

Gamal Abdel Nasser's Pan-Arabism and Formation of the United Arab Republic: An Appraisal

Abstract:

This research article explains Gamal Abdel Nasser's rise to supremacy in the Middle Eastern politics from 1952 to 1961. It further evaluates the domestic and foreign policies of President Nasser as implied in the ideology of Pan-Arabism; how these ideas, associated with the vibrant political leadership of Nasser, permitted Egypt to enter in the mainstream politics in order to bring revolutionary changes inside and outside the region. It also throws light on the formation and breakup of the United Arab Republic (UAR) and examines Nasser's intrinsic motives behind this union. This period demonstrated Nasser's charismatic personality as the President of Egypt and later on as the founder of the United Arab Republic. The research paper also gives a thorough analysis of how Egypt acquired the status of a regional political power for two decades in Middle East under Nasser's dynamic leadership. Egypt has been the only country in the Middle East that could unite and lead its neighboring countries for a period of time under the leadership of Nasser. This study provides a comprehensive outlook of the international conflicts which Egypt confronted during the Presidency of Nasser.

Keywords: Pan-Arabism, President Nasser, Middle East, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Formation of UAR, Breakup of Union.

Introduction:

Egypt's geographical location and geo-strategical position has been a matter of great importance for the country throughout its history and also has made it attractive for the foreign powers. The attraction of the foreign powers has two reasons; first, Egypt's productive soil along the Nile River that has allowed many 'cash crops' to be sown in it and exported to the whole world. Second, the long coastline along the Mediterranean Sea allows Egypt to get connected to the Mediterranean countries.¹It was highly considered by the western nations to be in their interests in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Geographically, Egypt is located between the continents of Asia and Africa; the 'Sinai Peninsula' plays an abridging role between the two continents.²Egypt's geographical location also provides the waterways that interlink the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean. The Suez Canal is a passage from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean which provides Egypt such opportunities as to control the flow in the waters of the region. This geographical position makes Egypt strategically and economically important for the foreign countries which use the international trade routes of the region. Egypt's location also brought it to the point where it could take advantage of the opportunities resulting from European industrial revolution; this is how

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Egypt harnessed its domestic powers.³ Various Egyptian leaders took the advantage of the geographical location of the country to develop relations with both the Western and the Middle Eastern countries. These foreign contracts expanded Egyptian circle in import and export of its products and material. Further, it advanced the economic and political relations with the other countries of the region.

The History of Modern Egypt is a paradox for the researchers and readers in the modern times. This new era, since the rise of Muhammad Ali in early 19th century, launched Egypt's modern projects that built up an army and altered the map of the country.⁴ The modern era in Egypt started after the emergence of Muhammad Ali. Some historians trace the 'modernity' to have started in 1517 when the Mamluks were defeated by the Ottomans in 1516–17. Muhammad Ali's kingdom became completely independent from the Ottoman empire after the war campaigns against the Ottomans and the enlistment of large scale soldiers; allowing him to have hold over Egypt and parts of North Africa and the Middle Eastern region.⁵ Egypt came under the British protection in 1915 and became an independent state in 1922; followed by a kingdom ruled by Muhammad Ali's dynasty which lasted till 1952.⁶ General Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser marked an end to the rule of King Farouk in 1952, who was the last king of Egypt. After the 1952 revolution, Nasser established a one party state, after having abolished the Kingship from the country, which was known as the Republic of Egypt, followed by. Egypt was ruled in an autocratic manner by the three dictators; Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar al Sadat and Hosni Mubarak for six decades. President Nasser assumed power in 1952 and realized the geo-political significance of the country for the West; he further endeavored to reinforce Egypt's leadership role in the Middle Eastern region. The ideology or philosophy of Pan-Arabism assisted him to gain power and making Egypt more important for the other countries of the Middle East. Furthermore, the merging of Syria and Yemen with Egypt; and the formation of a new union namely 'UAR' were the great examples of Nasser's leadership. The UAR was a unique model of the 'Arab Unity' in the Middle Eastern region. This union was established in 1958 and lasted till 1961 which made Nasser not only the hero of the Arab world but also gave him world wide popularity. His ideas and stature also got name and fame due to the 'Philosophy of Nasserism' which was an extension of Pan-Arabism. The British occupation of Egypt also left deep impacts not only upon the history of the country but also all over the Middle East.

Egyptians' Nationalism and the British Colonization

Egypt came under the British protectorate in 1883 and remained under the British Rule till its freedom in 1952.⁷ During the colonial rule, Egypt experienced many socio-political and cultural changes. The main interest of the British was to usurp Egyptian agricultural resources i.e., especially the cotton production from Egypt to the Britain. Furthermore, they wanted the Suez Canal to be used for the trade purposes. They got the political control over Egypt in order to ransack the Egyptian resources. The Egyptians could no longer bear it as they considered the European endeavors as an example of power that was keeping them away from forming a free and autonomous state. As a result, many social and political groups came into being in Egypt. These political developments played a pivotal role in the

struggle of the Egyptian independence. Lord Cromer, the first administrator of Egypt, managed all the affairs of Egypt from 1883 to 1907. He implemented such policies as introduced free trade of the Egyptian goods. These economic policies ultimately resulted in large scale production of cotton.⁸ Egypt got advanced in its industrial sphere due to the free trade policies of the British officials.

With the passage of time, the Egyptians got involved in class struggle; the workers raised their voices to get more and more pay for their labor. The local people of Egypt formed their unions to safeguard their economic and social rights but these unions were suppressed by the British. Although they proved effective in crushing down the unions, yet the idea of hostility against the British rule was implanted in the minds of the Egyptians. They fought against the British even more enthusiastically after the Dinshaway incident. The Dinshaway incident of June 1906 was very significant in the Egyptian history because of the murder of a religious leader of Egyptian people by the hands of the British soldiers.⁹ Although it happened accidentally, yet it engendered rage and violence among the masses. The indignation of the local community brought about attacks on the British soldiers who were wounded during the fights. The Egyptians demanded justice for the brutal killing of their innocent religious figure. The uprising was suppressed with a view to setting an example for the Egyptians, that if they stood up against the British rule, they would be gripped with an iron hand.¹⁰ Trial and execution period started in Egypt instead of stopping the British soldiers from using the unjust powers. Ironically, it resulted in infuriating the masses to stand up against the colonial rule. The resolution of the Egyptians was undermined by the British and thus they brought in a new administration to control the heightening situation.

