CHAPTER II

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The evolution of non-alignment as a basic tenet of Egyptian foreign policy could be attributed to a variety of factors. Their roots, which hastened a new orientation in Egyptian political thinking, lie both in the domestic and foreign policies adopted by Egyptian ruling elite. So there is a need to analyse the domestic policy in the context of political, economic and military factors to understand the evolution of this policy of non-alignment. The foreign policy has to be analysed equally for the emergence of such a policy in the context of new developments in the Communist bloc, Pan-Arabism and the associated Egyptian desire for Arab leadership, Palestinian question including support to the Fedayeen, Arab-Israeli confrontation on state-to-state basis, broad Arab policies concerning Arab League resolutions etc.

DOMESTIC FACTORS

The political factors in the domestic front influencing Egypt’s policy are the policies pursued by the Wafd, the Ikhwan, the Communists and the newly emerging military elite. The Wafd Party, which was founded by Zaghloul in 1919 and "drew inspiration from Lutfi al-Sayyid’s Umma Party"\(^1\) and which was the authentic voice of Egyptian nationalism for close to twenty years, was discredited

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by the Egyptians primarily because of its failure in liberating Egypt from the Western clutches. The Wafdists had achieved neither complete national independence nor an economically developed Egypt. The essence of relationship of Britain with Egypt between 1922 to 1952 was that the British sought to promote strategic interests by means less than full colonialism but consistently short of cooperation with freely self-determining and indigenous government of Egypt, and the Wafd-dominated Parliaments failed to find a diplomatic *modus operandi* to match the passionate hopes of the Egyptians during the post-World War II period.

On 20 December 1945, Mohammed Nokrashy Pasha, who had succeeded Ally Maher as Premier, approached the British officially to negotiate for a revision of the 1936 Treaty. Under the Annexe to Article 8 of the Treaty British troops might be deployed 'in the vicinity of the Canal' but 'shall not exceed, of the land forces, 10,000, and of the air forces, 400 pilots, together with the necessary ancillary personnel for administrative and technical duties (these numbers do not include civilian personnel, e.g., clerks, artisans, labourers). This clause had provided the legal foundation for Britain's construction of the gigantic multi-purpose canal base in World War II.\(^2\) The recent frustration grew out of British promises in the Treaty (1936 Treaty) to transfer responsibility for defense of the Suez Canal to the Egyptian army at such time as the army could "ensure by its own resources the liberty and entire security of the navigation of the Canal".\(^3\)

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Nokrashy, to satisfy the Egyptians and to check further the imperialist designs of the British, was demanding a complete and immediate withdrawal of British troops from Egypt and the Sudan and the unity of the two countries under the Egyptian crown. Nokrashy's proposal was coldly received by Britain. The British answer to this overture in 1945 was that while preliminary conversations would be opened with the aim of placing Anglo-Egyptian relations "on a footing of full and free partnership, as between equals, the essential soundness of the fundamental principles", underlying the 1936 Treaty had been demonstrated by World War II.\(^4\) The reply was very disappointing and it led to serious student riots in Cairo. It resulted in 170 casualties from police fire known as the 'Abbas Bridge Massacre', and riots by workers in Alexandria and elsewhere. There had been large-scale industrial strikes as well as bomb outrages and other attacks in the Suez Canal zone.

From 1946 to 1950, sporadic negotiations between the Egyptian and the British Governments, through the British Embassy, dragged on intermittently. In 1951, the Wafd tried the second course after Herbert Morrison's succession to Bevin as the Foreign Secretary. On 8 October 1951, Prime Minister, Mustafa Nahas Pasha brought to power by the Wafd Party's victory in the monarchy's only free post-War election, moved the Egyptian position forward by unilaterally repudiating the 1936 Treaty which he himself had signed fifteen years earlier. However, imprudent this gesture might have been, public opinion was excitedly waiting for it. But the national question still existed. The Governor General of

Sudan, supported by Britain, declared this unilateral abrogation to be invalid. Moreover, British forces took such forcible action as was necessary to maintain themselves in the Canal zone.

Once the legal action of unilateral abrogation of the 1936 Treaty proved to be abortive, nationalists resorted to more direct methods of putting pressure on the British. By the middle of October the Wafdist attempted to make the British presence in the Suez base difficult by non-cooperation and by launching guerrilla attacks. But this policy got out of hand, and indirectly brought down the Wafd and hastened the revolution in Egypt without getting rid of the British.⁵ Thus, the Wafd could not satisfy the popular slogans of Egypt - 'Evacuation' and 'Unity of the Nile Valley'. It was quite natural that this party was discredited. Not only the credibility of this party was being eroded, but also other political groups were emerging in Egypt as ideologically opposed to Wafdist. Among these groups were the Ikhwan and the Communists who were the potential threats to Wafd.

After Zaghloul's death, Egyptians turned increasingly to more traditional forms of political expression. In the 1940s opposition movements sprang up in the conservative Islamic community. Although it was Nasser's tight little group of junior officers that was to change Egyptian history, it was the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928 by Hassen al-Banna, that most troubled the authorities.⁶ The Ikhwan al-Muslimun (Muslim Brethren) represented a strong and growing force in Egyptian politics that believed in basing the domestic and foreign policies of Egypt

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⁶ Joseph P. Lorenz, n.1, p.18.
on the Islamic tenets. It was anti-monarchy and anti-West. It took active part in guerrilla attacks against the British and gave full support to the Palestinian cause. Assembled into a covert paramilitary army known as the Battalions of the Supporters of God, Brotherhood volunteers fought with the Palestinians in the Arab rebellion against the British from 1936 to 1939. By the end of the Second World War, it had grown into a strong politico-religious group. Some of the officers of the Egyptian armed forces were also close to it. So it was emerging as a serious political force. It also confronted the Free Officer group after the 1952 revolution. The struggle for power between the Ikhwan and the Free Officers' Group ended in 1954.

As early as 31 July 1952, the Free Officers, dominated by Naguib and Nasser, tried to appeal to the masses directly rather than established political channels. General Naguib, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, prime minister, military governor, minister of defense, and minister of the interior, Nasser and other members of the Free officers Group stressed that army was a part of the people and did not aspire for power. They reiterated their struggle against imperialism. They asked the Egyptian mass for their support. In doing so, they were also trying to weaken the popular support for the Ikhwan. Moreover, they sought to gain legitimacy by dissociating themselves from the previous regime and by identifying themselves with the moderate Islamic ethos. They preached from the pulpits of mosques stressing the Islamic character of their planned reforms. To appeal to the masses, their adherence to Islam was clear. Even Nasser in the book *Philosophy of the Revolution* talks about the Islamic circle. Nasser's pilgrimage to Mecca in August 1954, during his struggle with the Ikhwan,
was a clear indication that, although he had to suppress opponents who based their message on Islamic principles, he was no less a Muslim than they were.\footnote{Derek Hopwood, \textit{Egypt: Politics and Society, 1945-81}, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982, p.95.}

In an attempt to undermine the influence of the Ikhwan in Muslim states, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) founded the Islamic Congress in September 1954 with Anwar Sadat as Secretary General. It was an agency of the Presidency and, thus, was under the control of Nasser. It was founded when the struggle with the Ikhwan was in its last stages as a demonstration that army officers too were defenders of the Islamic faith. The unsuccessful and badly organized assassination attempt on Nasser in October 1954 provided the regime with the opportunity to crush the Ikhwan.\footnote{R.Hrair Dekmejian, \textit{Egypt Under Naser: A Study in Political Dynamics}, London: University of London Press, 1971, p.33.}

