as opposed to British) systems of reconnaissance, and even thinking up new tank-destroying tactics – all steps toward military self-sufficiency that threatened the maintenance of British influence.<sup>159</sup> Ultimately, having a “half-force” was detrimental to Egypt when it faced significant territorial encroachments during World War II. The ties Egypt had with Britain at the time did not allow Egypt to remain neutral for very long; but regardless of its allied status,

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>156</sup> El-Sadat, “Glorious Days,” 19.

<sup>157</sup> Nasser, “The Egyptian Revolution,” 210.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>159</sup> El-Sadat, *Revolt*, 30-32.

Egypt's security "was in the hands of a foreign power"<sup>160</sup> throughout several notable invasions from the west. Even more than that, Sadat claimed that Winston Churchill ordered Egypt to be "completely subordinated to the British war machine," so even if Egyptians, who at the time of the WWII were technically independent, wanted to take another approach to the conflict, they would not have been able to according to.<sup>161</sup> For example, faced with the Italian incursion from Libya in 1940, Britain ordered the (in Sadat's opinion, dangerous and humiliating) withdrawal of Egyptian forces from the west.<sup>162</sup>

In his *Revolt on the Nile* memoir written shortly after the revolution in 1952, Sadat justified an armed revolution against what he saw as a puppet Egyptian government after independence by claiming that the imperialists got to their position of strength by having a modern military and fighting their way to respect.<sup>163</sup> Therefore, alongside the economic and political ramifications of the revolution, Sadat explained that a major goal of the revolutionary efforts was to "form a strong, modern military" to defend Egypt<sup>164</sup> and make Egypt militarily self-sufficient along the way – in the same way that Egypt's foreign rulers had risen to influence.

After the revolution, the biggest challenge to military self-sufficiency was Egypt's dependence on foreign arms sales. Nasser and Sadat were vocal about issues with the Soviets' delivery of arms when promised; Sadat referred many times to how the USSR hardly ever followed through with its promises to Nasser to supply much-needed arms and ammunition to Egypt,<sup>165</sup> and thus remarked that Nasser aligned Egypt too much with the Soviet Union to the detriment of Egypt. Indeed, Egypt tried to negotiate an arms deal with the USSR before the 1967 debacle, but the USSR determined to keep its own timetable, regardless of Egypt's needs, which Sadat alluded to as a potential contributing factor to the 1967 defeat.<sup>166</sup>

Immediately following the 1967 defeat, the Soviets continued their self-interested maneuvering on arms deals, giving Egypt a hard time over "rebuilding [its] defeated army" and refusing to provide it the arms it had promised.<sup>167</sup> In preparation for the 1973 war, Sadat met with the Soviets

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 19-21.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>165</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 173 and 197.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>167</sup> El-Sadat, *Those*, 88.

to negotiate more arms for the planned war, but seeing as Moscow refused to let up with political conditions to the arms sale, Sadat responded by expelling all the Russian military experts in Egypt in 1972.<sup>168</sup> Even before this falling out, Sadat claimed that he had made his military plans for the October War taking into account only the arms and capabilities currently in the hands of the Egyptians, depending nothing on potential imports or help from outside,<sup>169</sup> taking a hint from their enemies, the Israelis, who also kept a fully autonomous (and successful) military force.<sup>170</sup> In fact, earlier during the Nasser years, Israel had boasted about its production of its own sophisticated weaponry, inspiring Nasser to hire German scientists “to develop rockets and aircraft” in order for Egypt to “depend more on weapons [it] had produced [it]self.”<sup>171</sup>

Even dependence on fellow Arab countries, although more reliable than dependence on large self-interested powers, was seen as not ideal. Sadat learned this the hard way with his experience with Libya, which had agreed with Sadat for several preparations for the 1973 war contingencies but had backed away from these agreements and sacrificed Egypt’s success.<sup>172</sup> Still, as Sadat told it, Arab countries most often followed through on promises that affected Egypt’s military engagements, due to their fundamental cultural link to Egyptians and mutual interest in keeping interested parties from infringing on Arab sovereignty.<sup>173</sup>

Along with being militarily independent came the idea that Egypt should consider only independent interests in its military calculations; in other words, it should only become involved in military engagements that are in its own interests. In the Sadat years, although Sadat was still interested in Arab unity, his actions and much of his rhetoric implied a change in Egyptian policy toward the Arab brothers: that Egypt would have to be more cautious when intervening in other Arab countries’ revolutions when it could hamper Egypt’s own interests. In a speech to the Suez region, Sadat explicitly mentions that Suez was “hit twice, once when we supported Algeria in its struggle for independence [during the Suez Crisis], and the second time because we were fighting in Yemen to help it attain its independence [referring to the 1967 war].”<sup>174</sup> In this instance, rhetorically he is able to hide behind how Egypt has been victimized by large powers due to its

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>169</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 238.

