

[Números](#) > [Número 08 \(junio-diciembre de 2009\)](#) >

## Power competition in Nasser's Egypt

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### Resumen

*El presente artículo tiene un doble objetivo: primero, presentar brevemente los principales aspectos teóricos de la "Sociología del poder"; segundo, exponer los resultados obtenidos por la aplicación de este marco teórico al análisis de Egipto durante los años 1952-1970.*

*En la primera parte se presentan los conceptos principales del marco teórico: actores, elites, relaciones circulares, acumulación diferencial del poder, y recursos. Se argumenta también la utilidad de la "Sociología del poder en el estudio de las relaciones entre actores que sobrepasan las fronteras nacionales, y por tanto para la disciplina de las Relaciones Internacionales. La segunda parte está dedicada al caso egipcio, en el periodo del mandato de Nasser. A este propósito se revisan las políticas adoptadas bajo el prisma de la "Sociología del poder".*

### Abstract

*The present paper has a double aim. First, to present briefly part of the basic theoretical aspects of 'sociology of power' approach and, second, to expose the results obtained by its application on the case of Egypt during the years 1952-1970. This paper is based on a previous research, published under the title "Nasser's National Interest. A 'Sociology of Power' Analysis". For the purposes of this paper, we develop a part of the theoretical framework of the previous work, we skip its application on the case of Egypt and we present directly in the second part the conclusions we have obtained from the theory's application in the case study of Egypt during the former research. The first part, the theoretical one, is analysing four main concepts of our approach: actors, elites, circular relations and differential accumulation of power and resources of power. A short reference follows to the pushing need for the international relations' discipline to study the relations between actors, crossing the national borders, in accordance to the theoretical framework previously exposed. After the theoretical part, the second part focuses on the empirical case, with the purpose to present the conclusions from the application of the theoretical framework on Nasser's Egypt.*

## Theoretical framework

### Actors

A broad definition of actor is that of 'an individual or social group that affects the decision process within a political system'. Following Sewell (1992), "to be an agent means to be capable of exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is

*enmeshed, which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree”.*

From our point of view, the term actor concerns those individuals who interfere in power relations. In other words, all individuals who manage to alter the power relations pursuing consciously their interests, whether in a latent or in a manifested mode, are qualified in the present research as actors.

We can differentiate among two principal categories of actors: elites and people/society. This division ensues from their main interest which determines two distinctive power relations. On one hand, the elites' interest is found in the differential accumulation of power that determines circular relations, demonstrating the lack of a concrete objective. On the other hand, the interests of society/people refer to the improvement of their welfare. In this second case, the power relations established in the pursuing of their interests are linear, indicating the tangible character of their objectives. In what follows, we are going to focus on the actor-elites, using the two terms actor and elite interchangeable.

## Elites

According to Izquierdo (2007: 10), elites or actors are those individuals who have the capacity to decide over the use of the resources of power. For us the notion elite refers to those individuals, found in superior positions, who have the capacity to pursue their goals through relations of conflict with other actors, whether in a latent or in a manifesting mode. In other words, the elite refers to the sum of individuals, whose survival as such depends on their ability to compete for the further accumulation of power.

The majority of the literature regarding elites has focused on the concept either from a moral or from a functional view [1]. The normative approaches “*are based on the assumption that some functions are, or will be, of particular importance to the community and that elites are, or should be, composed of the individuals or the groups who can best perform these functions*” (CLIFFORD, M., 1960 : 319). On the other hand, the descriptive studies outline the behaviour and the relations of elites in a given society [2].

Furthermore, we can distinguish between two different studies regarding the concept of elite. One line of thought, the elitists, following Aristotle, Mosca, Pareto focuses on one unique elite, whereas on the other side we find the pluralists, who defend the coexistence of more than one elite, such as Saint-Simon, Mannheim, Aron, Mills. The basic opposition between elitists and pluralists refers to what Meisal (1958) calls ‘the three C’s’ referring to the group’s consciousness, coherence and conspiracy [3].

The elite’s cohesiveness recalls to Marxist and Marxian theories and the notion of ‘class’. Following the Marxian theory, the social class refers to the ensemble of individuals who have a determined rapport with the means of production, who are conscious of their common situation and interests, and who are organised in order to defend them.

Despite the almost material exclusiveness of classic Marxism [4], one of the main elements of the term class in a Marxist and Marxian sense is the postulation of a perpetual alliance and the existence of the common interests. From our point of view, the elite(s) may share a common interest to preserve a specific status quo [5], which enables them to maintain their power capacities, especially in moments of socio-political changes. However, the main interest of each individual-elite is the increase of his/her personal power capabilities and not

a general interest of the dominant class.

## Circular Relations and Differential Accumulation of Power

In order to understand this 'selfish' comportment of the actors we have to precise their main interest: the differential accumulation of power. As Lasswell underlined (1936: 13) "*The study of politics is the study of influence and the influential [...] The influential are those who get the most of what there is to get [...] Those who get the most are elite; the rest are mass*".

