



# **The Rocket in the Haystack: Between Nasser's Developmental Vision and the Neo-Imperialist Mission<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

This article assesses Gamal Abdel Nasser's efforts to transform Egypt's postcolonial economy via his industrialisation policies, drawing lessons for today from both his successes and shortcomings. By analysing outcomes through indicators of industrial production, employment patterns, productivity, and main beneficiaries in the post-independence period, the article critiques Nasser's incremental approach, the undermining of workers' movements, and the limiting nature of 'state feminism', which contributed to the failure to achieve full economic and political independence, leading to its eventual collapse in the face of imperialist resurgence. Nasser's industrialisation project, however, does demonstrate the superiority of active policy intervention, particularly of planning and import-substitution-industrialisation, and suggests the need to pursue central planning, economic inclusion, self-sufficiency, and social production aimed at meeting the material needs of the population in the contemporary period.

## **Résumé**

Cet article évalue les efforts de Gamal Abdel Nasser pour transformer l'économie postcoloniale de l'Égypte avec ses politiques d'industrialisation, en tirant de ses réussites et de ses échecs des leçons utiles à la société contemporaine. En analysant les résultats par le biais d'indicateurs de la production industrielle, de schémas d'emploi, de productivité et des principaux bénéficiaires de la période post-indépendance, l'article critique l'approche graduelle de Nasser, l'affaiblissement des mouvements ouvriers et la nature limitative du « féminisme

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d'État », qui ont contribué à l'échec de l'indépendance économique et politique totale, conduisant à son effondrement final face à la résurgence impérialiste. Le projet d'industrialisation de Nasser, cependant, démontre la supériorité de l'intervention politique active, en particulier de la planification et de l'industrialisation par la substitution des importations, et suggère la nécessité de poursuivre la planification centrale, l'inclusion économique, l'autosuffisance et la production sociale dont l'objectif est la satisfaction des besoins matériels de la population dans la période moderne.

*The society of the half percent,<sup>2</sup> the rule of the exploiting class, the rule of the alliance of capital and feudalism always finds protection in the colonial powers, they ally with colonialism in secret or in the open. We have a multitude of examples in our region, they ally with colonisers, achieve the colonisers' goals, and are in turn protected by the colonisers...*<sup>3</sup>

Gamal Abdel Nasser, 1965

## Introduction

With over 30 per cent of its population living in poverty (Omar 2018), massive devaluation that halved the value of its currency, and rampant inflation, Egypt is now in a dire situation. Unprecedented levels of debt crossed the 100 per cent ratio of GDP over five years ago and were a key justification for the 'reform' package imposed on the Egyptian people. Over-reliant on tourism and semi-rentier in nature, the Egyptian national economy has deteriorated, and its industrial capacity has diminished, whereas inequality is on the rise. The Egyptian middle class, once important and robust, has shrunk to less than 5 per cent of society amid ever-increasing wealth disparities (Social Justice Platform 2018). Before suffering all of these indignities, worsening economic conditions drove Egyptians into a massive uprising in 2011 demanding bread, freedom and social justice. During that uprising, the spectre of an experience six decades prior hung over every conversation about what course the country should take: the Nasserist state with its forgotten promises and crushed hopes remained the model and reference point towards or against which all forces oriented. The era remains mythologised as an age of great builders, corrupt officials, and a bloodied bulwark against imperialism. As such, in order to salvage the policies that made it a high-watermark, the remains of the experiment are worth revisiting, at a time when Egypt has accepted its relegation to the periphery.

A mere seven months after the end of the 1973 6<sup>th</sup> of October war (also known as the Yom Kippur war), President Anwar Al-Sadat, with recourse to the immense political capital he accrued as a liberator of the occupied Sinai, announced the October Paper.<sup>4</sup> This policy proposal for the *Infatih*

(Open Door Policy) was the decisive nail in the coffin of the *Ibra lil Saroukh* (Needle to Rocket) policy and its industrialisation programme's hallmark. Although the October Paper acknowledged the public sector as the main pillar of state-led developmentalism, it severely criticised the latter and its alleged inefficiencies, thereby revealing itself to be a hollow homage and ushering in the age of the *Infatih*. More significant, nonetheless, was that the October Paper came to enact the explicit shift to liberal socio-economic policies, i.e. encouraging a growing role for the private sector, intentional negligence of the public sector and its finances, a growing rentier tendency, attempts to attract foreign direct investment, and favouring production for international markets over local needs. Similarly, it opened the door for the regime to shift its allegiance to the US and to initiate a radical transformation in relations with Israel, i.e. the peace treaty of 1978.<sup>5</sup>

The 22-year period of *Ibra lil Saroukh*, which can be traced back to the 1952 Free Officers' bloodless coup/revolution, saw the last British soldier leaving Egyptian soil, two wars with colonial powers, and one of the most ambitious Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) programmes in the postcolonial world, which revolutionised much of the Egyptian polity, society and economy. ISI refers to the policies implemented by former colonies in an attempt to escape their subordinate position as primary commodity exporters in the international division of labour, imposed on them by colonial powers. By producing high-value products domestically instead of importing them, this strategy aimed to reposition countries within the global value chain (Baer 1972: 95–6). However, while ISI is a liberationist project, it only seeks to reposition the polity within the global value chain rather than trying to break with the capitalist totality. This renders such projects mere attempts to move from the ranks of the exploited to the ranks of the exploiters.

This article argues that the *Infatih*, the economic opening orchestrated by Sadat, a precursor to neoliberalism,<sup>6</sup> was made possible by Nasser's failure to fully realise plans for economic and political independence. Taking this as our point of departure, we aim to interrogate the limits of Nasserite industrialisation policy, a programme that came to encompass the entirety of Egyptian society with its ambitious slogans of Import Substitution Industrialisation and *Ibra lil Saroukh*, which sowed the seeds for its eventual reversal, beginning in the 1970s. Put differently, as per our understanding of Egypt as a part of a capitalist totality, this reversal was associated with the rise of liberal and neoliberal economics worldwide, hence the title of our project (McMahon 2016: 3–10). In fact, the choice of the word 'neo-imperialism' here confirms that the failure of the Nasserite project coincided with the

beginning of a new era of domination that did not require direct physical presence or conquests. Instead, it was through the deployment of economic and cultural force, encouraging liberalisation and later neoliberalisation of under-developing 'peripheral' countries such as Egypt, that the 'core' capitalist developed countries managed to impose their dictations and force the former to give up hopes of complete independence. With the help of international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, free-trade agreements, and the mobility permitted to transnational capital, there was no continuous need for direct intervention.

In our present context, the neo-imperialist, neoliberal (and previously classical liberal) project has triumphed over the postcolonial developmental vision.<sup>7</sup> Its consequences force us to examine the industrialisation policy at the heart of the *Ibra lil Saroukh* programme, and the limitations causing its collapse in the face of neo-imperialist resurgence, met with open arms by the Egyptian state (Waterbury 1983: 123–5).

## Research Questions and Methodology

In keeping with the aim of recovering successful anti-imperialist policies through assessing the Nasserite regime's political-economic project that nonetheless caused the triumph of the neo-imperialist mission, this article focuses on the regime's industrialisation project. With the cornerstone being the *Ibra lil Saroukh* ISI programme, this article examines how and to what extent it transformed the economic and social fabric of postcolonial Egyptian society by asking what shortcomings caused its eventual collapse and what lessons can be recovered for future use. It will first delve into the intricacies of the programme (the industries that were prioritised and if they were developed), exploring how policies such as land reform, labour rights, and even women's empowerment were developed as accessories to the programme.<sup>8</sup> Subsequently, we attempt to contextualise Nasser's industrialisation experience, i.e. specify the circumstances that surrounded the project by focusing on both the internal limitations (economic structures and social formations) and the external interferences (of foreign powers and international institutions) that contributed to the collapse of the Nasserite state's industrialisation programme and its capitalist development project. Moreover, we evaluate how such a behemoth, massive undertaking, which revolutionised the Egyptian economy, interacted with and affected different Egyptian social factions and forces, namely the working class, and, especially, subaltern peasant and working women. Finally, the article concludes with the practical and theoretical lessons that can be inferred from the Nasserite experiment to inform contemporary attempts at inclusive development.

This article relies on a variety of archival materials, including first-hand accounts (narratives collected by the Economic and Business History Research Center at the American University in Cairo) of decision-makers and executives associated with Nasserite industrialisation. Through their memoirs and testimonies, we engage with their takes on how the industrialisation project was conducted and how it affected Egyptian society. Similarly, we use the Women and Memory Forum's archives, the American University in Cairo's Social and Women's History archive, and the Gamal Abdel-Nasser Archives at Bibliotheca Alexandrina for further documents on the history of Egyptian industrialisation and working women. Finally, we draw from a group of primary and secondary sources in both Arabic and English with the aim of highlighting the chronology of Nasser's industrialisation programme, surveying its day-to day progress, before evaluating its effects on the lives of the masses using an interdisciplinary political economy approach, and finally critiquing it both practically and ideologically.

## **Intermissions and Preconditions**

### ***A Necessary Intermission***

Although concerned with industrialisation from an early stage in his political career, at the moment of his ascension, Nasser had yet to develop a concrete action plan for realising his vision of an industrialised Egyptian society. Between 1952 and 1954, when the new regime was still engaged in internal power struggles and no clear direction had emerged, several laws were issued that encouraged private and even foreign investment while relaxing state controls on transfer of profits, going so far as to allow foreign interests to gain majority control of companies (Dekmejian 1971: 124). In the first few years of Nasser's rule – between his *de facto* ascension to power in 1954 after the March crisis and the 1956 presidential referendum – the regime showed its willingness to collaborate with the private sector and to create an atmosphere where it could flourish (O'Brien 1966: 124). During this period, the regime had no specific economic orientation.<sup>9</sup> Nasser had pinned his hopes on the 'national bourgeoisie' to take the lead and expand on the limited but nationally inspiring Banque Misr experiment.<sup>10</sup> His drive for industrialisation was reflected in the creation of an Independent Ministry for Industry in 1956, shortly after he officially ascended to power, followed by the Economic Organisation, which would manage the foreign assets nationalised during the Tripartite Aggression.<sup>11</sup> In 1958, Nasser issued decree 453 to reorganise the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI) (Sedqi 2004) into chambers and establish new ones, such as the Chamber for Engineering Industries, a sector unique to Egypt that went on to play a significant role in Nasser's industrialisation programme.

Around the same time, Aziz Sedqi was handed the Ministry of Industry and given the responsibility of designing the first industrialisation plan across five years with a budget of E£250 million (US\$ 717.8 million) (*ibid.*). These rapid successive moves were aimed to consolidate the Egyptian industrial sectors into recognisable segments as part of the first industrial plan. On the one hand, the Economic Organisation represented the state itself, and the FEI was supposed to be the channel of communication between the private sector and the government's Ministry of Industry, on the other, even though the private sector was still included in the state's policy, Nasser's hopes for it to actually perform its historically prescribed role were fading quickly.

The reasons for the reluctance of the private sector to invest during that period have been debated for over half a century, with arguments ranging from claims of inherent parasitism in the Egyptian capital to the prevalence of a vaguely-defined rustic mentality. The most succinct explanation is offered by 'Abd al-Salam 'Abdel-Halim 'Amir: the alienation of capitalists from the decision-making circles made them heavily distrustful of the regime, as they felt that they were no longer in control (1993: 156–9). However, instead of their intransigence forcing the regime's hand, it actually strengthened its resolve and encouraged it to start deploying punitive measures. Realising that the moneyed class was heavily investing in real estate as an alternative to industrial investment, the regime enacted the Rent Control Act, Law 55 of 1958, which decreased the rents for all properties built after September 1952 by 20 per cent. This was the regime's way of letting the private sector know that non-productive investments would not be encouraged, while simultaneously making housing cheaper (*ibid.*: 150–3).

