

## The Arab Republic of Egypt Government's Policy during Gamal Abdul Naseer Reign (1952-1962)

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### Abstract

The focus of this research is concern about Egypt's policy during the reign of Gamal Abdul Naseer (1952-1962 BC). this research aims to explain 1) Explaining Gamal Abdul Naseer policy in Egypt. 2) Describing the impact of Gamal Abdul Naseer policy on the development of Egypt. The research choose qualitative method by using descriptive analysis on sociological politic approach as a subject which concentrates on power, government, and authority toward its citizens. The result demonstrated Nasser's urge in order to improve the politic and economic sector in Egypt during his regime. Nasser initiated a system which supported the growth of political development and fiscal cooperation for improving Egypt as a nation. Nasser started the guided democracy system in Egypt. While in economic sector, Nasser's goal was to develop industrialization as a solution of Egypt economic problems.

*Keywords:* Gamal Abdul Naseer; Policy; Political policy; Fiscal Policy; Egypt

### Introduction

Egypt is an interesting area which has attracted scholars for conducting research about this country as its strategic location. The plateau of Egypt located in the northern Africa which borders with Mediterranean sea in the north, the Red Sea in the east, Sudan in the south, and the state of Libya in the west. An old poem stated that Sudan and Nile river are the veins of Egypt if there were no Sudan and the Nile, the world would be different from what we know. The land of Egypt is like a barren land in which very arid since it consist of the deserts of Libya, Nubia, and Arabian deserts. By

the existence of the Nile river, there are fertile parts alongside its delta. Since the cradle of civilization, the fertile valleys of the Nile have attracted human attention.

Egyptians have developed agricultural livelihoods so they have been completely dependent on the watering of the Nile. Although it is impossible for humans to live alone in nature and agricultural society. They need each other and cooperation is very necessary. Perhaps because of that, Egypt has long since formed community organizations such as villages. Each village is led by a village head whose job is to collect taxes from farmers and usually in the form of crops. (Kutojo, Soetijoso, & Soetjipto, 1976, pp. 15-16).

By examining the literature and history from a western perspective, the desire for political independence arises in the greater part of the educated youth, and sooner or later this impulse has gradually formed into organized movements seeking for independence in many Muslim countries. The leadership of these movements fell into the hands of those who tasted education according to the formal education system. The new leaders of the community were not at all devout followers of Islam, however, almost all of them had used religious sentiments and narration that were easy for common Muslims to follow that could guarantee their participation and support aim to defend their religion. (Abul A'la Maududi, 1980, p. 37).

The history of Egypt over the centuries has similarities with the history of Turkey although in some aspects are different. Egypt is a country that is developing into a secular state, just like Turkey. The transformation into a secular state has began with government reforms which had previously been disrupted by the British occupation in 1882 AD (Lapidus, 1999, p. 101).

The Arab Republic of Egypt gained its independence from the British in 1952 AD. However, British Kingdom represented by its troops still occupied Egypt and were directly involved in state affairs. This is what resulted in the coup d'état which further paved the way for Gamal Abdul Naseer to occupy the Egypt government in 1952 to become the Arab Republic of Egypt (Muhammad Nurudin, 2015, p. 55).

Gamal Abdul Naseer's journey to becoming President of Egypt began when the abdication of King Farouk resulted in the vacancy of the government in Egypt. By the support of Free Officers Movement, Farouk attempted to abolish the monarchy system whom allied with the British colonial. This movement originated from Naseer's conscience who felt the lack of coordination between Arab troops and the lack of support in weapon supply from the government during the war with Israel. In addition, when the war erupted, the government decided to build a luxury mansion for King Farouk instead of spending the budget for weapons during the war.

