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Η γέννηση του μοντέρνου Αιγυπτιακού Κράτους:

παράδοση εναντίον εκσυγχρονισμού

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The building of the modern Egyptian State:

tradition versus modernization

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Η γέννηση του μοντέρνου Αιγυπτιακού Κράτους: παράδοση εναντίον εκσυγχρονισμού

Σημαντικοί όροι

Αίγυπτος, κράτος, αποικιοκρατία, απο-αποικιοποίηση, Αραβικός Εθνικισμός, Ισλάμ, επανάσταση, εκσυγχρονισμός, ίδρυση κράτους (state building)

Περίληψη

Αυτή η εργασία επικεντρώνεται στην Αιγυπτιακή επανάσταση του 1952 και το κρατικό οικοδόμημα που αυτή δημιούργησε στην Αίγυπτο. Η εργασία παρουσιάζει την θεωρία που περιγράφει την αποτυχία του αραβικού κρατικού μορφώματος, η οποία σχετίζεται με την διατήρηση των αποικιακών δομών έθνους-κράτους μετα-αποικιακά από τις Αραβικές ελίτ και εξετάζει τους λόγους που διατηρήθηκαν οι αποικιακές δομές στην Αίγυπτο μετά την επανάσταση του 1952. Το πρώτο επιχείρημα της εργασίας είναι ότι πυρήνες οργάνωσης που προσομοιάζουν σε έθνος-κράτος υπήρχαν στην Αίγυπτο για περίπου έναν αιώνα πριν αναλάβουν οι Βρετανοί την εξουσία. Υποστηρίζω ότι η μετα-αποικιακή κυβέρνηση διατήρησε τις δομές έθνους κράτους που σχηματίζονται στην περιοχή από τον 19ο αιώνα, καθώς εντοπίζουμε τα σύνορα, την διοίκηση και την εθνική συνείδηση της περιόδου του Μουχάμαντ Άλι (Μεχμέτ Αλί Πασάς). Το δεύτερο επιχείρημα είναι πως το Αιγυπτιακό έθνος-κράτος ήταν απάντηση στο αίτημα του εκσυγχρονισμού και της προόδου, το οποίο ενισχύθηκε από τον Αραβικό Εθνικισμό, την κύρια αντι-αποικιακή ιδεολογία της εποχής, η οποία επηρεάστηκε από την Δύση.

The building of the modern Egyptian State: tradition versus modernization

Key Words

Abstract

This essay focuses on the Egyptian revolution of 1952 and the state apparatus that it created in Egypt. The essay presents the theories that examine the failure of the Arab states as a result of the preservation of the colonial structures of nation-state post-colonially by the Arab elites and considers the reasons why the colonial structures were preserved in Egypt after the 1952 revolution. The first main argument of this essay is that nuclei of nation-like organisation laid in Egypt for almost a century before the British took control. The author believes that the post-revolution government maintained the state-like structures that were taking form in the region since the 19th century, as we trace down the borders, administration and national consciousness of the period of Muhammed Ali. The second argument is that the Egyptian nation-state was the response to the popular demand of modernization and progress, forced by the Arab nationalism, the main anti-colonial ideology of the era inspired by the Western thought.

Contents

Περίληψη

Abstract

Introduction

In the majority of post-colonial countries, the first independent governments, which aggressively fought against the colonial powers in the past, maintained the colonial state apparatus that they inherited from them. Many have accused the marriage of Arab tradition and Islam with the Western heritage, for further emphasizing the divide between the societies and the state and, therefore, creating authoritarian regimes and weak states.

Wael Halaq's theory on the Arab state is that Arab societies could not meet the social formation that could support and give birth to a nation-state like organisation. He goes as far as to claim that the Islamic state is an impossibility.[1] When, the colonial powers implemented the state organisation and legislature to traditional Muslim societies that followed the Sharia law, they caused the rupture of the already existing traditional power structures in these societies. On the other hand, the nationalist elites of the new-formed countries that rose after the decolonization process preserved the state formation that they inherited from their colonizers, further provoking sectarianism between different tribes and sects that were forced to coexist under the same political power. The result has been hard authoritative and oppressive non-participatory states with large armies, bureaucracies and security forces that are at the same time very weak in terms of borders, law enforcement and taxation and -more often than not- result to recent failure. Furthermore, these elites used the foundation of Islamic thought, Sharia law, only as a tool for the legitimacy of their new-born states.

Abdallah Al-Arawi (or Laroui) formed a similar theory of the Arab state. He wrote that the modern Arab state maintained the despotic organisation of the Caliphate at its core due to the Ottoman past but only borrowed from the West the bureaucratic administration and technology due to its contact with the colonizers.[2] The elites, on the other hand, maintained the status quo in order to solidify their power. The maintaining of the status quo could be achieved either by changes within the society and economy and/or suppression of autonomous groups and political opponents. Laroui believes that the raw violence that the Arab state utilizes, is indicative of its weakness. Besides its very strong body, the state's place in society is rather poor, in terms of education, ideology and morality. Therefore, and any economic progress aside, Arab people have been unable to think of the state as the

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[1] Hallaq, Wael, B., (2013), *The impossible state*, Columbia University Press, New York

[2] Abdallah Laroui, (1997), *Islamisme, modernisme, libéralisme: Esquisses critiques*, Centre Culturel Arabe, Casablanca

expression of popular will and power and thus society cannot follow the state apparatus wholeheartedly. Arabs thus have always prioritized their bonds with family, village and local authority while remaining hostile to the state that their elites created for them.

In our case study, post-revolutionary Egypt, the Egyptian government of the Free Officers and Gamal Abdel Nasser could not be an exception. The regime did procced to changes such as the establishment of the Egyptian republic, the agrarian reform, the country's industrialization and most importantly, the ousting of the British control over the country. Nevertheless, it did not proceed to structural changes, such as the change of colonial borders, and enforced the military-bureaucratic regime that the British had applied in order to control the Egyptian society and the matters of state. At the same time, Nasser's regime did not create institutions for political participation and used extensively the police forces to suppress it. As the Egyptian society was not ready for the state organization, the state was forming as military and political entity before gaining the legal recognition and popular legitimacy for its existence. As a result, and in spite of their aspirations, the post-colonial leaders would impose colonial practises to their people by following the colonial state apparatus. This essay questions why the Free Officers movement, although it carried a national revolution against imperialism, did not seek to break from the previous state structures and reinvent the Egyptian state according to its history, religion and tradition.