### ***Enabling Preconditions***

In the process of initiating the *Ibrah lil Saroukh* project, Nasser and his regime clearly saw that for the project to succeed in achieving its socio-economic developmental and political goals, it required the fulfilment of certain enabling preconditions. Three key preconditions can be identified.

### ***Egyptianisation of Foreign Assets***

Effectively this was the sequestration of the means of production – and the subsequent nationalisation of the Egyptian assets' processes (O'Brien 1966: 125–32).

This legal but forceful seizure of the material capital and the means of production permitted the launching of the project, created a structural change in the shape of the Egyptian economy, and secured the main factors of production needed for it to succeed. The Nasserite era was born.

To demystify the Egyptianisation process we must clearly recognise that this process does not naturally translate into nationalisation, as the first necessitated that the controlling capital be Egyptian, while the second required it to be held by the Egyptian state. The value of the assets sequestered from foreigners is estimated at US\$ 300 million (Tignor 1998: 154–5). For example, the nationalisation saw some prominent joint ventures such as Al-Nasr Philipps for Electrical and Electronic devices, which was not touched during the first wave of nationalisations, first Egyptianised, and later nationalised (Gazarin 2006: 114). The government, however, was selective in its efforts, as evidenced by the case of the Ford factories in Alexandria – the sole assembler of vehicles in Egypt – which emerged unscathed from both processes (Tignor 1990). This selectivity caused some speculation that it was Nasser's fear of the United States that protected the factory. Others postulate that the factory's nature as an assembler and not a manufacturer made it completely useless for the Nasserist developmental plan, unlike other manufacturing assets.

### ***The New Social Contract of Socio-economic Rights and Ideological Structures***

The paramount feature of Nasser's regime was the new social contract it offered the masses. The pre-revolution period witnessed different calls and proposals for land reform; the land reform law enacted by the Nasserite regime was among the least radical submitted to the parliament (Mitchell 1999: 464). Implementing such a modest reform implies an initial desire to not antagonise the landed semi-capitalists and persuade them to take on the transition to industry. Still, the land reform, enacted over three stages, combined with the new tenancy laws, managed to transform the socio-economic and political lives of large sections of the Egyptian peasantry, even if the persistence of violations enabled some of the old elites to maintain their power in a new form.<sup>12</sup> As a matter of fact, small land ownership increased, reaching 57.1 per cent by 1965, with the number of small landowners (defined as owning up to 5 feddans<sup>13</sup>) increasing to more than 3 million by 1965 ('Abdel-Fadil 1975: 11). While the law was revolutionary in the context of its enactment, it also managed to transform the social structure in a way that will be evidenced through this article's narrative.<sup>14</sup> Still, this transformation was not as radical as it may seem. A total of 45 per cent of families working in agriculture remained landless, and the top 5 per cent of owners held 43 per cent of all arable land (Mitchell 1991: 225). Moreover, according to Anouar 'Abdel-Malek, 70 per cent of all new



private investments in the period following the agrarian reform law went to the construction industry, a direction Nasser would counter once he realised that private capital was failing its historical mission ('Abdel-Malek 1964: 40).

These factors had significant consequences, not only for the confidence in the regime, but also for the programme's prospects for success. The local capitalists' lack of interest in industrialisation was one of the main factors encouraging the regime to interfere more directly in the economy and implement measures such as the Egyptianisation and later nationalisation of assets. Additionally, while small ownership increased, the nature of such small ownerships failed to create the large-scale effective demand needed to mechanise farming. This was because, on average, those who received lands, received 2.4 feddans (which was below the minimum of 3 feddans declared by the state),<sup>15</sup> and it was estimated that a minimum of 5 feddans were needed for a rural family to sustain its needs; as such, their full consumptive capacity could not be adequately tapped, especially in regard to productive consumption of farm machinery ('Amir 1958: 153–4).<sup>16</sup>

The implementation of universal healthcare and education systems, along with state-subsidised housing, acted as a buffer to the seizing of the material basis for production by securing the long-term social reproduction needed for the process of production. However, this same social contract laid the foundations for an ideological system that went on to cement an undemocratic atmosphere of oppression, as structures were developed to preserve the consent that was essential for the enactment of the Nasserite vision. These structures largely emulated Leninist single-party state ideals, where the party,<sup>17</sup> as a vehicle of national mobilisation, articulated the state's developmental policy. Co-opted by the regime, labour unions gave auxiliary support to sustain the expanding working class. This approach allowed for the influence of the state's bureaucracy to grow. This bureaucracy depended heavily on former officers who were integrated into political, economic and administrative institutions, to the extent that 1500 officers were appointed to jobs related to these institutions between 1952 and 1964 ('Abdel-Malek 1964: 45).<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, bureaucratic expansion was one of the reasons behind the increase in government expenditure, with the payroll climbing to almost 73 per cent of governmental spending by 1965 (Dekmejian 1971: 230). At the same time, it allowed the large landlords, supposedly categorised as exploiters and traitors by the agrarian reform laws, to maintain their former influence by infiltrating the new parliaments and cooperatives at a time when ordinary peasants and workers (especially women) were denied any real representations on these platforms.<sup>19</sup>



### ***Establishing Economic Administrative Infrastructure***

Towards the goal of establishing an independent economy, keeping in mind the lack of resources and the inefficient allocation of available funds to support political independence, the regime built three administrative apparatuses: the Economic Organisation (EO), Misr Organisation and il-Nasr Organisation (Basiouny 2007: 11). These three groups were charged with the administrative and executive tasks of managing one section of the state's industrial capacities and overseeing their integration and interaction with each other. As the regime started to lean more towards socialist planning, it attempted to introduce an approach that superficially resembled those used in other socialist economies by implementing industrial plans put forth by the National Planning Committee and the five-year development plans (Mabro and Radwan 1976: 66). They functioned as the overarching structure within which all of the Egyptian economy and polity was subsumed. Two five-year plans were developed, starting from the early 1960s, though the second was never completed due to the defeat of 1967.<sup>20</sup>

For example, the EO created in 1957 was delegated the task of overseeing the formerly foreign (mainly British and French) assets (Waterbury 1983: 79). In its short life span, lasting only until 1961, the organisation saw its initial industrial investment of E£38 million increase to E£49 million by 1961, and accounted for almost 20 per cent of employment in the industrial sector and nearly 30 per cent of the total output of industrial production in Egypt (Radwan 1974: 206). The other two organisations, Misr and il-Nasr, were established in 1960 to manage the Misr Group assets (formerly owned by Banque Misr's private investors) and the state enterprises coming into being with the first five-year plan (Waterbury 1983: 79). Here, it can be seen that although there was no official hierarchy between these three organisations, as each ruled in its own realm and reported to the Presidency through the National Planning Committee, perhaps the EO had the largest impact, at least in the early stage of Nasser's regime. Despite dissolving shortly after the establishment of the other two, it managed the initial industrial base's expansion and gave the impetus that allowed the other two to thrive and grow.

### **‘Socialism without Socialists’<sup>21</sup>**

Still, while the regime's rhetoric made extensive use of words like ‘socialism’ and ‘planning’, it did not actually, as is commonly believed, implement a central planning nor a socialist approach. Such a misconception should be amended to categorise Nasser's approach correctly, if we are to retrieve lessons about limitations to be avoided. First, central planning is only

possible within genuinely socialist economies, where the state controls all means of production and the private sector – if not outright outlawed – struggles to exist.<sup>22</sup> Second, a planned economy stipulates the existence of public space and mechanisms for ordinary working class people to participate in the design of the central plan and its targets, in addition to efficient coordination between the different sectors and goals of the plan (Bettelheim 1965: 66).<sup>23</sup>

The categorisation of Nasser's regime as non-socialist<sup>24</sup> is actually reinforced by looking into the nature of the regime's ideology known as Arab Socialism.<sup>25</sup> The latter, drawing heavily on nationalist and Islamic ideas, was used as ideological backing for crackdowns on Marxists (Abdel-Malek 1964: 51).<sup>26</sup>

None of these conditions were met in Nasser's Egypt. The private sector was not only allowed to survive but also to prosper and accumulate in certain areas, regardless of nationalisation. 'Abdel Malek asserts that, at least until 1963, private ownership was maintained as a cornerstone of the social structure, as the private sector's contribution to the national income reached 65.8 per cent of the total national income, in comparison to 34.2 per cent from the public sector (1964: 42–3). Specifically, it represented 87.5 per cent in construction, 56.4 per cent in industry, 79.1 per cent in commerce, and an astonishing 93.8 per cent in agriculture (*ibid.*), which was facilitated by the fact it was easy to evade state controls, especially when the products were effortlessly marketable. This allowed the large landowners who specialised in these marketable crops like vegetables and fruits to accumulate large amounts of capital.<sup>27</sup> The significance of this becomes evident as field crops, whose prices were strictly controlled by the state, represented 80 per cent of small landowners' production in comparison to one-third of the large landowners' output (Cooper 1982: 455). However, unlike fruits and vegetables, field crops that were produced mainly for export, such as cotton, were not priced by 'free market forces'. Rather, Law No. 108 (1961) designated that all cotton exports be made through public-owned companies (Dekmejian 1971: 329), and in fact, the public sector is estimated to have paid E£489.2 million in wages in 1965, compared to E£372.1 million by the private sector, due to its domination of most agricultural production, internal trade, and personal service sectors (al-Morshdi 1965: 29). This suggests the freedom given to the private sector was not due to the absence of legal framework; it was instead within this specific legal framework that private property was entrenched as a given right (Abu-Laban 1967: 184, 189). This shows the conflicting interests within the industrialisation project, concealed by the pragmatic socialist slogans of the official discourse. For as long as the private

sector is permitted to exist as freely as it did under Nasser, it will endeavour to generate the highest degree of surplus through eliminating all possible competition, which includes the public sector. In the same process, it will seek to exploit the largest possible number of workers.<sup>28</sup>

Based on the above, it is more appropriate to treat Nasser's planning experience as developmental planning, which resembles the approach of many Western countries to build what is known as the welfare state. Further, Nasser's regime can be characterised as adopting a form of state capitalism that borrowed socialist characteristics such as socialist rhetoric, an economic nationalist orientation, and a degree of planning to achieve certain capitalist ends (Petras 1977: 2, 8).

The capitalist form of the regime was the logical result of a society defined by a weak domestic bourgeoisie that in the pre-1952 days failed to enforce its domination over its own local market vis-à-vis imperialism. Thus, to facilitate this class' accumulation of capital and to hide this already existing weakness, the state form became mystified with nationalism. Meanwhile, it attempted to entrench new rules that served the maintenance of capitalist reproduction, such as to allow this weak nascent ruling class the chance to cement its hegemony over the local market on the expense of feudalism and semi-capitalist social forces.<sup>29</sup> Here, although we agree with Cooper's main characteristics defining state capitalism (such as originating from weak national economies with a weak upper class; that it oversees a nationalistic reorientation of economic resources and nationalisation, etc.), we find the two last features he lists worthy of comment. In this sense, we refer to his understanding that, in the aftermath of state capitalism, society remains capitalistic despite the extensive role of the state, and that state capitalism fails to transform society's fundamental structure (1982: 16–7).