The notion of elite is strictly connected with the notion of power, and from our point of view, the main objective of the elites is the constant increase of their respective power capacities. This strict interrelation of the two notions, power and elite, determines the behaviour of the actors in the pursuing of their goal.

Following Weber (1993: 63), "*by power is meant every opportunity existing within a social relationship which permits one to carry out one's own will even against resistance and regardless of the basis on which this opportunity rests*". Therefore, power [6] contains a relational aspect and it is not limited in the possession of the agent's capabilities. Furthermore, the capacity and the will of the agent to mobilise the sources of power should be added as "*las fuerzas utilizables por cada unidad politica en su rivalidad con las otras son proporcionales no al potencial, sino al potencial de movilizacion*" , according to Aron [7].

Power, therefore, cannot be measured in absolute but only in relative terms. Consequently, the power capabilities of an actor can be measured only in relation with those of the rest of the actors. As Izquierdo upheld (2008: 52): "*La posición de los agentes depende directamente de la posición de los demás, con lo que su objetivo será siempre acrecentar la diferencia respecto a los demás si está dominando el juego, o disminuir esta diferencia si está perdiendo. Y lo que medirá el poder de cada uno de los agentes no serán los recursos en términos absolutos sino la diferencia de la capacidad de control sobre los recursos de poder*".

The power's relative nature and the consequent lack of absolute maximisation impose an endless race for the elites. In order to maintain their status as elites, they are not only aiming at the simple increase of their power capabilities but at the increase of their power capacities vis-à-vis the others.

This dynamic generates the main interest of the elites, which is the differential accumulation of power. Nitzan and Bichler (2002: 36-37) have determined this interest with reference to the capital: "*To accumulate differentially is to increase your share of total profit and capitalisation. And to increase your distributive share of these magnitudes is to increase your relative power to shape the process of social change. The source of such power is the ability of owners to strategically limit, or 'sabotage' the process of social reproduction. [...]*".

The differential accumulation of power, therefore, can be defined as the increase of power capabilities of an agent in comparison to the power of his competitors. Here we have to clarify that the term competitors refers to the ensemble of the elites, whether allies or not. It becomes obvious, that the ability of an agent is not limited in his capability to accumulate power but also in his capability of disrupting his rivals from attaining more power. That is because more important than the power itself is the participation in the competition, as it is their participation that qualifies the actors as elites. The impossibility of an actor to increase his power capabilities will determine his expulsion as the distance between him and the rest will constantly increase, reducing the his capabilities to compete.

The above discussion demonstrates the absence of cohesion among different actors. The interest of differential accumulation of power leaves no margin to any kind of solidarity among them, as the survival of each one depends exclusively on his or her capacity to accumulate more power than his/her competitors. By consequence, the differential accumulation of power determines the conflictive character of the intra-elite relations, characterised as competitive and circular.

According to Izquierdo (2008: 6), the nature of power and the interest of the agents for differential accumulation of power establish circular relations among the elites, because they constantly struggle against their competitors, the ensemble of the actors, in order to further their aim. Consequently, the relation among the agents becomes a competitive one at a permanent basis, since the survival and the positioning of an actor depends directly on the positioning of the rest.

The acceptance of the constant competitiveness among elites does not imply the inexistence of cooperation among them. On the contrary, we uphold that the alliance among elites is not only possible, but in some cases indispensable, due to the asymmetry of power distribution.

The rule under which an elite decides whether he/she will form a coalition or not resides always in the calculation of relative gains. The decision of the actors to form a coalition with others, is taken on the basis of whether the aggregated power capabilities enables them to compete with their common rivals.

However, the formation of an alliance does not imply the disappearance of the competition among the allies, because the allies will continue targeting the improvement of their positioning towards their rivals and their allies. Thus, once one ally understands that his position in comparison to his allies is deteriorating, he will step out.

## Resources of power

As we have already mentioned, power is not a concrete notion and thus can not be limited in a specific sector. As Foucault [8] said, "*power is everywhere [...] because it comes from everywhere*". Therefore, competition among elites for further accumulation of power is diffused to all society's sectors for the control of all element qualified as source of power, such as capital, ideologies, state, information, population, coercion, international and regional conjuncture. At this paper we are going to focus on only three of the resources that we consider more problematic to comprehend as such: state, ideology and people/society.

## State

Western academic literature of social sciences has been occupied with the concept of the state, with different disciplines focusing on different points of view. The social anthropology has centred its interest mainly on the genesis of the state, whereas sociology has been more concerned with questions of how the state works or what we understand under the term state. International Relations have been occupied either with normative questions, or with the primacy of the state as an agent in the international sphere. Recently some authors, among them Wendt (1999), introduced new questions concerning the nature of the state in this discipline calling for a 'social theory of the state'.

