

Understanding the “Arab Socialism” in Egypt

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Abstract

The Arab socialism is a political ideology that combines Pan-Arabism and socialism. The influence of Arab socialism was in it pick on the 1950s and 1960s, while it was the ideologic basis of the Ba'ath Party and less influential on Nasser's movement in Egypt. This term should not be mixed with socialist thinking in the Arab world, which was fifty years before the Arab socialism. The socialism idea came to the Arab world by the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, about a hundred years after it was developed in France and in England. The term was first translated “Ajathmaaya” and then “Ashtrachia” that means cooperative, a meaning that is different from the western origin, therefore the name origin and its development should be examined first. The origin of the noun socialism is in the Latin word socialis – social. One of the most important designers of the socialist ideal is Karl Marx. Arab socialism rejects the anti-nationalist approach of socialism. However, the regimes that were supposed to strengthen the working class, create equality, and reduce gaps failed to reach the working class, and the situation of the poor did not improve, and in fact, the situation of the lower class and the fringe of the middle class did not improve. As the development of industry is minimal, so is the development of the proletariat and its weight in the general population and even among the urban population. In Egypt, the most developed of the Arab countries, the percentage of industrial workers did not reach 10% of the total urban population in 1958 (i.e. 6 years after the officers' coup)! But we should not underestimate the power of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) that was established (the Arab Socialist Union) and its influence (Nasser's vision of pan-Arabism). The Six-Day War found the organization at the peak of its political and organizational power. Ali Sabri, who was the Secrein-General of the ASU in the two years preceding the war, managed to transform it from a bureaucratic organization lacking political influence into an organization with political and organizational capacity whose political influence was considerable.

Keywords: Egypt, Egyptian politics, Ba'ath Party, Nazarism, Socialism.

1. Introduction

The Arab socialism is a political ideology that combines Pan-Arabism and socialism. The influence of Arab socialism was in it pick on the 1950s and 1960s, while it was the ideologic basis of the Ba'ath Party and less influential on Nasser's movement in Egypt. This term should not be mixed with socialist thinking in the Arab world, which was fifty years before the Arab socialism.

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cooperative, a meaning that is different from the western origin, therefore the name origin and its development should be examined first. The origin of the noun socialism is in the Latin word *socialis* – social. One of the most important designers of the socialist ideal is Karl Marx. Arab socialism rejects the anti-nationalist approach of socialism.

The socialist movement began its way in the modern world in the working-class movement at the end of the 19th century. In this time, the term “socialism” was first and foremost linked to European social critics, who criticized capitalism and the property term. According to Karl Marx, who has defined and shaped the socialist movement in the modern era, socialism is the socio-economic stage after the proletariat revolution and after all production products will be transferred to joint ownership. According to Marx, society will advance from this stage to the stage of communism.

Many different streams may be called or were called by others “socialistic”. Since the 19th century there is no consent about the doctrine or strategy for achieving the movement goals in the socialist movement. The supporters of the various socialist movements sometimes belong to opposing streams, and one can especially distinguish between reformists and communists. Some of the socialists believe in nationalization of production while others, for example social democrats support the nationalization of a limited number of key industries, within an integrated economic system. Some of the Marxists support central planning of the economy carried out by the state, like the Soviet model, others, including the communists in Yugoslavia and Hungary (since the 1970s), the reformists in China and some of western economists, support integration of socialism and market economy, trying to use the market economy advantages for the socialists’ principles. Anarcho-syndicalists and some supporters of the New Left support the establishment of “Workers’ Councils” and managing the production means through them. There are some additional streams.

2. Arab socialism (الاشتراكية العربية)

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The term “Arab socialism” was coined by Michel Aflak, one of the founders of the Ba'ath party in Syria, to distinguish between his socialism and other socialism streams.

2.1 Nasser's image and personality in the process of determining his policy

It is important to analyze Nasser's growth sources to understand his ideological values and approaches to perceive the meaning of Nasser's leadership in Egypt. It should be remembered:

First – he was the first Egyptian leader who ruled Egypt since the Pharaoh time. He was a Nile native, a true Egyptian.

Second – he was a military leader, and in Arab-Islamic history, the legitimate claims for authority and leadership were based on military empowerment and success.

