ALL ABOUT THE WORDPLAY: GENDERED AND ORIENTALIST LANGUAGE IN U.S.-EGYPTIAN FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1952-1961

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ iii

Chapter

I. Introduction .............................................................................................................. 1

II. Chapter One: The Truman Administration and Revolution in Egypt: The Language of Stability and Middle East Defense ............................................. 23

III. Chapter Two: Eisenhower and Dulles Tackle Egypt: Old and New Strategic Issues, But the Language Remains the Same .............................................. 51

IV. Chapter Three: Alpha and Western Orientation: A Divergence toward Negativity ............................................................................................................. 97

V. Chapter Four: Nasser as Nemesis: Omega, Suez and the Souring of U.S.-Egyptian Relations ............................................................................................... 136

VI. Chapter Five: U.S.-Egyptian Relations after Suez: Continued Negativity, 1957-1958 ........................................................................................................... 180

VII. Chapter Six: As It Was in the Beginning, It Shall Be in the End: American Language and the Nasser Regime, 1958-1960 ..................................................................... 222

VIII. Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 241
BIBLIOGRAPHY

.................................................................249
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INTRODUCTION

In a telegram to Washington in the summer of 1953, the U.S. ambassador to Egypt, Jefferson Caffery, described the relatively new leadership in Cairo as “sincerely anti-Communist and desirous of leading Egypt into a firm association with the West” and further remarked that the Egyptian Free Officers were “honest,” “realistic,” and “believe[d] in keeping their word.”¹ In 1950s American cultural discourse, the words Caffery used depicted the Egyptians as masculine and Western. The following August, Caffery noted that comments made by Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser “exhibited a deplorable measure of political naïveté” and an “attitude of a child toward elders who are not sufficiently understanding.” The American ambassador went on to write that Nasser showed signs of “exaggerated nervousness” and a “recurrence of traditional suspicions regarding Western motives.”² To Americans reading Caffery’s later words, Nasser and Egyptians would have been thought of as effeminate, childlike, and “Others.”

Throughout the period studied in this work, American language describing Egyptians fluctuated between positive and negative depictions such as those described above. What was the reasoning behind this linguistic turn of events? What role did cultural

¹ Caffery to the Department of State, 1 June, 1953, Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter cited as FRUS), 1952-1954, Vol. 9, pp. 2086-2087.
² Caffery to the Department of State, 13 August, 1954, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 59 (hereafter cited as RG 59), Records of the Department of State, 774.00/8-1354.
impressions play, for better or for worse, in American policymaking? Were these
depictions, whether positive or negative, random, or were there broader policy issues
behind them? In other words, what was the cause and effect relationship between
cultural stereotypes and U.S. policy? This study will answer these questions and fill a
gap in the literature on culture in U.S. foreign relations.

This dissertation will explore the shifting language that U.S. officials, in both the
waning days of the Truman administration and throughout the Eisenhower
administration, used regarding Egyptians from 1952 to 1961. I will particularly focus on
the meaning behind such language and its relationship to America’s interests and goals in
the Middle East region. I will also use articles from major periodicals in order to show
that these language changes were part of a larger cultural pattern. Studying how
language changed as the U.S.-Egyptian strategic relationship shifted will demonstrate
how words and their meanings were used to place Egypt at one end of the political
discourse or the other. Ultimately, this study will demonstrate that U.S.-Egyptian foreign
relations during this period were not driven, or overtly influenced, by Western
stereotypes of Arabs and the cultural differences between the groups. When one looks
more closely, it becomes apparent that U.S. policymakers devised Middle Eastern policy
either without cultural stereotypes in mind or without heed to those that they may have
had. The language Americans used to describe Egyptians, whether positive or negative,
was in response to policies already designed and implemented, which explains why both
forms of linguistic depictions existed. American officials and the media’s language
toward Egyptians was directly related to American strategic interests and whether or not Egyptians were helping or hindering those goals.

This study will focus specifically on the language, whether negatively or positively gendered, Orientalist, or Western, that U.S. officials and the media used when describing Egyptians. This language could and did take on both negative and positive meanings throughout the time period under review. The gendered and Orientalist language used by Truman and Eisenhower administration officials and the media when the Egyptians hindered U.S. policy was part of a cultural belief-system that placed “Others” in a unique and different category than the United States and its leaders. The deep cultural beliefs of administration officials and members of the media preordained that once the Egyptians started acting counter to what was deemed the “American,” or Western, way of acting in the international arena, the language used to describe them would become derogatory in order to place Egyptians in the camp of the “Other.” These negative descriptions also helped to explain why Egypt deviated from U.S. policy. In contrast, when Egypt seemed to be working toward a common goal with the United States, Egyptians were described in positively gendered and Western terms, placing them on the same level as Americans.

It is pertinent at this point to explain how the terms “gendered” and “Orientalist” will be used in this study. Gendered language will refer here to words, phrases, or symbols that were used to give an individual or group masculine or feminine identity in relation to U.S., or Western, cultural norms. Terms such as “strong,” “poised,” “patient,” and “mild-mannered” that were used to describe Egyptian leaders assigned them qualities
that were perceived in the West to be masculine, and thus positive. In contrast, descriptions of Egyptians as “emotional,” “ranting,” “soft,” and “irrational” held more negatively gendered meanings in the eyes of Americans and their leaders, especially when used to describe a foreign leader or high-ranking official. These words coincided with what Westerners believed to be feminine qualities that were not desired in or acceptable for Western leaders. As Joan Scott noted in her groundbreaking work, “gender becomes a way of denoting ‘cultural constructions’ – the entirely social creation of ideas about appropriate roles for women and men. It is a way of referring to the exclusively social origins of the subjective identities of men and women. Gender is, in this definition, a social category imposed on a sexed body.”¹ Scott also writes that “the use of gender emphasizes an entire system of relationships that may include sex, but is not directly determined by sex nor directly determining of sexuality.”² Ultimately, as Kristin Hoganson has noted, “Scott maintained that gender did not refer to fixed biological differences between men and women but to socially-determined symbols, norms, and identities.”³ Scott’s work challenged historians to move away from an analysis of gender that rested on fixed or static physical differences between men and women. As Scott herself noted, “a theory that rests on the single variable of physical difference poses problems for historians: it assumes a consistent or inherent meaning for the human body – outside social or cultural construction – and thus the ahistoricity of

gender itself.” Following upon this starting point, Scott called for “a refusal of the fixed
and permanent quality of the binary opposition, a genuine historicization and
deconstruction of the terms of sexual difference.”

Most importantly for this dissertation and for historians of American foreign
relations who undertake studies of gendered language, Scott maintains that the social
construction of gender has a great deal to do with power. She contends that “gender is a
primary way of signifying relationships of power.” Scott goes on to say that “gender is a
primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated.” Similar to what
will be seen in Edward Said’s notion of Orientalism, gender, by giving Egyptians either
masculine or feminine traits, was a way in which Westerners held power over Nasser and
other Egyptians. In short, “gender should be regarded as ‘one of the recurrent references
by which political power has been conceived, legitimated, and criticized’.” In her article
calling upon diplomatic historians to take up Scott’s call to arms, Kristin Hoganson
writes that “the growing receptivity to gender analysis suggests that the challenge facing
those who are interested in connecting gender to foreign relations history is shifting from
demonstrating the relevance of gender to situating gender alongside strategic, economic,
political, and other factors.” By explaining the cause and effect relationship between
U.S. policy and language, this dissertation is doing just that.

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6 Ibid, p. 1069.
7 Hoganson, “What’s Gender Got to Do With It?” in Hogan and Patterson, p. 304.
8 Ibid, p. 316.
In order to determine what elite policymakers and the media believed to be positively or negatively gendered language, it is important to understand their ideas on masculinity in the 1950s. Robert Dean’s influential study of gender and its implications for U.S. foreign policy during this period gives us a strong window into American policymakers’ and the media’s ideas on what it meant to be masculine and how this carried over into the making and implementation of foreign policy. Dean writes that “the ‘establishment’ that dominated U.S. foreign policy between 1947 and 1968 consisted of men who shared strikingly similar patterns of education, socialization, and, in many cases, class background.” More importantly, the ideology of manliness and toughness in the realm of foreign policy and the “actions and attitudes of foreign policy decision makers were grounded in prescriptive lessons learned in a series of exclusive male-only institutions – boarding schools, Ivy League fraternities and secret societies, elite military service, metropolitan men’s clubs – where imperial traditions of ‘service’ and ‘sacrifice’ were invented and bequeathed to those that followed.”

This shared background and outlook viewed strength, rationality, poise, demeanor, and toughness (among others) as forms of masculinity. As we will see, when the Egyptian leadership followed policies that seemed to go along with American goals in the Middle East, Americans describing them gave them these qualities. In other cases, Egyptian reluctance to follow America’s lead brought with it effeminate language that described men such as Nasser in terms that

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went against these “norms” in order to “Other” the Egyptians and explain why the United States was finding it difficult to accomplish its goals.

It is also necessary to discuss what is meant by the terms “Orientalist” or “Orientalism.” For many years, these terms pertained to the study of the Middle East or to scholars who studied the area. According to AL. Macfie, “in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,” and until the latter half of the twentieth century, “the word Orientalism was, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971), generally used to refer to the work of the orientalist, a scholar versed in the languages and literatures of the orient; and in the world of the arts to identify a character, style or quality, commonly associated with the Eastern nations.”

The term Orientalism began to take on negative connotations in many respects after the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. Said described Orientalism as a “style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between the ‘Orient’ and the ‘Occident’.” Most importantly for this study, Said saw Orientalism as a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.” In other words, and much like gender, Orientalism was a way of giving the West power over the East.

Said’s work borrowed theories from a number of European intellectuals, forcing academics to look at Orientalism in a new way and positing theories that are still heavily debated more than three decades after they were first postulated. Getting at the heart of Orientalism, Macfie writes that “according to Said the orientalist, through his writing ‘creates’ the orient. In the process, he assists in the creation of a series of stereotypical

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images, according to which Europe (the West, the ‘self’) is seen as being essentially rational, developed, humane, superior, authentic, active, creative and masculine, while the orient (the East, the ‘other’) is seen as being irrational, aberrant, backward, crude, despotic, inferior, inauthentic, passive, feminine and sexually corrupt.”

Akin to Scott’s notion of gender, Said writes that “the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony,” going on to also note that “the Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be ‘Oriental’ in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it could be – that is, submitted to being – made Oriental.”

In other words, Orientalism is a dichotomy between the “self” (the West) and the “Other” (the East) that gives the West the ability and means to have power over the Arab world. Orientalism is a way of looking at the Middle East that relegates its peoples to a subservient role vis-à-vis the West. Douglas Little describes it as a Western “self-serving view of Asians, Africans, and Arabs as decadent, alien, and inferior.”

Underlying currents of Orientalist sentiment can be seen in any language that describes Egyptians in terms that are perceived to make them un-Western. This includes language that depicts peoples as untrustworthy, dirty, conniving, weak, emotional, backward, and uncivilized.

As was the case with gendered language, Americans used Orientalist language to describe Egyptians when they seemed to be working against U.S. regional goals and used

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12 Macfie, p. 4.
13 Said, pp. 5-6.
positive, Western language that was the opposite of Orientalist when the U.S.-Egyptian relationship was progressing smoothly.

While a number of disciplines have used Said’s work to a great extent, U.S. diplomatic historians, albeit with a few exceptions, have tended to shy away from using Said’s theories in their work. In his thought provoking article, “Saidism without Said: Orientalism and U.S. Diplomatic History,” Andrew Rotter explains the reasoning behind this and calls for diplomatic historians to use Said more often. According to Rotter, Said’s “lack of basis in sustained historical research,” his lumping together of European and American imperialism, and his “dubious epistemological relationship to matters of cause and effect” have caused most U.S. diplomatic historians to stay away from his theories.15 Specifically, diplomatic historians have been tentative to use Said’s approach due to its “post-modernist emphasis on cluture, language, and rhetoric,” which, according to Melvyn P. Leffler, “often diverts attention from questions of causation and agency.”

Leffler, quoted in Rotter’s article, goes on to say that “the problem with discourse theory specifically ‘is that although we might learn that seemingly unconnected phenomena are related in some diffuse ways, we do not necessarily get much insight into how relatively important these relationships are to one another’.”16 A key component to this dissertation is to describe the ways in which there was a cause and effect relationship between the

16 Ibid, p. 1211.
The historiography of U.S.-Egyptian and U.S.-Middle East relations is deep. If one adds the literature on the 1956 Suez crisis, a small library could be filled with books relating to that issue alone. This study could not have been undertaken had it not been for the detailed works on the diplomatic history of U.S.-Egyptian and U.S.-Middle Eastern relations that have come before it. While drawing heavily upon this previous scholarship for context, background information, information on U.S. and Egyptian policy, and insights into the ways in which language was tied to policy, this dissertation does not attempt to rewrite the diplomatic history of the era. Instead, it focuses on issues of cultural discourse and the linguistic aspects of the U.S.-Egyptian relationship, although it is underpinned throughout by the diplomacy and strategy involved in that relationship.\(^\text{17}\)

This study focuses more on the cultural aspects of America’s relationship with Egypt, and, in recent years, studies of this nature have yielded new approaches to and scholarship on American foreign relations. Language, which is the heart of this study, is often a reflection of culture. Akira Iriye believes that cultural relations take the form of

direct and indirect relations. Indirect relations, the most pertinent for this study, “involve such things as a person’s ideas and prejudices about another people, or cross-national influences in philosophy, literature, music, art and fashion.”

Language, the words that people use when describing others, regularly calls upon these “ideas and prejudices” about another people. As this work demonstrates, though, language can also be used to look beyond sometimes deep-seated “ideas and prejudices” in order to give individuals or groups in other cultures characteristics that go against common cultural stereotypes. This new cultural approach to the study of foreign relations has revitalized the field and opened up numerous new avenues of scholarly research.

As this study will demonstrate, analysis of language in particular can shed light on a whole new world of important research. Frank Costigliola writes that “what we might otherwise dismiss as ‘just words’ constitutes language, a system that reflects and creates meaning. Scholars can discern historical evidence in the assumptions and the logic (rational and emotional) in embassy telegrams, diaries, films, and other texts.” What this means is that looking at what administration officials and media figures were writing can illuminate what informed individuals were thinking and what the public at large was reading, providing a deeper understanding of Americans’ underlying cultural beliefs and the effect they did or did not have on policy.

This dissertation adds to previous scholarship, and most importantly, fills a serious gap in the historiography of culture and the study of U.S. foreign relations. While new cultural approaches dealing with the study of American foreign relations have

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produced a large number of influential and important studies over the last two and a half decades, the historiography of U.S.-Egyptian foreign relations is seriously lacking in cultural approaches. There may be studies that glance over Egypt as part of a larger, regional cultural approach, such as Douglas Little’s, but there has not been a study that deals specifically with culture and the way it did or did not affect U.S.-Egyptian foreign relations. This is especially true when dealing with the discourse of gender and Orientalism.

In order to highlight the significance of this dissertation, it is pertinent to discuss some of the works that touch on this topic and/or employ these theories and methodologies within the larger field of U.S. foreign relations. One of the earliest works to examine the relationship between culture and U.S. foreign relations history is John W. Dower’s *War Without Mercy*. In part, Dower analyzes U.S. depictions of the Japanese during World War II to show the ways in which race made fighting in the Pacific theatre much more violent than in Europe. The author’s use of multiple sources made clear the ways in which the war brought underlying racial prejudices front and center.20 Two other studies that deal with race, along with American paternalism, that are important methodological guideposts for this study are Mary Renda’s *Taking Haiti* and Kristin Hoganson’s *Fighting for American Manhood*. Renda looks at how U.S. Marines interacted with and described Haitians throughout the extent of American occupation in the early 1900s in order to describe the “cultural processes that shaped the violence of imperialism.” She does not stop there, though, as she also describes the effect of Haiti on

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regular Americans in an effort to understand “how, once empire was established, other
U.S. Americans came to imagine themselves in relation to it.”

Hoganson looks at the ways in which the political culture of late nineteenth century America, and gender in particular, helped push the United States to war against Spain and Philippine insurgents. In part, Hoganson argues that “jingoes urged the United States to assume the role of the heroic rescuer to the Cuban damsel or loyal brother to the Cuban knights,” while, in this case, the Spanish were depicted as uncivilized and barbaric. Hoganson describes how gendered language was fluid, much like this study, but she does not show how directly related these changes were to U.S. policy and relies more heavily on domestic issues of gender, such as new women’s roles in politics, domestic economic troubles, and American males who were seeking fields to test their manhood much like the previous Civil War generation of men had.

David F. Schmitz’s work on the American relationship with and backing of right-wing dictators, in *Thank God They’re on our Side*, brings up some interesting points related to this dissertation but does not focus on language and its direct correlation to strategic policies. Schmitz argues that American policymakers backed right-wing leaders because these dictators kept their nations open to U.S. economic investment and were not communist. Another aspect of Schmitz’s study looks at race and the ways in which U.S. officials believed that many of these nations, especially in Latin America, were not yet ready for democracy, and needed a strong hand in government to work their way toward

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eventual democracy. Schmitz’s analysis of American language in regard to Italy under Mussolini briefly touches on some of the same arguments upon which this study focuses, but the author does not go into detail on these points and the relationship between the language and its direct correlation to Italian policies vis-à-vis the United States is not the focus of his work. Schmitz relates how Americans spoke positively about Mussolini because the Italian dictator was helping to advance the American policy of keeping the communists out of control in Italy. Meanwhile, the previous Italian leaders, who could not guarantee that communism would not overtake Italy, were described in negatively gendered terms.23

Michael H. Hunt and Mary L. Dudziak also deal with race and U.S. foreign relations in unique and different ways. Hunt’s seminal look at the long sweep of U.S. foreign policy in Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy assigns race and racial views of foreigners as one of his three main currents of American ideology.24 For her part, Dudziak looks at domestic issues affecting foreign relations as she analyzes race relations within the United States, describing how civil rights issues caused image problems for the nation’s Cold War struggle abroad, especially in newly independent African and Asian nations. Dudziak even makes the connection that Cold War considerations helped move policymakers toward accepting and implementing more civil rights within the United States.25 These studies have all been important methodological tools for this dissertation.

and have added to the historiography of gender and race in U.S. foreign policy, but they do not focus on the fluidity of gendered and racist language and its direct relationship to U.S. policy goals.

There are also a number of works, in one form or another, on gender and race that deal specifically with the region in question. Like the previous works, these regional pieces have touched on many of the same issues as this current study does, but none has delved deeply into the question of the fluidity of gendered and Orientalist language and the reasoning behind it. In his transnational study of U.S.-Indian relations, Andrew J. Rotter describes the ways in which the two nations viewed each other from 1947-1964. Rotter’s work is commendable for its research into both American and Indian culture, and for its scope. The author does not stop at just analyzing race and gender, but moves into other cultural realms as well, such as religion, governance, class, and caste. Ultimately, Rotter believes that culture did play a large role in the formation of policy between the two nations, leading to a tense relationship that oftentimes saw the United States and India at odds with one another. In one of Rotter’s early works on this subject, he noted that Orientalism, of which gender is an element, was “a way of conceptualizing Asia that presupposed Western superiority and undergirded Western domination,” and that “what was for nearly two centuries a European enterprise [Orientalism] became after World War II a U.S. one.” Rotter further notes that during the course of his research he discovered that there were three traits that Americans ascribed to Indians: passivity, emotionalism, and a “lack of heterosexual energy.” Rotter argues that these underlying gendered views of Indian men led to a turbulent relationship between the two nations. In
contrast, the martial, suit-wearing, martini drinking Pakistanis were strong, masculine men, and thus, close allies of America during the period studied.26

Mary Ann Heiss also deals with gendered American views toward the region in her work on Anglo-American depictions of Mohammed Mossadeq during the Iranian oil nationalization crisis in the early 1950s. Heiss contends that “Anglo-American officials came to a common way of looking at Mossadeq that used many of his personal characteristics, habits, and negotiating tactics, as well as some of his policy positions themselves, to justify a view of him as unmanly and unfit for office.” According to the author, these types of views deserve scholarly attention because “they helped to shape the context within which officials formulated policy.”27 According to Heiss, American officials considered Mossadeq “inferior, childlike, and feminine,” and much like Rotter explains in regard to the differing American views of Indians and Pakistanis, U.S. officials had a difficult time dealing with Mossadeq because he wore pajamas instead of business attire and spent much of his time making decisions from his bed.28 While most historians dealing with U.S. cultural perceptions are content to take a handful of instances in which negative depictions are given and surmise that this was true in all cases dealing with a specific group or groups, Heiss shows that this was not the case by describing

26 Andrew J. Rotter, “Gender Relations, Foreign Relations: The United States and South Asia, 1947-1964,” in Peter L. Hahn and Mary Ann Heiss, eds., Empire and Revolution: The United States and the Third World Since 1945 (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2001), p. 195. For a more in depth study that is expanded to look at other cultural realms such as race, religion, and caste, see Rotter’s full-length book on this topic: Comrades at Odds: The United States and India, 1947-1964 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000).
instances in which Anglo-American officials depicted other Iranians in masculine terms.29

Also dealing with gender, but from the positive, masculine side of the coin, is Michelle Mart. As Mart succinctly notes, her work “examines the dramatic discursive transformation of Jews and Israel in American popular culture and politics in the 1940s and 1950s from curious minorities to kindred spirits and reliable allies in the Cold War.”30 Looking specifically at gender, Mart describes the ways in which “Jews were increasingly depicted as masculine insiders,” while “Arabs were increasingly depicted as unmasculine outsiders.” This study draws heavily on what Mart describes as the “insider”/“outsider” dichotomy. (see chapter 1)

John Foran’s work on *Time* magazine and the upheaval in Iran in the early 1950s is similar to this study in one aspect, which is that it goes much more in-depth in looking at both positive and negative images of Arabs. Foran examined Mohammed Mossadeq and the Shah of Iran and claims that his study of their “contrasting images” provides his readers a “window on the deep roots of U.S. intervention in Iran.” Ultimately, Foran believes that the press had more of an impact upon foreign relations and U.S. policymakers than most people think, and that “both tapped a deeper source.” He argues that “*Time* influenced U.S. foreign policy; both drew on and contributed to Orientalist discourses; Musaddiq and other actors tried to combat these influences; and the coup was

29 Ibid. p. 189.
a product of this struggle for discursive hegemony, further shaped, to be sure, by the political economy of oil and geostrategic power.”

Arguably the most important cultural study of U.S. foreign relations that deals with Orientalism is Douglas Little’s *American Orientalism*. Little spends the first portion of his book describing Orientalism and instances of negative American depictions of Arabs, then shows how this affected U.S. policy in the region since 1945. The author argues that since the Second World War, “something very like Said’s Orientalism seems subconsciously to have shaped U.S. popular attitudes and foreign policies toward the Middle East.”

Little’s study abounds with negative Orientalist depictions of Arabs from 1945 all the way up until the 1990s productions of movies such as *True Lies* and *Aladdin*.

Other than a few notable exceptions, most cultural studies dealing with U.S. foreign relations focus solely on the negative American cultural stereotypes of Third World peoples, oftentimes overestimating the impact that these underlying ideologies play in the formation and implementation of foreign policy. While correct in denoting the negative ways Americans describe Arabs, Little and others posit that these underlying beliefs played a crucial role in the formation of policy. Yet, for the most part, they fail to take into account the numerous instances of positive depictions of those same Arabs.

This type of one-sided approach that focuses on the negative and gives cultural

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32 Little, p. 10.
stereotypes a large amount of agency in the formulation of American policy abounds in cultural studies of U.S. foreign policy. Salim Yaqub’s work on the Eisenhower Doctrine does not deal with culture, but the author rightly questions cultural approaches that throw blanket appraisals on the topic. Yaqub writes that “there have been numerous studies documenting and analyzing European and American cultural biases and stereotypes regarding the Middle Eastern ‘Other’; most of these studies argue, implicitly or explicitly, that such perceptions have had a profoundly distorting effect on Western policies toward the Middle East.” Regarding this question in general and Little’s thesis directly, Yaqub notes that

As Little ably demonstrates, the documentary record from the 1950s is full of disparaging remarks made by U.S. officials about Arabs. What is less clear is the extent to which such anti-Arab sentiment actually explains the Eisenhower administration’s policies toward the Arab world. One difficulty that immediately arises is that of distinguishing the documented anti-Arab sentiment from the blanket condescension with which top administration officials regarded Others in general, be they Arabs, Jews, Europeans, or U.S. congressmen.33

Yaqub goes on to briefly describe how Eisenhower administration officials at times spoke negatively about Arabs and allies alike, calling into question the thesis that negative cultural stereotypes of Arabs played a crucial role in the formation of U.S. policy. Negative American language toward their British and French allies during the Suez crisis is a case in point. Eisenhower referred to them as “unworthy and unreliable” allies, while Secretary of State John Foster Dulles called British and French actions “crude and brutal.”34 Moreover, Yaqub demonstrates that the nature of the Eisenhower Doctrine

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33 Yaqub, p. 11.
34 Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt*, p. 231.
itself and its attempt to build up pro-Western Arab leaders showed that U.S. officials had faith in many Arab leaders and spoke positively of them on numerous occasions.\textsuperscript{35}

It is apparent through this brief historiography of some of the more pertinent cultural studies of U.S. foreign relations that there are some key gaps, overlooked language, and unanswered issues that beg for a full-length study that takes into account both negative and positive depictions of Arabs in order to truly see what effect underlying cultural stereotypes had on U.S.-Middle Eastern relations in the 1950s.\textsuperscript{36} Using Egypt as a case study, this dissertation does just that.

Ultimately, I will demonstrate that U.S.-Egyptian foreign relations in the late Truman administration and throughout the Eisenhower administration were not driven, or overtly influenced, by Western stereotypes of Arabs and the cultural differences between the two groups. This argument will become apparent as I analyze the language American officials and the media used to describe Egyptians. The fact that there were so many instances in which Egyptians were depicted in positive, Western terms will demonstrate that negative American stereotypes of Egyptians were not a major factor in the policymaking process. Although Americans did have cultural stereotypes of Arabs, they used language and cultural descriptions not only to “Other” Arabs but also to paint those same Arabs as “insiders” when the moment called for it. This study surmises that counter

\textsuperscript{35} Yaqub, pp. 11-13.
to what most cultural studies on the topic argue, American linguistic descriptions of Egyptians were in response to policies already determined and were not a factor in the policymaking process.

Neglecting to look at both sides of the linguistic coin does not allow for a full telling of the role culture may or may not have played in U.S. policy. Contrary to John Foran’s argument that negative cultural notions of Mossadeq as weak and different from American leaders played a key role in the decision to help implement a coup against him, I believe that the fact that Mossadeq had become a destabilizing regional factor who had placated Iranian communists and opposed Washington’s regional policy led to his ouster and any negative language. Likewise, Andrew Rotter’s argument that Indian passivity and clothing played a role in the language Americans used against them vis-à-vis their more martial, suit-wearing Pakistani neighbors does not stand up under the scrutiny of this study. My argument and research also calls into question Rotter’s view that the United States depicted Nehru negatively and had a difficult relationship with the Indian leader because of his attempts to resolve conflicts outside of the region surrounding India. If this was the case, then why was Nasser, who was a military man in Western clothes, depicted so often in negative terms? Also, Theodore Roosevelt, whose masculinity was never called into question, won a Nobel Peace prize for his work brokering a peace in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, while World War II hero Dwight D. Eisenhower vowed in 1952 to go to Korea in order to bring the war to an end. If one takes Rotter’s argument at face value, would not these men been seen as effeminate as

37 Foran, p. 177.
well? The framework employed in this study would posit that Nehru was depicted as lacking masculine qualities and his Pakistani counterparts were billed as “strong” because of where they stood in regard to America’s strategic goals. Nehru was a champion of neutralism who kept India from siding with either superpower in the ongoing Cold War, while the Pakistanis were only too eager to join the United States in military alliances and pledge their allegiance to the West against the Soviet Union.

When one looks more closely, it becomes apparent that U.S. policymakers devised Middle Eastern, and specifically Egyptian, policy either without cultural stereotypes in mind or without regard for those that they may have had. The language Americans used to describe Egyptians, whether positive or negative, was in response to policies already designed and implemented.
CHAPTER ONE:

The Truman Administration and Revolution in Egypt: The Language of Stability and Middle East Defense

In the early morning hours of July 23, 1952, a small, but well organized group of middle-ranking Egyptian Army officers launched a coup to wrest control of the country from their king. Within a few hours, the “Free Officers,” as they would come to call themselves, had bloodlessly removed King Farouk from power and gained the upper hand within the country. The military coup culminated a six-month period in Egyptian politics that had seen a succession of failed governments, each more powerless and worthless than its predecessor. The Free Officers had grown tired of rampant governmental corruption, the most notorious being the 1948 Arab-Israeli War scandal in which corrupt Egyptian governmental and military officials pocketed profits from purchasing faulty weapons, and growing turmoil and turnover within the nation’s ruling body.¹ These latest indignities within the government were just the latest in a long line of corrupt government that had spent the last decades bending to the ultimate will of Great Britain. As the Egyptian author Mohammed Haykel writes, it was in this atmosphere in the late 1940s and early 1950s that Egypt’s “Free Officers talked of little else but

freedom and the restoration of their country’s dignity and Gamal Abdel Nasser plotted his revolution.”¹

Egypt’s period of destabilization began on October 15, 1951, when the Wafd prime minister al-Nahhas Pasha abrogated the Treaty of 1936 between Egypt and Great Britain. That treaty, signed during a period of intense Egyptian nationalism, recognized Egyptian independence from Britain but at the same time allowed for the stationing of British troops in the Suez Canal Zone and restated Britain’s right to defend Egypt in case of attack.² The treaty’s abrogation spurred optimistic Egyptian guerrilla fighters into action, and the British sought retribution when two British soldiers were killed in January. On January 25, a British military contingent moved on Ismailia, where an auxiliary Egyptian police unit was said to be aiding guerrilla fighters. Shooting began after the police resisted, and when the dust settled, forty-two Egyptian policemen and four British soldiers were dead. Egyptian citizens protested throughout Cairo the next day, dubbed Black Saturday, leaving Cairo’s business district almost totally destroyed by flames. The day’s chaos cost Nahas his position as prime minister, and the next six months saw a revolving door in the government’s highest position as three different men gained and then lost the premiership for differing reasons, Hussein Sirry being the last to step down just days before the coup.³

³ Ibid., p. 303; and Hahn, The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, pp. 139-40. For a detailed description of the events at Ismalia and the burning of Cairo see Thornhill, pp. 55-64.
This period of Egyptian political instability and the intensification of the Anglo-
Egyptian squabble coincided with an increased American perception of what its role
should and needed to be in the Middle East, and in Egypt in particular. In early 1950,
American officials came to believe for the first time that they would have to play a more
active role in the Middle East in order to safeguard oil transit to Western Europe and to
prevent the region from falling to the Soviet Union. Initial steps in this direction were
taken in May 1950 with the tripartite declaration, by which the United States, Great
Britain, and France pledged to stop Middle East aggression. Soon thereafter, a number of
issues came to light that would ultimately move American policymakers to the
conclusion that they needed to do still more in the region. The Korean War’s outbreak in
1950 brought with it fears of a Soviet incursion into the Middle East; it also brought
about the implementation of NSC-68, which gave the Truman administration for the very
first time the means to place men and material in the Middle East region. These two
issues coincided with Great Britain’s declining ability to maintain its historic presence in
the region and an increase in Egyptian nationalism that was pulling Cairo away from the
West and thereby threatening the security of the Suez Canal base.

U.S. officials believed that the best way to rectify this difficult situation was to
strive for stability in Egypt, which would be helped along by settlement of outstanding
Anglo-Egyptian disputes and the elimination of extremist political elements from Cairo,
and to enact some sort of Middle East defense pact. Initial efforts at the formation of a

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4 NSC-68 refers to National Security Council document #68. Issued in 1950, this document said that the
Cold War was much more serious than anyone had imagined and that, if the United States wanted to come
out victorious, the nation had to start acting like it was fighting a real war. The document called for a
massive build-up in the military and its budget. The Korean War was the catalyst for its implementation.
5 Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt*, p. 129.
Middle East Command (MEC) failed because the Arab nations feared that they would end up in a subservient role and because the rising tide of nationalism in Egypt pushed the government to demand evacuation of British troops before there could be any talk of the nation joining in the region’s defense. American policymakers subsequently made some changes in MEC’s structure and tried to implement a more loosely based military defense plan in the region, known as the Middle East Defense Organization or MEDO. The Truman administration, however, had been unable to make any headway on MEDO by the time the Free Officers came to power in July 1952.6

American goals of achieving Egyptian stability and implementing the Middle East Defense Organization had not changed when General Mohammed Naguib and the Free Officers came to power on July 23. In fact, American officials saw in the new Cairo government a golden opportunity to stabilize the region and implement MEDO. As Peter Hahn notes, “After the revolution, Acheson and other American officials tried to establish warm relations with the government headed by General Naguib. By bolstering Naguib with American military aid, they hoped to attract him to MEDO, stabilize Egyptian politics, and contribute to settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian base dispute.”7 Stability and MEDO also played such a large role in policymakers thinking because they could contribute to containment of communism in the region.

As we will see, the language U.S. policymakers and the media used when describing Egyptians directly correlated to the nation’s strategic interests: stability in

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6 For a more detailed discussion of the origins of the Middle East Command, its failure, and the plans to establish the Middle East Defense Organization, see Ibid, pp. 109-147.
7 Ibid., p. 153.
Egypt and the region and implementation of a Middle East Defense Organization. The words and phrases, and the underlying cultural beliefs that went with them, did not drive U.S. policy. But the language, whether masculine or feminine, Orientalist or Western, paternalistic or peer based, directly flowed from the situation at hand and its larger relationship to American goals and strategy. Throughout this period, the key strategic interests of stability, which went hand in hand with the containment of extremist elements from Egypt and successful conclusion of outstanding Anglo-Egyptian disputes, and the implementation of MEDO were the driving forces behind how Americans spoke and wrote about Egyptians. It will become apparent that as the situation unfolded, American policymakers and the popular press spoke positively about Egyptians when it seemed that U.S. strategic interests were being pursued and negatively about those same Egyptians when American goals were in jeopardy, highlighting in the process the fluid nature of gendered and Orientalist language. While the Free Officers brought a new hope to American goals in the region, an ambiguity remained in the language that portrayed the new leadership in Cairo in both positive and negative terms due to still unanswered questions when the Truman administration left office.

**Tossing the Old Regime Under the Bus**

Ambiguous language may have been the norm for U.S. policymakers’ descriptions of the Free Officers, but officials in Washington and the media throughout this period were much more static or fixed in their depictions of King Farouk and the old
regime. In addition to being unceremoniously bumped off the political stage in Cairo, Farouk and his cronies now found themselves the targets of extremely negative American language. This was due to two interrelated sets of circumstances, both relating to U.S. strategic interests in the region. First, neither MEDO nor regional stability had been accomplished under Farouk’s reign. In fact, the country had disintegrated into virtual upheaval by the time of his exile, and virulent nationalists whom the king could not control were calling for immediate British evacuation and no ties to the West, especially when it came to a defensive pact. Farouk’s inability in American eyes to reach even a modicum of stability, coupled with a lack of any progress toward establishing MEDO, would have already colored U.S. language as negative. Second, now that the king and the old regime had been removed from power, they no longer played any tangible role in helping the United States to accomplish its goals for the region; in other words, they had become politically irrelevant. To put it another way, the old regime was depicted in negative terms because it had failed to help achieve American goals, while at the same time, U.S. policymakers and the U.S. press attributed this failure to the regime’s weakness and backwardness.

Once Americans had placed all of their hopes in the new Free Officers’ regime, they found it easy to dwell upon the negative characteristics of Farouk and the old regime. Highlighted now would be attributes of femininity and Arab backwardness, among others, and all descriptions following the coup would place the old regime firmly in the camp of “Others.” Because the Farouk regime was no longer in a position to further the attainment of U.S. goals in Egypt, American policymakers, the media, and
their political discourse colored these Egyptians as polar opposites to what constituted strong, Western leaders. In this way, Truman administration officials and the press were able to help explain to themselves and the public why there had been a failure to achieve the strategic goals of stability and MEDO while Farouk was in power. In a nutshell, they concluded that the fault lay with a weak and inept Egyptian ruling clique that had proved unable to achieve U.S. goals in Egypt.

Following the coup that ousted Farouk from power, U.S. policymakers, along with popular weekly publications such as *Time* and *Newsweek*, repeatedly depicted him as an inept, sheltered, weak, and effeminate leader who had spent a lifetime ensconced in a lifestyle reminiscent of the grandest Arab kings. Initial reports out of Cairo claimed that Farouk had “completely lost control” of the situation during the coup. The king even went so far as to assert that the British had plotted to overthrow him, something that American ambassador Jefferson Caffery found “preposterous.”8 Amid the chaos of the coup’s first day, Caffery mockingly quoted the king as saying he had been “busy,” a claim that was not only a monumental understatement on Farouk’s part but also one that suggested that after years spent in leisure, the king was ill-prepared for the circumstances that now confronted him.9 According to Secretary of State Dean Acheson, apart from being “busy,” the king was also losing control of his emotional state and had begun to “panic.”10 Caffery and the secretary of state both agreed that it would be best to counsel

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8 Caffery to Acheson, 23 July, 1952, General Records of the U.S. Department of State, Record Group 59, 774.00/7-2352, National Archvies, Washington, D.C. (hereafter RG 59, with filing information); Wright to Acheson, 23 July, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/7-2352; and Caffery to Acheson, 23 July, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/7-2352.
9 Caffery to Acheson, 23 July, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/7-2352.
10 Acheson to Caffery, 23 July, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/7-2352.
Farouk to do nothing “rash” during the first hours of the coup.\textsuperscript{11} It was apparent that U.S. officials believed the king to be “weak,” so much so that Ambassador Caffery feared that the king would add to the situation’s still unsettled nature by attempting to “run away.”\textsuperscript{12}

U.S. officials also feared that Farouk’s un-Western ineptitude in regard to leadership and political ability could very well worsen the situation. Very early on in the coup, some American officials quipped that Farouk needed to “keep his hand out of meddling with his government” in order to keep the situation from deteriorating.\textsuperscript{13}

Accordingly, officials in the Truman administration depicted the dethroned monarch as a man who was out of touch with political realities and who too often had to seek advice from Westerners such as Ambassador Caffery. It seemed that one of Farouk’s only good qualities, in a childlike manner, was to heed the advice of his wiser American counterparts from time to time. It was also worth pointing out that Farouk had only surrounded himself with “yes-men,” a severe liability once the king faced revolution and was left “amazed, confused, and bewildered” and “pathetically anxious to lean” on Caffery’s strength and veteran statesmanship.\textsuperscript{14}

The deposed king also found himself in the crosshairs of the U.S. media, which echoed Truman administration assessments of Farouk’s negative aspects. In an obvious poke at the former Egyptian ruler’s laziness and un-masculine nature once he had been

\textsuperscript{11} Caffery to Acheson, 25 July, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/7-2552; and Acheson to Caffery, 25 July, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/7-2552.

\textsuperscript{12} Memorandum of conversation between ambassador McGhee and Secretary General of Turkish Foreign Office, 5 September, 1952, RG 59, Lot File No. 53 D 468, box 7: Office Files of Assistant Secretary of State George C. McGhee, 1945-1953, folder: Memoranda of Conversations, Volume I, January 8 to June 30, 1952; and Caffery to Acheson, 25 July, 1952, RG 59, 774.11/7-2552.

\textsuperscript{13} Holmes to Acheson, 23 July, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/7-2352.

\textsuperscript{14} Caffery to Acheson, 28 July, 1952, RG 59, 774.11/7-2852.
forced to flee his country, *Newsweek* noted that he “was sailing for exile in Italy unhonored, unsung, unwanted, and possibly reflecting that nobody loves a fat man.” This picture of an overweight failure was contrasted against what had been said sixteen years earlier when Farouk took the throne, when he was described as “young, gallant, handsome, slim and fresh from a British military school.” Possibly once Farouk allowed the opulence that went with his position to take control, the vestiges of his Western, British schooling had worn off.\(^\text{15}\) Reports of the king’s exit from Egypt also described the way in which his naval uniform stretched against his “beefy” frame, while “tears spilled down his cheeks” in a most un-Western display of frailty.\(^\text{16}\) Both *Time* and *Newsweek* made sure to mention that while the king was being forced from his country, he would be able to continue his lavish lifestyle with help from his 204 pieces of luggage, as well as from the entire third floor of the hotel he would come to occupy once he had arrived in Italy.\(^\text{17}\) Once Farouk was firmly entrenched in his new Italian digs, it seemed that, in another un-masculine and negative depiction, the “royal exile, bulky and balding,” usually spent his mornings listening to the radio and reading papers, and nights were spent in the lounge where he would find it difficult to “heave” his large frame out of his cozy chair.\(^\text{18}\) As for the reasons behind the pudgy prince’s downfall, it seemed that Farouk was more inclined to seek pleasure through “yachts, gambling and women,” and had not possessed the strength or ability to get rid of the corrupt members of his

\(^{15}\) *Newsweek*, 4 August, 1952, p. 35.  
\(^{16}\) *Time*, 4 August, 1952, p. 22.  
entourage and the government.\textsuperscript{19} Many of these media depictions of Farouk are reminiscent of descriptions of Mohammed Mossadeq during the Anglo-Iranian oil crisis of the same time period. William A. Dorman and Mansour Farhang, when discussing American press reports of the nationalist Iranian during the crisis, explain how Mossadeq, who was also hampering U.S. goals in the region, had appeared as “a highly irrational and discredited leader,” much the same way that Farouk was being depicted.\textsuperscript{20}

Farouk’s un-Western, un-masculine, and childlike nature were on display for all to see once the media was allowed into his previously private palaces. What reporters found within the walls of the former king’s shrines to greed and avarice made it all the easier to depict Farouk as an Other. Touching upon the king’s seemingly childlike nature, it was reported that his tastes “seemed curiously childish, like those of a schoolboy who has never grown up beyond the French postcard stage.” Describing the former monarch’s weak, lazy, and un-masculine state, \textit{Time} noted the gymnasium full of exercise equipment, which included “an ingenious machine which was supposed (but signally failed) to keep the royal rump from becoming imperial.”\textsuperscript{21} The huge mattress in the master bedroom was even “fit for a king of even Farouk’s size,” according to \textit{Newsweek}.\textsuperscript{22} The media depictions of Farouk’s private hideaways also made sure to mention the pornographic nature of many of the books and paintings in the ex-king’s study, perhaps highlighting his Oriental lustfulness. The palaces that had been opened up

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Time}, 4 August, 1952, 22.


\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Time}, 8 September, 1952, pp. 33-40.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Newsweek}, 8 September, 1952, p. 38.
for the world to see had thrown “a pitiless light on the character” of the deposed ruler, and amidst this “Oriental opulence” it seemed that Egypt’s former ruler had lost his hold on the nation and his “character.”

While Farouk epitomized the instability in Egypt and America’s inability to secure MEDO, he was not the only member of the old regime to be painted negatively during this period. Prince Mohammed Aly, Farouk’s great-uncle, was one of the only remaining members of the royal family left in Egypt following the coup and was the brunt of many unflattering American comments. U.S. officials in Cairo depicted the prince as a “broken old man” who was apparently jealous that none of the new military leadership had called on him. Moreover, when news reports that he would be named Crown Prince proved unfounded, he was reported to have risen to a “crescendo of hysteria” while “talking wildly.” These events led American officials in Cairo to comment that it seemed that Aly was dangerously close to becoming senile and that he was stirring up trouble because he was losing self control and would not “keep his mouth shut.”