<sup>170</sup> Gamasy, 18.

<sup>171</sup> Heikal, *Cairo Documents*, 207.

<sup>172</sup> El-Sadat, *Those*, 48-49.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>174</sup> El-Sadat, Anwar. “Speech by President Anwar el-Sadat on Labour Day, Suez, May 1, 1976.” The Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, 611.

altruism toward its neighbors but simultaneously acknowledge a pattern of Egypt angering the world enough to be hit for perhaps little return in its investment.

## **INDEPENDENT DECISION-MAKING**

Alongside lessons about economic and military self-sufficiency from Egypt's centuries of foreign rule, comes the idea of independence in thought and decision-making. As mentioned before, years of foreign rule left a mark on modern Egyptian leaders, including creating a complex to ensure that "the will of Egypt was entirely Egyptian."<sup>175</sup> In order to secure this, the Egyptian leadership had to battle foreign influences from two sources: internal and external.

Because of the British Empire's ability to ingrain itself completely into the fabric of Egyptian institutions, modern Egyptian leaders perceived that there existed internal enemies, some people in power who allowed themselves to be governed by foreign forces or influenced by foreign influences over the interests of Egypt and the Egyptians. To Nasser and Sadat, those who took part in the pre-revolutionary regime – from the King to the old party politicians to "clerical reactionaries" to senior army officials<sup>176</sup> – were implicated in being unduly influenced by foreign forces (namely Britain) and thus as responsible as the British for Egypt's less-than-ideal circumstances.

During the post-independence but pre-revolution period, Sadat "saw the [British] embassy as the symbol of [Egypt's] national shame: the seat of the British high commissioner, who was the real ruler of Egypt, above the king, above the government and above the people."<sup>177</sup> Indeed, although Britain had officially given Egypt its independence in 1922, Nasser, Sadat, and the revolutionaries saw elements of overwhelming British influence, even contrary to Egyptian interests. Indeed, a whole section of Sadat's autobiography is dedicated to Egypt's relationship with Britain during World War II, when "Egyptian opinion was sharply conscious of our dependent status," and according to Sadat, Egypt's "fate was in the hands of a foreign power."<sup>178</sup> Egypt, although no longer legally under British administration, in fact suffered many political changes as a result of British influence or the fear by the top brass of any political hints against the British. For example, the King was claimed to consider it "quite natural to invite the intervention of a foreign power in Egyptian affairs."<sup>179</sup> In addition, one of the most heightened instances occurred when the British took over the Egyptian government at gunpoint in 1942,<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 231.

<sup>176</sup> El-Sadat, *Revolt*, 67.

<sup>177</sup> El-Sadat, *Those*, 121.

<sup>178</sup> El-Sadat, *Revolt*, 19.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>180</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 32.

installing a Wafd government and thus tarnishing one of the only organic nationalist Egyptian political parties by forcing them to succumb to British will.<sup>181</sup> Moreover, General Aziz el Masri, the army chief of staff, who ended up being the “godfather” of the July Revolution, was dismissed by the British due to his “revolutionary” ideas and actions taken that overall heightened Egypt’s independence.<sup>182</sup> Sadat explicitly said that “a nation which is fighting for its independence” – an ambition that both Nasser and Sadat claimed did not just stop with the revolution – “cannot tolerate a foreign power trying to impose its will in this way.”<sup>183</sup> Apprehension toward the British, however, was mostly confined to the pre-revolutionary period, because four short years after the revolution, in 1956, Nasser secured the full withdrawal of British forces. Indeed, as Sadat himself remarked, Egyptian relations with Britain turned positive over time.<sup>184</sup>

The general fear of internal foreign influence was not isolated to the pre-revolutionary period, however. Sadat often purged those near to political or military power who he believed were being unduly influenced by outside forces. For example, Sadat famously expelled all Soviet military officers from Egypt in 1972<sup>185</sup> and removed several top officials he suspected as being loyal to the Soviet cause.<sup>186</sup>

Overall, Sadat was very adamant about keeping Egypt officially non-aligned in the Cold War, keeping a strong Egyptian presence at the non-aligned summits started during Nasser’s terms. He felt strongly that Egypt was not in “anybody’s sphere of influence.”<sup>187</sup> Sadat tried to learn from and keep a strong relationship with Tito, who he saw as inspiration for his ability to benefit from a relationship with both major powers but never lose autonomy.<sup>188</sup> Sadat most frequently alluded to Egypt’s need and right to determine its own decisions independent of the opinions or pressures of other nations.

Nasser mentioned in his speech immediately preceding the 1967 war that a major positive of Egypt’s relationship with the USSR was that the USSR “never interfered with our policy or

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<sup>181</sup> El-Sadat, *Revolt*, 41.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>184</sup> El-Sadat, *Those*, 122.

