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The Role of the Egyptian Military in Domestic Society

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This paper was written in conjunction with a series of strategic seminars conducted between analysts from Egypt and the United States under the auspices of the Institute of National Strategic Studies, National Defense University in 1994-1995. It should be published by the National Defense University in the summer of 1997.

S.E. Finer¹ says that an army is a *purposive* instrument, rationally conceived to fulfil certain objectives; its central purpose is to fight and win wars in defense of the state.² Throughout the world, with few exceptions, armies represent professional, highly structured, hierarchal organizations characterized by high levels of discipline and motivation. By virtue of their function and training, armies also acquire highly prized skills and values, such as the capacity for intercommunication, an *esprit de corps*, and self sufficiency. A military's unique structure facilitates rapid decision making and efficient execution of these decisions. These institutional characteristics provide military organizations with the potential to undertake social action well beyond the defense function. The military also comes to serve as the corporate representation of and defender of a state's nationalism.

Military organizations are generally considered to have an organizational structure sufficiently capable to conduct the affairs of state, manage national projects and resolve political chaos. Capabilities not necessarily relished in most civil societies. In Egypt, this capability was demonstrated by the 1952 overthrow of the Egyptian monarchy by Gamal abd al-Nasser and elements of the Egyptian military. Upon assuming power, senior military officers served as Egypt's President and Prime Minister. Military officers dominated the cabinet and senior governmental positions.

As in Latin America, the Middle East has a long history of military rule. Modern Egypt evolved from the 1952 military putsch. From 1952 until the mid-1970s, the Egyptian military was the strongest institution within the Egyptian polity. Nominally, as Egypt has democratized, the Egyptian military's involvement in matters of national politics has declined as has its direct involvement in matters of state. At the same time, its involvement in Egypt's national life and economy has expanded. As the role of Egypt's military in domestic society is considered, one cannot help but reflect on the possibilities that the Egyptian military could once again become a dominant player in Egyptian politics -- through circumstance or intent. This paper will examine the domestic role of the Egyptian military in national society. It will address the potential of the military as a socializing agent; its expanding involvement in the economy; and its role in domestic politics. It will argue that the Egyptian military, by design and chance, has evolved into

an entity that is supportive of national goals, responsible to civilian control and without overt interest in political dominance.

Egypt maintains a large and professional army which numbers 440,000³ personnel -- comparable in size to the armies of Syria, Iraq and Iran. In the context of Egypt's peace with Israel, the size of Egypt's military greatly exceeds that of its most likely opponents -- Libya (70,000 personnel) or the Sudan (118,500 personnel).⁴ Although exceeding Egypt's realistic defensive needs, Egypt probably maintains such a large force in the belief that it provides deterrence, prestige, and credibility to Egypt's putative regional leadership. Also, under Egypt's distressing economic conditions, it would not be smart policy to add several hundred thousand individuals with military training and experience to the unemployment lines.

Egypt remains concerned over Israel's military strength and reputed nuclear capabilities which may serve as another reason for maintaining such a large force. With an active military force only about a third the size of Egypt's (136,000), Israel still effectively eclipses Egypt's military capabilities. Despite the peace, a majority of Egypt's ground forces remain permanently stationed between Cairo and the Suez canal.⁵ Historically, this was a measure to safeguard the Suez canal and Cairo from an Israeli invasion. The continued stationing of these forces in this area may reflect Egypt's continuing concern over the Israeli military, but may also reflect the economic fact that the housing and infrastructure for these forces has long been located in this area.

While providing a major source of national employment, Egypt's large military is not without costs -- between 1966 and 1994, Egypt's military expenditures have averaged around 23 percent of Egypt's total government expenditures (excluding the war-time peaks in 1973 and 1974).

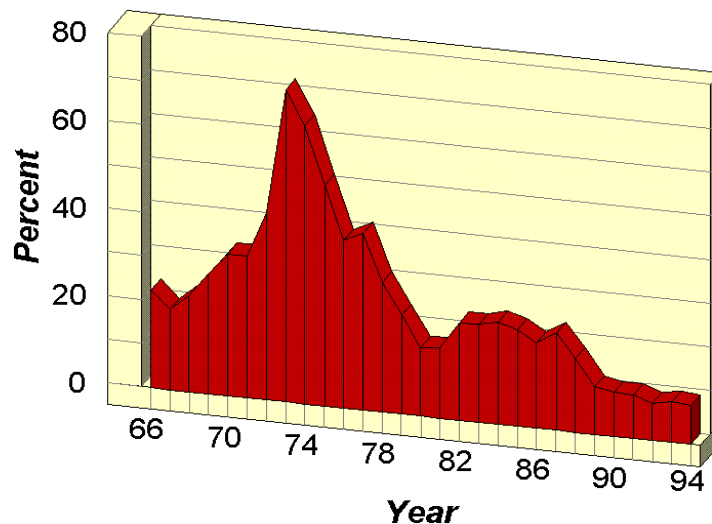


Figure 1 - Egyptian Military Expenditures as a percentage of Current Government Expenditures 1962-1994. Source: Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, Various issues 1965-1995.

