



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of International Relations

**A CONSTRUCTIVIST ANALYSIS OF EGYPT-ISRAEL  
RELATIONS DURING NASSER AND SADAT PERIODS**

Sevim BÖRKLÜCE

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2022



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NASSER AND SADAT PERIODS

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## ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

The jury finds that Sevim BÖRKLÜCE has on the date of May 16, 2022 successfully passed the defense examination and approves her MA Thesis titled “A Constructivist Analysis of Egypt-Israel Relations during Nasser and Sadat Periods”.

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I agree that the signatures above belong to the faculty members listed.

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## ETİK BEYAN

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**Sevim BÖRKLÜCE**

To my babies, Furkan and Neva

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## ABSTRACT

BÖRKLÜCE, Sevim. *A Constructivist Analysis of Egypt-Israel Relations during Nasser and Sadat Periods*, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2022.

One of the important results of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 is the emergence of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question. The Arab soil which was already populated by an Arab community, namely Palestinians, became a destination for the Israeli settlements which triggered hatred and anger of the Arab states in general. Conception of Israel as the main enemy of the Arab states reached the highest level following the Suez Crisis of 1956 that made Gamal Abdel Nasser the charismatic leader of the suppressed Arab world, and thus born and shone pan-Arabic ideology of the late 1950s and 1960s. Nasser became the epitome of the struggle against the imperialist West and its extension Israel in the Middle East. Then came Anwar Sadat and put the Egyptian interests in front of the Arab concerns, making Egypt the first Arab state having officially recognized Israel. Foreign policy of Egypt towards Israel took a steep turn from pan-Arab nationalism to Egyptian nationalism. Egypt and Israel signed a peace treaty that ended military confrontations on the battlefields which continues even today. How and why that policy shift took place is the main research item of this study, and it is researched based on the tenets of social constructivism focusing on the concept of identity. After examining historical flow of the events and analyzing foreign policy behaviors and discourse of the leaders, this thesis argues that the Egyptian state identity changed from Nasser to Sadat, and that change was rooted in the inherent domestic and international factors. This study concludes that state identity of Egypt is relevant in its relations with Israel during Nasser's and Sadat's tenure.

**Keywords:** Egypt, Israel, state identity, foreign policy, constructivism

## ÖZET

BÖRKLÜCE, Sevim. *Nasır ve Sedat dönemi Mısır-İsrail İlişkilerinin Sosyal İnşacılık Açısından Analizi*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2022.

1948 yılında İsrail Devleti'nin kurulmasının en önemli sonuçlarından biri, Arap-İsrail çatışması ve Filistin sorununun ortaya çıkmasıdır. Halihazırda üzerinde bir Arap topluluğun, yani Filistinlilerin yaşadığı Arap toprağı üzerinde İsrail yerleşimleri kurulmuş, bu da genel olarak Arap devletlerin nefretini ve öfkelerini tetiklemiştir. İsrail'in Arap devletlerinin en büyük düşmanı olarak algılanması durumu, 1956 Süveyş Krizi'ni takiben en yüksek seviyeye ulaşmış ve bu olay sonrası Cemal Abdülnasır ezilmiş Arap dünyasının karizmatik lideri haline gelmiştir. 1950 sonları ve 1960'lı yılların Pan-Arap ideolojisi bu şekilde doğarak gelişmiştir. Nasır, emperyalist Batı ve onun Orta Doğu'daki uzantısı İsrail'e karşı verilen mücadelenin sembolü haline gelmiştir. Sonrasında ise Enver Sedat, Mısır'ın yeni lideri olarak ülkesinin ulusal çıkarlarını Arap kaygılarının önüne koymuş ve Mısır, Sedat liderliğinde, İsrail'i resmi olarak tanıyan ilk Arap devleti olmuştur. Mısır'ın İsrail politikası pan-Arap milliyetçiliğinden Mısır milliyetçiliğine doğru keskin bir dönüş yapmıştır. Mısır ve İsrail, geçerliliğı halen devam eden bir barış anlaşması imzalamış ve savaş meydanlarındaki askeri karşılaşmalara bir son vermiştir. Bu çalışmanın ana konusu, söz konusu politika değişikliğinin nasıl ve neden gerçekleştiğinin incelenmesidir; bahse konu inceleme, sosyal inşacılık kuramının temel ilkelerine dayanarak özellikle kimlik kavramı üzerinden gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu kapsamda, olayların tarihi akışı araştırılmış, ayrıca liderlerin dış politika davranışları ve söylemleri analiz edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak bu tez, Mısır devlet kimliğinin Nasır'dan Sedat'a değişiklik gösterdiğini ve bu değişikliğin çeşitli iç ve dış faktörlerden kaynaklandığını öne sürmektedir. Yine, bu çalışma Mısır'ın devlet kimliğinin Nasır ve Sedat dönemlerindeki İsrail ilişkilerini etkilediğini ifade etmektedir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Mısır, İsrail, devlet kimliği, dış politika, inşacılık

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>YAYIMLAMA VE FİKRİ MÜLKİYET HAKLARI BEYANI.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ETİK BEYAN.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>DEDICATION .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>ÖZET.....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.1 MAIN ARGUMENTS OF CONSTRUCTIVISM .....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1.1 The Concept of Identity and State Identity .....	14
1.1.2 Role of Identity in Foreign Policy Making .....	21
1.1.3 Identity and Continuity/Change in Foreign Policy .....	25
<b>1.2 CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2 EGYPT DURING NASSER PERIOD.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.1 DOMESTIC FACTORS .....</b>	<b>33</b>
2.1.1 Pre-revolution Period in Egypt .....	33
2.1.2 Egypt under the Rule of Nasser .....	36
2.1.3 Suez Crisis .....	38
2.1.4 Arab Nationalism or Pan-Arabism .....	43
<b>2.2 INTERNATIONAL FACTORS.....</b>	<b>46</b>
2.2.1 Relations with the US .....	46
2.2.2 Relations with the SU .....	49
2.2.3 Relations with Israel .....	51
<b>2.3 CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>59</b>

<b>CHAPTER 3 EGYPT DURING SADAT PERIOD .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>3.1 DOMESTIC FACTORS .....</b>	<b>61</b>
3.1.1 Egypt under Sadat .....	61
<b>3.2 INTERNATIONAL FACTORS.....</b>	<b>64</b>
3.2.1 Relations with the US .....	64
3.2.2 Relation with the SU .....	67
3.2.3 Relations with Israel .....	70
<b>3.3 CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4 COMPARISON OF THE TWO PERIODS IN TERMS OF STATE IDENTITY .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>4.1 EGYPTIAN STATE IDENTITY DURING NASSER AND SADAT PERIODS .....</b>	<b>85</b>
4.1.1 Individual Level Analysis .....	85
4.1.2 Domestic Level Analysis .....	100
4.1.3 International Level Analysis .....	105
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1. ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORM .....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2. ORIGINALITY REPORT.....</b>	<b>129</b>

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

IR	International Relations
OPEC	Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
SU	Soviet Union
UAR	United Arab Republic of Egypt
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States

## INTRODUCTION

The Middle East has always been a hot spot where interests of actors both in and outside the region have collided and led to different forms of confrontations, on battlefields and beyond. Apart from many reasons inherent to this area, establishment of the State of Israel on the Arab soil in 1948 lit the touch paper to escalate the conflictual situation therein. The Israeli settlements and subsequent establishment of the Israeli State started the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian issue which continue to the present day.

Establishment of the Israeli State on the Arab soil already owned and populated by the Palestinians triggered intense hatred and hostility to Israel by the Arab states, Egypt being the locomotive. Enmity to Israel further increased as the Arab military forces were smashed in each confrontation by the clearly superior enemy supported and equipped by the Western powers, particularly the United States (the US). Thus, Israel became a constant foreign policy item in the Arab world where it served to different political purposes.

Egypt is a very important country located in the Middle East. It stands out with its ancient civilization, culture, population, geography and other riches as well as its claim to regional leadership. Therefore, it is only natural that Egypt became the driving force behind the Arab-Israeli conflict from the very beginning. In this regard, establishment of the Israeli State next door had widespread repercussions in all segments of the country, across the military and civilian life. The 1948 confrontation with Israel scattered the Arab forces, followed by deep unrest in the army and demonstrations on the streets, which ultimately brought the end of the regime in Egypt in 1952.

The Egyptian monarchy was brought down with the promises to avenge the humiliating defeat of the war and to obliterate the imperialist existence in the region. This is how new and charismatic leader of Egypt Gamal Abdel Nasser embarked on a highly influential wave of pan-Arabism. After the 1956 Suez Crisis, Nasser was reborn as the national hero of Egypt and popular leader of the Arab world, restoring the Arab pride

and dignity. His tenure was characterized with Arab nationalism sweeping the Arab world, and Arab nationalism meant more profound Arab hatred towards Israel. Nasser's rhetoric was embellished with his vigorous statements about wiping out the traces of imperialism in the region.

At a period in the middle of the Cold War and at the age of competing ideologies, Nasser chose to remain neutral and even led establishment of such a platform with the Non-Alignment Movement. On the other hand, Nasser established close relations and collaboration with Moscow and his time in office turned into pro-Soviet as Egypt's dependency on the Soviet Union (the SU) increased with the ever-increasing military budgets and poor economic conditions. As to relations with Israel, the most striking event of the Nasser period was 1967 War which maximized the hatred and enmity towards Israel following the humiliating defeat of the Arab forces.

For years throughout Nasser's tenure, Egypt defined itself with regards to its enmity towards Israel: It was number one enemy of Israel and defender of the Palestinian rights. However, winds of change began to blow with his successor Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat. Israel was still the top foreign policy item of Egypt, but Sadat had his own ways of dealing with it, which put the country in a different direction and ended on a negotiation table with Israel to sign a peace treaty.

The 1973 War was the last confrontation with Israel and it was "a war to make peace"<sup>1</sup>. It was a radical move by Sadat to free the Egyptian territory under the Israeli occupation by attracting attention of the US and forcing Israel to sit down at the negotiation table. This astounding maneuver of Sadat was followed by even more astounding moves: his statement about his readiness to go to Israel for peaceful settlement of the conflict and his historic speech at the Israeli Parliament. He put national interests of Egypt in front of everything including the concerted Arab dignity. To make this happen, Sadat had to revise relations of Egypt with the two superpowers and decided to change sides, as he was convinced that the US was the one who could bring peace and the SU was the one growing upon the status quo.

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<sup>1</sup>Patrick Seale, "The Egypt-Israel Treaty and Its Implications," *The World Today* 35, no. 5 (May 1979): 191.

How Egyptian nationalism of Sadat replaced pan-Arabism of Nasser and how it affected the foreign policy behaviors of Egypt is worthy of examination, but, by no means, could be explained with the mainstream theories of International Relations (IR) which attribute a static identity to actors arising from the archaic international structure. In this vein, social constructivism provides an alternative look into the changing behaviors of Egypt towards Israel by chalking such a change up to the state identity which can be defined and redefined through interstate interactions.

Scholars of constructivism disagree with proponents of the mainstream theories on the “meaning of anarchy and balance of power, the relationship between state identity and interest, an elaboration of power, and the prospects for change in world politics.”<sup>2</sup> Instead of recognizing the international structure as a pre-given fact, constructivists focus on the interactions among states, arguing that the main structures in the system are not material, on the contrary they are intersubjective, and that identities of states and their interests are actually a product of social construction.<sup>3</sup> In the attempt to explain and make sense of a state’s behavior in the global affairs, the concept of identity comes to the fore as an important element. Identity is the way states define self and the others as a friend or enemy. Thus, they ascribe a certain identity to one another through social relations.<sup>4</sup>

Identity is a very important instrument for foreign policy making, and since it is not a material fact, it can be redefined by different leaders, institutions or generations depending on the changing circumstances in politics. As identity is a product of social interactions among states, it is open to change, which makes it a good instrument to explain the Egyptian-Israeli relations during the Nasser and Sadat periods. It is acknowledged that state identity is affected from both domestic factors – leaders, institutions etc. and also from the international system, and according to constructivists,

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<sup>2</sup> Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” *International Security* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1998): 172.

<sup>3</sup>Alexander Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation and the International State,” *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 2 (June 1994): 385.

<sup>4</sup>Vendulka Kubalkova, “Foreign Policy, International Politics, and Constructivism,” in *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, ed. Vendulka Kubalkova (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 34.



it is important to understand the concept of state identity since identity impacts a state's interests and its actions.<sup>5</sup>

Within this framework, this thesis aims to explain how relevant state identity of Egypt in its relations with Israel, and to examine the probable continuity or change in the Egyptian state identity throughout the terms of Nasser (1956-1970) and Sadat (1970-1981), two very important leaders of Egypt. In this regard, state identity concept of constructivism will be used as the theoretical instrument to understand the Egyptian foreign policy towards Israel during the specified periods.

Main research question of the study will be as follows: How relevant is the state identity of Egypt in its relations with Israel during the terms of Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat? Further to this main question of research, this thesis will try to answer two sub-questions to present a thorough analysis: Is there a continuity or change in the Egyptian state identity during the Nasser and Sadat periods, and what are the domestic factors and international reasons that affect the probable identity change?

On that account, this study will use a qualitative and interpretative method to examine Egypt-Israel relations from Egyptian standpoint. Principally, this study will make use of the constitution texts of Egypt, relevant legal texts, political discourses of the leaders towards the West and Israel, and academic contributions. The research will also benefit from books, e-books, periodicals, relevant master theses and PhD dissertations focusing on constructivist theory, Egyptian foreign policy, and the Egyptian-Israeli relations.

This thesis is built on four main chapters as well as the introduction and conclusion parts. In the first chapter, theoretical framework of social constructivism is presented in detail. To this end, the chapter starts with the information on emergence and development of constructivism. After giving general information, it continues with more specific topic of identity and state identity. Since identity is at the center of this research, the chapter has many subtitles going around that issue including the concept of identity and state identity, role of identity in foreign policy making, and identity and

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<sup>5</sup> Masahiro Matsumura, "The Japanese State Identity as a Grand Strategic Imperative," The Brookings Institution Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, Working Paper (2008), 3.

continuity/change in foreign policy. Since this thesis argues redefinition of state identity in the specified period, the first chapter tries to provide a large content and sufficient literature about identity change and reasons thereof.

The second chapter starts with brief historical background prior to office of Nasser. Instead of going too back in the history, the chapter gives a rough picture of the pre-revolution period. Then, it continues with leading developments of the Nasser era and provides historical flow of the events. The chapter particularly focuses on Egypt-Israel relations and important dynamics that affect their relations including, among others, relations with the US and the SU, the Suez Crisis and the 1967 War as well as the conception of Egypt and Israel by Nasser. Pan-Arab nationalism, the dominant ideology of the period, will be studied in detail as it is the main determinant of the Egyptian-Israeli relations.

The third chapter explains the significant events of the Sadat period with a particular focus on Egypt-Israel relations. Within this framework, Egyptian nationalism, the prevailing ideology of the period, will be traced; and domestic and international developments which may be associated with definition or redefinition of the Egyptian state identity will be mentioned. To this end, relations with the two superpowers will also be explained briefly since relations with the US and the SU are important international components that may trigger adoption of a particular identity. In the amid of the Cold War, both the US and the SU wanted to increase their influence in the Middle Eastern region which became a venue for competition between them. Therefore, their policies towards Egypt will be examined to see their impact on the Egyptian foreign policy making. The chapter will attach utmost attention to the Egyptian-Israeli relations as it is the main focus of the study, and particularly explain the 1973 War and its repercussions leading to signature of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, touching on conception of Egypt and Israel by Sadat.

The fourth chapter will provide a comparison of the two periods and examine Egypt-Israel relations from Egypt's standpoint focusing on concept of state identity. From Nasser to Sadat, Egypt's foreign policy changed from pan-Arab nationalism to Egyptian nationalism, culminating in the Egypt-Israel peace process. In this vein, this

chapter will try to explain whether this change in the Egyptian foreign policy towards Israel is relevant to a change in the state identity of Egypt throughout the specified periods, which will include comparison of the two terms in terms of political leaders, institutions, foreign policy behaviors and political discourses to reach a conclusion, and to interpret the obtained data from theoretical framework of constructivism. To this end, the analysis in chapter 4 will be structured on three levels as (i) individual level analysis, focusing on the leaders' personality and their role in definition of the Egyptian identity towards Israel, (ii) domestic level analysis to reveal the internal situation that may have conditioned adoption of a particular identity, and (iii) international level analysis to explain the external factors that may have been effective in this process.

## CHAPTER 1

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Constructivism is a social theory and an approach that attempts to make sense of the interstate relations and global affairs with a new perspective. It focuses on such concepts as idea, identity, meaning, norm, socialization etc. to explain what the mainstream theories fail to interpret, and thus provides a different path to analyze international relations. Therefore, this study will use main tenets of constructivism by taking identity at the center, and it will particularly describe function of identity in foreign policy actions, and how and why a particular identity changes in the course of time.

#### 1.1 MAIN ARGUMENTS OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

The arena of the IR discipline had long been dominated by two main theories; namely neorealism and neoliberalism, and by the debate between these two mainstream theories when constructivism could come out as an alternative analytical framework. The end of the Cold War was the main ground-breaking moment for the sprout and development of constructivism as an interpretative tool of global affairs since the existent theories failed to explain the demise of the SU, and predict nature of the world order in the aftermath of the Cold War. At a time when the world was looking for a new perspective to make sense of the unexpected developments, constructivism took to the stage by giving insights about abrupt end of the Cold War and the new global order.<sup>6</sup>

To begin with, it is important to underline that constructivism is a social theory which does not provide specific hypothesis about global affairs, but instead, draws a framework to understand and explain the relations between states and structure.<sup>7</sup> For

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<sup>6</sup>Michael Barnett, "Social Constructivism," in *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, eds. John Baylis, Steve Smith, Patricia Owens (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 157.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 157.

constructivists, there is no objectivity, as invariant and timeless natural laws cannot apply to political and social world, which requires adoption of an interpretative approach to explain international relations.<sup>8</sup> In this vein, constructivism brings a new viewpoint to fundamental questions of world politics particularly by delving into “taken-for-granted” concepts and “making strange” what is considered ordinary.<sup>9</sup>

Constructivism – as a term – was first put into words by Nicholas Onuf in his book of *World of Our Making* (1989). In this milestone book of constructivism, Onuf argues that people can only make sense of the world by taking into account norms and ideas, since in their absence, the world would lack of meaning and it would also be impossible to interpret actions of states and other actors, and why they position themselves as they do.<sup>10</sup> This perspective of Onuf is highly contradictory with the basic assumptions of realism and liberalism considering that the former rejects capability of agents to draw away from the fixed patterns of behaviors, and the latter believes in pursuit of a specific path to progress.<sup>11</sup>

Even though Onuf is considered as the coiner of the term “constructivism,” it is actually to Alexander Wendt and his works that this social theory owes a lot. Wendt describes main components of the theory as follows: states are main units of analysis as in the positivist theories; international structure is determined by intersubjective agreements instead of material forces, which means prioritization of social factors over material reality, and lastly, identities and in turn interests of actors are socially constructed rather than being pre-given or exogenous.<sup>12</sup> In this sense, constructivism, which is called as social constructivism for a reason, sees the world “as coming into being rather than existing as a pre-given entity.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 209.

<sup>9</sup> Vincent Pouliot, “The Essence of Constructivism,” *Journal of International Relations and Development* 7 (2004): 323.

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Barnett, “Social Constructivism,” in *The Globalization of World Politics*, 157.

<sup>11</sup> Trine Flockhart, “Constructivism and Foreign Policy,” in *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, eds. Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, Tim Dunne (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 80.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation and the International State,” *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 2 (June 1994): 385.

<sup>13</sup> Flockhart, “Constructivism and Foreign Policy,” 84.

Wendt puts idealism in the center of constructivism, arguing that ideas, which are social indeed, profoundly matter in interpretation of global affairs. There are two kinds of forces, which are material and ideational. Therefore, constructivism does not mean total rejection or ignorance of material forces, but argues that through ideas, we give meaning to those material forces. People have collective memory of ideas which is fed with specific knowledge, norms and symbols. Holism is another important approach that Wendt focuses on, allowing certain autonomy for agents and observing that through interactions, agency can construct, redefine and redesign the structures. An example of this can be seen in the transformation of the Cold War structure when the American and Soviet leaders entered into a different kind of interaction.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, material facts should be interpreted with a particular reference to its context to see a more complete picture.

International relations are no exception, and they are a product of social construction as well, which means they are not independent from meanings attributed to them. However, it is important to underline that these social products are “reified” following interactions and daily practices making them seem like an “objective reality” outside their constructors. Within this framework, constructivism particularly asks “how are social facts socially constructed and how do they affect global politics.”<sup>15</sup>

Social construction repeatedly underlined by constructivism becomes possible through the role of “language,” “speech” and “argument,” which also implies “linguistic construction of reality.” In this regard, Onuf argues that “talking is undoubtedly the most important way that we go about making the world what it is.”<sup>16</sup> In other words, language is a key instrument of the process of social construction.

Constructivism prioritizes the role of human awareness in global politics, arguing that interstate relations are mainly characterized by social facts rather than material reality. In other words, anarchy, balance of power, power etc. are not a reality “out there”

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<sup>14</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 24-26.

<sup>15</sup> Flockhart, “Constructivism and Foreign Policy,” 85.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Hoyoon Jung, “The Evolution of Social Constructivism in Political Science: Past to Present,” *SAGE Open* (January-March 2019): 7.

independent from human awareness and waiting to be discovered, but instead intersubjectivity or shared understanding among states give them a meaning.<sup>17</sup> This ephemeral structure of the international system is put into words by Wendt's dictum as follows: "Anarchy is what states make of it."<sup>18</sup> In this framework, Wendt explains the anarchy with ideational terms open to change. He describes three anarchy cultures of "enemy, rival and friend" which represent "Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian" approaches. The Hobbesian approach is characterized with "the war of all against all" and emphasizes self-help system. The Lockean culture, on the other hand, introduces rivalry, arguing that states respect to each other's sovereignty, and do not interpret every move as a sheer threat or an attempt of domination. Nevertheless, violence is again possible in times of disputes. Lastly, the Kantian approach is built upon friendship. In this categorization, conflicts do not end in a war, and friends take joint action in case of any threat from outside. In other words, "anarchy as such is an empty vessel and has no intrinsic logic; anarchies only acquire logics as a function of the structure of what we put inside them."<sup>19</sup> Therefore, if ideas or common understanding regarding the world politics or international system are redefined or reproduced, then the system itself will follow suit, because it is the ideas which enable that system in the first place.

To reiterate importance of meaning for constructivism, it can be said that people's actions are conditioned by meanings they have for recipients of that action. That is, states' actions towards their adversaries and friends considerably vary since adversaries constitute a threat while friends do not.<sup>20</sup> An example of this can be possession of nuclear munitions by both France and North Korea, and contrasting attitudes towards this even though they hold the same capacity of destruction. This is both relevant to the "culture of anarchy" described above and to differing meanings ascribed to both states, which eventually bring varying actions and differing foreign policy choices as can be seen in the case of the US position towards both states.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Jackson and Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, 209.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 391.

<sup>19</sup>Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 249-299.

<sup>20</sup> Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," 396.

<sup>21</sup> Flockhart, "Constructivism and Foreign Policy," 84.

Concerning the relation between agent and structure, there is a mutual constitution. Gould argues, “agents and structures actively and continuously constitute and change each other.”<sup>22</sup> This is achieved through daily practices, which is very important for constructivism since “actors reproduce daily their own constraints through ordinary practice”<sup>23</sup>. Indeed, practice renders social relations exogenous, giving them an independent dimension outside constructors of that social reality. Thus, such concepts as self-help, balance of power, etc. seem like inherent parts of the structure, and undertake a determining effect on behaviors, which reflects the “enabling and constraining” relation between agent and structure. In this sense, daily practices enable changes, and alternately the embedded practices obstruct and constrain changes.<sup>24</sup>

Constructivism focuses on “how the material, subjective and intersubjective worlds interact in the social construction of reality ... how structures constitute agents’ identities and interests ... [and] how individual agents socially construct these structures in the first place.”<sup>25</sup> To put it differently, interactions of states are the main determinant of the international structure, which is not constant but instead open to constant change through such interactions among actors.

Identity is a highly important focus for constructivism. Identity “tell you and others who you are and they tell you who others are.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, “self” is defined with reference to the “other,” and identity is open to redefinition.<sup>27</sup> Despite its resistant character, it needs to be backed by a narration to reflect the probable changes as normal and organic. In this vein, culture, history and socio-political situations have a role in creation of identity.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Harry D. Gould, “What is at Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate?” in *International Relations in a Constructed World*, eds. Vendulka Kubalkova, Nicholas Onuf, Paul Kowert (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 80.

<sup>23</sup> Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” 180.

<sup>24</sup> Flockhart, “Constructivism and Foreign Policy,” 88-90.

<sup>25</sup> Emanuel Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics,” *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (1997): 330.

<sup>26</sup> Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” 175.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 175.

<sup>28</sup> Flockhart, “Constructivism and Foreign Policy,” 87.



According to constructivism, states do not have predetermined and constant identities, but rather, identities are open to change in the social environment of world politics. In other words, identities of actors can be redefined, reproduced or transformed through interactions among themselves. Furthermore, it is identities that inform interests in the first place, which in turn determines the choice of foreign policy. It is not possible, according to constructivism, to talk about fixed and universal interests, as they are also socially constructed pursuant to identity and culture of the actors.<sup>29</sup>

In this vein, constructivism is in stark contrast with the mainstream understanding of IR in that it is prerequisite to question the origin of such concepts as power or interest, and their transformation across time and place. It is nonsensical to accept that those concepts have the very same meaning for all actors, since agents tend to define them differently depending on their domestic or external conditions.<sup>30</sup>

Norms are highly important for constructivists. To give a definition, “norms are collective understandings that make behavioral claims on those actors who (because of their identity) see the norm as salient.”<sup>31</sup> Hence, norms indicate appropriateness of a behavior for actors in that they provide “cognitive maps” to figure appropriateness or the opposite of a specific action. Besides, norms have a determining effect on identities and preferences of agents, which eventually renders norms both “constraining and constitutive.” Furthermore, significance of norms for regulation of social relations cannot be denied. For example, those who wish to be a part of a given community will have to abide by norms and rules of that community. EU application and accession process can be a concrete example at this point, which suggests that “structural change” is possible through dissemination and adoption of norms by other actors.<sup>32</sup>

Basically, there are two types of constructivism, which are conventional and critical approaches, and they differ on the aspects they mostly focus while explaining the international relations. Both variants of constructivism share a common theoretical

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<sup>29</sup> Birgül Demirtaş, “İnşacılık,” in *Uluslararası İlişkilere Giriş: Tarih, Teori, Kavram ve Konular*, eds. Şaban Kardaş and Ali Balcı (Istanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2014), 113.

<sup>30</sup> Birgül Demirtaş-Coşkun, “Review on Social Theory of International Politics by Alexander Wendt,” *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 2, no. 7 (Fall 2005): 190.

<sup>31</sup> Flockhart, “Constructivism and Foreign Policy,” 86.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 86.

background arguing that the international relations are socially constructed, and put weight on the component of identity as a product of social interactions. They both seek to reach the meaning depending on the context, and believe in intersubjectivity.<sup>33</sup> However, they differ in terms of epistemology in that conventional constructivism, in general, can be regarded as the “middle ground”<sup>34</sup> between mainstream theories and post-structuralist approaches, as it does not completely reject the positivist methodology. To put it more concretely, the conventional approach asks the reason behind a specific behavior, believing a causality between identity and actions as well as norms and interests. Furthermore, in case of an identity change, proponents of conventional constructivism seek to explain the reasons causing redefinition of identity. On the other hand, critical constructivism is closer to the critical theory, trying to explain “how do actors come to believe in a certain identity”<sup>35</sup>. Therefore, instead of consequences brought by adoption of a particular identity, critical constructivism wants to learn the components which create a particular identity in the first place, and completely rests on the post-positivist methodology.

