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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) THE 1955 CZECHOSLOVAKIAN-EGYPTIAN ARMS DEAL: LESSONS IN THE MAKING OF FOREIGN POLICY.		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED FINAL REPORT 13 MAR 86
7. AUTHOR(s) MERKLEY BART NYLLE		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS STUDENT HQDA MILPERCEN (DAPC-CPA-E), 200 SIOGALL STREET ALEXANDRIA VIRGINIA 22332		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS HQDA MILPERCEN ATTN: DAPC-CPA-E, 200 SIOGALL STREET ALEXANDRIA VIRGINIA 22332		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		12. REPORT DATE 13 MAR 86
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 117
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) UNCLASSIFIED
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release, distribution unlimited.		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Document is a thesis submitted to the University of Utah in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Arms Arms Deal Czechoslovakian Arms Deal, Egyptian Arms Deal, Secret Egyptian Arms Deal, Arms Transfers, Foreign Policy Decisions, Eisenhower Library, Austria, Hanoi, Hubert Anthony Eden, Eisenhower Administration		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) The purpose of this thesis is to reveal the specifics of the 1955 Czech- Egyptian Arms transfer as an attempt to understand the way in which policy decisions were made by the nations involved. It shows that the interests of the United States and Egypt to develop a more amicable relationship during the 1950s were a result of faulty perceptions, poor timing, and a lack of communication. The key personalities who were in charge of the negotiations were not well informed and their actions were largely reactive to the situation.		

**THE 1955 CZECHOSLOVAKIAN-EGYPTIAN ARMS DEAL: LESSONS IN THE  
MAKING OF FOREIGN POLICY**

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**Final report, 13 March 1986.**

**Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.**

**A thesis submitted to the University of Utah, Salt Lake City Utah, in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.**



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## ABSTRACT

The transfer of arms from an industrialized nation to a Third World country is a common feature of international foreign relations. The first such transfer of notable scale occurred in 1955 when the Soviet Union began shipping large quantities of modern arms to Egypt. This transfer, known as the Czech arms deal, is widely recognized to have been a turning point in the relative influence of the Soviet Union and the United States in the Middle East. Nevertheless, the specific details of the deal itself and of the events and decisions associated with this precedent setting incident are not well known or understood.

The purpose of this thesis is to reveal in a concise and complete manner the specifics of this arms transaction and to use this event as a point of focus in an attempt to understand the way in which policy decisions were made by the nations involved. It shows that the inability of the United States and Egypt to develop a more amicable relationship during the critical 1950s was a result of the combination of the following: faulty perceptions, poor decision-making processes, and personal prejudices of the key personalities who were in charge of formulating foreign policies for each country. It also shows that the best efforts of the West to keep the influence of the Soviet Union out of the Middle East backfired and that Western actions actually enhanced Moscow's ability to penetrate this region. Additionally, this thesis demonstrates how necessary it is, even in an apparently isolated instance, to understand the complex regional issues of the Middle East when states form their foreign policy for this region.

This case study also permits a review and an evaluation to be made of the overall efficacy of arms transfers as an instrument of foreign policy.

It is hoped that this analysis of events, personalities, and perceptions will enhance the ability of present and future American policy makers to identify and work for the attainment of pragmatic, rational goals in the Middle East.

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## INTRODUCTION

The transfer of conventional arms from the United States, the Soviet Union and other industrialized, arms-producing countries to the Third World is viewed as an accepted, even necessary component in today's arena of international politics. This was not the case in 1955 at the time of the so-called "Czech"<sup>1</sup> arms deal which involved the shipment of Eastern Block weapons to Egypt. Before this deal, arms transfers primarily consisted of the sale or gift of weapons to countries readily identified as allies of the arms producer. The Soviet-Egyptian arms deal signaled the beginning of a new instrumentality in the expression of the foreign policy of nations, an instrumentality whose usefulness has been the object of much reflection and debate in the three decades since this initial venture.

Egypt and the Soviet Union concluded this transaction for a variety of reasons. Similar reasons or expectations echo through the years to the present each time an arms transfer occurs. In general, an industrialized power transfers arms to a Third World country for the following reasons: to establish or maintain influence in a country or region, to buy permission to use military facilities, to reduce the possibility of "inviting" local conflict from a stronger neighbor, to improve - through arms sales - its balance of payments, or to simply express friendship.<sup>2</sup> In general, a Third World

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<sup>1</sup> In reality, the deal for the arms transfer was negotiated and agreed upon between the Soviet Union and Egypt. An examination for the initial deception concerning the participants in this transfer will be discussed in later chapters.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew J. Pierre, ed., Arms Transfers and American Foreign Policy (New York: New York University Press, 1979), p. 4.

country seeks arms for the following reasons: to enhance its prestige, to assert its sovereignty, to maintain a balance or superiority in weapons strength with its neighbors, and to facilitate its influence over neighbors by retransferring imported arms.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, for security and economic reasons, the Middle East had always attracted the interest of the Soviet Union. This attraction was naturally magnified by Western efforts to prevent Soviet entry into the region. John Foster Dulles' Northern Tier concept (1953) and the formalization of the Baghdad Pact (1955) only heightened Soviet anxiety and resentment at being encircled by Western sponsored agreements. Ironically, Western designs to limit the scope of Soviet influence in the Middle East actually spurred the Russians to make a brave new foreign policy leap; a leap over the Northern Tier, and a leap into new dimensions in foreign relations with *Third World countries*.

Egypt required a viable, well armed military for political and security reasons. The West's inability or unwillingness to arm Egypt's new non-aligned government could not prevent that government from seeking what it wanted elsewhere. Thus, Egypt found itself "forced" to look in an unprecedented direction in foreign relations to alleviate its untenable political and security pressures. Whatever the motivations behind the arms deal, they were sufficiently strong to assure its consummation.

As the first major transfer of arms from an industrial power to a non-aligned, Third World power, this arms deal was a venture into uncharted territory in the realm of international relations. As such, it deserves serious attention and analysis. At first glance it appears to be sufficiently covered.

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew J. Pierre, The Global Politics of Arms Sales (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 131.

It is mentioned and referred to in the historical and political writings which cover this period and which study other salient and proximate events such as Egypt's quest for financing the Aswan High Dam and the Suez Canal Crisis. Yet, there is a surprising paucity of comprehensive information and analytic study concerning this important event. The few accounts available for public view come through versions colored by various persons close to the events and personalities involved in negotiating and concluding the deal. The details of one account often disagree with the details of another and render questionable the authenticity or dependability of all the accounts.

Under such circumstances, one must question the ability of historians and government planners to adequately accomplish their duties of understanding and analyzing the complex issues and events which arose in the Middle East subsequent to the arms deal. Arms transfers continue to be a dominant feature of international foreign relation activity in the Middle East. Yet, they appear, in many instances, to be poorly understood and executed by the countries involved. With the vantage point provided by thirty years of hindsight, perhaps it is time to reexamine this precedent setting transfer of arms to the Middle East.

The emotional issues which attend such transfers have subsided in this particular case. Their absence will facilitate a serious attempt at making an objective analysis of the event. Furthermore, there are new sources of information concerning the Egyptian-Soviet arms transfer of 1955 which were not available to earlier authors and officials who documented this important segment of history. The facts and details of the transfer have, with the passing of years, become somewhat more clear thanks to a few revelations by knowledgeable individuals who have published their memoirs and autobiographies. Additionally, the declassification of many pertinent

United States government documents provides new insight and understanding - at least from the U. S. point of view - for this particular arms transfer. These new sources provide fresh nuances in some cases, in others they serve to confirm or deny suppositions made by earlier authors about the facts and details of this transfer.

The importance to world peace in understanding this proliferating phenomenon is self evident. With hindsight, new information, and decades of experience in arms transfers of this type to draw upon, the Czech arms deal provides material for a case study of the complexities involved in such transfers.

Most importantly, this study attempts to examine the decision-making process of the foreign policy planners of the nations who were closely involved with the Czech arms deal; particular attention will be given to the policies and policy makers of the United States.

Thus, the purpose of the present study is to examine a selected incident during a period which was critical to the subsequent development of relations between the United States, the Soviet Union, and the Middle East - Egypt in particular- and to demonstrate the importance of understanding regional issues when the United States or other powers make policy decisions regarding this area. An additional purpose of this study is to challenge generally accepted tenets which underpin the reasons countries cite most often for engaging in arms deals and it questions the efficacy of such deals in achieving the goals of the participating countries. The importance of the role of personalities in this arms deal will also be demonstrated.

## CHAPTER I

### EGYPT BEFORE 1955

#### Political Developments

The year 1955 was one of great importance in the development of international relations between the newly emerging nonaligned nations and the solidified blocks of Eastern and Western powers. Egypt was to play a prominent role in the unfolding drama and would provide an example which other newly independent nations would emulate in varying degrees. An examination of the major events in Egypt, during the years just prior to the Czech arms deal, provides a better understanding of the motivations and reasons for such a deal.

From the beginning, the Egyptian "revolution" of July 23, 1952, had been on philosophically shaky ground. "Many of the problems experienced by Egypt's new rulers stemmed from the fact that in a fundamental way the study of Nasser's Egypt is the story of a regime come to power without an ideology."<sup>1</sup> In the place of a political theory, or political-social objectives, Nasser and the junta substituted six principles.<sup>2</sup> In reality, these were desirable goals which showed that the new leaders were principled

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond William Baker, Egypt's Uncertain Revolution Under Nasser and Sadat, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.101.

<sup>2</sup> E. S. Farag, trans., Nasser Speaks: Basic Documents, by Gamal Abdel-Nasser (London: The Morssett Press, 1972), p. 63. In short the six principles were as follow: 1) the elimination of imperialism, 2) the abolition of feudalism, 3) the end of monopolies and capitalist control over government 4) the establishment of a strong army, 5) the establishment of social justice, 6) the establishment of a sound democratic system.

individuals but they did not define a framework within which to achieve such goals and the intended restructuring of the Egyptian society. The revolution could be considered a popular event in that any change in the Egyptian power structure would have been a welcome occurrence to the vast majority of Egyptians. Nevertheless, the national sentiment certainly fell short of jubilation. Anwar Sadat recalled the mood of the people he observed after having announced the "birth of the revolution" via radio.

As I came out of the broadcasting station and drove up to our headquarters in the north of Cairo, I saw the streets of the metropolis crowded with people as I had never seen them before. Men, old and young, women and children, were kissing each other, shaking hands, coming together in small clusters or large circles - but all the time in total silence.... It [the mood of the people] was best expressed by this festive silence and by the feeling of togetherness which they all shared.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, the base of the "revolution" was very narrow and selective. Of the approximately three hundred card carrying Free Officers, Nasser selected ninety of the most trusted to be active participants in the planned military coup.<sup>4</sup> Through planning and good fortune, this small group of individuals managed to capitalize on the degenerating state of affairs of the ancien régime and to wrest from it the reins of power. The fact that there was no immediate opposition to the military coup attests to the lack of popular support enjoyed by King Farouk. The months immediately preceding the coup had been particularly trying for the old regime. The

<sup>3</sup> Anwar el-Sadat, Anwar el-Sadat: In Search of Identity, (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), pp.107-108.

<sup>4</sup> Robert St. John, The Boss, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), p.115. Note: St. John observes that those Free Officers excluded from the coup would never forgive Nasser for being left out of the "action" and that this would be a continuing source of complications for the new regime as it attempted to consolidate its power.

Egyptian masses were decidedly anti-British and were tired of waiting for action to rid their land of British presence and of its control over the Suez Canal.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the Egyptian masses had been denied any role in the coup d'état and their mood, immediately following the military takeover, could perhaps be better described as nervous anticipation rather than as "festive silence."

Efforts to engender popular support for the new regime were fairly successful. Within a few weeks of the coup, the Revolutionary Command Council<sup>6</sup> did away with archaic honorary and hereditary titles such as Pasha and Bey. On September 28, 1952, the R.C.C. instituted agrarian land reform which limited the size of agricultural land holdings to a maximum of 200 feddans (about 208 acres).<sup>7</sup> Newly freed lands were distributed to landless peasants who in many cases had been working the land as laborers or share-croppers. Other actions designed to restore a measure of equity to the Egyptian economy were exemplified by reductions in rents and food prices and by the introduction of minimum wages for agricultural workers.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In fairness to the old regime, one must note that in 1951 the Egyptian parliament unilaterally abrogated the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty and called for the immediate withdrawal of British forces from the Canal Zone. This action sparked anti-British demonstrations and riots but the British remained steadfast in their determination to stay in Egypt. Source: George Lenczowski, The Middle East In World Affairs, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 498.

<sup>6</sup> Europa Publications Ltd., The Middle East and North Africa (London: Staple Printers Ltd., 1964), pp. 640-641. The Revolutionary Command Council was the initial ruling body in Egypt established by the top members of the Free Officers association and Nasser was always its undisputed head.

<sup>7</sup> Lenczowski, p. 502.

<sup>8</sup> Keith Wheelock, Nasser's New Egypt, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), p. 21.

In spite of the egalitarian reforms, real participation in the "revolution" by the Egyptian population was feared by the R.C.C. Cotton-mill workers in a town near Alexandria were caught up in the nationalistic rhetoric and within a month of the coup they demonstrated against their employers for rejecting demands for higher wages. The army, which the demonstrators had praised in their chants, was called in to halt the uprising and its destructive behavior. Nasser instructed the chief judge of the R.C.C. court-martial to make an example out of those guilty of starting the commotion.<sup>9</sup> The trial, held on the factory grounds, was short and sweet and two of the leaders of the demonstration were condemned to death by hanging. Twelve others were sentenced to long prison terms. Nasser was adverse to carrying out the death penalties. He was against vindictive bloodletting in general and because the factory was Communist-directed, he feared this action would be interpreted as open season on the political left.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, he was out voted in the Council and he allowed the sentencing to stand. The executions took place a short time later and a clear message had been sent to any who would aspire to take political matters into their own hands.

The Free Officers had come to power, unified by strong anticolonial, anti-Farouk sentiment. They felt that a change of leadership at the top would be sufficiently effective in remedying the economic, political and social ills which afflicted Egypt.<sup>11</sup> Mahmoud Hussein, an ardent Communist, describes the mistaken point of view held by the Free Officers as follows:

They were aware only of the superstructural aspect of the crisis: politico-ideological inferiority of Egyptians with re-

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<sup>9</sup> St. John, p.147.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148.

<sup>11</sup> Wheelock, p. 21.

spect to foreigners, loss of the state's moral authority and anachronism of the traditional political parties.<sup>12</sup>

The initial thrust of the R.C.C. was to establish an authentic political community with the view to usher in democratic elections. Efforts by the new regime to purge the existing political parties of corrupt elements failed. Later, when it was discovered that elements of the Wafd and other political parties had made new connections with the military, the R.C.C. feared a plot against itself and ordered the disbanding of all political parties and on January 23, 1953, it instituted the Liberation Rally in their stead.<sup>13</sup> "The new 'Liberation Rally,' headed by Colonel Nasser, was expected to provide the new regime with popular support."<sup>14</sup> In reality, the elimination of the political parties had created a vacuum which had to be filled with an immediate if not authentic alternative.

The initial figurehead of the new regime was General Naguib.<sup>15</sup> All the members of the R.C.C. were young officers in their early and mid thirties and they felt - especially Nasser - that an older "father figure" would lend respectability to the coup.<sup>16</sup> Nasser first assumed the positions of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior. He was personally content to remain as anonymous as possible, believing that unity of the R.C.C. would be enhanced if the Egyptian people and the world at large recognized a distinguished individual like Naguib as Egypt's new

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<sup>12</sup> Mahmoud Hussein, Class Conflict in Egypt: 1945-1970 trans., Michel Chirman, et al., (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), p. 95.

<sup>13</sup> Lenczowski, p. 503.

<sup>14</sup> Wheelock, p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> General Mohammad Naguib was half Sudanese and had been a division commander of distinction during the 1948 War. He had a broad base of popularity with the army and civilian population.

<sup>16</sup> St. John, pp. 131-132.

leader.<sup>17</sup> Anwar el-Sadat, in his autobiography, refers to Nasser as a suspicious, sometimes bitter man and there is no doubt that he was concerned with the possibility of counterrevolutionaries taking action against the new regime. St. John suggests that Nasser, a student of history, wanted to avoid being eaten by his own creation.<sup>18</sup> Nasser showed additional political caution by obtaining substantial pay raises for the military - the only sure base of support upon which he could rely.<sup>19</sup> He also promised to strengthen the army and to remedy its equipment and training problems.<sup>20</sup>

As seen above, many of the early steps taken by Nasser and the R.C.C. were designed to consolidate the power of the new regime and to ensure its longevity. Nevertheless, the new leaders were equally intent on establishing Egypt as a proud and independent nation. King Farouk had been forced to abdicate within days of the military coup. Nasser resisted those who wanted the old king's head and insisted instead that he leave the country. The King did so in a relatively dignified manner on the royal yacht *Mahroussa*. Nasser even allowed a twenty-one gun salute be given the departing king. From the £70 million confiscated from King Farouk, schools and hospitals were constructed at a prodigious rate which in one year

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<sup>17</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the Naguib-Nasser relationship, see: Mack D. Gift, "The Basic Goals and Reforms of the Egyptian Government: 1952-1965," (Master's Thesis, University of Utah, 1965), Chapter 3.

<sup>18</sup> St. John, p.133.

<sup>19</sup> Wheelock, p.13.

<sup>20</sup> P. J. Vatikiotis, The Egyptian Army in Politics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961) p. 98. The Egyptian army had performed poorly in the 1948 War in Palestine. The Egyptian officers placed much of the blame on the government for its apparent lack of concern about the readiness of the army and for its failure to provide the army with reliable arms.

outpaced the total number built in the preceding twenty years.<sup>21</sup> The new schools allowed many more students to be enrolled, especially at the primary level which proved to be instrumental in reducing Egypt's large illiterate population.<sup>22</sup>

Ambitious attempts at land reclamation were begun. One of the most ambitious was known as the Liberation Province. It was created in April of 1953 with the initial goal of reclaiming 600,000 feddans from the desert.<sup>23</sup> Housing projects were developed to lodge the new inhabitants of the province. Produce packaging and some manufacturing industries were planned and built in the area. The new province became symbolic "of the revolutionary regime's dynamic approach to social and economic problems."<sup>24</sup> In spite of criticisms of these and other projects and of the methods employed by the new regime, it was clearly evident that Egypt's new leadership was attempting to better the overall economic and social situation in a way which would be meaningful to and gain the general support of the masses.

Proof of the improvement in Egypt's economic state of affairs during this early period was provided by Nasser when he announced, "We have succeeded in balancing our budget in 1953.... In 1954, we have been able to draw up a constructive and progressive budget in which services and production will be well balanced."<sup>25</sup>

Even with all this apparent progress, the need to bolster Egypt's military was still very real. As indicated earlier, it was one of the basic

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<sup>21</sup> Sadat, p. 129.

<sup>22</sup> Gift, p. 53.

<sup>23</sup> Wheelock, p. 95.

<sup>24</sup> Gift, p. 49.

<sup>25</sup> Wheelock, p. 143.

pledges of the six point program of the new regime. Psychologically it was very important, to the military and to Nasser personally, that improvement in the weaponry of the army be made.<sup>26</sup> "Moreover, the creation of a modern military force was an important symbol of independence and sovereignty in Egypt, contributing to the development of a national identity...."<sup>27</sup> Initial Egyptian efforts late in 1952 and early in 1953 were designed to do this based on a reworking of a previously accepted shopping list submitted by the Farouk government to the United States.<sup>28</sup> The amount of weaponry required to satisfy Egypt's early needs is not easily quantifiable. It would necessarily have been substantial but not gargantuan.