In the Arab world, the state as a topic, began to attract the interest of intellectuals in the

80's. Before that, they were more concerned with the notions of the 'Islamic umma' or 'Arab nationalism' (AYUBI, N., 2006). A similar idea is also shared from Korany (1987: 47), who upheld that the systematic study of the Arab states was still nascent by the time and that the existing literature "*shows the domination of two approaches: political psychology (i.e. the personalisation of the state) and religion (i.e. Islam)*".

The state has been defined by many and in different ways. Indicatively we can mention that in 1951, Titus identified 151 separate definitions of the state in the American Political Science Review. Thus, in the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences (143-157) we find that in the entry 'state' is written "*at present [...] conflict among parochialism (among approaches) overshadow harmony and the search of common denominators. As a result it is impossible to offer a united definition of the state that would be satisfactory even to a majority of those seriously concerned with the problem*".

Why is it so difficult to define the dominant political organisation of our times? From our point of view, the problem of incomprehension resides in the nature of the state and also in the functions attributed to it. Our hypothesis is that the state, as well as other socio-political hierarchical organisations, are institutions wherein significant power capabilities are enclosed [9]. These capabilities convert the state into a significant source of power at the disposal of those agents, physical persons, who have the capacity to control it or to compete for its control. Therefore, the state can only be comprehended as a resource of power [10] and the role of agent can only be attributed to concrete persons or groups, who have precise interests to accomplish and not to some impersonal structure with separate interests per se. We coincide therefore with Gilpin (1981: 18) when he underlines that only individuals and alliances of them can be actors. And as the very same king of France, Luis XIV, said: "*l'état c'est moi*".

In order to argument over the validity of our hypothesis we shall resort to the origins of state formation. There is an extensive corpus of scientific works destined to the analysis and search of state's origins [11]. The hypothesis over 'state' creation of course cannot be confirmed and thus can not be exhausted or considered as homogenous. However, it seems to be generally accepted that the 'state's' genesis, weather responding to internal or external threats or to the society's organisational necessities, is strictly connected, as result or as a cause [12], with the subordination of an important part of the population to a group.

Following Balandier (1999 : 176-177), "*L'État traditionnelle permet effectivement a une minorité d'exercer une domination durable ; les luttes pour le pouvoir au sein de cette dernière - auxquelles on réduit souvent la politique en ces sociétés - contribuent plus a renforcer la domination exercée qu'a l'affaiblir. [...]Le pouvoir et l'autorité sont si fortement personnalisés que l'intérêt public, propre a la fonction, se sépare difficilement de l'intérêt privé de celui qui l'assume*".

Thus the 'early state', or better the polities pre-existing the modern state, represent one of the mechanisms through which groups-elites served their own interests, separated from or superior to the society they were funded. In other words, the 'early state' constituted a political organisation, through which a limited group of individuals, the rulers stratified society/community by subordinating the rest of the members, under the pretext for protection or organisational necessities. Following Cohen (1975: 33) "*From Russeau to Marx and Engels, through to contemporary writers such as Fried, early states are defined as governmental systems of control in which ruling groups use and create the state as a means for maintaining themselves in power over other subordinated classes in the society*".

We sustained that specific polities pre-existing the state represent a resource of power at the disposal of a limited group of people. However, some centuries separate these polities from the modern state. What is the connection between them?

In the case of the modern state, we believe that, despite the changes introduced, there is a connection between it and the polity it substituted. As it was underlined by Badie (1986: 134), the modern state was build over the feudalist system, as the king had in his disposal competences that we can place on the origins of the state.

However, the state is a polity, meaning a mode of societal organisation. Thus, the state presupposes, among other things, fundamental subjects, citizens, individuals subordinated to the authority of specific groups/elites. Following Copp (1999: 4) "*virtually no state is legitimate, for virtually every state owes its existence to some combination of events that includes a share of skulduggery, or worse*". Then the question raised is how was the task achieved? How were and are societies, meaning the totality of individuals who compose the state, convinced to render themselves to the authority of the state, or better said to groups of people having the capacity to control the state?

According to Gramsci the state is "*the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom rules*". The integral state presupposes a "*combination of force and consent which are balanced in varying proportions, without force prevailing too greatly over consent*". [13]

Important aspect of the establishment of power authority is legitimacy, a concept dating since Thucydides' days in the History of the Peloponnesian war. In different historical periods and different societies, the rulers adopted different methods to extract the necessary popular consensus, in order to legitimate their authority.

Therefore, even though, violence has been a significant instrument of power imposition, it can not last for long. As Arendt (1983: 35) underlined, violence is employed only at times when power is threatened and unstable.

The persons or the groups controlling the state apparatus do not achieve the preservation of their rule through the exercise of a direct coercion, at least in macro scale. The long presence of hierarchical polities has permitted the development of more subtle ways of reassuring the power/control of the elites over the resources. According to Giddens (2006: 13), violence, when it is controlled under the authorities of the state, becomes a subjacent sanction, an occult threat, whereas the control is sustained mainly through the disciplinary power of surveillance.