Paternalistic and Orientalist undertones were also apparent in Caffery’s description of another member of Egyptian royalty. Abdel Moneim, who would have become king had the British not deposed his father in 1914, was the subject of very preliminary and fleeting discussions about installing a king in the interregnum period.

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23 Time, 8 September, 1952, pp. 33-40; and Newsweek, 8 September, 1952, p. 38.
24 Caffery to the Department of State, 4 September, 1952, RG 59, 774.11/9-452.
25 Caffery to the Department of State, 2 September, 1952, RG 59, 774.11/9-252.
26 Caffery to the Department of State, 8 September, 1952, RG 59, 774.11/9-852; Caffery to Acheson, 9 September, 1952, RG 59, 774.11/9-952; and Caffery to Acheson, 12 September, 1952, RG 59, 774.11/9-1252.
until Farouk’s son reached the age of seventeen. The American ambassador was a good acquaintance of Moneim’s and believed that while he was not an overly bright man, he was “good-natured, affable, and well-behaved” and possessed a presentable family. This description shows that American officials tended to believe at this point that the only thing monarchs were good for in Egypt was to make a show while doing nothing of real importance.

As can be seen, Truman administration officials and the press used negatively gendered and Orientalist language to describe members of the old regime following the coup that brought the Free Officers to power in July 1952. King Farouk and other members of the royal family were depicted as effeminate, weak, and un-Western. These characterizations stemmed from the fact that the former Egyptian rulers had done nothing to help implement America’s strategic goals of stability and the Middle East Defense Organization, and following July 23, would no longer be in a position to turn this trend around. Some of the same types of descriptions would be used when talking about the Free Officers as well, but as we will find, these negative descriptions would also be interspersed with positive and Western depictions.

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27 Caffery to Acheson, 2 August, 1952, RG 59, 774.11/8-252.
The Free Officers and the Ambiguity of Stability

American officials’ optimism regarding the new Egyptian regime’s ability to maintain stability oftentimes carried over into the language that they used when describing the military leaders of that regime. At almost any time, and in reference to just about anything that showed the Free Officers’ ability to stabilize the Egyptian situation, Americans found themselves portraying the new regime in masculine and Western terms. As is human nature, Truman administration officials judged others in comparison to how they viewed themselves, and this particular case was no exception. American officials had developed a sense of what they deemed to be acceptable behavior for masculine or Western leaders, and when Egyptians seemed to be working toward attainment of the American strategic goal of stability, U.S. officials touched on the positive traits that the Egyptians were representing.28

The sense of impending doom and despair that had hovered over officials in Washington and Cairo when faced with the Egyptian political scene gave way to hope and optimism when the Free Officers took power. Visions of a fresh start in Egypt and the prospect of stability there had U.S. officials praising the “complete law and order” that was present in cities like Cairo and Alexandria following the events of July 23 and marveling at “one of the smoothest military coups ever undertaken.”29 News reports were also positive, as Naguib was described as a “solid soldier” whose coup had been a

28 For a discussion of this type of underlying cultural ideology, see Heiss, “Real Men Don’t Wear Pajamas,” pp. 188-89.
29 Caffery to Acheson, 26 July, 1952, RG 59, 774.11/7-2652; and Caffery to the Department of State, 30 July, 1952, RG 59, 774.55/7-3052.
“perfect performance.” The media, taking its cue from the Truman administrations reactions, saw the Egyptian revolution as a break from the old regime’s corruption, debauchery, and backwardness that had played a part in thwarting the achievement of America’s goals in the region. The situation “encouraged” Secretary of State Acheson even more, and led Time to laud the new Egyptian leader and the “good job” he was doing, because General Naguib had promised to give full protection to foreign lives and property, a move that would give the British no reason to take an active role in the ongoing events in Egypt. More tangible steps at stabilizing Egypt would lead to more praise as time progressed.

In sharp contrast to the depictions of Farouk, both Time and Newsweek painted General Naguib and his men as intelligent, Western-style leaders. One of the ways that these weekly publications went about doing this was by informing their readers that the new leader in Cairo was fluent in English, as well as other languages, and that he was highly educated, even graduating from his two and a half year military school courses in nine months. It was also pointed out that the general had a hero’s status during the Arab-Israeli War, and that the other Free Officers were “mostly trained in England, better educated and more honest than the palace-protected army brass.” A cover story in Time reported that Naguib had finally brought “hope” to Egypt, and that, unlike his predecessor, the general lived in a “modest suburban home” like many middle-class American families, smoked cheap tobacco, and drove a “tiny German Opel on which he

30 Newsweek, 4 August, 1952, p. 35; and Time, 4 August, 1952, p. 22.
31 Acheson to Caffery, 25 July, 1952, RG 59, 611.75/7-2552; and Time, 18 August, 1952, p. 23.
33 Time, 4 August, 1952, p.26; and Newsweek, 4 August, 1952, p. 38.
still owed three or four payments."\textsuperscript{34} As can be seen from the earliest media coverage, the press, along with the Truman administration, was painting the old regime as weak, effeminate, and un-Western, while the new military leadership was strong, masculine, and Western as long as stability seemed imminent.

American officials believed that one of the most important steps that needed to be taken in order to stabilize Egypt was to end the rampant corruption that had epitomized previous regimes. The ultra-nationalistic Wafd party had been one of the key perpetrators of this crime under the old system of government. Its penchant for nationalistic dramatics had also contributed to Anglo-Egyptian problems and worsened overall stability. It should come as no surprise, then, that the Free Officers’ efforts to quell the Wafd’s power and influence were lauded in American circles. At first, the Free Officers had wanted to work with the Wafd, but following the political party’s refusal to go along with the new regime’s economic and land reforms the relationship soured even more.\textsuperscript{35} The Free Officers had been undertaking steps to force the Wafd to reform itself and jettison some of its more fiery leadership when General Naguib went on a campaign tour in the heavily populated Wafd country in the Egyptian delta. This move, through which the Free Officers maneuvered to undermine Wafd power, led American officials to describe Naguib as a “consummate politician,” who in the “finest campaign style” had achieved a “triumphant success.” It also did not hurt American objectives of stability that Naguib was also calling upon the Egyptian populace to remain calm and avoid

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Time}, 8 September, 1952, pp. 33-40.

\textsuperscript{35} For more information on the Free Officers’ struggles against the Wafd in the early months following the revolution, see Robert Stephens, \textit{Nasser: A Political Biography} (London: The Penguin Press, 1971), pp. 118-120.
disruptions in order to give the Free Officers time to settle the political scene in Cairo. This episode is of particular importance for our purposes because it vividly portrays the ways in which Egyptians were depicted as Western when they were helping to achieve the U.S. goal of stability. Ambassador Caffery even went so far as to say that the general had gone about his tour “in the best ‘American’ campaigning tradition,” which evidently entailed kissing babies, shaking hands, and visiting with the sick. The way in which Naguib was able to tailor his speeches to the audience at hand demonstrated to Caffery the general’s and his political advisors’ “skill.” The Free Officers’ successful excursion into Wafd country caused the ultra-nationalistic party to purge its “extremist” elements and led American officials to applaud Naguib’s “taming” of the Wafd. He had clearly passed a “major test of strength.”

Likewise, Naguib and the Free Officers’ other moves to end corruption in government and limit the power of the Wafd were met with praise as well. Caffery doted upon the new leader and touched upon the newfound strength in Egyptian politics when he called Naguib an “honest soldier” who was “in control of Egypt.” In contrast to the old regime, which had seemingly pushed Egypt close to “disaster,” the Free Officers were working in a “new atmosphere of efficiency and hard work” that bode well for Egypt and America’s future prospects. Free Officer actions abolishing political parties

36 Caffery to Acheson, 30 September, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/9-3052; Caffery to Acheson, 3 October, 1952, RG 59, 774.00(w)/10-352; Caffery to the Department of State, 6 October, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/10-652; and Gifford to Acheson, 9 October, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/10-952.
after some Wafd intrigues generated still more positive American appraisals, including
depictions of Naguib as a strong and “bold” Egyptian leader whom American officials
could take heart in because of his “firm intention to preserve” his power against political
rivals such as the Wafd.\textsuperscript{39}

Truman administration officials believed firmly that a successful settlement of the
Anglo-Egyptian dispute over the Sudan would hasten stability in the region. Therefore,
when it seemed that the new Egyptian regime was working toward this end, U.S.
policymakers and the media described it in terms that were reminiscent of descriptions
that Americans would bestow upon themselves as enlightened, Western leaders. At the
time of the revolution there was a large contingent of both Egyptian and British troops in
the Sudan. According to Yevgeny Primakov, “there was in Sudan a powerful movement
advocating unification with Egypt, and similar sentiment was widespread in Egypt.
However, Cairo made it a priority to recognize Sudan’s independence – in effect
abandoning anti-British activity there.”\textsuperscript{40} Egyptian overtures that pointed at allowing the
Sudan the right to self-determination, which had been a large stumbling block in the way
of an Anglo-Egyptian agreement, led American officials to comment on the military
junta’s “reasonable” mindset and “judicious point of view.” It was also helpful to the
relationship that the new leadership in Cairo was not squawking about Egyptian
sovereignty over the Sudan, and as \textit{Time} pointed out, had “refrained from the usual

\textsuperscript{39} Caffery to Acheson, 11 December, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/12-1152; Caffery to the Department of State, 13
December, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/12-1352; and Caffery to Acheson, 17 January, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/1-1753.
\textsuperscript{40} Yevgeny Primakov, \textit{Russia and the Arabs: Behind the Scenes in the Middle East from the Cold War to
rabble-rousing demands” that had evidently become associated with the old regime.\textsuperscript{41} Secretary of State Dean Acheson even remarked that he was “encouraged” by the “progress” that was being made in Egypt and that the new outlook toward the Sudanese issue was a “particularly hopeful sign.”\textsuperscript{42}

Likewise, American officials were convinced that Egypt would only become stable along American lines if communist elements within the country were controlled or purged altogether. As with other elements of stability, when it was suggested that the Free Officers were going to take steps to combat communism, U.S. policymakers conferred on Egyptians what Michelle Mart refers to as “insider status,” in which Americans viewed Egyptians as embodying the same cultural attributes of strength and Western values that they possessed themselves.\textsuperscript{43} General Naguib was granted “insider status” after he informed American officials that he intended to “resist the communist threat shoulder to shoulder with the United States.” The U.S. representative who documented the conversation made special mention of the fact that the Egyptian leader spoke English with relative ease and used it throughout the whole conversation, ostensibly demonstrating Naguib’s cultural affinity with his American guests. The general’s talk of combating communism was so impressive that the American official recording the meeting felt compelled to add his own impressions, describing Naguib as “an exceedingly impressive person” with a good sense of “political reality” and a “deep

\textsuperscript{41} Time, 18 August, 1952, 23.
\textsuperscript{42} Caffery to Acheson, 21 August, 1952, RG 59, 611.74/8-2152; Caffery to Acheson, 19 September, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/9-1952; and Memorandum of Conversation, 15 November, 1952, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri, Dean G. Acheson Papers: Box 71, Secretary of State File, 1945-1972, Folder: November, 1952.
\textsuperscript{43} Mart, p. 360.
sense of humility and modesty,” characteristics that all Americans would want in their own leaders. The Free Officers voiced the opinion that they would help the United States battle communism in Egypt on a number of occasions, always reiterating that Egyptian communists were the new regime’s largest enemy. Upon continually hearing declarations such as these, U.S. officials saw in the Free Officers kindred spirits who were full of “good intentions,” and “almost too good to be true.”

Reform took on many different forms during the Free Officers’ revolution in Egypt; apart from reforming government and getting rid of corruption and extremists, the new ruling junta also wanted to implement long needed economic and land reforms throughout Egypt. The new Egyptian regime passed the agrarian land reform law in early September, providing for “a modest but comprehensive agrarian reform, including the redistribution of land,” while also calling for a minimum wage for agricultural laborers and the legalization of agricultural trade unions. For their part, Truman administration officials welcomed these moves because they would help solidify Naguib’s government in power, which in turn would help to stabilize Egypt and the region. In American minds, though, it was hoped that these reforms would be undertaken in a way that did not upset the economic situation in Egypt so much that it led to instability. U.S. officials were pleased with the earnestness and determination that the Free Officers displayed toward bettering their peoples’ economic situation, and even more pleased when they

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45 Caffery to Acheson, 16 September, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/9-1652; and Caffery to Acheson, 7 August, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/8-752.
believed that the Egyptian leaders would be taking a “constructive” approach and “did not wish to act hastily” in their pursuit of reform.\textsuperscript{47} The steps toward stability that would be taken by sound economic and land reforms were “encouraging” to officials in Washington and were seen as signs of a strong and healthy new government in Cairo.\textsuperscript{48}

In contrast to the positive language that the Truman administration used to describe Egyptians when they seemed to be working toward stability, there were also instances in which the Americans depicted Egyptians as “outsiders” or “Others” when they appeared to be doing things that hampered this U.S. goal. Earlier, we saw how the Egyptians’ determination to combat communism in their nation, with help from the United States, led U.S. officials to describe them in positive language. In that particular instance the Egyptians were dealing with communism in a way that American officials believed would help lead to stability in Egypt, but this was not always the case. U.S. officials came to very different conclusions about how well the Egyptians were handling communism when it seemed that a member of the Regency Council (the ruling clique of military officers) was not overly upset at the fact that a number of Egyptians were attending a peace conference in Vienna, and in fact, had actually allowed them to go. This was troublesome to State Department officers because the conference was really a communist affair. The Egyptian Director of Military Intelligence’s nonchalance in this case led U.S. officials to refer to his actions as reflecting “naiveté.” This type of condescending language was used to describe Egyptians on numerous occasions when

\textsuperscript{47} Caffery to Acheson, 19 September, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/9-1952; and Caffery to Acheson, 12 September, 1952, RG 59, 774.00(w)/9-1252.

\textsuperscript{48} Bruce to Caffery, 21 August, 1952, RG 59, 611.74/8-2152; and Memorandum of a Conversation, 8 September, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/9-852.
American officials believed that they were not taking the right steps to quash communism within Egypt and were being “taken-in” by left-leaning elements.49

Officials in Washington and Cairo were also given pause when it was learned that in a moment of “haste” the Free Officers had released some communists from prison. Ambassador Caffery was quick to blame this incident on the “woefully ignorant” new Egyptian leadership, especially when it came to understanding the global communist threat.50 This was not a mistake that a Western leader who was experienced in the East vs. West worldwide struggle would have made, and thus, Caffery used descriptive language to point out this negative aspect of the new Egyptian leadership. As we will see, this would continue to be a point of American discussion throughout the Eisenhower administration as well.

As we have seen, in certain instances, the new Egyptian regime’s position on the Anglo-Egyptian debates over the Sudan question caused American officials to laud them for their Western attributes, but this was not always the case. Near the end of Anglo-Egyptian discussion over the Sudan, American officials were worried over Free Officer delays in responding to new British proposals for fear that they would lead to a stalemate in the negotiations. Ambassador Caffery took Dean Acheson’s advice that he should remind the Egyptians that American support would not be forthcoming if the Free Officers undertook “unreasonable action tending to frustrate a Sudan agreement.”

49 McClintock to the Department of State, 27 December, 1952, RG 59, 774.001/12-2752; Caffery to Acheson, 22 August, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/8-2252; and Caffery to Acheson, 14 September, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/9-1452.
Caffery also went so far during this period as to urge “moderation” and “patience” upon the Egyptians lest they let a great opportunity to inch closer to stability slip from reach.\footnote{Caffery to Acheson, 18 January, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/1-1853; Acheson to Caffery, 16 January, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/1-1653; and Caffery to Acheson, 16 January, 1953, RG 59, 774.00/1-1653.}

While praiseworthy on many occasions because of their potential for helping implement stability, American officials were also quite concerned at times with the economic reforms that the new government in Egypt was planning to implement. The Free Officers were anxious to get some far-reaching reforms enacted in order to give something to the people and help cement their leadership. For their part, American officials worried that overly ambitious reforms could launch the Egyptian economy into a frenzy and topple the new regime in which the Truman administration had placed so much hope. In instances when the Free Officers’ tactics on land reform caused concern for U.S. officials along these lines, Ambassador Caffery found himself questioning their efficiency and had to “counsel” the military leaders in heavy-handed and paternalistic fashion to proceed more slowly.\footnote{Caffery to Acheson, 22 August, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/8-2252; and Caffery to Acheson, 27 August, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/8-2752.} The ambassador also felt the need in these instances to blame most of the economic problems on the Egyptians’ novice-like knowledge and experience in these matters, which manifested itself in a “lack [of] sufficient competent and trustworthy supervisors.”\footnote{Caffery to Acheson, 25 October, 1952, RG 59, 774.00(w)/10-2552; and Caffery to Acheson, 19 August, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/8-1952.} It seemed to American officials that the Free Officers believed they could wave a magic wand and have solid reforms enacted, a belief that U.S. personnel blamed on their impatience and lack of realism.\footnote{Caffery to Acheson, 11 August, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/8-1152; and Caffery to Acheson, 15 August, 1952, RG 59, 774.00(w)/8-1552.}
The question of land reform went hand in hand with the regime’s need for Western economic assistance in order to solidify its precarious hold on power. The ruling junta again frustrated Ambassador Caffery when it was slow to explain exactly what it needed in terms of economic aid packages. The longer this situation persisted, the greater the chances for unrest within Egypt. Caffery blamed most of the problems inherent in this episode on the Egyptians’ “economic ignorance” and the “inability of the young colonels to formulate a sensible program for economic development.” The ambassador also blamed Egypt’s economic troubles on the lack of the Free Officers’ experience in such matters.55 These examples demonstrate how easy it was for American officials to depict Egyptians in negative terms when they seemed to be acting in ways that threatened the U.S. goal of stability.

A New Hope for Middle East Defense

In addition to stability, the Middle East Defense Organization was the other U.S. goal in the Middle East. The ever-changing Egyptian political and economic atmosphere relating to stability in the months following the coup led U.S. officials to use both positive and negative language to describe the Free Officers. While both types of language were used to depict Egyptians in relation to MEDO as well, the situation was one in which American officials were much more inclined to view the military leadership

55 Caffery to Acheson, 26 November, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/11-2652; and Caffery to Acheson, 18 August, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/8-1852.
in Cairo in the same way that they saw themselves, which was reflected in the language. This was due to the fact that, although MEDO was never enacted, the Free Officers vowed time and again that they would be in a position to join some type of defense arrangement once their internal situation was solidified and Anglo-Egyptian disputes were resolved. Such declarations led American officials to speak about the Egyptian leadership in glowingly Western and “insider” terms when referenced with these statements on MEDO in mind. Correspondingly, Naguib was a “reasonable” and “skillful” leader who represented America’s “best chance” in Egypt. Likewise, the Central Intelligence Agency described the new leadership as “honest,” “energetic,” and genuine when the Egyptians indicated a willingness to align themselves with the West.

In another instance, one leader of the Free Officers impressed an American embassy official with his “moderation, modesty and pleasant reserve” and was also described as a “very good type of intelligent staff officer” after it had become apparent that the Egyptians were seriously considering joining some type of Middle East defense with the United States. A favorable disposition toward MEDO also led to descriptions of the Egyptian leadership as strong. In one American official’s mind, such a development would be “the most hopeful thing that could happen for Egypt.”

These “encouraging” signs, as far as MEDO was concerned, led Western officials to believe that the Naguib regime afforded them the best opportunity for “working out

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satisfactory arrangements” for a defensive pact throughout the region.\textsuperscript{57} The Middle East Defense Organization, or a version of it, had been a dream of U.S. policymakers for some time, and expressed willingness on the part of Egypt, which was so critical to a regional defense’s inception, filled Western language with praise for the new regime in Cairo.

Due to the fact that the Free Officers and General Naguib indicated their willingness to discuss joining MEDO once their other problems were solved, there was very little negative language regarding this U.S. strategic interest. Such language did exist, however, and as was the case regarding stability, it resulted from instances when the Egyptians seemed to be acting counter to the formation of the West’s much sought after defense arrangement. For example, in one case in particular it seemed that the Egyptians might have had a problem with MEDO because of British involvement in the defensive pact. The Egyptians were balking on this point because they were desperately trying to get the British out of Egypt, and MEDO seemed like a measure that would do just the opposite. In seeking to diffuse such sentiment, American officials, in true Orientalist fashion, stated that the United States needed to become the “conscience” of Egypt’s leaders when “reminding” them that there were much larger world and regional issues at stake than their personal squabble with the British.\textsuperscript{58}

In one other instance, U.S. officials doubted the young Egyptian military officers “turned apprentice statesmen” because they did not seem to understand that U.S. military assistance would be tied into Egyptian acquiescence on MEDO and not a hand out.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{57} Acheson to Caffery, 1 August, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/8-152; and Gifford to the Department of State, 3 January, 1953, \textit{FRUS, 1952-1954}, vol. 9, pp. 1946-47.
\textsuperscript{58} Caffery to Acheson, 9 September, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/9-952.
\textsuperscript{59} Hahn, \textit{The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt}, pp. 149-153.
Caffery believed the misunderstanding could be cleared up, though, after he and other Westerners finished their “basic job in diplomatic education” and helped the Egyptians to understand Western proposals.\textsuperscript{60} While the language in this instance is negative, it was also one of the rare occasions that the Free Officers’ position on MEDO troubled the Truman administration during the first months of the new regimes reign. The main reason for this is that the Egyptians, while possibly causing some minor problems on one point or another, never faltered in their statements of willingness to join MEDO once domestic issues and the Anglo-Egyptian disputes were put to bed.

**Conclusion**

As this chapter has demonstrated, Truman administration officials’ and the mainstream media’s perceptions of Egyptians, and the language that they used to vocalize those perceptions, took on both positive and negative connotations in relation to Western cultural norms and what was perceived to be masculine or feminine, Western or backward. Behind the language’s fluidity lay America’s twin strategic interests of stability in Egypt and throughout the Middle East and formation of a Middle East Defense Organization. As we have seen, due to their prior failure to help implement these goals and their uselessness following the coup, members of the old regime were repeatedly described in negative language that painted them as weak, corrupt, childlike, \textsuperscript{60} Caffery to Acheson, 8 October, 1952, RG 59, 611.74/10-852; and McClintock to the Department of State, 10 October, 1952, RG 59, 10-1052.
and backward. Depictions of the old regime were static, or fixed, because they could no longer do anything that would benefit the United States and the attainment of stability and MEDO, nor had they before the coup. Other examples vividly demonstrate that when U.S. officials and the media believed that the Free Officers were working toward hastening stability in Egypt, the words and phrases that were used to describe them were rife with masculine and Western depictions. In contrast, when American policymakers viewed the Egyptians as acting counter to their goal of a stable Egypt, they were categorized as feminine and backward, thus placing them in the realm of outsiders or “Others.” Likewise, MEDO also drove the type of language that was used, but due to the Egyptians’ more consistently favorable attitude toward joining this defensive arrangement, we find a much more Western and masculine view of the Free Officers in this regard. There were occasions in which American officials were inclined to depict the Egyptians in feminine or Orientalist terms as far as MEDO went, but such instances were rare.

Apart from the old regime, all in all, we find an ambiguity to the language throughout the period of the Truman administration’s relationship to the revolutionary regime in Cairo. When Harry Truman left office, stability, while closer than before, was still not certain in Egypt, resulting in the vacillating language that has been described. While MEDO was still not a reality, nor would it become one, the prospects for its implementation looked better than they had six months earlier because of the continuous assurances of the new Egyptian leadership that they would be willing to join once they finalized agreements over outstanding disputes with the British and solidified their
political hold within Egypt. Thus, the tendency of U.S. officials was to depict the Egyptians in positive terms, though there were some instances when American disillusionment brought out negative wording and phrases. What the documents do show with certainty is that preconceived cultural perceptions of Egyptians as Others did not drive the language, nor were they fixed. While they were depicted in this negative way many times, there are too many instances in which they are seen as masculine and Western for negative stereotypes to be driving foreign policy. The record bears forth a much more plausible explanation – Egypt’s relationship to America’s strategic interests of stability and Middle Eastern defense in any given situation was the driving force behind whether underlying positive or negative cultural assumptions were used. In other words, the language U.S. officials used was not static or fixed but instead depended on how faithfully the Egyptians were hewing to American goals for the region.

Beginning on January 20, 1953, responsibility for U.S. foreign relations would fall upon President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles. While there were hopeful signs in Egypt that pointed toward the possibility of stability and the formation of MEDO, there was still much to be determined. As we will see in the following pages, some of the strategic interests may have changed, but U.S. interests continued to drive the language.
CHAPTER TWO:

Eisenhower and Dulles Tackle Egypt: Old and New Strategic Issues, But the LanguageRemains the Same

World War II hero Dwight David Eisenhower brought a new outlook on U.S. foreign policy to the presidency when he took the oath of office on January 20, 1953. After the Truman administration’s initial Cold War successes with the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the Berlin Airlift, the Republican Party and the public had vilified it for the Soviet atomic test and the “loss” of China in 1949. Following the opportunity to reassert the containment policy after war broke out in Korea in 1950, early battlefield victories gave way to Communist China’s entrance into the war and a stalemate that would not end until Eisenhower was in office. Eisenhower pledged during the campaign to end the Korean War, and he and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, promised a more aggressive “Rollback” policy in Eastern Europe to supplant the containment policy. Eisenhower and Dulles may have preached the need to implement a new “policy of boldness” and liberation vis-à-vis the captive nations of Eastern Europe, but they “never departed from Truman’s course in Europe and certainly were not about to provoke a war
by invading Russia’s sphere of influence.”¹ As we saw in the last chapter, American interests in the Middle East had grown considerably throughout the Truman administration, a trend that would continue under Eisenhower. As Robert A. Divine has succinctly pointed out, it seemed inevitable that under Eisenhower’s watch, the United States would have to deal with the Middle East on a much grander scale than ever before. The factors leading to this conclusion were many indeed, as Divine demonstrates by painting a picture of what awaited the Eisenhower administration in the Middle East:

England and France, the European nations which had dominated the Middle East in the past, were no longer able to exercise their former authority. The French had retreated from Syria and Lebanon after World War II and were approaching a dangerous civil war in Algeria; the British faced a new nationalist regime in Egypt that was demanding the end of imperial control and the eventual take-over of the Suez Canal, long considered the lifeline of the British Empire. The emergence of an independent Israel in 1948 and its subsequent victory against its Arab neighbors had led only to greater tensions in the area.²

Given the region’s vast oil fields and proximity to the Soviet Union, the Eisenhower policymaking team had no choice but to view the Middle East as an area of great strategic interest. This view was solidified when Dulles selected the region for one

² Divine, p. 71; William Stivers also discusses the Eisenhower administration’s role in the Middle East. He believes that U.S. interests in the Middle East should all be viewed in a Eurocentric light, and that America’s initiatives in the region were contradictory and unattainable. Stivers sees access to Middle Eastern oil, which kept Western Europe’s economy and military going, as the main U.S. objective in the region. For more information see William Stivers, “Eisenhower and the Middle East,” in Melanson and Mayers, pp. 192-219.
of his earliest official foreign trips in 1953. As was the case under Truman, Egypt was to be an integral part of the United States’ plans for the Middle East.

A number of strategic interests, dealing with Egypt alone and with the region as a whole, would come into play throughout the administration’s first two years. Like the Truman administration before it, the newly elected Eisenhower team placed Egyptian stability high on its list of strategic interests for the region. In American policymakers’ and the media’s minds, a stable Egypt would be less susceptible to communist intrigue and more likely to side with the West in the ongoing Cold War. A corollary to stability in Egypt was a successful conclusion to the Anglo-Egyptian dispute over the Suez Canal zone. According to Gail Meyer, a British base containing eighty thousand foreign troops on Egyptian soil continued to be a hotbed of contention between Egypt and Great Britain and a “primary source of regional instability.”3 As Peter Hahn has pointed out, American policymakers “were concerned that unsatisfied nationalistic aspirations were leading the developing world toward a neutral orientation in the Cold War and that the unresolved Anglo-Egyptian base dispute fomented rampant nationalism in Egypt.”4 Nationalism and neutralism, according to Eisenhower and Dulles, could lead to instability in Egypt and the region and make it much more difficult to align the Middle East with the West in the Cold War. To defeat such forces, settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian base dispute was a top priority.

The Truman administration had been a strong proponent of the Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO), but a regional Western defensive strategy along these

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3 Meyer, p. 49.
4 Hahn, The United States, Great Britain and Egypt, p. 156.
lines died a relatively quick death under the Eisenhower administration. Initially, Republican policymakers showed the same inclination toward MEDO, but new strategic imperatives left the old notion of a defense centered upon the Suez Canal base outdated. While this was the case, the United States was still very much interested in developing some sort of defensive shield in the Middle East, hopefully with Egyptian support. Along with this strategic interest went American hopes that the Egyptian regime would become more strongly pro-Western and go along with Dulles’ new plans for a defensive shield along the “northern tier.”

Toward the end of 1954, the Eisenhower administration also began earnestly looking for ways to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute that had been ongoing since the 1948 war. Seen as a way to further stabilize the region, peace between the Arabs and Israelis was a key Eisenhower administration strategic objective. To this end, American policymakers, along with their British counterparts, began to implement a plan for peace, codenamed Project Alpha, during the final months of 1954. Nasser, whom many saw as the de facto leader of the Arab world, received a starring role.

Stability, an end to the Anglo-Egyptian base dispute, the formation of a pro-Western defensive shield in the Middle East, and an end to the Arab-Israeli dispute constituted the core of America’s Middle Eastern strategic interests in the Eisenhower administration’s early years. As was the case during the Truman administration, American policymakers’ and the media’s descriptive language toward Egyptians was based upon where they stood in relation to American strategic interests. Language was not solelyemasculating or Orientalist, nor was it singularly masculine and Western.
Instead, the language used to describe Egyptians during this period was once again fluid in nature and depended upon the realization, or lack thereof, of American goals for the region. When Egyptians were apparently moving their nation closer toward stability in American officials’ and the media’s minds, they were described in positively gendered and Western terms. Likewise, when these same officials, or members of groups vying for power, were acting in a way that threatened that same stability, depictions of them tended to be more effeminate and Orientalist. This trend continued throughout the period in regard to all of the Eisenhower administration’s strategic interests and the Egyptians’ relationship to those interests. When it seemed that the Free Officers were helping to achieve an agreement to the Anglo-Egyptian base dispute, adding a positive influence to the formation of a Middle East defense, or expressed a willingness to move forward with an Israeli peace settlement, American policymakers’ and the media’s language was positive. Conversely, when the Egyptians tended to be working against these same goals, language was both negatively gendered and Orientalist when compared to Western descriptive “norms.”

The Ongoing American Desire for Stability

As was the case under the Truman administration, Eisenhower policymakers felt that Egyptian stability would be a key element to fulfilling American strategic desires in
the Middle East region. According to U.S. policymakers, ending the Anglo-Egyptian dispute over the Suez Canal zone, working out some sort of Middle Eastern defensive shield that was oriented toward the West, and seeing tangible gains in the Arab-Israeli peace process all hinged upon Egyptian stability. As had been the case earlier, the Eisenhower administration’s and the media’s language when describing Egyptians in relation to their nation’s internal stability was not static or fixed, but fluid and changing to fit the situation. Once again, we find that when Egyptian leaders were acting in a positive way toward the consistent attainment of stability, American depictions of them were positive and Western in nature. But when stability was called into question, or a group that threatened stability was discussed, language became negatively gendered and Orientalist in order to paint these out of line Egyptians as “Others.”

Eisenhower administration officials spoke positively about the new Egyptian regime in the weeks following the inauguration. Stability was foremost on Jefferson Caffery’s mind when he noted that the “Naguib regime is for [the] present more firmly in control than ever” following the arrest of a number of individuals who were plotting against the new regime.5 Events over the course of the week that celebrated the new regime’s six month anniversary and coincided with the one year anniversary of the burning of Cairo (see chapter 1) further emboldened the ambassador to speak in masculine and Western terms when describing Egyptians. Throngs of adoring Egyptians were “good natured and orderly” and demonstrated Naguib’s popularity. Just as important, though, the regime’s ability to arrest a group in possession of explosives

5 Caffery to the Department of State, 22 January, 1953, RG 59, 774.00(w)/1-2253.
demonstrated their “commendable alertness.” The overall sense of stability and calm that prevailed throughout seemed to be a harbinger of the Free Officers’ growing foreign relations acumen as well. Caffery reported that the “Egyptian military [was] well aware of [the] adverse effect disturbances would have had on foreign relations. Their own restraint, plus [the] failure of any of [the] regime’s political enemies to cause trouble is [the] best commentary I can offer on [the] present international security situation.”\(^6\) In order to hammer his point home, the ambassador also contrasted the present situation with the previous year’s “ugly” events, thus demonstrating how much more stable the nation had become while also inadvertently reminding Washington officials how un-Western things had been under the old regime.\(^7\) The media also picked up on this train of thought when it set the joyous and fun-loving crowd that had gathered for the celebration against the “bloody, costly anti-foreign riots which hastened the fall of the old regime.”\(^8\)

American officials also saw continued stabilization efforts, such as the founding of a headquarters for the Free Officers’ political party and leniency toward old regime politicians, as praiseworthy actions. The Liberation Rally, which mobilized a portion of the working class in favor of the new regime and helped fill the political void left by the outlawing of old political parties, demonstrated the Free Officers’ strength and determination to purge the country of many of the older, more nationalistic, and anti-Western political groups.\(^9\) American diplomats praised General Naguib’s speech at the

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\(^6\) Caffery to Dulles, 27 January, 1953, RG 59, 774.00/1-2753.

\(^7\) Caffery to the Department of State, 30 January, 1953 RG 59, 774.00(w)/1-3053.

\(^8\) *Time*, 2 February, 1953, p. 27.

ceremony as demonstrating his “ability to speak simply and directly to the people” while at the same time being “forceful, yet restrained.” In this case, Naguib was helping to further the American goal of stability with a demonstration of his calculated strength and the political ability to connect with the people, which led Americans reporting on the scene to describe him in many of the same ways they would describe American politicians. This was also the case when the Free Officers showed Western-style diplomatic and political restraint toward their former enemies. In cracking down on a corrupt former member of the old regime and crony of Farouk, the new regime was solidifying its position in the country and displaying an ability to be “remarkably lenient” when it handed down a relatively light sentence. Actions later in the year along these same lines elicited a comparable response from Caffery, who called a Revolutionary Command Council decision to commute the death sentence of former Prime Minister Ibrahim Abd Al Hadi to life in prison a “wise” decision because doing otherwise would have riled public and foreign opinion against the Free Officers.

A battle for power between General Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser, the real mastermind behind the Revolution, that began in early 1953 threatened the Eisenhower administration’s goal of Egyptian stability. Naguib found himself in the position of premier and president after the RCC abolished the Egyptian monarchy and declared a republic on June 18, 1953, while Nasser was given the role of vice-premier and minister of interior. As we will see, later events would decidedly change American policymakers’

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10 Caffery to the Department of State, 7 February, 1953, RG 59, 774.00/2-753.
11 Caffery to the Department of State, 17 February, 1953, RG 59, 774.00/2-1753.
12 Caffery to the Department of State, 5 October, 1953, RG 59, 774.00/10-553.
and the media’s language, but, hoping for the best outcome, initial reports from Cairo heralded the stabilizing qualities of both men. Naguib, who was the symbol of a “new” Egypt, not to be confused with the corrupt old regime, had gained “enhanced prestige and popularity as head of state,” a role for which he was “eminently suited.” For his part, Nasser, who had “always been [the] brains and sparkplug of [the] movement,” was a “reassuring” addition to the ministry of interior from a security standpoint for U.S. diplomats and policymakers because he appreciated the importance of protecting foreign lives and property and had personally been keeping the Muslim Brotherhood from causing trouble in the Canal Zone. From Caffery’s vantage point, Naguib’s popularity and Nasser’s ability to keep the masses and troublemakers in check had a stabilizing effect that in turn brought out Western depictions of strong and wise leaders. As we have seen, and will continue to see, while the Egyptian government was not perfect, when it suited American policymakers’ goals of stability and anti-extremist nature it was depicted in a positive light. This type of attitude was not new to American history. As David Schmitz demonstrates, officials in Washington often chose to support right-wing governments “as a defense against democratic or left-wing movements that appeared either unstable or prone to communist ideology.” Events in early 1953 were a perfect example of American actions in this regard: as long as Egypt remained stable and anti-communist, U.S. officials would continue to speak positively about Naguib and Nasser even if they ran a sham “republic.”

13 Caffery to Dulles, 22 June, 1953, RG 59, 774.00/6-2253; Schmitz, p. 3; for more information on Nasser and Naguib’s power struggle and American thoughts on the subject see Hahn, The United States, Great Britain and Egypt, p. 157.
The Free Officers’ success in keeping the Muslim Brotherhood from causing too much trouble was brought to the attention of both *Time* and *Newsweek* readers as well following the arrest of numerous members of the rival group. Reports of clashes between the brotherhood and the revolutionary regime in early 1954 depicted a strong and Western-like government, contrasted against an Orientalist and overly emotional Muslim Brotherhood. Writing about the melee that took place between the two groups, the weekly news magazines described the brotherhood as “reactionary” and full of “cutthroats and idealists” who wanted to “expel the foreigners and return Egypt to the simple brotherhood of primitive, eighth-century Islam.” In fact, the word “fanatic,” or “fanatical” was used three times in the two short articles. The Free Officers were seen differently then the “Red infiltrated extremist” group, because they possessed the “decision and strength” to quickly answer the challenge the brotherhood posed. This style of contrasting language can also be seen in American depictions of the Shah of Iran and Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq during the Iranian oil nationalization crisis. As has been noted, Heiss, Foran, and Dorman and Farhang describe the ways in which the American media depicted the Western-leaning Shah in positive terms, against Orientalist and effeminate visions of the nationalist, and supposedly left-leaning, Mossadeq. In one last literary flare, *Time* succinctly summed up the differences between the two groups when it wrote that “there could be no peace between the fundamentally progressive, Western-influenced Naguib regime and the West-hating, reactionary Brotherhood.”

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The media continued to speak about old regime members in negative terms when *Time* described the auctioning off of a large portion of ex-King Farouk’s personal belongings, which indirectly denoted the differences between the former Egyptian ruler and the new men in power. This reporting was reminiscent of stories that appeared in the early days following the revolution, when Westerners and the Egyptian populace first learned about Farouk’s truly opulent lifestyle. *Time* referred to Farouk as a “pack-rat,” who “had cached everything he could beg, buy and demand.” The article also made sure to quote the British auctioneer who had come to the conclusion that the former monarch had “preferred small objects he could carry and fondle,” going on to also remark that “he was a child in many ways.” One final jab at Farouk, underscoring the story that Americans had just read, came in the form of an update on what the former Egyptian ruler was up to now that he was no longer hoarding trinkets in Cairo. It seemed that Farouk was busy brushing off a bill collector who had come to retrieve payment on a $5,000 underwear bill and driving to Monte Carlo “with his latest collector’s item, brunette Irma Capece Minutolo, aged 18.”\(^\text{15}\) The young royal might not have had a country to rule anymore, but apparently he was still trying to maintain the grandiose lifestyle that he had been used to, a sharp contrast to the new leaders in Egypt who were cracking down on just this type of greed and corruption.

The power struggle between Mohammed Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser took a turn for the worse in early 1954 when the RCC deposed Naguib as president and premier. Naguib was no longer content being the figurehead leader of the Free Officers and

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wanted the actual power that went along with his title. In order to gain power at the expense of Nasser and the Free Officers, Naguib began seeking out support from such accursed groups as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Marxists.\textsuperscript{16} Not knowing how the situation would affect the regime’s stability, Ambassador Caffery’s language was, in many respects, initially ambiguous. As events unfolded and it was unclear whether the general would remain deposed, the resident American diplomat in Cairo noted that he was “essentially good, honest, patriotic, loyal, lovable, [and] sincere,” but also “weak.” While the jury was still out on some levels in regard to Naguib, as is apparent in Caffery’s vacillating language, the fact that Nasser seemed to embody some of the qualities that the general lacked brightened the situation. The former, for the moment, president and premier had many good qualities about him, but he unfortunately lacked the requisite strength to lead. In contrast, Caffery noted that “at 36 Nasir is already head and shoulders above Naguib in ability and strength of character.”\textsuperscript{17} Any leadership and stability crisis was avoided when Naguib was restored as president on February 27 following a showdown between the RCC and a large military contingent loyal to Naguib.\textsuperscript{18} The situation seemed to get even more secure for the Eisenhower administration when the Free Officers announced in early March that they planned to restore parliamentary government and begin elections for a Constituent Assembly within

\textsuperscript{16} Baker, pp. 32-33.
\textsuperscript{17} Caffery to Dulles, 26 February, 1954, RG 59, 774.00/2-2654.
\textsuperscript{18} When Naguib returned to the presidency in late February, Nasser ended up becoming premier. Using his position, Nasser led an internal purge of RCC and military officials loyal to Naguib, thus setting the stage for his eventual takeover in mid-April when Naguib stepped down following a nervous breakdown and the loss of most of his internal support. Naguib would stay on as president until an assassination attempt on Nasser in November allowed the regime to tie Naguib to the Muslim Brotherhood, the group from which the assassins came, and finally remove him from the presidency. For more information on the Nasser-Naguib power struggle see Stephens, pp. 123-128 and 136.
three months. The RCC’s recognition of the changed political climate within Egypt was a “wise” move that had revealed the party’s growing Western astuteness in regard to domestic politics, at least in the eyes of American policymakers.19

The media toed the same line as the Eisenhower administration when it came to describing the events that transpired in late February between Naguib and Nasser. Just as American diplomats in Cairo had done, the media spoke of Naguib in both masculine and Western terms, as well as in effeminate and Orientalist terms because he had almost upset the precarious balance of stability in Egypt. The media wrote that the general had an “impeccable reputation for honesty and integrity,” had been a “hero” during the Palestinian War, and had provided “maturity” for the young Free Officers during the revolution’s early days. Hopes for future stability, and the fact that the internal ruckus had been quieted for the moment and stability reestablished, elicited praiseworthy language from the media. Naguib’s apparent “obsession against being considered a mere front man,” however, was not going unnoticed and led to discussion of his momentary lapse into effeminate emotionalism. While the American media’s linguistic ambiguity reflected the uncertain nature of the situation, it can also be explained by what John Foran calls “Orientalism-in-reverse,” which coincided with Time’s depiction of the Shah of Iran from 1951 to 1953. In this case, Naguib’s “integrity” and “honest” Western orientations earn him praise from the media, but his lack of strength at times left him vulnerable to negative language as well.20

19 Caffery to Dulles, 6 March, 1954, RG 59, 774.00/3-654.
20 Newsweek, 8 March, 1954, p.32; and Foran, pp. 168-69.
Following the signing of the final Anglo-Egyptian agreement in October 1954, which brought to an end the ongoing feud between Egypt and Britain over the Suez Canal Base and the British troops stationed on Egyptian soil, Ambassador Caffery addressed growing concerns over what direction Egypt and its people would head now that they did not have something as all consuming as the Suez Canal base dispute to deal with.\textsuperscript{21} The American diplomat felt it was imperative for the Egyptian government to re-channel the Egyptian masses’ energies toward stabilizing endeavors. Caffery believed that Prime Minister Nasser was pushing the nation in the right direction when he stated in a speech that the new goals of the regime would be the “‘eradication of ignorance, disease, fanaticism and poverty.’” Heartened by this speech, the ambassador remarked that “as guiding principles,” the United States “could not ask for more.”\textsuperscript{22} Caffery again noted a few days later that Nasser’s remarks, and his intention to tackle domestic issues, seemed “well balanced and reasonable.”\textsuperscript{23}

Nasser also impressed the American ambassador in Cairo with his reaction to an attempted assassination during a speech in Alexandria. The would-be-assassin was identified as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, but instead of seeing the failed assassination attempt as evidence of growing Brotherhood strength, Caffery saw it as a possible means to further America’s goal of stability. Nasser exhibited “great presence of mind” by telling the crowd to stay in place while he made “political capital” out of the situation by preaching against the Brotherhood, Caffery reported, actions that garnered

\textsuperscript{21} For a detailed account of the Suez Canal Base negotiations see Thornhill, pp. 155-206.
\textsuperscript{22} Caffery to the Department of State, 21 October, 1954, RG 59, 641.74/10-2154.
\textsuperscript{23} Caffery to the Department of State, 23 October, 1954, RG 59, 774.00/10-2354.
Nasser even greater popularity. Moreover, Caffery viewed the incident as a possible stepping-off point for a new offensive against the anti-Western Muslim Brotherhood.\textsuperscript{24} In fact, the ambassador’s hopes came true when a number of Brotherhood members were brought to trial. One got the sense of a more stable Egypt when reading media coverage of the trials. Juxtaposed against a strong and Western regime that had had the courage and acumen to stand up to the “fanatic Moslem Brotherhood” who “used to be the terror of Egypt,” those on trial were depicted as weaklings and frauds. \textit{Time} went on to describe a scene in which “Egyptians openly laughed at the Brotherhood as, one by one, its high dignitaries, shorn of their imposing beards, shambled forward to stammer confessions and recriminations like so many cringing schoolboys.”\textsuperscript{25} The Free Officers had turned a group that had once threatened the country’s stability into a laughing stock.