Although we do not oversee the mishandlings of the post-revolutionary government, the purpose of this essay is to examine its decision to follow the existing structures and understand that this decision was an organic and logical one, based on the apparatus inherited by the colonial power. It represented a necessity for the new political institution for it to survive against its rivals, which involved political opponents inside the state and the rival Western European states in the international system. Besides the contradictions and malfunctions of the post-revolution state apparatus in Egypt, one is forced to examine the latter as a necessary vehicle towards modernization, that the Islamic, conservative opposition was condemning as ungodly. In post-colonial Egypt the modernising government resembled the structure established by the colonial governments because, according to its elite's famous Arab nationalist ideas, modernization originated from the Western example of centralization of power and a strong administrative and military apparatus. That is partly why the inherited

apparatus had the same lack of institutions of political representation while maintaining forceful state bureaucracy and repression forces, just like the colonial one.[3]

Secondly, this essay argues that, although the concept of the Western nation-state was not organic to Islamic thought and the Sharia, some aspects of it were present for centuries in Egypt. In most cases, the formation of states followed borders already existing with some states -like Egypt- having been around for at least two centuries. In many aspects, colonialism did not change the borders or organization of the states but rather consolidated them, while introducing more rationalized, bureaucratic means, which the post-colonial government sustained. Nevertheless, Egypt had an established authority and jurisdiction that was ruling upon its territory for years. Also, the society of Egypt had formed its own local language and customs and was conscious of its -delimited, of course- statehood. The first attempt of state-building and modernization in Egypt took place in the beginning of the 19th century, while Egypt was still an Ottoman province. Therefore, the state-building and modernization process from 1952 onwards was not created in a vacuum, nor was it based solely on the colonial foundations and modes.

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[3]Christopher Clapham, (1985) "Third World Politics, an Introduction", University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 163

Chapter 1

The Western and Arab states: A juxtaposition

1.1 The modern nation-state: The Western ideal-type

In order to make definitions and concepts clearer, we first have to provide a definition of the state. The definition concerns the ideal type of a modern Western European state; therefore, I do not intent to use a certain historical example, rather than an abstract concept based on characteristics of Western European states that took form in modern history.[4] This essay is interested in the state rather as an administrative organisation and as the centralised mechanism that administrates the political power. Therefore, it focuses on its administrative structure and not on its system of governance.

According to Max Weber, the state is a ruling political organisation; its order is "*continuously safeguarded with a given territorial area by the threat and application of physical force on the part of the administrative staff.*"[5] According to Max Weber's definition of the ideal type of modern state, state power is diffused form the centre to the outside, and is therefore centralised. At the same time, state power is territorially delimited by national borders. The state's main function is the enforcement of order in society, either juridically, administratively or with the main tool of enforcement: legitimised violence. Legitimized violence has to be the most crucial and important Weberian notion of the modern state, because it connotes its sovereignty over society. The state -through its administrative staff-should claim the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in order to reinforce its order.[6] In Weberian thought, modern state is strictly associated with Christian protestant ethic, individualism and therefore the capitalist economy.

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[4] If we really want to appoint a clear example of modern European modern state, based on Weber's definition, we will have to think of the French kingdom of the 16th-17th centuries, during the birth of the absolutist state, see Anderson, Perry, (1979), *"Lineages of the absolutist state"*, Verso, London

[5] Weber, M., (1949), *The methodology of the social sciences*, Free Press, Glencoe, p. 40.

[6] Op.cit.

In the modern state new political and social institutions are adopted based on law and official duties. The modern state employs functionaries that act in its name. The bureaucrats have no personal interests and are professional and expertise executives. Their decisions are based on state law and serve the state's benefit. Law on the other hand, is voted by political power and legitimized from society. Legislature consists of impersonal, general and logical rules. State officials are the bureaucrats in ministries and municipalities, the army and police officers as well as the judges. The modern state's powers are officially and institutionally separated into the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. This is also part of the roman heritage of European law, that was later transmitted to medieval empires.

In Thelda Scokcpol's theory, the state is "*rather, a set of administrative, policing, and military organizations headed, and more or less well coordinated by, an executive authority.*"[7] In this essay, the examination of the post-colonial Egyptian state is based on Scokcpol's definition of the state -which is itself heavily based on Weber's theory-. Therefore, in order to explore the building of the post-colonial state in Egypt, I will have to explore the movements towards the birth of Western-type state bureaucracy and regional administration as well as the enforcement of the military branch. These institutions were present in Egypt since the 19th century, under Western inspiration and were reinforced during British presence. Furthermore, I will have to investigate the new state's borders, which were more or less designed by the imperialistic powers but met no serious alteration during post-colonialism. In the meantime, I will have the chance to describe the role of Islam in the new-founded state and the institutions for political participation that were no more present post-revolutionary than during the British occupation.

1.2. The modern state in the Arab World

At this point, it is crucial to understand the special traits of the Arab tradition and different historical process that the state formation followed. In order to talk about state formation in the Arab World, one would do well to start with Islam and *Sharia* law. Islam has always played an important role in the Arab social and political life. Islamic thought did not

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[7] Skocpol, T.,1979 *States and Social Revolutions: A comparative analysis of France, Russia and China,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 29-30.

undergo a process of Enlightenment, meaning the break from spirituality, nor did it create a natural law different from the religious one. Islamic foundations would have made the path towards modernity in the Western sense rather difficult. By contrast to modern European reality, religion has never been a private domain, but has always been a way of organizing life and politics. At the same time, law is not separated into religious or secular; all legislature is religious because all legislature is derived from *Allah.*[8] In the Quran, religious and secular powers are twins that derive from the same source: Sharia. In the West, the wars between European monarchs and the Pope concluded to the birth of state law and sovereignty. But Islam has not seen serious clashes between Caliphs and Sultans. Nevertheless, from the early years, there has been a de facto separation of religious and political powers between the Caliphs/Imams and Sultans/Emirs.[9] The separation was de facto because legally was not recognized, yet it is not clear whether the political authority was indeed a subject to the religious one.

In Islam there is not an official hierarchical religious institution, similar to the papacy in Christianity.[10] The Ottoman Empire established a body of salaried clerics, the *ulema*, who functioned more like a bureaucracy close to the Sultan. Their role was to provide religious legitimacy to the former and occupied themselves with juridical and educational duties, but were far from the ideal type of Western bureaucracy.

Last but not least, in Islamic tradition there is no society; there is Ummah or the community of the faithful. Therefore, tribes and ethnicities for Islamic tradition are of no importance. In Islam, Arabs, Turks and Persians are united. National borders make any sense to traditional Islamic thought.