Nevertheless, before 1955, there was a surprising lack of emphasis placed on the quest for weaponry. As pointed out by Donald Neff in his recent work, Warriors at Suez:

Nasser since coming to power two and a half years earlier had shown scant interest in the usual Arab expressions of hatred for Israel. When General Burns [the highest-ranking U.N. official in the area] first met him November 15, 1954, he found the Egyptian Leader absorbed by domestic problems.... To *New York Times* correspondent Kennett Love, Nasser said: "We want peace in order to spend money that is now being devoted to defense on our economic and social projects.... Nasser [in January, 1955] talked only of reforming Egyptian society to noted British Zionist Richard H.S. Crossman,.... "The Israelis will destroy themselves if they go

<sup>26</sup> Mohamed Heikal, Nasser: The Cairo Documents (London: New England Library, 1972), pp. 47-48. The numerous reasons behind Egypt's requirement for obtaining weaponry will be discussed at length later in this work.

<sup>27</sup> William J. Burns, Economic Aid and American Policy toward Egypt: 1955-1981 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-49.

on spending 60 percent of their budget on armaments," Nasser said. "We are not going to make that mistake."<sup>29</sup>

It is evident that Nasser was performing a delicate balancing act during the period just prior to the Czech arms deal. He wanted a strong army because of his personal convictions that a weak, ill-prepared army had led to the humiliating defeat during the 1948 conflict with Israel; a situation which he could never allow to reoccur.<sup>30</sup> A strong army was also necessary to satisfy the perceived needs of the military and especially of its officers. Still, Nasser managed to maintain a balanced fiscal policy which would allow spending for domestic progress as outlined in the remaining principles of the revolution. Nasser did not envision a large-scale conflict with Israel and was therefore conservative in estimating the amount of military hardware required to sufficiently bolster Egypt's army.<sup>31</sup>

The political and military state of affairs between Israel and Egypt had remained relatively stable during tenure of the moderate Moshe Sharett as the head of the Israeli government. Border incidents between the two belligerents had occurred, but at "acceptable," low levels of frequency and ferocity. The Egyptian government - Nasser in particular - consumed much time in maintaining and building legitimacy of rule and

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<sup>29</sup> Donald Neff, Warriors at Suez (New York: The Linden Press/Simon and Schuster, 1981), p. 33.

<sup>30</sup> Heikal, p. 47.

<sup>31</sup> Townsend Hoopes, The Devil and John Foster Dulles (Boston: Little and Brown, 1973), p. 323. One may estimate that the value of weapons Nasser deemed necessary fell somewhere between five and twenty-seven million dollars. This estimate is based on the various lists which floated about between Egypt and the United States as Nasser, Eisenhower and Dulles attempted with varying intensity and interest to come to an agreement on a transfer of arms from the United States to Egypt.

was therefore not immediately interested in rekindling the Egyptian-Israeli conflagration.

Indeed, Nasser had gained full and open control of Egypt only late in the year before the arms deal by engineering Naguib's resignation as president on November 14, 1954. A new element which would enhance Nasser's leadership had begun to emerge for the first time to public view in the month preceding Naguib's resignation. Shortly after signing the withdrawal agreement with the British, malcontents, the Muslim Brothers in particular, voiced their opposition to such a "lenient" accord by trying to assassinate Nasser while he spoke at a public rally in Alexandria on August 27, 1954. Neff captures the mood of the incident as follows:

The stunned crowd watched as the bullets hit a light bulb above Nasser's head and then heard the badly shaken but uncowed leader shout: "I am still alive." Defiantly, he screamed: "Let them kill Nasser. He is one among many. You are all Gamal Abdel-Nassers!" His courage under fire made an instant popular hero of Nasser.<sup>32</sup>

This new element, the charismatic aspect of leadership, would blossom and become one of the pillars of legitimacy for Nasser's authority.<sup>33</sup> But at this juncture, Nasser's authority could not withstand the force of ill political winds which were set to blow in his direction. In a truly charismatic fashion he would respond appropriately to the needs and expectations of the Egyptian people.

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<sup>32</sup> Neff, p. 59. The perceived leniency was the fact that Britain was to be allowed to take twenty months to complete the evacuation of British troops from Egyptian soil and that under certain conditions, Britain would have the right to reactivate the military bases in the canal zone.

<sup>33</sup> R. Hrair Dekmejian, Egypt Under Nasir: A Study in Political Dynamics (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1971). Dekmejian's work is an excellent attempt to study the intricate charismatic relationship between Nasser and the people of Egypt.

### Relations with United States

From the beginning moments of the 1952 coup, the United States enjoyed a "friendly" position with the new regime. One of the first thoughts entertained by the instigators of the military coup was to notify the American Embassy of their action. In the early hours of the morning of July 23, 1952, contact was made with the American ambassador who was informed of what had transpired and of the goals and ideas of the "revolution."<sup>34</sup> There were two good reasons for this. First, the military junta wanted to establish a cordial link with the Americans which would block potential British moves or protestations. Second, association with the United States was felt to be a good thing because the members of the junta generally held the United States in high regard since it had never been one of the hated colonial powers and it espoused praiseworthy principles like freedom and respect for sovereignty.<sup>35</sup>

For the United States, the overthrow of the Farouk regime was no great loss. In fact it was cautiously held to be a great boon for the plans envisioned for the region. Burns describes this sentiment in the following manner:

As a bulwark against [the] perceived Soviet threat, the United States needed a strong, stable, sympathetic Egyptian government; the prerevolutionary Egyptian regime had been neither strong, nor stable, nor particularly sympathetic to Western interests.<sup>36</sup>

American ambassador, Jefferson Caffery saw pro-Western proclivities in the early actions of the new regime and happily reported his findings to

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<sup>34</sup> Sadat, p. 108.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Burns, p. 11.

Washington.<sup>37</sup> Continued amicable relations during the early months of the junta's leadership must have fueled American dreams of an Egyptian-United States alliance. However, this was not to be. A close examination of Free Officer documents would have revealed a decidedly negative attitude regarding "joint defense" or any "collective security pact."<sup>38</sup> Nasser attempted to educate the people of the United States on this point during an interview with the New York Times a couple of years after the revolution when he said that it was only natural for Egyptians to be cautious of treaties and alliances with outside powers since the history of such agreements had always resulted in deleterious effects on the Egyptian population.<sup>39</sup>

Hope for continued favorable relations between Egypt and the United States began to wane for additional reasons. One of the major reasons was that as Nasser's power and influence over the general Arab population grew, so did the consternation of the American administration. Eisenhower was displeased that Nasser's "activities ranged far outside the borders of Egypt," and that Nasser apparently "had ambitions transcending a reformer's role."<sup>40</sup>

In the beginning, the new Egyptian leadership likewise harbored some naive dreams. Heikal indicated that the original "atmosphere" which prevailed in the ruling council was one of hope and expectation that "the riches and strength of the New World were going to help one of the world's

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>38</sup> Wheelock, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> "Cairo Asks Patience on West-Arab Pacts," New York Times, Aug. 20, 1954, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, Waging Peace (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965), pp. 23-24.

oldest countries emerge from the cocoon of colonialism."<sup>41</sup> The new regime quickly asked the United States for armament. Nasser made it clear to Caffery that any sale of weapons by the United States to Egypt would "enhance the prestige" of the United States and that such weapons would be for defensive purposes only.<sup>42</sup> A period of uncertainty and frustration subsequently ensued between Egypt and the United States over this issue.

Part of the confusion came from rather simple problems in planning. Nasser knew that he needed to build up the Egyptian army but he had not formulated a concrete list of what would be required to satisfy the nation's psychological and security requirement. As indicated above, the shopping list envisioned by Nasser before 1955 was rather conservative from the point of view of total numbers and cost.

The exact nature and size of this list seems to have varied somewhat during the various stages of negotiation and confrontation in which Nasser and the American administrations were engaged. At first it was based on a five million dollar figure originating from a secret request of the Farouk regime to the United States.<sup>43</sup> When the itemized list was made available to Nasser, it was found to be made up of weapons more suitable for crowd control than for enhancing the army's readiness posture.<sup>44</sup>

The final reworked list submitted to the Eisenhower administration consisted essentially of a request for one hundred medium tanks and fifty

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<sup>41</sup> Heikal, p. 47.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

aircraft.<sup>45</sup> I estimate the value of this weaponry to be about twenty-seven million dollars from comments made by Eisenhower in his book Waging Peace concerning the last request for arms from Egypt before the Czech arms deal.<sup>46</sup> By this time Eisenhower was extremely suspicious of Nasser and suspected that prior negotiations had been nothing more than a prearranged ruse by which to cloud the issue after the deal had been concluded with the Soviet Union.<sup>47</sup> This seems to be an overreaction to the course of events confronting Eisenhower, because the original U.S. offer of the twenty-seven million dollar package had apparently been made in earnest and accepted as such by Nasser after the "savage, unprovoked Israeli raid on Gaza"<sup>48</sup> which effectively dashed all hopes for a timely normalization of Egyptian-Israeli relations. Indeed, Eisenhower considered the package as "peanuts"; that is, as strictly defensive quantities when it first came up.<sup>49</sup> Later, after France, Britain and Israel objected to any transfer of American arms to Egypt, Eisenhower reconsidered his intentions and delayed acting on the Egyptian request.

Opposition by Israel was to be expected. France objected because of Egypt's meddling in the civil strife in Algeria.<sup>50</sup> Britain objected because of fear that at least some of the weapons would be turned against British

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<sup>45</sup> Intelligence Advisory Committee. National Intelligence Estimate, re. "The British Position in Egypt." [Washington D.C.], first published October, 15 1951. (Later updated approximately October 1955.) Source: The Declassified Documents Quarterly Catalog, 1984, Ref. No., 001518 (The Catalog is hereafter referred to as DDQC.)

<sup>46</sup> Eisenhower, p. 25.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Hoopes, p. 323.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 320.

troops still in the Suez Canal zone.<sup>51</sup> Eisenhower's close association with the British during World War II had instilled in him a profound respect for the British as individuals and as a culture and he was highly motivated to respect their wishes.<sup>52</sup>

Besides these objections there were other serious reasons for Eisenhower's hesitation regarding Egypt's request for arms. First, official U.S. military policy at the time recognized the primacy of the British in defending this region and in setting related policies.<sup>53</sup> Second, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was generally opposed to such a transaction on the grounds that conciliatory gestures should not be made to "abominable" nonaligned nations.<sup>54</sup> Third, and probably most important, the Tripartite Declaration of 1950, in which the United States, the United Kingdom, and France pledged themselves to cooperate in restricting the flow of arms into the Middle East was still in effect and appeared to be functioning relatively well.<sup>55</sup> Eisenhower certainly did not relish the thought of being the one responsible for disrupting the status quo.

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<sup>51</sup> Neff, p. 71. Neff also points out that "when Gamal Abdel Nasser heard of this [complaint], he noted that under the withdrawal agreement all British troops would be gone before July 1956 and archly remarked: 'If you give us arms, there won't be any British for us to kill.'"

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Memorandum re. "Revision of Part "B" of the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan." Washington, D.C., March 26, 1953. DDQC, 1976. Ref. No., 161C.

<sup>54</sup> Hoopes, p. 323.

<sup>55</sup> Pierre, The Global Politics of Arms Sales, p. 203. Note: The French arranged for a transfer of arms to Israel in 1954 because of their myopic view that Nasser was the cause of their problems in Algeria and that by strengthening Israel they would distract some of Nasser's energy and resources. This was clearly a violation of the Tripartite Declaration. Source: Hoopes, p. 320.

Besides the problems encountered on the arms issue, Egypt and the United States held conflicting views on two other significant issues, namely the Baghdad Pact and the concept of nonalignment.

Dulles toured the Middle East in 1953 in search of partners to encircle the southern borders of the Soviet Union in an effort to contain feared Soviet expansion into the region. He found very little support among most Middle East nations for defensive pacts with Western powers and concluded that the so-called "Northern Tier," including Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey, were the only countries in the region inclined to participate in such an alliance.<sup>56</sup> As noted earlier, Nasser was diametrically opposed to Egypt - and for that matter other Arab nations - participating in military alliances with the West or any outside power. He claimed that they were not popular with the masses and that they were actually dangerous to any leader who would go against the evident will of the masses.<sup>57</sup>

Dulles was certainly cognizant of Nasser's strong feelings regarding pacts with the West<sup>58</sup> but he was apparently willing to risk "losing" Egypt in order to fulfill his plans. By early 1955 the first agreement in a series which would conclude in the establishment of the Baghdad Pact was signed by Turkey and Iraq. This angered and disappointed Nasser for a couple of reasons. First, as Miles Copeland alleged, there was reason to believe that Nasser was continually fed information by those who represented the United States which "led him to believe that he would be given time to

<sup>56</sup> Department of State Bulletin, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, June 15, 1953), pp. 831-835. (This office is hereafter referred to as GPO.)

<sup>57</sup> Robert Grant Lawrence, "The Dulles-Nasser Confrontation 1952-1958," (Master's Thesis, University of Utah, 1973), p. 53.

<sup>58</sup> President Gamal Abdel Nasser's Speeches and Press Interviews 1959 (Cairo: United Arab Republic Information Department, n.d.), p. 600.

build an Arab regional organization."<sup>59</sup> Second, it was obviously important to Nasser that Egypt, as the natural focal point of pan-Arabism, be the center of any Middle Eastern defense pact and not Iraq. In describing the negative results of the Baghdad Pact on Egyptian-American relations, Burns noted the following:

Nasser held the Eisenhower Administration responsible for the Baghdad Pact, since he did not believe that the British could have engineered Iraq's entry into the Western defense system without American support. When seen in juxtaposition to the U.S. government's restrictive military aid policy, formation of the Pact appeared to Nasser to be part of a general Western effort to keep Egypt weak and isolated.<sup>60</sup>

As expected, Nasser strongly objected to the formation of the bilateral pacts and to the subsequent Baghdad Pact.<sup>61</sup> His protestations were "certainly more vociferous than the West had anticipated."<sup>62</sup> Nasser made much headway in stirring up the Arab masses by means of anti-Pact, anti-Iraqi, anti-West propaganda broadcast via Radio Cairo to the new,

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<sup>59</sup> Miles Copeland, The Game of Nations (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969), p. 210. Miles Copeland was a member of the CIA working in Cairo in the mid fifties. His book is a criticism of the double faced approach to foreign policy, specifically in the Middle East and Egypt. Some of his claims appear to be far fetched, but in this particular instance, surrounding evidence supports his view that Nasser was allowed to believe what he wanted.

<sup>60</sup> Burns, p. 25.

<sup>61</sup> The Baghdad Pact consisted of Britain and the Northern Tier countries: Iran, Turkey, Iraq and Pakistan. The Pact had its official beginning on February 24, 1955, when Turkey and Iraq signed the anti-Soviet defense agreement in Baghdad. Britain signed on April 4, 1955, and Iran on October 11, 1955. Source: George Brent Miller, "Baghdad Pact/Central Treaty Organization: An Evaluation," (Master's Thesis, University of Utah, 1974), p. 13.

<sup>62</sup> Lawrence, p. 67.

ubiquitous transistor radio now in the hands of the masses.<sup>63</sup> Clearly, this issue had become a turning point in the development of relations between the United States and Egypt.

The third issue which tended to separate Egypt and the United States was the question of nonalignment. Given the history of encroachment and outright domination of the colonial powers in Egypt and the Middle East, Nasser was understandably anxious to distance himself and his nation from entanglements with the West. This did not mean that his anti-imperialist stance would necessarily eliminate the possibility of Egypt pursuing a truly neutral course, but this was indeed how many in the West interpreted such a policy.<sup>64</sup>

Nasser's desire to steer an independent course in the arena of international relations never did set well with Dulles. The American Secretary of State shared the fear of Communism espoused by many of his era. It was a world in which "neutralism was considered virtually akin to hostility" to the West.<sup>65</sup> On one hand, Communism was easily recognized as "evil incarnate" while on the other, it was irresistibly seductive to the developing, unsophisticated nations which would inevitably be drawn through association with Communism into its web.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, any movement by neutral nations to normalize relations with the Soviet Union was seen as a step in the direction of disaster. Egypt, like most of the nations of the Middle East viewed Israel and internal turmoil as the most immediate threats to stability in the region and not the "impending"

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<sup>63</sup> Miller, p. 33.

<sup>64</sup> Lawrence, p. 15.

<sup>65</sup> Anthony Nutting, Nasser (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1972), p. 98.

<sup>66</sup> Hoopes, p. 315.

advance of the Soviet Union. These ideas simply did not fit into the West's picture of the world and in particular they did not facilitate Dulles' plans for containment of the Soviet Union.<sup>67</sup>

### The Bandung Conference

The early months of 1955 had been disastrous for Nasser. Eisenhower was delaying any positive response to Egypt's arms requests. Iraq had become a member of the Bagdad pact.<sup>68</sup> The Arab Prime Minister conference in Cairo early that year had "collapsed in disarray."<sup>69</sup> The Israeli raid on Gaza in February had revealed the real weakness of the Egyptian army.<sup>70</sup> Nasser was far from secure in his position as leader of Egypt and Egypt seemed even further from exerting her "rightful" preeminence in the Arab world.

The opportunity for Nasser to divert some domestic attention away from these troubles and to advance some of his pet views came in April 1955 at the conference of nonaligned nations in Bandung Indonesia. Heikal states that Dulles tried to dissuade Nasser from going because the conference was viewed by Dulles as an affront to his "anti-Communist

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. Hoopes clarifies Dulles' position as follows: "His distress on this point was probably more strategic than ideological, for the principal instruments of an American policy of pressure - namely, military bases and alliance relationships - were ultimately dependent on at least the tacit allegiance of the governments and peoples who owned the real estate in places of strategic interest to the West. Calculations of world stability and Western influence would be undermined by 'uncommitted' governments in such places."

<sup>68</sup> Heikal, p. 56.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Herman Finer, Dulles over Suez (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), p. 27.

crusade."<sup>71</sup> Nasser went anyway; no doubt reinforcing in Dulles' mind his image of Nasser as an arrogant, uncooperative Egyptian leader.

The Bandung Conference allowed Nasser to associate with some of the "big shots" of the nonaligned world: namely Nehru of India, Chou En Lai of China, and Sukarno of Indonesia.<sup>72</sup> Nasser was surprised by the warm reception accorded him by the people of India and of Indonesia and by the majority of the leaders at the conference. He "was hailed as a leading figure in the emerging 'third world' of Afro-Asia."<sup>73</sup> These developments surely must have buoyed his spirits and provided him with welcome "sources of political and diplomatic support."<sup>74</sup> This support was very real in that it augmented his ability to effectively bargain with the West and the concept of nonalignment proved to be very popular in Egypt and throughout the Middle East in general.<sup>75</sup>

Besides the enhancement of his prestige, Nasser sought three things at Bandung. First, he wanted to elicit support for the Arab cause in Palestine.<sup>76</sup> Second, he wanted to get India to back him in the United Nations.<sup>77</sup> Third, he wanted to explore the opportunity for obtaining arms from other non-Western sources. He was successful in all three goals. The most important of these goals was undoubtedly the last. When the opportunity arose he quickly engaged Chou En Lai in conversation about his need for obtaining armament. He described how the West was attempting

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<sup>71</sup> Heikal, pp. 56-57.

<sup>72</sup> Finer, p. 27.

<sup>73</sup> Nuting, p. 101.

<sup>74</sup> P.J. Vatikiotis, The Modern History of Egypt (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), p. 390.

<sup>75</sup> Burns, 27.

<sup>76</sup> Vatikiotis, The Modern History of Egypt, p. 390.