In light of the previous discussion on the 'socialist' nature of the regime, it will not be hard to see that state capitalism does not create genuine socialist societies. Rather, through the aid it extends to local capitalists, this state form attempts to transform the nature of society *capitalistically*. In other words, it pushes capitalist development further through the development it oversees and asserts a capitalist mentality over all other pre-capitalist ones. For that reason, Cooper's conclusion regarding Nasser's failure to develop a fully dynamic capitalist system falls short of describing the entire context. Certainly, Nasser failed to construct a dynamic capitalist society, and not for a lack of trying. Instead, this was caused by an interplay of internal-external factors that proved too costly for the regime's hopes. Nonetheless, we must keep in mind that Nasser's regime managed to construct a sort of capitalist society on the ruins of the semi-capitalist/semi-precapitalist norms that dominated Egyptian

society from the beginning of the twentieth century. He simply consolidated the capitalist forces to a large extent and enforced a certain degree of capitalist development. As such, it is possible to understand the pre-Nasser era as one where capitalist forces were still attempting to cement their presence and had failed to do so before Nasser. Accordingly, it is not true that state capitalism by default does not change the nature of society, as the Nasserite experience witnessed a social change that transformed Egypt into a 'capitalist' state. In a nutshell, it would be a grave mistake to highlight that Nasser's capitalism did not generate a fully dynamic capitalist system while forgetting that it revolutionised the entire social structure in Egypt.<sup>30</sup>

Crucial to this last point is an understanding of the conditions that brought Nasser to power, while keeping in mind the nature of his regime. Looking more closely at the context of a few years earlier, one can see that aside from the well-known poverty that characterised the majority of Egyptian masses, a high degree of political polarisation existed, arousing fears about the type of system to be installed and its possible threats to the class essence of the society. Meanwhile, communists were enjoying growing popularity among the masses, both in cities and the countryside ('Abdel-Malek 1964: 40).<sup>31</sup> Amid this polarisation, which also saw the rise of religious fundamental movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the fascist Young Egypt's Party,<sup>32</sup> the attempts of the nascent domestic bourgeoisie to cement its position vis-à-vis foreign capitalism, and the social unrest the whole situation generated, none of the actors involved were able to clinch victory. Or at least, that was the case until Nasser's rise to power, when he became the Bonaparte who rose above the ongoing class conflict and utilised the state to ensure the implementation of the capitalist development process, regardless of its degree of success.<sup>33</sup>

### **Industrialisation Programme and Progress**

As the industrialisation plan was rolled out, the EO shone brightest, with the FEI (and the private sector it represented) relegated to playing second fiddle. By 1961, when the EO had run its course and the first five-year plan was being actualised, the EO had developed into a massive industrial amalgam responsible for over 30 per cent of the total industrial output in Egypt and roughly 20 per cent of employment in the industrial sector (Radwan 1974: 206). According to Sedqi (2004), Egypt saw a real miracle: the building of a real industrial base that was composed of a number of heavy industries such as iron and steel, despite the E£250 million allocated being so minimal that many expected the whole project to fail. However, Soviet assistance was also an important factor, as their loans included minimal interests and longer repayment periods.<sup>34</sup>

Significantly, these numbers allow us to peer into the essence of Egypt's industrial capital of the period, as they reflect the comparative advantage in productivity that public sector companies developed. The origins of the EO lay in the nationalised foreign assets, which were already more advanced than the majority of the national private sector. This value of industrial output vis-à-vis employment also offers us an insight into capital investment in the sector. The fact that previously foreign-held establishments had a higher output share compared to its lower employment could only mean that these establishments had a significantly higher capital investment ratio that persisted and, according to Aziz Sedqi's (2004) testimony, even increased after nationalisation. This means that Egyptian private capital was reluctant to make long-term investments in productivity. In fact, some writers such as Samir Radwan and Robert Mabro, whose scholarship on Egyptian political economy is widely recognised, often refer to the public industrial sector as the sole 'modern' industrial sector in Egypt, as native industrial capital failed to maintain a sufficient level of investment to keep up with the times, falling into obsolescence by the end of the 1960s (1976: 96–8).

After the regime realised the unwillingness of Egyptian capitalists to follow its plans of long-term industrial investments, instead preferring quick and easy profits, it resorted to acts of nationalisation,<sup>35</sup> leading to the expansion of the public sector.<sup>36</sup> Certainly, this lack of interest on the capitalists' side did not serve the project well, as decisions had to be approved by Nasser and his cast before their implementation.<sup>37</sup>

In 1960, the first five-year plan was announced and put into action. The ambitious project saw the creation of several giants of industry such as Al-Nasr Automotive Manufacturing Company, Al-Nasr Company for Television and Electronics, and Al-Nasr Company for Steam Boilers and Pressure Vessels, among many others. The gargantuan public sector that was the hallmark of the Nasserite era was born. All of these newly created companies, along with the nationalised enterprises, were organised under the direct supervision of the Minister of Industry (Gazarin 2006: 114). Thus, by the dawning years of the second five-year plan, 90 per cent of the gross value added generated in establishments of ten or more employees was produced by the public sector. However, that percentage drops to only 64 per cent when smaller establishments are included (Mabro and Radwan 1976: 96). Nasser's vision of a public sector as the vanguard of the industrialisation process without having to be burdened by its minutiae was effectively realised.

For this plan to materialise, the Nasserist regime had to marshal its resources for industrialisation. This marshalling occurred in four main arenas: industrial, agricultural, diplomatic and monetary. In the case of

the industrial arena, the Egyptianisation and later the nationalisation of the main industrial assets allowed the government to control vast tracts of the industrial sector in Egypt. This gave it access to the already established industries and their revenues, which were directed at further industrial expansion and investment.

With respect to agricultural production (arguably more important), the regime not only owned lands outright but also commandeered the process of agricultural production, outlining what and how much peasants could plant, in order to limit the need for importing essentials while still producing enough cash crops to sell on the international market (Ragab and Abou-Harb 1970: 49–56). Both these goals served one purpose: to limit the haemorrhaging of hard currency and save it for the procurement of machinery and material on the international market.<sup>38</sup>

This leads us to the third arena, that of the diplomatic resources. For many developing nations, the acquisition of machinery and technology, essential for the process of industrialisation, is a precarious task, as the hard currency needed to acquire them on the international market requires orienting the national economy towards external markets, often at the expense of the domestic market's self-sufficiency. To overcome this significant hurdle, loans in these currencies are solicited on the international money markets, which often come with the onerous burden of high interest. This is where diplomatic resource fits in, as cordial relations and strategic partnerships with industrialised nations can lower the cost of borrowing and facilitate payments. It can further allow lower prices and better conditions for the purchase of these machineries and technologies. Such was the case for Ghana and its beneficial partnership with Hungary in the pharmaceutical field, and Czechoslovakia in the rubber manufacturing field (Sawyer 1980: 3–7). The primary partner was the Soviet Union, with which Egypt forged mutually beneficial economic arrangements, and leveraged its geopolitical position and diplomatic clout to gain access to extended lines of credit on favourable terms that would become available once called on. For the 1961 cotton crisis, however, Egypt had to resort to quickly accessible short-term loans, which if not for Nasser's earlier financial prudence would have been disastrous (Social Justice Platform).

The fourth and last arena is the directing of internal market trends, and whether it should be geared to consumption or savings that could be marshalled for investment. In an industrialisation programme such as the one at hand, the choice between the two ends is an immensely difficult and consequential one. On the one hand, increasing consumption is important, to ensure the new factories have market demand that they can fulfil. On the other hand, investment enables these factories to be built in the first place. Facing this

decision, Nasser and his regime could not make a clear choice and favour one over the other, and ended up attempting to achieve both at the same time, hoping that the projected increase in income would allow them to achieve both ends. What transpired were varying degrees of success on both fronts.

On the consumption front, Egyptians' consumptive ability increased in all areas. By the end of the first five-year plan, average per capita consumption increased at the lowest rate for lentils, at just 14 per cent, compared to 1960 when the plan was launched. The highest increases were in radios, at 652.2 per cent, detergents at 453.8 per cent, followed by refrigerators at 215.5 per cent. In fact, the number of households with refrigerators roughly tripled by 1965 (Sabri 1966: 51–4).<sup>39</sup> So, while consumption rose dramatically, the still significant reliance on debt for purchasing meant that income levels – and hence consumptive ability – were lagging behind production and could become unsustainable in the long run.

On the savings and investment front, another remarkable success was in the making. After brief but significant growth between 1960 and 1961, savings fell drastically in 1962, when roughly 21.6 per cent of the national savings were wiped out, reduced from E£210.1 million to just E£164.7 million. Savings would only clear the 1961 level again in 1964, when they hit E£236.8 million. By the end of the first five-year plan, savings stood at E£288.4 million, a full 64 per cent growth compared to the 1960 level of E£175.9 million (*ibid.*: 88–90). This decrease in savings – caused by the drop in 1962 – forced the government to rely more on Treasury bills and bonds as a means of financing its investments (Nour 1965: 36). While borrowing to finance productive investments is an economically sound endeavour, the increased reliance on incurring internal debts reveals the difficulties in the policy of pursuing two rabbits at once. So, while Nasser did successfully finance his plans, it was not without hurdles that revealed cracks in the structure.<sup>40</sup>

## Industrial Production Development

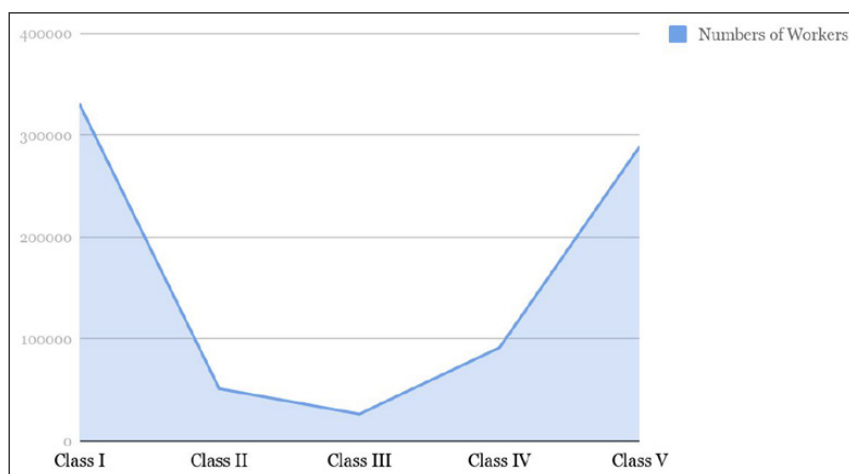
The Republican government's decision to build an industrial base was not an empty promise. Indeed, industry enjoyed the largest share of public investment from 1957 until the First Republic's demise in the early 1970s. Massive industrial complexes were erected for the manufacturing of steel, steam engines, vehicles, and durable consumer products that aimed to supply the nation's needs, from the needle to the rocket.<sup>41</sup> Between 1956 and 1973, the industry's average share of public investment grew from 23.8 to 33.9 per cent, an overall growth of 42.4 per cent. Contrary to current detractors' claims, these investments were not the least bit wasteful, as within the same period industry's contribution to GDP increased from 13.4 to 21.7 per cent,



a growth of over 61.9 per cent (Mabro and Radwan 1967: 46–8).<sup>42</sup> The investment in the manufacturing and mining industries during the ten years of the two five-year plans covering 1960–70 amounted to £912.9 million (*ibid.*: 68–9), the equivalent of almost US\$ 2.1 billion at the time.<sup>43</sup> The rapid increase in industrial investments translated into higher manufacturing outputs, which doubled between 1954 and 1970 (*ibid.*: 87).