The next step initiated by Naseer was organizing a coup movement together with the support of Free Soldiers Movement in 1952. Three days after the revolution, King Farouk was removed from the throne and Naseer was elected President of the Free Officers Movement which resulted in the abolition of the constitutional monarchy, and Egypt became a Republic with Mohammed Naguib as the first president. Following up the formation of The Republic Arab of Egypt, Naseer and the Revolutionary Command Council disembodied the political party in 1953. In addition, it was announced to the Egyptian citizen that all political policies were fully governed by himself. This was motivated by his desire to oppose colonialism and foreign rule in Egypt (Widyarsa, 2012).

## **Discussion**

### **Brief History of Gamal Abdul Naseer**

Gamal Abdul Naseer was born in Alexandria in 1918 and died in 1970 M. Naseer had received his education to the highest level of a military academy (different from the youth at that time who received very low education) even though he came from an ordinary family. Education in the Arab world has a very striking system which differed the nobility (royal) and the ordinary ones. A child from a noble family received privilege to access the best education offered which strengthening their status and broadening the gap from their fellow ordinary people. Because a person's

educational attainment is measured by class and position. In addition to the boundaries (rules) of the late kingdom of Muhammad Ali Dynasty, there was a colonial intervention in all aspect of government activities which determined by the colonial. This condition inspired Gamal Abdul Naseer to initiated the Egyptian society reform movement. Since the beginning of his career, Naseer had passionated about transforming the whole aspect of social in Egypt, a passion to liberate Egypt from colonial grip (Elie Podeh, 1996, p. 162).

Gamal Abdul Naseer was among modern Egyptian figures who has carved out history of the Egypt. His name has widely known in the Arab World and even the world as whole. He managed to carve his history in the political scene in the Republic Arab of Egypt. Nasser, along with fellow countries leaders initiated Bandung Conference of Asian and African nations as an attempt for world peace. Nasser was renowned as He is known as a strict and persistent person in behave against Israel state formation. One of his most notorious idea was "socialism of Arab". The purpose of his idea was unifying countries in the Arab peninsula in a social economic order. According to his idea, those social economic order must be based on Islamic law/very which promote the members to applying Islamic spirit and teaching as a foundation for economic affairs (Islamic teachings has presumed as a reason for improvement of social welfare and a solution for escaping from colonialism. Moreover, Nasser was also known from his idea of Arabic Nationalism.

Gamal Abdul Naseer had been acknowledged as an accomplished soldier yet a notable statesman. He is also the figure behind the emergence of the Arab Nationalism. Nasser also the main actor who succeeded in overthrowing King Faruq from his throne as well as ending the dynasty of Egypt in 1952. When he succeeded in overthrowing King Faruq, he appointed Naquib as puppet president, while he became prime minister of Egypt. Soon after, in 1954 he appointed himself as president of the Egypt after President Naquib was overthrown because of the indication of his affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood (ikhwanul muslimin). Naseer was a very

charismatic leader who strongly opposed the establishment of Israel which then attracted the sympathy of Egyptian people. Gamal Abdul Nasser was seen as a prospective leader who will be able to unite Arab countries with the idea of Arab Nationalism in expelling colonialism and advancing the Arab nation (Ali Hasan Nadwy, 1983).

Nasser was appointed without having a solid ideology or plan while he had tried several times to provide a basis for the legitimacy of his government. He adopted socialism as the best solution and tried to form a forum within the Arab Socialist Association to implement his ideas. Nasser believed that socialism would promote development and provide a stable political framework for Egypt (Esposito, 2002, p. 160).

### **Government Conditions**

The sentiment of being willing to sacrifice everything for the glory and prosperity of a country must be marginalized by the emergence of an idea for changing a country into a better country in the field of social, political, economic and religious. Mustafa Kamil gave an idea about the unity of a nation, the spirit of self-sacrifice to save the motherland from colonial groups who wanted to dominate and change a constitutional form of government. The attitude of self-sacrifice for the country from Western colonialism is a spirit of jihad that must be inflamed to free the country from the grip of the Western colonials as well as giving recognition to the rights of the people in the formation of society.