Eisenhower administration officials believed that eliminating all communist elements from Egypt would also greatly enhance the nation’s chances for stability. With this in mind, when revolutionary regime members talked about or took anti-communist measures, administration officials and the media spoke and wrote about them in positive terms. Two instances of anti-communist tendencies that warranted the media’s Western-style praise of Gamal Abdel Nasser occurred when he ousted members of the ruling clique for harboring communist leanings. The first took place when a member of the Free Officers, Captain Yussef Sadek, asserted that the revolutionary movement was communist. When Nasser questioned the man, it was reported that Sadek “hotheadedly” admitted to his remarks and even began demanding that a number of anti-communists

\textsuperscript{24} Caffery to the Department of State, 29, October, 1954, RG 59, 774.00/10-2954.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Time}, 6 December, 1954, p. 41.
within the RCC be dismissed and that imprisoned communists be freed. In sharp contrast to the overly emotional hotheadedness of the left-leaning Sadek, Nasser, in a calm and collected Western manner, “gently” told the captain that he needed a break and dismissed him from the ruling body.\textsuperscript{26} The other confrontation between Nasser and communist sympathizers among the RCC took place when Khaled Moheddine, who had been behind earlier efforts to stand up to Nasser in his internal struggle with General Naguib, was sent to Italy and then given an extended European vacation. This expulsion of another pro-communist from the Free Officers occurred once “Nasser was strong enough once more” and “was another measure of the gentleness” of the Free Officers’ revolution. In order to ensure that their readers saw the difference between the leftist Moheddine and the rest of the Free Officers, \textit{Time} went on to comment that “had Major Mohedine [sic] and his Communist friends come out on top, General Nasser would probably have ended up in some place far less pleasant than Italy in the Spring.”\textsuperscript{27}

The media were not the only ones to use Western and masculine rhetoric to describe the Free Officers when the Egyptians were showing signs of ridding their nation of Communist influence. American officials in Cairo were pleased when it appeared that the RCC would be getting rid of two “opportunists with extremist tendencies” from within their realm, one of whom was the minister of the interior. Even more positive was the fact that the RCC was looking for a new interior leader who would “conduct [an]
effective anti-Communist operation.” This possibility was very “encouraging” to the Eisenhower administration.²⁸

The Truman administration had placed much importance on economic reforms as a means to gain stability in Egypt during its short period of interaction with the Egyptian revolutionaries, and the Eisenhower administration was no different. Reforms in the Egyptian economic system were seen as a way to boost the economy (if done right), provide more jobs, and, in turn, make the threat of the masses turning toward communism or against the new regime much more remote. Efforts made toward this stabilizing factor were met with positive American language.

RCC plans in July 1953 to increase business activity, heighten levels of employment, and balance the nation’s budget were “encouraging” signs. Efforts along these lines demonstrated that the Free Officers were ready to make a “serious and courageous attack” on one of their country’s biggest problems. Caffery also noted how pleased the British were with these moves as well, commenting to Secretary Dulles that a British Embassy official had commented “favorably on [the] RCC’s realistic attempts” at reform. State Department officials within Washington believed that the Eisenhower administration should give “strong support to the recently announced new economic program” in Egypt.²⁹

²⁸ Caffery to Dulles, 18 May, 1953, RG 59, 774.00/5-1853.
²⁹ Caffery to the Department of State, 3 July, 1953, RG 59, 774.00(w)/7-353; Caffery to Dulles, 7 July, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/7-753; and Schwinn to Sanger, 9 July, 1953, RG 59, 611.74/7-953.
Members of the State Department’s Near Eastern Affairs Bureau (NEA) reported that a “violent social explosion” could take place in Egypt if “widespread economic and social reforms” were not undertaken, but all was not lost. NEA officials believed that, The present government of General Naguib has offered the first hope that these reforms will be seriously undertaken by an Egyptian Government. This government has set up a well-conceived land reform program, abolished formal social differentiation, broken the power of corrupt political parties, made impotent political leaders who whipped up extremist and xenophobic nationalism for their own ends, and most important, has recognized that it is largely up to the Egyptians themselves to settle their social and economic problems. Largely because of this realistic attitude, the United States has publicly offered the Naguib Government its support and cooperation.

It seemed that a strong government, with Western-style programs and efficiency, had taken the reigns in Egypt. To underscore just what these reforms meant for the American objective of stability in the region, NEA planners suggested that “the success of this Government in meeting Egypt’s problems would greatly advance United States interests in the Near East as a whole.”

While these types of Egyptian actions were followed with positive American language, such was not always the case. In situations where Egyptians seemed to be pushing their country toward the Eisenhower administration’s goal of stability, American officials tended to see a little bit of themselves in their Arab counterparts. This, in turn, made it easier for them to give the Egyptians what Michelle Mart terms “insider status,” by describing them in masculine and Western terms. Free Officer and Egyptian moves that were counterproductive to this stated American objective led to different descriptions in which Eisenhower administration officials and the media saw these Middle Easterners

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30 Briefing Paper on Egypt, Jernegan to Dulles, 18 December, 1953, RG 59, 774.00/12-1853.
31 Mart, p. 360.
as different than Westerners. In these instances, effeminate and Orientalist language was used to paint the Egyptians as “Others,” which helped American policymakers to understand why their goals were being hampered.

Anti-Communist sentiment among the Free Officers was almost guaranteed to warrant positive language from Eisenhower administration personnel, but the exact opposite was true for those with leftist tendencies or political ideologies that were antithetical to the new Egyptian regime. More often than not, American officials would depict these persons or groups in negative language. Take for instance Ahmed Hussein, a socialist leader who found himself on trial for helping to stir up anti-British upheaval that helped lead to the Cairo riots of January 1952, the epitome of anti-stability. To Americans, this man was the complete embodiment of the “Other.” Commenting on Hussein’s past and present, Cairo Embassy officials remarked that he was an “opportunist and political extremist of the worst sort, who during the 1930s, when Nazism was rising, espoused Nazi ideology, and who, since the end of the war, has become increasingly leftist and pro-communist.” This man’s opportunism and extremism bring to mind notions of a wily and emotional Arab who had been working against America’s strategic interests. Depictions such as these fit nicely into Edward Said’s notion of Orientalism and the British diplomat Lord Cromer’s vision of the Egyptian mind penned decades earlier that Said uses as an Orientalist example. In his writings, Cromer notes that the Arab mind is “eminently wanting in symmetry” and that “his reasoning is of the most slipshod description.”

32 Said, p. 38.
linguistics was Mustafa Al Nahas, who one will remember as the leader of the nationalistic and anti-Western Wafd Party. In Jefferson Caffery’s mind, it had become apparent that since the Free Officers had shown their political strength by quieting the Wafd, the sickly Nahas was “too old and senile ever to resume effective political leadership.”

The Free Officers themselves were not immune to negative language either. It has been described earlier in this section that the power struggle between Naguib and Nasser in late February 1953 brought with it an extremely fluid situation, linguistically and politically speaking. We have already seen that American diplomats and the media were eager to heap praise on whomever seemed to be demonstrating control of Egypt at any given moment. The back and forth nature, and the speed with which the political maneuvering took place, meant that there were also times when Egyptians were depicted in negatively gendered and Orientalist terms as well. This was a very important period for Eisenhower administration officials because stability hung in the balance. It seemed that Naguib’s strength was still in question as far as Ambassador Caffery was concerned, even after the dust had settled and the general had resumed his role as president. In a meeting between the two, Caffery noted that Naguib “appeared physically tired and showed signs of strain,” while at times making “confused statements.” Until stability once again reigned supreme in Egypt, American officials would take a somewhat ambiguous stance toward Egypt’s president.

33 Caffery to the Department of State, 14 April, 1953, RG 59, 774.521/4-1453; and Caffery to the Department of State, 20 April, 1953, RG 59, 774.00/4-2053.
34 Caffery to Dulles, 13 March, 1954, RG 59, 774.11/3-1354.
From the American perspective, it seemed that Naguib was being placed on the bench because he was asking for more power, which, in fact, would have given him veto powers over the RCC. Caffery believed that while Naguib’s ouster could cause some issues due to his popularity, it was not all that disconcerting because it had been evident for some time that Naguib was just a “figurehead” and that his ascension to the role he desired would have put the government at the “mercy of [a] man who actually [was] not qualified [to] exercise such powers.” His ouster also brought to the forefront his “obvious subservience” to the RCC, which was not what one would have expected from a strong and masculine Western leader. For their part, the media depicted the general as a conniving and power hungry Arab, who, “having tasted popularity,” now wanted the power that went with it. They even noted that Nasser was the one who made all the big decisions and would then hand Naguib papers with notations regarding what should be done. Harkening back to Farouk’s childlike image, the media noted how Naguib had even “learned to sulk and how to suffer diplomatic illnesses to get his way.” Depictions such as this are reminiscent of Anglo-American policymakers’ and the media’s haranguing of Mossadeq during the Anglo-Iranian oil crisis for wearing pajamas during meetings. In one final blow to the president’s masculinity and what appeared to be a lack of strength of character, Newsweek reported that many in Egypt feared Naguib would be overtaken by extremists in his attempt to regain control.35

35 Caffery to Dulles, 25 February, 1954, RG 59, 774.11/2-2554; Caffery to the Department of State, 5 March, 1954, RG 59, 774.00(w)/3-554; Time, 8 March, 1954, pp. 30-31; Heiss, “Real Men Don’t Wear Pajamas; and Newsweek, 15 March, 1954, pp. 40-42.
Stability would be a continuous point of interest for the Eisenhower administration. While some Egyptian actions led to greater stability and positive language, others called into question that stability, along with the Egyptians’ level of masculinity and Westernness.

The Anglo-Egyptian Agreement

According to American strategic planners, a successful conclusion to the ongoing Anglo-Egyptian dispute over the Suez Canal base was a key element to making Egypt, and the entire Middle East region, more stable. While it had been important during the Truman administration, settlement of the canal base dispute took on new levels of importance under the Eisenhower administration. Thus, it deserves to be looked at separately from stability, while keeping in mind that it was also a part of America’s overall strategy of stabilizing Egypt. As has been briefly mentioned, the continuing presence of British troops on Egyptian soil threatened to build upon already high levels of nationalistic fervor inside Egypt and other newly independent nations in the Middle East. Just as dangerous to American policymakers, this nationalism, along with a large contingent of British troops in Egypt, could sway the new regime in Cairo toward a neutralist stance in the Cold War, something the Eisenhower administration hoped to
curtail at all costs. These realistic fears coincided with a determination in Washington and London that MEDO was no longer a viable option, especially with its headquarters in Egypt, due to new Soviet long range nuclear capabilities. All of these factors pushed the Eisenhower administration to pursue a quick and peaceful solution to the Anglo-Egyptian base dispute.36

Negotiations over the base dispute encompassed a series of ups and downs that lasted for over a year and a half. Most taxing to both sides in their negotiations was domestic opinion. Backbenchers and a large portion of the public in Great Britain did not want to so easily give up portions of their Empire, while the Free Officers’ regime found it difficult to give in to any British demands for fear of the Egyptian masses, who wanted nothing less than complete and immediate evacuation.37 For their part, American policymakers in both Washington and Cairo tried to find a middle ground that would satisfy both sides and end the impasse as soon as possible. In an effort to move talks in the right direction, in early March 1953, Eisenhower sent a letter to General Naguib in which he praised the Egyptian leadership for solving some of Egypt’s tougher problems. The new American president went on to note that this had won Naguib the “admiration and respect of the American people” and that the quick resolution to the Sudan issue had been a “monument” to Naguib’s “statesmanship, patience and courage.”38 The media

36 For more detailed information on the strategy behind the Anglo-Egyptian base dispute, see: Hahn, The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, pp. 155-179; and Thornhill, pp. 155-206.
37 Ibid.
38 Eisenhower to Naguib, 11 March, 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abiline, Kansas, Papers of John Foster Dulles, White House Memoranda Series, Box 1, Folder: White House Correspondence, 1953 (hereafter cited as DDE with box and folder information).
echoed almost this exact sentiment when it also noted that it had been the general’s “statesmanlike decision” that had led to a decision on the Sudan question.\(^\text{39}\)

Egyptian actions that created an atmosphere more amenable to conclusion of the base issue were almost always followed by positive language from both American policymakers and the media, no matter how small the Egyptian gesture, demonstrating just how important a settlement was to the Eisenhower administration. Caffery praised statements Gamel Abdel Nasser made to a London newspaper for their “conciliatory” and diplomatic nature, which might help to improve the atmosphere for upcoming talks. Editorials from two of Egypt’s leading newspapers, *Al Akhbar* and *Al Misri*, were seen as significant because they showed good-natured “restraint” by not pointing a recriminating finger at the British. The media also picked up on this hopeful mood within the midst of dire circumstances. A settlement that was in both sides interest looked possible because Naguib’s “remarkable regime” had shown “real leadership” in Egyptian politics for the first time. The general’s work ethic and determination were demonstrated in the fact that he lunched while standing, and it helped that he was aided by the “quiet, strong-faced” Nasser, who acted “as a one-man brain trust” in the “only honest and progressive government Egypt has had for decades.” Nasser also showed his strength when he defended the need to keep some British technicians on the Suez Base, an issue that had come to be a real sticking point in the negotiations. For their part, the British were adamant that some British technicians needed to be retained in order for the canal to continue to run smoothly, while the Egyptian majority believed that they could

\(^{39}\text{Time, 23 February, 1953, pp. 32-33.}\)
handle the canal without any British help. In an act of compromise, Nasser was acquiescent in keeping a small contingent of British technicians at the base. According to *Time*, this “hard, forthright” decision “had an authentic ring” that epitomized the “well-knit, handsome six-footer.” Echoing this appeal to Nasser’s masculinity, the weekly publication went on to write that he worked nearly twenty hours a day and did not seek the lime light, which alluded to his integrity and determination to do what was best for Egypt.  

Continued Free Officer public statements that worked toward ameliorating the Anglo-Egyptian situation helped American policymakers to view the Egyptian regime in a Western light. After a number of regime members made local and national speeches calling for “unity, patience and preparation,” U.S. officials noted how these statements demonstrated an Egyptian desire to keep the situation “calm and in hand.” This strong “determination” on the RCC’s part also reflected a diplomatic sense of “caution, amicability toward the United States, and a willingness to bear responsibility in maintaining the Suez Base.” These were sweet sounding words to the Eisenhower administration that went a long way toward making it easier for American officials to depict the Egyptian leaders as steady, Western-like diplomats. Jefferson Caffery was so pleased with these public issuances, and of a like-mind about the situation with his British counterparts, that he even quoted British diplomats’ positive language regarding the RCC. The ambassador remarked that the British were admitting “with satisfaction

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40 Caffery to the Department of State, 16 April, 1953, RG 59, 774.00(w)/4-1653; Caffery to the Department of State, 17 April, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/4-1753; *Newsweek*, 13 April, 1953, p. 52; and *Time*, 4 May, 1953, p. 37.
that [the] Egyptian Government is observing care and moderation in its public statements and that tension has lowered considerably.” The lack of Egyptian derogatory statements toward the British helped to quiet both backbenchers in Britain and the Egyptian masses. The fact that the Egyptians’ “restraint” and “more sensible attitude” were “hopeful” signs to London was exactly what the Eisenhower administration was looking for, and made officials like Caffery feel free to toss around the sort of positive language such as the British were using.41

Lieutenant Colonel Nasser was on the receiving end of the vast majority of the positive language directed toward Egyptians during the tenuous Anglo-Egyptian talks. More than others in the RCC, Nasser seemed desirous of a successful conclusion to the base dispute and was intent on getting the bulk of Britain’s eighty thousand troops out of the canal zone. There are many instances when Nasser’s actions, both big and small, led to depictions of him that were masculine and Western in nature. One of the largest stumbling blocks to any compromise solution between the Egyptians and the British was the ultra-nationalistic Muslim Brotherhood. Intent on accepting only the complete and instant withdraw of British troops, the Brotherhood oftentimes was the most vocal opponent of the RCC’s attempts to conclude a settlement. Realizing this, Nasser went out of his way in mid-1953 to improve relations between the RCC and this outspoken group in order to quiet their rumblings and to allow the Egyptian government some wiggle room in negotiations with the British. This action was music to the ears of U.S.

41 Caffery to Dulles, 20 May, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/5-2053; Caffery to the Department of State, 20 May, 1953, RG 59, 774.00/5-2053; Caffery to Dulles, 641.74/5-3053; Caffery to Dulles, 10 June, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/6-1053; and Caffery to the Department of State, 20 June, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/6-2053.
officials, who considered it a “quiet, but clearly effective piece of diplomacy” and described Nasser’s willingness to reach agreement as a “highly encouraging” sign that showed the military man’s “greater degree of political realism and maturity.” American officials lauded the Egyptian leader’s “calm” actions when they were in the best interest of American strategic interests by bringing a “new and positive approach to Egypt’s problems.”

Even amid the power struggle between Naguib and Nasser in early 1954, American officials continued to laud Nasser when speaking of him in relation to the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, again highlighting the relationship between policy and language. Ambassador Caffery pointed out that the prime minister’s “skillful handling” of public opinion during the crisis would come in handy if the regime had to deal with extremists who felt their government had given up too much to the British once an agreement was reached. More important still, the chief American diplomat in Cairo believed that Nasser was the “only man in Egypt with strength enough and guts enough to put over an agreement with [the] British.”

As negotiations neared their conclusion, American and British diplomats remarked that Nasser’s willingness to concede a number of sticking points was evidence of the “skillful and serious manner” in which he presented his nation’s case. The fact that this positive language was being spoken due to the fact that Nasser was compromising in

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42 Caffery to the Department of State, 20 June, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/6-2053; Caffery to Dulles, 2 August, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/8-253; Caffery to the Department of State, 23 November, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/11-2353; Caffery to Dulles, 10 March, 1954, RG 59, 641.74/3-1054; and Smith to London, 10 March, 1954, RG 59, 641.74/3-1054.

43 Caffery to Dulles, 5 April, 1954, RG 59, 774.00/4-554; and Caffery to Dulles, 31 March, 1954, RG 59, 774.00/3-3154.
order to get a deal done was no coincidence. Masculine and Western language poured in from all fronts following the October initialing of a heads of agreement on the Suez Canal Base that would bring years of frustration and the possibility of destabilization to an end. President Eisenhower issued a statement applauding the “statesmanlike” approach that had been taken, and when asked about the agreement in his weekly news conference, he remarked that it was “evidence of patience and statesmanship,” a sentiment that the press echoed as well.44

Initial reaction to the Anglo-Egyptian agreement from anti-regime groups such as the communists and Muslim Brotherhood was strong, but, thankfully for American interests, it was not stronger than Nasser and his group. Immediately following the initial announcement of a deal, Caffery was “confident” in Nasser’s ability to “handle [the] opposition” and bring the base agreement to a successful conclusion. Reiterating British comments, Caffery told officials in Washington that the Egyptian negotiators had “shown themselves to be ‘tough, clever, and well informed’ and in every way a match (and sometimes more than a match) for such talent as the British Embassy has been able to draw together from officers serving in the Canal Zone base and London.” Beliefs such as these would have given Caffery even more hope that Nasser could weather any storm of protest that might erupt.45

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45 Caffery to Dulles, 4 August, 1954, RG 59, 641.74/8-454; and Caffery to the Department of State, 14 August, 1954, RG 59, 641.74/8-1454.
The successful conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian canal dispute was a victory for American strategic interests, but the road that led to an agreement was not always as rose-colored as the previous language might convey. In fact, throughout the year and a half process, there were many ups and downs in negotiations that led to positive descriptions of Egyptians, as we have just seen, but for every American utterance of positive language, there were also exacerbating moments in which Egyptians were depicted in an Orientalist nature as effeminate, childlike, and untrustworthy Arabs.

Fearing that the honeymoon stage following the Anglo-Egyptian agreement over the Sudan would quickly fade away, John D. Jernegan recommended that the president press British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to act quickly, before the Egyptians made “rash” public statements that could sour the mood. Jefferson Caffery believed that bombastic Egyptian speeches could be a real problem as well, and began to “counsel Egypt to be patient.” These fears turned to a reality when American officials in Cairo began reporting on “fiery speeches calling for unconditional evacuation” that were in “no way realistic” that began emanating from the vocal chords of Free Officers. For the time being, Caffery was able to temporarily “tone down” Egyptian speeches by using “vigorous scoldings” and to continue “urging moderation.” How quickly the situation could change to one in which the Egyptians were seen as an emotional group that should be treated like nothing more than children. Secretary of State Dulles, in fact, reiterated
this paternalistic mindset following his trip to the Middle East when he described how he had “tried to educate General Naguib on the international importance of the Suez base.”

In the spring of 1953, the Eisenhower administration put out feelers to the Egyptians, hoping that they would be invited to help in the negotiations. American policymakers believed that they might be able to offer a helping hand in negotiations between the British and Egyptians, who had stockpiled animosity for one another over the years, especially when it came to issues involving British forces and domination on Egyptian soil. After Naguib rebuffed American attempts, President Eisenhower, calling upon Said’s notion of Orientalism, which Douglas Little believes to have “subconsciously shaped U.S. popular attitudes and foreign policies toward the Middle East,” chalked it up to the Egyptian leader’s need to “satisfy the population’s intense emotionalism.” Ambassador Caffery reiterated this effeminate depiction when he noted that the Egyptians were making a number of “emotional speeches,” emotional because they were calling for the complete Egyptianization of the base, something American officials hoped to avoid and the British would never accept. For their part, the media also made mention of the “noisy press” that was beginning to stir up popular sentiment against the British.

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46 Jernegan to Dulles, Procedure for Negotiations with Egypt, 24 February, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/2-2453; Caffery to Dulles, 3 March, 1954, RG 59, 641.74/3-353; Memoranda of a Conversation, 11 March, 1953, RG 59, 611.74/3-1153; Caffery to Dulles, 25 March, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/3-2553; and Memorandum of Discussion at the 147th Meeting of the National Security Council, 1 June, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, vol. 9, p. 380.

47 Memorandum for the President, 6 April, 1953, DDE, Papers as President, 1953-61, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, Folder: Dulles, John F. April, 1953; Little, p. 10; Caffery to Dulles, 30 April, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/4-3053; and Time, 25 May, 1953, pp. 36-38.
Egyptian emotionalism, and the lack of realistic “Western” thinking that went with it, was a theme that American policymakers would come back to often during times of crisis in the negotiations. U.S. officials pointed out that one of the main causes of dispute in the talks was an overly emotional and “deep basic distrust” of the British on the Egyptians’ part, which oftentimes led them to be “unreasonable.” In fact, some in American circles felt this line of thinking was “so deep-seated it seemed to have replaced objectivity in the minds of Egyptian leaders.” This unbridled passion also led to “highly inflammatory speeches,” in which the Egyptians condemned the British and the West, caused the Free Officers to be “suspicious,” and helped explain the “impatience of the young leaders of the RCC, who being youthful, dedicated and military minded, were, therefore, also impatient for results.” The situation looked so bleak at one point that Caffery believed that “their emotions are so great, they would rather go down as martyrs then concede.” In another instance during a break in negotiations, the ambassador told Foggy Bottom that “the present virulence of Egyptian sentiment results from Egypt’s lagging behind in the march towards ‘sovereignty.’ The Egyptians are currently obsessed by this idea to the exclusion of everything else.” U.S. officials’ descriptions of Egyptian emotionalism is an example of Said’s claim that Westerners view the Oriental as “irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different,’” which in turn is juxtaposed against, and reasons, that the Westerner is “rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal.’” Once again, we also see Michelle Mart’s “insider”/“outsider” dichotomy at work in the American language used in this instance.48

48 Caffery to Dulles, 12 May, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/5-1253; Dulles to Caffery, 7 July, 1953, RG 59,
The periods in which the talks were broken down were not the only times when American officials spoke negatively about the Egyptians. The sometimes heated negotiations drove U.S. policymakers to believe that a deal would never be worked out due to Egyptian attitudes and a lack of compromise on even the seemingly smallest of issues. It was in these moments that the Americans would linguistically distance themselves from the Free Officers by “Othering” them by describing them in ways that made them un-Western. Heated debates between the British and Egyptians that threatened the negotiations caused the Egyptian ambassador in London to be in an “excited state of mind,” and at one meeting, even Nasser “lost his temper and stalked out.”

British attempts to push their luck and get the Egyptians to accept a bad deal also worried Caffery, because he felt the Egyptians “were capable of an impulsive action” that would lead to them getting up and walking out of the negotiations all together, which was possible at any moment given Nasser’s “brooding” manner.

Egyptian posturing that was outside of the scope of the Anglo-Egyptian talks, but threatened their successful conclusion, also caused U.S. officials to speak of the Free Officers in a paternalistic manner, just as they had done when talks were broken down.

When negotiations were ongoing, men like Caffery were even quicker to reprimand the Egyptians for fear of failure. He “counseled moderation and restraint” upon the Cairo
regime at points in which talks of neutralism or recognizing Communist China were in the air, and had to give them a “frank talking” on these subjects and the intermittent hostilities in the canal zone. The murder of a number of British soldiers in the base area led Caffery to “forcefully” reprimand an Egyptian official.  

Like stability, it is apparent that the strategic interest of a successful conclusion to the Anglo-Egyptian base dispute drove what type of language American officials used when describing their Egyptian counterparts. Fortunately for the Eisenhower administration, this strategic interest came to fruition. Area defense, initially founded upon the MEDO framework, would take on a new look under the Eisenhower administration, but Egyptian acceptance, and participation if possible, was a key to American plans in the region.

**Efforts at Military Defense and a Pro-Western Egypt**

When the Eisenhower administration came to office in January 1953, the plan to establish the Middle East Defense Organization, devised under Truman’s watch, was still in place. Following Secretary of State John Foster Dulles’ trip to the Middle East in May, it was decided that Egyptian nationalism and new Soviet nuclear capabilities had

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51 Caffery to Dulles, 11 December, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/12-1153; Butterworth to Dulles, 13 January, 1954, RG 59, 641.74/1-1354; and Caffery to Dulles, 23 March, 1954, RG 59, 641.74/3-2354.
made MEDO obsolete. Dulles came up with a new plan focused around a Western military alliance along what became known as the Northern Tier of the Middle East, along the Southern border of the Soviet Union. This plan focused on Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan, nations that had expressed more of a willingness to work with the West, and were more aware of the Soviet threat than the Egyptians. Although Egypt was no longer the center of the West’s plans for area defense, it still played a crucial role in its success. As Peter Hahn has noted, “Egypt remained important in strategic thinking because, as prospective leader of the Arab states, it could determine the degree of support that the Arab powers showed the northern tier alliance.” Thus, it was important for American military strategy in the Middle East that Egypt not only supported this defense arrangement but also came out on the side of the West in the Cold War struggle to ensure that other Arab countries did the same.52

Like previously discussed strategic interests, favorable Egyptian pro-West and area defense comments garnered positive language from Westerners. American officials spoke highly of General Naguib and his brother for the former’s “friendly tone” when discussing planning for area defense once the British question had been settled, and lauded the latter’s “cordial comments” and “pleasant personality.” Naguib was not the only high ranking Egyptian official to be praised in this regard. After a “very satisfactory conversation” dealing with U.S.-Egyptian relations and defense, Caffery was left believing that Ahmed Hussein’s “ideas at this stage” were “sound.”53

52 Hahn, _The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt_, pp. 156-57, 180 and 183.
53 Moose to the Department of State, 16 February, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/2-1653; and Caffery to Dulles, 21 February, 1953, RG 59, 611.74/2-2153.
Secretary Dulles even got into the act following talks with Naguib while on his tour of the Middle East in which the Egyptian leader remarked that although his country was in the need of friends, it was no friend to the Soviet Union. Dulles told the Egyptian leader that after careful study the United States had come to the conclusion that “Egypt under Naguib’s guidance has the capability of providing [the] kind of leadership and example [the] Arab world [had been] lacking for [a] long time.” The former international lawyer went on to say that the Eisenhower administration hoped that “Egypt might become [an] example for other Arab states to follow.” During further talks with the Egyptian general, the secretary of state noted America’s enthusiasm for the new regime in Cairo due to the Free Officers’ ability to “introduce honesty into public life.” He went on to say that the United States looked forward to providing Egypt with military goods “because we feel that Egypt now has the leadership which could cause Egypt to set an example to the other Arab States, where there has been so much weakness during the past few decades.” While the secretary of state came away from his trip convinced that MEDO would not work due to Egyptian nationalism, he was still hopeful of RCC cooperation in regard to the northern tier and Egyptian allegiance to the West. Thus, his comments regarding Egypt setting an “example” for previous inherent Arab “weakness” painted the picture of a more masculine Egypt.\(^5^4\)

For his part, Caffery told Washington that the Free Officers seemed “sincerely anti-Communist and desirous of leading Egypt into a firm association with the West,” going on to remark that they were “honest,” “realistic,” and “believe[d] in keeping their

word.” These comments definitely go against Orientalist stereotypes of the back-stabbing and untrustworthy Arab and sound more like descriptions of solid Western leaders. The media also found the Egyptian rulers to be realists when it wrote about their willingness to side with the West and go along with defensive plans. *Time* noted that the Free Officers were “not so unrealistic about Russia as is Nehru.” It looked apparent to journalists that the Egyptians knew that the Soviet Union was a threat and could be counted on to be more solidly pro-West than the neutralist leader of India, Jawaraal Nehru. This astuteness in the realm of international relations also came across in Salah Salem’s “well reasoned and prepared argument” to the Jordanian foreign minister in which the Egyptian spoke of his country’s desire to side with the United States against Communist Russia. These strong and Western depictions of Egyptians when they seem to be moving toward anti-communism and against neutralism are telling, especially when contrasted against the media’s vision of India’s Nehru as “unrealistic.” This juxtaposition between Muslims (Egyptians) and Hindus (Indians) is echoed in Andrew Rotter’s work on U.S.-Indian relations, in which the author finds American policymakers praising the Muslim leaders of Pakistan as strong and solidly pro-Western, while Nehru and Indian Hindus were seen as weak, passive, and falling within a Cold War grey area due to their pacifist religion and neutralism.55

On the flip side of this positive language, Egyptian comments or allusions to difficulties in siding with the West and/or America’s regional defensive plans, or anything that hinted of neutralism, brought with it a much less favorable American

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reaction. The Eisenhower administration understood early on that it would be investing much more time and effort in the Middle East than any previous American administration had, and thus it did not react very well when Egypt showed signs of possibly causing problems for U.S. dreams of a pro-West Arab world.

Secretary Dulles lamented that the Egyptian’s desires to eliminate all remnants of British military interests in Egypt showed that they “appeared to have no realization of the present dangerous international situation or of the strategic importance to the West of the base.” U.S. government officials also noted that the Egyptians seemed to have grown an “isolation complex” over what they feared were attempts to isolate Egypt by setting up the northern tier and giving arms aid to Iraq, which was making Egypt’s Western allegiance more difficult to achieve.\(^5^6\)

In order for Egypt to side with the West in the Cold War struggle, any communist elements within Egypt itself needed to be weeded out and made irrelevant. Foreign service officers in Cairo noted that Nasser “embarked upon a rather confused and intemperate dissertation” when he commented to American officials that communism was making great strides in Egypt due to effective Soviet propaganda and American ineptitude in the Near East. According to U.S. policymakers, this rant “contained even more than the usual number of inconsistencies encountered in Egyptian thinking.”\(^5^7\)

Nasser’s statements to reporters from \textit{U.S. News and World Report} also frustrated American policymakers because they demonstrated that the Egyptian leader, at that

\(^5^6\) Second Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the United States and the United Kingdom, 14 July, 1954, \textit{FRUS, 1952-1954}, vol. 5, pp. 1683-84; and Caffery to the Department of State, 28 May, 1954, RG 59, 774.00(w)/5-2854.

\(^5^7\) Caffery to the Department of State, 23 March, 1954, RG 59, 774.00/3-2354.
moment, was not sold on allying his country firmly with Western plans for the region. Caffery noted that these comments “exhibited a deplorable measure of political naivete” and an “attitude of a child toward elders who are not sufficiently understanding” when dealing with communists in his country. The ambassador believed that Nasser’s state of mind could be described as “post-agreement shock” over the Anglo-Egyptian base agreement. This “shock” was accentuated by “exaggerated nervousness,” a “recurrence of traditional suspicions regarding Western motives and a heightened sensitivity to those ultra-nationalistic attitudes which communism has assiduously been cultivating in this area for some time.” When speaking about China and Southeast Asia, Nasser made remarks contrary to the American line of thinking that Caffery described as “personal views which, as a responsible statesman, he had better left unsaid.” The “dismay” that Nasser’s utterances caused led the American ambassador to fall back upon his Arab stereotypes, believing that “the schizophrenic overtones which occasionally emerge” throughout the interview “are not only symptomatic of the state of mind of a man with whom the West has little choice but to deal, but are also indicative of the state of present-day Egyptian society.” Taking on a paternalistic tone as well, Caffery warned officials in Washington that “people in such a frame of mind must be handled with great patience and tact.” American officials had apparently retreated to Saidian depictions of “irrational” Arabs once again.58

58 Caffery to the Department of State, 13 August, 1954, RG 59, 774.00/8-1354.
Nasser and Arab-Israeli Peace

President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles also believed that a successful conclusion to the Arab-Israeli dispute was an integral component of America’s strategic interests in the region. When developing strategy for the Middle East, the Eisenhower administration did so with the larger Cold War in mind. Thus, everything that was done was done to quash Soviet inroads into the area. This meant that the Arab-Israeli dispute held new importance, for the same reasons as the other strategic interests in this period, because the longer it persisted, the greater the likelihood the Soviets could take advantage of the problems it engendered. Peter Hahn put it succinctly when he said that “because” the Arab-Israeli dispute “provoked anti-Western sentiment in Arab states, hindered the establishment of a regional defense scheme, and limited economic and social development, Eisenhower and Dulles concluded that solving the problem would serve their ambitions in the region.” All of these issues caused by the dispute also made the region more vulnerable to Soviet penetration.59

During most of the period studied in this chapter, officials in the Eisenhower administration kept the notion of solving the Arab-Israeli dispute in the back of their minds, but other issues (such as stability, the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, and area defense) took precedence. Following conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian base dispute, though,

59Hahn, Caught in the Middle East, p. 154. For more on the Eisenhower administration’s strategy in regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict during this period see pages 147-184.
Eisenhower and Dulles began to push harder for a settlement. That being said, American officials continually gauged Egyptian mindsets on this issue, because they believed that securing peace between Egypt and Israel first would help blaze a trail for an overall Middle East peace settlement. For the most part, Egyptian responses were upbeat, leading American officials to speak positively about those in power along the Nile. But as we have previously seen, there were also moments in which negative language came out due to Egyptian actions and/or words that did not align with America’s plans.

On a number of instances throughout 1953 and 1954 Egyptian words or actions hinted at the possibility of a positive outcome in regard to Israel, bringing with them positive descriptive language from American policymakers. During a tense period between Israel and Jordan over Israeli military excursions on Jordanian villages that were thought to be the source of fedayeen raids, Caffery commented on the “calming influence” Egypt was trying to exert by not stirring up trouble and keeping these clashes from reaching the United Nations Security Council. After one of the few meetings between Arabs and the Johnston Committee, which tried to implement a workable water sharing program for the region, in which “substantial progress” was made, American officials noted that the “Egyptians worked hard to induce [a] realistic attitude” onto their Arab brethren. When Gamal Abdel Nasser made positive comments in regard to

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60 Ibid., The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, p. 180.

61 The Johnston Committee was an Eisenhower administration initiative, headed by the chairman of the Advisory Board for International Development, Eric Johnston. The committee’s goal was to reach an agreement on regional water usage based upon an original plan “composed by TVA engineers under a UNRWA contract,” known as the Jordan Valley Plan (JVP). “The JVP provided a blueprint for maximizing usage of water resources by all Middle East states and for devoting those resources to refugee relief projects.” For more information on the Johnston Committee, see: Hahn, Caught in the Middle East, pp. 172-73.
improving relations with the Israelis, Secretary Dulles felt that they offered “considerable encouragement.” The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs’ John D. Jernegan, along with Caffery, believed that “Egypt affords genuine prospects of moving on the Israel problem.”

Following the successful conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, the Eisenhower administration and the British believed the time was right for a more concerted effort at formulating an Arab-Israeli peace. Coordination between the Americans and British began in the fall of 1954 for what would become known as Project Alpha. Alpha was to be a comprehensive peace plan, and as planning moved forward, Western policymakers decided that Nasser should be the first Arab head of state approached. Alpha was a multi-faceted peace plan that was composed of many elements. It proposed that Israel would repatriate seventy-five thousand refugees over five years and pay $280 million to compensate others for lost property. Arab states would absorb the remaining eight hundred thousand refugees and terminate the Suez Canal blockade and the economic boycott. All parties would accept the Jordan Valley Plan. Israel would give Jordan free access to a port at Haifa, and both sides would allow mutual civil air and telecommunications access. A U.N. entity would oversee and guarantee free access to the holy places of Jerusalem. To sweeten the deal, the United States would dispense more than $1 billion over five years, including $120 million for the JVP, $100 million for the Aswan Dam as an incentive to Nasser, $150 million to help Israel compensate refugees, and $250 million in military aid.

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62 Caffery to the Department of State, 17 October, 1953, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 9, pp. 1361-62; Caffery to the Department of State, 18 June, 1954, RG 59, 774.00(w)/6-1854; Dulles to Caffery, 31 July, 1954, RG 59, 641.74/7-3154; and Jernegan to Dulles, 6 August, 1954, RG 59, 641.74/8-654.

63 Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East*, pp. 183-84.
One of the more difficult issues regarding Alpha was that Israel was to yield land in the Negev in order for Egypt and Jordan to “control an East-West corridor.” American officials believed that Nasser, due to his stature in the Arab world, would lend weight to the peace process if a separate peace was first worked out between Egypt and Israel. For this reason, American policymakers became even more watchful and cognizant of Egyptian attitudes toward the peace process in the end of 1954. Egyptian Ambassador Fawzi’s desire for a closer working relationship with the United States in regard to the peace process thus “pleased” Dulles, and was “encouraging.” The secretary of state was also “encouraged” by Egyptian remarks in the Security Council that noted Egypt’s non-interference with Israeli shipping through the Suez Canal over the previous months.

When looking at the prospects for a peace settlement, American policymakers in late 1954 were cautiously optimistic, and it is reflected in the language. The government in Cairo was more “capable” than most at handling the pressures of working toward peace, aided by the fact that the Egyptians were “less emotional on the subject,” thus making them “more willing” to work for peace than other Arab governments. Officials in Washington believed that Nasser had made “considerable progress in tightening his control over the government,” which was seen as having “sincere intentions and energetic application.” These positive traits would help Nasser if he made a move toward peace, but there would also be difficulties in controlling an opposition, in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood, that was much less pragmatic and much more fanatical in its views.

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64 Ibid.
65 Dulles to Caffery, 11 November, 1954, RG 59, 611.74/11-1154; and Dulles to Caffery, 11 November, 1954, RG 59, 611.74/11-1154.
vis-à-vis Israel than was Nasser. Even with a strong and vocal opposition possible, the Eisenhower administration believed that Egypt should be the first to be approached about a comprehensive peace plan. State Department planners saw Nasser as a “practical statesman” and noted that since the Free Officers’ inception, the American government had “faith in it and in its conception of the new Egypt.”

Unlike some of the other strategic interests of this period, American policymakers were not given much reason to describe Egyptians in negative terms in regard to the Arab-Israeli peace process. This can be partially explained by the fact that the Eisenhower administration waited until after successful conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute to make a strong move toward peace, and because, for the most part, the Egyptians indicated that they would be willing to move in the direction the United States desired following the Suez Canal base talks. But, the RCC did not come out of this period unscathed when it came to this particular strategic interest. Following repeated Israeli border violations, Caffery “counseled calmness” to Nasser and noted that the Egyptians were “still subconsciously very touchy on the subject” of Israel.

All in all, the language shows that Egyptians were described in the most positive terms when the Arab-Israeli dispute was the topic of discussion. Like strategic interests before it, though, there was both positive and negative language used. But, as the United States and Great Britain began to formulate their plans for Project Alpha, the situation seemed ripe, in the form of Gamal Abdel Nasser, for a possible peace settlement.

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67 Caffery to the Department of State, 29 September, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, vol. 9, p. 1337; and Caffery to Dulles, 30 September, 1953, RG 59, 641.74/9-3053.
Conclusion

When the Eisenhower administration came to office in the winter of 1953, it inherited some of the Truman administration’s strategic initiatives for the Middle East (stability), changed some (MEDO), placed more emphasis on an old issue (the Anglo-Egyptian base dispute), and added a new one (Arab-Israeli peace). Stability was still a key issue for obvious reasons. In order to have a secure and non-communist Egypt, the Free Officers needed to be able to keep order and control within their country. The Anglo-Egyptian base dispute was a corollary to stability, but just as important in the eyes of American policymakers. The longer the dispute between Egypt and Great Britain persisted, the greater nationalism and anti-Western sentiment in Egypt would become, a development that the Eisenhower administration did not want to deal with while fighting an all out Cold War with what Eisenhower and Dulles saw as an expansionist adversary. Early on in the new administration, Secretary Dulles had decided to shelve plans for MEDO, due to new Soviet nuclear capabilities that made the large base obsolete, Egyptian nationalism that opposed handing the canal base back to a foreign power, and the Free Officers’ reluctance to discuss area defense until the British had left the canal zone. While MEDO may have been discarded, that did not mean that plans for an area defense were gone. Dulles shifted gears and now looked to the northern tier countries of Turkey and Pakistan as the basis for defense. But Egypt still figured prominently in these plans because its acquiescence in or dislike of them would play a large role in recruiting
other Arab countries into the pact. Finally, Eisenhower and Dulles, much more so than
Truman, were eager to end the Arab-Israeli dispute. This ongoing quarrel caused
dissension and instability throughout the region, making it more susceptible to Soviet
croachment. American and British policymakers would accord Nasser and Egypt a
special position in regard to the peace process, because they believed that Egypt had the
strength to be the first Arab nation to make amends with Israel.