<sup>77</sup> Lawrence, p. 80.

to control Egypt and indeed all Arab countries by refusing to provide them the weapons they required to justly defend themselves against Israel.<sup>78</sup> Chou indicated that the best place to turn for weapons was the Soviet Union and that he would ask the Russians to contact Nasser about providing arms to Egypt.<sup>79</sup>

In the end, the Bandung Conference was a great boon for the new Egyptian leader in many respects. He had been very willing to "disobey" the American Secretary of State in his gambit for arms and improved political position. The specter of Nasser greeting Chou En Lai must have bordered on revulsion for Dulles who had the year before spurned a hand shake from the Chinese leader. The United States and Egypt continued to drift apart.

#### Conflicts with Israel

Before 1955, the new Egyptian regime and Israel had coexisted in a state of relative peace. As we have seen, border incidents between the two countries occurred but were limited in frequency and severity and posed no serious security or political threat to Egypt. Nasser had even allowed secret channels of contact to be established between the Prime Minister of Israel, Moshe Sharett, and himself.<sup>80</sup> Nutting maintains that this was done because of Nasser's pragmatic view about the continued existence of the State of Israel and because of his basic desire to maintain peace. Nasser was quoted as saying in the January 1955 issue of *Foreign Affairs*: "War has no place in the constructive policy which we have designed to improve

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<sup>78</sup> Nutting, p. 101.

<sup>79</sup> Heikal, p. 57.

<sup>80</sup> Nutting, p. 93.

the lot of our people.... A war would cause us to lose, rather than gain, much of what we seek to achieve."<sup>81</sup>

Although there was a certain amount of opposition to the withdrawal agreement with Britain, the prospect of removing the 80,000 British troops from Egyptian soil did give rise to a degree of optimism that reason and cooperation would prevail in the Middle East.<sup>82</sup> The promise of economic and military aid from the United States was announced at the conclusion of the negotiations which tended to sweeten the atmosphere between Egypt and the United States.<sup>83</sup> However, the optimistic environment was shattered on February 28, 1955 during the Israeli raid on Gaza.

The Gaza Strip is an unimposing ribbon of land, some five miles wide by twenty-five miles long which protruded into Israeli held territory in the Negev. The Egyptians maintained a small military presence just outside the main town of Gaza. It was upon this camp which some fifty Israeli regular paratroopers converged that morning at about seven o'clock with orders to destroy it completely.<sup>84</sup>

This action "was David Ben Gurion's way of saying he had returned to power in Israel."<sup>85</sup> He had returned from retirement at kibbutz Sdeh Boker to take up the position of Minister of Defense in the wake of the disastrous

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<sup>81</sup> Gamal Abdel Nasser, "The Egyptian Revolution," Foreign Affairs, January, 1955, p. 211.

<sup>82</sup> Lawrence, p. 77.

<sup>83</sup> Burns, p. 16. The total amount envisioned by Dulles was \$20 million in economic aid and the same amount in military aid.

<sup>84</sup> Neff, p. 30.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

Lavon Affair.<sup>86</sup> Ben Gurion considered Sharett weak and prone to compromise with the Arabs and himself as a "daring fighter with confidence in himself, who is unapologetic about his Jewishness." The Lavon affair, which had caused the resignation of the previous Minister of Defense and had ushered in Ben Gurion as his replacement, had shaken Sharett to such an extent that he was unable to establish control over the very boisterous and active new Minister of Defense.<sup>87</sup>

Ben Gurion insisted on near complete control over the Ministry of Defense and put the Arabs on notice that past restraint should not be viewed as lack of resolve.<sup>88</sup> For these reasons and to stop internal bickering in the army over the Lavon Affair he ordered the raid on Gaza just eleven days after he had assumed his new post.<sup>89</sup>

The Israeli paratroopers conducted a well organized, surprise attack on the Gaza military camp. Their weapons included machine guns, mortars, hand grenades and satchels of TNT. In all, thirty-eight Egyptians were

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<sup>86</sup> Pinhas Lavon had been the previous Israeli Minister of Defense who had approved of, or who was ultimately responsible for, an ill-conceived Israeli intelligence plot to disrupt what it viewed as a too friendly relationship between Egypt and the United States and to disrupt the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian negotiations so as to assure that British troops would remain in place in the Suez Canal. Israeli agents working in Cairo attempted to make several bombings of American and British official buildings look like the work of the "untrustworthy" Egyptians. The attempt was amateurish and uncovered by the Egyptians who later tried the Israeli agents in public. Source: Robert Stephens, Nasser: A Political Biography (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), pp. 154-155.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

killed and many others wounded.<sup>90</sup> One of those killed was a seven year old boy.<sup>91</sup>

Nasser immediately came under pressure from all directions to do something about the raid.<sup>92</sup> The next day a changed rhetoric was easily discernible from Nasser as he talked of war to a crowd of cadets at the Military Accademy.<sup>93</sup> As seen before, the raid immediately revealed the extent of Egypt's military weakness for all to see. The incident was particularly galling for Nasser. He had, only a few days before, paid a visit to the camp in Gaza where he assured the troops that they were in no danger and that all would remain quiet.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, Nasser was confronted with his worst nightmare. He had been responsible for sending ill-prepared soldiers to face an enemy. This was one of the major crimes which he and the other Free Officers had charged the old regime of inflicting on Egyptian soldiers. It was unconscionable to Nasser and must have presented him with all the shock he required to dramatically alter the direction of Egyptian foreign policy and to pursue wholeheartedly his quest for arms from any potential supplier.

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<sup>90</sup> St. John, p. 189.

<sup>91</sup> Neff, p. 31.

<sup>92</sup> Heikal, p. 56.

<sup>93</sup> St. John, p. 189.

<sup>94</sup> Neff, p. 35.

## CHAPTER II

### CLIMATE FOR AN ARMS DEAL

#### Arms Transfers before 1955

The production of armament must rank as one of the oldest organized activities of human endeavor in that it developed nearly simultaneously with the ancient military profession. From these early beginnings to the present, transfers of weapons and ancillary technology from those who possess the means to produce "modern" weapons to those who do not have them, played an important part in the relations nations have with one another. In the Western experience, the phenomenon now known as arms transfers perhaps began in the Middle Ages when the European kings imported gunpowder to be used in the first crude cannons with which to defeat "hitherto impregnable battlements...."<sup>1</sup> From this early beginning, the practice of transferring arms and related assistance from one country to another for various economic, political and security reasons has continued to the present. A few examples will serve to illustrate this point.

American involvement with arms transfers is as old as the nation itself. Arms transfers played a salient role in winning independence for the United States during the American Revolutionary War. France, having lost her American colonies to the British, sought to debilitate her old rival by providing arms and assistance to the American forces. She was the major

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<sup>1</sup> H. C. Engelbrecht and F. C. Hanighen, The Merchants of Death (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1934), p. 13.

source of arms for the Revolutionary Army and it is reasonable to postulate that without such military assistance, the historic outcome of the Revolutionary War could have been different.<sup>2</sup> One of the major thrusts of the American Civil War revolved around efforts by the South to gain armaments from Britain and efforts by the North to prevent their delivery.<sup>3</sup> During and after World War I, the United States emerged as one of the world's primary players in the arms trade business. This new role was disturbing to many Americans who were interested, for moral and isolationist reasons, in limiting the production, sale and transfer of US arms to foreign combatants. Between 1934 and 1936, the American Senate sponsored an investigation of this question which was known as the Nye Committee, to investigate the question of munitions. It was felt that the commercial motive for American individuals and corporations to get involved in shipping arms to foreign entanglements was immoral and that this unrestrained practice endangered the peaceful existence of the United States.<sup>4</sup> As a result of the efforts of this committee, legal barriers were put in place to control the flow of U.S. munitions to foreign countries during time of war. This however did not effectively reduce American involvement in the arms trade business.<sup>5</sup>

In the late 1890s, Japan had been influenced by the British to import a whole navy to the great satisfaction of the English armament makers.<sup>6</sup> Britain, France, Germany and Austria all vied for favorable position to

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<sup>2</sup> Pierre, Arms Transfers and American Foreign Policy, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> George Seldes, Iron, Blood and Profits (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1934), p. 29.

provide arms to the various warring nations during the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars.<sup>7</sup>

During World War II, the United States was unquestionably the major source of arms transfers in the world.<sup>8</sup> President Roosevelt's desire to make America "the arsenal of democracy" is exemplified by such transactions as the destroyers-for-bases deal and the Lend-Lease Program.<sup>9</sup> After World War II, the United States emerged as the premier industrial power in the world, capable of dominating the international trade in arms.

The United States attempted to influence the policies and actions of the Western bloc nations through the instrumentality of arms transfers. In fact every American foreign policy thrust during the post-World War II era (1945-55), included the transfer of arms in one form or another.<sup>10</sup> Many of the arms transferred to America's new partners in systems of alliances were simply donated without charge.<sup>11</sup> These alliances, NATO, SEATO, and numerous bilateral agreements initiated by the United States were seen as essential to bolstering the defense capabilities of countries threatened by the Eastern bloc powers. The concept of encircling the expansionist

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>8</sup> Pierre, Arms Transfers and American Foreign Policy, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> The destroyers-for-bases deal concluded between Britain and the United States in 1940 specified the transfer of fifty old American destroyers to Britain in return for American access rights to numerous British bases located in the Western hemisphere. Source: Pierre, Arms Transfers and American Foreign Policy, (page 22) The United States Congress granted exceptional powers to President Roosevelt in the Lend-Lease Act of 1941. This act allowed the president to "sell, transfer title to, exchange, lease, lend, or otherwise dispose of... any defense article" in order to bolster the military of any country whose defense was determined to be in the national interest of the United States.

<sup>10</sup> Pierre, Arms Transfers and American Foreign Policy, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> David K. Whynes, The Economics of Third World Military Expenditure (London: The MacMillan Press, 1979), p. 86.

Communist countries - the Soviet Union in particular - established the foundation for the direction and formulation of American foreign policy during this period. According to John Gaddis who studied the strategies of containment:

Containment [was] the term generally used to characterize American policy toward the Soviet Union during the postwar era... The idea has been to prevent the Soviet Union from using the power and position it won as a result of... [the] conflict to reshape the postwar international order.... George F. Kennan coined the term in July 1947, when he called publicly for a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.<sup>12</sup>

In keeping with this philosophy, the United States demonstrated a distinct proclivity for entering into bilateral defense alliances with nations "in close proximity - both geographically and, potentially, ideologically - to the Soviet bloc."<sup>13</sup> American arms found their way to the Middle East region when Greece and Turkey became major recipients of military assistance under the general rubric of the Truman Doctrine announced in the spring of 1947.<sup>14</sup>

In spite of efforts by the United States to reenforce the military capabilities of its allies, and in spite of the long history of American

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<sup>12</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, Strategies of Containment (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Lenczowski, pp. 147-150. The Truman Doctrine was an effort by the United States to fill the gap left when Britain announced that she could no longer shoulder the burden of providing defense assistance to these countries at a time when Soviet pressures were mounting in the region in the form of Soviet-backed guerrillas which were attempting to overthrow the legitimate Government in Greece, and in the form of numerous Soviet political machinations directed against the sovereignty of Turkey. By 1950, under the provisions of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, Greece and Turkey had received \$700,000,000 in military assistance.

involvement with arms transfers, there was a definite unwillingness on the part of American policy makers to provide weapons to specific areas of the world. For example, in the Middle East, where an immediate threat of Soviet intrusion was not envisioned, the United States demonstrated a general reluctance to promote or respond to requests for arms transfers.<sup>15</sup> The Tripartite Declaration of 1950 formalized and intensified this reluctance on the part of all the major Western powers.<sup>16</sup> In a "Talking Paper" prepared by the U. S. State Department for President Eisenhower in the fall of 1955, American hopes concerning the Declaration were explained in these words:

The Western powers have been guided by the principles set out in their May 1950 Declaration, namely, that neither side should gain a great superiority over the other; that there should not be an arms race, and that there should not be aggression from either side.<sup>17</sup>

In the face of this reluctance, and in opposition to problems which were clearly manifested by Egypt concerning its unwillingness to enter into

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<sup>15</sup> Pierre, Arms Transfers and American Foreign Policy, p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> As indicated in chapter one, the United States, France and Great Britain signed the Declaration in a cooperative effort to restrict the flow of arms to this region. The impetus for this agreement was the failure of the Arab-Israeli peace talks after the War of 1948. Having failed to obtain a formal peace agreement between belligerents, the three Western powers settled on efforts designed to prevent war from resuming. The limitation of arms transfers into the region was seen as a way to prevent the resumption of war. As noted earlier, the French had violated this agreement by shipping substantial amounts of arms to Israel in 1954.

<sup>17</sup> Talking Paper for President Eisenhower, re. the American perspective on the Soviets supplying Egypt with modern arms. Washington, D.C., October 28 1955. DDQC, 1980, Ref. No., 000621. It is interesting to note that, before hand-written changes were made to the text, it began in the following manner: "The Western powers in the main have been guided ..." This omission was apparently made so as not to injure French sensibilities.

any formal defense alliance with the West,<sup>18</sup> the United States attempted in 1951, to establish an Allied Middle East Command which ideally was to include Egypt.<sup>19</sup> It was to be situated in the Suez Canal Zone after the departure of the British. One natural outcome of any successful alliance involving Egypt and the United States would most certainly have included the traditional transfer of arms which accompanied such defense agreements. This would result in a change in the balance of power in the Middle East and would therefore violate the intent of the Tripartite Declaration. Other questionable elements in this initiative were described by Lawrence as follows:

On the surface, the Western proposal appeared to lack any semblance of an effective structure. It was impossible to incorporate Israel and the Arab states into the structure unless there was a settlement of their problems and it couldn't include either separately because the supplying of arms to its members would violate the Tripartite Declaration of 1950.<sup>20</sup>

It should have been apparent from the first failure that subsequent efforts would also be doomed to fail. Nevertheless, American foreign policy was so deeply rooted in the concept of anti-Soviet defense pacts that two more attempts were made to persuade Egypt to cooperate. As badly as Nasser needed modern arms for the Egyptian army, it was politically and personally unthinkable for him to formally allign Egypt with the West in order to gain the arms. Thus, neither attempt ever really got off the

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<sup>18</sup> As noted in chapter one, Nasser held a strong belief that past military alliances between Egypt and Western powers had been to the detriment of the sovereignty and freedom of Egypt, and that future alliances would harbor the same dangers.

<sup>19</sup> Lawrence, p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

ground. It was only after the second attempt, when Dulles personally met with Nasser in 1953, that America finally realized the hopelessness of this course. Out of this realization came the first embers of the Northern Tier concept and the Baghdad Pact.

Throughout the course of the diplomatic fencing which took place between the United States and Egypt, Nasser continued to seek American arms from the Eisenhower administration. At times, America appeared ready to transfer arms to Egypt. As noted earlier, one such occasion was at the successful conclusion of the withdrawal agreement between Egypt and the United Kingdom in July of 1954.<sup>21</sup> "On 2 August, Ambassador Caffery presented Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Fawzi with draft proposals for \$20 million in military aid and an equal amount in economic assistance."<sup>22</sup>

This proposal, which had been initiated by Dulles and approved by Eisenhower, fell on to hard times almost immediately.<sup>23</sup> Egypt could not accept the normal congressional strings associated with arms transfers; i.e., that American arms should be used only for internal security or for defense

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<sup>21</sup> U.S., Cong., Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Armed Services, The President's Proposals on the Middle East, Hearing, 85th Cong., 1st sess., 5-8 and 11 Feb. 1957 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1957), p. 791. Senator Fulbright revealed during his questioning of Ambassador Caffery that President Eisenhower, in a letter to the Egyptian President dated July 15, 1954, stated that: "Simultaneously with the conclusion of the Suez agreement with Great Britain, the United States would enter into 'firm commitments' with Egypt for economic assistance for strengthening its armed forces." When Senator Fulbright asked Ambassador Caffery why these firm commitments had not been kept, the Ambassador could not give a definite answer.

<sup>22</sup> Brown, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

against exterior aggression.<sup>24</sup> Nor could it accept the traditionally associated presence of an American Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) to help train Egyptian personnel in the utilization and maintenance of U.S. imported arms.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, the American public was generally hostile to the idea of sending arms to Egypt which could very likely be used against Israel at a future date.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the status of American arms transfers to Egypt and the relationship between the United States and Egypt never attained the desired expectations of either country. The United States even stalled in answering Nasser's frantic request for arms after the Israeli raid on Gaza in February of 1955, and only showed a renewed interest in providing Egypt with the weapons on that list after information about the impending Egyptian-Czechoslovakian arms deal began to leak out.

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<sup>24</sup> Uri Ra'anana, "Soviet Arms Transfers and the Problem of Political Leverage," in Arms Transfers to the Third World: The Military Buildup in Less Industrial Countries, eds. Uri Ra'anana, Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., and Geoffrey Kemp (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), pp. 132-133.

<sup>25</sup> Brown, p. 16. In spite of these restrictions, title IV of the Mutual Security Act of 1951 (amended in 1954), gave the President the authority to transfer up to \$20 million in military assistance to a single country from a special fund of \$150 million, "when the President determines that such use is important to the security of the United States." Ambassador Caffery stated to Senator Fulbright during hearings in the eighty-fifth congress that he was unaware of this act. Additionally, there is no evidence that the President ever considered using its provisions to provide Egypt with arms which would be free of strings. Source: U.S., Cong., Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, The President's Proposal on the Middle East, pp. 788-789.

<sup>26</sup> Brown, p. 19-20. Brown notes that: "Although the Israel lobby was not nearly the political force in Washington in the 1950s that it was to become in the 1960s and 1970s, Israel's backers in the United States made their presence felt during the Eisenhower era, particularly when the issue of aid to Arab governments surfaced."

Between the time of the Egyptian revolution and the Czech arms deal, Nasser had attempted to obtain arms from other Western sources. His success in this venture had been limited. Heikal's account of these attempts is given below:

Nasser tried to buy obsolete arms from Second World War dumps in Belgium. He got a few pieces from Italy. He tried in Sweden, Switzerland and Spain. He tried to get the British to release the eighty Centurian tanks which the Government had contracted to buy before the revolution and which had already been paid for. They sent sixteen and said they would deliver the rest if Egypt would stop attacking the Baghdad Pact.<sup>27</sup>

There were several reasons why Nasser generally preferred to modernize the Egyptian army with Western weapons.<sup>28</sup> First, the Egyptian army was unfamiliar with Soviet weaponry. Second, Nasser felt that it would be difficult to communicate effectively with a country whose language and culture was basically unknown in Egypt. Third, he expected a negative reaction from conservative elements and countries in the Arab world who would reject any association with the "godless" Communists. Nevertheless, by early 1955, Nasser felt compelled for personal, political and security reasons to look to the Eastern bloc for arms.

To many Western observers, the announcement of the Egyptian-Czech arms deal in September of 1955 seemed to be a unique, first effort by the Soviet Union to become involved in arms transfers with a noncommunist country. However, this was not the case as Uri Ra'anah revealed in 1969, in his careful study of the history of Soviet Union arms transfers.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Heikal, p. 56.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>29</sup> Uri Ra'anah, The USSR Arms the Third World: Case Studies in Soviet Foreign Policy (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1969), pp. 28-29.

According to Ra'anan, Moscow had a definite history of transferring arms and military expertise to noncommunist destinations with the intent of exerting its political influence. Moscow gave arms and military training to Turkish, Persian, Afghani and Chinese leaders in the 1920s. In the 1930s, the Soviets provided arms and military advisers to the Spanish Republic, to Chiang Kai-shek's forces in China and to Iranian and Afghani warlords. In the 1940s they sent surplus German weapons to Israel, Syria, Egypt and Guatemala. These shipments were all clandestine in nature and served a specific intent.