Third – his leadership was based on a series of political successes – elimination of the monarchy and the oligarchy, purification of politics from corruption, and attempt of agrarian reform.

Fourth – His modernizing leadership in nature – in aspiration to bring socio-economic changes and change the *Egyptian society's image*, emphasizing the revolutionary change in politics and building a new system. Nasser's rule is an example of a patrimonial regime – the army role in political systems, informality in decision making process, the personal nature of the regime, the absence of corporate interests and a broad middle class, and lack of institutionalization of the political system. Political structures, mass parties and real political participation, did not succeed due to Nasser's personalistic rule.

Although in the past this phenomenon was based on land ownership and wealth, in Nasser's time, clientelism was based on personal strategic relations with policy makers. However, it still not providing sufficient organizational basis for government. As mentioned, "Egyptians do not operate in organized groups..." Corporatism never ingrained in Egyptian society: because the economic system was always had to answer the political government due to cultural-political factors, which were related to the non-institutionalization of Islam, and the absence of class and ethnic ties.

Political clientelism has united the political system for centuries. It was informal, personalistic and was based on unifying leadership. The "divide and conquer" tactic was accepted in Nasser's leadership style. However, he managed to unite all the revolution officers, while cooperating between them and being loyal to him. In this sense, the statement that post-coup Egypt is an "integrative and non-competitive society" is correct. However, the charismatic phenomenon is a result of severe socio-political crises. The modernization crises are the main causes of the need for charismatic leadership. Namely, charismatic leadership is a function of internal situation in developing countries – the desire to achieve consensus, legitimacy and integration.

The researcher Dekmejian analyses Nasser's leadership by the *charism theory* he believes, and the researcher Weber offers a tri-polar interpretation of historical and social change. In times of severe socio-political crises and the traditional society falling, the charismatic personality rises, becomes routine and leads to regime bureaucratization. Without entering into theoretical limitations, the Egyptian socio-political situation demonstrates the validity of Nasser's charismatic personality. It had its own image, communication ability, influence, and credibility – the three skills that every charismatic personality must have. His leadership was largely personalistic, and the political system is clientelist. It is essential to largely analyze this subject to know and understand Nasser's place in the decision-making process and in shaping the Egyptian policy¹.

Tactically, Nasser's political activity was expressed in pragmatism, which means a struggle on one front at a time, while isolating and neutralizing the other fronts until the end of the fight. Abdel-Kader Hatem has explained it well, calling it "the one front system": "... the system was set by the revolution leader... when ending one stage, the revolution has prepared itself to the second stage...". For this reason, the researchers or policy makers often saw Nasser to be moderate, ready to compromise and negotiate, in doing so, the West was impressed that it would be possible to reach an agreement with him. Schematically, it can be described as follows: there is an event that is important to Egypt, and Nasser reacts according to the circumstances of the event, but

¹ Bukai, D. (1978). *Nasser and the "Baghdad Alliance" shaping foreign policy ideologies in Egypt*. M.A. dissertation, the department of Social Sciences, University of Haifa, pp. 23-25.

mainly tactically. During the implementation and execution of the response, a more inclusive policy is set that is ideologically justified.²

For Nasser, Arab unity meant solidarity, alignment of the Arab countries foreign policies, and realizing a form of joint political and economic arrangements. He sought to control the foreign policy of Arab countries, but not to annex them or merge with them. He called on the Arabs to unite under his leadership and adopt a common foreign policy. In his opinion, Arab solidarity is the basis for Arab nationalism. It will strengthen the Arab countries through cooperation in economic, military and foreign policy fields. The union is not an inevitable and obligatory step. For Nasser, Arab nationalism is absolute independence from any foreign influence, and its external political content is neutralism between the superpowers. He emphasized Arabism as a main political and social weapon in the hands of the Arabs:

“... that protects the Arab nation from imperialist intrigues... nationalism is a means of preserving independence and freedom... and making Pan-Arabism to be the main issue, part of each Egyptian’s cognitive content.

“... our revolution was due to Arab nationalism... the Arab nation has common history and destiny...”

“Arab nationalism is not just a political movement, it is a social philosophy... common interest, strategic necessity...”