We argue that the state is a political organisation representing an important resource of power in the disposal of those who control it or struggle for its control. Following Barnes (1967), "*Only the state among all known human political systems is capable of such growth in size and power*".

State, thus, can only represent a resource of power and cannot be perceived as an actor. By accepting the state as a source of power, we consequently imply the absence of national interest. As it is defined in the International Relations' theory, the national interest is strictly connected with the state's survival and security, the pursuit of wealth and economic growth and power. Still, one of the questions raised is why this national interest is frequently antithetical to the desires of the society's majority. The answer offered by many referring to long term strategic interests does not satisfy us, thinking, for instance, the questions

related to the environment and the absence of long-term policies.

From our point of view, it is not an abstract national interest that imposes the preservation of the state as institution, but the interest of different groups of individuals who have the capacity to compete for the state's control. The national interest is in fact the cover, under which different groups that control the state manage to extract the general concession of the population in front of an 'external threat'.

R. Cox (1986: 247) writes: "*I would differ from Gilpin when he (and Stephen Krasner, in line with him) suggests that it is possible to distinguish a national interest from the welter of particular interests, if they mean that such a general will exists as some form of objective reality. I can accept their proposition if national interest is understood in a hegemonic sense, i.e., as the way in which the dominant groups in the state have been able -through concessions to the claims of subordinate groups- to evolve a broadly accepted mode of thinking about general or national interests*".

Even Morgenthau (1990: 103) takes into consideration the particular interests of different groups: "*Naturalmente, los intereses de grupo ejercen una presión constante sobre la conducta de nuestra [U.S.A.] política exterior, reclamando su identidad con el interés nacional. [...] Es más posible dada la naturaleza de la política interna en los Estados Unidos, que la política exterior norteamericana, dado que es objeto de presiones debidas a intereses sectoriales, sea el producto de un compromiso entre intereses sectoriales divergentes. [...] Pero, el concepto de interés nacional, que emerge de esta pugna entre intereses sectoriales en conflicto, es también algo más que un interés sectorial particular o la suma de todos. Es, por decirlo así, el mínimo denominador común que reúne a los intereses sectoriales y al interés nacional en un difícil compromiso que deja mucho que desear teniendo en cuenta todos los intereses en juego*".

## Ideology

Ideology is problematic to define, due to the fact that different scholars dealing with the concept make reference to different kinds of 'thoughts', 'beliefs' [14], 'ideas'. Minar (1961: 321-324) has classified different typologies of 'ideology': content or structure "*as a 'belief in' something [...] [or] in terms of form it takes*", by its function "*ideas which are developed, either consciously or subconsciously to rationalize either life condition or action [...] (or) ideas that interpret an organization to relevant audiences in the social world [...] (or) as verbal symbols [...] utilized in social relations for purposes of persuasion*", and by its locus "*on the basis of the nature of its subject-source*". Another kind of division in sociology's literature has been proposed by Lewnis (1988): the functional ideology and the ideology of content [15]. The first refers to ideology's functions to the subjects, whereas the second refers to what should be considered as ideology.

We can define ideology "*[as] a system of conceptions which explicitly or implicitly claims to be absolutely true, that is to say which is based on a distorted, objectivist consciousness*" [16] in all forms, discursive and non discursive ones. The acceptance of this definition leaves no room for a division of ideologies between positive and negative or, in gramscian terms, organic and arbitrary ideologies (GRAMSCI, A., 1978: 362), the first ones replying to the necessity of a specific structure to organise the mass and the second ones offering answers in 'personal' questionings.

In order to comprehend the function of ideology, it would be useful to distinguish different

levels of creation of beliefs: discourse/truth in Foucault's terms, cultural hegemony in Gramsci's terms and ideologies in a strict/narrow sense. The first two are related to discursive and non discursive practices and the last exclusively alludes to discursive ones. In this text we are going to be concerned with the third level, which is considered as a 'direct' resource of power, whereas the other two are connected more with the immaterial aspect of structure.

The ideological discourse constitutes one of the mechanisms, which enables the transformation of people/ society from subject to object, from an actor to a power resource. People/society, discussed later, become actors, as long as they have a relative consciousness of their needs and personal interests. The adoption of a prêt a porter system of beliefs distorts, to smaller or greater degree, the personal criterion of judgement over their subjective situation. The criterion of judgment, of course, is not dissolved. However, their objectives become blur and not precise under an undefined 'we' and thus the chances of becoming merely a resource of power are being amplified. As Gramsci [17] underlined *"(ideologies) are not an instrument for understanding the reality but rather a set of moral principles for orienting practical actions and human behaviour"*.

The ideological discourse, comprehended as a discursive instrument, is adopted to serve directly necessities of the elites, such as support from social groups and other actors. However, even though the elites' actions/decisions are motivated and subscribed in their own ideological framework, this latter is not necessary identical or even compatible with the discourse they use. Actors are rational, and up to the point they can be conscious of where their interests reside, they will choose to further their power over ideological consistency.