Beyond the central objective of national defense, the Egyptian armed forces have other important objectives and goals: deterrence, support for Egypt's regional role, military modernization, achieving military self-sufficiency, maintaining a positive image with Egypt's population, effectively employing soldiers idled by a diminished defense requirements in an era of peace, and serving as an engine for Egypt's economic growth and development.⁶

The Socialization Role of the Military

The Egyptian Armed Forces comprise less than 1 percent of Egypt's population of 62.4 million.⁷ A more meaningful assessment of its potential to influence is to measure its percentage of the labor population of Egypt. The male working age population (15-64 years) of Egypt is 18.6 million.⁸ The Armed Forces comprise 2.4 percent of this number. Approximately 650,000 males reach military age each year of which approximately 80,000⁹ are conscripted into the Armed Forces. Of this group, the Armed Forces will annually have an influence on 12.3 per cent of Egyptian males entering the work force -- a not insignificant figure, but still fairly small compared to the Islamic exposure of the Mosque.

The service length for conscripts varies with education level. Conscripts who have completed high school serve a two year term of service. Conscripts without high school serve a term of three years. Conscripts live in military barracks and are trained primarily in their particular military specialties with some remedial instruction given in basic skills such as literacy. Conscripts are paid only ₤ 32 a month (about \$10). After about a year they are promoted to the next higher grade and their pay increases to about ₤ 140 (\$40). Conscripts identified as lacking basic skills, are given full-time vocational training, emphasizing skills convertible to civilian employment, for the last six months of their conscripted service. This vocational training appears to be an instrument designed specifically to support national economic development. Reportedly, many of the conscripts leave military service at the end of their term of service and take their newly acquired skills into the civilian economic sector.

Egyptian military service is an important socialization agent in Egyptian society. In the military, a new recruit with a traditional background, is placed in an egalitarian environment which provides the soldier with the prospect of social mobility through a system of promotion based on merit rather than class/kinship factors. The conscript is also exposed to a work ethic based upon operational goals and objectives. Military life provides the conscript a relatively satisfactory life from a material point of view. The conscript receives a monthly salary, adequate food, medical care, uniforms and living accommodations. From a political perspective, he learns of a world beyond his rural agrarian origins and of a larger political self in a national community. This tends to be a politicizing experience providing the soldier with a sense of "civic" identity and loyalty to the state -- a world view much expanded beyond his previous exclusive reference to family, village and religion. Military service provides a soldier with a sense of citizenship, responsibility, and nationalism -- all especially important in the Middle East where the credibility and legitimacy of a central government usually diminishes rapidly as distance increases from its capital.

Coupled with this experience in nationalism is an exposure to modern technologies and life styles. By its nature, an Army constantly looks abroad to compare its strengths to possible

enemies and correct deficiencies.¹⁰ It is thus more aware of the importance of technology, its own weaknesses, and is willing (even driven) to modernize, acquire and utilize needed technologies. The soldier is exposed to and trained to use technologies that run the gamut from modern weapons, communications, manufacturing, construction and management systems not available in the other sectors of the state.

The Egyptian military's socializing influence should continue as long as the Egyptian Armed Forces remain at their present strength levels. Although, as economic pressures rise, it may become increasingly difficult for Egypt to maintain these high force levels. For the last several years, the US Department of Defense has been trying to persuade the Egyptian Armed Forces to downsize the force and accept the combat efficiencies enabled by their new Western weapon systems. Specifically, the U.S. is interested in having Egypt discard its large inventory of Eastern Bloc military equipment which is nearly obsolescent, expensive to maintain, manpower intensive and of only marginal military capability. This would allow much needed funds previously spent on maintaining its aging inventories of Eastern equipment to be diverted to the more useful and needed categories of training and sustainment. It would also require significantly fewer soldiers to effectively man its equipment. Egypt has resisted downsizing its force because, as noted previously, of its considered deterrent value and its concern for adding thousands of individuals into the unemployment lines. A smaller military would have a reduced socializing role, but the cost savings might provide additional funding for military modernization and other non-military national priorities. The value of this additional funding must be assessed *vis-a-vis* the reduced socialization role it would result in. Arguably, no other institution in Egypt could provide as effective a socialization instrument as the military in terms of work ethic, egalitarianism, social mobility, exposure to technology, civic responsibility and nation building.

The National Economy

. . . A military establishment comes as close as any human organization can to the ideal type for an industrialized and secularized enterprise.¹¹

Since the 1970s, the Egyptian military has had an expanding role in economic issues in Egypt. Both Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and former Egyptian Minister Of Defense Field Marshal Abu Ghazala¹² (1980-1989) shared a vision of the beneficial role the military could play as an engine for economic growth and development. This led to what Robert Springborg¹³ refers to as a horizontal expansion in the role of the military into the national economy. There are probably a number of factors that led to this shared vision: a widely-held belief that the organizational attributes of the military could provide an effective engine for economic growth and development; the potential to exploit the comparative economic advantages of the military (low salaries, heavy equipment infrastructure, etc.) in fostering economic growth; the military's goal of self-sufficiency; and a need to effectively employ large numbers of soldiers in meaningful activities when defensive requirements are low, but there is an interest in maintaining a large force structure for deterrent purposes.