### Employment Patterns

These colossal developments were of course accompanied by increases in employment figures in industrial activity in general, and especially in industrial establishments employing ten or more workers (10&<). Overall, the number of workers in the manufacturing industries increased by 118.6 per cent, from roughly 396,800 workers in 1954 to 867,300 in 1967. In (10&<) factories, the number of industrial workers increased by 129.7 per cent, from 264,4000 workers in 1954 to over 607,300 workers in 1967 (*ibid.*: 139). The governmental industrial policy clearly favoured large industrial establishments, creating a bimodal distribution of industrial workers vis-à-vis establishment size in a clearly inverted bell curve. For the purpose of this display (Figure 1) we took the figures of the year 1963<sup>44</sup> and divided industrial establishments into five different classes (Class I: <10, Class II: 10–49, Class III: 50–99, Class IV: 100–499, Class V: 500+).



**Figure 1:** Distribution of workers by factory size

Source: Barbour (1972); Mabro and Radwan (1976: 139)

While Figure 1 capturing the 1963 industrial employment figures shows the (<10) class employing the most workers, it is worth noting that the general trend during that period was the continual, if slow, decrease in employment

in these establishments. Workers in (<10) establishments amounted to 33.4 per cent of the total industrial labour force in 1954, and over the years it decreased, reaching 29.9 per cent in 1967. By 1970, it had decreased to only 27 per cent (Mabro and Radwan 1976: 139).<sup>45</sup> This bimodal distribution of employment weight in Class I and Class V illustrates the landscape of the Egyptian economy: the public sector dominated all classes but Class I, and clearly favoured the large industrial establishments of Class V, while the private sector remained concentrated in Class I (establishments usually servicing the public industrial sector), the central management of which through the state would have been too inefficient.<sup>46</sup> The value of Figure 1 is that it undisputedly shows that the economy in Egypt never became completely absorbed by the state, as current revisionist narratives of the period would lead us to believe. Rather, the economy remained in a delicate balance between state-led developmentalist planning and efficient management.

## Productivity and Progress

Overall, Gross Value Added per Worker (GVApW) increased significantly during the industrialisation plan, as the massive increase in investment as well as workers ensured that workers' productivity did not lag, and the factories did not become bloated with unnecessary labour. As we mentioned above, the total employment in industrial establishments (10&<) grew from roughly 260,000 in 1952 to 577,800 in 1967. During the same period, the GVA for these establishments increased from E£74.5 million to E£305.7 million (Mabro and Radwan 1976: 99–104). Thus, the GVApW increased from E£286.5 per worker to E£529 per worker, a growth of roughly 84.6 per cent over these fifteen years, a clear and indisputable indicator that the capital investments the Nasserite government poured into the industrial sector were well managed and directed, as they generated significant growth in labour productivity.

As Table 1 clearly shows, while GVApW grew at an impressive rate, considering where the Egyptian industry had started, the growth was vastly uneven, with only one sector (rubber) deteriorating due to the massive bust of the rubber market in the mid-1950s, which continued well into the 1970s. The biggest growth in GVApW was in paper (246.3 per cent), electric machinery (184.9 per cent), and metallic products (128.7 per cent).

Aside from the differentiation of GVApW by sector, clear speciation can be observed between (<10) establishments and (10&<) establishments. As the first class employed roughly 260 out of 867,300 workers, forming 29.9 per cent of the industrial labour force in 1967, it contributed E£57.1 million out of the E£362.8 million of GVA (*ibid.*: 101), i.e. roughly

**Table 1:** Employment and Gross Value Added<sup>47</sup>

Sector	Workers 1952	GVA 1952 (000)s	GVApW 1952 (EGP/W)	Workers 1967	GVA 1967 (000)s	GVApW 1967 (EGP/W)	GVApW Growth (%)
Food	47606	13553	284.7	76484	32696	427.5	50.2
Beverages	5385	3100	575.7	5635	3799	674.2	17.1
Tobacco	10,532	5484	520.7	12,238	13,538	1106.2	112.5
Textiles	11,5357	24,722	214.3	24,6505	116,376	472.1	120.3
Clothing	5706	1400	245.4	9472	3774	398.4	62.4
Wood	944	155	164.2	3426	1110	324.0	97.3
Furniture	5614	1028	183.1	8672	2578	297.3	62.3
Paper	5245	976	186.1	13,409	8641	644.4	246.3
Printing	7235	2059	284.6	13,354	6138	459.6	61.5
Leather	1995	425	213.0	2874	1069	372.0	74.6
Rubber	186	275	1478.5	4103	2886	703.4	-52.4
Chemicals	11,052	5570	504.0	46,058	38,917	845.0	67.7
Petroleum	4576	6358	1389.4	10,192	15,952	1565.1	12.6
Non-metallic products	13,946	3176	227.7	31,992	12,912	403.6	77.2
Basic metals	3800	1234	324.7	22,966	11,995	522.3	60.8
Metallic products	7292	1283	175.9	24,928	10,032	402.4	128.7
Non-electric machinery	534	174	325.8	8867	3401	383.6	17.7
Electric machinery	1095	340	310.5	11,178	9888	884.6	184.9
Transport	8746	2336	267.1	18935	6496	343.1	28.4
Miscellaneous	2576	865	335.8	6605	3493	528.8	57.5
Total	260,052	74,513	286.5	577,803	305,691	529.1	84.6

Source: Mabro and Radwan (1976: 99–104)

15.7 per cent of total industrial GVA. Considering that the first class is where the private sector primarily operated during that period, these numbers lend credence to Mabro and Radwan (1976), and others' assertions that by the late 1960s private industry in Egypt was so outdated it was particularly inefficient.

The final dimension of the *Ibra lil Saroukh* on which the programme must be assessed is the hallmark goal of building an industrial base capable of supplying national needs and cementing the nation's independence.<sup>48</sup> In this case, two indicators for success are the rate of import substitution, i.e. the change in Domestic Production Ratio (DPR) of total supply (a measure of self-sufficiency in manufactured products), and the percentage of imports in intermediate consumption (IC) for manufacturing production (Table 2).<sup>49</sup> It is important to note, however, that intermediate imports can almost never equal zero,<sup>50</sup> and that tariffs inflate the proportions of this component in a way that we cannot correct in our analysis due to a lack of exact and actionable information.

The figures in Table 2 show clear signs of progress in the main thrust of the ISI programme, as DPR increased across the board. In this vein, some industries were rather created from scratch, such as the electric machinery sector, which grew to cover 46 per cent of domestic needs. Overall, Egypt achieved self-sufficiency in tobacco, clothing, furniture, and leather, and near self-sufficiency in food, beverages, textiles, printing and non-metallic products. Overall, DPR increased by 12.6 per cent, from 70.5 to 79.5 per cent, during the period.

## Benefactors

Importantly for the programme's social and economic goals, the expansion of the industrial sector witnessed the influx of large numbers of workers without affecting wages negatively, increasing effective demand. In fact, wages (and compensations related to public firms' profits, of which workers became entitled to a share in 1961) rose steadily over the period of the industrialisation programme;<sup>51</sup> the average hourly wage was doubled between 1954 and 1970 (from 3.7 piasters to 7.4 piasters<sup>52</sup> per hour) ('Abdel-Fadil 1980: 33). Moreover, the minimum wage was raised three times: in 1962, 1972, and again in 1974. The first of these raises (and the highest increase of the minimum wage in Egyptian history) doubled the minimum wage from 12.5 piasters per day to 25 piasters. It should be noted, however, that the law only covered all industrial workers immediately after its enactment, rather than all workers (*ibid.*: 28–9). This decision was taken in the context of the regime's new socialist direction. As such, as well as raising workers' living standards and consumptive ability, it served the political purpose of securing workers' support for Nasser's socialism.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, this same law reinforced workers' gains by improving the public sector workers' situation, granting them 25 per cent of their respective companies' net profits.<sup>54</sup>

**Table 2:** Domestic production ratio (DPR) and intermediate consumption

Sector	DPR of total supply 1947	DPR of total supply 1967	Change in DPR (%)	Imports in IC (%)	Domestic IC (%)
Food	95.8	92.4	-3.5	51.2	48.8
Beverages	77.8	96.5	24	9.7	90.3
Tobacco	97.7	100	2.4		
Textiles	73.4	96.2	31	9.6	90.4
Clothing	69.7	100	43.4	22.6	77.4
Wood	30.9	68.8	122.6	6.6	93.4
Furniture	90.2	100	10.9	15.6	84.4
Paper	40.4	65.3	61.6	26.2	73.8
Printing	93.2	96.8	3.8	10.7	89.3
Leather	88.7	100	12.8	58.6	41.4
Rubber	30.7	40.7	32.5	44.8	55.2
Chemicals	53.8	61.2	13.8	45.2	54.8
Petroleum	35.3	74.4	110.8	50.2	49.8
Non-metallic products	73.9	89.4	21	16.6	83.4
Basic metals	16.2	65.4	303.7	27.9	72.1
Metallic products	42.5	80.9	90.4	72.2	27.8
Non-electric machinery	0.4	14.3	3475	46.2	53.8
Electric machinery	0.0	46.0	$\infty$	42.2	57.8
Transport	8.3	43.0	418.0	29.8	70.2
Miscellaneous	52.8	66.6	26.1	30.1	69.9
Total	70.5	79.4	12.6	33.4	66.6

Source: Mabro and Radwan (1976: 19, 209)

### **Instrumentalising Women: State Feminism?**

It is evident that Nasser's industrialisation programme saw unprecedented economic transformation, reaping benefits for the entire working class. However, these benefits were uneven: while it enhanced women's presence and participation in certain areas, it also to a large degree maintained and cemented patriarchal norms that effectively prevented women from achieving complete emancipation.

The action rom-com *Taymour we Shafika* (Taymour and Shafika) was released in 2007, featuring the strong-willed environmental prodigy, Shafika, and her romance with her neighbour, the secret service police officer Taymour. Shafika – by the end the Minister of Environment and youngest minister in Egypt – has to quit her job so that her soon-to-be husband does not have to face the dilemma of sitting with his wife on the dais during ministerial functions or standing outside with his colleagues. With this, the flimsiest of excuses, Shafika concedes that her very important work is far less important than the mild and occasional social discomfort of her future husband (Marei 2007).

Contrary to what some might imagine, this theme of the strong-willed woman submitting to her partner's control is relatively new to Egyptian cinema. In 1966, forty-one years before *Shafika* gave up her ministerial position, another woman called Esmat found herself promoted and transferred to a different company in Fateen Abdel Wahab's *Miraty Modeer 'Aam* (My Wife, The General Manager, 1966). Upon showing up to work, Esmat discovers that she was transferred to her husband's company, where she is to be his new boss. Happy for her but wanting to avoid the complications of the situation, Esmat's husband asks her to keep their marriage secret at work so as not to affect his standing. However, as soon as Esmat starts to learn how to fend off the sexist attitudes of her workplace, her relationship with her husband Hussein is revealed. Not standing for anyone at the office impugning his wife's honour, Hussein reveals that they are in fact married. After comedic hijinks and complications caused by employees trying to exploit Hussein and Esmat's marriage, Esmat asks to be reassigned to a different company, only to show up there and find her husband has asked to be reassigned too so he can work with her.

