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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Monterey, California



## THESIS

THE RISE AND FALL OF SOVIET INFLUENCE  
IN EGYPT

by

Gregory Hale Bradford

December 1976

Thesis Advisor: J. Amos

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By 1957 Russia had the Mid East presence she so long desired. The Soviet influence in Egypt grew to enormous proportions throughout the Nasser years. After Nasser's death in 1970 it appeared that the same strong relationship would continue between Egypt and the Soviet Union, but that was not to be. Russia had failed to understand the Egyptian people and the Egyptian government and had failed to deliver the kind of arms and aid that Sadat requested. In 1972 Sadat expelled most of the Russian advisors and technicians and the relationship began a steady decline until the spring of 1976 when there was a virtual break between the Egyptians and the Russians. Now (after 1975) Egypt has turned to the West once again. The United States has an opportunity to regain valuable lost ground in Egypt and the Middle East. The US must learn from the lessons of the recent past and deal pragmatically with Egypt's requests for arms and aid in order to re-establish lost American influence and prestige in Egypt.

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The Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence  
In Egypt

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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Since Peter the Great

### ABSTRACT

→ Russia has <sup>wanted</sup> desired a foothold in the Middle East since the time of Peter the Great. Russia wanted access to the Middle East for both military and commercial reasons. This foreign policy objective met with varying degrees of success until the mid 1950's when it appeared that the Soviet Union finally had her entry into the Middle East. → After the 1952 Egyptian revolt <sup>of 1952</sup> the new government turned to the West and the United States for aid and arms, <sup>but</sup> Egypt was turned down repeatedly. Egypt then turned to the USSR, <sup>and</sup> By 1957 Russia had the <sup>long-desired</sup> Mid East presence she so long desired. The Soviet influence in Egypt grew to enormous proportions throughout the Nasser years. → After Nasser's death in 1970 it appeared <sup>seemed</sup> that the same strong relationship would continue between Egypt and the Soviet Union, but that was not to be. → Russia, however, had failed to understand the Egyptian people and the Egyptian <sup>their</sup> government and had failed to deliver the kind of arms and aid that Sadat requested. In 1972, <sup>the</sup> Sadat expelled most of the Russian advisors and technicians and the relationship began a steady decline until <sup>in</sup> the spring of 1976 when there was a virtual break between the <sup>two nations.</sup> Egyptians and the Russians. Now <sup>again</sup> (after 1975) Egypt has turned to the West, <sup>once again</sup>. The <sup>author believes</sup> United States has an opportunity to regain valuable lost ground in Egypt and the Middle East. → The US must learn from the lessons of the recent past and deal pragmatically with Egypt's requests for arms and aid in order to re-establish lost American influence and prestige in Egypt. →



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## I. INTRODUCTION

We have an opportunity unique in the history of International Relations; that is, an opportunity to study, examine, and analyze the relationship between two sovereign nations from the inception to the demise. This particular relationship is, of course, the one between the Soviet Union and Egypt.

There is no doubt that the relationship between these two major international actors climbed from one of simple diplomatic courtesy and representation, to one of great stature and involvement between the nations, and then fell back to its original status of courteous, if not cold, diplomatic representation.

This entire chapter of Egyptian-Soviet history was written in less than twenty five years. International relationships of this magnitude and consequence usually need decades to evolve and mature and then wither - if that is their destiny. Here is a case that cannot be brushed aside as historical accident, or disregarded as an isolated example not likely to occur again. There are questions that must be answered if policy and decision makers hope to be effective in foreign relations and avoid the failures that the Soviet Union suffered in Egypt.

This paper will ask and answer such questions as: "How did the West, principally the United States, fail to gain

any position of influence in Egypt after the 1952 revolution?"; "What were the factors and circumstances that caused Egypt to turn to the Soviet Union for aid and advice?"; "How and why did the Soviets gain such a position of pre-eminence in Egypt in a relatively short period of time?"; "How did the Russians manage to negate their efforts and lose their position of influence in Egypt?"; "Is there a chance that the United States, or any other nation, can fill the void left by the Soviets in Egypt?"; and finally, "Is this case an isolated instance in international relations or can this phenomenon occur again, specifically in the Middle East?"

The purpose of this paper is to trace the rise and fall of the Soviet Union in Egypt from an Egyptian perspective. It will however, include references to, and analyses of, the relationships between Egypt and the other major powers that helped shape the Egyptian-Soviet relationship. Specifically, the paper will examine why the United States, Britain, and France (the West) lost the opportunity for a meaningful relationship with Egypt, and whether or not a relationship can now be developed between Egypt and the West.

In the course of examining the Egyptian-Soviet relationship one must look at the military, political, economic, cultural, strategic, and diplomatic aspects of the alliance. In order to handle so large a volume of information it is

necessary to arrange the material chronologically. The paper will begin with the earliest known interests of the Russians in the Middle East, and then proceed through the pre-Nasser, Nasser, and Sadat eras. The individual conclusions in each chapter will be summarized at the end of the paper and these factors or conclusions will be used to gain some insight into Egypt's future in the international community.

This study should prove useful from several points of view. It should help the reader to understand: 1 - Egypt, her character and her goals; 2 - how and why the West lost, or forfeited, a chance to be the dominant influence in Nasser's Egypt; 3 - how the USSR came to fill the void left by the West; 4 - how and why the Soviet Union fell short of its expectations of position and influence in Egypt; 5 - how the Egyptians viewed the Soviet-Egyptian relationship; 6 - the root causes of the Soviet failure in Egypt; 7 - how the West (especially the United States) can gain a position of influence in Egypt in the future; 8 - Egypt's possible prospects or courses of action if the West does not make an attempt to fill the vacuum left by the Soviets.

Although this is only a brief analysis of such a critical event in international relations, this paper will allow for a study of Egypt and her goals in the post World War II era. Additionally, it will allow for an examination of

one sector of Russian foreign policy and foreign policy goals and perhaps give some insight into total Russian foreign policy objectives. Finally, the paper will leave no doubt in the reader's mind that the United States made some serious judgmental errors in dealing with the Middle East and Egypt after WW II and the US can now take advantage of the break between Egypt and Russia, an incident unique in international relations, to gain a presence and influence she might have had 25 years ago.



## II. THE SOVIETS IN THE MIDDLE EAST: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

It is impossible to delve into Egyptian-Russian relations without some historical perspective. The Middle East, or Near East, has fascinated Russian rulers for centuries, and, in fact, there is a history of Russian presence in the Middle East that reaches back to the year 1000. This chapter will set the stage for the Russian-Egyptian relationship of the post World War II era by examining Russian interests in the Middle East from the eleventh century until 1945.

Shortly after Russia became recognizable as a nation-state, she expanded her trade routes to the north, west, and south. The southern trade route brought Russia into contact with the Byzantine Empire and Constantinople. This was Russia's first contact with the Middle East.<sup>1</sup> Russian merchants traded not only with Constantinople, but also with the rich areas around the Caspian Sea. With the expanded trade came territorial expansion; it was through these two types of contact (economic and military) that Russia came into contact with, and learned the ideas of, both Christianity and Islam. The lively trade with the Byzantine Empire eventually led to Russia's desire for warm water ports for her goods and for her fleets. It was through the southern

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Kirchner, History of Russia, (Barnes and Noble, New York, 1963) p. 11.



routes that Russian trade grew and prospered and this early economic success led to Russia's increased fascination and interest in the Middle East not only as an outlet for her goods, but also as a source of knowledge and culture.

Russia's relations with the Near East continued to be economic and cultural, and remained stable and prosperous until late in the 17th century when Peter I (The Great) became Tsar. The constant threat of the Crimean Tartars forced Peter to declare war on Turkey (Turkey supported the Tartars) and Russia found herself in need of a navy, specifically a fleet on the Black Sea. The fleet was built and although the navy enjoyed some success, there was no decisive outcome of the war and peace was concluded in 1700 with the Turks. The experience of the short war was significant however, as it showed the Russians that they needed a warm water port for the navy, and, additionally, needed access to the Mediterranean if Russia was to be a strong European power.

In the 1700's Russia concluded several treaties with Turkey<sup>2</sup> which gave Russia control of most of the Black Sea coast, the Crimea and the territory up to and including the foothills of the Caucasus, and the legal right to interfere

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<sup>2</sup>In the 1700's Russia concluded three treaties with Turkey: The Treaty of Belgrade in 1739; The Treaty of Kuchuck Kainardji in 1774; and the Treaty of Jassy in 1792. Walter Kirchner, The History of Russia, (Barnes & Noble, New York, 1963) pps 121, 122.

in internal Turkish affairs in certain specific instances. These concessions did not satisfy Russia however, and the dominant theme of Russian foreign policy, with regards to the Middle East, was to gain control of a warm water port and access to the open seas through the Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup> The vision to extend the Russian Empire southward into the Middle East was the driving force during the reigns of Peter the Great (1682-1725) and Catherine the Great (1762-1796), and continued through the reign of Nicholas II (1894-1917).

The Russian gains of the 1700's were nearly negated by the outcome of the Crimean War which broke out in 1853. It was in that year that the Tsar suggested - to England - the deliberate proportioning of Turkey and the crumbling Ottoman Empire. England categorically declined the "offer" as she was interested in maintaining unchallenged routes through the Mediterranean and unlimited economic privileges in Turkey. The Turks were urged by the British to reject Russian ultimatums - which they did - and Russian troops invaded causing Sultan Abd al-Majid I to declare war. The Ottoman Empire, backed by Britain and France, was victorious; peace was concluded in Paris in 1856. The Treaty of Paris cost Russia her previous gains in the Middle East; Russia

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<sup>3</sup>Wynfred Joshua, Soviet Penetration into the Middle East, (National Strategy Information Center, New York, 1970) p. 1.

was forced to give up her territory in the Caucasus; she was forced to renounce any protectorate in Turkey; she was forced to dismantle her Black Sea fleet; and finally, she was forced to abandon her shore fortifications on the Black Sea.

Russian physical presence and influence remained at this low - or even non-existent - level until the outbreak of World War I. Events in Europe prior to WWI caused Russia to ally with Britain and France against Germany and the Ottoman Empire. With this alliance came British and French recognition of Russian claims in the Black Sea and in the Ottoman Empire. The success of the Allied powers in the war would have guaranteed Russia not only her territorial claims in Turkey, but also undisputed control of the Black Sea, control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, and heretofore unprecedented influence in the Middle East were it not for an ironic turn of events inside Russia.

When the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia in 1917, they renounced all previous Tsarist territorial claims and ambitions<sup>4</sup> thereby nullifying any potential gains Russia might have made in the Middle East as a result of WWI. Instead of gaining influence and territory in the Middle East after the war, Russia became the ideological ally of the colonized

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<sup>4</sup>Wynfred Joshua, Soviet Penetration into the Middle East, (National Strategy Information Center, New York, 1970) p. 1.

people of the Arab states and renounced the colonialist, imperialist, and territorial ambitions of the European powers.

After the revolution in 1917, domestic factors and problems occupied most of the time of the new leaders; foreign affairs was of little importance. In the first few years following the revolution the Soviets considered the rest of the world, especially the Middle East and similar developing areas, as nothing more than a breeding ground for the Communist revolution. Consideration of commerce and geostrategy and foreign policy seemed to have no place in the early policies of the new Bolshevik government. When, in the early 1920's, the world-wide revolution failed to materialize, the Soviets realized that they must - de facto - exist in an international environment, and they began to formulate a basic foreign policy.

The first Soviet policy makers did not view the Middle East as a large area stretching from Northern Turkey to Southern Egypt and from Iran to Morocco. Instead, they seemed to divide the area into two regions; that is, the region that bordered the Soviet Union and the "rest" of the Middle East. Clearly Iran and Turkey were much more important as Russia's border nations to the South, than were the other countries of the Middle East. Russia needed their friendship and cooperation because of their value as buffer zones, their primordial links with segments of the



Russian population<sup>5</sup>, and because of the possibility of easily obtained natural resources - namely oil. The remainder of the Middle East was important only as a seedbed for the revolution and as a chessboard on which to play the game of one-upmanship with the colonial powers, primarily Great Britain.

In 1921 the Soviet Union began to court the new Turkish regime of Kemal Ataturk. Even though Ataturk suppressed the Communist Party in Turkey, the Russians realized the need to cement relations between the two countries, and, laying ideology aside, concluded a treaty of neutrality and non-aggression with Turkey in 1925. This treaty also allowed Soviet ships to pass through Turkish straits. The Soviets pursued the same course of action in Iran. As in Turkey the revolutionary factions were suppressed and persecuted, but the ideological hostility of the Soviets was attenuated by the need to preserve the economic relations between the two countries. In 1928 the Russians concluded a treaty with Iran similar to that with Turkey.

When Egypt gained her independence from Britain in 1922 Russia held high hopes for the revolution in this most important region in the Middle East. Russia encouraged the formation of an Egyptian Communist Party. When the revolution

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<sup>5</sup>Robert E. Hunter, The Soviet Dilemma in the Middle East, (The Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1969) p. 3.



did not occur, and it became clear that nationalism was the driving force in Egypt, the Soviets lost interest.

Soviet interest and activity in the Middle East continued along these same patterns outlined above until after World War II. The Soviets continued to support and encourage local communist parties, but the support was most verbal. Communist parties were continually suppressed across the Middle East because of either their attitude toward religion (atheism and secularism are anathema to Islam), or their revolutionary tendencies, or both.

Russia continued to trade with Turkey throughout the 1920's and 1930's, but the relationship - already doomed by the ideological split - took a turn for the worse just prior to WWII when Russia began to press for concessions from Turkey with regards to the Black Sea. Russia wanted entry restricted in order to counter possible German maneuvers. Turkey's concessions to Germany, her alliance with Britain and France, and finally her determination to remain out of the war all seemed to sound the deathknell for friendly Turkish-USSR relations. (Economic and cultural relations between the two countries have resumed and even expanded in recent years, but the official attitudes of the Turks and the Russians toward each other can only be described as frigid.)

Throughout the post WWII period, the Russian troop maneuvers on the Turkish border and the threatening propaganda of Stalin was more than enough to cause the Turks to fear a

Russian invasion. With the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine in March of 1947, Turkey's strategic position underwent a basic change. Turkey was no longer an isolated nation left to the whims of her stronger border neighbors; she was now a very definite actor in the East-West confrontation arena. The Turks (at least the Turkish elites) were quick to ally with the Western camp. This was the blanket of security that Turkey needed, and, in fact, Soviet interest in the Turkish straits and territory waned after the Turkish alignment with the West. (The Soviets did not want to push for a confrontation at that time.)

The Russians then centered their propaganda attack on Turkey and its American connection, claiming that Turkey was another United States pawn. The Soviet Union became increasingly worried about Russian heartland security with Turkey's new strategic-military position. Turkey's entrance into NATO did not cause a change in the relationship between Turkey and the USSR, but it did rule out any possibility of a thaw in the icy relations.

There were at least seventy three instances of official, "normal", diplomatic contacts between Turkey and Russia between 1917 and 1953 in the form of official notes, formal agreements, or treaties <sup>6</sup> (including two as late as 1953). With this piece of knowledge, or evidence, it becomes clear

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<sup>6</sup>Robert M. Slusser, Jan F. Triska, A Calendar of Soviet Treaties, 1917-1957, (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1959) pps. 523, 524.

that even though the Turkish-Soviet relationship had very high peaks and very low valleys, and was under a great deal of strain in the early 1950's, there were numerous contacts between the two countries, and somewhat normal relations with regards to trade, border rights, postal service, communications, and all those areas of involvement indigenous to contiguous nations.

The same pattern of relations that occurred between Turkey and the Soviet Union was evident in Iranian-Soviet affairs. Soviet-Iranian relations have always been under a strain. Russia's Tsarist expansionist policy caused Iran (Persia) to regard Russia with fear and distrust. During the nineteenth century Iran lost territory to Russia on three separate occasions.<sup>7</sup> Each of these losses followed a period of military hostility. At the outset of World War I the Russian army operated in northwestern Iran, disregarding Iran's neutrality in the war; even after the revolution in 1917, despite the denunciation of Tsarist territorial ambitions, the Red Army invaded Iran's Caspian region in 1920.

Shortly thereafter the Soviet government reassessed its policies toward Iran, and in February 1921 concluded a treaty of friendship and non-aggression with the Iranian

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<sup>7</sup>George Lenczowski, Soviet Advances in the Middle East, (American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, 1972) p. 23.

government, just as it had done with its other southern border nations of Turkey and Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup> The treaty endured for the next twenty years, but the era could best be described as armed truce rather than friendship. Throughout this period Marxists-Leninists described the Iranian government as revolutionary, moving in the proper direction - away from British imperialism; yet Soviet agents were active in the country attempting to split up the government. The "armed truce" came to an end in 1941 when Soviet troops moved into northern Iran in order to secure safe passage of war supplies from the West to the Soviet Union.

The end of the war failed to bring a lessening of tension between Iran and Russia. Iran again felt endangered by the Soviet Union late in 1945 when the Kurds in northern Iran proclaimed a separate Kurdish Republic with the help and support of the Russians. Almost simultaneously the Azerbaijan Democrats, who were local Communist insurgents supported by Soviet agents, seized power in Azerbaijan and declared the province a separate regime. These two actions clearly presented a danger to the integrity of Iran. With the announcement of the Truman Doctrine and the encouragement of the United States, Iran was able to forestall Soviet expansion into her territory and restore Iranian rule over the two provinces. This turn of events worsened Soviet-Iranian relations.

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<sup>8</sup>Slusser and Triska, op. cit., pp. 18, 489.



When British imperialism raised its head again in Iran over oil concession rights (a concession that the Soviets had coveted for years), the Soviet press began to support Iran in its economic and ideological battle with Britain. The issue of oil rights, or oil concessions, split Iran into several political factions, each with its own plan of action; one of these factions was the Tudeh party, the local Communist party in Iran. The Tudeh had the support of Moscow and continued to be a source of dissention and irritation within the Iranian government. The United States finally "stepped into" the Iranian crisis on the side of the Shah and offered not only moral support but economic aid as well. Thus the United States became the principle outside actor in Iran, and this new Iranian-U.S. relationship led to the acceptance of the Baghdad Pact by Iran in 1955.<sup>9</sup> Once again Soviet policy and ambition in the Middle East had been thwarted, and Soviet-Iranian relations were at their lowest point in history.

Amidst all of the diplomatic and ideological hostility, Iran continued to have official, if not normal, contacts with the Soviet Union. As in the case of Turkey, the Iranian government concluded more than seventy agreements and treaties with the Soviet Union from 1920 to 1957, including several

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<sup>9</sup>Ivo T. Lederer and Wayne S. Vucinich, eds., The Soviet Union and the Middle East, (Hoover Institute Press, Stanford, 1974.) pp. 70,71.



agreements concerning trade and port facilities in 1954 and 1955.<sup>10</sup> Even though official Soviet policy towards Iran was a failure, there was obviously some normalcy of relations between the two governments owing, once again, to the contiguous nature of the two nations.

As far as the rest of the Middle East is concerned, there was very little Soviet presence or influence from 1917 to 1954. The Middle East was a source of great intellectual curiosity for Soviet scholars from a cultural, historic, and religious point of view. However, the Soviets did not attribute any strategic importance to the area until the announcement of the Truman Doctrine and the advent of the Cold War and the ensuing East-West military-politico confrontation. As a result of this assessment by Moscow, the Middle East (excluding Turkey and Iran) had no impact on Soviet foreign policy other than to furnish propaganda to the Marxist-Leninists for their ideological battle with imperialism, colonialism, and the West.

Much of the Middle East was colonial or under a protectorate system until the outbreak of World War II. As a result, there was virtually no contact between the Soviet Union and Libya, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, or Egypt (although officially independent) until the early 1940's. Previously the Russians had established diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia (then called the Hijaz) in 1924, but this

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<sup>10</sup>Slusser and Triska, op. cit., pp. 317-329, 489-491.

relationship never grew or matured due largely to the difference of opinion over religion and Islam. As early as 1928 the Soviet Union established relations, both diplomatic and economic, with Yemen, but again the relationship never grew. By 1957 the Soviet Union and Yemen had concluded only seven agreements or treaties in contrast with more than seventy with Turkey and Iran where relations were hostile.

The Soviets established diplomatic relations with Egypt in 1943; with Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon in 1944; and with Israel in 1948. Prior to establishment of diplomatic relations with these countries, any contact was either through trade missions or through local Communist parties. Throughout the period 1920-1945 the nations of the Middle East were struggling to become independent; Arab nationalism was on the rise. There was no hurry on the part of any Arab nation to court the Soviet Union as a sponsor or benefactor. There was considerable dislike and distrust of the Soviet Union as a result of the Soviet's aggressive policies toward Turkey and Iran, and the Marxist-Leninist doctrine on religion. The people and governments of the Arab nations were not inclined to rid themselves of one colonial power in favor of another.