We uphold that ideological discourses are pronounced in order to extract support. Additionally, they are employed to blur the objectives of society/people and to distract them from acting furthering their personal interest, the improvement of their welfare. Therefore, ideological discourses represent a resource of power.

## People/society

People/society represent a source of power and, depending on the circumstances, the popular support constitutes an important element of power. Thus the appeal of different political parties or religious organisations for popular support by populist policies and demagogy, especially in periods of social mobilisation, constitutes a clear manifestation of the population's importance for distinctive groups.

The alienation of their interests constitutes the main cause of people's transformation to a resource of power in the disposal of the elites. As it was underlined by Kornhauser (1959: 43) *"a high rate of mass behaviour may be expressed when both elites and non-elites lack social insulation; that is when [...] non-elites are available for direct mobilization by elites"*. Following the same author mass behaviour occurs, among others, when the focus of the attention of the non-elites is remote from personal experience.

Nevertheless, people share a distinct qualification compared to the rest of the power resources. Their nature, as human beings and not institutions or material elements of value, grants the opportunity to become agents. This is just a potential feature, as it does not constitute a fundamental factor but if not a necessary precondition.

When and only when people are becoming actors can they establish linear relations.

However, we can verify the coexistence of linear and circular relations, which means that actor-society can be used as a resource of power. What changes is that the further accumulation of power for those elites, who need popular support, passes through at least partial satisfaction of the popular demands.

## The International Relations' Theory

Once we clarified the basic concepts used in the present research we can identify the field that International Relations occupy as a science.

The discipline of International Relations helps us to comprehend and possibly offers us reasonable explanations over the different socio-political phenomena. Whether a branch or an autonomous discipline of political sciences, the International Relations theory, in its vague definition, studies the relations of all types among agents within the international system, beyond national borders. From our point of view, the discipline should study the relations between actors not sharing the same nationality. These relations, which can be friendly or hostile, depending on their capabilities, aim at the expansion of their interests and the differential accumulation of power.

Nonetheless, as the agents are physical persons, their 'behaviour' and interests remain the same inside or outside the geographical boundaries. The relations between alien groups are developed under the same pattern as those of the native elites. Therefore, the analysis cannot be limited in the relations effectuated among groups that do not share the same nationality, as the different coalitions and hostilities between the groups are interrelated. That is why the analysis of the 'domestic' relations cannot be neglected.

## Empirical case

After having presented the theoretical base of our study, we now come to its application. The case study we have chosen is Egypt during the period 1952-1970. As mentioned at the beginning, this part is taken from the conclusions of a previous research. Therefore, the facts we are presenting are not showing the way we applied the theory in Egypt's case, but directly the conclusions I have reached from this application.

In the case study of Egypt during the period 1952-1970, the absence of the national interest was verified all along the research. The putsch of the Free Officers' revolution was responding to specific needs since the very beginning, although these were not the national ones. Aspiring after the expansion of this interest, the new group of the Free Officers that entered the Egyptian scene 'suddenly' and as head of the state, proceeded to the adoption of a series of policies and strategies. Even though these policies were serving personal interests, whether aiming at the direct empowerment of the group or the weakening of its rivals, they were presented as suitable for promoting the 'national welfare'.

The empowerment and modernisation of the Egyptian army, one of the priorities of the putschists, was responding to the distinctive necessities of the new group. On the one hand, it was covering the immediate needs for repression and internal defence. On the other hand, the Free Officers' consolidation inside the army, which represented their principal source of power, gave them the possibility to negotiate the collaboration with their common rivals. Furthermore, the building of a strong army offered the new regime popular support.

Furthermore, the land reforms can also be seen as an effort of the authorities to promote a more equal distribution of wealth in the Egyptian society, characterised by strong economic and social disparities. Nevertheless, that policy was another way of abstracting power from specific agents, appropriating a part of capital and controlling specific sectors, as it was the case of the agrarian bourgeoisie or the ulemas.

Moreover, the dissolution of the political parties, under the motto of political purification, and the abolition of the monarchy were other important internal policies promoted by the junta. The new group in power used the above policies, in order to eliminate domestic rivals and to accumulate the necessary political power, through the creation of a unique political organisation (National Rally, National Union, and Arab Socialist Union).

Additionally, the construction of the High Dam of Aswan was aiming at boosting the hydroelectric power. Still, this huge national project was a way to secure the collaboration of the industrial elites rather than to offer national development. Equally, the rushed nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company got the country in debt to foreign shareholders and put the bases for a military aggression against the Egyptian country. This strategic move opened the way to the regime to extend its actions outside the Egyptian borders, increased its sources in capital, eliminated part of its rivals, mainly foreign ones, and boosted the popular consent.