It should be noted that there are counter-arguments to these considerations. Some observers such as William Quandt¹⁴ claim that these activities may not be helpful to the Egyptian economy as a whole because the military's low-cost subsidized labor, exempt from taxes and licenses,

undercuts private entrepreneurs. Others such as Robert Springborg¹⁵ argue that the relationship between the Egyptian military and the civilian sector has been characterized by cooperation -- private entrepreneurs have benefitted from the millions of dollars for associated contracts the army has awarded as well as in cooperative efforts in technology sharing. Arguments can also be made that Egyptian society benefits because the military's profits (if in fact there are any) can be used to offset declining military budgets. To Egypt's economic benefit, these activities also create a trained work force that can (and appears to) migrate out of the military into the private sector. Robert B. Satloff¹⁶ also argues that if the Army didn't assume many of these economic duties Islamic institutions would be in a position to take control of them -- not a situation the government would prefer.

The military's role in Egypt's economy is represented in four primary sectors: military industries, civilian industries, agriculture, and national infrastructure.

Military Industries

To paraphrase Yezid Sayigh¹⁷ Egypt is the veteran Arab arms producer. Military production began in Egypt in the 1820s under Mohammed Ali. Ali created Egypt's fledgling arms industry to support his interests in regional military conquest. This industry reportedly produced high-quality small arms, artillery, warships and ammunition.¹⁸ Egypt's initial arms production efforts essentially ended in the 1840s under pressure from the European powers and did not resume again until the 1940s. In recent years, Egypt's arms industry has produced or assembled a wide variety of products including artillery, mortar and small arms ammunition, indigenously produced armored personnel carriers, the US M1A1 Abrams tank, British Lynx helicopters, Aerospatiale Gazelle helicopters, European AlphaJet aircraft, Chinese F-7 fighter aircraft, aircraft engines, and a wide variety of military electronics including radars and night vision devices.

One of the principle goals for the defense industrial sector is the pursuit of self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency equates with military autonomy and self-reliance. There have been numerous instances where the West has refused to provide or embargoed needed arms to Egypt. Likewise, after the 1973 war, the former Soviet Union refused to rearm, provide repair parts or overhaul assistance to the Egyptian military and discouraged cooperation with Egypt by its other client states. Self-sufficiency would permit a greater measure of Egyptian independence in security matters and should allow the Egyptian military to fight longer without foreign resupply. Other goals for the defense industry include: import substitution; increased employment; increased export earnings; upgrading worker skills; economic development and modernization; regional power; acquisition of industrial and military technology; and encouraging Pan-Arab cooperation.

Egyptian Defense production occurs in some 30 factories and companies which reportedly employ up to 100,000 people. Value of production in the industry was estimated at an average of \$400 million a year¹⁹ in the 1980s. The Egyptian military industries also exported an annual average of \$191 million in the 1980s. The range of exports during the 1980s was from \$30 million in 1981 to \$550 million in 1988.²⁰ The majority of exports were arms sales to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. Figure 2 shows that once this war ended in 1989, Egyptian exports fell

precipitously. Reportedly, the profits from these exports were returned to the military coffers with no government accounting or taxes (i.e. "Off-budget").²¹

In April 1975, Egypt, Saudi Arabi, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar formed the Arab Organization for Industrialization (AOI) -- an arms production consortium. The Gulf countries provided the funding base (\$1.04 billion) and Egypt provided the manpower and infrastructure. The intention was for the AOI to produce weapons for its charter members and export surplus production to other Arab, Islamic and Third World Countries. The goals of AOI were to provide the partners with a measure of self-sufficiency in conventional military hardware, reduced military production costs, a basis for advanced Arab industrialization, a source of export earnings and to promote Arab cooperation. Four Egyptian production factories were immediately turned over to the AOI and production began through licensed manufacturing arrangements with Western firms. In 1979, with President Sadat's signing of a peace treaty with Israel, the other members of AOI quit the organization and withdrew their funding. Despite its short life, the AOI provided Egypt with the basis for its rapid expansion in assembly and manufacturing operations. Egypt continues to maintain the AOI and it serves as the chief agency responsible for aerospace, missiles, electronic and avionics plants. Since returning to the Arab fold in the late 1980s, Egypt has not been able to convince any other Arab states to rejoin AOI.²²

In the coming years, Egypt's military production sector will probably decline. Egypt suffers from low productivity, a lack of adequate funding and a dearth of external markets. Egypt's largest customer during the 1980s, Iraq, has been removed from the market place as a result of UN sanctions imposed against Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait. Egyptian military products also face increased competition. The cash-strapped Russians are offering highly advanced weapons at bargain prices. The Gulf Arab states, a traditional focus of Egyptian marketing efforts, have the money and interest in procuring advanced US military systems believing their military superiority will provide effective deterrence and their purchase will provide a political insurance policy for continuing U.S. security involvement. As illustrated in figure 2, Egypt's military industries have not promoted import substitution or sustained export earnings. The technological benefit of the armed forces' military industrial endeavors have proven to be only marginal to Egypt's economic developments. While Egypt does assemble sophisticated military weapons systems, the facilities to do so are provided by Western businesses on a "turn key" basis. The Egyptians receive kits for assembly, but the technology involved is closely maintained by the Western partner. Hence, little technology that would allow independent Egyptian development of systems has been received. For Egypt, technology is a conundrum -- high technology industrial efforts are a capital intensive endeavor; Egypt has a labor intensive economy with little capital. Finally, it would appear that Egypt's military industries have done little to enhance its regional power.