These two movies stand in diametrical opposition to each other: one is about a woman who perseveres against social prejudice in the workplace and eventually asks to be reassigned so she can preserve her marriage without compromising her career's success; forty-one years later, the heroine gives up her much more prominent career so as not to inconvenience her future husband. Even between Hussein and Taymour, the difference could not be more stark. For all his misgivings, Hussein supports his wife and admires her success, making a point of transferring to her new company as a sign of his appreciation of her as a competent manager. Meanwhile, Taymour can scarcely stomach his sweetheart's success, constantly belittling her, commenting on her wardrobe choices, and pointing out that she would not be able to be a good homemaker if she is working.

*Miraty Modeer 'Aam* delivers the message that entering the workplace is not going to be easy, even with the state's backing, but it is worth the trouble, and the attitudes women face are destined for the dustbin of history. The choice of Shadiya, a singer, actress and sex symbol of the period, to play Esmat perhaps also points to Esmat not sacrificing her femininity in any way for work. However, with far fewer available jobs after the collapse of Nasser's industrialisation project, women were no longer needed to build the nation through participation in the formal job market. They were instead seen as a liability, and unemployment was blamed on their presence in the workforce. As such, Shafika was mobilised in 2007 to tell Egyptian girls and women that no matter how smart and successful you are, even if you could single-handedly end climate change, your greatest value is your role in the private sphere providing unpaid care for your family.

A deeper analysis of the Nasserite industrialisation project and its relationship with women uncovers why its collapse not only saw the participation of women in the formal economy plummet, but also an almost complete reversion of their perceived role in society. A key fact is that women's power within the industrialisation programme was not solely a function of their bargaining power as a part of the labour force, but also a function of the social norms governing Egyptian society at the time, which the industrialisation process did not completely eliminate. In a sort of passive gender revolution, the Nasserite regime pushed to enhance women's economic and social standing, though it shied away from fully emancipating them by overturning the general patriarchal structures governing society, leaving women's status in society stalled.

Unlike the pre-1952 regimes, Nasser's 'welfare state' offered explicit commitments to public equality for women. Accordingly, a type of state feminism – as a formal and legal state strategy for women's rights – was initiated, aimed at introducing changes to gender relations within Egyptian society (Hatem: 1992: 232–3). Such an approach bolstered the regime's political legitimacy and extended its progressive credentials (*ibid.*). More importantly, it highlighted the government's aims and limits by abolishing the structural basis of gender inequality, making reproduction a public rather than a private concern, and employing increasing numbers of women in the state, which continues to employ the majority of women workers (*ibid.*). The regime embarked on a reform agenda that began with affirming the state's commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and wages to all Egyptians, and prohibiting all types of discrimination (on the basis of gender, racial origin, or religion) in the 1956 constitution. These rights were later reaffirmed in the revised constitution of 1963 (*ibid.*). Additionally, all



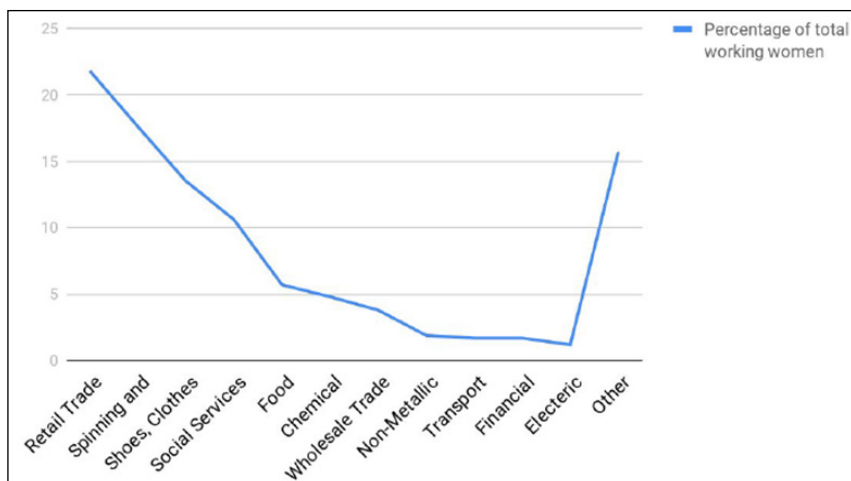
holders of intermediate school diplomas and college degrees were guaranteed a job by the state, regardless of their gender (*ibid.*). Moreover, women became entitled to fifty days of paid maternity leave and employers were forbidden to fire pregnant women on maternity leave and obligated to provide daily care services where one hundred or more women were employed (*ibid.*). Indeed, taking into consideration the context of the 1950s and 1960s, not to mention the horrible working conditions and societal pressure working women had to experience in the pre-revolution era, the Nasserite regime managed to achieve a number of good results on this front.<sup>55</sup>

Social attitudes towards women's education and employment became more welcoming as women's presence in these areas grew, with participation in the manufacturing sector increasing from 3.3 to 11.7 per cent of total women employed in the private sector between 1961 and 1971 (Hammam 1980: 56). However, this does not translate directly, as women's overall participation in the total manufacturing labour force in 1964 did not exceed 5.4 per cent (in comparison to 5 per cent in 1954) (Mabro and Radwan 1976: 44). By the same token, in 1969, women composed roughly 10 per cent of the formal wage labour market.<sup>56</sup> In a clear example from 1962, when Nasser opened a textile factory in Qina, one of the most conservative governorates of Egypt, the employment of five girls in one of the regime's first attempts to employ women as workers attracted significant media attention (Bier 2011: 60). This attention was not only a product of the infringement on local norms that prohibited women from occupying such jobs and mixing with men, but also of the regime's insistence on popularising the topic through different newspapers and media outlets. As a result, the number of women labourers inside the factory increased to 200 (*ibid.*). As Bier puts it, these sorts of acts were vital for the new 'revolutionary public life' and for 'redrawing the gender boundaries of political and social order' (*ibid.*: 62).

However, while such examples might suggest radical change was afoot, actual damage to the patriarchal culture affecting the majority of women was minimal. The fear of men's reactions and of antagonising religious groups, and the prospects of losing the support of both, prompted the regime to pick and choose its battles against patriarchal norms (Keddie 2007: 122–4). Instead, in certain state practices and laws, they were to some extent cemented. One example is the enacting of 'gender-specific protective legislation', framed as protecting *womanhood* by prohibiting women from working in jobs categorised as dangerous for their health or morals, such as working in nightclubs with gambling tables and alcohol, taking jobs that require heavy physical labour, as in mines and foundries, or jobs performed between 8 p.m. and 7 a.m. (exceptions were granted for performers, nurses

and workers in restaurants and hotels) (Bier 2011: 65–6). So, in this sense, working women remained gendered subjects (*ibid.*: 65).

Even in the industrial sector, where they enjoyed social protection, women were confined to certain ‘feminine industries’.<sup>57</sup> In the private sector, a microcosm of Egyptian industry, almost 70 per cent of women worked in fields such as retail trade, spinning and weaving, shoes and clothes manufacturing, social services, and food (Hamam 1980: 58). In reality, women’s concentration in industries forms a gradient topographical curve of the perceived femininity and masculinity of industrial work (see Figure 2). This suggests the continuity of the contempt for, or disbelief in, women’s ability to replace men in fields of industry that were considered masculine. As such, even as women made huge strides in their liberation in comparison to the previous period, compared to men in the same period, their gains were rather limited.



**Figure 2:** Economic activity of working women in Egypt’s private sector

Source: see Hamam (1980: 58)

Unlike manufacturing and industry, women’s presence in other fields of employment improved significantly; as by 1969, the percentage of working women increased by 31.1 per cent (Bier 2011: 68). However, men continued to dominate top positions and women were concentrated in clerical and teaching jobs (Keddie 2007: 122–4),<sup>58</sup> which were less rewarding in terms of salaries than other sectors dominated by men (*ibid.*: 67), and were denied the chance to become judges or diplomats (*ibid.*: 66–7). This suggests that educated middle class women were the main beneficiaries of the women-related reforms introduced by the regime.

Simply put, Nasser's regime created and oversaw a 'public patriarchy' that encouraged women to work, join the labour force, and enjoy a degree of economic independence while marginally preserving patriarchal culture that views women as subordinate to men and dependent on the state for education, employment, and other important social services (Hatem 1992: 233). While the state actively sought to change the perception of women in the economic sphere, to enshrine work as a part of a woman's life, and actively propagandised women's equality in the workplace, it chose to institutionalise other repressive notions of femininity, which circumscribed particular roles within the workplace. In this context, housework was still largely seen as women's work, so even if unpaid domestic labour time was reduced, a working woman still had to perform both: the same labour as her counterparts at the workplace, and domestic care work, leaving her at a social disadvantage and making work a disproportionate burden for her. As a matter of fact, the regime tried to promote the idea of an 'energetic worker and successful wife' in an effort to ease women's introduction into the economic sphere, particularly in response to fears they would neglect their original role (in the view of patriarchal society) as housewives.<sup>59</sup> Even when the regime initiated its industrialisation project, which partly depended on expanding the production of electronic appliances, it was believed that encouraging women to work would enable them to generate enough funds to buy the kind of electronics that would make their life easier and at the same time help the industrialisation process by increasing the demand for its products.<sup>60</sup> In reality, however, the demand was limited to the upper strata due to high prices (Bier 2011: 81–2). In 1962, the regime decreased the prices of locally produced appliances (to become cheaper than imported ones) and allowed public sector employees to purchase them on instalment plans (*ibid.*: 83). These measures were marginally effective, with appliance ownership rising significantly between 1963 and 1964, but failing to help the majority of women.<sup>61</sup>

Another survey, conducted in 1970 and published a few days away from Nasser's death by *al-Tale'e'ah*, interviewed women about their experiences of work. While the sample is relatively small, with only forty-one women surveyed, it is consistent with other evidence. A majority of over 92 per cent of those surveyed had entered the formal workforce after Nasser's ascension. The majority of those surveyed also earned more than the national average wage, even though the occupations reported were factory work, teaching, agricultural work, and retail (1970: 24–8).<sup>62</sup>

Ironically, the centrality of the phallic image of the rocket to the programme of industrialisation betrays the intrinsically patriarchal approach to women's issues within such modernising projects. In its scope, it becomes

expedient not to wage an all-out war against patriarchal norms, as the project still requires women to maintain their role in social reproduction. Several signs are presented in order here. The personal status laws of the 1920s and 1930s continued to be upheld. In these laws, women were defined as the economic dependents of men and as unstable emotional beings who cannot be trusted with the right to divorce (Hatem 1992: 232–3). Likewise politically, although women were granted the right to vote by 1956, their political representation remained minimal – they were not represented at all in the constitution assembly of 1954, and all independent feminist organisations were outlawed as from 1954 (Keddie 2007: 122).

For sure, Egyptian feminists reacted against these acts. Still, because not all such activists made demands related to socio-economic matters, their opposition to the regime's policies was either quite limited to elitist circles or failed to generate enough momentum to pressure the government to implement radical changes. For example, Doria Shafik, perhaps the best known feminist in the time of Nasser, confined her demands to the political sphere, demanding the vote for women through her institution *Bint al-Nil*. Her political activism dated back prior to 1952 (Nelson: n.d.);<sup>63</sup> in 1954, Shafik and her associates started a hunger strike for votes and representation, to which the government acceded (*ibid.*). One year later, Nasser closed Shafik's *Bint al-Nil* before putting her under house arrest in 1960s for a number of years; she eventually committed suicide in 1975 (*ibid.*: 123).

