

The Interest-Based Relations of the Ruling Elites as the Determining Main Variable in U.S.-Egypt Relations and the Hegemony*

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Abstract

This study claims that the main determinant in US-Egypt relations during the Mubarak era (1981-2011) were the mutual interests of the power elites of both countries. That process which began at the political level between the two countries during the Sadat era (1970-1981), evolved into reciprocal economic and political relations among the ruling elites of both Cairo and Wahington, gaining a social dimension during the Mubarak era. The relations among the power elites of the two countries have been very influential in determining bilateral relations and foreign policy.

In this study, case analysis and process analysis research techniques have been utilized. The relations between the US and Egypt are evaluated according to the basic concepts of Neo-Gramscian theory, considering material resources, institutions, ideology, the concept of the historical bloc and hegemonic social classes. The hypothesis that the most decisive dynamic in the political determination between the US and Egypt are mutual interest relationships and ideological alignments among the hegemonic social classes will be explained on applying the Gramscian concepts onto historical and interaction between both actors.

Keywords: US, Egypt, Hegemony, Power Elites, Neoliberalism.

ABD-Mısır İlişkilerinde Belirleyici Ana Değişken Olarak İktidar Seçkinleri Arasındaki İlişkiler ve Hegemonya

Öz

Bu çalışma, Hüsnü Mübarek dönemi (1981-2011) ABD-Mısır ilişkilerinde belirleyici ana değişkenin her iki ülke iktidar elitinin karşılıklı çıkar ilişkileri olduğu iddiasına dayanmaktadır. Her iki ülke arasında Sedat döneminde (1970-1981) siyasi ilişkiler düzeyinde başlayan süreç Mübarek döneminde sosyal boyut kazanarak siyasi elitler arası ekonomik ve siyasi ilişkilere evrilmiştir. İki ülkenin iktidar elitleri arasındaki ilişkiler dış politika ilişkilerinin belirlenmesinde etkili olmuştur.

Bu çalışmada vaka analizi yöntemi ve süreç analizi araştırma tekniğinden faydalanılmıştır. ABD ile Mısır arasındaki ilişkileri, Neogramşçıyan kuramın temel kavramları olan maddi kaynaklar, kurumlar, ideoloji, tarihsel blok ve baskın sosyal sınıflara göre değerlendirilmektedir. ABD ile Mısır arasındaki politik belirlenimde en belirleyici dinamiğin baskın sosyal sınıflar arasındaki çıkar ilişkileri ve ideolojik uyum olduğu hipotezi açıklanacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ABD, Mısır, Hegemonya, İktidar Elitleri, Neoliberalizm.

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Introduction

According to Cox, the two most significant reasons enabling the US's hegemonic expansion globally are defined as: i) its use of military power as a tool of coercion, and ii) strong political, economic, military, and ideological relationships established between the US and local power elites in peripheral countries (Cox, 1987). For instance, following World War II, the US hegemonic class reached agreements with the capitalist class that still was constituting the power elites of both post-war West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany) and Japan. This consensus was based onto the reciprocal realization where both the US and their German/Japanese counterparts assessed their mutual interests and the need to provide economic prosperity in order to persuade their populations to concur with these policies. The elite class that dominated the state executed joint policies and strategies through common interests and ideological alignment. However, the acceptance of US hegemony by the state elites of West Germany and Japan with their mutual consent also resulted from the presence of US military power in Japan and West Germany. Consequently, the US included the countries it fought against in World War II into its own Anti-Communist bloc and sphere of hegemony (Ikenberry and Kupchan, 1990: 283-315).

Based on Neo-Gramscian hegemony theoretical framework, the rise of the US as a global hegemonic power can be explained due to its military strength and consent-based relationships established with local power elites. Local power elites accepted and consented to adhere to US hegemony due to the influence of the US's material resources, institutions, and ideology. Albeit, groups or countries that joined the hegemony with their own consent still felt the presence of military power as a lingering background pressure. The expansion of global US hegemony significantly relies on gaining the full consent of local ruling groups. According to Neo-Gramscian hegemony theory, consent-based hegemony takes precedence over military power (Cox, 1993: 59-60).

The US did apply a cooperation and hegemon centered foreign policy strategy towards Egypt that was very similar to the hegemonic power-building approach as described above. In Egypt, the US clearly established its hegemony through local power elites. Unlike British imperialism, which relied primarily on military (global naval and local ground forces) power for dominance, the US based its dominance on the clear consent of those elites in the specific countries that were able to gain favors, privileges and power within that process. This approach is consistent with the Neo-Gramscian hegemony

theory, which explains hegemonic power relationships through the interactions among hegemonic social classes (Cox, 1987: 105).