The dispatch of the weapons was meant to serve a primarily military purpose; they were intended for immediate use in battles that were being fought at the time.... In all of these earlier instances, it was the arms themselves that were of vital interest to the recipient, and their continued acquisition was best served by keeping the origin and the very presence of the deliveries secret.<sup>30</sup>

In spite of this history, transfers of weapons from the Soviet Union to Third World countries were very limited. The third world nations which received substantial amounts of Soviet arms before 1955 were all socialist countries, North Korea being the largest recipient.<sup>31</sup> The Soviets publicly criticized the type of military and economic aid the West provided to developing nations because of the unavoidable supplier-recipient relationships which developed. The Soviets insisted that the West was motivated solely by the desire to acquire control over the policies of the recipient governments.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>31</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, The Arms Trade with the Third World (Sweden: Almqvist and Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1971), p. 189. (Hereafter the Institute is referred to as SIPRI.)

<sup>32</sup> Ra'anan, Arms Transfers to the Third World, p. 131.

The prospect of Egypt receiving arms from the Soviet Union evolved during the three years since the military coup in Egypt. At first it appeared to be completely out of the question. The Soviets viewed the new regime with suspicion. They initially believed that America had a hand in engineering the overthrow of the old regime and saw proof for this in the amicable rapport which appeared to spring up overnight between Egypt and the United States.<sup>33</sup> But after a year or two, relations between the two countries warmed as it became apparent that the policies of Egypt and the Soviet Union converged on a number of issues, the most salient of which were: rejection of the Baghdad Pact, resistance to Western influence in the Middle East and acceptance of neutralism as a legitimate national policy.

This warming trend was assisted by the emerging shift in foreign policy which appeared after the death of Stalin in 1953 and with Khrushchev's consolidation of power throughout 1954. The resultant foreign policy outlook of the Soviet Union was more self assured and began to allow for initiative and peaceful coexistence with noncommunist social systems.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the stage was set for Egyptian-Soviet rapprochement when in April of 1955, Nasser confided to Chou En Lai, in Rangoon before the Bandung conference, that he was in need of modern arms which the West seemed unwilling to provide.

#### The Military Status of Egypt and Israel

Since the end of the 1948 War, Britain, France and the United States had been fairly successful in restricting the flow of arms to the Middle East. This success was due in large part to the fact that the Soviet Union had

<sup>33</sup> George Lenczowski, Soviet Advances in the Middle East (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1971), p. 76.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

chosen - for reasons of its own - a policy of noncommitment to both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and it had refrained from entering into arms agreements with either side. Additionally, the maintenance of "pax occidentala" in the Middle East depended on the military balance of power in the region. The importance of this balance of power was reflected in official U.S. documents of the era which stated: "To date, [April 1956] a relative balance of military power, coupled with Israel's economic necessity for a period of peace, have served to forestall a resumption of open large-scale hostilities."<sup>35</sup>

As self-appointed custodian of the Middle East, the West found itself in a difficult position. Uri Ra'anan states that protecting the region's political and military status quo,

required constant vigilance to defuse smoldering local disputes and to prevent dangerous military imbalances that might tempt local rulers to attack their neighbors; at the same time, a consistently even-handed approach was required toward the mutually antagonistic countries of the area, so as to preserve the Western influence in each and every capital. Such a complex policy was practicable, however, only as long as the West preserved its monopoly of relations with Near Eastern states,... and was not compelled to start bidding against an irresponsible outsider.<sup>36</sup>

This complex policy included provisions for providing limited quantities of arms to Middle Eastern countries to reward them for entering into defense agreements with Western nations or to satisfy "legitimate" self-defense requirements. The United States ostensibly recognized the requirement of weapons for self-defense and looked favorably on an

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<sup>35</sup> Joint Strategic Plans Committee. Memorandum for Richard H. Phillips, Capt. U.S. Navy, re. "Plans for Prospective Military Measures in the Middle East." [Washington, D.C.], April, 27, 1956. DDQC, 1981, Ref. No., 396A.

<sup>36</sup> Ra'anan, The USSR Arms the Third World, p. 23.

Egyptian request for about \$1 million of arms late in 1952.<sup>37</sup> This would have been a fairly painless transaction because of the nature and limited quantity of the arms and because of the prospect of enhancing U.S. relations with the new regime.<sup>38</sup> Because the list of desired weapons contained mostly small arms, Eisenhower was later inclined to delay sending the arms to Egypt, heeding a request from British Prime Minister Churchill who insisted the arms would be turned against the British forces in Suez. As noted earlier, the United States was, in principle, opposed to substantial shipments of arms to the Middle East. The policy of the United States in May of 1950 was clearly stated in a National Security Council document in the following manner:

The United States' view with regard to the export of arms to the area [the Middle East] was expressed by Senator Austin in the UN Security Council, August 4, 1949, as follows: "So far as the United States is concerned, it does not intend to allow the export of arms which would permit a competitive arms race in the area. Export of arms to this area of the world should be strictly limited to such arms as are within the scope of the legitimate security requirements.... We hope that prudence will prevail... among all nations of the world which are in a position to supply arms and that they will pursue a policy similar to that which we intend to pursue."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Letter from Ambassador Caffery to General Naguib, re. "Supply of Military Equipment." Cairo, Egypt, November 24, 1952. DDQC, 1975, Ref. No., 25E.

<sup>38</sup> This planned transfer consisted mostly of small arms and armored cars which were more suitable for internal police actions than for satisfying the weapons requirements of the army. The United States "magnanimously" indicated that it would lift the requirement that the weapons be used only by the Egyptian police force.

<sup>39</sup> National Security Council. Report on "United States Policy Toward Arms Shipments to the Near East." [Washington, D.C.], May 10, 1950, p. 1. DDQC, 1982, Ref. No., 000291.

Even if the political constraints which limited the United States from providing large quantities of arms to the Middle East had not existed, there is some question whether it was physically capable of providing substantial quantities of arms to the region before 1954. The State Department, in 1952, described the problem as follows:

The shortage of available equipment and the urgent requirements of other and higher priority areas have heretofore made it impossible to allocate any significant amounts of military equipment to the Middle East.... There are indications that the volume of U.S. military production in fiscal 1954 will, in certain categories, be sufficient to permit limited allocations to the Middle East without affecting seriously existing programs to other areas.<sup>40</sup>

Britain was the major supplier of arms to Egypt before the military coup in 1952 and before the Czech arms deal in 1955. One of the major reasons Britain supplied arms to Egypt in the early 1950s was to facilitate the formation of a partnership between the two countries for resisting Soviet aggression in the region. It was also hoped that the Egyptian army would become sufficiently dependent on British spare parts and materiel replacements so as to "enhance the prospects of continued British presence in the Suez Canal zone."<sup>41</sup> In formulating the appropriate size and disposition of an Egyptian force, the British Chiefs of Staff had two

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<sup>40</sup> Letter from the Department of State to the Honorable W. Averell Harriman, re. "The Objective of United States Policy in the Middle East." [Washington D.C.], November 10, 1952. DDQC, 1981, Ref. No., 391B. This letter also looks forward to a time when sufficient U.S. arms would be available for military aid to be used at opportune moments with the countries of the Middle East. Indeed, it asserts that there are political motives for providing such arms. It is interesting to note the lack of any reference to this type of motivation in providing arms to the Middle East from public U.S. declarations such as that of Senator Austin cited above.

<sup>41</sup> NSC Report on "United States Policy Toward Arms Shipments to the Near East," p. 2.

considerations. First, the force had to be sufficiently strong enough to provide real assistance in resisting Soviet aggression. Second, it had to be sufficiently small enough so as not to provoke the parties of the 1948 War to resume hostilities. In 1950, the British had approved the formation of the following major units for such an Egyptian force: 1 infantry division, 12 heavy antiaircraft regiments, 2 infantry brigades, 4 light antiaircraft regiments, 1 light armored brigade and 2 coast artillery regiments.<sup>42</sup> This order of battle was to form the basis for and set a ceiling on all British arms shipments to Egypt. Thus, the British - and to a lesser extent the United States and France - shipped various quantities of arms to Egypt from 1950 through 1955 under the auspices of this plan.

Since the end of the 1948 War, the Israeli government had been accumulating arms from any source it could find. Most of the weapons it obtained, especially major items, were purchased from Western sources. Until the announcement of the Czech arms deal in September of 1955, Israel had maintained a rough military parity with the combined strength of the Arab nations.<sup>43</sup> Table 1 reflects how the open literature of the time sketched this parity.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. (A small number aircraft and naval vessels were also to be delivered to Egypt under the plan.) According to this report, the United States did not feel that the quantity of British equipment to be shipped to Egypt would be sufficient to upset the delicate military balance in the Middle East. Additionally, the report held that the arms Egypt thus required would be consistent with the development of an Anglo-Egyptian defense. The findings of the report were in opposition to the view and desires of the government of Israel which objected to the British arms transfers.

<sup>43</sup> "If War Comes to the Middle East," U.S. News and World Report, 11 November 1955, p. 24.

Table 1

## Estimate of the Balance of Arab-Israeli Military Strength as of 1955

Country	Troops	Planes	Tanks
Israel (Total)	250,000*	100-125	unspecified number but modern (French & US)
Egypt	120,000	75-90	200 (100 Sherman, 30 Centurion)
Iraq	50-60,000	25	unspecified
Syria	35-50,000	25	unspecified  not
Jordan	40,000	0	unspecified  significant
Lebanon	10,000	0	unspecified  in number
Saudi Arabia	10,000	0	unspecified
Arab: (Total)	265-290,000	125-140	200+

\* Israel had a standing army of about 50,000 but maintained the capability of recalling up to 200,000 reserves in 48 hours.

Note: This table was adapted from information and tables in Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. pp. 22-26, and "Middle East: Ingredients of War," Newsweek, 10 October 1955, p. 50. This table demonstrates a point of confusion. The presence of at least 100 - probably 150 - American Sherman tanks in the Egyptian army indicate that the United States did transfer, in at least one instance, a substantial amount of arms to Egypt. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute corroborates that the Sherman tanks were sent from the United States to Egypt between 1954 and 1955. Heikal flatly states that Egypt never got any arms from the United States during this time period. Eisenhower's writings and other political observers of the era omit mention of this apparently secret transfer. Nasser does not mention it either and he insisted on getting more arms from the Soviet bloc. He apparently felt he needed even more and the United States was either unwilling or extremely slow to respond.

Egypt, however, was not happy with the military "balance." As we have seen, Nasser could not keep his base of power without improving the capabilities of the Egyptian army. Additionally, when comparisons of Israeli versus Arab military might are made, they often overlook the fact that there was a distinct lack of cooperation between the Arab forces. There were no joint Arab plans, nor were there any provisions for an allied Arab command in time of war.<sup>45</sup> This reality tended to require that Egypt be fully capable of defeating any Israeli threat with little outside support. Thus, the comparison of Arab military strength to that of Israel was probably not very important from an Egyptian point of view.

#### The Blossoming of the Cold War

The Czech arms deal occurred at a time of intense international political tension. The strife between Eastern and Western bloc powers strongly shaped the thinking and actions of nations and individuals during the era of the present study. A brief review of the origins and development of the Cold War will serve to clarify the impetus of philosophies and policies of the countries with interests in the Middle East.

The war-time coalition of allied nations caused both the United States and the Soviet Union to be propelled into dominant positions in the realm of international politics even before the end of the Second World War.<sup>46</sup> It was inevitable that both countries should encounter growing pains in their new roles as leaders in world politics. It was also inevitable that a great deal of friction between the United States and the Soviet Union would result from their divergent historical experiences and ideological viewpoints.

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<sup>45</sup> "If War Comes to the Middle East," U.S. News and World Report, p. 24.

<sup>46</sup> Norman A. Graebner, Cold War Diplomacy: American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960 (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1962), p. 7

Americans suffered no invasion or catastrophic losses as a result of the war and were convinced that the war should end on a moral note which would insure the preeminence of the principle of self-determination for all the peoples of Europe regardless of their status as victor or vanquished.<sup>47</sup> Russians, however, had suffered greatly in the war and they sought assurance that their western borders would not be violated again by European nations. This assurance necessitated the imposition of Soviet control on many Eastern European nations in contravention to the principles of the Atlantic Charter and of the United Nations Declaration. The United States was "not certain that the U.S.S.R., having broken one set of promises, would not continue its westward course as subsequent opportunities presented themselves."<sup>48</sup> In the struggle for power and influence which ensued, each side saw the other as the aggressor and took actions which were designed to enhance their respective security. The problem of building a better rapport between the United States and the Soviet Union was exacerbated by the ideological differences between Capitalism and Communism which fueled the fires of distrust and fear.

In the rush to bolster Western security against the expansionist designs of the Soviet Union, the Truman administration did not feel it had the luxury of time to develop a plan of reconciliation or cooperation with the Russians.<sup>49</sup> Instead, in 1947, it produced the tangible Cold War "child" known as the Truman Doctrine which was to contain and prevent Soviet influence from growing in Greece and Turkey. From a Soviet point of view,

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Hugh Ross, ed., The Cold War: Containment and its Critics (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963), p. 2.

the Truman Doctrine could easily be interpreted as one more provocative, capitalistic step designed to extend the interests of the United States.

Since the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, the policy of containment proved to be generally unpalatable to an American public so recently conditioned to the "total" victory of the Second World War.<sup>50</sup> The Democrats defended their policy of containment in Korea by noting that Communist intrusion had been halted without starting a Third World War. The Republicans challenged this view during the 1952 presidential campaign by insisting that "containment had been a costly failure permitting the absorption of hundreds of millions of people in Eastern Europe and China into the Soviet bloc since the end of World War II."<sup>51</sup> The Republican foreign policy platform called for a more positive, dynamic course of action in confronting the Soviets; a policy of liberation which would put greater stress on the "jailers" and which would produce a spark of hope in the hearts of those under the yoke of Moscow.<sup>52</sup>

The Eisenhower administration also embraced the concept of massive retaliation as a workable plan which would continue to contain the Soviets

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<sup>50</sup> The Truman administration had been guided in its containment policy by the National Security Council report number 68, dated April 7, 1950. This report made recommendations regarding the options available to the Free World in its effort to hold the expansion of Soviet influence. In short, the course of action recommended by the report called for the United States and its allies to begin a rapid buildup in economic, political and military strength. The report stated that in emergency situations, the United States could spend up to fifty percent of its gross national product in order to counter the Soviet threat. Under this concept, War on a grand scale was to be avoided but the possibility for the proliferation of "small," yet very unpleasant and inconclusive wars was very likely.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>52</sup> John Foster Dulles, "A Policy of Boldness," *Life*, 19 May 1952, p. 151.

and at the same time be affordable to the American taxpayer.<sup>53</sup> Emphasis was placed on cultivating allies and on developing their capacity for collective security.<sup>54</sup> In that truly intercontinental bombers had not yet been developed, part of the strategy of massive retaliation required that the United States have access to air bases in friendly countries which ringed the Soviet Union. United States endorsement of the 1955 Baghdad Pact was understandable given the acceptance by the Eisenhower administration of the concepts of liberation and massive retaliation. Under the concept of liberation, the decidedly anti-Soviet defense alliance of Northern Tier nations constituted a real irritant in the underbelly of the Soviet Union. Under the concept of massive retaliation, it was hoped that these friendly nations could be persuaded to allow the stationing of American bombers within their borders.

The philosophical approaches of both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations recognized the validity of a strict bipolarization of the international political system and handled the Soviet threat accordingly. Indeed, by the time of Eisenhower's election as president in 1952, it must have seemed inevitable that most nations of the world would eventually become aligned with one of the two great blocs. In the war to win influence and control over the unattached nations of the world, it was only natural that both blocs would resort to some familiar strategies; for example: political and diplomatic maneuvering, economic and military aid, propaganda, espionage, subversion, and military force if necessary.<sup>55</sup> After

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<sup>53</sup> Ross, p. 29.

<sup>54</sup> The New York Times, 12 January, 1954, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> From this viewpoint, it would have also been natural to expect the United States and the Soviet Union to be resentful of nations which resisted being aligned with one of the opposing camps.

the Bandung conference, the emergence of a strong contingent of nonaligned nations provided for a new pluralistic nature in the realm of international politics. These nations thus presented a problem in diplomacy to be solved by the more adroit of the feuding blocs.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PERSONALITIES

#### States and Personalities

One of the duties of the state in the arena of international relations is to be the primary actor in protecting the rights and security of its citizens in the face of actions and individuals of other states.<sup>1</sup> In making a study of a particular international historical incident, the natural level from which to investigate and compare actions surrounding that incident is that of the state. It may be argued that the role of personalities in international politics is *minimal* given that individuals, who are naturally the product and reflection of their particular state and its attendant historical background and political aspirations, must follow the expected course prescribed by the state. Nevertheless, the study of personalities is still an important tool in understanding the way in which states interact one with another.

John Stoessinger insists, in case studies of the six major conflagrations of this century, that personalities played a critical role in leading nations to war; for example, he concludes the following about the First World War:

It is my conviction that during the descent into the abyss the perceptions of statesmen and generals were absolutely crucial.... All the participants suffered from greater or lesser distortions in their images of themselves. They tended to see

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.15-17.

themselves as honorable, virtuous, and pure and the adversary as diabolical.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, the role of personalities, in the formulation of foreign policies which nations employ with each other during times of peace, is a factor which should be given serious consideration in understanding the overall nature of the actions taken by states. Furthermore, this study contends that consideration of the major personalities involved in international incidents must be examined when certain circumstances exist. One such circumstance occurs when those individuals who hold authority in a given state are relatively new to that position. Another example is when those who hold the reigns of power within a state are blinded by personal prejudice. Both such circumstances were present in the course of events leading to the Czech arms deal.

Among the major nations involved in the denouement of the Czech arms deal were five very influential individuals. They were: Dwight D. Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles of the United States, Anthony Eden of England, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union. At the time of the announcement of the Czech arms deal, all of the above personalities had only recently emerged as authoritarian state figures of the first order.<sup>3</sup> At various times, two of the personalities

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<sup>2</sup> John G. Stoessinger, Why Nations Go to War, 4th ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), pp. 21-22.

<sup>3</sup> The Eisenhower administration with John Foster Dulles as Secretary of State, began its first term in January of 1953. Gamal Abdel Nasser led the successful military coup in Egypt in July of 1952 and emerged as the preeminent national leader only after the abdication of General Naguib in November of 1954. Anthony Eden became Prime Minister of Britain in April of 1955 when Sir Winston Churchill resigned. Nikita Khrushchev had been consolidating power in the Kremlin since the death of Stalin in March of 1953 and was recognized as the man with power by the Supreme Soviet in February of 1955.

demonstrated personal antipathy for Nasser which may have clouded their judgment. They were: John Foster Dulles and Anthony Eden. The following brief sketches of each of the above individuals attempt to amplify some of the qualities and characteristics which may have had a bearing on the way they interpreted and influenced the events surrounding the Czech arms deal.

#### Dwight D. Eisenhower

Dwight D. Eisenhower was cut from a different mold than his contemporaries who had held the office of president in that he was a professional military man with no prior political experience.<sup>4</sup> Eisenhower graduated from West Point in 1915 in the top half of his class. His early military experience was undistinguished from that of other, hard-working, competent army officers. By virtue of assignment, however, he was privy to the decision-making process of the Executive branch during the early 1930s, when he was appointed as assistant to the Assistant Secretary of War.<sup>5</sup> Eisenhower's accelerated rise in rank occurred during the tremendous expansion experienced by the army as a result of the Second World War, and because of his demonstrated executive prowess during assignments as Chief of Staff for major army units. Eisenhower never commanded troops in battle. He was, nevertheless, selected as Supreme Allied Commander largely because of his administrative abilities and because of his agreement with the Army Chief of Staff, General George Marshall on critical military issues.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> David B. Capitanichik, The Eisenhower Presidency and American Foreign Policy (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 7. Specifically, Eisenhower and Marshall felt it necessary to promote a policy of victory in Europe first and in the Pacific second.