The modern state as a concept and as an institution of territorial bureaucratic authority was introduced quite recently in the majority of Arab countries.[11] Being a Western social product, it could be claimed that Arabs in a way borrowed the concept of the state from the West during the 19th century, by means of imitation. Later, during the century, it is true that most of the Islamic countries were forced to subscribe to this type of political organisation

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[8] Rosenthal, E.I.J., (2009), *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 8

[9] Kumar, Deepa, *Political Islam: A Marxist analysis,* International Socialist Review, Issue 76, "Revolt in the Middle East: Another world is possible", March 2011. Retrieved from http://isreview.org/issue/76/political-islam-marxist-analysis

[10] Ayoob, Mohammed, (2008) *, The Many Faces of Political Islam*, University of Michigan Press, Michigan

[11] Ayubi, Nazih, N., (1995) "Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East", New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd :

going back to the colonial era. On the other hand, the post-colonial elites that came to power seemed to embrace and mimic this state pattern eagerly.

As Wael Halaq would argue, nation-state organisation is a European creation, based on the European historical process that gave birth to it, expanded it and maintained it though social fermentation. Modern state is not a product of the socio-political reality, legislature or intellectual thought of the Arab or the Islamic world and therefore not an organic part of it. The Arab societies could not sustain certain notions, such as that of political participation or the notion of individual rights. The power structure of the European nation-state does include, according to Halaq, the notion of citizenship, a notion that did not exist in Arab World.

Laroui supports that modern Arab state has the institutions of a modern Western state, but it lacks the very vital -for Western thought- concept of liberty, that created and developed the state and lies within the state law. This kind of liberty, that in the West is provided by the law, does not exist in Islamic thought.

The criticism is that Arabs adopted the Western-type state without adapting it to the Arab and Islamic reality. As Ali Kazancigil writes, Arabs did not improvise on their state formation even when this was so contradictory to their native religio-political ethos.[12] In the next chapter, we will follow step by step the post-imperialistic state formation in Egypt and we will trace this "lack of imagination" one would say, from the Arab elites that took the responsibility of the process.

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[12] Kazancigil, Ali.(ed.) 1986, *The state in global perceptive*, Gower Pub Co: Farnham

Chapter 2

The Egyptian Revolution: The post-revolution structures

In this chapter, I will focus on the case study of Egyptian state, where the theories mentioned in the previous chapter apply. In order to start my argument, first I have to go back in history and run across not only the Egyptian revolution and the Free Officers movement but first and foremost the structural changes that this revolution brought or not. The Egyptian revolution is considered one of the first and the most successful revolutions against a colonial power, the British, and their puppet monarchy, that resulted to complete independence and a new state. Egypt has also been the pivotal country for nationalist and anti-colonialist ideas in the Arab World and the one that gave birth to one of the most influential leaders, Gamal Abdel Nasser. The latter has been the "unofficial leader" of Pan-Arabism and the Non-Alignment Movement but also the "unofficial leader" of the Arab nation during his presidency. Even before all these achievements, Nasser was the leader of the Egyptian state and the Egyptian Revolution, as one of the leading army officers of the Free Officials movement.

2.1 The British heritage

Colonies in the Third World were deeply affected by the colonial rule of the metropolis. The indirect rule of the British took control of existing political structures and also created traditionalist mechanisms that were later absorbed by the post-colonial governments. Egypt was never an official British colony. However, the country had been a part of the Ottoman empire under British administration since 1882 for economic reasons, and an official protectorate during the First World War, this time for additional, military reasons. The British succeeded in occupying the country by paying its debts to France and asking for control of the Suez Canal in return. The British wanted to secure the trade route through the Suez Canal, which was the safest and quickest path towards their other colonies. When the army rose against British control of the Canal, the British officially invaded and

occupied Egypt, aiming to secure political obedience. Egypt was now one of the countries that Britain exercised indirect rule over, although it was still considered an Ottoman province (*Khedive*).

At first, the British chose to not deal with the local dynasty in Egypt, to the extent that the latter did not intervene in issues regarding the country's territories and exact borders. However, it exerted total control over them. It was the policy of the British Empire to keep local leaders of the colonies in power but deprive them of any policy-making decisions. Therefore, the British kept the previous government of Egypt in power and the Muhammad Ali dynasty continued governing Egypt officially. In reality, the government of the country was controlled by a British administrator, who had real authority in state issues. The British Administrator governed with the help of members of the Cabinet that were also British by majority. Soon, the British administration introduced new colonial legislature and established the known as the Cromer regime, that weakened the Egyptian government and the political rights of the people. The British Empire did introduce a parliamentary regime with two Houses of Parliament in Egypt: a Legislative Council and a General Assembly. Those two were of course powerless and their main function was to discuss the bills that the government was drafting but without interfering further.

The British policy of indirect control, although leading to state-like structures, created a weak state with fragile mechanisms. This was evident when the British left the country; no firm political structure was left in place to govern the country efficiently and no solid institution for political participation would allow people to enter politics. British kept the monarchy in power but never let it mature into a government of a modern-state. The parliamentary system they established after the 1919 revolt was highly illiberal and depended, with small responsibilities and no actual political power. It is of no surprise that it did not survive the 1952 revolution.

Throughout the seventy years of the British presence in Egypt, one of the main attributes of the colonial administration was the overfilling of the military and bureaucratic branch of the state, in order to achieve its very own interests. Their goal was to secure social quietism and defeat nationalism, while exploiting Egyptian resources. By contrast to the "civilizing mission" of the French, the British only cared for maintaining the social order to exploit the resources of the colonies. What is important is the fact that the size of the Egyptian army per se was reduced, due to its political activism. The British placed their

preferred British officers in command, while they removed many locals from their positions. At the same time though, they modernized the army, by introducing modern weapons and technologies, further empowering it.

In many aspects, the structures of administration took shape during the colonial period. Strong modernized armies in post-colonial countries in Africa were a product of the colonial administration. According to Ruth First, colonialism was "*military in conception and organisation*", as if the colonizers were continuing the administration of the country the same way they invaded it.[13] That military-bureaucratic oligarchy is the one that continued to have great political power in the new states even after the colonization. Egypt is a very clear example of the above. The British also introduced new legislature in Egypt, as shown previously. The Crammer legislation set up a big bureaucracy in Egypt both in numbers and in terms of absorption of state funds.[14] In order to achieve compliance, the bureaucracy of the state was manned with British officials and only a few Egyptians.

The Egyptian state of 1919-1951 was more or less a police state; there were restrictions of the freedoms of meeting, speech and the press and the security forces were enforcing the order. But despite functioning as a state, the country lacked serious infrastructure and industrialisation in order to maintain its economy. Egypt lacked a central bank and its monetary flows were solely controlled by the British. The British went on creating a small market and a considerable industry but for most part, they sustained the monoculture of cotton in Egyptian economy and imported it as a raw material for their industry, while also exporting to the country their industrial goods. This not only condemned the country to be a small, rural economy but also made it vulnerable to international economic changes.