With this historical perspective it becomes clear that the stage is set for the Soviet move, indeed an all out effort, for presence and influence in the Middle East. In contrast to the popular conclusion that the Soviet advance into the Middle East was a radical new adventure in foreign policy requiring a modification of Marxism-Leninism, we can

now see that the move was a strategic necessity brought about by a rapidly changing international environment tipping the balance in favor of the West, and a failing Soviet foreign policy on her southern border. The West, led by the United States, was successful in encircling the USSR with NATO and the Baghdad Pact countries, and the West was waging a successful propaganda campaign against the Soviet Union and the "evils" of Communism. The Soviet Union had to expand its foreign policy horizons if it was to mount a counter offensive to Western propaganda attacks, increase its sphere of influence, and expand the buffer zone around Russia. The early Bolshevik regime had already dealt with, and concluded trade agreements and treaties with, nations in the Middle East - nations other than Communist states; therefore, no change in ideology or Marxism-Leninism was required. All that was required was a reassessment of current foreign policy and national goals. The Soviets anxiously awaited an opportunity to enlist client states that would allow Russia to make inroads in the Western sphere of influence or break the chain of containment, or both. Egypt provided just such an opportunity in 1955.

III. THE GENESIS OF THE EGYPTIAL-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP:  
1945-1954

Although there were few contacts between the Soviet Union and Egypt between 1945 and 1954, there were a number of significant events that, in retrospect, served to lay the foundation for the genesis of the Soviet-Egyptian relationship that was to come. As there was no real relationship between the two countries during this period - other than the formal, diplomatic relationship - this chapter will serve to highlight the events which would eventually bring Egypt and the Soviet Union together in 1955.

The Soviet attitude toward Egypt in the post war era can be summarized quickly. The Soviets considered Egypt only formally independent. As far as Moscow was concerned, Egypt was still an English colony, and all of Egypt's interests were parallel with Britain's. Russian writers concluded that the possibility of a workers revolt in Egypt was practically nil. They wrote of a "national bourgeoisie" in Egypt which cut across all social and economic strata; a bourgeoisie whose interests were thought to be identical with Britain's.<sup>1</sup>

Soviet hopes for a Communist takeover in Egypt rested squarely with the local Egyptian Communist party. Local Communist factions were quite active in 1946 but faced

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<sup>1</sup>A.R.C. Bolton, Soviet Middle East Studies: An Analysis and Bibliography, Part IV: Egypt; (Chatham House Memoranda, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1959) pps 1, 7, 10.



insurmountable opposition; the Ismail Sidqi government was determined to suppress the Communists and the Soviets were too preoccupied with domestic and border problems to consider aiding the Egyptian Communist party.

As part of the wartime effort to solidify alliances against the Axis powers, Russia established diplomatic relations - on the legation level - with Egypt in July of 1943. (The legation was upgraded to Embassy status in March, 1954.) Even though Egypt did not figure prominently in Russian foreign policy plans, there were several important trade and commercial agreements concluded between the two countries in the years 1948 - 1954.<sup>2</sup>

The Egyptian revolution in July 1952 did little to change the Soviet attitude toward Egypt and the potential there for Communism. The initial Soviet reaction to the coup and the new leaders was a mixture of caution and even hostility. The coup in Egypt was seen in Moscow as Anglo-American rivalry for predominance in Egypt.<sup>3</sup> The An Nahar research staff wrote that "... the overwhelming impression during this period is that the Soviet Union considered the 1952 revolution to be of little significance either for its own policies toward the country or for the Egyptian people themselves".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Slusser and Triska, op. cit., pps 474-475.

<sup>3</sup>Aryeh Yodfat, Arab Politics in the Soviet Mirror, (Israel University Press, Jerusalem, 1973) pps 34-35.

<sup>4</sup>Riad N. Rayyes, Dunia Nahas, eds., The Dragon and the Bear, (An Nahar Press Service, Beirut, 1973) p. 9.

As late as July, 1954 (the date of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement providing for British withdrawal from the Suez Canal) the Soviets were convinced that Egypt was an American client. Pravda (August 8, 1954) renounced the agreement as a "dangerous step towards supporting American plans for a Middle East Command, which is a direct threat to the cause of peace in the Middle East".

During the months that followed, the Soviets became acutely aware that Egypt was not in the American camp, nor even in the Western camp. Moscow analysts also concluded that the new government in Egypt was strong and stable - and in need of aid. This reassessment of Egyptian-Western relations came at a time when Moscow was beginning to feel the effects of the United States containment and encirclement policies; Soviet leaders had begun to look around the world for areas where Russia could contest the West. When Egypt appeared as a possible chink in the US's armour, the Soviets decided to re-evaluate Egypt's potential as a client and ally and did not hesitate to step into Egypt when the opportunity arose.

In order to understand the Soviet-Egyptian alliance that began in 1955, we must look at the events which led to the July 1952 revolution, without which there could never have been any close tie between Egypt and the USSR.

There were, obviously, many factors which led to the 1952 Egyptian revolution; among them were: the inability of the Egyptian government to deal with the British (that is, remove

the British from Egypt and effectively manage internal affairs); the faltering economy, which was supported by Britain; the totally unequal distribution of land and wealth in Egypt; and the inability of the government to raise, train, and maintain an armed force capable of providing both internal and external security.

One of the contributing factors occurred ten years before the revolution. In 1942 the Egyptian military, indeed the government itself, suffered a humiliating experience at the hands of the British. Although seemingly insignificant at the time, the "Abdin Palace Coup" would leave a lasting impression on the Egyptian military, particularly the leaders of the 1952 revolt.

It was in February, 1942 that the Abdin Palace Coup took place. King Farouk had become displeased with his Foreign Minister and asked for his resignation. The result was that the entire government under Hussein Sirry resigned and a political crisis developed. The British feared that the King would replace the Sirry government with a government headed by Aly Maher, a man the British believed to be sympathetic to the Axis powers. The British therefore, through Ambassador Lampson, tried to persuade King Farouk to name Nahas Pasha, a neutralist, as Prime Minister. Farouk refused. The following day the British literally stormed the palace with armoured cars and armed troops and threatened the King with forced abdication unless he appointed Nahas Pasha.

The King relented.<sup>5</sup> This humiliation, witnessed by many Egyptian military elite, would serve to help lay the foundation for the 1952 revolt. Additionally, the Abdin Palace Coup sowed the seeds for the future Egyptian obsession for a strong military and a government completely free of all foreign domination.

The most direct cause of the revolution was the defeat of the Egyptian army by Israel in 1948. Egypt (the King) decided to move openly against the Israelis in support of the Palestinians despite the insistence by General Naguib and other military leaders that Egypt act covertly and continue to equip and train the army before moving openly. The military advice was ignored. As a result, the Egyptian army was ill-trained, poorly supplied, and uncoordinated. The war ended in February, 1949; Egypt and the Arabs had been badly defeated. If we add to these factors the perception by the military leaders that throughout the war the political string pulling behind the scenes was more important than the battlefield operations, then we have a very disillusioned military, ripe for revolt against - in their eyes - an ineffective government.

Riad el-Rayyes and Dunia Nahas, of the An Nahar research staff, summed up the effect of the 1949 war thusly:

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<sup>5</sup>Robert Stephens, Nasser: A Political Biography, (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1971) pps 54-56.



Although the defeat was basically a military one, the Egyptian officers felt that the ultimate blame lay with the corrupt monarchy and the decadent social structure upon which it rested.

These defeated soldiers returned home from the front regarding themselves as victims of the ills of Egyptian society. Nasser, who took part in the 1948 war, summed up the situation with the remark, 'The biggest battlefield is in Egypt.'

Thus the younger and more politically minded officers became convinced that the most effective weapon in the struggle against Israel and Zionism would be a strong, regular army, and they realized that monarchist Egypt would never produce such a military.<sup>6</sup>

While the events cited above are surely not all of the causes of the July 1952 revolution, they are listed here because they were not only contributing factors of the revolution, but also factors in the making of the Soviet-Egyptian alliance that was to come.

There are a few other noteworthy events that occurred between 1945 and 1952 that bear mentioning here as they too helped shape the forthcoming Soviet-Egyptian relationship. A scanning of the New York Times for the period in question reveals that a recurring theme in the Soviet press from 1946 to 1950 was the denouncing of the United States and British presence in Egypt. Most authorities on the Soviet Union, and indeed the beginning of this chapter, lead the reader to believe that the Soviets virtually ignored the Middle East and Egypt until the 1950's. Yet in perusing the periodicals of that time we see that as early as 1946 the Soviet Union

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<sup>6</sup>Riad N. el-Rayyes, Dunia Nahas, eds.; Politics in Uniform, (An Nahar Press Service, Beirut, 1972) p. 17.

used the Middle East and Egypt as a propaganda springboard to initiate attacks on the West.

At the same time that the USSR was denouncing US and British presence and influence in Egypt (1946 - 1950), the Egyptian government was attempting to negotiate arms deals and foreign aid with both the United States and Great Britain.<sup>7</sup> As we shall see later, Egypt, for all practical purposes, was unsuccessful in her attempt to secure aid of any kind from the West.

It is interesting to note that even before the revolution there were suggestions in Egypt of an Egyptian-Soviet relationship. During 1951 there were a number of contradictory positions taken by the Egyptian government and press concerning the possibility of expanded Soviet-Egyptian relations. In April of 1951 the Egyptian government seized 26 Communists and began another purge of Communists and Communist related activities. On June 7, 1951, the New York Times carried an article which stated that the Egyptian press had accused Nahas Pasha (the Prime Minister) and some of his closest associates of having contacted the USSR. Despite this anti-Soviet feeling in Egypt, on September 4, 1951, Foreign Minister Fahmi proposed buying arms from Russia as Egypt was unable to obtain weapons from the West. On October 27,

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<sup>7</sup>There are numerous references to this theme; a few are cited here: The New York Times, Feb 25, 1946, 3:5; Mar 14, 1946, 2:2; May 8, 1946, 3:4; Oct 10, 1946, 6:7; May 10, 1947, 5:3; Apr 16, 1948, 11:5; Sept 29, 1948, 6:5; May 28, 1949, 2:4; July 4, 1949, 4:2; Aug 2, 1949, 3:4.

1951, both the New York Times and the London Times carried articles based on sources in Egypt that declared that relations between the Soviet Union and Egypt were quite friendly and that the groundwork was being laid for future trade and cultural exchanges between the two nations.

In retrospect, it is possible to deduce that as early as 1951 the Soviet Union began to think in terms of Egypt as a potential Middle Eastern ally and was willing to overlook not only Egypt's non-Communist orientation, but also her continuous persecution of Communists and the Communist Party. Given the nature of Joseph Stalin and Communist Party doctrine at the time, this deduction, or analysis, is on shaky ground at best. It is possible though, that the Soviet foreign policy reorientation to a global scale that was evident in 1955-1956 had its beginning in 1951. In any event, whatever potential there might have been for an expanded Egyptian-Soviet relationship in 1951, ended with the Egyptian "Free Officer's" revolution in July 1952.

The details of the Egyptian Revolution are not important to this paper. The factors concerning the revolt that bear on this paper are: 1) on July 23, 1952 the Egyptian "Free Officer's Association" forced King Farouk into exile and took control of the government; (2) the "Free Officer's Association" had elected Gamal Abdul Nasser as their president in 1950 and it was he who planned most aspects of the coup; 3) the group of officers who revolted included Nasser, Naguib, Sadat, and Sabry - the men who would shape

Egypt's future after 1952; (4) immediately after the coup the President of the newly declared Republic of Egypt was General Mohammed Naguib who also headed the RCC (Revolutionary Command Council); after the revolution both Nasser and Sadat preferred to remain out of government and attend to the affairs of the army.

In the months that followed the revolution, General Naguib and his cabinet were primarily concerned with domestic affairs. Naguib did, however, press his country's requests for aid and military hardware with both the United States and Britain (as Egypt could not ignore the necessity of both internal and external security) declaring that the West should honor the conditions of the 1950 Tripartite Declaration.<sup>8</sup> Naguib and his advisors, for reasons stated above, realized that one of their first tasks was to stabilize and revitalize the army. At the same time they knew that they must defend themselves against the Israelis who continued to receive large shipments of arms from the West.

One of the first official actions taken by Naguib was to send a detailed list of urgently needed defensive weapons to Washington. The request was for modern, defensive weapons in hopes of modernizing the Egyptian army. Through bureaucratic red tape and administrative mix-ups the list that the

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<sup>8</sup>The demand for arms by both the Israelis and the Arabs prompted the American initiative which resulted in the Tripartite Declaration of 1950. The declaration stated that the US, Britain, and France would maintain a balance in the supply of arms to the Middle East, and further stated that the three would guarantee the territorial status quo.



newly elected President Eisenhower received was an old list, prepared by Farouk and his cabinet and was totally different from the Naguib list in that it (the Farouk list) specified weapons designed for internal security and riot control. On the basis of the items on the list that he saw, President Eisenhower, with the urging of Prime Minister Churchill, denied the request.<sup>9</sup> (Churchill feared that any weapons received by the Egyptians - especially modern weapons - would be used against the British to oust them from Egypt and the Suez Canal.) This denial of military aid by the United States was the first of several denials, and coupled with the arms embargos levied by the British and French against the Egyptians, left Egypt with a poorly equipped army and without an arms supplier.

There was virtually no contact between the USSR and Egypt during the last half of 1952, and the contacts during 1953 concerned cultural exchanges and trade agreements on future wheat and cotton crops. From the Egyptian point of view, this first year and a half of power was a dismal eighteen months for the Revolutionary Command Council; yet the RCC obviously had not considered the Soviet Union as a potential source of aid. During the same period of time, from the Soviet point of view, the prospect of Egypt's becoming a client state and recipient of Soviet aid was quite real.

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<sup>9</sup> Mohammed H. Heikal, The Cairo Documents, (Doubleday & Co., Garden City, N.J., 1973) pps 39,40.

By 1953 Russia was feeling the effects of successful United States foreign policy around the world. Russia was encircled by NATO; she was unable to complete her buffer zone of defense because of a failing foreign policy in Turkey and Iran; and, the USSR was losing ground to the Americans on the ideological battlefield. Clearly the Soviets had to re-evaluate their foreign policy and their foreign policy strategy and tactics if they were to compete effectively with the West in the international arena. Clearly the Soviets saw the possibility of a Soviet-Egyptian relationship before the Egyptians as indicated by the constant press coverage that Pravda afforded the Egyptian-United States dialogue. While condemning the new Egyptian regime as militaristic and a pawn of the West, the Soviet press reacted even more harshly to the continuous denials of aid by the United States and Great Britain, stating that this kind of policy (arming Israel and denying aid to Egypt) could only lead to increased tension in the Middle East and therefore was detrimental to the cause of world peace. Obviously the Soviets felt that Egypt should be armed, and if the USSR could win Egypt as an ally or client, she would win a great victory in the ideological arena, as well as garner a method for stepping over "containment" and NATO.

In Egypt the domestic ills of the country had brought the government to a political crisis. Three Naguib cabinets had resigned within eighteen months; the economy of the

country was no better than it was at the time of the revolt; Egypt was unable to secure any guarantees of aid - military or economic - during the months that followed the revolution; and Egypt was unable to defend itself from continuing Israeli attacks. Nasser could remain silent no longer. In April 1953, Nasser began to make himself more and more of a public figure. He overtly influenced domestic politics and his name was constantly in the press. Finally, in early 1954, Nasser realized that he must take over from Naguib and accept the mandate of the RCC that he - Nasser - save the revolution. On April 17, 1954 Nasser became Prime Minister (and actual head of government) of the Republic of Egypt.

Although unpredictable at the time, the decision by the Soviet Union to expand its foreign policy horizons and the Egyptian determination to obtain foreign aid - both military and economic - was to bring the two countries together in 1955. The foundation for the Soviet-Egyptian alliance had been laid.

IV. EGYPTIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS 1954-1970:  
THE NASSER ERA

Although Nasser was a prime mover in the revolution and had a strong following of military elite, he was never an official member of the government until June 1953 when he entered the cabinet as a Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior.<sup>1</sup> After that time a split developed in the inner circles of government between Naguib and Nasser and their supporters. (For Nasser that included the Council of the Revolution, or the RCC.) The rift was over domestic policy and methodology. Naguib wanted to end the "revolutionary period" and return control of the government to a parliament and the people, while Nasser and the RCC felt that power and control must remain closely guarded and centralized. Naguib challenged Nasser by resigning in February, 1954, thereby hoping to muster popular support and a mandate from the people to return to office. Naguib wanted to force the hand of the RCC and expose what he considered a potential

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<sup>1</sup>This is not intended to imply that Nasser had no authority or power until June 1953. Analysts and observers agree that the real power in Egypt from the revolution onward was Nasser. In The Cairo Documents Heikal tells us, "On the Egyptian side General Naguib was still titular head of the revolution, but by now, ten months after King Farouk had been deposed, it had become obvious that Nasser was the man who held the power." Biographer Robert Stephens states in, Nasser, A Political Biography, "The true power structure of the regime was beginning to emerge. At its core was the Council of the Revolution...but to those who had serious business to transact with the Egyptian government it was becoming increasingly clear that the man who counted was Nasser."



coup. Following several rounds of political maneuvering, Naguib was persuaded to return as President and Lt/Col Khaled Mohieddin was installed as Prime Minister. (Mohieddin was a close associate and staunch backer of Nasser.) These political compromises were simply delaying tactics by Nasser who still felt that Naguib must resign if the goals of the revolution were to be realized.

Beginning in March, 1954 Nasser engineered a subtle in house coup. With Naguib out of the country (in the Sudan) Nasser had several hundred of Naguib's supporters arrested. The, using reverse psychology, the RCC issued a communique announcing that on July 24, 1954, the Council would proclaim the end of the Egyptian Revolution and surrender power to an assembly. The announcement had the desired effect; the Army, the trade unions, and most other organized groups in Egypt did not want to return to the ways and means of the old regime. Nasser was able to channelize this swelling sentiment in popular demonstrations which called for a continuation of the revolution with Nasser as the leader. The Free Officers and the RCC "called on Nasser" to settle the crisis. On April 17, 1954 Naguib, suffering from exhaustion and strain, resigned once again. Nasser became Premier and Naguib (because of his popularity) was kept President in name only; Nasser held the real power.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>For a complete account of Nasser's "Path to Power", see Stephens, op. cit., Chapter 5.

When Nasser took control of the government he inherited all of the problems that Naguib had faced, but now at near crisis proportions. Nasser had several immediate, short range objectives that he pursued from the outset. He knew he must first centralize and strengthen the government; he had to strengthen the economy and continue land reform; finally, he had to strengthen, train, and equip the armed forces as he had to be able to defend Egypt from both internal and foreign aggressors. Without question, Nasser's success in realizing his goals for Egypt were dependent on foreign support; he needed moral support from his Arab neighbors and financial and military support from the great powers.

By mid 1954 Egypt was at the crossroads, not only caught up in the East-West struggle, but also embroiled in a British-Egyptian battle over colonialism, independence, and the Suez Canal, and further, squarely in the center of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Nasser wasted no time in attacking these problems. The very fact that he took control of the government seemed to strengthen and centralize the regime. A month after taking office Nasser reorganized the cabinet. He appointed Gamal Salem as Deputy Prime Minister, Major General Abdel Hakim Amir as Minister of War, and Lt/Col Anwar el Sadat as Minister of State. Nasser now had his closest associates in the cabinet and the full support of the RCC. Additionally, Nasser and the Council had the mandate of the people to

continue the provisional government and the spirit of the revolution. The Egyptian motto of, "Unity, Discipline, Work", born during this era, reflected the spirit of the revolution. Nasser felt that his first problem was solved, or at least under control; he had Egypt and the government on the proper path and now he and the Council could work on the more difficult problems of national security and foreign aid. Of these two dilemmas, the problem of national security was the foremost and most critical. The growing arsenal in Israel, the increased number of incidents in the Gaza and along the Suez Canal, and the deadlocked negotiations over British withdrawal from the Canal, and the arms embargos imposed on Egypt by both Britain and France, all indicated that security - both internal and external - was Egypt's most serious problem.

The problem of recognition (de jure) by foreign governments and securing foreign aid did not seem to Nasser to be a difficult hurdle at the outset. Initially most foreign governments watched the new Egyptian regime with skepticism; the world did not know what to expect of the military takeover in Egypt. By the time Nasser became Prime Minister, most governments had accepted the fact that the new Egyptian government was a reality, and stable enough to endure. Even the Soviet skepticism that the Egyptian coup was sponsored by the United States in an attempt to replace the British was waning.

Nasser and the Council were extremely concerned over the lack of an aid and arms supplier to Egypt, but continued to believe that aid would materialize at any moment - from the West. Nasser knew full well that he and Egypt were important factors in the East-West confrontation contest.