In the new administration, Sir Eldon Gorst was the first administrator of Egypt who remained in office from 1907 to 1911. He was succeeded by Kitchener who served Egypt from 1911 to 1914. The policies, during both of the aforementioned administrators, were executed to address the social and political apprehensions which were felt inside the country. Britain introduced 'moderate nationalism' but the nationalists of Egypt refused to accept it. The Britain ultimately wanted to remove the germs of nationalism from the Egyptian society and thought of any concession to them as a symbol of feebleness.¹¹ When Kitchener took the charge of administration in 1911, he tried to promulgate another constitution in Egypt that gave some local and national institutions to the country in order to be represented by the local people. Before this, the country was known as the assembly of delegates but now in the constitution, the legislative council was introduced.¹² The task of the council was to give advice to the government in making of the policies. In 1930, when the new constitution was formally put in practice, the local people were not in a satisfactory position. The local unions became very active that ultimately turned into political parties which demanded the expulsion of the British from Egypt.

The Watani party and the Umma party were the main political parties which were formed for the sake of British expulsion. The Watani party was the more extremist group that demanded the immediate expulsion of the British from Egypt.¹³ Kamil was the head of the party who possessed an Islamic ideology and was against the British Imperialism. He realized the need of reforms in the country but he was of

the view that the British must not bring these reforms. This ideology attracted many Egyptians but the sudden demise of Kamil in 1908 proved a severe loss for the party and in early 1950s, the Watani party hardly played any role in the country politics.

On the other hand, the Umma party was more successful as compared to the Watani party. The founders of this party were Hassan Abdar Raziq and Sulayman Pasha. The Umma party demanded freedom from the British in the same way as the Watani party had demanded the expulsion of the British from the country. They were considered less extremist because they did not attack the British soldiers directly. They wanted to introduce reforms in the Egyptian laws and institutions.¹⁴The ideology was based on Islamic thoughts that suited the modern times and allowed the modern world citizens to feel affinity with the ideology. The Umma party accessed a large number of people in the society because most of their members were journalists. In this way, the ideology of the party increased its influence among the masses. Both the parties paved the way for Egypt's rise and independence in post-World War-I era.

When the World War-I was over, a delegation, headed by Saad Zaghlul Pasha, went to the Great Britain for the purpose of taking permission to participate in the Paris Peace Conference; with expectations to determine and influence the future of Egypt.¹⁵The British did not accept the request and this proved to be a great folly on their part. After the delegation was back again in Egypt, the members started to mobilize the masses to get independence from the British rule. Zaghlul formed his political organization which was called as the Wafd party.¹⁶Later on, many protests and strikes took place in Egypt which affected the Egyptian as well as the British economy. At this crucial period, the British no more wanted to engage in the changing patterns of the country. By 1919, the British started to send delegations to Egypt to figure out the ways through which the country could be granted autonomous institutions, but still they kept on protecting their interests in Egypt.¹⁷By 1920, the British realized the need of cooperation with Zaghlul to gain their purposes and interests.

The British Lord Milner arranged a meeting with Zaghlul in the summer of 1920 that resulted in Milner-Zaghlul pact. This pact was declared in February 1921 which delineated that Britain would have no objection to the obliteration of the protectorate. Ultimately, the British surrendered before the Egyptians' demands for independence; nevertheless, the independence was granted in a limited form. After the independence, the British elevated the Sultan of Egypt to the status of the King with a view to commence Egyptian self-governance. Although the Egyptians got freedom and autonomy, yet they were being influenced and controlled on a large scale by the European forces. The British continued to control four major fields of Egypt which included: the defense of Egypt, the protection of foreign interests, security of imperial communications and the issue of Sudan.¹⁸The British controlled all the spheres of the country that were in their best interests and not even in the best interests of the Egyptian people. A new constitution was signed and put in effect in 1923 that led to the future development of the Egyptian politics.

The era from 1923 to 1936 was marked as the Liberal Experiment in Egypt.¹⁹ During this period, many efforts were made to gain complete national unity and power for the newly independent country. In January 1924, elections were conducted under the new constitution in which the Wafd party won a great number of seats; leading to Zaghlul's election on the post of Prime Minister.²⁰ As the constitution gave much authority to the King, therefore, many political problems emerged in the country. It was in the King's jurisdiction to appoint the Prime Minister and give out the orders for the dissolution of the parliament. It was the King's desire to preserve his royal rights and as a result, he would dissolve the parliament when he realized that his authority was being reduced. The inability of Zaghlul to compromise with the Wafd party was also a major political problem of Egypt. He and his party were not in favor of allowing the British to maintain their rule in the four abovementioned fields which they controlled after granting independence to the country. All this created a chaotic scenario, leading to mutual conflicts among the British, the King and the Wafd party to eliminate the entire British rule over the Egyptian society.²¹ The British interference was itself a great political problem for the newly constructed Egyptian system. As the British had their own economic interests in Egypt, they kept on interfering or undermining the parliament with a view to save their interests. All these political problems remained unresolved till the year of 1936.