One of the potential factors influencing Egyptian foreign policy was the rising trend of Communism in Egyptian domestic scene. In the early days of Stalinism, Communists had challenged the ideological framework of non-alignment. Non-alignment was visualized as a policy to steer clear of the two ideological extremes: Capitalism and Communism. The Egyptians did not want to make a choice between these two extremes. While capitalism was a complete negation for the injury it inflicted upon them, Communism was unacceptable to them due to its ideology. The new Egyptian ruling elite, in order to maintain its legitimacy, suppressed the Communists soon after the coup d'état of 1952. The foreign policies of Naguib in 1952 and 1953 and of Nasser in 1954 emphasized
on a fast and peaceful settlement of the major problems like the evacuation of British troops from Egypt and the independence of Sudan primarily to suit the Egyptian sentiment. Thus, in the winter of 1953 a large number of Communists were rounded up and detained.

The army junta, in its effort to consolidate power, had deposed the monarchy and stripped the old political parties of power. Instead, it had set up a 'National Liberation Rally' as the only legal political organisation. The Liberation Rally was not designed initially to be a party but a means of rallying the people round the new rulers, an organization to mobilise popular support and to squeeze out potential opposition. But it had the seeds of the single party system in Egypt.

In the 1952-54 period, British gradually shifted their attention from Naguib, whom they regarded as the figure head of the 1952 revolution, to Nasser, its moving force. Ravin Hankey, who was in charge of the Embassy affairs in Cairo, wrote in June 1953:

I derived quite a good impression of Gamal Abdel Nasser and my feeling is that he is trying to be reasonable though he probably has a deep emotional dislike of the British conflicting with a very considerable admiration of us.\(^9\)

By 31 May 1954, Nasser was almost controlling the Free Officers group. He had put 252 Communists in gaol. He told a conference of the Liberation Rally leaders that Communists could live only in chaos and in this they had the support of the

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Zionists' and that they were working in the interests of a foreign power. The fact that the USSR had voted for the partition of Palestine and also the presence of large number of Jews in the Egyptian Communist Party gave credence to that charge. Nasser was also able to suppress simultaneously other political groups like the Wafd and the Ikhwan. The Free Officer group, led by Nasser, gradually consolidated power in its hands.

The Liberation Rally, as an organisation, was consolidated as a single party system in 1955 with the formation of the National Union. It was subsequently given a place in the constitution of 1956. Nasser seemed to feel the need to establish this political organisation even if he had no intention of giving it real power. It was meant to exclude other groups from political power. The Arab Socialist Union (A.S.U.) was later formed in June 1962 explicity with the same idea. Some ex-Communists joined it while others remained imprisoned.

**CHANGING INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

Nasser's suppression of the Communists and the hostile Stalinist era in the USSR hampered the evolution of a lenient Soviet attitude towards Egypt. Though Egypt was trying hard to resist the Western pressure, the ideological intransigence of the USSR at that time precluded any rapprochement between Egypt and the Communist bloc states. Even the change in Egypt after the 1952 Revolution failed to evoke any immediate favourable response. The Anglo Egyptian Agreement of 27 July 1954 for the evacuation of the Suez Canal base was

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Egypt, till 1955, could not get any Communist help, either political or economic. Thus, left with no other option, it tried to please the West more so when economic development became a cardinal point in Egyptian domestic policy. It should be remembered that, despite his differences with the West, Nasser was not anti-Western. In September 1954, Nasser informed the New York Times' correspondent that Russia and Communism constituted a major danger to Egypt's security and that the Arabs would naturally turn towards the West to request arms and assistance.\footnote{\textit{New York Times}, 3 September 1954.} In another interview to the \textit{US News and World Report}, he said:

\begin{quote}
We must not sit down and write a confession that we are on the side of the West. In spite of everything, we must be on that side, because we are far away from the Russians. If there is any government here that wants to be on the side of the Russians, I don't think it can be this government.\footnote{Quoted Bahgat Korany, \textit{Social Change, Charisma and International Behaviour}, Geneva, 1976, p.270.}
\end{quote}

It was the rejection of Egypt by the USSR as well as the suppression of the Communists in Egypt that prompted USA to lean more towards Egypt at that time. The signing of the Suez Canal Base Agreement of 1954 also helped. Thus, the US continued to give economic aid to Egypt and even approved of the Aswan Dam aid. A World Bank study, prepared largely in Washington, showed that
Egypt required $1,350 million to finance the construction of the High Dam. It was calculated that Egypt would probably be able to raise $550 million locally, necessary to defray the costs of local labour and material, in Egyptian pounds. Also, the government would launch a bond drive, combining it with a strong patriotic appeal, to coax some $400 million out of rich Egyptians. This left $400 million to be obtained abroad in foreign currency to pay for imported materials and technical help. That was to be raised from USA and other international markets. The World Bank expressed its readiness to grant a ten-year $200 million loan to Egypt if Egypt fulfilled certain conditions. The participation of the US in the project was considered essential. American influence was strong in the World Bank and much of the material needed for the project was to come from USA. It was agreed that USA and Britain would offer $70 million, of which the US share would be $56 million and Britain would put up $14 million in "blocked sterling" (money owed to Egypt by Britain for goods and services during and after World War II). The U.S. and Britain also said that they would favourably consider the additional grants for the final phase of the construction.

It should be noted that after World War II, Egypt could obtain economic and military aid only from the West. The economic aid, from USA till 1955, amounted to $102.8 million. Of this $19.6 million was provided from 1946 to 1952. From 1953 to 1955, the aid was $83.2 million. In 1955, Egypt had received a large sum amounting to $66.3 million. The aid of 1955 should be viewed in the context

of the rapprochement of relation between Egypt and the west due to the Suez Canal Base Agreement of 1954 - a contribution of Nasser.

During the said period no Soviet military help was possible to Egypt. All the military help it could get was only from the West. The British air-crafts like Avro Anson, Super-Marine Spitfre F-22, Gloster Metcor F-8, D.H. Vampire, F-52 and T-55 were supplied by Great Britain whereas Curtiss C-46, Buch C-45 and Doughlas C-47 were provided by the US.\(^\text{15}\)

**1955: THE WATERSHED IN EGYPTIAN POLICY**

Things began to change in 1955 when Nasser acquired new options in his foreign policy. Egypt henceforth jolted the anti-imperialist stance it had taken hitherto and adopted the new slogan of non-alignment (or positive neutrality as it was then called).\(^\text{16}\) This was the result of a combination of two main events; change within the Communist world and closer co-operation among some of the newly independent Afro-Asian states seeking to pursue an independent foreign policy.

The death of Stalin in March 1953 brought new leaders to the Kremlin. The post-Stalin leaders of the Kremlin embarked upon a gradual relaxation of Stalinist inflexibility and reactivated the Leninist policy of support to national liberation movements, even though they happened to have bourgeois leadership, as a means for weakening imperialism and capitalism. By 1955, they had

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launched a vast programme of aid to and trade with several non-Communist Afro-Asian countries, beginning with India and Afghanistan.

