

Post-British Occupation Egypt and Its Interactions with Türkiye*



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***After his undergraduate studies in Izmir, Halim Gençoğlu completed his master's degree in religious studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT). His thesis focused on the religious activities of the Ottoman Islamic scholar Abu Bakr Effendi in South Africa in the nineteenth century, using South African, Ottoman, and other archival sources. He then enrolled for his PhD in Hebrew studies on "Socio-political Challenges of "Marginal" Religious Denominations: The Sabetai Sect as a Case Study." He analyzed a controversial figure in history, the self-proclaimed Messiah, the Jewish Rabbi Shabbetai Tzvi. During his academic studies, he also conducted research on broader South African themes using both South African and Ottoman archival sources. During his archival research, he discovered that Dr. Muhammed Shukri Effendi was the first black medical student to graduate from UCT. This discovery was published on the UCT website on April 12, 2016. (<http://www.health.uct.ac.za/news/new-evidencefirst-black-medical-doctors-uct-south-african-history>) More recently, he discovered that the Bo-Kaap museum at 71 Wale Street actually belonged to the Ottoman Turkish religious scholar Mahmud Fakih Effendi. He is currently a Research Fellow in the Department of African Studies at the UCT, where he conducts research in African studies.*

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the post-British occupation period in Egypt, focusing on its diplomatic and political relations with Türkiye during the early years of its establishment. Following the end of British occupation in 1952, Egypt entered a phase of significant political and social transformation under the leadership of figures such as Gamal Abdel Nasser. During this period, Egypt sought to redefine its foreign policy and establish new alliances. The paper delves into the evolving relations between Egypt and Türkiye, two nations with rich historical ties dating back to the Ottoman era. It analyses the diplomatic exchanges, treaties, and collaborative efforts that characterized their interactions in the aftermath of British withdrawal. The study considers the geopolitical context, regional challenges, and shared aspirations that influenced the trajectory of Egypt- Türkiye relations. Key themes include the impact of pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism on diplomatic discourse, the pursuit of mutual economic interests, and the geopolitical considerations that shaped the two nations' foreign policies. The paper also investigates the cultural and societal dimensions of their relations, exploring how shared historical and cultural affinities influenced public perceptions and bilateral engagements. Drawing on archival documents, diplomatic correspondences, and historical records, this research sheds light on the intricacies of Egypt's post-occupation foreign policy and its establishment-era relations with Türkiye. By examining the political, economic, and cultural dimensions of this relationship, the paper contributes to a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics that defined the geopolitical landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East during this critical period.

Keywords: British Egypt, Egypt, independence of Egypt, Ottoman Egypt, Türkiye-Egypt.

AFTER DECADES OF BRITISH OCCUPATION, Egypt embarked on a transformative journey towards national sovereignty in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The aftermath of British rule left an indelible mark on Egypt's political, social, and economic landscape, laying the groundwork for a period of self-determination. The British occupation that began in 1882 profoundly influenced the country's political dynamics. In the wake of the occupation, however, Egypt sought to establish a more independent political system. In 1922, the United Kingdom unilaterally eventually declared Egypt's independence, albeit with certain

reservations. This move marked the beginning of a transitional phase in which Egyptians aspired to shape their political destiny. The early post-occupation period witnessed the establishment of a constitutional monarchy under the rule of King Fuad I. However, this era was characterized by political instability, economic challenges, and growing discontent with the monarchy. In 1952, a military coup led by General Muhammad Naguib and later supported by Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, resulted in the overthrow of the monarchy, marking a significant turning point in Egypt's history (Stolz, 2018: 213).



In 1925, while Türkiye was dealing with revolutions and rebellions, it did not forget its Egyptian brothers and a sports competition was organized to support them against the British domination in the region. Despite those painful years, Egyptian artists visited Türkiye due to sincere relations.

Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivi (CDA), 180.09/3.19.1, 1925.

Nasser's Rise and Pan-Arabism

Colonel Nasser's ascent to power marked a shift towards a more assertive and nationalist Egypt. Nasser pursued policies aimed at modernizing the country, redistributing land, and reducing

foreign influence. His vision extended beyond Egypt, advocating for the idea of Pan-Arabism, which aimed to unite Arab nations. The nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 further strengthened Egypt's pursuit of economic independence and sovereignty (Mestyan, 2017: 16).

The 1956 Suez Crisis was a turning point in Egypt's post-British occupation era. Nasser's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal led to military intervention by the United Kingdom, France, and Israel. However, international pressure, particularly from the United States and the Soviet Union, forced the invading forces to withdraw. The Suez Crisis showcased Egypt's ability to defend its sovereignty on the global stage.

