

POLICY PAPERS • NUMBER TEN

**ARMY AND POLITICS
IN MUBARAK'S EGYPT**

ROBERT B. SATLOFF



THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY

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PREFACE

Though the violent Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza has riveted the attention of U.S. policymakers and observers for more than six months, the rest of the turbulent Middle East has not been put on hold. Indeed, the urgency of the region's periodic (and seemingly endemic) crises should not postpone careful evaluation of political, strategic and social trends throughout the Middle East that are sure to have a profound impact on fundamental U.S. interests.

Egypt, for example, is a country which has garnered few headlines over the past year but which holds singular importance for U.S. interests in the region. Only months away from the tenth anniversary of the Camp David Accords, Egypt is in a state of domestic, regional and international flux. At home, the competing challenges of democratization, economic vitality, overpopulation and Islamic militancy are overwhelming; abroad, satisfaction with the renewal of ties with most Arab states is tempered by apprehension about deepening involvement in the Gulf war. And if the Palestinian uprising has had any effect on Egypt, it has been to further underscore Egypt's status as the lone Arab state at peace with Israel.

In this paper, Robert B. Satloff, a Washington Institute Fellow, examines a little-explored aspect of contemporary Egypt that is vitally important to understanding the Mubarak years – the changing role of the army in politics. Though the military has been the backbone of Egypt's government since the revolution, it rarely receives the analytical attention due such a powerful player in Egyptian life.

Here, Mr. Satloff looks at Husni Mubarak's policy of expanding the scope and role of the military and the army's enhanced responsibilities in terms of both national defense and economic development. The military, he argues, is the most dynamic institution in Egypt today, but it is already finding itself at odds with the push for democracy on the one hand, and the danger of Islamic radicalism, on the other. Moreover, this study assesses the tentative moves the army is making toward playing a more active role in both the Gulf conflict and the Arab-Israeli arena and warns of the dangers involved for Egypt – and the U.S. – if Cairo were to be more deeply engaged in either.

This Policy Paper is the first in-depth analysis of the changing relationship of army and politics in post-Sadat Egypt; the arguments it presents about the direction of military growth are compelling and provocative. The Washington Institute presents this paper as part of its ongoing effort to provide the policymaking community with timely, expert analyses of current Middle Eastern issues and to promote a better understanding of American interests and the means by which those interests can best be served.

Barbi Weinberg
President
May 1988

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Among the most important facets of Egypt under Mubarak has been the creation of a new dynamic between army and politics. *This dynamic has produced the revitalization of the Egyptian Armed Forces and the reemergence of the military as an active player in national politics.*

In contrast to Anwar Sadat's policy of cutting the army's budget and restricting its role in public life, Mubarak has welcomed the military's potential contribution to Egypt's economic development and its role as ultimate guarantor of domestic stability. *He has supervised a government-military partnership that permits the army to command an increasing share of central government expenditure, control a widening sphere of government activities and exert greater influence in domestic politics.* Critically important in this regard has been the army's assumption of principal responsibility for regime security.

But at the same time as the military grows in terms of both institutional weight and political power, it is facing new and potentially constricting checks on its ability to exercise that authority:

- First, with Egypt's removal from the Arab coalition against Israel, the *raison d'être* of the military lost urgency and the army was no longer inviolate. For the first time in two decades, *the army is now a legitimate target of criticism for the political opposition.*

- Second, *Islamic fundamentalism has begun to make inroads inside the military.* The threat of Islamic fundamentalism in the ranks of the Egyptian army is fueled by two main factors: demographic and educational trends that undermine the Armed Forces's manpower strategy of seeking both quantity *and* quality; and geographic realities that have many army camps situated in close proximity to the same urban areas that are fundamentalism's prime breeding ground. The government has already begun to take some preventive measures against the spread of radical Islam, but the structural barriers it faces are daunting.

These twin and competing processes – on the one hand, institutional growth and expansion; on the other hand, popular criticism and the threat of religious militancy – assume greater significance in light of the Egyptian army's resurgent role in two regional arenas, the Gulf war and the Arab-Israeli front. *An essential part of the army's development in recent years has been its preparation for the day when it is capable of filling the Arab military vacuum in the Gulf or, alternatively, able to return to confrontation with Israel.*

For Washington, the task of husbanding the army-politics dynamic is fraught with problems, trade-offs and paradoxes. Clearly, though, U.S. policy should steer Cairo away from either of the two regional options. Specifically, *the U.S. should try to prevent any further aggravation of the already dismal "no war/no peace" situation with Israel, as well as caution against any formal and open engagement of Egyptian troops in the Gulf war.* American support for a more prominent domestic role for the Egyptian army would best serve the twin U.S. interests of maintaining the stability of the Mubarak regime and fueling domestic economic growth. Δ

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I: SADAT'S LEGACY AND THE RESURGENCE OF MILITARY POLITICS

Today's Egypt is far different from the one Husni Mubarak inherited in a hail of bullets more than six years ago. In sheer statistical terms, he rules over an Egypt one-sixth more populous and – with the full restoration of Sinai – thousands of square kilometers larger than it was in October 1981. But the texture of society and politics has changed in ways more important than demography and geography.

Under Anwar Sadat, Egypt realized important political, financial and material gains through a policy of polarization. In superpower relations, Sadat was faced at least twice – in 1972 and then again in 1977 – with Soviet-American coordination to restrict his freedom of maneuver. Each time he was able to score significant gains for Egyptian national interests by breaking through and polarizing the larger powers. Similarly, Sadat refused to accept the decades-old inter-Arab “rule by consensus” and purposefully split with the Arab world on one of its few existential issues – peace with Israel. Domestically, it was Sadat's haste to confront his rivals with the organs of state power that was itself a contributing factor in his eventual demise.

Mubarak's Egypt has adopted a different tack. Rather than confront and polarize, Mubarak has championed reconciliation – with the Soviets, with the Gulf Arabs and with the regime's own domestic critics. Egypt no longer offers itself as a front-line state in the battle against Moscow's expansionist designs; on the contrary, it welcomes trade and political dialogue with the Soviets. Similarly, Sadat's disdain for the “pygmies” who ruled desert Arab statelets has given way to atmospherics of felicity and Arab brotherhood and the re-emergence of Arab financial support as an important source of foreign exchange. Internally, in times of domestic discord Mubarak has regularly turned to consultations with the same political opponents his predecessor was wont to jail. Whereas the “semi-official” press was once the only permissible source of news, today dozens of newspapers and magazines jockey for circulation. And, much to the president's credit, “plebiscite democracy” has been replaced by a system that – albeit flawed – guarantees opposition, debate and dissent. Two days after the assassination, president-designate Mubarak said to Walter Cronkite, “I will follow the same procedure, the same line and I'm going to carry on the same way” as Sadat. That has surely not been the case.

Focus on army and politics

While it is useful to examine how such “conventional” politics has changed in the Mubarak era, these assessments tell only part of the story. They fail to examine the institution which holds sway over an important slice of political power in Egypt

– the military.¹ Since the army coup that overthrew the monarchy and established the republic more than three decades ago, the military establishment has retained a disproportionate share of political power, a reality that has grown only more subtle with the ongoing process of civilianizing the military elite. National decisions are determined at least as much by battles within the ranks of the military as they are by competition among various civilian groups, elites, constituencies and institutions. There are some time-honored truths about Egyptian politics that have not lost their saliency simply because parliamentary life is more active and the opposition press more vocal. Where there is smoke, fire is not always sure to follow, and the visible changes in Egyptian political life have done little to alter the basic construct of the regime:

- men with military roots always inhabit the presidency, which carries with it wide legislative and executive powers;
- whereas all presidents have exercised their authority as civilians, the clear separation of military and civilian authority – and the subordination of the former to the latter – is not engrained in the nation’s political culture;
- democracy is largely perceived as a commodity designed to defuse political opposition, rather than as a system to distribute political power;
- national institutions (such as the parliament, the prime ministry and the cabinet) are relatively weak and undeveloped and mass participation in party life is limited;
- and issues of national security – whether they be focused toward external confrontations or internal stability – preoccupy the regime.

There have surely been fluctuations in the nature of the Egyptian political system over the past three decades, including various attempts to broaden the base of popular participation and to establish a regime of institutions, not personalities. But, in retrospect, such efforts have altered fundamental power relationships rather little. In understanding contemporary Egypt, what still matters are the relationships among the president, the army and society, as well as the dynamic within the army itself.²

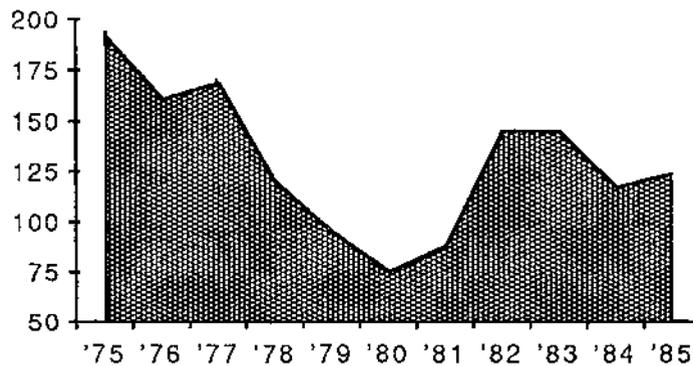
¹ For syntactical reasons, the terms “army,” “military” and “armed forces” are used interchangeably throughout this paper. In point of fact, the Army is only one of the four main services of the Egyptian Armed Forces, the others being Navy, Air Force and Air Defense.

² Over the past decade, there has been strikingly little scholarship examining the role of the military in post-1973 Egyptian politics. This is most likely due to the paucity of available source material, as well as the acute sensitivity among most Egyptians that still surrounds discussion of military and strategic issues, even (and especially) Egyptian performance in the 1973 war. This

Sadat and the army: subordination

In this light, no national issue better exemplifies the differences between the two presidents than Mubarak's reversal of Sadat's policy of relative demilitarization. In the years following his dramatic journey to Jerusalem, Sadat's policy was to project overwhelming political rhetoric shored up by underwhelming military force. With peace intact, Sadat vowed to project Egyptian power on other fronts. On many occasions, he offered oral commitments of force to combat Soviet influence and radical threats throughout the Middle East and indeed in sub-Saharan Africa as well. But Egypt's capabilities did not keep pace with Sadat's promises. In the final three full years of his rule (1978-1980), for example, per capita military spending in constant dollars was cut in half and as a percentage of total government expenditure, defense outlays fell by more than 60 percent. Egypt in 1980 was left with virtually the same military arsenal it had at the end of the 1973 war.

Chart 1:
Per Capita Military Expenditure
(Constant 1984 \$US)



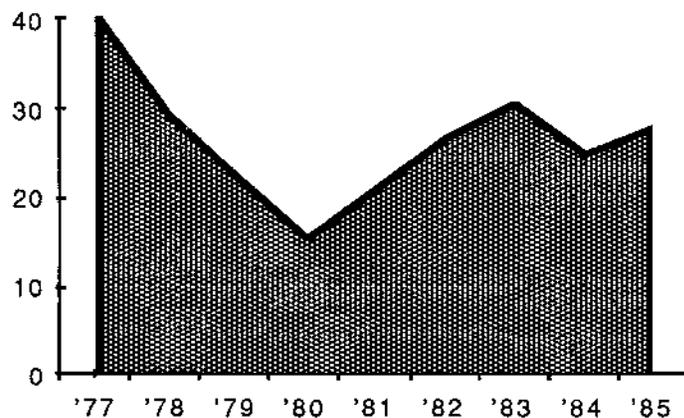
Source: Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers*, 1987, (March 1988)³

study tries to overcome those hurdles by a combined analysis of available material, press reports, statistical data and personal interviews. Earlier studies that, in many respects, remain useful in understanding the civil-military dynamic in Egypt today are Amos Perlmutter, *Egypt: The Praetorian State* (1974); Eliezer Be'eri, *Army Officers in Arab Politics and Society* (1969); and P. J. Vatikiotis, *The Egyptian Army and Politics* (1961).

³ Many charts in this paper are derived from data in various editions of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency's annual publication *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers*. Because its statistics represent the official view of the U.S. government, ACDA data is used throughout this paper. Generally, ACDA statistics are best suited to chart trends, rather than to be relied upon for individual citations. Further support for the trends indicated in these charts and charts below can

The divergence between commitments and capabilities resulted, at least in part, from Sadat's desire to limit the armed forces militarily so as to restrict them politically. It was not a new desire. Sadat had been an eyewitness to the debacles of the 1960s, when the armed forces were too interested in domestic Egyptian politics to force a decision in the Yemen or to prepare adequately for the contest against Israel. Having committed himself to battle against Israel, he understood the need to foster the professionalization of the Egyptian army. Prior to the 1973 war, he was diligent in preventing the creation of independent military power centers and, as a result, his defense ministers and the military elite were shuffled in and out of their posts. The successful crossing of the Suez was itself a double blessing, for it not only allowed Sadat to "land with the Americans" (to paraphrase Heikal) but also to proceed with undermining the institutional power of the armed forces.

**Chart 2:
Military Expenditure as a
Percentage of Central Government
Expenditure**



Source: ACDA. ACDA notes that the military expenditures reported by the Egyptian government may consist mainly or entirely of recurring or operating expenditures, omitting all or most capital expenditures, such as arms purchases. ACDA suggests that a better estimate of military expenditure can be obtained by adding the value of arms imports to the quoted amount of military expenditure.

be found in data in the International Institute for Strategic Studies' annual *Military Balance* (London); the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies' annual *Middle East Military Balance* (Tel Aviv) and various publications of the International Monetary Fund. Discrepancies, such as are evident between Chart 2 and 2a, are the product of differing statistical accounting methods and differing source and reference material. There is no single independently verifiable and uniformly accepted source for such statistical data.

**Chart 2a:
Military Expenditure as a
Percentage of Central Government
Expenditure**



Source: *Government Finance Statistics Yearbook*, Vol. XI, 1987, International Monetary Fund⁴

Through victory, the *raison d'être* of the armed forces lost urgency. Sadat was therefore able to play upon his grand strategy of “peace and prosperity” to relegate the military to the sidelines of Egyptian politics and to redirect government investment from the military establishment to civilian development. As he argued in early 1977,

If we were able to achieve peace this year ... military expenses would definitely drop ... I truly need all the funds I can get to rebuild my country. Until this moment, our average military expenditure is very high and we cannot afford to weaken our armed forces as long as we are confronting Israel.⁵

After the war, he demobilized hundreds of thousands of troops (mostly not first-line soldiers), many of whom had been on active duty since the June 1967 war, and he adamantly refused to countenance the creation of personality cults around

⁴ The asterisk refers to a change in government accounting in 1980, when the calendar year was altered. As a result, there is no entry for 1981. Figures for 1986 are projected. The presence of both Charts 2 and 2a is to underline the variations in statistical data between the two sources.

⁵ Sadat interview in the Iranian newspaper *Rastakhiz*, reported by Egypt's official Middle East News Agency (MENA), May 18, 1977; cited by *Middle East Contemporary Survey (MECS)*, Tel Aviv: Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1981, vol. I, p. 317.

prominent “heroes of October” that might promote other centers of power and detract from his post-October policy goals.⁶

Moreover, Sadat had taken great strides toward structurally removing the army from politics and restricting the soldiers to the barracks. Whereas former army officers filled many non-military ministries throughout the Nasser years, Sadat was zealous in replacing them with prominent civilian politicians. For example, about one-fifth of Nasser’s ministers were officers; Sadat cut that percentage to less than one-twentieth.⁷ By the time of his assassination, Sadat had gone far toward channeling national energies away from the confrontation with Israel and into development of the non-military sectors of the Egyptian economy and in stripping decision-making authority from army officers and handing it to civilian politicians.

There were, however, limitations to Sadat’s policy. Despite his effort to diminish the overt political power of the military, he could do little to alter the fact that the army remained the country’s most important interest group as well as the regime’s most powerful constituency. Three times during the drama-filled year of 1977, for example, Sadat was forced to turn to the armed forces to either safeguard the regime or validate fundamental policy decisions. In January, the army was called upon to quell the violent “food riots” that threatened to undermine Sadat’s rule – the first deployment of troops in the streets of Cairo in the history of the republic. In July, the army and air force fought a four-day border war with Libya, Egypt’s first (and, to date, only) major military engagement since the October War. And in November 1977, Sadat flew to Jerusalem only after Minister of War Muhammad Abdul Ghani al-Gamasy bid him farewell at the tarmac at Cairo Airport and offered the support of the armed forces for the president’s bold peace initiative.⁸ In that one year, therefore, Sadat needed the visible display of army support to ensure domestic stability, to bolster his inter-Arab position and to legitimize his policy on the Arab-Israeli front.

⁶ For example, not until 1982, after Sadat’s death, were the commanders of the Second and Third Field Armies, Maj. Gen. (ret.) Sa’ad ad-Din Ma’mun and Maj. Gen. (ret.) Abdul Mun’im Muhammad Wasil, granted the rank of honorary lieutenant general. *African Defense Journal*, November 1982.

⁷ Mark N. Cooper, “The Demilitarization of the Egyptian Cabinet,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2, May 1982, p. 208. Because of the inherently security-oriented nature of the post, many governorships remained in the hands of former military officers.