Even before 1954 Nasser - and Egypt - had become involved in the international politics of the period. As pointed out in the previous chapter, Egypt was regarded as a potentially valuable ally to the USSR even before the revolution in 1952. The perception was no different in the West. The United States, specifically John Foster Dulles, wanted Egypt in the Western camp.

We must remember that John Foster Dulles (Secretary of State under Eisenhower) was virtually obsessed with containing Communism and nullifying its effect on nations and peoples of the world. Dulles saw his - and the United States' - role as negator, or even eradicator of Communism in as short a time as possible. To this end it seemed that Dulles would stop at nothing. It was this quest that brought Dulles to Cairo in May of 1953 for a meeting with Nasser - the only meeting these two men would ever have. There were two objectives of this visit. The first was to try to arrange a peace between the Arabs and the Israelis, and the second was to convince Nasser that Egypt should be part of MEDO (Middle East Defense Organization, which never came about) or at least part of NATO. The latter objective would help Dulles shore up the chain of nations encircling Communism and the USSR.



Dulles appeared to Nasser to be diplomatic, dogmatic, and yet receptive. At the meeting between the two men Dulles laid out the American concerns over Soviet aggression, Middle East oil, the vacuum created by the departure of both Britain and France from the Middle East, and the growing tension caused by the Arab-Israeli crisis.<sup>3</sup> It seemed to Nasser that Dulles was sincere and would go to any length to secure the "help" and allegiance of Egypt. Nasser continued, however, to assert his and Egypt's determination to remain independent of outside influence and apart from the East-West confrontation. Nasser did not wish to be a part of either camp. He thought that his determination to individually resist Soviet influence would be sufficient for Dulles and the United States. As we shall see shortly, it was not.

The dinner meeting that evening made a profound impression on Dulles. He was frankly impressed with Nasser. As a result of the meeting Dulles softened somewhat on his approach to the Middle East. He was no longer convinced of the necessity of MEDO; he gained a different perspective on Egypt's plight with Britain and became convinced of the need to ease Britain out of the Suez; lastly, Dulles became even more determined to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli problem.

The immediate result desired by Nasser did not come about. Nasser wanted arms, and nothing that was said at that meeting produced any optimism in the Egyptian leader. In

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<sup>3</sup>Heikal, op. cit., pps 31-33.

fact, all Nasser heard concerning arms was that his original shopping list had been turned down in large part due to the pressure of the British and Winston Churchill. British pressure on Washington and Eisenhower was relentless on the issue of arms to Egypt and therefore the possibility of military aid for Egypt from the West was very slight. Dulles seems as though he wants to help Egypt but can not.

A year after the meeting between Dulles and Nasser, Dulles' true feelings about the Middle East and the United States' policy toward that region came to light. On the eve of Churchill's visit to Washington and Eisenhower (June 18, 1954) Dulles "confessed" that the United States policy in the Middle East was being hampered by the ties between the United States, Britain, and France. (West Europe). The United States traditionally supported British and French policy and by so doing was unable to act freely and in the best interest of the United States and Egypt in the Middle East. Dulles admitted that the United States must continue to follow this policy (support of Britain and France) "even reluctantly" in order to keep the US and Western Europe united in the effort to thwart Communism.<sup>4</sup> This "admission" by Dulles bore out what the developing nations of the world, especially those in the Middle East, had come to believe.

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<sup>4</sup>The Egyptian Mail, Cairo, June 18, 1954, p. 1.

In contrast to this perception, immediately after WWII the emerging nations of the world looked to the United States for leadership with awe and envy. The United States was the champion of freedom; the US had the resources and production capability that inspired imitation; the American ideal or ideology was attractive to developing, newly independent, nations; and the United States had material luxuries that were the result of ambition, invention, and hard work. The United States wore an aura of both success and glamour, shining out above the failures of the old world imperialists. For nearly a decade after WWII the peoples of the emerging nations were receptive to the idea that America should play a major role in their respective parts of the world; the Middle East was no exception. But, by 1955 it was clear that United States and European interests were irrevocably linked, and the United States came to be identified with European interests; further, Americans began to be regarded as colonialists and imperialists through their association with West Europe.

Nasser was well aware of this transition of attitudes toward the United States; he himself harbored the same feelings. Yet, amidst this growing tide of anti-Americanism and continuing wave of anti-Europeanism, Nasser reaffirmed Egypt's close ties with the West. At the same time that Nasser reorganized the cabinet (September 1, 1954) he issued a statement that, in retrospect, must have been a plea for Western aid and sympathy for the Republic of Egypt. Nasser

reiterated Egypt's determination not to join any mutual defense pacts. Yet he conceded that Egypt needed to defend herself from local attack by the Israelis and that if there were a global threat to Egypt it was the Soviet Union. He further asserted that Egypt was traditionally, historically, and economically linked with the West.<sup>5</sup>

Nasser continued this approach of verbally linking Egypt with the West and the results were favorable, but short lived. In August Britain had agreed to lift the ban on export of war materials to Egypt and declared her intention to uphold the Tripartite Declaration. In November the United States signed an agreement in Cairo committing \$40 million to Egypt for agriculture and irrigation. But still there were no arms. Britain's pronouncements of August were just diplomatic rhetoric; Britain never sent any war materials to Egypt. Additionally the other signatories of the Tripartite Declaration failed to ship any war supplies to Egypt causing Nasser to feel - at the close of 1954 - that the Republic of Egypt was on the brink of disaster and possible collapse.<sup>6</sup> Nasser's two most pressing problems

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<sup>5</sup>The London Times, September 2, 1954.

<sup>6</sup>It is important at this point to outline Egyptian military strength. A review of the Military Balance, the SIPRI Arms Trade Register, and Brassey's Annual shows the following Egyptian armed strength: (1955 figures) Army = 85,000; Navy - 5,000; Air Force - 10,000; National Guard - 50,000; Ground Force Weapons - UK Centurions (tanks) 32, US Shermans 150, French AMX 13's 20; Aircraft - 40 UK Spitfire, 45 UK Vampires, 10 UK Avro Anson Trainers, 6 US Transports, 2 US and 3 UK Helicopters; Ships - 3 UK Frigates, 2 UK Destroyers.



those of national security and foreign assistance, were now one and the same.

The next turning point in Egyptian affairs came in February of 1955 when the Israelis raided an Egyptian camp at Gaza and reportedly killed thirty seven soldiers. The attack was presumably ordered by Ben Gurion (the Israeli Prime Minister) and set the pattern for Israeli retaliation or punitive raids.<sup>7</sup> The raid came at a critical time in Nasser's political career. There was great dissension in the Arab world, Nasser was opposed to the Baghdad Pact believing that it was an attempt by Britain to unite other Arab states against Egypt; further, there was a meeting of Arab Prime Ministers in January in Cairo that collapsed in disarray. Nasser had no local Arab support and was losing the support of the Egyptian people. In short, Nasser was under great pressure. He had to get arms from somewhere. He had to equip his army in order to face the threats in the Middle East. Nasser faced the possibility that his vision of a strong, independent Egypt might never materialize.

Egypt attempted to buy World War II weapons from the nations in Europe. Nasser got a few pieces of equipment from Italy, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland, but most of these were obsolete. At the same time that Nasser was buying arms in Europe, Israel was receiving large shipments of arms from France. For Nasser this was intolerable and served to

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<sup>7</sup>Stephens, op. cit., pps 154-155.

heighten the tension in the Arab world and increased the need for Egypt to obtain arms. When the new American Ambassador, Henry Byroade, arrived in Cairo (February, 1955) Nasser met with him immediately to press his request for arms; Byroade said that he would send an urgent message to Dulles.

Dulles was not able to help Nasser even if he wanted to. As pointed out above, the US relationship with Western Europe prevented an independent US foreign policy toward Egypt. At that particular moment in history however, Dulles was not disposed to helping Egypt; he was very displeased with Nasser. Besides his rejection of the Baghdad Pact and other "entangling alliances", Nasser had decided to attend a conference of non-aligned nations in Bandung, Indonesia. To Dulles there was no such entity as a non-aligned nation; every nation had to be on one side or the other. Dulles tried to persuade Nasser to boycott the conference. Dulles was unsuccessful and saw Nasser's decision as a betrayal of his (Dulles') anti-Communist crusade. No arms were forthcoming from the United States.

The Bandung Conference was attended by Nasser, U Nu of Burma, Nehru of India, and Chou En-lai of China. The relationship that was to develop between Nasser and Chou was to prove historic. Nasser and Chou talked of exchanging goods and crops; they talked of cultural exchange and of the conference. Gradually Nasser switched the topic to arms. Nasser confided that what he really needed was cooperation

in obtaining arms. He asked Chou if the Russians would sell arms to Egypt. Chou assured Nasser that he would ask the Soviets, and added that he (Chou) believed that the Russians now thought very highly of Egypt and of Nasser. This was the first real overture of an arms deal with the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup> As far as Nasser was concerned, this was the only option left open to him.

Chou En-lai did query the Soviets and they indicated that if Nasser himself approached them, they were ready to deal. On May 18, 1955 Nasser attended a party at the Sudanese Mission in Cairo. The Soviet Ambassador was also in attendance. As Nasser greeted Ambassador Solod he said, "I wanted to see you." Solod replied, "I have been instructed to ask for an audience with you." Nasser continued, "And you, wouldn't you give us arms?". The Soviet Ambassador immediately replied, "I'll give you the answer the day after tomorrow.". When Solod appeared in Nasser's office two days later he brought a complete folder: a list of available arms; delivery dates; payment methods; and means of transfer.<sup>9</sup> The discussions continued through May, June, and July. The Soviets sent Colonel Nimoshenko to survey Egypt's requirements. Both parties were ready to sign the agreement in September 1955, but the Soviets were not ready to be

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<sup>8</sup>Heikal, op. cit., pps 47,48.

<sup>9</sup>George Naccache, "Conversation With Nasser", Arab World, Beirut, April 16, 1956, p. 6.

identified as a party to the deal. They used Czechoslovakia as a go-between to try to mask the fact that the arms were actually Russian weapons shipped from the Soviet Union.

Even before all of this transpired Nasser gave the United States another opportunity to supply weapons. After Nasser met with Solod he met with US Ambassador Byroade and informed him that he (Nasser) had a firm commitment from the Soviet Union to supply arms to Egypt. Nasser again reiterated his need for arms and advised Byroade that Egypt would rather have Western weapons. Russian weapons would be unfamiliar to the Egyptian forces; there would be a language barrier; there would certainly be world-wide repercussions; and further, Nasser did not understand all of the Russian intentions.

Byroade conveyed this message to Washington; there was no official reaction. Dulles thought Nasser was bluffing; Dulles even asked the Russians if they were willing to sell arms to Egypt. They of course answered "no". Dulles refused to believe the Egyptian-Soviet arms deal until it was a reality. When Dulles finally realized that the arms transfer was a fact, he was furious. He sent special envoys to persuade Nasser to delay; to convince Nasser that help was coming. It was too late. Nasser could wait no longer.

Nasser announced the arms deal to the world on September 27, 1955, one week after the agreement had been signed.

There was a great deal of concern — and fear — among the Egyptian elite that the United States would try to undermine



the transaction and further embarrass and weaken Egypt. In fact, they were correct. The United States tried to talk Nasser out of the deal for several weeks after the announcement, but had no success. Nasser stood his ground. Nasser was on the verge of breaking off diplomatic relations with the United States on several occasions, but restrained himself and maintained a calm exterior. The United States (Dulles) even tried to deliver an ultimatum to Nasser, but the message was never delivered due to diplomatic circumstances. The US special envoy and the Ambassador in Cairo knew what the consequences of such an ultimatum might be and therefore did not deliver the note.

The arms deal was firm. This agreement by the Soviet Union to transfer arms to Egypt in exchange for cotton was the first major building block in the Soviet-Egyptian alliance.

It is not enough to state that there was an arms deal; the reader must see the size and scope of the transaction in order to grasp just how dependent the Republic of Egypt was to become on Soviet arms and supplies. Conversely, the Soviets knew that the magnitude of the arms shipments to Egypt would virtually rebuild the Egyptian military and make Egypt totally dependent on Soviet replacement parts, resupply, training, and technology. Nasser insisted that Egypt would remain independent and that Egypt would resist foreign intervention; however, even Nasser must have realized that the

Soviet arsenal he was buying would bring direct Soviet influence into Egypt's military - from planning to execution and from logistics to operations.

The initial arms agreement is difficult to sort out from the second, third, fourth, etc. After the original agreement in September of 1955, there seems to be a continuous flow of arms from the Soviet Union to Egypt. This initial build-up phase lasted from 1955 until 1958. (There was to be another phase of arms transfer, even larger than the first, which would take place from 1964 - 1970.) Although it is difficult to ascertain exactly what Egypt ordered in the initial deal, it is possible to document the following shipments. Beginning in December, 1955, Egypt received (primarily through the port at Alexandria): 120 USSR T-54 tanks; 200 Czech T-34 tanks; 100 USSR BTR 152 armoured personnel carriers; 50 USSR JSU 152 tank destroyers; 86 USSR MIG-15 fighter aircraft; 39 USSR IL-28 bombers; 12 USSR motor torpedo boats; 5 USSR "W" class submarines; 2 USSR Skoryi class destroyers; and 6 USSR mine-sweepers.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the Soviet Union sent numerous advisors and technicians to Egypt, Egypt sent 200 officers to Poland for schooling, and the Soviet Union supplied the necessary supplies, training devices, and ammunition.

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<sup>10</sup>This list of weapons transferred is compiled from articles or listings in: The Arab World, Beirut; The Military Balance, London; Brassey's Annual, New York; SIPRI, The Arms Trade Register, Stockholm.

It is evident from the list of weapons above that Egypt was rebuilding her forces from the ground up. Egypt was past the point of no return; she had committed herself to dependency on the Soviet Union.

The next layer in the foundation of the Soviet-Egyptian alliance was constructed of economic aid and technical assistance.

From the moment that he took office, Nasser had been working to turn his dream of building a high dam at Aswan into a reality. The dam had a tremendous importance for Egypt and was necessary for the success of the revolution. The Aswan High Dam (first seriously discussed in 1953) would permit the Egyptians to push back the desert for the first time in history. An additional one and one-half million acres would be available for cultivation. It was necessary if Egypt was to industrialize; the hydro-electrical plant would produce ten billion kilowatt hours a year. (In fact, Egypt would have 50% of the electrical power on the African continent.) The Aswan Dam was to be seventeen times the size of the Great Pyramid. This dam was to be modern Egypt's Great Pyramid; it would provide a place in history for Nasser, his government, and for Egyptian people of the era. (For the sake of comparison, while the Aswan High Dam was a tremendous undertaking for Egypt, it was, and is not the largest in the world. The largest concrete dam is the Grand Coulee; the highest is reported to be the Nurek in the USSR.)

Egypt approached the World Bank for the financing. The World Bank would not undertake to finance the dam on its own; it went to major participants for help and that is how the United States and Great Britain became involved.

Serious negotiations began in late 1955 with many meetings between Ahmed Hussein, the Egyptian Ambassador to Washington, and Dulles, and between Eugene Black of the World Bank and Nasser. Hussein pressed Dulles - and the United States - for a definite commitment. Dulles would not commit himself; he was still very disturbed about the arms deal. Finally, however, after Egypt's Finance Minister, Abdel Moneim el-Kaissouni, participated in extensive talks in London and in Washington, Dulles declared that the United States was going to help Egypt. Dulles added that Nasser should think about the two kinds of aid he was receiving and then decide who were Egypt's true friends. Nasser apparently had the feeling that the United States - because of the size and expense of the project - thought that it could get a firm grip on Egypt and that the expected duration of the project would allow the US to offset the Soviet influence with American influence.

The Aswan Dam would require \$400 million in foreign currency; the World Bank would put up one-half and Britain and the United States would supply the other half. From the outset the aid was to be a loan, not a grant. As 1956 began, the US and Britain announced that they would agree to loan enough for the first year's work, not the entire amount required. Dulles insisted that the US Congress would not



approve the entire amount, and that the aid would have to be voted on each year. Nasser countered that he could not begin a project that he might not be able to finish. He needed a pledge of the entire amount. Nasser suspected that Dulles was trying to tie Egypt to the United States for at least ten years in order to try to influence Egypt each time the loan renewal came up for a vote. Naturally, Nasser was completely opposed to this plan.

Nasser and the World Bank were able to iron out minor differences on the terms of the loan and the remaining obstacle was the United States. At the beginning of 1956 Dulles and the United States seemed sincere about granting the loan. As the year wore on, however, there came to be more and more difficulties. Dulles was having a great deal of trouble with the Congress and with public opinion. Additionally, the United States was placing conditions on the loan. In May, 1956 the Under Secretary of State conveyed three conditions to Ambassador Hussein. These conditions were: Egypt would accept all monetary conditions laid down by the US and Britain; Egypt was to make a declaration saying that there would be no more arms deals with the Russians; finally, Egypt was to - somehow - negotiate a peace between the Arabs and the Israelis. There was no other way to interpret these conditions than to be intrusions into Egyptian international and domestic political affairs.

The United States argued that there must be a guarantee of a return on the investment in both dollars and diplomatic

points as the US was under tremendous pressure from many sides not to help the Egyptians. The pressure was applied by Britain, France, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and from three United States domestic lobbies - the cotton lobby, the Israeli lobby, and the Chinese lobby.

Britain had turned against Nasser for his continued attacks on the Baghdad Pact and for his support of Arab nationalism in Arab countries which worked contrary to British interests in the Middle East. The French were furious over Nasser's support for the Arab nationalists in North Africa. Turkey, Iran, and Iraq were concerned for their regimes because of Nasser's support for nationalism and Nasser's growing following throughout the Middle East. They feared that eventually Nasser would be able to direct coups from Cairo and certainly would do so, given his penchant for Egyptian supremacy and Arab nationalism. The cotton lobby in the United States opposed the Aswan Dam because it opposed the expansion of Egyptian cotton production. The Israeli lobby was, predictably, against all aid to Egypt. Finally, the China lobby was incensed over Egypt's recognition of Communist China. Dulles was under pressure to back out of the commitment to aid Nasser in building the High Aswan Dam.

Nasser kept abreast of these developments through both news and intelligence sources. As early as April - 1956 - Nasser felt that the United States would back out of the deal.

In June, 1956, M. Shepilov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, visited Egypt for a number of reasons and at the end of the five day visit Nasser and Shepilov announced that they had discussed a wide range of topics and that "there was a complete unity of views". Also, at that time, Shepilov extended both technical and economic (400,000 L) aid for the Aswan Dam. Nasser informed him that Egypt was still engaged in negotiations with the United States and Great Britain over the aid for the dam.

As the time for a decision on the loan for the Aswan Dam drew near - July, 1956 - Ambassador Hussein returned from Washington to discuss the problem with Nasser. Hussein related to Nasser that Dulles' difficulty was with the US Congress. Nasser disagreed; he felt that the difficulty was Dulles. Nasser decided to prove his point by instructing Hussein to return to Washington and accept all of the conditions laid down by Dulles and the United States. Nasser told Hussein that the United States would still back out of the deal.

Hussein returned to Washington and en route stopped in London; there he addressed a news conference and told the reporters - contrary to Nasser's instructions - what his mission and purpose was. This news item gave Dulles a warning of what Hussein would tell him the next day in Washington, and therefore Dulles was prepared.

At the same moment that Dulles was receiving Hussein, a prepared news release was read to reporters. The statement

was that the United States - regretfully - had to withdraw the offer of aid. Dulles supposedly told Hussein: "Mr. Ambassador, we are going to issue a statement. I am sorry, we are not going to help you with the Aswan Dam. ...We believe that anybody who builds the High Dam will earn the hatred of the Egyptian people, because the burden (economic) will be crushing. The Egyptian people could not take up such a big project. It is more than Egypt's resources can bear, especially with the arms commitments. We don't want to be hated in Egypt, we are leaving this pleasure to the Soviet Union if they really think they want to do it."<sup>11</sup>

When Nasser read Dulles' statement he regarded it as not only a withdrawal, but an "attack on the regime" and an invitation to the Egyptian people to bring down the government.

Nasser decided on his counter move on July 21, 1965; he was going to nationalize the Suez Canal. In nationalizing the Suez Canal, a symbol of foreign domination over Egypt, Nasser thought he could finance the Aswan Dam himself with the canal's revenues. Nasser was furious over the United States' withdrawal of aid and immediately launched a bitter attack on the US ridiculing the American reasons for the withdrawal. Nasser declared: "We will build the Dam without the West...We will build the Dam without pressure from any nation."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Heikal, op. cit., pps 66-67.

<sup>12</sup>The New York Times, July 26, 1956.