The main hypothesis of this study therefore is that the most decisive factor in the political, military, and economic relations between the United States and Egypt are the interest relations and ideological alignment among the hegemonic classes. Egypt's ruling elite consist of each; the armed forces (SCAF/ Supreme Council of the Armed Forces), local capitalists, landowners, and the upper-middle social classes, mostly intertwined with the aforementioned classes. However, the most powerful ruling elite are the armed forces. Capitalists have a minor albeit very profitable partner position within the ruling elite. In contrast, landowners and social classes have very little power over the state (Bozbaş, 2018: 82-83). After the alliance relationship that was established by the Egyptian ruling class with the US hegemonic class, the Egyptian ruling elites maintained their political positions and increased their respective economic gains. In return for these gains, the Egyptian ruling elite supported the regional and global policies of the US hegemonic class. From the US hegemonic classes perspective, Egypt's inclusion in the American political camp was seen as beneficial for achieving its regional and global policy objectives. With Egypt joining the U.S. political camp, the United States achieved significant gains in the two areas it prioritizes most in the Middle East: uninterrupted access to energy resources and the security of Israel. In summary, the Neo-Gramscian theory's main argument is that hegemony involves the realization of mutual interests between the hegemonic and the subordinate power. This argument fits into the Egyptian example. That concept, although elite based and hegemonic, is clearly not a unilateral exploitation system, as confirmed in the context of US-Egypt relations.

Following the signing of the 1978 Camp David Agreement during the presidency of Anwar As-Sadat, Egypt ended its state of war with Israel and officially became a strategic partner of the US (Mansfield, 2012: 424-425). U.S.-Egypt relations have continuously improved since 1973. These relations officially became a strategic partnership after Egypt and Israel signed the historic Camp David Peace Agreement in 1978. US hegemony on the Nile, which started in the political arena, has gradually penetrated into military, economic and social life. The US has established its hegemony in Egypt via its institutions, ideology, technology, financial power and grand strategy. The US did not encounter any meaningful or strong resistance in this process. The Egyptian ruling elites seamlessly co-operated with the US in the establishment of US hegemony in their country.

Egypt's policy of aligning with U.S. hegemony, initiated during the era of Anwar As- Sadat, continued and was solidified under Mubarak. This paper specifically explains the emergence of this process through relationships based on shared interests and strong ties between the Egyptian ruling elites and the U.S. hegemonic class. Both sides have managed to create harmony between political, economic and strategic interests. This harmony is the principal basis of the mutual benefitting (from an elite viewpoint) hegemonic power relationship. In addition to this, the ideological harmony between the two sides has made the hegemonic power relationship possible and feasible.

In the initial part, the theoretical framework of the paper, the Neogramscian theory of hegemony, and the mainstream international relations theories of realism and liberalism are explained in the context of the concept of hegemony. The following section evaluates the Egyptian ruling elites and their relations with the US in terms of Neogramscian theory. The subsequent section explains the security, military, economic and political gains that the US was able to secure by including Egypt in its hegemony. In the last section, the ideological reasons for the strengthening of relations between the two countries are evaluated based on the historical process as defined by Neogramscian theory.

Theoretical Framework

Realism, which is accepted as the oldest and mainstream theory among international relations theories, has interpreted the concept of hegemony differently from the concept as proposed by the Critical Theory school of IR. The interpretation of hegemony put forth by realism is based on the assumption that military superiority is the primary determinant of power. In this view, hegemony can be understood as a form of "power," which is defined as the ability of a state to influence the actions of other states (Gill, 2003: 82).

Neogramscian theory, on the other hand, does not use the concept of hegemony in this sense; it does not interpret the concept of hegemony as the mere dominance of one country over others (Cox, 1993: 59-60). According to Robert Cox, the founder of the neogramscian theory, hegemony should not be interpreted as the simple domination of a world power. The Neogramscian theory of hegemony postulates that hegemony is based on consensus and the production of common good (Bostanoğlu, 2009: 49-51). The hegemonic concept of international order is not based on unilateral exploitation. In contrast, the hegemonic power as well as the social classes or states involved in hegemony derive common interests and benefits from this power relationship

(Alsancak, 2021: 185). Michael Mann's assessment reflects the neogramscian theory perspective: "Hegemony is not essentially based on brute force, the classes/states involved in the system participate for their interests, but also have ideological commonalities such as secularism" (Münkler, 2009: 74).

Gramsci, the inspiring factor behind the Neogramscian theory of hegemony, explains hegemony basically in terms of two concepts: consent and coercion (Gramsci, 2007: 261). Gramsci defined hegemony as "consensus protected by coercion." Again according to Gramsci, the consent of large segments of society is necessary for the hegemonic group to establish its power (Gramsci, 2018: 289). Although hegemony is based on the apparatus of force and consent, consent should be more dominant than the apparatus of force. Accordingly, if the power of the hegemon class is based on force rather than consent, its power cannot be explained by hegemony (Augelli and Murphy, 1994: 128). The hegemonic class must support and enable the social structures that are its allies to realise their goals and objectives. This is one of the conditions necessary for the realisation of hegemony (Gill, 1994: 40). Furthermore, in order for hegemony to be realised, the hegemon must make tangible concessions to the social classes under its domination (Okur and Ongur, 2014: 289).

The main point where the UK and the US, as classic hegemons, differ from the empires of the past is that both gained the consent of local power elites in the geographies they dominated. In addition to the pressure of coercive apparatuses such as military power, the political elites of the countries under the hegemon's domination have consented to the hegemon due to the material resources and ideological affinity offered by the hegemonic power (Okur and Ongur, 2014: 312). The practical counterpart of these assessments is the process by which the US built a "consensual hegemony" after World War II. In line with its vision of "consensual hegemony", the US allowed its allies to protect and develop their interests (Rupert, 1990: 334).