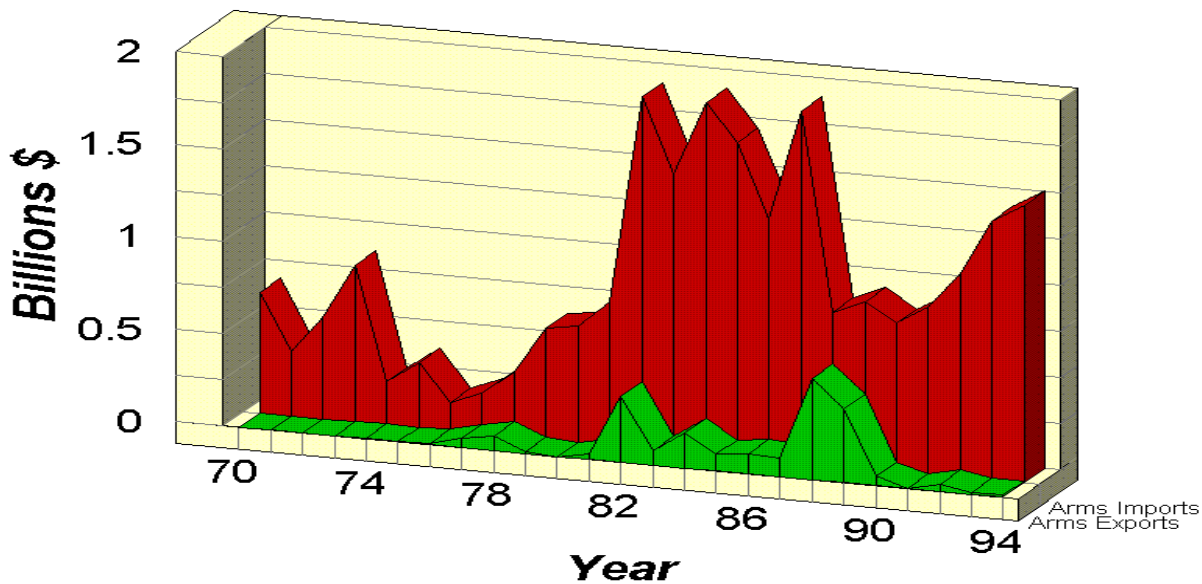


Figure 2 - Egyptian Arms Imports compared with Arms Exports. Source: Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, Various issues 1965-1995.

Civilian Industries

In the late 1970s, plagued with overcapacity, falling oil prices, rising government deficits, falling per capita income,²³ a requirement to offset the military's diminished role resulting from peace with Israel, and with a continuing interest in self-sufficiency, the Egyptian military converted large portions²⁴ of their military production capacity to the production of civilian goods. This initiative was conducted under the auspices of the National Service Project Organization (NSPO), a Ministry of Defense subsidiary established to control projects in the exclusively civilian sectors of the economy²⁵ and reorient the military toward national economic development efforts.²⁶ Military facilities now manufacture a wide variety of products such as washing machines, heaters, clothing, doors, stationary, pharmaceuticals, and microscopes. Most of these products are sold to military personnel through discount military stores, but a significant percentage also reach commercial markets. Profits from these activities are, like military export earnings, off budget."

The Military in Agriculture

Under the auspices of the Food Security Division of the NSPO, the military set a goal of 100 per cent self-sufficiency in food stuffs. As in the case of weapons, the government believed that national security would be bolstered with military self-sufficiency in food.²⁷ In the early 1980s, the NSPO began to develop a broad network of dairy farms, milk processing facilities, cattle feed lots, poultry farms, and fish farms. Reportedly, the military produced 18 per cent of the nation's total food production and 60 percent of the army's required consumables (food, uniforms, footwear, etc.) in 1985.²⁸ Again, while the military consumes much of the products produced the

surpluses sold through commercial outlets with the profits returned to the military's coffers off-budget."

National Infrastructure

The military has also been involved in a significant number of major national infrastructure projects such as construction of power lines, sewers, bridges, overpasses, roads, schools, and installing and maintaining telephone exchanges. While predominately pursued by the military with its own resources, reportedly there were a large number of associated contracts to civilian businesses involved in these projects. Data is not available to reveal how significant civilian business involvement with these projects was. As previously discussed, some pundits have argued that such military activity is harmful to civilian commercial activities -- competing with and denying the business to private firms. Others argue that development of this infrastructure will benefit civilian enterprise. Others still could argue that this infrastructure development was only affordable to the government through military resources. Reportedly some military officers have criticized this role because it detracted from the military's focus on national security; others counter this criticism citing the benefits of the military's improved image with the Egyptian people. There is little data available to resolve these issues.

Overall, the performance of the Egyptian military's civilian sector economic activities has been fairly impressive in terms of production and the achievement of some measure of self-sufficiency for the military (i.e. production of 60 percent of required consumables). These civilian sectors of the military's economic activities will probably continue to expand because of their reported profitability,²⁹ derived social benefit, and because they also accomplish the military objectives of maintaining military productivity, enhancing the military's public image and self-sufficiency.

The Domestic Political Process

The trend of military participation in the domestic political process in Egypt has been one of decline since 1967. With the overthrow of the monarchy in 1952 by the Free Officers movement, the Egyptian military became one of the most important political institutions in Egypt. President Nasser appointed many senior military officers to the Cabinet and into senior positions to implement the social revolution. Toward the end of President Nasser's rule, and as a result of the military's poor showing in the 1967 war, the number of senior military officers in government positions and cabinet positions began to decline.