The British Empire created much more dependent, fragile structures in its colonies. The policy of the British Empire in general was the maintenance of traditional structures while allowing some gradual changes in society. Meanwhile, they completely neglected the organisation of a system of education and public health. On the other hand, the indirect interference of the metropolis in the Egyptian governance and its territory emphasized the stateness in the country. The French in their colonies, by trying to assimilate them and make

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[13] First, Ruth, (1983), *Colonialism and the formation of African countries*, in Held, David (ed. et al), *State and Societies*, martin Robertson and Company Ltd, Oxford, p. 208

[14] Darwin, John , Nielsen Beverley, (1981) *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial policy in the aftermath of war*, MacMillan Press, Cambridge, p. 55

them part of the French state, did not reinforce the locality and the stateness, while the British indirect rule enforced formally the one-country, one-state idea in the locals. This is one of the reasons, Arab nationalism found a fertile ground in the country.

2.2 The Egyptian revolution of 1952: the structural changes and the nationalist movement

By the end of the second World War, new social forces such as the military officers, the middle class and the intelligentsia was against the British presence and the monarch. Finally, it was through the already powerful army that this new elites took the power.[15] In 1952, a secret association coming from lower class officials organized a coup d'état against King Faruk, who had succeeded his father Fuad. The Free Officers' movement (*al-Dubbat al-Ahrar*) took grip of power and finally ousted the British presence from Egypt. They demanded the withdrawal of British troops, the removal of their Egyptian collaborators and a new constitution, as well as a fair and equitable social system, through the elimination of feudalism.[16] The first political move of the Free Officers was the ousting of Kind Faruk and later the proclamation of the Egyptian Republic. The old Egyptian regime of the previous years was over.

The nationalist aspiration of the Free Officers was an independent, modern, industrialised state of the Western type which would take the place of a rural, developing colony. That did not necessarily include the change of the constitution; the original plan of the coup d'etat was the replacement of King Farouk with another monarch and the defeat of imperialism in Egypt.[17] It was later that the movement and its leaders became very popular among the Egyptians, a popularity which resulted in the proclamation of the Republic of Egypt in 1953 and the formation of the new Egyptian state. The new constitution that actually enclosed their ideas of governance was not announced until 1956, three years after the

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[15] Roussos, Sotiris, *The Middle East* in Sotiropoulos Dimitris, Houliaras, Asteris a.o. (2005), *The third World*, Papazisis Publications, Athens
[16] Cleveland, William, L. , Bunton, Martin, (2009), *A history of the Modern Middle East*, Westview Press., Boulder, p. 305
[17] Ohsten, Frederik, Merli, Francesco, *Nasser and the Arab revolution*, International Marxist Tendency, 12.05.2011. Retrieved from https://www.marxist.com/nasser-and-arab-revolution.htm

Revolution and the first constitutional declaration. The Officers did not question the state formation; on the contrary, inspired by the Western ideologies of socialism and nationalism, they transferred all economic and social power to the state machinery. Furthermore, the regime was a continuation of the previous one in many terms and used the existing framework of governance, the authoritative one.

The revolution's first care was the end of imperialism in Egypt, meaning the end of the British presence. This was achieved through a process that begun in 1954 with the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement that evacuated the country form the British troops and finished in 1956 with the nationalization of the Suez Canal. The British troops evacuated the Canal zone, Cairo, and Alexandria and did not have the chance to interfere with Egyptian economy or politics again.

The new government did proceed to structural changes in the society, first of them being the agrarian reform. On September 1952, the new law that was passed prohibited to anyone to hold more than 200 feddans of land (latter it was reduced to 100 feddans).[18] Land owners with property bigger than this, would have to divide their "extra land" to landless peasants. This law, as well as the law that abolished all civil titles, changed dramatically the dynamics of the society in Egypt as it destroyed the class of old aristocracy of big land-owners and created a new base; the small peasants that were impoverished after the previous privatisation of traditional communal agricultural property. Along with the army, the workers, that were created from the industrialisation of the country, and the public servants, that were created from the bureaucratisation, peasants would form the powerful base of Egyptian society and politics in the future.

The constitution of 1956 was a very crucial one for the country. First of all, the government committed once again to the abolition of imperialism and feudalism. Also, the constitution provided for the establishment of a strong army and of a democratic society that would support measures for social justice. When it comes to the democratic principle, this would be achieved through the establishment of an elected national assembly. Parliamentarism was present in Egypt since the 1920's, after the country was declared partially independent, although we will see that political participation and representation were not rooted to the society. As for the social justice, this was achieved with the declaration of a

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[18] 1 feddan=1.0368 acres

bill of rights that eliminated any discrimination based on race, sex, religion or language. This was the introduction of human rights from the West to Egypt.

As for the economy, the new regime was committed to a big program of economic growth, based on the industrial development of the rural economy but also on a big program of nationalization of enterprises. By 1961, Nasser had nationalized banks and industries and had passed laws in favour of the workers. This was very much a successful program, as the unemployment was decreasing and the industrial output was increasing substantially, especially during the 1960's. The country was the first Arab economy to be industrialized and blooming. Nevertheless, it never reached the levels of industrialization of the Western European countries and when in need of weaponry, Egypt had to reach to different providers like the USSR or Czechoslovakia. Last but not least, Nasser decided to elevate the national infrastructures and committed its work towards constructions of roads.[19] The biggest infrastructure had been the Aswan High Dam across the Nile river that further promoted the agricultural production was well as the industrialization of Egypt, by providing water storage for irrigation and was also used as a hydroelectricity source. As a result of industrialization, since the 1950's and the 1960's we can spot the urbanization of the country.

Besides the successful modernization process in the economy, the abolition of big property and the independence from the British, the military regime failed to be truly revolutionary. The post-colonial government did proceed to alterations in the societal and political structure of the country, but whether we can talk of a full-scale revolution is up for debate. According also to our theory, the post-colonial government maintained many colonial structures and institutions, while was heavily influenced more by the Western politics and notions of the era, rather than from the Islamic Arab tradition. Besides, the ideology of nationalism, as well as socialism are Western ideologies, that were of course adapted to the Egyptian reality in an ideology commonly known as "Nasserism", named after the great leader. On the other hand, the new state did neglect the implementation of certain institutions that exist in modern European states; the institutions of political participation and representation.