Hegemonic power does not always adhere to the notion of consent production. When necessary, it imposes its will on subordinate powers by force or makes this potential power felt by subordinate classes or states (Cox, 2006: 99). To cite Friedman, a "hidden fist" is necessary for the hegemonic international system to function. Friedman pointed out the importance of the presence of the US military force as a "hidden fist" in order to enable the use Silicon Valley technologies worldwide and ensure the safety of elites in general (Kolasi, 2021: 31). Friedman's remarks on Silicon Valley technologies (consent devices) and the "hidden fist" (pressure/military devices) can be viewed

as a reference to the common importance of consent and pressure devices in establishing hegemony.

Again in accordance with the tenets of Gramscian theory, the establishment of hegemony is contingent upon the formation of a historical bloc. The historical bloc is constituted when conflicting and competing social forces reach a compromise on common goals and act in concert. In essence, it is the integration within the “national unity” alliance (De Smet, 2016: 130-131). One example of a historical bloc is the “Historical Atlantic Bloc,” which was formed by the United States and European capital classes and political elites who agreed on the concept of the common good after World War II and shared a similar liberal-democratic ideological perspective.

Sometimes hegemony in the Neogramscian sense can be considered as a form of indirect rule. The hegemony is established by the hegemon by taking local power elites under its control. Britain, according to that viewpoint, lost its hegemony in Egypt because it could not establish a similar domination over the Egyptian power elites as in India (Ikenberry and Kupchan, 1990: 287).

Neo-Gramscianism does not consider the United States as the embodiment of hegemonic power in state form. Because the Neo-Gramscian theory views social forces as the primary actors of hegemony, it considers the hegemonic class within the United States as the main actor that shapes international hegemony (Turan, 2021: 271). This assessment can be better understood through the following example: in the United States, macro-political decisions and strategies are shaped by the influence of large corporations. The capitalist class is the most powerful force in the state’s decision-making process. Therefore, in determining U.S. foreign policy, the interests of the hegemonic class within the U.S. take priority (Kolasi, 2021: 32-33).

According to the Neogramscian theory of hegemony, social groups and states that are included in the hegemon’s domination should adjust their policies closer to the hegemonic power. One of the conditions for the realization of hegemony is that the surrounding countries comply with the hegemon in terms of policy (Cox, 1987: 32).

By revealing the political, economic and ideological structure of the Egyptian ruling elites, it is aimed to explain and analyse the internal political and social dynamics that determine the relations between Cairo and Washington’s elites. The subsequent section of the article examines the security and geopolitical reasons for the United States to incorporate Egypt into its sphere

of influence, elucidating Egypt's regional and global significance in the context of US hegemony.

Egyptian Ruling Elites and the United States

The radical change in policy under Anwar As Sadat cannot be explained solely by the president's decision. The radical change in foreign policy was also a result of the Egyptian ruling elites support for Anwar Sadat himself. Although the Sadat era ended with his assassination in 1981, the foreign policy paradigm continued President Mubarak's period. Therefore, the changes in foreign policy paradigms were not solely based on -the late Sadat's decisions. In contrary, most powerful ruling elite of the country, the Egyptian Armed Forces (SCAF), willingly supported and adapted the principle of geopolitical re-orientation from east to West. The Egyptian capitalists, holding the position of "junior partner" after the change of strategic allegiance, concurred with that vision. In summary, all post-Sadat Egyptian ruling elites supported the continuation of the peace process with Israel and consented to the U.S. hegemony over Egypt.

The US has been concerned about the possibility of a change in Egypt's foreign policy following Sadat. Alfred Leroy Atherton, the US ambassador to Egypt, stated that the U.S. was concerned about Egypt's potential back out of the Camp David Agreement (1981). US concerns were allayed by the statement of the successor Mubarak. Mubarak considered the Camp David Agreement as "a legal obligation that must be observed and respected" and gave assurances to US elites that his allegiance would never shift (Brownlee, 2012: 44).

Mubarak shared similar views with Sadat regarding the strategic alliance with the US. Mubarak believed that maintaining this alliance was crucial for Egypt's development (Cook, 2012: 162). The ideological harmony that the Neo-Gramscian theory claims as a requirement for the establishment of hegemony can be understood from Hosni Mubarak's inclination toward an alliance with the United States and his full-fledged adoption of the capitalist economic model (Cox, 1993: 63)

The elites of the Sadat era continued to maintain their presence during the Mubarak era without interruption. One of the reasons the Egyptian ruling class consented to U.S. hegemony is their need for American support to maintain their power. Moreover, Egypt had a significant need for U.S. support in several areas: the modernization of the Egyptian army, the provision of basic

foodstuffs at low prices to reduce public discontent, and the securing of loans and grants to prevent economic crises. Additionally, Egypt needed U.S. support to secure territorial concessions from Israel, useful for swaying public opinion towards the new elite. In the absence of this assistance, the new Egyptian government was likely to encounter heavy difficulties in maintaining its authority (Hinnebusch, 1990: 206). The Egyptian ruling elites believed that the pan-Arabist, anti-U.S., and anti-Israeli policies pursued during the Nasser era had negatively impacted their power and Egypt. Consequently, they endorsed the shift in alignment (Alterman, 2005: 357-359).