The visits of Nikita Khrushchev and Bulganin to the countries like Afghanistan, Burma, India and Indonesia in November-December 1955 opened a new vista for improved relations between Egypt and the Communist bloc states. Though these two leaders did not visit Egypt at that time, still under the leadership of Nasser, Egypt became acceptable to them. This modification should be viewed in the context of the Baghdad Pact which had been opposed by these Arab states.

Once the Soviet policy changed, Communists stopped calling Nasser "American fascist Gamal, a torturer and traitor" and in the Nawat and Dalshin leaflets he became the "brave defender of the nation's peace and independence."\(^{17}\) In 1955, Vatoline, a Soviet expert, wrote an article praising internal as well as external policies of Nasser's government saying that they were "objectively progressive actions".\(^{18}\) The Soviet penetration into the Arabian Sea along the eastern Mediterranean coast and down the Red sea seems to be a well-planned move of the new Soviet-Egypt relationship. Not only did it outflank the Baghdad Pact, an outcome of the Northern Tier Plan of John Foster Dulles, but also enabled the Soviets to thrust out into the Indian Ocean.\(^{19}\)


By this new turn in the Soviet-Egypt relationship, the Soviet bloc extended its economic aid, military aid as well as political support to Egypt even in the United Nations. Low-interest loans, satisfactory terms of repayment, liberal credit and helpful trade agreements, adequate supply of arms, and scrupulous abstention from political demands - all these were made possible by the post-Stalin metamorphosis of Soviet strategy, which came into its own precisely at the time when Egypt's economic needs were becoming pressing and its needs for arms desperately urgent.

Though the USSR had voted for the partition of Palestine and had recognized the state of Israel, soon Soviet-Israel relations began to deteriorate. The strong links fostered by Israel with the Western bloc states like USA, Britain and France, soon after its independence, made Israel a suspect in the eyes of the USSR. Thus, it began to support Arabs against Israel. In 1952-54, the question of passage through the Suez Canal for Israeli ships and cargo assumed international dimension. The question was raised in the United Nations in which USSR supported Egypt against Israel. On 29 March 1954, USSR vetoed the UN resolution which was moved against Egypt in favour of Israel by the New Zealand delegate Sir Lesley Monroe. It was favoured by Brazil, Columbia, Denmark, France, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States. It called upon the Egyptian Government to comply with the Constantinople Convention and offer free passage to Israel through the Suez Canal.\(^\text{20}\) It marked the change of Soviet position from

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that of abstention which the Soviet Union had followed since 1948, to one of keen interest for support of Egypt.

THE PALESTINE FACTOR

Among the regional factors influencing Egyptian foreign policy, the Palestine question linked to pan-Arabism of Nasser draws our attention quite effectively. The Palestine question, about which an Arab was so emotional that he was not prepared even to acknowledge the existence of Israel, has deep roots. For him Palestine is a part of the Arab nation which was, contrary to the British promise during the First World War, given to the Jews. Israel was created not only by the Jews but also by Great Britain and above all by the US which, after the Second World War, took active steps in this regard. American dollar financed the Jews’ efforts during the Palestine War of 1948 and the same source continues to finance the state of Israel even today. The attitude of the Big Powers in the Palestine War had hurt the Arabs. So it was quite natural that Egypt, the leading Arab nation, should sympathise with the cause of the Palestinians.

While Egypt had played a leading role in supporting the Palestinian cause, Nasser made it a major plank of his foreign policy. If leadership of the Arab World was one of the objectives of Nasser’s foreign policy, supporting the Palestinian cause and consequently opposing Israel, not only politically but also militarily, became a major instrument of Nasser’s Arab policy. Such a policy, besides giving Nasser a great deal of credibility at home, would also enhance Egyptian influence in the neighbouring states. That would also constitute a first line of defense against pressure from Britain or other great powers against Egypt’s tenuously independent foreign policy. In 1955, Nasser began his
campaign against the Baghdad Pact and it at once electrified the Arab world, at least, at the popular level.

Given the situation, confrontation between Egypt and Israel was inevitable. David Ben-Gurion became the Defense Minister of Israel on 17 February 1955 and hardly eleven days later Israeli troops smashed across the Armistice line at Gaza strip under Egyptian patronage in a meticulously planned way and made an armed attack that killed thirty-eight and wounded thirty-one Egyptians and Palestinians. It was by far the heaviest attack across the Israeli-Egypt Line since 1949. This attack was condemned by the UN Security Council on 29 March 1955 in resolution S/3378 which said "The Security Council condemns this attack as a violation of the ceasefire provisions of the Security Council resolution of 15 July 1948 and as inconsistent with the obligations of the parties under the General Armistice Agreement between Egypt and Israel and under the charter; calls again upon Israel to take all necessary measures to prevent such actions."21 The attack was, however, defended by the Israeli Government as a "reprisal" against the "savage hanging of two Jews in Cairo on 31 January 1955" and the Egyptian seizure of the Israeli vessel "Bat Galim" on 28 September 1954 as well as against the infiltration into Israeli-controlled territory of Palestinian refugees who had been living in refugee camps in the Gaza Strip since 1948.22 But neither UN reports nor official US intelligence nor reliable Western Press analysis substantiated this


There had not been any significant increase in raids into Israel. According to the former US Ambassador to Egypt, Henry Byroade, Israel was responsible for this attack and also according to him, at that time Egypt was not half as strong as Israel.²⁴

The Gaza raid of February 1955 was the first in a long list of Israeli military operations which kept the Israel-Egyptian Armistice Demarcation Lines ablaze for several months and culminated in the full-scale invasion of Sinai on 29 October 1956. It was also important because it was the first military incursion into Arab territory since the Armistice Agreement of 1949, for which the Israeli Government publicly assumed official responsibility. The Gaza raid was one of the determining factors in Egyptian foreign policy for which Nasser had to seek modern arms.

The Egyptian Government did not immediately contact the Eastern bloc for arms but tried to obtain them from countries of the Western bloc. Negotiations with Washington were urgently resumed. Egypt insisted that it would buy the arms so as to keep free of political strings. But despite long negotiations and even assurances, Egypt’s requirements remained unfulfilled. This, of course, meant the end of negotiations in Washington. The Israeli lobby, which was very active in USA, had also prevented large-scale arms transfers to Egypt. That


summer, Egypt got from Britain only forty Centurion tanks but shipped without one round of ammunition. On protest, ten rounds per tank were sent - not enough even for preliminary firing tests.  

While the Egyptian search for arms was continuing Nasser on 7 September 1955, publicly referred to the existence of secret French-Israeli arms agreement which, he alleged, included the sale of one hundred French tanks and several latest Mystere jet fighters to Israel. But the world took little note. At this juncture, feelers were sent out from the Eastern bloc countries that they would be willing to sell heavy arms to Egyptians on barter basis. The proposition was very attractive and contracts, known as the Czech-arms deal, were officially announced on 27 September 1955.

On 10 November 1955, Life magazine published an interview with Nasser in which Nasser had said,

One thing I am not going to use the arms for is to start a war and Egypt had signed the Czech-arms deal thinking not of Israeli-strength as it was then, but as it would be when her secret arms deal with France was contemplated.  