Before concluding, it is important to state that constructivism does not have a specific research design. It is more about using analytical tools that would explain the questions under examination. In this respect, constructivism favors “interviews, participant observation, structured focused comparison, genealogy, discourse and content analysis and many others to capture intersubjective meaning.”<sup>36</sup>

To sum up the analytical framework of constructivism, it shows “how international norms evolve, how ideas and values come to shape political action, how argument and discourse condition outcomes and how identity constitutes agents and agency.”<sup>37</sup> Moreover, key components of constructivism particularly focus on the role of social facts in understanding international relations, significance of ideational factors and

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<sup>33</sup> Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” 182.

<sup>34</sup> Adler, “Seizing the Middle-Ground: Constructivism in World Politics,” 319.

<sup>35</sup> Sarina Theys, “Introducing Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” Last modified Feb 23 2018. Accessed April 5, 2022, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/02/23/introducing-constructivism-in-international-relations-theory/>.

<sup>36</sup> Jung, “The Evolution of Social Constructivism in Political Science: Past to Present,” 7.

<sup>37</sup> Christian Reus-Smit, “Constructivism,” in *Theories of International Relations*, eds. Scott Burchill et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 207.

meanings, determining effect of identity on states' interests and actions, and lastly, mutually constitutive relation between agent and structure.

### 1.1.1 The Concept of Identity and State Identity

Cambridge dictionary defines identity as “who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others” (first definition)<sup>38</sup>. However, more sophisticated definitions that specifically apply to the field of IR are available in the literature. Concerning constructivist approaches to the concept of identity, Nicholas Onuf says that “We are nothing but the difference,” arguing that it is not a constant or permanent quality, but a product of social construction which implies “reciprocal differentiation.”<sup>39</sup> Like Onuf, most constructivists define identity “as a changing set of beliefs, ideas or norms that reflexive selves -mostly states- follow” and consider the concept of identity instrumental to understand change of actions.<sup>40</sup>

According to Peter J. Katzenstein, identity refers “both (a) the nationally varying ideologies of collective distinctiveness and purpose...and (b) country variation in state sovereignty, as it is enacted domestically and projected internationally.” Thus, he describes identity as an important element of both “nationhood” and “statehood.”<sup>41</sup>

As maintained by Vendulka Kubalkova, the axis changed to identity from material capabilities through transition to constructivism from mainstream theories. Thus, “what states can do because of their position in a structure” became outmoded and obsolete while “what states want to do because of how they see themselves in relation to others” came to the fore.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>“Identity,” Cambridge Dictionary, accessed December 5, 2020, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/identity>.

<sup>39</sup> Nicholas Onuf, “Parsing Personal Identity: Self, Other, Agent,” in *Language, Agency, and Politics in a Constructed World*, ed. François Debrix (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 26.

<sup>40</sup> Birgit Locher and Elisabeth Prügl, “Feminism: Constructivism’s Other Pedigree,” in *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation*, eds. Karin M. Fierke and Knud Erik Jorgensen (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 79.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Katzenstein, “Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security,” in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 24.

<sup>42</sup> Vendulka Kubalkova, “Foreign Policy, International Politics and Constructivism,” in *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, ed. Vendulka Kubalkova (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 33.

On the other hand, Daniel M. Green describes the term as follows: “Identity, at any level of collectivity, shapes preferences about most everything, certainly shapes the probability and character of many varieties of conflict, and stimulates group rights claims and assertions of self-determination.” He further argues that identities particularly stand out as a critical component if they undergo a transformation, resulting in unaccustomed alternatives, behaviors and preferences that may change the course of history.<sup>43</sup>

Identity is not an important component – or a component at all - in rationalist theories. As a matter of fact, rationalist theories do not recognize existence of varying identities, since they argue that there is a specific pattern of identity dictated on the actors by the international system. In other words, agents (states) come into contact with each other with predetermined agendas and pre-given interest; social interaction has not any role whatsoever in establishment of identities or interests as they are exogenous to the observer.<sup>44</sup>

These theories are not attentive to the origins of such interests and preferences, but instead focus on the ways used by actors to realize them. Such understanding has no room for change: change of identity or change of interests and preferences. Constructivism, on the contrary, tries to understand the process through which actors’ interests are developed, which is a key component to make sense of international politics. In order to understand and interpret this process, constructivism underlines importance of identity, which informs interests and behaviors.<sup>45</sup>

Wendt particularly criticizes the mainstream theories for ignoring the concept of identity and taking it for granted in interstate relations. On the contrary, constructivism puts the emphasis on how actors define themselves and the others. In this regard, identity comes to the fore as one of the most important components of the IR studies, even before actors’ interests or behaviors. Because, as Wendt argues, actors define their interests and take action accordingly once they adopt a specific identity. For, in the

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<sup>43</sup> Daniel M. Green, “Constructivist Comparative Politics: Foundations and Framework,” in *Constructivism and Comparative Politics*, ed. Daniel T. Green (London and NY: Routledge, 2015), 33.

<sup>44</sup> Reus-Smit, “Constructivism,” 197.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 197.

absence of an established identity, actors may not recognize their interests, and therefore cannot take action in line with their interests. Therefore, identity is the precondition of interest and behavior, or in the very words of Wendt himself “Identities are the basis of interests.”<sup>46</sup>

Agents define their identities, and subsequently their interests within a process, which is named as “socialization.” That is to say, states go through a socialization process by which they both define themselves and other actors, and thus draw up their interests. It was mentioned above that norms are important for analytical perspective of constructivism. Norms “define the meaning and identity of the individual actor and the patterns of appropriate economic, political and cultural activity engaged in by those individuals”<sup>47</sup>, and “through reciprocal interaction that we create and instantiate the relatively enduring social structures in terms of which we define our identities and interests.”<sup>48</sup> In other words, norms of international society are also among determinants of identities.

Constructivism argues that through interactions among themselves, states form their identities and also ascribe an identity to others. Furthermore, in order to understand why states take a specific action, it is essential to understand that state’s identity, which means that identity basically conditions foreign policy making.<sup>49</sup> To provide more concrete definitions of the concept, Lynch defines state identity as “not only the conceptions held by leaders, but set of beliefs about the nature and purpose of the state expressed in public articulations of state actions and ideals.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, state identity is a combination of leaders’ perceptions, ideas, institutions and discourse while

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<sup>46</sup>Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” 398.

<sup>47</sup>J. Boli, J. Meyer and G. Thomas, “Ontology and Rationalization in the Western Cultural Account,” in *Institutional Structure: Constituting State, Society and the Individual*, eds. G. Thomas et al. (London: SAGE Publications, 1989), 12.

<sup>48</sup>Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” 406.

<sup>49</sup> Derviş Fikret Ünal, “Turkey’s Relations with Israel in the 2000s: A Constructivist Perspective” (PhD Dissertation, Middle East Technical University, 2016), 13.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 13.

it is described by Telhami and Barnett as “corporate and officially demarcated identity linked to the state apparatus.”<sup>51</sup>

Identity is a definition of “who we are” which could only be known by revealing differences from others, in other words, by specifying “who we are not.” In this case, group identity can be established by specifying similarities within the same group. Since identity is basically built upon self-definition and difference in relation to the other, this causes actors to define the others as inferior or threatening.<sup>52</sup>

Birgöl Demirtaş-Coşkun associates state identity with the ideas about the other states. She argues that through interstate interactions, states may choose to maintain or change their identities. In this regard, foreign policy is the main tool of political leaders in definition, reproduction or transformation of identities.<sup>53</sup>

Kuniko Ashizawa describes state identity as “referring to the image of individuality and distinctiveness held and projected by the state within particular international contexts.”<sup>54</sup> Therefore, identity is dependent on an “actor’s self-understanding,” which is achieved as a result of social interactions with other actors. While mutual interactions stand out as critical dimensions of identity construction or reconstruction, culture and institutions also influence the process of identity building. Ashizawa further argues that state identity may not have the same connotations for policy makers and other individuals. In other words, state identity does not have to be a concept on which government and people are in complete agreement.<sup>55</sup> However, it is political leaders that make clear a state’s identity, and this can be revealed by examining statements, speeches, memoirs and other sources.<sup>56</sup> In her article in which she traces transformative power of the leading party in changing foreign policy of Turkey towards the West,

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<sup>51</sup> Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett, *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), 8.

<sup>52</sup> Bahar Rumelili and Jennifer Todd, “Paradoxes of Identity Change: Integrating Macro, Meso, and Micro Research on Identity in Conflict Processes,” *Politics* 38 no.1 (2018): 7-8.

<sup>53</sup> Birgöl Demirtaş-Coşkun, “Systemic Changes and State Identity: Turkish and German Responses,” *Insight Turkey* 10 no. 1 (2008): 33.

<sup>54</sup> Kuniko Ashizawa, “When Identity Matters: State Identity, Regional Institution-Building, and Japanese Foreign Policy,” *International Studies Review* 10, no. 3 (September 2008): 575-576.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 575-576.

<sup>56</sup> Jackson and Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, 224.

Aydın-Düzgüt argues that political leaders act like engines of identity changes in society. She supports her argument by revealing impact of the discourses of political elites on the public opinion, which went through parallel change and transformation.<sup>57</sup>

In constructivism, there are three kinds of approach to identity and interest formation of actors, which can be defined as “systemic, unit-level and holistic.”<sup>58</sup> Wendt is the pioneer and one of the rare representatives of the systemic constructivism. Further to his opinions on identity mentioned above, Wendt puts the emphasis on systemic elements; that is to say, he separates “social identity and corporate identity” of states. This distinction refers to external and internal factors; the first one being about the character given to an actor by international society while the second one being about the internal or domestic factors (culture, ideology, etc.).<sup>59</sup> Wendt chose to ignore impact of domestic developments on definition of state identity, arguing that it is the international environment that conditions and shapes a state’s identity. According to this understanding, the international environment and its structures created by certain norms and ideas are the main determiners of state identity, and such structures actually have their sources in practices of actors. This approach is considered to be non-inclusive as domestic factors are not taken into account to explain formation, continuity or change of state identity.<sup>60</sup>

Martha Finnemore, an influential constructivist, also adopts a systemic approach to the formation of states’ identities; however, Finnemore deviates from Wendt’s opinions to a certain extent in that she mostly concentrates on the role of norms of international society in shaping states’ interests. In other words, she prioritizes international norms over interactions among states.<sup>61</sup> “The fact that we live in an international society means that what we want and, in some ways, who we are shaped by the social norms, rules, understandings, and relationships we have with others.” says Finnemore in her book

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<sup>57</sup> Senem Aydın-Düzgüt, “Foreign Policy and Identity Change: Analysing Perceptions of Europe among the Turkish Public,” *Politics* 38 no.1 (2018): 20.

<sup>58</sup> Reus-Smit, “Constructivism,” 199.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 199.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 200.

<sup>61</sup> Jackson and Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, 218.

*National Interests in International Society*.<sup>62</sup> For her, norms are “shared expectations about appropriate behavior held by a community of actors.”<sup>63</sup> Before establishing their foreign policy choices, states must define their identities and accordingly their interests. International norms are very effective in this definition process, and international organizations play a vital role in transmission of these norms. Therefore, international organizations show what a state’s interest should be and thus help organize national policies. In other words, international organizations “construct the social world in which cooperation and choice takes place. They help define the interests that states and other actors come to hold.”<sup>64</sup>

Peter J. Katzenstein, on the other hand, points to the importance of domestic factors in definition or redefinition of a state’s identity. This is what is called unit-level constructivism, providing insights into the absence of uniform identities and interests among states. Nevertheless, this approach may remain insufficient to explain the similar identities and interests across states.<sup>65</sup> In one of his works, Katzenstein compares and contrasts state identity of Germany and Japan which have similar political and economic experiences and defeats, but developed very different state identities.<sup>66</sup> Katzenstein considers it necessary to “broaden our analytical perspective, ... to include culture as well as identity as important causal factors that help define the interests and constitute the actors that shape national security policies and global insecurities.”<sup>67</sup>

In other words, Katzenstein finds the analytical framework of the systemic approach too narrow to explain the differing state identities and interests, and instead chooses to focus on the role of domestic environment. To give an example, even though respect for human rights is an international norm embedded in the international society and encouraged by international organizations, this norm is not adopted in all states to the

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<sup>62</sup> Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 128.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Jackson and Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, 220.

<sup>65</sup> Reus-Smit, “Constructivism,” 200.

<sup>66</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 153-154.

<sup>67</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, “Conclusion: National Security in a Changing World,” in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 537.



same extent depending on internal factors such as existence of authoritarian regime, power of non-governmental organizations, etc.

Ted Hopf, another representative of unit-level approach, seeks to explain the identity formation with a particular emphasis on domestic environment. Hopf aims to give “an account of how a state’s own domestic identities constitute a social cognitive structure that makes threats and opportunities, enemies and allies, intelligible, thinkable, and possible.”<sup>68</sup> He further explains his approach as “... exploring not only how that state’s identities are produced in interactions with other states, but also how its identities are being produced in interaction with its own society and the many identities and discourses that constitute that society.”<sup>69</sup>

The last form of constructivism, which is the holistic approach, seeks to eliminate the dichotomy above between international environment and domestic environment. Rather, it combines the two in those domestic and international factors are equally included in the analytical framework to explain identity formation.<sup>70</sup>

As can be seen in the definitions above, there are different approaches focusing on international or domestic environment to explain formulation of state identities and interests. Rather than using those non-inclusive and reductionist approaches, this study will try to make use of the holistic approach, combining both domestic and international factors. In this vein, key decision makers and their statements, also public institutions will be examined under the scope of domestic factors, while international environment will be analyzed as well since there is a relation of mutual constitution between these two. Within this framework, the Egyptian state identity will be examined with a reference to internal and international factors, and Egypt-Israel relations during the specified periods will be analyzed accordingly.

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<sup>68</sup> Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2002), 16.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 294.

<sup>70</sup> Reus-Smit, “Constructivism,” 201.

### 1.1.2 Role of Identity in Foreign Policy Making

Foreign policy analysis has always been very important for the field of IR. Realism, for example, tries to explain the foreign policy decisions with a strong reference to survival in the anarchic international system focusing on increasing power and capabilities.<sup>71</sup> According to Morgenthau, “State strategies are understood as having been decided rationally, after taking costs and benefits of different possible courses of action into account,”<sup>72</sup> in which environment identities can only be pre-given and static. This approach, according to constructivism, ignores the agent as a “social being.”<sup>73</sup>

However, constructivism brings a new perspective to the process of foreign policy making by refusing determinant impact of anarchy on states’ actions. On the contrary, constructivism chooses to examine foreign policy under the roof of socialization. In other words, states may abide by certain norms in their international relations by considering them to their benefit, or by internalizing them. Scholars of constructivism concentrate on identities and interests to explain foreign policy decisions, which mean they follow ideational forces instead of material elements.<sup>74</sup> This explains why interest can be defined differently across states. Furthermore, emphasis placed on the word “social” by constructivists implies that foreign policy analysis is deeply linked to agents who are in constant interaction in the world which is also inevitably social, suggesting that policies are not static but quite changeable.<sup>75</sup>

Foreign policy is conducted on agent level in internal and external environments, which makes foreign policy susceptible to both structures, and also more complicated to examine. Furthermore, foreign policy behaviors of agents are not “routinized social practices,” but instead, “non-routine actions designed to effect or deal with change.”<sup>76</sup> In order to better understand the perspective of constructivism in foreign policy

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<sup>71</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 26-27.

<sup>72</sup> Hans J Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 3.

<sup>73</sup> Kubalkova, “Foreign Policy, International Politics, and Constructivism,” 22.

<sup>74</sup> Adel Altorai, “Understanding the Role of State Identity in Foreign Policy-Making: The Rise and Demise of Saudi-Iranian Rapprochement (1997-2009)” (PhD Dissertation, The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012), 33.

<sup>75</sup> Kubalkova, “Foreign Policy, International Politics, and Constructivism,” 23.

<sup>76</sup> Flockhart, “Constructivism and Foreign Policy,” 90.

analysis, most scholars prefer to make a distinction between “foreign policy as practice” and “foreign policy as action.” In the first case where it is admitted as a “practice,” foreign policy must be constant. However, in the second case, where it is admitted as an “action,” it allows certain autonomy for agents’ intentions to achieve some goals. In this regard, apart from constant and routine practices, foreign policy also includes deliberate and premeditated actions resting on “conscious decision making designed to achieve a specific goal which may well be a change from the status quo.”<sup>77</sup>

According to Vendulka Kubalkova, it is the states that reflect each other as friends, rivals or enemies. Thus, they ascribe a certain identity to one another through social relations.<sup>78</sup> Mainstream theories argue that states’ interests are decided by the structure; on the other hand, constructivism takes identity as the starting point, which is followed by interest and ends up in structure again, which altogether create culture.<sup>79</sup>

It is one of the main arguments of constructivism that ideas and identities shape international relations, and affect the ways policies are implemented. That is to say, there is a causal connection between states’ identities and actions. Chafetz et al. describe identity “as the state of being similar to some actors and different from others in a particular circumstance,” which also implies drawing some kind of boundaries between “self” and “other.” This course of boundary-construction has important ramifications for the global politics. Apart from being an outcome of social construction, identity not only defines an actor, but also ordains how that actor must “think, feel, evaluate and ultimately behave.”<sup>80</sup> In other words, this self-defining concept has significant consequences for behaviors of a state, and thus its foreign policy making. This should not mean that identity can explain every single thing in the process of foreign policy making; however, it provides a very valuable perspective to interpret the ways states choose to behave.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>78</sup> Kubalkova, “Foreign Policy, International Politics, and Constructivism,” 34.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>80</sup> Glenn Chafetz, Michael Spirtas and Benjamin Frankel, “Introduction: Tracing the Influence of Identity on Foreign Policy in Origins of National Interests,” *Security Studies* 8:2-3 (1998): viii.

<sup>81</sup> Altorai, “Understanding the Role of State Identity in Foreign Policy-Making,” 28.

Actions of actors are basically rooted in their identities, which makes identity a determinant component. As such identity “generates motivational and behavioral dispositions” for agents.<sup>82</sup> Many scholars do not see a direct relation between identity and foreign policy, but instead they place “interest” in-between, creating an “identity-interest nexus” ending in specific foreign policy actions. Because “actors often cannot decide what their interest are until they know what they are representing.”<sup>83</sup>

According to Kuniko Ashizawa, state identity creates a “*pro attitude* toward a certain kind of action” that leads states to follow a certain foreign policy.<sup>84</sup> Ashizawa shows how identity informs values ending in specific actions by examining Japan’s position and role in institution building activities in the region after the Cold War. In her article, Ashizawa draws a general framework where she claims that state identity gives political leaders certain values and these values, in turn, determine the foreign policy options.<sup>85</sup>

In his book which tries to explain probable reasons of why Sweden entered into the Thirty Years War back in 1630, Erik Ringmar argues that sometimes winning is not the only motivation of actions, but sometimes agents take action for the sake of upholding a “certain conception of who they are.” In the case of Sweden, as a very small country, it dared to go to a war with the Holy Roman Empire in order to defend its Protestant church among some other reasons, which is an indication of the role of identity on foreign policy.<sup>86</sup>

Identity also gives certain clues about how those specific actions of actors will influence actions of other actors toward them.<sup>87</sup> The process of distinguishing self from other has important consequences for states’ actions and thus foreign policy. Therefore, it is essential to include identity while interpreting state behaviors in world politics since it is

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<sup>82</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 224.

<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Ashizawa, “When Identity Matters,” 577.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 571.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 581.

<sup>86</sup> Erik Ringmar, *Identity, Interest and Action: A Cultural Explanation of Sweden’s Intervention in the Thirty Years War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.

<sup>87</sup> Chafetz, Spirtas and Frankel, “Introduction: Tracing the Influence of Identity on Foreign Policy in Origins of National Interests,” xi.

not possible to “know what we want if we do not know who we are. This insight holds for foreign policy as much as it does for personal preferences.”<sup>88</sup>

According to Tidy, “identities operate to tell actors about themselves and others and to entail interests and preferences for actions in given situations involving other actors.” Therefore, it offers actors “a method of guiding actor actions.”<sup>89</sup> In this regard, foreign policy decisions are heavily influenced by state identity, and also becomes an instrument, through interstate interactions, in maintaining the existent identity or undertaking a new one. Thus, states seek to be acknowledged as a member of the international society and to gather prestige. Furthermore, political leaders instrumentally resort to state identity with the aim of fulfilling certain foreign policy targets,<sup>90</sup> which equals to argument of David Campbell who defines state identity as a “site in which political struggles are enacted.”<sup>91</sup>

State behaviors are inherently affected by state identity which alternately is affected by the culture and institutional environment of that state. In this vein, Barnett argues that “Identity will shape policy by drawing together and shaping societal interests into a national interest and the formal institutional context represents the political space.”<sup>92</sup> In other words, identity informs state interests, which in turn determines the course of action followed by that state, which all take place in an institutional context.

State identity has its roots in political leaders and certain state institutions, and has a determining role in conditioning foreign policy practices through which it will show friendship, hostility or rivalry to other states. Therefore, re-designation of the state identity will basically mean redefinition of relations with other actors as a friend, enemy or rival.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid, xiv – xvi.

<sup>89</sup> Joanna Tidy, “The Social Construction of Identity: Israeli Foreign Policy and the 2006 War in Lebanon,” *Global Society* 26:4 (2012): 536.

<sup>90</sup> Demirtaş-Coşkun, “Systemic Changes and State Identity,” 33.

<sup>91</sup> Quoted in Altoraiifi, “Understanding the Role of State Identity in Foreign Policy-Making,” 47.

<sup>92</sup> Michael Barnett, “Culture, Strategy and Foreign Policy Change: Israel’s Road to Oslo,” *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no.1 (1999): 16.

<sup>93</sup> Altoraiifi, “Understanding the Role of State Identity in Foreign Policy-Making,” 52.

To sum up, constructivism denies rationalist assumptions that states only take calculated steps in the world politics to satisfy their national interests, and instead claim that actors also pay attention to appropriateness of a specific action for their identity.<sup>94</sup> Even though constructivism is a social theory lacking substantial theory characteristics, it opens an alternative perspective to understand and explain foreign policy behaviors in the international structure, which makes it an important instrument in foreign policy analysis.

### **1.1.3 Identity and Continuity/Change in Foreign Policy**

This study has so far focused on changeable nature of foreign policy behaviors. However, it should be examined which situations trigger such changes, which is a difficult question under the radar of all theories. In this regard, such transformations or changes most probably follow a “disruptive event” that renders the existent structures or collective meanings insufficient for the newly-arisen situation. In other words, in the aftermath of such a “critical juncture,” cognitive surroundings of actors do not seem adequate for them, and existent norms cannot be upheld any more as a “cognitive map” to single out the “appropriate behavior,” which can even cause ambiguity of the sense of “self” and “other.” Under these circumstances, new identities may be taken, and these premeditated and calculated changes can alternately enable pursuit of different policies in the international environment.<sup>95</sup>

Matsumura puts forth that state identity is the way a state thinks of itself and its place in the world politics. He also underlines the changeable nature of state identity, particularly by pointing to both domestic and external factors: “Each state’s political leaders must construct such an identity through practice under inherent domestic constraints, economic growth and development, technological capabilities, military power and public opinion, among others and in the context of the changing power

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<sup>94</sup> Flockhart, “Constructivism and Foreign Policy,” 93.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 90.

structure dynamic international relations”<sup>96</sup> and “through identity change, other patterns of interaction, and thus other realities, can be created.”<sup>97</sup>

Rational theories are inclined to take identity as a static phenomenon, which does not permit, and therefore, fails to explain any changes among states. Like all scholars of constructivism, Campbell disagrees with this approach, arguing that “states are in a process of continual change and transformation.”<sup>98</sup> In other words, state identity is dynamic, and open to change whenever that state is involved in foreign policy practices. Campbell further asserts that external threats particularly affect state identity: “The constant articulation of danger through foreign policy is thus not a threat to a state’s identity or existence: it is its condition of possibility.”<sup>99</sup>

Identities can continue and change, and bear characteristics of both. In order to talk about an identity, there must be a continuity and ongoing specification with a specific category. Contrarily, identities are changeable and in the process of redefinition. Actually, even if identity continues, this takes place through retelling and articulations.<sup>100</sup> Rumelili and Todd argue that change and continuity do not have to be in stark contrast, but instead they are naturally involved in the process, and co-exist all the time even though not to the same extent.<sup>101</sup>

An actor - actor A - in the international structure may be a foe of another actor – actor B. However, identity of the actor A can change and transform into being a “friend of actor B.” This transformation implies that there have occurred social interactions between those actors to reduce “negative identification” and increase “positive identification.” Accordingly, social interactions may result in new values, perceptions

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<sup>96</sup> Matsumura, “The Japanese State Identity as a Grand Strategic Imperative,” 3.

<sup>97</sup> Maja Zehfuss, “Constructivism in International Relations: Wendt, Onuf and Kratochwil,” in *Constructing International Relations*, eds. Karin M. Fierke and Knud Erik Jorgensen (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 58.

<sup>98</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security, United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 11.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 11-12.

<sup>100</sup> Rumelili and Todd, “Paradoxes of identity change,” 9-10.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 10.

and beliefs. These new constructions of the social interaction may be adopted for being profitable and gainful, including “material benefits such as security and welfare.”<sup>102</sup>

Identity changes mostly take time and follow recurring interactions. However, traumatic developments may cause rapid identity changes or reorganization of the existent identity even though this is not very common.<sup>103</sup> Wendt focuses on identity changes by claiming that states do not walk around with a “portfolio of interests” separate from the social environment; “instead, they define their interests in the process of defining situations.”<sup>104</sup> In other words, it is a dynamic process that may bring about changes over time. As state identity incurs a change, foreign policy behaviors, and thus interstate relations will change accordingly.

As described above, state identity can undergo changes particularly pursuant to international and domestic factors. In brief, international environment can cause states to be in cooperation, competition or rivalry in which case foreign policy practices result in identity changes. On the other hand, political leaders can choose to deviate from their then-established state identity, particularly if forced by other states and international organizations, which may subsequently cause revision of internal agendas, and creation of new identities.<sup>105</sup>

Identity is not a permanent value; that is to say, it is not stable, on the contrary, identity is described and reproduced across generations depending on the newly arising conditions. Hudson refers to such changes by observing that identities “are neither carved in stone, nor do they spring from tables of stones; rather ... identities are shaped and reshaped every moment by society. Discourse and interaction within our society are the engines of national identity.”<sup>106</sup> Hudson further argues that identity can only be

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<sup>102</sup> Chafetz, Spirtas and Frankel, “Introduction: Tracing the Influence of Identity on Foreign Policy in Origins of National Interests,” x.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, xiii.

<sup>104</sup> Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” 399.

<sup>105</sup> Altorai, “Understanding the Role of State Identity in Foreign Policy-Making,” 50.

<sup>106</sup> Valerie M. Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013), 119-120.



handled within cultural context, because identity is an essential part of the active process of “social discourse.”<sup>107</sup>

State interests are informed by their identities, and state identities are quite changeable through interactions. In this respect, there is a redefinition of state identity “when a state’s foreign policy and its overall positioning in the system is transformed due to factors operating on both the unit and the systemic levels,”<sup>108</sup> which is distinguishable from national identity. Because transformation of the latter does not necessarily have to require redefinition of foreign policy or that state’s status in the global structure.<sup>109</sup>

Impact of state identity on the conduct of foreign policy can be concretely seen in the book of Ted Hopf who compares and contrasts the Moscow’s state identity with relation to China in two different periods. Firstly, in 1950s, the SU and its allies were considered as “self” while the Western group was “the other.” During that period, Soviet leaders recognized China as a part of the “self” for which reason they were willing to share their military technology with them. However, after demise of the SU, there occurred a change of state identity in Moscow, causing redefinition of “self” and “other,” and bringing about new interests and new foreign policy choices towards China, and other actors.<sup>110</sup>

In spite of many descriptions presented above, the concept of identity change does not have an agreed definition. Some scholars take abrupt changes in self-definition as an indicator of identity change while others focus on “changing role prioritisations.” There are other scholars who consider identity change as “a gradual process of socially negotiating established understandings and discourses.”<sup>111</sup>

Referring to temporal characteristic of identity, Ilya Prizel concentrates on various reasons why state identities change over time, causing redefinition of foreign policy. As the most widespread reason of identity change, Prizel mentions about “metamorphosis

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 119-120.