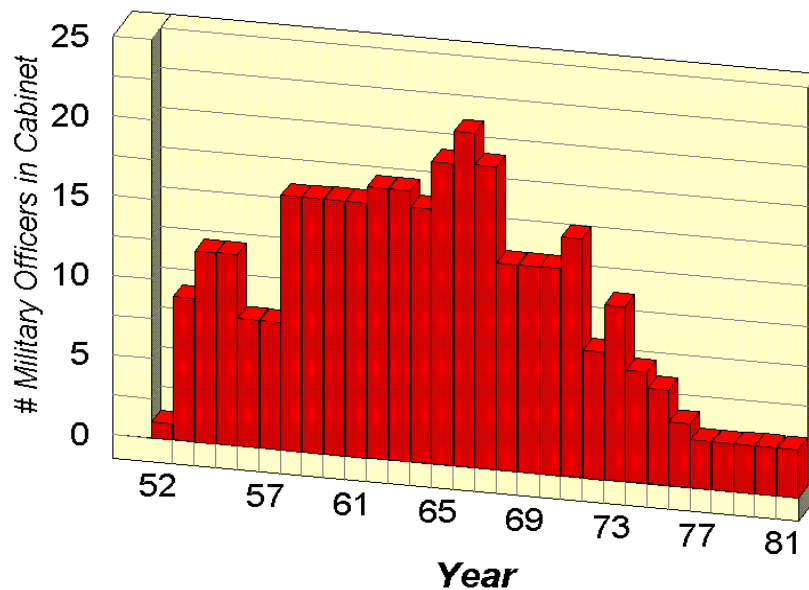


Figure 3 - Number of Egyptian Military Officers serving on the Cabinet, 1951-1981. Source: Mark N. Cooper. "The Demilitarization of the Egyptian Cabinet." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 14 (1982). pp. 203-225.

This decline accelerated under President Sadat. Sadat removed most of the senior officers likely to challenge his policies from and appointed fewer senior or retired officers to cabinet and senior government positions. This "demilitarization" of the Egyptian Cabinet is detailed extensively by Mark N. Cooper³⁰ who recounts the removal of the military from the cabinet under both Nasser and Sadat. Cooper points out that since the end of Sadat's "purge" of military officers from the cabinet, the cabinet posts the military routinely came to occupy were technical in nature and directly related to the military, such as the Ministers of Defense, Military Production, Transport, Communication, Maritime Transport & Civil Aviation and occasionally Interior.³¹ This appears to have continued to be the case since the early 1980s.

As part of his plan to reduce the military's influence in government and stave off political threats from the military, Sadat controlled the military through manipulation of the senior military command positions -- removing incumbents frequently before they could amass any politically relevant support. In the nine years from 1971 to 1980, President Sadat had seven Ministers of Defense. In lieu of the military's political involvement, Sadat insisted on a program of greater military professionalism. The benefits of this drive for professionalism were realized in the greatly improved performance of the Egyptian military during the 1973 war over the debacle of 1967. Sadat was also committed to reducing the military budget. As can be seen in Figure 4, military expenditures declined significantly from 1977 until President Sadat's assassination in 1981.³²

Unlike Sadat before him, President Mubarak embraced the Egyptian military as a partner in the economic development of the country. However, while expanding the

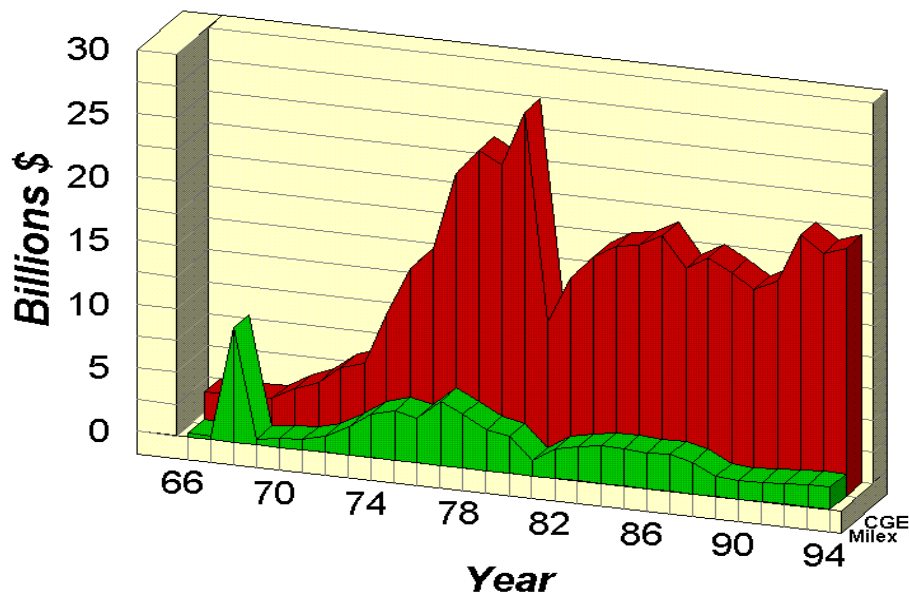


Figure 4 - Military Expenditure (Milex) against Current Government Expenditures (CGE).
Source: Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, Various issues 1968-1995.

military's national mission into the economic realm, Mubarak still maintained firm control to restrict the influence of the officer corps from political decisions.