Shafik's ardent support of the revolution and the new regime is evident in her publication *Bint al-Nil al-Siyasiyah* (The political daughter of the Nile), for example in an article titled 'The Happiness of a Nation', in which she celebrated the first anniversary of the free officers' rise to power (Shafik 1953: c.18/89). In the same year, she wrote, 'The only one step left is for women to gain equal political rights. Once achieved women will have been truly liberated.'<sup>64</sup> She also stated 'there can be no success for a nationalist movement without the cooperation of women .... It is unfair that half our nation are always giving but then are deprived of their rights'.<sup>65</sup> However, she started criticising the regime later by saying:

however, all these projects are connected to men. The Revolution has as yet paid little attention to projects dealing with women and their social and political lives .... True liberation should include the liberation of the majority from signs of slavery.<sup>66</sup>

Despite these differences with the regime, she was quite happy with the regime's approval to let women join the militias of the National Guard.<sup>67</sup> Eventually, she expressed a more obvious opinion on Nasser's regime by stating that she was protesting 'the onset of the dictatorship that is leading

Egypt into chaos.’ (Nelson n.d.). It is evident that Shafik’s main concern was the anti-democratic atmosphere that Nasser initiated, especially towards women, with little if any analysis around the material interests of women.

Other women involved in political activism, such as Inji Aflatun,<sup>68</sup> a communist who was running for parliamentary elections in 1956 with Sisa Nabrawi, showed a clear interest in the economic conditions of the masses, rather than an isolated interest in women’s liberation. As their political programmes in the elections showed, they conceived women’s rights as part of a larger struggle dependent on the alleviation of the masses’ dire economic conditions (minimum wages, subsidies, and representation, to name a few).<sup>69</sup>

Aflatun and Nabrawi were just two of sixteen women who ran for these elections receiving positive coverage by the state press despite an overwhelming majority of men being opposed to women in office (Naeba).<sup>70</sup> Despite this, Rawiya Atya a veteran of the Tripartite Aggression, and Amina Shukri, a social worker, would become the first women elected to office in modern Egypt (Sullivan 1986). Five years later, Dr Hekmat Abu Zaid would become the first woman appointed to ministerial office as she held the Ministry of Social Affairs from 1962 to 1965 (Badran 1995). The groundbreaking lasting effect of her appointment was that the Ministry of Social Solidarity would be one of the few ministries in Egypt that women are routinely appointed to lead.

Remarkably, the regime’s official rhetoric occasionally reflected its deeply-entrenched patriarchal tendencies. In one of his speeches, while commenting on the previous deliberations with the Supreme Leader of the Muslim Brotherhood on the prospects of collaboration, the hijab (veil), and gender segregation, Nasser stated:

Why wouldn’t women work? In my opinion, when a woman works, she is protected; because why do these who go astray do so? Because of need .... Because of poverty. We hear a woman was sick or her mother was sick and she was in need – we all know the stories – and she has to sell her body; as such work is safety for women. Preventing women from work is against their interests, we are really freeing women by allowing them to work with men shoulder by shoulder (21 December 1965).

In another speech, Nasser mocked British figureheads, including the Queen herself:

Can’t our newspapers insult the queen of Britain or its prime minister? We can, just like you did here in Port Said with your writings on the wall [during the Tripartite Aggression]. We remember this. We can pull out the writings?

You told them 'your Queng [apparently wanted to say queen but stumbled on his speech, the bibalex archives transcript says 'king'] is what?' [the crowd replies 'whore'] (23 December 1962).<sup>71</sup>

Such occasions prove that, regarding women's presence in public, the supervision of the state was still viewed as something essential to protect them from backsliding. This narrative justifies the public patriarchy implemented by the state and at the same time gives the state the right to determine the limits of women's participation in the public arena. Additionally, as the second quote shows, womanhood was still used from time to time as an insult, even in official discourse. This should dismantle the myth that Nasser gave unconditional support to women's liberation and show that his advocacy was still bound by moralist understandings of women's liberation and its limitations.

All in all, the post-Nasser experiences demonstrate how the retreat of the state from the economic sphere could negatively affect the prospects of gender equality. In 1960, the men's unemployment rate was 1.9 compared to the women's rate of 5.8 per cent. Yet, in 1976, the men's rate was 5.5, with 29.8 for women. The state's presence provided women with access to public resources without which they would be entirely dependent on the patriarchal family and its related burdens (Hatem 1992: 234). This reversal is simply the entropy of a statist system, as the state left to its own devices without forceful intervention will always revert to requiring the least energy to maintain it. In this case, it would be a resurgence of the patriarchy, which shares its paternalistic roots with the state. Feminism, along with all liberationary politics, stands essentially opposed to the hierarchical nature of the state.

## **Limitations and Lessons Learned**

The Nasserite project for postcolonial industrialisation faced limitations that can be categorised into three groups.

### ***Material Limitations***

In the Nasserite case, the most significant issue was the limited cultivable area, any increase in which demanded exorbitant investments. The second main material limitation was the extremely undeveloped industrial sector in Egypt, with some industries needing to be built from scratch, resulting in the third limitation, i.e. time. The very undeveloped nature of Egyptian industry meant the time needed for the realisation of the project was particularly long.

### *External Limitations*

Perhaps the hallmark of any postcolonial project are external limitations materialising in the pressures put forth by colonial powers on newly-independent nations. In the case of Egypt, this was shaped by the Cold War and its bipolarity, reflected in the high dam affair and the 1956 Tripartite Aggression, which almost killed the experiment in its cradle. Nasser also faced other serious external issues. In global politics, Nasser's visualisation of Egypt placed it at an intersection of three circles of identity: Arab, African and Islamic.<sup>71</sup> Realising the extent of the oil wealth lying in the Arab region and the geographical proximity of its countries, not to mention their lack of an industrial base like the one Egypt enjoyed, Nasser saw in the region the prospects of an external market capable of supporting the industrialisation process inside Egypt (Abdel-Malek 1968: 144–5). This is why he sought to extend Egypt's political and economic influences into other Arab countries dominated either directly by imperialist power or by their local allies, through promoting Arab Socialism and creating an Arab common market to sell Egyptian products. Such limitations materialised first in the failed union with Syria under the name of the United Arab Republic, and then later with the ideas of Arab Socialism and the war against British- and Saudi-supported groups in Yemen which caused the Egyptian Treasury burdensome losses (Little 1967: 207–17). On the African front, Nasser's policies can be easily summed up in an excerpt from a speech he gave in Conakry, Guinea:

Let me repeat after my brother [President Ahmed] Sekou Touré, there is but one Africa .... An Africa part of which got its independence, and an Africa that is still fighting against colonialism. It is the duty of the independent Africa to aid the Africa still struggling against colonialism (2 November 1965).

This invocation of African solidarity was not just a diplomatic courtesy performed for the host country. In fact, earlier the same year, Nasser brought up the ongoing Congo war in a campaign speech, contextualising it, along with the Tripartite Aggression, as the latest imperialist attack on African independence (20 January 1965). As such, Nasser's view of Egypt's relationship to Africa was that of a big sister and her little brothers. The big sister enjoyed independence, a modern army, and an industrial base that her little brothers lacked. While Egypt saw the Arab world – most of which was independent and comparatively richer than their African counterparts at this point – as a market, its sisterhood with Africa was manifested in aiding anti-colonial movements from Algiers to Leopoldville, where Egypt provided Patrice Lumumba with direct military assistance (Shaaraway 2014:



63). It also manifested itself in institutions such as the Organisation of African Unity, in which Nasser positioned Egypt as part of the Casablanca bloc that called for a federated Africa (Manelisi, Kornegay and Rule 2000). The membership of the Casablanca bloc in itself was a clear indication that attempts to separate the African from the Arab were misguided, as it also included Libya, Algeria and Morocco, a concentration of Arab states that can only bely the leveraging of Arab identity for African unity on the part of Nasser and his counterparts. However, the unevenness of development across the continent, coupled with a myriad of physical, linguistic and material barriers, doomed their attempts. Even though the experiment persisted through these failures, it received a staggering blow with the 1967 defeat at Israeli hands. All in all, Nasser's economic and political expansionary programme put him in the imperialist crosshairs long before he was ready to face their wrath, which severely hindered the experiment.

### ***Internal Limitations***

These are the limitations imposed on the experiment by its own implementers. Major among these was the absence of coordination between the different sectors, especially with the existence of what Amin referred to as independent centres of power and the various centres of decision-making, resulting in the prevalence of different criteria of implementation and quality.<sup>73</sup> Such weak coordination resulted in a competition between public apparatuses in a manner that affected the entire progress of the plan negatively (Labib 2019). The scope of the competition and the extent of its negative effects, however, is unclear. While many planned economies followed a system where the design phase was competitive and the execution phase was cooperative, the exact unfolding of the process in Egypt is not clear enough to establish whether this was the norm or not. Consequently, financial disruptions became one of the permanent features of the system and the programme (Amin 2012: 170–2). The latter, when coupled with a continuous need for imported production inputs (and technology) and occasional disruptions of foreign currency, as was Egypt's case in the 1960s, can affect the sustainability of industrialisation (Mabro and Radwan 1976: 231–6).

Second, the absence of the required industrial base hindered the development of the technology needed for the entire industrial sector, as within the heavy industries the focus was directed towards traditional commodities such as iron and steel, cement, petroleum, and chemical products (Dowidar 1982: 109; Mabro 1974: 144–6). This was coupled with the increased cost of production caused by excessive usage of inputs, mis-storage, and the inability to use the factories up to their full potential

(*ibid.*: 114). Finally, the lack of trained and skilled cadres forced the regime to hire personnel who did not necessarily believe in the project, or others who lacked the know-how needed to avoid wastefulness ('Abdel-Malek 1967: 169; el-Serafy 1963: 230).

However, the limitation that spelled the doom of this experiment was the fact that it attempted to give workers a measure of economic freedom and progress without giving them the political means to protect these very gains. Thus, the managerial caste became the stewards of vast tracts of wealth with only Nasser keeping them in line, binding his fate to the fate of the entire experiment. Upon his death, the stewardship of the managerial caste went unsupervised, allowing them to gradually strip the politically disempowered workers of their gains. The importance of this limitation stems from the fact that, in our understanding, it is almost universal to postcolonial development, as each leader, no matter how noble their goals, ends up embedding the antithesis of their work in its foundation by fostering unequal relations of power and monetary compensation that ensures, once possible, that the new empowered caste will do away with their project.

## Breakthroughs and Pitfalls

Nonetheless, positive achievements materialised in the establishment of almost 800 factories (mainly between 1962 and 1968) (Sayigh 1984: 51). In this process, a choice had to be made between favouring heavy industries or consumer goods.<sup>74</sup> Overall, different types of industries were centres of investment, including textiles, steel and iron, chemicals and fertilisers, mineral, food industries, and durable consumer goods. However, investigating the limits of Nasser's policy requires determining which of the two categories of industries received relative priority. All of these industries did not supposedly materialise as a blind push for industrialisation, but rather as parts of cogent strategy whereby all these industrial cogs fitted together to create the desired developmental leap.<sup>75</sup> The aim was to create a network of different industries that would serve and develop each other, keeping in mind the main goal of developing Egyptian society. However, the plan did not actually develop accordingly, as the necessary coordination between the different industrial and manufacturing sectors (networking) was never reached (*ibid.*). Critical to note here is that although the state invested in both types of industries, the results were not equally successful. This problem drew a lot of attention in *al-Tale'e'ah*, with many authors arguing the importance of prioritising heavy industries, as was expected to happen in the second five-year plan, due to its long term effects on growth, development, and even agriculture, by providing all the necessary equipment

to increase production, unlike consumer industries, which do not aid overall production.<sup>76</sup> Likewise, others reiterated the consumer industries' inability to help developmental purposes other than increasing individual consumption, and highlighted how, in fact, public consumption in the first four years of the plan increased beyond the limit designed by it, causing the rate of annual savings to income to deteriorate for the duration of the plan (Eid 1965: 42, 46). This is not to say that heavy industry was neglected; in fact, except for the first year of the first five-year plan, it consistently received more investments than intermediary and consumer industries. However, the argument that is made here is that even more focus needed to be directed on to heavy industry, as it was largely non-existent when the project began, with some authors arguing that allocating 53 per cent of the first five-year plan investments to heavy industry was not enough (Hassan 1965a: 104–5).