During 1936 to 1952, there was a continuous fight between the Egyptians and the British to determine the position of an independent and free Egypt. New compromises, agreements and promises were made from the both sides to permit Egypt in becoming a free and autonomous state. Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 was one of such examples as it gave space to Egypt in becoming independent to some extent.²² The British acknowledged Egypt's sovereignty under the treaty that allowed the British to leave some forces in the zone of Suez Canal. Egypt was also permitted to become a member of the League of Nations.²³ This new agreement was also unable to grant full independence to the country and the Egyptians 'independence dream' turned into reality when, in July 1952, the Free Officers Corps overthrew the British-backed King.²⁴

Gamal Abdel Nasser's Rise in Power and the Free Officers Corps

Gamal Abdel Nasser's charismatic leadership was crucial for the Free Officers Corps to overthrow the government in Egypt which was supported by the British. This extraordinary leadership could be testified by Nasser's rise in the Egyptian politics. He was not eager to become an icon or leader in Egypt or in the Middle Eastern region, but the popularity that he got among the people of Egypt ascended him to such status.²⁵

Nasser was born on 15th January, 1918 in Beni Mor, a small town of Alexandria.²⁶ He belonged to a middle class family, which allowed him to become popular in the masses. Nasser's family was considered a local notable family within the suburbs of Upper Egypt, because they owned a few acres of land.²⁷ Nasser spent a lot of his childhood time in moving around from city to city in Egypt with his father. These visits by Nasser broadened his views and allowed him to attend different schools

and meet different people in Egypt. In this way, he got a better understanding of Egypt as an important and vital African country. Scholar Aburish says, “Nasser was successful in broadening his outlook.”²⁸ At the age of 19, Nasser applied to a famous Military College in Egypt but his application was not accepted and this could not stop him from applying again. However, next time his application was accepted and he was given admission. The military institution further broadened the horizons of Nasser because the students who came to attend the college belonged to different classes of society.²⁹ He quickly befriended Abdel Hakim and Anwar Sadat, who later on, became his confidants and closest allies in the Free Officers Corps.³⁰ After his graduation, Nasser was given the choice to be posted in many regions throughout Egypt and Sudan. When he was performing his duties as an army officer on different places, he started listening to the unhappy whisperings about the government from military officers. The generation that Nasser belonged to, was not at all happy with the British occupation and considered it as a reason behind all the problems of Egypt because the government was just a puppet in the hands of the British government. Nasser did not participate in such sort of whisperings as he was foreseeing the change in another way.³¹

In 1942, the British Ambassador to Egypt gave out orders to King of Egypt for dismissal of the Prime Minister Maher and appointment of a pro-British Mustafa Nehas. To make sure whether his orders were being followed or not, the British Ambassador took the siege of the palace with the help of the British troops and endangered the King with detention. This step of the British forces went a long way in making Nasser more skeptical and thus he started to oppose the British existence in Egypt because he considered the siege as a threat and violation against the Egyptian sovereignty.³² The fact, that the Egyptian army itself did not try to defend the King, proved to be a bolt from the blue. Nasser, in a letter written to his fellow officer, stated, “It is extremely shameful that even our own army did not endeavor to protect the King from the attack.”³³ Nasser as well as many of his close friends felt the inaction of the Egyptian army as shameful. At this juncture, the activities of the Free Officer’s Corps started for their move.

Nasser attended the Egyptian Military Staff College from 1942 to 1948 and taught at the same college where he once used to attend his classes as a student.³⁴ During this time, Nasser involved enthusiastically in the political activities of Egypt and also made connections with the *Akhwan al Muslimoon*, (Muslim brotherhood) an Islamic organization founded in Egypt in 1928 by Sheikh Hassan al Banna.³⁵ Nasser, due to his political activism, became outspoken in his hostility towards the British and also felt a need for freedom from them. He also wanted the other officers of the Egyptian army to join his antagonism against the British. In 1947, Nasser indulged in another military expedition which put a question mark upon his loyalty for the King.³⁶ The United Nations decided to partition Palestine in 1947 to make room for the creation of Israel as a separate independent Jewish state. Having heard the decision, Nasser offered his services to the Arab Higher Committee that was enlisting the soldiers to join the Liberation Army and contest against the partition of Palestine.³⁷ In spite of being a prominent officer, he could not serve in the Liberation Army because the government did not allow him to serve in the Liberation Army. In 1948, the Egyptian administration sent military troops in order to help the Palestinians in the war. Nasser blamed King Farouk and

his “cronies” for the lack of military preparations who only wanted to take advantage from the benefits which they got from the British as a reward.³⁸This added fuel to fire and the dislike of Nasser for the King Farouk increased to a great deal. Nasser returned to Egypt after the defeat of Egypt’s army in the war.

Nasser underwent three events in 1949, which consequently caused the rise of the Free Officers Corps. The first event occurred when he was made a member of the delegation which was assigned the task to make a cease-fire agreement with the Israelis. But unfortunately, it proved a humiliating experience for Nasser because he was not in favor of dealing with Israelis. When Nasser returned to Egypt, he experienced the second event when he witnessed the Syrian army overthrowing the government in Syria which also had enormous support of the populace. Nasser was too excited with the dethronement of the government and this particular event paved the way towards the upcoming unity of the Muslim countries. In other words, this change was foreseen by Nasser as to be the turning point in his politics because he visualized his dream of the Arab unity turning into reality. The final event was Nasser’s interrogation about his political activities by the Egyptian Prime Minister before the Army Chief. After the examination, Nasser immediately turned the weak group of officers into a proper organization called ‘the Association of Free Officers’. When it was formed, its members chose Nasser as the head of association unanimously.³⁹

The ‘Free Officers Corps’ initially started its work as a minor group, but the number of the like-minded people increased with the passage of time. Though the exact number of the members is not in counting, there are speculations that the number of members was round about 100 army officers.⁴⁰The Corps funded the secret pamphlet that was concerned with two main things; the British occupation and corruption of the government.⁴¹ At the outset, the Free Officers Corps was not aiming at taking over the government; its main purpose was to culminate the corruption and the British existence in the region. On 25th January, 1952, the British forces ordered a police post in the Suez Canal region to surrender because they believed that the personnel at the post were followers of anti-British group and when the officer of the post refused to surrender, the British forces killed 40 and wounded 70 policemen.⁴²The atrocities of the British forces maddened the Egyptians and brought about massive protests on the Black Saturday; foreign trades in Cairo city were abolished by the Egyptians. The government remained just like spectator and did not take any action to stop the protests nor did it seek vengeance against the British forces. It was considered a golden opportunity by Nasser and the Free Officers Corps to start their move against the British imperialism.