The Egyptian military seems to have accepted its declining role in the political process. It has turned its attention to modernizing the Egyptian military and other matters of interest such as its economic activities which seem to have effectively offset its diminished political role. Senior military officers removed from the cabinet or government bureaucracy have usually been able to establish parallel domiciles in the military sectors. Likewise, upon retirement, many senior officers find important niches in the military-related commercial sectors. One recent example: in 1995, Lieutenant General Saleh Haliby, Chief of Staff, Egyptian Armed Forces retired and was immediately appointed as the Director of the Arab Organization for Industrialization.

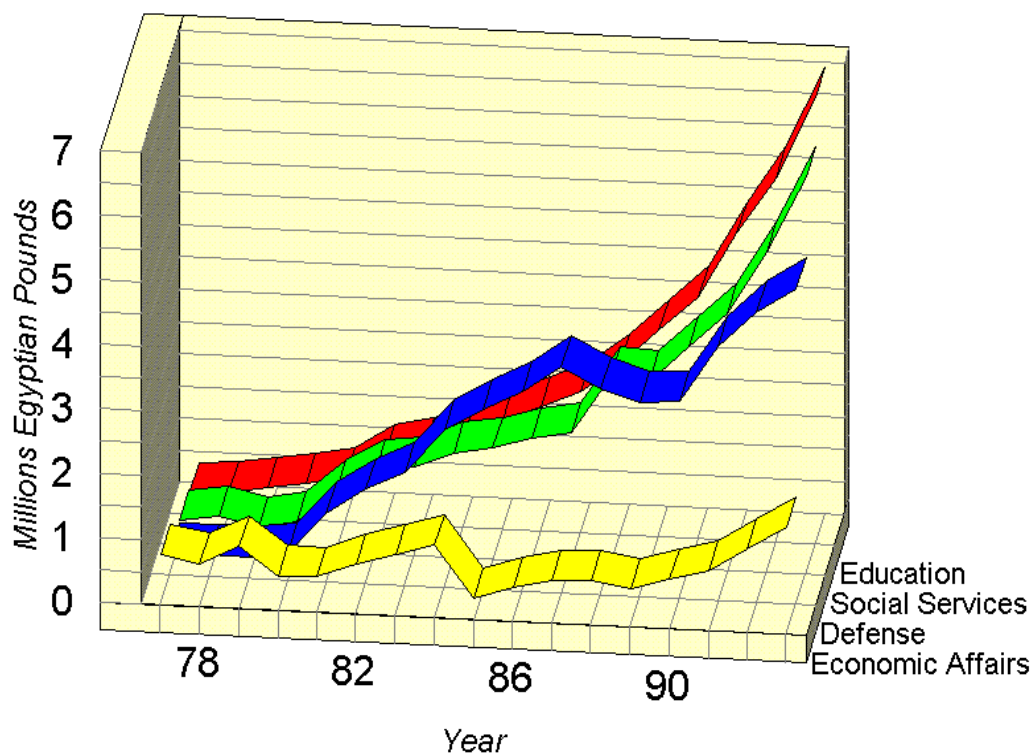


Figure 5 - Funding Comparison of Major Public Sector Categories Source: International Monetary Fund. *Government Finance Statistics Yearbook*. 1995.

Available evidence seems to indicate that Egyptian military officers, as a group, harbor no extraordinary political ambitions. Probably as important, there have been no major cuts in the Egyptian military budgets, with the exception of the years following 1977 when President Sadat was committed to reducing the military budget by 50 percent. Available data does not exhibit any other major precipitous declines in the Egyptian military budget. Figure 5 charts central government financing of several major economic sectors. It can be seen that the military represented the dominant sector for the government's budget during the 1980s, but not remarkably so. In the 1990s data indicates that defense generally parallels education and social services. It is difficult to determine, with any assurance, whether this was a function of the action program of the dynamic Minister of Defense Abu Ghazala or the hesitance of the President to risk the military's displeasure by reducing its budget. While there have been recent declines in the military budget (generally correlated to declines in the national economy), off budget" profits achieved in the military industries may have been significant enough to have offset the worst effects of these budget declines.

Field Marshal Abu Ghazala pursued a steady program to maintain the "perks" and self-esteem of the Egyptian officer corps. One such program was the construction of Egypt's military cities such as Nasr City in Cairo. These cities provide what Robert Springborg refers to as "relatively sumptuous flats"³³ to military personnel at highly subsidized prices in communities in virtual isolation from civilian society. Within these self-contained military cities are nurseries, schools

and military consumer "cooperatives" which sell a range of domestic and imported products at discount prices. Several of these military cities were built and plans called for the building of up to 30. Abu Ghazala reportedly financed the construction of these military cities by selling valuable army-owned land adjacent to Egypt's largest cities.³⁴ In the face of declining military budgets and poor economic conditions, these military cities have probably been an important mechanism to maintain the prestige and self-esteem of the military's officers and to protect the buying power of their salaries from inflation.

Figures 1, 4 and 5 do not include the \$1.3 billion Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and \$800 million Economic Support Funds (ESF) provided Egypt annually by the United States. In fiscal year (FY) 1997, Egypt will receive 40 per cent of worldwide U.S. security assistance monies; second only to Israel (56 percent).³⁵ The FMF funds are committed exclusively to military procurement. It is this FMF which is primarily funding Egypt's military modernization. ESF funds are not committed to the military. While there is an expectation that these monies will begin to decline in the next few years, they should impact only on Egypt's on-going military modernization program and should not effect Egypt's military industries or payroll.