As Supreme Allied Commander, Eisenhower naturally became familiar with the workings of foreign affairs and proved himself to be a skillful leader in handling the delicate feelings of foreign staffs in the Allied headquarters. His philosophy of the presidency was surely influenced by his military leadership experience.

Some authors contend that there is evidence President Eisenhower would bow to "expert" council just as he tended to agree with the opinion of his army staff when they had reached a consensus.<sup>7</sup> Other authors claim that the Eisenhower administration was seriously underrated and that the President was indeed at the helm of all domestic and foreign policy decisions.<sup>8</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, in compiling Eisenhower's diaries, noted that critics had misinterpreted many of the President's actions as evidence that the man was incapable of an original thought. With the insight provided by the President's diaries, Ferrell insisted that:

Another Eisenhower appears - a man who carefully masked his shrewdness, his purposes. The general-president knew what he was doing. Contrary to the critics who said that what seemed thoughtlessness was indeed so, there was an active mind at work, not shuffling through issues and crises but determined to get to the essentials; it is this analytical mind that presents itself in the diaries.<sup>9</sup>

When Eisenhower decided to run for the presidency on the Republican ticket, he chose foreign affairs as one of the salient issues of his campaign and pressed the Truman administration hard for not ending the Korean War

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Blanche Wiesin Cook, Declassified Eisenhower: A Divided Legacy (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1981), p. i-ii.

<sup>9</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, ed., The Eisenhower Diaries (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), pp. xi-xii.

in an expeditious manner.<sup>10</sup> As President, Eisenhower demonstrated his ability to form independent and perceptive opinions about foreign affairs even when these opinions were counter to the British position. An example of Eisenhower's frankness and ability is provided by Cook who states the following:

Eisenhower was not naive about America's anticolonial dilemma. Self-determination was an American tradition.... Eisenhower [on July 22, 1954] told Muir [publisher for *Newsweek*] that he agreed with Nasser on the issue of colonialism.<sup>11</sup>

Although he adopted, for campaign platform purposes, some of Dulles' concepts such as: liberation of nations enslaved by Communism and massive retaliation, this did not signal a relinquishment of his authority over foreign affairs. On the contrary, he skillfully exerted his influence over Dulles and others as "a man of judgment amid men of passion."<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the general course of foreign policy was set on a path which would antagonize the sensitive feelings of the emerging nonaligned nations. Delicate diplomacy would be required to attain its desired goals. The shaping of this diplomacy was left largely in the hands of the Secretary of State.

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<sup>10</sup> Ross, p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> Cook, p. 184. Nasser had said that the colonial ambitions of Britain and France - referring specifically to Indochina - were not conducive to the development of nationalism and independence which the Western nations supposedly admired so fervently.

<sup>12</sup> Ferrell, p. xi.

### John Foster Dulles

John Foster Dulles, according to his own account, had always "wanted to be qualified to be Secretary of State."<sup>13</sup> His grandfather, John W. Foster, who had been Secretary of State under President Benjamin Harrison, was undoubtedly a model which John Foster Dulles emulated. His father was a Presbyterian minister and John Foster was strongly influenced by the conservative, religious environment in which he was raised. About a year after his graduation from Princeton in 1908, he decided to follow in his grandfather's footsteps and he began his career in international affairs.<sup>14</sup>

Dulles was a staunch anti-Communist. In his first public address as Secretary of State, he said: "We have enemies who are plotting our destruction. These enemies are the Russian Communists and their allies in other countries."<sup>15</sup> His active role as spokesman on international affairs during the Eisenhower administration had a very lasting affect on how Americans in general viewed the Soviet menace.<sup>16</sup>

As Secretary of State, it is clear that he had a preeminent position with the President with regard to the formation and execution of American foreign policy. President Eisenhower acknowledged in his memoirs the elevated role Dulles played in the arena of foreign affairs in the following words: "It was the mutual trust and understanding, thus engendered, that enabled me with complete confidence, to delegate to him an unusual degree

<sup>13</sup> Andrew H. Berding, Dulles on Diplomacy (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1965), p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Office of Public Affairs, A Survey of Foreign Policy Problems, [by John Foster Dulles], Department of State Publication, No. 4911 (Washington D.C. : U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Hoopes, p. 490.

of flexibility as my representative in international conferences."<sup>17</sup> That his faith in Dulles was more than mere words was demonstrated when Eisenhower suffered his heart attack in September of 1955. As soon as Eisenhower was able, he communicated to the Vice-President in a letter which stated essentially that Nixon was to keep his hands off "Foster Dulles" who was engaged in follow-up meetings of the Geneva peace conference.<sup>18</sup>

Dulles emphasized that his relationship with Eisenhower was based on oneness of mind and mutual respect.<sup>19</sup> He had apparently decided early as Secretary of State to demand of himself the same "positive loyalty" to the President and the policies of the President that he required of the Foreign Service and there is no doubt that Eisenhower and Dulles often agreed on the course of American foreign affairs.<sup>20</sup> It is plausible that Dulles' method of advising the president contributed to the way in which Eisenhower saw the world.<sup>21</sup> In describing the way he advised the President, Dulles said: "I

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<sup>17</sup> Eisenhower, p. 637.

<sup>18</sup> Robert L. Donovan, Eisenhower: The Inside Story (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 383.

<sup>19</sup> Berding, pp. 14-15.

<sup>20</sup> Hoopes, p. 5. Hoopes further states (p. 138) that Dulles' "basic conception was that he was the President's lawyer for foreign affairs and that, as in other lawyer-client relationships, his job was to provide advice and counsel. He was in no doubt that it was the client who possessed the ultimate authority and power, but as the relationship matured he left nobody else in doubt that the President would very probably accept his recommendation."

<sup>21</sup> Richard Good-Adams, The Time of Power: A Reappraisal of John Foster Dulles (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962), p. 70. The opinion Eisenhower and Dulles held for Nasser seems to have converged by the end of 1956. In a cablegram to Dulles, Eisenhower said, "I am sure that they [the NATO Allies] know that we regard Nasser as an evil influence." Source: Dwight D. Eisenhower, Cablegram to Secretary of State Dulles, 12 December 1956. DDQC, 1984, Ref. No., 000385.

select the approach I think best and recommend this to him for his approval, giving my reasons for the selection."<sup>22</sup>

Dulles saw the Middle East as an area of the world which was extremely susceptible to Soviet expansion. To support his view, the Russians, historically had maneuvered to gain a warm water port in the area. They had been very reluctant to retreat from their foothold in Northern Iraq and Iran at the end of the Second World War. Their proximity to Middle Eastern oil, which was of strategic importance to the West, was also a matter of concern for Dulles.

Dangers which may have been inherent to a strong American presence in the Middle East were subordinated by Dulles in his quest to pursue his - and President Eisenhower's - "New Look" policy of building anti-Soviet defense pacts.<sup>23</sup> In this policy, Dulles expressed the goal of building a world that was more secure for freedom loving peoples. He operated on the principle that American interests were enlightened and that those of the

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<sup>22</sup> Berding, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence, pp. 57-58. The "New Look" policy which was adopted by the Eisenhower administration in 1953, called for a new, positive method of dealing with the threat of Communism. The Truman policy of containment was deemed negative and unfruitful. In an effort to take the struggle to the door steps of the Communists rather than to wait for them to expand their influence before taking any action, Dulles worked hard to form anti-Com-munist defense pacts around the world. He strongly believed that "the dynamic prevails over the static." Source: John Foster Dulles, "A Policy of Boldness," Life 19 May, 1952, p. 152.

Soviet Union were founded on principles of darkness.<sup>24</sup> His attitude about the absolute requirement for all enlightened governments to actively resist communism was unmoveable. Thus, it was difficult for him to accept and to deal efficiently with the newly emerging bloc of nonaligned nations which could not be persuaded to see things his way.<sup>25</sup> Heikal compared Dulles' enthusiasm for containing Communism to missionary fanaticism.<sup>26</sup>

The opinions and feelings Dulles held concerning Nasser varied over the course of their relationship. At times, Dulles seemed to understand the point of view of the Egyptian leader and the political realities which directed Nasser in his actions. For example, the first public statement made by Dulles concerning the Czech arms deal indicated his reserved acceptance of Egypt's right to obtain arms which it sincerely believed to be necessary for its own protection.<sup>27</sup> But usually, Dulles disapproved of Nasser as a man and as a leader.

In a confusing move, Dulles wrote a letter the day after his public announcement about the Czech arms deal, to the Egyptian leader who

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<sup>24</sup> Office of Public Affairs, A Survey of Foreign Policy Problems, [by John Foster Dulles], Department of State Publication, No. 4911 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 10. The religious overtones to this concept seemed from his early background. Goold-Adams (p. 14.) maintained that Dulles was steeped in intransigence because of his belief in the sovereignty of God who was interested in the "moral unity and purpose in the world," and who helped the righteous advance in their struggle against those who did wrong.

<sup>25</sup> Hoopes, p. 315. Hoopes also points out that the origins of Dulles' frustrations regarding the nonaligned nations may have been more "strategic than ideological," because the successful implementation of the Eisenhower "New Look" policy required the support of friendly nations which bordered the Soviet Union.

<sup>26</sup> Heikal, p. 50.

<sup>27</sup> John Donovan, ed., U.S. & Soviet Policy in the Middle East: 1945-56 (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1972), p. 179.

warned of dire consequences if the deal went through. Assistant Secretary of State George Allen was dispatched to Cairo with the letter.<sup>28</sup> When Nasser learned of the letter, he was infuriated and contemplated breaking diplomatic relations with the United States.<sup>29</sup> The letter was never shown to Nasser because American diplomats in Cairo convinced Allen that it would bring only negative results.<sup>30</sup>

In a personal letter to Eisenhower, Dulles summarized his feelings about the Egyptian leader by saying:

Nasser counts as "friends" those who help him to achieve his ambitions.\* Of course, Nasser would be glad to get help from us as well as from the Soviet Union. But that would, I fear, lead him to merely move on, and not to moderate his ambitions. He is not a moderate kind of person.<sup>31</sup>

\* This sentence could also be a description of Dulles.

As we have seen, Dulles was totally inflexible in his plan for meeting the menace of Communism. This, and his overt dislike of Nasser interfered with his ability to accept the Egyptian leader as a viable authority and to treat him accordingly.

#### Anthony Eden

Anthony Eden received his early education at Eton and he served as an officer in the First World War. His army experience left him with a distinct dislike of the destruction of war.<sup>32</sup> After the war, he returned to his education at Oxford and received honors in Persian and Arabic. In

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<sup>28</sup> Heikal, pp. 61-62.

<sup>29</sup> Copeland, p. 165.

<sup>30</sup> Heikal, p. 62-63.

<sup>31</sup> John Foster Dulles, Letter to President Eisenhower, re. "Nasser's Brand of Nationalism," 25 July 1958. DDQC, 1984, Ref. No., 002565.

<sup>32</sup> Neff, p. 183.

1923, Eden was elected as a Conservative member of the House of Commons at the age of twenty-six.

The early political career of Anthony Eden was distinguished by his meteoric rise in power and popularity. His particular forte was in the field of foreign affairs. During his early years as Member of Parliament, he served as parliamentary private secretary to the Foreign Secretary, Sir Austen Chamberlain. Eden "had a distinguished and reserved style that was appealing.... Soon he caught the eye of Tory leaders and, as he recalled, he was rapidly 'propelled into the political stratosphere.'"<sup>33</sup> He held the office of Foreign Secretary from 1935 to 1938 but resigned in protest to Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's policy of yielding to Hitler and Mussolini. Under Winston Churchill, Eden was called in to again act as Foreign Secretary beginning in 1940. Churchill promised Eden that he would become Prime Minister after the war but when that time came, Churchill proved unwilling to turn over the reigns of power.<sup>34</sup>

In the interim, the Conservative party lost power in 1945 and Eden served as the deputy leader of the opposition under Churchill.<sup>35</sup> By accentuating the positive, Eden made his mark on British public opinion but found his continued position under a paragon like Churchill to be difficult.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, he once again became Foreign Secretary under Churchill when the Conservatives returned to power in 1951. During his third term as Foreign Secretary, Eden continued to prove himself to be an able negotiator and level-headed thinker. In 1953, he was successful in breaking the

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>35</sup> Lewis Broad, *Anthony Eden: The Chronicle of a Career* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1955), p. 218.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 219-220.

deadlock at the Korean peace talks by proposing a step by step approach which started with the release of sick and wounded which eventually contributed to the armistice agreement in July of that year.<sup>37</sup> In 1954, Eden was successful in leading his party through a difficult decision to sign the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian agreement.<sup>38</sup>

Eden visited Egypt in February of 1955 and met Nasser for the first and only time. Heikal recalls that the meeting was particularly distasteful for Nasser and that Eden, who had put on a good show, was interested in fostering an impression of British superiority rather than discussing matters of substance.<sup>39</sup> According to Heikal, "Nasser said afterwards that Eden behaved like 'a prince dealing with vagabonds.'"<sup>40</sup>

At long last, Eden became Prime Minister in April of 1955. When the announcement of the impending delivery of Soviet bloc weapons to Egypt was made in September of the same year, Eden reacted rather mildly;<sup>41</sup> this, in spite of his previous stance against American shipments of arms to Egypt.<sup>42</sup> Although Eden disliked Nasser, his hatred for him did not begin to develop until March 1956 when King Hussein of Jordan dismissed his

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224. This agreement provided for the evacuation of all British troops from Egypt within twenty-four months and the right for the British to have military use of the base facilities in the Suez Canal under certain circumstances. It also ended the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty which had given Egypt its first diplomatic independence but which had also protected British interests and permitted the stationing of 10,000 troops in the Canal Zone. Source: Vatikiotis, *The Modern History of Egypt*, p. 389.

<sup>39</sup> Heikal, pp. 78-79.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>41</sup> Anthony Nutting, *No End of a Lesson* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1967), p. 21.

<sup>42</sup> Anthony Eden, *The Suez Crisis of 1956* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. 36.

longtime British army chief, general Glubb.<sup>43</sup> Eden was having problems on the domestic front resulting from his leadership style - or lack of it - which was constantly compared to that of Churchill.<sup>44</sup> Eden's prestige suffered greatly and he determined to eliminate the perceived source of this new discomfort, namely Nasser. Anthony Nutting, a British civil servant and protégé of Eden, tried to convince the Prime Minister of his folly but to no avail. Nutting described Eden's demise of logic in the following words:

From now on Eden completely lost his touch. Gone was his old uncanny sense of timing, his deft feel for negotiation. Driven by the impulse of pride and prestige and nagged by mounting sickness, he began to behave like an enraged elephant charging senselessly at invisible and imaginary enemies in the international jungle.<sup>45</sup>

Eden and Dulles also had problems getting along with each other. Eden was frustrated by Dulles' habit of thinking out loud which often left the impression that the American Secretary of State agreed with British policies or suggestions when in fact Dulles was merely considering their worthiness.<sup>46</sup> Thus, at a time when Britain should have been able to provide expert advice and assistance to the United States in matters dealing with the Middle East, the crisis in British leadership only impeded Western influence in the region.

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<sup>43</sup> Nutting. No End of a Lesson. p. 27.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. pp. 24-27.

<sup>45</sup> Nutting. No End of a Lesson. p. 32. Eden was under extreme physical distress because of the failure of two operations to clear a blocked bile duct. The problem was eventually cleared up, but only after it had physically drained him. Additionally, Eden was prescribed amphetamines to help combat his fatigue by well meaning physicians who did not at that time properly understand the negative psychedelic effects of such drugs. Source: Neff, p. 182.

<sup>46</sup> Goold-Adams, p. 15.

### Gamal Abdel Nasser

Gamal Abdel Nasser was born in Alexandria in 1918. Although he actually lived much of his life in either Cairo or Alexandria, his family maintained a close relationship with their ancestral home of Beni Mer, a small village in Upper Egypt.<sup>47</sup> Nasser witnessed at a young age the depravation and humiliation the "fellahin" suffered at the hands of the British and the Egyptian privileged classes.<sup>48</sup>

His life spanned a tumultuous period of political and cultural change in his homeland. While he was still a youth in school, Nasser accidentally participated in a political demonstration. He was arrested and while in jail was anxious to learn of the motivations behind such movements.<sup>49</sup> In 1935, he became the leader of student political activity and he investigated most of the nationalist factions of the day.<sup>50</sup> Nutting notes that for a youth, Nasser directed a considerable effort to reading philosophy and politically provocative materials.<sup>51</sup> At the age of eighteen, he expressed in a letter to a friend his deep concern over the political situation in Egypt and the lack of dignity enjoyed by the Egyptian people.<sup>52</sup> In the same year he organized student protest marches against the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty which Egyptian nationalists considered to be a step down from the suspended constitution of 1923.<sup>53</sup> The Treaty did, however, permit Egyptian middle and lower middle classes to enter the Military Academy for the first time. Nasser entered the Academy in 1937 and graduated a year later. He

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<sup>47</sup> Stephens, p. 21.

<sup>48</sup> Lawrence, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Stephens, p. 31.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>51</sup> Nutting, Nasser, p. 7.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

continued his efforts - now from within and directed at the army - in organizing resistance to the King, the British and the landed elite.<sup>54</sup>

In the years before the revolution, Nasser directed the efforts of the Free Officers and cautiously cultivated friends and shared ideas. Only a few of the members of his organization knew that he was its leader.<sup>55</sup> Sadat remembered Nasser as a very careful man who did not want to make a move until all was properly prepared. Nevertheless, events forced him to attempt the coup on July 23, 1952, which turned out more successful than he had hoped to dream.

As the leader of a new nation which had long been searching for its rightful role in the world, Nasser was extremely anxious to establish and maintain Egypt's prestige. Uri Ra'anani notes that one of the natural methods of gaining prestige for the new nations - and for their leaders - emerging in Africa and Asia involved harnessing an emotional response of the masses through "proudly defying one of the great powers."<sup>56</sup> Ra'anani succinctly describes this syndrome which surely affected Egypt as follows:

Where the European colonial power granted independence more or less voluntarily, or where self-government was achieved after a few skirmishes, resentment was all the stronger since liberty was not wrested from the adversary in victorious battle and because past humiliation, therefore, was not blotted out. The pride and sensitivity of Afro-Asian leaders to overreact to any demands advanced by a great power\* - were all part of this syndrome.<sup>57</sup>

\* Overbearing personalities like Eden and Dulles only helped to exaggerate this reaction in Nasser.

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<sup>54</sup> Lawrence, p. 5.

<sup>55</sup> St. John, pp. 90-91.

<sup>56</sup> Ra'anani, Arms Transfers to the Third World, p. 137.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

Although he was sometimes given to hyperbole when addressing the Egyptian masses, his statements - especially to foreign diplomats and correspondents - usually reflected candor and understanding. He claimed that because of Western deception and assistance, Israel was militarily stronger than Egypt; and he showed Egyptian intelligence documents of substantial sales in modern weapons to Israel by France and the United States to prove his point.<sup>58</sup> It was obvious to him that the military "balance" was a myth. In a speech, Nasser described how he had notified the United States in June of 1955, of his decision to obtain weapons from the Soviet Union if the West continued to refuse Egypt's requests for arms. The official response from the United States was to lie; saying that such information had not been received in American-Egyptian talks during that time frame.<sup>59</sup> All the more reason for Nasser to distrust the West.