Although the Nasserite state gave special importance to the development of heavy industries – those of capital goods – its development lagged. The fact that many of these industries did not exist at all prior to the programme meant that their success would remain rather limited. Meanwhile, in intermediate and consumer products the programme achieved remarkable feats (Mabro 1974: 144–6). So while by the demise of the project Egypt had not become an advanced industrial state, it had achieved significant strides in that direction.

The positive lessons to be drawn from the Nasserite industrialisation programme and its eventual decline are as numerous as they are complex. These lessons include:

The superiority of central planning – and even approaches to planning derived from it – as a tool for developing economies to eliminate the waste of unnecessary competition and parallel processes. In his narrative, Sedqi (2004) showed special attention to the importance of planning and development and how it was a vital part of the industrialisation project. However, he strictly meant the type of planning that leads to increased productivity, which eventually can create tangible development. Thus, it is not strange to find both Sedqi and Abdel-Wahab (2004), despite their obvious hatred of leftist ideas, aggressively attacking the policies of economic opening and categorising the mire of low ineffectual investments under liberalism and neoliberalism and their effects on the economy as disastrous.

1. The attainment of a tangible developmental leap affecting the majority of the Egyptian population should be the mainstay of any liberationist project. Nasser's regime foresaw an unprecedented increase in the social and economic rights professed and granted to the population, which accompanied the induction of a large segment of society into the labour market without depressing wages.

2. The development of self-sufficiency, in tandem with social production aims, to primarily satisfy and serve the social material needs of the population.
3. The success of the neo-imperialist mission after the industrialisation programme was rolled back turned Egypt into a country significantly dependent on external markets for its needs, especially foodstuffs and energy. This highlights the importance of self-sufficiency, which Nasser managed to achieve to a some extent, despite not succeeding completely. Currently, in the absence of such sufficiency, crises abound where supplies of basics and necessities can easily disappear from the shelves due to currency fluctuations or foreign reserves depletion.

It should be clear by now that once the state rolled back its interventionist role practised under Nasser, and after the attempts to escape the dictations of the imperialist system failed, Egypt was restored to its previous position as an integrated part of a capitalist totality, though on neoliberal grounds and under the supervision of the neo-imperialist powers. This does not indicate that, even under Nasser, Egypt completely ceased to be a part of that totality. Rather, after the attempts to create an economically and politically independent state in the face of the old imperialist powers failed, post-Nasser regimes were obligated to accept a re-integration that was never in the Egyptian masses' favour. This means that resistance against imperialist capitalism cannot be a time-bound intervention but must be a protracted, continuous, never-ebbing process, so that whatever gains are achieved do not become sandcastles wiped away by the imperialist tide.

In conclusion, and so as to not let the vastness of the experiment devour our attempts to recover it, one lesson stands paramount atop all others: if we seek to overturn or to merely reshape the capitalist totality, created and maintained by imperialist powers, we cannot fight it piecemeal. Rather, it should be a fight against an entire structure opposing the betterment of the masses' welfare. The essence of the Nasserite project, hinted at by the name 'needle to rocket', is that it was a comprehensive response to the totality of its time, and hence any attempt at a parsimonious recovery that does not aim to recover it in its entirety will be doomed to fail. The increased productivity would not have been achievable were it not for the massive capital investments, which in turn would not have been available were it not for the mobilisation of the state's natural and financial resources. This commandeering of resources was made more palatable to the populace by the new social contract and the economic rights it secured – economic rights that could not have been granted if not for continually rising productivity.

This is not to say that this is a closed circle, but rather to assert the fact that all these developments need to happen in tandem, not only to ensure maximum efficiency and make use of the limited time anti-colonial projects have before the imperial powers can effectively mobilise their arsenal, but also to ensure the mere survival of the project, as any lags in any cogs will eventually halt the entire machine. In fact, we highlighted earlier that one of the reasons the project collapsed was the lagging of democratic workers' representation, which allowed the project to be hijacked. As such, when we seek to recover projects such as these, when we accept these herculean undertakings, we have to do so with the intent to restore the totality of their achievements while avoiding the pitfalls of their disappointments. Just as the imperial powers, personified in Baron Thorneycroft, Defence Minister of the UK, saw that 'there could be no half measures in dealing with [Nasser]' (McNamara 2003: 198) now too, half measures will avail us nothing.

## Notes

1. Social Justice Platform. This article was completed as part of the Post-Colonialisms Today project.
2. Common name for pre-revolution Egypt.
3. Victory Day Address in Port Said, 21 December 1965 (Abdel Nasser).
4. The paper has no connection whatsoever to the month of October, however it seems that it was titled as such in a cynical attempt to capitalise on the October War (Yom Kippur War) and popularise it.
5. For more on the period, see Farah (2009); Hinnebusch Jr. (1985); 'Abdel-'A'lim (1990); Morsi (1987); Soliman (1998); and Tignor (2016).
6. We distinguish classical economic liberalism, embodied in Sadat's *Infitah* and the first twenty years of Mubarak's regime, from neoliberalism, symbolised by Mubarak's last ten years at the helm. Confusing both is a common mistake that we find detrimental to the discourse. As such, it is implied throughout this article that Egyptian society witnessed a number of transformations under the influence of the dominant economic mentality and as a clear consequence of Sadat's liberalisation. It follows here that these transformations had different – albeit consequential – ramifications. So, while we understand the difference between them, we lack the space to delve into their specificities. Our focus is directed towards the Nasserite industrialisation experience, as we believe that its failure (combined with other external factors) caused the later shifts to classical liberalism and eventually neoliberalism.
7. This is not to imply that different 'underdeveloped' countries all get to be affected equally, but rather that their development does vary according to the internal conditions prevailing in each case (combining a mixture of old and modern features of capitalist development) without leaving the capitalist terrain, i.e. variegated capitalism. See Jessop (2014).

8. We exclusively use the word 'woman', and not 'female', to avoid any biologically reductive reading of our work.
9. For these first few years, the Nasserite regime tried to make use of the bipolarity of international politics and to extract all the aid it could get from both the US and the Soviets, without officially declaring allegiance to either. However, when the US pursued the World Bank in declining to finance the High Dam, a project which was to provide Egypt and its industries with electricity, and the Soviets stepped in with the necessary funds in the early 1960s, Nasser started shifting towards the latter and inaugurated the 'socialist road', represented in the National Charter of 1962. Ironically, up until the mid-1960s, he depended on American surplus food and loans for land reclamation and road paving (Little 1976: 230).
10. See Davis (1983).
11. Even after the Egyptianisation of foreign assets and until 1961, Nasser continued his attempts to encourage domestic private companies such as Banque Misr and Aboud to cooperate and invest in accordance with the programme of industrial development – to no avail. See 'Abdel-Malek (1967: 72; 1964: 41).
12. For more, see Ansari (1987); 'Abdel-Fatah (1987); 'Abdel-Fadil (1975); Radwan (1977); Mitchell (1967); Abdel-Sadiq and al-Nour (2017).
13. 1 feddan = 4200 square metres  $\approx$  1 acre.
14. By revolutionary we are referring to the fact that the land reform law managed to cement the capitalist relations of production and to attack the feudalist norms, mainly in favour of landless peasants, who, unlike before, gradually became agricultural workers with legal rights. Moreover, more machinery began to be used in agricultural production. As such, farms with tractors increased to 11,378 in 1961 (from 8617 in 1950) and irrigation machines increased to reach 27,157 in 1961 (from 13,399 in 1950) ('Abdel-Fadil 1975: 32–3).
15. Specifically, between 1952 and 1970, the state acquired 944,457 feddans, from which 817,538 were distributed to almost 341,982 families ('Abdel-Fadil 1975: 9–10).
16. This was probably why the regime was so interested in consolidating small ownerships above all else.
17. Over the two decades of Nasser's rule, the party had three different names: *Hai'at il-Tahrir* (the liberation organisation), *il-Ithad il-qawmye* (the national union), and *il-Ithad il-Ishtiraki il-'Arabi* (the Arab socialist union). See Mohamed (2002).
18. They were also appointed to key posts in media, press, culture and the diplomatic corp ('Abdel-Malek 1967: 75).
19. See Ansari (1987).
20. See O'Brien (1966: 104); 'Abdel-Malek (1968: 109–11).
21. It should be remembered that not all socialists and Marxists opposed Nasser equally, as there were some who believed that Nasser could develop to be a fully-fledged Marxist, and hence that their historical task was to put him on 'the road to socialism', not to oppose him. See 'Abdel-Malek (1964: 50–2). Other scholars such as Torrey and Devlin believed that Nasser was only applying some 'socialist remedies' pragmatically to solve some deeply-entrenched problems within Egyptian society (1965: 62).

22. Within such economies, the private sector is confined to act in accordance with the general plan that the state implements; if it survives, it will not be allowed to grow at the same rate as the public sector. For more on the possible cooperation between private and public sector within a centralised (planned) economy, see Dowidar (1965).
23. *al-Talee'ah* was a journal issued by a group of socialists and Marxists following their release from prison in the early 1960s. It started in 1965 and continued until the 1970s, when Sadat decided to shut it down after the social unrest associated with what is known as the food riots. The significance of the journal lies in the discussions it contains on different social and ideological issues that those authors were not allowed to have in public. As such, it provides a great insight into the ideas and critiques of a wide range of leftists of different backgrounds on post-1952 Egypt. For more on the journal, see al-Mulla (2014).
24. Keep in mind the regime's insistence on the sanctity of private property (a social institution) in the constitution of 1956 under articles 8 and 11. See Dekmejian (1971: 125). Equally telling are the decrees of July 1961, as it sought to distance itself from radical/Marxist currents calling for a proletarian revolution to change the entire social structure of the country. Finally, there was the regime's insistence on paying compensation for confiscated property, and the difference between the regime's envisioned ideal classless society and the single class desired by communists. See Kerr (1962: 138).
25. Also referred to as Arab Nationalism and sometimes as scientific socialism. See 'Abdel-Malek (1967: 73).
26. For more on the original sources of Arab Socialism and how it differentiated from Soviet Socialism and Marxism see Dekmejian (1971: 132–4); Hayashi (1964: 78–9, 88); and Kerr (1962: 140).
27. Grocery crops were dominated by large landowners due to the high level of capital required to cultivate them. Additionally, even though the state maintained a control over the inputs (such as fertilisers, seeds...), it loosened its control over the outputs, allowing those owners to increase their income. See Cooper (1982: 24).
28. This is why we find the regime's differentiation between exploitative and non-exploitative owners to the means of production shameful. Simply put, in the long run, the interests of both public and private sectors are destined to clash, endangering the sustainability of the entire project.
29. '[N]ationalism appears as the main fetishistic form of capital domination in the periphery and, hence, it plays a crucial role for capital reproduction.' See Perez Sainz (1980: 60).
30. On the eve of the 1952 events, there were ongoing debates between the Soviets and the Chinese on the nature of the new regime in Egypt. In general, it was believed that it represented a phase of the bourgeois revolution that could lead to the unification of the Arab world into a single nation-state and that it would put an end to the Western domination over the region. However, while the Chinese were eager to support the new regime in the hope that it could be radicalised later,