The continuity of a national movement can be implemented through da'wah and literacy activities and can also be initiated in a political movement such as the formation of a national organization and party as led by Mustafa Kamil in 1890. Among these parties, there were several ones that showed their true identity. For example, in 1906 there was a fight between one of the British with local residents which resulted in the killing of British troops. In return, British troops killed local

residents. This was what triggered the conflict and hostility between Egypt and Britain (Esposito, 2002, pp. 113–114).

Problems haunted newly developed Egypt government were getting intense due to the division of power in Egypt between the king, political parties and the British government is getting stronger. The British government's politics who tried to implement divide et impera to bring the king of Egypt and political parties into conflict. Therefore, the probability to unite Egypt and fight for freedom from British colonialism remained weak. This condition was caused by the opportunity of Britain who took advantage of the feud between the king and political parties by offering assistance to the king to win the competition against political parties.

Politics in Egypt in the period 1922 and 1952 portrayed a certain pattern. The Egyptian government at the time of King Faruk was weak since he was known as a leader who did not have the competence as a leader, he was seen as lame in every policymaking, including the social gap between the rich and the poor. Even though a leader must be responsible for the people and behave like a leader in making every decision, however King Faruk did not demonstrate those skill. Moreover, King Faruk possessed the nature of arrogance which actually caused dissatisfaction from the people that triggered various kinds of riots that occurred in Egypt. At that time, there were also figures who protested the policy and even figures who mobilized the existence of movements that tried to overthrow the government of King Faruk. In addition, the emergence of the Wafd Party since the time of the struggle for independence and developed into the winning party in the national election. On the other hand, the British government conspired with the king to counter Wafd's reign and ended his reign. The Egyptian government at that time failed to address the problems of economic development. The decline in the prices of necessities caused by the increasing population of Egypt affected the Egyptian economy at the time of World War II which the fell into a level of below standard. However, there had been some progress made by the government in the industrial production of textiles,

cement, and several other products. For example, the government established the Bank of Egypt which aims to control the Egyptian economy as a whole from the clutches of foreigners. (Esposito, 2002, pp. 115–117).

The most important reform movement of this period was the Muslim Brotherhood (*ikhwanul muslimin*) in 1928 by Hasan al Banna. The emergence of this movement resulted in the emersion of Islamic puritanism. Al Banna, together with his movement, managed to organize groups and collaborate with other members in each region. This movement helped the Arab uprising in Palestine in 1936-1939 (Esposito, 2002, pp. 119–120). This movement also gathered forces with the youth to oppose the British government, the corrupt Egyptian government. This movement also helped the demonstrators who took action in Suez which then became a seed of hatred for the Egyptian people towards British colonial. This movement calls for the formation of a state based on Islamic law induced the hatred toward British colonial. Therefore the Muslim Brotherhood (*ikhwanul muslimin*) paid attention to moral reform, education, economy, and the formation of a Muslim state (Ishak Musa Husaini, 1983).

The Muslim Brotherhood (*ikhwanul muslimin*) attempted to take over Egyptian power, but they were hidden by the Free Officers, a force formed from different backgrounds. Among them are youth groups, military officials, and ordinary people. In 1952 a movement coordinated by Muhammad Naquib, Gamal Abdul Naseer, and Anwar Sadat succeeded in overthrowing the parliamentary government (Nasution, 1989). In 1952 there was a military coup initiated by Naseer and his group for overthrowing the government at that time, King Faruq, and changing the form of government of Egypt into the Republic of Egypt. He became the prime minister of Egypt. He and the leaders of fellow countries formed a movement aimed at stemming the Soviet invasion at that time called the Pan Islamism Movement in 1954 (Widyarsa, 2012, p. 275). This new government had succeeded in changing the structure of state identity on the international stage. A government with a royal system was replaced with a presidential form of government with a single party. This new government

switched from a Liberalism system to socialism and called for a spirit of anti-colonialism that led to nationalism which further led to Pan-Arabism which has the aim of developing Egypt's National development goals (Esposito, 2002, p. 121).