These strategic interests were the driving force behind what type of language
American policymakers and the media used when discussing Egyptians. While some of
America’s goals may have changed, the reasons for why U.S. officials described
Egyptians the way they did had not. As we saw in the previous chapter, the language
used to describe Egyptians was fluid in nature and not fixed. It all depended upon the
context of the situation and where the Egyptians stood in regard to America’s foreign
policy goals at any given moment. When the Free Officers and their countrymen seemed
to be working for American interests, they were depicted in masculine and Western
terms. On the flip side, if they were seen to be working against those stated goals, they
were colored in ways that made them effeminate and different than their American
counterparts.

As we will see in the next chapter, the Eisenhower administration would launch
forward with plans for Project Alpha and a broadening of the northern tier into what
would become the Baghdad Pact throughout 1955 and 1956. A new element of U.S.-
Egyptian foreign relations would also emerge in the form of the Aswan Dam Project.
How the Egyptians would react to these interests, especially in the face of Nasser’s new
and bold foreign policy initiatives that saw the Egyptian leader verbally abuse the Baghdad Pact and conclude an arms deal with the Soviet Union, would have everything to do with how Americans talked about them.
CHAPTER THREE:

Alpha and Western Orientation: A Divergence toward Negativity

From the Eisenhower administration’s beginnings until early 1955, negative and positive descriptions of Egyptians were driven by whether Cairo could help or hinder Washington’s four main strategic interests in the Middle Eastern region. Administration officials had deemed stability, a successful conclusion to the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, the formation of a regional pro-Western defensive shield, and an end to the Arab-Israeli dispute as its key strategic interests in the Middle East over the past two years. By early 1955, Gamal Abdel Nasser firmly controlled Egypt, which was surely more politically stable than at any time in recent memory. A major cause of that internal stability was an October 1954 agreement bringing British dominance over the Suez Canal Base to an end. With two of its four main strategic interests for Egypt under control, officials in Washington would now exert all of their energies into aligning Egypt with the West through Cairo’s acquiescence to the Northern Tier and American plans for the Middle East and bringing an end to the ongoing Arab-Israeli dispute.
As noted in chapters 1 and 2, the Truman and Eisenhower administrations deemed a pro-Western defensive pact in the Middle East crucial to preventing Soviet penetration into the region, thus safeguarding American interests and regional oil. After Secretary of State John Foster Dulles shelved plans for the Middle East Defense Organization in early 1953, American and British policymakers decided upon a defense centered around the Northern Tier countries of Turkey and Pakistan. Dulles hoped that Egypt would eventually join this new defensive grouping, but from the start Eisenhower administration officials wanted Nasser to give his blessing to Western plans for the Northern Tier. Correctly understanding the sway and influence that Nasser and Egypt held over the Arab world, U.S. policymakers considered Egyptian support crucial to the Northern Tier’s success. Unfortunately, Nasser had other plans. As 1954 came to a close, the Egyptian leader began to embark on a new foreign policy, one that became even more apparent following Iraq’s accession to the military alliance in February 1955, known from that time on as the Baghdad Pact. Peter Hahn writes that this new policy “conflicted with plans for the Northern Tier,” because “Nasser expanded his vision of revolutionary Egypt’s destiny to include leadership of a struggle against imperialism in the Arab world, the Islamic world, and Africa.” The Egyptian leader viewed Western attempts to tie Arab and Islamic countries into a military alliance with the West as a new form of imperialism, to which he was adamantly opposed. Nasser also “opposed the arrangement because Iraqi Premier Nuri Said, his rival for leadership of the Arab world, favored close security ties between the Arab states and the Western powers.”

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1 Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt*, pp. 183 and 186. Besides Hahn, another good source
To make matters worse, Nasser embarked on a number of other new overseas initiatives that the administration considered antithetical to America’s strategic interests in the region. In the spring of 1955, Nasser’s attendance at the Asia-Africa Conference of non-aligned nations at Bandung, Indonesia, brought him into contact with India’s Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian leader’s brand of neutralism, which Nasser now fully embraced as Egyptian policy.\(^2\) Nasser’s new love affair with neutralism clearly threatened Eisenhower and Dulles’ plans to align Egypt with the West and violated their strict us-against-them reading of the Cold War.\(^3\) Even more problematic for American strategy in the Middle East was the arms deal signed between Egypt and Czechoslovakia in September 1955. Nasser’s move to attain arms from the Soviet bloc placed Soviet technicians in the most populous, and arguably most important, Arab state. It seemed the Western military alliance along the Northern Tier could do little to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining a potentially permanent foothold in the Middle East.

Along with strengthening the Baghdad Pact and convincing Egypt to align with the West, the Eisenhower administration considered the settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute its other major strategic initiative in the Middle East from early 1955 to early 1956. Officials in Washington believed that the ongoing tension and conflict between the

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\(^2\) Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt*, p. 190.
\(^3\) H.W. Brands argues that the Truman and Eisenhower administrations did not really have anything against neutralism, especially in places such as India and Yugoslavia, where it “served American geopolitical interests.” This was not the case in Egypt, though, as a neutralist Egypt, “in a region heretofore dominated by the West, represented a net loss to the American alliance system. By the end of World War II the United States had become the essential status quo power. In the Middle East the status quo and all it implied in terms of access to oil markedly favored the West; hence the basic American objective in the area was the preservation of as much of the status quo as possible for as long as American leaders could manage. By challenging the status quo Nasser challenged American security as Washington defined it.” H.W. Brands, *The Specter of Neutralism: The United States and The Emergence of The Third World, 1947-1960*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 224.
Arab states and Israel threatened regional stability, which could open the door for major armed conflict and provided inroads for Soviet penetration. Following the conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian base negotiations in October 1954, officials in Washington began pushing forward with plans to implement an Arab-Israeli peace. As noted in chapter 2, Project Alpha called for an overall peace agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Due to his stature within the Arab world, Western policymakers saw Nasser as the key to any peace and thus decided to approach the Egyptian leader first. Peace in the Middle East became even more important due to new Israeli fears of a resurgent Egypt following the Anglo-Egyptian base deal, which made an Israeli preemptive strike on Egypt a real possibility. Such actions, in American minds, would destabilize the region, render the Baghdad Pact ineffective, and invite Soviet penetration at the same time that the Communist Chinese wanted to make inroads into the area.\(^4\) These fears drove the Eisenhower administration to fervently work toward an Arab-Israeli peace in the spring of 1955.

From late March 1955 until March 1956, the Eisenhower administration wanted to align Egypt with the West, build up the Baghdad Pact, and bring the Arab-Israeli quarrel to a successful conclusion through Project Alpha. American’s linguistic descriptions and the way that policymakers and the media spoke about Egyptians during this period reflected the same factors noted in chapters 1 and 2, but the results now began to change. American strategic interests once again drove the type of language officials in Washington and the media used when describing Egyptians, but, beginning in March

1955, that language became much more heavily negative than in the two previous periods. While episodes of positive language correlating to Egyptian moves that coalesced with U.S. strategic interests occurred, these instances were few and far between when compared with earlier interactions. This shift to more prevalent negative language coincided with the administration’s critique of Nasser’s new foreign policy initiative in early 1955. The Egyptian leader’s drive for dominance in the Arab world, and his continued denunciation of anything that smacked of Western imperialism, made American strategic imperatives such as the Baghdad Pact all the harder to achieve. Likewise, Nasser’s firmer positioning as a Neutralist, his recognition of Communist China, and his arms purchases from the Soviet bloc hampered the administration’s attempt to align Egypt with the West. These issues, along with Nasser’s intransigence regarding Project Alpha’s plans, caused American policymakers and the media to increasingly use negative language in particular labeling him an “outsider” by “Othering” him in effeminate and Orientalist language.

The Baghdad Pact and Aligning Egypt with the West

From its earliest days, one of the Eisenhower administration’s strategic priorities was the formation of a strong military alliance in the Middle East that would deter Soviet
penetration into the area. Following the shelving of MEDO in early 1953, plans for a
defense along the Northern Tier came to fruition when Turkey and Pakistan formed an
alliance in 1954. While not directly joining the defensive arrangement itself,
Washington wanted to build the alliance into a formidable bloc against any plans the
Soviet Union might have in the Middle East. After Iraq joined in early 1955, American
attempts to gain Egyptian support became much more difficult due to Nasser’s inter-Arab
struggle with Iraqi leader Nuri Said. Not only did the Egyptian leader oppose the new
alliance because of his rivalry with Said, but Nasser also believed that the Arab people
would not readily accept such an agreement. Robert Stephens argues that Nasser’s main
problem with the alliance was his “conviction that a system which appeared to give
primacy to an Arab grouping would arouse less hostile reaction from Arab opinion than
one which seemed to originate from the strategic interests of the Western Powers.” Whether Nasser’s dislike for the Baghdad Pact stemmed from Arab nationalism, a
perception problem, his rivalry with Said, or all of these issues, U.S. policymakers
throughout 1955 and into 1956 spent much of their energy trying to gain Egyptian
acceptance of the pact, but with little success.

The United States also wanted to place Egypt firmly on the Western side of the
ongoing Cold War. Since the 1952 revolution, the Truman and Eisenhower
administrations had continually tried to woo the Egyptians firmly into the American
camp. Egyptian leaders had maintained that following successful conclusion of the

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5 For more information on the U.S. decision to shelve plans for the Middle East Defense Organization see chapter two.
Anglo-Egyptian dispute they would then be able to come out more vocally on the side of the West and take tangible moves to solidify this relationship. Unfortunately for the Eisenhower administration, following the final Anglo-Egyptian agreement on the Suez Canal base, Nasser began to pursue a different foreign policy that preached Egyptian independence from outside powers and Arab nationalism, both of which clashed with American strategic interests in Egypt and the region.

Once again, the linguistic relationship among American policymakers, the U.S. media, and the Egyptians hinged upon the latter’s attitudes and actions in regard to American strategic interests. When it seemed that Egyptians joined American policymakers on issues such as the Baghdad Pact and the Cold War, media and administration officials described them positively as “insiders.” Beginning in this period, what is much more common are instances of negative language that depicted Egyptians in effeminate and Orientalist terms. These derogatory linguistic bombardments occurred as Nasser and his colleagues tried to undermine the Baghdad Pact, moved further into the Neutralist camp, or made arms deals with communist countries. In these instances, U.S. policymakers and the American media found it much easier to explain Egyptian intransigence by portraying them as “Others” and “outsiders.”

From the beginning of March 1955 until the end of March 1956, there are very few instances of positive language describing Egyptian leaders, and those that are found occur very early on in the period, before Nasser and the Eisenhower administration grew further apart in their foreign policy outlooks for the region. Ambassador Henry A. Byroade, who took over for Jefferson Caffery in Cairo, was pleased in early meetings in
March 1955 that Nasser expressed a desire to work with the West and understood the “importance of being able to understand each other” when it came to U.S.-Egyptian relations. According to the new chief American diplomat in Cairo, the Egyptian leader was also in a “relaxed mood” and “extremely friendly” during this encounter. In discussions later that same month, and before it became apparent that Egyptian and American views were headed down divergent paths, Byroade told Washington that his “appraisal of Nasser personally rises with each meeting.” The fact that, in Byroade’s mind, Nasser was “basically pro-West and certainly anti-communist” had very much to do with his personal praise of the Egyptian leader, and while relations between the two nations seemed strained, the ambassador believed that Washington needed to remember that “this [was] basically the best [leadership] that Egypt has had in our lifetime.” In these instances, Nasser showed signs of affability and affinity with the United States and its strategic goal of a pro-West Egypt. Unfortunately for all those involved, Nasser’s drive for Arab dominance and his new foreign policy initiatives made such laudatory descriptions few and far between during this period.

While Byroade certainly used positive language in his early encounters with the Egyptian leader, this honeymoon period between the two men also demonstrated Byroade’s willingness to use negative language as well. After their first discussion, which was devoted entirely to the Baghdad Pact and Egypt’s disapproval of the defensive entity, Byroade wrote Foggy Bottom explaining the effeminate and Orientalist

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7 Byroade to Dulles, 7 March, 1955, RG 59, 611.74/3-755.
8 Ibid.
9 Byroade to Dulles, 20 March, 1955, RG 59, 611.74/3-2055.
10 Ibid.
emotionalism of the Egyptian leaders, noting that he “sensed an intense dislike for Nuri Said as a person that I had not previously taken into account in my attempt to assess [the] present emotional situation,” and that this emotionalism ran so deep that he was “unable at this early stage to understand fully the apparent depth of Egyptian feeling.” Edward Said declares that knowledge of and about the Orient is one of the components of Orientalism, and now that Byroade had begun to gain this new knowledge he used it to depict Nasser as someone different than himself and fellow Westerners. In fact, the new ambassador had planned on discussing America’s position on the Baghdad Pact with Nasser, but Byroade believed that the Egyptians were in such a “mood” that they would be unable to dispassionately digest U.S. thinking on the topic.

Taking stock of the situation a week later, Byroade still attributed Egyptian intransigence toward the Baghdad Pact to Arab emotionalism. With the creation of the Northern Tier and its expansion into the Baghdad Pact, Nasser did all he could to block the new alliance’s formation by appealing to the Arab League and the West to build up an all-Arab defensive entity within the already existing Arab League. The Egyptian leader saw this as a way to offset the power moves of his rival in Iraq, Nuri Said, to regain his prestige and standing as leader of the Arab world, and to keep Arab defense and independence in their own hands. Reflecting on this episode, Byroade believed that the Baghdad Pact had caused the RCC to have childlike “tantrums” that had gotten them “so far out on [a] limb that some action became necessary on their part.” This action took

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11 Said, pp. 2-3.
form in Egypt’s attempt to create the all-Arab defensive arrangement, but U.S. diplomats in Cairo believed that once Egypt had “regained [the] initiative and restored its prestige, it will be more inclined to think and act reasonably.” Douglas Little has found that statements such as these show us that Byroade and his fellow Americans often times found the Egyptians to be “volatile, unpredictable, and quixotic.”

The notion of Egyptian emotionalism as it pertained to the Baghdad Pact and Nasser’s attempts to gain leadership over the Arab world became a recurring theme during this period. Members of the State Department’s Near Eastern Affairs Bureau believed that Egyptian attempts to gain dominant status throughout the region reflected “ambition, weakness and distrust,” and that Cairo’s actions aimed at building a defensive pact separate from the Baghdad Pact were done “largely out of a combination of eagerness to build Egypt’s prestige and a deep distrust of all its contacts whether Egyptian, Arab or Western.” It appeared to analysts in Washington, though, that Egypt could gain leadership status due to its “strength and by statesmanship.” Unfortunately, Egypt did not seem Western enough to realize its potential. But, falling back upon Orientalist stereotypes of Arabs, these same policy planners also believed that Egypt’s position in the Arab world could be ephemeral as well due to the fact that “while Arabs inveterately follow a leader, their allegiances are very tribal and temporary, based on a long tradition of freedom to give or withhold their support, depending on satisfaction of their own interests.” In their failed attempt to block the Baghdad Pact, Egypt had not

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15 Little, p. 28.
taken this analysis into account and, instead, had split the Arab world by invoking “the techniques of conspiracy upon which the RCC has relied since its birth.” In this same vein, assistant secretary Allen had previously denigrated Egyptian Air Commander Salah Salem’s inter-Arab failure in recent “heavy-handed attempts to scold and threaten the Arab states into action against Iraq.”

In a letter to ambassador Byroade, William Burdett of the NEA Bureau also commented on “how irrational” the Egyptians had been since the signing of the Baghdad Pact. In a reply to Burdett a few days later, Byroade commented on ways the United States could get the Egyptians out of their “present moods and attitudes” and noted that he believed the embassy in Cairo had played a large part in getting Egypt to “calm down” in regard to Iraq. George V. Allen got into the Orientalist act as well when writing to Byroade to discuss the Baghdad Pact issue in early August. Allen told the ambassador that he knew how difficult it could be to deal with the Egyptian leader “in the face of Nasser’s moodiness and playing at hard to get.” Such rhetoric shows how American policymakers painted Egyptians as “outsiders” by depicting them as emotional and conniving Orientals.

Members of the American media also attributed Egyptian defiance to deep-seated Arab emotionalism. In an early 1956 article dealing with the Baghdad Pact and British

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18 Burdett to Byroade, 22 June, 1955, RG 59, 611.74/6-2255.
19 Byroade to Burdett, 29 June, 1955, RG 59, 611.74/6-2955.
efforts to gain Jordan’s acceptance into the military alliance, *Newsweek* noted “Cairo’s
deeper fear” that Iraq’s newfound prominence would curtail Egyptian dominance and
prestige in the region.\(^{21}\)

State Department policy planners also feared what ongoing Israeli-Egyptian
clashes in the Gaza region would mean for regional defense. In late February 1955,
following repeated Arab incursions emanating from the Gaza region into Israeli lands,
Israel launched a major retaliatory raid into the Egyptian-held Gaza strip that left
numerous Egyptians and Palestinians dead.\(^{22}\) U.S. officials feared that episodes such as
these, besides hindering Project Alpha, also made it more difficult to demonstrate to the
Egyptians and the Arabs that the Soviets, not Israel, posed the real threat was to the
region. In early April, a National Security Council progress report on Near East policy
took a paternalistic tone when it touched on this issue. When discussing a recent Israeli
attack on Egyptian forces, the report noted that these kinds of events increased “the
difficulties of our task of attempting to make the Arabs aware of the reality of the
Communist danger and to convince them that in their own interests they should take
action to develop a realistic defense organization in association with Turkey and the West
to defend themselves from possible Soviet aggression.”\(^{23}\) In this instance, it seemed that
NSC planners believed that the United States must educate Arabs on the realities of what

\(^{22}\) Meyer, p. 78.
\(^{23}\) National Security Council: Progress Report on United States Objectives and Policies with Respect to the
Near East, 7 April, 1955, Record Group 273, Records of the National Security Council, National Archives,
Washington, D.C., Box 15 Official Meeting Minutes 245-265, Folder: 247\(^{th}\) Meeting (hereafter RG 273
with box and folder information).
was happening in the international arena, something they seemingly could not do on their own.

Nasser’s attendance at the April Bandung Conference of non-aligned nations and its implications for his new neutralist tendencies also elicited negative American language. Byroade saw these moves toward a new independent foreign policy as once again representing a deep-seated effeminate emotionalism in the Egyptian leader and the people. Following a Nasser speech in which he reaffirmed his nation’s new move toward neutralism, the U.S. ambassador remarked that “Nasser, the RCC members, and most Free Officers are to a large extent governed in their thinking by their own conspiratorial thinking.” Byroade continued that he believed that the Egyptians were “also obsessed by a fear of ‘foreign intervention’ stemming from the frustrating experience of the Egyptian Army during the British ‘occupation’ when the Army was reduced to impotence and a spectator role as the British intervened directly and indirectly to oppose Egyptian governments or political factions which were thought to be hostile to British interests.”

Byroade’s statements in this instance point to a more deep-seated psychological factor that was in play when dealing with Arabs, something Douglas Little describes well in *American Orientalism*. It seems that the only explanation the ambassador could come up with to explain Egypt’s willingness to move away from the United States’ interests was to paint Egyptians as overly emotional and weak. In this instance, Byroade’s depiction of the Egyptian Army as impotent is an emasculating gesture, but one that fits in well with the ambassador’s belief in their already effeminate emotional mindsets.

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24 Byroade to the Department of State, 15 July, 1955, RG 59, 774.00/7-1555.
25 Little, p. 28.
Time magazine was not so subtle in its depiction of those attending the Neutralist talks. When writing about the diverse grouping of world leaders and national dignitaries, the weekly publication noted that “in all, they spoke or affected to speak, for more than half of humanity, chiefly the yellow and brown and black half.” In case there was any doubt in readers’ minds, Time wanted to ensure that the American public realized that these world leaders, discussing foreign policy ideas such as neutralism, that were antithetical to American interests, were in fact different from those men in power in Washington and most definitely “Others.”

While the administration believed that Egyptian meddling against the Baghdad Pact and serious drives toward neutralism hurt American interests in Egypt and the region, nothing irked American policymakers more than the arms deal Nasser signed with the Soviet bloc in September. As Peter Hahn explains, many factors led to Nasser’s decision to purchase arms from the Soviets. He writes that

By exposing glaring weaknesses in Egypt’s military capabilities, the Gaza raid sharply stung Nasser, threatened his command of Egypt, and vaulted him toward a policy of neutralism in the Cold War. Egyptian army officers pressured Nasser to acquire modern weapons and improve the armed forces so as to prevent additional debacles. Other Arabs questioned Nasser’s claim to Arab leadership and ridiculed his plan to build an Arab defense pact. Besides being personally humiliated by the raid, Nasser concluded that unless he countered it with some bold initiative, his leadership of Egypt and of the Arab world would crumble.

Foggy Bottom policy planners had been working for some time to ink an arms deal with Nasser, but to no end. For his part, Nasser did not welcome the American military planners that would accompany any arms purchase. Dulles, fearing that granting aid

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27 Hahn, The United States, Great Britain and Egypt, p. 189.
would “anger other Arab states, spark an Egyptian-Israeli arms race, destroy Alpha, and possibly result in regional war,” decided against granting arms aid even in the face of repeated murmurings of a possible Egyptian-Soviet arms deal.\textsuperscript{28} The Egyptian arms deal with Czechoslovakia opened the Nile region to Soviet penetration, and did so by leapfrogging the Western defensive shield that had been put in place for the sole purpose of keeping communism out. This blatant Egyptian move, which rendered the Baghdad Pact ineffectual and highlighted growing disaffection between Nasser and the West, brought with it a torrent of negatively gendered and Orientalist language.

American officials in Cairo began to discuss a possible arms deal between Egypt and the Soviet bloc as early as June 1955. After a meeting with Nasser, who expressed exasperation at failed attempts to gain U.S. military aid and hinted that an arms deal with the Soviets was a done deal, Byroade let his feelings on the possibility of a Soviet-Egyptian arms deal be known when he commented on the “stupidity” of Nasser’s thinking. The ambassador further stated that while it would be “logical” for those reading his report in Washington to believe that this exemplified an attempt by Nasser to threaten the United States into supplying military aid, the Egyptian leader spoke the truth, “however illogical and dangerous” that truth may have been. Ultimately, Byroade believed that this was a “dangerous and most unfortunate situation” that encapsulated the weakness of the Arab mind, for while Nasser agreed with U.S. criticism and the dangers

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, p. 192.
of “Egypt’s policies in the long run,” he still seemed “convinced he must move as he does in the short run.”

Once the arms deal was confirmed, American officials unleashed a barrage of negative language aimed at Nasser. Ambassador Byroade commented that the Egyptian leader had made a “sweet mistake” and the secretary of state wrote Nasser a letter highly paternalistic in nature. In his note, the secretary wondered whether Nasser fully grasped the seriousness of his decision and then lectured him about the true nature of the Soviet menace. Dulles educated Nasser, who he deemed a naïve Egyptian, when he stated that “the record of the Soviet Union in this respect is clear. Initial, supposedly friendly gestures, lead quickly to subversion, inextricable involvement in the Communist orbit, and loss of that independence of action which Egypt rightly values so highly.”

A week following the signing of the arms agreement, Dulles continued to “question Egypt’s wisdom and prudence.” American officials clearly believed that the Egyptians’ lack of experience and mindset for international relations had gotten them in over their heads. Undersecretary of State Herbert Hoover, Jr. echoed like-minded sentiments following a meeting with the Egyptian leader. Describing a lack of depth in Egyptian thinking, Hoover noted that Nasser did not seem able to “recognize and face the magnitude of the

30 Byroade to the Department of State, 23 September, 1955, Ibid, pp. 508-509.
31 Dulles to Nasser, 27 September, 1955, DDE, Dulles, John Foster: Papers, 1951-59 JFD Chronological Series, Box 12, Folder: John Foster Dulles Chronological September 1955 (1).
32 Dulles to the American Embassy in Cairo, 6 October, 1955, RG 59, Lot File No. 59 D 518, Box 30, Folder: Alpha Memos, etc., After Secretary’s Statement, Aug. 26 – Oct. 29, 1955, folder 2 of 2.
damaging consequences certain to follow implementation [of the] Soviet arms deal.” The undersecretary also bemoaned the “evil effects of Nasser’s mistake.”

Americans again quickly fell back upon the crutch of effeminate emotionalism when explaining the reasons why Nasser would have reached out to the communists for arms. According to officials in Washington, the Israelis played a large part in fomenting emotionalism this time around. Earlier in the year, Israeli forces had left Egyptian forces reeling following a military raid in Gaza. State Department planners believed that the “psychological shock” of this raid, along with the still lingering memory of the embarrassing loss to Israel in 1948, had left Nasser “obsessed with a feeling of military inferiority to Israel, and thus a desire to obtain arms.”

*Time* also noted that the Israeli military was substantially larger than Egypt’s, which was a “constant source of humiliation to Nasser’s military junta.” George V. Allen of the State Department’s NEA Bureau also touched on the Egyptians’ “feeling of inferiority in the face of Israel” in discussions with Israeli Ambassador Eban. Eisenhower administration officials in Cairo were also inclined to point out that “emotionalism” in Egypt “had been great,” and was probably aided in part by a “highly emotional speech” Nasser had given in regard to the arms purchase and Israel.

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34 John D. Jernegan to Dulles, 30 September, 1955, RG 59, Lot File No. 59 D 518, Box 30, Folder: Alpha Memos, etc., After Secretary’s Statement, Aug. 26 – Oct. 29, 1 of 2.
For their part, the media played up Orienal image of Egyptians and painted Nasser as a devious, power-hungry Arab when it wrote about the Soviet-Egyptian arms deal. In late October, when reports surfaced that Nasser may have been wavering in his decision to purchase arms from the Soviet bloc, Newsweek, using visionary descriptions akin to A Thousand and One Arabian Nights, stated that “anti-Western sentiments, whipped up in propaganda broadcasts, by leaflet-dropping planes, and by belly dancers in battle dress appealing for contributions to pay for Communist arms, appeared likely to tip the balance.” Playing upon stereotypes of cocky, non-Christian Arabs, Time wrote that the “deal elevated Nasser to a role he has coveted for some time, cock of the walk with the Arab world,” while the Egyptian leader also took “obvious satisfaction in the amount of attention the world” had bestowed upon him. All the same, though, Nasser was taking a big gamble and “behaved like a man convinced that his spoon is long enough to sup with the devil.”

After the dust had settled and U.S. policymakers had a chance at sober reflection, it seemed that they still looked at Nasser’s arms deal decision as a reflection of his Arab emotionalism, inexperience in Western-style international relations, and egotism. Reflecting a lack of Egyptian good judgment, experience in foreign policy, and Nasser’s drive for power, a State Department Intelligence and Research (INR) Bureau National Intelligence Estimate noted that the “RCC almost certainly underestimates the risks of accepting Soviet arms and other support,” and that “the strengthening of Nasser’s personal position has been to some degree at the expense of moderation.”

38 Newsweek, 24 October, 1955, pp. 48.
cohorts’ emotionalism came into play yet again, but INR analysts believed their erratic behavior might be of benefit in this case. When dealing with the possibility of Egypt aligning with the Soviet Union a position like the one the United States had sought, Foggy Bottom planners believed that “the same apprehensive, suspicious nationalism that underlay Egypt’s rejection of alignment with the West in a Middle East defense organization will probably work with equal force against Soviet efforts to obtain a special position in Egypt.” That being said, Egyptian inexperience left this scenario unanswered, as “the RCC regime almost certainly overestimates its ability to handle both the short- and long-range risks of accepting the Soviet arms offer.” When proffering possible Eisenhower administration responses, INR officials believed that withdrawing U.S. economic and technical aid “would probably produce an angry and emotional reaction from the RCC.” According to U.S. policy planners, Nasser’s drive for power, effeminate emotionalism, and lack of experience had gotten the United States into the situation it now found itself in, and these same “outsider” issues impaired the Eisenhower administration’s ability to find a way to salvage its goals.

Throughout the period in question, American policymakers had discussed providing aid to Egypt in its quest to build the Aswan High Dam. This took on new importance following the Czech arms deal, as officials in Washington searched for ways to corral Egypt back into a tighter working relationship with the West. Millions of dollars in Western aid and a large contingent of Western engineers and financiers on Egyptian soil could do just that. As had been the case with the majority of the language

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dealing with Egypt, and American attempts to align the Arab nation more firmly with the West, depictions of Egyptians in this regard tended to be negative in nature. Americans used negative language toward Egyptians because of Egyptian attempts to haggle over details of the loan that Western nations and institutions were trying to negotiate with the Nasser regime. The Egyptians were angling for a loan for the full amount needed to finance the dam due to fears that the West would pull out before completing the project.\footnote{Hahn, \textit{The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt}, p. 202.}

For their part, American officials hoped that Nasser and his colleagues would view the conditions being proposed by the World Bank, the primary lender and negotiator of the loan, “with a more balanced viewpoint.”\footnote{Byroade to the Department of State, 30 January, 1956, \textit{Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957}, vol. 15, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1989), pp. 100-101 (hereafter \textit{FRUS}).} Harkening back to the inexperience and emotionalism of the Free Officers, Eugene Black, president of the World Bank, believed that the Egyptians were “naïve in thinking that a project of this magnitude was easy, and were suspicious that the Bank was dictated to by the United States and the United Kingdom.”\footnote{Memorandum of Conversation, 16 November, 1955, RG 59, Lot File No. 59 D 518, Box 31, Folder: Alpha Memos, etc., During Geneva Conference, Nov. 1 – Dec. 10, 1955, folder 1 of 3.}

The American media commented in like fashion. \textit{Newsweek}, for example, contended that the stereotypical street peddling Egyptians were “still haggling over details” and “driving a hard bargain.”\footnote{\textit{Newsweek}, 16 January, 1956, p. 38.}

While Western officials and the media easily fell upon Arab stereotypes when negotiations over the High Dam faltered, they just as quickly turned to positive language when evidence indicated the Egyptians were beginning to see things in a more Western
light. It seemed that a slight Egyptian wavering toward the World Bank’s position in early February 1956 had led to a “hopeful turn” in the negotiations.\textsuperscript{45}

While this language showed signs of positive language in regard to the High Dam, the fact remains that the Eisenhower administration and the media overwhelmingly used negative language toward Egyptians when dealing with the question of aligning Egypt with the West and strengthening the Baghdad Pact. By early 1955, Project Alpha and an end to the Arab-Israeli dispute had become just as important to American policymakers. While the language may have been more evenly divided between positive and negative language in regard to Project Alpha, a shift to primarily negative language brought with it another loss for American interests in the region during this period.

\textbf{Project Alpha}

Following the conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian Suez Canal Base negotiations in late 1954, American policymakers began to energetically pursue means to bring the Arab-Israeli dispute to a successful close. Eisenhower administration officials believed that the continuation of the Arab-Israeli dispute brought with it a continual chance of regional war and concomitant instability. With the larger Cold War picture always in

mind, American policymakers feared that this instability could open up inroads for Soviet penetration into the Middle East, something that Western officials were trying to avoid at all costs. Egypt played a key role in the planning for Project Alpha. Nasser gained a large amount of stature in the eyes of the Arab world following the Anglo-Egyptian base agreement and the removal of British “imperialist” forces from Egyptian soil. Western officials decided to approach Nasser first in regard to Alpha, resting their plans on the belief that his acquiescence and regional leadership would entice other Arab countries to follow suit.46

As with America’s other strategic interest during this period, U.S. officials’ and the media’s language when describing Egyptians once again depended upon where Nasser and his countrymen stood in relation to the success or failure of Project Alpha. During instances in which it seemed that the Free Officers were cooperating with American plans for an Arab-Israeli peace, Americans called Egyptians “insiders” through the use of positive and Western language. During times of turbulence in regard to this strategic interest, Americans used negative and Orientalist language to paint Egyptians as “outsiders.”

A number of Egyptian actions in the spring of 1955 boded well for Project Alpha’s success, and American officials responded positively. State Department officials initially worried about how Egypt would react to an Israeli military raid in Gaza in late February that left a number of Egyptians dead and what it meant for the peace process. The Israelis were retaliating against Egypt for continued “continuing border incursions

46 For more information on the Alpha Peace Plan see chapter two.
from the Egyptian side,” and left thirty-eight Egyptian soldiers dead.47 “Egyptian authorities,” however, allayed these fears, and, Byroade reported, were “exercising remarkable restraint” in their reactions toward Israel.48 While this episode would obviously delay action on Alpha somewhat, American officials believed that the lack of a negative Egyptian response kept the peace plan alive. Likewise, Egyptian foreign minister Fawzi’s “desire to discuss [the] possibility of [an] Arab-Israeli settlement” in early April led ambassador Byroade to praise the Egyptian regime in Western terms. Byroade commented that the United States “wished to see [a] strong and progressive Egypt” and that “we admire Nasser’s efforts [in] that direction.” He also noted that due to Nasser and Egypt’s leadership in the Middle East and its “realism,” the United States and United Kingdom had decided to approach Egypt first. American officials also liked the fact that Egypt had taken a “positive” attitude toward the Johnston Committee’s Jordan River Valley Plan (for details see chapter 2). Taken together, the American ambassador and Western officials considered this an “extremely encouraging development” that led to an atmosphere “as favourable as could be expected for a resumption of the contacts with Nasser.”49

American officials continued to use positive language when dealing with foreign minister Fawzi well into the summer of 1955, as he demonstrated a strong willingness to work with the United States in regard to Alpha. American officials in Cairo got the impression after one meeting that “Fawzi will try hard for acceptance” of an Egyptian-

47 Hahn, The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, p. 189.
Israeli peace, which led Byroade to feel that he had had a “general foreign policy exchange which was [the] most encouraging” since his arrival in Egypt.\footnote{Byroade to the Department of State, 8/9 June, 1955, \textit{FRUS, 1955-1957}, vol. 14, pp. 234-235.} Due to his willingness to work in favor of American interests in the region, Fawzi’s Western-style attributes shone through in a NEA memorandum to Secretary Dulles. The Bureau remarked that “Dr. Fawzi has consistently demonstrated a high degree of understanding of United States objectives and has exerted his influence toward the improvement of U.S.-Egyptian relations. He has been reasonable and constructive in dealing with problems of mutual concern even at times when other members of his Government have adopted extreme positions.”\footnote{Memorandum to Dulles, 21 June, 1955, RG 59, 611.74/6-2155.} The Egyptian foreign minister’s attempts to help the Untied States reach its goals in the Middle East led U.S. officials to speak of him in strong and Western language and to paint him as someone who could rise above the “extreme” emotions of some of his compatriots. Dulles continued the trend of laudatory language when he told Byroade that he was “encouraged” by the latter’s recent discussions with Nasser and Fawzi, especially the foreign minister’s mindset that the “US should seize [the] initiative” of a peace plan “in 1955.” Dulles particularly wanted to duck possible domestic political problems with the Jewish lobby during the 1956 election year.\footnote{Dulles to Byroade, 20 August, 1955, \textit{FRUS, 1955-1957}, vol. 14, pp. 376-378.}

Nasser also received positive linguistic treatment from American officials when he acted in a manner they considered helpful to the U.S. goal of an Arab-Israeli peace. In August, Dulles decided to make a speech in which he would make the details of Project
Alpha public, hoping that this would spur movement on the part of the two aggrieved parties. The secretary believed that making the plan public would bring about a positive global outlook and make both sides a little more civil in negotiations. According to Peter Hahn, “the approach of the 1956 election and intelligence reports of an impending Soviet-Arab rapprochement also convinced him” to act while the United States could still act as a friend to both sides.\(^5^3\) American officials in Cairo gave Nasser and Fawzi advance copies of the speech so as that they were not caught off guard when the news of Dulles’ action went public. Both Nasser and Fawzi reacted positively to the secretary’s speech, causing Byroade to comment on their “apparent objectivity” when dealing with the situation.\(^5^4\) This Western-style statesmanship boded well for progress on Alpha in the minds of American officials. This masculine and Western linguistic praise continued once Dulles actually gave his speech outlining Project Alpha, as the secretary noted that initial reactions had “been gratifyingly thoughtful, sober and responsible.”\(^5^5\) Also helping the situation in American minds was the fact that Egyptian press criticism of Dulles’ initiative had been “moderate.”\(^5^6\) Once ambassador Byroade sat down with Egyptian officials to discuss the contents of the secretary’s Alpha speech in detail, he was very pleased to find out that initial encouraging Egyptian reactions in regard to the public disclosure of the American peace plan seemed, in fact, to be a reality. Following this fruitful encounter with a number of RCC members, Byroade told Foggy Bottom that “throughout [the] discussion [the] Egyptians showed every disposition [to] be helpful. I

\(^5^3\) Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East*, p. 185.
\(^5^6\) Byroade to the Department of State, 14 September, 1955, Ibid, pp. 468-469.
could not have asked for more considerate or constructive [an] attitude.\textsuperscript{57} In Byroade’s mind, at least, the Egyptians had shown strong signs of being Western “insiders.”

In late August 1955, fighting once again broke out along the Israeli-Egyptian border and threatened America’s peace plans. American officials became aware of an Egyptian plan to send military units across the border to attack Israeli forces after three Egyptian soldiers had been killed and were able to convince Nasser to call off the attack, but not before a number of units out of radio contact had already attacked. In response, the Israelis attacked and killed thirty Egyptian soldiers, but Nasser’s decision not to retaliate helped \textit{Time} magazine describe him in positive terms in a late September cover story.\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Time} told its readers how Major General Amer, head of the Egyptian Army, had asked Nasser for permission to attack into Israel, but the wiser Egyptian front man had emphatically refused. This moderate response toward Israel on Nasser’s part led the magazine to describe the colonel in Western and masculine language throughout the article. Commenting upon his order not to attack into Israel, \textit{Time} noted that “Gamal Abdel Nasser, a handsome, dedicated soldier of only 37, is the one man in Egypt who could give such an order and have it obeyed. Last week, further curbing some of his impatient lieutenants and the Moslem hotheads who would like to provoke a full-scale war with Israel, he endorsed United Nations efforts to create a buffer zone or stretch a barrier along the border dividing Israel and Egypt.” Moves such as these were promising for American strategic interests in Egypt and the region and were the opening salvo in an article that was full of laudatory language toward Nasser. The weekly publication


\textsuperscript{58} Hahn, \textit{The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt}, p. 191.
described the charismatic Egyptian leader as “the most powerful, most energetic and potentially most promising leader among the long divided, long misled Moslems of the Middle East.” Indeed, Nasser was “more firmly and more personally in control than ever,” and his reach extended beyond Cairo and the immediate regional area. He had “become a prominent, sought-after guest in diplomatic conclaves across the world.”

While Egypt and its new leader had experienced some setbacks along the way, *Time* wrote that “in Western capitals, Nasser is still looked upon as Egypt’s best hope for decent government, a moderate among the hotheaded many who would fight Israel even at the cost of suicide, a man who perhaps some day can grow into the dominant Middle Eastern leader he aspires to be.” Praise did not stop there. In an attempt to give Nasser “insider” status, the article noted how he carried “200 lbs. with the lithe grace of a big, handsome All-America fullback,” and “he talks quietly, gently, and has never been known to raise his voice or lose his temper.” But, soft he was not, for “beneath his apparent softness, there is a streak of rough, tough ruthlessness,” which came through in his Cairo office as “he talked quietly, but he let the toughness come through.” These descriptions of Nasser as calm and quiet, yet strong, mirrored what American readers expected from their own leaders. In closing, *Time* contrasted Nasser against his opulent and Oriental predecessors and cemented “insider” status when it wrote that the Egyptian leader, who still lived in the same home inside the army compound, allowed “himself none of the personal privileges now within his means.” This personal frugality was a far cry from the palaces and trinkets that the corrupt, “outsider,” old regime had

60 Ibid.
accumulated when it held the reigns of power. These images were also reminiscent of the media’s contrasting depictions of the Shah of Iran and Mohamed Mossadeq during the Anglo-Iranian crisis of the early 1950s, as Mary Ann Heiss, John Foran, and others have demonstrated.\(^6^1\)

Foreign minister Fawzi was once again the subject of positive American language following a meeting between Egyptian, American, and British diplomats. According to Fawzi, “Egypt [was] prepared to work towards [a] settlement [of] Arab-Israeli issues at [the] earliest practical date.” Byroade and his British counterpart believed this to be such a “positive approach” on the part of the Egyptian foreign minister that they “strongly recommended” that the time had come to approach Israel with their peace plan.\(^6^2\) State Department officials also called Fawzi’s notions of the basis in which Egypt “would be willing to make [a] settlement with Israeli encouraging.”\(^6^3\) The American ambassador also found it “encouraging” a week later when discussing Fawzi’s comments and the foreign minister’s positive position regarding American plans for peace with Nasser.\(^6^4\) Nasser’s approval of Fawzi’s statements and the subsequent American message to Washington outlining the foreign minister’s main points was a good sign for America’s strategic goal of an Arab-Israeli peace and brought with it laudatory language aimed at


the Egyptian leader. So heartening was this turn of events, Dulles even mentioned it in a letter to British Foreign Minister Harold Macmillan.65

Following these talks with Nasser and Fawzi, American representatives in Israel told Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion that they were “greatly impressed” with the possibilities of a settlement, while further discussions with Nasser led Dulles to comment to Eisenhower’s peace envoy, Robert Anderson, that the Egyptian leader’s acquiescence in sending a communication to Israel was a “step forward,” and like his fellow diplomats, Dulles also called Nasser’s pledge to tone down propaganda aimed at Israel “encouraging.”66

While the primary source evidence points out that Egyptian actions in regard to American hopes of settling the Arab-Israeli dispute left U.S. officials in a much better position to describe Egyptians in positive and Western terms than their stance on aligning with the West and the Baghdad Pact, they used such language only sparingly. More often than not, Egyptian officials thwarted American attempts at an Arab-Israeli peace. American officials reacted by using negative language that depicted Egyptians as “outsiders” and “Others.”

While Nasser ultimately showed restraint toward Israel following the Gaza raid in late February 1955, Western officials were at first uncertain and worried that this would not be the case. In order to prevent the situation from escalating and damaging American hopes of a peace settlement, ambassador Byroade paternalistically “counseled

moderation” to Foreign Minister Fawzi in one of his earliest visits with the Egyptian. U.S. and British policymakers shared similar uneasy sentiments during a meeting in London regarding Alpha. British Foreign Service official Evelyn Shuckburgh commented that he was worried “lest the Egyptians should do something rash.” Drawing upon stereotypes of Arab emotionalism, Western diplomats agreed that they “must recognize that Nasser had recently taken several knocks. His prestige had suffered as a result of his opposition to the Turco-Iraqi treaty as well as through the humiliation of the Egyptian Army at Gaza.” U.S. and British officials feared “such a situation; and although Nasser might know that the Egyptian Army was not capable of effective action against Israel, he might feel that he had to take some action, however reckless.”

It seemed that Nasser’s vanity and effeminate emotionalism caused anxiety among Western policymakers and what it could mean for Project Alpha. American and British officials had wanted to approach Nasser about the role they envisioned for him and the details of Project Alpha at this time, but the Gaza incident gave them pause.

Following a conversation with his British counterpart, Byroade wrote to Foggy Bottom that “Nasser is sore and suspicious” and that “it would be both unwise and useless to make [an] official secret approach to him at the present time.” This assertion stemmed from Byroade’s belief that due to the recent Israeli raid and the signing of the Baghdad Pact, an American approach along the lines of Alpha would play into Nasser’s Arab sense of Oriental suspicion and “persuade him of [the] truth of his colleagues

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assertions that [the] Turco-Iraqi pact was part of [a] deep laid plot aimed by the US and UK at splitting the Arab world and softening Egypt up.” Moreover, “his recent diplomatic defeat over [the] Turco-Iraqi pact forces him for the present at any rate into a more nationalistic and thus less realistic attitude.”