#### Nikita Khrushchev

Nikita Khrushchev came from very humble origins. Born in 1894, in a village north of the Ukraine, his early work experience was that of a miner and metal worker.<sup>60</sup> He was given his chance at improving his lot in 1918 when he joined the Bolshevik Party at the age of twenty-four.<sup>61</sup> He served as a political officer in the Red army during the Civil War and later held a variety of at first minor, then more elevated, Party posts until he gained the position of Party boss of Moscow in 1934-35.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Neff, p. 97.

<sup>59</sup> Neff, pp. 97-98.

<sup>60</sup> Background Paper on Khrushchev's visit to the United States, Washington D.C., 4 September 1959, p. 3. DDQC, 1983, Ref. No., 000300.

<sup>61</sup> Edward Crankshaw, Khrushchev: A Career, (New York: The Viking Press, 1966), p. 13.

<sup>62</sup> Background Paper of Khrushchev's visit to the United States, p. 3.

By the time of Stalin's death in 1953, Khrushchev was in a position to maneuver himself into the leadership role over the Soviet Union. He eventually accomplished his goal by working hard on improving the productivity of Soviet agriculture by increasing the amount of virgin land under cultivation and through greater centralized control of the commune system.<sup>63</sup> His efforts had limited successes in improving production and this reflected well on him, but more importantly, his travels to the various agricultural regions throughout the Soviet Union permitted him to actively campaign for grass roots support; this was something which his chair bound opponents in Moscow failed to see until too late.<sup>64</sup> He became the First Secretary in 1953 and continued to consolidate his power until he became Soviet Premier in 1958.

Khrushchev appeared to be just as pragmatic in his view of Russian foreign policy. He was not as dogmatic as Stalin had been and first revealed his philosophy in a speech at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party in 1956.<sup>65</sup> He called for coexistence between Communism and other social systems. He recognized the fact that a considerable number of the world's nations were not aligned with either of the two great camps and that they were legitimate entities to be dealt with. He also advocated the possibility of a peaceful road to Communism for some nations. The resultant policies, which emerged during the early years of Khrushchev's rule, reflected the above ideas and greatly facilitated rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the Third World countries. It was a dramatic

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<sup>63</sup> Crankshaw, pp. 190-195.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

<sup>65</sup> Lenczowski, Soviet Advances in the Middle East, pp. 13-17.

departure from the Stalinist concept that neutral countries were "implicitly anti-Soviet and evil," but it recognized the political realities of the world.<sup>66</sup>

In his memoirs, Khrushchev recalled a number of interesting points about the developing relationship between the Soviet Union and Egypt.<sup>67</sup> Stalin demonstrated his unwillingness - for ideological as well as pragmatic reasons - to get involved with the British sphere of influence when King Farouk asked the Soviet Union for arms to help force out the British. Khrushchev confirms that he thought little of the Egyptian coup at first but later looked on the new regime with favor when it was seen to be working for social justice and for the expulsion of the British. By the time Khrushchev had gained power, the Soviet Union was in a better position militarily, economically and philosophically, to respond to a request for arms from the Egyptians. The Soviet Union took advantage of the convergence of interests between itself and Egypt and readily provided arms in substantial quantity.

Thus, in the case of the Czech arms deal, we can see the importance of understanding the interaction of the major personalities responsible for determining the course of foreign policy for their respective nation. Armed with this understanding, it is easier to appreciate the complexities associated with the events before, at the time of, and after Nasser's announcement of the deal.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.14.

<sup>67</sup> Strobe Talbott, trans., Khrushchev Remembers, by Nikita Khrushchev (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), chapter 16.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DEAL

#### Chronology and Commentary

Nasser began his quest for modern arms for the Egyptian army soon after he and the Free Officers came to power in July of 1952. It is important to have an understanding of the sequence and substance of the critical events which transpired after the coup and before the consummation of the Czechoslovakian-Egyptian arms deal of 1955 if knowledgeable judgment is to be rendered regarding the impetus for this historic, precedent setting event.

The Egyptian need for arms was communicated to the American Ambassador in Egypt at least as early as September 1952.<sup>1</sup> During one of the early meetings between Nasser and Ambassador Caffery, the Egyptian leader explained the six principles of the revolution; one of which was the importance of a strong military. On November 24 1952, Caffery communicated to General Naguib a conciliatory message from the Department of State which indicated the American intention of "making available to the Egyptian Government certain equipment for the armed forces of ... [Egypt] ... which had previously been intended for use by the Egyptian police."<sup>2</sup> Although the value of these arms was small - approximately one million

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<sup>1</sup> Nutting, Nasser, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> Jefferson Caffery, Letter to General Mohamed Naguib, 24 November 1952, with attached Department of State Foreign Service Dispatch, Subject: Note to General Naguib, 28 November 1952. DDQC, 1975, Ref. No., 25E.

dollars - this gesture was designed to foster the development of good relations between Egypt and the United States. At about the same time, in the autumn of 1952, the British refused to provide the Egyptians with jet aircraft they had requested.<sup>3</sup>

In the early months of 1953, after having received certain encouragement from the American Assistant Secretary of Defense, the Egyptians had sent a military mission to the United States, in order to drum up support for Egypt's request for American arms. The mission, headed by Ali Sabri, a trusted member of the Free Officers Association, was avoided and sidetracked by American officials and after two months of this "royal" treatment the mission returned to Egypt with little to show for its efforts.<sup>4</sup> Nasser was frustrated and humiliated by this episode which demonstrated that Washington's real intentions were not reflected by the charm of Caffery and other American diplomatic officials.<sup>5</sup>

In May of 1953, Dulles made his Middle East fact-finding trip. He met with Nasser and discussed the possibility of Egyptian participation in a Western sponsored, anti-Soviet defense agreement. It was during this visit that Dulles discovered "apparently somewhat to his surprise, that the Arabs were 'more fearful of Zionism than of the Communists.'"<sup>6</sup> Nasser made his case to Dulles for Egypt's need of modern arms, but his arguments fell on ears deafened by the "Communist roar." The only armament Egypt received as a result of this meeting was a pair of matched pistols which were a present to General Naguib from President Eisenhower. Churchill reportedly objected to this gesture, calling it an ill-conceived sign, and prevailed upon

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<sup>3</sup> Nutting, *Nasser*, p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>5</sup> Sadat, p. 127.

<sup>6</sup> Neff, p. 43.

the Eisenhower Administration to withhold American arms shipments until the safety of British troops in Egypt could be guaranteed.<sup>7</sup>

On July 27, 1954, the British and Egyptians signed their long negotiated agreement concerning the the withdrawal of British troops from the Suez Canal. As a result of this successful negotiation, and as noted before, U. S. Secretary of State Dulles initiated a proposal for the transfer of American arms to Egypt as part of an overall assistance program. However, the Eisenhower administration was not sufficiently motivated to overcome the problem of the MAAG to which Nasser strongly objected.<sup>8</sup>

On February 24, 1955, the Baghdad Pact, which would eventually include Britain, Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Pakistan was announced. Iraq's membership in the agreement was particularly difficult for Nasser to accept because of Egypt's traditional rivalry with Iraq for the position of supremacy in the Arab world. As an ally with Britain in a defensive pact, Iraq now became eligible for arms transfers from the West. This situation was a tangible threat to Nasser's ambitions for the region.<sup>9</sup> Nasser's extremely vocal protestations alienated the British and encouraged the Soviets in their dealings with Egypt.

The Israeli raid of 28 February, on the Gaza Strip, humiliated Nasser and the Egyptian army. It proved to be a strong reminder of the urgent security requirements which demanded an immediate improvement in the readiness of the Egyptian military. The seriousness of the raid in Egyptian

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<sup>7</sup> Heikal, p. 53.

<sup>8</sup> Burns, p. 18. Burns also notes that the Eisenhower administration was pressured at this time by the Zionist lobby in Washington to provide comparable assistance to Israel. The President and his Secretary of State began to reconsider their proposal fearing perhaps that this military assistance could provide the spark to ignite a dreaded arms race.

<sup>9</sup> Neff, p. 76.

thinking can hardly be over stated. Sadat insisted that the incident held "historic significance" and that it was a "turning point in the history of Egypt."<sup>10</sup> The United States was also very concerned with the raid. Dulles felt that it seriously jeopardized the Egyptian position in the Gaza Strip. He informed the President of indications that Israel was prepared to take this territory by force and he recommended to Eisenhower that "in the event of action of this sort, the United States might unilaterally take economic sanction, including cutting off remittances of funds to Israel."<sup>11</sup> In response to the raid, the Eisenhower administration dutifully dusted off the latest arms "shopping list" which Nasser had previously sent to Washington and offered to sell the Egyptian's the items on the list. According to Eisenhower, the State Department suspected that Egypt was short of money and rebuffed Nasser once again by requesting payment in cash, some twenty-seven million dollars, rather than in barter.<sup>12</sup>

On April 9, 1955, Nasser departed for the Bandung Conference where he reportedly discussed his need for modern arms with China's Chou En Lai who in turn transmitted the request to the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup> According to Heikal, Daniel Solod, the Soviet Ambassador, first approached Nasser regarding the possibility of an arms transfer on May 18, at a party in the Sudanese Embassy.<sup>14</sup> According to the best American intelligence information available at the time, Nasser and Solod met on May 23, and

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<sup>10</sup> Sadat, p. 135.

<sup>11</sup> John Foster Dulles, Memorandum of Conversation with the President, re. "Gaza Raid," 15 June 1955. DDQC, 1984, Ref. No., 001822.

<sup>12</sup> Eisenhower, p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> Heikal, p. 57.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

agreed that the Soviet Union would provide "Egypt with military equipment in exchange for cotton, with no strings attached."<sup>15</sup>

Feeling that his position with the Soviets was secure, Nasser notified U. S. Ambassador Henry A. Byroade on 9 June of the impending transaction and "expressed his preference for American arms."<sup>16</sup> Secretary of State Dulles ignored Nasser's request for the United States to reconsider the standing \$27 million shopping list, feeling that it was a shallow attempt at blackmailing the United States into offering more acceptable terms.<sup>17</sup> On numerous occasions during the months of June and July, and for the last time on August 15, Byroade communicated Nasser's willingness to deal with the West rather than with the Soviet Union in his quest for arms.<sup>18</sup> Even at this late date, Dulles and Eden had convinced themselves that Nasser's maneuvering was nothing more than a bluff. They believed that Khrushchev had spoken the truth at the Geneva summit conference when he assured the Western leaders on July 20, that no such deal was under consideration.<sup>19</sup>

On September 20, Secretary Dulles was forced to see the light when "Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov confirmed the imminence of a Czech-Egyptian arms arrangement to Dulles in New York when both men were

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<sup>15</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Report on the Soviet Arms Offer to Egypt, [Washington, D. C.], 6 September 1955, p. 1. DDQC, 1976, Ref. No., 182E. This report notes that there were contradictions between the several versions of the Nasser-Colod meeting regarding the types and quantities of weapons involved and regarding the manner in which the request was made.

<sup>16</sup> Hoopes, p. 325.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Burns, p. 28.

attending the opening session of the United Nations General Assembly."<sup>20</sup> Dulles tried in vain to halt the inevitable by dispatching first Kermit Roosevelt, a CIA Middle East expert who was acquainted with Nasser, then later George Allen, Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs, to Cairo in an attempt to dissuade Nasser from going through with the deal.<sup>21</sup>

President Eisenhower suffered a heart attack on September 24, while vacationing in Denver. Eisenhower directed that Dulles be left alone regarding the conduct of foreign affairs. At this moment and during the President's convalescence, Dulles was in nearly complete control of the conduct of U. S. foreign policy in general and in particular his judgment guided the American reaction to the Czech-Egyptian arms deal.<sup>22</sup>

On September 27, 1955, Nasser publicly announced that Egypt and Czechoslovakia had successfully concluded an arms deal of substantial size. As noted before, this arms deal was really between the Soviet Union and

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> Hoopes, pp. 326-327.

<sup>22</sup> In the first Cabinet meeting after the President's heart attack, Dulles indicated that the Middle East was the current hot spot in foreign relations and he sought to quiet the fears - and the potential criticism - of the members of the Cabinet over the recently announced decision by the Soviet Union to provide Egypt with arms. He did this by assuring "the Cabinet that the United States was not without plans for dealing with the situation." Source: Robert J. Donovan, p. 371.

Egypt.<sup>23</sup> This fact was understood by the West even in the early hours after its announcement.<sup>24</sup>

From Denver, Colorado President Eisenhower sent a letter of concern, dated October 11, to Nicolai Bulganin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. The text of this letter is given below:

I am concerned about the new prospective arms shipments to Egypt. I fear that they will not promote the goals which, I hope, we have in common -- that is a relaxation of tensions between us and a peacefully constructive solution of the Arab-Israel problem.<sup>25</sup>

Bulganin responded by saying that there were no grounds for concern.<sup>26</sup> Dulles questioned Mr. Molotov, the Soviet representative at the follow-up meetings in Geneva, about the meaning of Chairman Bulganin's assertion that there were no grounds for concern regarding the furthering of commonly held goals in the Middle East. Mr. Molotov said that the Soviet Union had done nothing wrong in permitting Czechoslovakia to negotiate a purely commercial deal with Egypt and he insisted that the "small" quantity of weapons involved in the deal would amount to but a drop when

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<sup>23</sup> The need for deception regarding the origin of the arms was essentially a Soviet need and the reasons for such deception - however shallow - were numerous. Some of the most salient were as follows: 1) The military and diplomatic reaction of the West to such an arms transfer was potentially severe. 2) The Soviet Union did not want to be marked as the nation which broke the spirit of the July 1955 Geneva Summit. 3) Although Khrushchev's influence and power were sufficient to lead the Soviet Union into unexplored foreign policy territory, he chose to proceed cautiously and to allow the dissenters within the Kremlin the pretext for an emergency exit.

<sup>24</sup> New York Times, 28 September 1955, p. 4, col. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, Letter to Chairman Bulganin, 11 October 1955. DDQC, 1977, Ref. No., 154E.

<sup>26</sup> John Foster Dulles, Memorandum of Conversation with Mr. Molotov, 30 October 1955, p. 1. DDQC, 1984, Ref. No., 000376.

compared to the ocean of arms which the U.S., the U.K., and France had provided to the region.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the arms deal was on and no amount of persuasion by the Eisenhower administration could alter the fact.

The traditional understanding of the sequence of events which lead to the announcement of the Czech-Egyptian arms deal has thus far been presented. Documentation concerning Egypt's actions with the West are generally sound and not in dispute. However, documentation concerning the development of the Egyptian-Soviet relationship which ended in the arms agreement under study is not well founded and it requires further analysis.

The details and exact sequence of events regarding Egyptian dealings with the Soviet Union are somewhat clouded and the accounts vary according to the source which is used. There are two causes for this confusion. First, the secrecy with which Egypt and the Soviet Union conducted their negotiations and the subsequent lack of clarification that they provided on the subject, hinder the ability of historians to accurately understand how the deal was negotiated. Second, the traditional story concerning the events which preceded the deal abounds with inconsistencies. These inconsistencies necessarily occurred either as a result of design or by a simple lack of precision - perhaps sprinkled with a bit of misdirection - on the part of Nasser and the Egyptian government. Historical understanding of the reason or reasons each country had for entering into this arms deal may be altered - at least slightly - by a close analysis of the salient and relevant peripheral events related to the transfer.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

According to a CIA report which was produced in 1955, two or three versions of the Nasser-Solod meeting were revealed through US intelligence channels.<sup>28</sup> One report indicated that the Soviets were ready to ship certain arms to Egypt within six weeks. The relatively short delivery time would indicate some prior understanding between Egypt and the Soviet Union. Another version indicated that Solod had only tempted Nasser with a list of arms which could be made available to Egypt. This version would support Nasser's statements that no prior contacts of substance had taken place between himself and Soviet representatives. However, these accounts are on opposite ends of the spectrum of logic and necessarily throw into doubt the question of the validity of one version over the other; in fact, their disparity raises doubts about the validity of either version.

In 1969, Uri Ra'anán made the only other serious study of the Czech-Egyptian arms deal this author has been able to uncover.<sup>29</sup> In his study, he notes the discrepancies discussed above and he identifies additional problems with the accepted sequence of events. For example, Ra'anán doubts that the April meeting of Nasser-Chou En Lai was the first instance of an Egyptian query to a Communist country regarding the purchase of arms. He backs up this statement with two arguments. First, he insists that because Nasser was a military man, Chou En Lai would not have needed to educate the Egyptian leader about China's inability to provide the modern jet aircraft and tanks which were imperative for Nasser's political requirements. The Soviet Union was the logical first choice (p. 58). Second, Ra'anán builds a case for a secret February offer of Soviet arms to Egypt by

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<sup>28</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Report on the Soviet Arms Offer to Egypt, [Washington, D. C.], 6 September 1955, p. 1. DDQC, 1976, Ref. No., 182E.

<sup>29</sup> Ra'anán, The USSR Arms the Third World.

analyzing the power struggle which occurred between Khrushchev and Molotov at this time (pp. 86-95). In short, Khrushchev began to usurp some of Molotov's authority over foreign affairs by pushing for the development of Soviet contacts and relationships in the Middle East. Molotov strenuously objected because he did not feel that the people or leaders of the Middle East were worthy partners in obtaining Soviet goals. His opinions, however, did not impress the Soviet Central Committee which decided to promote a more optimistic view of the potential usefulness of the Middle East and it sided with Khrushchev. This political alignment helped to propel Bulganin, who was supported by Khrushchev, rather than Molotov into the premiership. A logical first step in promoting Egyptian-Soviet relations would have been an offer to provide Nasser with the arms he was seeking.<sup>30</sup> The above analysis of the rather tumultuous events which occurred in the Kremlin seems to support the presumption that such an offer was made at this time.

An additional indication that the Soviet-Egyptian deal may have been concluded at a date earlier than that announced by President Nasser<sup>31</sup> can be found in the unusually short delivery time for the first shipments of arms to arrive at Egyptian ports. If Nasser's statement regarding the date

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<sup>30</sup> This analysis provides an alternative explanation for the content of the Nasser-Chou En Lai conversation in Rangoon. Hoopes (p. 325) feels that Nasser did discuss his need for weapons from the Soviet bloc with the Chinese leader but with the view to get him to intervene on the behalf of Egypt during this time of confusion in the Kremlin and the resultant uncertainty about the vitality of the previously arranged arms deal.

<sup>31</sup> Heikal related that Nasser did not want to be "interrogated" by Kermit Roosevelt, Dulles's envoy, and so he chose to publicly announce the arms agreement on 27 September 1955; thereby thwarting any American attempt to change his mind. Nasser stated at this time that the agreement had been finalized a week earlier. Source: Heikal, p. 60.

of the agreement is correct, then the first arms shipments were to arrive in Egypt within a period of six weeks of its conclusion: a logistical feat of respectable magnitude.<sup>32</sup>

There are other questions which can be raised concerning the details and sequence of the events which lead to the arms agreement between Egypt and the Soviet Union. Ra'anan's study investigates many of these problems in detail, nevertheless, this presentation and analysis of the salient chronological events as discussed are sufficient to prepare the way for identifying and understanding the motivations behind the arms deal.

#### Terms of and Motivations for the Deal

Terms and motivations for obtaining arms for Egypt were closely linked in Nasser's mind. Some of the motivations Nasser had for obtaining modern arms in substantial quantities have already been discussed in sufficient detail to demonstrate that his quest was driven by a set of rather strong inducements. Regardless of his need and desire to provide the Egyptian army with modern arms, he refused to accept arms shipments which were tied to participation in Western, anti-Communist defense pacts or to the presence of foreign military personnel on Egyptian territory. He also sought favorable financing arrangements to ease the need for using large portions of Egypt's foreign currency reserves for the purchase of arms.<sup>33</sup> The Western bloc had found it difficult to provide Egypt with the quantities Nasser desired without infringing upon one or more of these stipulations.