Most and foremost I have to present the augmentation of the size of armed forces and the blooming of their power. As I mentioned above, the military branch of the state was very powerful since the colonial years. In reality, army was the only colonial institution capable of

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[19] Choueiri, Youssef, M. (2000), *Arab Nationalism: A History*, Balckwell Publishes Ltd., Oxford, p.193

exercising power and lead the new state formation and easily emerged as the main political power after the revolution. The Free Officers soon established a new regime, qualified as the bureaucratic-military oligarchy regime with its own interests.[20] The army was further empowered politically and economically and armed with new technology weapons, leading to the victorious wars of the 20th century and even today's government. As we saw before, the foundations of this regime had already started taking shape during the colonial period, although the army has been playing a major role in Egyptian politics since the beginning of the previous century. Military service became mandatory for all Egyptian males and men were entering by thousand in the military and police branch to secure social, political and economic power. Of course, Nasser was imposing strict controls over the security forces; he knew the power of the army, therefore he wanted to secure that the army will be loyal to him only. He tried reforms in police and intelligence but the reforms in the army failed, especially after the betrayal of the Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Army Abdel Hakim Amer, that planned a coup towards Nasser.

When the army had such a decisive role, democratic function was weak. Direct military rule was established, and the emergency law was enacted as soon as 1958, despite the demands for democracy by the officers in the constitution. Nasser got himself imprisoned in the same authoritative system that he was fighting against. In this essay, although I do not intent to examine the nature of the government and whether the revolution of 1952 led to a democratic regime, I have to mention the governmental institutions and how executive power was being exercised.

To solidify the military regime, Nasser created a state machinery that could exercise power where the army could not. Nasser's regime restrained the Egyptian people from participating politically in order to retain power. Every movement towards political organisations was brutally supressed, just as the colonial power had done before. Communists and Islamists were imprisoned, exiled or murdered by the regime.

The government established in 1953-1956 a National Assembly, that consisted of 350 seats and it consisted of one-party -the party of the regime-. There was no opposition as all other political parties (Wafd and Ikhwan) were banned. Despite that, the Assembly had no

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[20] Harik, Iliya, (1990), *The origins of the Arab state system,* in Luciani, Giacomo(ed.) , *The Arab state*, University of California press, Berkley, p. 2-3

clear functions besides the approval of Nasser's policies and decisions. The party of the regime changed its name and organisation several times. After the Liberation Rally, National union (1957) and Arab Nationalist Union (1961) were established as parties but proved to be merely a bureaucratic extension of the authoritarian regime.[21] These parties consisted of the Higher Executive Committee, appointed and headed by Nasser and there was no clear distinction between these unions and the government and administrative actions. This administrative structure was spread down to local level, where it replaced local traditional centres of power but also the religious authority in a way. National Union had committees at urban district or village level. It had a strong presence of army officials, peasants and workers and it was present in schools, factories and universities. These institutions, as they were very centralised and powerless at local level, failed to form a sense of national consciousness and political action. That system sustained the regime but not an accepted political system and ideology.

As for the exercise of executive power, this was also concentrated on Nasser only. The constitution in 1956 inaugurated the new presidential government system with a strong executive power. The ministers were solely following him and approving his moves.[22] Nasser had created a system of cross-checking institutions, in order to solidify his power.[23] He was controlling the government, the security apparatus, the army, the bureaucracy and the institutions for the mobilisation of popular support, such as the Liberation Rally. The latter filled in a way the vacuum between the state and the society but was not meant to encourage political dialogue and mobilisation.

As we mentioned above, the regime that was established was military-bureaucratic. The bureaucratic organisation that tried to imitate the Western one and existed since the colonial years was in bloom. First of all, the big state machinery and the ministries that the regime tried to create were in need of numerous personnel to run its business. Plus, as the government was nationalising banks and enterprises within the country, the need for educated, professional public servants that could run the business and industries was imperative. Last but not least, the Arab Socialist Union itself developed into a huge

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[21] National Union (Egypt)." Encyclopaedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa. . Retrieved 29.11.2017 from http://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/national-union-egypt

[22] Furthermore, candidates had to pay for their candidacy, so most seats were gained by richer citizens, a few workers and no peasants at all.

[23] Hopwood, Derek, (1986), *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-1984*, Allen & Unwin, Winchester, p.103

bureaucratic organization and it was occupying some 5 million people in local, regional and national level.

In the beginning, educated military staff or former officers would manage these state affairs. Sooner or later though, the regime realized the lack of trained bureaucrats.[24] The bureaucratization of the state, had serious effects in the society. First of all, it introduced more women to the job market, as many of public servant jobs were filled by Egyptian women for the first time. Furthermore, as a result of the large public sector, a new class of technocrats was formed: the state bourgeoisie.

Moreover, the need for educated member of the society but also the crave for modernization changed the Egyptian national education system. Schools were open, and teachers were hired as literation rates in the population were augmenting, while the public more secular educational system was replacing Islamic education. The government tried to encourage university education in order to fill the nationalized economy by abolishing tuition fees and inaugurated new universities in the province. Last but not least, Nasser even proclaimed that every university graduate would be guaranteed a governmental job.

Last but not least, one of the most important colonial heritage for the new-formed countries were the artificial -most of the times- borders that the imperialistic powers have designed for them. The new government did not actively question the borders that Egypt has inherited from the imperialistic period. Nasser tried to challenge the existing borders twice, without great success. First, although the administration of Sudan has been a big matter of dispute between the British and the Egyptians in previous years, the government of Free Officers settled the Sudan question with the British in February 1953. Unlike the previous Egyptian governors though, Free Officers easily solved the question by signing willingly the Anglo-Egyptian agreement in February 1953 that established a transitional period of self-government for Sudan, which became an independent republic three years later.

The second and most important time about the Egyptian borders has been the short-lived United Arab Republic, a political union that was formed with Syria in 1958. This move was very consistent to Nasser's idea of Arab Nationalism and his will to connect all Arabs. He believed that Arabs are by nature different in language, civilization, history from the rest

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[24] Cleveland, William, L., Bunton, Martin, (2009), *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Westview Press, Boulder, p. 317

of the world and that they can form a natural unity which could be transformed into a political one. The union with Syria was a step towards a pan-Arab unity, formed around the inspirational figure of Nasser. Yet, the political, economic or customs union has not been achieved and the union of Egypt and Syria was about to collapse from the beginning. At this historical point, Arab nationalism has been taken to a point where each political elite valued its state sovereignty more than a union between the Arabs; even more the Egyptian elite that was the leading country in 1958. Nasser wanted an Arab unity under his leadership. From its powerful position, Nasser demanded from Syria full submission to the Egyptian army and administration and dominated the Union. A coup in Syria in 1961, threw easily the humiliated country out of the Union.