Making matters worse, American officials speculated that Egypt secretly planned to retaliate against Israel if it launched another attack. Ambassador Byroade believed that “another Gaza-like attack by Israel combined with an outcome in [the] SC (United Nations Security Council) considered unsatisfactory to [the] GOE would probably cause Egyptian frustration to reach [the] breaking point, particularly if combined with [an] increased sense of isolation from [the] Arab world and [the] idea [that] Egypt [was] abandoned by [the] US. In such circumstances we believe it possible that [the] RCC might consider a desperate adventure in [the] southern Negev.”

Even with all of the positive statements during this period aimed at Mohammed Fawzi, Americans still used negative Orientalist stereotypes when discussing the Egyptian during this uncertain time following the Gaza raids. While they liked Fawzi’s forward-looking statements in regard to a peace settlement, recent events and the possibility of Egyptian retaliation against Israel called these sentiments into question. When dealing with this situation in a telegram to Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, Byroade questioned the foreign minister’s motives, writing that “if one thinks in terms of normal Middle East suspicions and

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politics one might also conclude that, with the uncertainty here at present, [that] Fawzi had decided he might benefit in the future personally by appearing reasonable in the US eyes.”

It seems that the possibility of Egyptian actions against Israel that would jeopardize America’s peace plans even caused U.S. officials to question some of the positive assumptions they had made in regard to the Western attributes of some Egyptian officials and allowed them to easily fall back upon Orientalist stereotypes of “Middle East suspicions and politics” that Said and Little discuss so well.

In June, following another outbreak of Egyptian-Israeli fighting that Cairo instigated, Acting Secretary Hoover sent Byroade a message informing him to tell the Egyptians, in paternalistic and heavy-handed language, that the U.S. government was “compelled to express to [the] Egyptian Govt in [the] strongest terms [the] fact that [their] failure [to] adopt adequate measures to prevent such behavior is strongly deplored by this Govt.”

Byroade commented shortly thereafter that British representatives had found Nasser in a “bitter” mood due to what the Egyptian considered inaccurate Western allegations that Egypt had instigated the most recent fighting with the Israelis.

In a meeting of State Department officials on June 8, Dulles and his team tried to find the best avenue for proceeding with Project Alpha in the face of this newest outbreak of hostilities. When discussing Nasser and the troubles that the recent fighting had caused in regard to the peace process, George V. Allen, again falling back upon negative stereotypes of Egyptian emotionalism, remarked that “apparently” Nasser’s “inherent

73 Byroade to the Department of State, 6 June, 1955, Ibid, pp. 220-222.
suspicions and the influence of the Salem brothers, who were Cairo newspaper editors, had caused him to give in to anti-Western thinking.”

The next day, American hopes for moving forward with Alpha were thwarted once again when Nasser said that he would not accept a meeting with the Israelis at the highest level, an important goal of the Eisenhower administration. This setback caused ambassador Byroade to note that he “could not have used more forceful language” when trying to convince the Egyptian leader to meet this stipulation.

Although Nasser’s initial response sounded hopeful to Americans and brought with it positive language, Dulles’ attempt to spur action on Project Alpha by publicly disclosing the peace plans did not bring with it the continued type of Egyptian reaction the secretary was hoping for, and Nasser’s continued delaying led to more un-Western and Orientalist American depictions of him. Failure to get any movement on the peace process following the secretary’s speech led British and American officials, in attitudes straight out of Mark Twain’s *Innocents Abroad*, to comment that the “situation resembled an oriental bazaar bargain in which neither vendor nor purchaser would name the starting points.”

Other stereotypical Arab tendencies such as emotionalism also frustrated American officials when trying to balance desperate requests for arms aid from Israel following the Soviet-Egyptian arms deal, Aswan High Dam aid to Egypt, and the peace

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process.\footnote{American officials decided against arming Israel following the Soviet-Egyptian arms deal because they feared it would push the Arabs away from American and the West and into a deeper relationship with the Soviet bloc. For more information on this see Hahn, \textit{Caught in the Middle East}, p. 189.} Trying to take stock of where the aid situation would leave the United States and Egyptian attitudes toward peace with Israel, Byroade noted that the Good affects of United States assistance on [the] High Dam will be completely over-balanced, at least in [the] short run, by [the] supply of military equipment to Israel. While from [the] viewpoint [of the] development of Egypt and [the] standard of living of people, [the] High Dam is essential, emotions involved in what Arabs view as [the] immediate security problem would take precedence over [the] probably more vital, but much less dramatic long-range economic considerations.\footnote{Byroade to Dulles, 12 December, 1955, RG 59, 611.74/12-1255.}

According to Ambassador Byroade, Egyptian emotionalism over arms aid to Israel overshadowed the importance of aid for the Aswan High Dam and made it more difficult to get the Egyptians to sit down at the negotiating table with the Israelis. It seemed to American officials that Nasser had been dishonest in his dealings in regard to the peace process because of Israeli military strength. Not wanting to have to negotiate from a position of weakness, the Egyptian leader told Eisenhower’s personal peace envoy in January 1956, Robert Anderson, that he could not take any steps toward a settlement during the next six months. NEA official Francis H. Russell commented to Dulles that “while this is to some extent a repetition of the delaying strategy that he has always pursued in the past, it is particularly cagey from his point of view and disappointing from ours because it indicates that he does not want to do anything until after Egypt has absorbed its current arms acquisition.”\footnote{Memorandum to the Secretary, 19 January, 1956, RG 59, Lot File No. 59 D 518, Box 33, Folder: Alpha Anderson Talks w/BG and Nasser, Jan. 1956 – memos, etc., folder 2 of 2.}
Arms acquisitions and/or the lack thereof continued to be a source of trouble for American policymakers and their desire to settle the Arab-Israeli quarrel, leading to more negative depictions of Egyptians. At first, before a decision had been made whether to grant arms to Israel, U.S. officials bemoaned the fact that Egypt, following its own recent arms purchases, had delayed talks on Alpha and seemed to be nurturing a sense of egotism due to its new military strength vis-à-vis Israel. Dulles’ special assistant, upset at both Egyptian actions, commented to the secretary that “in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world an attitude of cockiness and over-confidence is already showing itself and will probably soon reach a point where it will make it even more difficult than at present for us to obtain cooperation from them in a settlement.”\textsuperscript{80} Just days later, when Egyptian officials asked Byroade if the United States planned to supply arms to Israel, the ambassador noted a different, but just as negative, Egyptian mood. It now seemed that Egyptian “emotions” in regard to the United States granting military aid to Israel would be such that it would make negotiations very difficult for the foreseeable future.\textsuperscript{81}

By the beginning of March, it had become apparent to American officials that Nasser would not start serious peace discussions with the Israelis. This realization led to a spate of negative language that had a paternalistic bent and depicted the Egyptian leader as weak and egotistical. Robert B. Anderson, whom Eisenhower had sent to the Middle East as a special emissary to work on Alpha, noted that Nasser’s new refusal to meet with Israeli leaders in a timely manner, contrary to the American belief that he was capable of the “courage” that peace with Israel would entail, indirectly pointed out the opposite, that


\textsuperscript{81} Byroade to the Department of State, 24 February, 1956, Ibid, pp. 235-236.
Nasser was, in fact, cowardly. Anderson referenced his most recent meeting with the headman in Cairo as the “most disappointing conference since the beginning of the mission.” In further correspondence the same day, Anderson again pointed out Nasser’s weakness, stating that what concerned the special envoy “greatly” was “Nasser’s stated unwillingness to assume a position of leadership.” Nasser would not be induced into attempting to start a dialogue with the Israelis even after Anderson “quite forcibly urged” him to do so. Sensing that Project Alpha’s chances for success had drawn to a close, Eisenhower found it quite easy to blame it on the fact that Egypt and the Arabs were “daily growing more arrogant” and, worse yet, “disregarding the interests of Western Europe and of the United States in the Middle East region.” Ike’s diary entry encapsulates the main argument of this entire study very succinctly. In one sentence, the president melded this use of negative language and the Egyptians refusal to go along with American strategic interests in the Middle East.

Conclusion

From March 1955 until March 1956, the United States sought to achieve two main objectives in Egypt and the Middle East. First, it wanted to align Egypt as tightly with the West as possible while strengthening the Baghdad Pact to shield the region from Soviet penetration. As we have seen, American plans in this regard hit a mighty

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83 Anderson to the Secretary of State, 6 March, 1956, RG 59, Lot File No. 59 D 518, Box 34, Folder: Alpha – Anderson Talks w/BG and Nasser Carbons of incoming and outgoing tels, folder 2 of 2.
85 Diary Entry by the President, 8 March, 1956, Ibid, pp. 326-327.
roadblock in Gamal Abdel Nasser and his new foreign policy initiatives. Nasser’s desire to undermine the Baghdad Pact through propaganda and the creation of his own area defensive pact were attempts to block any attempts by Iraq’s Nuri Said to gain leadership in the Arab world at the Egyptian leader’s expense. Unfortunately for American policymakers, this power struggle, and Nasser’s guarded fear of becoming too entangled with Western nations after just concluding an agreement removing the British from Egypt, made things difficult for the United States. Likewise, the Egyptian leader’s firm alignment with the neutralist movement following his trip to the Bandung Conference of non-aligned nations in April 1955 also hampered the Eisenhower administration’s efforts to achieve its goal of a firm Western orientation for Egypt. Most devastating from the American standpoint, Nasser’s purchase of Soviet-bloc arms in September 1955 seemed to almost undo everything that both Eisenhower and his predecessor had been trying to accomplish in the region. In one fell swoop, Nasser had not only demonstrated that he would not be aligning more firmly with the West, but he began a military aid relationship with the United States’ archenemy, the Soviet Union. Worse yet, this move allowed Soviet penetration deep into the Middle East region, totally bypassing the newly formed, but already impotent, Baghdad Pact, that had been formed in order to stop such Soviet inroads.

As we have seen, such actions led to very little positive American descriptive language toward Egyptians. This period, due to Nasser’s more blatant moves away from U.S. objectives, saw much more pronounced negatively gendered and Orientalist language used to describe him and his fellow Egyptians. Faced with growing
dissatisfaction at their failure to reel in Egypt to the Western side in the ongoing Cold War, American policymakers and the media quickly fell back upon negative stereotypes depicting Egyptians as “Others” to help explain to themselves and the public why they could not work with Nasser and to demonstrate why U.S. goals were not being met.

Eisenhower also wanted to end the ongoing Arab-Israeli dispute. Initially begun in late 1954, Project Alpha took on new life in early 1955 and policymakers in Washington hinged their hopes of a settlement on its success. U.S. officials believed the ongoing quarrel between the Arab world and Israel made the Middle East region volatile and unstable, which made it much easier for the Soviet Union to find ways to gain influence in the region. Western policy planners believed that an approach to Nasser first, due to his stature in the Arab world, was their best plan of action for Alpha to succeed. While some instances seemed to reflect Egyptian willingness to work toward such a peace, and at the pace the United States desired, led to masculine and Western depictions from the media and Eisenhower’s people, they were few and far between. The majority of the language in regard to this strategic interest was also negative in nature. Nasser’s continued unwillingness to meet with the Israelis in what the Americans believed to be a timely manner and continued attacks back and forth between the two nations led policymakers and the media to discuss Egyptian emotionalism and egotism. Again, and unlike previous periods, we find that the norm had become the depiction of Egyptians and their leaders as “outsiders” who were different from Americans and the men who were in charge of their government.
As we will see, following the failure of Project Alpha, American and British policymakers would actually undertake a new tack, Project Omega, that would try to undermine Nasser’s power due to his newfound intransigence to Western interests. One final attempt to woo Nasser was also made, though, in the form of the Aswan High Dam. Throughout the spring and summer of 1956, American policymakers would try to gain Egyptian acceptance of their terms for the dam’s funding. This final push’s failure in the summer of 1956 would bring with it Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal and war. It would also bring about the most negative language that had been seen to date.
CHAPTER FOUR:

Nasser as Nemesis: Omega, Suez and the Souring of U.S.-Egyptian Relations

From the Truman administration’s earliest encounters with the Egyptian Free Officer movement in the summer of 1952 and Eisenhower and Dulles’ subsequent dealings with the regime through the first few months of 1956, negative and positive descriptions of Egyptians depended upon whether Cairo seemed to be helping or hindering Washington’s main strategic interests in the Middle Eastern region. American interests included at one time or another Egyptian internal stability, an end to the ongoing Anglo-Egyptian Suez Canal Base dispute, the creation of some type of Middle East defensive alliance (initially planned with Egyptian participation), and an Arab-Israeli peace. Until late 1955 and early 1956, American descriptive language, for the most part, painted Egyptians in equally positive and negative terms. When Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser embarked on a number of new foreign policy initiatives in 1955, however, American language for the first time became more heavily negative. The Egyptian leader’s moves caused American policymakers to rethink their strategy vis-à-vis Egypt in early 1956. This change, along with Nasser’s continued anti-Western actions, led to serious consequences for both parties over the next months and led American officials
and the media to almost exclusively describe Nasser and his cohorts in negatively
gendered and Orientalist terms.

The Eisenhower administration sought to align Egypt with the West as closely as
possible and convince Nasser to acquiesce to the Baghdad Pact throughout 1955, and
viewing the world through a Cold War lens, Eisenhower and Dulles worked to prevent
the Soviet Union from making inroads into the Middle East region. Unfortunately for
officials in Washington, Nasser chose early 1955 to undertake a more independent
foreign policy very much out of line with what U.S. strategists wanted. Correctly
understanding the influence Nasser had over the Arab world, U.S. policymakers
considered Egyptian support crucial to the Baghdad Pact’s success. Nasser thwarted this
American goal by adamantly opposing the pact because he worried that his rival and
prominent Arab member of the pact, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Said, would gain
prestige throughout the region as his own fell. Nasser also viewed Western attempts to
tie Arab and Islamic countries into a military alliance with the West as a new form of
imperialism, something he vociferously opposed.

Nasser embarked upon a number of other initiatives throughout 1955 that led
Egypt further away from the West. First, his attendance at the Bandung Conference in
April 1955 symbolized his full embrace of neutralism as official Egyptian policy. This
new international stance clearly threatened Eisenhower and Dulles’ plans to align Egypt
with the West and violated their strict us-against-them reading of the Cold War. Then, in
September, Nasser dropped a bombshell when he concluded an arms deal with the Soviet
bloc. This move was doubly problematic for American policymakers. Not only did the
arms deal place Soviet technicians in the most populous, and arguably most important, Arab state, but it revealed that the Baghdad Pact could not prevent Soviet penetration of the Middle East.¹

American officials also hoped to bring about an end to the Arab-Israeli dispute in 1955 through their plans for Project Alpha (see chapter 2). Officials in Washington believed that the ongoing tension and conflict between the Arab states and Israel threatened regional stability, which could open the door for major armed conflict and provide inroads for Soviet penetration. Again, due to his stature in the eyes of other Arabs, Western officials decided to approach Nasser first in regard to a peace settlement. While Nasser initially showed signs of cooperating with Washington’s plans, by the beginning of 1956 it had become apparent that he would continue to delay moving on Project Alpha. His purchase of Eastern-bloc arms exacerbated the situation by fueling Israeli fears of an Egyptian first-strike on their soil.

By early 1956, Nasser’s continued resistance to America’s Middle East goals forced a reassessment in Washington. While its goals remained the same, the Eisenhower administration changed its tactics. In March, Eisenhower and Dulles concluded that “friendly incentives had failed to control Nasser’s behavior or stem the growth of Egyptian neutralism.” Indeed, as Peter Hahn writes, “Soviet weapons were arriving in Egyptian ports; Nasser announced that Soviet technicians would launch an Egyptian atomic research program; and Egyptian-Chinese commercial ties were

¹ For more information on the foreign policy differences and struggles between the United States and Egypt during 1955 and into early 1956 see chapter three and Hahn, The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, pp. 183-190.
growing.” On top of all of this, the Egyptian leader “sought military alliances with Syria and Saudi Arabia to counter the Baghdad Pact and attacked the West in radio broadcasts.” Hahn further notes that,

Dulles advised that the United States suspend consideration of providing aid to Egypt, including that for the Aswan dam; finance Iraqi propaganda against Nasser’s drive for Arab preeminence; support Arab powers suspicious of Nasser and court those closely allied to him; and bolster the Baghdad Pact without adhering to it.2

Eisenhower approved this new initiative, code named Omega, at the end of March. Walking a very fine line, U.S. policymakers wanted to avoid causing a precipitous break with Nasser that would drive him into Moscow’s arms while at the same time leaving enough wiggle room to allow the Egyptian leader to come back over to the West if he desired.3

A major component of the Omega plan was an American reconsideration of proposed funding for the Aswan High Dam. Plans for Western aid in this endeavor began earlier in the Eisenhower administration’s dealings with the Free Officers, and serious negotiations between the Egyptians and the World Bank’s Eugene Black had been ongoing since October 1955. The administration also saw Aswan aid as an added inducement to get Nasser to adhere to the Alpha Peace plan, but the peace initiative’s failure “ended the American attempt to use the Aswan loan as a quid pro quo for an Arab-Israeli peace.”4 By early 1956, Nasser’s refusal to ink a Western deal for the dam

3 Ibid. Nigel John Ashton sees the Omega plan as “an endeavour to paper over the widening cracks in the Anglo-American common front in the region,” while also noting that an element of the plan was the preparation of a coup in Syria, which would eventually take a backseat to the Suez crisis in the fall. Ashton, p. 80. Also see Freiberger, pp. 134 and 147-150.
4 Freiberger, p. 152.
unless the Americans and British promised the needed funds to finish the project further
irked U.S. policymakers. On top of Nasser’s hard-headedness over finances was the
Egyptian leader’s negotiation of a small arms deal with Poland, his recognition of
Communist China, further intrigues with upper-level Soviet officials, and his stinging
refusal to press forward on the Alpha peace process. Eisenhower and Dulles also faced
domestic pressure from the Israeli lobby to dump the Aswan project, along with
opposition from Southern congressman who feared an increase in Egyptian cotton
production due to the dam. American officials also worried how it would look to some
Allies if they seemingly rewarded a neutralist Egypt by giving aid for Aswan’s
construction. Due to these factors, Dulles rescinded his offer of aid on July 19.

When the Eisenhower administration withdrew its offer of aid for the Aswan High
Dam in July it set off a series of events that destabilized the Middle East, the very
outcome it had wanted to prevent. On July 26, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal,
planning to use the finances from its operation to fund construction of the dam. The
Egyptian leader’s actions led to a tense period of negotiations and conferences in which
the United States tried to restrain the British and French, who were dependent upon the
canal, from attacking Egypt. In the end, there was nothing Eisenhower and Dulles could
do, as Israel, with British and French collusion, attacked Egypt in late October. The
British and French then used the invasion as a pretext to secure the canal themselves.
Facing an international outcry, including that of the Eisenhower administration, the
British, French, and Israelis had to leave Egypt and the canal in Nasser’s hands. But the
damage had been done. Instead of retaking the canal to ensure its smooth operation and
diminishing Nasser’s stature, the canal remained under Egyptian control. Nasser became a bigger rallying symbol to the Arab world than he had been before.

**Pushing Forward with Plan Omega**

When Eisenhower administration officials gave the green light to operation Omega in late March 1956 their overall goals in the Middle East region had not changed, but their tactics had. They still wanted to strengthen the Baghdad Pact, bring an end to Arab-Israeli hostilities, and shelter the region from Soviet encroachment. Previously, officials in Washington had tried to fulfill these goals by cultivating Nasser. Due to Nasser’s unwillingness to be of assistance throughout the previous year, American officials now pursued a firmer Baghdad Pact, Arab-Israeli peace, and a stronger Middle Eastern affiliation toward the West without the Egyptian leader’s help. Eisenhower administration personnel had also decided that it would be in America’s best interest to try to diminish Nasser’s influence throughout the region. Nasser’s growing independence from the West, coupled with this shift in American strategic thinking, led American policymakers and the media to use an abundance of negative language when describing Egyptians. Gone were the times when seeming Egyptian willingness to work toward American goals led to positive descriptions. Only a few such instances now
occurred. Egypt and the United States reached a point in early 1956 in which their strategic interests no longer meshed.

The Eisenhower administration repeatedly tried to bring about an end to the Arab-Israeli dispute. Initial hopes in 1955 to end the conflict through the Alpha Peace Plan had not come to fruition. The situation did not improve throughout 1956, and, in fact, worsened. But there were a few instances in which Egyptian actions in this regard garnered positive American language. In early April an Egyptian attack on an Israeli patrol killed three soldiers, which led to an Israeli retaliation: the shelling of Gaza that left fifty-six dead.\(^5\) U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold, already in the region trying to work toward an overall peace, now found himself trying to bring about a quick end to hostilities before events escalated further. After talking with Nasser, Ambassador Byroade believed that the Egyptian leader was ready to agree to end hostilities when he met with the U.N. Secretary General. Byroade called Nasser’s mood “serious” but “very friendly,” and said that the Egyptian leader seemed “quite calm and soft-spoken.” Nasser’s lack of bellicosity in this situation made the meeting all the more “assuring.”\(^6\)

Just a week later, it seemed that Nasser might be willing to resume peace talks and was eager to work out any outstanding problems between Egypt and the United States, including the Baghdad Pact. This turn of events led American officials to comment that the “climate” in Egypt was “much more constructive than any recent time.”\(^7\)

Unfortunately, instances of positive American language in regard to the Arab-Israeli

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\(^5\) Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East*, p. 191.
\(^6\) Byroade to Dulles, 10 April, 1956, RG 59, Lot File No. 59 D 518, Box 34, Folder: Alpha – Anderson talks w/BG and Nasser Incoming telegrams.
dispute during 1956 were very few indeed. As we will see, Nasser’s continued intransigence in this regard, along with the Eisenhower administration’s shift in strategy toward the Egyptian leader, brought with it an abundance of negative language.

American officials were desperately trying to keep any Arab-Israeli hostilities at bay throughout 1956, but Nasser’s continued unwillingness to move forward on a positive solution, and his at times outright exacerbation of the issue, only helped to solidify negative American language. As officials in Washington conferred on Project Omega in mid-March, Nasser made the decision to go forward with Omega all the easier for American policymakers. The Egyptian leader expressed concerns to Ambassador Byroade about Israeli arms purchases and the notion of whether or not Israel had been getting military “volunteers” to wage war against Egypt. Byroade believed that the “volunteers” issue was “most disturbing” because there were reports that the Soviets had offered the Egyptians “50,000 ‘Moslem volunteers’.” Fearing that Nasser’s emotionalism might overtake him in regard to this subject, Byroade noted that the “Arabs are quite capable of getting completely beside themselves on such an issue as Israeli recruiting,” which was partly due to the fact that “by nature they [were] inclined to fight windmills.”

Following further Arab-Israeli hostilities in early April that led to both parties reinforcing their positions in the Gaza Strip and the Sinai region, respectively, Byroade touched on Nasser’s lack of solid Western-style judgment when it came to such highly emotional issues. Referring to the possibility of an Egyptian counterattack to any Israeli

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8 Byroade to Dulles, 14 March, 1956, RG 59, 611.74/3-1456.
military moves, the ambassador stated that he did not believe Nasser “would exercise that much restraint.” Meeting with Nasser again the next day, Byroade told the Egyptian leader, in much the same way a teacher would tell a pupil, that if Nasser retaliated against another Israeli incursion, he would be “walking straight into their trap.” The ambassador, in a most paternalistic fashion, “reminded” Nasser “of his dreams for a better Egypt, which could become irrevocably jeopardized” if the Egyptian leader answered Israeli provocations with military force.

Even Eisenhower reminded the leader in Cairo that it was “a time for high statesmanship.”

Eisenhower administration officials were not the only ones to comment upon the Egyptian leader’s penchant for over emotionalism. Newsweek wrote that the president “already had smoothed some of Egyptian Premier Lt. Col. Gamal Abdel Nasser’s ruffled feathers by the time the U.N. emissary arrived in Cairo.” Not to be outdone, Time magazine painted Nasser as the childlike lackey of the Soviet Union. The periodical noted that the Soviet Union had agreed that the great powers should seek regional peace through the United Nations only after it had helped Nasser “create mischief” through the Egyptian-Soviet arms deal.

While the early April Egyptian-Israeli hostilities ended in a cease-fire, other problems arose in May that again brought out negative American language. Byroade

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9 Byroade to the Department of State, 8 April, 1956, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 15, p. 494-495. The fighting in question took place after “an Egyptian attack on an Israeli patrol left three Israelis dead,” at which time the Israelis “retaliated by shelling the town of Gaza, killing fifty-six people.” Hahn, Caught in the Middle East, p. 191.

10 Byroade to Dulles, 9 April, 1956, RG 59, Lot File No. 58 D 519, Box 39, Folder: Omega Black Binder NE – Mr. Burdett 1956.

11 Dulles to Byroade, 9 April, 1956, DDE, Ann Whitman Files, International Series, Box 9, Folder: Egypt (1).

12 Newsweek, 23 April, 1956, p. 47.

wrote to Foggy Bottom that Nasser believed that decisions had been made in Paris to continue giving the Israelis French military aid until their military strength had exceeded that of the Arabs. Nasser, as it turned out, was not far off the mark. Eisenhower and Dulles, in order to offset the Egyptian-Soviet arms deal and assuage Israeli fears, convinced Canada and France to sell jets to Israel, while denying any American collusion so as to forestall an Arab backlash. According to the ambassador, Nasser’s emotionalism again lacked rationality, with the Egyptian leader “working himself into a state” over rumors of the sale. Playing the wiser and more levelheaded Westerner, Byroade noted that he was doing what he could to “calm” the situation. An arms race between the Arabs and the Israelis was something that both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations desperately wanted to avoid. Unfortunately, Nasser’s earlier reactions to Israeli arms purchases and research done on the part of the embassy in Cairo led Byroade to write to Washington that he had “reviewed [the] Embassy cables [to] make certain [that] we have accurately predicted our feeling that Nasser [is] capable of almost any conceivable act in order to insure [that] Egypt and [the] Arabs will have and be able to retain what they believe to be [an] adequate military strength vis-à-vis Israel.” In this instance, American officials viewed Nasser as a type of desperate mad man, doing whatever he had to do to make sure that his nation had more weapons than his enemy. While this may not have differed very much from the way some officials in Washington felt in regard to American nuclear capabilities vis-à-vis the Soviets, Nasser was going

14 Hahn, _Caught in the Middle East_, pp. 189-90.
against America’s strategic goal of avoiding an arms race in the Middle East, thus, he was viewed negatively and depicted as an “outsider.”

In May, a Staff Study on U.S.-Egyptian relations from the deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, William Rountree, also commented on how Nasser had reacted emotionally to the French shipment of arms to Israel. The study noted press allegations stating that the United States was encouraging its allies to ship arms to Israel. This, according to the report, had caused a “violent Egyptian reaction” with “an unbridled campaign in the Government-controlled press and radio, including charges of hypocrisy hurled at the United States.”

By early July, Nasser had so disenchanted American officials that they had become skeptical of any Arab-Israeli peace plans that Egypt proposed, especially those that followed Soviet-Egyptian meetings. In a manner that painted Nasser and his followers as duplicitous Arabs, American officials noted that while they “are prepared to make large contributions to secure an Arab-Israeli peace and had thought that Egypt was the key to any such arrangement,” developments now had to be taken with Egyptian-Soviet collusion in mind. “However,” NE’s Paul F. Geren went on to note, “we cannot fail to regard the present Egyptian move with considerable skepticism in view of the attitude taken by Nasser during the talks in January and March and the likelihood that this particular plan may have been worked out with the Soviet Union.” Moreover, according to Geren, “it has been a favorite Egyptian maneuver to try and retain Western support by talking about peace with Israel, while building up Egypt’s own strength in the area and

collaborating in acts with the Soviets.” By July, and with the Omega Plan in full swing, American policymakers seemed ready to call Nasser’s bluff.

As the documents show, officials in Washington found very little in Egyptian actions regarding an Arab-Israeli peace on which they could put a positive spin. In fact, what little positive language they did use toward the Egyptian leadership during this period only pertained to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and this was minimal at best. The majority of U.S. language was negative in nature, as the Eisenhower administration pursued the new Omega strategy and Nasser continued to work against America’s goal of peace.

As in past periods, the Eisenhower administration wanted to align the Middle Eastern nations with the West as tightly as possible in order to curtail Soviet overtures into the region and to ensure a free flow of oil to the Western world. Washington policymakers had originally hoped to work through Egypt and Nasser to achieve this goal, but the Egyptian leader’s new independent foreign policy and continued divergence from American desires throughout 1955 made this all but impossible. The Eisenhower administration’s shift in thinking in regard to Nasser with the Omega plan, and the Egyptian’s continued belligerence toward anything that smacked of Western imperialism led American officials to describe him in harsh, negatively gendered and Orientalist terms.

In mid-March, State Department planners described a litany of problems that Nasser had caused over the past year that had led to the implementation of the Omega

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Plan. These problems led U.S. officials to negatively color their depictions of the Egyptian leader for the foreseeable future. In a memorandum on U.S. policy in the Near East, Foggy Bottom analysts wrote that

During the past year the United States has, in general, looked to Egypt under Prime Minister Nasser to take leadership in meeting the major problems in the Near East. Nasser has, however, failed to move toward a settlement with Israel; he is now delaying on taking the initiative with respect to the Johnston Plan and has raised a number of serious objections with respect to the provisions of the proposed Aswan Dam agreements; he has inaugurated a series of bilateral military pacts with Syria and Saudi Arabia because of opposition to the Baghdad Pact; he set aside the offer of American arms from the U.S. and made an agreement with Czechoslovakia; his radio and press are now speaking strongly against the U.S. and other Western countries. Against this background there seems little likelihood the U.S. will be able to work with Nasser in the foreseeable future. The U.S. will therefore have to consider other means for obtaining U.S. objectives in the Near East.  

U.S. officials further noted that they had suggested a number of “constructive” steps to Nasser that he could have taken in the previous months, only to have Nasser ultimately refuse them. It now seemed apparent to American planners that due to Nasser’s unconstructive attitude toward regional U.S. goals and his long list of failures in this regard, American objectives in the region had to also include the curtailment of the Egyptian leader’s power vis-à-vis the Arab world.

By mid-March 1956, the Eisenhower administration’s inability to cajole Nasser into working with, and for, the West resulted in a plethora of negative depictions of the Egyptian leader when discussing just about anything pertaining to the Middle East. While British Foreign Office personnel compared Nasser to former Italian Fascist leader

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20 Ibid.
Benito Mussolini, Acting Secretary of State Hoover told the president that “Nasser appeared to be becoming a progressively increasing menace.” His actions, Hoover explained, had led to the implementation of Omega and American plans to split the Saudis away from Egypt and build up King Saud in Nasser’s place.\(^{21}\) In a diary entry, President Eisenhower touched on Nasser’s growing “menace.” The president believed that “a fundamental factor in the problem” of the Middle East “is the growing ambition of Nasser, the sense of power he has gained out of his associations with the Soviets, his belief that he can emerge as a true leader of the entire Arab world – and because of these beliefs, his rejection of every proposition advanced as a measure of conciliation between the Arabs and Israel.” Like officials in the State Department, Eisenhower considered him a power-hungry leader who was unwilling to take what Ike and his administration believed was the correct and realistic approach to the area’s problems.\(^{22}\)

While U.S. officials tried to build a strong relationship with Middle Eastern nations, Nasser’s use of anti-Western, and specifically anti-American radio propaganda, began to hit full-stride during this period, further agitating American planners and making it harder to achieve their goals. Byroade told Egyptian foreign minister Fawzi that Egypt seemed to be “concentrating her efforts more upon arousing emotion and action among extremist elements” than with working toward a betterment of relations with the West. Furthermore, Egyptian propaganda that caused extremist elements throughout the Middle East to strike out against Western domination made it almost


impossible to work with “moderates towards desired ends.”

Byroade found it easier to lump Nasser in with extremists and those whose “emotions” could be aroused.

A United States Information Agency (USIA) official also found that the propaganda emanating from Nasser’s Voice of the Arabs radio station was quickly becoming a cause of concern in many Arab nations that the United States had hoped would become more tightly aligned with the West. Unfortunately for America’s new Omega initiative, Nasser’s prestige in the region had skyrocketed over the past twelve months. The USIA official, G. Huntington Damon, found that Egyptians had “arrogantly” stated that America should get on the Nasser bandwagon before they were left behind. Not only did the growth of Nasser’s prestige in the region go against America’s goal of weakening his position, but the Voice of the Arabs, which was unleashing “an avalanche of anti-Western extremism,” had impaired the Eisenhower administration’s goal of aligning the Arab nations with the West. It also seemed that Nasser was playing upon the Arab peoples’ inherent suspicion of the West and the Egyptian leader was “ably wielding this psychological club to establish his own leadership of the Arab world” like some schoolyard bully.

A State Department report on the Near East situation at the end of March also touched on the problem of Cairo’s radio propaganda. Nasser’s use of the airwaves and his foreign policy actions helped the

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23 Byroade to Dulles, 30 March, 1956, RG 59, Lot File No. 59 D 518, Box 34, Folder: Alpha – Anderson talks w/BG and Nasser carbons of incoming and outgoing tels, folder 1 of 2. American officials saw Nasser’s use of radio propaganda during this period as a source of trouble for the West throughout the Middle East. According to Hahn, Western officials saw “Nasser’s influence in anti-British riots in Bahrein, a surge of anti-Westernism in Syria, and a plot to overthrow the pro-Western government in Libya.” They also “blamed Egyptian radio propaganda for the unrest in Jordan, which persisted until Hussein dismissed General John Bagot Glubb, a British national who had commanded the Arab Legion since 1939, on 1 March.” Hahn, The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, p. 199.

Soviet position in the region and encouraged “extreme Arab nationalism,” which included “vicious attacks on the West and an aggressive attitude toward Israel.” The report further stated that while the Egyptian leader may have momentarily curtailed his press harangues against the West, this “superficial” act should not be taken as “sufficient proof of a real willingness to reorient his policies.”25 This last statement belies an underlying Orientalist negativity that speaks of Nasser’s potential for trickery and untrustworthiness.

The Cairo regime’s willingness to use the medium of radio to work against America’s goals for the region came up again in mid-May in the run-up to Secretary Dulles’ meeting with Egyptian Ambassador Hussein. William Rountree believed that Dulles should bring up Nasser’s “incitement of irresponsible nationalist elements” through the use of Egyptian propaganda when the secretary met with Hussein. Painting the regime as akin to the “irresponsible” “outsiders” that its propaganda was encouraging, Rountree used negatively gendered and Orientalist language to contrast Nasser and his group against the Western, “insider” types that the Eisenhower administration wished the Egyptians to build up. Rountree also stated that

There has been an increasing tendency to rely upon and encourage extreme nationalist elements. This does not refer to patriotic and enlightened persons or groups who are sincerely and properly interested in fostering the security, progress and independence of their countries; it refers to irresponsible extremists who for one reason or another are interested in fomenting hatreds and capitalizing upon emotions for purposes other then the attainment of legitimate national aspirations. The stock in trade of these elements is inflammatory attacks on the legitimate interests of Western countries in the area and demands for elimination of Israel. The negative and destructive programs which they advocate are the antithesis of the economic and social progress previously

talked of by the RCC. They pose a threat to the development and stability of Egypt and to the security of the other Arab states, thereby both assisting the communist effort and threatening the Western community.26

This last sentence speaks to the reasons for the use of negative language. These elements were threatening America’s goals in the region and were aided by Nasser’s propaganda, which caused American policymakers to lump the Egyptians in with the extremists as “Others.”

Dulles touched on the issues Rountree mentioned when he met with Ambassador Hussein later that same day. The secretary told the Egyptian ambassador that Egypt was “stirring up” the region against the West and “seemed to be deliberately going about making U.S.-Egyptian friendship difficult.” Dulles also asserted that “whenever [Nasser] saw that popularity could be gained thereby, he had shown no restraint in leading the mob against the West.” In fact, both Nasser’s actions and American views of him had deteriorated to the point that Dulles’ only positive remark was that Nasser’s attitude toward the U.N. secretary general had been better than that of the Israelis.27 The secretary later told Byroade that he had told Hussein that many people now “believe Nasser [is] pursuing opportunistic anti-Western policies in [an] effort [to] develop his own power over [the] united Arab world.”28

Nasser continued during this period to rail against the Baghdad Pact, while also trying to build up his Arab counterweight to the Western alliance, the ESS Pact. As

27 Memorandum of Conversation, 17 May, 1956, RG 59, Ibid, Box 37, Folder: Omega – Memos, etc., from April 24, 1956, to June 30, 1956, 2 of 3.
28 Dulles to Byroade, 21 May, 1956, RG 59, 611.74/5-2156.
Nigel John Ashton writes, “the culmination of Nasser’s attempts to establish an anti-Baghdad grouping in the Arab world lay in the Egyptian-Syrian-Saudi alliance of March 1955,” which the Egyptian leader continued to try to strengthen.\textsuperscript{29} The American media scoffed at the Egyptian leader’s notion that building up a defensive alliance could form any real deterrent without Western backing and/or allegiance. \textit{Time}, after describing the steps that were being taken to strengthen the Western-backed Baghdad Pact, indirectly touched on the weakness of Nasser’s alliance when it wrote that the Egyptian leader “was off in southern Arabia lining up little Yemen in his neutralist military alliance.”\textsuperscript{30} In the eyes of the media, it seemed that “little Yemen” summed up the efficacy of the alliance.

While Operation Omega aimed to curtail the growth of Nasser’s prestige in the region, the Eisenhower administration added an important caveat: it wanted to move the Egyptian leader back into the American camp if possible. Dulles told Rountree that Foggy Bottom should advise Byroade regarding actions Nasser could take to re-ingratiate himself with the United States. Dulles essentially believed that Byroade would have to hold Nasser’s hand through this process. He commented that “it is perhaps too much to expect that even if he wants to adjust his policies to ours, he will automatically without any suggestion from us find what we consider to be the right things for him to do.”\textsuperscript{31}

Ambassador Byroade apparently seconded the notion of having to plainly inform Nasser what was expected of him. The ambassador had come to “doubt” Nasser’s “ability on his own [to] understand [the] West well enough [to] produce [the] desired

\textsuperscript{29} Ashton, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Time}, 30 April, 1956, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{31} Dulles to Rountree, 22 April, 1956, RG 59, Lot File No. 59 D 518, Box 39, Folder: Omega Black Binder, NE – Mr. Burdett 1956, folder 1 of 2.
plans and [to] force them through his colleagues without help which his colleagues cannot provide.” Byroade believed that the United States should “guide” the Egyptian leader “rather than let things take their course.” State Department planners, as well as those in Cairo, now believed it necessary to depict and treat the Egyptian leader as if he lacked the Western traits and acumen that he needed to establish a viable working relationship with the United States and the West.

Continued American discussion of Nasser’s relationship with the Soviet Union once again brought with it negative depictions of the Egyptian leader. When, in June 1956, the German Federal Republic considered inviting Nasser for a visit, Herbert Hoover, Jr. responded positively. He saw this as an opportunity, coming on the heels of Nasser’s trip to East Germany, to “enlarge Nasser’s horizon and give him a better understanding of East-West relations.” In Hoover’s mind, the unenlightened Nasser did not fully understand the differences between the East and West, which would help explain why he had made deals with the Soviets in the first place, and such a trip might awaken him to his folly. Dulles also seemed willing to blame Nasser for difficulties the United States had with wooing the Saudis. The secretary reported to Byroade that he was sure the Egyptians were at the heart of American troubles in Saudi Arabia and that “Nasser [was] also [the] author of [a] suggested Saudi-Soviet arms deal through Egyptian intermediation.” While the Egyptians may have been denying any collusion, Dulles believed this fit into Nasser’s untrustworthy Arab nature due to the fact that this was “not

32 Byroade to Dulles, 30 May, 1956, RG 59, 611.74/5-3056.
33 Memorandum of Conversation, 25 June, 1956, RG 59, 774.11/6-2556.
[the] first instance respecting [the] West in which [the] Egyptians have said one thing and
done another.”

Around this time, State Department officials also began reviewing Nasser’s book,
*The Philosophy of the Revolution*, which appeared at a rather unfortunate time. State’s
Frasier Wilkins sent a memo to George V. Allen highlighting some of the details of the
book and immediately denigrated it by calling it “little.” Wilkins wrote that the book
gave “as much insight into Nasser’s thinking as *Mein Kampf* gave us into Hitler’s
thinking.” Allen called the work “egotistical,” and the two State Department officials’
depictions of Nasser and the correlation with Hitler painted the Egyptian leader as overly
emotional and power-hungry. This would not be the last time American language
would compare Nasser and the former leader of the Third Reich.

Dulles wrote to Byroade in early July to remind the ambassador of the extent to
which the Eisenhower administration had extended goodwill to the Egyptian regime and
the ways in which Nasser and his group had failed to reciprocate throughout the previous
year. Dulles commented how the United States had given “coaching” to Naguib, and in
contrast to the Egyptians’ lack of restraint, officials in Washington had shown “restraint”
not only in their dealings with the Baghdad Pact (by not officially joining), but also in
giving arms to Israel. In direct opposition to America’s helpful position, and again
touching upon Nasser’s untrustworthy nature, Dulles wrote that there had been a
“progressive unveiling” of the “true nature [of] Egyptian policy as one of maintaining
U.S. expectations [of] future Egyptian cooperation while demanding immediate U.S.

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35 Wilkins to Allen, 2 July, 1956, RG 59, 774.13/7-256.
assistance and in fact pursuing policies detrimental [to] U.S. objectives.” In fact, not only had the Egyptians not cooperated, but they had issued “violent attacks” on the Baghdad Pact, and showed “deceptiveness” regarding Israel. To Dulles, Nasser’s delaying tactics in regard to Alpha had “revealed clearly [the] speciousness [of] his assertions.” Not content to just describe Nasser as an untrustworthy Arab, Dulles also depicted the Egyptians as weak and effeminate. When writing about the problems Nasser had caused due to his propaganda, the secretary noted that the Egyptians bore responsibility for the “emergence of forces which it now may be powerless [to] control and which pose serious problems for [the] U.S. future in [the] Middle East.”

As noted previously, the Eisenhower administration also wanted to stop communist penetration into the Middle East. Nasser had already made this goal harder for American policymakers when he inked his arms deal with the Soviet bloc, but he gave officials in Washington another headache when he recognized the People’s Republic of China in May 1956. Ambassador Byroade referred to Egypt’s recognition of Communist China as a “slap” at the United States that Cairo had handled in a “shocking manner.” Dulles told Rountree that the United States regretted the Egyptian leader’s recognition of the PRC. The secretary called Nasser’s move hasty and unenlightened when he told Rountree that “I have in [the] past indicated we are sympathetic with whatever action Nasser reasonably takes to emphasize genuine independence of Egypt.” But this action, which promoted the interests of the Soviet Union and Communist China over the United

37 “Byroade to Dulles,” 17 May, 1956, RG 59, Lot File No. 59 D 518, Box 34, Folder: untitled.
38 Memo of a Telephone Conversation with Mr. Rountree, 22 May, 1956, DDE, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 5, Folder: Memoranda of Tel Conv General May 1, 1956 to June 29, 1956 (3).
States, was not seen with favor in Washington and showed just how unreasonable Nasser could be. Using Nasser’s recognition of the PRC to emphasize a by now familiar theme, *Newsweek* wrote that “the manner of Egypt’s sudden recognition of Red China is cited as proof of Nasser’s unreliability.”

As the documentation shows, throughout the spring and early summer of 1956 American depictions of Nasser and his fellow Egyptians had become more negatively gendered, paternalistic and Orientalist than ever before. First, Nasser continued to work against America’s goal of stabilizing the Middle East along pro-Western lines with his nationalist propaganda and burgeoning relationship with the East, which, as in the past, brought with it negative American language. Secondly, America’s new view of Nasser as an obstacle to the successful achievement of its Middle East strategy and the Omega Plan that came with it meant that the Egyptian leader was seen in a new light, which was almost wholly negative in nature. By the summer of 1956, the U.S.-Egyptian relationship stood on shaky ground, and America’s ability to establish a stable and pro-Western Middle East seemed to be floundering.