Though the Head of a state had publicly levelled this allegation of secret Franco-Israeli military supplies, once again the world took little notice of it and dismissed it as Nasser's fabrication. But Nasser had not only alluded to the secret alliance but also had provided a list of French weapons which included 70 Mystere jets, 100 tanks, 100 heavy 155 mm guns, and 150 high velocity 75 mm

25 Erskine B. Childers, n.23, p.133.
26 Quoted in ibid, p.135.
anti-tank guns. In late 1956, when Israel's use of the French weapons in Sinai became known and were detailed by close observers, they corresponded almost exactly, in type and quantity with Nasser's detailed list of 1955.

In this context, it needs to be noted that the tripartite arms control agreement between USA, UK and France to maintain a military balance between Arabs and Israel was deliberately violated by one of the parties and other two signatories had not only not done anything to rectify the resulting imbalance but when Egypt sought to obtain arms from the only other source - the Eastern bloc - condemned Egypt and used it as an instrument to isolate and punish it.

The Czech-arms deal was a major step in Egypt's foreign and defense policy. It was the first arms deal concluded by the Eastern block with a non-Communist country and, as such, emphasized Egypt's international position. By concluding this deal with Czechoslovakia, Egypt paved the way for the Arabs to assert their sovereignty both in defense and foreign affairs. The deal did mark a major shift in the power equation of West Asia. While it ended the Western monopoly over transfer of arms to the Arabs, it also enabled the Soviet Union to bypass the laboriously created Western-screen in the Northern Tier Plan. While this development startled and angered the West, it was welcomed throughout most of the Arab world. Western countries viewed the Egyptian decision as a

27 Ibid.
threat posed to them which, were it not to be penalized, might lead to other countries of the Third World following Egypt's example. But here it should be noted that the Western arms transfer towards West Asia, especially to the Arabs and to Israel were governed by the 25 May 1950 Declaration by the USA, the UK, and France. This Tripartite Declaration, a statement of policy for the Middle East stated in part:

The three governments take this opportunity of declaring their deep interest in and their desire to promote the establishment and maintenance of peace and stability in the area and their unalterable opposition to the use of force or threat between any of the states in that area. The three governments, should they find that any of these states was preparing to violate frontiers or armistice lines, would, consistently with their obligations as members of the UN, immediately take action, both within and outside the UN, to prevent such violation.

It also imposed a de facto arms control in the region by a carefully calculated transfer of arms to the Arabs and Israel. The new Egyptian regime was trying to break through this unilaterally imposed restriction. The British who did not trust Nasser, not only resisted American initiatives to meet Egyptian request, but also refused to deliver planes and tanks for which the Egyptian had already paid.

It is true that Egypt's relation with UK and USA had improved since the settlement of such a base problem in October 1954. But Nasser's opposition to Baghdad Pact and the Czech-arms deal followed by Gaza raid on Egypt were the major

32 Amin Hewedy, "Nasser and the Crisis of 1956", W.M.Roger Louis and Roger Owen (eds.), n.9, p.162.
facts that strained the relation. 1955 was indeed a turning point in Egypt's history of foreign policy.

The willingness of USSR and China to compete with the Western bloc states in terms of political, economic and military support, so as to enhance influence in the Afro-Asian world, offered new options to Egypt. Also, by 1955, the change of government in Israel had brought a more aggressive regime there. Arab-Israeli confrontation was bound to increase. By 1955, Nasser had acquired a firm control over power in Egypt and was all set to pursue a vigorous foreign policy, especially in the Arab world, to put Egypt as the dominant Arab power. 1956 saw further deterioration in Egypt's relations with the West and an increasing reliance upon the East. It had profound impact upon the policy of non-alignment of Egypt. In fact, the Suez crisis of 1956 was the first major international test of non-alignment.\(^{33}\)

**THE SUEZ CRIES**

The Suez crises beginning with the cancellation of the Aswan Dam loan agreement, the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, abortive attempts at Pacific settlements of dispute and finally the tripartite aggression on Egypt had a profound impact upon Egypt's domestic and foreign policies.

The project for a high dam at Aswan was aimed to cut down imports, boost foreign exchange reserves, render possible the erection of a chain of industries by generating more power and to increase the annual national income of Egypt by a billion dollars. Against a runaway birth rate, the Aswan Dam was

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\(^{33}\) Sarvepalli Gopal, "India, the Crisis and the Non-Aligned Nations", in W.M. Roger Louis and Roger Owen (eds.), n.9, p.173.
represented as the only hope of maintaining the standard of living. From 1954 onwards, the High Dam was a popular vision of Egypt. Therefore, the Egyptian Government approached the West and the World Bank for financial support to implant the project. The question was widely discussed and it was announced in Washington on 17 December 1955 that USA and Great Britain would give Egypt financial support. The World Bank, largely influenced by the USA, also announced its readiness to fund the project. But, all of a sudden, on 19 July 1956, US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, announced America's withdrawal from the offer. It was a surprise not only to the Arabs but also to the US Ambassador in Cairo who came to know about it only through newspapers.  

The sudden withdrawal of the American grants did not, as was sometimes supposed, come to Britain as an unpleasant surprise. The British Government also announced its withdrawal the next day. The World Bank offer, which was conditional upon the US and British participation, was also withdrawn.

The reason for America's refusal to have a hand in the financing of the High Dam was probably simple. In the view of the State Department, Cairo had become too deeply committed to Moscow with the arms deal and the recognition of the Communist Chinese regime, and by financing the Dam, the US would be indirectly financing the Kremlin. There was talk of slapping Nasser down for

34 K.R. Singh, n.24, p.145.


his neutralism. World Bank spokesmen were so annoyed that they scarcely concealed their view that no new factor had altered the merit of the High Dam, or Egypt's ability to finance the share of its cost.\(^{37}\)

The cancellation of the Aswan Dam aid was a calculated snub to Egypt. It generated its own responses. Egypt's "man of destiny" could not tolerate any denigration of his regime. He seized this opportunity to nationalize the Suez Canal Company.\(^{38}\) On 26 July 1956, Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company and declared that since the Western powers refused to finance the Dam, Egypt was compelled to raise her own money.\(^ {39}\) "The income from the Canal, a hundred million dollars a year", he said, "would be used to build the Dam".\(^ {40}\) (This figure was based on the previous year's gross income from the Canal which was $97,596,000 or £35,000,000 approximately). Nasser also said:

We, who have lost 1,20,000 persons, who have died in digging the canal, take only 1 million pounds or 3 million dollars. This is the Suez Canal Company, which according to the Firman, was dug for the sake of Egypt and its benefit... But the Americans and the British are taking over the canal which is situated in the territory of Egypt, cuts through the territory of Egypt is a part of Egypt and belongs to Egypt.\(^ {41}\)

\(^{37}\) The Times, Report from Washington, 21 July 1956.


\(^{40}\) Emil Lengyel, n.36, p.89.

\(^{41}\) Translation made from Nasser's speeches on 26 July 1956, quoted in (continued...)
This new action of Nasser affected the West severely particularly Britain and France. The government of the UK was the largest single share holder of the Canal Company, *Campagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime du Suez*, a private corporation with a special status, operating under the French and Egyptian laws. Moreover, the Cold War role of the Suez was also important. Western shipping used the canal far more than that of the Soviet bloc. Since the NATO countries obtained eighty percent of their vitally needed oil from the Gulf, the Suez Canal was their most important petroleum tanker route.