On July 26, 1956, Nasser took his revenge; revenge not only for the withdrawal of the offer of aid for the Aswan Dam, but also for the bitter, personal attacks launched by the British against him for his opposition to the Baghdad Pact. Nasser and his advisors had correctly calculated that there would be no immediate reprisals for the takeover of the Canal; they estimated that it would take Britain over two months to initiate any military action against Egypt.

Nasser's popularity soared. The Canal now belonged to the Egyptian people. Egyptians felt as though they were now truly free of foreign domination and Nasser had brought them this freedom.

The initial response to the nationalization of the Suez Canal was predictable. The West cried, "Outrage", and the developing nations shouted, "Hurrah!". The canal operation continued normally throughout most of the crisis. There was no immediate military intervention. Eisenhower declared that the United States would send her ships around the cape if the canal were closed; further, the U.S. asserted that under no circumstances would it declare war. Britain's Foreign Office was dissuaded from military intervention by the High Command. Mountbatten and Templer convinced Anthony Eden that such a move would be a disaster. There were several attempts to settle the Suez crisis through negotiation. Dulles headed a conference in London which proved fruitless. Robert Menzies, the Australian Prime Minister, headed a mission to Cairo to try to convince Nasser that the Canal should be governed by

an "International Commission". Nasser refused; the Menzies' mission also failed.

Even while these peaceful settlements were discussed, the British continued military preparations for an invasion of the Suez Canal Zone. In October (1956) the question came before the United Nations and eventually a resolution containing six principles on the administration of the Canal was adopted. After the resolution was adopted, Nasser virtually ruled out any possibility of an invasion of the Canal.

On October 29, 1956, the Israelis (later learned to be urged on by, and in collusion with, the British) moved an armoured column across the Sinai with the intention of drawing the Egyptian armour and army into the desert. Nasser suspected a British-French-Israeli collaboration of some kind and moved his army closer to the Canal to protect it from invasion. On November 1, the British bombed Cairo; the objective was the Egyptian Air Force. Britain had estimated that Nasser would fall; that he would have to succumb to internal pressure. The reverse came true. There were massive demonstrations of support not only within Egypt, but all over the Arab world. The bombing continued and the Suez Canal situation became an international crisis. Indeed, world leaders began to fear that another world war was imminent. The British and French (with the help of the Israelis) could have undoubtedly crushed the Egyptian army, but international political pressure on Britain halted the

invasion. The crisis became a standoff and the argument was taken to the United Nations.

The United States and the Soviet Union forced the issue to the UN, with the Soviets siding with Egypt from the outset. The Soviets were also very vocal in favor of the Egyptians, while the United States played a silent, diplomatic role. Had not the United States and the USSR "rescued" Egypt, Nasser surely would have fallen to the British, French, and Israeli attack, Arab pride would have suffered enormously, the Israelis would have held the Sinai, and England would have held the canal. Instead the reverse was true; Arab pride soared over the victory in the Canal Zone (the British were out of Egypt and Egyptians ran the canal), Nasser's popularity and influence grew by leaps and bounds, the Israelis were forced out of the Sinai, and the Colonialists were out of Egypt and on their way out of the Middle East entirely.

The Suez Crisis had many and varied effects on Egyptian, Middle Eastern, and world history; of all of these effects, the following five are most important to this paper: 1) It established Nasser as the leader of the Arab world (and therefore the spokesman for the Arabs); 2) It finished the Baghdad Pact; 3) It reduced British (and Western European) influence and involvement in the Middle East to zero; 4) It seriously strained whatever relations remained between Egypt and the United States; 5) It opened the door to increased USSR involvement and presence in Egypt.

The Suez Crisis and the subsequent political repercussions drove Egypt further and further from the West. Egypt could no longer count on help from the West, and indeed, saw herself as an enemy of Britain, France, and possibly even the United States. This situation caused a de facto alliance between Egypt and the Soviet Union and the Soviets were quick to realize the existence of this "alliance".

Even before the Suez crisis the Soviets recognized Egypt's value as a stepping stone over containment and as a rift in the Baghdad Pact. An added attraction of attempting to gain influence in Egypt was that it was a large populous country with a relatively powerful armed force and was the recognized regional leader. Influence in Egypt would quite possibly lead to influence in other Arab nations.

Through no fault of their own—that is no prior planning—the Soviets enjoyed an "open door" policy in Egypt after the Suez debacle in 1956. The West had shut themselves out of Egypt. With the West out of the picture, who else could the Egyptians turn to for aid and international sponsorship. The fact is that the only nation capable of helping Egypt (or any emerging nation) realize her goals was the Soviet Union, or Communist Bloc.

Between mid 1955 (the arms deal) and late 1958 (the Aswan Dam loan) the Soviets devoted a great deal of time, energy, and money to the Middle East and Egyptian problem. Khrushchev is considered by the analysts to be the man who re-oriented Soviet thinking in relation to the Third World.



Khrushchev began the formal ideological justification for Soviet-Third World ties at the 20th Party Congress in February of 1956. Khrushchev largely abandoned the concept of "capitalist encirclement" as it had been somewhat self defeating as by implication it regarded the entire non-Communist world as hostile to the USSR. Instead, Khrushchev said that a "vast peace zone, including both socialist and non-socialist peace loving states... has emerged in the world arena."<sup>13</sup> This was a shift from Stalin's bipolar "two camp" theory and is thought to be a fundamental change in Soviet practical foreign policy toward underdeveloped countries. Egypt was one of the nations mentioned which had recently won its independence and was in the "peace zone". The Soviet Premier stated further that these countries "need not go begging for up to date equipment to their former oppressors. They can get it in the Socialist countries without assuming any political or military commitments."<sup>14</sup>

Khrushchev also agreed with the position that there was more than one road a nation could take to realize socialism and he reaffirmed Lenin's position on peaceful coexistence. In effect, the Kremlin was officially announcing its intention to become directly involved in the affairs of Third World countries where it might be able to capitalize on

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<sup>13</sup>Leo Gruliov, ed., Current Soviet Policies II, The Documentary Record of the 29th Party Congress and Its Aftermath. (New York, 1957) p. 33.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

anti-colonial sentiments, internal instability, or strained external relations.

In 1957 a thorough reappraisal was made of Egypt's 1952 revolution. (It was no longer a military coup.) In revising the earlier line, the revolution was now said to have enjoyed strong popular support. The Egyptian army had been solidly against the old government, the masses were on the side of the army, and the general population had taken part in the July' uprising. Most of the Egyptian officers had come from the petty bourgeoisie circles, received low pay, and were linked by family ties to the common, working classes. This "volte face" coming shortly after the Suez Crisis, acknowledged the fact that the Soviets approved of Nasser's regime, while at the same time it made the regime more palatable to Politburo members.

By the end of 1958 the official Soviet position was that Egypt was fertile ground for socialism, that Nasser was in fact a leader of the masses, and that Egypt was a potentially valuable ally. Relations between the USSR and Egypt were generally good between 1955 and 1958, keeping open the diplomatic channels for the "total involvement" effort that began in 1958.

On February 1, 1958, Egypt and Syria proclaimed the formation of the "United Arab Republic" - the UAR. This union of two large Arab nations was an indirect outcome of the Suez crisis. Arabs now felt more than ever that there was strength in unity, and that Nasser had the ability, character,

and international reputation necessary to lead such a union. The UAR formation is important to this paper in so far as it - de facto - drew the Soviets into even deeper involvement in the Middle East. If the Soviets were going to court Egypt then they were going to have to court Syria. The Soviets knew this and went ahead with their Egyptian plans and were therefore obviously ready for an all out commitment in the Middle East.

In December of 1958 the USSR and Egypt (the UAR) signed two important trade agreements. The first was an agreement whereby the Russians consented to finance and technically assist in the construction of five airfields, several factories, and a thermal power plant (at Suez) in Egypt. (December 22, 1958) The second agreement, signed six days later was the more important of the two from the Egyptian point of view. This was the Aswan Dam agreement.

(December 28, 1958) The Soviets agreed to supply materials, technical assistance, technicians, and 400 million roubles to aid Egypt in the first phase of construction in the Aswan High Dam.<sup>14</sup>

With these two deals came a marked increase in Soviet involvement and presence in Egypt. Both Egypt and Russia perceived beneficial results from this informal alliance and as far as both sides were concerned, they were to be

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<sup>14</sup>Arab World, Beirut, December 22 and 28, 1958.

allies for years to come. Egypt was providing Russia with a diplomatic foothold and a base of operations in the Middle East, and the Soviet Union was providing Egypt arms, funds, and technical assistance that Nasser considered vital to emergence as a developed nation and as leader of the Arab world.

From this point, December 1958, until July 1972 (the date that Sadat expelled the Soviet technicians) the Russian-Egyptian relationship was to grow to phenomenal proportions, become more entangling and complex, and from the Egyptian perspective, more one-sided.

The next watershed in the Egyptian-Soviet relationship was the war of June, 1967. Between 1958 and 1967 the Russian presence and influence in Egypt (as indicated above) continued to grow. The relationship was not without setbacks or differences of opinion, however. There were continual accusations by both sides that the other was something less than an ideal diplomatic partner. Nasser continually accused the Communists of subterfuge and double dealing. He continued to imprison Communists and would not permit any Communist or Socialist political activity in Egypt. Nasser never did trust, or believe in, Communist doctrine or ideology. He preferred to believe that Egypt and the Soviet Union could deal with each other pragmatically, with each side entering into agreements for the mutual benefit of the nation-state in a real world environment. Nasser separated - at least in his mind - the Soviet Union as a nation-state and Marxist-



Leninist Communism as an ideology and as a prime mover in the USSR. As a result of this differentiation in Nasser's mind, he saw no contradiction in condemning Communism openly and criticizing Communists for interference in the Middle East affairs,<sup>15</sup> and dealing openly with the Kremlin. Nasser needed help; he needed physical and financial assistance and not an ideology.

The Kremlin on the other hand, particularly Khrushchev, had a difficult time convincing the Communist Party members and the Politburo that Russia needed an Egyptian presence badly enough to forgive and forget the verbal attacks launched by Nasser against Communism. There was a definite contradiction in the minds of the Soviet elite between the actions and the speeches and the intentions of Gamal Nasser.

As the relationship continued to grow - and apparently prosper - Nasser fell victim to the same kind of criticism that Khrushchev had been enduring. Close advisors of Nasser - such as Anwar el-Sadat, Mohammed Heikal, and Mahmoud Fawzi - cautioned Nasser that Soviet aid and arms and Communism (the ideology) go hand in hand, that they were inseparable. Nasser did not believe this and, obviously, continued to deal with the Soviet Union.

The history of the relationship between Egypt and the Soviet Union from 1958 to 1967 is basically characterized by an ever increasing number of agreements between the two

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<sup>15</sup>Arab World, Beirut, March 16 and 22, 1959.

countries. The two nations concluded agreements on: trade, diplomatic missions, cultural exchanges, technical and scientific aid and advice, and tourist trade exchange. Additionally, many visits were exchanged by both the heads of state and the members of the military and political elite. After each visit there inevitably followed a joint communique asserting a unity of goals, purpose, and foreign policy. These interactions between the two governments served to enlighten Russians about Egypt and the Middle East and bring a small Egyptian presence to Moscow; but, more importantly, broadened the base of influence and increased the scope and nature of the Russian presence in Egypt and the Middle East.

The second stage of Soviet Egyptian relations in the Nasser era began with the promulgation of the socialist decisions in July 1961. As Egypt turned to socialism relations with the Soviet Union became increasingly close. The Soviets greatly increased economic aid to Egypt and Nasser was granted the title "Hero of the Soviet Union".

Khrushchev visited the Arab Republic in May 1964; the first visit by a Kremlin leader to an Arab state. The occasion of the visit was the diversion of the Nile River flow as a prelude to construction of the High Dam. Italian party leader Togliatti described Khrushchev's visit as one of the most important triumphs by the Soviets in Egypt.

Khrushchev's downfall in 1964 removed the man who built the foundation for good relations between the USSR and Egypt. It did not affect relations between the two countries.

Moscow sent a series of leaders to Cairo to reassure Nasser that a continued policy of cordial relations would be maintained by the Kremlin. Kosygin visited Cairo in May 1966 to assure the Nasser government that Moscow wanted to continue its good relations with Egypt.

This reassurance by Kosygin came at the right time for Egypt, because the protracted war in Yemen<sup>16</sup> was adversely affecting the Egyptian economy and the already uncertain relations with the United States were deteriorating even further.<sup>17</sup>

The June 1967 war with Israel cemented Egyptian-Soviet relations. Their political and economic cooperation became a fateful alliance with Soviet power as a shield for Egypt. By the end of the decade, 1970, estimates were that the Soviets had at least 19,000 military experts in Egypt and had more than doubled their investment in terms of dollars. Before the war the Soviets had poured approximately two billion dollars worth of aid into Egypt; by 1970 the figure was four and one half billion dollars.

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<sup>16</sup>Nasser responded to pleas from the rebel officers of the Yemeni armed forces and sent planes, arms, and army troops to Yemen in October 1962; he was unable to withdraw the forces until after the June 1967 war with Israel. For more detail on the Yemen war and Egypt's involvement see: Stephens, op. cit., pps 380-410.

<sup>17</sup>The subject of deteriorating Egyptian-US relations is not important to the paper at this point. The relations between Egypt and the United States between 1958 and 1967 did not concretely affect the growing relationship between the USSR and Egypt - although they might have, handled differently. For a good account of these relations from the Egyptian point of view see: Heikal, op. cit., pps 201-249.

The minute by minute details of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war are not critical to this paper. The events leading up to the war, the Egyptian and Soviet views of the war - before, during, and after - and the outcome of the war are important as they serve to further describe the Egyptian-Soviet alliance in its maturing stage.

Obviously the root causes of the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 were numerous and varied. However there are a number of factors that can be cited as immediate causes of the war, or at least direct contributors to the outbreak of hostilities.

The decade preceding the June 1967 war had been a decade of turmoil in the Middle East. There were civil clashes and coups. Violence and upheaval were evident in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and all across North Africa. Nationalism was sweeping the Middle East. Ironically, Nasser's popularity (based on his actions in the Suez crisis) as the Arab world leader was ebbing. Egypt had been unable to help the Arab world unite in the spirit of nationalism; unable to remove the occupying Israeli forces, unable to solve the Palestinian problem, and unable to untangle herself from a protracted war in Yemen. Nasser was criticized sharply in the Arab press and even by his own political and military elite for not leading the Arabs against the Israelis. (Israel not only occupied Arab soil, but continued - for some reason - probing spot attacks against both Egypt and Syria.) Nasser and the Egyptian military were therefore predisposed to engage in military action against Israel.



During March and April of 1967 the situation between Syria and Israel became very dangerous. The Israelis accused the Syrians of sending infiltrators onto Israeli soil. Israel replied that she could and would occupy Damascus if necessary. Naturally, these warnings did not lessen the tension between Israel and Syria. These minor incidents and rhetoric exchanges led to border clashes and aerial dogfights. Israel massed troops in the border and Syria responded in kind. At this time, late April, Sadat was in Moscow and informed that Russian intelligence had learned that the Israelis had massed two brigades on the Syrian border. This intelligence, coupled with the Israeli threats to occupy Damascus, led Nasser to conclude that the situation was very grave and out of hand.

Egypt had a mutual defense agreement with Syria and as a result ordered part of the Egyptian Army into the Sinai in order to divert Israeli attention and possibly avoid an attack on Syria. The situation continued to escalate. It was at this time that Egypt's Minister of War was in Moscow for consultations and was told by Kosygin, "We are going to back you. But you have gained your point. (No attack on Syria by the Israelis.) You have won a political victory. So it is now time to compromise, to work politically."<sup>18</sup> When Badran reported back to Nasser he gave Nasser the impression that the USSR was ready to back Egypt to the hilt; clearly that was not Kosygin's meaning.

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<sup>18</sup>Heikal, op. cit., p. 242.

As the crisis continued to build, the "international intelligence network" picked up the idea that Egypt had prepared to launch an attack against Israel on May 26th. The United States sent an urgent message to Egypt through the Soviet Union asking Egypt to reverse that decision. The Soviet Union was emphatic in their request; the Russian ambassador informed Nasser that whoever fired the first shot would be in an "untenable political position." They (the Russians) strongly urged Nasser not to fire that first shot

Whether Nasser had in fact ordered an attack (which is doubtful at best) is immaterial. Nasser had to pause and wonder about such council from an ally that was going to "back him to the hilt". Nasser made several speeches in the aggressor and fire the first shot that sent the Middle East back to war.

At the same time that the United States was exhorting Nasser to back down and restore peace and stability to the area, United States military presence and activity increased noticeably throughout the Middle East. US warships traversed the Suez Canal in order to join the Sixth Fleet; the Sixth Fleet itself began to maneuver into position to evacuate Americans from the Eastern Mediterranean and support and resupply its client (Israel); and US planes began to fly reconnaissance missions over Syria, Egypt, and Israel. Egypt (and the Arab world in general) was very disturbed over American participation in the crisis and was convinced (correctly) that the United States would not let Israel fall to the Arab forces.

The Russian presence, on the other hand, was quite limited. The Soviets were very disturbed over the intensity of the crisis, but chose to remain outside the conflict, save for advising Egypt to back down and restore stability. The Soviets therefore, were not as noticeable or obnoxious as the Americans and seemed to be the true friends of the Arabs. Nasser was still very suspicious and puzzled over the Soviet advice to negotiate a peaceful settlement, and over the lack of actual support the Russians were giving Egypt and Syria. Surely his friends and allies in the Kremlin would agree with Nasser and advocate military action if necessary.

The Third Arab-Israeli war began at 8:45 AM (Cairo time) on Monday, June 5th, 1967. It was virtually won by Israel within the first three hours, perhaps even the first few minutes. The fighting did not end for six days however, and thousands of lives were lost.

It was Israel who fired the first shot. Israel opened the offensive with an all out attack on Egyptian airfields. In three hours of raids the Egyptian Air Force was destroyed, or at least neutralized, leaving the entire Egyptian Army with no air support or cover. For whatever reasons - embarrassment, reluctance to expose their own inadequacy, or sheer disbelief of the actual enormous losses - the Egyptian commanders in the field and the intelligence branches did not report the actual damage or losses or scope of the first day's action to the Egyptian High Command or to Nasser

until Monday evening. This delay allowed the Israelis to make even further gains in Arab territory and inflict more damage from the air than would have otherwise been possible.

When the actual scope of the disaster was finally comprehended by Nasser and the Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian High Commands, they (the Arab leaders) were convinced that the Israelis had the assistance of at least the intelligence branches of the US and British military, if not their actual fighting forces. The result of this belief was a wave of anti-American and British anger throughout the Arab world and the breaking of diplomatic relations with the United States and Great Britain by several Arab nations, including Egypt.

The loss of the war was inevitable. Nasser and the High Command knew it. The Egyptians were unable to advance or take the initiative; they were so mired in complex tactics and battles that they could not even withdraw in an orderly fashion; the battlefield scene was chaotic. Moreover, the Egyptians found their equipment to be inadequate and inferior to that of the enemy. There was no prospect of help for Egypt from any other Arab state or from her friends and allies outside the Middle East - specifically the Soviet Union. In contrast with 1956 Egypt was not alone, however. Syria and Jordan had already entered the war, and Iraq, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia had all promised troops. These additional forces were all weak and unable to organize into effective fighting units in the short time available.



Moscow's support for Egypt consisted of: assuring Nasser that there would be no American intervention (The Russians did not believe that the US actively participated); public condemnation of Israel; and, diplomatic backing of Egypt in the UN. This support was obviously far short of what Nasser needed to save Egypt and the Arabs from another humiliation and defeat.

The United Nations Security Council passed a resolution on the 7th of June calling for an immediate cease fire at 8PM on June 7th. Syria and Iraq had rejected the call for a cease fire, but Egypt accepted the cease fire on June 8th. By the morning of June 9th the Israeli forces had advanced to the eastern bank of the Suez Canal and the Egyptian High Command announced that they had completed their withdrawal to the west bank of the Canal. Nasser later admitted that by June 9th Egypt could no longer defend the Canal. "The road to Cairo was open and offered no resistance whatever due to the paralysis of the armed forces."<sup>19</sup> According to Nasser the Egyptian Sinai forces lost 10,000 men (soldiers, 1,500 officers, 5000 men and 500 officers taken prisoner, approximately 700 tanks lost or destroyed, and thousands of guns and trucks were lost or destroyed.<sup>20</sup> As previously

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<sup>19</sup> Gamal Nasser; speech of 23 Nov 1967.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. While some analysts believe Arab and Egyptian losses to be inflated, most other sources agree very closely with Nasser's statement of losses. (See: Politics in Uniform; The Military Balance, 1966, 67, 68; and Stephens, op. cit.)

stated, the Air Force had been neutralized at the outset with losses figured at 340 combat aircraft.