From now on, the enemies of the Egyptian people are those external factors that stand between Egypt and its destiny. The fact that Egypt is a leader and speaks for the region countries, and negotiate in their behalf with foreign parties, will support its prestige in the region, and its importance in the international system, it will mainly be a means to obtain economic and military aid from foreign parties and will lead to the socio-economic development of Egypt. A united Arab world under the leadership of Egypt will inevitably raise Nasser's prestige and the superpowers will have to consider him as a factor in the international system.³

All the ambitious development plans of Egypt regarding industrialization, economic development, and military power development, created a strong incentive to turn to foreign policy in order to obtain massive aid. The intention was to translate Egypt’s influence in the Arab world into control over Arab oil sources and get considerable economic and military assistance from both superpowers. Copeland describes that in one of the meetings organized by Nasser in 1954 to discuss the foreign policy he was asked why not go to the North African Union. Nasser replied that there is only geographical interest, the Maghreb may be a goal, but what is the power of such a union? The Arabs in the East have oil, transportation arteries and the Palestinian problem, and all these interests in the West and the USSR.

In the meeting it was described as follows:

“... Egyptian foreign policy is Egypt’s main investment and its power. Due to its influence in Asia and Africa, Egypt can influence global movements, all for economic profit.

Arabism was used to get support, justify policies and legitimize the domestic regime. Its empowerment and effectiveness were a flame in Islamic society, which has directly and emotionally addressed to the people. In this sense, Arabism is an ideal instrument for taking a popular and active policy as one. Formulating foreign policy goals is mainly a cognitive process.

² Bukai, D. (1978). *Nasser and the "Baghdad Alliance" shaping foreign policy ideologies in Egypt*. M.A. dissertation, the department of Social Sciences, University of Haifa, p. 11 (introduction).

³ Bukai, D. (1978). *Nasser and the "Baghdad Alliance" shaping foreign policy ideologies in Egypt*. M.A. dissertation, the department of Social Sciences, University of Haifa, pp.158-159.

However, it is carried out in the external-executive environment. The implementation process requires various methods called “political means”, which are both conceptual and operational. What means Nasser used to promote Egypt’s inter-Arab goals?

First, referring Islam as a religion and political instrument. Islam is not an important element in the political system of the Nasser regime, it was referred within the historical-religious framework, and not a factor of political-social importance. However, most of the “free officers” members are related to the traditional system of Egypt, therefore, there were no revolutionaries who were related to religion and secularism.

Second, Israel as a tool in inter-Arab policy. Until the end of 1954 the conflict with Israel was not an important motive in Egypt policy, “Palestine problem” was third in the Egyptian foreign policy priority during the two first years after British evacuation and uniting with Sudan. Nasser expressed it in saying that the struggle with Israel will postpone and delay the internal reforms, which the regime believe are the basis of its activity and therefore are more important. This emphasis of social and economic reforms was due to Nasser’s conclusion that the Arab defeat in 1948 was a result of their weakness rather than Israel’s power.⁴

2.2 *The influence of external factors on Nasser’s policy*

A new era began in the Middle East in general and in relation to the Palestinian problem in particular following the Kadesh operation results and the Suez Battle in October-November 1956, Jamal Abdel Nasser was the charismatic leader of Egypt and the entire Arab world. The first result of his political victory was his massive appeal to the Arab region to establish his leadership in the Arab world after he was recognized as the undisputed leader of Egypt. Nasser politically conquest the Arab world through preaching the idea of Arab nationalism (al-Kumiya al-Arabiya) which was the axis of Arab politics in the reviewed period and after it. This idea was mentioned in some of his speeches in 1955, but without explaining its meaning. In his speech on November 7, 1957, Nasser began the long and vigorous campaign for the idea. The period between 1957-1961 was the heyday of Arab nationalism and its peak in the United Arab Republic (UAR) which was established following the union between Egypt and Syria in February 1958. This nationalist plan was the essence of Nasserism. An entire generation of Arab leaders was educated following Nasser’s theory. Nasser preached an active and militant Arab nationalism that would use all means, including force, to achieve its goals. He believed that in the Arab nationalism he preaches, he expresses the aspirations of the Arab nation more than any other Arab leader in his time. He defined several goals for Arab nationalism, including the political, social, and economic liberation of the Arab world and elimination of imperialism and Arab reaction. Arab nationalism was designed to fill the empty space created in the Arab world after eliminating the Western influence. He believed that Arab nationalism is the strongest weapon of the Arab world and the guarantee for its security. Arab nationalism means Arab solidarity (later he added “Arab uniqueness”) that is based on independence of Arab countries, later he has added contents as positive neutrality, non-identification, social justice and real democratic life.⁵