The announcement of the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, thus, took the breath away from the Western diplomats. In their desperate attempts to maintain control over the Suez Canal, they committed themselves into an uncompromising position by attempting to equate the Suez Canal with the Suez Canal Company. They agreed that Egypt had the right to nationalize the Suez Canal Company but in the same breath they argued that she had nationalized the Suez Canal. And, when they could not argue on legal grounds they descended to the level of abuse and started accusing Nasser as a 'dictator attempting to choke the life-line of the Western economy'.

They sought to gain complete control over the Suez Canal through the Suez Conference held in London on 16 and 18 August 1956 and the Suez Canal Users' Association of 19-21 September 1956. There was twenty-two participants in the London

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42 K.R.Singh, n.24, p.146.
Conference. A majority plan was produced by eighteen nations. It called for the establishment of an international organisation to operate the canal - the Suez Canal Board. The minority report was endorsed by the Soviet Union, India, Indonesia and Ceylon. Under the minority plan, the Canal was to remain under Egyptian management but with an advisory board of the representatives of international users. However, only the 18-Power plan was presented to the Egyptian Government in Cairo on 3 September 1956, by a five-nation committee headed by the Prime Minister of Australia. 43 Egypt's answer to the eighteen-power proposal, conveyed in President Nasser's letter of 9 September to the Committee's Chairman, said: "The Egyptian people are bound to consider the proposed system an infringement of their rights and sovereignty; it precludes their cooperation upon which any system operating the canal must depend." 44 Egypt's reiterated willingness for reaffirmation of Constantinople Convention of 1888 was ignored.

Upon the failure of the first plan, a second conference was convened from 19-21 September 1956. Fifteen countries led by USA, Britain and France, now decided to form the Suez Canal Users' Association (SCUA) which would employ its own pilots, collect the tolls and pay Egypt appropriate fees. But it proved objectionable to Nasser and succumbed to a Soviet veto.

However, it suffices to say that discussions aimed at solving the issues led to deadlocks and the attempts of the Western powers towards the status quo ante


nationalization failed. In desperation and in order to cover their humiliation, Great Britain and France used Israel to obtain by force what they could not obtain by diplomacy. The Suez controversy at this juncture got linked with the conflict between Israel and Egypt. Two seemingly unrelated hostilities between Israel and Egypt, on one hand; and Britain in league with France against Egypt on the other, eventually merged and ended not far from the banks of the Canal.

There had been blows and counter blows: infiltration into Israel across her meandering frontiers, across the hills of Judaea and Samaria; on the plains where the Philistines had dwelt; from Gaza strip along the mediterranean. The counter blows were against the Fedayeen encampments in Gaza and elsewhere. During the height of the Suez controversy there were apprehensions that Israel was contemplating drastic action to discourage Fedayeen attacks. At the same time, in France, the upholders of the French national gloire in Egypt seemed to have obtained the upper hand. The French were also hostile towards Egypt for its support with Maghreb liberation movement aimed against France in North Africa. In Britain too, the vocal Suez group¹, which had maintained that the line had to be drawn somewhere and that this was the line, was chafing under new restraints. USA, sensitive to trouble, cautioned restraint all around, and President Eisenhower transmitted a message to Prime Minister David Ben Gurion, warning against armed action. What went on behind the diplomatic curtain of silence in Paris, London and Jerusalem was not known at that time but did not remain a mystery for long. Active preparation for military intervention by British and French forces from Cyprus was going on for some time. The collusion between Israel, Britain and France was evident since the unfolding of events in October-
November 1956. On 29 October 1956, the government of Israel announced that it was striking out to wipe out the Fedayeen bases. It also attacked Egypt and penetrated into the Sinai by paratrooping on the passes there. At this point, the Sinai campaign became a part of a larger conflict. On 30 October Britain and France dispatched joint ultimatum to Egypt and Israel, demanding that they should cease fighting and withdraw their forces to position ten miles on either side of the Suez Canal. In order to safeguard these operations, the two countries called on Egypt to accept the temporary occupation of Port Said, Ismailia, Suez and other key points along the Canal. Prime Minister Eden announced in the name of the two allies that unless the ultimatum was complied within twelve hours, their armed forces would intervene. Israel accepted by Egypt rejected the proposal. After all, Israeli forces were far away from the Canal and there was no threat to the shipping in the canal at that time. Also Nasser had no intention of obliging Israel, Britain or France by withdrawing not only from the Sinai but also from the West Bank of the Suez Canal. After the time of expiry of the ultimatum, the Anglo-French forces began the bombardment of Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, Ismailia and Suez. Egypt had no option but to order a quick withdrawal of its forces from the Sinai trap. In that process, Israel forces, allied with the British and French forces inflicted a heavy loss on Egypt and occupied Sinai. The Tripartite British-French and Israel aggression came to a halt on 5 November 1956 under pressure of the United Nations Command Force. The USA strongly criticized the Tripartite aggression. Also the Soviet Union warned that it would send Soviet citizens as volunteers to take part in the Egyptian struggle. The world knew from previous experiences in the Far East what "volunteers" meant in Soviet language.
By this aggression, the West had thought that they would be able to overthrow Nasser and entrench somebody who would be more amenable to their will. But in this attempt the West failed miserably. Instead of demolishing Nasser they made him a hero. The Suez War was a diplomatic victory for Nasser. Nasser adamantly declared in 1960, while laying down the foundation of the Aswan Dam on 9 January:

We proceeded, dear Brethren, to establish a free economy based on solid grounds. We were not affected by threats, we were not terrorised by aggression, we were determined to put our wishes and desires into execution by making our economy free, sound, nationalist and Arab.\(^45\)

The nationalization of the Suez Canal Company by Nasser not only led to the Tripartite Aggression but also to an economic blockade of Egypt by the West. Egyptian foreign currency holdings in USA, Britain and France were immediately frozen. Figures for the value of these assets vary but are around £107 million to £110 million in the No.1 and No.2 accounts in London and perhaps $27 million to $27.3 million in the U.S.\(^46\) Thus, the Suez crisis provided a striking example of the militant use of financial power. Historically Nasser said: "The meaning of Suez is that there is an end to the methods of the nineteenth century, that it was


\(^46\) £107 million and $27.3 million are suggested by Bent Hansen, and Girgis A. Marzouk, Development and Economic Policy in the UAR, Amsterdam, 1965, p.190; and £110 million and $27 million are suggested by Roger Owen, "The Economic Consequences of the Suez Crisis for Egypt", in Louis and Owen (eds.), n.9, p.364.
impossible to use the methods of the nineteenth century in the twentieth century".47

UN response to the tripartite aggression was one of the few illustrations of a positive role of the UN in revolving the crisis. Though the Security Council was powerless to act due to use and threat of use of veto by UK and France, the General Assembly under the uniting for Peace Resolution, and with active support of USA and USSR, succeeded in evolving a framework that not only led to the withdrawal of British, French and Israeli forces from the Egyptian soil but also created the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) as a buffer between Egypt and Israel.