At this point, it is crucial that we examine the relations of Nasser and the Free Officers with Islam and the Ulama, one of the most important parts of an Arab Islamic state. Nasser was identified and associated itself with the Islamic religion, tradition and ethos. Although the state established by the nationalist movement was secular at its core, policies and ideas, the Free Officers never wanted a strictly secular state, like the one Ataturk established in Turkey and maintained religious institutions. The older plans of the Wafd party about the separation of the state and the clergy was now past. Islam for the Free Officers was a social power that was functioning as a social fabric in their approach of the nationalist state. In reality, Islam was not playing a central role for the formation of the new Egyptian society. The Free Officers though used Islam and the Ulama for legitimisation and propaganda reasons.

The Ulama was not always very welcoming, especially when the government nationalised the oldest Islamic university, Al-Azhar and introduced secular knowledge and classes to it. The government institutionalized an Islamic Congress, in order to establish relations with and approach the ulama and Al-Azhar university but without making it another centre that could threat their power. As they were seeking to exploit the popularity of Islam in the society, the officers were preaching from mosques and were propagandising the governmental policies in the Friday mosque sermons. Finally, the ulama aligned with the government, that was also appointing its own people in office, to the point where Ulama was supporting, through articles, books and decrees socialism as the equivalent of Islam in terms of social justice, equality, brotherhood and elimination of desire! Nasserism was combined

with the Sharia that derived from Allah for reasons of legitimacy, as Laroui's theory presented in the previous chapter showed.

Chapter 3

Understanding the evolution of a nation-state

In the previous chapter I got to talk excessively about the structural, political and social policies of the Free Officers and Gamal Abdel Nasser's post-colonial government. The nation building process that they followed fits the theory of the thinkers that we have presented on the role of the Arab elites post-revolutionary. The state structures of the newly formed Arab states resembled much the colonial ones and were based upon Western ideas on state, except for the ideas of political participation.

At this point though, it is important that we set the Egyptian revolution of 1952 in time and space. By time and space, I mean two things. First, I mean the history of Egyptian land and state-building. Unlike other Arab countries (*e.g.* Lebanon) Egypt has a history of centralized authority and state organizations like the army since the 19th century. Therefore, certain institutions that the Free Officers empowered were present in Egyptian soil before the British arrived. Secondly, with space I mean, the position of Egypt in the international system. Egyptian revolution finds the rest of the world in a cold war situation, when the area of Middle East was internationally important. It was the perfect time for Arab leaders to take a step forward and solidify their country's power in order to achieve a better role in international system. Furthermore, mimicking the Western states and competing with them in the international system was for the Arabs the restoration of their dignity post-colonially and after the Israeli invasion in their lands. Last nut not least, the revolution was the offspring of Arab nationalism, an ideology present for decades in the area, that reached its peak at this point. Arab nationalism changed many times, to the point where it became "Arab patriotism", but at the time of the revolution, Arab nationalism was posing the demand of modernization. The Arab elites, educated as they were, many of them in Europe, were deeply influenced by the Western term of modernization and imported it in their countries.

3.1 Pre-existing societies, structures and nations

By tracing the theory of the Islamic state and the process of state formation in Egypt, this paper aims to show that the nation-state was not a natural development of the Islamic Ummahs. Nonetheless, it was the product of an organic process that at a certain point derived from Islamic societies, or even better from Islamic elites. Nation-state is contradicting to the Sharia. Yet, power was centralized, religion was losing its clout over state legitimacy and a certain kind of state-ness was already taking place before and at the same time as the imperial era. It is true that colonialism accelerated and distorted the process, but the calls for modernization and secularization in Arab societies were indigenous, even if emanating from the prominent strata of the society.

Thus, one has to examine the power structure in Egypt before the British invasion. As an exception to other Arab states, Egypt had a state-like organisation as early as the 19th century. Many experts have concluded that a centralised power was already present in Egypt for years. Notably, N. N. Ayubi in his work "Overstating the Arab State", supports that "*cultural and/or economic nuclei or embryos for "states" existed in various parts of the Arab World, most notably Egypt.*"[25] At the same time, Iliya Harik agrees by suggesting that: "*the states of ...*[some]*... Arab countries ... are not only quite old (and in some case extremely old) but also have within themselves the source of their legitimacy...*"[26]. Especially in the case of Egypt, Harik is being certain that Egyptians always had a central government of some kind in their modern history and traces the beginning of the Egyptian state back to the Mamluk period in the 16th century.[27] This could be an overstatement, if we do not make clear that he refers to the substructure of the Egyptian state, meaning an established, centralized authority over a limited region and population. Of course, there were no official administration or official borders. Thus, colonialism affected the Arab states' borders, but when it comes to Egypt, colonialism did not create them. It gave a more definite form to the indigenous states and introduced elements of modern administration into them.

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[25] Ayubi, Nazih, op.cit. p. 86
[26] Harik, Iliya, op.cit. p. 2-3
[27] Ibid, 16
When Iliya Halik mentions the term state, he wants to make sure that he does not refer to the formalistic term of state, but rather to "*an established authority which enjoys jurisdiction over a core territory and people for an extended period of time, stretching over at least several generations. The jurisdiction includes powers to implement the law, impose taxation and demand military service, loyalty and allegiance to established authority.*" p.

The foundations of state formation are found in the history of the Ottoman Empire. The state started centralizing its power and exercising more authoritative powers towards its provinces and regional pashas in order to mimic the French organization of absolutism. This had happened in central Europe since the 17th century approximately when the absolutist state appeared.[28] This movement was not successful, while the Ottoman Empire was decaying economically and politically. By the 19th century, the Ottoman central government was so weak that it was losing the grip of power in its provinces from local administrators. Meanwhile, the administration changed as the Sharia legislature was being modernized in order to meet the needs of an empire. New internal reforms known as *tanzimats* were added to the Sharia legislature body.[29] While this had happened in the Western world for centuries, in the Ottoman Empire a body of juridical professionals started to assume the responsibility of codifying the expanding legislature. This is the moment where the first professional bureaucracy was formed in the Islamic World. Meanwhile, the clerics weakened as the bureaucrats took their place, as the role of religion was fading and the function of courts was modernized. In this period of the Ottoman Empire, one can spot moves towards bureaucratic centralization and the building of bigger armies and educational systems. At the same time, there was a certain swift towards a modern economy, as the state was occupying itself with public constructions and general control of the economy.