⁸ Gamasy said, “The armed forces are aware of the dimensions and responsibilities of the present situation and are closely watching your courageous step toward a just peace. So march ahead, Mr. President, with the blessings of God, and you have, from all members of the armed forces, greetings, esteem and prayers for success.” Cited in Raymond William Baker, *Egypt’s Uncertain Revolution under Nasser and Sadat*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978, p. 160.

Generally, however, Sadat's rule was marked by an effort to curtail the political influence of the army. While all the other confrontation states were building arsenals in the 1970s, Egypt's was deteriorating.⁹ Moreover, on issues of fundamental national security, the army never posed a serious challenge to presidential authority. In order to wage war against Israel, Sadat first had to fight his own generals, symbolized by his firing of War Minister Muhammad Sadeq in 1972; Sadeq was then replaced by the more supplicant Ahmad Ismail Ali. In his memoirs, Kissinger recounts that at one point during the Kilometer 101 talks in the aftermath of the October War, Gamasy "came close to dissociating the Egyptian military from the negotiations."¹⁰ But Sadat's will prevailed. Later, during the first Kissinger shuttle, Sadat was exercised over military haggling that threatened to hold up the disengagement agreement. "My army!", he was quoted as saying. "First I had trouble convincing them to go to war. Now I have trouble persuading them to make peace."¹¹ But persuade the army he did. And when harsher measures were necessary (such as the trial of Sadeq for torturing troops under his command) or when presidential authority needed to be reinforced (such as the abrupt dismissal of Gamasy at the height of the peace treaty negotiations), Sadat acted swiftly and forcefully.

Even in the case of the January 1977 riots, the decision to deploy the army was made out of reluctance, not out of an eagerness to employ the forces of state control against the rioters. A reading of the official Egyptian history of the episode gives barely a hint of the military's pivotal role in safeguarding domestic security. For example, in a major parliamentary address several days after calm was restored to the streets of Cairo, Prime Minister Mamduh Salim outlined the methods by which the government suppressed the demonstrations. He gave top billing to the role of the police force and referred to the role of the armed forces only as an afterthought.¹² In his own public accounts of the riots, Sadat virtually never

⁹ Indeed, in absolute terms, Egypt's military power had declined since 1973. See Martin Indyk, *To the Ends of the Earth: Sadat's Jerusalem Initiative*, Harvard Middle East Papers, Number One, Cambridge, MA: Center for Middle East Studies, 1984, p. 8. See also, testimony of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance, International Development Assistance Authorization, FY 1979, 95th Congress, 2nd session, March 2, 1978.

¹⁰ Henry A. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1982, p. 823.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 836.

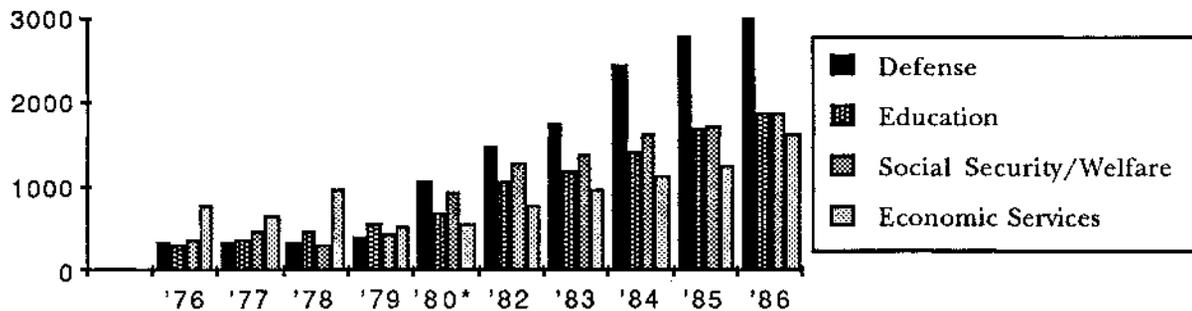
¹² Salim: "It is also clear that the attempt was contained and the scheme foiled, not because of a retreat by the forces that had prepared themselves to cause these disturbances, but because the police forces confronted the waves of sabotage and demonstrations on January 18 and 19, in addition to the assistance provided by the armed forces on the evening of January 18." Cairo Domestic Service (radio), January 29, 1977; cited in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), January 31, 1977.

referred to the role played by the armed forces in defending his regime. Moreover, one man who was rarely quoted throughout the episode was Gamasy, who was extremely reluctant to use his troops against Egyptian civilians.¹³ In short, not only did Sadat not want the army involved, but the army shared his sentiment as well.

Mubarak and the army: partnership

In Mubarak’s Egypt, the trend toward disengaging the military from political life and diminishing its share of the national wealth has not only been arrested but has been reversed. Rather than combat the idea of the army’s centrality in Egyptian politics, Mubarak has embraced it. Rather than restrict the military’s participation in non-military affairs, he has endorsed it. Today, the armed forces command an increasing share of national expenditure, control a widening sphere of government activities and play an ever-growing role in many aspects of Egyptian political and economic life.

**Chart 3: Trends in
Central Government Expenditure
1976-86
(millions of current Egyptian pounds)**



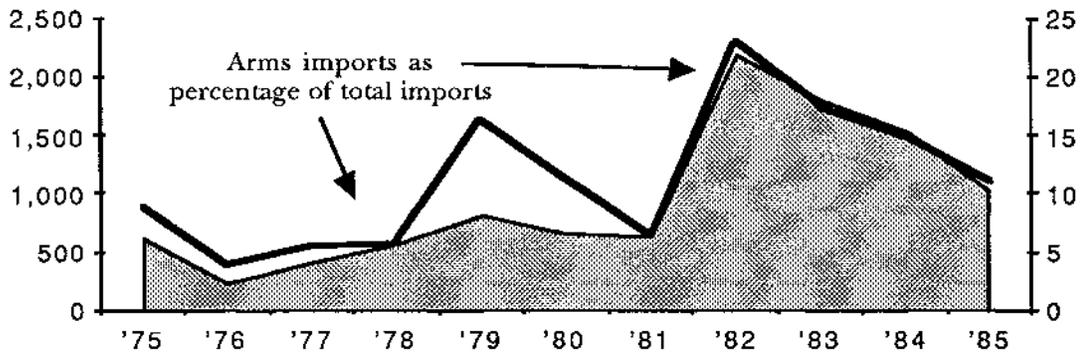
Source: *Government Finance Statistics Yearbook*, Vol. XI, 1987, International Monetary Fund. This chart records government spending for the four largest and defined expenditure categories as of 1986. Not included in this chart are the categories of Health, General Public Services, Housing and Social Services, as well as the largest – but undefined – category of spending, “Other.”¹⁴

¹³ Indyk cites the U.S. ambassador at the time, Hermann Frederick Eilts, who said the military command was reluctant to deploy force in January 1977 and found the task extremely distasteful. See Indyk, p. 54, note 8. Also, Cooper details a series of demand that the military allegedly made as *quid pro quo* for agreeing to act against the rioters. See Mark N. Cooper, *The Transformation of Egypt*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, p. 272, note 20.

¹⁴ The asterisk refers to a change in government accounting in 1980, when the calendar year was altered. As a result, there is no entry for 1981. Figures for 1986 are projected.

Chart 4: Egyptian Arms Imports

(Millions of constant 1983 \$US)



Source: ACDA, 1986

In the first two years after Sadat's assassination, for example, per capita military spending rose by nearly three-quarters and, as a percentage of total government expenditure, defense outlays increased by nearly half. Indeed, the Mubarak era has so far been marked as a time of rejuvenation of the armed forces as a modern fighting force (symbolized by the the movement toward mechanization and the acquisition of American F-16 and French Mirage 2000 fighter aircraft) and a time of the restoration of the legitimacy of the armed forces as a pivotal actor in Egyptian domestic politics.

Table 1: Sources of Egyptian Arms Imports, 1981-1985

(Hundreds of Millions of Constant 1983 \$US)

Country	Amount	percentage of total
United States	2,900	40.7
France	1,200	16.8
China	525	7.4
United Kingdom	460	6.4
Italy	350	4.9
Soviet Union	40	0.6
<i>Others</i>	1,640	23.0
Total	7,120	

Source: ACDA, 1986

Mubarak, it seems, has been far more solicitous of the armed forces than his predecessor. In the first two years of his presidency, for example, Egypt imported more military goods than in the previous seven years – *combined*. And it would be

wrong to ascribe that increase solely to the new American weapons pipeline whose origins date back to the Sadat period. Three-fifths of the more than \$7 billion in arms that Egypt has imported between 1981-1985 came from non-U.S. sources. To have maintained Sadat's legacy *vis-a-vis* the military would have been unremarkable; to countermand it is striking. Clearly, a decision was taken to divert a greater percentage of economic resources to the purchase of military goods and to the expansion of the military infrastructure – a policy which still remains in force today. (*See above, chart 3.*)

There are at least two factors that suggest why the political/military policies of Mubarak and Sadat – both military men, whose political authority depended to a great extent on military support – diverged so widely. On a practical level, Mubarak's courting of the military may be due to the fact that while his predecessors both faced – and in some cases overcame – the transfixing national dilemmas of independence, sovereignty, war and peace, he has been left to deal with less glamorous but equally problematic matters such as infrastructure revitalization, currency exchange modification and industrial productivity. In those fields, yardsticks of success are difficult to quantify, translate poorly into newspaper headlines and radio copy and, even if met, elicit few groundswells of popular praise or approval. By endorsing pay raises, benefit bonuses and weapons procurement, Mubarak may have been trying to pamper an important constituency as he tries to widen backing for other items on his political agenda, including efforts to promote Egyptian democracy and economic efficiency.

On a more existential level, it is important to note that while both Sadat and Mubarak drew their fundamental political legitimacy from military activity – their respective roles in the October War – their wartime accomplishments differed in very profound ways. Sadat, as noted above, forced the war upon his generals, in effect, first waging (and winning) an intra-military struggle before turning his sights on Israel. Much of his post-war legitimacy derived from a profoundly anti-military stance (e.g., his slogan “No more war”). Mubarak, on the other hand, was appointed vice president *because of* his wartime accomplishments as Air Force commander; he is a symbol of the Egyptian armed forces at its finest. Unlike Sadat, Mubarak represents the “October generation,” which experienced Egypt's first military success since the revolution. Unlike Sadat, Mubarak does not view the military as a part of Egypt's larger problem, but rather as a partner in reaching its solution.

The role played by Defense Minister Abdul Halim Abu Ghazalah highlights the way in which Mubarak has encouraged a partnership with the military in such civilian matters as economic development. Whereas Sadat had no less than six defense ministers in his decade of rule, Mubarak and Abu Ghazalah have been together since the day they flanked Sadat on the Heliopolis parade ground more than six years ago. Abu Ghazalah is a survivor, being one of only a handful of ministers remaining from Mubarak's original 34-man cabinet. During Mubarak's tense first year in office, which witnessed the aftermath of the assassination, the

insurrection in Asyut, the anxious moments preceding the final Israeli withdrawal from Sinai and then the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Abu Ghazalah proved to be an invaluable source of stability and was amply rewarded with a political promotion to Deputy Prime Minister and a military promotion to Field Marshal – Egypt's first since the 1973 war.

However, there have been a steady stream of reports over the past few years of friction between the two, often centering around rumors of Abu Ghazalah's impending "promotion" to the vice presidency on condition that he resign the defense portfolio.¹⁵ In fact, Mubarak has continually deferred from public discussion of the vice presidency and Abu Ghazalah has given no hint of wishing to leave his powerful post in exchange for a largely honorific one. Moreover, there are few signs of outward competition between the two. Abu Ghazalah often speaks out on non-military matters, apparently with the president's assent. Indeed, a pattern has emerged in which Abu Ghazalah is often the point-man for indicating the government's coolness in the relationship with Israel. For example, a minor diplomatic crisis erupted in January 1987 when the Israeli press reported on a virulently bellicose presentation Abu Ghazalah allegedly made before a closed-door parliamentary committee. After a protest by the Israeli ambassador, Abu Ghazalah issued a carefully worded statement that offered an explanation but neither a denial nor an apology.¹⁶

Mubarak has apparently decided to give Abu Ghazalah the freedom to succeed or fail on his own, especially in what is popularly perceived to be Abu Ghazalah's backyard – the U.S. relationship. Having served for three years as defense attache in Washington during the formative period of the Egyptian-American strategic relationship, Abu Ghazalah zealously guards his control over the American portfolio. To many in Egypt, his closeness with Washington is a political albatross which Mubarak could exploit if Abu Ghazalah were to falter. And in the past year, Abu Ghazalah has suffered a series of stunning defeats in that very arena.

First, Abu Ghazalah was intimately involved in the negotiations to alleviate Egypt's military debt burden. He was patently unsuccessful in his efforts to persuade U.S. officials that debt relief was a political – not a financial – decision. Second, Abu Ghazalah was the bureaucratic engine behind the General Motors multi-billion dollar automobile assembly project, having convinced the U.S. Agency for International Development to help underwrite the effort. The deal collapsed in September 1987, leaving Abu Ghazalah scrambling for new partners.

¹⁵ The most recent of these periodic reports appeared in *ad-Dustur* (London), February 1, 1988; cited in JPRS.

¹⁶ See original report by Zeev Schiff in *Haaretz*, January 29, 1987.

And third, Abu Ghazalah has committed much of his personal prestige on U.S. agreement to the eventual co-production of the M1A1 Abrams battle tank, which would be the centerpiece of Egypt's reinvigorated armaments industry. Although the project will likely be approved, Congressional reaction to the idea has been at best cool and at worst derisive, putting the Pentagon on the defensive and placing Abu Ghazalah in an awkward and vulnerable position. If Mubarak were to confront Abu Ghazalah, his best weapon would be the defense minister's own record on what he supposedly does best – handling Washington.

Despite the potential for deep competition between the two, both the President and the Defense Minister appear to share the same vision of the beneficial role the military can play as the engine for economic growth and development. Abu Ghazalah has been given free rein to move ahead with a full range of ambitious projects, many of which clearly fall outside the traditional purview of the defense ministry. As chairman of the Higher Strategic Committee, Abu Ghazalah oversees a wide range of national initiatives and has publicly promoted all sorts of development plans – from bakeries and chicken farms to the now-defunct effort to create a fully integrated automobile assembly industry in tandem with General Motors. He has led the military to take a different tack in its approach to domestic decision-making. Instead of entrenching itself in the non-military ministries, as was the case under the Nasser/Amer period, the armed forces' own development branches are themselves playing a larger role, competing with and, in some cases, eclipsing their civilian counterparts. According to *The Financial Times*, for example, the government was originally able to offer swift approval for the GM deal because Abu Ghazalah, chairman of the selection committee, circumvented normal bureaucratic procedure and evidently “overrode objections which could have delayed a decision for months or even years.”¹⁷ One observer noted that at all recent inaugurations of army-financed development projects, “the appropriate [civilian] ministers had to tag along behind Abu Ghazalah to give their blessings to his latest encroachments into their domain.”¹⁸ In short, in place of the 1960s system of military men filling civilian functions in civilian ministries, today military men fill civilian functions in military posts – parallel to civilian ministries.

Eager for a role, the armed forces have been ready to step in to fill vacuums when other actors have proved incapable. Paralysis in the civilian ministries has opened avenues of opportunity for a military establishment desirous of prestige, expansion and investment. As the Cairo bureaucracy proves itself increasingly

¹⁷ *The Financial Times*, June 4, 1986.

¹⁸ Robert Springborg, “The President and the Field Marshal: Civil-Military Relations in Egypt Today,” *MERIP Reports*, July/August 1987.

incapable of delivering basic social services (e.g., food distribution and health care), the military has begun to fill the void. Military leaders like Abu Ghazalah have been outspoken in areas that, in recent years, have been clearly outside their traditional portfolios and have eagerly circumvented the sloth-like civilian bureaucracies.¹⁹

The official rationale for the expansion of the military is two-fold. First, Egyptian leaders argue that peace can only be maintained through strength and the creation of an Egyptian deterrent force whose existence would convince potential adversaries of the inadvisability of war. Given the deteriorated state of the military as of 1980, only a massive infusion of both political and financial capital could restore Egypt's fighting capability. Abu Ghazalah has often cited the case of Egypt's relative incapacity to offer any response to Israel's move into Lebanon in 1982 and the need to build a force able to "neutralize" Israel's.

We must consider that Israel is still embracing the strategy it pursued before the peace was signed, namely that it should have a military force which is superior to that of all of its neighbors as a group, even if these neighbors have been won over to peace, for a very clear purpose, which is to solve problems that might arise between it and its neighbors militarily. In this case we must look around ourselves and state that there is a threat ... Therefore, the Arab nation also looks at Israel and its increasing military expansion as a threat to its security. It must think of ways to neutralize this Israeli military force. It is not a matter of my wanting to invade, to strike or to fight. Rather, it is enough for me to neutralize this force, at least, so that it will not be a contentious force or a force of aggression ... This is the most significant serious threat directed against the Arab nation.²⁰

Second, defenders of military expansion point to the army's contribution to domestic economic development. The military, they argue, is the most efficient engine of economic growth. "We compete with international commercial

¹⁹ Note, for example, this exchange in a 1986 Cairo radio interview:

Question: In a speech last month, Your Excellency said that defense is a national strategy, and that it requires material aid from the ministry of defense, which is in charge of planning, and other ministries, which are in charge of implementation. How is this coordinated?