Land reforms were initiated to reduce wealth concentration and redistribute land to peasants.

After the British occupation, Egypt witnessed significant social and economic changes. Land reforms were initiated to reduce wealth concentration and redistribute land to peasants. Industrialization efforts aimed to modernize the economy, but challenges persisted. This period of rapid population growth also brought about social and economic challenges that required innovative solutions. Therefore, one could argue that the post-British occupation era laid the foundation for modern Egypt. Nasser's charismatic leadership and advocacy of Arab nationalism continue to have an impact, despite difficulties and criticism. Subsequent leaders built upon the developments of this era, shaping Egypt into the dynamic and complex nation it is today (Febe, 2011: 65).

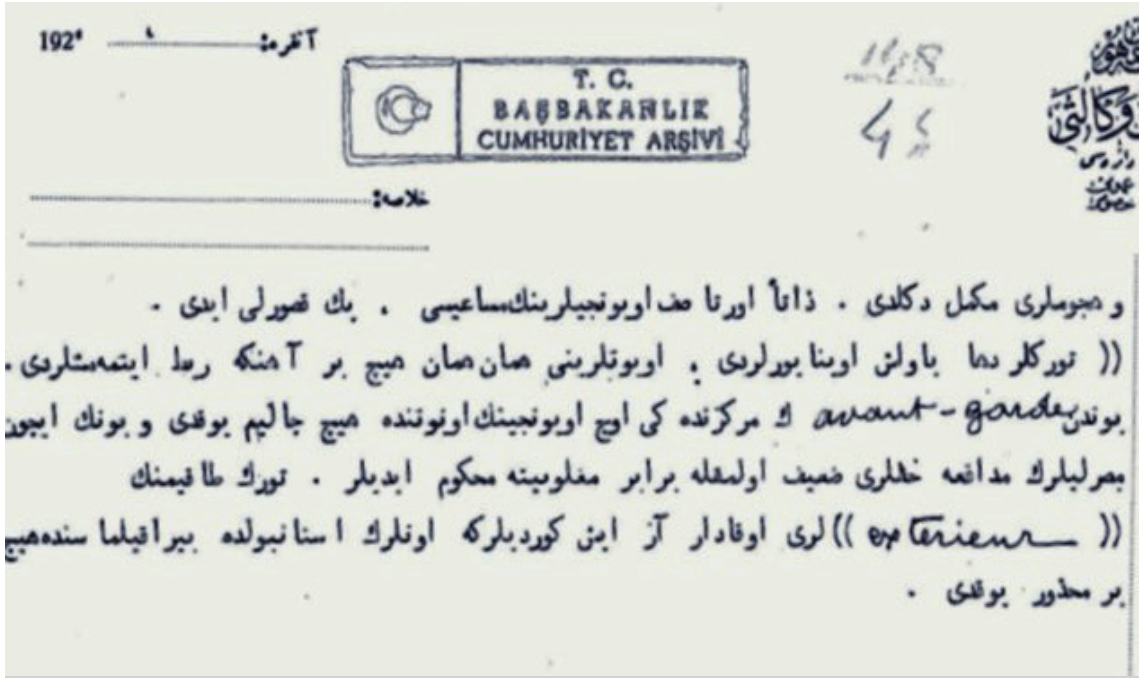
The Twilight of Ottoman Rule in Egypt: A Look at the Later Years

The final years of Ottoman rule in Egypt, spanning from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, were marked by a complex interplay of political, social, and economic changes. As the Ottoman Empire grappled with challenges, both internal and external, Egypt found itself at the center of a transformative period that would shape its destiny for the decades to come.

In the late 19th century, the Ottoman Empire struggled with a series of internal reforms known as the Tanzimat, aimed at modernizing administrative and legal systems. However, these reforms proved insufficient to address the deep-rooted issues within the empire, leading to a period of decline and instability.

Egypt, a pivotal province of the Ottoman Empire, also faced unique challenges during this time. This era witnessed the rise of nationalist sentiments and calls for greater autonomy. Charismatic leaders like Egyptian nationalist and military officer Ahmed Urabi played a significant role in shaping the political landscape. The Urabi Revolt of 1881-1882 marked a turning point in Egyptian history. Fueled by grievances against foreign influence and economic troubles, Urabi led a nationalist uprising against the Ottoman-appointed khedive in power. The revolt ultimately resulted in direct British intervention, ostensibly to safeguard their financial interests in the Suez Canal (Alan, 2013: 38).

In 1882, British forces occupied Egypt, effectively ending Ottoman rule in the region. While Egypt nominally remained a part of the Ottoman Empire, it came under British protection in practice. The Ottoman Sultan retained his formal title as ruler, but British influence prevailed, particularly in economic and military matters.