<sup>108</sup> Toni Alaranta, *The Transformation of the Republic’s Status in the International System: National and State Identity in Turkey* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 32.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>110</sup> Cited in Ünal, “Turkey’s Relations with Israel in the 2000s: A Constructivist Perspective,” 42-43.

<sup>111</sup> Rumelili and Todd, “Paradoxes of Identity Change,” 5.

or the total disappearance of the other.”<sup>112</sup> Demise of the SU or the end of the Habsburg Empire can be examples of such disappearances leading to rise of new definitions. Secondly, conduct of a certain foreign policy can cause change of identity. Prizel gives Austria as an example, arguing that Austria initially targeted to unite with Germany; but after 1955, it began to pursue a policy of neutrality, and this neutrality policy was adopted so profoundly that many Austrians did not want to be a part of the European Union in order not to lose its position. Thirdly, military defeats may cause to redesign identities. France, for example, became a member of European society while it had sought to be an empire following its losses in Indochina and Algeria. Similarly, Great Britain started to act as a “junior partner to the United States” after its withdrawal in Suez Crisis of 1956. As the fourth reason, Prizel refers to the “mere disappointment” in a foreign policy. For example, end of Wilson diplomacy caused frustration to the US, which caused redefinition of its role in the international arena in the form of isolationism.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, it can be said that provided that nature of interactions between actors change or transform, this would ultimately give rise to different social relations.<sup>114</sup>

The concept of identity change is widely used in the IR in order to point out important changes in foreign policy tendencies, and these researches usually start with examination of precursor changes in state identity. Concerning conflict resolutions, scholars are of the opinion that identity changes of the relevant groups would eventually fortify peace processes and become a shortcut for reconciliation.<sup>115</sup>

Change of state identity brings along the redefinition of relations with “significant Others.” In durable conflictual situations, identity issue is deeply linked to security considerations which may facilitate changes. However, once conflictual situation ends, and it becomes possible again to raise disagreements, reconciliation may no longer hold

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<sup>112</sup> Ilya Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 33-34.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 33-34.

<sup>114</sup> Flockhart, “Constructivism and Foreign Policy,” 82.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 4.

together. On the contrary, opposing identity can be created again in reformed institutions, which can be used in political arguments.<sup>116</sup>

Giving example of reconstruction of Russia's image in the eyes of Germany, Siddi argues that "the Other" can be redefined across time following choices of political leaders, internal contestations and external factors.<sup>117</sup> In his article, he focuses on new situations in internal politics, disturbances in international environment and role of policy makers as drivers of the identity change. He particularly takes policy makers as executors and guardians of state identity in which case their interpretation of global affairs and formulation of foreign policies accordingly deeply matter. That is to say, political leaders can choose to embrace a certain identity over the others for reacting some international developments or for realizing their certain agendas.<sup>118</sup> On that note, Flesken argues that political leaders significantly influence formation and redefinition of identity that is subsequently adopted by the society and constitute a shared understanding. They have the ability to shape and reshape the public discourse about frontiers of self and other.<sup>119</sup>

Nevertheless, changes occur slowly. Main domestic characteristics (founding myths, culture, etc.) generally sustain without any major changes. On the other hand, there can be rapid changes in discourses of political leaders about the narration of identity "when historical events force upon the nation a reconsideration of its values and interests."<sup>120</sup>

## 1.2 CONCLUSION

To conclude, it can be said that agents and structure constitute one another. Within this framework, social interactions produce structure, and in turn, the structure affects states'

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>117</sup> Marco Siddi, "An Evolving Other: German National Identity and Constructions of Russia," *Politics* 38 no.1 (2018): 35.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>119</sup> Anaïd Flesken, "Identity Change in a Context of Intergroup Threat: Regional Identity Mobilization in Bolivia," *Politics* 38 no.1 (2018): 52-54.

<sup>120</sup> Siddi, "An Evolving Other: German National Identity and Constructions of Russia," 37.

identities, interests and foreign policy patterns. Eventually, “foreign policy is what states make of it.”<sup>121</sup>

Under the light of the explanations above, this thesis will use theoretical framework of social constructivism in order to examine Egypt-Israel relations during the Nasser and Sadat periods. In doing so, the changing state identity of Egypt will particularly be investigated to understand its relevance to the bilateral relations throughout the said periods. For this purpose, statements, discourse, institutions, speeches etc. will be analyzed to make sense of the Egyptian foreign policy towards Israel, and thus this study will try to understand whether the state identity changed in this 25-year period and try to see how the Egyptian state identity affected its relations with Israel.

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<sup>121</sup> Steve Smith, “Foreign Policy is What States Make of it: Social Construction and International Relations Theory,” in *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, ed. Vendulka Kubáľková (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 38.

## CHAPTER 2

### EGYPT DURING NASSER PERIOD

This chapter will examine the up-front events of the Nasser period with a particular focus on Egypt-Israel relations. Rather than giving the complete picture of the era – that would require another research *per se* with more far-reaching content - this chapter will focus on particular events and developments which may be chalked up to the Egyptian state identity, and consequently try to explain its impact on the Egyptian-Israeli relations. In this vein, pan-Arabism which was the predominant ideology of the Nasser period and its influence on the foreign policy orientations of the then-Egypt will be analyzed. As discussed in the previous chapter, identity preconditions interests and foreign policy of the states, which requires closer examination of the dominant identity to make sense of the foreign policy decisions rooted in the states' interests. Since both domestic and international factors are relevant to definition and redefinition of identity, as argued by many scholars of constructivism, internal conditions of Egypt and international developments during the Nasser era will also be mentioned. Within this framework, relations with the two superpowers - the US and the SU- will be explained briefly as relations with the US and the SU are among the leading international factors that may be effective in adoption of a particular identity and shape foreign policy decisions towards Israel. The chapter will attach utmost attention to the Egyptian-Israeli relations as it is the main focus of the study, and particularly explain the Suez Crisis and the 1967 War as well as the conception of Egypt and Israel by Nasser.

On the other hand, the following chapter will describe Egypt under the rule of Anwar Sadat. After giving details about historical events of both periods, chapter 4 will analyze these two periods to reveal continuity/change in the Egyptian state identity in its relation with Israel, and domestic and international factors that affect such a change.

## 2.1 DOMESTIC FACTORS

### 2.1.1 Pre-revolution Period in Egypt

Decolonization period gathered pace after the World War II, and even India, the biggest colony of Great Britain, gained its independence in 1947. However, the British were not ready to give up their privileges at the Suez Canal for which reason Egypt was still kept under their reins. This was a big source of dissatisfaction among the Egyptians, which was followed by the striking defeat of Egypt in the Arab-Israeli War of 1948-49. On the other hand, Egyptians had to struggle with immense poverty as vast agricultural lands were possessed by a few wealthy landlords while majority of the population had to share very small lands. This injustice of land distribution caused to further deepen the income gap between these two groups. Therefore, people, who got poorer day by day, were not happy about King Farouk and political elites for certain political and social reasons.<sup>122</sup>

Even though this economic desperation of people arising from the unjust distribution of lands was well known by the political parties, and particularly the ruling party, their leaders chose to cover their eyes to this ever-deepening social trouble since they owed their wealth and status to big landlords for which reason they were not willing to improve the living conditions of the ordinary Egyptians. Demonstrations were everywhere: workers were protesting the working conditions and low wages, while university students wanted eradication of the British presence in their country.<sup>123</sup>

In the amid of this conflictual environment, the Muslim Brotherhood, which was established in Egypt in 1928, consolidated their position, and increased the number of their members and supporters by initiating some social reform programs with a particular focus on the preservation of the Islamic values. The organization also

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<sup>122</sup> William L. Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, trans. Mehmet Harmancı (İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2008), 336.

<sup>123</sup> Peter Johnson, "Egypt under Nasser," *MERIP Reports* no. 10 (July 1972): 3.

engaged in some violent acts against the foreign businesses in the country and the political elites who were accused of being at the service of the foreigners.<sup>124</sup>

On January 26, 1952, the Cairo fire, a.k.a. the Black Saturday erupted after massacre of 50 Egyptian policemen by the British during the clashes between the Egyptian gangs and the British army forces. This event that took place in Ismailia triggered large-scale demonstrations and protests in Cairo. There were set many big fires and lots of places, including cafés, restaurants, theaters etc. were looted, which was a reaction to both the British presence on their land and corrupted Egyptian elites who allowed that presence.<sup>125</sup>

These events fueled the situation and, in a way, brought the end of the old regime. Seven months later, on July 23, 1952, a handful of young military officers who called themselves “Free Officers” took power following a relatively smooth coup. That movement was more than a change of leaders, but instead, it was a change of regime.<sup>126</sup> Consequently, Nasser and Sadat who actively participated in the military intervention became the leaders of Egypt for the coming thirty years.

Gamal Abdel Nasser, head of the Free Officers, grew up in Egypt witnessing all significant political stages of his country. Serving in the army during the 1948 “catastrophe,” Nasser was convinced that the defeat was considerably attributable to the then-leaders and their corrupted policies, and for this reason, this defeat must be avenged.<sup>127</sup> He referred those periods as “feverish and a period of boiling over” during which he took part in anti-British marches and even shot by the British in such a demonstration.<sup>128</sup> Therefore, he was determined to “free the country from a foreign yoke” and end “misuse of governmental power.”<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, 337.

<sup>125</sup> “The Cairo Fire of 1952”, Association for Diplomatic Studies & Training, accessed January 25, 2022, <https://adst.org/2012/09/the-cairo-fire-of-1952/>.

<sup>126</sup> Nezar Alsayyad, *Cairo: Histories of a City* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2013), 233.

<sup>127</sup> Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, 338.

<sup>128</sup> Derek Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-90* (London: Routledge, 1993), 34.

<sup>129</sup> Gamal Abdel Nasser, “The Egyptian Revolution,” *Foreign Affairs* 33, no. 2 (January 1955): 199.

The coup d'état was performed by military officers in the name of all Egyptians regardless of any political group and ideology etc. and without a sound plan about the aftermath of the intervention. There was only one single plan: "to cleanse the nation of tyrants and to reform the constitutional life of the country."<sup>130</sup> On the third day of the coup, King Farouk was sent to exile to Italy and in 1953, the old regime of monarchy was replaced with republic. Military captured the government in its fullest sense.<sup>131</sup> Thus, period of military rule started in Egypt, with people of military background being appointed to important positions of the government.

That military coup of 1952 became a turning point for the modern Egyptian history for many aspects in that it brought the long-established monarchy to a close, initiated radical domestic reforms, and most importantly gave the reins of the country to ordinary, well-educated and middle-income men of Egypt with a strong will of eradicating the colonial influences and imperial traces.<sup>132</sup> "Free Officers Group" was established in the first place with these targets in mind by some nationalist officers in 1949 in order to solve such long-standing problems of Egypt. They held many different political visions: some were closer to Muslim Brotherhood, and some had sympathy with communist views; however, their enemy was one and single: they all wanted to get rid of the Wafd Party which had been ruling the country during the humiliating defeat of 1948 Israeli War and was always at the service of the British forces rather than the poor Egyptians.<sup>133</sup> Following the coup, all political parties were closed except for the Muslim Brotherhood which would later be banned after an attempted assassination towards Nasser in 1954.

Even though Nasser was the leader of the Free Officers Movement, he chose to remain in the shadow as people would find him too young and immature for undertaking the leadership position. Therefore, General Muhammad Neguib was appointed as the new leader of the country. Nevertheless, the term of Neguib lasted very short as he soon wanted to act independently from the masterminds of the coup, particularly Nasser.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>131</sup> Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, 340.

<sup>132</sup> Robert L. Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 256-257.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 257-258.



Consequently, in 1954, Nasser replaced Neguib in a staged delegation of authority. Even though there was a Revolutionary Command Council which was ostensibly in charge of administration, it was actually Nasser who governed the country on his own until he passed away in 1970.<sup>134</sup>

### **2.1.2 Egypt under the Rule of Nasser**

It was not, by any means, a coincidence that the term “Nasserism” earned its rightful place in the political dictionaries since Nasser was the long-awaited proactive leader who defied the imperialist powers and stripped the former political elites of their titles and wealth. Therefore, Egypt under his rule is often referred to as “the age of Nasser” for his inspiring and encompassing policies.<sup>135</sup>

To begin with, Nasser was the “first Egyptian to rule in Egypt since the time of the Pharaohs.”<sup>136</sup> He was, indeed, a very important figure in the history of modern Egypt for he was the first leader pursuing a daring and self-reliant foreign policy, unrestricted by the British interests. First and foremost, Nasser is remembered for his decisions ending the British influence in his country, particularly with the agreement of 1954 and the crisis of 1956, after which Egypt began to rise on the world stage as an important actor.<sup>137</sup>

Nasser was the leader of “Free Officers Movement” deposing, in 1952, King Farouk who was at the service of the British interests in the region. The humiliating result of the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 triggered the rebellious actions against the monarchy as of which date the Palestine question remained as a priority of the Egypt’s policy choices in international environment.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 259-260.

<sup>135</sup> Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, 335.

<sup>136</sup> Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Red Star on the Nile: The Soviet-Egyptian Influence Relationship Since the June War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 127.

<sup>137</sup> Noor-ul-Ain Khawaja, “Egypt’s Foreign Policy Analysis: From Nasser to Morsi,” *Pakistan Horizon* 66, no. 1/2 (January-April 2013): 44.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 44.

Nasser was born and raised in Egypt; he was the man of that country unlike previous leaders who were educated in the West and remained loyal to that direction. Above all, Nasser brought an end to the settled monarchy of Egypt with relatively painless coup and promised to become the voice of the poor and exploited people of Egypt, and promptly started a development program.<sup>139</sup>

During the term of Neguib, Nasser became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior.<sup>140</sup> After Neguib was removed from power in 1954, Nasser became the face of Egypt and in 1956 he entered the elections as the only candidate and became the President of Egypt. Thus, Nasser was born into the political life of Egypt, totally armored and without any sound rivals.<sup>141</sup>

The coup brought fundamental changes for the Egyptian political system, for Nasser not only ended the monarchy but also casted away the political elites who dominated the administration for a very long time, and instead of the settled Turkish aristocracy, he appointed people of Egyptian origin to the important duties even though they were only figureheads.<sup>142</sup>

During the Nasser period, Egypt underwent a big transformation as he introduced many socialist reforms at home in succession. Land reform was launched in 1952 in order to increase agricultural productivity. Primary education became free in 1953. University education also became free to increase intellectual capacity of the country. The first 5-year plan was prepared to ensure economic stability, which was followed by expropriation of various industries and restriction of private sector. Nasser's reforms extended to education as a result of which the rate of literacy and the number of university graduates skyrocketed. However, it came with a burden: Nasser promised to provide public employment for any and all graduates which rendered public institutions unnecessarily crowded and brought economic depression.<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, in the political arena, Arab Socialist Union replaced National Union to consolidate the regime,

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<sup>139</sup> Tarek Osman, *Egypt on the Brink: From the Rise of Nasser to the Fall of Mubarak* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 52.

<sup>140</sup> Alsayyad, *Cairo*, 233.

<sup>141</sup> Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, 341.

<sup>142</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink: From the Rise of Nasser to the Fall of Mubarak*, 53.

<sup>143</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 270.

which was followed by the “new national charter” in 1962 with a view to strengthening new socialist perspective of the country.<sup>144</sup>

Like his successors, Nasser’s foreign policy agenda mainly depended on such issues as “security, economic stability, relations with influential states and the Arab states in the region.”<sup>145</sup> His period is mostly remembered with his bold confrontations with many actors, including Israel, Western states and some peer Arab states, the details of which will be provided below.

### 2.1.3 Suez Crisis

Even though Suez Crisis had international repercussions with involvement of the foreign actors, it was actually a domestic development since Suez Canal is a part of the Egyptian territory. Therefore, it is also examined under the section of “Domestic Factors.”

“The Universal Company of the Suez Maritime Canal (Egyptian joint-stock company) is hereby nationalized. All its assets, rights and obligations are transferred to the Nation and all the organizations and committees that now operate its management are hereby dissolved.”<sup>146</sup>

The paragraph above is the first article of the “Decree of the President of the Republic of Egypt on the Nationalization of the Suez Canal Company” on July 26, 1956. This decree marks a very important turning point for all sides of the conflict, but particularly for Nasser and Egypt. The process leading to eruption of this crisis, and the way it ended have various aspects worthy of examination.

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<sup>144</sup> Jesse Ferris, *Nasser’s Gamble: How Intervention in Yemen Caused the Six-Day War and the Decline of Egyptian Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 28.

<sup>145</sup> Noor-ul-Ain Khawaja, “Egypt’s Foreign Policy Analysis,” 43.

<sup>146</sup> Decree of the President of the Republic of Egypt on the Nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, (July 26, 1956), 2, accessed December 27, 2020, [https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2001/10/9/50e44f1f-78d5-4aab-a0ae-8689874d12e6/publishable\\_en.pdf](https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2001/10/9/50e44f1f-78d5-4aab-a0ae-8689874d12e6/publishable_en.pdf).

To provide brief background information about history of the Suez Canal, it was constructed on initiation of Ferdinand de Lesseps who was granted with that concession by the ruler of Egypt Said Pasha in 1854. It took ten years to complete the project; it was finally opened in 1869 as of which date the Suez Canal Company was supposed to have the right to operate the Canal during 99 years.<sup>147</sup>

On October 29, 1888, the “Convention Respecting the Free Navigation of the Suez Maritime Canal” was signed in Constantinople by leading powers of the time, and it was agreed upon that the “Canal shall always be free and open, in time of war as in time of peace ... without distinction of flag.”<sup>148</sup> This convention did not have a time limitation like the previous concession awarded to the Canal Company.

In a treaty of 1936, the British assured to have up to 10,000 troops around the Canal, which was in contradiction with the 1888 Agreement prohibiting military presence therein.<sup>149</sup> This treaty was followed by another agreement between Egypt and Great Britain in 1954 in which both sides “express the determination to uphold the Convention ... signed at Constantinople ... in ....1888.”<sup>150</sup> This Agreement also ensured withdrawal of the British troops around Suez.<sup>151</sup> However, only two years later, on July 26, 1956, came the decree on nationalization of the Suez Canal and dissolution of the Company by providing compensation for shareholders based on the values of Paris Stock Market.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> “Suez Canal... A Historical Evaluation”, accessed February 25, 2022, <https://www.suezcanal.gov.eg/English/About/SuezCanal/Pages/CanalHistory.aspx>.

<sup>148</sup> Convention Respecting the Free Navigation of the Suez Maritime Canal (October 29, 1888), 3, accessed on December 27, 2020,

[https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/convention\\_respecting\\_the\\_free\\_navigation\\_of\\_the\\_suez\\_maritime\\_canal\\_constantinople\\_october\\_29\\_1888-en-35fba5fa-113a-4468-a6c9-efc467f13563.html](https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/convention_respecting_the_free_navigation_of_the_suez_maritime_canal_constantinople_october_29_1888-en-35fba5fa-113a-4468-a6c9-efc467f13563.html).

<sup>149</sup> Jagdish P. Sharma, “Egyptian Nationalism and the Suez Canal Episode: A Summary,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 57 (1996): 914-915.

<sup>150</sup> The Harvard Law Review Association, “Nationalization of the Suez Canal Company,” *Harvard Law Review* 70, no. 3 (January 1957): 482.

<sup>151</sup> Louise Richardson, “Avoiding and Incurring Losses: Decision-Making in the Suez Crisis,” *International Journal* 47, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 374.

<sup>152</sup> The Harvard Law Review Association, 481-482.

From the time it was opened, the Suez Canal became “the jugular vein”<sup>153</sup> of the British Empire, not only for they spent too much for its construction, but also for the shortcuts the Canal provided between Europe and Far East, saving both time and money. On the other hand, Nasser was, from the very beginning, determined to eliminate the British existence in Egypt, which was reciprocated by the British side to topple down Nasser upon his decree of nationalization.

At the end of 1955, the United States and Britain promised to give financial aid to Egypt (around \$70 million) for completion of Aswan Dam in order to establish closer relations with Nasser and curb Soviet expansionism in the region.<sup>154</sup> However, the US backed down from its promise of financing the construction. The US Secretary of State Dulles told the Ambassador of Egypt Ahmed Hussein that “there was little goodwill toward Egypt on the part of the American public,” and “the Dam project should be put on the shelf while we try to develop a better atmosphere and better relations.”<sup>155</sup> Reaction of Nasser to this withdrawal was quite unexpected as he initiated nationalization of the Suez Canal, announcing that “this is the answer to American and British conspiracies against Egypt.”<sup>156</sup>

This bold decision of Nasser was not welcomed by the Western powers, particularly by the British and French, which joined their forces with Israel to reverse this decision, but had to return empty-handed upon pressures of the US. On the other hand, the SU acknowledged legality of the nationalization move and condemned Britain and France as true enemies of the world peace.<sup>157</sup>

Nasser’s retaliation was an equally big shock for the US, but use of force was not on the table for Eisenhower as he was running again for presidential elections, and resorting to

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<sup>153</sup> Steven Morewood, “Protecting the Jugular Vein of Empire: The Suez Canal in British Defence Strategy, 1919–1941,” *War&Society* 10, no. 1 (1992): 81, <https://doi.org/10.1179/072924792791198995>.

<sup>154</sup> History.com, “United States withdraws offer of aid for Aswan Dam,” accessed November 13, 2021, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/united-states-withdraws-offer-of-aid-for-aswan-dam>.

<sup>155</sup> Andrew Kelly, “Suez,” in *ANZUS and the Early Cold War: Strategy and Diplomacy between Australia, New Zealand and the United States, 1945-1956* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2018), 158.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, 158.

<sup>157</sup> Caroline Piquet, “Le canal de suez: une route stratégique au coeur des conflits du moyenorient au xx e siècle,” *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, no. 262 (April-June 2016): 81.

force would have reflected him as an imperialist figure and damaged his image as a peaceful candidate.<sup>158</sup>

The British was the largest shareholder of the Company and the biggest beneficiary of the Canal as the British tonnage exceeding 28% of the maritime traffic there. The Canal was also the main route of oil import for Britain accounting to 20.5 m tons per year. On the other hand, France was also among the main losers of a potential nationalization decision as the number of French-held shares was quite high. Above all, France was convinced that Nasser was supporting the rebel groups in Algeria in military terms, which eventually ended up in joining forces by the British and French, and including Israel to end the Nasser period in Egypt.<sup>159</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the crisis, Britain formed a specific Committee to deal with Nasser and his decision, and convened an international conference in London. The ostensible reason of the conference was to come up with a diplomatic solution to the problem, while the underlying reason was to propose unacceptable conditions for Nasser so that it could be a legitimate reason of war, since Britain and France did not only want internationalization of the Canal again, but also aimed to end the rule of Nasser in Egypt.<sup>160</sup> Predictably, Nasser did not accept any of the proposals, naming them as “a form of collective colonialism”<sup>161</sup>

Since nationalization move of Nasser could not be a justified *casus belli*, Britain, France and Israel came up with a plan to give grounds for a military action. According to that plan, Israel sent its troops to Sinai and started an invasion of Egypt, upon which Britain and France gave an ultimatum to both Israel and Egypt not to come closer to the Canal by 10 miles. As expected, Nasser did not pay any attention to this ultimatum which ended in bombardment of Egypt and dispatch of the maritime forces from Malta. On

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<sup>158</sup> Richardson, “Avoiding and Incurring Losses: Decision-Making in the Suez Crisis,” 372.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 372-373.

<sup>160</sup> Kelly, “Suez,” 166.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 168.

November 6, forces arrived the Port Said to protect the Canal according to their arguments.<sup>162</sup>

The fact that Britain and France joined forces with Israel was a big surprise for both Nasser and Eisenhower. While Nasser considered this as a sheer madness, Eisenhower said that “I can’t believe that they would be so stupid as to invite on themselves all the Arab hostility to Israel.”<sup>163</sup>

The impending presidential elections being an important reason of the US opposition to the military operation in Egypt, Eisenhower had other concerns as well: He thought that the increasing Western pressure and aggressiveness would push Egypt to the side of the SU, which would risk the US interests in the region and facilitate Soviet expansionism.<sup>164</sup> As the US opposition to the military action was well-known, Britain started the operation without consulting Eisenhower who described this as “the biggest error of the time.”<sup>165</sup> The invasion also coincided with the Soviet’s military operation in Hungary and the US could not even make use of this difficulty of its main enemy. Therefore, the US did not support the invasion at the expense of its position in the Middle East region. In order to end this, the US applied economic and military pressures on London to make them admit a UN ceasefire and evacuate the Canal zone.<sup>166</sup> Eisenhower also warned Israel to withdraw its forces or “face UN condemnations, attack by Soviet volunteers and termination of all US governmental and private aid.”<sup>167</sup> Finally, on November 6, Britain and France had to admit the ceasefire, and withdrew their forces around the Canal area, which is an important indication of the end of the British leadership and rise of the US as a superpower.<sup>168</sup> Two days later, on

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<sup>162</sup> Richardson, “Avoiding and Incurring Losses: Decision-Making in the Suez Crisis,” 373.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 376.

<sup>164</sup> Michael Olson and Dwight D, “Eisenhower and the Suez Crisis of 1956,” accessed on January 30, 2021, <https://www.eiu.edu/historia/Michael%20Olson%20historia%202016.pdf>.

<sup>165</sup> Kelly, “Suez,” 171.

<sup>166</sup> Geoffrey Warner, “The United States and the Suez Crisis,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 67, no. 2 (April 1991): 314-316.

<sup>167</sup> Warren Bass, “The Suez War, 1956,” in *A Surprise out of Zion?: Case studies in Israel's decisions on whether to alert the United States to preemptive and preventive strikes, from Suez to the Syrian nuclear reactor* (California: Rand Corporation, 2015), 12.

<sup>168</sup> Kelly, “Suez,” 178.

November 8, Israel also declared to admit the ceasefire, but did not withdraw its forces from Sinai until March 1957<sup>169</sup>, which were replaced by UN Emergency Force.

Suez Crisis had ramifications for the foreign nationals living in Egypt as well. The British, French and Jewish companies were nationalized and included in the Egyptian public assets. People of Britain and France origin were discharged from Egypt. Furthermore, Jews who did not have Egyptian nationality were also expelled. Jews with means and money chose to migrate to the West and the US while the others had to go to Israel. This “Jewish exodus” lasted many years, and in 1970 there were very few Jewish family living in Egypt.<sup>170</sup>

#### **2.1.4 Arab Nationalism or Pan-Arabism**

Nationalization of the Suez Canal is a turning point for the rise of Egypt-led Arab nationalism. Nasser is considered as one of the most influential leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Once he proclaimed his leadership, he started his struggle against the British presence in Egypt. The fact that the tripartite aggression was condemned by both the United States and SU increased his popularity to an inconceivable extent. Apart from the short-lived union with Syria and his involvement in Yemen War, Nasser became the leader of the Non-Alignment Movement in 1964 and was reelected in the following year, which is an evidence of his strong impact in the other states of the region.<sup>171</sup>

When Nasser took the decision to reverse internationalization of the Suez Canal, it was beyond securing economic interests of the country; it was also revival of national pride of Egyptians and Arab dignity. It was a strong uprising to the imperial states which exploited their resources for many years, and an important symbol of the release of subjugated Egyptians from the imperial chains. Thus, Nasser became a man with “remarkable ability to voice the aspirations for revival,” and “restored dignity of the

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<sup>169</sup> Piquet, “Le canal de suez: une route stratégique au coeur des conflits du moyenorient au xx e siècle,” 83.