3.1.1 The Egyptian State of Muhamad Ali

Especially when it comes to this case-study, the Egyptian province of the Ottoman Empire under Muhamad Ali of Egypt has been the most prominent example of this phenomenon. The personality and governance of Muhamad Ali presents many similarities with Nasser. Muhamad Ali, governor of Egypt from 1805 to 1848, is considered the founder of the Egyptian nation, in terms of borders and the notion of locality and Egyptian-ness.[30] Muhamad Ali formed a strong bureaucracy and an even stronger army. For some, Muhamad

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[28] Anderson, Perry, (1979), *Lineages of the absolutist state,* Verso London
[29] Hamid, Sadi, *Is Islam exceptional?*, The National, 06/06/2016. Retrieved from
https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/06/islam-politics-exceptional/485801/
[30] Ayubi, Nazih, N.,op.cit., p. 103

Ali's modern army was pivotal for the development of modern Egyptian national identity, due to the soldiers' experience in wars against the Ottoman Pasha.[31]

Muhammad Ali has been the father of the modern Egyptian army in the 1820's. In order to declare the independence of the country from the Ottomans and to form its own autocracy, he built the first civilian army in modern Arab history. The army consisted of Egyptian peasants, who were forced to participate. He sent Egyptians to Europe for technical and military training and invited French and other Europeans in Egypt to train and equip the army and the navy. The formation of army defined in a greater sense the modern Egyptian nation as a concept; by recruiting locals, the Egyptian government created ties with its people rather than with other people from the Ottoman empire.

Last but not least Muhammad Ali was maybe the first Arab leader to understand and profit from the Industrial revolution. Industrialization in Egypt was more or less the aftermath of the military growth. The army needed factories for its weaponry and clothing and the navy needed dockyards for its ships, while other industries were open to produce commodities for the daily consumption of the army. He introduced Egyptians to big enterprises, laying the foundations of economic growth. The next years, industries were privatized in order for the state to gain incomes and organize taxation, and as a way to solidify its power. For this task, he recruited Egyptian administrators and a first bureaucracy would form in Egypt. Meanwhile, he proceeded further to the modernization of the nation; in order to sustain the agricultural economy, the industrialization and the army he built roads, canals and a modern irrigation system from the profit that the country was making of agriculture.

Muhammad Ali did not only build a strong army and a strong industry but he modernized Egypt in a greater sense. He proceeded himself to nationalization of Egyptian land from rich land-owners in order to control the agricultural goods that the country produced and exported, as Nasser would do more than a century later. It was the first state planned agricultural production. The state "supplied the peasants with seeds and tools, purchased their crops; and sold them at a profit." [32]Furthermore, modern hospitals were built for the army and schools for their education. Muhammad Ali opened the first schools and

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[31] Fahmy, Khaled, (2008), *Mehmed Ali: From Ottoman Governor to Ruler of Egypt*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford

[32] Goldschmidt, Arthur jn, Davidson, Lawrence, (2010), *A Concise History of the Middle East,* Westview: Boulder, p. 164

sent Egyptians to Europe in order for them to attain a better, Western education. Little did he know that they would come back with the "disease of nationalism".

Muhammad Ali was prone to modernizing the nation. He followed the Sharia law but did not seek to achieve any kind of legitimacy, especially from the Ulama, the religious authority. The latter, however, were representing an immensely popular power from inside the al-Azhar University.

These movements towards modernization were continued by the descendants of Muhammad Ali. Let us not forget that one of the biggest infrastructures of the 19th century has been the construction of the Suez Canal, decided and orchestrated by the Egyptian Khedivate, although carried out by a French construction company. Society did not perceive these changes as quickly; the state-like formations of the Muhammad Ali dynasty met an underdeveloped society and economy that could not process the changes and come to terms with the state. This rupture would eventually pave the road to foreign intervention.

Nevertheless, and as Egypt was annexed on account of its debts by the British Empire, it is almost certain that the economic demands of this call for modernization by the Muhammad Ali dynasty were the reason Egypt became dependent to the colonial powers of Europe and eventually a British protectorate. Of course, that is an overstatement, as the British Empire or any other imperialist power would undoubtedly have found an excuse to annex Egypt. What I am trying to say is that there was a certain willingness, unknown how strong, to modernize the Egyptian state at least in terms of economy and administration. One could support that the British invasion was a rupture in Egypt's path towards modernization and state-building and that Nasser's regime was a straight continuation of the Muhammad Ali's dynasty.

Of course, there has always been certain pressure in Arab or Islamic states, such as in the case of the Ottoman Empire, to mimic and antagonize European rich states. This pressure was evident during the 20th century, but it was also present in the 19th century, especially in Egypt. A very crucial point for the Egyptian history, concerning the interaction with the West was the arrival of the Napoleonic Army by the end of 18th century, around 1798-1799. Napoleon addressed the Egyptians as "people of Egypt", talked extensively about equality and condemned the Mamluks for their treatment of the Egyptian people, sharing the French revolution ideas, the ideas of Enlightenment as well as the idea of the nation state to the

society of Egypt and at the same time showing off his big army, consisting of French citizens.[33] During the French occupation the Egyptians met the European technology and French customs and manners. Egyptian elites, besides their hate towards the imperialist powers, harboured a secret admiration for European values and the European civilisation and were eager to reach their level of excellence. As Europe was progressing into numerous nation-states, the traditional Islamic system of government was understood as an obsolete organisation of the past. Muhammad Ali himself was surely impressed by the European absolutist states of his era and tried to antagonize them by mimicking them, just as Nasser will do a century later.

3.2 The predicament of modernization

Finally, in order to move to this paper's last point on state formation in Egypt and in continuation to the previous argument, one should inquire into the ideology of nationalism towards modernization in the Arab World. One must take into account the aspirations of the Free Officers Movement, when it comes to placing the new Egypt in the modern world of nation states. Just like Muhammad Ali, the Free Officers wanted to transform the country into a modern, self-sufficient, sovereign state. Therefore, modernization has been a demand in Egypt for two centuries. Although they did not institute a radical change of structures, they wanted an Arab state that could stand along and fight against the European states in the international system -diplomatically but also economically and militarily-. To do that, they indeed proceeded to big changes and drastically modernized Egyptian politics and society, as we saw above.

Nationalism was indeed, to a certain extent, the child of colonialism, as it introduced the centralized administration to the majority of the colonies and transmitted Western ideas.

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[33] Bonaparte, Napoleon, (1798), *Déclaration du général Bonaparte au peuple égyptien*, Retrieved from https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/D%C3%A9claration_du_g%C3%A9n%C3%A9ral_Bonaparte_au_peuple_%C3%A9gyptien;
Choueiri, Youssef, ibid. p. 29

The Arab elites that had studied in the West had been thinking of the ideas of individual rights and freedoms but most importantly, that people could belong to political communities based on race, language, culture, and shared historical experience—in short, people could form nations. The emerging social groups from the domestic market and the blooming economy viewed the acquisition of the mechanisms of the central administration as the focus of the political orientation and action. Nationalists in the 20th century were, to a great extent, the new social strata of officers and merchants that the colonial economy helped emerge. These social strata, although benefitting from the colonial power, never completely came to terms with it, something the old aristocracy and ruling dynasties did in order to maintain their political position.