The creation of the United Arab Republic with Syria can be easily comprehended as a government's effort, representing the national good, to strictly collaborate with a 'brother' state so as to increase the state capabilities in the political, economic and military field that would enable it to respond to possible threats and challenges. Nevertheless, the UAR was representing the institutionalisation of the alliance between Egyptian and Syrian governmental elites, aiming at their personal empowerment and the stabilisation of the authority. Nasser managed to extract important sources of power, one of them being the pan-Arabist ideology.

Furthermore, Egypt's participation in Yemen's war constitutes another example of the absence of national interest in the foreign policy sphere. Despite the official justification of the Egyptian leaders that the help towards the oppressed Yemenites was a moral duty of the Arabs as a nation, the real reasons could be found in the needs of the regime to counterbalance the moral defeat marked by the withdrawal of Syria from the UAR, to increase its economic reserves and to empower its military apparatus.

Consequently, the national interest of Egypt under Nasser's mandate can be considered as the hegemonic interest of the groups, which had the capacity to transform their own interest into a generally accepted one.

The essence of the elites' interest is not found in the simple accumulation of power but in a differential one. Additionally, as the struggle for the increase of differential power is constant, the relations among the agents become circulars. This is due to the absence of an absolute point the agent can reach, in order to end his efforts. Moreover, the competition cannot be limited in the state field.

In our study we saw that both the Free Officers' regime at the beginning and later during Nasser's regime expanded its influence outside the state apparatus. Due to the fact that they were lacking control over different sources of power, they tried to accumulate power through extension of state activities. Consequently, the lack of economic power was overtaken by the nationalisation of important economic sectors and the sequestrations of private fortunes, either through land reforms or through other policies, such as the banding

of political parties. The capital resources of the regime were also increased by the important international aid coming from foreign governments and institutions through the state apparatus.

Education was another sector to which Nasser gave special attention. The corrections of school books and the 'cleansing' of the academic field from unwanted professors and students facilitated the task to construct a social conscience compatible with the regime's orientations. The control over the media, through the appointment of censors or the establishment of 'friends' as editors and later the institutionalised obligation of the journalists to form part of the political organisation of the regime, represented the regime's effort to control the 'forth power'.

The usage of ideology as an instrument of demagoguery was deeply exploited by the Free Officers. The first steps of the junta were characterised by the usage of a religious discourse, 'borrowed' from the Muslim Brotherhood, aspiring to the popular support and recognition. Later, the introduction of the pan-Arabist ideology in Nasser's political discourse was so successful that it was frequently named as 'Nasserist'.

Last, but certainly not least, we referred to the population as an important source of power for the Nasserist regime. Still, the special attention of the new regime to the Egyptian population, materialised by the adoption of several policies, was connected to the socio-economic situation preceding the coup. Social frustration, fruit of the political corruption, external interference and the incapacity of the Egyptian politicians to secure the 'national integrity', had created a tense environment. The Free Officer's negligence of the people's needs could be dangerous for the junta, as the source 'people' could be transformed into an agent. For that reason, populist policies were applied so as to minimise the possibilities of a revolution and at the same time to secure popular support.

The policies aiming at popular 'seduction' were both direct and indirect. The policies of food subsidies, the land reform, the job opportunities to the state sector, the raise of salaries, the opening of education to all Egyptians, to name some of them, were ascribed to the first category. At the same time, the regime used indirect methods to achieve popular approval. More specifically, the modernisation of the army apparatus, the improvement of the national infrastructures, the nationalisation of companies and the political victories against foreign enemies were carefully used in order to stimulate popular recognition.

The list of the elements which can be transformed in sources of power is, as we underlined, endless. The agents, looking for extensive accumulation of power, do not only try to control a source of power, but also seek to exploit the dynamic of international or regional conjuncture. For instance, in the Egyptian case during the period of the international Cold War, Nasser's regime 'used' the rivalry of the two blocks for extracting the maximum profit on his account. Moreover, the Egyptian junta, as well as other Arab leaders, found in the Palestinian cause the opportunity to empower themselves by launching an appeal for solidarity to the subjugated 'brothers' or by demonising the Jewish state.

The actions of the governmental elites are not, therefore, restricted in the state's sphere. Consequently, their rivals are not limited only in the political rivals for the control of the state apparatus, but they are extended in other fields. Nonetheless, as the power capabilities of specific elites are not equally distributed, the different agents have to form coalitions for competing with their common rivals. The rule under which a coalition is formed is always the relative gains of each component.

At the international level, Nasser's regime, searching for political, economic and military

support, propelled the cooperation with Moscow. The received aid helped Nasser's regime to increase its power capabilities in the above fields and, thus, to consolidate its rule at national and regional level. On the other hand, through this coalition Moscow managed to expand its influence in the Middle East region, which was until then reserved for the western powers. The cooperation marked significantly Nasser's regime, to such an extent that even nowadays Egypt under Nasser's rule is considered a cornerstone of soviet influence in the region.

Still, it has to be remembered that the first international support that the Free Officers received came from Washington. The needs of the American government to increase its role in the region vis-à-vis the ex-colonial powers could be fulfilled through a coalition with the Free Officers. The new regime, which lacked power capabilities, found in Washington a powerful international ally that could negotiate the retirement of the British troops and offer important aid at various fields.