The Egyptian ruling elites held the conviction that the US would provide Egypt with military, economic, and political assistance, largely due to Egypt's geostrategic position, its significance for regional security, and the ongoing peace process with Israel. This belief was largely validated. (Goldschmidt, 2008: 144). The US provided Egypt with approximately 74 billion dollars in economic support following the Camp David Agreement (1978) with the objective of maintaining Egypt within its bloc and preventing it from being exposed to political chaos (Jadallah, 2016: 2).

During the Mubarak era, the president required the support of the military to maintain his power. The continued support of the Egyptian army was of paramount importance to Mubarak and his associates. In order to get the support of the Egyptian army, Mubarak was basically dependent on US arms aid and financial support. The Egyptian Armed Forces furthermore had to distribute two billion dollars of US aid to the people in order to gain influence and support from the people. Failure to do so could lead to political and social crises. Doing so helped to present the army as "caring" entity to the people (Brownlee, 2012: 3-4).

To secure his power, Mubarak granted vast privileges to the already powerful military class. To this end, he encouraged his generals to become capitalists. During Mubarak's tenure, the military vastly increased its economic and political power. Mubarak and the factions loyal to him both formed alliances with the military and competed with each other (Kurt, 2016: 135). The military class maintained its economic interests with the support of the president, while the president and his circle maintained their power with the support of the military class (Kurt, 2016: 132). Evaluating the relations between the Egyptian army and the President, Ali Sabri, a former Prime Minister, stated: "The Egyptian army is a rent-centred institution that cooperates with conservative politicians for their interests and does not adopt any ideology" (Magd, 2016: 63).

This formula is easily explainable in neogramscian terms: The military-bureaucratic class and capitalists, who formed Egypt's ruling elite, based their interests and power on the alliance with the U.S. hegemonic class. In turn, the U.S. hegemonic class cooperated with Egypt's ruling elite in order to establish hegemony and become a dominant power in the country.

US Hegemony, Economic Militarisation and Neoliberalism

In order to establish a hegemony based on consent in the Neo-Gramscian sense in Egypt, the consent of the army was utterly necessary. For this reason, The US has always placed special importance on establishing connections with the Egyptian army. For this purpose, the US has supported the Egyptian Army in areas such as high technology transfer, joint arms and machinery production, finance, education, and intelligence (Magd, 2016: 79). Links between the United States and Egypt include economic assistance, joint military exercises, intelligence sharing and high-stakes global and regional diplomacy (Brownlee, 2012: 9).

Since 1984, the United States has provided military aid to Egypt in the amount of 1.3 billion dollars and to Israel in the amount of 1.8 billion dollars for each year. This amount corresponds to approximately fifteen per cent of the Egyptian state treasury. It can therefore be concluded that a significant part of the military budget is based on US aid. It is also noteworthy that in 1986, Egypt and Israel were the two countries that received the largest proportion of US military aid distributed globally as grants (Magd, 2016: 85-86). These funds accounted for 80% of the weapons requirements of the Egyptian Armed Forces (Hanieh, 2015: 63).

The significance of the United States' engagement with the Egyptian military is underscored by the exclusive access granted to advanced technologies, a privilege, apart from Israel, extended solely to the Egyptian Armed Forces. The Egyptian military furthermore gained significant economic profits by selling advanced weapon technologies to Middle Eastern countries. (Joya, 2018: 11). The provision of material resources by the United States to the Egyptian military illustrates the pivotal role of such resources in the establishment of hegemony (Kandil, 2014: 151).

The US economy also benefited from the military aid provided to the Egyptian army. US weapons were sold to the Egyptian market and export revenues were increased. Thus, by exporting surplus products, the US both provided income for its own economy and increased its ally's dependence on it. The US facilitated Egypt's participation in the commercial process by providing

Egypt with easy credit and military aid (Joya, 2018: 11). The U.S. hegemonic class has shaped state policy and power in order to achieve its global hegemony. The capitalist class, having the most powerful position within the U.S. hegemonic class, has pursued a policy of aligning with local power elites on shared interests. The US hegemonic class actively used its material resources to include Egypt in its hegemony. The examples provided in this section reveal that the financial resources given to Egypt by the U.S. have been utilized by Egyptian power elites to serve their class interests. The military cooperation between the USA and Egypt based on material resources is a clear and open hegemonic power relationship from the perspective of neogramscian theory. As can be understood from the examples, there is not a unilateral exploitation relationship. Although both sides are not equal, they have realised their interests mutually. The subordinate group or the state consents to the hegemon's power primarily because of the economic concessions it obtains.