When attempting to set up a modern state in Arab societies, the leaders had to take a stand in the dilemma of tradition versus modernization. Huntington examined the role of the army in the modernizing process; the Free Officers movement was a child of Arab nationalism and also very secular at its core. In Egyptian politics, Officers were the face of modernity and progress, whilst powers like the Muslim Brotherhood represented a return to the roots. In order for the regime to solidify itself and protect its vision of the modernization of Egypt, it had to exercise its legitimate violence through the armed forces towards the political opponents that were putting this vision at stake. Moreover, modernization required the centralization of power, in order for the industrialization and the nationalization programs to be designed, organized and executed.

Nasserism was a very big and popular movement; its popularity meant that the Egyptian society wanted a step forward and not backwards. The modern state, although inherited by external powers, was an existing organisation that could at some point exert a powerful authority. Societies do not commit suicide; a rupture from within the society and with the previous rule would result in an entropy in Egyptian society that no one was ready for.

The modern nation-state has been for Egypt the vehicle of social development. Besides being imposed from the outside and later downwards in a society not equally developed, the nation empowered Arabs and marked their countries in the political map, especially in the case of Nasser's Egypt. According to Huntington, the concept of statehood intensifies against a foreign invader, and forms strong coalitions among society.

At that point, modernization for the Arab countries amounted to a change of traditional values, especially when referring to the secularization of public and political life. Also, the bonds with the local authorities such as the family, the village and the tribe had to be broadened to include that of the nation and the state authority. The latter authority structures were rationalized and operated by selected professional bureaucrats, following the Western model. Last but not least, there was the need for the expansion of communications, bigger national infrastructures and public construction works. At this point, it was also crucial that the educational system be upgraded for the next generation of Arabs. By upgraded I mean its expansion to include every social class and area in Egypt. At the same time, I mean the secularization of education. There was an urgent need of separation of the church and the state, in order to stop the influence of the clergy in state matters, while weakening political Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood influence. As far as Nasserist Egypt is concerned, one must add Arab socialism to Arab nationalism. Under the banner of Arab nationalism, Nasser proposed many reforms, such as the famous Agrarian reform that shook Egyptian society. But above all, Nasser borrowed the secularism of socialism. According to some, Nasser's vision for Egypt was more Marxist than Muslim", although he did used the power of Islam in the society for reasons of legitimization.[34]

Again, there is the very orientalist view of the Islamic world, as a culture that cannot be modernized and that is deeply entrenched in its religious beliefs. When radical secular nationalism became a dominant political ideology in the Arab World, Westerners would not believe that Western ideologies like nationalism and modernization could have any influence on Arab thought. Yet, nationalism outnumbered the thinkers of Islamism. The aspiration of Islamists, or when it comes to Egypt of the Muslim Brotherhood, would be a new formation based on Arab and Muslim tradition. Islamists not only formed their own theory of political organisation, political Islam, but also believed that nationalism was essentially paganism and a sell out to the West.[35] After the two World Wars socialism was the most revolutionary intellectual trend, something that Nasser truly leaned towards. Walter Laqueur would argue, just five years after the revolution, that communism and nationalism have dominated the Islamic world against Islamism, at least among the elites and the educated youth.[36]

[34] Viorst, Milton, (1998), *In the shadow of the prophet*, Doubleday, New York
[35] Porth, Christian, *The two "isms" in the Middle East*, Al-Jazeera, 04.02.2008. Retrieved from http://www.aljazeera.com/focus/arabunity/2008/02/200852518534468346.html
[36] Laquer, Z. Walter, (2013), *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*, Literary Licensing LLC, Whitefish

4. Conclusion

We cannot overlook the societal -though not political- changes that Nasserism brought to the country, but whether we can talk of a full-scale revolution is up for debate. The Free Officers Movement did control the state machinery inherited from the *ancien regime* without really building something from scratch (as in the French or Russian revolutions for example). By no means though, should this devalue the Egyptian revolution nor the momentum it created for the Arab World and the anti-imperialistic movement in general.

As for Egypt, the army did indeed play a modernizing role and modernization in Egypt has been successful. The country stood against the West and the Israeli troops in war, not always with success but always as an accountable power. Nasser put Egypt in the international system as a leading country in the Non-Alignment movement, but also as a country that could secure peace and stability in the greater area of the Middle East. As for the Egyptians themselves, the modernizing process was beneficial; the standard of living as well as the levels of literacy augmented. Lastly, despite the fact that political participation was problematic during the years of the transition to the modern state, Egyptian people got scientifically more involved in politics after their country became independent.

On the other hand, the predicament of today, that was also the inspiration for this essay, are the peculiarities of the Egyptian state when it comes to its power structures. The structural contradictions of the Egyptian state became more evident during the Arab Spring and the political upheaval that followed the years 2011 to today. The burst of an extreme and rampageous informal political participation and the violent oppression that followed manifested the lack of institutions of political participation and the inordinate power of state security forces.[37] The last coup d'etat in 2013 and the de facto government by the army has

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[37] See Refaei, *Mostafa Magdy, Political Participation in Egypt: Perceptions and Practice*, Baseera, Retrieved from http://www.aecid.es/Centro-Documentacion/Documentos/documentos%20adjuntos/Informe%20final.%20Participaci%C3%B3n%20Pol%C3%ADtica%20en%20Egipto_eng.pdf ;
Shabana, Ihab, *A cultural tug-of-war: Internet culture and the Egyptian surveillance apparatus*, Middle East Bulletin, Vol. 32, June 2017. P. 6-9. Retrieved from http://www.cemmis.edu.gr/index.php/publications/item/529-egypt-there-and-back-again-middle-east-bulletin-32;

set the same persistent questions on the powerful role of the military wing and the armed forces in Egypt that function as a state within a state.. Last but not least, the rise of Islamism again after the death of Nasser and Sadat, shows the failure of Arab nationalism to penetrate the Egyptian culture.

It is widely believed in theory that the very strong Western-type state met an Arab society not equally developed and that colonialism had negative effects on indigenous societies. On the other hand, Egyptian people have been prompt to authoritative, one-man rule even before the presence of the British in the country. Therefore, it is not part of this essay to understand who carries the blame for the weak, authoritative state of modern Egypt as the Egyptian state, its structures and institutions have been forming for the last two centuries at least in a slow and complex process. This essay aspired to place the Egyptian revolution in the frame of Arab nationalism, post-colonial politics and Egyptian tradition and history and understand the reasons why the Free Officers have not aspired to radically remodel the Egyptian state.

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