In one of his speeches, he defined Arab nationalism as a “spiritual movement” and a “historical movement”, without explaining these terms. He threatened to use military force to protect Arab nationalism, and indeed invaded Yemen in 1962-1967. Nasser divided the Arab world into his allies and his enemies, nationalists and imperialism agents, progressives and

⁴ Bukai, D. (1978). *Nasser and the "Baghdad Alliance" shaping foreign policy ideologies in Egypt*. M.A. dissertation, the department of Social Sciences, University of Haifa, pp. 160-161.

⁵ Shemesh, M. (2004). *From the Nakba to the Naksha, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian problem 1957-1967, Nasser’s path to the Six Day War*. Ben-Gurion Institute Publishing, p. 1.

reactionaries. On this basis he strove to change regimes that did not go his way. The dissolution of the Egypt and Syria union in September 1961 symbolized the beginning of the Arab nationalism decline according to Nasser's theory. This idea suffered the real blow in the Arab military defeat in June 1967. In October 1960, when Nasser was at the peak of his glory, Al-Ahram newspaper wrote about Arab nationalism and its fulfillment:

“Arab nationalism is spreading every day among the Arab masses in the area between the Atlantic Sea to the Persian Gulf. Every Arab feels this nationality and believes that he is a member of the Arab nation. But the mission of Arab nationalism these days is the mission of active action for realizing the nationalism from an idea into a dynamic actual fact.”

During this period, Nasser was the undisputed leader of the Arab world, while “Arab nationalism has a victory after a victory”. Arab public opinion outside of the UAR, especially in the Arab Mashrak (East), was rapturous by Nasser and the union he symbolized. This reality did not change even after the UAR dissolution. The stable regime in Egypt was confronted by a vibrant and unstable Arab world. The political events in the Arab world and in the Arab countries, including Iraq, Syria and Jordan, were all around Nasser's steps and decisions in the Arab arena or a result of them, even during the “depression” period in his leadership after the dissolution of the UAR. Nasser was forced – both due this struggle and the communist danger to Syria (which was part of the UAR), especially after the communists' activity increased there – to openly launch an ideological attack on communism, which he completely rejected, and on the internal regime in the Soviet Union, his friend. Communism was described in the Arab countries as a betrayal of Arab nationalism, apostasy to Islam. The agents of Moscow who have collaborated with imperialism and Zionism were communism's messengers to eliminate Arab nationalism. On the other hand, the special social content of Arab nationalism advocated by Nasser was emphasized. But the Soviet Union has eventually succeeded in patch things up with Nasser to prevent erosion in its positions in the Arab countries and prevent the Egyptians from turning to the West again.⁶

The Israel Issue: The change in Egyptian policy towards Israel at the beginning of 1955 was due to internal unrest and seeing Israel as an essential means in inter-Arab policy to achieve the Egyptian foreign policy goals. A change in this attitude may be seen in the many statements Nasser and his friends began to make, clearly defining their position in relation to Israel.⁷

3. Nasser's policy and socialism

The first factor – and the researcher Eliyahu Agassi (1970) also spoke about this - is the awareness of backwardness in the Arab world in general, and in Egypt in particular. The researcher emphasizes: not only the fact of backwardness but the backwardness awareness. The Arab world stays behind the developed countries, and it is not that we are so smart and educated to know this – they also know and strongly know it. For example, the national convention – the basic document of the new, socialist Egypt – from 1962, mentions “the solution of social and economic backwardness problem.” The researcher emphasizes this point as one of the factors, and maybe the most important. The Arab world is backward, and it knows it, the backwardness awareness is a fundamental motive for everything that happens.

The second factor – the awareness of oppression and exploitation, both internal and external. There is a fact and there is awareness, it is well known, and it has only been mentioned.