As a result of US support to the Egyptian Army, the Egyptian army has adapted towards US policies and strategies, shaping its policies accordingly. Examples of this include providing military equipment support to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War under US guidance, exerting military pressure on Libya, which was in conflict with the US, and participating on the side of the US and Western countries in the First Gulf War. Additionally, Egypt avoided military conflict with Israel and pursued a policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian Issue according to the primary priorities of US policy (Magd, 2016: 87). In summary, Egypt has carefully aligned its policies with the overall strategy of the US. This political stance doubtless corresponds with the Neogramscian theory's argument that subordinate powers in hegemonic relationships harmonize their policies with those of the hegemonic power (Cox, 1987: 32). To summarize: hegemonic classes are decisive in the formation of state policies. The resulting state policies are shaped in line with the interests of hegemonic classes. Geopolitical and geostrategic decisions should be understood as the result of the consensus between the global hegemonic class and local power elites.

Militarisation of the Egyptian Economy, the US and Hegemony

The 1979 Camp David Agreement and Egypt's transition to a state of peace with Israel brought about a paradigm shift in the Egyptian army. After this agreement, the Egyptian army transformed from a security and war-oriented apparatus to an institution with economic priorities. In other words, the army has transformed from a military force to a commercial conglomerate. The transformation of the Egyptian military into an economic actor has been described as a U.S. strategy, based also on aspects of psychological warfare

and ideology. “Taming” the generals by shifting their energies away from a heroic self-view, based on combat, sacrifice and victory towards material gains in trade has led to a certain loss of the “warrior ethos”. This, in turn helps ensuring the long-term security of Israel by distracting the biggest and potential adversary, Egypt, away from military and towards economic goals (Magd, 2016: 78).

In line with the, US military aid to Egypt is twice as much as its economic aid (Kurt, 2016: 132). The US support to the Egyptian military accelerated the process of Egypt’s economic militarisation, but kept the general’s energy from concentrating on developing more geostrategic depth that might have endangered Israel. Moreover, these relations paved the way for the formation of organic ties between the Egyptian army and the US (Alexander, 2009: 139). With the support of the US, the Egyptian army became an important institution in the fields of production, agriculture and urbanisation (Mitchell, 2002: 240). The economic enterprises of the Egyptian military have been legitimized with the rhetoric of serving the public good. However, in reality, the economic institutions of the Egyptian military contribute to the military’s economic profits (Magd, 2016: 127).

Another aspect of the US economic and military aid is that it has been recycled into the US economy through the relations established with Egyptian high-level state officials. (Jadallah, 2015: 7). One of the data supporting this claim is that military aid from the US was spent largely on purchasing US weapons. Between 1985 and 1990, Egypt purchased \$7.5 billion worth of weapons from the US arms industry, resulting in approximately \$8 billion in US aid returning to the US economy (Mitchell, 2002: 240).

The US’s economic connections with senior Egyptian armed forces members have largely been realized through US-affiliated institutions. The Egyptian military and US-affiliated organisations such as USAID have signed joint memoranda of understanding. The Egyptian military facilitated USAID’s entry into vital economic areas such as food, manufacturing and infrastructure. In return, USAID provided the Egyptian military with the resources and commodities needed to operate in these areas (Joya, 2018: 12-13).

The assessment made in 2011 by Major General Said Elassar demonstrates the strong relationship between the U.S. hegemonic class and the Egyptian military: “We have strong strategic relations with the US since the 1979 Camp David Agreement. Relations with the US are pivotal to our foreign policy. We are supported by the US and we are proud to protect US interests” (2011) (Selim, 2020: 10-11).

Although the Egyptian army had a defense budget of \$4,400,000,000 (2016), it had a foreign debt of \$41,320,000,000. Therefore, the army was dependent on the United States for foreign aid. For this reason, the army wants to maintain good relations with the US (Koşak, 2018: 78-79).

The fact that the Egyptian army became an economic actor in the early 1980s is also linked to the implementation of neoliberal policies. At this time, neoliberalism became the rising trend in the world. The implementation of neoliberal policies has enabled the high-level military class in various countries to participate in economic activities and become a leading social class in this field. During the 1980s and 1990s, many states in Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East implemented neoliberal policies (Magd, 2016: 123). States implementing neoliberal policies cut public expenditures by obtaining conditional loans from international financial institutions. This situation led them to shape their economies to align with free market principles. The fact that these states cut their defense budgets led to the emergence of military trade. Due to military budget constraints arising from neoliberal policies, governments have pursued a policy of attracting the military elite to their side through economic favoritism in order to prevent possible military coups by members of the military. Thus, economic enterprises linked to military elites have emerged. In many countries such as Russia, China, Indonesia, Pakistan, Argentina, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Panama, the military has become a part of commercial life (Magd, 2016: 123-124).

With the agreement with the IMF in 1991, neoliberal policies started to be implemented in Egypt, too. The implementation of this programme increased the economic efficiency of the Egyptian military elite. These policies accelerated the formation of a neoliberal military elite. During this process, the Egyptian military converted its arms industry to civilian production, thereby leveraging its privileged position within the state to expand its share in the economy. Moreover, strategic capabilities that might have compromised Israel's security were redirected towards the creation of financial capital. (Magd, 2016: 126). The phenomenon of emergence of a neoliberal military elites, besides Egypt, has emerged in many countries that transitioned from a socialist economy to capitalism over the past forty years (Magd, 2016: 126).

To put it in neogramscian perspective: the transformation of the Egyptian army into an economic actor has emerged as a result of the class interests of the Egyptian army-or its top-brass- and the political, military and economic goals of the US hegemonic class. In summary, the formation of common interests between the Egyptian military and the U.S. hegemonic class and

both sides have close policy perspectives have created a hegemonic power relationship.

