

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Analysis of The Activities of Egyptian And Syrian Political Figures in The Second Half of the 20th Century

S.Sh.Pirimkulova

Ass. of Department of "World History", Faculty of History, Samarkand State University, named after Sharof Rashidov, Uzbekistan

Ummatova Dildora Davron kizi

4-th year student Faculty of History, Samarkand State University, named after Sharof Rashidov, Uzbekistan

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Abstract

This article provides a comprehensive scientific analysis of the political history of Egypt and Syria in the second half of the 20th century, the historical foundations of relations between these states, and regional geopolitical processes. It covers the political development of Egypt between 1950 and 1990, the political life of Syria and the formation of its state system, as well as the historical background of political relations between Egypt and Syria. The research extensively utilizes Egyptian, Syrian, and Turkish historical sources, primary documents in Arabic, and academic literature in Russian and English. The article comprehensively examines the Arab national liberation movement, the ideology of Pan-Arabism, models of state structure, and the impact of the Cold War era on regional politics.

KEY WORDS

Egypt, Syria, political history, Pan-Arabism, United Arab Republic, nationalization, Ba'ath Party, Anwar Sadat, Hosni Mubarak, Gamal Abdel Nasser.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the influence of the majority of Arab nations within the global community is steadily expanding. Egypt, which endured prolonged British colonial rule, attained its independence in 1949. Securing this independence entailed overcoming profound adversities. Subject to 74 years of British colonial domination, the rights of the Egyptian people were systematically violated, and the nation's natural resources were ruthlessly exploited by the British authorities. Under these oppressive conditions, the population of Egypt consistently demonstrated resistance against the colonial regime through demonstrations and periodic labor strikes. One such historical milestone occurred on February 28, 1922, when Egypt officially gained independence; however, it continued to function as a dependent state in its foreign policy and defense

matters under British oversight. Pursuant to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, the British occupation of Egypt was officially terminated, albeit largely in name only. Under the terms of the agreement, British military aircraft retained the right to utilize local Egyptian airfields, and British forces were permitted to station within the Suez Canal zone, as well as in the strategic cities of Cairo and Alexandria.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In 1951, marking the fifteenth anniversary of the treaty, mass demonstrations erupted among laborers in Cairo, demanding the absolute withdrawal of British troops from the sovereign territory. Amidst these geopolitical tensions, Gamal Abdel Nasser, a prominent Egyptian political figure, emerged onto

the national political arena as a vanguard of patriotic forces. "He abdicated in 1951-1952, as a result of the "Free Officers" movement, in favor of King Farouk. As a result of the "Free Officers" movement, in 1953, he abolished the constitution and the monarchy. The lands of King Farouk's family were confiscated and distributed to landless peasants. At the same time, Jamal Abdul Nasser was appointed as the leader of the revolution." [1,352]

Following its independence in June 1953, Egypt became an equal member of the international community and advocated for a fair foreign policy. In his work 'The Philosophy of the Revolution', Gamal Abdel Nasser outlined the core principles of Egypt's foreign policy. "Gamal Abdel Nasser's place among the world leaders advancing the idea of "Arab socialism" in Egypt and the Arab world, his bloodless independence, his resolution of the Palestinian issue, and his international relations with the most powerful Western powers began to show Egypt's strategic position on the political stage." [2, 192]

The Baghdad Pact emerged between Arab states and the Middle East. It was an open secret that the Baghdad Pact project was directed against the Soviet Union and the socialist camps. In 1955, Gamal Abdel Nasser organized the "Bandung Conference" for Arab states against imperialist blocs. According to it, a total of 29 countries from Asia and Africa participated. Out of these, 9 were Arab states. Under a common issue, these countries advocated for liberation from imperialism and achieving national independence. There are facts regarding the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 during Nasser's rule, and that foreign countries could not use the Suez Canal without Egypt's permission. Due to this policy, many enterprises and factories were granted the right to use the Suez Canal. After achieving independence, Nasser began working to eliminate several problems among the Arab peoples. He carried out agrarian reforms in 3 stages, which allowed for the improvement of the agricultural sector. As a result of the reforms, land began to be allocated on credit to landless peasants. This created a ground for significantly improving the condition of the landless population. The people of Egypt have been engaged in agriculture since ancient times. The majority of people living in Egypt were directly connected to agriculture. At this time, only about 3% of Egypt's territory consisted of arable land suitable for cultivation.

"On the eve of the revolution in 1952, all cultivated land was concentrated in the hands of 2.7 million private owners. More than half of them owned 0.5 feddans of land. Another 1 million

people owned 1 to 3 feddans of land each. 290 thousand people owned 3 to 5 feddans of land. Thus, 61 landowners in one row owned 2,000 feddans, and 28 people each owned 1,500 to 2,000 feddans. to a thousand feddans, 99 people each owned from 1 thousand feddans to 1.5 feddans, 92 people each owned from 800 feddans to 1 thousand feddans. Large landowners used the method of renting out their lands, which was profitable for them. They increased their income by re-cultivating the lands using modern methods." [3,52].