Abu Ghazalah: ... National security depends on many things, including military security. Military security is inseparable from other factors, such as economic security. That is why we say that the whole subject is indivisible. Hence, there must be an integrated plan to ensure Egyptian national security through coordination. A comprehensive plan should be drawn up, involving the various ministries and other parties concerned.

Cairo Domestic Service, April 24, 1986; cited in FBIS, April 30, 1986.

²⁰ *al-Musawwar*, October 29, 1982, cited in Joint Publication Research Service (JPRS).

companies and we have beaten all of them," the Defense Minister once said.²¹ Moreover, implicit in this argument is the contention that if the armed forces were not to pick up the slack, private Islamic charitable institutions would take control of what was once solely a government domain.

Army and domestic stability

In addition to its own institutional growth, the military has begun to assume a more pivotal role in the looming political confrontation between the civilian government and the Islamic opposition. Results of the April 1987 nationwide parliamentary elections did not produce the dynamism for Mubarak's goal of forging a multi-party democracy in Egypt. On the contrary, only two political forces displayed any electoral staying power – the central government (in the form of Mubarak's National Democratic Party) and the Islamic opposition (represented by a coalition of two established political parties plus the Muslim Brotherhood). The conservative, legalistic Neo-Wafd gained little support among its traditional backers, the rural *fellahin*, and the leftist National Progressive Unionist Grouping (*Tagammu*) failed miserably among its natural constituency, the urban masses. There should be no doubt that the election was a contest between Mubarak's party (actually more a patronage network than a party) and the Islamic current in society. The results, which still accorded Mubarak's party a comfortable margin in parliament, may have been Mubarak's way of gaining legitimacy for the electoral process, but *inter alia* they underscored the belief that in the quiet confrontation between the government and the Islamic opposition, the Islamics are gaining. After Cairo witnessed several terrorist attacks in the weeks after the election, that belief was given new urgency.

With the growing polarization between the civilian government and the Islamic current, the military has begun to reassert itself as a key power broker in Egyptian political life. As it proved in its able handling of the Central Security Forces mutiny in February 1986, the armed forces are the regime's sole safeguard against domestic instability, not just *primus intra pares*. At that time, a crack division camped in the outskirts of Cairo was deployed to crush rioting by Central Security conscripts near the Pyramids, to supervise a general curfew and to keep the capital's main thoroughfares free of looting and further disturbances. The troops performed their tasks, even the difficult one of firing on other uniformed security forces, with what virtually all observers have called a high degree of professionalism and restraint. Even more important in the minds of many

²¹ "Egypt's Armed Forces in a New Era," *Defense and Foreign Affairs*, Cairo Special Edition, 1981, p. 12.

Cairenes was that the army returned to its barracks about as swiftly as it was first deployed. In response to a provocative question about increasing military control of political life, Abu Ghazalah launched into a heated defense of the army's professionalism:

There is no control of civilians by the military. No such term exists in the lexicon of any Egyptian ... The armed forces are always under the control of the government. We receive orders, execute them, do our duty as best we can and then return to our barracks – that is all.²²

While the Central Security rioting was the most visible example of the regime's reliance upon the army, it is not the only one. Indeed, an analysis of some of the security threats to the Mubarak regime of far less gravity than the police conscript riots reaffirms the key role of the military – even when its direct involvement in quelling the disturbances was not required.

In late September 1984, for example, the Mubarak government introduced some moderate increases in food prices and health insurance premiums. Almost immediately, workers at textile mills in the town of Kufr al-Dawwar, near Alexandria, responded by organizing a sit-in, which quickly degenerated into demonstrations and rioting at other factories and shipyards in the area. Interior Ministry officials imposed a curfew and dispatched regular police forces, reinforced by special anti-riot units. In clashes with the estimated 2,000 demonstrators, at least three were killed and 51 – included six policemen – wounded. This time, internal security troops adequately quelled the disturbances. No deployment of army troops was necessary, although there were reports of heightened readiness among some army units. Just as in 1977, the government blamed "leftist extremists" for provoking the riots and almost immediately thereafter, Mubarak rescinded the order authorizing the price increases.

Interestingly, despite the lack of armed forces participation in suppressing the Kufr al-Dawwar uprising, there was, in its aftermath, a marked increase in press reference to the army's pivotal role in maintaining internal order. On October 4, just two days after the curfew was lifted, the government press agency reported Mubarak chairing a meeting of the Armed Forces Supreme Council, which includes the chiefs of all military services but does *not* include the internal security apparatus. Afterwards, Abu Ghazalah – not the President – reported to Cairo Radio that the council had "reviewed the international situation, the political situation *and the domestic situation*," with the clear implication that the military hierarchy took the opportunity to air its views on the most important internal incident – the Kufr al-Dawwar riots. Then, two days later, on the anniversary of the

²² Cited in *African Defense Journal*, April 1986.

October War, Mubarak himself linked the army with the recent rioting when he exhorted Egyptians to extend the spiritual feeling of the armed forces' success in 1973 to all manner of civil development.²³

This sort of publicized juxtaposition of episodes of internal strife and the affirmation of the military's responsibility for maintaining domestic order is not coincidental. Rather, it has occurred consistently throughout the Mubarak regime. In September 1982, for example, a self-avowed teenage member of al-Jihad opened fire on a tourist bus in the vicinity of the Pyramids, wounding two. The next day, Mubarak met for three hours "with armed forces senior commanders, officers, NCOs and enlisted men." According to *al-Ahram*, the president discussed the domestic situation with the military personnel and, in their presence, harshly criticized the legal opposition parties. "...[T]he opposition is not constructive, offers no solutions to the problems and is just looking for mistakes, even unverified mistakes," Mubarak said. Abu Ghazalah later described the meeting as "a family gathering."²⁴

In November 1984, hundreds of anti-riot police clashed with thousands of students at Cairo's al-Azhar University demonstrating for academic reforms and the resignation of Interior Minister Ahmad Rushdi. At the height of the confrontation, Cairo radio reported a three-and-a-half hour meeting at the Defense Ministry between Mubarak, Abu Ghazalah and top armed forces commanders, suggesting heightened armed forces readiness should the al-Azhar situation have deteriorated.²⁵

The army's role in suppressing the police conscript riots removed any doubt about the military's preeminent position and wiped away any pretense to a balance among the various security agencies. That new status was reflected in government statements later that year suggesting a clear and defined domestic security role for the armed forces. As Abu Ghazalah has stated, one of the official duties of the armed forces is to "defend constitutional legitimacy in cooperation with the internal security forces."²⁶

²³ Cairo Domestic Service, June 10, 1984; cited in FBIS, June 10, 1984. Emphasis added.

²⁴ *al-Ahram*, October 26, 1982; cited in FBIS, October 28, 1982.

²⁵ Cairo Domestic Service, November 24, 1984; cited in FBIS, November 26, 1984.

²⁶ MENA, July 22, 1986; cited in FBIS, July 23, 1986.

Forces of constraint

At the same time as the military grows in popular stature and in political power, it is beginning to face new and potentially constricting checks on its ability to exercise that authority. Ironically, the two main factors threatening to constrain the military are themselves direct products of the political environment under Mubarak that has fostered the armed forces' renaissance.

First, the military is now being challenged by a democratizing society. Over the past few years, Mubarak has doggedly promoted the growth of democratic institutions, most notably an independent opposition press. Hesitant and apprehensive at first, the opposition has taken up the charge and has started to comment with ferocity (though, not necessarily, accuracy) on topics previously deemed out-of-bounds. Indeed, even the establishment newspapers are airing views that differ sharply with government policy on some fundamental issues. Unlike any other period in the past two decades, basic issues of national security and military policy, with few exceptions, are up for open debate. And given that the military is playing a larger and more visible role, there is much more fodder for debate. Part II of this paper examines the tensions between democratization and military muscle-flexing.

Second, and more important, the military has begun to confront the spectre of Islam that stands in the shadows of all assessments of Egyptian domestic stability. Egypt's army is, to a large extent, a conscript army, and it therefore cannot be insulated from the phenomena affecting overall Egyptian society. Basic structural factors that are unmistakably altering the face of Egypt and feeding the Islamic tendency are taking their toll on the military as well. These include demographic and educational trends that have threatened to undermine the military's manpower strategy and geographic realities that have contaminated the army with the same social ills affecting civilian society -- most notably, Islamic militancy. In the Egyptian case, the danger of these trends has been magnified by a government decision not to sacrifice quantity for quality; in fact, data indicates that Egypt is seeking to expand the number of personnel in the armed forces at the same time as it modernizes. The result is that the danger of religious militancy sprouting from within the army may be more likely today than on the day Sadat was shot. Genuine fear has propelled the military to begin taking some remedial measures, but it is now engaged in that sort of spiral whose end is uncertain. Part III assesses the Islamic threat to the military and the steps the government has taken in response.

Regional circumstances magnify the significance of the resurgent role of the military in Egyptian politics because the growth of the Egyptian army coincides with a vacuum of Arab military strength in the Gulf war. Egypt has been moving tentatively to expand its military role in the Gulf, both in terms of military exports and coordination with Gulf armed forces. At the same time, Egypt has taken steps to rebuild its capability in another regional arena, the Arab-Israeli front. Part IV

examines the extent to which the development of the armed forces has sought an outlet through these two external routes and the dangers involved in pursuing each one.

Clearly, the way political power is distributed in Cairo is shifting, with the military establishment in the ascendance. The army is acquiring an enhanced status as the most productive national institution, as the preeminent source of regime security and as the virtual employer-of-last-resort. In turn, these trends pose a new and difficult set of problems for achieving Mubarak's main priorities of stability, productivity and liberalization. Moreover, the army is flexing the muscles of its new status in the regional realm as well, and there too the drawbacks inherent in such policies loom large. The concluding pages of this paper assess the lacunae in American understanding of these Egyptian trends and offer suggestions for maintaining the proper perspective on U.S. interests in Egypt at a time of deepening U.S. engagement in the Gulf.

II: TENSIONS WITH THE PUSH TOWARD DEMOCRACY

Egypt's "democratic experiment" has left the military in an awkward position. On the one hand, the polarization of national politics between the ruling party and the Islamic opposition has opened the door to the reemergence of the armed forces as a powerful actor in the political arena. But on the other hand, the military has often found itself the focus of the trappings of that "democratic experiment," namely the relatively unbridled press and parliamentary debate. For the first time since 1967, when the military was subject to popular recrimination for its disastrous wartime performance, issues of national security strategy in general, and the Egyptian military in particular, are legitimate topics for public debate. It is ironic that as its power is in the ascendance, the military is also facing what one Cairo-based Western diplomat has called "an assault on its nobility."²⁷

Excessive peacetime spending

Parliamentarians and journalists from the Wafd party have taken the lead in openly criticizing the scope of military expenditure and the government's military strategy. Traditionally a liberal, nationalist party, the Wafd platform mixes demands for tax cuts with calls for limiting defense outlays and the channeling of those funds into public welfare and economic development projects. When the armed forces budget came up for parliamentary review in 1986, Wafd deputies were particularly vituperative in their criticism.

Is it reasonable that we should borrow to buy arms, when the people are sleeping in tombs, when sick people are dying because there is no room in the hospitals and when the budget deficit is more than 5 billion pounds?²⁸

²⁷ Private interview, Cairo, June 1987. For background, see also Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New London: Yale University Press, 1968. "In an institutionalized society, the participation of new groups in the political system reduces tensions ... In praetorian societies, however, the participation of new groups exacerbates rather than reduces tensions... [T]he stability of a praetorian society varies inversely with the scope of political participation." (p. 198) While contemporary Egypt does not represent the classic praetorian state, it does exhibit many of its characteristics.

²⁸ Ahmad Abu al-Fatah in *al-Wafd*, June 12, 1986, cited in JPRS.

Moreover, the Wafd directly attacked the military leadership for keeping so many men under arms, essentially criticizing the government's ambivalence over whether to opt for a policy of quality over quantity in its military posture.

Egypt's leaders can create a powerful army with no more than 200,000 individuals as officers and soldiers, so why 800,000? [sic] Yes, why? Do officials know that the proportion of Egyptian soldiers to the population of Egypt represents the highest proportion compared to the armies of the world?²⁹

By attacking the most sensitive of government institutions, these sorts of attacks on military spending pushed the regime's newfound press liberalism to the limit and touched a nerve inside the government leadership. Mubarak himself believed it necessary to answer the Wafd's charges, accusing the army's critics of "poisoning the atmosphere for new generations to serve." He noted that Egyptians who support lower military budgets were only serving "Israeli interests."

This may serve Israeli interests, but I do not believe that it can possibly serve Egyptian interests. That is why I am so astonished at such strange and urgent calls for a reduction in military expenditure. It cannot bear any further reduction.³⁰

Mubarak's use of Israel-baiting was echoed by Abu Ghazalah. Asked about reports of excessive military spending and claims that Egypt's military budget was larger than Israel's, he fired back that Egypt must be even more ready for conflict today than in 1973.

We must surpass the October War phase and not remain captives to it. The tasks entrusted to [the Egyptian armed forces] dictate that we should not withhold money from the Egyptian Army, which must remain the Middle East's strongest and most capable army. If we retreat for a single moment from the training and armament plans, our lurking enemies will exploit the opportunity. Egypt is targeted and it must always remain strong ...³¹

Faced with such vociferous government opposition to the mere suggestion of criticism of the army, the Wafd opted to change tack. The Wafd's deputy chairman took the high road in an editorial in the party newspaper, reaffirming

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ MENA, July 2, 1986, quoting *al-Musawwar* interview; cited in FBIS, July 9, 1986.

³¹ *al-Tadamun*, London, November 1-7, 1986; cited in FBIS, November 6, 1986.

support for army spending as a “sacred duty” because the “people’s strength lies in the Army’s strength.” But he took the opportunity to test Mubarak’s commitment to democracy and liberalism by demanding that the government remove the cover of secrecy from the military budget.

It is unthinkable for governments in the democratic countries to withhold information on the military budget from the people’s representatives as we do [in Egypt]... This abnormal situation which we inherited from the era of despotism and darkness should end ... Parliamentary control of the annual state budget can be neither serious nor fruitful unless it includes the Defense Ministry’s budget and military spending of all kinds, particularly since this spending constitutes a major portion of the public expenditure ...³²

Indeed, in a time of across-the-board retrenchment, Mubarak’s plaintive cry that military spending “could not stand any further reduction” seems hollow. Under his tenure, the armed forces had benefited from massive expansion and even in recent years, with the general slowing down of government spending, military expenditures have continued to garner a larger share of national expenditures.³³

Moreover, Abu Ghazalah boasted on several occasions that the armed forces were able to finance many of their own projects and weapons acquisitions from their own resources, indicating that a large amount of the military’s income was outside the purview of parliamentary accountability. Part of Abu Ghazalah’s defense of a 25 percent increase in military spending for FY84 was that the armed forces had already freed the state budget from “paying a single cent” for billions of pounds worth of weapons imports.³⁴ And the chief of the army corps of engineers said in 1986 that the army would not burden the state to contribute towards the construction of desert military cities but would finance the projects from the profits of selling land owned by the armed forces in urban areas.³⁵ It is clear from these and other reports that profits from the sale of commodity goods domestically and armaments internationally do not pass through the usual accounting channels and are held in accounts separate from the general government expenditure. The

³² Wahid Ra’fat in *al-Wafd*, July 10, 1986; cited in FBIS, July 7, 1986.

³³ For example, in 1985, defense spending (in nominal dollars) rose 13.6 percent over the previous year, while the allocation for social security and welfare increased (in nominal dollars) only 6.7 percent. International Monetary Fund, *Government Finance Statistics Yearbook*, vol. XI, 1987, p. 342.

³⁴ Cited in *African Defense Journal*, December 1984.

³⁵ Major General Mahmud Abdul Aziz, quoted in *al-Ahram*, *al-Tab’ah al-Duwaliyah*, October 22, 1986; cited in JPRS.

opposition had occasion to criticize only publicly avowed military expenditure, not even the huge "shadow" military budget that seems to have financed a large chunk of military expansion in recent years.

Reports of dissension in the ranks

While the government may have been irritated over increasing press scrutiny of the military budget, it was incensed over opposition press suggestions of widespread disloyalty, bordering on insurrection, among the ranks of the armed forces. Following the attempted assassination of former Interior Minister Hasan Abu Basha in early May 1987, rumors began to circulate about disaffection in the armed forces. In mid-May, the organ of the Islamic-nationalist Socialist Labor Party, *ash-Sha'b*, reported that the president's personal security apparatus was deeply involved in a large-scale, six-month investigation to "break up one of the most dangerous secret organizations to arise within the armed forces."³⁶ Moreover, in an interesting twist, it added that Mubarak had entrusted the Chief of Staff, Lt. General Abdul Ghaffur Ibrahim al-Urabi, with personal responsibility for tracking down the extremists, suggesting that Abu Ghazalah lacked the full confidence of the President.³⁷

Such blatant questioning of the basic loyalty of the armed forces was unprecedented and provoked a strong and vociferous response from the government. Within hours, Urabi held a news conference in which he not only asserted that "there is absolutely no secret organization within the Egyptian army," but also warned the opposition newspapers to "keep their hands off the armed forces and let them do their job."³⁸

The next day, Cairo's semi-official press echoed Urabi's statement. An editorial in *al-Jumhuriyyah*, titled "What Does the Opposition Want from our Armed

³⁶ *ash-Sha'b*, May 19, 1987; cited in FBIS May 26, 1987.