Egyptian Capitalists, the US, Neoliberalism and Hegemony

Capitalists, who are the second power after the army within the Egyptian ruling elite but are subordinate to the army in power hierarchy, continued to support the radical change in Egyptian foreign policy during the Sadat and Mubarak eras. These policies increased the capitalist classes economic gains and strengthened its leverage towards the ruling authority. For these reasons, the Mubarak regime, may clearly be described as organic continuation of the Sadat era.

Egyptian capitalists worked with their American counterparts to further class interests by developing strong relations with the US. When national interests and class interests clashed, they preferred their class interests similar to the world in general (Erpul, 2021: 164). For example, US global companies have collaborated with Egyptian capitalists to exploit low-wage Egyptian workers to produce goods. Egyptian capitalists linked the Egyptian economy to the global economy in line with the IMF program. While US and Egyptian capitalists benefited from these economic relations, the working class did not earn any substantial income (De Smet, 2016: 170

In the early 2000s, the influence of capitalists on the Egyptian economy increased further. The class took control of the economy in cooperation with US-based global companies (Kandil, 2012: 207-208). Large Egyptian firms and conglomerates became the representatives of large US companies in the Egyptian market. For example, Orascom, owned by the Sawiris family, the largest Egyptian capitalist family, is Egypt's largest economic enterprise and has strong relations with the US state and US global businesses. Orascom has acquired several representative offices in Washington and in the Pentagon, the center of the US military administration. Orascom in Egypt represents a few big US companies, from US high-tech firms such as Microsoft to private corporations and food giants such as McDonald's (Mitchell, 1999: 463). In other words, Orascom became a "lobbying" power in Washington D.C., too, showing the trans-national and non ideological, pragmatic cooperation between the power classes on both sides of the Atlantic.

The US also maintained its relations with Egyptian capitalists through its diverse institutions. The U.S. has shaped Egypt's economy through institutions connected to hegemonic power, such as the IMF and the World Bank. For example, the US determined Egypt's macroeconomic policies through USAID.

The direct US influence on the Egyptian economy has declined, but the new economic relations created after Egypt's inclusion into the US hegemony have led to an increase in the indirect US influence on the Egyptian economy. Egypt received loans and aid from US-based financial institutions. This led to an indirect increase in US influence in the Egyptian economy. In sum, although the quantitative data of US direct aid decreased, the presence of the global economy under US hegemony in the Egyptian economy increased (Jadallah, 2016: 5). For example, following the inclusion into the US economic system, the Egyptian economy received an annual flow of approximately 10 billion dollars through foreign investors, remittances and tourism (Waterbury, 1997: 115).

The US has utilized its investments and aid to peripheral countries in cooperation with the ruling elites of these countries. The US returned the aid to Egypt to the US economy through technology and infrastructure tenders. Accordingly, the aid was given on the condition that it had to be given to US companies (Mitchell, 2002: 238). Jadallah's statement illustrates this dimension of US aid: "The primary beneficiary of America's foreign aid programs is always the United States" (Jadallah, 2016: 39-40). Thus US can transfer resources from the Egyptian economy to its own economy.

Neoliberal policies that started to be implemented in the early 1990s have an important place in the formation of US hegemony over Egyptian politics and economy. The political and economic elites of the peripheral countries, who implemented neoliberal policies, participated in this process in line with their interests by collaborating with the US hegemonic class.

In line with neoliberal principles such as fiscal discipline, privatization, tax reform and liberalization of foreign trade, the Egyptian economy was opened to international competition (Akgemci, 2020: 43). In line with the propagated neoliberal program, state subsidies for consumer goods were cut, public companies were privatized and transferred to the private sector. Markets and prices were liberalized, wages were frozen, agricultural lands were commercialized, a fixed tax system was introduced, and inflation with foreign debt was thus brought under control (De Smet, 2016: 206-207).

The implementation of neoliberal policies benefited Egypt's ruling elite and the US hegemonic class in particular. However, the masses of the people have reacted to these policies with riots and protests. The collapse of the Mubarak regime can be considered as the result of these reactions (Magd, 2006: 6).

Economic data gives more context to the real world implications of that massive redistribution: In the late 1980s, a narrow group of Egyptian capitalists owned 51.5 percent of GDP; by the mid-1990s, this group had increased its share of GDP to 71.4 percent, and in 2007 to 80 percent (Al-Ahram 2006, 2008). Those who receive their income in the form of wages have achieved an income pattern that is in negative correlation with the increase of capital gains by capitalists. Although wage laborers accounted for 48.5 percent of Egyptian GDP in the late 1980s, the income of this class, which constitutes the largest mass of society, dropped to 28.6 percent in 1995 and below 20 percent in 2007 (El-Naggar, 2009: 49). The Egyptian economy has grown more successfully than countries with similar economic and political structures, growing fourfold in the last forty years. However, these growth figures have not led to an increase in per capita income; in fact, per capita income has decreased. In 2006, per capita income was 7 percent lower than in 2000 (Mitchell, 2002: 220-221).