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<sup>32</sup> "Middle East : Ingredients of War," Newsweek, 10 October 1955, pp. 50-53. This article reported that the first shipload of arms was already on its way to Egypt from the Black Sea.

<sup>33</sup> Heikal, p. 48.

Although the exact terms of the arms agreement have never been made known, Nasser's major stipulations concerning the way in which Egypt should obtain arms were met, at least in principle, by the Soviet-Egyptian agreement. In a study of the Soviet Union's political activities in the Middle East, Maurice Georgi explained Khrushchev's philosophy of befriending the progressive Arab states.

Khrouchtchev ne leur demandera ni bases militaires, ni privilèges, mais tout simplement de poursuivre la lutte pour la réalisation de leurs aspirations nationales, et surtout de suivre une politique neutraliste. Il allait promettre son appui à tous les Etats neutralistes....<sup>34</sup>

The value of the arms involved was estimated to be approximately \$200 million and they were to be delivered over a period of five years.<sup>35</sup> The agreement called for payment to be made in cotton and rice "on a normal commercial basis."<sup>36</sup> There would be no strings attached and to make this point clear the Soviet news agency TASS reported on October 2, 1955, that "the Soviet government believes that every state has the right to defend itself and to purchase weapons for its defense from other states."<sup>37</sup> Soviet personnel were soon on hand in Egypt to assist in putting the equipment into operation.

<sup>34</sup> Maurice Georgi, La Politique de l'URSS au Proche-Orient 1954-1964 (Stockholm: Raben and Sjögren, 1965), p. 49.

<sup>35</sup> "Soviet Aid: What it is Worth; The 'Calculated Risk' in the Middle East," Jewish Observer and Middle East Review 28 October 1955, p. 8. The real value of Soviet bloc weapons is difficult to estimate but they are uniformly less expensive than comparable Western equipment; this is because of the Soviet's large production runs, cheap labor and because the cost of research and development is usually not included in the purchase price. This naturally allows the importing country to receive a lot of equipment for the money spent.

<sup>36</sup> Pravda [Moscow], 2 October 1955, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

Regarding the question of motivations, thus far the following general reasons for Egypt to seek arms have been identified and discussed: 1) Nasser had a personal, psychological need to improve the readiness posture of the Egyptian army. This need arose from his experience in an Egyptian army which he felt had been betrayed by the poor leadership of the Egyptian government during the 1948 War. 2) Nasser required arms to pacify the demands of the military officer corps in order to assure their support for the new regime. 3) Egypt's nationalistic pride and delicate sense of sovereignty required a visible symbol around which to rally. 4) As a result of Western arms shipments to Iraq which began after Iraq had become a member of the Baghdad Pact, Egypt's prestige required a military boost to offset Iraq's growing military might. 5) For security and political reasons, Egypt needed to be able to assert its ability to repel any and all Israeli incursions into Egyptian territory.

The basic chronology of the events related to the arms deal supports identification of the above listed general motivations. Additionally, Nasser had at least three reasons for seeking arms from the Soviet Union rather than from the West. First, the West could not or would not provide arms to Egypt free of strings. Second, the Soviet Union agreed to favorable financial terms and the West did not. Third, according to the analysis provided by a revised chronology concerning the developing relationship between Egypt and the Soviet Union, it becomes highly likely that Nasser and the Soviets concluded an arms agreement with the view to destroying the Western domination of arms transfers in the Middle East; and by extension, this would destroy much of the political influence of the West in the region.<sup>38</sup> This third point requires some explanation.

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<sup>38</sup> Ra'anan, The USSR Arms the Third World, pp. 34-85.

As noted in chapter two, there is a point of confusion regarding the time frame during which some one hundred to one hundred and fifty American Sherman tanks were shipped to Egypt. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reports that one hundred and fifty M-4 Sherman tanks were shipped from the United States to Egypt in 1954-55.<sup>39</sup> Ra'anan stresses that because Egypt was in fact receiving "sufficient" arms shipments from the West, Nasser's primary motivation in seeking arms from the Soviet Union was other than military.<sup>40</sup> Ra'anan explained his argument in the following manner.

The purpose of such a transaction had to be *political*; however, the only rational political goal that an Egyptian arms deal could have had at that time was, as Premier Nasser himself indicated, bound to be in diametric opposition to the contemporary Western aims in the region. In the words of the Egyptian leader, Cairo was attempting to "break up" the Western "arms monopoly...."<sup>41</sup>

The fact that the destruction of Western domination in Middle Eastern affairs was a major goal of Nasser cannot be disputed. Nevertheless, to say that it was the only reason - as Ra'anan seems to indicate - for the Soviet-Egyptian arms agreement, overstates its importance. As we have seen, Nasser's domestic political requirements for arms were very real. His need to enhance the morale and capability of the Egyptian army were also

<sup>39</sup> SIPRI, Arms Trade Registers: The Arms Trade With the Third World (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1975), p. 46. The register also documents shipments of comparable numbers of British and French armored vehicles to Egypt during this period. Another controversy arises regarding the origin of the "American" tanks. An Israeli monthly publication which identified the existence of the Sherman tanks stated that they were manufactured in Britain. Source: "Nasser Prepares," Jewish Frontier, January 1956, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> Ra'anan, The USSR Arms the Third World, p. 54.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

essential for the well-being of the nation and its leader. Although Egypt was receiving more arms from the West than either Nasser or Western leaders apparently wanted to publicize, this does not necessarily mean that Nasser considered the quantity sufficient to satisfy Egypt's security and other political needs. Doubtless he anticipated the emotional ground swell of domestic sentiment which would rise to approve of this blatantly anti-Western action.

Thus, it would appear that the combination of forces and events in the Soviet Union, the West and Egypt were predestined to ensure that Nasser would get his arms and that they would not come from the West. The deal broke the artificially imposed status quo.

#### Description of the Arms

Because of the secretive nature of both the Soviet Union and Egypt, and because of the need to protect the national security of Egypt, data concerning Egyptian military equipment strengths is generally restricted from the public domain. Subsequently, there is a distinct paucity of information regarding specific numbers and details about the arms involved in the so called Czech-Egyptian arms deal. For this reason, one has to make a concerted effort to find "hard" facts about the weapons which Egypt received, and often the data obtained differ surprisingly. Table 2 is compiled and adapted from a variety of open and previously closed sources. It is a best attempt by the author to identify and describe the important weapon systems of this transfer.

The arms and equipment listed in the table were generally comparable to what the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc nations had in their ar-

Table 2  
Major Weapons/Items of the Czech Arms Deal (Delivered 1955-56)

Number	Major Weapon Group	Description
	<u>Aircraft</u>	
[10]	Ii-14	Transport
30-39	Ii-28	Light jet bomber
[10]	An-2	Light transport
88-100	MiG-15	Jet fighter (approx. six trainers among this number)
31	(trainers)	(various makes)
	<u>Armored Fighting Vehicles</u>	
100	BTK-152	7 ton APC (armored personnel carrier, with six wheels, capacity twelve troops)
[40]	BTR-40	5.3-10 ton APC (four wheels, capacity 6-7 troops)
120	T-54/55	36 ton main battle tank (100mm main gun, crew of four)
150	T-34/85	32 ton main battle tank (85mm main gun, crew of five)
[50]	JSU-152	[50 ton] self propelled gun (152mm gun, crew of 4-5)
[30]	Su-100	32 ton tank destroyer (100mm gun)
	<u>Naval Vessels</u>	
12	Motor torpedo boat "p6"	Displ. 50 tons (2, 21 in. tubes, speed 42 kts)
4	Fleet minesweeper "T34"	Displ. 410 tons (4, 37mm anti-aircraft guns, speed 18 kts)
2	Destroyer "Skoryi"	Displ. 2,600 tons (4, 5.1 in. guns; 2, 3 in. anti-aircraft guns; 7, 37mm anti-aircraft guns; 10, 21 in. tubes; 80 mines; speed,

Table 2 continued

## Major Weapons/Items of the Czech Arms Deal (Delivered 1955-56)

Number	Major Weapon Group	Description
1	Submarine "MV" (coastal)	38 kts; crew 140) Displ. 350 t. (1, 45mm anti- aircraft gun; 2, 21 in. tubes; speed 8.5 kts surface, 5 kts sub- merged; crew 24)

Note: This table is adapted and compiled from several sources: (1) Duncan Crow and Robert J. Icks, Encyclopedia of Tanks (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1975), p. 199. (2) Janes Fighting Ships, "Egypt," (London: Jane's Fighting Ship's Publishing Co., LTD., n. d.), pp. 137-139. (3) B. Perrett, Fighting Vehicles of the Red Army (New York: Arco Publishing Company Inc., 1969), pp. 36-37, 40-43, 60-63, 65. (4) SIPRI, The Arms Trade with the Third World, pp. 810-820, 838-839. (5) SIPRI, Arms Trade Registers, pp. 43-46. (6) Joint Chiefs of Staff, Memorandum for Admiral Radford, "Information Requested Concerning the Middle East," 27 February 1956, (Washington, D. C.), pp. 3, 5, 7-12. DDQC, 1978, Ref. No., 369A.

Brackets indicate unreliable information. Parentheses contain additional information.

senal of first line armaments. The Soviet Union was at this time in the process of producing the T 1954/55 medium battle tank which was the newest and most advanced tank available from the Eastern bloc. It was an improvement over the T 1934/85 medium tank in that it required four rather than five crew members and it had a larger main gun and more armament. Both tanks, however, were considered to be standard issue in the Red army and can therefore be considered as up-to-date, modern equipment of the period.

Egypt received substantial quantities of both the above mentioned tanks and other equipment: most notably the large number of the modern MiG-15 jet fighters. The sudden appearance of great quantities of modern military equipment in Egypt was sure to have a great effect on the military and political situation in the Middle East. The detailed list provided in Table 2 will aid in understanding the full impact of the effects this transfer had on the Middle East.

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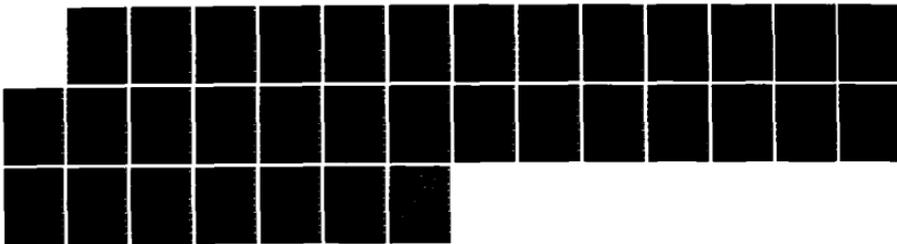
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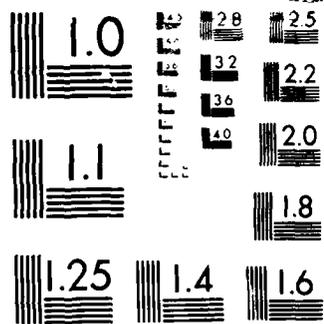
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## CHAPTER V

### EFFECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

#### Immediate Effects of the Deal

For the West, the most salient and immediate result of the announcement of the Czech arms deal was that it rendered the Baghdad Pact ineffectual.<sup>1</sup> From its inception, the Baghdad Pact had suffered the strategic disadvantage of having only one Arab country among its members, namely Iraq.<sup>2</sup> The Egyptian-Soviet agreement helped to diminish the Pact's limited value even further. Additionally, the ability of the West to maintain the status quo regarding its interests in the region and regarding the balance of military power among the various states was no longer assured.<sup>3</sup>

From the point of view of the Soviet Union, the results were initially positive and multifarious. The deal allowed Russia to "leap" over the Northern Tier and into a more active role in Middle Eastern affairs.<sup>4</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> Lenczowski, Soviet Advances in the Middle East, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> SIPRI, p. 90. Iraq's usefulness as a member of the Baghdad Pact was short-lived. On July 14, 1958, a military coup overthrew the Western backed government of Prime Minister Nuri es-Said. The new man in power, General Abd al Karim had little respect for the Baghdad Pact. He directed that the officials of the Baghdad Pact be forbidden from entering their headquarters for a period of time. The secret files and plans were broken into then read and distributed to the Soviets. On March 14, 1956, Iraq formally withdrew from the Pact. Source: Miller, pp. 38-42.

<sup>3</sup> Ra'anan, The USSR Arms the Third World, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Lenczowski, Soviet Advances in the Middle East, p. 79.

ended the Western monopoly in supplying arms to the region.<sup>5</sup> It provided the rulers in the Middle East with an alternative to Western arms and the associated pressure to join Western organized or controlled defense pacts.<sup>6</sup>

The Soviet Union was now, for the first time, in a position to reshape the pattern of Egyptian trade and to break the Western hold on the Egyptian economy.<sup>7</sup> To assist in the attainment of this goal, the Russians established a trade mission in Cairo the next year.<sup>8</sup> Also, the ability of Moscow to influence the Egyptian government and army was enhanced by the presence of thousands of Soviet advisors who, despite Nasser's earlier statements regarding the presence of foreign troops on Egyptian soil, were nevertheless required to assist in inspecting, assembling and maintaining the new equipment and in training Egyptian soldiers how to fight with it. Once this supplier-recipient relationship was established it would tend to perpetuate Egypt's need for continuous Soviet support with regard to ammunition, spare parts, and replacements.<sup>9</sup>

Egypt seemed to gain the most from the arms deal and its subsequent rapprochement with the Soviet Union. "The chief immediate effect of the

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<sup>5</sup> Aaron S. Klieman, Soviet Russia and the Middle East (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), p. 39. Additionally, the ability of the Tripartite Declaration to limit the flow of arms into the Middle East was seriously undermined and it too became ineffectual.

<sup>6</sup> Ra'anan, The USSR Arms the Third World, p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> P. J. Vatikiotis, "The Soviet Union and Egypt: The Nasser Years," in The Soviet Union and The Middle East, eds. Ivo J. Lederer and Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1974), p. 123. Vatikiotis notes that soon after the arms agreement, sixty-five percent of Egyptian trade was with East bloc countries.

<sup>8</sup> Charles B. McLane, Soviet-Middle East Relations, (London: Central Asian Research Center, 1973), p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> Ra'anan, ed., Arms Transfers to the Third World, pp. 132-133.

arms deal on Egypt's combat capabilities... [was] to raise morale."<sup>10</sup> In that morale is one of the critical factors considered in combat readiness estimates, the mere announcement of the deal must have certainly improved the fighting ability of the Egyptian army.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, Nasser received the much needed military and domestic approval which enhanced the legitimacy of his regime. Soviet largess, which was nearly simultaneous to the announcement of the arms agreement, also provided Egypt with a Russian cultural center in Cairo and with a nuclear cooperation agreement.<sup>12</sup>

The Israeli government was obviously affected by the news that Egypt would receive the largest single shipment of arms which had, until that date, ever been delivered to the Middle East. The Israeli government interpreted this arms deal as "a major step [by Egypt] toward the decisive battle for the destruction of Israel."<sup>13</sup> These fears of a "new," powerful Egypt would persuade Israel to ally itself with Britain and France during the 1956 Suez War.

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<sup>10</sup> Intelligence Advisory Committee, National Intelligence Estimate, re. "The British Position in Egypt," [Washington, D. C.], 15 October 1951, (Updated circa 1955), p. 10. DDQC, 1984, Ref. No., 001518.

<sup>11</sup> Any quantitative assessment of this benefit is necessarily difficult to determine. The intelligence estimate cited above also notes that the deal gave Egypt the potential for achieving a status of superiority over Israel in the number of fighter and bomber aircraft. It would also significantly reduce Israel's numerical superiority in tanks and it would provide Egypt with an enhanced ability to harass Israeli shipping. Nevertheless, tangible improvements in the fighting capability of the Egyptian army would come only with time. The intelligence estimate predicted that the Egyptian Army would require at least one year to effectively integrate and utilize the majority of the new equipment in unit operations.

<sup>12</sup> McLane, pp. 30-31. The promised nuclear reactor was completed in 1961.

<sup>13</sup> Chaim Herzog, The Arab-Israeli Wars (London: The Arms and Armour Press, 1984), p. 112.

### Opportunities for U.S.-Egyptian Rapprochement

Since Gamal Abdel Nasser came to power in 1952, the relationship between the United States and Egypt has been particularly stormy. The Czech arms deal was one of the numerous crises which marked the way the two states interacted with each other during the fifties. It demonstrated how the United States and Egypt tended to view the other's policies as detrimental to their own and how they interpreted the other's actions as poorly suited to enhance the general welfare of the Middle East. It is the author's contention that a correct, if not friendly, relationship between the two countries could have evolved if each side had tried to understand the other and had exerted a modicum of effort with the intention of promoting such a relationship.

Both the United States and Egypt stood to gain from maintaining a more reasonable relationship. Because of Nasser's pan-Arab appeal and because of his early anti-Communist inclinations, Egypt was in an excellent position to act as a bulwark against the infiltration of Communism in the region. Thus, a strong, independent - if not totally "friendly" - Egypt could have been used to promote the anti-Soviet goals of the United States more successfully than the Baghdad Pact. Because of the demonstrated experience of the United States in rebuilding the European economies and in bolstering their armed forces, Egypt's greater opportunity for economic development and for enhanced military readiness lay in the West rather than in the East.

There were numerous opportunities for the United States and Egypt to build a better relationship both before and after the announcement of the Czech arms deal. Perhaps a few lessons can be drawn regarding the efficacy of certain American and Egyptian foreign policy approaches by

examining a few of the more salient opportunities for rapprochement which availed themselves to the two countries.

From the beginning moments of the 1952 Egyptian "revolution," the opportunity for establishing cordial relations between the United States and Egypt clearly existed. The Truman administration had looked favorably upon the efforts of the RCC to do away with feudalism which had flourished under the old Egyptian regime.<sup>14</sup> The leaders of the new regime generally respected the historical stance of the United States with regard to its efforts in defending the rights of the oppressed. Additionally, they tended to identify America's Revolutionary War with their struggle for complete independence from Britain. U.S. Ambassador Caffery soon developed a good relationship with the leaders of the RCC and encouraged the Truman administration to approve at least a moderate shipment of modern arms to Egypt as a sign of America's confidence with the new regime. "On 3 September 1952, President Truman made a public statement which expressed support for the new Egyptian government and hinted at American readiness to provide military aid to the Free Officers."<sup>15</sup> This statement was apparently not well thought out and it did not anticipate British resistance to any such offer while 80,000 British troops occupied the Suez Canal Zone. The offer was subsequently put on the "back burner" until after the new president was to take office in January of 1953. Perhaps an accommodation with the British could have been reached which would have allowed for a delivery of a modest amount of the type of arms Nasser desired. On subsequent occasions, Nasser seemed willing to be satisfied with reductions in the amount of arms he had initially requested. At the

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<sup>14</sup> Burns, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

very least, the Truman administration could have dealt with Nasser in a more organized and effective manner.

The next year, the opportunity for bona fide rapprochement between the United States and Egypt developed after Nasser, who at some personal risk, had signed the 1954 agreement with the British.<sup>16</sup> As noted before, American economic and military aid which had been tacitly linked to the successful conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement, was not, in the end, forthcoming. Again, an American presidential administration had not clearly thought out its ability to follow through with a promise - albeit a tacit one - with the Egyptian leader.