³⁷ Urabi has since retired and was named chairman of the Arab Industrial Organization, responsible for military industries. His replacement is Lt. General Sayf ad-Din Abu Shanaf, former commander of the Second Field Army and one-time chief military liaison officer with Israel. These changes came amid a general shake-up of virtually all the top-level military positions in 1987.

³⁸ MENA, May 19, 1987; cited in FBIS, May 20, 1987.

Forces?”, bluntly reminded the opposition that irresponsible reportage of instability in the armed forces might threaten the “perpetuation of the Egyptian democratic experience.” Harkening back to the earlier debate on military spending, the newspaper recalled Mubarak’s Israel-baiting and noted that “it was a Jewish journalist who called on Egypt to rationalize military expenditure.” Like Urabi, the newspaper asked the opposition to “leave our Armed Forces alone and not to involve them in their political game.”³⁹

Mubarak himself sounded a similar chord in remarks several days later. The president denounced the *ash-Sha’b* story as “baseless” and said that “publishing such fabricated news can impinge on stability and, consequently, hinder development.”⁴⁰ Moreover, he added that political parties that fail to keep the armed forces “out of partisan politics ... must purge from their ranks all those who attempt to encroach on the homeland’s security.”⁴¹ The implication of Mubarak’s statements was clear; in the carefully orchestrated relationship between regime and opposition, *ash-Sha’b* had crossed an undeclared “red line.”

Just as the government was on the verge of teaching the opposition press a lesson, the attempted killing of U.S. embassy personnel by the little-known “Egypt’s Revolution” in late May gave new fodder to the opposition claims. The communique claiming responsibility for the attempt was signed in the name of “sons of the armed forces, part of the armed Nasserist struggle.” Among the group’s grievances were complaints about military dependence on the United States and the poor performance of U.S.-supplied military hardware. The group praised Abu Ghazalah for his combative posture toward Israel and demanded that Egypt return to the forefront of the fight against Zionism. Together with the fact that the assassination attempt, though unsuccessful, reflected a high-level of tactical planning, many Cairo observers believed that “Egypt’s Revolution” was comprised of a group of current or former military personnel.⁴² That belief was given credence in September 1987 when Egyptian police, in tandem with U.S. security agents cracked the clandestine group and arrested 16 members – including three armed forces colonels.⁴³ In February 1988, the public prosecutor formally indicted 20 men, including Gamal Abdul Nasser’s son, his cousin, two former Army

³⁹ *al-Jumhuriyyah*, May 20, 1987; cited in FBIS, May 22, 1987.

⁴⁰ *al-Ahram*, May 25, 1987; cited in FBIS, May 27, 1987.

⁴¹ *al-Akhbar*, May 25, 1987; cited in FBIS, May 28, 1987.

⁴² See *Christian Science Monitor*, July 8, 1987.

⁴³ *Washington Post*, November 17, 1987.

officers and one ex-Air Force master sergeant, for various crimes, including the murder (or attempted murder) of American and Israeli diplomats and conspiracy to destabilize the regime. For 11 of the defendants (including the former military personnel, who remain subject to military law), the prosecution is seeking the death penalty.⁴⁴

In retrospect, Egypt's opposition has grown much bolder over the past two years in its discussion of the armed forces. At first, the criticism was indirect and was levelled against the way the army spends its money. More recently, the charges have been more serious, directed against the basic loyalty of elements of the army itself. The debate assumes even greater importance in light of the fact that it assumed full form in the months following the army's sterling and professional performance in quelling the February 1986 riots. Having returned to the barracks almost as swiftly as they left them, the armed forces were viewed with considerable respect and prestige in the streets of Cairo. It appears as though the anti-military charges offered by both ends of the mainstream opposition, the secularist Wafd and Islamic-leaning Socialist Labor Party, were an attempt to arrest the army's snowballing popularity. As such, they elicited far more vociferous responses than did the daily opposition fare. It is interesting to note that the opposition viewed no contradiction between its denunciation of Egypt's adherence to the peace treaty with Israel and its criticism of the armed forces. Just as the army has become more of a player on the domestic scene, the army issue has been internalized in Egyptian politics.

Whereas the Wafd took the lead in demystifying the army issue and opening it to public debate, other political actors have not been silent. From the Communists on the left to the Muslim Brotherhood on the right, virtually all players on the domestic political scene have, at times, commented on military affairs and the proper role of the army in politics. Only the Wafd, though, has consistently criticized the military; other parties have merely set the precedent of offering their opinions on military issues.

Epitomizing this willingness to discuss military affairs was the Muslim Brotherhood's manifesto prior to the April 1987 parliamentary elections. Two months before the vote, *ash-Sha'b* printed an "open letter" to Mubarak from Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide, Hamid Abu al-Nasr.⁴⁵ Abu al-Nasr offered his opinions on all areas of foreign and military policy. His message was isolationist, nationalist and relatively moderate in tone. On the Gulf, he urged that Egypt not involve itself in "any regional war, be it Arab or non-Arab." Concerning Israel,

⁴⁴ For details of the indictment, see MENA, February 18, 1988; cited in FBIS, February 19, 1988.

⁴⁵ *ash-Sha'b*, February 17, 1987; cited in JPRS.

Abu al-Nasr offered no polemics and none of the traditional denunciation of Egyptian “capitulation” in Camp David. Rather, he merely advised Mubarak that he should “pursue a firm policy toward Israel based on extreme cautiousness and total awareness.”

Those non-descript comments reflect Mubarak’s success in removing the issue of peace with Israel from day-to-day politics. On the military issue, however, Abu al-Nasr was unequivocal in his support of the aggrandizement and expansion of the armed forces:

Exploit the present period to increase the armed forces’ military efficiency in all fields, complete the establishment of military industries and promote the spirit of *jihad*, manliness and earnestness ...

While the regime must have taken solace in the support it received from the Muslim Brotherhood for its industrial and development plans, the reference to *jihad* could not have been welcome. In fact, there exists in the public debate over the military a streak of bellicosity that pushes government policy further than it wants to go. For example, at the height of the controversy over military expenditures in 1986, the semi-official *al-Ahram* published a belligerent commentary advocating a return to the war option as a solution to Egypt’s political and economic problems.

The war days were days of unity, solidarity, discipline and sacrifice. These days of peace – that are no more than a truce – are days of debts, pressures, relinquishment and extremism. These are the lessons of the present and the past. What future are we heading toward? ... We are inevitably heading toward another war with the Israeli enemy.⁴⁶

Internal debate

In addition to such public comment on military and strategic issues, there are even signs of intense debate on policy options within the military. Much of that debate surrounds the decision to involve the army in domestic economic development, especially in terms of projects that have little or no connection to the functioning, capability or preparedness of the army itself. Normally, one hears complaints from civilian firms that the army, with its low labor costs, poses undue competition and is driving many of the *infitah* construction companies out of business. Inside the army, a different complaint is heard, one that hits closer to

⁴⁶ Mahjub 'Umar, “With Respect to War,” *al-Ahram*, *al-Tab'ah al-Duwaliyah*, October 14, 1986; cited in JPRS.

home. There is evidence of grumbling inside the ranks that being laden with development projects has detoured the military from its main task of defense and has dulled the army's "cutting edge." In the pages of the military journal *ad-Difa'* (*Defense*),⁴⁷ in commentaries by the editor of *al-Ahram* and in statements by both Abu Ghazalah and Mubarak, the government has taken seriously the criticism that the military values of the armed forces have been diluted by "make-work" projects. The defense minister, for example, dismissed such complaints not by defending the projects *per se*, but by arguing that conscripts who work on development projects are kept separate from the "true" Egyptian soldier.

The armed forces involvement in civilian development projects will not weaken its fighting capabilities since the [military development organization] is not part of the fighting divisions; its members are selected from those who are not qualified physically for fighting responsibilities...⁴⁸

al-Ahram editor Ibrahim al-Nafi' offered a similar defense of the development projects.

It is a common mistake to say that the Egyptian Armed Forces are building bridges and are involved in food security projects. The Armed Forces do not carry out such tasks; in other words, the Armed Forces' combat units do not carry out such tasks because their basic task is to fight and defend the nation. As for the projects in question, they are being carried out by the National Service Department of the Defense Ministry, which is a separate organ and has nothing to do with the Armed Forces' formations in the Second or Third Army or in the forces in the western or central areas.⁴⁹

The thrust of these arguments is quite remarkable: while the army can take great pride in the benefits of vast development projects under its control, it cannot yet also take credit for the operation and management of those projects. In other words, while the army may be irreproachable on purely military issues, it is still waging an uphill battle to secure for itself the publicly accepted role as a vehicle for domestic economic development. This inability to win over some segments of the Egyptian political community as well as some elements of his own army takes on

⁴⁷ For example, *ad-Difa'* notes that the army's economic development role is "the object of numerous and wide-ranging discussions inside and outside the armed forces." See "What do Egyptian military men think?", *ad-Difa'*, January 1985.

⁴⁸ *Rose el-Yusuf*, June 17, 1983.

⁴⁹ "Peace Banners and Drums of War," *al-Ahram*, January 6, 1984; cited in FBIS, January 11, 1984.

added importance since it is in the non-military sphere that Abu Ghazalah has placed so much emphasis during his tenure.

The public debate over the military, therefore, is quite wide-ranging, spanning the spectrum from vituperative condemnations to jingoistic calls to arms. What is important is that such conflicts exist and that they are aired publicly. As the armed forces assume a larger role in public life, that role is under increasing scrutiny. Many observations are negative; some are positive. Yet it is the sort of scrutiny and debate to which the armed forces are unaccustomed.

III: THE ARMED FORCES AND ISLAM – STRUCTURAL IMPERATIVES

Abbud az-Zumur was a living nightmare for Egypt's military leadership. A colonel in the Egyptian army's intelligence service, Zumur was sentenced to life imprisonment for his role in the October 1981 assassination of Anwar Sadat. Whereas the on-site assassins, led by Lieutenant Khalid Islambuli, were reservists, Zumur was career "regular army." His presence in the conspiracy put to rest the issue of whether militant Islamic fundamentalism had found its way into the armed forces officer corps. The question left for the military to ponder was the extent of the contamination.

It should not have come as a surprise to the military leadership that there were soldiers and officers harboring fundamentalist sympathies within the ranks. Army officers have co-mingled with Islamic activists since prior to the 1952 revolution. Among the nucleus of Free Officers that carried out the revolution were many current or former associates of the Muslim Brothers. Nasser, Sadat and Abdul Hakim Amer were all, at one time, affiliated with the Brotherhood. In the mid-1960s, when the Nasser regime was engaged in a brutal confrontation with the Islamic activists, the military responded forcefully to Muslim Brotherhood efforts to infiltrate the army officer corps by purging many suspected sympathizers from the ranks.

Even more important in shaping the mindset of the typical Egyptian soldier was the religious awakening that followed the 1967 disaster and its role in preparing for battle in 1973.⁵⁰ Focusing on the Islamic responsibilities of the Egyptian soldier was an important part of the psychological training prior to the October War. It is now commonplace among Egyptian leaders to pay tribute to the religious fervor of the Egyptian soldier as a factor that tipped the balance in Egypt's favor in 1973. Mubarak, for example, continues to make reference to the profound impact of the Islamic nature of the October war on the Egyptian psyche:

The third value of the October war, by which we must always be guided, is that the material factor alone cannot produce work; a spiritual element in any action is its inexhaustible fuel and energy ... The call *allahu akbar* that

⁵⁰ Indeed, several army officers had been executed for their brazen meeting in a Cairo mosque to call for a renewal of the fight against Israel. See R. Michael Burrell and Abbas R. Kelidar, *Egypt: The Dilemmas of a Nation, 1970-1977*, The Washington Papers No. 48, The Center for Strategic and International Studies, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977, p. 19.

resounded during the battles of the October war had the same force as weapons...⁵¹

That “spiritual element” has returned to haunt the military leadership as they have come to realize that they could not easily control the political message of *allahu akbar*.

In the years after the war, several incidents brought the military in direct contact and conflict with various fundamentalist groups. At the very least, these episodes should have heightened awareness about the nature of the Islamic activist movements and the potential for their spread throughout the ranks. In April 1974, for example, a group of Islamic radicals unsuccessfully attempted a *coup d'état* by attacking the Military Technical Academy in Heliopolis. They planned to use the weapons garnered in that exercise to arrest Egypt's political leadership while Sadat was giving a public address later that evening. Among the 92 indicted in the plot were 16 military cadets and two sailors.⁵² According to the statement by the state prosecutor at the rebels' subsequent trial, the cadets took an active role in the attack, signaling their cohorts to begin the assault on the academy guards and then supplying military uniforms for the rebels to wear in order to ease their entry into the speaking hall. Also among the defendants were two captains in the Egyptian army, who were accused of knowing about the plot but failing to report that information to superiors.⁵³

Three years later, the military faced a different sort of confrontation with fundamentalists. In the summer/fall 1977, the army – rather than the interior or justice ministry – was given responsibility for the prosecution of Shukri Mustafa and his “Society of Muslims” collaborators in the case of the abduction and subsequent murder of Muhammad al-Dhahhabi, former Minister of *Awqaf* (religious trusts). As Gilles Kepel notes,

... [A]rmy discourse was thus accorded the force of law, to the detriment of other discourses on the Society of Muslims by institutions like the corps of *ulema*, which was thereby reduced to ancillary status. It was the military prosecutor ... who articulated the official view of Shukri and his group in the

⁵¹ Mubarak speech on the anniversary of the October War, Cairo Domestic Service, October 6, 1984; cited in FBIS, October 9, 1984.

⁵² *New York Times*, April 27, 1974.

⁵³ *New York Times*, November 17, 1974.

newspapers and at the hearings, while the sheikh of al-Azhar, Islam's highest authority in Egypt, was not even allowed to testify at the trial ...⁵⁴

That is to say the military was the government institution accorded principal responsibility for refuting the claims of Shukri's brand of Islamic activism. It is noteworthy that the military was awarded this responsibility for dealing with an issue of domestic security just months after safeguarding the security of the regime during the January "food riots." Ironically, despite its essentially military character, prosecution for the assault on the Technical Academy three years earlier was handled through the civilian courts.

Crisis management

Following Sadat's assassination, the high command adopted both punitive and preventive measures in a vigorous effort to rid the armed forces of any existing fundamentalist elements and to severely limit the potential for fundamentalism's spread among the troops. These measures were aimed at suspect groups within the military as well as those ostensibly loyal officers who were lax in their oversight responsibility.

The military leadership's immediate concern was to reassure the political elite and the Egyptian people that Sadat's assassins were an aberration within an otherwise loyal armed forces. The day Sadat died, Abu Ghazalah issued a statement in the name of the Armed Forces High Command dismissing charges of widespread disaffection in the military.

The armed forces, who total nearly half a million, condemn this insane crime committed by a number of servicemen that does not exceed the fingers of one hand.⁵⁵

And the next day, the Defense Minister told parliament "that every soldier and officer in the armed forces is ready to redeem Anwar as-Sadat with his own soul instead of living without him."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, p. 97.

⁵⁵ MENA, October 6, 1981; cited in FBIS, October 7, 1981.

⁵⁶ Cairo Domestic Service, October 7, 1981; cited in FBIS, October 7, 1981.

But in order to convince the public, the army had first to convince itself. As in 1977, the military prosecutor's office was charged with investigating the crime.⁵⁷ Its mission, however, was not limited to exploring the circumstances of the assassination and the background of the killers but was expanded to include "aspects of security measures at the military grandstand."⁵⁸ Within days, about 30 officers and more than 100 enlisted men were discharged from service for their sympathetic views toward the fundamentalists. Considering that those numbers were volunteered by Abu Ghazalah, who said at the time that the discharges were implemented with the soldiers' "magnanimous consent," there is reason to believe the true figure to be far larger.⁵⁹ In addition, there were reports that the chief of military intelligence and the commander of the artillery corps were cashiered for their indirect responsibility in permitting the assassins to infiltrate the unit that passed by the reviewing stand. In March 1982, after a trial lasting more than three months, the High Military Court of three active generals handed down a mixed verdict – only the four assassins plus their ideological mastermind, Abdul Salam Faraj, were given death sentences; five others (including Zumur) were sentenced to life imprisonment; and 12 more were given prison terms ranging from 5-15 years at hard labor. Two others, including the blind shaykh who authorized the assassination on Islamic grounds, al-Jihad leader Umar Abdul Rahman, were acquitted.

Military leaders were quick to visit field commands to quell any rumors of instability in the central government and to see for themselves whether there was much sympathy for Sadat's assassins among the troops. On October 23, for example, Abu Ghazalah visited infantry troops at the Inshas base and two days later visited the headquarters of the Third Field Army. There, he tried to explain that the dispatch to Egypt of American AWACS aircraft was agreed to prior to the assassination and was not – as was indeed the case – a symbol of U.S. concern over Egyptian stability.

Toward structural reform

After the initial response to purge suspected fundamentalist sympathizers, the army command changed tack and embraced moderate Islam as an important

⁵⁷ Interestingly, responsibility for investigating the Asyut insurrection that followed two days after the assassination was left solely to the interior ministry.