- the Soviets were first sceptical as to whether they could trust the leaders of such a revolution. Accordingly, the nature of the 1952 revolution, and the new regime it brought to power, was one of the reasons that caused conflict between both powers in the 1950s (Deutscher 1958). For a more detailed analysis on the nature of Nasser's Egypt, especially after the 1967 defeat, see Deutscher (1967: 38, 41).
31. For a more detailed account, see Hussein (1973).
  32. See Jankowski (1975).
  33. On the idea of Bonapartism, see Poulantzas (1969; 1976).
  34. Sedqi maintains that the Soviets did not help with more than 10 per cent of industrial projects (*ibid.*). In another narrative, Mohamed Abdel-Wahab, a former engineer in Nasser's military factories who became Minister of Industry in the 1980s, affirms that the help of the Soviets was essential to the industrialisation process in Egypt, especially since they used to grant Egypt entire factories in exchange for cotton, for example (a repayment agreement). Moreover, he insists that the Soviets should not be held responsible for industrial backwardness in Egypt (Abdel-Wahab 2004).
  35. Interestingly, following Egyptianisation, Nasser depended on Egyptian Marxists such as Ismail Sabri Abdullah and Samir Amin, among others, to establish and run the EO before he persecuted them in the late 1950s. During their work in the organisation, they complained of the highly centralised military bureaucracy and the lack of attention to the proposals submitted to expand the effectiveness of the institution. See Amin (2006: 82–90).
  36. On top of this huge bureaucratic structure was the army, headed by the Revolutionary Command Council. According to some sources, those who refused to show obedience to Nasser or preferred to follow their own ideas were not given the chance and were instantly marginalised (Little 1967: 233–5). Accordingly, in the light of the regime's failure to find enough collaborators among Egyptian capitalists and its need for cadres to fill the top positions, it chose to deploy its own personnel (the army), giving the latter the chance to dominate this newly created state apparatus.
  37. Concurrently, this autocratic manner was mirrored in the outlawing of any space for political expression not only for intellectuals, but also for workers. Merely a month after this new regime rose to power, two workers, Mohamed Mostafa Khamis and Mohamed A. al-Baqri, from Kafr il-Dawar City, were charged in a military tribunal for inciting a strike and violence, and subsequently executed. It was rumoured that both workers were members of a secret communist/leftist society and that their activism affected the charge, as the new regime wanted to clearly express its intention of not allowing this kind of political activism. The co-optation of the workers' union came as the final blow to any attempts to express grievances against the regime or its policies (Beinin and Lockman 1988: 418–26). In the following years, leftist activists (despite the regime's claims of socialist orientation) of different schools and names (Communists, Marxists, Socialists), as well as the members of the Muslim Brotherhood, were prosecuted and imprisoned for conspiring against the state. See 'Abdel-Malek (1964).

38. The importance of this arena is highlighted by the failure of the cotton crop in 1961. The crop was so vital that in 1961 it fetched over £121.8 million out of the £189 million that all Egyptian imports earned on the international market. In 1962, when the crop failed and the value of exported cotton fell to £88.8 million, the Egyptian state was in dire straits, as it not only lost on projected incomes, but it also had to compensate the farmers for their losses. In doing so, the regime fulfilled both a social duty to the farmers and their wellbeing, and an economic function in protecting the domestic market from the pangs of depression. The financial hardship severely affected the first five-year plan as it failed to meet its targets for the year 1962. See Sabri (1966: 86–9).
39. Worth noting here that a majority of appliances sales were on instalments instead of cash sales (Nour 1965: 38–9).
40. Another problem here, that relates to the general finances of the regime, is its dependence on indirect tax revenues. Even though taxes on personal income were increased massively in the wake of the so-called socialist transformation, the majority of tax revenues came from indirect taxes on goods and services. In the financial year 1965–66, indirect taxes comprised almost 73 per cent of the total tax revenues in comparison to about 27 per cent coming from direct taxes on income and wealth. Similarly, the majority of tax revenues came from public sector companies. See Hassan (1965b: 78). For a more detailed study of tax policy and the tax authority's performance under Nasser, see 'Abdel-Fadil in Sabri 'Abdallah et al. (1978).
41. *Ibra lil Saroukh* (Needle to Rocket) was the famous slogan of the Nasserist industrial policy. According to Abdel-Wahab, production was actualised over two production lines, with the first directed towards military needs, and the second (based on the unexploited remaining power of the first line) towards civil production.
42. By 1967, the gross value added in manufacturing industries establishments employing ten or more persons (10&<) had ballooned to over £305.7 million from a mere £74.5 million in 1952, a growth of over 310 per cent. If smaller establishments are included, the gross value added increases to £362.8 million. This growth expanded to every single industry; the lowest gains were made by the beverages industry, whose gross value added still increased by 122.5 per cent. The largest growth however was registered in industries that were almost non-existent at the birth of the Republic, such as in the engineering industries. Growth in industries such as non-electric machinery (1854.6 per cent growth), and electric machinery (2808 per cent growth), were the biggest beneficiaries, even though both combined remained at less than a tenth of the value of the textile industry, for example, which grew by over 470 per cent. See *ibid.* (1967: 99–102). It is important to note that in these calculations, construction, transport and electricity industries are not included, as industry is used in the narrowest possible sense, meaning manufacturing industries.

43. For the conversion rate, see 'The economy of the United Arab Republic', *International Bank for Reconstruction and Development* 1, 1966. Calculating inflation for the US dollar since then, the industrial investment of the period equals roughly US\$ 13.5 billion, or a quarter of a trillion Egyptian pounds in the modern sense.
44. The year that has the most data needed for this display, as K. M. Barbour (1972) offers a trove of information on it.
45. These authors offer several estimates; the researchers here chose the numbers from the Census of Industrial Production as it is the most consistent and a continuation of the estimates.
46. See Gazarin (2006).
47. All figures are for establishments of (10&lt;).
48. The regime's rhetoric about the industrialisation programme focused mainly on iron and steel due to the symbolism that the project carried in Egypt's struggle for economic independence. Within this rhetoric, different forms of tools were used to legitimise the programme and the regime, including a children's book titled *Qeset il-hadeed fi Misr* (The story of iron in Egypt) (Labib 2019).
49. Tobacco was not included in the intermediate imports as its farming was banned in Egypt since the nineteenth century. Hence its inclusion would not only have been pointless but would also seriously distort the overall image.
50. Attempting zero intermediate imports would not be economically wise, as some primary commodities are not available domestically, not to mention that shipping all imports in unprocessed form could be counterproductive, as the cost of transport and domestic processing will end up significantly higher than importing intermediate products. As such, the proper policy is to limit the intermediate imports.
51. There are several factors in compensation, however due to limited space, we chose wages, as it is traditionally the largest and most important component.
52. This roughly translates to an increase from 8.5 cents per hour to 17 cents an hour, putting the average daily wage at US\$ 1.36.
53. In 1966, the regime created an industrial exhibition, where different types of locally produced commodities were offered to encourage consumption (Bier 2011: 83).
54. In 1972, when the minimum wage was increased for the second time, it increased from 25 piasters to 30 piasters per day, and to 40 piasters per day in 1973. Clearly, Anwar Al-Sadat was trying to pacify the working class and convince them that the gains the Nasser's regime offered them would not be eroded ('Abdel-Fadil 1980: 30–3).
55. See Hammad (2016).
56. In 1947, women labourers represented anything between 4–6 per cent of the formal waged labour force (Bier 2011: 63, 68).
57. Bier relates the small increase in the numbers of women workers in factories to the fact that women in general were seen as more efficient in delicate manual labour like assembling refrigerators and television parts (*ibid.*: 67). See Bier (*ibid.*) for the legal prohibitions affecting women working in agriculture.

58. By 1973, 25 per cent of professional jobs were held by women, and by 1976, educated women made up almost 50 per cent of the entire women's labour force, despite composing just 5 per cent of all women. Related here is that in the wake of nationalisation, the regime used to replace foreign women working in nationalised companies with Egyptian women (Bier 2011: 201, endnotes 25–8).
59. Household management classes became obligatory for women students in the public education system as from 1965. However, criticism against working women usually concentrated on their lack of attention to children, especially when they were left with servants. Of course, not all working women had the financial capacity to hire servants or for their children attend day care, and thus more criticism was laid on them. For more see Bier (2011: 74–82).
60. As a part of Nasser's import substitution policies, public firms such as Ideal started producing gas stoves, washing machines in 1954, and refrigerators and air conditioners in 1956, the first ever in the Middle East. Imported appliances were available from an earlier date (Abaza 2006: 90–3).
61. According to a survey conducted in 1963 by the Ministry of Social Affairs, involving about 3000 women workers, 2299 stated that they had no appliances at all. In another survey conducted by a different institute in 1964, in which working women from the urban cities such as Cairo and Alexandria were included, only 1348 out of 4274 indicated that they owned at least one appliance, while 744 had multiple appliances. Hence, it can be noted that the regime's efforts in this field did not really manage to help the majority of working women (Abaza 2006: 205).
62. As for wages, 31.7 per cent were making less than E£10 per month, 24.4 per cent were making E£10–15 –the range where the average wage of E£12 is centred – while the rest – 43.9 per cent – made well over the average wage as they fell into brackets above E£15 per month. Also note that for the purposes of this calculation we are drawing on the average hourly wage of 7.4 piasters per hour, or roughly E£12 per month mentioned above concerning the benefactors. See *al-Tale'ah* (1970: 24–8).
63. In one of her best known acts to earn women the right to vote, she gathered around 1500 women who stormed the parliament and brought the proceedings to a standstill.
64. 'Qasim Amin, *ibid.*
65. 'Women and the case of Arabs', *ibid.*
66. 'The liberation of women', *ibid.*
67. 'The last hope', *ibid.*
68. Aflatun was later prosecuted and imprisoned (Keddie 2007: 123).
69. Women and Memory forum – Newspapers, clips and documents folder.
70. 'Innovation for Egypt: women office seekers create furor', *The Spartanburg Herald*, 6 June 1956, <https://bit.ly/3w3vYiv>.
71. For the crowd's response, see the speech: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPUATtBYQQ8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPUATtBYQQ8).
72. See Abdel Nasser (1954).

73. According to some scholars, the plan did not specify the actual production targets and referred only to it in terms of money, with the assumption that its value would remain constant. See el-Serafy (1963: 227).
74. While the first would encourage productive consumption – i.e. reproducing the means of production and creating its own internal demand for its products (internal orientation) with no dependence on external markets and forces for technology and machinery – consumer goods, especially durables, were to improve the population's quality of life. The latter could potentially reduce the socially necessary domestic labour time at home, thus allowing women the chance to integrate into the expanding workforce needed to serve the industrialisation programme. Additionally, it would allow women to secure a more or less stable income and hence increase the effective demand needed to ensure the viability of the economies of scale required for the programme.
75. As a sign of the Nasserite regime's intention to enhance the local without neglecting the agricultural base of the Egyptian economy, lands owned by corporations and companies were barred from those confiscated and redistributed under the land reform law of 1952 ('Amir 1958: 148).
76. See Khaleel (1965).

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