While Egypt succeeded in the withdrawal of Israeli military forces from Israel it had to agree to a compromise on the right of passage through the Gulf of Aqaba. The Suez invasion resulted in Egypt's loss of comprehensive control over the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran. UNEF was stationed there and the passage was open to Israeli ships. Israel has since then been able to navigate through the disputed water-way, which had previously been denied to it. This issue has raised legal controversy. There is no doubt that coercive change is unpermissible and illegal under the rules of international law. This fact was endorsed by the UN Secretary General's report to the General Assembly where he referred to the change effected by the invasion of Egypt:

The UN cannot condone a change of the status juris resulting from military action contrary to the provisions of the charter. The organisation must, therefore, maintain that the status juris existing prior to such military action be re-established by a withdrawal of

47 Quoted in Robert Stephens, n.5, p.247.
troops, and by the relinquishment or nullification of rights asserted in territories covered by the military action. 48

But even if we assure that Egypt's status juris over the Gulf and the strait is questionable, it will have to be conceded that the passage of Israeli shipping is a "Legal controversy". That the invasion of Egypt should not affect the solution of this "legal controversy" is also pointed out by the Secretary General of the UN. 49

It is beyond doubt that sovereignty over the Gulf and the Strait was solely asserted by the Arab states and, despite the illegal seizure and holding of a small frontage by Israel, remained with the Arab states. This sovereignty, or authority and control over the Gulf and the Strait, together with the fact that all the territories surrounding them belonged since immemorial times to the Arabs, identifies the status juris or legal character of the Straits.

On 28 January 1950, following an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Egypt which transferred and regulated authority over the two islands of Tiran and Sinafir to Egypt, an Aide Memoire was sent by the Egyptian Government to the American Embassy in Cairo. Until 1950, passage through the straits and the Gulf was limited to the shipping of the surrounding Arab states, namely Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Prior to 25 June 1952, when Elath (Aqaba) was established

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as a harbour, Israeli ships neither sailed the Gulf, nor passed through the strait.  

The New York Times of 9 December 1955 observed that "only four or five ships sailing to or from the Israeli port of Elath had passed through the Gulf in those seven years since the establishment of Israel." In 1954, Egypt promulgated certain regulations regarding maritime traffic through its territorial waters, in the straits of Tiran. In August 1955, the Director General of the Egyptian Ports and Lights Administration issued a general regulation to the effect that 72 hours prior to a planned passage through the straits, the following information must be given to the Egyptian authorities: "Name of vessel, type, nationality, exact hour of passage through the straits, general cargo, and destination". The 1956 invasion of Egypt by Israel resulted in Egypt's loss of comprehensive control over the Gulf and the Strait. Egyptians have argued that the Gulf of Aqaba, was basically, not an international question. The Gulf was a national inland waterway, subject to absolute Arab sovereignty. The geographic location of the Gulf is conclusive proof of its national character. It is separated from the Red Sea by a chain of islands, the largest being Sanafir and Tiran. The only navigable entrance - which, itself, is within Arab Territory - does not exceed 500 meters. Thus, by its configuration, the Gulf is in the nature of a mare clausum which does not belong to the class of international waterways. The Gulf


52 M.Burhan W. Hammad, n.48, p.738.
is so narrow that the territorial areas of the Littoral States are bound to overlap among themselves, under any kind of measurement, even if we assume that the Gulf comprehends part of the high seas.

The Suez crisis was an important test case for the non-aligned foreign policy of Egypt. While the Czech-arms deal was a signal of Egypt's willingness to deal with the Soviet bloc, the rejection of the Aswan Dam aid, and the subsequent Tripartite Aggression followed by the economic blockade by the West became the major force that propelled Egypt into the Eastern camp. Though USA played a little more positive role during the Suez crisis, it soon lost its advantage by propounding the Eisenhower Doctrine.

THE EISENHOWER DOCTRINE

One of the several fall-outs of the Suez Crisis was the further erosion of the credibility of Britain and France as regional big brothers. USA argued that a vacuum was, thus, created which would be filled by USSR unless USA preempts it. Thus, the Eisenhower Doctrine was a policy statement on the Middle East issued in January 1957 by the American President, Dwight David Eisenhower, and was authorised by the Congress in March 1957. It was meant to bolster the pro-Western Arab regimes by granting military and economic assistance to them. It also authorised the use of US military forces to protect the territorial integrity of any threatened state by Communist aggressions. The US President said in the statement:

The action which I propose would have the following features. It would first of all, authorise the US to cooperate with and assist any nation or group of nations in the general area of the Middle East in the development of economic strength dedicated to the maintenance of national independence... in the second place, authorize the
executive to undertake in the same region programmes of military assistance and cooperation with any nation or group of nations which desires such aid... in the third place, authorize such assistance and cooperation to include the employment of the armed forces of the US to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations requesting such aid against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by international Communism.\(^\text{53}\)

Only two Arab regimes, the Iraqi and the Lebanese publicly accepted the Eisenhower Doctrine. Iraq was a member of the Baghdad Pact and her acceptance was taken, more or less, for granted. But Lebanese acceptance, because of the pro-Western Chamou Government, had far-reaching consequences. In other Arab countries the Doctrine was widely criticized. Even Prime Minister Nehru, the then Premier of India, wrote to Eisenhower of his dislike of a "military approach to these problems" - an approach which, he thought, "might excite... passions and create divisions among the Arab countries and, thus, add to the tension."\(^\text{54}\)

Egypt criticized not only the so-called vacuum theory but also the assumption that the USA could fill that vacuum.\(^\text{55}\) It visualized all this as another attempt to escalate Cold War in the region. Hence it was rejected by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and also Syria. Jordan and Saudi Arabia, however, modified their stands subsequently. Rejection of the Eisenhower Doctrine by Egypt became one more hallmark in its policy of non-alignment. Nasser not only

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54 Ibid, pp.180-83.

rejected it but Egypt also led the opposition to that doctrine in the whole Arab world.

The Eisenhower Doctrine was discussed first at the Cairo Conference on 19 January 1957. It was attended by President Nasser, King Saud, King Hussain and Sabri al-Asali. They all rejected the Eisenhower Doctrine. After the Cairo Conference, King Saud left for the US, ostensibly, to convey the Arab view about the Doctrine. But his subsequent statements in Washington showed a change in the Saudi policy. Probably the fabulous red carpet treatment meted out to him was partly responsible for his deviation from the avowed aim of the visit. King Saud further reaffirmed his faith in the Eisenhower Doctrine in the joint communique signed after the visit of Richard’s Mission to Riyadh on 11 April 1957.56

In Jordan, the reaction to the Eisenhower Doctrine was negative in the initial stage and Premier Nabulsi even went to the extent of terminating the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty of 1948 on 13 March 1957, thereby severing the last tie with Great Britain. There was also a possibility of exchanging diplomatic missions with the USSR. Indeed the spirit of non-alignment was running pretty high in that country. It, however, received a big shock when in April the same year martial law was proclaimed and political parties were banned by King Hussain. Soon after that the Jordanian Foreign policy gradually drifted away from the policy of non-alignment to pro-westernism.