The war was not over. Having finished with Egypt, Israel turned to Syria. The Israelis bombed Syrian positions on June 8th and 9th. Israel stormed the Golan Heights on the morning of June 9th and the next day the Syrians abandoned their positions and withdrew to Damascus. The Israelis and the Syrians accepted a cease fire on the afternoon of June 10th. The Six Day War was over.

It was Nasser's darkest hour.

The public was slow to grasp the full extent of the disaster. When Nasser announced the cease-fire it came as a shock and served to arouse anger and criticism of Nasser. The public could not understand why the army had given up so soon.

Nasser's work of fifteen years - the liberation of Egypt from foreign troops, the establishment of Egyptian control of the Suez Canal, the rebuilding of national self-confidence - seemed to collapse in three ruinous days.

For the purposes of this paper, one of the most important points to remember is that Nasser firmly believed that the United States and Britain were actively helping the enemy while the Soviet Union did nothing to stop them or materially help Egypt.

Additionally, world opinion seemed to be - indeed was - against the Arabs after the war. The Arabs were pictured as cowards, as losers, as unheroic, and as the aggressors.

The Western press, especially France and Britain, played up these characterizations of the Arabs as true in retaliation for their expulsion from the Middle East. The Israelis were successful in spreading this image throughout the world through a massive propaganda campaign. The Russians, to Nasser's dismay, were unable, or unwilling, or both, to stem this tide of anti-Arab sentiment and propaganda.

Nasser came near to nervous and physical collapse when confronted with all of this bad news. He saw no way out of the dilemma for himself or for Egypt. Some of his closest advisors including Vice-President Mohieddin, urged Nasser to seek an understanding and reconciliation with the United States as the only possible solution.<sup>21</sup> Nasser chose another course. He decided on accepting full public responsibility for the war and its outcome, and on insisting that the Soviet Union make good on some of its promises. He also intended to resign the Presidency on the ninth of June during a nation-wide radio and television address.

His speech of that evening was eloquent and obviously moving. He spoke of the war as only a setback; he declared that this was an hour of "action and not of sadness". He extolled the virtues and bravery of the army and criticized the world powers for their parts in the war and particularly the USSR for not coming to the aid of their new Arab allies.

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<sup>21</sup>Stephens, op. cit., p. 505.

Even before Nasser had finished speaking the people began to pour out into the streets shouting, "Nasser, Nasser, don't leave us, we need you!" The streets of Cairo were full of citizens all demanding that Nasser stay on as President. He did.

The unbelievable amount of support that Nasser received during those few days astounded both Eastern and Western analysts. The West thought that this was a perfect opportunity for the people of Egypt to rid themselves of a dictator. The East thought that the Arabs would like to rid themselves of a leader who failed them. Both sides were - at first - unable to comprehend the pro-Nasser sentiment that swept Egypt. The West finally deduced that perhaps Nasser was not a dictator, at least not in the mold that the West had cast for him, and the East began to realize that the popular support was for Nasser the man and leader, not Nasser "the loser". The Arabs knew that Nasser could and would lead them to greater heights and did not blame him for the disaster of the Six Day War.

Both East and West attempted to capitalize on this new wave of Nasserism in the Middle East. The West made overtures or renewed diplomatic relations and aid, but, at first, the offers fell on deaf ears. The East - Russia - offered increased support for Nasser and Egypt (eager to be associated with a leader of the masses who enjoyed so much popularity and loyalty) and promised to make good all of Egypt's war losses.



Since Nasser was distrustful and suspicious of the West, and since the Soviet Union was already "in" Egypt, Russia was again able to further enhance her position in Egypt.

Nasser faced four formidable tasks in the aftermath of the war: to rebuild Egypt's military strength; to seek a diplomatic settlement of the war; to unify the Arab front in support of Egypt; and to hold the country (Egypt) together politically and economically. It was clear to Nasser that the Soviet Union could be of direct assistance in three of these areas, if not all four.

The Soviets wasted no time in responding. The Kremlin sent President Podgorny to Cairo a few days after the ceasefire to discuss the areas of possible assistance with Nasser. Podgorny promised military, economic, and diplomatic aid to Egypt as well as propaganda and "public relations" aid throughout the world in order to counter the bad press that Egypt and the Arabs received after the war. Podgorny asserted that the Soviet Union would assist Egypt up to the point of actual military intervention or the breaking of ties with the United States; anything up to that line was possible as far as the Soviets were concerned.

Nasser pressed the Soviets not only for arms but also for increased Soviet military and technical personnel; he realized that at least part of the armed forces' problem was lack of military competence and technical expertise. They needed to regain confidence in themselves and a renewed

esprit de corps. Within four months of the war about 80% of Egypt's losses had been replaced. New weapons were introduced into the Egyptian arsenal and Soviet military advisors - numbering some 500 before the war - were increased to at least 3,000 officers.<sup>22</sup> Never, with the exception of Cuba, had the Soviet Union deployed such a large number of its own military personnel outside the Warsaw Pact area. By October of 1968, the value of Soviet arms deliveries to Egypt since June, 1967 was estimated at \$1.4 billion.<sup>23</sup>

In the months that followed the Six Day War, Moscow repeatedly urged Nasser to reorganize the Egyptian command structure, indoctrinate new officers, and broaden the base of experience of the Egyptian armed forces. Nasser finally agreed to the changes suggested by the Soviets and replaced over 600 officers including Marshal Amer, the Chief of Staff of the Egyptian armed forces. It was obvious that the Kremlin had gained considerable influence in Egyptian internal military affairs.

Egypt's defeat caused great consternation and embarrassment for the Soviet leaders in Moscow, but for reasons outlined above, as well as pure pragmatic ones, the Soviets continued to support Nasser. Had the Soviets backed out on

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<sup>22</sup>Joshua, op. cit., pps 12-14.

<sup>23</sup>Walter Laqueur, Confrontation: The Middle East and World Politics, (Quadrangle, New York, 1974) p 82.

Egypt it would have had an adverse effect on other Soviet aligned and certain non-committed nations around the world; additionally, a Soviet pull-out would allow Red China an opportunity to unleash propaganda attacks on Moscow as well as a chance to gain a physical presence in Egypt herself.

The Kremlin leaders obviously decided that the quickest and surest method to regain lost ground in the Middle East and garner an even greater degree of control in Egypt was to continue the flow of Soviet weapons to Egypt.

From mid June 1967 until Nasser's death in September, 1970, the most outstanding feature of the Soviet-Egyptian relationship was the ever increasing arms buildup of Egypt's armed forces, combined with a tremendous influx of Soviet technicians and advisors. By 1968 Russian crews were flying their aircraft from Egyptian airfields and the Soviets controlled at least six air bases by 1970. Shortly before Nasser's death the Soviets had begun to install a sophisticated surface to air missile (SAM) system in Egypt. This move by the Russians created an even greater need in Egypt for Soviet technicians and military advisors, as well as Soviet assistance in the planning of Egypt's military strategy. (The system also served to defend against the tremendous losses of aircraft that the Egyptians suffered not only during the Six Day War, but also after the cease-fire in Nasser's "war of attrition". The Soviets could not afford to continue to replace aircraft at such a phenomenal rate; the Egyptians had lost over 150 planes since the end of the war.)

The arms shipments were clearly the critical factor that preserved Soviet prestige and influence in Egypt. Moscow also sent emergency food and medical supplies, and extended short term credit for wheat. Although no new economic agreements were negotiated, the old programs which were still in progress continued on schedule.

In further support, Soviet warships started to make regular calls at Egyptian ports. While the Russians were careful to avoid acquiring naval bases in Egypt (they did acquire land bases as mentioned above), they did obtain the rights to harbor facilities and subsequently greatly increased their Mediterranean fleet.

Wynfred Joshua analyzes the outcome of the Six Day War thusly:

"Thus Moscow emerged from the 1967 Middle East crisis with its ties to Cairo greatly reinforced. To the extent that Egypt's dependence on the USSR had deepened, Moscow's leverage over Cairo had substantially increased. Admittedly, the Russians did not fully control Nasser, but his freedom to maneuver was limited at best. It would be unlikely that the UAR would pursue a course that would alienate its only effective backer and surely not as long as it needed Russian arms. Since the spring of 1970 the use of Russian pilots in combat missions to strengthen Egyptian air defenses has increased Russian leverage even more. The major victor of the Six Day War, therefore, turned out to be the Soviet Union."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Joshua, op. cit. p 14.



While Joshua's conclusion could not be any more accurate, it was true only for that specific time in the Russian-Egyptian relationship. For with the death of Nasser the relationship changed; not at first, but relentlessly and inevitably as Nasser's successor, Anwar el-Sadat, gained complete control of the Egyptian government. They did not know it or realize it at the time, but the Soviets had already sown the seeds of their downfall in Egypt.

On the evening of September 28, 1970 Nasser died, and his death marked the beginning of the end of Soviet influence in Egypt.

## V. SADAT AND THE SOVIETS

There was a great deal of concern around the world over who would succeed Nasser. To the outside world there were many possibilities. The fears and anxieties of the leaders of the world proved unfounded however, as Anwar el-Sadat came to power. For the most part the transition of power from Nasser to Sadat was smooth and orderly. All of the potential rivals for the Presidency met, and along with the High Executive Committee of the Arab Socialist Union and the National Assembly they nominated Sadat to succeed Nasser. (Sadat was the First Vice-President at the time and the Egyptian Constitution calls for his succession to the Presidency.) Sadat was confirmed in office by a national plebiscite on October 15, 1970.

Although Sadat was a personal friend of Nasser, a member of the original revolutionaries of 1952, and the First Vice-President of the country, he was not privy to all of Nasser's decisions and meetings on foreign policy matters. As a result, he was more of an outside observer, and as time would show, had his own ideas about the nature and conduct of Egyptian foreign policy.

Robert Stephens has observed that Nasser could have sent the Russians home at any time if he wanted to pay the price.<sup>1</sup> —

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<sup>1</sup>Stephens, op. cit. p. 570.

The price would have been the weakening of Egypt's defenses because of the probable loss of Soviet military and economic aid. Nasser had repeatedly stated that Egypt needed to be militarily strong - for obvious reasons - and the leader of the Arab world; knowing that to be true we can conclude that Nasser would not have expelled the Russians. In fact, when Sadat came to power, the Soviets were at their peak of physical presence, power and influence in Egypt and in the Middle East.

Just prior to Nasser's death (Summer of 1970) the Russians had an unbelievable military presence in Egypt. By June 1970, the Soviets had: at least 45 SAM-3 sites ranging from Aswan to Alexandria (manned by Russians); at least six Russian manned airfields; a military highway between Cairo and Alexandria for transporting mainly Russian supplies; a naval base at Alexandria; and air-defense headquarters at Baltim; a military headquarters at Cairo; and an enormous land area nearly 220 miles square in the Northwest corner of Egypt which was completely under Soviet control and off-limits to everyone else, including Egyptians.<sup>2</sup>

One of Newsweek's senior editors, Arnaud de Borchgrave, described the Russian presence and involvement thusly:

"... By the time this network is completed (the SAM site construction project) the Russians plan to have 480 new surface-to-air missiles in place, manned by some

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<sup>2</sup>Arnaud de Borchgrave, "Red Star over the Nile," Newsweek, June 1, 1970, pps 38-42.

15,000 Soviet military personnel. Including the 3,000 military advisors and the 2,500 civilians who were already there before the SAM-3 buildup began, more than 20,000 Russians should be in Egypt by the end of the year, and one well connected military attache in Cairo puts the figure as high as 28,000.

"Moscow, in short, is beginning to run the show. In theory, the Egyptian continue to be responsible for their own airspace. In practice, however, a Russian general and his staff will now make all the decisions, and the Soviet personnel will do most of the firing. Russians will decide, for example, how an intruder is to be engaged - whether by Egyptian or Russian flown MIG-21 interceptors, or by Egyptian manned SAM-2s, or by Russian manned SAM-3s, or by Russian manned and Egyptian fired 100mm anti-aircraft guns (which will soon ring every key military site in Egypt). On the ground and in the air, the Russians operate and defend their own installations. They have deployed machine gun nests and sown mines against an Israeli ground attack. They have taken over early-warning radar, including some installations close to the canal. And to cap it all, they have set up their own communications system, which keeps U.S. listening posts on Cyprus working around the clock.

"Evidently, the Soviets have decided that even with thorough training the Egyptians are not capable of operating the highly complex gadgetry of a modern air defense network. 'An Egyptian University graduate would require two years of training in the Soviet Union before he could fit into the system', explains one Russian. 'And there isn't time'. ...

"The Russians have also taken over a vast tract between Matruh and the Libyan border, putting a Soviet general in command. Russian dredgers are deepening the harbor at Matruh. And the Soviet Deputy Defense Minister and the naval chief of staff have put the arm on Nasser to persuade Libya's Col. Muammar Kaddafi to give the Soviets naval facilities at Tobruk and an air base at El Adem - both recently evacuated by the British. Encouraged by the French to resist, Kaddafi is said to be equivocating. He told Nasser at an all-night meeting in Cairo that he didn't get rid of the Americans and the British just to turn his country over to the Russians.



"Such qualms are shared by many educated Egyptians, as well. Says a Cairo journalist, 'How we will ever get rid of the Russians is a question we ask each other all the time'. In fact, there are various signs that the Soviet presence in Egypt is getting a little too close for political comfort. In a classic balancing act, Nasser revamped his Cabinet, moving several well-known anti-Communists into important positions. And the Egyptian President's long-waged campaign against internal Communists shows no signs of slackening.

"Even so, the Soviets have made their intentions clear: they will not let the Egyptians go down to defeat again, even if they have to run the country themselves to prevent it. Why has Moscow moved as far and as fast as it has? Most veteran diplomats in Cairo feel that the Soviets had no choice. After fifteen years of heavy investment, they could not afford to see Nasser's regime go down the drain - a distinct possibility had Israel's deep penetration raids in Egypt's heartland gone on unabated. Further humiliation in Egypt could also have dire consequences for the men in the Kremlin - the same men who kicked out Nikita Khrushchev, in part for the humiliation Russia suffered in the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. To put it bluntly, Egypt has now become as important to Moscow as Czechoslovakia was in 1968, and the Russians are determined to keep their stake alive."<sup>3</sup>

The vast military presence was not the only concrete link between Moscow and Cairo. By 1970 the Russians had established numerous economic ties and treaties with Egypt, and indeed Egypt depended to a great extent on Soviet trade for its very existence. Frederick Cox, writing in the Naval War College Review, adequately describes the "Soviet Economic and Industrial Satellite in Egypt".

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<sup>3</sup>Arnaud de Borchgrave, "Red Star over the Nile", op. cit. pps 38-42.

"Besides establishing themselves authoritatively in the military organization, the Russians have also gradually assisted Nasser in constructing an economic satellite along the Nile, which, during the next decade, could produce a self-sufficient gas, iron, steel, and oil complex capable of supplying the needs of the African Continent. Nasser has attempted, since 1960 and the inauguration of the first Five Year Plan, to industrialize and diversify the domestic economy with Soviet aid. The year 1968 marked the 10th anniversary of the first USSR-United Arab Republic economic and technical cooperation agreement. During the past decade, the Russians have posted to Cairo over 2,000 technicians with the net result that the economic and industrial planning is being regulated by Soviet engineers. The Russian aid missions have facilitated the process with the building of the High Dam at Aswan, the showpiece of the Nile, and the revamping of the Helwan steel and iron complex near Cairo. The former is nearing completion; the latter is underway; both projects are directly supervised by the Russians.

"The show piece of the Russian-Egyptian industrial cooperation, at a cost of \$902 million is the High Dam at Aswan, begun in 1960 and scheduled for completion by 1969.

"... However, the momentous industrial news of 1968 was the agreement between the United Arab Republic and the USSR in May to build a \$946 million extension to the steel plant at Helwan, near Cairo. The project which began during the summer, brought a huge influx of Russian, Bulgarian, and East German engineers into Cairo with their families and belongings. This is the largest industrial undertaking that the Russians have participated in since the inception of the High Dam, and will make the Helwan complex, when completed, the biggest on the African Continent, increasing production from 250,000 tons of steel a year to 1.5 million. It includes a steel sheet rolling mill as well as a fertilizer plant, using waste residues from the steel mill, public utilities, services, and houses for 12,000 steel and iron workers.

"... The Aswan Dam and the Helwan steel and iron complex form two sides of a Soviet industrial triangle being constructed in Egypt. The third side is based on the magnificent discovery of high grade iron ore from mines situated in

the Bahariya Oasis, north of Aswan in the western desert. The Soviet-Egyptian plan is to build an integrated industrial core using the electrical power from Aswan, the iron ore from Bahariya, and the steel from Helwan coupled with the natural gas in the delta which will be sufficient, not only to supply Egyptian needs, but of quality and quantity for export in Africa.

"... The latest of the Russian endeavors in Egypt is the prospecting for oil. The USSR needs Middle East oil for its Eastern European satellites which prompted Russia in 1967 to sign an oil pact providing for technical assistance in drilling for oil in the western desert near the Siwa Oasis.

"... Credit facilities have also been extended by the USSR for other industrial and agricultural developments in Egypt, totaling some \$800 million. Trade protocols were signed in 1968 which called for exchanges worth up to \$286 million, including import commodities such as wheat, machinery, and industrial equipment and export items in terms of clothing, footwear, furniture, and cotton. Since 1967 Russia has supplied the Egyptians with most of its wheat and foodstuffs. A tourist protocol was signed in January, 1968 in Moscow, which provided that 20,000 Soviet tourists a year would take their vacations along the Nile, as guests of the Russian government. East Germans, Bulgarians, Czechs, and Yugoslavs have supplanted the British, French, and Americans who used to winter in Egypt. Trade and tourism with the Soviet bloc nations have been of decisive importance to the economy since June 1967 with industrial production rising by 14 percent for 1968-69.

"In the Middle East, since 1958 and the first trade pact between the Russians and the Egyptians, the Soviet bloc countries have become the major source of credits for the Arab countries. Hundreds of millions of dollars worth of armaments and credits for development projects, in addition to the Aswan and Helwan complexes, have been provided. As a consequence, Egyptian productivity is being diverted from Western markets to Soviet bloc countries, and Communist goods and services are flooding the United Arab Republic. What is most significant is that the new trading relations have enabled the Egyptians to reduce considerably their trade deficit in 1967-69. There has been a reversal of trade relations between the Arab



world and the West during the past ten years; the net result is that Egypt, the most populous and potentially rich of all the Arab nations, along with Syria, Iraq, and Algeria are becoming Soviet economic-military enclaves in the eastern Mediterranean in an area where there are vital American interests. Barring some unlikely developments, some observers see the Arab Middle East gradually slipping into a Soviet hegemony that ultimately must result in an American retreat in the region or a direct confrontation of the superpowers as a result of a miscalculation or another Arab-Israeli crisis."<sup>4</sup>

From the outset it appeared that Sadat would follow in Nasser's footsteps. The Soviet's were naturally wary when they learned of Nasser's death and Sadat's accession to the Presidency; Nasser was "their man", but Sadat was an unknown quantity.

Sadat wasted no time in eliminating his opposition. In November, 1970, he named a new cabinet with members more favorable to his own views and position. He repeatedly stated his intentions to continue the work of the revolution and follow Nasser's path to Egyptian supremacy, Arab unity, and freedom from Israeli aggression. Sadat inherited not only Nasser's goals and dreams, but also his problems. Egypt was still devastated from the 1967 war. Egyptian lands were occupied by the Israelis, the economy was on the verge of collapse, the military was still weak and rebuilding,

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<sup>4</sup>Frederick J. Cox, "The Russian Presence in Egypt", Naval War College Review, February, 1970, pps 45-51.



the ceasefire agreement was about to expire (February 5, 1971), the Palestinian problem was seemingly insoluble, and the Arab nations were as divided as they had ever been. This was clearly not the time for sweeping foreign policy changes and Sadat knew it.

Sadat had no choice but to work on all of the above problems simultaneously as they were all interrelated. His most pressing problem was, of course, the Israeli problem. He had but two choices, war or political settlement. Before his death Nasser told the people that they must be ready for war, but he pursued a political settlement. Sadat followed this policy of political settlement. This was not purely an Egyptian decision, but Soviet advice as well.

Ever since the disastrous defeat of 1967 the Soviets had advised the Egyptians to pursue a peaceful, political settlement to the Middle East problem. Their reasons were obviously selfish; they could not afford to actively engage in a war against Israel and thereby risk a superpower confrontation, and secondly, they could not afford to have Egypt defeated again thereby causing a great deal of embarrassment to the Soviet Union and requiring once again a massive resupply of arms and supplies. On the other hand the Soviets could not afford not to back Egypt. Non-support of Egypt, an ally, would have detrimental, far-reaching, worldwide consequences and would certainly spell the end of Soviet presence in Egypt and perhaps even the Middle East. The only option open to the Soviets was to support Egypt

in a policy of peaceful, political settlement of the Middle East crisis. This then was the policy that Sadat followed and the situation seemed stable for a time; the Soviets continued their military, economic, and technical aid to Egypt.