During his 18 years of leadership in Egypt, Naseer left legacy to the government from all fields, including political, economic, and social Egypt. Naseer built Egypt in nationalizing industrial assets. This was done so in order for preparing Egypt government to become the main provider of goods and services for its people. The state also played a role by carrying out land reforms in order to control and distribute state wealth, for instance, expanded agricultural land. In addition, Naseer built the Aswan dam for agricultural purposes as well as the expansion of educational infrastructure which created a substantial middle class for the Egyptian people.

## **Gamal Abdul Naseer's Policy**

### **Political Policy**

The president is assumed as a leader of a country who must master skills in gaining and mobilizing support from the people. The president is a vital figure in state affairs. The major achievement of the government of Gamal Abdul Naseer in the political field towards Egypt was the establishment of a single party system which aimed to foster a new form of Egyptian political participation and economic cooperation. This system helped avoiding people's feuds against the government in making policies of the rulers and acts as a channel for the aspirations of the people. This system had played a very important role in Naseer's government in making policies and was able to control the government well. Therefore, peace had been established in his government as well as the unity among warring parties (Esposito, 2002, p. 124).

When Gamal Abdul Naseer succeeded in reaching government, he immediately called for a quest for the Arabs to form Arab Nationalism against Israel establishment. The implementation of the call could be seen in 1955, when he refused to join one of



the blocs (whether western or eastern bloc) and decide to join the non-aligned movement which made him received very strong pressure from countries from both blocs, both from Russia and America. But Naseer had no trouble when the pressure came from both blocks. He began to move for the Nationalization of the Suez Canal which has been a very strategic and important waterway for travel by sea, so that Britain, France, and Israel Egypt to reclaim the Suez Canal which was already controlled by Egypt. However, these efforts were in vain because they could not seize the Suez Canal because Egypt received assistance from Russia, which was a party against America (Esposito, 2002, p. 123).

Another policy carried out by Naseer was Suez nationalism, as an attempt to take over companies from the clutches of foreigners with the aim to end foreign investment in the economic sector and utilizing the Suez Canal as a link between the Asian and African regions when viewed from the economic sector. Suez has a very strategic location that connects the waters of the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea. The existence of the Suez Canal became the center of trade relations between Europe and the Eastern World would actually shorten the travel time of traders.

### **Economic Policy**

The economic concept of the government of Gamal Abdul Naseer was a socialist economy whose goal was to distribute the economic welfare evenly among Egyptian people and escape from the clutches of foreigners. experiencing an economic downturn.

Naseer's government was considered to be able to change the economy of the Egyptian people. He demonstrated a new view in advancing Egypt. During his leadership, Naseer initiated two thoughts, removing the British presence from Egypt and eliminating British influence in the Arab World which allowed him to make Egypt and himself known to the world. He also took an action in carrying out economic

change by reforming the land by changing the structure of land ownership to distribute welfare among Egypt (Elie Podeh, 1996).

Naseer had a brilliant idea in restoring the Egyptian economy. He developed industries in Egypt and increased agricultural productivity by providing agricultural subsidies for his people, which aims to increase the income of the Egyptian people's economy. In carrying out his policy, Naseer revised the land law and expanded the maximum limit of land owned by a person is 50 Faddan (previously 200 Faddan), therefore land owners who previously benefited, felt disadvantaged because of the revision of the law carried out by Naseer. However, small farmers felt that they have benefited from Naseer's policy in supporting the economy of the Egyptian people. Then the land is distributed to the people to be managed properly. However, with the revision of the land law, there were people who still lack land for agricultural land (Zikwan, 1997).

In running its economy, the government cooperated with the private sector by providing a number of lands that can be used to develop industries with the aim of controlling and securing several government goals. The level of agricultural productivity is increased by the existence of policies issued by the government with the aim of increasing agricultural yields by providing subsidies for fertilizers and seeds. Farmers were coordinated and given the opportunity to participate in improving the community's economy. Apart from agriculture, the government also improved public services in areas that have not been reached from the center by improving road access, establishing schools, providing health centers for factories and others (Esposito, 2002, p. 125).