<sup>170</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 269.

<sup>171</sup> Noha Khalaf, “Repenser le nassérisme (1952-1970) (Autour d’Anouar Abdel-Malek (1924-2012)),” *Revue Française d’Histoire des Idées Politiques*, no. 42 (2<sup>nd</sup> semestre 2015): 48.



Arab masses.”<sup>172</sup> He was even described as “the last prophet” by Nizar Kabbani, a famous Arab poet.<sup>173</sup>

Nasser was among the masterminds of the Non-Aligned Movement that started in 1961 as a new group of “independent nations” separated from NATO and Warsaw Pact. He became a high authority whom “freedom fighters” of Africa came to ask for advice. He was called “a brave friend” by Soviet leaders of the time while Chinese leader Zhou Enlai mentioned him as “the giant of the Middle East.” Even Che Guevara visited Cairo which he saw as the new center of “revolutionary support.” Thus, Nasser became the strongest hero of the region.<sup>174</sup>

Given the geographical position and rich resources of Egypt, Nasser believed that this country should play a vital role in the global affairs.<sup>175</sup> Nasser claimed that the Arabs were actually one nation, and Egypt was only a part of the big Arab community spread on a vast geography. In this sense, all Arabs actually came from the same parents, and even though they were spatially divided, their emotions were connected apart from their shared language and history.<sup>176</sup>

Weak situation of the other regional states also facilitated the rise of Nasser as an unrivalled hero. There were revisionist movements in both Syria and Iraq, and Lebanon was in its endless fight with sectarian struggles. Other countries were not in any better shape either. Nasser was perceived as a hero who could beat the imperialist powers of Britain, France and nemesis Israel without any real confrontation, and thus began his portrayal of an “Arab leader.”<sup>177</sup> Nasser argued that “the Arabs’ oil should be for the Arabs” and heavily criticized Saudi Arabia and other pro-Western states of the region for being “agents of the West, working against the will of the nation.”<sup>178</sup> For this reason,

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<sup>172</sup> Peter Mansfield, “Nasser and Nasserism,” *International Journal* 28, no. 4 (Autumn 1973): 675.

<sup>173</sup> Eric Walberg, *From Post Modernism to Post Secularism: Re-emerging Islamic Civilization* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, Inc. 2013), 220.

<sup>174</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink: From the Rise of Nasser to the Fall of Mubarak*, 59.

<sup>175</sup> Khalaf, “Repenser le nassérisme (1952-1970),” 73.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, 73.

<sup>177</sup> Andrea Teti, “Political and Social Change in Egypt: Preludes to the January Uprising,” *The Arab Transformations Working Paper Series* (2017), 3.

<sup>178</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 67.

the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia were the main forces against the rising popularity and extending Arab nationalism of Nasser.<sup>179</sup>

Egypt of Nasser became a guidance center for the political movements in Africa in that Egypt set up an African Liaison Office in 1955, and there were even opened offices for supporting African liberation movements as of 1959.<sup>180</sup> Nasser's position was profoundly consolidated by the state-owned media channels. "The Voice of Arabs," for example, was serving to popularize Nasser and broadcasting his emotional speeches to the entire Arab geography from "the Ocean to the Gulf." Cinema and music industry were also used as an instrument to praise and glorify Nasser.<sup>181</sup>

The most concrete and earliest achievement of Nasser's pan-Arab ideas was the establishment of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958 between Syria and Egypt. Fearing from a probable coup by a communist organization in Syria, the ruling Baath Party proposed to merge with Egypt, which was readily accepted by Nasser. However, the unification did not take place on an equal footing: Nasser proclaimed himself as the leader of the UAR, and rendered the Syrian leaders, who were forced to habit in Cairo, functionless with regards to the domestic affairs of Syria. Furthermore, all political parties in Syria were abolished, high-level military staff were replaced by the Egyptian counterparts and similar reforms were imposed on Syria, which caused a strong reaction in the Syrian army and brought the end of the unification in 1961.<sup>182</sup>

This dissolution was an unexpected blow for the prestige of Nasser as the leader of the Arab world. However, he did not flinch and continued to be involved in the affairs of other Arab states, which created a kind of "Arab Cold War" in the region. Involvement of Egypt in the Yemen Crisis caused further separation of the Arabs since both sides fighting with one another was Arab.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>180</sup> Khalaf, "Repenser le nassérisme (1952-1970)," 78.

<sup>181</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 66.

<sup>182</sup> Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, 349.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 349.

Secession of Syria from the UAR was a very bitter blow for Nasser, and he was determined to reverse this embarrassing situation rather than accepting the end of his ambitions regarding the Arab unity. Therefore, he set his mind to uphold revolutions in the Arab states to ensure a probable and subsequent unity among them. Revolution, according to Nasser's imagination, should be Egyptian style, a military rule following the example and lead of Egypt.<sup>184</sup> Crisis in Yemen erupted in the middle of this Cold War environment among the Arab states, which was considered by Nasser as a chance to behold to regain his heroic position.<sup>185</sup>

Yemen was struck with a military coup followed by proclamation of republic by rebel groups. The royalist leader Imam Muhammad could run and gathered support of some local tribes as well as Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Therefore, there was only Nasser to support the new military regime led by Abdullah el-Sallel as he was the main defender of "revolutions." When it was 1965, around 70,000 Egyptian soldiers were in Yemen fighting against royalists with big losses, and they had to retreat empty-handed three years later.<sup>186</sup> That was also a negative development for the pan-Arab dream of Nasser.

## 2.2 INTERNATIONAL FACTORS

### 2.2.1 Relations with the US

Under this title, it is noteworthy to mention that Nasser had already had some ties with the US before *de facto* introduction of his regime. According to Miles Copeland, the CIA agent assigned to work in Egypt, the US was well aware and also supportive of the coup for many reasons, *inter alia* preventing spread of communist ideas in the region. The American support even extended to teach the national media to propagate in order to glorify Nasser and scandalize his enemies.<sup>187</sup> The US also provided military equipment to deal with his domestic rivals, assured that they would not be used against

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<sup>184</sup> Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble*, 27.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

<sup>186</sup> Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, 350.

<sup>187</sup> Miles Copeland, *The Game of Nations* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), 59-65.

Israel. Consequently, it can be said that the US became effective in consolidating Nasser's position.<sup>188</sup>

These friendly relations deteriorated when Nasser could not be induced to join the Baghdad Pact, describing it as “the West's unending attempts to subjugate our lands.”<sup>189</sup> Baghdad Pact including Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Iraq and Great Britain aimed to curb expansionism of the SU in the Middle East region. For this aim, the US promised various aid programs to make the membership more attractive to the states in the region. However, Nasser did not admit to be a part of the Pact, arguing that it was another reflection of the imperialist targets in the region. Apart from keeping Egypt away from the Pact to maintain his influence, Nasser also undertook a policy of propaganda to hold the other Arab states out of this union to which Jordan and Syria responded positively even though it culminated in deterioration of economic situation in Egypt.<sup>190</sup> Therefore, it can be said that even though Nasser and the US started out together, they drifted apart in time since both had their own agenda.

As a consequence of the deteriorated relations, when Nasser asked for arms, in continuation of the ordinary trend, he had to return empty-handed since he did not admit to be a part of the Western pact. At this point, the SU came to the help and promised to provide weapons through Czechoslovakia, which was met with anger by the West and made Nasser even more defiant towards them.<sup>191</sup>

After ending the long British presence in his country, Nasser did not have any intention of admitting other imperialist powers to replace them, which could be considered as an open confrontation against the US.<sup>192</sup> Nasser was “an obstacle” and “an adversary for the US interests in the region” for Lyndon Johnson. On the contrary, he was considered, by the SU, as “a friend” and “a rare phenomenon of genius in the Arab World.”<sup>193</sup> His

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<sup>188</sup> Mohamed Elsheikh, “Egypt Foreign Policy Orientation and its Impacts on Civil-Military Relations” (MA Thesis, University of Istanbul Aydın, 2019), 13.

<sup>189</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 70.

<sup>190</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 271.

<sup>191</sup> Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-90*, 44-45.

<sup>192</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 68.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid*, 69.

strong opposition to the West attempts consolidated his position as “people’s hero,” not obeying to “imperialists and colonialists” and even “to mighty America.”<sup>194</sup>

Another blow on Egypt-US relations came once the US decided to withdraw its proposal to finance construction of Aswan Dam, but restored, to a certain degree, when Eisenhower insisted on retreat of the Tripartite Collision during the Suez Crisis. Nevertheless, Nasser was never convinced of the military and monetary aid promised under Eisenhower Doctrine to curb Soviet expansionism, and therefore refused such assistance directly.<sup>195</sup>

Nasser considered the US as “antithetical” to Egyptian revolution.<sup>196</sup> In line with this perspective, Nasser never opened the door for Eisenhower doctrine that argues to “defend territorial integrity and political independence of the region’s nations against armed aggression from any nation controlled by international communism.”<sup>197</sup>

Relations with the US further declined with improvement of relations with the SU, and with Egypt’s involvement in Yemen War. Because in Yemen, Nasser was working against Saudi Arabia, one of the most important allies of the US in the region.<sup>198</sup>

Above and beyond all factors, Nasser found the US leaders unreliable for their profound commitment to support Israel. Arms supplies to Israel by the US were considered as “policy antagonistic to the Arab nation”<sup>199</sup>. Furthermore, the 1967 War became another factor degrading the Egypt-US relations since Nasser was convinced of the US’s vital role in the war. As a reaction, he suspended diplomatic relations and expelled the US citizens from Egypt.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>195</sup> Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-90*, 70.

<sup>196</sup> Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America’s Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 57.

<sup>197</sup> The Eisenhower Doctrine, 1957, accessed March 10, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/eisenhower-doctrine>.

<sup>198</sup> Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-90*, 70.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, 71.

As can be seen above, there are certain breaking points for the Egyptian-American relations. Nasser's reactions to such events reflect continuity/change in state identity of Egypt which will be examined in chapter 4 of this study.

### **2.2.2 Relations with the SU**

The SU was the center of communist ideology. On the other hand, Egypt was a Muslim country which could not approve atheism, and even chose to lock supporters of communism in jails. However, this chasm of ideological differences did not prevent these two countries to grow closer since power politics mattered more.

Following the elections of 1955 in Israel, conflicts escalated in Gaza Strip which was under the rule of Egypt. This development encouraged Nasser to improve his army and buy new weapons. However, Nasser's requests of an arm deal were refused by Britain, France and the US respectively on the grounds of Nasser's prudent approach to Baghdad Pact, his support of revolts in Algeria and absence of financial power.<sup>201</sup> As a result, Nasser turned his direction to the East, and asked supply of weapons from China, which took the request to the SU and ended in an arms deal between Egypt and Czechoslovakia in 1955. This event not only alienated Nasser from the West, but also opened a gate for the SU to penetrate into the Middle East.<sup>202</sup>

In 1958, Moscow and Cairo concluded a loan agreement that also regulated provision of additional technical aid for Egypt. In the same year, Khrushchev and Nasser signed another agreement for construction of the Aswan Dam with the Soviet support. Close relation between two leaders grew more upon visit of the Soviet leader to Cairo to see the construction of the Dam in 1964.<sup>203</sup> In a way, the SU seemed to establish its presence in the Middle East through Egypt and Nasser.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Yasmin Qureshi, "A Review of Soviet-Egyptian Relations," *Pakistan Horizon* 35, no. 1 (First Quarter 1982): 111.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 111-112.

<sup>203</sup> Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-90*, 68-69.

<sup>204</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 70.

The arms deal between Egypt and the SU continued in the following years which culminated in \$ 1.5 billion in 1967. Furthermore, Soviet influence also became visible in the organization of Egyptian army under the surveillance of 400 experts from East Germany and Czechoslovakia.<sup>205</sup>

At a time when the SU was dealing with Cuban missile crisis in the amid of the harsh Cold War environment, Khrushchev also did not avoid sending military support, including air force and staff, to help Egypt in its Yemen involvement.<sup>206</sup>

Egypt and the SU were also together in the 1967 War during which the SU provided weapons to Egypt. As the Egyptian army was hammered during the War, the Soviets took this opportunity to increase their influence in Egypt by setting up permanent missions in the capital of Egypt with the aim of reshaping the Egyptian military organization. Moscow even undertook to replace the military equipment lost in the war. The Soviets also took part in the War of Attrition started against Israel in 1969.<sup>207</sup> However, Egypt was becoming even more dependent on the SU in military terms, and distancing even more from the US.

One of the most important reasons behind Nasser's anti-Western policies was the huge support provided to Israel by the West. As of its foundation in 1948, Egypt considered Israel as a threat and pursued a foreign policy accordingly. In this vein, Egypt preferred to conclude an arms deal with the SU rather than the US, and made agreements with Romania, Hungary, East Germany and China to ensure economic stability. Meanwhile, Nasser's Egypt recognized People's Republic of China and supported the revolts in Algeria against France.<sup>208</sup>

Nasser occupied a very important position with regards to presence of the SU in the region. He was considered as a "consultant" on Arab-related politics and situations. For many Arab states also, Nasser was the mediator to reach the SU; instead of establishing a direct connection with Moscow, they preferred to come to Nasser first and requested

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<sup>205</sup> Qureshi, "A Review of Soviet-Egyptian Relations," 119.

<sup>206</sup> Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble*, 70.

<sup>207</sup> Qureshi, "A Review of Soviet-Egyptian Relations," 126.

<sup>208</sup> Khawaja, "Egypt's Foreign Policy Analysis: From Nasser to Morsi," 45.

him to make the connection on their behalf. Muammar Qaddafi explained this role of Nasser as follows: “during Nasser’s time, we all left the development of Soviet-Arab relations to him ... Even after the victory of the Libyan Revolution in 1969, we went to Nasser and through him to Moscow.”<sup>209</sup>

The Soviet influence was visible in many aspects: the Arab Socialist Union was, for example, the only party in Egypt formed by Nasser in 1962, and it was similar to the “Soviet Politburo.” During the rule of this party, Egypt underwent substantial changes particularly in terms of social policies.<sup>210</sup> A striking result of this transformation was that all private belongings over 10.000 Sterling were expropriated by the state, which striped the wealthy elites from their resources and made the state the only player in economy. Thus, Egypt could be considered a socialist country with full state control in many areas from economy to education and media.<sup>211</sup> Even, Nasser was awarded with the “highest honorary title in Soviet repertoire,” “Hero of the Soviet Union” by the SU in 1964.<sup>212</sup>

Vast presence of the SU in Egypt following the defeat of 1967 War, yet its incapacity to eradicate the signs of the war “by diplomatic or military means” caused deterioration of bilateral relations between Egypt and the SU and drove Egypt (under Sadat rule) to the US for good.<sup>213</sup>

### 2.2.3 Relations with Israel

Pan-Arabism of Nasser was particularly directed to Israel based on the purpose of eliminating traces of Israeli presence in the Middle East. Nasser vigorously claimed that “all Arabic lands belong to the Arabs and Israel is an arrow directed at the heart of the Arab world.”<sup>214</sup> Nasser’s statement of “Palestine is the peg upon which Arab unity hangs” reaffirms that Israel was an important component of Egypt’s foreign policy.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Ferris, *Nasser’s Gamble*, 72.

<sup>210</sup> Alsayyad, *Cairo*, 243.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*, 244.

<sup>212</sup> Ferris, *Nasser’s Gamble*, 101.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid*, 297.

<sup>214</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 71.

<sup>215</sup> Ferris, *Nasser’s Gamble*, 296.



On the other hand, Nasser always believed in legitimacy and justification of a constant war against Israel, and it was not only a “Palestinian-Israeli” issue but an “Arab-Israeli” one.<sup>216</sup>

It must be underlined that establishment of Israel in 1948, and defeat of the Arab forces in the wars of that year was a traumatic event for Egypt whose traces have been observable in the Egyptian foreign policy.<sup>217</sup> According to Nasser, Israel was “a Western military base” and its ultimate intention was to segregate the Arab states, which makes Israel “the nation’s strategic enemy” beyond the question of Palestine.<sup>218</sup> This fervent position of Nasser was, by far, the biggest challenge Israel encountered as of its foundation back in 1948.<sup>219</sup>

The Suez Crisis and the following tripartite aggression against Egypt was the first important confrontation between Egypt and Israel. On the other hand, the second and the biggest confrontation was the 1967 War whose details will be provided below.

Origin of the 1967 War actually did not have a direct relation with Egypt, but instead, it was triggered by tensions at the Syrian-Israeli border. Its eruption can be attributed to many political and economic reasons, particularly in terms of its timing.

“Total Arab rejection” of the Israeli state in their lands can be accepted as the ever-permanent reason of this all-out war.<sup>220</sup> Palestinian issue had always been among the top agenda items of Nasser’s both rhetoric and plans. A manifestation of this behavior was organization of an Arab meeting in the capital of Egypt in 1964 with a view to discussing methods to deal with the “Israeli threat.” At this summit, there were particularly discussed two important issues: (i) to divert the Jordan river so that Israel could not use it to water the Negev desert, and (ii) to “lay the proper foundations for organizing the Palestinian people and enabling it to fulfill its role in the liberation of its

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<sup>216</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 71.

<sup>217</sup> Teti, “Political and Social Change in Egypt: Preludes to the January Uprising,” 3.

<sup>218</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 71.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid*, 72.

<sup>220</sup> Efraim Karsh, “The Six-Day War: An Inevitable Conflict,” BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 470 (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 2017), 5.

homeland and its self-determination.”<sup>221</sup> The summit was followed by the establishment of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) only within 4 months.

Those developments repaired, to some extent, the damaged image of Nasser after secession of Syria from the Union. He could show, once again that, pan-Arabism is achievable by collecting the Arab states among a common goal. Thus, he could even find a way to work with Jordan and Saudi Arabia, his eternal rivals, by focusing on this always popular Arab-Israel issue. The second meeting took place towards the end of 1964 as a result of which Nasser’s “anti-Israel strategy” was accepted by the participating states. That strategy included empowerment of Arab military, economy and politics, and concurrently struggling with Israel taking sound steps such as diverting water paths of the Jordan River and allowing the PLO to have its own army of volunteers with the support of Arab states.<sup>222</sup>

The Arab-Israeli War of 1967 erupted in the amid of such efforts to contain and ultimately eliminate Israel from the Arab lands. The spark causing the confrontation was generated by a false Soviet information about deployment of Israeli troops on the Syrian border which was construed as a strike plan of Israel on an Arab state. Under these circumstances, Nasser had to take action to uphold his policies of Arab nationalism, apart from being bounded by a joint treaty of defense. Thus, Egyptian troops were sent to take their positions in Sinai which became remilitarized by Egypt for the first time since the end of Suez Crisis. On May 14, 1964, on the day when the Egyptian deployment was started, Muhammad Fawzi, Chief of Staff, went to the capital of Syria to see the alleged movement of Israeli soldiers on the border, but he did not come across with any sign of such action from the side of Israel. Fawzi was quick to report this situation to the Egyptian leader, but that new information did not become sufficient to stop the concentration of the Egyptian troops in Sinai.<sup>223</sup> Overnight, Nasser had to change his reason of probable military confrontation with Israel: rather than

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>223</sup> Richard B. Parker, “The June 1967 War: Some Mysteries Explored,” *Middle East Journal* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 179, 181.

attacking to defend Syria, he was now determined to reverse the conclusions of the Suez War.<sup>224</sup>

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Nasser took action to send the UN Emergency Force deployed on the Egyptian land to act as a buffer zone between Egypt and Israel, which was a disgracing reminder of the 1956 War.<sup>225</sup>

UN forces acted surprisingly swiftly and retreated upon demand of Nasser who filled the area with the Egyptian troops. He also went further and closed Strait of Tiran to the Israeli ships by declaring that “Under no circumstances will we allow the Israeli flag to pass through the Aqaba Gulf.”<sup>226</sup> He was certain that such an act would result in a definite victory over Israel, and announced his “main objective” as “the destruction of Israel” and “restore the status quo of before 1948.”<sup>227</sup>

Thus, reason of the conflict underwent a profound transformation: it started as a defensive action from a probability of an Israeli attack on Syria but later became a “jihad to eradicate the foremost remnant of Western imperialism in the Middle East.”<sup>228</sup> It is understood that Nasser made use of this probable confrontation as a rhetoric to consolidate his then-wearing position of pan-Arab leader.

Nasser was not alone. Jordan, who accused Nasser of “hiding behind UNEF’s apron,” and Iraq concluded a “defense pact” with Egypt against the Israeli threat. The initial Arab forces setting out to Jordan also included troops from PLO, Syria and Saudi Arabia which seemingly altered the “balance of forces” in favor of the Arabs.<sup>229</sup>

Even though it was an all-out Arab war, they abstained from making the first strike as, apart from the ongoing preparations, Nasser was afraid of the possible intervention of

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<sup>224</sup> Karsh, “The Six-Day War: An Inevitable Conflict,” 6.

<sup>225</sup> Michael Oren, “The Revelations of 1967: New Research on the Six Day War and Its Lessons for the Contemporary Middle East,” *Israel Studies* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 3.

<sup>226</sup> Sydney Dawson Bailey, *The Making of Resolution 242* (New York: Springer, 1985), 28.

<sup>227</sup> James P. Eckman, *A Covenant People: Israel from Abraham to the Present* (Indiana: West Bow Press, 2014), 311.

<sup>228</sup> Karsh, “The Six-Day War: An Inevitable Conflict,” 7-8.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

the US in the war in that case. Instead, they wanted to take action in response to an attack from Israel which would be considered as self-defense.<sup>230</sup>

Nasser and his military officers readily believed in the capacity of the joined Arab forces to fend off any Israeli attack and reach victory. However, when the war started on June 5, events raveled out contrary to expectations. Israeli air forces wiped out those of the Arab states within hours, and it took them only three days to drive the Egyptians out of Sinai Peninsula. Armed forces of Syria, Iraq and Jordan were equally destroyed and the war ended within only six days. In the end, Israel obtained control of the huge Arab lands including Suez Canal, Jordan River and Golan Heights.<sup>231</sup> The 1967 defeat was much worse than 1948 War which ended with the loss of only Palestinian lands. This time Egypt, Syria and Jordan lost vast territories to their eternal enemy.

Many consider that this war was actually a trap for Nasser and a premeditated move against him, which was laid down very carefully in order to end his wave of nationalism and ruin his prestige as a “hero.”<sup>232</sup> For real, this war and its humiliating result put a conclusion to the big project of Nasser for which Anwar Sadat remarked that “Nasser did not die on 28 September 1970 but on 5 June 1967”<sup>233</sup>

Thus came the end of the Nasser’s sweeping nationalism movement. Nasser was no longer considered as an exceptional man. He became an ordinary man overnight, a mere leader of a poor country badly humiliated in a military confrontation. This defeat also triggered the first revolt against Nasser when thousands of people began demonstrations in the streets. He offered to resign and even though his representation of the rising Arab dignity got a strong blow with the humiliating defeat at the 1967 War, he was insisted to “stay” as he was “the hope.”<sup>234</sup>

The humiliating defeat of the 1967 War was the fatal blow to Arab nationalism represented by Nasser, while secession of Syria from the UAR and the deadlock in

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>231</sup> Ersun N. Kurtulus, “The Notion of a "Pre-emptive War:" the Six Day War Revisited,” *Middle East Journal* 61, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 220.

<sup>232</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 72.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid, 73, 51.

Yemen shook off its foundations. As a result, Nasser had to bid farewell to his allegations for being regional leader of the Arab world.<sup>235</sup>

Nasser took considerable risks by engaging in a conflict with Saudi Arabia, an important American ally in the region, in Yemen which distanced Egypt from the US even more, and made it more dependent on the SU by crushing its neutral position. Distancing from the US caused suspension of the food aid and driving the country to the axis of the Soviets, which all took place in the form of a domino effect and ultimately brought the defeat against Israel in 1967.<sup>236</sup>

The Arab-Israeli conflict was always important in shaping actions of the sides even in the absence of hot confrontations. Defeat of 1948 and later invasion of Sinai Peninsula of Egypt in 1956 were always vivid in the minds of the Arab states. Furthermore, Nasserism was fed, to a significant extent, with the Palestinian issue and the rhetoric to save the Arab lands from Israeli occupation, which represented the well-known Western expansionism in the Middle East.<sup>237</sup>

In the 1960s, there were intense conflicts at the Jordan-Israeli border, which were triggered by the Palestinian resistance movements based in Syria. However, at the beginning of 1967, inter-Arab relations were more problematic than the Arab-Israeli relations, in that there were large-scale struggles between old style monarchies and socialist movements. In the amid of such commotion, Nasser was quite busy with making efforts to still lead the revolutionary Arab states and revive the Egyptian economy in spite of his unsuccessful attempts that reached the peak in Yemen.<sup>238</sup>

The 1967 War had very heavy consequences for the defeated Arab states. Jordan lost West Bank and Jerusalem while Syria lost Golan Heights. Egypt lost the revenues coming from the oil wells and the Suez Canal until 1975, which forced Nasser to admit aids from his biggest rivals Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to compensate such losses. Other

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<sup>235</sup> Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble*, 295.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid*, 295.

<sup>237</sup> Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, 374-375.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*, 375.

than this, Egypt lost around 12 thousand soldiers and 80% of its air forces.<sup>239</sup> The result of war and hand-over of such vast territories caused a new Arab refugee crisis. The humiliating defeat also revealed corruptions and bad management of the Egyptian army which shook the prestige of Nasser even more.<sup>240</sup>

However, the peace was a far cry from the Middle East even though the war was over. On November 22, 1967, UN Security Council (UNSC) adopted the Decision no 242, which underlined inadmissibility of “acquisition of territory by war.” According to this decision, Israel had to “withdraw from territories of recent conflict.”<sup>241</sup> This decision approved by Egypt, Jordan and Israel but refused by Syria and Palestinian organizations could not create a common understanding for a lasting peace. In May 1968, Egypt agreed to admit UNSC Resolution 242 on condition that Israel withdrew from occupied lands which was refused by Israel on the grounds that “negotiations should precede any evacuation.”<sup>242</sup>

That stalemate caused eruption of “War of Attrition” between March 1969 and August 1970. This one-and-a-half-year period contains a large artillery conflict, reciprocal raids, struggle of air forces and air-borne attacks of Israeli forces inside the Egyptian state. During this period, lots of Egyptian villages were hit, displacing many people. Once the conflict escalated, both the US and the SU increased provision of arms for their respective “clients.”<sup>243</sup>

However, the US Secretary of State William Rogers could come up with a peace plan approved by Egypt, Jordan and Israel, which stipulated a ceasefire as of July 1970. Even though the Rogers Plan could bring a ceasefire between the parties, it could not achieve

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid, 366-377.

<sup>240</sup> Al-Rodhan N.R.F., Herd G.P. and Watanabe L, “The Six-Day War and its Consequences,” in *Critical Turning Points in the Middle East* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 99.  
[https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230306769\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230306769_5).

<sup>241</sup> UNSC Resolution 242, November 22, 1967, accessed January 9, 2020, <https://peacemaker.un.org>.

<sup>242</sup> Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-90*, 81.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid, 82.

to realize a peace agreement between Egypt and Israel nor it could convince Israel to withdraw from the occupied Egyptian lands.<sup>244</sup>

Nasser underlined that he admitted the ceasefire only because he thought it was the only way to make Israel admit the UN resolutions with the US influence. Otherwise, “the situation will be grave ... We must not lose sight of the major fact... What has been taken by force can only be recovered by force.”<sup>245</sup>

On September 28, 1970, Nasser died of a heart attack. The Arab leader who dominated the last fifteen years of the Arab world said farewell. Egyptians deeply mourned over his death and almost 7 million people followed his funeral through the streets.<sup>246</sup>

Thus, also died the principles of Nasserism which was later criticized by many for mixing such conflicting ideas as democracy and dictatorship, socialism and capitalism, religion and secularism, and being incapable of making a sound decision of what Nasserism contained actually.<sup>247</sup>

Shattering of Nasserism had its unique consequences: its demise brought the rise of political Islam, and even empowerment of such organizations as Muslim Brotherhood Hamas, al-Qaeda and Hezbollah which had Islamic rhetoric. This caused revival of the Islamic thought as “the tendency to fall back on tradition was a natural response to the disaster of 1967.”<sup>248</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of Nasser’s death, Sadat abandoned many components of Nasserism, allowed development of Muslim Brotherhood and frequently underlined Islamic values in order to consolidate his position.<sup>249</sup> But most importantly, national interests replaced pan-Arabism to overturn the status quo, and Egyptian nationalism became the dominant ideology of Sadat’s Egypt.