There are two central myths regarding the Egyptian military and politics in Egypt: the army is Egypt's kingmaker and the army is the ultimate guarantor of regime security. There is certainly some credence in the latter, but no longer much in the former.

Every President of Egypt since the revolution has come from the ranks of the military. This fact owes to the nature of the 1952 revolution as a military putsch. As Egypt's political institutions have matured and political participation broadened, the role of the military as kingmaker has probably come to an end (outside conditions of dire national crisis). The Egyptian government no longer has an exclusive focus on national security in its international and domestic affairs (as it did at the time of the revolution) that demands military leadership. The military is also no longer the dominant interest group in the country. Significant interest groups now include a large bureaucracy and public sector, a large group of unionized workers, a relatively large group of urban commercial businesses, a small group of wealthy industrialists, and professional associations, as well as clerical and religious intellectuals and secular intellectuals. Another important factor is the emergence of a group of trained, experienced, and professional civilians, such as Osama al-Baz and Amre Moussa, serving as cabinet officers and close advisors to the President. These and similar individuals are probably better positioned than the senior military officers to emerge in a future succession as the government's central focus is now more oriented toward international political and domestic economic issues.³⁶ Furthermore, there are no indications that military loyalty to regime and President depend on a military officer in the line of succession.

The second myth is that the military is the ultimate guarantor of the regime. In two instances, the military has been called into the streets to respond to a domestic threat which could have endangered the government. The first occasion was the 1977 food riots. The food riots broke out when the Sadat government proposed to eliminate various subsidies which would have raised the price of many common food items. Perhaps reflecting a corporate concern for Egypt's citizens, the Army reputedly refused to intervene in the riots unless the subsidies were reestablished.³⁷ Sadat restored the subsidies. The second was the uprising of Central Security Force (CSF)

conscripts in 1986. The conscripts rioted, setting fire to tourist hotels and nightclubs, when a rumor spread that their mandatory term of service was to be extended from three years to four. Such an extension would have been a significant hardship considering that CSF conscripts were paid much less than the Army's conscripts. In both instances, the Army responded in a professional and efficient manner and returned to their barracks immediately upon conclusion of the crisis. The military's performance in these crises led to the not unrealistic public perception that the army was the ultimate safeguard against threats to the regime. Despite the effectiveness of the military in these crises, the Ministry of the Interior retains primary responsibility for domestic security.

The Egyptian military will maintain a monopoly in superior firepower to respond to future threats to the domestic order if needed, yet most indications are that the army does not relish these duties. Senior Egyptian military officers seem very disinclined to volunteer the army in controlling the increasing Islamic extremism, but would undoubtedly do so in a crisis.

Military Loyalty to the Regime

Many scholars of civil-military relations present various military motives and incentives for military intervention in the political process of their governments. These run a broad range covering domestic circumstances, the existence of overt or latent crisis, the popularity of the military, the level of the political culture, governmental corruption and the dependence of the regime on the military. S.E. Finer³⁸ proposes several possible intervention motives which are salient to Egypt. The first addresses the principle of civil supremacy. As Finer relates, the military's consciousness of themselves as professionals may lead them to see themselves as servants of the state rather than of the government in power. The military may become reluctant to coerce the government's domestic opponents (i.e. food riot subsidies). Military leaders may also feel that only they are competent to make decisions on military size, force structure, mission, and modernization. Another principle that Finer proposes concerns the corporate interests of the military. In this, the motive to intervene is raised when the military comes to feel that its status, privileges, or autonomy is threatened or that it is being prevented from achieving its organizational goals and objectives.

As it relates to the principle of civil supremacy, there are strong indications that there is an acceptance by the Egyptian military of the 1971 Constitutional clause that says the Egyptian Army shall belong to the people" and an unquestioned acceptance of civilian control. However, this acceptance has not been tested since Sadat's assassination. There have been no significant popular challenges to the rule of President Mubarak. The military has shown its willingness and capability to oppose direct threats to the state and government as it did during the food and CSF riots. However, the question is perhaps open as to how the military would respond to mass popular challenges to the regime -- be they major protests over governmental corruption or part of a wider Islamic expression.

As regards the corporate interests of the military, decisions on military issues have been left predominantly in the hands of the senior military leaders. U.S. security assistance to Egypt has provided the means for its much needed modernization despite declining national budgets. The military has been the driving force in the decisions on how these U.S.-provided funds are spent.

Concern has been voiced that the military's declining status coupled with the possibility of declining living standards for its officers would raise the level of regime dissent. The military's involvement in economic activities appears to have allowed the military to preserve its status and for the most part the privileges of its members. These derived perquisites appear to have been sufficient to prevent major dissent within the ranks.

In summary, it would appear that the Egyptian military has established itself as a positive and effective institution in Egypt's domestic society with the potential for increased value. There are currently no significant indicators of displeasure by the corporate military over the course the nation is pursuing or its role in that course. It remains strongly loyal to the current government. While the military does have systematic shortcomings and weaknesses (i.e. an emphasis on mass over quality, highly centralized inflexible command structures, outdated choreographed Soviet military doctrine, a poor emphasis on sustainability, etc.) and there may be some incipient greed and corruption in the ranks, these problems are not insurmountable. The Egyptian military should remain a reliable and positive agent of influence, modernization and stability in the coming years.