56 K.R. Singh, n.24, p.149.
ARAB UNITY AND THE EGYPTIAN POLICY OF NON-ALIGNMENT

By the summer of 1957, Nasser had only one ally left; Syria and it was also on the midst of national and international crises. Syria, despite the restraining influence of President Shukry al-Quwatly, was drifting towards the left. Consequently, US-Syria relations deteriorated further. During this time, arms supply to Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Jordan was stepped up by the USA. It was at this time that the Syrian-Turkish border tensions developed. The inevitable result was that Syria was pushed further towards the Communists. The Syrian Communist Party, under the leadership of Khaled Baghdash, was the strongest Communist Party among the Arab states. Liberal politicians in Syria became alarmed at the pro-Soviet orientation in Syria and sought closer support from Egypt which was granted. But by that time, the crisis had simmered down, yet the ill-feelings against USA remained. The result was that the pro-Arab Unionist forces led by the Baath Party and supported by the liberals, embarked upon a concerted effort of campaigning for unity with Egypt. Nasser was also committed to form the Egypt-Syria unity as a part of the larger Arab unity and also to buttress his policy of non-alignment. Concrete steps were taken to unify the economies of Egypt and Syria.\(^{57}\) The Syrians, encouraged by the Baathists among them, surprised Nasser by demanding more than the expected federal union. Nasser argued that if federal union was not a viable proposition, then union should be total and this meant the complete and organic merger of Syria and Egypt, with the condition that the Syrian political system should follow that of

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Egypt. On this basis, the United Arab Republic (UAR), under the Presidency of Nasser, was announced on 4 February 1958.

After the union between Syria and Egypt, the new state, UAR, adopted the single-party system. Consequently the Syrian Communist Party became illegal and had to stop its activities. Khaled Bagdash, the Syrian Communist leader, went into exile and started attacking the UAR government in general and Nasser in particular. It had a direct impact upon the relation of UAR with the Eastern bloc. At this juncture the Iraqi revolution of 14 July 1958 and its repercussions created conditions which had far-reaching consequences upon Egypt's foreign policy and its relations not only with USA but also USSR and China.

The Iraqi Revolution of 14 July 1958 unleashed the pent-up political energies and all the political parties which had been suppressed under the previous regime reemerged into active political life. Of them the Communist Party was the strongest and the most influential and was able to have a dominating influence in Iraq. Naturally it became the rallying point not only of Arab Communists but also of the Communist bloc as a whole. The Eastern bloc, thus, became involved in the controversy between the Arab Communists and the UAR government.

The UAR-Iraq controversy started after the dismissal in October 1958 of Col. Abdul Salam Arif of Iraq who was a Baathist and was spearheading the movement for union with the UAR. The UAR press and radio accused not only the Iraqi but also the Arab Communists in general of working against Arab unity. In his Port Said speech on 23 December 1958, Nasser even criticised the Syrian
Communists of trying to separate Syria from the UAR.\textsuperscript{58} Again, on 11 March 1959, while speaking in Damascus, President Nasser criticised the Arab Communist in general and the Iraqi Communists in particular for being foreign agents and for working against the unity of the UAR.\textsuperscript{59} His criticism must be read in the context of the Communist led anti-Baath movement in Mosul in March 1959. Also, at that time, there was a strong rumour of a Communist plan for the 'Red Fertile Crescent'; a union of Syria, Jordan and Iraq. The inclusion of Syria in this plan went against the unity of UAR. These developments not only created a rift between Nasser and the Communist bloc but also severely tested the egyptian policy of non-alignment. What had started as a policy of non-alignment directed primarily against the West, assumed an anti-Communist orientation as well thereby justifying a certain degree of non-alignment.

The deteriorating relation between the Communist bloc and Egypt had a direct impact upon Egypt's economy. Egypt received absolutely no economic aid from the USSR in the year 1959 whereas it had received approximately $275 million in the two years of 1957 and 1958.\textsuperscript{60} During these two years (1957-58), Egypt's acceptance of economic aid from the US was almost nil as it could manage to get only $1.6 million.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{58} UAR Information Department, President Gamal Abdel Nasser's Speeches and Press Interviews, Cairo, 1958, p.355.

\textsuperscript{59} The Government of the United Arab Republic, President Gamal Abdel Nasser's Speeches and Press Interviews, Cairo, 1959, p.123.

\textsuperscript{60} James Richard Carter, The Net Cost of Soviet Foreign Aid, Praeger, 1969/71, Appendix Table 1).

\textsuperscript{61} U.S. Agency for International Development, n.14, Appendix-2, Table 1.
While there was an unevenness in relations between UAR and the Eastern bloc states, new changes were taking place in international sphere which had a direct impact upon the non-aligned aspect of Egyptian foreign policy. John Fitzgerald Kennedy stepped into the White House in 1961 as the new President of the USA. President Kennedy tried to delink US policy from the purely Cold War framework and sought to develop ties with the non-aligned states also. He tried to cultivate good relationship with Nasser. Nasser too had a good opinion about Kennedy. Hence cordial relations developed between these two leaders. However, these relations deteriorated soon because Nasser did not favour the US policy of supplying Israel with arms. Nasser also believed that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was directly responsible for the break up of the United Arab Republic in 1961. Moreover, the United States was using its wheat loans as a political lever. Negotiations were delayed, and the agreements were often for short periods ranging from three to six months. Thus, a steady deterioration set-in in Egypt-US relations. Assassination of President Kennedy and the coming into power of Johnson as the new US President also contributed to this drift.

EGYPT'S ISOLATION FROM THE WEST

Growing Egyptian isolation from the West was conspicuous in 1964-65. That was because of several issues like growing alliance between the traditional

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Arab regimes led by Saudi Arabia and the West and USA's total commitment to Israel.

Egypt did not favour the US policy of supplying Israel with arms, a policy initiated by President Kennedy, that attained new heights under President Johnson. Following the HAWK SAM missile deal during Kennedy period, arms negotiation between Washington and Israel was accelerated and Israel got the powerful Patton tanks. Moreover, Egypt did not favour the USA's attitude towards Israel when the Arab-Israeli conflict became more intense after the confrontation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 and the clashes over the Israeli attempts to divert the waters of River Jordan. The debate over the issue of Jordan River Waters serves to illustrate both the Egyptian outlook at that time and the interlacing of the Arab-Israeli conflict and intra-Arab rivalries.

Shared usage of the Jordan River waters has been a persistent issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Eric Johnson's mission in the early 1950s had offered the framework of an agreement between Israel and other Arab states like Jordan regarding the distribution and utilization of the waters that would have allowed Israel to build its National water carrier system in stages. No agreement was, however, signed. But Israel unilaterally went ahead with its scheme. During the last months of 1963, while the Arab states were engaged in their quarrels, Israel was approaching the completion of its project to divert the head waters of the River Jordan from the Sea of Galilee. The Arabs, in the past, had frequently
declared that such a diversion would be regarded as an act of aggression by
Israel and as such would be met by force.\textsuperscript{63}

As in many earlier instances, Arab action did not match the Arab rhetoric
and Israel was allowed to continue to work on the project unhampered. By 1964
the work was nearly completed. Though Egypt was not directly involved, it was
cconcerned as an Arab leader. Nasser was, however, not anxious to be dragged
into hostilities through the precipitous action of another state, especially Syria and
her demagogic Baathist leadership. Moreover, an assessment of the objective
capabilities of the two disputants convinced the Egyptian elites that Israel should
not be militarily engaged except by the forces of all Arab states, using all
elements of their power, operating under a unified command and executing a
concerted and pre-determined plan. Thus, on 23 December 1963, in a major
speech, Nasser declared:

\begin{quote}
In order to confront Israel, which challenged us last week, when its
Chief-of-Staff stood up and said, we shall divert the water against
the will of the Arabs and the Arabs can do what they want', a
meeting between Arab Kings and Heads of State must take place
as soon as possible, regardless of the conflicts and differences
between them.\textsuperscript{64}
\end{quote}

Nasser convened the first Arab summit, for the above reasons, in Cairo in
January 1964. At the meeting, the Arab League decided that its members should
proceed with plans to divert the river waters. The Arab Kings and Heads of State
addressed broader issues. They affirmed that "they will regulate their political and
economic relations with other countries according to the stands of these countries

\textsuperscript{63} A.I. Dawisha, n.39, p.43.