The agent's mutual interests do not eliminate the rivalry, characterising all the relations among the elites. As we sustained, competition is a constant element of inter-elites relations. Thus, the agents compete constantly against the totality of the elites, including their allies. And, as the agents are individuals, every one of them struggles for his personal differential accumulation of power. Consequently, alliances do not refer to groups, but to persons. Even though the degree of cooperation differs in length and intensity, the fact is that every agent always seeks the fulfilment of his own interest.

In our study we have been able to demonstrate all the above. The alliance between the Free Officers and the Muslim Brotherhood did not last long. Once they relatively established their presence in the Egyptian scene, the Free Officers seized the opportunity to complete the expulsion of their 'allies' from important power centres, by banding the Muslim Brotherhood. The enterprise, however, was neither spasmodic nor sudden, as the process had gradually started since the beginning of the coup. The same pattern was followed with the Egyptian Marxist allies, even though the conflict was not as intense, due to the latter's relative weakness. Moreover, the friendly relations between the regime and the Marxists were revived and abandoned more than once.

Neither the inner conflicts were absent. The first two years that followed the coup were characterised by intense struggles inside the group of the Free Officers. The conflict between Nasser and Nagib for the conquest of the hegemony inside the group verifies the existence of personal interests. Under the pretext of desirability or not of the democracy, the principal rivals struggled for the expansion of their personal power through the formation of coalitions and the mobilisation of their own power capabilities. The end of the conflict came only for Nagib, by his defeat, as Nasser continued his struggle against allies and enemies.

Another important clash inside the Nasserist regime was that between Nasser and Amer. The conflict was so severe that resulted to the bipolarisation of the regime. Yet, the fragile equilibrium and the important power capabilities that each agent had to his disposal, obliged the cooperation of the rival parts and their symbiosis. Despite this rational compromise, Nasser and Amer did not abandon their efforts to expulse their rival. This clash ended once more with Nasser's win.

All the above do not lose validity once crossing the national borders. The 'behaviour' and/or the interests of the elites remain alike, inside or outside the boundaries of the state. Consequently, the foreign policies or the international relations can not be understood and explained irrespective of the agents' 'internal' interests. That is because a negligence of the

'domestic' conflicts, alliances and needs of the agents overshadows important factors that furnish rational arguments for the elites' 'behaviour'.

This assumption has been verified in several occasions in the specific case study. In the beginning of the coup, Free Officers' group adopted a pro-American attitude. The justification for this alignment is found in the common interests of the American administration and the new power group. The Free Officers entered 'unexpectedly' in the arena of the power conflict, imposing a redistribution of power capabilities. Representing a small fraction of the armed forces, the movement of the Free Officers was logically condemned to failure, as important interests of powerful agents were jeopardised. They needed, therefore, a strong back up, a powerful ally, who, driven by self-interests, would offer them a conditional help.

In this period, Washington had already managed to establish its power in the European scene after the end of the Second World War. The region of the Middle East, as well as other geographical areas, was escaping their control, being under French and British influence. Washington's interests, therefore, were linked to the limitation of European presence. A direct conflict against the European allies though, in the period of the Cold War, would not have been a lucrative enterprise, as it would amplify the 'official' list of rivals and would break the common front against the communist threat.

The mutual interest to limit British power gave birth to an alliance between the Free Officers and Washington. This coalition permitted the establishment of the junta inside Egypt, its international recognition and substantial economic aid. It also facilitated negotiations with British authorities. At the same time, Washington managed to enter the Middle East region.

This cooperation also proved fruitful in specific cases, as in the war of 1956. The three aggressors, UK, France and Israel, found in front of them Washington's discontent, which resulted to their political defeat. Nevertheless, as the interests are under continuous changes and the rule of the alliances is always taken under the spectrum of relative gains, the coalition did not last for long. As a result, in the Six Day War, Washington positioned itself on Tel Aviv's side against the Nasserist regime.

On the other hand, Moscow became an important ally for the Nasserist regime. After the end of the Stalinist era, the Soviet elites began to show an active attitude towards the Middle East. Nasser, deprived of military aid, found in Moscow's interests the possibility to obtain military equipment, necessary for his survival and expansion of power inside Egypt. Although this coalition significantly coloured the Nasserist regime and offered military, economic and political aid, it did not lack problems. More specifically, their relations got cold after the formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR), as Moscow was preparing the establishment of a communist regime in Syria. Moreover, the persecution of the Egyptian communists introduced the discontent of the Kremlin. Nevertheless, the generally friendly relations between Nasser and Moscow helped the former to rescue his regime's 'dignity' after the humiliating defeat in the Six Day War by the substantial increase of military aid.