It was not long however, before signs of unrest and discontentment began to show up in the Egyptian-Soviet relationship. In the Spring of 1971 Sadat began to make references to the "centers of power" within Egypt. It was clear that he was referring to the groups that had their own views on the conduct of Egyptian affairs, both domestic and foreign. These groups also had the potential power to oust Sadat from office. Several distinct factions emerged; there were those who supported Sadat; there were those who wanted immediate military action against Israel; there were those who wanted the Russians out of Egypt because of their policy of no peace, no war; and there were those who favored a return to the West for both aid and intervention.

At the same time that Sadat was confronted with these challenges to his power, he was formulating his own new approach to the Arab-Israeli problem. Sadat's re-evaluation of the Middle East crisis took into account the objections and criticisms of the factions mentioned above. It is evident from Sadat's speeches and actions of the Spring and Summer of 1971 that he carefully thought through Egypt's two possible courses of action with relation to the Middle East Arab-Israeli crisis. Sadat reasoned that if he opted

for war, then his only strong ally - the USSR - would not back him and Egypt was not strong enough to venture into a war without the assurance of support and resupply from Russia. (The other strong Arab states, primarily Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, would not actively support Egypt because of her ties with the Soviet Union - they were and are vehemently anti-Communist - and because of the bitterness left by Nasser.<sup>5</sup>)

This left Egypt with only a political option open to settle the crisis. Sadat realized that the Soviets would be little help in obtaining a political solution. The Soviets did not have any influence in Israel, and no amount of rhetoric in the United Nations or in any other world forum was going to bring about a political solution. Egypt needed a strong, resourceful, influential, and concerned mediator for the Middle East crisis. That mediator was the United States. The United States definitely had influence in Israel, could restrain Israel if necessary, and was committed to a peaceful solution to the Middle East crisis.

In what can now be analyzed as an attempt to patch up the differences between the United States and Egypt, Secretary of State William Rogers was invited to Egypt - in conjunction

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<sup>5</sup>Nasser continually attacked the other Arab leaders and nations as weak, incapable, and unconcerned over the Arab plight. Only after the loss in 1967 did Nasser apologize to the Arab leaders and mollify his position in order to get funds from them in order to pay for Soviet weapons.

with an extensive Middle East tour - in May 1971. Just prior to Roger's visit President Sadat removed Ali Sabry as First Vice President. Sabry was known to be close to Moscow and opposed reconciliation with the West, at least at that time. This move seemed to indicate that Sadat was very serious about his intentions to try to enlist the help of the US in the Middle East peace solution. The removal of Sabry disturbed the Soviets a great deal. (There were other reasons why Sadat removed Sabry; it is the timing of the move that is significant here.)

Quite naturally and predictably, nothing of real importance came out of the talks between Sadat and Rogers. The two leaders expressed the positions of their respective governments and vowed to review all of the factors in the Middle East crisis in order to try to achieve a peace settlement. Rogers reaffirmed United States support for Israel and Sadat left no doubt that Egypt intended to regain the land and the pride lost in the 1967 war.

The significance of the meeting then, was the fact that Rogers visited Egypt, and did so by invitation. Official visits by high ranking officials are always the first step in the normalization of relations and nothing of any consequence comes out of these initial meetings. However, the Soviets were very interested in the Roger's visit. They expressed their disapproval and disdain in no uncertain terms. The Soviets were also upset over the removal



of Ali Sabry. The Kremlin was openly concerned that Soviet influence might be challenged by the United States.

On May 27, 1971, as if to quell Russian fears about losing their influence, Egypt signed a "Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation" with the Soviet Union. Obviously this treat was not conceived and concluded in less than a month, rather, it had been in the offing for quite some time. It happened that May, 1971 was the most advantageous time for both parties to sign the treaty.

This "Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation" was seen at the time to be the most important occurrence in Soviet-Egyptian relations since 1955. It was viewed with great concern and even alarm in the West. (The treaty proved to be much less significant than originally thought; a point brought out later in this chapter.) The treaty was much like the cooperation and assistance treaties that the USSR had concluded earlier with India and with the Eastern European countries.

The treaty contained twelve articles which basically stated that both sides had mutual goals and would cooperate on all matters of concern to both countries. The treaty was more rhetoric than substance, but did contain several key provisions, specifically articles 7, 8, and 9. Article 7 commits both parties to consult together "on all important questions affecting the interests of both states". The article further states, "... if a danger to peace or violation

to peace arises," the two nations "will contact each other without delay in order to concert their positions with a view to removing the threat that has arisen for restoring peace."

Article 8 states in a non-specific manner that Russia and Egypt "will continue to develop cooperation in the military field."

Article 9 provides that, "each of the contracting parties declares that it will not enter any alliance nor join any international grouping directed against the other contracting party." This article was unique to the Egyptian treaty and reflected the Kremlin fear that Cairo might enter an alliance with the United States or some other Western nation, which of course, would be directly contrary to Soviet interests. Initially Egypt did not take the article literally, but as time passed the Soviets pressed the issue, thereby restricting Egypt's freedom of action in the international arena.

Official U.S. reaction to the treaty was cool. The United States felt the treaty was in keeping with the Soviet operational code and was basically just a foundation for ideological propaganda. However, upon closer examination, it is clear from the reduced level of intercourse between the U.S. and Egypt after the treaty, that this document - specifically article 9 - helped to undermine the attempt by the United States and Egypt to normalize relations. Before the treaty the United States could hope to gain

influence for itself in Egypt at the expense of the Soviets by bringing power to bear on the Israelis. After the treaty the United States could no longer realistically hope to replace Soviet influence, at least in the near future.

The treaty did serve to soothe over the differences that had arisen between Egypt and the Soviet Union. Additionally, it helped to quiet the domestic storms of political unrest in the two countries. In Moscow the conclusion of the treaty seemed to dispell the fears of the party leaders that Egypt was turning to the West; Egypt seemed to be firmly back in the fold. In Cairo, Sadat had been under great pressure to do something positive about the 1967 defeat and the subsequent occupied lands. The treaty served to show Sadat's critics that he was successful in getting the Russians to commit themselves on paper to back Egypt in her struggle with Israel. Article 8 of the treaty was originally viewed in Cairo as a promise of future Soviet military aid and training and article 7 reaffirmed Moscow's intention of coming to the aid of Egypt if "peace was threatened." The Russian-Egyptian alliance was stronger than ever, and perhaps even at its peak upon the signing of the "Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation" in 1971.

Relations between Moscow and Cairo were further enhanced by President Sadat's visit to the Soviet capital in October, 1971. A joint communique issued by Russia and Egypt reiterated the common goals of the two countries in the Middle





East, and, additionally, contained promises of arms and aid for Egypt. While the visit and the communique strengthened Russian-Egyptian relations, they cooled United States-Egyptian relations. Sadat had already publically stated that the US had backed down on promises of mediating a Middle East peace and had changed its (US's) conditions for a Middle East peace. The renewed promise of arms for Egypt brought immediate criticism from the United States Secretary of State, William Rogers, and from President Nixon. The official United States position was that increased aid to Egypt would create an unstable situation and cause the US to increase aid to Israel, and would therefore start a new Middle East arms race.

By the end of 1971 it seemed that Moscow had weathered the storm that grew up at the beginning of the year. Soviet influence in the Middle East was still strong and the United States was still at odds with the Arab countries. Yet Sadat and Egypt still had no peace settlement, the Israelis still occupied Arab lands, and there had not been any increased aid from the Soviet Union. When the year ended, Sadat was again under pressure to "do something" about the Russians, the Israelis, the economy, and the weak Egyptian military. Sadat had promised that 1971 would be the "Year of Decision"; there was no decision.

1972 did not promise to be any brighter for Sadat. The domestic unrest that was evident in 1971 was about to boil over in 1972. This unrest was most apparent in the

military. Sadat was forced to resort to stern measures in dealing with those who opposed his policies. Yet he knew that he must gain some measure of success immediately toward at least one of Egypt's objectives or both he and Egypt would be lost.

The United States' actions in the Middle East late in January served to increase the pressure on Sadat. The US stepped up its aid program to Israel, and by so doing, virtually announced to the Arab world that there was no way the Arabs would be able to defeat the Israelis and therefore the Arab nations should agree to face-to-face bargaining with the Israelis. Russia did not counter the United States program in the Middle East; Russia did not increase the military aid to Egypt, nor did she deliver any of the new weapons systems she had been promising. This growing military imbalance and the non-support by the Soviet Union placed Sadat in an untenable position. The mounting internal pressure and the seriousness of the Arab-Israeli crisis forced Sadat to visit Moscow in February (1972) to try to seek out some reason why the Soviets had not supplied the requested military hardware and why they had not brought some pressure to bear on the United States to slow the flow on arms and aid to Israel.

On the occasion of Sadat's return from Moscow, Egyptians looked for some new purpose and vigor in the Egyptian preparations for war. When none came, public dismay and discontent was evident throughout the country. The Egyptians

felt that their plight was similar to that of India; they concluded that India had won its battle with Pakistan because of Soviet military aid. Why was there no aid for Egypt? Egyptians began to see their country as the loser in the Soviet-Egyptian partnership. Throughout the Spring of 1972 Sadat tried to dispell the fears and rumors that the Soviets were not the friends of the Egyptians. He defended the attitudes of the Soviets; Sadat emphasized the uniqueness of the Egyptian-Soviet alliance and point out that what was good for other Soviet partners was not necessarily good for Egypt.

Sadat visited Moscow again between August 27th and 29th to reiterate his requests. Just prior to the President's departure for Moscow, General Ali Baghdadi was removed as Commander of the Air Force and installed as Minister of Civil Aviation. General Husni Mubarek replaced Ali Baghdadi. The move was reported as a promotion for Baghdadi yet it was not seen in that light by the political observers.<sup>6</sup> There was persistent friction between the Egyptian military and the Soviet advisors and technicians, and Mubarek was known to be more pro-Moscow than Baghdadi. Observers felt that this move, on the eve of Sadat's Moscow trip, was to appease the kings in Kremlin.

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<sup>6</sup>"Sadat: Same Old Motives", An Nahar Arab Report, May 1, 1972, Vol. 3, No. 18, pps 1,2.

The two governments issued the usual communique at the conclusion of the talks. The communique was, as usual, simply rhetoric. It reaffirmed the positions of the two governments and reiterated the 1971 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. Nothing concrete (military aid) came out of the Sadat visit. Nevertheless, Sadat continued to defend the Soviet-Egyptian alliance. He defended the Kremlin so often and at such length that observers began to feel that Sadat was not only trying to convince the people, but himself as well.

The first crack in the Sadat facade occurred during the first week of May. Sadat admitted that he was not receiving all the weapons he asked for. Additionally, he announced that the Federation of Arab Republics had decided to manufacture everything they could (weapons) inside the federation. He also confided that arms agreements were being drawn up in "certain Western countries."<sup>7</sup>

It was also during this early part of May that the activities and demands of "certain rightist elements" came to light. This right wing element was composed of former leaders of the country, including some members of the original Revolutionary Command Council. Three of the men were former aides of Nasser. This group advocated immediate action on the current grave unprecedented situation,

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<sup>7</sup>"Egypt: Domestic Unrest", An Nahar Arab Report, May 8, 1972, Vol. 3, No. 19, pps 1,2.



abrogation of the Egyptian-Soviet treaty, expulsion of the Soviet experts, and re-activation of the Jarring mission.<sup>8</sup> (The Jarring mission was the name of the committee appointed by the UN Security Council to seek a peaceful solution to the Middle East crisis after the 1967 war. The mission was headed by Gunnar Jarring who advocated talks which included not only Egypt and Israel, the the US and the USSR as well.) Sadat was visibly shaken by this sudden emergence of the right wing element, especially since it was made up of such respected and knowledgeable men. Sadat even tried to assimilate the group into the ASU in order to give it a legitimate voice in the leadership of the country.

Obviously the domestic unrest and the lack of faith and trust in the national government had reached grave proportions when such an extra-governmental faction as described above could voice its criticisms publically and be heard. Sadat knew he was in trouble, and his benefactor, the Soviet Union, was not coming to his rescue.

The summer of 1972 marked the beginning of the end of Soviet influence in Egypt and perhaps even the Middle East. On July 18, 1972 President Sadat announced that he was removing (asked Moscow to recall) 15,000 Soviet advisors

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

from Egypt. (The actual number of advisors is not known; original estimates range from 10,000 to 15,000.) The Soviet military would stay as well as a number of civilian technicians who were engaged in important industrial and economic projects.

Sadat listed four reasons why he decided to take this drastic action: 1) Failure by the Soviets to honor their commitments in meeting Egyptian timetables for arms deliveries; 2) Soviet procrastination in providing Egypt with modern weapons; 3) the "atmosphere of suspicion" that constantly characterized the relations between the two countries; 4) the rise of a new situation in the wake of the United States-Soviet Union summit conference in Moscow in May, 1972.<sup>9</sup>

These are the reasons given by Sadat himself, and while basically true, were not the only reasons. Political observers saw a more international consideration to the expulsion. US News and World Report Middle East editors listed three additional reasons for the ouster: 1) an open invitation to the United States to change its Mideast policy and influence the Israelis to adopt a more flexible position; 2) to reduce the rising frustration inside Egypt; 3) to administer a shock to Moscow and force it to reconsider its refusal to supply Egypt with offensive weapons.

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<sup>9</sup>"Soviets to Continue to Get Facilities", The Arab World Weekly, July 27, 1972, p. 1.

The immediate Russian reaction to the expulsion of its advisors was muted. The Soviets did not attack Egypt for the decision, nor did they balk; Moscow began to remove its personnel the next day.

Although Sadat's action constituted a major strategic and political setback for the Kremlin in the Middle East, Moscow still believed that its influence would prevail, that its foothold was secure. After all, Egypt had just recently signed a fifteen year friendship treaty, and Egypt owed Russia a great deal of money, not to mention the fact that Egypt was still dependent on Soviet resupply for its military and on Soviet expertise for its hydro-electric plants and many of its factories. Sadat had not broken those ties. The Soviets correctly analyzed the Sadat move as an admonishment to the Soviets over weapons and timetables. The Soviets fully expected the deterioration of the alliance to stop at that point. In fact, the Soviets admitted that they actually benefitted by the Egyptian action.

First, the Russian leaders were convinced that the Egyptians were incapable of using sophisticated weapons and would suffer another defeat like that of 1967 if the Soviets delivered modern, offensive weapons to Egypt. Secondly, the Russians were determined above all to avoid a US-USSR confrontation and this friction between Egypt and the Soviet Union allowed for a lessening of the possibility of a showdown in the Middle East with the United States. In another Arab-Israeli war the Russians would

have a real dilemma; either confront the United States by actively aiding the Egyptians against Israel, or stand passively by while their allies were defeated once again. The official public statements by Moscow over the incident all emphasized the fact that the withdrawal was mutually agreed on by Moscow and Cairo, a statement that Cairo never supported.

It became more and more obvious as the year drew to a close that Sadat was intent on a complete break with Moscow if the Soviets didn't deliver the arms the Egyptians needed for the anticipated war with Israel. The Russians remained steadfast; no new weapons. The Soviets also decreased the resupply of military hardware and parts for the existing Egyptian forces. Sadat now faced a new crisis; where to turn for military aid and resupply.

In the months that followed the Soviet expulsion, Sadat tried to soothe over the deep rift in the Russian-Egyptian relationship. It was as though Sadat immediately realized that he may have cut his own throat in relation to his avowed objective of avenging the 1967 defeat and regaining the Arab lands. Sadat went to great lengths in his speeches to emphasize that the Soviet Union and the Egyptian Arab Republic were still friends and that Egypt fully intended to abide by the 1971 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The Russian military was allowed to remain in Egypt and allowed to maintain bases, and the Russian Navy was still permitted to make port calls for recreation and resupply.



As if to make one last effort at restoring the former relationship between the two countries, Sadat sent Prime Minister Aziz Sidky to Moscow in October, 1972 to discuss the turn of events with the Soviet leaders. There was apparently cause for optimism upon Sidky's return. Sidky reported that there was no change in the policy of the Soviet Union toward Egypt. The joint communique that followed the talks reaffirmed all of the articles of the 1971 Treaty of Friendship. Sidky reported that the "talks have succeeded in melting the ice that affected our relationship with the Soviet Union in this past period, and now relations between us will proceed normally ..." (The advisors did not return, however.)

After October Sadat's speeches once again turned toward Israel and the inevitability of war. Preparations for this unavoidable battle continued in earnest in Egypt, yet as the year closed there were no new weapons from the Soviet Union. The Egyptian military was as sceptical as ever.

It should be noted at this point that throughout 1972 (and the latter part of 1971), Egypt stepped up its efforts to deal with the West, specifically the United States. Sadat had some limited success in negotiating arms sales with Great Britain and France and apparently received some assurances from the US that it (the US) would do all it could to bring about a peaceful settlement in the Middle East if Egypt took "more positive action" on its own. These

factors must have played a significant part in Sadat's decision to expel the Soviets. He would never have acted unilaterally in this direction if he had no alternatives.

It is possible to measure Sadat's success with the West by simply reading his speeches. Immediately after the expulsion of the Soviet advisors Sadat's speeches were appropriately anti-US, but left some room for optimism about United States intervention and sincerity. One must remember however, that the United States was at its most critical period in the Vietnam war and the Middle East was not the most pressing problem; a fact that Sadat may have minimized or overlooked. This is supported by the change of attitude by Sadat in the fall of 1972 when he obviously felt let down by the West and the United States and began several bitter attacks on the US. Obviously Sadat did not get the immediate response he was hoping for when he expelled the Russians. As noted above, Sadat - almost frantically - ran back to the Russians to try to salvage the alliance in order to pursue his and Egypt's objectives.

During the early months of 1973 Sadat tried to focus national attention on domestic problems and domestic successes. This, he hoped, would direct attention away from Israel and Russia and the failure of Sadat's foreign policy.

Sadat continued to send envoys to Moscow to try to restore relations to their former high point. The atmosphere in Moscow was congenial, the talks were lengthy, the communique issued at the conclusions of the meetings were favorable,

but still there was no new military aid from the Soviet Union. (It is interesting to note that at this same time, the Soviets had dramatically increased their aid to the Syrians in both economic and military aid. This was as if to teach the Egyptians a lesson for the expulsion of the advisors and shore up the Russians' position in the Middle East. Needless to say this infuriated Sadat and the Egyptians and the increased amount of military hardware in Syria made the Israelis very nervous.)

Sadat and his cabinet were quick to take advantage of the Vietnam Paris Peace Accords of January 1973. As soon as the US was out from under the tremendous burden presented by the Vietnam crisis Sadat sent an envoy to carry on negotiations with Washington to try to secure United States intervention in the Middle East and possibly US aid for Egypt. When national security advisor Hafez Ismail returned from Washington, he brought no new news. The Americans seemed as determined as ever to support Israel and protect Israel's sovereignty. This point of view was anathema to the Arabs. Yet, it must be emphasized that the door for negotiation and understanding between Egypt and the United States was never closed. The United States continued to insist that it (the US) held the key to Middle East peace, and Egypt, now more than ever, believed it.

As the year passed it became evident that the Soviets agreed with the Americans on the necessity of a peaceful solution to the Middle East crisis. The Soviets still

refused to send any offensive weapons to Egypt and continued to press Sadat for a peaceful, political solution to the Arab-Israeli crisis. Sadat interpreted the United States peaceful solution to mean allowing the Israelis to remain on Arab lands occupied in the 1967 war. Sadat bitterly attacked the United States position in his May Day speech and urged the Russians to abandon the idea of a peaceful solution. Sadat saw no other way out of the crisis but war.

Despite these apparent setbacks, Sadat continued to send envoys north to Moscow. In late May Foreign Minister Hassan el-Zayyat visited the Kremlin for another round of talks. The results were the same. Moscow left no doubt that a peaceful solution was the only course they (the Russians) would follow. The same tired rhetoric appeared in the statements that followed the meetings. Sadat was convinced that American-Soviet detente was more important to the Russians than the short term successes of the Russian-Egyptian alliance. In his speech in July on the anniversary of the Egyptian Revolution Sadat criticized the Russians for allowing the American-Soviet detente to stand in the way of full cooperation between Russia and Egypt. He stated further that Egypt was not happy with the weapons it was receiving from the Soviet Union and also that Russian support for the Arabs in general was not adequate.