The United States has integrated the Egyptian economy into the global economy through its international. This integration has made the Egyptian economy part of the global economic system. As long as the Egyptian ruling elites received support from the United States to maintain their power and expand their economic interests, they supported U.S. regional and global policies. This web of relationships can be explained by the concept of passive revolution. The concept of passive revolution can be defined as the extension of the hegemony of the dominant social class in the center through the formation of alliances with allied classes in the periphery. The relations between the hegemonic social classes serve to guarantee the establishment of global hegemony (Yavuz, 2018: 261).

The collaboration between Egyptian capitalists and the US hegemonic class has developed based on significant economic interests and shared ideology. The US capitalists, the most powerful class within the hegemonic class, pair themselves with Egyptian capitalists in line with common interests and a shared, neoliberal ideology. For this reason, Egyptian capitalists have easily integrated with US capitalists. Institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, which are part of the hegemonic system and are affiliated with the US, have successfully planned the relations between the hegemonic classes. As a result, Egyptian capitalists gained more absolute financial and political power after cooperating with the US hegemonic class. In return, the US hegemonic class increased its profits and share of the global hegemony. The cooperation between these two classes largely shaped the Egyptian economy.

The Importance of Egypt from the US Perspective: Geostrategy, Security and Economy

By including Egypt in its hegemony, the US has gained significant advantages in establishing its regional and global hegemony. Egypt is of great importance for the US in shaping its security policies. Due to its important geographical location, Egypt is able to influence the world economy, from the value of high-tech equipment to the prices of energy resources. As a superpower that has shaped the global economy, the U.S. places great importance on removing obstacles to the functioning of the world economy to ensure the continuity of its hegemony.

Besides that, twelve percent of international trade and 22 percent of container trade takes place through the Suez Canal (Jadallah, 2016: 4). In the event of a blockage in Egypt's water and airways, this situation can directly affect the world and the US economy. The potential blockage of the Suez Canal, which is vital for access to world energy resources, would have negative effects on the US and the world economy. If this happens, Western economies may enter a crisis, (Cole, 2013).

The US incorporation of Egypt into its hegemony allows the US to exploit Egypt's strategic position to gain important military and security advantages. The US could use the Suez Canal to move its warships to the Persian Gulf eight days faster. During its military attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq between 2001 and 2005, the US conducted more than thirty-six thousand airstrikes using Egypt (Witty, 2023: 86-87). In addition, Egypt has pursued a common policy with the US on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, jihadist movements and stopping Iranian expansion (Cook, 2012: 239).

The importance the US gives to Egypt can be understood from the amount of aid it provides. Between 1974 and 1980, the United States gave more aid to Egypt than it did to Western European countries through the Marshall Plan between 1948 and 1952. (Heykel, 1986: 105).

In summary, the U.S. hegemonic class has shaped U.S. state policy by taking global economic and political developments and its own interests into account. Due to its geographical location, political and military significance in the Arab world, and its relations with Israel, Egypt has been regarded as an important ally by the U.S. hegemonic class. Egypt's alignment with U.S. policies has contributed to advancing the interests of the U.S. hegemonic class.

Hegemony, Culture and Ideology

The ideas of political leaders have an important role in shaping both foreign and domestic policy. The fact that the United States could not become a hegemonic power in Egypt during Nasser's era is also linked to Nasser's political ideas. Due to Egypt's colonial past, Nasser was inclined to pursue an independent policy against Western powers. Nasser's ideas largely shaped Egypt's foreign policy. This example highlights the importance of ideology in the formation of foreign policy and hegemony.

US officials, such as John Marshall, traveled to the Middle Eastern countries and conducted research. As a result of these studies, they came to the following conclusion: The modernization of Muslim societies can only take place through what they termed the "creative minority", a Westernized local ruling class with important political, cultural and economic positions. They argued that the large mass outside this group was the "unwinnable majority" (Erken, 2020: 203-205). Egyptian ruling elites and intellectuals correspond to Marshall's 'creative minority'. Egyptian ruling elites and intellectuals viewed their country as belonging to Western civilization (Hinnebusch, 1982: 536). Hassanein Heikal's testimony confirms this opinion: "Sadat was sure that Egypt did not belong to the East, the symbol of backwardness, but to the West, which had turned its face forward" (Heykel, 1986: 97). An important factor in the penetration of the US hegemony into Egypt and its lack of strong resistance was the accumulation of modernization and Westernization that had begun in Egypt since the 19th century. If there had been a ruling elite in Egypt that did not embrace Westernization and the Western lifestyle, it might not have been possible for the U.S. hegemonic class to become the hegemonic power in Egypt. U.S. culture and ideology attracted to the Egyptian ruling elites. For this reason, Egyptian power elites sent their children to the United States for education. Ideology and culture are among the main determinants in the realization of hegemony.

The ideologies and ideas of leaders play a significant role in shaping the politics of countries. Nasser's anti-imperialist ideas, his opposition to England and France, and Sadat's pro-American and pro-Western thoughts and ideas have greatly influenced and transformed Egypt's foreign policy (Ghali, 1997: 117).