\textsuperscript{64} The Arab Republic of Egypt, Nasser’s Speeches, Cairo, 1963, p.311.
towards the Arab's legitimate struggle against Zionist designs in the Arab world", and they accused Israel of "continuous acts of aggression", "practicing racial discrimination against the Arab minority", having "evicted the Arab Palestine people from their home", and subjecting Afro-Asian states to "Zionist, imperialist dangers and designs particularly in Africa." To put teeth into these accusations, they placed their armies under a Unified Arab Command. The Conference also began the discussions that led to the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in March 1964 at the Arab Palestinian Congress in (Jordanian) Jerusalem.

However, while the Arabs were trying to evolve a common front against Israel, they were far away from being united among themselves. The great cleavage between the so-called "progressive" and "traditional" Arab regimes was widening. The socialist and Pan-Arab waves from Cairo were challenging the stability of the "traditional" regimes. The Yemeni coup of 1962 and the large-scale Egyptian military involvement on the side of the republican regime of President Sallal heightened the confrontation. The "traditional" regimes, which by and large leaned towards the US, tried to group themselves under the banner of the "Islamic Pact" in 1965. The growing rivalry between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which in the 1950s were strong pillars of the Arab Non-Aligned Movement, was undermining Arab unity.

CLOSING THE OPTIONS: LEANING ON USSR

By 1965 while Egypt was getting more and more isolated not only from the Western powers, as well as the pro-Western regional powers, it was sucked deeper into Arab-Israeli confrontation. Egypt, therefore, had to lean much more upon the USSR and its East European allies not only for political and military but also for economic support. That dependence was final and total during and after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

It should be noted that from 1965 till the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, Egypt got as many as twenty MIG-21D, fourteen Su-7, fifty MIG-19, one-hundred MIG-21, twenty IL-28 aircrafts; and during this period it also got the modern missiles like anti-tank AT-1 "Snapper" and SAM SA-2 in large quantities. It also acquired naval vessels like the "R" class submarines, "Osa and Komar" class missile boats, "Shershen" class motor torpedo boats etc.66 In 1965 Egyptian debt payments were suspended and an arms debt of $460 million was written off by the Soviet Union.67 Since then Egypt has paid little, if anything, for military aid. In this case, as in a number of others, what started out as credit has ended up as a grant-in-aid.68 From 1965 till 1969 Egypt had spent approximately $300 million

66 SIPRI, n.15, pp.43-46.
68 Ibid.
on arms in comparison to its arms cost of $700 million from 1961 to 1964. The Soviets also benefited from their close cooperation with Egypt and Syria.

Despite the post-1962 detente, the Super Power naval rivalry had intensified not only in Indian Ocean but also in the Mediterranean. While "Indian Ocean was perceived as a region of increasing hostility and instability in the past" the Mediterranean region began to show a steady increase in tension particularly since 1964. The Eastern Mediterranean region acquired a new geo-strategic significance after 1963-64 when USA had developed the Polaris submarine-launched ballistic missile system (SLBM). Their deployment in Eastern Mediterranean could cover a large portion of Soviet Union. It needs to be noted that the land-based IRBM, the Jupiter, were withdrawn in 1963 as a part of the larger deal that had helped to resolve the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. The Soviets, recognized the potential threat from the Polaris-armed submarine sought to strengthen its naval and naval air strength in the region. The so-called ideological dispute with Albania at that time had led to the evacuation by Soviet Union of its only base in the region. Hence it had to depend more upon the Arab states with Syria, Egypt, Libya and Algeria for support facilities in the region. Thus, the Cold War-based nuclear strategy dove-tailed with that of the Arab-Israeli conflict especially after 1963-64 and continued to dominate the region, including the Egyptian foreign policy till Sadat changed the whole power equation.

Since Soviet Union had no direct land or naval base in the Mediterranean it depended upon the Arabs to provide some facilities for its naval deployment in the Mediterranean. Egypt reportedly provided naval facilities in Alexandria and Mersa Martuah and some air-base facilities for maritime reconnaissance by Soviet land-based aircraft. Thus, the growing Soviet-Egyptian relations benefited both the parties though in that process Egypt got sucked into the Cold War rivalry of the two Super Powers and the USSR got indirectly involved in the regional Arab-Israeli conflict on behalf of the Arabs, thereby legitimising the open and massive US economic, political and military aid to Israel, especially after 1964 and much more after the 1967 War.

The continuing confrontation between Israel and Egypt regarding the division of the Jordan River waters approved by the Arab League pushed Egypt further into the Soviet orbit. Though Egypt was fighting the so-called Arab battles, no Arab state with financial resources helped Egypt. The Arab-Israeli War of 1967 made Egypt completely subservient to the Soviet bloc.

The war of 1967 which was the outcome of several factors like the El Fatah raids organised from Jordan and Syria and the massive Israeli raids in retaliation as at ESSAMU, the air battles over Syria and Jordan, the reports of Israeli plans to attack Syria, Egypt’s demand for the withdrawal of UNEF and to close the UAR Government’s decision, whether by intent or accident, Israeli shipping, the Straits of Tiran, etc. The war in which Egypt as well as Syria not only lost men and weapons but also vast territories, also pushed Egypt further into the Soviet camp. Undoubtedly, the Arab Summit, held in Khartoum in 1967 after the Arab defeat, promised support to Egypt and some oil rich states promised to pay Egypt $100
million a year to make good its losses due to the closure of the Suez Canal. Still Egypt had to shoulder the burden of the continuing undeclared war alone or with the support of the Soviet Union. More than eighty percent of Egypt's military equipment was replaced after the June war by USSR and the number of Soviet advisors and technicians increased from 500 to 3000 by the end of 1967.\(^\text{70}\)

Nasser, a captive of his pan Arab ideals, drained his country's life-blood for an Arab cause while the majority of the Arab regimes were directly or indirectly undermining his position. Nasser's efforts to unite the Arab world failed, yet at the same time he has imposed a way of thinking even on those who attacked him most.\(^\text{71}\)

The Nasserite period of Egypt in the context of evolution and pursuance of the policy of non-alignment had witnessed two distinct years - 1955 and 1965 - as benchmarks. While 1955 symbolized protest against imperialism, 1965 signified not only protest against the West but also a massive tilt towards Soviet Union. It was at the cost of an independent policy. As late as 23 December 1964, Nasser had said,

This is our policy - an independent one. We have declared that we deal with the nations of the world on the basis of non-interference in the affairs of others. But if the Americans think that they are giving us a little aid to dominate us and control our policy, I would


like to tell them we are sorry…. I would like to know that whoever does not like our conduct can go drink up the sea.\textsuperscript{72}

By 1965, one saw a change in that policy and after 1967 War the ‘independent’ policy was under severe constraints.