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<sup>244</sup> John W. Young and John Kent, *International Relations Since 1945: A Global History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 294.

<sup>245</sup> Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-90*, 82.

<sup>246</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 51.

<sup>247</sup> Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, 381.

<sup>248</sup> Ferris, *Nasser’s Gamble*, 302.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid*, 304.

### 2.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter summarized the important events of the Nasser period with a particular focus on Egyptian-Israeli relations, and this study ultimately argues that bilateral relations between Egypt and Israel are affected by the Egyptian state identity defined and put into action by the leaders of the time. It is one of the main arguments of constructivism that ideas and identities shape international relations, and affect the ways policies are implemented. That is to say, there is a causal connection between states' identities and actions. On that note, pan-Arabism which was the prominent ideology of the Nasser era considerably impacted the relations between Egypt and other Arab states, and between Egypt and Israel, which makes pan-Arabic identity the cause and the Egyptian foreign policy orientations towards them the result.

States ascribe a certain identity to one another through social relations, and it is mainly state leaders that drive the process of identity definition. Their conception of the other actors as friend, enemy or rival determines the path of foreign policy decisions towards them. For this reason, this chapter concentrated on foreign policy behaviors of the then-Egypt under Nasser. Since domestic and international developments also have a defining role in definition, continuity or change of state identity, as argued in the chapter of theoretical framework, this chapter tried to give a general picture of the country and the world that may have affected the Egyptian-Israeli relations.

The next chapter will describe Egypt under the rule of Sadat. After giving details about historical events of both periods, chapter 4 will analyze these two periods to reveal continuity/change in the Egyptian state identity in its relation with Israel, and try to explain the factors that may have driven the process of identity definition or redefinition, keeping in mind that foreign policy behaviors of agents are not "routinized social practices" but instead, "non-routine actions designed to effect or deal with change."<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Flockhart, "Constructivism and Foreign Policy," 90.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **EGYPT DURING SADAT PERIOD**

This chapter will examine the important events of the Sadat period with a particular focus on Egypt-Israel relations. Rather than giving the complete picture of the era, this chapter will focus on particular events and developments which may be associated with the Egyptian state identity, and consequently try to explain its impact on the Egyptian-Israeli relations. Rather than pan-Arabism which was the predominant ideology of the Nasser period, Sadat's tenure is characterized with Egyptian nationalism, and this chapter will try to follow the traces of Egyptian nationalism in policy inclinations to subsequently explain its influence on the foreign policy orientations of the then-Egypt.

As discussed in chapter 1, state identity is not a static or permanent phenomenon. It is open to change and redefinition subject to the inherent domestic and international factors, particularly when existent structures remain insufficient for the newly-arisen situation. Actors are always in the process of defining themselves and the others through social interactions, and in the meantime, they can adopt new identities. Therefore, in order to find out the continuity/change in the Egyptian state identity particularly with regards to its relations with Israel, important political developments of the era – both domestic and international - will be mentioned. Within this framework, relations with the two superpowers - the US and the SU- will be explained briefly. The chapter will attach utmost attention to the Egyptian-Israeli relations as it is the main focus of the study, and particularly explain the 1973 War and its repercussions leading to conclusion of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, touching on the conception of Egypt and Israel by Sadat.

After giving details about historical events of both periods, Chapter 4 will analyze these two periods to reveal continuity/change in the Egyptian state identity, and domestic and international developments driving such a change. To this end, the two periods will be examined in terms of leadership, institutions and mainly discourse to follow the traces of a probable identity change in Egypt in its relations with Israel.

### 3.1 DOMESTIC FACTORS

#### 3.1.1 Egypt under Sadat

When Sadat came to power upon sudden death of Nasser, he was not expected to retain that power for long, neither he was considered to make important changes in the Egyptian domestic or foreign policy practices, as he lacked the “Nasserian” charisma or leadership.<sup>251</sup> Even, some people initially teased the new President as “Nasser’s pet poodle,” but, as the time elapsed, even his adversaries had to admit that Sadat left his mark on domestic and international position of Egypt as indelibly as his predecessor.<sup>252</sup>

Both Nasser and Sadat belonged to the same Free Officer group, burning with national aspirations, “a hatred for all aggressors and a love and admiration for anyone trying to liberate the land.”<sup>253</sup> Even though Sadat was among the military group who brought about the downfall of monarchy and toppled the king in 1952, he remained in the back seats of the ruling elites while Nasser came out as the new and influential leader. Sadat was considered more religious compared to other officers and less cultivated for his rural background; he was nothing but a shadow of Nasser for almost 20 years – which probably saved him from being dismissed by Nasser - when he finally became the second man before Nasser’s death.<sup>254</sup> It was clearly unexpected of him to succeed Nasser.

Apart from the disadvantage of remaining in the shadow of Nasser, Sadat also had to deal with the challenging “legacy” of Nasser – the 1967 War which left the country devastated, with “a sense of frustration on the national, political and military levels” in Sadat’s own statement.<sup>255</sup> However, time revealed that he had his own ways of dealing with demanding tests both on domestic and international level.

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<sup>251</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 274.

<sup>252</sup> Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, 416.

<sup>253</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 276.

<sup>254</sup> Martin Kramer, *Sadat and Begin – the Peacemakers*, Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies 2017, 3.

<sup>255</sup> Ankush B. Sawant, “Recent Changes In Egypt's Foreign Policy,” *India Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (January-March 1979): 21.

Before stepping in the office as the new leader of Egypt, Sadat first became the acting President as stipulated by the Constitution of the time, and, in two weeks, elected as the new president of the country. As he was the least expected man to represent the country, he initially committed to pursue basic policies of the Nasser period.<sup>256</sup> Nevertheless, determined to lead a different path, he went on with adoption of a new constitution only after a year, on September 11, 1971. The 1971 Constitution changed the state's name as the Arab Republic of Egypt which was officially known as the United Arab Republic. The new Constitution was adopted with many objectives to achieve. Among others, the new code promised more democracy and freedoms to gain support of the Egyptians. In an attempt to consolidate judicial position, Sadat introduced certain reforms to uphold rule of law and end arbitrary arrests.<sup>257</sup> Furthermore, in order to appease fundamentalists, who were regaining more power day by day, he brought Sharia as the main source of law.<sup>258</sup>

As a matter of fact, Sadat's *sui generis* personality could be considered as a sign of his capacity to lead Egypt to a totally different direction from his predecessor. In stark opposite of Nasser who was a simple man – no matter how influential he was in his leadership – and not very indulged to make business with the Western world, Sadat was very keen on being under the spots in his exclusive suits, and looked quite comfortable while chatting with the leaders of the West or delivering speeches in front of the media. Other than being very different in terms of character, the two leaders also introduced quite divergent policies in both domestic and international arena.<sup>259</sup>

On domestic front, in order to consolidate his position, Sadat turned his face to Syria and Libya, and these three countries established a confederation in November 1970 becoming official with “Confederation of Arab Republics Agreement” in April 1971. This was the time when Sadat met with domestic opposition as proponents of the SU did not approve any bonds with anti-Communist Libya. This process ended in resignation and house arrest of Sadat's opponents, which also meant purging of ardent

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>257</sup> Jason Brownlee, “Peace before Freedom: Diplomacy and Repression in Sadat's Egypt,” *Political Science Quarterly* 126, no. 4 (Winter 2011-2012): 648.

<sup>258</sup> Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt 1971, Article 2, accessed February 2, 2022, <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/electronic/34111/67289/f>.

<sup>259</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 274, 276.

Nasser supporters from state institutions. Thus, Sadat reinforced his position as the sole leader of the country and made his mind to deal with the main foreign policy issue “to redress the situation following from the 1967 defeat so as to regain our self-confidence and world’s confidence in us.”<sup>260</sup>

Before switching to the foreign policy behaviors of Sadat, another important policy of domestic front should be explained. It should be underlined that to transform Egypt, Sadat chose a very different path from Nasser: Nasser went for Arab socialism believing that it was the key to Egypt’s prosperity while Sadat opted for liberalism. That meant abandonment of economic and also political principles laid out by Nasser. Sadat sought to transform the national economic policies by reducing the government involvement, and encouraging private sector and foreign investments.<sup>261</sup>

Egypt was a war-torn country after two important confrontations with Israel within less than a decade. This situation left the country’s economy devastated, which could only be recovered with American aid. In order to find capital to ensure economic recovery, Sadat initiated the *Infitah* – “opening” – as a new strategy to attract foreign investments to the country. In this regard, tax exemptions were introduced for foreign capital holders and a neoliberal wave started in Egypt, diminishing the state intervention into the economy and encouraging the activity of private sector. However, the *Infitah* policy did not yield to the results expected by Sadat for the investments mostly concentrated on “non-productive sectors” such as construction and tourism.<sup>262</sup>

Not only *Infitah* could not bring the expected economic recovery, it could also not prevent the economic devastation. It could not be a relief for the long-suffering Egyptians, which ended in large-scale demonstrations of public and strike of industry workers. In order to overcome the deficit, Sadat’s government agreed to end state subsidies on gas, rice and sugar, which caused eruption of a massive public movement and an unprecedented reaction among the Egyptians.<sup>263</sup> "Hero of the Crossing, where is

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<sup>260</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt's Foreign Policy,” 22.

<sup>261</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 278.

<sup>262</sup> Brownlee, “Peace before Freedom: Diplomacy and Repression in Sadat's Egypt,” 649.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid*, 651.

our breakfast?”<sup>264</sup> shouted rioters, referring to unfulfilled promises of Sadat as of the partial victory of 1973 confrontation. Those mass protests ended in military intervention and death of over 150 civilians. Sadat had to restore the state subsidies in order to appease the chaos. It was an important development driving Sadat to undertake an initiative to get square with Israel, convinced that it was the only way to ameliorate the Egypt’s economy.<sup>265</sup>

### 3.2 INTERNATIONAL FACTORS

#### 3.2.1 Relations with the US

When Nasser died of a heart attack by the end of 1970, there was a strong anti-Israel policy settled in Egypt. The country was an important ally of Moscow, an “arch enemy”<sup>266</sup> of the Israeli State, and also the locomotive of the revolutionary Arab block. Nevertheless, when Sadat succeeded Nasser upon his sudden death, this approach of Egypt gradually changed, and that change gained visible momentum following the 1973 War. Furthermore, that policy change did not take place only at the international front, but also at the domestic arena as Sadat opened the country for investments of the West. However, Sadat needed better relations with the US for his economic policy and the “open door” policy requiring attraction of foreign capital and improvement of private sector with a view to ameliorating the economy of Egypt.<sup>267</sup> Finally, when *Infitah* policy turned out to be a failure, Sadat needed mediatory role of the US to settle with Israel and thus, prosper Egypt.

Even though he followed the political direction of Nasser during his first years in the office, Sadat brought a new ideology to pursue in foreign policy of Egypt. The most manifest indication of such a policy change was expulsion of around 20,000 Soviet experts from the country, and trying to win the other superpower. Eventually,

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<sup>264</sup> Raymond William Baker, *Egypt's Uncertain Revolution under Nasser and Sadat* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 133.

<sup>265</sup> Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, 421.

<sup>266</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt's Foreign Policy,” 20.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

diplomatic relations between Egypt and the US were reestablished on February 28, 1974, followed by a very large aid - \$250 million to Egypt.<sup>268</sup>

This change of alliance in Egypt-Soviet axis is commonly attributed to ever-shaking relations between the two as neither party trusted each other nor their expectations could be met in the real sense, which led Sadat to change sides eventually. However, there is another well-established perspective arguing that this policy change took place because Sadat was assured that the US was the key actor in the probable settlement of the conflict with Israel. Sadat is reported to said that “that man – Kissinger – is the only person who can order that woman – Golda Meir<sup>269</sup> – to get out and be obeyed.” Sadat also believed that “99 percent cards were in the US hands in the Arab-Israeli dispute,” mentioning that “no other country could equal the role of the US.”<sup>270</sup> Sadat was convinced that the US was “Israel’s lifeblood.”<sup>271</sup>

Thus, Sadat paved the way for Egypt-US relations by first declaring that he was ready for ending the dispute with Israel on condition that Israel withdrew from the territories occupied in 1967 War. It was a “definite break from the plan of total obliteration of Israel from the map of West Asia.”<sup>272</sup> Furthermore, expelling the Soviet staff from Egypt helped restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries, and ended in Sadat’s acceptance of “step-by-step diplomacy” of Kissinger.<sup>273</sup>

Motivated to reverse the oil embargo and decrease the Soviet influence in the Middle East, Kissinger started his “shuttle diplomacy”<sup>274</sup> on January 1974.<sup>275</sup> As a result of these efforts, “Egyptian - Israeli Agreement on Disengagement of Forces in Pursuance

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<sup>268</sup> Brownlee, “Peace before Freedom: Diplomacy and Repression in Sadat's Egypt,” 648.

<sup>269</sup> Israeli Prime Minister of the time

<sup>270</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt's Foreign Policy,” 28.

<sup>271</sup> Anwar Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper&Row, 1977), 273.

<sup>272</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt's Foreign Policy,” 28.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>274</sup> It is a term used to define Kissinger’s going between the capital of Arab states and the Israeli capital for many times to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict.

<sup>275</sup> “Shuttle Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Dispute 1974–1975,” Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute United States Department of State, accessed February 20, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/shuttle-diplomacy>.

of the Geneva Peace Conference (Sinai I)<sup>276</sup> was signed on October 18, 1974 and the “Interim Agreement between Israel and Egypt (Sinai II)”<sup>277</sup> was signed on September 4, 1975. Apart from the US aids, the Sinai Agreement brought replacement of the Soviet experts with the American staff.<sup>278</sup>

To crown all these endeavors, the US President Nixon finally visited Cairo in June 1974 as a result of which the two leaders made a joint statement. Thus, Nixon committed to “strengthen the financial structure of Egypt, to encourage private US investment, to give the greatest possible amount of government economic aid, subject to Congressional approval, and to help satisfy urgent needs for wheat and other basic commodities.”<sup>279</sup> The two leaders also pledged to strengthen their ties of friendship, and reiterated their interest in peace in the region, considering that “without peace, there can be no progress.”<sup>280</sup>

Following the Sinai Agreement, Sadat visited Washington in October 1975, the first presidential visit pursuant to the Revolution. Sadat received a very warm reception and even had the opportunity to deliver a speech at the US Congress on November 2, 1975 underlining importance of friendship between the two countries.<sup>281</sup>

The official visit of Sadat to the US also contributed to reconsideration of alliances and thus restoration of the relations with the Western Europe. Sadat made his intention clear that he wanted to reverse his country’s relations with the West by paying visits to these countries – the first presidential visits ever since the 1952 Revolution. Sadat went to France twice and to Great Britain during 1975. In the next year, Sadat visited West

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<sup>276</sup> Egyptian - Israeli Agreement on Disengagement of Forces in Pursuance of the Geneva Peace Conference (Sinai I), October 18, 1974, accessed February 22, 2022, <https://peacemaker.un.org/egyptisrael-disengagementforces74>.

<sup>277</sup> Interim Agreement between Israel and Egypt (Sinai II), September 4, 1975, accessed February 22, 2022, <https://peacemaker.un.org/egyptisrael-interimagreement> 75.

<sup>278</sup> Elias Samo, “The Sinai Agreement and Beyond,” *World Affairs* 139, no. 1 (Summer 1976): 40.

<sup>279</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt’s Foreign Policy,” 29.

<sup>280</sup> Richard Nixon, “Remarks on the Arrival of President Nixon in Cairo,” Cairo, June 12, 1974, 173, accessed February 22, 2022, <https://sadat.umd.edu/sites/sadat.umd.edu/files/Remarks%20on%20the%20Arrival%20of%20President%20Nixon%20in%20Cairo.pdf>.

<sup>281</sup> Anwar Sadat, “Before Joint Session of Congress,” Cairo, November 2, 1975, accessed February 22, 2022, <https://sadat.umd.edu/sites/sadat.umd.edu/files/Anwar%20Sadat%2C%20Before%20Joint%20Session%20of%20Congress.pdf>.

Germany, France, Italy, Austria and Yugoslavia. During his tour, he also dropped by the Vatican City. Most of these visits took place following termination of the Soviet-Egypt treaty.<sup>282</sup>

It can be said that by the end of Sadat's office, Egypt had totally drifted apart from Moscow and became a "US orbit" for which the US had to heavily rely on Sadat as "US policy depends too much on Sadat's fate and too little on institutionalized Egyptian leadership."<sup>283</sup>

### 3.2.2 Relation with the SU

"... We are not within the Soviet sphere of influence nor, for that matter, anybody's sphere of influence. I'd like you to know, furthermore, that nobody could claim to be Egypt's tutelary power. So, if you wish to talk about anything concerning Egypt, the venue will be Cairo and the talks will be with me, not with any other party [by which I clearly meant—as I had explained to the diplomat looking after US interests in Egypt—the SU, which wanted to act as our master, a "right" Nasser had granted the Soviets at one time]."<sup>284</sup> This is how Sadat wrote to the US President Nixon at the very beginning of his tenure in 1970, giving hints about his prospective standing towards Moscow.

Nasser and Sadat had very different views vis-à-vis the SU. In stark contrast with Nasser, Sadat was pro-Western and anti-Soviet. Throughout the Nasser period, the SU was the main military supplier of Egypt, apart from financing Aswan Dam and providing diplomatic support for the country. However, Sadat did not have much confidence in Moscow. There is only two years between his stepping in the office and dismissing the Soviet experts from the country.<sup>285</sup>

In order to consolidate his position, Sadat was quick to get rid of the high-level officials of the Nasser era and his move to purge his hard pro-Soviet rivals in the ruling circle disturbed the Soviet leader Nikolai Podgorny who rushed to Egypt quite frustrated

<sup>282</sup> Sawant, "Recent Changes in Egypt's Foreign Policy," 30.

<sup>283</sup> Henry F. Jackson, "Sadat's Perils," *Foreign Policy*, no. 42 (Spring 1981): 64.

<sup>284</sup> Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 278.

<sup>285</sup> Kramer, *Sadat and Begin – the Peacemakers*, 4.



considering the money they had spent on that country to protect the Soviet interests in the region. The two leaders signed the Treaty of Friendship in May 1971, which served the interests of both as Sadat wanted to appease the Soviets.<sup>286</sup> However, signing of the Friendship Treaty could not prevent deterioration of the bilateral relations, which became even more visible following the developments in Sudan. When pro-Communist riots started in Sudan and gained enough momentum to topple the President, Sadat gave “absolute support” to the government, and condemned “anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism as damaging to the liberation ....of the people.”<sup>287</sup>

Sadat was convinced that the SU was of no assistance to Egypt, as the “no peace, no war” situation with Israel served to Soviet interests as it escalated military dependence of Egypt which had to be on alert for a possible confrontation with the explicitly superior enemy. On the other hand, the US, according to Sadat, could have an interest and also the power to bring peace in the Middle East.<sup>288</sup> This comparison brought Sadat to oust the Soviet personnel from the country in 1972.

On the other hand, the *Infitah* strategy was welcomed and supported by the US, and the American aid increased to over \$1 billion in 1977. In this process, Sadat moved away from Moscow to the extent he got closer to Washington. On March 14, 1976, Sadat even went that far to terminate the “Egyptian-Soviet Friendship and Cooperation Treaty” signed on Sadat’s first year to consolidate bilateral relations between the two countries. Thus ended the American embargo on arms supply, and Egypt could buy a military aircraft from the US. Moreover, in the following month, he did not allow the Soviet ships to come closer to the Egyptian ports even they were still important trading partners.<sup>289</sup>

Supporting Sadat’s position, nine bureaucrats including the former vice-president Abdel Latif Baghdadi presented a notice asking for “reconsideration of the policy of extravagant dependence on the SU,” and going back “to a secure area between the two

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<sup>286</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt's Foreign Policy,” 23.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>288</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 276.

<sup>289</sup> Brownlee, “Peace before Freedom: Diplomacy and Repression in Sadat's Egypt,” 649.

superpowers.”<sup>290</sup> Thus in 1972, Sadat became certain that Moscow was not ready to support Egypt in its probable attack against Israel and nor was it capable of solving the problem in peaceful terms.<sup>291</sup>

Furthermore, Egypt could not get enough military equipment from the SU whose company turned into a liability aggravating the “no war, no peace situation” after some years of fruitful collaboration, and Sadat resorted to dismiss some 20,000 Soviet experts in his country in mid-1972. In his statements of 18 July 1972, Sadat expressed main reason of his disagreement with Moscow as follows: “For them, the Middle East crisis may not be number one problem... But for me ... it is not only the number one problem ... it is sleep, life, food, fasting and drinking.”<sup>292</sup>

This surprise moves of Sadat to end the Soviet presence in his country was a critical moment for the bilateral relations between Egypt and the SU on the one hand, and between Egypt and the US on the other hand. However, the US did not automatically appear on the stage as it was the year of election for the Americans, and nobody was willing to offend the Jewish voters by establishing close relations with Sadat. That was how Sadat planned and implemented, by all himself, his unexpected plan of attack against Israel.<sup>293</sup>

Sadat gave an interview to *Le Monde* in early 1975, and explained how different they were from the SU, accusing Moscow of “having remained hostile to any military action, and refusing to deliver adequate quantities of sophisticated weapons and the necessary spares, having prevented Egypt from launching hostilities – even limited – against Israel.” Concerning the question about abrogation of the Friendship Treaty with Moscow, he said that he “cannot rule out such a possibility.”<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt's Foreign Policy,” 25.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>292</sup> Anthony McDermott, “Sadat and the Soviet Union,” *The World Today* 28, no. 9 (September 1972): 408.

<sup>293</sup> Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 288.

<sup>294</sup> “Excerpts from Sadat's Interview in *Le Monde*,” *New York Times*, January 23, 1975, accessed February 22, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/01/23/archives/excerpts-from-sadats-interview-in-le-monde-soviet-arms-crucial.html>.

Moreover, Sadat bore negative feelings for the Kremlin since the latter did not agree to grant additional time for repayment of Egypt's debts in spite of its war-scarred economy. In order to settle the big debt of almost \$6 billion; Sadat paid visits to some oil-rich Arab states and also brought the matter to the attention of the US President Ford in Salzburg. This contact between the two leaders resulted in the Sinai Agreement that was considered "a blow to Arab unity" by the SU.<sup>295</sup> These events further aggravated the situation between Egypt and the SU, and Sadat proposed termination of Egypt-Soviet Friendship Treaty on March 14, 1976, which was readily admitted by the Egyptian Parliament on March 15. For Sadat, that treaty was nothing but a "scrap of paper" given the economic and military pressure exerted by the Kremlin.<sup>296</sup> Sadat further explained his move as a reflection of his desire to be completely independent.<sup>297</sup>

### 3.2.3 Relations with Israel

Foreign policy considerations of the Middle Eastern states had long concentrated on ending existence of the Israeli state and thus, responding to calls of the Palestinians. This foreign policy trend created a constancy for the region.<sup>298</sup>

Egypt was maybe the most hostile state against Israel and tried to use every opportunity to end its existence, being a major actor in 1948 and 1967 Wars. Egyptian leaders also deemed it a duty to fight with the Zionist state, even though it turned out that they were militarily incapable.<sup>299</sup>

Relations between Egypt and Israel were always hostile, but the hostility further escalated following the Suez Crisis during which Egypt regarded Israel as a tool of the imperial states on top of its traditional occupying state image. Thus, Nasser's period created an unprecedented euphoria in and outside the country in terms of pan-Arabism, which visibly declined during the Sadat's office. The 1967 War peaked the hatred and enmity in bilateral relations as it marked the historic defeat of the Arab states, and until

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<sup>295</sup> Sawant, "Recent Changes in Egypt's Foreign Policy," 33.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>298</sup> Smith, "Foreign Policy is What States Make of it" 412.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid, 414.

the 1973 War, there occurred “no war, no peace period” during which Egypt tried, in vain, to force Israel to retreat from the Egyptian territories.<sup>300</sup> Sadat, first and foremost, wanted to free the “Arab land” under Israeli invasion no matter what it required: military confrontation or negotiation. This is how he planned the year 1971: it had to be the time when the Israeli issue was settled even though it would cost lives of a million Egyptians.<sup>301</sup>

To the shock of the entire world, Sadat declared his Peace Initiative in 1971, openly stating that Egypt was ready for a settlement with Israel on condition that both sides abided by the UNSC Resolution 242. Sadat also made it clear that Israel must retreat to its pre-1967 War frontiers and that rights of the Palestinians must be guaranteed, calling the two superpowers and also the United Nations to make their part and assume responsibility.<sup>302</sup> However, that call to peace announced at the National Assembly of Egypt did not bear fruit since Sadat was arguably not ready to make concessions about “every detail of the collective Arab stand” which imply very little room for diplomatic initiatives of the other parties.<sup>303</sup> Eventually, the year 1971 could neither be a year of decision for Sadat nor a year of peace for the Middle East. However, the year 1971 witnessed wide demonstrations questioning credibility and capability of Sadat regarding solution of the Suez Canal problem.<sup>304</sup>

Sadat made his intention very clear that Egypt wanted the lost territory of Sinai back through negotiations or force. When diplomacy proved to be insufficient, Egypt started an attack on Israel to provide involvement of the US and thus regain its lost territories.<sup>305</sup>

On October 6, 1973, on holy Yom Kippur Day of the Jews, determined to end the “no war no peace” impasse, Sadat started an unexpected strike against Israeli army positioned at Bar Lev fortifications. That attack across the Suez Canal turned out to be

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<sup>300</sup> Abadi, “Israeli-Egyptian Relations: Obstacles to Meaningful Rapprochement,” 1.

<sup>301</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt's Foreign Policy,” 23.

<sup>302</sup> Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 280, 298.

<sup>303</sup> Mordechai Gazit, “Egypt and Israel - Was There a Peace Opportunity Missed in 1971,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 32, no. 1 (January 1997): 97.

<sup>304</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt's Foreign Policy,” 25.

<sup>305</sup> Smith, “Foreign Policy is What States Make of it,” 420.

successful, astounding every single person in the country. Encouraged by the advancement, Sadat was insistently advised to move further into the enemy's territory, but he refused such advices to evade a potential international reaction. Therefore, the Egyptian forces waited on stand-by, allowing the US to come to Israel's rescue. Israel was quick to recover itself, and repulsed the Egyptian army back to Sinai. At this point, the US became a party to the conflict, as expected by Sadat in the first place. In order to prevent Soviet involvement, the US wanted to announce a ceasefire in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and enabled Egypt to retreat. This is how began the Egypt-US rapprochement, which subsequently paved the way for a peace treaty.<sup>306</sup>

An important trait of the 1973 War was that Egypt decided to wage a war without its Arab friends, making this attack more an Egyptian decision than an Arab. There were only Egyptian and Syrian forces. Egypt had its own reasons to go to a war against Israel, including retrieving the previously lost territories, getting revenge of the humiliating defeat of the 1967 War, or even as an indication of their support for Palestinians.<sup>307</sup>

Above all, Egypt had to concern about its internal situation. Heavy dependency on the Soviets, lack of support from the West and the US in particular left the country's economy devastated. Poor economy made the regime look even weaker, which led the leader to a display of force.<sup>308</sup>

No matter how it ended, the 1973 War had very important repercussions for Sadat and Egypt, and perception of Israel by the Arabs. Sadat could end the humiliation caused by the 1967 War, by smashing the "invincibility and secure border myth" of Israel. Above all, Sadat could dismiss the "no war, no peace situation" in the region, and get rid of the "shadow of Nasser" and come out as a supported leader.<sup>309</sup> This war became a turning

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<sup>306</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 276-277.