Aswan, Suez, and Bleak Days for American Middle Eastern Interests

America’s goal of a stable, pro-Western Middle East and a Nasser whose popularity and appeal was in check took a momentous hit in July 1956 and continued to move further out of reach throughout the remainder of the year. As we have seen, in late June and early July, Dulles decided to suspend America’s offer of aid for the construction of the Aswan High Dam. The abrupt cancellation of aid led Nasser to nationalize the Suez Canal and use its earnings to fund the construction of the dam. Nasser’s nationalization further destabilized the region and in late October, in collusion with Britain and France, Israel attacked Egypt. London and Paris stepped in, ostensibly to protect the canal but in reality to wrest control of Suez from Nasser and topple the colonel from power. Unfortunately for U.S. strategic interests, by the end of 1956 the region had become further destabilized and Nasser’s prestige in the Arab world had reached an all-time high because he had survived the Israeli, British, and French attack. All this resulted in a flood of negative language directed at the Egyptian leader and his followers. As in previous episodes when Nasser had been working against U.S. area objectives, policymakers in Washington and the American media depicted the Egyptians in negatively gendered, paternalistic and Orientalist language in order to “Other” them and depict them as “outsiders.”

On July 19, 1956, Dulles told Egyptian Ambassador Hussein that the United States would withdraw its offer of aid for the Aswan High Dam. This decision was made
for a number of reasons. First, Dulles had gotten tired of Egyptian threats to turn to the Soviets to get the aid needed to build the dam. The secretary and others within the administration also suspected that Egypt’s finances and economy could not sustain such a large-scale project. Other factors included opposition to U.S. aid from Southern members of Congress who feared that an increase in Egyptian cotton output, a likely consequence of the dam’s construction, would hurt their constituents. In fact, Congress was actually trying to prevent any indirect funding of Aswan from “untargeted portions of the 1957 foreign aid appropriations.” This point was key in Dulles’ ultimate decision, as the implications of what Congress was trying to do “greatly concerned Eisenhower and Dulles” according to historian Nigel John Ashton. Ashton goes on to note that “in effect, the committee’s action implied the existence of a Congressional veto over White House use of untargeted aid funds, thus setting what the administration would regard as a dangerous precedent.”40 The administration also feared that rewarding neutralists like Nasser would cause Western allies to question why Egypt had been rewarded for acting against U.S. interests.41

Dulles particularly feared Egyptian-Soviet cooperation on construction of the dam, but the secretary was willing to take the risk, and in fact, the Egyptian position vis-à-vis the Soviets played a large role in Dulles’ ultimate decision and the type of language that officials in Washington used to describe Nasser in this instance. Dulles told the British ambassador, Roger Makins, that in “desperation” Nasser might invite the USSR.

40 Ashton, p. 85.
41 For more on the reasons behind the withdrawal of Aswan Aid see Hahn, The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, pp. 202-205; Meyer, pp. 141-143; and Freiberger, pp. 153-156.
to build the dam.\textsuperscript{42} Just days later, Allen reiterated notions of Nasser as weak and un-Western when he wrote the secretary that the Egyptian leader had been negotiating with the Soviets and would probably continue to do so regardless of whether or not the United States extended aid. Allen further argued that “to achieve his own objective Nasser is demonstrating a naïve readiness to collaborate with the USSR in undermining the Western position.” Allen discussed the possible Egyptian reactions to America’s withdrawal of aid, writing that “Nasser will be sorely tempted to launch a campaign of ‘broken promises’ against the U.S. If some faint ray of hope of getting the dam is left for him, this may temper the Egyptian fury.” He also believed that Foggy Bottom’s refusal to fund Aswan could “present a temptation” to Nasser “to whip up the war fever against Israel to an increased pitch as a means of making disappointment on the Aswan High Dam more nearly tolerable.”\textsuperscript{43} To Allen, as was often the case in American minds when the Egyptians were working against American goals, Nasser’s emotionalism might get the best of him in this situation. Ambassador Byroade agreed that Nasser might do something rash. Following the secretary’s meeting with Hussein, he wrote to the State Department that if he and Nasser had both been in Cairo, he would have visited him in order to “caution moderation.”\textsuperscript{44}

The American media quickly jumped on the negatively gendered and Orientalist bandwagon once the news of Dulles’ action came out. \textit{Time}, in language that weakened and softened the Egyptian ambassador, remarked that the “chubby Ambassador” had

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\textsuperscript{42} Memorandum of a Conversation, 13 July, 1956, RG 59, Lot File No. 59 D 518, Box 37, Folder: Omega – Memos, etc., for July 1 to Aug. 31, 1956, 3 of 3. \\
\textsuperscript{44} Byroade to Dulles, 25 July, 1956, Ibid, pp. 899-900.
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“emerged sadly” from his meeting with Dulles. It seemed to members of the magazine’s staff that Nasser’s “debacle” of playing the West against the East and the threat of further Soviet penetration in the region was “no greater than the risk of having Nasser go on with his fast-and-loose game in the precarious Middle East.”\(^45\) Continuing to “Other” Nasser and those to whom he was tied, *Time* described how India’s Jawaharlal Nehru had flown back to Cairo following a neutralist summit with the “bruised” Egyptian leader. Putting an Orientalist and negatively gendered spin on those who followed neutralism, like Nehru and Nasser, the magazine went on to call Nehru the “high priest of neutralism” who had “found himself at week’s end playing nurse to a new and noisy member of the family.”\(^46\) Not only was Nehru painted as an ungodly heathen and described effeminately as a nurse, but Nasser’s relationship with the Indian leader had the unfortunate effect of effeminizing the Egyptian leader as well. Going even further, Nasser was also likened to a child on a temper tantrum.\(^47\)

Nasser’s vacillating nature in regard to the Aswan Dam and his threats to seek Soviet financing for the project had led U.S. officials in Washington to rescind their offer of aid. The Egyptian leader’s actions, along with the Eisenhower administration’s view and goals toward Nasser inherent in the Omega Plan, also led to negative descriptions of the colonel from both U.S. officials and the media in regard to the dam. American policymakers and the media’s fear that Nasser might approach the Soviets to get his dam built, however, proved initially unfounded, although their trepidation that the Egyptian
leader might do something that would endanger America’s Middle East strategy were not. Nasser’s actions following Dulles’ rebuke threw the entire area into a raging storm, made American goals for the region seemingly as unattainable as ever, and led to a period of intensely negative depictions of Nasser and his comrades.

On July 26, 1956, Nasser used the American withdrawal of Aswan Dam aid as a pretext to nationalize the Suez Canal and use its proceeds to fund the dam’s construction without outside aid. This move destabilized the region, increased his prestige in the eyes of the Arab world, and threatened all pro-Western allegiances in the Middle East. Nasser’s nationalization of the canal destabilized the region by threatening Britain and Western Europe’s vital life line to Mid-East oil. In turn, the British, French, and Israelis attacked Egypt in order to unseat Nasser and regain control of the canal. The Western failure to achieve these objectives due to American intervention brought with it more than just military failure, as Nasser became the undeniable leader of the Arab world and the Western nations were seen as overt imperialists. Nasser’s nationalization, the tense months before Western invasion, and the resulting wave of adoration throughout the region for Nasser following the failed invasion generated a torrent of negatively gendered, paternalistic, and Orientalist language that depicted Nasser and the Egyptians as “outsiders” and “Others” in the strongest terms to date.48

American officials began their negative linguistic onslaught toward Nasser and the Egyptians as soon as they learned that the Egyptian leader had nationalized the Suez

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48 For a detailed outline of the events following Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal and the Suez crisis see: Feiberg, pp. 159-207; Hahn, The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, pp. 211-239; Ashton, pp. 81-202; and Meyer, pp. 151-180.
Canal. Ambassador Byroade commented that the colonel had become “clearly emotional and excited,” and that in the parts of Nasser’s nationalization speech in which he talked about the history of Aswan negotiations with the United States, “he was by turns sarcastic, condescending, and occasionally facetious.”

Herbert Hoover, Jr. told the president that the speech was “a sustained invective in the most violent terms against the United States and its officials, containing many inaccuracies.” Hoover further argued that the Egyptian leader’s actions were “not based on reasoning but are irrational and emotional,” while Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Allen Dulles, believed that there was a “note of desperation in Nasser’s actions.”

The next day, reports from Alexandria noted that the crowd on hand to listen to Nasser’s speech reached “hysteria level” and had almost gotten “out of control” in its effort “to kiss the president’s feet, hands and face.”

This painted the Egyptians as uncivilized and backward. In London, Ambassador Murphy stated that the United States deplored “the violent and even reckless language employed by President Nasser.”

U.S. officials in both Washington and Cairo then turned up the negative language. Ambassador Byroade spoke negatively and paternalistically to and about the Egyptian president upon Nasser’s return to Cairo. The head American official in Egypt told Nasser that he had made a “very serious mistake” and went on to inform Washington that he had “lectured” the Egyptian leader on the “inadvisability” of continuing on his present

[51] Lakas to the Department of State, 28 July, 1956, RG 59, 774.11/7-2656.
Dulles and Senator Mike Mansfield both agreed that Nasser’s actions and the situation they had created in the Middle East were “terrible.” Using negatively gendered and Orientalist language, Mansfield noted that Nasser had “all the attributes of an unstable dictator.” Instability and emotionalism came up again the next day in a meeting between a number of administration officials and President Eisenhower, the latter commenting that “Nasser embodies the emotional demands of the people of the area.” At the same time, Dulles compared the Egyptian leader to a common criminal when he said to those attending that “Nasser must be made to disgorge his theft.”

During a meeting with the British, Dulles touched on the Egyptian leader’s mental state as well, remarking to the British that “it would be unacceptable to have any one nation dominate Suez, especially if it would be the dictatorship of a fanatical person who openly avowed an intention to use the canal for the purpose of exploiting it for national purposes and ambitions.”

For their part, the British hinted almost immediately that they would take military measures in order to make Nasser give up his hold on the canal. The Eisenhower administration, fearing the negative effect this would have for U.S. strategic goals in the Middle East, tried to forestall any Western European military action. Ironically,
Washington seemed to side with Egypt in opposing an invasion, but this did not translate into positive descriptions of the Egyptians as a means to argue against military intervention. Byroade presciently told Dulles that if there was an attack at this “time of high emotion,” Nasser “would have [the] masses behind him and certainly would further consolidate his emotional hold over [the] Middle East.”

Byroade’s comments depict Egyptian citizens as an unruly and emotional mob when the threat of Nasser’s gaining more prestige, to the detriment of America’s strategic interests, became a valid possibility. Dulles consistently rejected Western military action as well, but still believed that “Egypt cannot be trusted to do what they say they will.”

An internal State Department paper discussing U.S. policy options toward Nasser painted a vivid picture of the ways in which American officials viewed the Egyptian leader following his nationalization of the canal and his actions throughout the year. Full of negative language from its first paragraphs, the paper initially tries to conclude what type of leader the Americans faced in Nasser. These included “a symbol and leader of several centuries of accumulated Arab frustration, resentment and bitterness,” to “an aspirant for power on a large scale, utilizing without scruple and without regard to the interests of his own or other peoples the tensions, resentments and capacities for trouble that exist in the Middle East and Africa.” Ultimately, State Department planners concluded that “developments of the past few weeks point clearly to the conclusion that

predicted, would intensify nationalism throughout the developing world and provide the Soviet Union an opportunity to gain influence in the Middle East,” pp. 211-212.

59 Telephone Conversation between Knowland and Dulles, 3 August, 1956, DDE, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Calls Series, Box 5, Folder: Memoranda of Tel. Conv. General July 12, 1956 to Sept. 29, 1956 (4).
Nasser is an international political adventurer of considerable skill with clearly defined objectives that seriously threaten the Western world, though probably with no definitely planned tactics or timetables.” The Eisenhower administration clearly saw the Egyptian leader as a fly-by-the-seat-of-his-pants “adventurer” who, while having goals in mind, had no real sense of how to attain them. Worse yet, U.S. officials believed Nasser to be an egotistical, glory-seeking maniac, which comes through in language accusing Nasser of seeking to “build . . . as much personal power as possible upon the exploitation of the tensions and resources of all of the Middle East and all of Africa.” The paper further argued that Nasser’s goals would be as detrimental to America’s interests as those of the Soviets. But, depicting the Egyptian leader as inexperienced and attuned to his people’s deep emotions, it contended that “his movement would not have the elaborate ideology or skillful long-term planning of the Communists but it would be motivated by ancient, deep and powerful hatreds that are directed primarily against the West.” Leaving no doubt as to where American officials language stood in regard to Nasser’s emotional state and the threat he posed to American goals, the paper concluded that the United States had to address the Nasser issue so that “no leader of the Hitlerian type be permitted to merge the emotions and resources of the entire Middle East and Africa into a single onslaught against Western civilization.”

It seemed that the authors of the internal State Department paper on possible policy options were not the only American officials to draw a comparison between Nasser and a former German leader. U.S. Ambassador to Moscow Charles Bohlen also

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compared Nasser to Hitler, while Admiral Arthur Radford said that “Nasser was trying to be another Hitler” at a National Security Council meeting.⁶¹

The American media also used negative language to describe Nasser and the Egyptians following nationalization. On its opening pages, *Time* reported that “out of the loudspeakers of Egypt shrilled a voice, urgent, strident and sharply reminiscent of the days in the early 1930s when another mustached zealot ranted and raved his way across the world stage.” The magazine went on to note, in effeminate language, how the Egyptian leader “shrieked his challenge” and “spluttered his anger” at the West while almost “choking on his own fury.” Not quick to give up on the Hitler theme, *Time* again commented on Nasser’s frame of mind when it wrote that he addressed the crowd “with semi-hysteria reminiscent of Hitler,” while *Newsweek* reported a week later that “the comparison on everybody’s lips was Hitler.” Noting that many other Arab countries approved of Nasser’s actions, the latter publication hinted at the backward manner of Arab diplomacy, commenting that “Arab politicians are apt to consider a well-delivered jab at the West a more statesmanlike act than running one’s economy properly.”⁶²

*Newsweek* also touched on Nasser and his people’s effeminate emotionalism, calling the canal’s nationalization a “desperate move.” In language that made it seem that Nasser was railroading his own citizens and using their weaker mindsets to his advantage, the magazine wrote that “by arousing anger against the West, attention is diverted from Egypt’s perennial problems – hunger and poverty – and the failure to solve them.”

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Meanwhile, Nasser’s usage of the West as scapegoat had in the past proved to be an “effective emotional weapon.” *Newsweek* also linked Nasser’s move to nationalize the canal with Mohammed Mossadeq’s nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in Iran a few years earlier. This linkage added to already heavily effeminate depictions of Nasser’s mindset, because in the past, Mossadeq had been painted as a weak and highly emotional individual who cried in public and wore pajamas to key meetings.63 *Newsweek* did not let the comparisons to Mossadeq die easily, as it again referred to Nasser in the same vein as the former Iranian prime minister the following week. The magazine noted that Nasser’s actions posed the biggest threat to area peace since those of Mossadeq, who they referred to as a “senile fanatic.” *Newsweek* even ran a short biographic section on the Iranian in order to remind readers just how effeminate and wily Mossadeq had been, noting that the former prime minister was best known “for the combination of tearful histrionics, fainting spells, and strategically timed street riots by which he ruled.”64 The magazine reminded readers of Mossadeq’s antics and compared him to Nasser, leaving no question as to the inference the American public should draw about the Egyptian leader’s emotional stability and trustworthiness.

When holding talks with other countries, American officials stuck to the same negative linguistic themes that they used internally. William Rountree told the Swiss legation that Nasser’s seizure of the canal had “questionable legal and moral methods and motivations.”65 Meanwhile, Dulles instructed all diplomatic posts on how to discuss the

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63 *Newsweek*, 6 August, 1956, p. 38. For more information on the Mossadeq-Nasser comparison, see Chapter Two. Also, Heiss; Foran; and Dorman and Farhang.
64 *Newsweek*, 13 August, 1956, pp. 43-49.
65 Memorandum of Conversation, 7 August, 1956, RG 59, 974.7301/8-756.
situation with their host nations and used language that contrasted the civilized and enlightened West with the backward and duplicitous Egypt. The secretary noted that “in contrast [to the] arbitrary action and irresponsible statements [of] Nasser we [are] firmly [of the] opinion [that the] position adopted by [the] three western powers to date has been most reasoned and is both sound and morally correct.” Dulles further stated that “we believe responsible world opinion will understand this and may wish [to] express itself accordingly in order that [the] full weight [of] its moral judgment may be brought to bear against such a violation of international commitments.” Dulles also remarked to the ambassador of New Zealand that “it would not be safe that a man of Nasser’s ambition and temperament should have sole control” over such an important waterway.

Addressing an international crowd at the opening of the First Suez Conference, Dulles again used negative language to depict Nasser and the Egyptians as effeminate and untrustworthy. The former international lawyer remarked that Nasser’s action was an “expression of bitter resentment,” and that the secretary had a “very real lack of confidence that the Egyptian Government, in operating the canal, would put its international responsibilities before its estimates – quite possibly intemperate estimates – of short term Egyptian national advantage.” Not only was Nasser effeminately emotional and untrustworthy, but Dulles shared with the world his fear of the Egyptian

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66 Dulles to all Diplomatic Posts, 8 August, 1956, RG 59, 974.7301/8-856.
67 Memorandum of Conversation, 8 August, 1956, RG 59, 974.7301/8-856.
68 Secretary’s Opening Statement, 9 August, 1956, RG 59, Lot File No. 62 D 11, Suez Conference Files 1952-57, Box 1, Folder: U.S. Delegation to the Suez Canal Conference Background Book (Mr. Stanley D. Metzger) folder 3 of 4.
leader’s egotistical and “grandiose ambitions” and lack of big picture, enlightened thinking.69

The background paper given to Dulles in preparation for the Suez Conference demonstrates the same type of negative language. The tone of the paper was immediately set by the title, “Recent Egyptian Acts of Irresponsibility.” Discussing Nasser’s propaganda toward other Arab nations and sparking images of the Orientalist’s “wily” Arab, the memo noted that the Egyptian leader’s “record of open and covert intrigue and machinations in neighboring Arab areas and beyond is well documented.” Commenting once again on Nasser’s book, the paper stated that it “gave further evidence of an intemperate, if not irresponsible, mind,” with certain portions “support[ing] the charge that Nasser is unstable, basically hostile to the West and ambitious to create a Pan-Arab empire.”70

Eisenhower also raised Nasser’s book and the Egyptian’s alleged Hitlerite tendencies in a meeting with congressmen. During the course of discussions, Ike “recalled Nasser’s aggressive statements which seemed much like Hitler’s,” and Dulles stated that the Egyptian leader was “the worst we have had so far,” and “referred again to Nasser’s book and his ‘Hitler-ite’ personality.” Not to be left out, Republican Representative Dewey Jackson Short of Missouri commented about “Nasser playing the old Hitler game.”71 It is apparent that at this point in the U.S.-Egyptian relationship, following months of Nasser’s intransigence toward American goals for the region, U.S.

officials found it very easy and convenient to portray him as a power-hungry and overly emotional menace.

American officials also used negative language to examine whether or not the Egyptians could successfully operate and maintain the operation of the canal without Western help. Although a State Department report admitted that “it is not impossible for the Egyptians to run the canal with reasonable competence,” this was not exactly a glowing endorsement. 72 Echoing the same themes, the consul in Port Said wrote that “the intelligent and enlightened Europeans in this area” (in obvious contrast to the Egyptians in the area) “whose assessments must be considered, believe that the Egyptians can handle routine problems, but that they would fail in forward planning and would fall down if a technically complex emergency arose. It should be pointed out in this connection that minor accidents occur regularly and they are kept from becoming major ones only by prompt and efficient handling.”73 Robert R. Bowie wrote to Dulles that in the realm of canal operation efficiency, “the danger” was “that the Egyptians will fail to maintain a proper organization to operate the canal efficiently. This might be due merely to ineptitude.”74 The secretary told the Indian ambassador that he “did not believe that Egypt was qualified alone to take over the Suez Canal. It lacked the sober judgment required to administer the waterway which was a vital and essential lifeline to many countries.”75 Racist commentary such as this is reminiscent of American attitudes toward

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73 Cuomo to the Department of State, 2 August, 1956, RG 59, 974.7301/8-256.
74 Memo from Bowie to Dulles, 3 August, 1956, RG 59, Lot File No. 62 D 11, Box 1, Folder: Bowie Memorandum – Suez Conference Aug. 3, 1956.
75 Memorandum of a Conversation, 6 August, 1956, RG 59, 974.7301/8-656.
the Japanese before World War II that John Dower examined in *War Without Mercy*. Dower details Americans’ perceptions of the Japanese as racial inferiors who could not fly their military aircraft or direct artillery fire, among other things, as well as Westerners. In this vein, the British resorted to Operation Pile-Up, which attempted “to clog up the Canal with so much traffic that the Egyptians would be shown to be incapable of running it effectively.” Unfortunately for British plans, the Egyptians easily handled the increased traffic.

*Time* magazine filled its pages the week after the first Suez Conference in London with a lengthy article on the situation in Egypt and its leader. Gone were the positive depictions of Nasser as a strong and Western-style leader that had graced the pages of American magazines a few years earlier. Now the magazine highlighted Nasser’s background and rise to power, this time framed in a negatively gendered and Orientalist style. The magazine described how its interviewer found Nasser to be “tense,” with a knee that “jiggled constantly as he talked,” while all the time chain smoking and fingering his lighter “nervously.” *Time* provided details of the Egyptian’s background and schooling, and snarled that he had “learned the classic Middle East three R’s: reading, ‘riting, and rioting.” A few years earlier, when Nasser had seemed interested in working with the West, the American media told the story of how he heroically rose up to conquer the corrupt and anti-Western old regime and said he embodied the physique of an All-American fullback. Now that he had become the antithesis of America’s goals in the Middle East, *Time* told its readers how Nasser had gone back to Cairo in 1952 from

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76 Dower, pp. 94-117.  
77 Ashton, p. 89.
his military barracks to “conspire his way to power” and that he usually lost his tennis matches versus old friend Ali Sabri because Nasser had gone soft, having “gained weight of late.” The magazine further noted that the Egyptian leader had acted in a “blind rage” during his nationalization speech and that “the coiled-spring character of Nasser,” while it could be “cool,” with a “calculating brain,” also had an underlying “emotional impulsiveness.” It seemed that the man who once tried to appeal to his people’s minds “now went around tearfully calling on boys to form home-guard units.” Likewise, the man who once seemed so ready to work with the West had, “by his duplicity and by his tearing of the fabric of international agreements, forfeited the indispensable good will of the West that alone could help build a strong, new Egypt.” *Time* also excerpted Nasser’s book, stating that while comparisons to Hitler’s work were overblown, “like Mein Kampf, Nasser’s little book is a self-revealing portrait of a restless, unstable man intoxicated with vast ambitions.”

U.S. officials spent the bulk of their time between Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal and the outbreak of hostilities in late October trying to negotiate a peaceful solution to the issue. The United States wanted to gain as much time as possible in order for cooler heads in Britain to prevail. On August 16, eighteen nations met in London, where the United States pushed for an international body to “supervise the operation of the Canal in cooperation with Egyptian authorities.” The first London Conference led to the dispatch of Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies to Cairo to win Nasser’s agreement to a Suez Canal Board. The meeting, however, failed due to Nasser’s refusal

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to internationalize the canal. The group met in London again in September, this time trying to implement Dulles’ plan for a Suez Canal Users Association (SCUA). As Ray Takeyh has noted, the proposal was “based on the notion that the users of the canal could exercise their transit rights under the original 1888 Convention by providing pilots and collecting tolls. The entire mechanism would function in cooperation with Cairo to ensure the efficient operation of the canal.”  

The British and French were keen on getting the Egyptians to internationalize the canal, which caused the Egyptians to make a “big fuss” according to Dulles. The secretary called the Egyptians’ behavior a “silly performance” that it suggested “to him that the Egyptians were getting jittery.”

Throughout the period leading up to the attack, Eisenhower and his administration did all they could to keep the Western powers that were pushing for war at the negotiating table. Eisenhower wrote to Anthony Eden on quite a few occasions during the crisis, admitting that the West had “a grave problem in Nasser’s reckless adventure with the Canal” and noting that while Washington wanted to “see that Nasser shall not grow as a menace to the peace and vital interests of the West,” the president believed that a military solution would have just the opposite effect.

U.S. officials again used negative language against the Egyptians following Menzies’ visit to Cairo. Dulles told the British that “he could not help but feel that Egypt was beginning to worry about the responsibility which it had assumed” and that “Nasser appeared to be acting in a highly nervous and emotional manner.” Dulles believed that

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79 Takeyh, p. 133.
bellicose Egyptian responses to the Suez Canal User’s Association also belied a “state of nervousness,” and what he referred to as “shaky nerves.” While meeting with the Australian prime minister, Dulles also wondered if Nasser was “too fanatical” to give in to Western proposals.\(^82\) The media also questioned the veracity of Nasser’s tough-guy persona when *Time* wrote that “for all Nasser’s heroic front, his is neither a stable nor an experienced regime, and it is showing distinct signs of a case of jitters in the face of the Western reaction to his seizure of Suez.”\(^83\)

American officials were furious with their British, French, and Israeli counterparts following the attack on Suez in late October. The Israelis, in collusion with the British and French, invaded Egypt on October 29. London and Paris then issued an ultimatum to Egypt and Israel to cease hostilities and fall back ten miles from the canal. Should Nasser not comply, the British and French would enter the fray, ostensibly to protect the canal. When Nasser defied, they joined the Israeli attack on October 31.\(^84\) The attack came at an especially bad time for Eisenhower and Dulles as the Soviet Union was invading Hungary at the same time in order to quell unrest. As Ray Takeyh argues, “the recent Soviet attempt to forcefully put down the Hungarian uprising was a glaring indication of the failure of socialist solidarity. But the allied conduct obscured Soviet brutality by projecting a degree of moral equivalency between the two blocs.” Unfortunately for American Cold War policy, “the Anglo-French invasion eliminated any propaganda advantage that the United States may have hoped to gain from the Hungarian

\(^82\) Memorandum of a Conversation, 13 September, 1956, RG 59, 974.7301/9-1356; and Memorandum of a Conversation, Ibid.
\(^83\) *Time*, 10 September, 1956, p. 38.
\(^84\) For more information on the invasion see: Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt*, pp. 229-233; Frieberger, pp. 187-193; and Ashton, pp. 96-97.
situation to further fracture the Eastern bloc.”

Eisenhower was also hamstrung in his reaction to Suez, at least initially, due to the fact that the presidential election was only days away. The president was able to overlook the strong Jewish lobby and the effect it could have on the election and go ahead with condemnations of the Israeli action. After days of international condemnation and the American tightening of the European economic noose, British Prime Minster Anthony Eden called a cease-fire on November 6. To State Department officials, “Nasser’s misguided policies” played a large role in the events that had unfolded, and it remained “to be seen whether [the] realization of [the] magnitude of [the] disaster which threatened Egypt as [a] result [of] Nasser policies will have [a] constructive effect on GOE attitude toward [the] settlement [of] these issues.”

In a National Security Council meeting following the ending of hostilities, Admiral Radford questioned why Middle East nations were so angered at the British and French while giving so “little emphasis to Nasser’s long record of provocations.” Eisenhower replied that he “believed this distortion seemed perfectly natural in Arab eyes.” Radford also called into question the Egyptians’ masculinity when he noted that during fighting between the Egyptians and Israelis, “every Egyptian who was able to had run away.”

The American media also did not paint a positive picture of Nasser following the onset of hostilities. After the fighting had ended but before troops had withdrawn, *Newsweek* wrote that “the threat of Holy War was as pressing as ever. Radio Cairo and

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85 Takeyh, p. 139. For more information on the Hungarian revolt and its correlation with Suez see: Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt*, p. 229; and Ashton, p. 192.
86 Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East*, p. 204.
87 Hoover to American Embassy Tripoli, 12 November, 1956, RG 59, 774.00/11-1256.
Nasser’s army of fanatical infiltrators were left intact by the quick termination of hostilities, and so his propaganda weapons among the Moslems could be as powerful an instrument of dissension as ever.”\(^89\) *Time* later noted that while Nasser had come out of the crisis still standing, “his record of impetuous, harmful, demagogic action” remained.\(^90\)

While Egypt and Nasser may have been the ones attacked, it seems that the media, as well as the Eisenhower administration, placed much of the blame on his shoulders and considered the Egyptian leader as large a threat as before.

As soon as the dust from the fighting had settled, American planners tried to come up with a way to increase their influence in the region by means other than Nasser, all the while using negative language. Indeed, Eisenhower “brought up the question of the great undependability and unreliability of Nasser and the fact that it would be most desirable if he were eventually gotten rid of.” Ike believed that the United States should find another Arab leader in the region “to create divisions between Nasser and the other Arabs.” Ultimately Washington chose Saudi Arabia’s King Saud, who should be told that “Saudi Arabia’s economic future based on oil was being risked by Nasser’s overweening ambitions” and his hold over the canal.\(^91\)

As the language shows, American policymakers and the media described Nasser and Egyptians solely in negative terms from the time of the withdrawal of Aswan aid up until the end of 1956. The decision to withdraw aid was an option within the Omega Plan and the negative language used in regard to this situation fits with the actions Nasser had

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\(^90\) *Time*, 3 December, 1956, p. 17.
\(^91\) MacArthur to Hoover, 20 November, 1956, RG 59, 774.11/11-2056.
taken throughout the year and with the American outlook seen in Omega. Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal and the subsequent hostilities that ensued destroyed American plans for a stable and pro-West Middle East. This situation exacerbated the already higher level of negatively gendered and Orientalist language that Americans had used to describe Nasser and Egyptians for some time.

**Conclusion**

From March 1956 until the end of the year, American policymakers and the media used negative language to describe Egyptian President Nasser and his people much more often than had been the case in previous periods. While the previous chapter has already shown that the level of negative language was raised throughout 1955, by July 1956 descriptive language had become exclusively negatively gendered, paternalistic, and Orientalist. This occurred for two reasons. First, Nasser continued to work against U.S. goals for the region in a number of ways, including the use of highly anti-Western propaganda aimed at other Arab nations, the recognition of Communist China, the threat of increased Soviet assistance, and ultimately the nationalization of the Suez Canal. Secondly, the United States had a new strategic goal during this period known as the Omega Plan, which called for the downgrading of Nasser’s influence throughout the
region. This goal had a double impact on the use of negative language. Inherent in the Omega Plan was the belief that Nasser was working against U.S. interests, thus leading to negative depictions of the Egyptian leader. Meanwhile, anything that Nasser did during this period to enhance his prestige in the region went against the Omega Plan’s goal, which would be cause for more negative language. The important point, though, is that the reasons for the type of language American policymakers and the media used to describe Nasser and Egyptians stayed the same. As had been the case since 1952, in both good times and bad, the type of language used depended wholly upon whether Egypt was helping or hindering American interests in the Middle East.

As we will see in the next chapter, the Eisenhower administration would decide to take on a new initiative in the Middle East, known as the Eisenhower Doctrine, due to what it viewed as a power vacuum in the region following the death knell of British influence in the region after Suez. Once again, Nasser’s prestige and influence in the region was antithetical to what officials in Washington were trying to accomplish. Negative linguistic depictions would continue to rule throughout 1957 and into 1958, and the Eisenhower administration would ultimately find itself embroiled militarily in the region.
CHAPTER FIVE: 

U.S.-Egyptian Relations after Suez: Continued Negativity, 1957-1958

The previous chapter vividly depicted how American policymakers and media began to paint Egypt’s Nasser and his followers in a wholly negative light in the spring of 1956. As this study has argued throughout, American linguistic descriptions of Egyptians correlated with Washington’s assessment of its strategic interests in Egypt and the Middle East region. The new Omega initiative, the underlying negative attitude toward Nasser that accompanied it, the Suez crisis, and the Egyptian leader’s continued independent foreign policy initially led to the continuation of negatively gendered and Orientalist descriptions of Nasser. This chapter explains how prolonged differences between the Eisenhower administration and the Nasser regime caused the language to remain wholly negative until late 1958.

Dwight D. Eisenhower suffered some of his administration’s worst policy setbacks in the Middle East region in 1956. In March of that year, Washington policymakers decided to implement a new regional strategy aimed at Egypt’s Nasser. Following a number of Nasser’s actions in 1955 and early 1956, such as the arms deal with the Soviet bloc and growing intransigence toward U.S. mediation efforts in the
Arab-Israeli dispute known as Project Alpha, Ike, Dulles, and others concluded that they needed to develop a new strategy for dealing with Nasser and the Middle East region. Becoming policy in late March, the new American strategy was known as the Omega Plan (see chapter 4). After years of trying to work with Nasser, American officials now believed this all but impossible.

In an effort to weaken Nasser’s hold over the Middle East region, Dulles argued that American suspension of consideration of aid to Egypt, especially for the Aswan High Dam, American financial assistance to Iraq for propaganda against Nasser’s push for Arab dominance, further support to Arab powers suspicious of Nasser, the courting of Nasser’s close allies, and bolstering the Baghdad Pact short of American adherence would all build up rivals to the Egyptian leader and isolate him. U.S. officials, particularly Eisenhower, hoped to strengthen American ties to Saudi Arabia’s King Saud, whom the president envisioned as a possible Middle East counter to Nasser. There was another side to Omega, however. Walking a very fine line, U.S. policymakers wanted to avoid causing a precipitous break with Nasser that would drive him into Moscow’s arms, while at the same time leaving enough wiggle room to allow the Egyptian leader to come back over to the West if he desired.¹

Throughout 1956, the Eisenhower administration tried to regain the initiative in the Middle East from Nasser, whose popularity and hold over the Arab peoples continued to grow due to his propaganda victory over the British, French, and Israelis during the

¹ Hahn, The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, p. 200.
Suez crisis. Nasser’s growing appeal amongst the Arabs encouraged him to adopt an outlook in foreign relations that was antithetical to perceived American interests in the region. One of the Omega Plan’s major components was reconsideration of proposed funding for the Aswan High Dam. Plans for Western aid in this endeavor began earlier in the Eisenhower administration’s dealings with the Free Officers, and serious negotiations between the Egyptians and the World Bank’s Eugene Black had been ongoing since October 1955. The administration also saw Aswan aid as an added inducement to convince Nasser to adhere to the Alpha peace plan, but the peace initiatives’ failure in early 1956 ended any American hopes to “use the Aswan loan as a quid pro quo for an Arab-Israeli peace.” By early 1956, Nasser’s refusal to ink a Western deal for the dam unless the Americans and British promised the needed funds to finish the project further vexed U.S. policymakers. The Egyptian leader’s negotiation of a small arms deal with Poland, his recognition of Communist China, further intrigues with upper-level Soviet officials, and his stinging refusal to press forward on the Alpha peace process only made matters worse. Eisenhower and Dulles also faced domestic pressure from the Israeli lobby to dump the Aswan project, along with opposition from Southern congressmen who feared that the dam would lead to an increase in Egyptian cotton production that would hurt domestic growers. American officials also worried how some allies would

2 Besides Nasser’s “victory” over what he and many Arabs viewed as Western imperialistic actions during the Suez crisis, Nasser also gained stature in the Arab world through his use of propaganda against the Baghdad Pact, which he also painted as a tool of Western imperialism. For more on these issues and Nasser’s emergence as the preeminent Arab spokesman, see chapters 3, 4 and Ibid, p. 198; and Hahn, Caught in the Middle East, p. 195.

3 Freiberger, p. 152.
view the rewarding of a neutralist Egypt by giving aid for Aswan’s construction. Due to these factors, Dulles rescinded his offer of aid on July 19.⁴

When the United States withdrew its offer of aid for the dam, it set off a series of events that destabilized the Middle East, the very outcome it had wanted to prevent. On July 26, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal and announced plans to use revenues from the canal to fund the dam’s construction.⁵ This led to a tense period of negotiations and conferences, in which the United States tried to keep the British and French, who were dependent upon the canal for their oil, from attacking Egypt. In the end, Ike and Dulles could do nothing, as Israel, with British and French collusion, attacked Egypt in late October. For their part, the Israelis wanted to remove Nasser’s hold over the canal in order to gain canal access for Israeli shipping and they were also weary of renewed fedayeen raids emanating from Gaza.⁶ The British and French then used the invasion as a pretext to secure the canal themselves and possibly oust Nasser. Facing an international outcry, including that of the Eisenhower administration, which withheld financial assistance to Britain, the British, French, and Israelis were forced to withdraw. But the damage had been done. Instead of retaking the canal to ensure its smooth operation and checking Nasser’s move, the canal remained in Egyptian hands and Nasser became a larger rallying symbol to the Arab world than he had ever been.

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⁵ Ibid, p. 206.
⁶ On the topic of Israeli reasons for colluding with the British and French to attack Egypt, Hahn notes that following the failure of the first London conference officials in Israel feared that Nasser would be emboldened to try and do something rash, such as possibly attacking Israel. Hahn goes on to note that more hawkish Israeli officials “sought to use the Suez crisis to launch a war on Egypt.” Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East*, pp. 195-97.
The Eisenhower administration’s strategic setbacks in the Middle East throughout 1956 and diminished British power following the Suez debacle forced Washington policymakers to undertake a new and more interventionist role in the region. While the U.S. strategy toward Egypt outlined in the Omega plan did not fundamentally change, it became apparent to American foreign policymakers that the United States had to go on the offensive in the Middle East if it wanted to isolate Nasser and win more regional Western support. Ray Takeyh sums up the situation when he writes that

The Suez Crisis fundamentally altered the political alignments of the Middle East. Throughout the Arab world the influence of the primary Western state, Great Britain, had ebbed to the point of non-existence, while the nationalist forces were emboldened and poised to assume control. As significant as the altered relationships may have been, they did not impact the objectives of the Eisenhower administration. The United States was still committed to mobilizing the Middle East for the task of containment by reducing Egyptian influence. However, the achievement of this goal required a more activist policy than previously pursued.7

On January 5, 1957, President Eisenhower outlined to Congress his administration’s new policy for the Middle East. Immediately dubbed the Eisenhower Doctrine, this new policy consisted of an American pledge to provide both financial and military assistance to those nations in the region that battled communism and sided with the West. According to Salim Yaqub, “the United States would now try to strengthen conservative Arab regimes – like those of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Libya – and reinforce their pro-Western tendencies.” The United States planned to use military aid, economic aid, and protective guarantees in order to, as Yaqub states, “encourage such governments to side openly with the West in the Cold War, thus isolating Nasser and his

7 Takeyh, p. 142.
regional allies, among them the Syrian government and Nasserist opposition parties in other Arab countries.”

As we will see, until the latter half of 1958 Eisenhower wanted to isolate Nasser and build up other regional leaders and nations as a counterweight to Egypt’s pan-Arab nationalism and neutralism. Policymakers would have to face a number of tests in the region throughout 1957 and into 1958. These included trying to get Middle Eastern nations to accept the Eisenhower Doctrine in the face of Egyptian refusal to do so, dealing with the aftermath of the Suez crisis, the formation of the United Arab Republic, the dispatching of U.S. troops to Lebanon in July 1958 to restore order and maintain a pro-Western government, and a coup in Iraq.

The language American policymakers and the media used to describe Nasser and Egyptians reflected U.S. policies and strategies. From January 1957 until late 1958, while the Eisenhower Doctrine and the remnants of the Omega Plan remained in effect, American language was overwhelmingly negative. Nasser did not help matters with his continued intransigence over Suez Canal issues, his refusal to accept the Eisenhower Doctrine, his push for Arab nationalism through propaganda and the formation of the U.A.R., and intrigue in Lebanon. Just as before, American policymakers and the media used Nasser’s actions and the underlying reasoning of policies such as the Omega Plan to depict Egyptians and their leader as “outsiders” and “Others.”

\[8\] Yaqub, p. 2.
The United States launched the Eisenhower Doctrine in January 1957 and spent the next year and a half trying to turn its goals of isolating Nasser and building up pro-Western Middle Eastern regimes into a reality. American policymakers found this to be a difficult task, due in large part to the pan-Arab nationalism that Nasser espoused. For his part, as we will see, the Egyptian leader continued to work against America’s goals by criticizing the Eisenhower Doctrine, refusing to tie-up loose ends from the Suez Canal crisis, continuing to court the communist bloc, voicing anti-Western radio propaganda, and forming the United Arab Republic in early 1958.

The administration decided to take bold action in early 1957. According to Eisenhower’s able biographer, Stephen E. Ambrose, “immediately after the Suez Crisis, Eisenhower decided that the president needed, in advance, authorization to intervene in the Middle East before the next crisis got out of hand. He also wanted authorization to send military and economic aid to the Arab nations.”\(^9\) Analyzing the Eisenhower Doctrine, the thinking behind it, and its effects even further, Yaqub has argued that “what occurred in 1957 and 1958 was a political struggle between the United States and the Nasserist movement over the acceptable limits of Arabism, that is, over what should be

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seen as falling within the mainstream of Arab politics and what should be regarded as marginal or extreme.”

While the doctrine was aimed at convincing Middle Eastern nations to adhere to and accept the new American initiative, the administration had to first seek congressional acceptance. It quickly became apparent to all in attendance at a bipartisan New Year’s Day congressional meeting that Nasser’s appeal and his probable refusal to accept the new policy could pose a problem for its overall success. One inquisitive senator in particular inquired about Nasser’s intentions in the area, how they might affect the plan, and whether “he could be trusted.” Dulles replied that while UN Secretary General Hammarskjold believed that the Egyptian leader had been somewhat reliable in living up to his UN commitments, he acknowledged “the difficulty of placing much trust in him.”

Despite these doubts, American officials went ahead with their plan to build up pro-Western elements in the Middle East and isolate Nasser. Four days after his meeting with congressional officials, Eisenhower stated to a joint session of Congress that “it is now essential that the United States should manifest through joint action of the President and

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10 Yaqub, p. 3. Townsend Hoopes viewed the Eisenhower Doctrine a bit differently than Yaqub. Dulles’ biographer believes that Eisenhower and Dulles fell prey to the “charge of Egyptian-Russian conspiracy to communize the Middle East,” which “seemed a natural and convenient explanation of events to cold-war planners in Washington, both in the bureaucracy and at the cabinet level.” According to Hoopes, this notion “triggered conditioned reflexes, and the result was to deepen the suspicion of Nasser, to confuse Arab nationalism with Communism, and to assume far greater Russian influence in the area than in fact existed.” Hoopes also viewed the Eisenhower Doctrine as containing all the prerequisite ingredients of Dulles’ brand of brinkmanship. Hoopes, pp. 405-407.

the Congress our determination to assist those nations of the Mid-East area, which desire that assistance.”

Ambassador Hare met with the Egyptian leader to discuss the president’s speech and solicit his opinion about the doctrine. Nasser feared the adverse effect the doctrine would have on Egyptian public opinion. Acceptance of the doctrine meant the denunciation of the Soviets at a time, according to Nasser, “when the Egyptian people see them [the Soviet Union] as helpful and sympathetic.” Compounding this view, Hoover refused Egypt’s request for emergency food, fuel and medicine after the Suez fighting and then added to Egyptian resentment by not allowing the release of enough Egyptian dollar reserves to allow the Nasser regime to purchase these things on its own. Nasser’s comment that the Egyptian people viewed the Soviet Union as “helpful and sympathetic” was born in large part by this situation because Moscow “promptly airlifted medical equipment and drugs, and shipped 60,000 tons of wheat” to Egypt. Taking a shot at the Egyptian strongman’s leadership skills and lack of political enlightenment, as well as pointing out the difference between Nasser and strong, enlightened leaders such as Eisenhower, Ambassador Hare commented that he had intervened to observe that Nasser had spoken at length of [the] importance of public opinion – of its suspicions and fixations. But what about Nasser himself? After all, a head of state may have to take public opinion into account but he must see further and wider than others. That is a requirement of leadership. Furthermore, [the] President’s address clearly showed understanding of matters preoccupying Arabs, including nationalism. Why could [the] latter not take [an] equally comprehensive view of [the] problem?