In 22nd July, 1952, army battalions moved in Cairo and took hold of the main buildings and centers; they were not resisted by the opposite forces.⁴³When the Free Officers Corps had control over the city, the Revolutionary Command Council, headed by both Nasser and General Naguib, took charge of the government. Nasser sent Anwar al Sadat to demand the renunciation of King Farouk from his throne, which he ultimately had to do. The coup by the Free Officers Corps was bloodless and finally led to the British exit from Egypt. Initially, Nasser shared powers and governmental authority with General Naguib,

but later on he got complete control of the government as he was more popular in the Egyptian military as well as people.⁴⁴ This rise of Nasser to maximum power led him to the post of Egyptian president which he held till 1970.

Ideology of Pan-Arabism and Nasser

After coming into power, the leadership of Nasser felt a strong need to unite the Middle East states and to achieve this, he introduced his ideology of Pan-Arabism in the 1950s. Pan-Arabism was of crucial importance for the states of the Middle Eastern region; it emerged only under the leadership of Nasser in Egypt. During 1950s and 1960s, the Ideology of Pan-Arabism thrived in entire Arab world and Nasser himself was the torchbearer of this Ideology.

The terminology of 'Pan' is very broad and vast in its meaning and it can be used to define a vast variety of desperate phenomena. Pan-Arabism is also quoted with reference to Arabism or Arab Nationalism; many terms are used to define and name the ideology of Nasser but no prominent scholar has been able to term it properly. The term Pan-Arabism might lead people to accept that Arabism was spread in a vast region, or it might also make people to remember the analogous terms e.g., 'Pan-Germanism' which has connected with fascism.⁴⁵ Arabism persuades people to believe that nationalism existed just in a small region. Most of the scholars use the term 'Pan-Arabism' but some have termed it as 'Arab Nationalism' instead.⁴⁶ The term 'Arab Nationalism' was used by Arab leaders and was also taken as political correct by the leaders and the masses during the latter half of the 20th century. No clear definition of Pan-Arabism has been given yet and this has become even more problematic than to figure out what term should be used.⁴⁷ Some scholars have theorized that Pan-Arabism means the formation of one autonomous Arab state which have been turned down by Rashid Khalidi.⁴⁸ Having examined all the definitions, a kind of minimal agreement is obvious, which states that Pan-Arabism is "the idea that the Arabs are linked by special bonds of religion, history and language and their political organization should reflect this reality in some way."⁴⁹ It can be argued that Pan-Arabism, to some extent, is an ideological form of nationalism which is somehow familiar with the European Nationalism.⁵⁰ Adeed Dawisha defines Pan-Arabism in the following words, "Pan-Arabism refers to the political amalgamation of the Arab countries in the Middle Eastern region."⁵¹ This definition does not assert that the Arab countries would merge in one state; rather it states that there would be a connection among all the Arabs, both politically and culturally. Pan-Arabism could be defined in a way that the Arab States would turn to one another for political, economic and social assistance, rather than relying on the Western aid or support. This assertion is based on the fact that the climax of Pan-Arabism was a direct result of the Western influence within the region.

Another opinion is that "people, living in one region, speaking the same language have a common heart and a common sense. As they constitute one nation, therefore, they must possess a unified state."⁵² Bernard Lewis stated, "a nation constitutes a group of people tied together with a common language, shared history, belief in descent, and destiny."⁵³ The fact that turns Pan-Arabism into a transnational entity is its ability to link the Arabian culture with the politics of the

Middle Eastern countries. Basically, Pan-Arabism unites all the Arabs together regardless of the fact wherever they geographically live. These statements provide an impression that all the Arab states are connected due to their culture, customs, traditions, history, religion and heritage and that connection should lead to collaboration in politics as well.

It is also not known as to where and when the ideology of Pan-Arabism originated. Generally, scholars endeavored to provide the origins of Pan-Arabism during the last period of the Ottoman Empire, the era between Wars, and after World War-II. Antonius detects the roots of Pan-Arabism in the era of Muhammad Ali of Egypt and the Wahabi Movement.⁵⁴The rule of Muhammad Ali and the movement started during the era of the Ottoman Empire. As the Empire was vast and diverse, there existed no common ground on which to unite all the societies. The rulers had a keen desire to unite the societies, therefore, they introduced reforms that allowed people to acquire a sense of where they belonged to. They also sought to impart a Turkish identity through nationalism into the Arab populations of the Empire.⁵⁵However, he did not succeed because the Arab population, adoring their religious leaders, went against this imposed identity and sought their cultural history in order to find the pure Arab identity. As a result, the initial stages of Pan-Arabism commenced; it is often stated that Arab nationalism rose in the form of an opposition movement within the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁶

At that critical juncture, the Arab populations of the Empire united themselves under the flag of Islamism and identified with one another as the Arabs. They had a solid faith in religion and the Arabian cultural background in order to en-kindle an 'Arab identity'. This strong reliance is connected to the Islamic modernization that took place as a response to a yearning of the Arabians to minimize the growing Western impact on the region. The Arabs had an intense desire to redefine their identity based on Islamic concepts and the Arabian culture instead of the West and the Western ideas.⁵⁷ Keeping in view the cultural crisis, Antonius states that Egyptian ruler Muhammad Ali as well as his son Ibrahim possessed a crystal clear idea of an Arabian identity.⁵⁸They utilized this idea during the identity crisis to explain a common Arab identity that was a direct result of the expansion of Pan-Arabism. Ibrahim said that he was no more a Turk because the sun of Egypt had turned his blood into an Arab.⁵⁹These individuals initiated the ideology of Pan-Arabism; but in the mid of the 20th century, Pan-Arabism emerged in the Middle Eastern region as a big change. Both Egypt and Greater Syria were considered the intellectual hubs of the Middle Eastern region. In these countries, the Pan-Arabism movement was of great importance to spread the ideology throughout the Middle East. Both the countries used the ideology of Pan-Arabism in a number of social associations and groups to advance its agenda.⁶⁰In Syria, the ideology of Pan-Arabism was used by Ibrahim Pasha to bring the Muslims and the Christians together to fight against the Ottoman Empire. Instead of using religious excuse for confrontation, he thought of using the idea of Arab nationals fighting against the hold of the Turks.⁶¹With a view to gaining independence from the British, Muhammad Ali took advantage of the idea of Pan-Arabism in order to unite the people of Egypt. Gamal Abdel Nasser was well aware of the history of his predecessors in Egypt and their efforts and dreams for Arab Unity, nationalism and Pan-Arabism.

Factors Leading towards the Arab Unity and Role of Nasser

Nasser was the champion of Pan-Arabism ideology both in Egypt and the Middle East, however, it is worth mentioning that the ideology of Pan-Arabism was already a part of the Egyptian societies. During the mid of the 20th century, Egypt had such leadership and cultural background that was sufficient in giving birth to the ideology of Pan-Arabism because the concepts of various forms of Arab unity and cooperation existed in Egyptian ruling classes.⁶²The ruling class felt that Egypt was far away from the other Middle Eastern countries and could only use the ideology of Pan-Arabism to spread it in all the Middle Eastern countries. To achieve this, the leaders and the press of different parties focused to strengthen the cultural and economic ties with other Middle Eastern countries.⁶³

In Egyptian society, a transition was taking place to make the country more self-consciously an Arab State. In those times, along with the rise of the ideology of Pan-Arabism, the Egyptians were also in quest for their indigenous identity. It was generally believed that there was an association between the Egyptians and their Arab brothers. It was their staunch belief that unless the Arab world shared the same cultural background and spoke the same language, they were joint as one.⁶⁴By disseminating these ideas, it was inculcated into the minds of the people that they were Arabs and therefore, they should be proud of the cultural roots that make them Arabs. As soon as the Egyptians began to cherish the idea of being Arabs, an intense desire for Arab unity was felt and Egypt was thought to be the doorway towards that unity. Many politicians considered Egypt as a frontline country and savior because of its hard efforts against the West.⁶⁵Similarly, many people and leaders of the Middle East hoped that Egypt would lead the Arabs in their struggle against the British. The political parties were also thinking in the same way like the Communist party of Egypt, which added a clause in their program to achieve a complete Arab union that comprised all Arab States.⁶⁶The most important point is that the politicians, elite class, journalists, political parties and even the masses were on the same page and were equally responding to the idea of the Arab unity. Gamal Abdel Nasser was minutely watching and observing the whole development and he took the advantage of the prevailing environment in the Egyptian society.

Nasser proved himself a true champion and torchbearer of Pan-Arabism between 1950s and 1960s.⁶⁷ He not only led the Egyptian nation but was also a hope of light for the whole Arab world. He was such a prominent leader who popularized the idea of Arab unity as well as the Arab Nationalism.⁶⁸He comprehended and took advantage of the Egypt's geographical significance in the Arab world to flourish his ideology of Pan-Arabism. The idea of geo-strategic importance of Egypt's unique geo-political features, religious and spiritual power and cultural advantages made Egypt to lead all the Arab states and fulfill the unity task.⁶⁹To Nasser, being Arab or Arabian cultural identity holder was of great importance; he observed it as a skill to affect other states of the Middle East. A number of speeches by Nasser took the tone of Pan-Arabism because in his speeches, he always used the names of an 'Arab Egypt' or 'Arab country' instead of just Egypt; sometimes he referred to it as a member of the great Arab entity. In 1953, on the first anniversary of the Radio Station; 'Voice of the Arabs', Nasser referred to all

the Arabs as 'one nation' and placed Egyptian nation within that one nation.⁷⁰The concept of Egypt as a part of the Arab entity was promoted by Nasser in the charter that he himself authored in 1962; he referred to the "Arab people of Egypt" and emphasized that "there is no conflict whatsoever between Arab Nationalism and Egyptian patriotism."⁷¹

Throughout his career, Nasser's speeches continuously kept on evoking the idea of Pan-Arabism and he installed it into the minds of the Arabs that the unity and cooperation was needed for defense against the West and also for the well being of the other Arabs.⁷²Nasser delivered a speech on July 1957 in which he said that the Arab nationalism was a weapon for the Middle Eastern countries; Arab nationalism was a weapon against any foreign intervention. He further said that it was essential for the invader to have knowledge that, if he attacked any Arab state, he will threaten his own motives.⁷³This is how Egypt and Nasser were able to "shape and ride the wave" of Pan-Arabism with a view to disseminate the ideology in the Middle East region and affect other countries.⁷⁴

Iraq, Turkey and the other Western countries signed a defense pact in 1955 which is referred to as the 'Baghdad Pact'. This pact was viewed by many leaders of Arab as the starting point of Western hegemony in the region. Nasser considered the defense pact as a hazard to his goal of Pan-Arabism and ultimately the pact brought a shift in the Egyptian foreign policy which brought Egypt closer to the Soviet Union.⁷⁵There was very less inclination of the Soviet Union towards putting their direct economic influence in the Middle East, which proved appealing to the leaders of Egypt and the Middle Eastern countries. The Baghdad Pact also paved the way for Nasser and Egypt to come in and control the local politics of the Middle Eastern region.⁷⁶ Even before the Baghdad Pact was signed, Nasser was aware of the discussions behind it and considered them as a risk to Egypt and the neighborhood. Nasser motivated the Arab League members to strengthen the Arab Collective Security Pact in order to counter the Western hegemony.⁷⁷ Nasser united the Arab countries and supported the Security Pact, not caring even the least about the Western interference. Officials of Western government threatened Egypt and the other Middle Eastern countries to isolate them from the international community if they tried to make such an alliance as Arab unity. Nasser said that the threads that join the Arabs together will get stronger, no matter how hard the opponents try to disrupt them!⁷⁸ Egypt faced hardships and financial problems from the West due to the issues of the Suez Crisis and Aswan Dam.