⁶ Shemesh, M. (2004). *From the Nakba to the Naksha, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian problem 1957-1967, Nasser's path to the Six Day War*. Ben-Gurion Institute Publishing, pp. 2-3

⁷ Shemesh, M. (2004). *From the Nakba to the Naksha, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian problem 1957-1967, Nasser's path to the Six Day War*. Ben-Gurion Institute Publishing, p.162

The third factor – is disappointment with capitalism. Egypt was disappointed by the attempts to solve its problems through economic, social or political methods according to the capitalist system, whether it be foreign-European capitalism or national-original capitalism. After all, those who rule Egypt now, the officers, the people of Arab socialism, did not start out as socialists. For years, until the end of the fifties, they did not talk about socialism. In Nasser's book *The philosophy of revolution* the term socialism does not appear at all, not even negatively. It was not a challenge that needed to be met. Their initial intentions were to encourage national capitalism. One of the three main goals of the agrarian reform was to encourage Egyptian capital to invest in industry rather than in speculations and lands. But they were disappointed and saw that private Egyptian capital is not right and cannot advance the economy and society. In 1955 Nasser spoke with Western socialist about the fact that the local Egyptian capitalists are unable to fulfil the role intended for them. He said: "We do not have capitalists; we only have brokers." Meaning, Nasser concluded that the capitalist way is not good for solving Egypt's terrible problems, neither for solving its social problems nor for solving its national problems. Of course, disappointment with capitalism is a very strong motive for embarking on the socialist path.

The fourth factor – is a general global mindset. Socialism may have many interpretations and definitions, in any case, a socialist spirit is blowing in the Afro-Asian world. There is a socialist fashion and there is no doubt that such general mindsets strongly influenced Egypt.⁸

3.1 *The origin of Abdel Nasser's Arab socialism lies in three motives*

a. Actions taken to ensure the establishment and physical security of the regime (enemy elimination and the "reaction"), cultivating layers of those who benefit materially, or at least psychologically, from the regime existence.

b. Steps taken to concentrate the capital assets and human resources required to fulfill the regime's ambitions, which are ambitions for prestige, for pretentious industrialization, for a major military buildup and creating other necessary conditions the regime think necessary to fulfill its great ambition – hegemony over the Arab world.

c. It should be noted that additional steps with sincere social consciousness background of the leader and the top brass, who strive for more social justice for the Egyptian people within the country were taken.⁹

3.2 *The incarnations of Nasserism*

The socialism development in Egypt had periods, and in 1952 - 1956 they did not even think about socialism, these are the years when the regime had to decide what it wanted, what it was looking for, and what it was striving for? During these years they maintained the social status quo. The agrarian reform was quite moderate and capitalist free initiative was encouraged. During this period, the private initiative was guaranteed the largest dividends and profits that Egypt had ever known. In 1956, after the terrible psychological shock of the Kadesh Operation, Suez and the economic blockade, there was a change, first in central, public planning (the economic institution), and in the "restriction" of foreign capital assets. In 1960-1961 they saw the beginning of the transition process to a more extreme economic-social policy, nationalization, expropriations, and

⁸ Be'erry, A. (1970). Nasser's Socialism. In: Z. Goldberg (Ed.) *Arab Socialism*. Beit Berl Publishing House, pp. 22-23.

⁹ S, Ernie. (1970). Arab Socialism - Pragmatism without performance – ideology. In: Z. Goldberg (Ed.) *Arab Socialism*. Beit Berl Publishing House, p.145.

considerable expansion of public sector bureaucratic infrastructure. In these years the implementation of the first general, large and pretentious five-year plan was announced, with almost exclusive use of public capital. The last period is from the summer of 1961 until the 1970s, is characterized by extreme socialism in which the economic branches were nationalized. 100 percent of the bankers and insurance companies, and 90% of the large and medium-sized industry are in the public sector hands: in fact, only workshops remained in private capital hands (1970), most of the services (including the transport, shipping and aviation companies) were nationalized, despite a certain worsening of the agrarian reform, “Arab socialism” hardly touched agriculture, and the revolution is hardly felt in the countryside.¹⁰

At first, they have limited the ownership of share capital per citizen to 10,000 pounds, but after a short time they nationalized it too. They have set: a maximum salary of 5,000 pounds per person per year, progressive income tax up to 90 percent of income, a minimum salary of 18 cents for agriculture and 25 cents for simple workers: profits and distributions to employees at a rate of 25% of profits per year (10% in cash and 15% in social services). They also shared the employees in the factory management in every public enterprise, 7 managers, of which 2 are elected by the employees and 5 are appointed according to the president’s orders. After a while, the number increased to 9 managers, of which 4 were elected by the employees and officials. Free education in all levels, including the university, was promised, although there has been a large quantitative expansion in education at the expense of quality. A 7-hour workday was introduced.