The vast majority of the officer class of the Egyptian army was ideologically close to the idea of Westernization and adopted the Western lifestyle. In this context, Westernized capitalists and officers shared a common civiliza-

tional orientation (Hinnebusch, 1982: 535). Egyptian capitalists established strong economic relations with the US-based capital bourgeoisie. These relations were not only based on economic interests, but also on social communication, lifestyle and ideological harmony (Zaakouk, 1989: 135). The Egyptian capitalist bourgeoisie were those who adopted the Western lifestyle and lived in Egypt for only three months a year (Zaakouk, 1989: 135). Egyptian sociologist Adel Iskenderi describes the prestige of American culture in Egyptian upper class as follows:

“In facilities that resemble one of the new college campuses in the Gulf, there are two dance clubs more exclusive than the ones frequented by Jay-Z and P. Diddy in New York City. The patrons of these clubs dress up to portray poignant caricatures of Western discotheques. Egyptian elites trying to imitate the dancers in Beyonce, Usher and Rihanna’s music videos...” (İskender, 2016: 48).

In addition to the cultural and ideological factors given above Egyptian ruling elites children are Westernized and have adopted Western ideas. In a survey conducted among the children of Egyptian ruling elites Egyptian political elites educated in the US, it was found that they were close to the following political tendencies: 12.8 percent had a favorable opinion of Nasser. Sadat-era policies were highly favored. The answers to the question “President Sadat’s conflict with the USSR was a mistake” are as follows: Agree: 22%, Disagree: 51%, Mixed Feelings: 16.3%, No Opinion: 10.6%. Sadat’s alliance with the US and relations with Israel were also generally supported by this social group (Hinnebusch, 1982: 548-554).

Western educational institutions established in Egypt have been vitally influential in Westernizing the Egyptian ruling elite and their adoption of liberal capitalist ideology. By culturally assimilating Egyptian elites, these educational institutions facilitated the penetration of the US and European countries into Egypt. For example, the American University in Cairo was among the educational institutions that trained ruling elites in line with the West (Zaakouk, 1989: 141-142). Since 2013, Egyptian President Sisi’s military education is based on US military training and culture, which should be considered as a cultural influence that facilitates relations with the US. Similarly to Sisi, numerous Egyptian officers have received education in the US and have been impacted by American culture and ideology, either directly or indirectly.

In conclusion, the Egyptian ruling elite is not in opposition to the US hegemonic class in terms of lifestyle, education and ideology. The fact that Egyptian ruling elites have either embraced or are not opposed to U.S. culture and

ideology highlights that the sociological makeup of these elites provides an advantage for the United States. The United States has not encountered ideological conflicts in Egypt similar to those it faced with the Taliban in Afghanistan or the Shiite clerical regime in Iran. The emergence of this situation is closely related to Egypt's early Westernization process and the fact that the political elites have embraced the Westernization process.

Conclusion

The paper argues that political cooperation between Egypt and the United States, which began during the Sadat era, turned into cooperation between the hegemonic social classes during the Mubarak era. Accordingly, the U.S. has managed to establish strong ties with the Egyptian ruling elite through its material resources, institutions, and ideological appeal. The intensification of US hegemony in Egypt over time and its penetration into what Foucault calls the "capillaries" (Loomba, 2000: 49) is the result of strong ties with local power elites

The Egyptian ruling elite's lack of resistance to US involvement in the region can be attributed to their pursuit of economic gain and consolidation of power, facilitated by US support. The United States' support for the Egyptian ruling elite has been a significant contributing factor to the maintenance of their domination. The United States sought to maintain the status quo in Egypt by providing support to the Egyptian ruling elite in four key areas: National defense, the capacity to withstand coups, macroeconomic stability, and the ability to maintain domestic repression (Brownlee, 2021, p. 11).

Therefore, the United States sought to maintain the political status quo in Egypt by preventing the emergence of alternative power structures, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. By ensuring the continuity of the ruling elite in Egypt, the United States adopted a policy of maintaining its hegemony in the region. As posited by US political scientist Brownlee, the US is a constituent of the institutions that make decisions in Egyptian domestic politics, and its position in Egyptian domestic politics is analogous to that of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. " (Brownlee, 2012: 10).

To conclude, the US has adopted a strategy of suppressing internal and external opposition and threats against the Egyptian ruling elites through economic, military, political and technological support to Egypt. The Egyptian ruling elites' preservation of power and the expansion of its economic interests facilitate and strengthen US global and regional policies. In the words of

Egyptian Major General Said Elassar, “We have had strong strategic relations with the United States since the 1979 Camp David Accords. The relationship with the US is our pillar in foreign policy. We are supported by the US and we are proud to protect US interests.” It reflects the depth of mutual relations (Selim, 2020: 10-11).

In summary, the process of Egypt’s inclusion in the US hegemony began with political processes. However, during the Mubarak period, relations between the two countries were shaped in terms of the interests and ideological harmony between the hegemonic classes. This hegemonic power relationship emerged as a result of the mutual consensus and consent of the hegemonic classes. In other words, the foreign policy relations between the United States and Egypt were largely shaped in accordance with the interests of the hegemonic social classes. Thus, neogramscian theory may be used to demonstrate those findings. The Egyptian sample can be used to explain other countries included in US hegemony.

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