The ambassador’s remarks regarding Arab public opinion’s “suspicions and fixations” also reflected the underlying stereotype of Arabs as untrusting and overly emotional. Hare called Nasser’s comments “most disappointing,” and hoped that with continued effort the Egyptian leader could view the president’s speech with “more favorable appreciation and understanding.” Furthermore, Hare commented that Nasser “looked haggard, seemed distraught and his presentation verged at times on incoherent.”\textsuperscript{15} Hare told other Egyptian officials that he had sent Washington details of Nasser’s “negativism and lack [of] forthrightness.”\textsuperscript{16} The ambassador also told Washington of his concerns at rumors that “Constitution Day,” January 16, might be used to make a “major governmental pronouncement” aimed at the Eisenhower Doctrine. According to Hare, Foggy Bottom needed to remember that “when in [a] difficult position” Nasser often looked to “seek [a] dramatic move to regain [the] initiative.”\textsuperscript{17} Thankfully, Hare’s fears did not come to fruition on the 16\textsuperscript{th}.

In early February, American officials decided to send a presidential emissary to the Middle East to explain the Eisenhower Doctrine to regional national leaders. Ike’s Middle Eastern troubleshooter, Special Ambassador James P. Richards, was tasked with the mission, which had two goals. First, he must “convince as many nations as possible to endorse the policy.” If this proved successful, the special ambassador should then “establish, following discussions with governments endorsing the doctrine, amounts of

\textsuperscript{17} Hare to Dulles, 15 January, 1957, RG 59, 774.00/1-1557.
U.S. economic and military assistance.” In a paper outlining Richards’s mission, State Department officials noted that Nasser’s policies toward the Soviet Union had “not contributed to the stability of the Middle East” and that issues such as the Soviet arms deal and pro-Soviet propaganda “frankly concerned” Washington. Just like Hare, Foggy Bottom gurus chalked up much of Nasser’s pro-Soviet action to a lack of Western sophistication and foreign policy enlightenment when it came to dealing with the Soviet Union. American officials planned for Richards to stop in Cairo and make clear to the Egyptian leader that “the United States is not convinced that [he] fully realizes the extent of the communist threat to the Middle East and looks to him for concrete evidence that he is alive to the danger and is prepared to combat it,” instructions that Dulles also later repeated verbatim to Richards. Richards commented on his approach to Nasser, should a visit to Egypt take place, in paternalistic terms when he noted to Dulles that he planned “to speak forcefully and frankly to Nasser.” Richards never got the chance to put on a tough front to Nasser. Although Nasser’s regime displayed some interest in receiving Richards, it never issued a formal invitation and the special ambassador returned to the United States without having met with Nasser.

_Time and Newsweek also commented negatively about the Egyptian leader. _Time_noted that the United States now seemed to be “effectively curbing his ambitions under the Eisenhower Doctrine,” which caused Nasser to use Voice of the Arabs to unleash an
“unprecedented campaign of hatred against the U.S.”\textsuperscript{22} While anti-Western propaganda emanating from Egypt was nothing new, following Nasser’s rejection of the Eisenhower Doctrine in late April “Egyptian news media stepped up their criticism of the United States and the West.”\textsuperscript{23} The magazine depicted this as an overtly Arab backstabbing gesture in the best knife-wielding Bedouin tradition since it had been America that “had saved his neck during the Anglo-French invasion.” Moreover, this comment also spoke to Nasser’s weakness, as not only had he needed the United States to come in and save him, but he now “found himself backed into a lonely corner.”\textsuperscript{24} The same month, \textit{Newsweek} reported that Cairo had just made an anti-Nasser plot public that had all the makings of “a modern day Arabian Nights affair.” It also seemed that Nasser, “the wily Egyptian,” had used “shrill attacks on the U.S. by Cairo Radio” to try and link the United States to the plot in the hopes that it would discredit the Eisenhower Doctrine and those Middle Eastern nations that favored the policy. In a reference to the Arab mindset so often seen throughout this study, the weekly publication also noted that Nasser, who was trying to regain some of his lost thunder, would speak to the public on July 26, “capitalizing on the emotional appeal of the first anniversary of the Suez Canal seizure.”\textsuperscript{25} According to \textit{Time}, though, Egyptian ineptitude shone through during the

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Time}, 15 July, 1957, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{23} Previously, anti-Western Egyptian propaganda had mainly been directed at Great Britain and the Baghdad Pact, but with the British defeat at Suez and the announcement of the Eisenhower Doctrine the United States began to find itself more specifically targeted. Yaqub, p. 140.
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Time}, 15 July, 1957, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Newsweek}, 29 July, 1957, pp. 41-42.
anniversary speech as Soviet-made jets doing a fly-by showed gaps on their second pass “because some were unable to keep formation.”

The Eisenhower administration’s continued vexation at Nasser for the instability he had helped cause in the latter half of 1956 and Washington’s goal of isolating the Egyptian leader, also led American policymakers and the media to continue depicting Egyptians and their ruler in negative terms. Private citizens even had the president’s ear following Suez. George Whitney, a high ranking official of JP Morgan and a man whose “judgment and loyalty” had earned Eisenhower’s “great respect,” wrote Ike and commented on the paternalistic endeavor that the United States faced in regard to Nasser. Whitney said that “the final judgment” of the Middle Eastern situation “will depend upon whether we can now succeed in bringing Nasser to sensibility.”

Time also touched upon the Egyptian leader’s childlike nature when discussing Cairo’s refusal to deal with Britain and France in regard to future Suez Canal operation. The magazine wondered if this begged the question “whether Nasser was again acting [too] big for his breeches.”

The settlement of outstanding Suez crisis issues was again brought up in early February when Time told its readers that Secretary General Hammarskjold, while contending that the Israelis should comply with the previous November’s withdrawal resolution from Egypt, also recognized the Israeli right of passage in the Gulf of Aqaba. Nasser did not agree with this latter point and Time feared what the Egyptian leader might do. The weekly wrote that “when Nasser believes he is being crowded and provoked is the

26 *Time*, 5 August, 1957, p. 15.
27 Eisenhower to Dulles, 31 December, 1956, DDE, Papers of John Foster Dulles, White House Memoranda Series, Box 7, Folder: Meetings with the President – 1959 (1); and Whitney to Eisenhower, 26 December, 1956, DDE, Ibid.
28 *Time*, 7 January, 1957, p. 27.
moment when he behaves like a bull in the ring: he paws the ground, snorts, glowers and charges.” This type of reaction could lead Nasser to stop clearance work of the canal, which had been blocked during the Suez-Sinai War, and use the “one dramatic move” left in his arsenal. The canal’s closure in October had created mass disruptions in international commerce, especially in regard to oil shipments to the West. Following Israeli evacuation of Sinai in January, “Nasser authorized the United Nations to conduct a canal clearance operation involving more than forty salvage vessels and bankrolled by the United States.” Thankfully, Nasser did not use a “dramatic move” to stop clearance work and the canal reopened in April.

In regard to Nasser’s control over the Suez Canal, the U.S. Navy did not paint a very pretty picture of the Egyptian leader or the issues regarding the canal that could possibly come forward in the future. The Navy’s report, “Major Factors pertaining to the Suez Canal Problem,” highlighted some of the problems regarding Suez that Nasser might pose to national security. Abstractly referring to Nasser’s untrustworthy Arab nature and the emotional hold that ambition had over him, the report noted that he could “delay and obstruct the effective operation of the Suez Canal, and use this instrument to achieve political and economic objectives in the Middle East and Africa.” The report also gloomily predicted that “in view of his previous difficult and non-cooperative attitudes, in which he has been and continues to be fully supported by the USSR which has objectives of its own in the Middle East, it is unrealistic to assume that he will readily

30 Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East*, p. 218.
divest himself of his most potent weapon – a quick and unrestricted opening of the Suez Canal – without exacting a heavy price.”

From this analysis, it did not seem that far of a stretch to expect Nasser to try to blackmail the West in order to achieve his goals.

Discussions dealing with canal transit and Israeli withdrawal in February and early March led American officials to repeatedly comment upon Egyptian emotionalism, along with other negative stereotypical assessments. Nasser wanted all tolls to be paid to Egypt and not to an international body, and four fast-approaching Soviet vessels had the possibility of making trouble for the West’s plan of internationalization. NSC members feared that the Soviets would pay tolls to Nasser, thus making any negotiations on payment that much more difficult. As Secretary of the Treasury George Humphrey noted, “the moment Soviet vessels go through the Canal, that will mark the end of all negotiations with Nasser for a reasonable settlement.”

Ambassador Hare found the post-Suez atmosphere “discouraging” days later because of Nasser’s “seemingly chronic deviousness and lack of constancy with which he approaches specific questions such as [the] Canal, Aqaba, [and the] IPC pipeline, etc.” Nasser’s “deviousness,” according to Hare, called to mind Orientalist visions of an untrustworthy Arab, while his effeminate “lack of constancy” painted him as a one who could never make up his mind and lacked conviction. During a follow-up meeting with Ali Sabry the following week, Hare noted that he hoped the Arabs, and Egypt in particular, would use “sobriety and act constructively,” much like the United States had done, when dealing with Israeli

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31 The Chief of Naval Operations to the Secretary of State, 6 February, 1957, RG 59, Lot File No. 69 D 488, Suez Canal, 1956-60, Box 68, Folder: Suez Canal #1 Suez Canal Settlement 1957.
33 Hare to Dulles, 15 February, 1957, RG 59, Lot File No. 57 D 616, Box 17, Folder: Mission to the Middle East – Telegrams Sent + Received Before Departure, Folder 1 of 3.
withdrawal. Not willing to leave it at that, Hare further told Sabry that by the “same token, we could not be expected [to] be tolerant of strident agitation and of obstructionism to constructive action. [The] time is one for responsible reasonableness.”

Regarding Egyptian weakness, and the emotionalism that it caused, in the face of Israeli intransigence over withdrawal, Hare commented to Washington in early March that the “situation in Cairo is most unclear and characterized by nervous ‘wait and see’ attitude.”

Tense U.S.-Egyptian relations led Hare to again comment upon Egypt’s emotional suspicion after another follow-up meeting, this time with Minister of the Interior Zakariya Muhieddine. Hare told his Department of State colleagues that there seemed to be a feeling among the Egyptians that the United States was “out to get them.”

As Israeli forces began their withdrawal from Egyptian soil in early March Time used some its pages to rehash Nasser’s reign and to ponder what the future might hold. Calling out the Egyptian leader, the magazine wrote that “for four months” Nasser had

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34 Following the Suez-Sinai War cease-fire, Israel refused to withdraw from Egypt unless “it gained border security, freedom of transit on the Suez canal and the Gulf of Aqaba, and assurances that” Nasser “would not restore the status quo ante bellum in the Sinai or Gaza.” In the midst of U.S.-Israeli negotiations to remove Israeli forces from Egyptian soil, the UN threatened to impose economic sanctions on Israel if it did not withdraw from Egypt. After much discussion and weary of public opinion, congress gave Ike the green light to go along with sanctions, which gave Eisenhower a negotiating chip versus the Israelis. The president was able to postpone debate at the UN long enough for Eban and Dulles to come to a solution. In a February 24 meeting between the two, “Eban outlined a plan for Israeli withdrawal. Israel would withdraw from Sharm al-Sheikh if UNEF occupied the area and if the United States and other maritime powers would publicly endorse Israel’s free transit rights on the gulf. Israel would yield Gaza to UNEF control if the United Nations would decide the strip’s government and prevent restoration of the status quo ante bellum. Cautioning only that Egypt must consent to any change in the Gaza government, Dulles endorsed Eban’s proposal.” Israel agreed to UN terms on March 1 and its military transferred power to UNEF from March 6 to 8. For more information on this subject, see Hahn, Caught in the Middle East, pp. 210-216.


36 Hare to the Department of State, 1 March, 1957, RG 59, 774.00(w)/3-157.

37 Hare to Dulles, 8 March, 1957, RG 59, 611.74/3-857.
“played the role of a wronged man. But once Israel’s invading armies leave his soil, it will be time to examine Nasser’s own conduct, past and future, and take new measure of him.” Reminiscing on the Egyptian leader’s conversion to neutralism, *Time* noted that the weak Nasser had fallen “under the flattering spell of Chou En-lai and Nehru at Bandung.” Following the Egyptian-Soviet arms deal, which had “freed Nasser from the restraint imposed by the West’s balance-of-arms policy his Voice of the Arabs grew increasingly shrill, demanding the blood of every Western imperialist” and “sowing hatred for the French throughout North Africa.” Depictions of shrill Arabs demanding blood may have easily led to images of knife-toting Bedouins akin to *Arabian Nights.*

According to the article, Nasser seemed “bewildered and uncertain nowadays” and “the ‘role [of] wandering aimlessly in search of a hero,’ which he envisioned for himself and his country, is more and more becoming a role in a Greek tragedy, its protagonist hopelessly playing out his own doom.” Ending with a note of what could have been, *Time* summed up the situation, writing that “there are some who regret that a man with such promise for good should have been reduced by his over-reaching ambitions to a cunning and reckless figure.”

Israel’s March withdrawal from the Gaza strip brought accompanying American fears that Nasser would move his forces back into the region in the face of UNEF occupation. Following months of back-and-forth debate, the Israelis agreed to withdraw from Gaza and Sharm al-Sheikh on March 1 and transferred power over to UNEF a few days later. Israel agreed to the withdrawal only after working out a solution in which

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UNEF occupied Sharm al-Sheikh and the United States and other nations publicly called for Israel’s free transit of the Gulf of Aqaba. Tel Aviv also agreed that UNEF could take over Gaza if the United Nations “would decide the [Gaza] strip’s government and prevent restoration of the status quo antebellum.” The situation began to turn worrisome when Nasser tried to reassert Egyptian control in Gaza following the Israeli withdrawal. As Peter Hahn has noted, “Nasser dispatched a civil governor into the territory and advanced troops to El Arish to assert his legal rights under the armistice and to restore Egyptian prestige damaged by his acceptance of UNEF.” Fortunately, the situation worked itself out and “Nasser refrained from sending troops into Gaza and suppressed the fedayeen,” which had been launching raids into Israeli territory from Gaza.39

This episode led to a flurry of telegrams depicting the Egyptians in a negative light. When the possibility of Egypt moving back into Gaza first came up, Under Secretary of State Christian Herter wrote Hare that Egypt’s actions “deeply concerned” the Department. The situation did not improve any the following day, as Herter again stressed to Hare its importance. Planners in Washington called Egypt’s possible move “extremely grave,” and again touching on Nasser’s emotionalism and lack of sound foreign policy judgment, noted that they were troubled “that Nasser for prestige reasons might proceed with [the] implementation plan to send Egyptians back into Gaza on [the] basis [of a] miscalculation [of the] seriousness [of] this move and world reaction hitherto.” Herter also stressed that the ambassador should make clear to the Egyptians “President Eisenhower’s deep concern lest Nasser has grossly miscalculated [the] dangers

involved in such action.” When Hare met with Nasser, the ambassador told him that he
had “taken action brusquely” and that the Egyptian leader had “indeed acted in disregard
of things far more important.” According to Hare, his enlightened and Western tutelage
“seemed to sink in and Nasser said he would think [his proposed move into Gaza] over
seriously.” At a later meeting Hare gave Nasser Herter’s message from the president, in
which the Egyptian leader seemed “at [a] loss to know what to reply.” Hare also told
Washington that Nasser “looked rather helpless,” which displayed the American’s belief
that Nasser was out of his league and acting recklessly and thoughtlessly. This mindset
and vision of Nasser as a child whom the United States had to set straight is typified by
Hare’s comment that the Egyptian “was obviously and deeply impressed by [the] grave
evaluation of [the] situation as seen by President Eisenhower.” Giving his own personal
analysis on Nasser’s state of mind, Hare wrote that the headman in Cairo had given him
the impression “of [a] person who had unwittingly become involved in [a] difficulty
which he found hard not only to meet but actually to understand. Part of this may have
been mere pose after mischief [had been] done but [it is] also true that Nasser not
infrequently does have [the] tendency to leap before he looks. In any event,” Hare
concluded, “[I] am convinced [that the] presentation did have [a] sobering and therefore
useful effect.”

Dulles commented to Senator William Knowland (R-CA) a week later
that the United States had its hands full trying to “get Nasser to behave.”

40 Herter to Hare, 12 March, 1957, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 17, p. 401; Herter to Hare, 13 March, 1957 Ibid,
p. 414; Hare to the Department of State, Ibid, p. 404; Hare to the Department of State, 15 March, 1957,
Ibid, p. 419; and Hare to the Department of State, Ibid, p. 423.
41 Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation, Dulles to Knowland, 19 March, 1957, DDE, Papers of John
Foster Dulles, Telephone Calls Series, Box 6, Folder: Memoranda Tel. Conv. – General March 1957 to
April 30, 1957 (4).
The Suez issue also came up during Anglo-American talks in Bermuda in mid-March. Nasser’s intransigence regarding clearing the canal and the payment of tolls was a topic of great concern for the two allies. The president and Dulles “did not debate” British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd’s comment on Nasser’s “unreliability.”

Preserving his thoughts on the conference in his diary the next day, Eisenhower admitted that the Egyptian leader was “far from an admirable character.”

Egyptian policies regarding Gaza and the Israeli right of passage were still in question when UN Secretary General Hammerskjold met with Nasser in late March. Many in Washington doubted Nasser’s ability to live up to agreements that the secretary general wanted to resolve. The Eisenhower administration’s UN ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., once again brought up the possibility of Nasser using his control of the canal to blackmail the West in order to get what he wanted out of a settlement. Touching upon this possibility, as well as Egyptian weakness, Lodge wrote that it was “undignified for [a] country as powerful as [the] U.S. to admit that it has been forced into accepting something against its will by being blackmailed by such [a] weak country as Egypt.”

Reporting on the Nasser-Hammerskjold talks, and harkening back to recent issues, Time reiterated its stance that “Nasser was getting too big for his boots.” When it began to look as if the Egyptians would not go along with the United Nations’ Six Principles of October 1956 governing Suez Canal use and allow the canal’s internationalization once it reopened in April, Dulles fired off a message for Hare to give to the Egyptian

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44 Time, 1 April, 1958, p. 22.
government expressing the United States’ “keen disappointment.” The Department of State’s John J. McCloy, who stopped in Cairo to see Nasser on his return home from a Mid-East trip, commented on the Egyptian leader’s “alleged suspicions” in regard to UN and Western initiatives. Ambassador Hare echoed McCloy’s sentiments regarding the Egyptians’ overworked imaginations when he wrote that they held a “deep suspicion of British, French and Israeli intentions” in regard to the six principles, so much so that it “dominates their thinking.” In subsequent canal talks a few days later, the Egyptian leader seemed to be in a “flighty mood which often took [the] form of [an] initially petulant and intemperate reaction,” and Hare later noted that Nasser “put on another emotional act” when they discussed the possibility of the canal’s outside management and control.

Washington officials’ views on Nasser’s character came up again in meetings with the French in regard to the Suez Canal. Dulles agreed with French Premier Guy Mollet and noted that “no agreements which might be made with Nasser would be dependable, whatever the words which Nasser might use.” The secretary “thought that for this reason not much importance should be attached to what Nasser said he would or

45 Dulles to Hare, 2 April, 1957, RG 59, 974.7301/4-257. Between October 9 and 13, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold met privately with British, French, and Egyptian foreign ministers, leading to the six principles. “Those principles were free transit rights for all powers; recognition of Egyptian sovereignty; insulation of the canal from the politics of any country; agreement between Egypt and user states regarding tolls; negotiation between Egypt and user states to decide the proportion of revenues to be invested in development; and settlement of disputes by arbitration.” The Security Council passed a unanimous resolution proposing the six principles on October 13. For more information on this topic see Hahn, The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, pp. 222-223.
46 Dulles to Hare, 4 April, 1957, RG 59, 974.7301/4-457.
47 Hare to Dulles, 7 April, 1957, RG 59, 974.7301/4-757.
48 Hare to Dulles, 11 April, 1957, RG 59, 974.7301/4-1157; and Hare to Dulles, 11 April, 1957, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 17, p. 537.
would not do.”49 Once again, Dulles described the Egyptian leader as an untrustworthy Arab when he pursued goals that were antithetical to American Middle East interests.

Nasser’s refusal to acquiesce to the Eisenhower Doctrine’s tenets and his intransigence in negotiations for a final Suez settlement were not the only issues in 1957 that led to negative American language. The United States consistently wanted to thwart Soviet attempts to infiltrate the region in any form. Egypt had committed the cardinal sin of allowing Soviet penetration into the region with its 1955 arms deal, and Egyptian dealings with the communists following Suez continued the American trend of depicting Egyptians in negatively gendered and Orientalist terms.

American officials questioned Egyptian judgment in regard to its relationship with Moscow. Indeed, President Eisenhower told Saudi Arabia’s King Saud in January that Egypt’s relationship with the Soviet Union, and the fact that Egypt tried to play Washington off against Moscow, was “one reason why Egypt has fallen on evil ways.”50 A week later, Eisenhower told Crown Prince Abdullah, in regard to Middle Eastern nations flirting with communism, that he “was amazed that the leaders of those countries seemed to think that they could let the communists come and go without seriously jeopardizing their security.”51 Dulles echoed these same sentiments with Lebanese Foreign Minister Charles Malik. The secretary explained that the type of nationalism Nasser represented led to a loss of independence and remarked that he “thought that countries which, in pursuing this type of nationalism, became dependent upon

Communism, would isolate themselves and die.” Dulles concluded that “Nasser’s philosophy would have this result.”

Continuing his round of talks with international representatives, Eisenhower spoke with Malik the next day on communism in the Middle East, and in Egypt in particular. The president believed that “many of the Arabs seemed to think that they could accept Russian arms and Russian ‘volunteers’ for the time being and could break off their dependence upon Russian sources of supply and could get rid of the Russian ‘volunteers’ when they wanted.” Ike further agreed that these nations “were very much mistaken if they thought such relations with the Soviet Bloc could be so easily terminated.”

Eisenhower and Dulles’ paternalistic and Orientalist language in these instances described Egyptian leaders as lacking the high level of foreign relations understanding and acumen that enlightened Westerners had.

The usage of this type of paternalistic language, in which American officials viewed themselves as having to “teach” the backward Egyptians about the true nature of Soviet communism, continued throughout the rest of the year. On a trip through the Middle East in May, Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (D-MN) met with Nasser and discussed a number of issues, including the relationship between Egypt and the Soviet Union. Reporting on the talks, Hare noted that he hoped the senator’s arguments had “sunk-in” to Nasser. Throughout the meeting, according to Hare, Nasser appeared to take a nonchalant approach toward issues, almost as if to say that he had expressed his position and that he had finished talking. Hare feared that “while in this mood, Nasser’s actions are more apt to be in [the] form of stubborn resistance or intemperate reaction

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rather than compromise.” In response, Dulles commented that “all previous attempts to reason constructively with Nasser have failed,” and went on to mention the Egyptian leader’s “capacity for troublemaking.”

The Egyptian inability to fully grasp the communist danger was a constant topic of discussion during this period. This mindset was exacerbated due to the continued Egyptian backing of Syria during the Syrian crisis and Nasser’s eventual dispatch of troops there on October 13. In October, Secretary Dulles used language aimed directly at Egyptian ambassador Ahmed Hussein that demonstrated the American belief that the Egyptians were unenlightened when it came to dealing with the Soviets. Dulles told the ambassador that the United States believed “that President Nasser is in error in his judgment” when it came to relations with the communist nations, and that U.S. officials believed that America’s “greater experience with the Soviets gives us some competence in understanding the basic Soviet objectives.” Furthermore, he argued that the administration “believed that collective security was the more sensible and more dependable way of protecting the independence of the free world against the Soviet Union” in contrast to Egypt’s method of shunning alliances and practicing neutralism. Dulles touched on these issues and brought forth these images again when meeting with World Bank President Eugene Black, noting the Egyptian “blindness toward the danger

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54 Hare to the Department of State, 2 May, 1957, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 17, pp. 589-590.  
55 Dulles to Hare, 4 May, 1957, Ibid, p. 596.  
56 Nasser’s landing of troops in the northern Syrian port of Latakia was said to be for protection against Turkish aggression, but the small contingent of troops was more of a political statement “that dramatically transformed the atmosphere of inter-Arab politics.” It also created a situation in which military measures by other Arab nations to oust the Damascus government had become unthinkable. Yaqub, p. 169; and Stephens, p. 272.  
57 Memorandum of a Conversation, 8 October, 1957, RG 59, 611.74/10-857.
of the Soviet Union” and saying that he hoped “the scales would drop from Nasser’s eyes” at some point.\textsuperscript{58} In early November, the secretary remarked that he hoped that Egypt would show “greater awareness of the dangers involved in its dealings with the Soviet Union,” sentiments that the Department of State’s William A. Rountree shared in December.\textsuperscript{59}

American officials also spoke negatively about Nasser when the Egyptian leader took other steps that seemed to thwart American objectives in the Middle East or were anti-Western in general. Stoking the fires of Arab nationalism along Nasserist lines was one such step, especially in the case of Jordan, where Nasser backed an anti-Hussein movement that threatened the monarchy. In a showdown between Nasserist cabinet members and King Hussein, the king refused to dismiss loyal advisors his cabinet wanted purged in order to strengthen their own hand. The situation soon escalated and was only put to rest after Hussein used loyal army personnel to quell a military uprising. Within a matter of days, Hussein used his royalist army officers to purge the military of anti-monarchy radicals and the king formed a new government with a cabinet that was predominantly Hashemite loyalist.\textsuperscript{60} Dulles stated to Hare in a May telegram to Cairo that the “US believes nationalism which appeals only to emotions [and] rejecting reasonable approach to problems can cause much damage. Nationalism which is used as [a] coverall for efforts by one nation to dominate other nations and to oblige other

\textsuperscript{59} Memorandum of a Conversation, 7 November, 1957, RG 59, 774.00/11-757; and Rountree to Dulles, RG 59, 774.13/12-657.
\textsuperscript{60} For more information on the Jordanian crisis in April 1957 see Yaqub, pp. 129-135; Ashton, pp. 120-121; and Hoopes, 411-412.
countries to follow blindly its policies will inevitably be opposed by [the] US.”

According to a CIA National Intelligence Estimate, nationalists in Iraq had become susceptible to the “emotional appeal of Nasser.” Anti-Western nationalism and the tightening of the Egyptian-Syrian relationship caused Hare to take stock of the U.S.-Egyptian situation toward the end of August. The ambassador painted a picture of Nasser as an emotionally unhinged man who had Western tendencies, but who too often allowed his weaker Arab sensibilities to take over. Hare said that one of the key difficulties in formulating an analysis of the current U.S.-Egyptian situation centered upon the “enigmatic character of Nasser himself.” The American diplomat found the Egyptian leader to be both “frank and secretive, straightforward and conspiratorial, bold and irresolute, generous and petty, liberal and dictatorial, wise and foolish, dedicated and egotistical – a veritable Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde.” Ultimately, this led him to believe that if the “inner sanctum of Nasser’s thinking could be located and illuminated, it would be found to contain more half-formed ideas than well laid plans.” Likewise, Dulles believed Nasser was behind events in Syria, telling Lebanon’s Malik that “he was a complicated man full of moods and difficult to judge.”

Nasser continued to use propaganda to build upon Arab nationalism to the detriment of American goals; not surprisingly, the United States reacted negatively. This was not the first episode in which anti-Western propaganda had been shouted over the airwaves from Cairo. The Baghdad Pact had been a target of anti-Western diatribes.

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61 Dulles to Hare, 29 May, 1957, RG 59, 774.11/5-2957.
63 Hare to the Department of State, 24 August, 1957, Ibid, p. 713.
referring to the defensive alliance as a tool of Western imperialism since its inception.\textsuperscript{65} Ambassador Hare met with Mohammed Haikal, the new editor of Egypt’s \textit{Al-Ahram} and a close confidant of Nasser, in June to discuss Egyptian print and radio’s anti-Western slant. Speaking on Haikal’s character, Hare reported that the new editor, while fairly bright, was “no mental giant but with a mind well above [the] regime average,” not exactly words of endorsement for the rest of Nasser’s underlings. Like other stereotypical, shallow-minded Arabs, Hare also found him to be “vain and susceptible to flattery.”\textsuperscript{66} It seemed that the meeting was much needed, as the next day the ambassador mentioned the fact that within the past few months Radio Cairo had “carried on [an] increasingly violent and irresponsible” attack against the West.\textsuperscript{67} American officials described a later Nasser speech as being full of “shrill hate-mongering.”\textsuperscript{68}

The formation of the United Arab Republic, the union of Egypt and Syria, in the winter of 1958, also concerned many Washington officials, because they viewed it as a victory for Arab nationalism along Nasser’s lines. Amid chaos in Syria, “a group of leftist officers began overtures toward Egypt seeking a union of the two major Arab nationalist powers.”\textsuperscript{69} At first, Nasser was suspicious of entering the political infighting between Baathists, communists, and the military in Syria,\textsuperscript{70} but, as Peter Woodward

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\item \textsuperscript{65} For more information on this see chapters 3 and 4.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Hare to the Department of State, 16 August, 1957, RG 59, 611.74/8-1657.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Hare to Dulles, 17 August, 1957, RG 59, 611.74/8-1757.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Hare to the Department of State, 11 December, 1957, RG 59, 774.00(w)/11-1257.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Woodward, p. 65.
\item \textsuperscript{70} In the fall of 1957, Syria signed an agreement that tied it more closely with the Soviet Union and precipitated a crisis. A number of Arab nations and Turkey, spurred on by the United States at first, threatened an attack on Syria in order to oust the government in favor of one more friendly to the West. Turkey amassed troops at the Syrian border and the ensuing tension brought with it a threat of super power confrontation as the Soviet Union and the United States fought a war of words. The Arab nations eventually backed away from their threats and the Soviet Union and Turkey also allowed cooler heads to
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notes, “Nasser felt that he was faced with an option that really left him with little choice. If he missed the opportunity it might never be repeated, and he was now the widely recognized leader of pan-Arabism. Furthermore, a failure to accept the union could see Syria swing into the arms of Nuri and the West reinforcing those against whom Nasser believed it was his destiny to act.”

On February 1, Nasser and Syrian President Quwaitly announced the union with the Egyptian leader as the head. Many in the administration and the Middle East saw this move as a major extension of Nasser’s power, leading to fear among many of his Arab opponents. John Foster Dulles, who initially heard of the projected union while attending a Baghdad Pact meeting in Ankara, called the union “dangerous,” while Hare wrote that the “pell-mell rush” in which events transpired had perplexed many of Egypt’s citizenry, “which itself probably reflects [the] confusion in the GOE itself.” Writing from Syria, Ambassador Yost touched upon the all too frequently used crutch of the Arab mind when he noted that Nasser might be able

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71 Woodward, p. 65.
72 Ibid, p. 66.
73 Herter to Eisenhower, 30 January, 1958, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 12, p. 36; Hare to the Department of State, 10 February, 1958, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 13, p. 422; and Hare to the Department of State, 4 February, 1958, RG 59, 774.00(w)/2-458.
to gradually consolidate the situation, in part because of the Egyptian leader’s “intoxicating emotional appeals.”

In an early appraisal of the situation from Cairo, Hare noted that Nasser had concluded his “greatest success outside Egypt as [the] irresponsible champion of Arab nationalism,” which brought with it “disquieting implications.” The fact did remain, though, that if union between Egypt and Syria led to difficulties for Nasser, it was “possible [to] foresee [the] deflation of Nasser’s ego to [the] point where he would be more amenable to reason and impelled [to] deal more constructively with” the United States. Hare, in tones both negatively gendered and paternalistic, both warned Nasser and provided him with some enlightened Western advice in March. Reflecting upon the fact that the United States did not yet know how the UAR situation would proceed, Hare told Nasser that he “could not help but feel that [a] very real danger continues to exist that [the] emotional impetus generated in [the] past few weeks could lead to action which would go beyond [the] scope of mere reciprocation of either friendly or unfriendly acts of others with [the] possibility that [the] UAR could take on [a] destructive rather than constructive aspect.” Hare also warned Nasser that due to this possibility, the “need now exists for him to break away from both political embraces and fisticuffs and take [a] higher level and statesmanlike position.”

With the UAR’s formation, many in Washington began to move toward a live-and-let live attitude toward the new entity and its leader, a trend that would be abruptly

74 Yost to the Department of State, 8 February, 1958, RG 59, 786.00/2-858.
76 Hare to Dulles, 20 March, 1958, RG 59, 786.00/3-2058.
halted in a few short months before later becoming policy. As Yaqub has pointed out, the formation of the UAR was “cause for both dismay and encouragement” in the Eisenhower administration. Officials in Washington feared what this union would mean for Nasser’s popularity, something that they had been trying to lessen since the inception of the Omega plan, but, at the same time, they also believed that Nasser could possibly tone down the communist activity and control within Syria. When it became clear that Nasser was curbing communism within Syria and it looked as if the union would last the United States recognized the UAR and worked to restrain other Arab nations from trying to undermine the new federation. Yaqub goes on to point out that “in March the administration conducted a policy reassessment whose main thrust was to undermine the anti-Nasserist foundations of the Eisenhower Doctrine.”

As we will see, though, events in the spring and summer of 1958 delayed any accommodation that was to be found between the United States and Egypt. Hare, for one, believed that some sort of arrangement of this nature might be feasible, but reminded Washington that the United States and Egypt “would never really get together except on specific points.” The ambassador opined that the administration’s best move was to downplay the new trend in an effort to “avoid over-formalizing what is essentially a pragmatic approach. In the first place” he wrote,

to attempt to do so would be to ignore [the] unstable fabric of [the] material with which we have to work and also [the] instinctive Arab aversion to legalistic engagements as contrasted with [the] informal and unpublicized agreements which are quite congruous with their mental process. In [the] second place, it would be contrary to [the] mentality of Arabs who are essentially bazaar traders, not big businessmen. If you are going to try

77 Yaqub, p. 180.
to sell a big idea to an Arab, you have to do so bit by bit; he has little concept of large-scale forward planning.

Hare’s analysis of the differences between the mind and mentality of Arabs and Westerners did not stop there. According to the ambassador, the United States should not undertake acts of “generosity for generosity’s sake in anticipation of grateful recognition.” While he conceded that “gratitude is not an Arab quality,” he argued that “this does not mean that they do not have psychological susceptibilities to be exploited and first among these is [their] receptivity to deference to their ego.” In Nasser’s case, the United States needed to find a way to “massage his ego and not over-inflate it.”

Following the Suez crisis, the United States basically continued to follow the strategic guidelines toward Egypt that had been laid down with the Omega Plan in March 1956. This policy was strengthened and solidified in January 1957 with announcement of the Eisenhower Doctrine. With this new policy, the United States ushered in a new era in which it would give political and military support to those Middle Eastern nations that were threatened by communism. As had been the case from 1955 through 1956, Nasser continued to defy America’s strategic interests and goals. The Egyptian leader’s disavowal and animosity toward the Eisenhower Doctrine, his steady intransigence toward issues such as a successful conclusion to the Suez crisis, canal payment and clearing, and the Gaza situation, along with his ongoing Soviet dealings and pan-Arabist aspirations, once again led American officials and the media to speak negatively about him and other Egyptians. By the summer of 1958, American soldiers found themselves

78 Hare to the Department of State, 17 April, 1958, FRUS, 1958-1960, vol. 13, pp. 441-442.
on Middle Eastern beaches, a staunch Western ally had been overthrown, and abundant negative language again dominated the discourse of U.S.-Egyptian relations.

The Eisenhower Doctrine’s Bite and Revolution in Iraq

The Eisenhower administration found itself facing two new Middle Eastern challenges in the summer of 1958. The first occurred in Lebanon and had been building for some time. Lebanese politics balanced uneasily on a sectarian division formed under the 1943 National Pact. The balancing act began to wobble by the mid-1950s, though, as “many Lebanese Muslims,” according to Erika Alin, “believed that the political balance mandated by the pact was being violated, directly or indirectly, by President [Camille] Chamoun.” Alin goes on to write that At the domestic level, Chamoun attempted to diminish the influence of politicians opposed to his policies – especially traditional communal leaders – and to increase the authority of the country’s Christian presidency; at the foreign policy level, he sought to move Lebanon closer to the West. Lebanese Christians, in turn, especially Maronites, feared that Muslims, increasingly influenced by Arab nationalist sentiments, wanted to incorporate Lebanon into a pan-Arab Muslim political union.

A pro-Chamoun victory in the 1957 parliamentary elections exacerbated domestic political tensions because this parliament would select the next president, the cabinet that was formed following the election was made up exclusively of Chamoun supporters, and many believed that Chamoun would now attempt to gain another six-year term as
The new parliament also did not reflect the sectarian divisions within the nation and the opposition began an armed insurrection in May 1958. Ultimately, U.S. military forces landed on Lebanese beaches and entered the city of Beirut as a show of force to maintain order and give backing to what had been a staunch pro-Western ally. Events in Iraq made American military action in Lebanon even more imperative. In early July, nationalist military elements overthrew the pro-Western Hashemite dynasty, arguably America’s biggest regional ally and a lynchpin of the Baghdad Pact. These setbacks did not bode well for American interests for a number of reasons. First, Washington’s goal of building up pro-Western regional allies took a huge hit. It remained to be seen what the tenor of the new regime in Lebanon would be following the end of President Camille Chamoun’s term and the new nationalist, communist leaning rulers in Iraq were certain to be less friendly to the United States than King Feisal and Nuri al-Said had been. Second, both of these upheavals seemed to be victories for the type of pan-Arab nationalism Nasser espoused. Reports surfaced of insurgents entering into Lebanon from the UAR, and the new junta in Iraq had a large Nasserist following. For these reasons, American policymakers believed Nasser and his call for Arab nationalism culpable in the 1958 uprisings, and they reacted with a deluge of negatively gendered and Orientalist depictions of Nasser and his followers.

The Lebanon situation began to heat up in the spring, and many American officials saw Nasser’s hand in the violence that ensued, bringing forth a torrent of 

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79 Erika Alin, “U.S. Policy and Military Intervention in the 1958 Lebanon Crisis,” in Lesch, pp. 144-162. This article is a concise and informative description of the political situation in Lebanon and the U.S. policies that led to American intervention. Yaqub, pp. 206-236; and Little, 134-136. All three authors believe that Eisenhower viewed the situation in Lebanon as a test of his administration’s credibility in the Middle East and the wider Cold War.
negative American language that remained throughout the summer. On May 8, following months of tension, a civil war broke out in Lebanon, with anti-Chamoun forces being aided through Syria. Chamoun toyed with the idea of asking for Western intervention throughout May and June, a request that the Eisenhower administration did not seem eager to embrace. As Yaqub notes, “a chain of events elsewhere in the Middle East, starting with an abortive coup in Jordan,” in which a conspiracy to assassinate King Hussein was uncovered, “and leading to a successful one in Iraq, dramatically transformed the political landscape of the region, prompting Chamoun to demand the Western intervention that Eisenhower and Dulles had long sought to avoid.”

Two months prior to American intervention, Dulles did not mince words when he sent a message to the Egyptian government via Hare. Dulles stated that the Lebanese government had become the “object of [an] effort to destroy its authority and bring about its overthrow by [the] promotion of insurrection.” Moreover, the Eisenhower administration did not appreciate the fact that it seemed that “this subversive effort in Lebanon” was “being aided by elements and arms from UAR territory.” When Hare met with Nasser to discuss Dulles’ telegram, the ambassador found that he had to try and “calm him down,” obviously rejecting the fact that Nasser’s reaction could have been due to the fact that he was being accused of aiding a revolution. In Hare’s mind, the Egyptian leader was letting his Arab emotions get the best of him yet again. *Time* magazine described Nasser’s emotionalism to a much wider audience and colored him as

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80 Yaqub, pp. 206-219.
82 Hare to Dulles, 20 May, 1958, Ibid, p. 68.
a culprit in the Lebanese upheaval when it noted that the Egyptian leader’s radio propaganda had “shrilled” anti-Western diatribes against the Lebanese government.\textsuperscript{83} Hare continued with this theme of Egyptian emotionalism when he noted that during a discussion on Lebanon he found that Nasser “was definitely in one of his difficult moods.”\textsuperscript{84}

Egyptian propaganda and Arab emotionalism continued to be key American talking points when dealing with Lebanon. From the Beirut embassy, Ambassador William McClintock wrote that the “most palpable evidence of UAR intervention against [the] GOL lies in [the] incontrovertible proof of [the] press and radio incitement to civil war.” This was all the more troublesome because McClintock believed that a “built-in Moslem inferiority complex and feeling of ranking inequity” existed “which has been exacerbated by recent dreams of Arab glory awakened by Nasser.”\textsuperscript{85} A Special National Intelligence Estimate on Lebanon backed McClintock. The SNIE stated that “Nasser and the UAR leaders have assiduously exploited the Lebanese crisis to promote the cause of radical pan-Arab unity.”\textsuperscript{86}

As had been the case during the Suez crisis, Nasser’s actions in regard to Lebanon led Americans to compare him to the overly emotional Hitler. Secretary Dulles “likened Nasser’s Pan Arabism to Hitler’s Pan Germanism,” going on to state that he believed that “Nasser is a demagogue who can stir up the crowds with his speeches.”\textsuperscript{87} According to the secretary, Nasser had a “highly volatile personality” and “at times he seemed calm

\textsuperscript{83} Time, 26 May, 1958, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{84} Hare to the Department of State, 31 May, 1958, FRUS, 1958-1960, vol. 11, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{85} McClintock to the Department of State, 2 June, 1958, Ibid, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{86} Special National Intelligence Estimate, 5 June, 1958, Ibid, p. 93.
\textsuperscript{87} Memorandum of a Conversation, 23 June, 1958, Ibid, p. 171.
and reasonable; at other times he was highly emotional, and whipped up Pan-Arabism, much as Hitler had whipped up Pan-Germanism, as a means of promoting an extension of his power.”\textsuperscript{88} Dulles believed that this gave the Egyptian a “complex that was a powerful handicap in any efforts to do business with him.”\textsuperscript{89}

When reporting on possible solutions to the Lebanon situation, \textit{Time} again noted the intense emotionalism that U.S. policymakers had to keep in mind when dealing with Nasser. It seemed that the best way to “stop Nasser without causing public pain to Nasser’s pathologically thin-skinned pride and his prestige as the unstoppable leader of Arab nationalism” was to go along with Dag Hammerskjold’s plan of a compromise government.\textsuperscript{90} Unfortunately, the problem became harder to solve and had been “aggravated by the shrill symphony of hate orchestrated from Radio Cairo, and the rebels” that “had been mischievously bolstered by arms and men smuggled in from Nasser’s Syria.”\textsuperscript{91}

U.S. policymakers did indeed keep in mind the emotionalism that the media also spoke of when discussing how to deal with Nasser. In a letter to Eisenhower, Dulles remarked that Nasser was “not a moderate kind of person,” which made dealing with him over Lebanon so “difficult.” He further argued that the United States was “basically wholly sympathetic with Arab nationalism if it means a constructive and productive unity of the Arab peoples. Unfortunately, Nasser’s brand of Arab nationalism” did not seem to

\textsuperscript{88} Memorandum of a Conversation, 25 June, 1958, DDE, Dulles, John Foster: Papers, 1951-59, General Correspondence and Memoranda Series, Box 1, Folder: Memos of Conversation – General – A through D (4).
\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Time}, 30 June, 1958, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid, 7 July, 1958, p. 18.
be acting in a way that allowed the United States to support it. In likewise fashion, UN undersecretary for special political affairs, Ralph Bunche, did not see Nasser as a “moderate man” either, and wrote that “Nasser will some day explode in some nervous paroxysm because he is an inadequate man who realizes his own inadequacies and is trying desperately to prove he is wrong in this analysis.”