In the era of decolonisation, Nasser accomplished to expand his influence in the newly independent states. The formation of the Non Alignment Movement helped Nasser, as well as other leaders of the 'Third World', to extract sources of power from weaker elites. Moreover, his 'neutral' position in the Cold War enabled him to achieve aid from the rival blocks. Playing both bands, he managed to obtain significant support from the East and the West, avoiding, at the same time, the strict obligations which an alignment would impose. Inside the regime, the neutral policy coexisted with the creation of contradictory interests. The division of the state elite between pro-liberal or pro-Americans and pro-communists

introduced additional conflicts.

At the regional level, the adoption of the pan-Arab discourse constituted the cover, under which Nasser and his allies achieved to absorb additional power. This interference, however, generated the creation of important rivalries, as the one between Nasser and Faisal. The confrontation of the two men stigmatised the entire region as it resulted to an Arab Cold War. The clash had repercussions also inside the Egyptian state. The Muslim Brotherhood, which was compatible with Faisal's religious discourse, was severely repressed in moments of particular tension between the rivals. The embarrassing defeat of Nasser in the Six Day War, furnished Faisal the wanted victory. The increasing economic necessities of the Nasserist regime obliged the defeated to accept his rival's terms and abandon his 'radical' discourse. Additionally, inside the Egyptian scene, the defeat 'opened the doors' to the pro-liberal state elite to reinforce its role and consequently re-orientate the regime's policies.

## Conclusions

Our aim in the present paper was to propose a different theoretical approach in the International Relations theory, this of 'sociology of power'. In order to accomplish our objective we dedicated an important part to the presentation of the basic concepts of our theoretical framework. We defined two categories of actors, people/society and elites, and we centred our study to the elites. Further, we explained the circular relations existing among them and their main interest for differential accumulation of power, deriving from power's nature. In continuation, we referred to the significance of power resources and we focused on three of them, state, ideology and people/ society. Once exposed the basic concepts of our approach, we offered an alternative definition of the International Relations theory. Finally, our study offered the empirical results obtained by the application of the theoretical framework in the case of Egypt during the period 1952-1970, in order to demonstrate in practice the validity of our assumptions.

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[1] For more information regarding the debate among scholars see Keller (1971), Parry (1988), Stanworth (1974).

[2] Indicative works of this approach are those of Aaronovitch (1961), Hunter (1959), Dahl (1957).

[3] Conspiracy in the sense of common will for action.

[4] The mono-causal economic interpretation of history and the separation of politic and economic spheres is another point of divergence with the Marxist theory, although Marx never denied the interference of other factors in the social changes.

[5] The term here is used to refer to general characteristics of a society which determine the hierarchy of the resources of power. In that manner, we accept the existence of a common interest among the feudalists to maintain the importance of the resource land in front of the threat of the capital introduced by bourgeoisie.

[6] The notion of power is essentially a contested concept. The works of Lukes (1979), Clegg (1989), Haugaard (1997) offer a coherent corpus of power's concept. An important debate in social sciences is regarding the notion of power is that between scholars comprehending as a relational variable (power over) and those promoting power as capacity (power to). The first approach was adopted and analysed by Mills (1956), Dahl (1968), Bachrach and Baratz (1962), Mann (1986) Poggi (2001). Power as the capacity to act in concrete, i.e. power to, is adopted by Arendt (1970), Parsons (1963), Barnes (1990).

[7] BARBÉ, E., 1990, "Estudio preliminar", in MORGENTHAU, H. J., *Escritos sobre política internacional*. Madrid, Tecnos, pp. XXXVIII-XXXIX.

[8] Quoted in NEWMAN, S., 2003, "Technologies of violence: Terrorism, Power and Sovereignty".

[9] The power capabilities enclosed in the resource 'state' are subscribed in a *longue durée* accumulative process, following the specific features of each society and its pre-existing forms of polity that determined its historical path. Therefore, we believe that it is more adequate to refer to states in plural than state, as the historical context of each society is particular to it. This acceptation helps us to understand the divergence on functions and characteristics describing the states actually and the problems of communication among theorists and political actors.

[10] We consider the state also as structure. However, here we are limiting our analysis of the state as resource of power.

[11] Indicative is the work of Glassen and Skalnik (1978).

[12] Of course there is an important difference between the two that means the state comprehended as cause or result of specific factors. However, our aim is to argue over the nature of the state as resource of power and not over the causes that helped or determined its creation.

[13] Quoted in BENEDETTO F., 2000, "Logos and Kratos: Gramsci and the Ancients on Hegemony", p. 308.

[14] Van Dijk (1998) in his work Ideology. A Multidisciplinary Approach, underlines his preference of the term term beliefs over ideas. For more details information see, pp.15-52.

[15] For a more extend analysis over the content definition of ideology see the article of Lewnis F., 1988, "Recasting the Concept of Ideology: A Content Approach".

[16] Gadamer. Quoted in Weinsheimer, (1985) Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of "Truth and Method".

[17] Quoted in MONASTA, A., 1993, "Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937)", p.7.

*Revista de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos ISSN 1887-4460*