<sup>307</sup> Smith, "Foreign Policy is What States Make of it," 418.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid, 418.

<sup>309</sup> Sawant, "Recent Changes In Egypt's Foreign Policy," 27.

point for Sadat's subsequent decisions and moves, and made him the "Hero of the Crossing."<sup>310</sup>

Sadat admitted the ceasefire introduced with the UNSC Resolution 338<sup>311</sup> on October 21, 1973 after which a peace conference was arranged to be held by involvement of the two superpowers. He agreed to participate in that conference in Geneva, which was refused by Syria. The Conference became the venue for Sadat to decide to reach an agreement with Israel. In this vein, Sadat is criticized by some for having "started Soviet-aided war and quietly switched over to American-arranged peace."<sup>312</sup>

The 1973 War became an overture to many twisting and metamorphosing episodes in Egyptian-Israeli relations. Even though Israel became the winning side, "the myth of the invincibility" of Israel was undermined through the initial success of the Egyptian and Syrian forces. Moreover, this outcome could put an end to the deadlock in their bilateral relations which had adversely affected the Egyptian economic and internal situation. Above all, Israel had to sit on the table to negotiate return of Sinai to Egypt as the US was interested in solving the impasse in the region.<sup>313</sup>

Even though the "no war, no peace situation" ended in the region, the expected Geneva Conference could not be gathered until December 21, 1973 because of the elections first in the US and then in Israel in the face of which Sadat announced his readiness to go to even Israel.<sup>314</sup> In the aftermath of the Geneva Conference, "Egyptian - Israeli Agreement on Disengagement of Forces in Pursuance of the Geneva Peace Conference (Sinai I)"<sup>315</sup> was signed on October 18, 1974. Primary aim of the Agreement was to ensure separation of the Egyptian and Israeli military forces entangled at the 1973 War.

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<sup>310</sup> Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, 420.

<sup>311</sup> UNSC Resolution 338, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://peacemaker.un.org/middleeast-resolution338>.

<sup>312</sup> Quoted in Sawant, "Recent Changes in Egypt's Foreign Policy," 27.

<sup>313</sup> Smith, "Foreign Policy is What States Make of it," 421.

<sup>314</sup> Sawant, "Recent Changes in Egypt's Foreign Policy," 34.

<sup>315</sup> Egyptian - Israeli Agreement on Disengagement of Forces in Pursuance of the Geneva Peace Conference (Sinai I), accessed February 23, 2022, <https://peacemaker.un.org/egyptisrael-disengagementforces74>.

On the other hand, thorough negotiations between the US, Egypt and Israel yielded to the “Interim Agreement between Israel and Egypt (Sinai II)”<sup>316</sup> and it was signed on September 4, 1975. Thus, the Parties agreed that “the conflict between them and in the Middle East shall not be resolved by military force, but by peaceful means,” and acknowledged “not to resort to the threat or use of force of military blockade against each other.”<sup>317</sup> The Parties also agreed to endeavor “to reach a final and just peace settlement by means of negotiations.”<sup>318</sup>

Indeed, Sadat decided to follow a unique path when he initiated dialogue with Israel. He made a huge stride to end the Arab-Israel conflict by making use of both military and diplomatic means and getting attraction of the US in an attempt to leave Egypt’s financial bottleneck situation behind. Pan-Arabism that was a big source of motivation for Nasser ended, which was followed by repairing relations with the conservative regimes of the region. Above all, Sadat put aside the offensive anti-Israel policies of his predecessor in favor of settling the Arab-Israeli conflict at the negotiation table. His policy shift was very striking indeed considering how he was ready in 1971 to sacrifice “a million martyrs to get back the Arab land,” and then how he was determined in 1977 “to go to the ends of the earth to save the life of an Egyptian soldier.”<sup>319</sup>

Bilateral relations between Egypt and Israel took a different turn when Sadat explained his willingness to visit Jerusalem to discuss possibility of peace between the two countries. This statement of the Egyptian President caused resignation of his prime ministers Ismail Fahmi and his successor Ibrahim Kamal, and had repercussions in the Arab world as it destroyed the old tradition of not negotiating with Israel. However, nothing could prevent Sadat from realizing that visit and giving a speech at the Knesset.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Interim Agreement between Israel and Egypt (Sinai II), accessed February 23, 2022, <https://peacemaker.un.org/egyptisrael-interimagreement75>.

<sup>317</sup> Interim Agreement between Israel and Egypt (Sinai II), Article 1 and 2.

<sup>318</sup> Interim Agreement between Israel and Egypt (Sinai II), Article 1.

<sup>319</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt’s Foreign Policy,” 20, 21.

<sup>320</sup> Abadi, “Israeli-Egyptian Relations: Obstacles to Meaningful Rapprochement,” 11.

This unexpected proposal of Sadat stirred important reaction including his being labeled as “a traitor to the Arab cause.” Thus, Sadat ended “Philosophy of the Revolution” of Nasser and embarked on the “Philosophy of Negotiation.”<sup>321</sup>

Sadat defined his Jerusalem visit as “sacred mission”<sup>322</sup>, which did not end without certain rituals: he inspected a soldier of Israel Defense Forces, prayed at the Dome of the Rock and visited Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial. Sadat also visited a Jewish synagogue at the time of the following Cairo Conference.<sup>323</sup>

On the sidelines of his visit to Jerusalem, Sadat delivered a speech in Knesset on November 20, 1977. In his address, Sadat underlined importance of a “peace and a lasting, fair settlement”<sup>324</sup> in the region. He further asked to establish a “comprehensive peace with total Israeli withdrawal from Arab lands and the recovery of the Palestinians’ rights, including their right to set up an independent state”<sup>325</sup> adding that “Egypt would accept all international guarantees that you can imagine and from whomever.” Sadat also asked the Israeli Parliament to stop the wishes of conquest and not to use the force in their relations with the Arabs.<sup>326</sup>

Thus, launched direct negotiations between the two countries, and carried on with Ismailia visit of Begin. Nonetheless, the negotiations turned into an impasse in mid-1978 after when the US President Carter became involved and invited the leaders of both countries to Camp David. Having been to even Jerusalem, Sadat readily admitted the invitation as he wanted to make use of the US influence to retrieve the occupied Arab territories, and therefore referred to that meeting as “a crucial crossroad for peace.”<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt's Foreign Policy,” 34-35.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>323</sup> Henry Kamm, “Sadat in Jerusalem, Day of Challenges,” *NY times*, November 21, 1977, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/11/21/archives/sadat-in-jerusalem-day-of-challenges-sadat-in-israel-day-of.html>.

<sup>324</sup> Sadat, “President Sadat’s Speech to the Knesset,” Tel Aviv, November 20, 1977.

<sup>325</sup> Brownlee, “Peace before Freedom,” 653.

<sup>326</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt’s Foreign Policy,” 36.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid, 36.



All three sides – Americans, Israelis and Egyptians – came together at Camp David, the US and the Camp David talks lasted for 12 days between September 5 and 17, 1978, as a result of which two separate documents were signed by the two leaders in the witness of President Carter. The first one was “A framework for peace in the Middle East”<sup>328</sup> which aimed to lay down a general framework for peace between Israel and the Arab states in the area. The document was mainly about the position of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian question in general. It was envisaged to reach a settlement within five years in accordance with the Security Council Resolution No 242, *inter alia* withdrawal of the Israeli forces and redeployment of the same to certain borders, establishment of a Palestinian government, decision of the future of the West Bank and Gaza Strip with negotiations among the countries of interest before expiration of the 5-year term, and recognition of the “legitimate rights” of the Palestinians by Israel.<sup>329</sup>

The second document was “A framework for the conclusion of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.”<sup>330</sup> Being more concrete and defined, the agreement was about execution of a peace treaty between the two countries within three months, including replacement of the Israeli authority with the Egyptian on the occupied territory of Sinai, and on the other hand, initiation of peaceful relations from the Egyptian side. The withdrawal would start within three months and end within three years at the latest.<sup>331</sup>

The Camp David talks could only lay the basis for eventual peace, which had to be obtained with “further negotiations.”<sup>332</sup> Even though it was far from settling the Arab-Israeli conflict, it was still a “giant step forward” to achieve peace as stated by Carter.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Framework for Peace in the Middle East, September 17, 1978, accessed April 15, 2022, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-210245/>.

<sup>329</sup> UNSC Council Resolution No 242, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://peacemaker.un.org/egyptisrael-frameworkforpeace78>.

<sup>330</sup> A framework for the conclusion of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, September 17, 1978, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/camp-david-accords-egypt-1978.pdf>.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>332</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt’s Foreign Policy,” 37.

<sup>333</sup> United States Congress Senate, “Sinai Agreement: Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate,” July 20, 1981, 59.

Sadat did not have to care about the public opinion in Egypt regarding an eventual peace with Israel as his was a “one-level game.”<sup>334</sup> “Sadat continually spoke of agreement or disagreement on the part of the Egyptian people even though he was clearly able to ensure the adoption of almost any decision he wanted” says Israeli Foreign Minister Ezer Weizman.<sup>335</sup> As written by the US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, “President Sadat, who saw Camp David as an opportunity to collude with the United States against Israel, ended with much of the pressure directed against him. His choices were either to walk out or to agree to whatever we could get the Israelis to accept. Sadat chose the latter....”<sup>336</sup>

During negotiation in the US, Sadat was “agreeable and accommodating,” according to Carter, and “promised to go to extremes in being flexible” while Begin was “evasive with Carter as with the Arabs.”<sup>337</sup> The Israeli Prime Minister Begin said yes only to Sinai withdrawal while firing away “five no’s,” that’s to say “no withdrawal from the West Bank, no end to settlement activity, no acknowledgement that UN Resolution 242 applied to the West Bank and Gaza, no Palestinian self-rule and no consideration of refugees.”<sup>338</sup>

Ultimately, “Treaty of Peace Between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the State of Israel” was signed in Washington on March 26, 1979, in order to “bring to an end the state of war between them and to establish a peace in which every state in the area can live in security” and for “settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its aspects.”<sup>339</sup>

Syria, Algeria, Libya and the Palestinians were completely against Sadat’s visit to Israel and his signing a peace agreement with them. Moreover, even the “more sober nations” – Jordan and Saudi Arabia – considered the treaty lacking in many aspects as the agreement did not reveal “Israel’s intention to withdraw from all Arab territories it occupied” and did not clarify the “rights of Palestinian people for self-determination and in setting up their homeland on their own soil” and also disregarded the existence of

<sup>334</sup> Brownlee, “Peace before Freedom,” 654.

<sup>335</sup> Ezer Weizman, *The Battle for Peace* (New York: Bantam, 1981), 166.

<sup>336</sup> Brownlee, “Peace before Freedom,” 655.

<sup>337</sup> Abadi, “Israeli-Egyptian Relations: Obstacles to Meaningful Rapprochement,” 14.

<sup>338</sup> Brownlee, “Peace before Freedom,” 655.

<sup>339</sup> Egypt-Israel: Treaty of Peace. *International Legal Materials* 18, no 2 (March 1979), 362.

PLO which was considered, by the Arab Summit, as the “sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinians.”<sup>340</sup>

The agreement put an end to the hot confrontations – as took place in 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973 - between the two countries, and made Egypt the first Arab country recognizing Israel. Sadat went that far and concluded a peace agreement with Israel, for he thought that prosperity of Egypt depended on it.<sup>341</sup>

Both sides had different expectations from the peace treaty: Israel sought recognition, and normalization of relations in all possible fields. Egypt, on the other hand, had different purposes including improving general well-being of the country, dealing with poor economy, benefitting from the American aid and increasing tourism incomes. To achieve all these, Egypt had to give up its role of “the leader of the Arab world” and also had to bear harsh reactions of the other Arab states.<sup>342</sup> That accommodation with Israel was not welcomed by the Arab states, which blamed Egypt for turning its back to the Palestinian issue and dismissed Egypt from the Arab League. The peace agreement did not have many enthusiastic supporters at home either. Sadat was criticized for betraying the Palestinian case and making peace with their greatest enemy.<sup>343</sup>

While sending Russian experts, concluding disengagement agreements, visiting Jerusalem, holding Camp David talks and signing the peace treaty, Sadat maintained a consistent strategy but without the support of the other Arab states.<sup>344</sup> The fact that Sadat proceeded with his decision to reach a peaceful settlement with Israel despite widespread criticism of the Arab world implies that he made his mind “not to mortgage permanently the future and prosperity of his country to the Palestine problem which is not in fact the main or the only problem of Egypt.”<sup>345</sup> It was, from the beginning to the very end, a “solo performance” of Sadat.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt’s Foreign Policy,” 38.

<sup>341</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 277.

<sup>342</sup> Abadi, “Israeli-Egyptian Relations: Obstacles to Meaningful Rapprochement,” 9-10.

<sup>343</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 278.

<sup>344</sup> Patrick Seale, “The Egypt-Israel Treaty and Its Implications,” *The World Today* 35, no. 5 (May 1979): 191.

<sup>345</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt’s Foreign Policy,” 38.

<sup>346</sup> Jackson, “Sadat’s Perils,” 64.

Even though priorities of the leaders changed and culminated in signing of a peace treaty, it could not gain support of the general public. For this reason, the Egyptian-Israeli relations embarked on the new period of “cold peace.” While the government pursued “official policy of peace,” there was a “culture of war” among public.<sup>347</sup>

In reward of their efforts, Sadat and Menachem Begin won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978 “for jointly having negotiated peace between Egypt and Israel.”<sup>348</sup> Even though Israel-Palestine conflict persists even today, Egypt and Israel conflict on the battlefields ended, for sure, with the peace treaty of 1979.<sup>349</sup> For the part of Egypt, there were significant consequences and financial benefits of the new normalization period, including attracting IMF loans, dropping military expenditures by almost 40% in only 4 years, receiving the US aid of around \$2.2 billion, and increasing oil revenues by more than \$2 billion. All this money could be used to reduce domestic tensions, boost employment and eventually consolidate the regime in the country.<sup>350</sup>

To conclude, it can be said that the Yom Kippur War became a turning point in terms of Egyptian-Israeli relations as Sadat adopted a different policy towards Israel. It was manifest divergence from the long-standing Arab policy of “no recognition, no negotiation, no peace” to “recognizing, negotiating and then making peace with Israel.”<sup>351</sup> That policy shift of Sadat meant that the Arab unity shattered and no longer held in fighting with Israel or fighting for people of Palestine. The 1970s was an important decade for normalization of bilateral relations between Egypt and Israel, which gained momentum with Jerusalem visit of Sadat in 1977, and conclusion of the peace treaty in 1979.

Sadat’s plan became successful as Egypt could get back Sinai from Israeli occupation, and cut the country off pan-Arab nationalism which vehemently defended the Palestinians. Isolation from the Arab world compensated itself by making Egypt the second biggest beneficiary of the US aid only after Israel. With the 1973 War, Sadat

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<sup>347</sup> Abadi, “Israeli-Egyptian Relations: Obstacles to Meaningful Rapprochement,” 14.

<sup>348</sup> The Nobel Peace Prize 1978, accessed February 26, 2022, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1978/summary/>.

<sup>349</sup> Kramer, *Sadat and Begin – the Peacemakers*, 1.

<sup>350</sup> Smith, “Foreign Policy is What States Make of it,” 423.

<sup>351</sup> Smith, “Foreign Policy is What States Make of it,” 421.

could obtain domestic legitimacy that he longed for, but lost it when he sat at the negotiation table with Israel. In this regard, Sadat sought to use Muslim Brotherhood, who was cracked by Nasser, to silence his Nasserist opponents. Nonetheless, that plan of Sadat ended in radicalization of some groups, causing rise of violence in the country. Sadat eventually became the target of the radical Islamist group in the army and assassinated on October 6, 1981 on the anniversary of the 1973 War.<sup>352</sup>

The Western world showed great interest in Sadat's funeral including three presidents of the US (Carter, Ford and Nixon). However, the Arab leaders did not show up except for the Sudanese President. Egyptians who were left heartbroken at the Nasser's funeral were now displeased with their deceased president.<sup>353</sup>

### 3.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter summarized the major events of the Sadat's tenure with a particular focus on Egyptian-Israeli relations, and one of the hypotheses of this study is that Egyptian-Israeli relations are affected by the Egyptian state identity defined and implemented by the leaders of the time. Examination of the Nasser and Sadat periods in a row revealed that there is a change from pan-Arabism to Egyptian nationalism, from pro-Soviet to pro-Western attitude, and from Arab socialism to liberalism. With regards to relations with Israel, dominant ideology of the respective periods which were pan-Arabism and Egyptian nationalism became highly effective in maintaining tough hostility towards Israel or making peace with it.

According to constructivism, states may choose to maintain or change their identities through interstate interactions. In this regard, foreign policy is the main tool of political leaders in definition, reproduction or transformation of identities. Therefore, identity informs foreign policy decisions which establishes a causal relationship in-between. In this vein, Egyptian nationalism of the Sadat era and its reflections on the foreign policy

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<sup>352</sup> History.com Editors, "The president of Egypt is assassinated," accessed February 25, 2022, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-president-of-egypt-is-assassinated>.

<sup>353</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 279.

decisions are worthy of examination and provides a good material for theoretical framework of social constructivism.

How and for which reasons Sadat deviated from economic and political principles of his predecessor and thus, ended in disengaging from the other Arab states and adopting the Egypt-first policy will be studied in the next chapter focusing on the domestic and international factors. Therefore, chapter 2 and chapter 3 aimed to explain the historical flow of the events. On the other hand, the following chapter will compare the two periods to show definition and redefinition of the Egyptian state identity with regards to its relations with Israel.

## CHAPTER 4

### COMPARISON OF THE TWO PERIODS IN TERMS OF STATE IDENTITY

Chapter 2 and chapter 3 delved into the prominent events and important developments of the Nasser and Sadat periods respectively in order to give a specific picture of Egypt of the time. In return, this chapter 4 will provide a comparison of the two periods and examine Egypt-Israel relations from Egypt's standpoint focusing on state identity.

From Nasser to Sadat, Egypt's foreign policy changed from pan-Arabism to Egyptian nationalism, culminating in the Egypt-Israel peace process. That was a manifest shift from *qawmiyya* to *wataniyya*.<sup>354</sup> In the most general sense, pan-Arabism or Arab nationalism is an idea that aims to gather Arab states around a shared goal, culture and politics.<sup>355</sup> It has a far-reaching scope going from cooperation on various levels to unification of all Arab states to create a "united Arab nation."<sup>356</sup> Therefore, it is an ideology with certain practical expressions which reached its heyday during tenure of Nasser who sought to assume leadership of the Arab world. On the other hand, Egyptian nationalism focuses on Egypt and gives priority to the Egyptian components. After zenith of Arab nationalism, Sadat embodied Egyptian nationalism, replacing the Arab concerns with his "Egypt-first"<sup>357</sup> policy.

Arab nationalism versus Egyptian nationalism is parallel to the Arabic terms of *qawmiyya* versus *wataniyya*. *Qawm*, the root of the word *qawmiyya*, refers to the people who do not belong to a specific land, but defined by affinity with the Arab nation. On that account, *qawmiyya* has the "sense of Arab nationalism," as it "includes all Arabs" and goes beyond "territorial boundaries."<sup>358</sup> On the other hand, *wataniyya*, deriving from the word *watan*, means belonging to a specific land and implies definition by

<sup>354</sup> Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, 254.

<sup>355</sup> Britannica, "Pan-Arabism," accessed April 20, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pan-Arabism>.

<sup>356</sup> Stewart Reiser, "Pan-Arabism Revisited," *Middle East Journal* 37, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 218.

<sup>357</sup> Baker, *Egypt's Uncertain Revolution under Nasser and Sadat*, 142.

<sup>358</sup> LA Brand, "A Note on *Qawmiyya* and *Wataniyya*," accessed April 20, 2022, <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/pdf>.

border. Therefore, *wataniyya* is the “state-based nationalism” if *qawmiyya* is the “trans-state Arab nationalism.”<sup>359</sup> Accordingly, *qawmiyya* has the sense of Arab nationalism, while *wataniyya* refers to Egyptian nationalism in the case of Egypt.

In this vein, this chapter aims to explain whether this change in the Egyptian foreign policy towards Israel is relevant to a change in the state identity of Egypt throughout the specified periods, which will include comparison of the two terms in terms of political leaders, institutions, foreign policy behaviors and political discourses to reach a conclusion, and to interpret the obtained data from theoretical framework of constructivism. In order to understand if there is a continuity or change in the Egyptian state identity during the Nasser and Sadat periods, this analysis will be performed on three levels: (i) individual level, (ii) domestic level and (iii) international level. Individual level analysis will describe leaders – Nasser and Sadat - and their role in definition and dissemination of state identity. Domestic level analysis will try to reveal the domestic factors affecting state identity while international level analysis will explain the external factors of the identity formation process.

Constructivism attaches importance to the role of leaders in foreign policy behaviors of states<sup>360</sup> as well as internal and external components. While explaining the factors that structure the state identity, Sadowski focuses on the “process, both internal (modernization) and external (interactions with other states).”<sup>361</sup> Similarly, Lynch underlines “the role of domestic and international public spheres in shaping the strategic contestation of identity and interests.”<sup>362</sup> On that note, Lynch attributes any identity change to a domestic or international crisis. Consequently, this study will bring together domestic and international factors in an attempt to explain the driving force of identity change in Egypt throughout the relevant periods.

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<sup>359</sup> Toby Dodge, “Introduction: Between Wataniyya and Taifia; Understanding the Relationship between State-based Nationalism and Sectarian Identity in the Middle East,” *Nations and Nationalism* 26, no. 1 (January 2020): 85. DOI: 10.1111/nana.12580.

<sup>360</sup> Ahmed Hayri Duman, “Leaders and Egyptian Foreign Policy: Individual Factors during Nasser and Morsi Periods,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 12, 2 (2020): 372.

<sup>361</sup> Telhami and Barnett, *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, 23.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid*, 23.



For constructivism, identity can be defined “as a changing set of beliefs, ideas or norms that reflexive selves -mostly states- follow,”<sup>363</sup> and give important clues about foreign policy behaviors of states as it provides insights into “what states want to do because of how they see themselves in relation to others.”<sup>364</sup> The concept of identity has recently gained wide attention as it comes up with an alternative explanation about state behaviors; however, it is particularly important in the Middle Eastern region because of the characteristics of the states therein where identity is more likely to be associated with “conflict or cooperation.”<sup>365</sup>

Identity is all about “self” and “the other,” and Egyptian “conceptions of self” broadly matter in its relations with Israel<sup>366</sup> since Israel was the “other” which unified the Arab states among the common objective of fighting with Zionism. Struggling with the Zionist State of Israel was a fixed foreign policy agenda – an “idée fixe”- for the Middle Eastern states.<sup>367</sup> However, Egypt had the leading position in hating the State of Israel, and became the driving force of the 1947, 1967 and 1973 confrontations. The Egyptian leaders also explicitly expressed their opposition to the existence of Israel even though they remained incapable of having a victory on the Israeli military forces.<sup>368</sup>

How these perceptions of “self” and “other” are relevant to the Egyptian-Israeli relations will be examined hereinafter from an Egyptian perspective, focusing on the Nasser and Sadat periods.

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<sup>363</sup> Birgit Locher and Elisabeth Prügl, “Feminism: Constructivism’s Other Pedigree,” in *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation*, eds. Karin M. Fierke and Knud Erik Jorgensen (London and New York: Routledge 2015), 79.

<sup>364</sup> Kubalkova, “Foreign Policy, International Politics and Constructivism,” 33.

<sup>365</sup> Telhami and Barnett, *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, 5.

<sup>366</sup> Ewan Stein, “Camp David Consensus: Ideas, Intellectuals, and the Division of Labor in Egypt’s Foreign Policy toward Israel,” *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (September 2011): 737.

<sup>367</sup> Smith, “Foreign Policy is What States Make of it,” 412.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid*, 414.

## 4.1 EGYPTIAN STATE IDENTITY DURING NASSER AND SADAT PERIODS

This section will examine components of state identity during tenure of Nasser and Sadat in terms of their leadership, internal circumstances of Egypt and external factors that may affect the Egyptian state identity. This three-level analysis is important as it fits in the relevant tenets of constructivism which admits role of the leaders and impact of the domestic and international factors in definition of state identity. Individual level analysis will cover personality of Nasser and Sadat and its impact on the foreign policy decisions, as well as their statements and discourse, which give hint about conception of Israel. Furthermore, domestic and international level analysis will describe the internal and external factors that may have triggered adoption of a particular identity in the course of their periods.

### 4.1.1 Individual Level Analysis

Like any other state, Egypt's foreign policy cannot be fully understood without giving particular attention to material and non-material facts including its geography, culture and demography, etc.<sup>369</sup> but, above all, leaders of Egypt became a critical determinant of foreign policy behaviors. Indeed, foreign policy is the main tool of political leaders in definition, reproduction or transformation of identities.<sup>370</sup> Therefore, this study will give utmost attention to the two leaders and their engine-like roles in adoption of identities.<sup>371</sup> In this respect, impact of the two leaders on state identity of Egypt will be examined hereunder.

Personal traits of Nasser deserve a closer examination considering his highly weighted role on foreign policy behaviors of Egypt. He was a very inspiring man and definitely an influential orator; he could capture attention of his audience for long hours explaining how resources of Egypt were exploited by the West and how Arab unity under leadership of Egypt could settle the Arab-Israeli problem and bring tranquility in

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<sup>369</sup> El-Sayed A Shalaby, "Egypt's Foreign Policy 1952-1992: Some Personal Reflections," *Security Dialogue* 23, no. 3 (September 1992): 107.

<sup>370</sup> Demirtaş-Coşkun, "Systemic Changes and State Identity," 33.

<sup>371</sup> Aydın-Düzgüt, "Foreign Policy and Identity Change: Analysing Perceptions of Europe among the Turkish Public," 20.

the Middle East.<sup>372</sup> He was “the man with savage sincerity,” who “comes into historical being to lead his people” and who “represents the aspirations of generations before and beyond him.”<sup>373</sup>

Nasser’s foreign policy was based on a set of personal beliefs which were “anti-imperialism, Arabism, leadership and prestige.”<sup>374</sup> In particular, Arab nationalism was the main ideology of the Nasser era. Initially, Nasser did not start off to realize an “Arab nationalist project”<sup>375</sup>; however, what was a socio-economic project in the first place gradually turned into a “pan-Arabic historical and transformational political dream,” and Nasser was almost regarded as Saladin who fought with crusader armies.<sup>376</sup>

Nasser made use of the power of propaganda through the national radio channel – “Voice of the Arabs,” which once announced that “what impacted one part of this nation would by definition impact the other parts.” That explains, in a way, Nasser’s philosophy for legitimatizing his interference in the other Arab states.<sup>377</sup> In another transmission, it was stated that “Egypt is in the service of the Arab nation and its struggle against Western imperialists and its lackeys in the Arab world.”<sup>378</sup>

“Sailing from Yemen, you were crying Palestine” said Nasser in his speech of October 22, 1963 to motivate his soldiers returning from Yemen,<sup>379</sup> which was a reflection of his Arabist views focusing on the Israeli enmity. According to Nasser, Arab nationalism “took precedence over any other consideration, even state sovereignty since it was the primary ideological and emotional identification of every Arab.”<sup>380</sup> On that note, Arab nationalism is important to underline since “the more pan-Arab the Arab state, the more

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<sup>372</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 260.

<sup>373</sup> Tarek, *Egypt on the Brink: From the Rise of Nasser to the Fall of Mubarak*, 51.

<sup>374</sup> Dawisha, A.I., *Egypt in the Arab World: The Elements of Foreign Policy* (New York: Halsted Press, 1976), 125.