Following this, medical fees and rent payments were sharply reduced. Cooperative construction of so-called "people's houses" intended for workers began. On August 14, 1961, a law was enacted to establish special social security funds for workers and employees in every private and state enterprise. From October 10, 1961, the transfer of workers and employees of nationalized enterprises to the group of state enterprise workers and employees associated with pensions and social security was reinforced. On November 20, 1961, a law on rent was adopted. In 1962, a law on free education was enacted. In 1963, a republic decree was issued that abolished exam fees in higher education institutions, as well as all forms of payment for education. All types of education became free and were open to all segments of the population.

"In April 1962, Industry Minister Aziz Siddiqui announced that companies and farms would begin paying out a share of their profits. May 1 was officially declared Labor Day." [4, 460-490]

The "National Movement Charter" was drafted by Abdel Nasser in 1962 and guides Egypt's domestic and foreign policy. After the nationalization law was passed (July 1961), a number of measures were implemented in the country, including a strict wage system for urban and rural workers, and a wide program of social initiatives was carried out in these areas. The political history of Syria in the second half of the 20th century is full of successive military coups, inter-party struggles, and ideological confrontations. Political instability in Syria deepened after the first military coup in 1949. As American Arab scholar Raymond Hinnebusch notes, "A distinctive feature of Syrian state-building was that after independence, the army became a permanent actor in political life." [5// Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.]

Although Egypt and Syria pursued a common strategy on the path of economic modernization, the practical results were different. In Egypt, the state sector achieved significant economic growth in the 1960s, but the 1967 war somewhat undid these achievements. In Syria, however, economic

development slowed down due to the Ba'ath Party's continuous political struggle and the burden of military expenditures. "The Iranian researcher Marvin Zonis created an important scientific school in the study of the political economy of the Middle East. Comparative studies conducted by his students and colleagues show that among the main factors determining the level of economic development of Egypt and Syria, the absence of oil resources (a secondary factor), the degree of integration with the world market, and strategic military spending were the most important." [6// Princeton University Press]

Moshe Ma'oz, an Israeli historian who strategically analyzed Egypt-Syria relations, in his work 'Syria and Israel', distinguished four main stages of these relations: the first stage (1948–1958) — rivalrous cooperation; the second stage (1958–1961) — artificial unity; the third stage (1961–1973) — mutual instability; the fourth stage (since 1973) — continuous confrontation. In conclusion, it can be said that the second half of the XX century was a period of radical political, social, and ideological changes in the history of Egypt and Syria. During this period, political figures such as Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, Hosni Mubarak, and Hafez al-Assad determined not only the internal political development of their own countries but also the geopolitical processes in the entire Middle East region. The research results show that while the political activity of these figures was aimed on one hand at protecting independence, sovereignty, and national interests, on the other hand, it led to the strengthening of the authoritarian management model through the formation of a centralized power system. In Egypt, during the era of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the country mostly chose the socialist path to develop its economy. Nasser's policy was characterized by nationalizing the state economy, strengthening social equality, and fighting against colonialism. His foreign policy was aimed at uniting the Arab world, and this process also manifested in the form of a short-term political alliance with Syria.

His foreign policy alignment with the East emerged as a result of Soviet intervention aimed at extricating Egypt from its economic and political crisis. Historical sources indicate substantial public support for Gamal Abdel Nasser during the Arab-Israeli conflict initiated on June 5, 1967. Although Nasser tendered his resignation, the populace organized mass demonstrations in Cairo, demanding his reinstatement. Consequently, he is recognized as one of the most prominent and influential figures in modern Egyptian history.

CONCLUSION

During the presidency of Anwar Sadat, a fundamental shift occurred in Egyptian foreign policy, characterized by a rapprochement with Western nations that altered the regional balance of power. His termination of the 'Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Egypt and the USSR' in 1976 fostered the concept of independent political thought among Arab nations. While Sadat's pragmatic policies focused on economic liberalization and attracting foreign investment, they also exacerbated internal social disparities. Concurrently, his foreign policy decisions received mixed reactions across the Arab world. During the era of Hosni Mubarak, Egypt maintained relative political stability; however, the restriction of political pluralism, the narrowing of opposition activities, and systemic corruption became deeply entrenched. Although Mubarak's governance ensured long-term stability, it simultaneously led to the accumulation of socio-political contradictions within society. In Syria, Hafez al-Assad established a model of governance characterized by the centralization of power and control through a military-political elite. His policy was aimed at ensuring internal stability, strengthening state sovereignty, and active participation in regional politics. Under Assad's rule, Syria transformed into a strong presidential republic, though the suppression of political opposition and party monopoly reinforced the authoritarian system.

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