The Suez Crisis emerged due to Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal with a view of paying for the amounts spent on construction and development of the Aswan Dam. The project of dam was the most important for the agricultural sector of the country.⁷⁹ Nasser contacted to the World Bank for acquiring funds to construct the dam. The USA agreed to give loan to Egypt with certain conditions, but later on the US withdrew from giving funds as a result of Egypt's adopting an anti-West behavior; recognizing the Communist China, assisting the Algerian rebels, and Nasser's harsh attitude towards the West.⁸⁰Later on, the Soviet Union showed consent to help Egypt in the construction of the dam without any terms and conditions, but only wished that Egypt should send military representatives to

Russia for initiating military negotiations for both the countries.⁸¹ With a view to pay for the construction of the dam, Nasser decided to nationalize the Suez Canal.

Though the Suez Canal was completely an Egyptian possession, yet it was controlled by the British and the French companies which sponsored its construction in 19th century. After the nationalization of the canal, Nasser was able to impose tax on the ships trading via the canal that was spent on many projects including the construction of the Aswan Dam. The Suez Crisis took place due to the nationalization of the dam; an open dispute among the British, the Egyptians, the French and the Israelis. The United States was outraged and had to intervene because of the unilateralism of the European partners, who failed to contact Washington D.C. before taking the violent action against Nasser. Various countries of the Middle East sent messages of congratulations and support towards Nasser after the nationalization of the Suez Canal.⁸² The nationalization of Canal and the triumph in the Suez Crisis earned huge support for Egypt and Nasser throughout the Middle East. Jordan and Syria offered military service to Egypt to contest the western powers, the Israelis and the French; Saudi Arabia put an end to the oil shipments to France and Britain.⁸³ This victory of Egypt proved very significant as Egypt got the position of Middle Eastern leadership. Egypt achieved the position that no country in the region could do; it had willingly refused the grouping of the foreign powers and emerged on the top. This victory also brought Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, to sign an Arab Solidarity Pact in 1957, that confirmed its commitment towards the intra-Arab development.⁸⁴ Key concept of Arab unity or the Pan-Arabism was embodied in the union of the Arab countries extending support for Egypt.

Formation of the United Arab Republic; U.A.R. (1958-1961)

The leaders and followers of Pan-Arabism came closer to each other for the cause of Arab unity; Egypt and its neighboring countries' political environment supported the circumstances.⁸⁵ The Syrian leaders had been demanding closer military and economic unification since 1955.⁸⁶ Meanwhile, Gamal Abdul Nasser got offensive in the Arab world when thousands of the Egyptian teachers, technical experts, agents and Egyptian military in the Middle Eastern countries started to carry out their pragmatic activities; some of them were caught red-handed distributing arms and propaganda leaflets in many countries under the mask of diplomats.⁸⁷ Since Nasser was an active leader, therefore he had sympathizers in Amman, Damascus, Beirut, Baghdad, and other Arab capitals and mainly relied on students and the members of the Baath whose mission of Pan-Arabism, anti-imperialism and revolution coincided with that of Egypt.⁸⁸ Besides, the radio Cairo gave out message of vigorous propaganda for uniting all Arabs.⁸⁹ In 1958, five Syrian army commanders went to Cairo to meet Nasser and talk about the merger of Syria and Egypt.⁹⁰ Although Nasser was aware of the consequences of such merger, yet he availed himself of the opportunity which might not happen again. Thus, this scenario carried out the unification of Syria and Egypt as it was planned and propagated by Nasser himself.

On 5th February, Nasser along with Quwatli presented his seventeen-point program in Damascus to run the new Republic. He proclaimed that an assembly would be

constituted comprising 100 Syrians and 300 Egyptian.⁹¹ On 21st February, 1958, Gamal Abdal Nasser and Shukri al Quwatli of Syria declared that Egypt and Syria would be one state, one army and one party from now. On the same day, the high majority of Egyptian and Syrian voters acknowledged the clauses of unification that formed UAR.⁹² On 22nd February, 1958, the official announcement of the merger was made and the curious phenomenon of the 'United Arab Republic' finally came into being under the headship of Nasser.⁹³ In the United Arab Republic, Syria had to dissolve all political parties and both Egyptian and Syrian parliaments adopted the newly proposed system to plan for the upcoming events.⁹⁴ The cabinet for UAR would also be chosen; in which the Egyptian members would be 20 of the 34 and they would hold the ministries of foreign affairs, defense, national guidance, education etc. From February 22 to 25, Afghanistan, Albania, Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Holland, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Iran, India, America Switzerland and Russia recognized the UAR. Later on, Lebanon and KSA on Feb 26, Sudan on Mar 3, Pakistan on Mar 11 and Ethiopia on Mar 13 recognized the newly formed UAR.⁹⁵ The new constitution of the UAR was made public on the 5th of March by Nasser. On 6th March, the first cabinet of the union and the two regional executive councils were constituted to start their governmental activities. Besides Nasser and constitutional executive bodies, four vice-presidents of the UAR, two from Egypt and two from Syria, also took the charge of their offices.