3.3 *The effect of the national coup*

“The coup heralded the end of imperialism and the regime liberation from the domination of feudalism and capitalism, for the establishment of social justice and the elimination of the contradictions between the classes, and for the rescue of the oppressed from their oppressors. The coup will turn employees into unexploited property owners and will work for the benefit of all classes,” in these words defined the President of Egypt, Abdel Nasser, the fundamental ideological principles of his regime, when it began on July 22, 1961 with the realization of “Arab socialism” in the “Land of Nile.”¹¹ Nasser’s “Arab socialism” grew and developed on the ground of the Egyptian reality and its unique economic-social conditions. Although ideological foreign currents, some global and some Arab, had an important part in the social ideological development of the Egyptian coup leaders, the Nasser’s “Arab socialism” is mainly an Egyptian creation and a result of a pragmatic coping with unique historical conditions and consequences of international power centers that operated and operate in this reality, and its development should only be understood against this background.¹²

4. The main trends and lines that characterize the “Arab socialism”

4.1 *The agrarian reform failures*

The Nazar regime does not stop praising the agrarian reform by emphasizing that it reflects today, as it reflected in the past, the revolutionary change of the Egyptian. The agrarian

¹⁰ S, Ernie. (1970). Arab Socialism - Pragmatism without performance – ideology. In: Z. Goldberg (Ed.) *Arab Socialism*. Beit Berl Publishing House, p. 146

¹¹ Efrat, M. (1970). Arab socialism in Egypt - in practice. In: Z. Goldberg (Ed.) *Arab Socialism*. Beit Berl Publishing House, p. 83

¹² Ben Zur, A. (1965). *Arab Socialism, Ideology and Action*. The Department of Culture of the National Kibbutz, Hashomer Hatzair, p. 41.

reform in Egypt – for all its regulations from 1952 until now (the seventies) has not caused a radical change in the social-class structure of the Egyptian countryside.

4.1.1 *Pseudo-agricultural cooperative*

The regime made quit an effort to prevent a serious weaken in the status of estate owners and the middle class, due to its policy of not providing extensive and sufficient financial and technical assistance to the Egyptian peasants, this policy was reflected in at least two areas:

- a. A constant reduction in the agricultural credit the authorities give to the peasants.
- b. Lowering the prices of agricultural products sold by the peasants to the authorities who pay prices that are lower than the wholesale price in the Egyptian markets.

In addition, the status of the estate owners and the middle class in the countryside was strengthened. The Egyptian authorities began to organize in 1952 and especially in 1961 the agricultural cooperative in the Egyptian countryside. The cooperative in Egypt is far from having the qualities and values of a voluntary member association, who have a cooperative awareness or understanding. The agricultural cooperative in Egypt is just a body operated by the authorities through an appointed mechanism that manages the cooperative “in behalf” and “for” the members “until they have cooperative recognition and have appropriate qualifications.”

4.2 *The social backwardness is constant*

However, the value and weight of the policy of the Nasser regime, to expand health services in the Egyptian countryside, compared to the situation during the monarchy should not be underestimated. In addition, infant mortality up to the age of one year has decreased, but in education in the countryside there have still been almost no important changes, unlike the impression created by Cairo's publications on the quantitative expansion of *education*. The housing conditions in the countryside are getting worse every year. Not only experts talk about the dire situation of the Egyptian countryside, but even Abdel Nasser himself admits this when he said in his speech in 1966: “Always remember that there are still temporary employees in Egypt, who go to work with onions and beans provisions for a month, this is a society that we must save , to this very day I have not been able to change it even though I spoke about it back in 1953.” Is it true that since he spoke about the problem, it was not possible to lay at least the foundations for a fundamental change in the situation of the peasant, if not changing it de facto?¹³