<sup>185</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 231.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>188</sup> El-Sadat, *Those*, 88.



internal affairs.”<sup>189</sup> Sadat disagreed with Nasser on the neutrality of the USSR, however, who he claimed often overstepped and infringed on Egypt’s sovereignty. Sadat even goes so far as to say that the 1967 defeat was instigated by a falsehood from the Soviet leadership, who misinformed Egypt that Israel had concentrated forces on the Syrian border, activating the common defense pact Egypt had with Syria.<sup>190</sup> The USSR was also very vocal about its opinion of Egypt’s military engagements, disapproving of the war of attrition and ultimately of the 1973 war as well.<sup>191</sup> Sadat resented the politicking by the Soviets – including how a couple times they would convey a message to another country on behalf of Egypt falsely – stating on numerous occasions that no one “is allowed to make a decision on Egyptian affairs except the people of Egypt itself – represented by me, the President of Egypt!”<sup>192,193</sup> Sadat’s experience with the USSR led him to publically proclaim that Egypt will never “allow [its] affairs to be resolved by others.”<sup>194</sup>

Despite their vast differences in opinion about the USSR, both presidents agreed in their way on the importance of Egypt reserving its right to decide its own fate free from undue outside influence. Sadat encapsulated this idea best when he claimed in two different speeches that although he and Egypt respects the international community and international institutions, “the decisive factor is our own.”<sup>195,196</sup> Along these lines, Heikal claimed that one of Nasser’s basic principles was “the maintenance of Egyptian independence,”<sup>197</sup> and in his article about the 1973 war, Sadat said that Egypt has “proved that [it] can choose freely and impose [its] will as far as issues of [the] country are concerned.”<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Nasser, “Statement by President Nasser to Members of the Egyptian National Assembly.”

<sup>190</sup> El-Sadat, *In Search*, 172.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>193</sup> El-Sadat, Anwar. “President Sadat’s Speech to the People’s Assembly,” November 26, 1977. The Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, 208.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>195</sup> El-Sadat, Anwar. “Announcement of Peace Initiative,” National Assembly. February 4, 1971. The Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, 14-15.

<sup>196</sup> El-Sadat, Anwar. “Address by President Anwar el-Sadat to the people of the Sudan,” 303.

<sup>197</sup> Heikal, *Cairo Documents*, 204

<sup>198</sup> El-Sadat, *Glorious Days*, 25-26.



## V. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings from the historical experiences and the discourse on each of the three major issues above suggest some possible implications about how Egyptian leaders may plan to use a nuclear weapon. These consequences are outlined according to issue below.

### GEOGRAPHIC THREATS

Egyptian leaders have pointed to fears of invasion from all its flanks except for the south: from the west (from Libya), north from the Mediterranean, and from the east (from Sinai or Suez). Invasions from these sides – and particularly from all the sides at once – could see Egypt using all assets at its disposal – nuclear weapons included – to maintain its territorial integrity. (b) (5)

[REDACTED]

(b) (5)

[REDACTED]

### PREEMPTION AND THE ADVANTAGE OF SURPRISE

Egyptian history has favored tales of imperial leaders who expanded Egypt's reach across the globe by striking first, striking big, and striking surprisingly. Likewise, both Nasser and Sadat referred myriad times to how successful these imperial strategies were. In addition, they also referred to the successes that Egypt's enemies had by applying a strategy of surprise first attacks, with important emphasis on Israel's blow in 1967, but also highlighting how Israel's surprise involvement in 1956 gave it an upper hand. Therefore, Sadat in particular advocated for a similar approach by Egypt to its military policies.

(b) (5)

[REDACTED]

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<sup>199</sup> Kirkpatrick, David D. and Mayy El Sheikh, "With Gaza Attacks, Egypt's President Balances Hamas Against Israeli Peace." *The New York Times*.

## THE NEED FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Just as the historical context and the discourse sections have been divided up, the need for self-sufficiency is divided into three parts: economic independence, military independence, and decision-making independence. Each holds the key to potential military decision-making patterns.