Federation with Yemen

On 8th March 1958, Nasser and the Prince of Yemen, Muhammad al Badr signed a pact in Syria; in which Yemen and the United Arab Republic were connected with a federation called 'United Arab States'.⁹⁶ The union of Yemen with the United Arab Republic in 1958 was federal and not unification on the Syrian model. Yemen in effect conserved its independence and possibly the power to go against Egypt in matters of foreign policy. The federation nevertheless affected British relations with Egypt, since the Yemen claimed that the whole Aden Protectorate is part of the Yemen and had fomented a series of frontier incidents. Field Marshal Abdul Hakim Aamer was appointed as the commander-in-chief of the federation united forces.⁹⁷

Foreign Policy of UAR under Nasser

The Egyptian-Syrian unification was made at the time when longing for Arabs' unity, urged by the Pan-Arab movement and foreign environment, had reached at its climax, especially among the nationalist intelligentsia. Therefore, only fourteen days after the union, two other Arab countries; Iraq and Jordan also merged into a federation.⁹⁸ If the geographical location, resemblance of inhabitants, parallel social organization and governing system were to be taken, the Jordan-Iraq federation would seem more natural than the merger of Syria and Egypt, in which, there were no such common features. On the ideological grounds, the merging of Egypt and Syria was the most appropriate, where the leading elite was devoted to the policy of Pan-Arabism, neutralism and social revolution.⁹⁹

Throughout the political career of Gamal Abdel Nasser Egypt kept receiving pecuniary aid from USA in the shape of many programs. The United States was expecting that this addition in foreign aid would force Nasser to alter his foreign policies. Surprisingly, Nasser did not let his decisions regarding his domestic and foreign policies be affected by the enormous increase in foreign aid. He also did not change his policies about the Middle East nor did he let the Egyptian relationships with the West be affected by the US aid. This denial to the Western powers was due to the Pan-Arabism ideology that never permitted the foreign powers to control the Middle Eastern policies. Nasser was aware of the fact that he had to spend some of the state revenue in sponsoring a strong military to make Egypt stable, enforce his policies, and depict the strong position of his country to the West. He made a massive increase in the budget for the military during his presidency. It is worth noting that in 1958, Egypt spent \$211 million on its defense projects.¹⁰⁰

During the rule of Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt rose to power and also influenced the Middle East to a large extent. Nasser took the help of his Pan-Arabism ideology to promulgate the foreign and domestic policies that would let Egypt accomplish its role as a regional power, which was believed to be their inherent right by him and the masses. Nasser turned to a position of neutralism while designing the foreign policies about the Soviet Union and the West, and also advanced Egypt's relations with the other countries of the Arab Middle East. He also visited Moscow on 20th April, 1958 and tried to resolve the misconceptions and misunderstandings between the both countries.¹⁰¹

Disrupting Factors of the U.A.R

It is worth mentioning here that the union of Egypt and Syria made Nasser really authoritative and became a cause of militant Pan-Arab group's further intensification. The enemies of Nasser reacted aggressively because they thought that he was a threat for them. Therefore, a dire state of annoyance developed in the relations between Nasser and Tunisian President Habib Bourquiba. In March 1958, Saudi-UAR relations got worse due to the alleged effort of King Saud to break the union with Egypt and attempt of murdering Nasser. This act was considered as a defensive step against the revolutionary activities carried out in Saudi Arabia by Egyptian military and civil agents under the mask of diplomats.¹⁰²

Later on, the UAR involved highly in the civil war of Lebanon when Nasser attempted to create troubles for King Hussain's rule in Jordan. This resulted in the arrival of the British paratroops to protect Hussain; this further created the gulf between the Pan-Arab and the pro-Western forces in the region. In the meanwhile, a terrible 1958 revolution came in Iraq because of Nasser's activities, in which Nasser's rival, Nuri el Said, was murdered. After that, General Abdul Karim held the charge of as its only stakeholder was a communist agent and got support from Moscow. It was also the fact that most of the Arab countries did not cherish over the unification of Egypt and Syria. Riyadh wanted Syria to remain neutral because Saudi Arab shared border with Syria. Saudis paid salaries to the Syrian politicians, ministers and the heads of the government to keep on the status quo. When the merging of Egypt and Syria was proclaimed, Arab states were highly

afraid of Nasser that he might treat them in the same way as he had treated King Faisal, King Hussain and Lebanese President Shamoun. It was no more a hidden fact that everyone was doubtful of the Egyptian-Syrian unification that could disturb harmony of power among the Arabs. The western allies and Israel were also fearful due to the newly union of both the countries. Prince Faisal stated that Syria was a factitious and tribalist state and therefore the UAR might not be able to survive for a long period of time and would bring about a disaster.¹⁰³

Breakup of the U.A.R.

With the passage of time, Nasser made efforts to solidify his authority since he was aware of the fact that his position in Syria was a complicated one. Initially, the Baath party and its partners were excited about the union with Egypt and Nasser's presidency but the merchant class had many reservations and doubts. Furthermore, the Communists, who were uprising in Syria before the union, turned against the merger at the eleventh hour. Similarly, the modern and conservative Syrians asked for their separate economy and high standard of living and also for a separate currency.¹⁰⁴ However, Nasser started eliminating the Baath party from power after a year of outward partnership; and by the start of 1960, many Baathists were alienated from the unification and the provincial cabinets including some of their top leaders. Further steps, regarding the revolutionary actions, taken in the country such as the subservience of press and the nationalization of Banks, began to be ascribed to Syria. One and a half year after the formation, it was obvious that the scenario was highly against the UAR. The Syrian political parties were soon disbanded in their country and the politicians were highly aware of this disruption. A number of problems had been putting their part to disrupt UAR since its formation. Many Syrians reacted displeasingly over the union because there were many factors for the disillusionment.¹⁰⁵