4.3 *Industrial employees at the bottom*

Much has been written about the industrialization and development policy of the Nasser regime, emphasizing Nasser's dedication to cultivate the industrial proletariat in his country, is this indeed the case? It is worth mentioning that due to the “socialist decrees” from July 1961, which were also reflected in the regime's takeover of the modern, developed part of the Egyptian economy in industry, finance, transportation and trade, it was determined that: the industrial employee will work seven hours a day rather than eight hours as was customary, the industrial employees will be shared in 25% from the factory net profits, the employees will participate in the public industry management by sending four elected representatives to the

¹³ Efrat, M. (1970). Arab socialism in Egypt - in practice. In: Z. Goldberg (Ed.) *Arab Socialism*. Beit Berl Publishing House, pp. 83-86.

factory management. These “benefits”, in fact, are not so meaningful as it seems at first, the shortening of daily working hours harms the industrial employees, and the employees’ share of the profits – it reduces the distributed amount. The price increase that was abolished in Egypt in 1961 has limited the importance of profit distribution, since it hardly allows a price increase level compensation. However, these profits do not compensate the employee for an income loss resulting from overtime work and/or any additional employment outside the factory. In addition, the Egyptian authorities are far from allowing laborers to represent the employees in the factory managements, thanks to the definition that says, “a laborer is any employee who lives by his salary, whether he does mental or physical work.” In the 1960s the industrial employees in Egypt are at the bottom of the salary ranks as they were before, moreover, in the public sector alone, their situation is relatively less benign.

4.4 The new class

The social gap widened as the mechanism’s control over the resources of the Egyptian economy increased, because of the many nationalizations in Egypt, especially since the beginning of “Arab Socialism” implementation in July 1961. This development even increased the number of special “white collar” employees in the upper class who have many pleasures and powers. While the senior manager layer was only 0.1% of the entire government apparatus, the layer of senior managers in the public sector – the “new class” – was 1.5% of all the employed clerkships. The “new class” is the social stratum that receives the most benefits and material pleasures under the regime of Abdel Nasser, although the regime especially emphasizes in its propaganda the pleasures the industrial employees receive.¹⁴

5. The lower levels of the medium class and its revolutionary role

In 1958, the class distribution of the urban population in Egypt was estimated as follows:

Table 1.

The class	Percentage in general population	Average annual income per capita in EGP
Bourgeoisie and aristocracy	3	8458
<u>Lower middle-class layers</u>	8	133.5
a. mid-level clerks, liberal professions	9	122.7
b. craftsmen (employers)	14	105.6
c. low-level clerks		
<u>Proletariat</u>	10	60.8
a. industrial and transport employees		
b. artisans	5	40
<u>Sub- proletariat</u>	2	26.8
a. regular roustabout	12	21.4
b. house servants		
c. out of permanent work	37	-

Source 1: Ben-Zur, A. Arab Socialism, pp. 9

¹⁴ Efrat, M. (1970). Arab socialism in Egypt - in practice. In: Z. Goldberg (Ed.) *Arab Socialism*. Beit Berl Publishing House, pp. 87-88

The data presented in this table shows that the lower layers of the middle class - three layers that are very close in terms of average annual income per capita, are 31% of the total urban population of Egypt, compared to 3% of the big bourgeoisie and aristocracy, and 15% of "sub-proletariat". This highlights the great quantitative weight of the middle class towards both the big bourgeoisie and the proletariat.¹⁵

Table 2. Egypt's national income composition
1960-1965

	1959/60 in millions EGP	%	1964/65 in millions EGP	%	1969/70 in millions EGP	%
Agriculture	400	31.2	512	28.5	627	24.5
Industry and construction	325	25.4	591	32.9	877	34.2
Others	557	43.4	692	38.6	1,060	41.3
Total	1,282	100	1,795	100	2,564	100

Table 3. Salary development in agriculture and industry
By the five-year plan
1960-1970

	1959/60		1964/65		Growth
Agriculture					
Number of employees	1,130,000		1,310,000		15.8%
Employee's average yearly salary	120	EGP	130	EGP	8.3%
Number of entrepreneurs	2,115,000		2,490,000		13.0%
Average rent in agriculture	125	EGP	137	EGP	9.6%
Total engaged in agriculture	4,220,000		4,660,000		10.4%
Net income from agriculture	400,000,000	EGP	512,000,000	EGP	28%
Average income for agricultural provider	95	EGP	110	EGP	15.6%
Industry					
Number of employees	528,000		732,000		28.4%
Employee's yearly salary	91,000,000	EGP	155,000,000	EGP	70.3%
Employee's average yearly salary	172	EGP	211	EGP	22.6%