<sup>375</sup> Tarek, *Egypt on the Brink: From the Rise of Nasser to the Fall of Mubarak*, 60.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid*, 66.

<sup>377</sup> Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 142.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid*, 147.

<sup>379</sup> Ferris, *Nasser’s Gamble: How Intervention in Yemen Caused the Six-Day War and the Decline of Egyptian Power*, 262.

<sup>380</sup> Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, 152.

antipathy and conflict it will express toward Israel.”<sup>381</sup> Therefore, Arab nationalism can be argued to impact the Arab-Israeli relations. In consequence, the Nasser era can be said to be characterized with an Arab nationalist identity.

Nasser once questioned “why should Arab efforts to oppose imperialism be dissipated when the region is one, with the same conditions, the same problems, the same future and the same enemy. The Arabs could be potential allies in getting rid of the remaining influence of imperialism in the region.”<sup>382</sup> This statement of Nasser is a clear manifestation of his Arab nationalist thoughts.

As explained in the theoretical framework in Chapter 1, it is political leaders that make clear a state’s identity.<sup>383</sup> Furthermore, political leaders instrumentally resort to state identity with the aim of fulfilling certain foreign policy targets,<sup>384</sup> which equals to argument of David Campbell who defines state identity as a “site in which political struggles are enacted.”<sup>385</sup> Similarly, Nasser used pan-Arabist identity to intervene in the domestic affairs of the other Arab states and demonize Israel. All this can be revealed by examining statements, speeches, memoirs and other sources. In this vein, political discourse of Nasser about Israel gives important clues about his conceptions of “self” and Israel as “other.”

Nasser’s discourse against Israel was noteworthy as he defined Egypt as the main barrier to “Israeli project of becoming an integral part of the Middle East” since he vigorously argued that “all Arabic lands belonged to the Arabs” and that “Israel was an arrow directed at the heart of the Arab world.” According to Nasser, there was a “civilizational and generational war between the Arabs and Israel” and “armed struggle against Israel was valid and necessary” and also “struggle with Israel was not a Palestinian-Israeli struggle, but an Arab-Israeli one.”<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Ibid, 17-18.

<sup>382</sup> Peter Mansfield, *Nasser's Egypt* (London: Penguin's Book, 1965), 54.

<sup>383</sup> Jackson and Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, 224.

<sup>384</sup> Demirtaş-Coşkun, “Systemic Changes and State Identity: Turkish and German Responses,” 33.

<sup>385</sup> Quoted in Altorai, “Understanding the Role of State Identity in Foreign Policy-Making: The Rise and Demise of Saudi-Iranian Rapprochement (1997-2009),” 47.

<sup>386</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink: From the Rise of Nasser to the Fall of Mubarak*, 71.

He was convinced that Israel was a “Western military base” positioned in the Middle East with the ultimate goal of causing divisions among the Arab states. In this vein, Israel was regarded both as an “occupier of Arab Palestine” and “the nation’s strategic enemy.” Therefore, Egypt was never completely secure in the face of an Israeli State; even the existence of Israel was unbearable and against interests of the Arab nations.<sup>387</sup>

Between the Revolution of 1952 and the October War of 1973 – which marks the entire Nasser period and the first years of Sadat’s office – Israel was regarded as the synonym of imperialism.<sup>388</sup> Analyzing the important speeches of Nasser, it could be seen that Israel did not generally get a lot of direct reference –visibly less than the references of imperialism – as Israel was generally considered as a “child of imperialism”<sup>389</sup>

For Nasser, Israel was a “fabricated state” (*dawla mulaffaqa*) after all.<sup>390</sup> Nasser announced in a speech that “Israel today does not represent for the Egyptians, the Arabs, the Afro-Asian bloc, nor for the world’s conscience, only a military aggression toward Egypt or the Arabs, or this region of the world. Rather, it represents something else. It represents the attempt to dominate us by way of this state. Israel represents foreign pressure on the Arabs. It represents the attempt to divide the Arab forces and spread division among them, to prevent them from joining and uniting and benefitting from the fruits of their country and their land.”<sup>391</sup>

According to Nasser, Israel “stands for imperialism. It serves imperialism and its objectives of domination and exploitation. It follows that the triumph of freedom and peace in liquidating imperialism cannot occur without affecting Israel’s existence... It is one and the same battle.”<sup>392</sup> He further argued that Israel was “actively aggressive and expansionist” and would not stop until it captured most of the Arab territories.<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>388</sup> Stein, “Camp David Consensus,” 740.

<sup>389</sup> Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, 243.

<sup>390</sup> Stein, “Camp David Consensus,” 740.

<sup>391</sup> Gamal Abdel Nasser, “Speech to the Popular Congress in Jumhuriyya Square,” July 22, 1955, Cairo.

<sup>392</sup> Stein, “Camp David Consensus,” 741.

<sup>393</sup> Laura M James, *Nasser at War: Arab Images of the Enemy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 9.

Lynch defines state identity as “not only the conceptions held by leaders, but set of beliefs about the nature and purpose of the state expressed in public articulations of state actions and ideals.”<sup>394</sup> In other words, state identity is a combination of leaders’ perceptions, ideas, institutions and discourse while it is described by Telhami and Barnett as “corporate and officially demarcated identity linked to the state apparatus.”<sup>395</sup> In his statements, Nasser unvaryingly defined Israel as “hostile, threatening, deceitful and aggressive.” It was pictured as “the fundamental enemy who is a manifestation of perpetual aggression.”<sup>396</sup> Just before the 1967 War, Nasser described Israel as “militarily boastful, deluded by false past successes and ripe for destruction by the Arab nation.”<sup>397</sup>

Concerning reaching a settlement with Israel, Nasser was convinced that “as long as the Israelis cannot sign a peace treaty with us, Israel will not consider that it has won the war. The Zionist strategy is to force a settlement.”<sup>398</sup> Nasser was of the opinion that Israel would not agree to withdraw from Sinai as main objective of their “deceptive,” “cunning,” “vicious” and “depraved” enemy was “expansion at the expense of Arab territory.”<sup>399</sup>

In relation to the West, particularly the US, Nasser always urged caution, and had a manifest opposition to the US’s involvement in the regional affairs. According to Nasser, the US was “biased in favor of Israel” and “planning to facilitate Israel’s domination of the Arab area.”<sup>400</sup> As reported by a Soviet Ambassador in 1967, he did not “trust the Americans” and described them as “crooks and thieves.”<sup>401</sup>

Apart from being an outcome of social construction, identity not only defines an actor, but also ordains how that actor must “think, feel, evaluate and ultimately behave.”<sup>402</sup> In

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<sup>394</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>395</sup> Telhami and Barnett, *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, 8.

<sup>396</sup> M James, *Nasser at War: Arab Images of the Enemy*, 97.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>398</sup> Richard Parker, *The Politics of Miscalculation in the Middle East* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993), 135.

<sup>399</sup> M James, *Nasser at War: Arab Images of the Enemy*, 138.

<sup>400</sup> Abdel Magid Farid, *Nasser: The Final Years* (Reading, U.K.: Ithaca Press, 1994), 58.

<sup>401</sup> M James, *Nasser at War: Arab Images of the Enemy*, 141.

<sup>402</sup> Chafetz, Spirtas and Frankel, “Introduction: Tracing the Influence of Identity on Foreign Policy in Origins of National Interests,” viii.

other words, this self-defining concept has significant consequences for behaviors of a state, and thus its foreign policy making.<sup>403</sup> On that note, Nasser once told that “there is no alternative to battle. Despite his losses, the enemy continues his pressure and arrogance. The enemy’s friends, with the US foremost among them, continue to give him aid, thus helping him continue his aggression.”<sup>404</sup> He did not separate Israel from the US and considered it as a single and unified struggle as follows: “Struggle with Israel is not over yet. And the struggle with the Americans also is not over.”<sup>405</sup> Even, his statements delivered at the beginning of the 1970s indicated a clear enmity towards the US “who wanted Israel to crush the peoples of the Arab nation.”<sup>406</sup>

The Soviet statesman Anatoly Dobrynin once said that Nasser “would not negotiate with Israel about anything, about demilitarisation, free maritime passage or security arrangements. And he would not agree to the language on peace that the US had made a condition for its endorsement of total Israeli withdrawal from Sinai.”<sup>407</sup>

According to Kubalkova, it is the states that reflect each other as friends, rivals or enemies. Thus, they ascribe a certain identity to one another through social relations.<sup>408</sup> Nasser never described himself as “an anti-Semitic on a personal level,” claiming that his “feelings of enmity towards Israel” and his “actions against it evolved later from one thing only the Zionist Movement that led to the usurpation of a piece of Arab land”<sup>409</sup> During an interview, Nasser answered a question of David Morgan about the “problem of Israel” as follows: “The existence of Israel in our region is impossible to accept. It is not possible for us to go back on our determination to attain the full recognition of the Palestinian rights, to return a million Arab refugees to their homes in Gaza from which they have been evacuated. Any thought of reconciliatory negotiations with the Israelis is necessarily inconsiderable. Even if they are willing to offer financial compensation of

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<sup>403</sup> Altorai, “Understanding the Role of State Identity in Foreign Policy-Making,” 28.

<sup>404</sup> M James, *Nasser at War: Arab Images of the Enemy*, 144.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid*, 130.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid*, 159.

<sup>407</sup> D. A. Korn, *Stalemate: The War of Attrition and Great Power Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1967–1970* (Boulder: Westview, 1992), 163–4.

<sup>408</sup> Kubalkova, “Foreign Policy, International Politics, and Constructivism,” 34.

<sup>409</sup> Gamal Abdel Nasser, interview by David Morgan, 1962, transcript, Sunday Times Reporter Interview with President, para. 14, accessed March 01, 2022, [http://nasser.bibalex.org/Common/SundayTimesInterview\\_en.aspx?lang=en](http://nasser.bibalex.org/Common/SundayTimesInterview_en.aspx?lang=en).

some kind, it is impossible to buy a human beings fatherland, or spirit, or basic human rights.”<sup>410</sup>

Concerning likelihood of a settlement with Israel, Nasser said in the same interview that “The account will be settled one day. I believe what will help achieve this is to promote the economy of the Arab World and raise the standard of living of its people, to reach this stage where we can exert pressure upon the Israelis and those who support them, until they realize the futility of their resistance.”<sup>411</sup>

Nasser’s influence on definition of the Egyptian identity and determination of foreign policy behavior towards Israel is profound since “evaluation of a foreign state by decision-makers is not based on what it is but their image of a state concerning its positions, capabilities and culture.”<sup>412</sup> In this vein, the way Nasser and subsequently Sadat conceptualized Israel is important to understand foreign policy actions of the two leaders. Like Nasser, Sadat left his marks on the direction of his country in terms of Israeli and Western policy which will be analyzed hereunder.

“No nation has a greater stake in Sadat’s survival than Israel.”<sup>413</sup> So writes Henry Jackson to define how Israel policy of Sadat could end Nasser’s shadow on his leadership, and transformed him into a remarkable name of unexpected developments. Hence, among many other things, the Nasser and Sadat periods widely differ in terms of how they handled the key foreign policy issue of “Israel.” Nasser refused any possibility of conciliation with Israel, but Sadat, on the other hand, “officially” reached agreement with Israel to avoid war.<sup>414</sup>

The Arab identity dream of Nasser turned into an “Egypt first policy”<sup>415</sup> with Sadat. The two leaders differed on their reactions to one common problem of sovereignty. Ending the British influence was Nasser’s initial purpose while Sadat was primarily concerned

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<sup>410</sup> Ibid, para. 180.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid. para, 181.

<sup>412</sup> Kenneth E. Boulding, *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1956), 6.

<sup>413</sup> Jackson, “Sadat’s Perils,” 61.

<sup>414</sup> Stein, “Camp David Consensus,” 745.

<sup>415</sup> Baker, *Egypt’s Uncertain Revolution under Nasser and Sadat*, 142.



about retrieving the control of the Egyptian territory under Israeli occupation.<sup>416</sup> To achieve these, they pursued drastically different policies in terms of both domestic and international actions.

Political leaders can choose to embrace a certain identity over the others for reacting some international developments or for realizing their certain agendas.<sup>417</sup> On that note, Flesken argues that political leaders significantly influence formation and redefinition of identity that is subsequently adopted by the society and constitute a shared understanding. They have the ability to shape and reshape the public discourse about frontiers of self and other.<sup>418</sup> Therefore, examining the leader's qualities is important as it is cogently argued that it is the leaders that have the most weight on the foreign policy orientations in the authoritarian states.<sup>419</sup> As a matter of fact, leaders "make decisions from among different choices, plan and conduct diverse actions and utilize their knowledge to look after their goals."<sup>420</sup> In this vein, Sadat's conception of self and the other, and his personal limits conditioning such a definition need to be enlightened. To begin with, Sadat considered himself "as an Egyptian, rather than as an Arab," and thus he could sit at the negotiation table with Israel to defend his country's interests instead of strongly sticking to the principles of the Arab unity.<sup>421</sup> He once said that "it is not conceivable that the fate of my country should be dependent on the consent of other Arabs."<sup>422</sup> That was how he diverged away from the Nasserist Arabism.

Sadat oriented his country to an "Egypt first"<sup>423</sup> axis, which left the Arab unity under the shadow of patriotism. This adherence to Egyptian patriotism became the dominant

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<sup>416</sup> Shalaby, "Egypt's Foreign Policy: 1952-1992 Some Personal Reflections," 109.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>418</sup> Anaïd Flesken, "Identity Change in a Context of Intergroup Threat: Regional Identity Mobilization in Bolivia," 52-54.

<sup>419</sup> Ahmed Hayri Duman, "Leaders and Egyptian Foreign Policy: Individual Factors during Nasser and Morsi Periods," *Middle Eastern Studies* 12, no. 2 (2020): 372.

<sup>420</sup> Donald a Sylvan, Ashok Goel, and B Chandrasekaran, "Analyzing Political Decision Making from an Information-Processing Perspective: JESSE," *American Journal of Political Science* 34, no. 1 (February 1990): 75.

<sup>421</sup> Smith, "Foreign Policy is What States Make of it," 422.

<sup>422</sup> D. Dishon, "Sadat's Arab Adversaries," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 8 (Summer 1978): 12-15.

<sup>423</sup> Baker, *Egypt's Uncertain Revolution under Nasser and Sadat*, 142.

ideology of the Sadat era. In this regard, Sadat launched the 1973 War with Israel not as an extension of Arab nationalism, but of “Egyptian patriotism and domestic unity.”<sup>424</sup>

“He (Sadat) was particularly thick-skinned when it came to Arab nationalist causes,” writes Michael Barnett in explaining the peace treaty with Israel.<sup>425</sup> In another note, Sadat was accused of leaving the “Arab cause” to which Sadat responded by underlining “his primary responsibility to Egypt.”<sup>426</sup> As can be seen, “state sovereignty” and “national interests” became the basis for Sadat’s foreign policy behaviors toward Israel,<sup>427</sup> which signals a change in Egyptian identity.

In an attempt to explain this structural foreign policy shift, it can be argued that, foreign policy choices of Nasser were highly affected from anticolonial movements of his period, and also from his conception of Egypt as a leader in its region. On the other hand, Sadat’s policy orientations basically arose from his objective of defending national interests of the country before all.<sup>428</sup> Sadat prioritized the Egyptian national interests over the Arab identity glorified by his precedent, which led Sadat to handle the Arab-Israeli question from a different perspective and a new “way of thinking.”<sup>429</sup> It is relevant to Kubalkova’s argument that “what states want to do because of how they see themselves in relation to others.”<sup>430</sup>

Birgöl Demirtaş-Coşkun argues that through interstate interactions, states may choose to maintain or change their identities. In this regard, foreign policy is the main tool of political leaders in definition, reproduction or transformation of identities.<sup>431</sup> Sadat’s main rupture from Nasser’s foreign policy orientations took place after the 1973 War which changed Sadat’s position with regards to the two superpowers. Sadat chose to end the Nasserist enmity towards the West and instead, geared down relations with the SU. The 1973 War also marks the date of policy shift towards Israel. “No recognition, no negotiation, no peace” changed to enable “recognizing, negotiating and making

<sup>424</sup> Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, 264.

<sup>425</sup> Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1998), 197.

<sup>426</sup> Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, 267.

<sup>427</sup> Stein, “Camp David Consensus,” 752.

<sup>428</sup> Shalaby, “Egypt’s Foreign Policy 1952-1992: Some Personal Reflections,” 114.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid*, 111.

<sup>430</sup> Kubalkova, “Foreign Policy, International Politics and Constructivism,” 33.

<sup>431</sup> Demirtaş-Coşkun, “Systemic Changes and State Identity: Turkish and German Responses,” 33.

peace with Israel.”<sup>432</sup> Thus, Sadat gave up the long-pursued policy of pan-Arab movement in favor of Egypt’s national interests. Last battle with Israel was initiated with the goals of recovery of the Egyptian territories under Israeli occupation, ending the military confrontations with Israel because of its ruining economic burden, restoring relations with the US considering its weighted role in Israel’s policies and improvement of Egypt’s economy through Western capital. Such goals did not include any reference to “Arab nationalism,” “Arab unity” or “Arab revolution” which were like the “staple diet” of Nasser’s statements.<sup>433</sup>

Egypt and Syria were partners in the 1973 battle and the objective was the liberation of Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights – at least so thought Syria – as Sadat had his eye only on the retrieval of the Egyptian territory. This Egypt first concern of Sadat was clearly demonstrated with his acceptance of the unilateral armistice with Israel, which could be learned by Syria only at the Security Council during announcement of the Egyptian official about “his government’s acceptance of the cease-fire.”<sup>434</sup> Thus ended, according to Patrick Seale, the “Egypt’s pan-Arab phase” and Sadat’s ideological orientation was “a sort of anti-Suez, setting in reverse everything Nasser had stood for.”<sup>435</sup> For some, this process would end with Sadat’s “concessions emboldening Israel, leaving the Palestinians in the lurch, and wrenching Egypt from the community of Arab states it had previously led.”<sup>436</sup>

Green argues that identities particularly stand out as a critical component if they undergo a transformation, resulting in unaccustomed alternatives, behaviors and preferences that may change the course of history.<sup>437</sup> Likewise, Camp David accords are clear evidence of a new understanding in Egyptian foreign policy toward Israel. Instead of the former hostile attitude, the government now recognized the need to adopt a “constructive” and “correct” approach in its relations.<sup>438</sup> Telhami and Barnett argue that the “Arabism” of Nasser turned into the “Egyptian nationalism” during the Sadat

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<sup>432</sup> Smith, “Foreign Policy is What States Make of it,” 421.

<sup>433</sup> Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, 265.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid, 266.

<sup>435</sup> Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria. Asad of Syria: The struggle for the Middle East*, 261.

<sup>436</sup> Brownlee, “Peace before Freedom,” 666.

<sup>437</sup> Green, “Constructivist Comparative Politics: Foundations and Framework,” 33.

<sup>438</sup> Stein, “Camp David Consensus,” 737.

period, and it was that change in identity which enabled conclusion of a peace treaty with Israel.<sup>439</sup>

Camp David Agreement pushed Egypt from the “heart and center of Arab politics” to its “extreme periphery”<sup>440</sup>. The Treaty brought again “Nile Valley nationalism” as it concentrated on “domestic concerns” more than “pan-Arab causes such as Palestine.” As a matter of fact, Palestine was the main issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict, however, that matter was quite ignored in the treaty. Above all, the peace treaty was said to harm the Palestinians’ “negotiating stance.”<sup>441</sup> Sadat’s Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmi even accused him of being “double-faced,” arguing that he was publicly supporting the Palestinians while actually “sending different messages” to Israel.<sup>442</sup>

Foreign policy behaviors of agents are not “routinized social practices” but instead, “non-routine actions designed to effect or deal with change.”<sup>443</sup> Foreign policy also includes deliberate and premeditated actions resting on “conscious decision making designed to achieve a specific goal which may well be a change from the status quo.”<sup>444</sup> Likewise, the October War was a “war to make peace”<sup>445</sup>, a strategy to change the status quo in a quite historic way.

As it was previously argued that it is political leaders that make clear a state’s identity, Sadat’s discourse towards Israel will be analyzed below by examining his speeches and statements. The speeches will be handled in a chronological order, which is important to show the change in Sadat’s discourse for Israel and for the US. During the initial years of his office, Sadat maintained a rhetoric similar to Nasser’s, which shifted in time. For example, in one of his speeches delivered at the Egyptian Assembly in 1972, Sadat blamed Israel for “dislodging” the Palestinians through “genocide and destitution,” and accused the US for providing supplies to Israel. He further argued that the US “will not

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<sup>439</sup> Ibid, 739.

<sup>440</sup> Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, 268.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid, 195.

<sup>442</sup> Abadi, “Israeli-Egyptian Relations: Obstacles to Meaningful Rapprochement,” 9.

<sup>443</sup> Flockhart, “Constructivism and Foreign Policy”, 90.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>445</sup> Seale, “The Egypt-Israel Treaty and Its Implications,” 191.

be able to impose on our people the myth of a *fait accompli* of peace.<sup>446</sup> He further said that “We will not cede one inch of Arab land. There will be no negotiations with Israel. There will not be in Egypt and we will not allow in the Arab land anybody who would relinquish the Palestinian people’s right.”<sup>447</sup> Furthermore, Sadat described Israel as “a tool of imperialism”<sup>448</sup> - the exact word previously used by Nasser, and such discourse does not indicate any prospect of settlement as Israel is positioned as an enemy.

In his statement of October 16, 1973 Sadat changed his fierce stance and said that “when great nations confront major challenges, they are capable of setting their priorities with the utmost clarity.”<sup>449</sup> Sadat talked about “peace based on justice,” arguing that Egypt is “fighting for the sake of peace”<sup>450</sup> and referred Israel as the “Zionist state”<sup>451</sup>. Sadat further added that they are not “adventurers in war” but “seekers of peace,”<sup>452</sup> and they “want the policy of detente to succeed and be fostered.”<sup>453</sup> Israel is portrayed as “enemy” while there are many references to the “Arab nation.”<sup>454</sup> Sadat expressed his readiness to attend an international peace conference on condition that Israel retreated to the pre-1967 War.<sup>455</sup>

Unlike the previous hostile attitude to the US for its frank support for Israel, Sadat received, on June 12, 1974, the US President Nixon in Cairo who described that meeting as a “turning point” in bilateral relations and the previous times as “a period of misunderstanding and noncooperation.”<sup>456</sup> Sadat somehow went back to the “pre-Nasser era” as he came to the conclusion that Egypt’s “national interests could be best served under American hegemony.”<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> Sadat, “President Sadat's Speech to the Second Session of the Egyptian People's Assembly,” Cairo (October 15, 1972), 1-2, accessed March 2, 2022, <https://sadat.umd.edu/resources/presidential-speeches>.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>449</sup> Sadat, “Excerpts of a Speech Calling for an Arab-Israeli Peace Conference,” Cairo (October 16, 1973), 90, accessed March 2, 2022.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid, 94.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid, 94.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid, 97.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid, 96.

<sup>456</sup> Nixon, “Remarks on the Arrival of President Nixon in Cairo,” Cairo (June 12, 1974), 173, accessed March 2, 2022.

<sup>457</sup> Seale, “The Egypt-Israel Treaty and Its Implications,” 191.

Sitting at the negotiation table with Israel was regarded as “inconsiderable”<sup>458</sup> by Nasser, but only 13 years later, in 1975, Sadat said to the press that “we stand at a turning point of the Arab-Israeli conflict. For the first time in 26 years, it is possible to achieve peace in the area. I quite agree with Dr. Kissinger that the position of Egypt and Israel can be reconciled.”<sup>459</sup> Towards the end of the same year, Sadat expressed his commitment “to reach a final and just peace settlement by means of negotiations.”<sup>460</sup>

In support of his *infitah* policy, Sadat delivered a speech to the Economic Club in New York on October 30, 1975, to attract foreign investments to his country as long as “their objective is mutual benefit and not exploitation.”<sup>461</sup> This is also a shift from Nasser’s foreign policies who had distanced his country from the West.

In his speech to the Egyptian nationals in Washington in 1975, Sadat stated that his visit to the US “realised a balance with the big powers and put an end to the attitude of traditional friendship and traditional enmity, and hence Egypt’s national interests have become the foremost consideration.”<sup>462</sup> This focus on the national interest can be considered as a harbinger of Egyptian nationalism that Sadat would adopt throughout his office.

On November 7, 1975, Sadat came together with the British businessmen to explain his open door policy and invite foreign capital to his country.<sup>463</sup> That signals a change in the former identification of Britain with imperialism.

State identity has its roots in political leaders and certain state institutions, and has a determining role in conditioning foreign policy practices through which it will show friendship, hostility or rivalry to other states. Therefore, re-designation of the state identity will basically mean redefinition of relations with other actors as a friend, enemy

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<sup>458</sup> Nasser, interview by David Morgan, para. 180.

<sup>459</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt’s Foreign Policy,” 29.

<sup>460</sup> Interim Agreement between Israel and Egypt (Sinai II), Article 1.

<sup>461</sup> Sadat, “Speech to the Economic Club,” New York (October 30, 1975), 49, accessed March 2, 2022.

<sup>462</sup> Sadat, “Speech to Egyptian Expatriates in Washington D.C.,” Washington (November 6, 1975), 96, accessed March 2, 2022.

<sup>463</sup> Sadat, “Speech to British Businessmen,” London (November 7, 1975), 7, accessed March 2, 2022.

or rival.<sup>464</sup> In one of his speeches in 1975, Sadat said that “when I went to America and spoke before the Congress after the October War, I was addressing them as an equal, as a friend but not as an ally”<sup>465</sup> and he implied his “willingness to negotiate with the US despite ideological differences.” Thus, Sadat described the US as a friend, which is a redefinition of self and the other.

During a meeting with the Arab and African ambassadors, Sadat stated that “we do not have traditions of friendship nor enmity with anyone. We side with our interests, and we can never live in isolation from the world.” Sadat further explained how he “made use of” the US “so as to advance the peace process.”<sup>466</sup> Thus, Sadat turned his back to the former enmity vigorously maintained during the Nasser period.

In his address to the Assembly in 1976, Sadat, referring to a Nasserist policy, declared that Egypt “got rid of the categorizations which separated the Arab states, and which wasted much of the Arab and national effort in internal and secondary fights which could only benefit the enemy. When I say categorizations, I mean labels such as reactionary, progressive and the likes.”<sup>467</sup> That was the discourse of Nasser to interfere in the other Arab states and support the revolutionary movements there. Sadat clearly expressed that he would not pursue such foreign policy behaviors and instead focused on his own country’s interests.

In his statements, Sadat began to underline the benefits of ending the war situation with Israel, and said in the Germany Foreign Policy Society in 1976 that Egypt wanted “to put an end to human suffering and misery,” and relieve “the burden of defense budgets and military expenditures.”<sup>468</sup> Concerning conflict resolutions, scholars are of the

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<sup>464</sup> Altorai, “Understanding the Role of State Identity in Foreign Policy-Making,” 52.

<sup>465</sup> Sadat, “Speech to Members of the Egyptian Community in Britain,” Britain, (November 8, 1975), 15, accessed March 2, 2022.

<sup>466</sup> Sadat, “Speech to Arab and African Ambassadors,” (November 8, 1975), 13, accessed March 2, 2022.

<sup>467</sup> Sadat, “Address to the People’s Assembly,” Cairo (March 14, 1976), 240, accessed March 2, 2022.