America’s interests in the Middle East region took another hit in July when nationalists, Nasserites among them, overthrew Iraq’s pro-Western Hashemite dynasty. The Iraqi monarchy came to an end on July 14, 1958, as General Abd al-Karim Qasim’s military forces, who were supposed to be deployed to the Jordanian border, made an unscheduled stop in Baghdad and overthrew the Hashemite monarchy. As Gareth Stansfield writes,

The events leading to the coup can be traced to the establishment of the ‘Free Officers Movement’ in 1952, which hoped to emulate the success of Nasser in Egypt. By 1957, the movement had established several cells within the army under the leadership of Qasim. The movement’s aims included (i) a struggle against imperialism and an end to foreign bases, (ii) the removal of feudalism, (iii) an end to the monarchy, (iv) the introduction of democracy, (v) recognition of the rights of the Kurds, (vi) cooperation with Arab countries, (vii) promotion of Arab unity, (viii) and the return of Palestine to the Palestinians.

This nationalist victory, which American policymakers also saw as a Nasser victory, predictably resulted in degrading, negatively gendered, and Orientalist language from the United States. In initial reports, CIA director Allen Dulles told officials that “pro-Nasir elements led by young army officers and backed by the mob” had been the

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coup’s ringleaders.\textsuperscript{95} Dulles’ reference to the “mob” equated the conspirators to nothing more than a rabble. At another meeting, in reference to the control of oil pipelines, Eisenhower emphasized that the United States could not subject itself “to the blackmail Nasser would be able to enforce should Lebanon and Iraq” fall.\textsuperscript{96} U.S. officials partly attributed the coup to the “public resentment and tension” that “had risen somewhat in the aftermath of a bitter and sustained propaganda campaign directed from the UAR.”\textsuperscript{97} Writing on Nasser’s propaganda use and its effects in places like Iraq, Eisenhower told British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan that the United States could not “match his extreme position” and his broadcasts consisted of “themes which appeal to the Arab masses and seem to win for Nasser the enthusiastic, even idolatrous, support of the largely illiterate populations in the region.”\textsuperscript{98}

Egyptian emotionalism and radio propaganda were popular topics of discussion for U.S. officials in late July. The administration said that Egyptian radio helped to “whip emotions ever higher” on issues such as Western imperialism and Arab nationalism.\textsuperscript{99} Taking stock of the situation in a July 23 presidential meeting, Dulles touched on old themes when he said that the United States “must not overestimate the thesis of Arab nationalism and Arab unity. Nasser, like Hitler before him, has the power to excite emotions and enthusiasm.” William Rountree echoed this sentiment, noting that there was a “strong wave of emotional ‘Nasser’ imperialism sweeping through the

\textsuperscript{98} Eisenhower to Macmillan, 18 July, 1958, RG 59, 780.007-1858.  
area.”¹⁰⁰ In an NSC meeting the following day, Allen Dulles commented on the “bile” that Nasser spewed throughout the region through his broadcasts, while his brother viewed Nasser, with backing from Moscow, as the real power behind the new Iraqi government. The secretary, in language that depicted Nasser as nothing more than a schoolboy, spoke of the Soviet “tutelage” of Nasser.¹⁰¹

Propaganda, emotionalism, and Soviet vassalage were on the American media’s minds as well. *Time* noted that coups like the one in Iraq were nothing new but took on an “ominous new meaning since Nasser came to power, proclaiming an Arab nationalism that overleaps borders and spreads by inflammatory radio appeals.” In Iraq in particular, the pro-Western pundits had had to constantly contend with “cries of Arab nationalism, the eroding torrent of abuse and incitement to revolt” emanating from Cairo propaganda and the “intrigues” of Iraqi Nasserites.¹⁰² *Newsweek* wrote about the “Nasser-inflamed mobs” in Iraq, and of other “friendly nations which were being torn from their roots to be delivered into the eager hands of Egypt’s empire-hungry Nasser.” The magazine further contended, much like *Time* had, that there had “been Nassers before. But this man has the capacity to inflame the Moslem world as no other modern leader. His voice carries a threat of chaos all over the Middle East.” If this was not bad enough, according to *Newsweek*, “Nasser’s agitation seems now to serve only the greater agitators – the men in the Kremlin – whose purpose is to bend subverted peoples to their will.”¹⁰³

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Time may have been moving forward, but Secretary Dulles continued to reach back to his tried and true beliefs regarding Nasser. In another NSC meeting, in which U.S. officials tried to devise a way to address Nasser’s influence on the region, the secretary voiced his belief that the United States “could not compete with Khrushchev in offers to Nasser. We could not, in honor and self-interest, support Nasser in his efforts to overthrow legitimate governments in the area. We could not advocate the nationalization of oil which would enable Nasser to blackmail Western Europe and threaten the solvency of the United Kingdom.” The secretary located much of the problem in Nasser’s “insatiable” ambitions, and once again compared Nasser to Hitler, saying that the careers of the two were very similar except that Nasser, “fortunately, does not himself control great military power. Although Nasser is not as dangerous as Hitler was, he relies on the same hero myth, and we must try to deflate that myth.”

According to U.S. officials, much like the former Nazi ruler, Nasser had “increased his influence in the area through his skillful and ruthless use of subversion and propaganda.”

The upheaval in Lebanon and the Iraqi revolution shook Middle Eastern pro-Western regimes to their core and seriously jeopardized American interests. The fact that insurgents were pouring into Lebanon from the UAR, that the pan-Arab, Nasserist intentions of groups in both nations had become clear, and the propaganda emanating from Cairo radio, all caused Washington to point to Nasser as the root of all their problems. This attitude resulted in an onslaught of negative language as bad as anything

105 Special National Intelligence Estimate: Arab Nationalism as a Factor in the Middle East Situation, 12 August, 1958, RG 273, Box 22, Folder: OMM 383rd Meeting.
since the Soviet arms deal in 1955. Seeing Nasser as the antithesis of regional American goals, the Eisenhower administration and the media continuously painted Nasser and his followers as “Others.” This situation, however, did not continue.

Conclusion

The Eisenhower administration’s foreign policy toward Egypt from the beginning of 1957 saw a continuation of the Omega Plan, as the United States tried to isolate Nasser and build up rivals to leadership of the Arab world. In January 1957 when Eisenhower announced his new doctrine toward the Middle East, the Omega Plan became solidified, albeit not publicly. Eisenhower’s announcement that he would provide aid, including military aid, to pro-Western regimes in the region that combated communism marked a new era in U.S. Middle Eastern policy. Nasser’s refusal to go along with America’s plans, which had become more and more the norm since 1955, meant that U.S.-Egyptian goals kept moving in opposite directions.

As we have seen throughout this study, American policy, and Egypt’s stand in relation to that policy, directly corresponded to how American policymakers and the media described Egyptians. From January 1957 until late 1958, factors such as the Omega Plan, Nasser’s intransigence in negotiations over the final settlement of Suez
issues, his continued anti-Western acts and propaganda, and his push for Arab nationalism directly contradicted American foreign policy goals. Furthermore, an uprising in Lebanon that threatened that nation’s pro-West leanings and a coup in Iraq that removed a staunch Middle Eastern ally were both detrimental to America’s regional goals, and Washington laid a large portion of the blame in both instances at Nasser’s feet. For these reasons, Americans repeatedly described Nasser and Egyptians in negatively gendered and Orientalist terms in order to depict them as “Others” and explain to themselves and the American public the differences that made them so hard to work with.

As the final chapter will describe, the total dominance of negative language would not last throughout the Eisenhower administration. During the latter half of 1958, U.S. officials began to see the faults in their approach to combating Nasser and sought a rapprochement with Egypt. At the same time, the United States and Egypt found themselves seeing eye-to-eye on a foreign policy issue for the first time in years. These circumstances led to a period from late 1958 until the end of the Eisenhower administration that was very reminiscent of the earlier linguistic periods of U.S.-Egyptian relations that have been discussed. Due to this new foreign policy collaboration, along with issues that still found U.S. officials and Nasser at loggerheads, both positive and negative language marked this final period.
As the last chapter described, throughout 1957 and until mid-to-late 1958, the United States and Egypt continued to be at loggerheads over foreign policy issues, leading to a continuation of wholly negative depictions of Egyptians. Nasser’s refusal to go along with the Eisenhower Doctrine, the Egyptian leader’s intransigence in the face of solving issues remaining from the Suez crisis, his anti-Western propaganda, the Lebanon crisis, and the Iraqi coup all went against America’s regional goals and brought with them negative American language. As this chapter demonstrates, the situation would change as the Eisenhower administration came to a close. For the first time since early 1955, the United States and Egypt found themselves seeing eye-to-eye on a foreign policy issue, in this case distaste for growing communist control of Iraq. This convergence of views led to an increase in America’s use of positive descriptive language toward Egyptians. All was not perfect, though, and differences of opinions on many international issues remained between the two nations, ensuring that considerable negative language still remained. The result was a return to a mixture of positive,
negative, and ambiguous language that was very similar to the earliest periods of America’s relationship with the Free Officers.

At the outset of 1956, the Eisenhower administration had envisioned bringing Egypt closer to the West, strengthening its ties to pro-Western Middle Eastern nations, and ending the Arab-Israeli dispute. By the end of the year, these dreams had been dashed, as the Alpha peace plan crumbled, the United States began operating under a new policy of isolating Nasser through the Omega plan, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, and the Israelis, British, and French launched an attack on Egypt. The failure of the Eisenhower administration and the Nasser regime to agree on foreign policy issues throughout 1956 and the resultant setbacks to American regional policy led American officials to consistently describe Egyptians in negative terms.

Due to Nasser’s apparent prestige victories in 1956, America’s policy failures, and diminished British regional power following the Suez debacle, the Eisenhower administration decided to undertake a new and unprecedented role in the Middle East. Dubbed the Eisenhower Doctrine and launched in January 1957, the new policy pledged American economic and military assistance to any Middle Eastern nation combating communism. The doctrine was actually a continuation of the Omega policy of isolating Nasser and building up pro-Western rivals to his Arab leadership, albeit with a new and more direct American interventionism. The doctrine and the Omega plan would continue to drive U.S. policy in the region and toward Egypt until the latter half of 1958.

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1 For more information on these issues, U.S. policy throughout 1956, and the resultant language used to describe Nasser and Egyptians, see chapter 4.
2 For more information on the formation and U.S. reasoning behind the Eisenhower Doctrine, see chapter 5; Takeyh, p. 142; and Yaqub, pp. 2-3.
Eisenhower and Dulles found their goals of isolating Nasser and building up rivals to his leadership a transient and impossible undertaking. The doctrine was not as positively received in the region as the administration had hoped, with Egypt leading the charge against it, and Nasser continued to cause problems in regard to the Suez Canal and the aftermath of the Suez-Sinai War. The Egyptian leader would not agree to Israeli transit rights in the canal; he quarreled with the West over toll payments; and he threatened to return Egyptian troops to Gaza following the Israeli withdrawal. Nasser railed against the West, using his Radio Cairo to lash out against what he saw as Western imperialism and calling for Arab nationalism along Nasserist lines. Cairo’s hand in the Jordanian crisis and the Syrian crisis, both in 1957, also put American objectives in jeopardy, and the formation of the United Arab Republic, while on the one hand a positive because it undermined communist gains in Syria, was also seen as a negative because it enhanced Nasser’s Arab popularity. Finally, the uprising in Lebanon, which was aided by refuge, troops, and weapons from Syria, against the pro-Western Chamoun government, and the coup in Iraq that swept from power the pro-Western Hashemite dynasty in July 1958, were both viewed as possible catastrophes to American regional goals and gains for Nasser. Throughout the course of 1957 and until the latter half of 1958, these issues, developments, and problems guaranteed that American language toward Nasser and his fellow Egyptians continued to depict them in negatively gendered and Orientalist terms.3

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3 For more information on these events see chapter 5; Yaqub, pp. 129-135, 140, 147-187 and 206-236; Stephens, pp. 265-275; Ashton, pp. 120-121 and 140-143; Lesch, pp. 128-143 and 144-162; and Hahn, Caught in the Middle East, pp. 210-216.
As this chapter will demonstrate, events would transpire to bring about the first positive depictions of Egyptians in some time. During the second half of 1958 and for the first time in over two years, the United States and Egypt began to identify similar strategic interests. This new convergence of ideas led to a mild rapprochement between the two nations. While outstanding differences and animosities still remained on both sides, relations improved, as did the language Americans used to describe their Egyptian counterparts.

Following the Lebanon crisis and the Iraqi revolution, Washington officials began to see that they could not successfully combat Arab nationalism and sought some sort of accommodation with Nasser. As Salim Yaqub writes,

By the fall of 1958 the administration was left with an essentially negative – not to say paralyzed – Middle East policy: opposed to Nasser, and opposed to opposing him. The events of late 1958 and early 1959, however, partly resolved the administration’s dilemma, as a sudden deterioration in relations between the UAR and the Soviet Union caused U.S. officials to revise their view of Nasser and to suppose that Nasserism might be a barrier to, rather than an avenue of, further Soviet penetration of the Middle East. The result of this surprising turn of events was a modest UAR-American rapprochement that lasted for the remainder of Eisenhower’s presidency and into the term of his successor.\(^4\)

Nasser, in the meantime, grew suspicious of the burgeoning Soviet-Iraqi relationship and began lambasting the Soviets and communists, rather than the West, over the airwaves. America’s new goal of rapprochement, therefore, dovetailed with Nasser’s security concerns and led to Americans using more positive language to describe Nasser than they had since before his arms deal with the Soviet Union. Negative language, though, did not disappear, as differences of opinion remained and led U.S. officials to use emasculating

\(^4\) Yaqub, p. 238.
and Orientalist depictions of Egyptians. These differences stemmed from continued
Egyptian intransigence toward Israel and Egyptian-Soviet dealings that remained strong
in some areas, despite a rift between Cairo and Moscow. Linguistically speaking, what
transpired during the final stages of the Eisenhower administration and its relationship
with Egypt was very reminiscent of earlier years when the United States found itself able
to work with the Free Officers in some respects, while in others they could not find
common ground. The documentation shows that Americans used both positive and
negative language to describe Nasser and Egyptians, helping administration officials
come to grips with and explain why they could work with Nasser on some issues, but
remained opposed to him on others.

Rapprochement

A few months after the Iraqi revolution, General Qasim’s new regime began to
move closer to being dominated by the Iraqi communists, who began to encroach more
and more on internal affairs.\footnote{For more information on the Iraqi coup, see chapter 5; Yaqub, pp. 219-223; and Simons, pp. 217-221.} Shortly after the July coup, a divide developed within the
new Iraqi regime between those who pushed for union with the UAR, such as pan-Arab
nationalists and the Baath party, and the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), which feared that
union would cause its demise much as it had in regard to communist parties in Egypt and Syria. Qasim fell in behind the ICP and removed key Baathist and unionist military and cabinet members, thus seriously strengthening the ICP. This new development was anathema to Nasser because growing ICP dominance meant stronger ties with the Soviet Union. Nasser had always preached that he would not stand for any imperialist power to dominate in the region. “The suppression of Iraqi unionists was a serious affront to his regional leadership,” and it also caused him difficulties in Syria when union with Iraq fell through and the Baath in Syria began questioning its own backing of the Syrian-Egyptian union.⁶

As Nasser’s relations and views toward the Soviet Union began to get cloudy and he began lashing out at communists within the UAR and without, the way in which Americans described him also became less clear. When Nasser began to combat communist influence in Iraq by cracking down on communists within the UAR⁷, Assistant Secretary Rountree noted that there was “clearly an awareness on Nasser’s part of a shift in Soviet policy toward the Near East.”⁸ This language was markedly different than earlier times when American officials so often spoke of Nasser’s lack of

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⁶ Yaqub, pp. 256-257. Malcolm Kerr writes that the problem for Nasser in regard to Qasim was that the Iraqi leader “failed to cooperate in the march towards Arab unity, or even to pay President ‘Abd al-Nasir any of the respect that other revolutionary leaders did.” Kerr goes on to note that had Qasim been a reactionary the likes of a Nuri Said or King Hussein, it would have been one thing, but the Iraqi leader was a radical, “a hero to the slum-dwellers of Baghdad, the enemy of Nasir’s presumed imperialist enemies and a friend of Nasir’s presumed friend, the Soviet Union. Unlike domestic Arab Communists, Qasim showed signs of a certain mass appeal” that was detrimental to Nasser’s regional goals. Malcolm Kerr, The Arab Cold War: Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958-1970, Third Edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 17-18.
⁷ On December 22, Mohamed Heikal wrote in al-Ahram that while the communists “had fought alongside the nationalists in violent struggles against imperialism, imperialist agents and feudalists, this struggle is now finished or about to finish.” The next day, Nasser “declared that Arab communists were enemies of Arab nationalism and Arab unity.” Simons, p. 221.
understanding when it came to the Soviet Union and communism. Now that he had sided with the United States against communism, albeit without the intent of furthering Washington’s goals, he had miraculously become an enlightened individual.

Subsequently, Rountree found his discussions with Nasser “encouraging,” because the Egyptian leader had begun “showing a real concern over Communist penetration of the Middle East.” Even President Eisenhower got into the act, noting that “if it were not for the existence of Israel we might be able to do some business with Nasser in that Nasser could oppose Communists better than can the U.S. in the three-cornered struggle of the Middle East.” While Israel remained a troublesome issue between the United States and Egypt, Acting Secretary Herter noted that Nasser had become “more moderate” in regard to Israel than other Arab leaders. This, coupled with Nasser’s newfound vehemence for communism, led Eisenhower to proclaim that he had “grown up a little.”

With the dawning of the New Year, American officials continued to be pleased with Nasser’s new attitude toward the Soviet Union and their convergence of interests with Egypt. The officer in charge of UAR and Sudan Affairs, William D. Brewer, told Hare that “Nasser’s apparent increasing recognition that the violent instability which characterized the area in 1956-1958 (and which was to a large extent Egyptian stimulated) may no longer be in his interest.” Like Rountree, Deputy Under Secretary Robert Murphy was “encouraged by the improvement” in U.S.-Egyptian relations thanks to Nasser’s new approach. Referring to the Middle East and the UAR in particular,

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11 Murphy to Kern, 8 January, 1959, RG 59, Lot File No. 61 D 43, Box 14, Folder: Cairo, 1 of 2.
Dulles believed that “an important new factor in [the] situation is that [the] Arabs, including UAR leaders, now seem to have [a] greater appreciation of [the] communist threat.”¹² In an interesting turn of events, Americans transferred their opprobrium and negative language to Iraq’s General Qasim. A Department of State study paper on Iraq contended that the new leader in Baghdad was “a man of apparently limited intelligence and neurotic tendencies, in a job that has proved too big for him, Qasim seems unable either to make or delegate essential decisions.”¹³ Only a few months prior to this report, one would have assumed that Nasser was the leader being discussed. Now that the Egyptian leader had joined the Americans’ vis-à-vis the Soviets and increased regional communist penetration, he had become enlightened and intelligent in these matters, whereas Qasim, who seemed to be falling deeper into the Soviets’ pockets, bore the brunt of such negative language.

In early 1959, the United States also made a positive gesture toward Egypt by agreeing to sell it wheat under PL 480, a move that caused Nasser to almost fall off of the couch when informed.¹⁴ In a memo to the secretary, Rountree attributed this move in large part to “signs during the last six months that Nasser may realize that policies which foster widespread area instability are not invariably in the interest of the UAR.” Even more important than the resumption of economic aid was the fact that “it had become clear that the UAR wished actively to pursue a more friendly relationship with the US

¹⁴ This U.S. move was in response to Nasser’s cracking down on communists in December, for which he sought an American concession. When Heikal asked Hare about the sale of wheat the ambassador jumped at the chance to strengthen the new atmosphere in U.S.-Egyptian relations and Washington responded accordingly. Yaqub, pp. 257-258.
and that the apparent trend toward [the] realization of the dangers of the penetration of the Near East by international Communism was continuing,” and was an “encouraging sign.” Nasser’s verbal assault on communism intensified following the failed uprising of a pro-Nasser army element in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. According to Robert Stephens, “the rebellion was directed against the growth of communist influence,” but unfortunately for the rebels, the uprising was crushed by military units led by the ICP. The defeat of the pro-Nasser group in Mosul led Nasser to greatly intensify his verbal assault. Stephens writes that “Nasser launched into a bitter, hard-hitting campaign against Qasim, the communists and eventually Khrushchev himself.” It seemed that no one was out of bounds in Nasser’s mind, as he accused him [Qasim] of imitating Nuri both in his regime of terror and in trying to split Iraq from Arab nationalism. He attacked the communists in both Egypt and Syria as being agents of outsiders who were trying to bring the Arabs into a sphere of influence. Having been foiled in their plans to dominate Syria, [according to Nasser] ‘the communists had emigrated to Baghdad in order to turn Iraq into a communist state from which communism will spread to the rest of the Arab countries, thereby creating a communist Fertile Crescent’.”

These anti-communist outbursts throughout March were music to the ears of U.S. officials, and Ambassador Hare commented that the Egyptian leader had “been as good as his word and has even gone much further than in his past attacks on the West in [the] sense that he has personally assumed responsibility for spearheading [the] campaign whereas attacks on [the] West were largely delegated to others, especially [the] press and

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16 Stephens, p. 296; and Yaqub, p. 260.
17 Stephens, p. 296.
radio.”

It had been a long time indeed since the United States had conceded that Nasser was “as good as his word.” This trend continued when Foggy Bottom responded to Hare’s telegram. Herter wrote that the United States “welcomed [the] recent progress in improving US-UAR ties and has been gratified [to] note [the] courageous stand taken by President Nasser and [the] UAR in exposing [the] true meaning [of] international communism to [the] peoples of [the] NE through forthright publicity [in the] recent weeks.” The Eisenhower administration would not publicly say this or take a stand due to Arab opinion and the possibility of a concomitant anti-American backlash, but Herter wanted Nasser to know that this should not be taken as in any way “implying [a] lack of interest or respect for Nasser’s courageous anti-Communist stand,” and wanted Hare to privately tell the Egyptian leader that “his firm and uncompromising position on the Communist issue has been welcomed by the highest levels in [the] USG.”

Rountree also expressed similar sentiments when he wrote that the United States “welcomed the courageous stand recently taken by President Nasser in exposing the true meaning of communism to the peoples of the Near East.”

While the Iraqi situation remained tenuous, Department of State officials believed that the overall Middle Eastern picture had brightened considerably since the troubles in the summer of 1958. A State Department paper on the situation in Iraq noted this change and emphasized the positive role that Nasser and Egypt had played in events. The report noted that

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19 Hare to the Department of State, 1 April, 1959, Ibid, p. 522.
20 Herter to Hare, 2 April, 1959, Ibid, p. 526.
While the developments in Iraq, from the United States point of view, present a very dark picture, it must not be forgotten that developments in the rest of the Near East present a far brighter picture from the United States viewpoint than has been the case for a long time. The rapprochement between the US and the UAR, the effective campaign being carried on by Nasser against local Communists and the Soviet Union, the resultant awakening of the Arabs to the danger of international communism – all of these are developments which would not have seemed possible a year ago and which bring tremendous political benefits from our point of view.\footnote{Paper Prepared in the Department of State: The situation in Iraq, 15 April, 1959, \textit{FRUS 1958-1960}, vol. 12, p. 415.}

This is a telling statement. The fact that Nasser’s campaign against communism and the Soviet Union had resulted in “tremendous political benefits” to the United States allowed American officials to once again speak of the Egyptian leader in positively gendered and Western language. As William Rountree noted, the UAR’s “trend toward the realization of the dangers of the penetration of the Near East by international communism was continuing,” helps explain why the United States had returned to speaking positively about Nasser and demonstrates some of that positive language.\footnote{Rountree to Herter, 16 April, 1959, RG 59, Records of the United Arab Republic Affairs Desk, Box 1, Folder: UAR-US Policy 1959; and Rountree to Rockwell, 21 April, 1959, RG 59, Lot File No. 61 D 43, Box 14, Folder: Cairo, 1 of 2.} He even praised the Egyptians to their face. Rountree told \textit{Akhbar al-Yom} editor Mustafa Amin he “was pleased at the way the situation had developed and this pleasure was reflected at all levels in the US government.” Moreover, in regard to Egypt’s new stance on communism, “there was great admiration for President Nasser’s forthright stand on the Communist issue.”\footnote{Memorandum of a Conversation, 30 April, 1959, RG 59, Records of the United Arab Republic Affairs Desk, 1956-1962, Folder: UAR-United States 1959.} The U.S. ambassador to Jordan told King Hussein that Nasser’s recent moves “encouraged” the United States and that the United States “would spare no effort to
reinforce and maintain Nasser’s present attitude towards Communism and [the] Soviet Union.”

The American media followed the administration’s lead. Painting the picture of a more enlightened, stronger, and Western-style leader, *Time* noted that Nasser was now “wiser in the ways of Communist purposes in the Middle East.” The Egyptian’s newfound cooperation with the United States against communism convinced the magazine that Nasser had become “less tense than he was, less eager for adventures, more mindful of mending fences and improving the economy at home.” It noted that “Nasser’s Cairo radio now outspokenly attacks the Communists,” and called this development “a gain for the U.S.”

Nasser’s ongoing verbal assault against communism in Iraq and the Middle East continued to elicit positive American language throughout this period. The key to this linguistic change was succinctly summed up in an August NIE. The report noted that “Nasser, once considered the most radical advocate of social change, now appears a moderate reformer in comparison to certain elements in Iraq.” Analysts felt safe to assume that this trend meant that in the short run, “the outlook for Western influence in the Arab world has improved, largely because of the reactions of Nasser to the Communist threat.”

This return to praise of Nasser also extended into the legislative branch. After a visit with Nasser in November, Senators Albert Gore, Sr. (D-TN) and Gale McGee (D-

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WY) said they “had been favorably impressed by [the] thoughtful and quiet way in which Nasser had received their comments and questions.”28 Nasser had evolved from a bombastic leader whom Americans mistrusted into one who had become deliberative and mature.

President Eisenhower even found himself praising the Egyptian leader to a group of Jewish leaders on the eve of Nasser’s visit to the United States for the annual United Nations meeting. Noting that Nasser had previously inquired about visiting the United States, the president told his audience that while he had never encouraged such a visit, he believed that “Nasser seemed to be showing a more mature outlook on the international situation, and the situation in his area.” This burgeoning maturity had occurred in large part because the Egyptian leader “also seemed to be showing an indication that he did not think it was profitable for himself and his country to continue to play closely with the Soviets.”29 Eisenhower and Nasser held their only face-to-face meeting on September 26 in New York, and the record shows that the Egyptian leader’s “clear voice was marked by self-confidence.”30 Ike found the Egyptian leader to have the manly attributes of being “impressive, tall, straight, strong,” and “positive.”31 State Department officials also considered Nasser’s “obvious concern for the future of the UN and the need for disarmament” that he expressed while in New York “positive developments.”32

31 Yaqub, p. 265.
The shift in U.S. linguistic descriptions of Egyptians from wholly negatively gendered and Orientalist to more positive and Western is quite apparent during this period. Nasser’s stance vis-à-vis America’s strategic interests and policies in the Middle East continued to drive American depictions of Egyptians. In this instance, the Egyptian leader’s belief that Iraqi communism and Soviet attempts to strengthen their hold over that country had challenged his regional position and contradicted his stance that no one superpower bloc should not be able to dominate in the Middle East. This realization paralleled America’s interest in keeping the Soviet Union out of the Middle East. This strategic shift in turn caused American policymakers and the media to routinely describe the Egyptian in positive terms for the first time in years.

Remaining Points of Contention

Nasser’s new stance toward communism and the situation in Iraq, however, did not absolve him from criticism. The United States and Egypt still differed over many issues and when they surfaced the Americans employed negatively gendered and Orientalist language. Just like the early days of U.S.-Nasser relations, language during this period was positive, negative, and ambiguous because at times each country pursued
policies that benefited the other, but at other times differences of opinion led to either negative or ambiguous language.

In many, but not all cases during this period, Egypt’s new outlook vis-à-vis Iraq resulted in positive American language. This linguistic duality was seen in a telegram from Cairo where, in paternalistic fashion, Ambassador Hare “cautioned” Mohammed Haikal when it looked as if the Egyptians might call off their attacks on Iraqi communists because Nasser believed he could not continue to do so while being attacked by Western media.\(^\text{33}\) This would have been a setback to the progress that had been made against communist penetration of the region, so Hare believed he must use his “father-like” presence to try and instill in the Egyptians the need to continue the battle. American officials were also concerned when Nasser’s radio attacks began taking on a more personal tone directed toward Qasim and not the communists in Iraq, which had in turn led to a number of personal attacks at Nasser from Qasim. Such attacks, which accomplished little from the American viewpoint, led Hare to comment that Nasser was “thin-skinned and sensitive to criticism,” and that criticism often caused his emotions to overtake him and create a “great rage.”\(^\text{34}\)

Continued differences of opinion over Israel also led to ambiguous and negative descriptions of Egyptians. In one instance in particular, American officials praised the Egyptians for their new stance on communism, but also found that they needed to call attention to the “dangerous implications” of the UAR’s position in regard to Israeli ships


\(^{34}\) Memorandum for the Record: Meeting of the Special Committee on Iraq, 13 January, 1960, RG 273, Box 24, Folder: 432\(^\text{90}\) Meeting.
through the Suez Canal.\textsuperscript{35} This latter language stemmed from Egypt’s tightening of the screws when it came to Israeli transit rights in May 1959. As time passed following the Suez-Sinai War, Israel was able to establish a pattern of canal usage, and by March 1959 Egypt had allowed almost fifty foreign-flag vessels bearing Israeli cargo to transit the waterway. But, in May 1959 Nasser cracked down and, as Peter Hahn explains, the Egyptian leader “detained the Danish-flag \textit{Inge Toft}, which had been chartered by Israel, but the ship’s captain refused to relinquish his Israeli-owned cargo, Nasser declined to seize the cargo by force, and a prolonged standoff ensued.” The incident was not concluded until February 1960 when UN Secretary General Hammarskjold was able to end the dispute.\textsuperscript{36} Likewise, a new Egyptian military buildup also posed new problems for the region and continued to be the “chief unstabilizing factor in [the] current NE situation.” This had become even more problematic due to Nasser’s “inflammatory” statements toward Israel.\textsuperscript{37} American officials also believed that Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion’s forthcoming visit to the United States had caused “anxiety” in Egypt. The new ambassador in Egypt, Frederick G. Reinhardt, worried over the “cumulative psychological effect” this and other Israeli issues “may produce in [the] minds of Nasser and [the] inner circle of UAR leadership.” Reinhardt believed that the United States should try to balance its gestures toward Israel with similar moves toward

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\textsuperscript{35} Rountree to the acting secretary, 4 June, 1959, RG 59, Records of the United Arab Republic Affairs Desk, 1956-1962, Box 1, Folder: UAR-United States 1959.
\textsuperscript{36} Hahn, \textit{Caught in the Middle East}, pp. 255-256.
\end{footnotesize}
the Arabs so as to not “strengthen UAR suspicion.” Regarding Israel, it seemed that the Egyptian “opportunities for mischief and irrational decisions” remained.\(^{38}\)

Although the Nasser regime had begun to speak out against Soviet encroachment in the Middle East, the Egyptians still maintained a strong relationship with Moscow that the United States refused to let slide. Soviet plans to finance the second stage of the Aswan High Dam led American officials to discuss Nasser’s “well known complexes,” as it seemed only the Egyptian leader’s emotional mindset could explain his ongoing relationship with the Soviet Union.\(^{39}\) Likewise, Nasser seemed to be in a state of “desperation” to conclude a deal for Soviet MiG-19s after hearing that Israel would soon receive a shipment of French Mirage fighters.\(^{40}\)

Another such instance occurred when Hare noted the positive trend taking place in Egypt regarding internal economic developments, which the United States applauded. But Nasser’s continued ties to the Soviet Union still raised a red flag in Washington. In a long analysis of Nasser and the U.S.-Egyptian relationship, Hare contended that Nasser’s present attitude was [the] typical evolution of his somewhat primitive but nevertheless keen mind which reaches conclusions more by trial and error than by abstract deduction. However, this does not mean, as we have said before, that Nasser’s disenchantment with [the] Soviets can be expected to result in a complete policy reversal but it does mean that our side of the scales gradually going up as that of [the] Soviets goes down and that something approaching balance is in [the] process [of] materialization.\(^{41}\)

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\(^{38}\) Reinhardt to the Department of State, 16 April, 1960, Ibid, p. 581.

\(^{39}\) Anschuetz to the Department of State, 20 January, 1960, Ibid, p. 578.


\(^{41}\) Hare to the Department of State, 19 September, 1959, \textit{FRUS, 1958-1960}, vol. 13, p. 551.
This statement is emblematic of the U.S.-Egyptian relationship at the time. While Nasser had spoken out against the communists, it did not mean that he had taken America’s advice and broken relations with the Soviet Union.

In the same vein, American officials hoped that Nasser’s trip to New York would do much to sway him away from the Soviet Union. Nasser had never visited the United States but had been to the Soviet Union on a number of occasions. G. Lewis Jones, the assistant secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, believed that the Egyptian leader’s trip to the States could open his eyes to the difference between the United States and the Soviet Union. According to Jones, Nasser’s “ignorance accounted for a great deal” when it came to his relationship with communism, and “therefore his exposure to New York, since he is a quick study, will probably have an impact.”

Jones viewed Nasser ambiguously in both negative and positive terms, first as ignorant, and then as a “quick study,” because these seemingly antithetical character traits mirrored the American relationship with Egypt vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

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Conclusion

Due to Nasser’s new stance on communism in the Middle East and the American strategy of rapprochement following the Lebanon and Iraq upheavals, Americans once again found themselves describing Nasser in positively gendered and enlightened, Western terms. That being said, areas of disagreement still existed between the two nations on a number of issues that manifested themselves in negative language. Unlike the linguistic situation since the Soviet arms deal, American depictions of Nasser from late 1958 until the end of the Eisenhower administration mirrored the situation in earlier periods. This was due to the fact that sometimes the Egyptians took actions that promoted American interests and other times Nasser’s actions went against those same goals. The language that ensued reflected this relationship.
CONCLUSION

The Truman and Eisenhower administrations’ relationship with the Middle East was unique in American foreign relations history, as these two presidents oversaw the beginnings of a major shift in the role the United States would play in the region. Following World War II, and with the onset of the Cold War, American policymakers found themselves taking on an increasingly active role in the region. In early 1950, American officials came to believe for the first time that they would have to play a more important role in the Middle East in order to safeguard oil transit to Western Europe and to prevent the region from falling to the Soviet Union. Initial steps in this direction were taken in May 1950 with the tripartite declaration, by which the United States, Great Britain, and France pledged to stop Middle East aggression. Soon thereafter, a number of issues came to light that would ultimately move American policymakers to the conclusion that they needed to do still more in the region. The Korean War’s outbreak in 1950 brought with it fears of a Soviet incursion into the Middle East; it also brought about the implementation of NSC-68, which gave the Truman administration for the very first time the means to place men and material in the Middle East region.
America’s newfound national interest in maintaining a pro-Western Middle East coincided with the July 1952 revolution that brought the Free Officers and Gamal Abdel Nasser to power in Egypt. Long a bastion of Western power in the Middle East due to Britain’s Suez Canal base, Egypt would play a key role, for better or worse, in the Truman and Eisenhower administrations’ regional policies. Nasser’s rise to power brought with it a surge of Arab nationalism like nothing the region had seen before and made dealing with Arab nationalism a key issue with which American policymakers would henceforth have to contend. Throughout the period in question, America’s two main and consistent goals were to maintain a stable, pro-Western Middle East and to block any Soviet attempts to penetrate the region. Egypt found itself a key component of many of America’s attempts to achieve its regional goals.

As noted in the introduction, many historians believe that race and notions of gender play a major role in the formulation of American Middle Eastern policy. This study has clearly demonstrated that the language Americans used to describe Egyptians was full of negatively gendered and Orientalist language, and it has also shown that these underlying American stereotypes did not, in fact, play a large role in the planning and implementation of U.S. strategy. The motivating factor in America’s Middle Eastern policy was the nation’s national interest, which, due to the ongoing Cold War, manifested itself in policies designed to stop Soviet advances into the region. This is not to say that cultural biases were not called into action at times and were not to be found in certain cases in the language Americans used to describe Egyptians. Negative language did appear, and very often. But there were almost as many instances during this period in
which Egyptians were described in glowing, masculine, and Western terms. Instead of being a driving force in U.S. foreign policy, American policymakers’ and the media’s tendency to use language that painted Egyptians as either “outsiders” or “insiders” was more of a reaction to already implemented U.S. strategies and Egypt’s position vis-à-vis those strategies. When it seemed that the Egyptian leadership was going along with American Middle Eastern goals, Americans described Naguib, Nasser, and others in glowingly Western terms. In contrast, during times of tension, when Egyptian actions appeared to jeopardize America’s strategic vision, policymakers and the media depicted these same Egyptians in negatively gendered and Orientalist terms in order to help explain to themselves and the public why certain policies were in doubt. In cases such as these, it was not the policy that was at fault, but the backward, weak, and untrustworthy Egyptians who were hampering American interests.

While broken up into chapters along administrative and policy lines, this study has demonstrated that there were roughly three linguistic periods in U.S.-Egyptian foreign relations from 1952 to 1961 that correlated to the two nations’ overall strategic and diplomatic relationship during each period. The first period, from the advent of the Free Officers’ revolution in July 1952 until early 1955, was marked by a roughly even amount of positive, negative, and ambiguous language depicting Egyptians. Alternately, language in the second period, beginning in early 1955 and lasting until the second half of 1958, was almost wholly negative, especially following the American decision to go ahead with the Omega Plan in March 1956. The final period discussed in this study, from
late 1958 until the end of the Eisenhower administration, brought with it a reversion to positive, negative, and ambiguous language, much like the first period.

The reason for the mixture of descriptive language during the first period of American interaction with the Free Officers correlated directly to the strategic relationship between the two nations. The first and second chapters demonstrated that American policymakers and the Egyptian leadership found themselves seemingly working toward many of the same goals. This convergence of interests, ranging from pro-Western stability, regional defense, and a successful conclusion to the Anglo-Egyptian base dispute, brought with it positive American depictions of Egyptians as strong, Western-style leaders. Highlighting even more the Western characteristics of the new regime were negative American depictions of King Farouk and his outgoing government, who Americans could now describe in culturally stereotypical ways because they had been unable to accomplish American regional goals while in power. At times, though, the new Egyptian leadership’s actions worked against American goals in the region and cast doubt as to the successful formation of a Middle Eastern defensive arrangement in which Egypt would play a role, and the eventual success of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute. In these instances, American policymakers and the media used negative descriptions to paint the Egyptians as “Others” in order to explain why American administrations were having a difficult time achieving their objectives.

Correspondingly, the shift to American usage of more negative language during the second period, to the point of becoming wholly negative by 1956, was due to the fact that U.S. foreign policy initiatives and goals, and those of Nasser’s Egypt, found
themselves moving further apart beginning in early 1955. Nasser had begun to shift toward a more independent foreign policy and neutralism after his attendance at the Bandung Conference in April 1955. As time progressed, the Egyptian leader’s intransigence in the face of the Anglo-American Alpha proposal for Arab-Israeli peace, his arms deal with the Eastern bloc, his anti-Western and anti-Baghdad Pact propaganda, the implementation of the Omega Plan, the nationalization of the Suez Canal, the Lebanese civil war, and the Iraqi coup, among others, brought forth an onslaught of negative language. This period, in which the United States found itself trying to isolate Nasser throughout the Arab world, while continuing its efforts to build a pro-Western Middle East and keep the Soviet Union out, was marked by a failure on the part of the United States and Egypt to come together on almost any major American policies. This failure led to a prolonged period in which Nasser and his cohorts were continuously depicted in negatively gendered and Orientalist language.

As we have seen, though, events following the July 1958 Iraqi coup moved the U.S.-Egyptian linguistic relationship into its third phase, and brought with it a return of the type of ambiguous, positive, and negative language that was used during the first period. This was due once again to strategic interests. For the first time in a long while, the Eisenhower administration and the Nasser regime found themselves pursuing parallel goals in the Middle East, as both groups sought to impede growing Soviet influence in Iraq. The Eisenhower administration did so in order to keep with longstanding U.S. goals of stopping Soviet penetration into the region, and Nasser in order to maintain sway over the region as the main champion of Arab nationalism. This rapprochement of sorts,
although not brought on by a sudden Nasser conversion to the American side, led American officials and the media to once again describe Nasser and his regime in positive terms now that it was sufficiently feasible, in some instances, to give him “insider” status. Just as was the case during the first period, though, there were still many issues on which officials in Washington and Cairo did not see eye to eye. These ranged from continued instability in regard to the ongoing Arab-Israeli dispute and Soviet aid to Nasser’s Egypt. These issues, which went against U.S. regional goals, brought forth, as in the past, negatively gendered and Orientalist American language. What took place in the final linguistic phase of U.S.-Egyptian relations was very similar to the relationship in the earliest period. Because officials in Cairo seemed to be helping American goals on the one hand and hindering them on the other, the pursuant language was a mixture of both positive and negative language.

Previous works on culture and U.S. foreign relations that deal with race, gender, and Orientalism argue that American cultural visions of “Others,” especially in regions such as the Middle East, had a significant impact on America’s relations with those countries and Washington’s formation of policy. These studies give vivid and voluminous accounts of American depictions of non-Westerners as weak, inept, emotional, untrustworthy, and backward, among others. While correct in pointing out this language and the underlying stereotypes that came with it, these works are less clear on instances in which these same non-Westerners, and sometimes the same individuals, were described in Western terms, and the great majority of the historiography on this topic does not even mention it. This study has made it abundantly clear, though, that
instances of positive language did occur, and on a fairly regular basis. Some studies, such as those by Mary Ann Heiss and John Foran, do discuss positive language, but not in the detail that this dissertation does. The fact that an abundance of positive language did exist makes it harder to come to terms with previous arguments that these stereotypes played a role in the formation of policy and throw a blanket American cultural view over non-Westerners. It also calls for U.S. foreign relations historians to look at this issue anew, from both sides of the street so to speak. If historians such as Douglas Little, for example, only discuss instances in which Americans described Nasser and other Middle Easterners in negative terms, extrapolating from this that it was a factor in the policymaking process and tenuous relationships, how do we explain periods of contentment between the United States and Egypt, or policies such as the Alpha plan and the Eisenhower Doctrine that put so much faith in Arabs? American policymakers and the media described Nasser in negatively gendered and Orientalist terms in September 1955 not because he was an Arab, but because he had signed an arms deal with the Soviet Union.

Ultimately, this study has shown that when dealing with the role that American cultural notions of race and gender play in U.S. foreign relations one needs to look at the entire picture in order to make a convincing argument, one way or another, that will stand up to all occasions and types of language. I believe that if expanded throughout Nasser’s reign of power, the argument that language was driven by policy would stand the test of time. I also believe that if one looked more closely into American language toward other Middle Eastern nations and other global regions, one would find both positive and
negative language that correlated directly to the seeming success, or failure, of America’s
goals for that particular country or region. When one gets down to it, Truman and
Eisenhower administration officials were more concerned about strategic realities
throughout the world than they were about what race or religion a nation’s leader was, or
what types of clothes they wore.
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