6. Conclusion

Economic development was the most important goal in developing countries, after the struggle for independence, both in terms of the regime's priority and in terms of the leadership's promises. Without promises of improving living standards, achieving industrialization and modernizing society, there will be considerable difficulties in achieving the regime's legitimacy. The process of socio-economic change in most developing countries is inconsistent, discontinuous, fraught with obstacles and dependent on foreign capital.

The main means of overcoming these crises (as noted in the work describing Nasser's work) is the creation of national emotions and symbols to bring about broad community commitment. Nationalism and comprehensive independence provide an essential psychological basis for achieving legitimacy and authority for leadership, and these are expressed mainly in their context with external factors because of the leadership's turn to an active foreign policy.

¹⁵ Ben Zur, A. (1965). *Arab Socialism, Ideology and Action*. The Department of Culture of the National Kibbutz, Hashomer Hatzair, p. 9.

Nasser's worldview and ambition can be seen in his essay “The Philosophy of the Revolution.” Nasser summarized his doctrine in it, presenting the ideology of the three circles: Arab, Muslim, and African, and in practice worked in the Arab circle.

Most of the goals that Nasserism set for itself were not achieved.

Furthermore, Nasserism failed to fulfill the historical mission it took on. Its failures or lack of achievements in each of these areas of action ultimately eroded the validity of the vision and the credibility of the entire movement and were a major factor in the decline of Nasserism.

The regimes that were supposed to strengthen the working class, create equality, and reduce gaps failed to reach the working class, and the situation of the poor did not improve, and in fact, the situation of the lower class and the fringe of the middle class did not improve, and even worsened, when most of the resources were invested in:

- A. Securing the physical foundation of the regime.
- B. Concentration of capital in the hands of the regime, industrialization of military buildup (engaging in a military race against Israel).
- C. Failure to implement and provide true social justice.

In fact, it was not possible to eliminate the remnants of feudalism and carry out an agrarian reform and industrial revolution that were the indispensable condition not only for the possibility of the rise of the working class, but also for the uninterrupted development of the middle classes. The young and weak working class could not serve as an alternative to carrying out the “bourgeois-democratic revolution” which subsequently developed into a real socialist revolution. The Arab countries (Egypt in particular) did not have the ability to provide a solution to the labor shortages that were constantly expanding because of natural increase and the migration of the unemployed from the countryside to the city. Most of the proletariat lacked elementary education and literacy and were captive to foreign, religious, nationalist class ideologies. It was difficult to influence and reach the lower strata of the middle class, which is a large one.

The young and weak working class could not serve as an alternative to carrying out the “bourgeois-democratic revolution” that would subsequently lead to a real socialist revolution.

As the development of industry is minimal, so is the development of the proletariat and its weight in the general population and even among the urban population. In Egypt, the most developed of the Arab countries, the percentage of industrial workers did not reach 10% of the total urban population in 1958 (i.e. 6 years after the officers' coup)!

But we should not underestimate the power of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) that was established (the Arab Socialist Union) and its influence (Nasser's vision of pan-Arabism). The Six-Day War found the organization at the peak of its political and organizational power. Ali Sabri, who was the Secretary-General of the ASU in the two years preceding the war, managed to transform it from a bureaucratic organization lacking political influence into an organization with political and organizational capacity whose political influence was considerable. For example, when Nasser resigned in June 1967, Sabri used his power and influence on the Socialist Youth Organization to prevent Nasser's resignation and the transfer of the presidency to Zakaria Muhi al-Din. It was the members of the Socialist Youth Organization who launched mass demonstrations on June 9 and 10 that returned Nasser to power.

“Arab socialism” despite its failure to meet its tasks and achieve its goal still signifies the vision of Arab unity and the desire to return to live as an Arab power. It is consolidated among nations through giving and receiving against capitalism and class warfare, in a way and manner that is uniquely Arab and Islamic, Nasser's ambition that failed.

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