Meanwhile, the atmosphere in colleges and schools became suffocating; academic freedom was held and became a nostalgic memory. Teachers were forced to show loyalty towards the government in order to defend their posts in educational institutes. Further, some Syrians also thought that Nasser's economic policy would subordinate the Syrians to the Egyptian economy and the policy, in their opinion, was the harbinger of bringing down their living standard than that of the Egyptians. In 1961, Nasser gave out a series of statements, announcing the socialization of the UAR's economy; these announcements raised the tension to the climax. The economic socialization of Nasser focused on nationalization of all the banks, insurance companies and several industrial and commercial corporations as well. Furthermore, a ban was imposed on contract works by the government unless the contracting enterprise admits the state to 50% ownership. Nasser also limited the private stakeholders. Besides this, a new scale of income taxes was introduced, with the rates raised up to 90% on incomes exceeding £E5, 000 a year. The principle decrees of his socialization reduced one half of the maximum landholding allowed by the agrarian reform law of 1952. The government was to impose 25 percent interest on all importing agencies and impose real estate taxes. The multiple jobs held by one person were also banned by Nasser according to this economic formula. Hence, he left no public or private institution untouched and unaffected.¹⁰⁶

Syria agreed to become a part of the bond with Egypt but soon disillusionment occurred in the Baathists' groups when they could not dominate the National Union which was formed in the UAR as the sole political party. Consequently, by the end of 1959, all the Baathists' leaders put themselves in self-exile in Lebanon. They started returning to Egypt when Nasser's deputy, Amer, was detained in Damascus and sent to Egypt. Syria and Egypt broke up again from the union; it was considered as if the union never took place. Nasser was very wise leader; decided not to fight and gave orders to his troops to give in. He did not want to use force to safeguard the union with Syria and said that the Arabs must not fight with the Arabs. Surprisingly, all the Middle Eastern countries, that wanted to settle their accounts with Nasser, were satisfied with the break-up of the UAR. Iran, Jordan and Turkey were relieved and immediately acknowledged Syria's new government. Nasser broke up his diplomatic relations with Ankara and Amman; and the relations with Tehran were cut off even one year before the disruption of the union. After that, on Dec 26, 1961, Yemen also got separation from its federation with the UAR.¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

The rise and fall of Egypt during 1952 to 1961 in the Middle East has been discussed in detail in this paper. The key condition, which led to the rise and fall of Egypt, was the leadership of Nasser, the ideology of Pan-Arabism and the implementation of the philosophy of Nasserism. This ideology was closely associated with the personal style of the leadership of Nasser. The most important element of the ideology was Pan-Arabism, which molded all the aspects of the Egyptian society, the ruling class, the policy making process and the masses. This association ultimately affected Egypt's rise and fall in the country politics to a great extent. The significance and implementation of the ideology of Pan-Arabism can be seen, in its practical form, in the formation of the UAR under the presidency of Nasser. These factors also played a key role to shape both domestic and foreign policies of the country.

On the one hand, it was the dream of Nasser to unite all the Arab countries but on the other hand, every nation has its own identity, cultural practices and core values. These were the facts which cannot be denied or compromised by any nation but Nasser was the leader who tried his best to unite the Arab World and merge the Middle Eastern countries in one nation. The example of the unification of Syria and Egypt, called the United Arab Republic; how Nasser made it and how it collapsed in a short span of just three years, was a wonderful experience in the history of the Arab world. However, this fact can also not be ignored that such a charismatic leader as Nasser of Egypt, was not even seen in any other Middle Eastern country, who was able to set an example in the form of the Arab union. He was an outstanding individual who was capable to rely on the leaders of the Arab countries and masses to accomplish his cause of uniting the Arab world. No other leader except him had the ability for the unifications of the countries in a practical form.

Gamal Abdel Nasser successfully ruled over Egypt from 1952 to 1970, succeeded by Anwar al Sadat in 1971 who ruled until his assassination in 1981, and after

him, Hosni Mubarak came in power and remained president from 1981 till his resignation in 2011. As of May 2012, the country was under interim military rule; elections were held on 28th November, 2011; the nation elected its new president Muhammad Morsi who was the first elected president in the history of Egypt. Before president Morsi, Egypt was ruled by the Kings and the military dictators and finally in 2012, after a long struggle, ultimately the dictatorship shifted towards the civilian rule. In 2013, president Morsi was expelled from the government and the caretaker set up was established in Egypt that declared the *Akhwan al Muslimoon* (Muslim brotherhood) as a terrorist organization on 25th December 2013; but unfortunately insurgency and instability never ended in Egypt. In 2014, the elections were held again and Abdul Fatah Alsesi became the elected president who took the oath as a president of Egypt on 8th June 2014. In a nutshell, the political stability, law and order, peace and prosperity had always been demanded by the Egyptian and Syrian societies. The dream of 'Arab Unity' has been the demand of the Arab Nations in order to make headway; this dream will also be the need and chapter of discussion in the times to come. To sum up, it was Nasser who saved the country from the clutches of reaction and put the nation on the track of justice and progress. He tried to reconstruct a 'homogenous whole' where a sort of utopian system could have been implemented. The masses yet not forget the glorious period of Gamal Abdel Nasser that was a source of strength and potential for the nation and for the survival of Egypt respectively.

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16. Wafd: an Arabic word which refers towards the delegation. Wafd party was a political and nationalist party which was organized by Saad Zaghlul Pasha on 13th November, 1918. During W.W-I, in 1919 it raised its voice in London peace conferences and its leaders Saad Zaghlul Pasha, Hamid al Basil and Ismail Siddiqi were exiled. When Egypt gets independence from Britain on 28th Feb, 1922, the Wafd Party organized itself as a political party in 1923. It demanded for the constitutional and political government, internal sovereignty, civil rights, and Egyptian control on the Suez Canal and Sudan. In 1936, when Egypt got complete independence, the Wafd governments were in constant clashes with the king. In 1953, when all the political parties were dissolved by the Revolution Command Council, the party used to issue four daily and four weekly newspapers. In Feb, 1978 the party was reconstituted by Anwar al Sadaat in accordance with legalization of a multiparty system, but in June the party was again dissolved and its remaining members in the People's Assembly became independent. For details see George Lenczowski, 315.
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37. Ibid.,73. Also see Aburish, *Nasser: The Last Arab*, 20.
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