The concern over economic dependence or vulnerability contributes (b) (5)

Military dependence concerns from the discourse suggest (b) (5)

seeing as Sadat and Nasser both attacked the USSR and other countries for not following through with arms deals, and talk with pride about Egypt's own manufacturing ability. In fact, Heikal mentioned in his *Cairo Documents* that Nasser had approached (b) (5)

only to receive a response underscoring Egypt's mandate to be militarily self-reliant: (b) (5)

<sup>200</sup> Additionally, the pattern of concern over independent decision-making shows that Egypt would most likely react negatively to any major power, the United States included, dictating any kind of foreign policy; instead, the attitude revealed by the discourse implies that Egypt would look closely at how Egypt could best anticipate, deter, and (if need be) defend against imminent geographic threats, regardless of big-power pressure, including nonproliferation norms and international laws against nuclear-weapon use.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the implications of all three main issues combined as shown in this analysis leads to the most direct conclusion that an (b) (5)

Secondarily, (b) (5). Some evidence suggests that a foreign military in the western and southern coast of the Arabian Peninsula would represent a threat to Egypt (b) (5). Study of additional literature on modern, post-Sadat perceptions of Egyptian leaders could enlighten or challenge this claim, however, and thus should be investigated in order to understand the most recent patterns in Egyptian threat perceptions.

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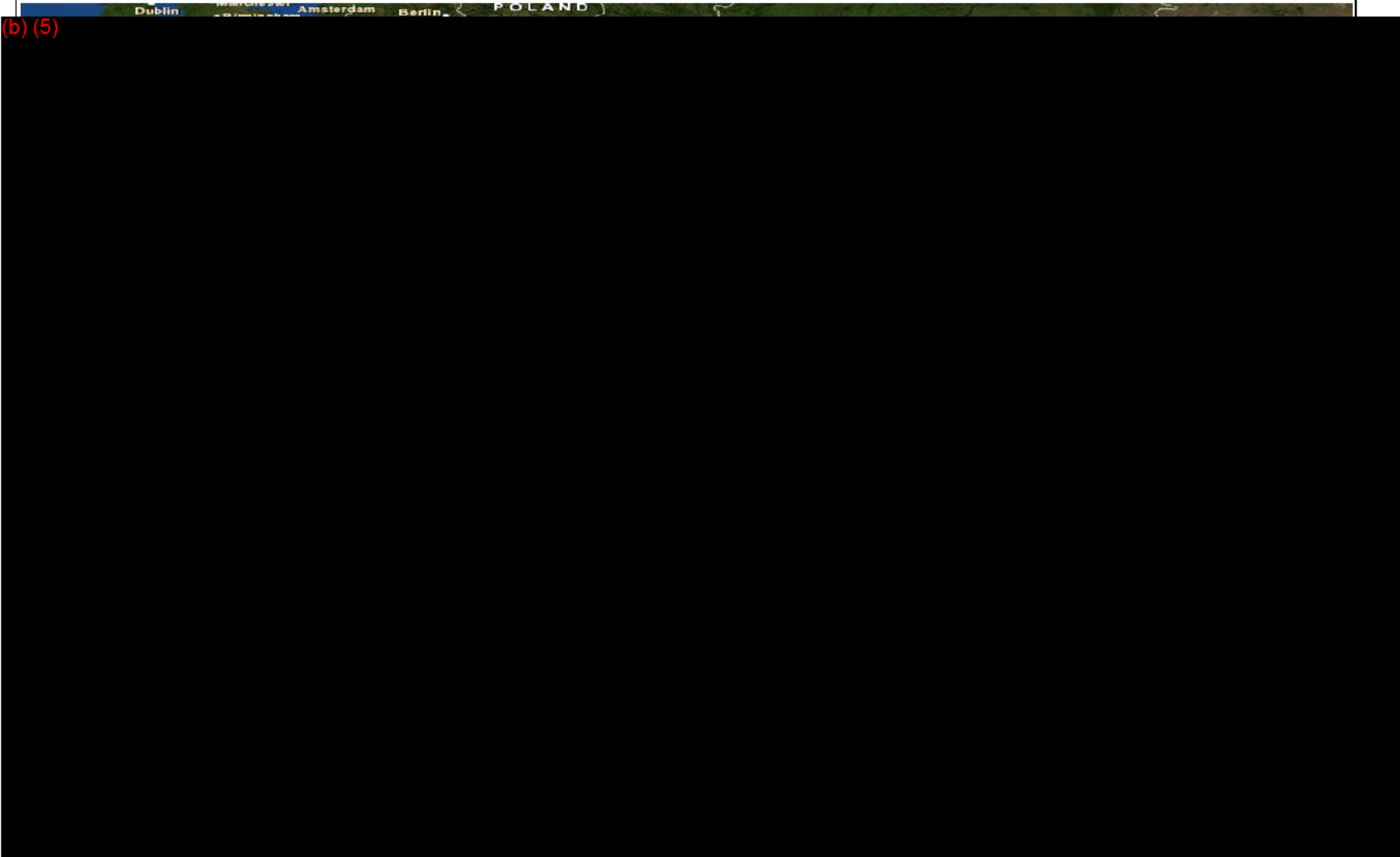
<sup>200</sup> (b) (5)

# APPENDIX

## STRATEGIC POINTS OF THE SINAI PENINSULA



(b) (5) [Redacted]



(b) (5)

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