The Turkish announcer described this match as follows: The game could not rise above the average. There are very few admirable elements in the Turkish game. If the Turks faced any Dutch team, they would most likely be defeated. While talking about the second half, which started with four goals scored by the Egyptians, the informant mentions that there was a remarkable movement among the public; The audience, which was initially limited to 2000, has now reached 5000. Aladdin scored a goal and saved the honor of the Turks. The Egyptians played football the English way, and the Turks played their games slowly. The Turkish team's reserves did so little work that there was no harm in leaving them in Istanbul.

Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivi (CDA), 180. 09\3.19.1, 1925.

The formal ties between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire were severed during World War I when Egypt came under British protectorate following the Ottoman Empire's alignment with the Central Powers in 1914. The remnants of Ottoman rule disappeared, and the Ottoman Sultanate was abolished in 1922. At this point, one should note that the final years of Ottoman rule in Egypt left a lasting impact on the country's psyche. The experience of foreign occupation, nationalist uprisings, and ultimately transitioning to British influence paved the way for Egypt's pursuit of independence and sovereignty in the ensuing decades (Nomani, 2020: 43).

Türkiye-Egypt Relations during the Nasser Era

The Nasser era in Egypt, spanning from the early 1950s to the mid-1960s, was a period of dynamic changes in geopolitics and regional alliances. During this time, Türkiye-Egypt relations underwent a complex evolution shaped by political ideologies, regional dynamics, and charismatic leaders like Gamal Abdel Nasser. Following World War II, both Türkiye and Egypt found themselves amidst a changing international landscape. Initially, relations between the two countries were characterized by cautious cooperation driven by shared desires for regional stability and economic development. However, with Nasser's rise to power in Egypt, differences in political

ideologies began to influence the course of Türkiye-Egypt relations (Gençoğlu, 2017: 18).

The Pan-Arabism vision emphasized by Gamal Abdel Nasser, highlighting Arab unity and independence, played a significant role in shaping Egypt's foreign policy. This ideology, combined with Nasser's charismatic leadership, aimed to unite Arab nations against colonial influences and establish a more assertive regional identity. As a result, Egypt's diplomatic priorities evolved and affected its relationships with countries like Türkiye.

In the early years of Nasser's rule, Türkiye was a member of the Baghdad Pact, a defense alliance established in 1955 to counter perceived Soviet influence in the Middle East. Criticizing Western-led alliances, Nasser distanced Egypt from the agreement. Türkiye, committed to maintaining a balance between the East and the West, faced challenges fulfilling alliance commitments while addressing the evolving dynamics in the region. The 1956 Suez Crisis further strained Türkiye-Egypt relations. Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal led to military intervention by Israel, the United Kingdom, and France. Despite being a NATO member, Türkiye expressed concerns about the use of force and maintained a distance from the intervention.

This divergence in foreign policy approaches between Türkiye and Egypt marked a critical period in regional diplomacy. Following the Suez Crisis, both Türkiye and Egypt recognized the importance of regional stability. The weakening of the Baghdad Pact and the emergence of the short-lived United Arab Republic (UAR) between Egypt and Syria prompted Türkiye to reevaluate its approach. In the early 1960s, there were efforts to improve diplomatic ties, as Türkiye expressed its willingness for dialogue and cooperation.

Therefore, it is possible to argue that the Nasser era left a lasting impact on Türkiye-Egypt relations. While political differences existed during this period, the evolving dynamics laid the groundwork for future interactions. In the subsequent years, changes in alliances

and diplomatic initiatives reflected the complex nature of regional relations (Toprak, 2012: 223-237). In the final analysis, the Nasser era marked a challenging yet transformative period in Türkiye-Egypt relations. Both countries grappled with the complexities of regional politics, realizing the importance of preserving stability in the Middle East while contending with ideological differences. The legacy of this period continues to shape the diplomatic landscape, shedding light on the intricate dance of geopolitics in the region (Gençoğlu, 2020: 14).

To conclude, Egypt's journey following the British occupation was defined by political transitions, economic reforms, and the quest for a national identity. The post-occupation era laid the groundwork for Egypt's pursuit of independence and sovereignty, ultimately shaping the nation's trajectory in the subsequent years. The legacy of leaders like Nasser continues to influence Egypt's political landscape, reflecting the enduring impact of this transformative era in the country's history. Meanwhile, the twilight of Ottoman rule in Egypt witnessed a complex interplay of political turmoil, nationalist aspirations, and foreign intervention. While the Ottoman Empire grappled with internal challenges, Egypt emerged as a focal point of change, ushering in a new era dominated by British influence. This period laid the foundation for Egypt's 20th-century quest for self-determination and independence. 🌸

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