Endnotes

1.S. E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), 6. [BACK](#)

2.*Ibid.*, 6. [BACK](#)

3. The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1994-1995* (London: Brassey's, 1994), 125. [BACK](#)

4.*Ibid.*, 125. [BACK](#)

5. Helen Chapin Metz, ed. *Egypt: A Country Study* (Washington, DC.: Library of Congress, 1991), 307. [BACK](#)

6. These objectives will be discussed in greater detail below.[BACK](#)

7. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 1995* (Washington, DC.: The Central Intelligence Agency, 1995), 125. [BACK](#)

8. *Ibid.*, 126.[BACK](#)

9. Metz. *Egypt*, 320. [BACK](#)

10. Lucian W. Pye, "The Process of Political Modernization" in John J. Johnson, ed. *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 79. [BACK](#)

11. Pye, "The Process of Political Modernization," 75. [BACK](#)

12. General Mohammed Abdel-Halim Abu Ghazala was selected as Minister of Defense in late 1980 by President Sadat while serving as the Chief Of Staff, Egyptian Armed Forces a position he had been assigned only early in 1980. Abu Ghazala, an army Artillery officer, was considered very pro-American having attended the U.S. Army War College and served as the Egyptian Defense and Military Attache to the United States from 1976-1980.[BACK](#)

13. Robert Springborg, *Mubarak's Egypt: Fragmentation of the Political Order* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 107. [BACK](#)

14. William Quandt, *The United States and Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1990), 355. [BACK](#)

15. Springborg, *Mubarak's Egypt*, 117. [BACK](#)

16. Robert Satloff, *Army and Politics in Mubarak's Egypt* (Washington, DC.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1988), 14. [BACK](#)

17. Yezid Sayigh, *Arab Military Industry: Capability, Performance and Impact* (London: Brassey's, 1992), 45-46. [BACK](#)

18. See R. V.,yrynen and T. Ohlson "Egypt: Arms Production in the Transnational Context," in Michael Brzoska, and Thomas Ohlson, eds., *Arms Production in the Third World* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1986), 105-124 and Mohammed El-Sayed Selim, "Egypt," in James E. Katz, ed. *Arms Production in Developing Countries: An Analysis of Decision Making* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1984), 123-156. [BACK](#)

19. Yezid, *Arab Military Industry*, 45. [BACK](#)

20. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Tables* (Washington, DC.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Various issues 1976-1991).[BACK](#)

21. See Springborg, *Mubarak's Egypt*, 108 and Satloff, *Army and Politics in Mubarak's Egypt*, 21. [BACK](#)

22. See Yezid, *Arab Military Industry*, 48-51; Springborg, *Mubarak's Egypt*, 107; V.,yrynen and Ohlson, "Egypt Arms Production," 109-113 and Selim, "Egypt," 142-146.[BACK](#)

23. External debt rose from \$5.4 billion in 1975 to \$50 billion in 1993. Total debt as a percentage of GDP rose, in the same time frame, from 47.9 percent to 103.2 percent. The average annual growth of GNP per capita fell from 5.9 percent in 1975 to -1.3 percent in 1993. See The World Bank, *Claiming the Future: Choosing Prosperity in the Middle East and North Africa* (Washington, DC.: The World Bank, 1995), 92-93.[BACK](#)

24. Estimates of the proportion vary greatly from 40 percent of capacity to as much as 60 percent. [BACK](#)

25. Springborg, *Mubarak's Egypt*, 109.[BACK](#)
26. Metz, *Egypt*, 325.[BACK](#)
27. *Ibid.*, 325.[BACK](#)
28. Metz, *Egypt*, 327 and Springborg, *Mubarak's Egypt*, 112.[BACK](#)
29. There is an assumption of profitability, but without the availability of cost data this may not truly be the case. [BACK](#)
30. Mark N. Cooper, "The Demilitarization of the Egyptian Cabinet," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14 (1982): 203-225.[BACK](#)
31. *Ibid.*, 209.[BACK](#)
32. Figure 4 demonstrates a significant decline in military expenditures beginning in 1977. Figure 1 shows a significant decline in the percentage of military expenditures immediately following the war in 1973. This difference can be explained by the fact that military expenditures remained fairly flat from 1974-1977 while government expenditures increased dramatically (figure 4) thus lowering the percentage of military expenditures.[BACK](#)
33. Springborg, *Mubarak's Egypt*, 105.[BACK](#)
34. *Ibid.*, 105.[BACK](#)
35. United States Department of State, *Congressional Presentation for Foreign Operations - Fiscal Year 1997* (Washington, DC.: United States Department of State, 1996), 159.[BACK](#)
36. See John Waterbury "Where Will Egypt's Future Leadership Come From" in this volume. In his article Professor Waterbury discusses the balance between the *technicos* to the *politicos* in elite recruitment and proposes four scenarios for the future sources of Egyptian leadership. One of his possibilities (number 2) proposes an engineered democratic opening allowing real" politicians to replace nominally apolitical technocrats similar to that proposed in this paper.
[BACK](#)
37. Metz, *Egypt*, 279.[BACK](#)
38. Finer, *The Man on Horseback*, 20-76. [BACK](#)