Gamal Abdul Naseer's policy in his government in Egypt was in the agricultural sector which managed to contribute 45-47% of Egypt's exports. In addition, more than 50% of the industry in Egypt was from the agriculture-based sector, such as textiles and food processing. Transport services, trade, and government activities were connected to agriculture in Egypt. Due to the agricultural sector, before Naseer

became the Egyptian government, the Egyptian economy was in serious trouble. This was caused by the previous government that did not have the competence as a leader and every policy that was decided was always lame, so that social classes emerged.

Gamal Abdul Naseer's government policies in the industrial sector have developed. This was due to the support of Free Officers in developing private companies. However, this policy was hindered because the government did not want private ownership of land on a large scale. It was considered to be able to cause a tendency towards Egypt in consuming private products, while what the government wants is equal ownership of land so that farmers can develop the agricultural sector in producing basic materials. Naseer was considered a leader who succeeded against imperialist countries. His concept of Arab Nationalists, especially in reforming the agricultural system and nationalization of the Suez Canal, had an influence on Egyptian politics and the economy. Therefore, his period is considered as the golden age of Arab Nationalism.

Egypt's government was dominated by the military. This was because the previous government was overthrown by groups from the military, among them was Gamal Abdul Naseer. The socialization of Arab nationalization in the fields of industry and agriculture had been expected to meet the needs for the advancement of the Egyptian economy by breaking away from foreign dependence by increasing the agricultural and industrial sectors in Egypt and creating quality products so as to increase exports to other countries. In addition, it could provide prosperity for Egypt and eliminate the policies of the previous rulers which tended to be corrupt, so that there was social inequality in Egypt (Esposito, 2002, pp. 126–127).

The opening of the Suez Canal by the Egyptian government during the time of Gamal Abdul Naseer reign which indicated of Suez nationalism resulted in a positive impact on the Egyptian economy. This had an impact on the Mediterranean countries to revive in world trade because they are located in world trade routes. In addition, it

shortens the travel time between Europe and Asia which causes Europe-Asia to be crowded because it is traversed by foreign traders (Muhammad Nurudin, 2015).

Suez's nationalist policy also sought to gain interest in Egypt, which had long been controlled by foreign countries who want to maintain their power in the Suez Canal. Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal and declared it in the Nationalization Law and had even been socialized by the government, so that the Suez Canal became fully owned by Egypt after being successfully nationalized by Gamal Abdul Nasser without any influence from other countries. This had a positive impact on Egypt in improving the Egyptian economy (World Affairs Institute, 1956, pp. 75–76).

The nationalization of the Suez Canal had an impact on the Egyptian economy, especially the freezing of Egyptian currency assets from Britain, France, and the United States, plus the termination of aid from the United States. In addition, there was an economic embargo from Britain, which is Egypt's trading partner. Moreover, the blocking of the Suez Canal had worsened the Egyptian economy. However, the problem did not last long. Gamal Abdul Nasser started efforts to recover the Egyptian economy that was facing difficulties by negotiating with Britain, France, and America. There was an agreement between the three countries based on the fears of these countries if Egypt fell into the hands of the Soviet Union (Muhammad Nurudin, 2015).

### **The Influence of Gamal Abdul Nasser's Policies**

The renewal during the 19th century during the reigns of Muhammad Ali and Khedive Ismail, Egypt followed the secular Western path in terms of political, military, and socio-economic development. While Islam has been recognized as the "source" of Islamic law, Egyptian law starts from the constitution and the Western-style system of government. Egypt under Gamal Abdul Nasser still continued a secular path, while respecting Islam, but generally separated religion as far as possible from the state.

Since 1950, Naseer combined local Egyptian nationalism with a broader identification of Arab nationalism, and in the process intends to assume the position of President of Egypt while concurrently Arab leader. In 1956, Naseer took over and nationalized the Suez Canal. His 1957 victories against British and French colonial forces made him a widely popular hero in the Islamic world and won the stakes for Arab leadership. Naseer's passion for leadership of the Arab world led to a progressive use of the Arab and Islamic aspects of Egyptian heritage. These two aspects of Egyptian identity are interrelated as important components of Naseerism, both ideologically and politically (Hobsawen, 1992).