If Nasser could have swayed Dulles and Eisenhower from encouraging the establishment of the Baghdad Pact there would have been a lot less friction between Egypt and the United States at this time. Nasser apparently felt that he had indeed dissuaded the Eisenhower administration from fostering Arab-Western defense pacts by promising to build an all Arab defense organization which would, if necessary, align itself with the West to face any external Communist menace.<sup>17</sup> In spite of Nasser's expressed antipathy for the establishment of any Western sponsored defense pacts in the Middle East, Dulles felt compelled to oppose the "clearly evident" Soviet threat by encouraging the establishment of the Baghdad Pact which would serve, in Dulles' eyes, as an irrefutable demonstration Western resolve. Additionally, Dulles did not feel that he had to pursue the establishment of anti-Soviet defense pacts with an

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<sup>16</sup> Sidney Nettleton Fisher, The Middle East: A History (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1959), p. 626.

<sup>17</sup> Copeland, p. 210.

uncommitted country like Egypt which appeared very proud of its "evil" position of independence based upon a philosophy of positive neutrality.<sup>18</sup>

When the Eisenhower administration introduced its view of a positive - that is, active - foreign policy which was based on a "coherent global policy" designed to fight the enslavement of free peoples everywhere, the importance of the Middle East was recognized in the attainment of desired American foreign policy goals.<sup>19</sup> However, as we have seen, the practical application of "positive" foreign policy meant that America would pursue mutual security agreements at the expense of all other considerations.

The Eisenhower administration made an additional mistake by not considering the rising phenomenon of nationalism in Egypt and the other countries of the Middle East as a constraint under which American foreign policy planners had to work.<sup>20</sup> In effect, Arab nationalism constrained American foreign policy with a force equal to or greater than that of the more obvious constraints, namely British regional interests and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Thus, American blinkers, put in place by the strong desire to do something about Soviet expansionism, tended to blind the ability of the United States to make rational judgments regarding the importance and validity of regional concerns which did not parallel its own concerns. The common ground which Egypt and the United States appeared to share during the early years of their relationship soon began to wash away in the torrents of misunderstanding which drenched this period of time.

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<sup>18</sup> Hoopes, pp. 315-317.

<sup>19</sup> U. S. Department of State, State of the Union Message, Department of State Publication, No. 4915 ([Washington, D.C.: GPO, February, 1953]), p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Steven L. Spiegel, The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 51.

Before the announcement of the Czech arms deal, the Gaza raid offered perhaps an additional opportunity for rapprochement between Egypt and the United States. Dulles was upset about the raid and he was not fooled into believing that it had been a spontaneous civilian action as the Israeli government claimed. As noted before, he recommended to President Eisenhower that all forms of American aid to Israel be suspended in the event of an Israeli takeover of the Gaza territory. The Gaza raid caused the Eisenhower administration to look once more at the possibility of responding to Nasser's request for modern weapons, but again nothing happened. This lack of action only heightened "Egyptian resentment of US military aid policy...."<sup>21</sup>

After having been unsuccessful in obtaining the desired type and quantity of arms from the United States, Nasser necessarily felt compelled to coerce American support from a position of strength. For example, he informed the American Ambassador of his intentions to seek arms from a Communist source.<sup>22</sup> This information was greeted by Dulles as inconceivable at best and as attempted blackmail at worst. The highly structured administrative organization in Eisenhower's White House tended to isolate the President from advisors who were in a position to clarify and challenge the sometimes erroneous views which dominated the administration.<sup>23</sup> As a result, reliable CIA information regarding the viability of the impending arms agreement between Egypt and the Soviet Union was ignored.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Burns, p. 26.

<sup>22</sup> Hoopes, p. 325.

<sup>23</sup> Spiegel, p. 59.

<sup>24</sup> Burns, p. 29.

In retrospect, one may argue for the inevitability of the Czech arms deal. Given the constraints under which the Eisenhower administration had to work and the psychological need for Egypt to assert itself through decidedly anti-Western actions, the fact of an Egyptian-Soviet arms deal may indeed have been inevitable regardless of the policies pursued by either the United States or Egypt. Nevertheless, the United States and Egypt would have been in a much better position to make the best of "unfavorable" developments if each had taken a more pragmatic view of the other's position and goals. For, in the end, many of the goals of Egypt and the United States were not so far apart. Both countries wanted Egypt to be a strong, stable anti-Communist force in the Middle East, and neither country wanted Israel to be able to attack Egypt with apparent impunity.

Even after the arms deal, the Eisenhower administration had several opportunities for rapprochement with Egypt.<sup>25</sup> One opportunity dealt with Nasser's desire to build the Aswan High Dam and another with the outcome of the Suez War.

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<sup>25</sup> During this period of intense feelings on the part of both American and Egyptian leaders, the highly volatile situation was controlled so some extent by the candid counsel of Kim Roosevelt, a high CIA official who was a friend of Nasser. He warned Nasser of the harsh nature of the Dulles note which was to be delivered to the Egyptian leader by envoy George Allen. He encouraged Nasser to receive Dulles' message in a polite manner. This approach by Roosevelt was not appreciated in Washington and he became known as Mr. "X," the high CIA official who undermined the foreign policy of the United States. Nasser was upset by the strong content of the message which insisted that Egypt not receive arms from the Soviet Union; and that if it did, there would be an economic and a political price to pay. Nevertheless, Nasser did not throw Mr. Allen out on his ear as was feared would be the case, largely because of the efforts of Roosevelt to assuage the situation before it got out of control. Source: David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, The Invisible Government (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 114-117.

After careful consideration, the United States, in concert with the British and the World Bank offered Egypt help in financing the construction of the Aswan High Dam. This offer carried with it certain conditions designed to insure repayment of the loans which would in effect permit external controls on aspects of the Egyptian economy.<sup>26</sup> Nasser held serious reservations about the intentions and effects of such conditions. However, he finally agreed to accept the terms; perhaps his intention was only to test Western resolve which had begun to buckle under foreign and domestic pressures.<sup>27</sup> On July 19, 1956, Dulles personally informed Egypt's Ambassador to the United States of the American decision to pull out of the project.<sup>28</sup> The Ambassador expressed his preference for Western rather than Russian assistance. Dulles thought that the Egyptians were bluffing.

Immediately following the Suez War, the United States had an opportunity to capitalize on its actions which had effectively halted the British, French and Israeli attack on the Egyptian controlled Suez Canal. Nevertheless, the Eisenhower administration chose to continue its hard-line with Egypt by attempting "to isolate Nasser and block the spread of his

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<sup>26</sup> Burns, p. 55. Burns notes the following examples: "The World Bank would be permitted to monitor the Egyptian economy to insure that sound fiscal and monetary policies were being followed. [Also], ...the Egyptian government was required to pledge to avoid new foreign debt obligations."

<sup>27</sup> By this time, US Congressional support had all but evaporated. There was little support for getting involved in a long-term commitment and there was fear about what damage an improved and enlarged Egyptian cotton crop might do to American cotton farmers. Additionally, foreign friends such as the Shah of Iran were critical of American plans to reward Nasser's previous bad behavior. Britain had all but pulled out of the deal because of the Glubb affair and the resultant hatred engendered in Eden which demanded the destruction of Nasser. Nasser had contributed to the problem when he led Egypt to be the first nation to recognize the People's Republic of China on 16 May 1956.

<sup>28</sup> Burns, p. 95.

influence in the Arab world.<sup>29</sup> Sadat was extremely critical of Nasser's ego which he said prevented Nasser from acknowledging the friendly role of the United States in extricating Egypt from its military predicament and that "Nasser should have seized that chance to consolidate US-Egyptian relations, if only to frustrate the Israeli strategy which sought the reverse."<sup>30</sup>

As we have seen, both the United States and Egypt failed to recognize the common ground which - in spite of differences - certainly existed between them. They failed to develop a relationship which could have been beneficial to each because the United States seemed unable to treat Nasser as a leader of an independent and proud nation and because Nasser apparently was himself insensitive to the Eisenhower administration's fears of Communism and its distaste for being coerced, and he was perhaps oversensitive to the needs of his own ego.

It is the author's contention that American foreign policy was inflexible during this period and that the makers of that policy were unable to anticipate, in even a rudimentary way, the ultimate effects of their policy on the Middle East. These factors surely contributed to the fact that America lost one opportunity after another for building a rational, pragmatic relationship with Egypt which would, in the end, have been much more useful than the policy employed. Through the preceding case study of the Czech arms deal, it may be possible to make useful judgments about the role of arms transfers as an instrument of foreign policy. It may also support the development of useful observations regarding the success

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 108

<sup>30</sup> Sadat, p. 147

of past and present philosophical approaches used by U.S. planners of foreign policy in the Middle East.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Problems with Strategic Consensus

The early years of the Reagan administration echoed many themes which resembled an earlier Republican administration, namely that of President Eisenhower. For example, in 1983, Reagan called on members of the National Association of Evangelicals to "pray for the salvation of all those who live in totalitarian darkness."<sup>1</sup> This is reminiscent of the anti-slavery theme of the Eisenhower era. Similarly, the Middle East was again recognized as an area in which the expansion of Soviet influence had to be minimized.<sup>2</sup>

"The [Reagan] administration planned to provide incentives to both the Israelis and Arabs so they would join the effort to block Russian expansion in the area."<sup>3</sup> The objective was clearly identified but the method by which it could be obtained was not.<sup>4</sup> In the end, Secretary of State Alexander Haig articulated the concept of strategic consensus, which called for the modernization and unification of many Middle Eastern armed forces into an unspecified alliance with the United States with the view to combat any

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<sup>1</sup> Spiegel, p. 400.

<sup>2</sup> Barry Rubin, "The Reagan Administration and the Middle East," in Eagle Defiant: United States Foreign Policy in the 1980s, eds., Kenneth A. Oye, Robert J. Lieber, Donald Rothchild, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1983), p. 368.

<sup>3</sup> Spiegel, p. 400.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 401.

Soviet intrusion into the region.<sup>5</sup> This strategic consensus was to be based essentially on the Arabian Gulf states. Although the focal point had shifted, from the northern tier to Southwest Asia, the basic goal and plan of earlier containment policies had simply been resurrected.

The new containment strategy soon fell on hard times for many of the old reasons. First, the key word in "strategic consensus" is the latter. "The strategic consensus concept, which implies that a direct Soviet military threat to the Gulf is inevitable if not imminent, is arguable."<sup>6</sup> The countries of the Middle East, for the most part, still view Israel as their major security threat and not the Soviet Union. Second, the political price any Middle Eastern leader or country would have to pay for an association with the United States in a formal security relationship would be extremely high.<sup>7</sup> As the leader of the West, the United States is inevitably associated with the old Western colonial powers and their hated imperialist policies. Additionally, the continual support of Israel by the United States is a never ending source of Arab antipathy toward America. Third, the presence of United States military personnel associated with any effective alliance would only serve as a visible catalyst for local antigovernment or anti-American elements.<sup>8</sup>

Essentially, the concept of strategic consensus ignores the importance and complexities of regional concerns and problems of the Middle East just as the concept of containment did thirty years earlier. Colonel Robert

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<sup>5</sup> Robert G. Lawrence, U. S. Policy in Southwest Asia: A Failure in Perspective, (Washington, D. C.: National Defense University Press, 1984), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

Lawrence of the U.S. Air Force argues that current American foreign policy makers are insensitive to the "historical, religious, and regional dynamics..." of the region.<sup>9</sup> This argument would support the contention of the author that American foreign policy planners should generally weigh more heavily the regional concerns of Middle Eastern leaders and peoples in the formulation of U.S. foreign Policy. Colonel Lawrence also argues that any increased American influence in the area will necessarily trigger increased Soviet activity in the region.<sup>10</sup> This seems to be a reasonable contention, especially when viewed with the benefit of having studied the Russian reaction to the Baghdad Pact.

The similarities between the two concepts discussed above are numerous. Although political, military and economic situations have changed in many of the countries of the Middle East, many of the underlying limitations and requirements remain. It would appear that the Reagan administration did not carefully study the available historical data regarding the lack of success of previous Western sponsored alliances in the region. A better understanding of the economic, religious and political forces which are present in the Middle East could have helped the Reagan administration plan an American foreign policy which had a broader base than the one it developed and relied upon in the early part of its first administration, namely that of a "military first" approach as the predominant instrument of policy...."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. v.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. xiii.

### Efficacy of Arms Transfers

As noted in the introduction, the reasons for countries to engage in the business of arms transfers are many and compelling. In the example under study, the Soviet Union, an industrialized country, shipped great quantities of arms to Egypt, a newly emerging Third World country. The goals of each country were met to varying degrees depending on the expectations held by each.

One of the major goals of any country which supplies arms to a Third world nation appeared to be attained by the Russians through the Czech arms deal: that is, the goal of establishing influence in the region. The Soviet Union had indeed been interested in gaining a foothold in the Middle East, an area in its own back yard which had long been dominated by the West. The sale of arms to Egypt in 1955 provided the first substantial evidence of Soviet influence in the region. Additionally, this venture neutralized to a great extent the efficacy of the Baghdad Pact and the general influence of the West over political, military and economic matters in this region. The arms deal seemed to establish the beginnings of a long and "profitable" relationship between Egypt and the Soviet Union. However, with the passage of time, doubts about the ability of the Soviet Union to exert its new influence over Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries must have appeared as "the brutal application of Soviet leverage - that is the interruption of economic and military supplies - had not proved markedly successful in bringing the deviationists to heel..."<sup>12</sup> The goals of reducing the possibility of local conflicts by maintaining the military status quo, and of improving the economic situation of the sending nation, seem to have had little if any part in the expectations of the Soviet Union.

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<sup>12</sup> Ra'anan, Arms Transfers to the Third World, p. 136.

As far as Egypt was concerned, the immediate and perhaps most important goals associated with its reasons for seeking arms from the Soviet Union were apparently achieved. The prestige of Egypt and Nasser was enhanced in the domestic and international realms. The psychological boost to Egypt's sense of sovereignty was certainly very real and the substantial improvement in the status of Egypt's armed forces helped Nasser achieve his desired military balance with - and perhaps superiority over - Israel. Additionally, the very important political goal of breaking the Western hold over military supplies to the region was extremely successful. Nevertheless, the Soviet-Egyptian relationship which developed subsequent to the arms transfer was not without problems. Even though the prices paid for Soviet equipment were relatively reasonable, the high cost of continued large shipments of increasingly more sophisticated arms, and the cost of maintenance for these arms, created economic problems for Egypt and other countries in similar circumstances who were trying to repay their obligations and at the same time were trying to induce development of their economies.<sup>13</sup> Nasser also became personally frustrated with the high-handed fashion in which the Soviet Union dealt with him and his requests for the buildup of the Egyptian air defense capability in the mid 1960s.<sup>14</sup> By the second year of the Sadat regime, in 1972, all Russian advisers were expelled because of their unwillingness to prepare Egypt in a real way for a resumption of military hostilities against the Israelis.<sup>15</sup> By this time there was general concern among the Egyptian population that the continued Soviet presence constituted a bona fide threat to the sovereignty of Egypt.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>14</sup> Sadat, p. 197.

<sup>15</sup> Baker, p. 129.

The usefulness of a strong Soviet-Egyptian relationship had long since evaporated in Egyptian eyes.

### General Conclusions

The major foreign policy goal of the Eisenhower administration was to thwart the spread of Soviet influence throughout the world. Regional or local considerations were generally subordinated to the global strategy employed by Eisenhower and Dulles in pursuit of this goal. The Middle East, because of its oil resources and its geographic situation, was recognized as a critical area in which their global policy would be implemented and tested. Although the President and the Secretary of State demonstrated moments of insight into problems and requirements encountered by the individual leaders of the region, they habitually returned to their global view of the world in formulating their plans and actions.

In defining its foreign policy, the Eisenhower administration made clear its reliance upon encouraging and building anti-Soviet defense pacts.

The policy we pursue will recognize the truth that no single country, even one so powerful as ours, can alone defend the liberty of all nations threatened by Communist aggression from without or subversion within. Mutual security means effective mutual cooperation. For the United States, this means that, as a matter of common sense and national interest, we shall give help to other nations in the measure that they strive earnestly to do their full share of the common task.<sup>16</sup>

As seen, this course was religiously followed by American foreign policy makers. Additionally, the conduct of American foreign affairs was to

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<sup>16</sup> U. S., Department of State, State of the Union Message of February 2, 1955: Excerpts Relating to Foreign Policy, by Dwight D. Eisenhower (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1953), pp. 2-3.

be guided by the noble ideal of freedom. American foreign policy was supposed to "create in other peoples such a love and respect for freedom that they can never be really absorbed by the despotism, the totalitarian dictatorship, of the Communist world."<sup>17</sup> From the vantage point of this study of the Czech arms deal, it would seem that the importance of rewarding and punishing nations in proper "measure" - Egypt in this case - outweighed any considerations for fostering trust based on mutual understanding and "respect for freedom." This study also demonstrates how the global path upon which Eisenhower and Dulles tread tended to define freedom as the absence of Communism and that it negated the possibility of a relationship between freedom and nonalignment.

One of the major problems with the foreign policy of the United States during this period was its inability to use the real concerns of the leaders and the peoples of the Middle East to its advantage. Although the development and implementation of a global foreign policy may be a desirable and possibly useful tool for any administration which hopes to pursue coherent foreign affairs, the importance of treating regional concerns and problems with considered weight must not be overlooked. In March of 1956, Eisenhower admitted in his diary that American policies in the Middle East had failed.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the Eisenhower administration continued in its attempts to reward Nasser, if possible, and to punish him, if necessary, into accepting its global, anti-Soviet strategy.

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<sup>17</sup> U. S., Department of State, A Survey of Foreign Policy Problems, by John Foster Dulles (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1953), p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Ferrell, The Eisenhower Diaries, p. 318.

Regarding the effects of American foreign policy upon the Middle East during the 1950s, John S. Badeau related the words of an Egyptian friend who told him the following simile:

"Your foreign policy," he asserted, "is based upon driving us into a corner in which we will come to our senses and turn to the West again. But there is no corner left in the Middle East - there is only a corridor. If you drive us too far down that corridor, we have nothing to do but come out at the eastern end."<sup>19</sup>

This study also illustrates the very real effects which personalities can play in determining the course and policies of nations. The personal perceptions Nasser and Dulles held toward each other clearly affected the way in which the United States and Egypt interacted. Lawrence argues that the responsibility for many of the "disastrous events of the period must rest with both men."<sup>20</sup> Anthony Eden's ability to think rationally on any topic related to Nasser was seriously impaired by his hatred of the Egyptian leader. This personal hatred eventually led Britain to its ill-advised attack against Egypt in 1956, and it only complicated the already complex Middle East situation. Khrushchev's penchant for personal risk payed off in his grab for control of the Kremlin as well as in his foray into the the Middle East. It is very possible that Russian progress, in extending its influence in the Middle East, may have been slowed if an individual other than Nikita Khrushchev had been in control of the Soviet government at this time.

Finally, it is hoped that this paper clarifies some of the issues involved between the Middle East, the United States, and the Soviet Union during this period, and that it increases the reader's understanding of the factors

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<sup>19</sup> John S. Badeau, "The Soviet Approach to the Arab World," Orbis, 1 (April 1959), p. 84.

<sup>20</sup> Lawrence, The Dulles-Nasser Confrontation 1952-1958, p. 132.

and beliefs which influence nations when they deal in arms with each other, and when they form policies toward each other. Perhaps the decisions made by future policy makers will be properly influenced by a reasonable amount of historical perspective.

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The Declassified Documents Quarterly Catalog, (DDQC), lists and describes post-World War Two U.S. government documents which were classified as Top Secret, Secret, or Confidential and which have been recently declassified. These documents originate, for the most part, from the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department, the Department of Defense, and Presidential Libraries.

This publication catalogs the documents by subject under the year in which they were declassified and it includes a description of each document. Copies of the documents are in microfiche form and are referenced by a system which correlates the catalog to the microfiche.

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