On August 4th the Middle East News Agency carried the text of a "working paper" drafted to be used at the meeting of the National Congress of the Arab Socialist Union in the quest for



a Mideast peace formula.<sup>10</sup> Two of the more important statements of the paper were that Egypt could no longer afford to over-emphasize the importance of the Egyptian-Russian alliance and instead must act in its own best interest. The paper characterized the Russians and the Egyptians as growing farther and farther apart and even suggested the possibility of the cancellation of the 1971 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The second important point was that the Egyptians were actively seeking arms from their Arab brothers since their pleas for new arms from Russia fell on deaf ears. The Arab press had in fact reported Libyan Mirages, Kuwaiti Lightenings, and Iraqi Hawker Hunters arriving in Egypt. These developments clearly show that Egypt was preparing herself for a possible break in Soviet-Egyptian relations.

At 2PM on October 6, 1973 the fourth Arab-Israeli war broke out. The causes of the war are almost too obvious. The seeds of the 1973 war were undoubtedly sown in 1967. The war immediately changed the political situation in the Middle East as it brought an end to the Soviet encouraged state of no-war, no-peace which followed the unsuccessful "war of attrition." The fighting seemed to commence at the point where the 1967 war had stopped, just as though both sides

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<sup>10</sup>"Egypt Reconsiders Its Middle East Policy", The Arab World Weekly, August 11, 1972, pps 5-10.

had called a temporary cease-fire. Given the Middle East deadlock that set in after the collapse of the US initiative known as the "Rogers Plan", and the deadend reached by UN mediator Gunnar Jarring, the outbreak of hostilities was inevitable, especially after the Egyptian bid to bring the Middle East crisis to the United Nations failed.<sup>11</sup>

As with the 1967 war the exact details of the fighting are not important to this paper. The pertinent points are basically these: the Arabs (Egyptians & Syrians) initiated the fighting in the wake of large scale military movements inside Israel. For the first four days the Arabs had the upper hand, driving the Israelis back from the Suez Canal and the Golan Heights. After 9 days of fighting the United States began a massive resupply to Israel and the Soviet Union countered with the threat of intervention. The United States and the Soviet Union came to the dreaded "eyeball to eyeball" confrontation over the Middle East war, and the Soviet Union backed down. On October 20th, Secretary of State Kissinger left for Moscow to insure the easing of tension between the two superpowers and to discuss possible courses of action for a ceasefire. On October 22 Egypt accepted a ceasefire, Syria on October 23, and the fourth Arab-Israeli war came to an end.

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<sup>11</sup>For a full and excellent account of why Egypt opted for full scale war, see: "General Ismail Speaks of the October 6th War", The Arab World Weekly, November 24, 1973, pps 16-20.

For the purposes of this paper the results of the war are best viewed from an Egyptian perspective, as this gives an insight into Egypt's "mind-set" and provides a basis for future relations with the international community, especially the Soviet Union. The results, as Egypt saw them, are clearly iterated by Lt. General Ahmed Ismail, War Minister and Commander in Chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces. The following are General Ismail's remarks when asked about the 1973 war:

"1 - The myth about the Israeli soldier was shattered before it could become firm in people's minds. 2 - It was proven in front of me that the Egyptian soldier is one of the bravest and toughest in the world. His patience and boldness are enough to testify to that ... 3 - Any well planned action supplemented by sufficient practical training could be 100% successful. In addition to these there are some strategic results which I shall list as follows: A. We have broken the ice which was about to engulf the Middle East crisis. B. We have changed our image in the whole world. The world, which thought we were paralyzed, has now been convinced that we are able to move, to fight, and to triumph. This was not true of Egypt alone, but of the entire Arab world as well. C. We have proved to Israel that her logic about secure borders was wrong. The Suez Canal was not barrier enough in the face of a ferociously determined will. The Bar Lev Line was not a barrier enough in the face of full readiness to sacrifice ..."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>"General Ismail Speaks of the October 6th War",  
Loc. cit.

- From General Ismail's remarks it is clear that Egypt felt that it, and the rest of the Arab world, won both a real and a moral victory in the October war. The success enjoyed by the Egyptians gave them a whole new perspective on their importance and capabilities in the Middle East and their status in the world. In speaking for Egypt General Ismail told us that the 1973 war was planned and executed "100%", and was done so without - indeed in spite of - the Soviet Union or any other outside help. It was at this point that we see Egypt begin to believe that she can stand alone, that she is the master of her own fate. With the 1973 "victory" Sadat gained an enormous amount of power and prestige, and was pushed out in the light away from Nasser's shadow. Sadat now ruled from a position of power; his domestic critics were silenced. More important for this paper, Sadat now negotiated from a position of strength. He was no longer subservient to the Soviet Union, he was now an equal.

For the first time since the mid 1950s Egypt heralded the New Year with elated national spirit and optimism for the future.

The role that the Soviets played in the war did nothing to reaffirm or strengthen their alliance with Egypt. The Soviets advised Sadat to seek a ceasefire within hours of the outbreak of hostilities. This was completely in character even though the Arabs were winning at that point. Sadat felt



it was quite odd to have his ally tell him to stop his offensive just when it appeared that he was succeeding.

The Soviets began a resupply effort to Egypt, but only after the war effort had bogged down in the Sinai. By that time the United States forces were already resupplying Israel and the US forces were on alert. The USSR had to show some effort to resupply and support her ally or be embarrassed internationally.

When the confrontation became grave, that is when the two superpowers came face to face in the Mediterranean, they realized they must back down. This cooling off, or de-escalation was a relief to the United States and the Soviet Union - and the rest of the world - but was still unbelievable to Egypt and the rest of the Arabs. Sadat and the other Arab leaders knew that the Middle East war was not the American's and the Soviet's war, but still this seeming obsession with detente proved that the Russians would not support an ally in a cause that would bring the superpowers face to face. Nor would the Soviets supply an ally would lose in its military endeavor and thereby embarrass the Soviet Union.

There were no official remarks from Egypt about the Soviet participation in the war until well into 1974. The first statements about Soviet involvement in the October war came when Sadat was interviewed by Alia al Solh, a Lebanese journalist, in March of that year. Sadat's remarks further indicated the deteriorating relations between Egypt and the USSR. The President accused the Russians of stalling in

delivering the weapons he had ordered prior to the 1973 war. During the interview Sadat confirmed that the Russian ambassador asked him to contact Hafez Assad, President of Syria, and seek a ceasefire six hours after the war started. In the interview Sadat was very critical of the Soviet assistance for Egypt (or lack of it), the Russian policy of no-peace, no-war, and the Soviet cooperation with the United States despite the military support the US rendered to Israel.

In remarks made to the People's Council and the ASU Central Committee (April 1974) Sadat was more specific in his criticism: "The Soviet Union has not replied to Egypt's requests for arms submitted six months ago...This is why I would like you to know in light of this situation, I have reached a decision with our armed forces that we must diversify the sources of our armaments. The decision has been implemented. Being responsible for our people and nation, I cannot stand with my arms tied up for six months and leave our forces without protection."<sup>13</sup>

Sadat also made it clear that Egypt had not intended to make friends with the United States at the expense of the Soviet Union; however, as far as the United States was concerned, there was undoubtedly a change in favor of the Arabs. There was no answer or reply from the Soviets.

(With these last two points in mind it is important to note that Egypt resumed full diplomatic relations with the

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<sup>13</sup>The Arab World Weekly, April 20, 1974, p. 4.

United States in November, 1973. Additionally, Egypt was successful in obtaining a limited number of aircraft from France ((Mirages)) in November 1973 and from Saudi Arabia in January, 1974.)

There was an icy silence between Moscow and Cairo for the first three quarters of 1974. However, President Nixon visited Cairo in June and shortly thereafter significant economic and investment agreements were renewed between Egypt and the United States. The accords included a promise by the United States to provide Egypt with nuclear reactors (a promise the Russians had made but not kept), and a promise of aid for Egypt in the amount of \$250 million. Egypt agreed to allow four major US banks to operate in the country. Once again it seemed that the flag would follow trade.

Egypt seemed to be turning to the US economically as well as politically and this trend further deepened the anxiety of the Soviets over the Egyptian situation.

This movement towards the United States was encouraged and welcomed by the Saudis. The Soviets had always been at odds with the Saudis (primarily over religion) and with the strained relations between Egypt and the USSR came a strengthening of relations between the Egyptians and the anti-Soviet governments in the Middle East.

The undoing of Soviet-Egyptian relations was not welcomed by Sadat. Sadat, displeased as he was with Soviet inaction, was desperate for Soviet aid. Egypt needed arms and military supplies. Egypt had not established any new pipeline of

armaments and all of Egypt's Russian weapons were in need of spare parts. Even if Egypt could have switched suppliers instantly, it would have taken (and still will) years for the complete changeover and retraining. Sadat continued to emphasize that while there were differences between the two countries, he would like to see better relations re-established between the governments. For their part the Soviets continued to follow their own advice that Sadat could not import weapons from Moscow and policy from Washington. Observers believed that at this time the Kremlin had written off the Sadat regime, but not Egypt. The Soviets seemed to be content to wait in wings until Sadat was gone and then approach the new Egyptian administration. In the meanwhile the Russians decided to fully support Syria in order to back up their decision in Egypt; they needed a client in the Middle East in order to maintain their physical presence and influential base.

By August 1974 Egypt was in urgent need of spare parts and repair for its weapons. Sadat stated in an interview published in As-Sayyad in mid August that he had not received any arms deliveries from the Soviets in the past nine months. Egyptian officials, including Sadat, had visited the Eastern European countries to try to obtain some armaments and to try to persuade the Bulgarian and Rumanian leaders to intervene in Moscow on behalf of Egypt to persuade the Kremlin to resume its arms shipments to Egypt. Other Soviet Union arms recipients - Yugoslavia, Rumania, Algeria, and India - were studied as possible sources of Egyptian resupply. All of



this effort was to no avail. It became clear to Sadat that the farther apart Egypt and Russia grew, the more he needed US friendship and aid - not just as an arms supplier and economic benefactor, but as an international power with the ability to prevent Israel from launching an attack against Egypt or the other Arab states. With no armed force as a deterrent, Sadat needed the United States to maintain the peace in the Middle East.

A glimmer of hope for better relations between the Soviet Union and Egypt appeared in September 1974. Russia re-extended an earlier invitation to Foreign Minister Fahmi to visit Moscow to discuss relations between the two countries.

At the outset the talks seemed to be fruitful. It was agreed that Secretary Brezhnev would pay a state visit to Egypt in January 1975. The Soviets' waiting game seemed to pay dividends. With the resignation of President Nixon in August and the slow action on the part of the United States Congress in approving the \$250 million in aid and the nuclear reactors, the stage was set for the Soviets to move back into Egypt. The possibility of Soviet advisors in Egypt was discussed at the talks between Fahmi and Brezhnev. Once again it seemed that the possibility of close United States-Egyptian ties was thwarted by US domestic issues and politics and once again the Soviets could take advantage of the vacuum. With these developments, the Soviets were expected to fill Egypt's arms orders as well as rendering the economic aid and nuclear reactors that Egypt needed.

Even though progress with respect to relations with the United States appeared stalled, Sadat still wanted balanced relations with the two superpowers. This was made clear to all parties and obviously displeased the Kremlin. 1974 ended with Sadat no closer to a solution to his problems. The Russians had not delivered any arms and he (Sadat) was still very distant - diplomatically - from both the United States and the Soviet Union.

The high hopes that Sadat held for Russian-Egyptian relations in 1975 vanished early in the year when Brezhnev cancelled his scheduled visit to Cairo. For a chief of state to cancel a visit to another nation is a major event - even an affront, and that was especially true in this case as the trip had been scheduled three months earlier and was to have been Brezhnev's first visit to Egypt. The Brezhnev visit was to clear the air between Moscow and Cairo, now it was more cloudy than ever. The official reason for the cancellation was given as Brezhnev's poor health, but even if this was the sole reason (and there is some doubt as Brezhnev had made other trips abroad) it could not have come at a worse time for Soviet-Egyptian relations.

With the postponement of the Brezhnev visit came the lowest point in the entire span of Soviet-Egyptian cooperation. The Soviet Union was not going to interfere with US Secretary Kissinger's peace efforts in the Middle East, and with the strengthening of detente between the US and the USSR, it was

evident that the Soviets were willing to let the United States try its hand at peace making in the Middle East.

At the end of January 1975 Sadat concluded an arms agreement with France which would bring at least 44 French Mirage F-1 fighter-bombers to Egypt. Sadat was definitely diversifying his arms sources and preparing for a possible complete shut-off of all Soviet supplies. The agreement was also designed to put pressure on the Soviet Union to resume arms shipments. Sadat seemed to have succeeded in that early in February Foreign Minister Gromyko agreed in principle to resume arms shipments, but specific dates and details were not discussed. (By this time Egypt had already concluded agreements with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates to provide arms to Egypt through a re-transfer process.)

Even though Western weapons were on their way to Egypt, Sadat and the Egyptian military were still desperate. For the immediate future, there was no alternative to Soviet weapons and supplies. The Egyptian forces had been using Soviet weapons for 20 years and estimates from military experts said that Egypt would need 10 years to completely switch from Soviet weapons and technology to Western weapons. Sadat's own estimates exceeded 5 years for the changeover.

Although Sadat and the military desperately needed Soviet arms, they just as desperately wanted to keep Soviet technicians and advisors out of Egypt. In the early months of 1975 the Soviets indicated that they would send weapons if they

could also send technicians and advisors. These conditions were unacceptable to Sadat - and to the military. This shared dislike of the Soviet advisors explains why Sadat was not under more pressure from the military to obtain Soviet arms and supplies at any cost; apparently the Egyptian military leaders wanted Soviet interference even less than Sadat.

On May 16, 1975, Beirut's weekly magazine, Al Hawadeth, published an interview with Sadat in which he clarified the Egyptian-Soviet differences. Sadat stated that the differences revolved around two points, economics and arms. Sadat said that he could not continue paying the Soviets in 1975 at the same rate he paid in 1974 and yet the Soviets would not relent. He also stated that the Soviets would not replace Egyptian weapons. Just as it had been the beginning of the Soviet-Egyptian alliance, this issue of weapons was also to be the undoing.

By mid 1975 Sadat was quite clear and vocal about wanting to deal with the United States to obtain aid and to effect a Middle East peace settlement. This iced the relationship even more. It was obvious that Sadat was very pleased with the United States, specifically President Ford, and very displeased with the Soviet Union.

The Soviet-Egyptian alliance was on a downhill slide and by August 1975 was clearly doomed. Egyptian forces were training in Western weapon systems and Sadat's attacks on the Soviet Union became more frequent and more caustic. In



September Sadat stated, "When the day comes for revealing the documents exchanged between us and the Russians, you will know that no man's pride would tolerate the Soviet way of dealing."<sup>14</sup>

When 1975 drew to a close, the Soviets had still not sent any weapons to Egypt; they had instead supported Syria to the fullest ever since the 1973 war, and had by December, 1975 even begun to supply arms to Libya. The Soviets seemed to be saying to Sadat, "You can't treat us the way you did in 1972 and accuse us of dirty dealings and expect us to support you. We will support your Arab brothers to maintain our influence in the Middle East and at the same time teach you a lesson."

In 1976 Egypt began to negotiate with Britain and Italy for modification of hundreds of Soviet supplied tanks so that they could use Western parts and ammunition. In February the Soviets announced that they would no longer overhaul the MIG-21 engine for the Egyptians. This development threatened to ground most of the Egyptian Air Force. Moscow had continued to send absolutely necessary spare parts to Egypt to keep the MIGs airborne; now even that trickle of spare parts was terminated.

This was the last straw for Sadat. On March 15, 1976 Sadat announced the unilateral abrogation of the Egyptian-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation of 1971. Sadat

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<sup>14</sup>"Sadat on The Soviets", Arab World Weekly, September 13, 1975, p. 18.

accused the Russians of putting a vicious economic and military squeeze on him and of defacto abrogating the Treaty themselves months before. There was now very little left of the Soviet-Egyptian alliance.

On March 27, 1976 Sadat formally asked the United States for arms. He requested fighter planes, anti-tank missiles, and other defensive weapons systems. Sadat stated that Soviet actions and policy had put him in an untenable situation. At the same time that Sadat spoke a United States guided missile destroyer the USS Dahlgreen, made a port call on Alexandria. This was a very symbolic gesture on the part of the Egyptians, as the Soviet Union had been the only major power allowed in Egyptian ports in 20 years.

On April 4, 1976 Sadat announced that he was closing Egyptian ports to Soviet ships. The Russians would have to be out by April 14th. This was Sadat's final measure of reprisal for the military and economic pressure levied by the Soviets.

By April 15, 1976 the Soviet-Egyptian alliance was over. The only connections left between the two countries were their respective diplomatic missions. The alliances had not gone the way either side had intended, and both sides had lost.

## VI. CONCLUSION

### The Lessons Learned

This chapter will review Russian involvement in Egypt with respect to the following points: how did the Soviet Union gain a position of influence in Egypt; why did the Soviets wish to commit themselves so deeply to Nasser and Sadat; why did Egypt seek Soviet aid; how did the Kremlin manage to lose its position of prestige and influence in Egypt; why was the West denied access to Egypt and the Middle East; and finally, what are the developing relationships now (1976) between Egypt and the Superpowers.

Finally, this paper will examine the lessons learned from Russia's Egyptian "experiment". There are some valuable insights to be gained by and from all of the participants in this phase of Egyptian history.

We will look at some general conditions for, and objectives of, alliances, and look closely at errors committed by Egypt and the Soviet Union in their dealing with one another. Further, we will look at costly errors made by the United States and the West that precluded a Western influential presence in the Middle East.

In conclusion this chapter will present some recommendations or prescriptions, for foreign policy making in general, and Middle East policy making in particular, in light of the

Russian experience in Egypt. The United States cannot afford to make the same mistakes that it made in 1954-55 with regards to Egypt and the Middle East. The time is right - right now - for positive action on the part of the United States in the Mideast.

Let us first review Russia's entry into the Middle East and Egypt. Historically, Russian presence in the Middle East dates back to the year 1000AD. This presence was primarily commercial. Russian traders conducted business in and around Constantinople and the Caspian Sea. This type of presence was quite natural; all countries - even adventurous companies and private citizens - have always expanded their commercial horizons whenever they had the means to do so. Trade and commerce are the common denominators that brought nations and continents closer together. This expansion of trade and exploration of new trade routes is a natural human or political phenomenon and Russia's desires in these directions were no different than those of any other European power up to and including the 18th century. In short, Russia had as much right to be in the Near East as any other nation.

Russian goals in the Middle East changed from purely economic goals to military-political-economic goals during the reign of Peter the Great (1682-1725). Peter realized that if Russia was to be a great European and world power she must have free access to open water for military and commercial fleets. This was the inception of the Russian



obsession for warm water ports. This overwhelming desire for warm water ports continued as a dominant theme of Russian foreign policy from Peter the Great through Catherine the Great and Nicholas II (1682-1917).

With the Russian revolution came a decreased interest in world affairs and in the Middle East. The new Bolshevik leaders struggled for years after the revolution to consolidate their power base and cure the numerous domestic ills of the country. The Russians were not concerned about foreign trade or a far-flung military force until the advent of World War II.

Even though the USSR had normal, everyday contacts with her neighbors to the south - Turkey and Iran - prior to World War II, and although she (Russia) sponsored Communist parties in several Middle Eastern countries and aligned herself ideologically with the toiling masses of the colonized peoples, it was not until the Soviet Union began to compete with the United States and the NATO countries in the 1950s that any real Russian interest was manifested in the Middle East.

The Soviet Union was (and still is) actually paranoid about the West's and NATO's success in encircling the Soviet Union with military bases and allies. They were virtually forced - faced with their objectives of self defense and Communist domination of the world - to expand their foreign policy horizons and actively compete with the West for client states and allies. One need but look at a map of Europe and Asia to see that the USSR was reasonably secure on all of

her borders except to the south. The most vulnerable area to the Soviet Union was her southern flank - the Middle East. This was precisely the area where the United States and the West were making strategic gains with NATO and the Baghdad Pact. The USSR had to make inroads into this link of containment to the south or face possible future disastrous consequences. (Not to mention the valuable natural resources and propaganda value that the Middle East held.) It seems obvious now that the Russians must have had then - between 1950 and 1955 - an overwhelming desire to gain influence in the Middle East. She anxiously awaited an opportunity to move. Egypt provided just such an opportunity in 1955.

It is reasonable to conclude that the Soviet Union did not "target" Egypt. The opportunity to move into Egypt is better classified as an historical accident. Through a process of elimination or deduction, one can see that Russia had little chance of gaining a dominant position of influence in any Mideast country. Constant border clashes and diplomatic entanglements kept the Soviets out of Turkey and Iran; ideology and historical precedent kept the Russians from gaining any real influence in Israel, Libya, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and even Egypt. It is humorous, in an ironic sense, that this list is a list of all the countries in the Middle East. The Soviet Union's foreign policy objective of jumping over containment and securing client states to the south must have seemed virtually unobtainable to Russian policy makers and diplomats in the early 1950s.