⁵⁸ MENA, October 27, 1981; cited in FBIS, October 27, 1981.

⁵⁹ MECS, vol. VI, p. 447.

mainstay of the soldiers' morale. As early as 1979, the army had begun to publish a religiously oriented magazine for soldiers called *al-Mujahid* – the Holy Struggler.⁶⁰ Just as the interior ministry initiated a much-publicized “prison dialogue” with the members of al-Jihad, the military evidently tried to woo to its camp the mass of devout soldiers wavering between traditionalism and radicalism. For example, mosque construction on military bases has undergone a boom in recent years, and the military even offers to pay the expenses of those soldiers participating in the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages.⁶¹

The next task was to look toward deeper structural reform as a means of preventing the erosion of the armed forces from within. But the basic problem facing the army leadership was that in both demographic and geographic terms, the armed forces is reflective of Egyptian urban society. The heavy reliance upon conscription means that soldiers are, to a large extent, a direct subset of Egyptian youth. As Abu Ghazalah has said, “The Armed Forces do not come from a vacuum; they come from every family, street, village and town.”⁶² Moreover, the positioning of so many military encampments around Cairo means that bases are easily permeable to the violent currents raging around them. The army realized that one of the leading causes of fundamentalist sympathy in the ranks was the sheer proximity of hundreds of thousands of soldiers to the same social maelstrom that regularly transforms students into Islamic activists. Given the inherent difficulty of solving the demographic problem, as discussed below, the army focused attention on the geographic problem instead.

Quarantining the army

The army's solution was to safeguard internal security within the ranks by removing the troops from urban areas and transferring them to the vast Egyptian desert. Thousands of troops are being quarantined in desert military cities, where surveillance and control is far more manageable than in the sprawling camps near Cairo. In effect, the high command decided that if they couldn't purge society from the army, they could purge the army from society. One high-ranking officer has described it as a “policy of separation.”⁶³

⁶⁰MECS, vol IV, p. 350.

⁶¹ See *The Economist*, March 8, 1986, p. 49 and *Arab Strategic Report*, Cairo: al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 1985, p. 407 (in Arabic).

⁶² *al-Jumhuriyyah*, April 23, 1987; cited in JPRS.

⁶³ Private interview, Cairo, June 1987.

The plans are certainly ambitious. Just days before Sadat's assassination, Abu Ghazalah announced plans for the construction of 22 military towns spanned over 10 years. At the time he envisioned the total project cost to be about \$2.5 billion -- more than half that year's total budget for domestic spending.⁶⁴ Moreover, according to the chief of the army corps of engineers, the army would finance all construction costs through the sale of valuable urban sites where current military camps now stand, thereby avoiding a drain on the state budget. Unlike many large-scale military initiatives, the military cities project seems to be proceeding on schedule. In October 1986, halfway through the plan's timetable, the Defense Minister declared that construction of 12 of the cities had been completed with five more underway.⁶⁵ Abu Ghazalah has offered a strategic rationale for the new placement of troops, arguing that it would facilitate Egypt's mobility in responding rapidly to security threats from any direction. But clearly, one of the principal reasons for the massive logistical shift has been to shield the army from the dangers of urban society. As he said in 1986, "The cities have brought the armed forces out of areas cordoned off in crowded cities and into the desert."

Each city, which could house up to 150,000 people, would be adequately self-sufficient in food, clothing and basic services so as to maintain the segregation between soldiers and civilian society. According to the Defense Minister, a typical city consists of large highly-protective camps, each containing thousands of apartments, plus primary, preparatory and secondary schools, a hospital, social and sport clubs, farms, stores and markets. Moreover, generous housing offers would be a further enticement for military personnel to participate in the desert cities plan. Soldiers and officers who would otherwise have great difficulty finding suitable living space for their families in Cairo would be provided apartments through 30-year cooperative loans payable on easy terms through monthly salary deductions. After a modest downpayment, for example, officers can purchase apartments for a mere LE 75-80 per month.

In addition, over the past several years, the army has approved a series of enticements to keep reliable soldiers and officers in uniform. Salaries raises are frequent; according to one report, 46 percent of the armed forces budget is targeted toward salaries and other personnel benefits.⁶⁶ Officers are promised a Mazda after 15 years of service. Children of armed forces personnel receive special consideration in university and job placement and the military academies themselves have been expanded to provide a larger pool from which to draw qualified officers. A perennial problem facing the armed forces is "brain drain" --

⁶⁴ MENA, October 1, 1981; cited in FBIS, October 2, 1981.

⁶⁵ *al-Ahram*, *al-Tab'ah al-duwaliyah*, October 22, 1986; cited in JPRS.

⁶⁶ Private interview, Cairo, June 1987.

the departure of many highly trained officers for better paid jobs after tours of duty are completed. Reportedly, one recently instituted attempt to arrest "brain drain" in the air force is the requirement of a career-long commitment from pilots graduating the air force academy.⁶⁷

The manpower dilemma

All of these measures are part of an attempt to make the armed forces a more appealing career choice for those prized candidates with advanced education and technical training. They reflect one of the most intractable problems facing Egyptian military planners – manpower needs.

**Table 2: Total Number of Armed Forces Personnel
(active, in thousands)**

Year	ACDA	IISS	Jaffee Center
1974	410	323	–
1975	400	322.5	–
1976	400	342.5	–
1977	350	345	–
1978	447	395	–
1979	447	395	–
1980	447	367	–
1981	447	367	–
1982	447	452	–
1983	447	447	400
1984	466	460	453
1985	466	445	453
1986	–	445	453

For Egypt, the basic difficulty lies in the clash between the demand for an increasing proportion of technically trained conscripts and the inherent drawbacks of the conscription pool. Egypt has made modernization of the armed forces a top priority, evidenced by the shift from reliance upon infantry to

⁶⁷ Private interview, Cairo, June 1987. For further information on the "brain drain," see, for example, Nazih Ayubi, "The Egyptian 'Brain Drain': A Multidimensional Problem," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 15, no. 4, November 1983.

mechanized divisions. The problem is that the draftees that the Egyptian armed forces need most to operate and maintain an increasingly complex and high-tech military infrastructure are both more scarce than in the past and more likely to sympathize with fundamentalist beliefs.

Throughout the past decade, determining the appropriate size of the Egyptian armed forces has been an important and often highly charged political issue. According to ACDA statistics (which, it should be reiterated, are best used to chart trends), total EAF manpower numbered 350,000 men at the time of Sadat's journey to Jerusalem, rose to 447,000 the following year and stabilized there for the next several years until it registered a small rise (4 percent) again in 1984.⁶⁸

**Chart 5: Total Armed Forces Personnel
(in thousands)**

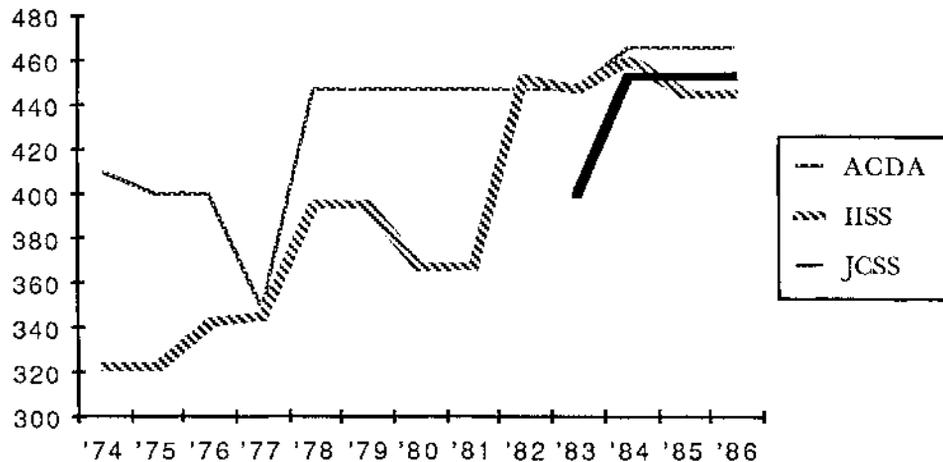


Chart 5 graphically illustrates both the historical trend toward an increase in armed forces manpower over the past decade (as well as the lack of consistent data from ostensibly authoritative sources).

During peace negotiations, there were clear intimations from the Egyptian side that a reduction in the overall size of the armed forces would be a logical extension of the peace process. Speaking to army units in January 1979, for example, then-Defense Minister Kamal Hassan Ali said that “the use of modern weapons and equipment does not require the current manpower level and that a reduction would not affect the formations and the forces’ combat efficiency.”⁶⁹ In his

⁶⁸ ACDA, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers*, 1988.

⁶⁹ MENA, January 4, 1979; cited in FBIS, January 5, 1979.

Congressional presentation of the Carter Administration's 1979 aid package for Egypt, Defense Secretary Harold Brown referred to "reductions from the present size of the [Egyptian] armed forces" and bluntly stated that in the era of peace, "the future of Egypt will not turn primarily on the strength of its armed forces."⁷⁰

In Sadat's final months, Abu Ghazalah (recently appointed Minister of Defense) spoke of the ongoing process of reassessing the appropriate size of the EAF and hinted at a possible decrease in the size of the EAF. He said, for example, that the military command had "concluded a study of possible threats to Egypt's borders from all directions and of the friendly states around us" and on the basis of that study had "decided on the size of the Armed Forces which could best achieve Egypt's military-political strategy."⁷¹

When Mubarak assumed the presidency, the issue of manpower reduction grew murkier. Official statements often flip-flop between support for a leaner or, alternatively, a larger armed forces. After the return of the final strip of Sinai in April 1982, Abu Ghazalah firmly denied reports of an impending reduction in the size of the EAF, stating that peace with Israel did not necessitate constricting Egypt's "deterrent shield." The following year, however, he hinted at a change in manpower strategy when he opened a symposium calling for the creation of a mobilization and reserve system which would be "the optimum solution" given "Egypt's limited economic capacity to keep a big active military power."⁷² The thinking of the high command was clearly reflected in a January 1985 article in the Egyptian military journal by Lt. General Ahmad Fakhr, now military advisor to the prime minister. In that article, titled "What do Egyptian military men think?" Fakhr outlined the arms race in the Middle East and declared:

One cannot blame Egyptian military thinking when it quantifies its military capabilities ... not on the basis of what others possess but rather on the basis of what the strongest of the others possess ...⁷³

Abu Ghazalah has stated with comparable clarity that Egypt would not sacrifice size for effectiveness.

⁷⁰ Testimony of Secretary of Defense Harold Brown on the Middle East arms package, before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 96th Congress, first session, April 11, 1979, p. 22, 42.

⁷¹ *Mayo*, March 30, 1981; cited in FBIS, April 2, 1981.

⁷² See *African Defense Journal*, April 1983.

⁷³ Lt. General Ahmad Fakhr, "What do Egyptian military men think?", *ad-Difa'*, January 1985.

We can say that there has been a quantum leap in all fields ... We have modernized our defense systems, but this change in quality did not come at the expense of quantity.⁷⁴

But less than nine months later, he reversed himself, postulating a clear policy of quality over quantity:

The EAF will continue to keep up with all the changes and rapid technological developments in arms and tactics that are taking place abroad so that they will eventually reach an appropriate size and rely not on quantity, whether in terms of armaments, equipment or personnel, but on quality. It is a concentration of quality and efficiency that in the end will achieve the three objectives of deterrent capability, military balance and economy in manpower.⁷⁵

This sense of ambivalence has continued. In December 1986, Abu Ghazalah referred to a "massive development and upgrading" underway in the EAF.⁷⁶ Just four months later, though, he indicated that some reductions in force had been implemented and reaffirmed the quality over quantity policy.⁷⁷ In May 1987, he stated unequivocally that manpower had been reduced and that the Armed Forces were being restructured to "confront the least possible threat and not the largest possible threat."⁷⁸

There is no available evidence, however, of any appreciable shrinkage in overall manpower levels; in fact, what evidence there is points in the opposite direction – expansion. It seems that as Egypt enters its second Five Year Plan for military modernization under Abu Ghazalah's direction, military planners are still grappling with the fundamental problem of manpower.

⁷⁴ MENA, November 19, 1985, quoting an interview in the Iraqi newspaper *Alif Ba*; cited in FBIS, November 21, 1985.

⁷⁵ MENA, July 22, 1986; cited in FBIS, July 23, 1986.

⁷⁶ Cited in *African Defense Journal*, December 1986.

⁷⁷ *al-Itihad*, April 13, 1987; cited in FBIS, April 16, 1987.

⁷⁸ *al-Musawwar*, May 8, 1987; cited in JPRS.

Retgression in educational trends

According to the *most conservative* of recent statistics (IISS), the total number of active personnel in the armed forces is 445,000.⁷⁹ Extrapolating from IISS, the total number of armed forces draftees is about 254,000. Assuming a three-year enlistment cycle, Egypt conscripts about 84,000 soldiers per year.

Table 3: Armed Forces Manpower Levels

Service	Total	Officers and NCOs	Soldiers	Conscripts	Annual Draftees
Army	320,000	32,000	288,000	190,000	63,000
Air Force	25,000	2,500	22,500	7,500	2,500
Navy	20,000	2,000	18,000	9,000	3,000
Air Defense	80,000	8,000	72,000	47,500	15,800
Total	445,000	44,500	400,500	254,000	84,300

Note: Several assumptions and estimates are implicit in the data presented in the above table. First, all troop figures refer to men on active, not reserve, duty. Second, the officer/soldier ratio was fixed at an arbitrary 10 percent. In services such as the air force, the rate may be higher; it is probably lower in the larger services. According to Lt. Gen. Saad ad-Din Shazly, for example, the percentage of officers in the army ranged from 4.5 percent in May 1971 to 5.8 percent in October 1973.⁸⁰ Third, the proportion of volunteers to draftees for the various services is gleaned from several sources; it is assumed that two-thirds of all servicemen in the army and air defense are conscripts, half in the navy and one-third in the air force. Fourth, the number of annual draftees per service is figured on a three-year enlistment cycle, which, for several categories of conscripts, is not the case.⁸¹ Fifth, the table does not include data for the Coast Guard and the Frontier Guard, both of which are statistically insignificant. Total service data is taken from IISS, *Military Balance*, 1986-87, p. 94-96.

One of the most important factors complicating Egypt's search for a cohesive military manpower policy is the need for technically trained personnel. If overall doctrine is to emphasize quality over quantity, Egypt's manpower requirements demand higher numbers of "educated" conscripts. According to various reports, three-quarters of all current non-officers in the EAF are high school, technical institute or university graduates – up from 25 percent at the time of the 1967 war

⁷⁹ Other sources point to larger figures; ACDA, for example, cites 466,000, while the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies cites 453,000.

⁸⁰ See Shazly's *The Crossing of the Suez*, San Francisco: American Mideast Research, 1980, p. 48.

⁸¹ In 1987, for example, compulsory service for conscripts possessing more than an intermediate school certificate was cut to 1.5 years. Cairo Domestic Service, June 9, 1987; cited in FBIS, June 11, 1987.

and 51 percent in 1973.⁸² In numerical terms, therefore, about 300,000 of the approximately 400,000 non-officers in the armed forces' four main services (army, navy, air force and air defense) are graduates. Even if, for argument's sake, a much lower percentage – half – is assumed, then about 200,000 soldiers are high school, technical institute or university graduates. On that basis, the armed forces need more than 66,000 “educated” conscripts per year. In other words, at least 78 percent – eight out of 10 – of all conscripts have some advanced education.

According to Egyptian education statistics, the total number of male high school, university and technical institute graduates in 1984 (the last year for which there are complete statistics) was about 342,000.⁸³ Of that prime academic pool, therefore, the EAF needs to consume nearly one in five.

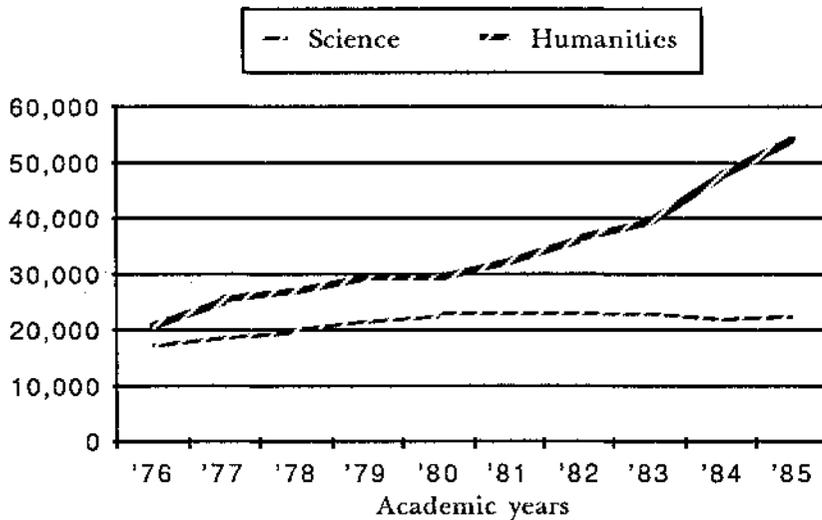
The prime academic pool, however, includes *all* graduates, irrespective of discipline or course of study. In fact, the quality of education in many state-run schools, especially in rural areas, is suspect to the point of questioning the value of many high-school diplomas. Moreover, a technically trained graduate is far more prized than one who has studied archaeology, linguistics or social work. This is especially true in light of recent changes in conscription regulations reducing the length of service for many university graduates. Such rules translate into less time for training, placing a premium on those conscripts already entering service with technical skills. In 1984, the total number of male graduates with degrees from faculties of science or technology (including those who passed their secondary examinations in science, technology or mathematics) was 150,364. Therefore, the ratio of total educated conscripts needed per year to the total number of prime technical graduates is less than 2.3 to one.