The essence of Naseerism was a secular movement in its early stages, but in fact, domestic and foreign politics led Naseer to selectively use Islam to legitimize the Arab socialist ideology to seek support. Instead, Islam has gradually increased to become a factor for a domestic policy as well as foreign policy. In 1960, Naseer found rivals from Arab socialist regimes: Syria, Iraq, and Algeria as well as the conservative oil-rich Arab kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Naseer faced tough challenges from the Muslim Brotherhood at home. The Muslim Brotherhood has widely known as an Islamic movement that rejects the Western-style secular path for a new Egypt, and maintains a return to Islam and Shari'ah. Even though they supported the revolutionary officers who were free-leaning, the Muslim Brotherhood later separated itself from Naseer, who had disagreed with the Muslim Brotherhood to form an Islamic state.

Naseer at first refused to comply with religious leaders' demands for the Egyptian Charter of 1962, which contained Naseer's socialist ideas for the formation of society, to include a clause declaring Islam the official religion of the state. However, in 1964 the clause was reversed in the Egyptian constitution. Naseer involved the government in Islamic matters when he carried out the nationalization of al-Azhar University (Esposito, 1990, pp. 177-178). Important administrative positions are held by government officials and curriculum reform is carried out by the government with the

aim of ending reactionary conservatism and training new generations to become involved and capable of contributing to modernization and development. As a result, the University lost much of its freedom in the academic and political fields. Oversight of al-Azhar as well as mosques whose imams are appointed and paid for by the ministry of waqf affairs, enabled Naseer to mobilize religious support for his socialist policies (Esposito, 1990, pp. 178–179).

The use of Islam to legitimize Arab socialism has increased Naseer's foreign policy because the majority of the Arabs he had approached were Muslims. As explained earlier, in the competition between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the position of Islam becomes very important, because Faisal had used the notion of Islam to condemn Arab socialism and defended pan-Islam as a rival to pan-Arabism. While Faisal received a decree from his ulema condemning socialism, Naseer instead received a decree from the Egyptian clerics, especially prominent scholars from al-Azhar. When Faisal declared that pan-Arabism was part of pan-Islam, Naseer announced that Arab socialism was rooted in Islam; "Islam is the first religion that calls for equality." In response to criticism from Arab conservatives, Naseer announced "our enemies say that socialism is *kufur*. But is it true that socialism is what they mean by that term? What they describe can be matched against the increase in slavery, the accumulation of money, and the extortion of people's wealth (Naseer's condemnation of the Saudi Arabian regime). This is really *kufur* and this is what really challenges religion and Islam. what we mean is the law of justice and the law of God" (Esposito, 1990, p. 180).

The experience was a challenge to the assumptions of modernization and developmental theories. The commitment of modernizing leaders in Egypt is a century old, but reforms imposed from above do not guarantee its acceptance by the majority of the occupation. The orientation of the state, its institutions, laws, and policies has reflected the ideas and goals of the Egyptian rulers which are a reality in Egyptian society (Esposito, 1990, p. 181).

## Conclusion

The regime's greatest innovation in politics was the establishment of a one-party system to foster new forms of political participation and economic cooperation among Egyptians. The single political party system helped in avoiding the general public's responsiveness to the decisions of the authorities, prevents higher echelons of government from getting involved with people's aspirations, and acted as a channel for mobility. Meanwhile, in the economic sector based on the funding of industrialization by increasing agricultural productivity and with subsidies from agricultural surplus, it was taken to break the chain of poverty. Egypt under Gamal Abdul Naseer still continued the secular path, while respecting Islam, but in general separated religion as far as possible from the state. 1956 Constitution: "Erase all aspects of imperialism, get rid of feudalism, erode the monopoly system and control capitalistic influence over the government system; building a healthy democratic society.

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