<sup>468</sup> Sadat, “Excerpt from a Speech to the German Foreign Policy Society,” (March 30, 1976), accessed March 2, 2022.

opinion that identity changes of the relevant groups would eventually fortify peace processes and become a shortcut for reconciliation.<sup>469</sup>

Concerning the European involvement in the Middle Eastern geography, Sadat said in a speech that “We have ... exerted our utmost effort in order to show clearly how we encourage an extremely active European role to be assumed not only for the sake of setting the Middle East crisis, but also to facilitate the immense and tremendous socio-economic conversion.”<sup>470</sup> However, Nasser had argued that “defense of our region should emanate from the region itself without the participation of a foreign country.”<sup>471</sup>

Sadat claimed that “I and all the Egyptian people are working to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict by peaceful means” and “we will always remain committed to realize a peaceful settlement in Geneva.”<sup>472</sup> Thus, Sadat called on Israel to attend the Geneva Conference to reach a peaceful settlement.

On November 11, 1976, Sadat called the US to “establish a just peace in the area and to set up new Arab-American relations.”<sup>473</sup> During a visit to Ismailia in 1976, Sadat stated that “1977 shall be the year for exerting our utmost for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.”<sup>474</sup>

During a speech of November 9, 1977, Sadat underlined that he “cared little about procedural methods” that may be demanded by Israel for going to Geneva, further adding that he was “even ready to go to the Knesset and discuss with them.”<sup>475</sup> On November 20, 1977, Sadat delivered his historic speech at the Israeli Knesset, calling

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<sup>469</sup> Rumelili and Todd, “Paradoxes of Identity Change: Integrating Macro, Meso, and Micro Research on Identity in Conflict Processes,” 4.

<sup>470</sup> Sadat, “Lecture Given at the German Society for Foreign Policy,” (March 30, 1976), 479, accessed March 2, 2022.

<sup>471</sup> Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, 161.

<sup>472</sup> Sadat, “Excerpt from a Speech to a Delegation of M.P.s from West Germany,” (May 25, 1976), accessed March 2, 2022.

<sup>473</sup> Sadat, “Excerpt from a Speech at the Inaugural Session of the New People’s Assembly,” Cairo (November 11, 1976), accessed March 2, 2022.

<sup>474</sup> Sadat, “Excerpt from a Speech during a Visit to Ismailia,” Ismailia (December 4, 1976), accessed March 2, 2022.

<sup>475</sup> Sadat, “Excerpts from a Speech to the People’s Assembly,” Cairo (November 9, 1977), 151, accessed March 2, 2022.



for “peace and a lasting, fair settlement.”<sup>476</sup> Sadat’s declaration that he could pay a visit to Jerusalem was a big challenge to a deep-rooted Arab “taboo,” and even included “tacit recognition” of Israeli state. In his address to Knesset, Sadat asked to establish “comprehensive peace with total Israeli withdrawal from Arab lands and the recovery of the Palestinians’ rights, including their right to set up an independent state.”<sup>477</sup> By addressing Knesset, Sadat “expressly recognized Israel’s right to exist in West Asia.” Sadat further added that “Egypt would accept all international guarantees that you can imagine and from whomever.” Before presenting his “five-point formula,” he asked the Israeli Parliament to stop the wishes of conquest and not to use the force in their relations with the Arabs.<sup>478</sup>

On February 8, 1978, President Sadat promised, on the occasion of his departure from the US, not “to fail” the American people<sup>479</sup> and called the US President Carter as his “friend.” To conclude, state identity is about drawing boundaries, and labeling others as friends or enemies, and therefore, this concept is a very important instrument of describing the nature of relations between states. By quitting the Arab nationalist identity of the previous era and adopting a new Egyptian nationalist identity, Sadat was able to sit at the negotiation table with Israel for a settlement, which ended in a peace treaty that was unimaginable only a decade ago.

#### 4.1.2 Domestic Level Analysis

Constructivism argues that agents define their identities and make them known through their policy choice. Furthermore, agents tend to define their identities and interests depending on their domestic or external conditions.<sup>480</sup> Therefore, it is important to understand the internal and international environment to make a more sound analysis. This section will examine internal signs that imply existence of a particular identity –

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<sup>476</sup> Sadat, “President Sadat’s Speech to the Knesset,” Tel Aviv (November 20, 1977), accessed March 2, 2022.

<sup>477</sup> Brownlee, “Peace before Freedom: Diplomacy and Repression in Sadat's Egypt,” 653.

<sup>478</sup> Sawant, “Recent Changes in Egypt’s Foreign Policy,” 36.

<sup>479</sup> Sadat, “Remarks on the Departure of President Sadat from the US,” (February 8, 1978), accessed March 2, 2022.

<sup>480</sup> Birgül Demirtaş-Coşkun, “Review on Social Theory of International Politics by Alexander Wendt,” *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 2, no. 7 (Fall 2005): 190.

first Arab nationalism and then Egyptian nationalism in this case, and domestic factors which affect such a definition.

On domestic level, capital sign of Arab nationalism is adoption of the Constitution of 1956 and “Provisional Constitution of the United Arab Republic” of 1958. Constitution of 1956 defines Egypt as “an independent Arab state that is in its essence sovereign, and it is a Democratic Republic, and the people of Egypt are a part of the Arab nation.”<sup>481</sup> Similarly, “Provisional Constitution of the United Arab Republic” of 1958 brought a change of the state’s name and Egypt continued to use the name of “United Arab Republic” until 1971. Definition of Egypt as “an Arab” country in the 1956 Constitution impacted national position of Egypt in the coming years by associating the Egyptian identity with a certain ethnicity following the long-term imperial presence in the country.<sup>482</sup> Official use of the word “Arab” in the constitution is an important indicator of the dominant ideology of Arab nationalism in the 1960s. Nasser also instrumentalized Islam as a bonding element for the Arab world, which is also clear in the 1956 Constitution defining Islam as “the religion of the state.” However, Nasser did not recourse to Islam in relation to Israel. In this sense, his struggle against Israel was basically defined in terms of a “theft of land” rather than any religious competition.<sup>483</sup>

Another domestic component of the state identity of the Nasserist era was an “Arab version of socialism,”<sup>484</sup> which drew Egypt and the SU closer no matter how different were their ideologies. However, since this study focuses on the role of the Egyptian state identity on the Egyptian-Israeli relations, and as that component did not have any determinant effect on their bilateral relations, socialist dimension of the Egyptian identity will be omitted. However, there are some noteworthy statements by the United Egyptian Communist Party giving hints about the conception of Israel. According to a Party report of 1955, “American imperialism has made Israel its spearhead in its Middle Eastern policy directed against Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Saudi Arabia- a

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<sup>481</sup> Kayla Sivak-Reid, “Tracing a State and its Language from Province to Republic: Translations of Modern Egypt’s Constitution,” *Classic Honors Project Paper 22* (2016), 45.

<sup>482</sup> Alsayyad, *Cairo*, 238.

<sup>483</sup> Meir Hatina, *Identity Politics in the Middle East: Liberal Thought and Islamic Challenge in Egypt* (London: Tauris, 2007), 100.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid*, 70.

springboard for extending its influence and domination over the economy and politics of the Arab countries.”<sup>485</sup>

The following year, the Party published a report announcing that “Imperialism is the principal enemy,” and the regime’s newspaper *al-Misa* described Israel as the “Imperialist base” and also a “tool against the Arab liberation movement.” Through its attack on the Suez, Israel primarily aimed to “break the Arab front and turn the attention of the Arabs from the direct battle with imperialism to an indirect battle with its stepdaughter (*rabiba*) Israel.”<sup>486</sup>

The media, which had a domestic base but international repercussions, referred to Israel as an “illegitimate entity” and accused it to be “behind every ill that befell the Arab world.”<sup>487</sup> Thus, Israel was the “perceived common enemy of all Arab states, be they monarchies or republics, traditional or revolutionary.”<sup>488</sup> The fact that media was controlled by the state served to consolidation of Nasser’s position as the new rising leader of the Arab world. “The Voice of Arabs,” for example, was serving to popularize Nasser and broadcasting his emotional speeches to the entire Arab geography from “the Ocean to the Gulf.” Cinema and music industry were also used as an instrument to praise and glorify Nasser’s pan-Arabic views.<sup>489</sup>

The most striking domestic factor that caused rise of the Arab nationalism in Nasser’s Egypt is nationalization of the Suez Canal, which subsequently became an international issue following the tripartite aggression. Unexpected end of the crisis became a turning point for the rise of Egypt-led Arab nationalism, and thus, Nasser was reborn as the leader who “restored dignity of the Arab masses.”<sup>490</sup>

Poor economy of Egypt and poverty is another important factor that consolidated Arab nationalist ideology. Egypt was supposed to make ends meet considering the

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<sup>485</sup> Joel Beinin, *Was the Red Flag Flying There? Marxist Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in Egypt and Israel, 1948-1965* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1990), 170.

<sup>486</sup> Stein, “Camp David Consensus,” 740.

<sup>487</sup> Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, 242.

<sup>488</sup> Dawisha, A.I, *Egypt in the Arab World: The Elements of Foreign Policy*, 43.

<sup>489</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 66.

<sup>490</sup> Peter Mansfield, “Nasser and Nasserism,” *International Journal* 28, no. 4 (Autumn 1973): 675.

importance of the Suez Canal in particular. However, resources of the country had long been exploited by Britain and the Western imperialism, which was more or less the same for the entire Middle Eastern region. This shared fate of the Arab states might have boosted Arabist nationalist feelings of the Egyptians, gathering them also around the similar feelings of hatred against a common enemy as stated by Nasser as “Arab unity was the only weapon available to fight imperialism in the Middle East.”<sup>491</sup>

As broadly described in chapter 2, Nasser’s tenure is characterized with many socio-economic reforms including his reforms on education. Primary education and also university education became free to increase the rate of literacy and intellectual capacity of the country.<sup>492</sup> This brought higher level of awareness among citizens who could understand the results of colonialism for their country. It can be argued that such national consciousness aggravated the enmity towards the West and reinforced the bonds with the other Arab states which had become the victim of similar oppression.

On the other hand, tenure of Sadat has its own domestic factors that became effective in adoption of Egyptian nationalism. Concerning domestic developments of the period which could be related to a new identity formation, name of Egypt was changed from the United Arab Republic to Arab Republic of Egypt. Thus, official name of the state maintained the Arab but omitted the word United, a sign of alienation from the pan-Arab thoughts. Even though Sadat discontinued the Arab nationalist identity, there was a relative rise in the Islamic identity of Egypt in the 1970s. Sadat particularly wanted to make use of Islamism and Islamists to suppress followers of Nasserism and leftism. Thus, Sadat started to be known as “the believer president.”<sup>493</sup> In this regard, the 1971 Constitution adopted Sharia as a “source of legislation,” which became the “principal source” in 1980.<sup>494</sup> In spite of the increase of Islamic influence, it cannot be argued that Egypt undertook an Islamic identity which may have had consequences for the Egyptian-Israeli relations.

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<sup>491</sup> Anees Jillani, “Nasser, Saddam and Pan-Arabism,” *Pakistan Horizon* 44, no. 2 (April 1991): 79.

<sup>492</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 270.

<sup>493</sup> Robert, *Religion and Politics in the Middle East: Identity, Ideology, Institution and Attitudes*, 44.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

From Nasser to Sadat, there was a certain identity change which made a peace treaty with Israel a reality. In this vein, there were certain socioeconomic factors which made such rapprochement a necessity. To begin with, negotiation was necessary to protect the regime from the domestic threats against the regime itself.<sup>495</sup> Exhausted from “unwinnable wars,” Egypt needed a long break for “retrenchment,” and therefore, “emotionally distanced itself from Arab grievances.” That was a break from the Egyptian foreign policy pursued as of the World War II, which encouraged dominance on the Arab countries.<sup>496</sup>

Sadat had initiated the *Infitah* policy to improve the poor Egyptian economy. However, the *Infitah* policy did not yield to expected results, and Sadat was convinced that he had to relieve the economic burden created by the military expenditures, and revive war-torn finances of the country. Consequently, this radical move of Sadat gained some support from economically devastated Egyptians,<sup>497</sup> and Sadat was convinced that prosperity of Egypt depended on it.<sup>498</sup> To summarize, war-scarred economy of the country, the urgent need to achieve socio-economic development by decreasing the military spending and gaining the US aid, and the ever-declining trust of the Egyptians in the regime were among the main domestic factors affecting redefinition of the state identity.

Constructivism points to the importance of domestic factors in definition or redefinition of a state’s identity. Ted Hopf, for example, seeks to explain the identity formation with a particular emphasis on domestic environment. He aims to give “an account of how a state’s own domestic identities constitute a social cognitive structure that makes threats and opportunities, enemies and allies, intelligible, thinkable, and possible.”<sup>499</sup> Therefore, this section focused on the domestic environment of the Nasser and Sadat periods that may have affected the identity definition.

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<sup>495</sup> Smith, “Foreign Policy is What States Make of it,” 423.

<sup>496</sup> Seale, “The Egypt-Israel Treaty and Its Implications,” 192.

<sup>497</sup> Brownlee, “Peace before Freedom: Diplomacy and Repression in Sadat's Egypt,” 653.

<sup>498</sup> Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 277.

<sup>499</sup> Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics*, 16.

### 4.1.3 International Level Analysis

According to constructivism, international environment also conditions and shapes a state's identity. This approach argues that international environment is also among the main determinants of a state's identity.<sup>500</sup> "The fact that we live in an international society means that what we want and, in some ways, who we are shaped by the social norms, rules, understandings, and relationships we have with others." says Finnemore about the impact of external factors on state identity.<sup>501</sup> Therefore, this section will focus on the international environment of the relevant periods to understand its impact on the definition of the Egyptian identity.

Concerning the Nasser period, outstanding signs of Arab nationalism in international arena can be initiation of the Non-Alignment Movement under leadership of Egypt and foundation of the United Arab Republic. Back in 1950s, Nasser refused the US President Dull's offer to start an alliance since he believed that "defense of our region should emanate from the region itself without the participation of a foreign country."<sup>502</sup>

At the very beginning, the new regime was not completely opposed to maintaining ordinary relations with Israel. However, political discourse changed into a "Zionist entity" instead of the "State of Israel" after 1955. That new orientation was further intensified when the US aid could not be obtained and particularly when Israel joined forces with Britain and France to attack Suez Canal. After that point, Israel was not regarded as a "sovereign actor" but a "hive of imperialism."<sup>503</sup>

The 1960s witnessed the highest level of Egyptian enmity towards Israel since it was the time when Arab nationalism doctrine of Nasser gained momentum, aiming to end the Western presence in the region, settling the Palestinian issue and toppling the Israeli state, and the hostility intensified even more with the 1967 War.<sup>504</sup> Following the

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<sup>500</sup> Ibid, 200.

<sup>501</sup> Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*, 128.

<sup>502</sup> Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, 161.

<sup>503</sup> Stein, "Camp David Consensus," 740.

<sup>504</sup> Abadi, "Israeli-Egyptian Relations: Obstacles to Meaningful Rapprochement," 6.

humiliating defeat of the 1967 War, the Arab leaders came together in Sudan and they decided “not to negotiate with Israel, nor to recognize or make peace with it.”<sup>505</sup>

Definition of identity is considerably affected from international developments. From time to time, international structure becomes a trigger for local transformations. To give an example, imperialism spurred discussions of self-determination, and in the case of Egypt, containment policy of the US caused the rise of Arab nationalism during the Nasser era, which culminated in the Baghdad Pact.<sup>506</sup> Actually, it is important to consider the East-West struggle in the course of the Cold War and its impact on the conception of the Middle East by the superpowers in order to better understand both Nasser’s and Sadat’s motivations. For example, Nasser’s period was a time when third world countries were fighting for their national independence under such leaders as Nehru from India, Nkrumah from Ghana and Lumumba from Congo,<sup>507</sup> which also became influential on the birth of pan-Arabism.

When the US withdrew its offer to finance construction of the Aswan Dam and refused to supply military equipment for Egypt, Egypt turned its face to the SU. The fact that Washington and Moscow were in competition to increase their influence in different parts of the world provided Nasser with another financier and supplier, which became effective in distancing Nasser from the West and approaching to the SU, and thus shaped state identity of Egypt.

Weak situation of the other regional states also facilitated the rise of Nasser as an unrivalled hero. There were revisionist movements in both Syria and Iraq, and Lebanon was in its endless fight with sectarian struggles. Other countries were not in any better shape either. This external situation impacted Arab nationalist identity of Egypt during office of Nasser.

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<sup>505</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>506</sup> Telhami and Barnett, *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, 12, 13.

<sup>507</sup> Shalaby, “Egypt’s Foreign Policy: 1952-1992 Some Personal Reflections,” 108.

According to Kuniko Ashizawa, state identity creates a “*pro attitude* toward a certain kind of action” that leads states to follow a certain foreign policy.<sup>508</sup> As explained before, identity informs interest and foreign policy choices of a state. In the case of Arab nationalism of the Nasser era, Egypt did not take the Egyptian interests at the center, but rather gave priority to the Arab interests, which put “a transnational Arab nation” in front of “the territorially defined state.”<sup>509</sup> Without paying attention to this concept of identity, it would not be possible to understand the reasons behind Egypt’s involvement in Yemen and its union with Syria. Contrarily, Egypt adopting an Arab nationalist identity could not reach a peaceful settlement with Israel. Thus, identity becomes a determinant of interest, and in this case, pan-Arabism impacts “inter-Arab and Arab-Israeli dynamics.”<sup>510</sup>

On the other hand, Sadat’s period coincided with the *détente* between the US and the SU, which explains, to an extent, Moscow’s unwillingness to support Egypt for confrontations with Israel. Heavy dependence on the SU but lack of support at the time of a probable military operation distanced Sadat even more from the axis of the SU, and drew Egypt to the US which had an interest in the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Apart from the relations with the superpowers, the role of Saudi Arabia also mattered in the settlement efforts of Sadat. In fact, in their peace-making efforts, all three states – Egypt, Israel and the US - had their own agenda of imposing power and gaining upper-hand in the region. On the part of Egypt, the peace treaty can also be construed as “Egypt’s rebellion” against the status dictated on it by the oil-rich states. As Egypt suffered from many downfalls including Syria’s rupture from the UAR, the Yemen War which became an impasse and the great humiliation of the 1967 War, Saudi Arabia came out as the new regional power. It was not easy for Egypt to accept the secondary position forced upon it considering its demographic structure, industrial infrastructure and its significant role in “intellectual, cultural and Islamic achievement.”<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> Ibid, 571.

<sup>509</sup> Telhami and Barnett, *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, 17.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid, 17-18.

<sup>511</sup> Seale, “The Egypt-Israel Treaty and Its Implications,” 192.



Sadat wanted to reverse this “unnatural state of affairs” as it was the right of the Egyptians to lead the Arab world as “there can be no war without Egypt and naturally no peace” without them. Consequently, Sadat’s visits to Jerusalem, Camp David and Washington were not in fact an act of “isolationism” from the Arab world but “Egypt’s bid for power” and its “will to reassert leadership.”<sup>512</sup>

For the part of the US, it became involved in peace efforts of Sadat because it collided with its national interests. First of all, the US wanted to end expensive and unpredictable wars, keep the SU out of the region, secure access to Middle Eastern oil, and, for sure, ensure security of Israel that was always important in the US foreign policy.<sup>513</sup> In this vein, the 1973 oil crisis is very important. When the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) decided to bring an embargo on the oil transferred to the West in reaction to the US support for Israel, it caused an unprecedented chaos, and the US would not dare to let this happen again. These developments encouraged the US to become involved in the peace process,<sup>514</sup> which was accepted by Sadat. Kissinger is reportedly said to Sadat once that “the Soviets can give your arms and this means war, but only the United States can give you back your occupied territories and this means peace.”<sup>515</sup>

Matsumura argues that “Each state’s political leaders must construct such an identity through practice under inherent domestic constraints ... and in the context of the changing power structure dynamic international relations”<sup>516</sup> and “through identity change, other patterns of interaction, and thus other realities, can be created.”<sup>517</sup> Therefore, this section aimed to explain international factors that may have affected adoption of a particular identity during the office of Nasser and Sadat.

This chapter analyzed components of Egyptian state identity during tenure of Nasser and Sadat with a particular focus on the leader’s personality and discourse, domestic

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<sup>512</sup> Ibid, 193.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid, 189.

<sup>514</sup> “Oil Embargo 1973, 1974,” accessed April 1, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/oil-embargo>.

<sup>515</sup> Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, “Egyptian Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 56, no. 4 (July 1978): 725.

<sup>516</sup> Matsumura, “The Japanese State Identity as a Grand Strategic Imperative,” 3.

<sup>517</sup> Zehfuss, “Constructivism in International Relations: Wendt, Onuf and Kratochwil,” 58.

factors and international developments. As a result, this study found out that dominant ideology changed from Arab nationalism to Egyptian nationalism, and apart from the leaders, domestic and international environment became effective on this redefinition.

## CONCLUSION

The Arab-Israeli conflict is a historical question that concerns a vast geography and involves a good number of states in the Middle Eastern region. For long years, Israel signified the “other” for the Arab states. Particularly, Egypt kept Israel among its main foreign policy items; Egypt was in every confrontation against Israel, and the locomotive of the enmity towards it. Even though the Arab-Israeli conflict continues in varying forms, Egypt’s stance with regards to Israel went through dramatic changes in the course of the twenty-five years from Nasser to Sadat.

This study aimed to bring a constructivist interpretation to Egypt-Israel relations by focusing on the state identity, and for this reason, compared and contrasted the terms of Nasser and Sadat. In this respect, the main research question was as follows: How relevant is the state identity of Egypt in its relations with Israel during the terms of Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat? Further to this main question of research, this thesis also tried to answer two sub-questions to present a thorough analysis: Is there a continuity or change in the Egyptian state identity during the Nasser and Sadat periods, and what are the domestic factors and international reasons that affect the probable identity change?

In order to find answers to the questions above, this research compared the Nasser and Sadat periods of Egypt in terms of the changing foreign policy orientation towards Israel, and aimed to explain whether it is relevant to a change in the state identity of Egypt. In this vein, the study included comparison of the two periods in terms of political leaders, institutions and political discourses to reach a conclusion, and interpret the obtained data from theoretical framework of constructivism. To this aim, the research was structured on a three-level analysis: (i) individual level, (ii) domestic level and (iii) international level. Individual level analysis described leaders – Nasser and Sadat - and their role in definition and dissemination of state identity. Domestic level analysis tried to reveal the domestic factors affecting state identity while international level analysis explained the external factors of the identity formation process.

Leaders are highly important in adoption and dissemination of a particular identity across a community. They can introduce policy shifts and change completely stance of the country in the international arena, get into a military confrontation, replace the old institutions, and thus transform reaction of the country to internal and external developments.<sup>518</sup> Therefore, this thesis paid utmost attention to the two leaders to discover their role in the definition of state identity. Nasser was a charismatic leader while Sadat was a dynamic one.<sup>519</sup> As a result, Nasser used his charisma to sweep the Arab nation into a pan-Arab movement and demonized Israel and any prospect of peace treaty; Sadat, on the other hand, made use of his dynamism and sat on the negotiation table with Israel culminating in a peace treaty.

In social constructivism, foreign policy behaviors are believed to be conditioned by the specific identity adopted by the state. From Nasser to Sadat, the Egyptian state identity went from Arab nationalism to Egyptian nationalism and from “*qawmiyya*” to “*wataniyya*.”<sup>520</sup> Nasser’s pan-Arab and socialist Egypt turned into a pro-Western country with an increased interest in liberalism. Egypt’s dependency on Moscow was replaced with a new dependency on the US.

The Arab nationalist identity of Nasser considered settlement or peace with Israel almost as a taboo while Sadat’s Egyptian nationalism made it a reality. Similarly, Egypt became the biggest beneficiary of the US aid following the settlement with Israel while Nasser had turned down the US aid for disallowing the imperialism. Hence, we witness that a particular identity predominated at a particular time period, and that the dominated ideology changed in the course of time and under some circumstances. As state identity incurs a change, foreign policy behaviors, and thus interstate relations will change accordingly. Consequently, relations between Egypt and Israel transformed following transformation and redefinition of the state’s identity. While Israel was the biggest enemy of Egypt and even legitimacy of its existence was questioned, Sadat first recognized the State of Israel and then signed a peace treaty that ended the military confrontations up to this day.

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<sup>518</sup> Byman, “The Implications of Leadership Change in the Arab World,” 61.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>520</sup> Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, 254.

Sadat was an “isolationist nationalist.”<sup>521</sup> Contrary to Nasser who declared the Egyptians to be “first and foremost Arabs” and Egypt to be the righteous representative and locomotive of the Arab world, Sadat disengaged his country from the Arab commitments, removing from the Arab nationalism.<sup>522</sup> According to Carter, Sadat “promised to go to extremes in being flexible”<sup>523</sup> during the peace negotiations while Nasser was always ready to go to extremes in his enmity towards Israel, which refers to ambitions differing from the previous set of values.

Nasser kindled the spark of Arab nationalism with his decision to nationalize the Suez Canal and the ensuing failure of the tripartite aggression. He was a nationalist man indeed, but the vigorous reaction of the oppressed Arab nation to his rebellion to the Western imperialism made him the leader of a geography, giving him the necessary prestige. He became a leading enemy of the West and its ally Israel in the Middle East. Thus became Egypt the locomotive of the Arab reaction to the existence of the State of Israel in the Arab geography.

Exploitation of the Arab resources by the colonial movements and the resulting poverty increased the hatred against the external actors, and facilitated gathering of the Arab nation around shared values. With the high increase in the rate of literacy and university graduates, people gained more awareness about their own civilization which, in turn, affected their conception of “self” and the “other.”

The Cold War environment characterized with the competing ideologies of the two superpowers, and the US refusal to supply military arms for Egypt, while generously supporting Israel, pushed Egypt to the axis of the SU. In return, the SU did not hesitate to provide arms for Egypt and finance the Aswan Dam through which Moscow could consolidate its position in the Middle East.

State identity of Egypt throughout the tenure of Nasser cannot be explained without taking such domestic and international developments into account. Such internal and

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<sup>521</sup> Nadim Shehadi, “Peace remains elusive 40 years on from Sadat’s assassination,” *Arab News*, October 5, 2021, accessed April 20, 2022, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1942151>.

<sup>522</sup> Kramer, *Sadat and Begin – the Peacemakers*, 5.

<sup>523</sup> Abadi, “Israeli-Egyptian Relations: Obstacles to Meaningful Rapprochement,” 14.

external factors, combined with Nasser's personality and leadership, culminated in an Arab nationalist identity which meant zero dialogue with Israel. Because, interests of the Arab nation came first, and the rights of the Palestinians displaced from their lands by Israeli settlements had to be defended and upheld before any other Egyptian concern. Such an approach rendered settlement and negotiating with Israel impossible.

However, Arab nationalist identity took a steep turn with Sadat who rolled with Egyptian nationalism, putting interests of Egypt in front of every other concern. Concerning domestic factors that triggered such a change in the Egyptian state identity, we may list the following: socio-economic unrest in the country particularly caused by poor and war-torn economy, and declining confidence of the Egyptians in the regime and the urgent need to refresh the look of the country. As to the international factors, regional and international developments led the change in the Egyptian state identity. In particular, emergence of Saudi Arabia as the new regional power, heavy dependence on the Soviet military and the increasing need on the probable US aid, and undeniable role of the US in the Camp David became international determinants of the process. Thus, the winds of change began to blow, bringing the decline of Arab nationalism and rise of the Egyptian nationalism in Egypt. It is also important to underline that the Nasserite project was equalized with Nasser himself and could not infiltrate into the government, which enabled his successor Sadat to move the country into a totally different direction.<sup>524</sup> As argued by Shibley Telhami, the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty is a result of the changing "regional and international balance of power, a shift that caused participants to recalculate which policies would best enable them to pursue their long-standing security interests."<sup>525</sup>

To conclude, this study argues that state identity of Egypt impacted its relations with Israel, particularly during the Nasser and Sadat periods. There is a change in the Egyptian state identity following the changes in political circumstances and interactions between the states. Lastly, the change in the state identity is associated with the leader's personality, as well as domestic developments and international factors.

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<sup>524</sup> Osman, *Egypt on the Brink: From the Rise of Nasser to the Fall of Mubarak*, 79.

<sup>525</sup> Telhami and Barnett, *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, 3.

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