After the Free Officers succeeded in their July 1952 revolution in Egypt they found themselves without the resources to build and maintain a sovereign, viable nation-state. Egypt's new leaders sought aid immediately. They correctly reasoned that an independent, sovereign nation must be economically sound, and possess a military force capable of defending the country, and a government which is strong, stable, and reasonably acceptable to the other nations of the world.

Egypt's new government needed recognition from the other governments of the world; it needed economic aid from and trade with the industrial nations; and certainly it needed military aid in the form of weapons in order to shore up a badly equipped, poorly trained armed force. In retrospect, these were legitimate needs of the new Egyptian government, yet when Egypt sought this kind of recognition and aid from the industrial nations (principally Britain, France, and the United States) the West turned a deaf ear.

The governments of the West were either too short-sighted, selfish (because of their own goals), or too pre-occupied with the Soviet Union to judge Egypt's needs and requests objectively. Certainly there was cause for concern that Nasser's government might not be stable, that Nasser might in fact be a passing military dictator, or that grant-aid might be squandered or misused, but no thorough evaluation or objective analysis of the new Egyptian government or its goals was made. Instead, personality and personal opinion

led the leaders of the United States, Britain, and France to turn down Egypt's requests for economic aid, technical assistance, and weapons. The situation became grave for Egypt's government and Nasser had no choice but "to look elsewhere" for support. At that time (indeed, even now) the only other possible source of aid was the Soviet Union.

Nasser asked the Soviet Union for arms through Chou En-lai in 1955. The Soviets were ready to deal. They knew that a major arms deal would create a certain dependency on the Kremlin and this was precisely the opening the Soviets had hoped for in the Middle East. After the critical arms deal of 1955 the Soviet presence in Egypt grew by quantum leaps every year.

The Egyptian government had asked the World Bank, the United States and Britain to finance the construction of the High Aswan Dam, and for reasons explained earlier in the paper, the West turned Nasser down. This was the final costly mistake by the West. Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in an attempt "to show the world" he could raise the revenue himself for the Aswan Dam. This action precipitated the Suez Crisis which brought the world to the brink of war. Britain, France, and Israel engaged in military operations against Egypt; the U.S. condemned Nasser and Egypt and brought the issue to the United Nations. Obviously, this crisis finished the West as far as Nasser was concerned. The Soviet Union on the other hand was a new found friend and ally of Egypt.



In 1958 the Soviet Union agreed to finance the Aswan Dam and provide technical assistance. This agreement was the first of a long series of agreements on construction, urban improvement, trade, and cultural exchanges. With the economic and military aid came an ever increasing number of advisors and technicians, both military and civilian.

The Russian-Egyptian alliance continued to grow and mature until 1967. The June 1967 war marked a crisis for the alliance. Nasser was sure that the Russians would "back him to the hilt" in his confrontation with Israel. Yet in the months prior to the war the Kremlin urged Nasser to seek a diplomatic solution to the Middle East crisis. Further, the Soviets asked Nasser not to fire the first shot in a war with Israel. Nasser began to wonder if Russia was his true ally. When the war finally came Russian support for Egypt was moral, not physical. The Russians assured Nasser there would be no American intervention; they condemned Israel; they supported Egypt in the United Nations. This support fell far short of what Nasser expected. It was not until after the ceasefire that Moscow responded to Egypt's needs.

When Nasser emerged as a hero and popular leader instead of a loser and a target for Arab ire, the Russians immediately sided with him. Past experience told the Russians they could not lose while backing a popular leader of the masses. A few days after the ceasefire the Russians began to replace Egypt's war losses. They also increased the total amount of aid and the number of advisors in accordance with Nasser's requests.

This sudden renewed support for Egypt seemed to make up for the non-support during the war, and the Russian-Egyptian alliance emerged from the 1967 war stronger than ever.

The relationship continued on a steady course even through Nasser's death in 1970, until it reached a peak in 1971 with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The alliance began a steady downhill slide from that point on.

It is clear now that the Russians and the Egyptians did not agree on what kind of support was best for Egypt. Russia continued to supply training, necessary military supplies, advisors, and technicians, but Egypt wanted offensive military hardware. The Soviets refused. The Soviets again urged a diplomatic settlement to the Mideast crisis. The Soviets diplomatically argued that Egypt needed good advice, good planning and tactics, continued industrial expansion, and a well-commanded, well-trained army. While the Soviets were objectively correct, Egypt (Sadat) declared that this was not enough. Egypt wanted modern, offensive weapons. The Soviets never specifically refused the request, but they never delivered.

Convinced that he needed weapons and not advice, and in an attempt to show the Kremlin that he was the real power in Egypt, Sadat expelled the Soviet advisors in 1972.

The Russian reaction to, and support for, Egypt during the 1973 war was much the same as for the 1967 war. They advised Sadat against it; they urged him to call off the war a few hours after it began. In Sadat's mind this was not the

help and advice of a friend and ally. At the conclusion of hostilities the Soviets were unwilling to replace Egyptian losses. They also failed to deliver the weapons that Sadat ordered before the war.

The alliance was doomed. Egypt continued to request weapons, and eventually asked for only parts and resupply, but there was no support from the Russians. Sadat was forced to seek help from other sources. The continued rejections by the Soviet Union were so infuriating and embarrassing to Sadat that ultimately in 1976 he unilaterally abrogated the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. Shortly thereafter he closed Egyptian ports to Russian vessels. All that remained of the once formidable alliance was normal, formal diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Ironically, it was the arms issue that brought Russia into Egypt and also forced her out. It is also ironic that in many respects the same situation exists today (1976) that existed in 1954 in Egypt. The Egyptian government is in need of economic aid, faces a grave Arab-Israeli situation, has a weakened military, and perceives its most immediate need to be a weapons supplier. However, now the roles are reversed. The Soviet Union has turned a deaf ear to Cairo and Sadat has sought aid from the United States and the West.

While it was passive refusal to support Egypt in both the 1967 and 1973 wars and active refusal to deliver modern offensive weapons systems to Egypt that proved to be the

undoing of the alliance, there were other factors that eroded the basis of the alliance.

Early on in the relationship the Soviets gave some disastrous advice to the Egyptians. They urged Nasser to support the revolutionaries in Yemen. Yemen became Nasser's Viet Nam. The Yemen involvement cost Egypt billions and drained the strength of the Egyptian armed forces. Many analysts agree that Egypt entered the 1967 war with Israel with a defeated army; it was already exhausted from its five year war in Yemen. The Soviets did not accept any of the responsibility for the failure in Yemen; they simply asserted that the Egyptian army couldn't handle the job.

Some Arab writers relate that Egypt had a tactically sound plan to strike first at Israel on the eve of the 1967 war. When the plan was related to the Russian advisors, they rejected it as impossible, doomed to failure. Nasser always felt that had he struck first, the outcome of the 1967 war would have been dramatically different.

Still another factor that detracted from the Soviet-Egyptian relationship was the type and quality of the industrial and economic aid the Russians supplied Egypt. At the height of the alliance there were more than 87 factories or industrial complexes set up by the Soviets in order to aid in Egypt's industrialization. In fact, very few of these complexes were ever operational. Many were only on paper,



others were no more than foundations, and still other lacked the necessary machinery to make them operational.<sup>1</sup>

As the number of Russian advisors and technicians grew in Egypt, their presence became more and more a source of contention among the population. The Russians kept to themselves and limited contacts with the Egyptians to official business. Socializing was only present at the highest levels. (Some of this segregation was imposed by the Egyptian government, but the result was the same.) The Russians even lived in separate communities in and around Cairo and Alexandria. Russian officers had command and control over Egyptian forces, but no Egyptian commanded or supervised any Russian military or civilian advisor. Eventually Russian officers actually had veto power over Egyptian operations and plans. By 1972 Russian air controllers had complete authority over Egypt's entire air defense network. They virtually commanded all of Egypt's air operations. Ultimately, only Russian pilots flew intercept missions and only Russian operators could launch and control the SAM missiles.

This situation obviously made a negative impression on not only the Egyptian military, but also on the private citizen. By 1972 the Egyptians saw the Russians as another

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<sup>1</sup>This information was gleaned from informal interviews with Egyptians who lived in Egypt during the period in question. These individuals are highly educated and had access to reliable news sources and government officials. The author has no reason to doubt the substance of the comments made by these Egyptian citizens.

colonialist power. They began to wonder if there was any difference between the Russian occupation of the Eastern European countries and the Russian presence in the Middle East. It seemed that the Kremlin wanted to control the Middle East. Before his death even Nasser wondered if he had traded British colonialism for Soviet colonialism.

Perhaps the feeling of the Egyptians and of Sadat himself about the Russians are best explained by several of the remarks Sadat made in 1975 about the Soviet-Egyptian relationship. The following excerpts are from Sadat's speech of September 28, 1975 which marked the fifth anniversary of Gamal Nasser's death.

"When I accepted the ceasefire on October 22, 1973 - and I want our brothers in the Syrian Baath Party to hear this - I was facing both the Americans and the Jews. America with its strength and its new weapons that had never before left the United States. They brought the weapons and (American) experts entered the battle in the days of the break through (the west bank of the Suez Canal)... Just as America and Israel were in front of me, the Soviet Union was on my back... The air bridge which brought in weapons was bringing weapons that should have been delivered in 1969. These weapons had been requested by Nasser, but the Russians did not deliver them because they wanted to punish Nasser as he had refused to stop the war of attrition at their request... The Soviet Union was on my back and I was afraid of the Soviet Union just as I was afraid of the Americans and Israelis... The Russians flooded Syria with weapons following my decision to expel Soviet advisors in 1972. The Russians began to spoil Syria... History repeats itself. The Soviet Union has had the habit of hitting one Arab regime with another. They began to hit Egypt with Syria when Nasser was alive, and they used to tease him that it would be Syria that would liberate Arab land. They are doing this again now. They want to hit Egypt with Syria again. Salah Jadid with Nasser and now Hafez Assad with Sadat... 14 months after the war ended the Soviet Union has not sent

me a single straw. As for Syria, which lost all of its tanks and most of its airplanes in the war, the Soviet Union replaced them before the ceasefire took effect."

President Sadat leveled an even more scathing indictment at the Soviet Union in an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper Al Siyassa on September 9, 1975.

"I think I will have to make a review of a few things here. In 1972 I was the only ally to the Soviet Union here in Egypt, and I said that at a meeting of the Central Committee. I also went to the People's Council and talked to all the Egyptian officials, and they were present at the People's Council meeting. I told them he who is ready to cooperate with me in cooperating with the Soviets is welcome to do so. He who is not should quit. This is despite the fact that the Soviets had let me down in the decisive year of 1971 when they refused to provide me with weapons.

"I took this stand because I wanted to reach a solution with the Soviets. Before Nasser's death and after I took over, I have spent 10 years dealing with the Russians. The decision to withdraw (expel) the Soviet advisors has a long story which I will write some day in my memoirs, and the people of the Arab homeland will know then why I asked for their withdrawal.

"We fought with Soviet weapons but, in my view, it is those who used the weapons, and not the weapons themselves that won the war. For I was ten steps behind Israel and three steps behind Syria. After the withdrawal of the Soviet advisors from Egypt, large quantities of technologically advanced weapons arrived in Syria. But I did not get any weapons except in the summer of 1973 and that is a whole year after Syria got them.

"One day I will explain how the Israelis were 10 steps ahead of me in the technology of weapons and the Syrians were three steps ahead of me. I visited Russia four times. They let us down in the year of decision. And yet I continued to defend them inside Egypt. If they want Egypt to be ruled by the centers of power, this is rejected, because in my domestic affairs I am not prepared to accept the guardianship of anybody.

"There is a secret which I want to disclose here. Ever since I became President, the Russians



have not been satisfied. They wanted somebody else to be President...

"I am not angry because the Soviets delay in providing us with new weapons or delay rescheduling our debts. They refuse to provide us with new weapons. They refuse to replace our losses (in the 1973 war). They refuse to implement old contracts which had been concluded between us and them. It was only 14 months after the ceasefire - it was January and Brezhnev's visit was being cancelled - that they notified us that they will send some of the weapons covered by old contracts and which should have been delivered in 1973 and 1974. They sent some weapons and then withheld the rest. In other words, they implemented only parts of the contracts and not all of them.

"When will Brezhnev visit Egypt? We don't know and they won't say. What is the state of our relations? They don't reply. The rescheduling of our debts? They don't reply. The Soviets were told that Sadat would cancel the treaty on July 23 and so, on July 20, they invited the Finance Minister (Egyptian) for negotiations. But I sent the Finance Minister after I had delivered my speech on July 23, and naturally I did not cancel the agreement, because the matter was out of the question.

"The result was that the Finance Minister went to Moscow and came back empty handed. They promised us they would send a committee to negotiate and until now the committee had not arrived. And until now we don't know when Brezhnev will visit Egypt or the nature of our military and economic relations...

"When the day comes for revealing the documents exchanged between us and the Soviets, you will know that no man's pride would tolerate the Soviet way of dealing... Even Nasser himself had declared that he was fed up with this method of dealing with the Russians... You send them an urgent request, perhaps a request related to your very destiny. But they don't answer. They would tell you that the Soviet leaders are in the Crimea where they usually spend four months from May to October. Naturally you will have to wait until the leaders return to Moscow, and then they will need a month and a half for rest in Moscow and then they may answer you. As to Americans, until now not a single request have I made but I got a reply, either positive or negative in 48 hours. They make life easier for me when they reply, regardless of whether the reply is negative or positive. But the Russians would sometimes allow six months to pass without replying, and this is in spite of the fact



that there are certain things which they had pledged. This is the difference between the Russians and the Americans.

"But what I want every Arab to know is that we should keep out of the game of the major powers, detente or its opposite. We have our own cause and we should keep away from the major powers and their political game. What we should do is to keep balanced relations with both and maintain the freedom and independence of our decision. My battle with the Soviets is that I am trying hard to be independent and free in making my decisions..."

The Russians did not succeed in Egypt because their goals and objectives were not the same as those of Egypt. The Soviets moved too quickly and did not realize that they appeared to be "colonialists" to the Egyptians. The Soviets became too involved in Egyptian internal affairs and began to make decisions for the Egyptians instead of simply rendering advice when asked for it. Basically the Soviets underestimated Sadat and failed to understand the Arabs' obsession for total independence and equality.

#### The Lessons:

Virtually all nations and students of international relations can learn valuable lessons from the Russian-Egyptian relationship. The United States, Russia, Egypt, and the Arab nations all stand to learn the most from Russia's experience in Egypt.

The United States has seen that foreign policy decisions should not be made by a single individual. There is an entire

bureaucracy established (actually more than one) to study, evaluate, and analyze foreign policy issues and then formulate policies or recommendations. In the case of the decisions made by President Eisenhower - and even Dulles - there were a number of options proposed by career, knowledgeable diplomats that were not implemented. Instead the personal preferences of Dulles and Eisenhower, influenced by European heads of state, were manifested in the Middle East.

Additionally, United States domestic politics caused the Congress to act in a negative manner towards Egypt at a most critical time. Had President Eisenhower granted just a few of the weapons requested by Egypt, had Dulles been more sympathetic with Egypt's national objectives - divorced from US vs. USSR considerations - or had the US Congress voted the funds for the Aswan Dam, the United States would have had an influential position in Egypt, and consequently the Middle East, and would have been a factor in the now strategic and critical Mideast. US diplomats and politicians, and even Presidents, were too short sighted to see the possible long range, beneficial consequences of a more positive attitude toward Nasser, Egypt, and the Middle East.

The Soviet Union was ready and willing to respond to Nasser and Egypt, but for the wrong reasons. Had Soviet analysts looked more closely, they would have realized that Egypt, indeed most of the Middle East, did not wish to be part of the East-West confrontation game. Nasser wanted to be his own man. Egypt would never have joined the Baghdad

Pact, or NATO, or any other Western alliance. Nor was she willing to join an Eastern alliance. The Soviets were still laboring under the delusion that Moscow directed Communism was the panacea for all peoples. They did not stop to consider that the basis for the Arab Middle East government systems - Islam - was directly opposed to Communist philosophy and ideology.

The Soviets should have moved much more slowly and cautiously in Egypt, lest they be branded as exporters of Communist doctrine or colonialists from another part of the world. The Soviets should also have been less of a "big brother" to Egypt and more of an uninvolved supplier if they wanted to maintain their presence in Egypt. In other words, once they assumed the role of wholesaler of weapons and technology to Egypt they should have continued and filled all of Egypt's orders with no questions asked. If they felt that at some point that this would be too costly for them in light of the international situation (detente, etc.) then a summit level meeting was called for to inform the Egyptians that the arms supplies would be cut off. Their manner of dealing with the Egyptians, that is passive refusal of requests and icy silence, was unacceptable to the Egyptians. Surely this method of dealing would garner the same results if tried on any country in the future.

Egypt should have realized early on in her relationship with the Soviet Union that she was going to import philosophy and doctrine and even tactics along with the weapons and



technical assistance. Even if she had dealt with the West the same would hold true. Weapons are all designed for a specific use within a specific context. Industrial technology and scientific achievement grow out of a specific national philosophy or ideology. When Egypt imported weapons and technology and advice from the Soviet Union, there necessarily, de facto, followed a certain philosophy on how to use the weapons, technology, and advice. This detrimental - from the Egyptian point of view - aspect was magnified because the Soviet Union was the sole supplier for Egypt for so many years. When there is more than one supplier involved the accompanying philosophy and advice is tempered. The receiver nation is able to see the two or more philosophies or systems side by side and either accept one, assimilate all, or reject all with more objectivity.

Egypt, as many advisors to Nasser and Sadat urged, should have made more of an effort to become independent of foreign sources of weapons. Even today Sadat admits that he and Egypt must rely on foreign sources of weapons and technology. The decision to industrialize fully and appropriate the necessary funds for building, developing resources, and raising the educational level is a difficult decision to make in light of the easier, faster solution of simply buying what you need from a foreign power.

Egypt expected to achieve full independence because of her alliance with the Soviet Union and instead grew more and more dependent. The same phenomenon will occur if she now



chooses to follow the same path and purchase all of her military and industrial supplies from another "sole supplier".

The same lessons that Egypt learned from her experience with Russia applies to the other Middle East countries. The Soviet Union is in the Middle East for selfish reasons; it cannot be any other way. No country can afford to expend the amount of time and money that the Soviet Union has in the Middle East without expecting to realize a tremendous return on the investment. If the other Middle East countries who are currently clients of the Soviet Union (Syria, Iraq, Libya) continue a sole supplier relationship with Russia, then they can expect much the same results that Egypt experienced. The Middle East Countries - in fact, all developing nations - must make the hard decision to place domestic industrial, economic, and educational goals first if they wish to achieve real freedom and independence. Since this process of industrialization and emergence into the "first world" - economically - is a slow one, these nations must have benefactors or suppliers. However they must diversify their sources of aid and resources or face the possibility of rejection or complete cutoff by the supplier just as Egypt did.

Perhaps the real problem between Egypt and Russia was that each perceived different objectives for the relationship and yet both perceived the relationship as an alliance. Their relationship was, in fact, not an alliance. The relationship

was one of patron and client, not ally and ally. The classic factors or functions of alliances were not present in the Egyptian-Soviet relationship. There was no augmentation of power by both parties; there was no clear delineation of, or movement toward, common vital interests or objectives; there was no provision for collective or unilateral intervention on behalf of either partner if the security of the other was threatened.

Had Egypt realized that the relationship was not an alliance, but a rational, commercial agreement, then she could have better predicted Russian response to her requests and problems. The vital interests of Egypt in the Middle East are certainly not vital to the Soviet Union. Conversely, the vital interests of Russia in the Middle East and in the world are certainly not vital to Egypt. If both parties had realized that the partnership - in spite of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation - was that of a patron and client, then the objectives and goals of each party would have been more clear and made a great deal more sense in that context.

The most important lesson that can be learned from the Egyptian-Russian experience is that nations must analyze and then understand exactly what constitutes the basis of their relationships with other countries. They must assess whether that relationship is an alliance, a commercial agreement, a diplomatic agreement, or a patron-client relationship. Only then can negotiation and interaction between countries be put into proper perspective and analyzed correctly and objectively.

Conversely, one of the lessons that should have been learned by now by the United States is that the US has the opportunity to move back into the Middle East. United States policy makers must first decide what kind of relationship the United States wants with Mideast countries and then act accordingly. There is definitely room for both superpowers in the Middle East without turning the area into a confrontation arena. The United States must decide on a long range course of action and then take positive steps to move in a direction that will achieve her goals. The United States must abandon incrementalism and moralizing and adopt a far sighted, pragmatic approach to the Middle East if she wants to be a forceful influence in this critical area of the world.

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