What makes the manpower problem even more unsettling is that trends in the Egyptian educational system are moving in the wrong direction. As far as military planners are concerned, Egyptian colleges and universities are producing too many of the wrong kind of graduate. There are fewer and fewer technically trained graduates and more and more humanities trained graduates.

⁸² According to research by an Egyptian psychologist, 25.05 percent of non-officers in the Egyptian armed forces during the 1967 war were either high school (13.8 percent) or college graduates (11.25 percent). In the 1973 war, the overall percentage more than doubled to 51 percent, including 15.3 percent high school and 35.7 percent college graduates. See Omar Shaheen, “Some Indicators of Psychological and Social Changes in the Egyptian Society after the October War,” *October War: Military, Political, Economic, Psychological Effects*, Canberra: Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, n.d., p. 89. The three-quarters figure for current non-officers was reported in a private interview in Cairo, June 1987.

⁸³ Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), *Statistical Yearbook, 1952-85*, Cairo: June 1986. Data compiled from various tables, p. 157-196. All the educational data from in the following section is drawn from this source.

Chart 6: Educational Trends in Male University Graduates

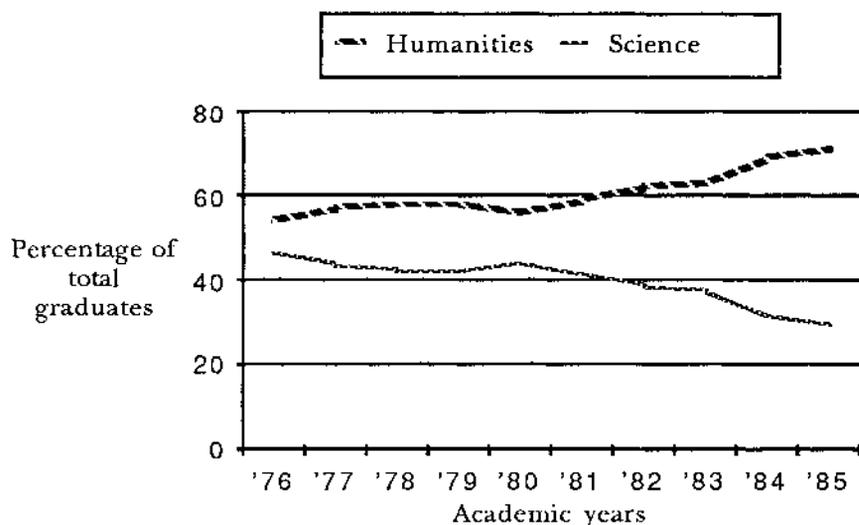


Source: CAPMAS

In 1976, 46 percent of all graduates from Egyptian universities were enrolled in various science faculties. By 1985, only 29 percent of all college students – and only one-quarter of all graduates – were in science faculties. Whereas the number of male students studying humanities in Egyptian universities rose 107 percent over the past decade, the corresponding number of science and technology students actually dropped 15 percent. Disciplines in which the number of male graduates declined include medicine (- 25 percent); pharmacy (- 20 percent) and technology (- 17 percent). It does not bode well for manpower planners that – in absolute, not relative terms – there are fewer students graduating with degrees in electronics today than there were five years ago.

Conversely, the most popular disciplines over the past five years are those of which the armed forces have little use. During that period, the two fastest growing disciplines for male university graduates were Islamic theology and Islamic legislature, with student enrollment up 463 percent and 343 percent respectively. The two fastest growing universities in that time have been al-Azhar, the center of Islamic education (up 120 percent) and al-Zaqaziq, the alma mater of Suleyman Khater (the crazed Egyptian soldier who opened fire on Israeli tourists in Ras Burqa) and site of frequent student disturbances (up 104 percent). In 1985, the total number of male graduates in Islamic studies disciplines equaled more than 60 percent of engineering graduates, was comparable to the number of medical school graduates, and far outpaced the number of graduates from technology, economics, natural science, pharmacy and dentistry schools *combined*.

Chart 7: Educational Composition of Male University Graduates



Source: CAPMAS

Even more significant for the military is that sociological studies have shown that the Islamic tendency is most prevalent among technically trained students. This is precisely that pool of students which the armed forces sorely need. Research by various Arab and Western social scientists has laid to rest the theory that study of modern, technical disciplines (e.g., engineering, medicine) imparts unto the student a certain predilection, or at least tolerance, for Western cultural and social norms. In fact, the opposite tends to be the case. Students of scientific disciplines seem more adept than their humanities counterparts in separating the western from the modern, keeping the latter while eschewing the former.⁸⁴

Further evidence to support this argument can be found in the success of the Islamic movement among science and technical students in elections for university student councils. Because only politically active students participate in university elections, election results are not, by themselves, comprehensive indicators of overall student behavior. But the phenomenon of Islamic activist control of virtually every science and technical faculty in Egyptian universities is difficult to disregard. For example, in the face of concerted government-supported opposition in the 1986 student elections at the University of Alexandria, the Islamic

⁸⁴ See, for example, Kepel, *op. cit.*; Saad ad-Din Ibrahim, "Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Groups; Methodological Note and Preliminary Findings" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 1984; and Hamied N. Ansari, "The Islamic Militants in Egyptian Politics," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 1984.

slate won 98 percent of the seats in the faculty of sciences, 99 percent of the seats in the faculty of medicine and every seat in the engineering school.⁸⁵

Without a decrease in the overall size of the armed forces, the manpower dilemmas facing the Egyptian military planner could become acute. As the EAF grows more hi-tech, the need for technically trained personnel grows with it. Yet the pool of technically trained personnel is not keeping pace, and in terms of university graduates, is actually shrinking. And it is precisely that shrinking pool that is most heavily influenced by Islamic fundamentalist tendencies. In short, the jobs to be filled are more numerous and more complex; the people to fill them are fewer and less reliable.

So far, there has been no significant reduction in the overall size of the EAF and whatever change has occurred has been largely cosmetic. Men under arms today are roughly equivalent to the number a decade ago. Technological advancements have permitted shrinkage in the size of various units; for example, manning one of Egypt's French-built Crotale surface-to-air batteries requires only a fraction the number of men as the older Soviet SAMs, many of which are still in Egyptian inventory. But decreases in unit size have not translated into overall force reductions. Indeed, there are more divisions in the Egyptian army today than in 1973. Moreover, the military command has preferred to keep surplus personnel and shuffle men around to such non-combat units as the National Armed Service Projects Organization, NASPO, an Egyptian hybrid of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps. In short, the EAF is currently waging an uphill battle to maintain a policy of quality *and* quantity.

Recurring problems in the ranks

Meanwhile, the immediate problem of rooting out fundamentalist sympathizers from the armed forces continues to confront the army's internal security apparatus. In July 1986, 33 people, including four army officers, were arrested for setting fires to two theaters and four video clubs earlier that year. By the time formal investigations were completed in December, the indictment was expanded to include charges of "forming an extremist religious organization" and plotting to overthrow the government. Moreover, the indictment directly linked the rebels to the al-Jihad group, the shadowy organization that tried to topple the state in an abortive insurrection in Asyut soon after Sadat's assassination. According to the semi-official press, the government not only referred the case to

⁸⁵ *al-Itisam*, December 1986/January 1987, p. 39-42; cited in JPRS.

the Emergency Supreme State Security Court but also convened a presidentially-appointed "emergency military tribunal" to investigate the disloyal officers.⁸⁶

In a surprisingly frank exposition, the state public prosecutor, Muhammad Abdul Aziz al-Jundi, highlighted the role of the army officers in the planning for the coup attempt. According to his press statements, the officers pirated arms and ammunition from military stores, stole official papers, stamps and insignia from their units and forged documents "intended for the use against the public interest." Moreover, Jundi said that the "military wing" of the extremist group had received "rigorous training in combat techniques and in the use of firearms and explosives."⁸⁷ Interestingly, only the interior ministry's security agencies are mentioned in press reports, suggesting that the armed forces' own security apparatus might have actually been oblivious to the existence and operation of the rebel group.

Over the next several weeks, the officers' participation in the rebel group was the subject of considerable press scrutiny and even provoked a response from President Mubarak. After the prosecutor's detailed description of the officers' role, the government began to minimize the importance of the plot and dismiss the notion that the officer corps was festooned with militants. In an interview with *Le Monde*, for example, Mubarak said the defendants were reservists, not regular officers, and that Egyptian intelligence services had kept the group under surveillance for several months. "We know them, we know what they do, and we know where they live. They are not a threat," he said. In addition, he continued to emphasize the loyalty of "regular" soldiers when he denied any role for fundamentalists in the February 1986 police riots.

I regard the events in February as insignificant; it was not regular soldiers who were involved but conscripts ... I used regular soldiers to control the protest...⁸⁸

And the government news agency responded quickly and forcefully to suggestions in the Islamic opposition press that the plotters had stolen secret military operational plans, labeling such claims "untrue, fabricated and groundless."⁸⁹

⁸⁶ *al-Jumhuriyyah*, December 5, 1986; cited in FBIS, December 8, 1986.

⁸⁷ MENA, December 4, 1986; cited in FBIS, December 4, 1986.

⁸⁸ *Le Monde*, December 10, 1986; cited in FBIS, December 12, 1986.

⁸⁹ MENA, December 15, 1986; cited in FBIS, December 16, 1986.

In addition to the fears brought about by the participation of the officers in the plot, military manpower planners could find little solace in the socio-demographic composition of the rest of the plotters. Soon after the indictment, the semi-official newspaper *al-Jumhuriyyah* named each of the 33 defendants and listed their occupations. The information reaffirmed earlier data suggesting a correlation between receiving advanced and often scientific education and Islamic activism. In fact, more than half of the accused would have fit in the military's pool of prime conscripts. In addition to the four officers, there were at least eight with highly technical jobs (e.g., engineer, physician), six with university or technical institute degrees and three others with some college training.

Another aspect of the abortive plot that was especially disconcerting was the link between the officers' group and al-Jihad. In a long, involved and highly instructive interview with a Lebanese magazine soon after the indictments were released, Shaykh Abdul Rahman, al-Jihad's spiritual guide, defiantly called for rebellion against the Egyptian government. He rejected the notion that al-Jihad was a "military organization" but reaffirmed the idea that combatting the military establishment was a necessary and legitimate precursor to bringing down the regime.⁹⁰ In hindsight, Abdul Rahman's comments should have received greater scrutiny. At the close of the interview, he warned that Egypt's "minister of the interior ... will rue the consequences of the continuous detention and torture of young Muslims ... just as Sadat reaped what he sowed." Within the next eight months, terrorists linked to al-Jihad carried out unsuccessful assassination attempts on two former interior ministers – Hasan Abu Basha and Nabawi Ismail – and one prominent journalist, Makram Muhammad Ahmad.

Moreover, the Egyptian government confirmed a connection between al-Jihad's domestic activities and the operation of the lone remaining Iranian diplomat in Cairo, leading to the diplomat's expulsion in May 1987. In short, even if one were to rely solely on the public statements of Egyptian government officials, then a worrisome link can be drawn connecting the army militants, Islamic terrorists and Iranian subversion. That link was given further credence by reports of interrogations of military officers following the attempt on Makram Muhammad Ahmad. The Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Watan* went so far as to list the eight officers it claimed were being "accused of forming an organization to overthrow the government by force at the instigation of Abbud az-Zumur and Isam al-Qamari," two of the chief plotters of the Sadat assassination. Among those names were two colonels, two majors and four captains, representing the air force, commandos,

⁹⁰ Citing the teachings of medieval Islamic scholar Ibn Taymiyyah, Abdul Rahman argued that "if the enemy hides behind Muslims and uses them as a shield, it becomes the duty of Muslims to kill those who were used as a shield." Originally published in *al-Fikr al-Islami* and reprinted in *al-Ahd* (Beirut), January 17, 1987; cited in JPRS.

and the armored, artillery and mechanized infantry corps.⁹¹ Eventually, a splinter group of Islamic militants linked to al-Jihad, *Najun min al-Nar* (Saved from the Flames), was assigned blame for the assassination attempts and several arrests were made.⁹² The government, however, did not formally implicate any active military officers in the crimes.

To be sure, only a small fraction of the hundreds of thousands of men under arms in Egypt are secretly Islamic militants. Moreover, there is little evidence to suggest that the units upon which the government relies the most for regime stability and public order are anything but reliable and competent (although in the case of a widescale popular uprising, the government should have reason not to take for granted the loyalty of *all* army units). But what is important is that trends inside the army are not moving in an encouraging direction and government policy has not yet helped remedy some of the structural flaws that keep the army vulnerable from within.

⁹¹ *al-Watan*, June 14, 1987; cited in FBIS, June 15, 1987.

⁹² Yahya Sadowski, "Egypt's Islamic Movement: A New Political and Economic Force," *Middle East Insight*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1987 p. 38. See also MENA, April 2, 1988; cited in FBIS, April 4, 1988.

IV: PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS AND THE SEARCH FOR A REGIONAL ROLE

In Mubarak's Egypt, the role of the military in all spheres of public life has been magnified. Put simply, the army has become a larger part of the solution as well as a larger part of the problem.

As part of the solution, it is charged with maintaining self-sufficiency and with administering development projects, for it is viewed as a useful tool to help solve Egypt's myriad social and economic problems, as far more efficient than the moribund state bureaucracy and at least as accountable as the *infitah* "fat cats" upon whom so much hope was placed under Sadat. And as part of the solution, it is, by default, the ultimate defender of public order and of the republican regime, perceived by both the political elite and the man-in-the-street as the only reliable source of stability.

But reliance on the army for these tasks also poses new problems for the regime and heightens its vulnerabilities. The once-crisp lines that elevated "national security" above all other political issues have blurred, and now the army has become one among several players in the political game – albeit one of the most powerful. With the end of the active confrontation against Israel, whatever national consensus existed on the proper role and composition of the armed forces has dissipated. With the signing of the peace treaty, the army stopped being an inviolable institution and its eagerness to carve out a new mission for itself has left it targeted by both the tolerated opposition and the Islamic militants. The army is part of the problem because under Mubarak's nurtured democracy, it is on the border of being a legitimate target of criticism, and it is not helping matters by providing ample ammunition for its critics. And the army is part of the problem because as the regime grows more dependent on its good graces, it becomes a more enticing target for Islamic-oriented infiltration in the ranks – a danger that escalates given the decision to build a high-tech army without cutting back on overall manpower levels.

Clearly, the military is the most dynamic public institution in Egypt today and its dynamism is being driven by the dialectic between the army as the source of development and stability and the army as the lightning-rod for controversy and national anxiety. The military turned in a stellar performance in crushing the Central Security riots, but the paranoia among the high command concerning fundamentalism in the ranks is very real. The military plays important roles in all aspects of domestic politics, but the army is in the process of moving out of the cities and into the desert. Abu Ghazalah may be the second most powerful man in

Egypt, but he was abruptly (and inexplicably) dropped from the ruling NDP's Politburo in 1984.⁹³ In short, both the currents and the crosscurrents are strong and the final disposition is far from clear. To be sure, democracy has not been sacrificed on the alter of "national security" and the army has not collapsed under the weight of fundamentalist infiltration – far from it. But the mere fact that such is the stuff of politics in Egypt should provide enough discomfort.

Search for an external role

In a strategic sense, what is especially important about the elevation of the military dialectic in Egyptian politics is that it has been played out against a backdrop of the army's reappraisal of its regional role. Assumption of a greater responsibility for domestic development and regime maintenance has not come at the expense of shunning what are conceived of as regional commitments. On the contrary, in recent years the military has shed its earlier quiescence on regional issues and moved tentatively to renew its traditional commitments in the larger Arab arena. In practical terms, such commitments have taken two forms: movement toward a more competitive posture toward Israel and upgrading of military ties to the Arab Gulf states.

Officially, Egypt's strategy toward Israel has been labeled "peaceful defensive deterrence."⁹⁴ Though the doctrine antedates the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, it is the Lebanon War that is often cited as the watershed in Egyptian military thinking regarding Israel. According to Abu Ghazalah, Israel's entry into Lebanon was caused by an Arab military vacuum – the lack of a credible, pan-Arab "deterrent posture." Creating a strategic balance would prohibit Israeli forces from again acting unilaterally in the region. Moreover, a distinct undercurrent in the rhetoric in defense of the strategic balance is that it would offer protection against Israeli retaliation should Egyptian national interests no longer reside in the maintenance of the security arrangements in the Sinai. As Abu Ghazalah said in October 1982:

[T]he Arab nation must have a deterrent force and it is in its power, by virtue of the human resources and various powers it possesses, to have one. In my opinion, Egypt is the country that is most qualified to have a deterrent force and able to create a balance in the region ... That is what I am seeking,

⁹³ MENA, October 25, 1984; cited in FBIS, October 26, 1984.

⁹⁴ For an analysis of the dangers inherent in Egypt's defensive posture and the potential threat it poses to the Egypt-Israel peace, see Ehud Yaari, *Piece by Piece: A Decade of Egyptian Policy toward Israel*, The Washington Institute Policy Papers Number Seven, November 1987.

because the day a balance occurs in the Middle East and deterrence is achieved, I can assure you that no country will be able to invade Lebanon and no agreements will constitute restrictions on anyone.⁹⁵

Much has been made of Abu Ghazalah's alleged statements in January 1987 to a parliamentary committee labeling Israel the principal regional threat and raising the spectre of renewed military coordination with Syria. But it should be remembered that such sentiments were neither novel nor limited to the Defense Minister. Almost immediately after the final Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai and the outbreak of the Lebanon War, Israel replaced Libya and the Soviet Union in official rhetoric as Egypt's preeminent threat and even "enemy."⁹⁶ For example, following the announcement of Israeli participation in the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative research and development program, Egypt's air defense commander argued that Israel's search for space-age technology "throws added burdens onto the shoulders of all the Arab air defense forces."

[T]he enemy is developing and so are we. But we must gradually outdistance him by taking advantage of the lessons of the immediate and more remote past.⁹⁷

And in April 1987, Abu Ghazalah summed up Egyptian defense planning with the simple rule: "If you want peace, then you must be ready for war."⁹⁸

In practical terms, troop deployments and training patterns (as well as descriptive statements about these deployments) offer a visible display of Egypt's combative posture. Eight of the army's 12 divisions remain located along the Suez Canal, compared with only two divisions stationed in the Western Desert facing

⁹⁵ *al-Musawwar*, October 29, 1982; cited in JPRS.

⁹⁶ Previously, Abu Ghazalah was wont to offer such quotable lines as "A weak Egypt renders the entire area a choice morsel in the mouth of the Soviet bear" and "The real danger comes not from Qadhdhafi but from the Soviet Union." See *Maya*, March 30, 1981; cited in FBIS, April 2, 1981 and *al-Majallah*, April 18-24, 1981; cited in FBIS April 24, 1981.

⁹⁷ Lt. General Adil Ali Khalil in *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, October 4, 1986; cited in FBIS, October 15, 1986. In October 1987, Khalil was promoted to Assistant Minister of Defense.

⁹⁸ MENA, April 22, 1987; cited in JPRS. Also see Abu Ghazalah's statements following an inspection of a mechanized division in the Second Field Army, facing Sinai: "[T]he meaning of war inspection . . . does not necessarily indicate the existence of a state of war as much as the need to be capable and prepared to go to war at any moment." MENA, November 30, 1987; cited in FBIS, December 1, 1987.

Libya.⁹⁹ Abu Ghazalah has even boasted that current troop levels inside Sinai, though restricted by Camp David, are Egypt's largest in history, even larger than in war time.¹⁰⁰ The Second and Third Armies continually prepare for a combined-forces, desert battle focusing on a race to the Sinai passes.¹⁰¹ Moreover, such exercises are often given high exposure in the government media.¹⁰² In short, at a time when building public confidence in the solidity of the bilateral peace should have been paramount in the minds of Egyptian military leaders, the Egyptian public has been given the unmistakable impression that among the main reasons the armed forces are consuming such a large share of the national budget is to prepare for the possible return to active confrontation with Israel.

At the same time, the Gulf war has produced a situation in which the currency of regional influence is shifting from petro-wealth back to raw military might and manpower. Egypt, with a native military industrial base and the largest peacetime Arab army, was thereby provided with a golden opportunity to re-assert itself as a powerful regional actor. At least since 1982, when Iran gained the upper hand in the land battle against Iraq, Egyptian leaders have chosen to disregard the anti-Egypt boycott and have expressed solidarity with Iraq and the Gulf Arabs. They have regularly stated their adherence to the collective security arrangements of the

⁹⁹ *Financial Times*, July 10, 1984.

¹⁰⁰ MENA, August 17, 1987; cited in FBIS, August 19, 1987. Similar statements have been made by Presidential Advisor Osama al-Baz. See *al-Siyasah* (Kuwait), January 5, 1988; cited in FBIS, January 12, 1988.

¹⁰¹ For example, in the spring of 1981, the army held a live ammunition exercise in the area of the Mitla Pass "designed to hold defensive positions in the mountain areas and the strategic passes," *African Defense Journal*, June 1981; a mock commando assault "to occupy and hold a pass behind enemy lines" was reported in MENA, October 27, 1983; artillery exercises to "demonstrate that well-trained, well-armed forces can make it impossible for any attackers to break through the mountain passes" were reported in MENA, May 12, 1984; the Third Field Army held a live ammunition exercise in October 1984 in the Sinai that included mechanized infantry, tanks, air defense, artillery, and air forces, *African Defense Journal*, December 1984; in April 1985, units from the army, air force, air defense and special forces held a live-fire exercise in Sinai designed to prepare against "surprise attacks and to carry out counterattacks," *African Defense Journal*, June 1985.

¹⁰² For example, joint special forces maneuvers with Jordan in June 1985 were characterized as simulating "infiltration of enemy territory." *al-Ahram*, June 29, 1985; cited in *African Defense Journal*, September 1985.

The highly publicized March 1988 tactical exercise of the Third Field Army, codenamed Destruction (*Tadmir*) II, was described as "the storming of a mountain pass and defeating and annihilating the enemy forces that had earlier taken control of the pass ... [T]he last stage involved completing the destruction of the enemy forces." Destruction II was held on the east side of the Giddi pass. See MENA, March 6, 1988; cited in FBIS, March 10, 1988.

Arab Defense Pact, implying their willingness to help defend the Gulf against Iran.¹⁰³ After Kuwait was attacked by an Iranian missile in October 1987, for example, Mubarak dispatched two top aides to the Gulf in a visible sign of support and reassured Kuwait of Egypt's commitment "to preserve its entity, existence, dignity and sovereignty."¹⁰⁴

Over the past five years, the Egyptian military has exploited the Gulf situation not only to expand the export market for its growing military industrial output but also to bolster bilateral ties with Arab states on a practical level. Egyptian arms transfers to Iraq have included ammunition, artillery, tanks, spare parts and trainer and combat aircraft, much of which was either manufactured or assembled domestically.¹⁰⁵ Conservative estimates have placed the total value of military exports to Iraq at well over \$1 billion. Egypt also provides maintenance and repair facilities for Iraqi aircraft and will most likely soon be doing the same for Iraqi helicopters.¹⁰⁶ Elsewhere in the Gulf, Egypt has been aggressively marketing other domestically assembled and produced arms and ammunition. In addition, there have been reports that Cairo has successfully solicited a renewal of Gulf financial backing in the Arab Military Industries Organization, whose operation had been suspended as part of the Arab boycott following the Camp David Accords.¹⁰⁷ In personnel matters, Egyptian military training academies now host young officers from every Arab state except Soviet-backed Syria, South Yemen and Libya.¹⁰⁸ Retired or seconded officers from the various Egyptian services hold command and advisory positions in the armies, navies, air forces, and intelligence services of the Arab Gulf. In addition, at least 12,000 Egyptian "volunteers" serve

¹⁰³ This has included remarks by both political and military leaders. For example, see statements by Presidential Advisor Osama al-Baz (*al-Bayan* [Dubai], February 1, 1987, cited in JPRS) and Abu Ghazalah (Cairo Domestic Service, January 19, 1987, cited in JPRS; MENA, November 8, 1987; cited in FBIS, November 9, 1987).

¹⁰⁴ *ad-Dustur* (Jordan), October 28, 1987; cited in FBIS, October 29, 1987.

¹⁰⁵ *Middle East Military Balance*, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 1986, p. 223.

¹⁰⁶ See statements by Egyptian Air Force Maj. Gen. Ala' Barakat, *al-Akhbar*, November 2, 1987; cited in FBIS, November 4, 1987. Also, *Middle East Military Balance*, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁷ See statements by Abu Ghazalah, MENA, November 8, 1987; cited in FBIS, November 9, 1987; also see *MidEast Report*, December 1, 1987.

¹⁰⁸ There have even been unconfirmed reports of Algerian trainees in Egypt. See *Middle East Military Balance*, *op. cit.*

alongside Iraqi troops, with more than 2,000 held by Iran as prisoners of war.¹⁰⁹ Hundreds of thousands more Egyptians work in Iraqi civilian industries, freeing up Iraqi laborers for active military service.

In theory, Egypt has a ready supply of the human weight and material muscle that the Arab Gulf needs to shore up its defenses (both actual and psychological) in the face of the Iranian threat. Similarly, there is much the Gulf has to offer in the way of helping to relieve Egypt's multi-billion-dollar debt burden. The November decision of the extraordinary Arab League summit to permit member-states to renew diplomatic ties with Egypt is only the most recent in a series of highly symbolic moves to curry favor with Cairo.¹¹⁰ Many of those symbolic moves have been augmented with even more significant infusions of financial assistance, either directly into Egyptian accounts or via underwriting third-party debt.¹¹¹

But while the outline of a "done deal" may be apparent in theory, it is far from a reality. The sort of military involvement that the Gulf is seeking from Cairo is of a wholly different character than what Cairo is now providing. While there is little political risk in expanding already existing intelligence, personnel and supply arrangements, the dispatch of a division or two of Egyptian mechanized infantry or armor would signal a fundamentally different approach to the Gulf War and the defense of Arab littoral states. Egypt's role would change from being a supplier of goods and services to an active combattant. So far, despite the political leadership's reassuring rhetoric, a consensus that Egyptian soldiers should fight for the defense of Kuwait or Saudi Arabia is far from being reached.

The political and military elite have been sending mixed signals toward the Gulf, on the one hand offering strong vocal support but on the other hand

¹⁰⁹ For the reference to "12,000 Egyptian troops ... fighting alongside the Iraqi forces," see "Egypt," *Military Powers - The League of Arab States*, Paris: Impact, Information, International Company, 1987, p. 63. The Wafd party newspaper has referred to "3,066 Egyptians detained in Iranian prisons" and "about 20,000" Egyptians who had "volunteered to fight with the Iraqi forces." See *al-Wafd*, July 6, 1987; cited in FBIS, July 9, 1987.

¹¹⁰ In early January 1986, an aide to the Saudi Defense Minister led a delegation to Cairo for talks on developing "military cooperation between the two Arab countries," which Kuwaiti news agencies noted was the first official Saudi visit to Egypt since the severance of relations. KUNA, January 5, 1986; cited in JPRS. On a more symbolic note, Saudi Arabia honored the Mubarak government in June 1987 by dispatching a massive Saudi cultural fair to Cairo for its only Arab showing.

¹¹¹ For example, Saudi Arabia reportedly granted Cairo \$90 million in Fall 1987 to help cover a military debt installment to the United States. Also, there have been reports that Arab states have contributed hundreds of millions of dollars in the past year to help meet payments on Egypt's military debt to the U.S. *Middle East Economic Digest*, November 21, 1987, p. 10.

adamantly rejecting any suggestion of active participation. Egyptian leaders have traveled to the Gulf – especially Kuwait – with increasing frequency following the resumption of diplomatic relations, dutifully declaring their solidarity. Abu Ghazalah himself was the first Egyptian official to visit, the symbolic value of which was not lost on the Kuwaitis, and Mubarak made Kuwait a featured stop on his Gulf tour in January 1988.

Yet very little of the psychological groundwork needed to smooth the transition from bystander to belligerent has been laid.¹¹² Gulf leaders reacted warmly when Mubarak reaffirmed Egypt's commitment to the Collective Security Pact, but with the very next breath he labeled the pact virtually inoperative:

They say Egypt is not implementing the Collective Defense Pact. This is not true ... the Collective Defense Pact includes some 10 or 12 articles and none of these articles is implemented these days. No one is implementing them. Furthermore, if there is to be any assistance, there must be plans and agreements. The chiefs of staff of the Arab countries should meet and study the possibility of certain situations and see what they should do. All the Arab countries should meet to see what kind of assistance they should give in terms of finance; military help, troops, artillery and rockets. Frankly speaking, this pact is no more than ink on paper.¹¹³

And while Abu Ghazalah has often argued that “Egypt will not allow the Iraqi front to collapse,” he has stated with similar frequency that “Egypt would only enter a new war if the Nile waters were threatened.”¹¹⁴

¹¹² Military officials repeatedly and vociferously deny every press claim of active involvement in the Gulf war. In November 1987, for example, Air Force Commander Maj. Gen. Ala Barakat “affirmed for the second time that not a single Egyptian pilot is on a combat mission outside Egypt’s borders.” *al-Akhbar*, November 2, 1987; cited in FBIS, November 4, 1987. Also, government officials quickly denied as spurious press claims that Egypt and Jordan were discussing plans for a 15,000-man “Arab deterrent force” to be dispatched to the Gulf in exchange for massive Gulf financial assistance. See Agence France Presse, December 10, 1987; cited in FBIS, December 11, 1987. and Mubarak’s response in KUNA, January 6, 1988, cited in FBIS, January 6, 1988. A semi-official newspaper in Cairo reported that the issue of troop deployments was never even discussed. *al-Akhbar*, reported by MENA, January 14, 1988; cited in FBIS, January 14, 1988. See also *New York Times*, January 6, 1988. It is important to note that no solid information is available on the nature of the *intra*-army debate on Egypt’s Gulf policy.

¹¹³ Mubarak’s news conference in Kuwait, *Cairo Voice of the Arabs*, January 11, 1988; cited in FBIS, January 12, 1988. Three days before that news conference, *al-Ahram* editor Ibrahim al-Nafi’ wrote a column in the newspaper’s international edition arguing that “Egypt is no longer obligated to [the collective security pact] officially or formally.” *al-Ahram al-Duwali*, January 8, 1988; cited in JPRS.

¹¹⁴ *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, February 2, 1988; cited in FBIS, February 10, 1988.

Moreover, on the popular level, there is no wellspring of enthusiasm for entering the Gulf fray. After five wars in four decades – four against Israel, one in Yemen – few Egyptians are eager for combat. Though Egypt has not reaped the prosperity that Sadat promised, it has enjoyed a decade of welcome peace. For some, peace is an end in itself; for others, peace is only an interval between conflicts with Israel. But the number of Egyptians who view peace as an opportunity to engage in war hundreds of kilometers away are very few indeed.

In fact, the powerful Muslim Brotherhood, along with its parliamentary allies, have warned against siding too openly with either side in the Gulf conflict. As the Brotherhood's Supreme Guide has argued,

[I]t is easy to start a war but difficult to end it; let us learn from the experience of Yemen in the past and of Iraq in the present.¹¹⁵

There are at least two possible reasons for the Ikhwan's outspoken position. First, the post-Sadat era of peace with Israel and inter-Arab isolation has offered Egyptians in general, and the Brotherhood in particular, a chance to turn inward and focus on reforming (or even revolutionizing) Egyptian society. Without an external referent around which to rally the people, domestic issues gain in importance; it is precisely on those issues, such as corruption, inefficiency, and democratic liberties, that the government is most vulnerable and the voice of the opposition – namely the Islamic tendency – most persuasive.¹¹⁶ Second, and most troubling, the Ikhwan's isolationism is reflective of a quiet admiration for the accomplishment of the Islamic republic in Iran, an admiration that transcends the Sunni-Shiite divide. While even its most ardent supporters do not condone the bloody excesses of the revolution, there is a tendency to respect the Iranians for their ability to overthrow a corrupt regime, establish a government wholly of their own making and then confront and even repel another despot's invasion – all in the name of Islam. To a generation whose greatest achievement, the crossing of the Suez, was made in the name of Islam as well, the Iranian revolution has a

¹¹⁵ Hamid Abu al-Nasr, *ash-Sha'b*, February 17, 1987; cited in JPRS. Also, see the statements of two Liberal Party officials upon their return to Cairo from attending a November 1987 Tehran conference on "the sanctity and security of the Holy Mosques," *al-Ahrrar*, December 14, 1987; cited in FBIS, December 18, 1987.

¹¹⁶ Shaykh Abdul Rahman, leader of al-Jihad, has expressed the same argument in relation to the battle against Israel: "Israel is a state and a state can only be fought by a state. If Islam had a state in Egypt, Egypt would have rocked the world. That is why I'm saying that we're trying to establish an Islamic climate and spirit that would restore to Egypt its identity and its soul. Egypt can then stand up to Israel. We believe that a confrontation with those who are dealing with Israel is a prerequisite to a confrontation with Israel itself. That is why we are saying with all due sense of responsibility that all the regimes that are dealing with Israel must be removed." *al-Fikr al-Islami*, reprinted in *al-Ahd*, January 17, 1987; cited in JPRS.

special resonance. Egyptians certainly do not want to fight alongside Iranians, but they have yet to be given a convincing reason to fight against them.¹¹⁷

In sum, Egypt has made important though tentative steps toward reasserting itself in two regional contexts – the Arab-Israeli military arena and the Gulf war. Reflective of the ambivalence of the political leadership, the nation seems groping for direction. Important strategic decisions – toward or away from a deepening of the “cold peace/cold war” with Israel; toward or away from a more active engagement in the Gulf war – have yet to be made. It is within this context that the across-the-board elevation of the role of the military in political life assumes importance beyond Egypt’s borders.

¹¹⁷ A third possible reason for the Muslim Brotherhood’s Gulf policy in recent years is the influence Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states may have exerted. At least until the August 1987 rioting in Mecca, Saudi Arabia followed an ambivalent policy of supporting Iraq with financial aid but accommodating Iranian oil pricing demands so as to restrict the conflict to the land war and to prevent the spread of the conflict to the Arab Gulf states. It is known that Saudi Arabia is among the chief financial backers of the Muslim Brotherhood and related Islamic institutions, including the popular Islamic investment authorities. The extent to which Brotherhood policy reflected Saudi wishes is difficult to determine.

V: IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY ANALYSIS AND POLICY MAKING

For its part, official Washington has been – with some justification – too busy with periodic crises to examine the army-politics dynamic that is at the heart of Egyptian politics today. In broad strokes, Egypt is an American success story, having rejected its identity as a pro-Soviet regional belligerent to become a pro-American partner in the peace process. U.S. policy has been, for the most part, an effort to maintain what has already been achieved, while looking elsewhere – Libya, Lebanon, and the Persian Gulf – for new challenges. The one bilateral crisis of seismic proportions was the October 1985 American interception of the Egyptair plane carrying the Achille Lauro pirates. Psychologically, the scars of what was perceived of as an American betrayal may remain indefinitely. In practical terms, though, the damage to the relationship was short-lived; within six weeks, Egypt was again asking for American advice and assistance in dealing with terrorism, in this case the storming of an Egyptian aircraft hijacked to Malta.

With the vacuum of Arab military power sucking Egypt into a more prominent political and military role, Egypt may once again reemerge as a central focus of U.S. regional strategy. Gulf states desirous of outside protection from Iranian aggression would most likely prefer the assistance of fraternal Egypt to the embarrassment of turning to Washington. But Egypt could not act alone. There could be no sizable Egyptian deployment in the Gulf without large-scale American logistical, supply, maintenance, communication, and intelligence assistance, essentially forming a U.S.-Egyptian partnership to assist in Gulf defense.¹¹⁸ Washington, therefore, must calculate for itself the costs and benefits involved in Egypt's active assumption of the role of regional policeman. To do so requires an assessment of the changing role the military has played in Egyptian politics in recent years but has escaped much American scrutiny.

The need for accurate analysis

A flagrant information gap between Cairo and Washington has rendered that analytical process extremely problematic. Much that is said and done in Egypt is

¹¹⁸ In November 1987, military analyst Anthony Cordesman said that while Egypt has two or three competent armored divisions that would be useful in the land defense of Kuwait, their deployment would require "total U.S. support." Public comments at the annual conference of the Middle East Studies Association, Baltimore.

neither heard nor seen in America. There are two parts to this equation. First, despite the "special relations" the two countries enjoy, American access to goings-on inside the Egyptian armed forces stops at the gate of the first camp not supplied with American materiel. As a result, Washington has solid data on the workings of the air force, which is being remodeled along largely American lines, but significantly less knowledge about large chunks of the army and other security services. And even in the air force, Americans officials face restricted access to those bases formed around squadrons of French, Soviet or Chinese aircraft. Moreover, U.S. officials readily admit that they lack basic information about the size of the Egyptian defense budget, the range of expenditures and the nature of military sales and purchases. In Congressional testimony, Pentagon officials have conceded that the Egyptian government shares neither precise data on its "military debt" nor on "total Egyptian military spending."¹¹⁹ For its part, the State Department has acknowledged not being "privy to" the Egyptian national security decision-making process *vis-a-vis* Gulf policy.¹²⁰

Second, the information that is relayed to Washington is often funneled through the filter of America's past achievement in Cairo. Given the policymakers' and Congressmen's already overburdened Middle East attention span, there has been little incentive to discuss disturbing trends in Egypt. Snapshots of Congressional testimony over the past few years concerning three central questions regarding the Egyptian military underscore this information and perception problem:

Manpower levels: Since the early 1980s, U.S. officials have repeatedly asserted the imminence of Egyptian reductions-in-force. For example, a Pentagon official stated in 1982 that "we expect a steady reduction in Egypt's overall force size in spite of increasing U.S. security assistance."¹²¹ In 1985, another Pentagon official stated that the Egyptians are:

¹¹⁹ Testimony of Major General Kenneth D. Burns, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, before the House of Representatives' Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, hearings on Foreign Assistance Legislation for Fiscal Year 1986-87, February 28, 1985, p. 196-197. Burns now serves as ACDA director.

¹²⁰ See statement by "Senior Administration Official" in State Department Background Briefing in preparation for Mubarak's visit to Washington, January 26, 1988.

¹²¹ Testimony of Lt. General James B. Ahmann, director of the Defense Security Assistance Agency, before the House of Representatives' Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, hearings on Foreign Assistance Legislation for Fiscal Year 1983, March 15, 1982. p. 5.

... clearly making a move away from quantitative to qualitative – they’re reducing the size of the military at the end of their five-year program – in fact, at the end of this year or next we should see a reduction in the numbers of people in the armed forces, but an improvement in quality.¹²²

In fact, according to the U.S. government’s own statistics, manpower trends are running in the opposite direction – toward expansion.¹²³

Military spending: In 1985, the Pentagon reported that expenditure on “total military assets” remained at “about 8-9 percent of gross domestic product through the 1980s as opposed to 10-12 percent in 1979.”¹²⁴ If that statement was meant to imply that Egyptian defense spending under Mubarak is less than it was during post-1977 Sadat, it is not only misleading but wrong. Again, citing ACDA, military spending as a percentage of gross national product (ACDA’s parameters) during the final two full years of the Sadat regime was 12.5 percent in 1979 and 9.2 percent in 1980. Under the first three full years of the Mubarak regime, those percentages rose to 16.8 (1982), 16.5 (1983) and 13.5 (1984).¹²⁵

Military capability: Over time, assessments of the readiness and battlefield capability of the military have changed dramatically. In 1982, for example, the Department of Defense reported that the Egyptian army was “experiencing an accelerated decline in combat readiness” largely because Egypt “had received virtually no new equipment since the 1973 war.”¹²⁶ At the time, the Pentagon envisioned no change in the army’s readiness status throughout the next decade’s heavy infusion of U.S. assistance. The security assistance program, the Pentagon reported, “was designed to be a maintenance program, not an increasing program ... to arrest the deterioration in combat capability.”¹²⁷ By 1985, that assessment was totally reversed. The Pentagon’s representative before Congress said

¹²² Burns’ testimony, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

¹²³ According to ACDA, the total number of personnel in the armed forces increased by 19,000 (4 percent) in 1984. As noted above, all data regarding Egyptian armed forces manpower are best cited for the trends they suggest, not for individual citations.

¹²⁴ Burns’ testimony, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

¹²⁵ ACDA, 1986, p. 73.

¹²⁶ See Appendix 2, 1982 testimony cited above, supplemental questions submitted by the House subcommittee to the Department of Defense, p. 193.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

“unequivocally” that Egypt was fielding a more capable fighting force than when the Soviets were the principal military patron.¹²⁸

These responses to straightforward questions about the size, resources and capabilities of a friendly and highly subsidized armed forces appear grounded in either outdated conceptions or self-fulfilling wishes. Since it is impolitic for the Egyptian army to have forsworn force reductions and to have increased its spending, important data has gone unexplored. Since it is unacceptable for the Egyptian army not to have significantly improved after infusions of billions of dollars of U.S. aid, in an unexplained about-face, it has. If the examples cited above offer an accurate indication as to the foundations of policy analysis on this potentially important issue, then making policy will be flawed from the start.

Keeping Egypt on track

Policy planning toward Egyptian political/military issues must begin from the premise that Egypt appears to be moving in three directions simultaneously. The Egyptian military is aggressively asserting itself (or preparing itself for a more prominent role) on the domestic front, in its relationship with Israel and in the Gulf war.¹²⁹ This triple-tracked policy has evolved from several basic decisions concerning the nature of the Egyptian armed forces, some of which are political, others inherently military. One of the most important of these is the political choice *not* to seek quality in manpower at the expense of quantity. Given the premise that Egypt must expand the military’s role in some arena, if for no reason other than to accommodate the high levels of personnel and to serve as employer-of-last-resort, then it is important that the U.S. use its ample influence to help guide Egypt down the most productive (and, hopefully, mutually beneficial) path.

Of the three, it is clear that any further drift toward “cold war” with Israel would pose the most serious threat to U.S. regional interests. The dominant reality on the Arab-Israeli front is one of relative stability, at least the sort of stability that precludes the likelihood of superpower confrontation. Such stability is due in large

¹²⁸ Burns’ testimony, *op. cit.* For a fascinating – and critical – assessment of the state of the Egyptian armed forces and its operational relationship with U.S. troops, see Lt. Col. Wolf D. Kuttner and Maj. Glenn M. Harned, “Interoperability with Egyptian Forces,” *Infantry*, January-February 1985. The *Infantry* article was disavowed and denounced by the U.S. Office of Military Cooperation in Cairo.

¹²⁹ Egypt’s policy toward its two other principal fronts – Libya and Sudan – has been marked far more by stasis than dynamism in recent years, a phenomenon which itself is worthy of further study.

part to Egypt's removal from the coalition of potential Arab belligerents. If the Camp David Accords achieved nothing else, they significantly reduced the likelihood of large-scale Arab-Israeli war.¹³⁰ To allow the Egyptians to slide into a combative posture toward Israel as an outlet for military activity would not only countenance the collapse of one of America's greatest diplomatic achievements but it would herald the resurrection of a volatile superpower rivalry. In this regard, therefore, U.S. policy should indicate opposition to highly publicized army maneuvers that suggest the return to military competition with Israel and whose spirit runs counter to the bilateral peace treaty.

The other two options – toward deeper engagement in the Gulf and a heightened domestic role – are more consonant with U.S. regional and strategic interests. Each may help to promote a different U.S. objective – the former, greater Gulf security; the latter, greater internal stability. But at the same time, each option carries with it heavy costs.

The issue of Egypt's role in the Gulf poses a thorny set of problems for the U.S. On the surface, a scenario involving the active engagement of the Egyptian army looks inviting. A compliant Egyptian partner could fill the shoes of America's regional pillar left empty since the fall of the Shah. Egypt could then, with U.S. logistical support, play a policeman's role and protect the Arab Gulf states on land while U.S. forces maintain air and naval defense against an Iranian threat. In a neat package, America benefits by having brokered a deal in which the Gulf states gain security without the taint of on-the-ground collusion with the "Great Satan," while pro-U.S. Egypt reasserts its historic position as regional titan.

But Washington should think twice before urging Cairo to call out the cavalry on behalf of Kuwait. In its haste to find a defense of the Gulf that does not entail the deployment of American ground forces, the U.S. should not forget its overriding interest in preserving Egyptian stability.

First, a large-scale Egyptian military commitment in the Gulf would be sorely expensive – and not just in financial terms. While Gulf states could most likely afford the tens of millions of dollars *per month* needed to outfit and maintain a single armored division, only Egypt will pay the price in terms of losing what progress Mubarak has achieved in recent years in reordering national priorities toward the need for economic reform, productivity and efficiency.

¹³⁰ Presidential Advisor Osama al-Baz: "We completely rejected and continue to reject any talk about normalization if it means that Egypt as a whole, both government and people, should establish certain relations and contacts whether it likes it or not. We are committed only to ending the state of war and to establishing a peaceful relationship that is supposed to be part of a comprehensive peace." *al-Siyasah*, January 5, 1988; cited in FBIS, January 12, 1988.

Second, in the absence of national consensus, a commitment to fight Iran is liable to add to the already volatile Islamic ferment in Egyptian society. Within the army itself, deployment in the Gulf may catalyze latent sympathy with the Islamic republic that, as has been suggested, might be widespread throughout the ranks. That feeling would be compounded by the genuine popular disgust that would vent itself in response to the overt U.S.-Egyptian military cooperation needed to make a Gulf deployment possible. It is by now axiomatic to state that contemporary Egypt is not analogous to the Shah's Iran, but a policy that exhorts Cairo to send troops to the Gulf may help make that comparison more real.

Third, given the fact that not all Egyptian army divisions are of equal caliber, Cairo would be caught in a deployment dilemma. On the one hand, it could send its most competent divisions to fight in the Gulf, thereby losing the most important protector of internal security. But with the vagaries of warfare, there is no assurance that even Egypt's best troops could avoid the meatgrinder that the Gulf war has become and decisively turn the battle in the Arabs' favor. On the other hand, Cairo could send less capable forces to the Gulf, thereby gaining the symbolic benefit of Arab solidarity without losing the most efficient source of domestic stability. But because second-line troops are less likely to be a determining factor in the conflict, Egypt runs the risk of getting bogged down in protracted confrontation in the Gulf.

Neither is an appealing scenario and the choice itself should be avoided. U.S. policy, therefore, should discourage Gulf states from soliciting Cairo to be their military bulwark. At the same time, the U.S. should assist the Egyptians to expand the supporting role they are now playing in the Gulf – in essence, doing more of the same – as a means of earning foreign exchange and political capital without suffering the deleterious effects of a highly visible and potentially disastrous troop deployment. In addition, Washington should support creative alternatives to debt relief financing, thereby reducing the Egyptian incentive to effectively hire out its troops as mercenaries.¹³¹ Moreover, U.S. diplomats should continually underscore the importance of Egypt's political victory at the November 1987 Arab League summit in Amman, where Egypt gained the restoration of Arab diplomatic ties with no strings attached.

Given the available options, therefore, an Egyptian policy of channeling the energies of the army into a domestic outlet is the least problematic for U.S.

¹³¹ Note the following report that aired on Cairo Domestic Service: "Responding to reports that Egypt is sending military forces to the Gulf states for a few billion, the president asserted that Egypt has no Armed Forces outside its territory. He said: 'We are not mercenaries. We are a nation that has its values, believes in its Arab responsibilities, consults and coordinates with its brothers and places its expertise at their service.'" March 9, 1988; cited in FBIS, March 10, 1988.

interests. Of course, the dangers of such a policy should not be dismissed. First, it must be realized that trying to pursue the twin processes of military expansion and liberalization is liable to produce new tensions that threaten to set back Mubarak's democratization drive. Second, continued funding of the military infrastructure is likely to rob other, potentially more productive sectors of needed investment funds. Third, this policy does nothing to alter the current trend of the regime's increasing reliance on troops of decreasing reliability, that is the danger of Islamic fundamentalist penetration of the armed forces.

Washington must be wary of a complacency that, in the name of domestic stability, would permit the military to gobble up civilian functions, smother the tentative democratic gains and drown both the traditional public sector as well as the growing private sector. In this regard, U.S. policy will err if it permits the Egyptians to conceive of such issues as co-production of the M1A1-Abrams battle tank *solely* as a litmus test of America's commitment to military modernization. Politically, financially, and technically, the proposal represents a mixed bag of benefits and drawbacks to both Egypt and the U.S. The careful process of assessing the program's viability in those three areas is still not yet completed. For more than a year, however, Abu Ghazalah has repeatedly declared Egypt's intention to build the high-tech tank; he has phrased his requests to Washington as a virtual ultimatum; he has even begun construction on the factory that would build the tanks.¹³² Given the magnitude of the M1A1 project, the stakes are too high for it to be dealt with simply as a political issue in the face of heated Egyptian demands. In the end, approval of the project may, in fact, be in the best interests of both countries, but that decision should be reached only as a result of a sober assessment of projected costs and available capabilities. If Abu Ghazalah's statements are any guide, a political struggle, rather than an analytical or a technical assessment, seems to be in place instead.

In the larger framework, U.S. policy should support efforts by the Egyptian leadership to expand the military-industrial base both quantitatively (in terms of its ability to absorb excess manpower) and qualitatively (in terms of gradually increasing the level of technology transfer and the scope of co-assembly and co-production projects). Through it all, though, America should continually remind Egypt that increasing the number of soldiers and military engineers is not a long term solution to a fundamental economic problem.

¹³² In April 1987, Abu Ghazalah said that Egypt "has [already] obtained the license to produce" the M1A1. MENA, April 28, 1987; cited in FBIS, April 29, 1987. For a similar statement, see *The Washington Times*, November 2, 1987. For a report on the funding and construction of the tank factory, see the *Middle East Economic Digest*, January 9, 1988.

At a time when U.S. policy risks losing sight of its main strategic interests *vis-a-vis* Egypt – namely promoting the internal stability of a moderate, Western-oriented regime committed to peace with Israel and political alignment with other Western-oriented states in the region – it is clear that the benefits of this policy outweigh its costs. Other U.S. interests in Egypt, from overflight rights to facility use agreements to programs of strategic cooperation, are only secondary to and derivative of that preeminent goal. Washington should encourage Egypt to focus on internal development to help foster the economic strength that is the handmaiden of political stability. If the price of internal stability and political moderation comes at the expense of the further empowerment of the military establishment, it is still a valuable deal.

In the final analysis, the changing relationship between army and politics in Egypt today is a dynamic process over which Washington has little control. Sound U.S. policy will seek to understand the costs and benefits implicit in the growth of the Egyptian armed forces and the reassertion of military influence in Egyptian politics and take some small steps to move those trends in a direction consistent with the fundamental policy goal of maintaining the stability of the Mubarak regime.

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