



COUNTRY IN PERSPECTIVE

EGYPT



*The Great Pyramid of Giza
Flickr / Gabriel Garcia Marengo*



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*St. Anthony Monastery in Eastern Desert
Flickr / Michael Tyler*

Chapter 1 | Egypt in Perspective

Geography

Introduction

Egypt is located in the northeastern part of Africa. To its south lies Sudan; to its west, Libya; and to its north, the Mediterranean Sea. Much of Egypt's eastern boundary is the Red Sea, running northward into the Gulf of Suez. At the northern tip of the Gulf of Suez, the Suez Canal cuts through Egypt and provides the shortest sea link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. East of the Suez Canal is Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, which is considered part of the Asian continent. Israel and the Gaza Strip lie east of the Sinai Peninsula; bordering the southeast edge of the Sinai is the Gulf of Aqaba, which ends at the point where Egypt and Israel meet.

Ancient Egypt developed into two regional cultures. Upper Egypt encompassed the southern part of the country extending toward sub-Saharan Africa. The boundaries were originally between Memphis and Aswan, near the Nubian border in southern Egypt. Today, Upper Egypt, the northern part of the country, is a smaller region that includes the area between Qena Bend and Aswan.¹ Lower Egypt includes the area between Memphis and the Nile Delta, south of the Mediterranean Sea.² In contrast to Upper Egypt, Lower Egypt (*ta-mehu*, or “water-filled land”) is densely populated.^{3, 4}



*Map of Egypt and neighboring countries
Wikimedia / United Nations Office
for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*

Geographic Divisions

About 96% of Egypt is desert. Almost all of Egypt’s cities are located along the Nile River, which bisects the country north to south. The vast majority of the population lives in 3.5% of the country’s area.^{5, 6}



*Western Desert between Bahariya and Farafra
Flickr / gyst*

Egypt has four main regions: The Nile River Valley and Delta, the Western Desert, the Eastern Desert, and the Sinai Peninsula. The Nile River enters Egypt at the Sudanese border and crosses more than 1,200 km (750 mi) of the country.^{7, 8} At Cairo, the Nile begins spreading into a delta, which is 160 km (99 mi) long. At its widest, the Nile Delta spans 250 km (155 mi).⁹

West of the Nile River is the Western Desert, or Libyan Desert, which makes up about two-thirds of Egypt’s land area (approximately 680,000 sq km, or 262,549 sq mi). Large parts of the Western Desert are uninhabitable.¹⁰ This dry and arid region is marked by seven depressions or basins, six of which contain oases with fresh water provided by the Nile or groundwater sources. These areas support small permanent settlements and limited agriculture.¹¹

East of the Nile is the third region, the Eastern Desert, or Arabian Desert. Unlike its cousin to the west, the Eastern Desert is fairly mountainous. It is also a much smaller region, about 220,000 sq km (84,942 sq mi). Its hills join a rugged mountain chain, known as the Red Sea Hills, which reaches an elevation exceeding 1,900 meters (6,233 ft). There are almost no permanent settlements in this entire isolated region. Oil is one of its very few natural resources.¹²



*View of Mount Sinai and St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai
Flickr / Andreas Metz*

southern Sinai. This range includes Mount Catherine (*Jebel Katrinah*) which, at 2,642 meters (8,668 ft), is Egypt's highest point. In the northern part of this region lies a flat coastal plain extending from the Suez Canal into the Gaza Strip and Israel.¹⁴

The fourth region, the Sinai Peninsula, a triangular formation at the northeastern end of Egypt, is bordered by the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Suez in the west and the Gulf of Aqaba in the southeast. The Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba join in the Red Sea south of the peninsula.¹³ This northeastern section of Egypt covers around 61,100 sq km (23,590 sq mi). The arid desert-dominated peninsula is largely covered with granite mountains and rocks. The Red Sea Hills continue from the Eastern Desert into

Climate

Egypt, one of the world's hottest and sunniest countries, has two seasons. There is a mild winter from November to April and a hot, dry summer the rest of the year. In coastal regions, the climate is moderate, with an average low winter temperature of 14°C (57°F), and an average high summer temperature of 30°C (86°F). In inland areas (desert), temperatures fluctuate much more. Summer temperatures vary from 7°C (44°F) at night to 43°C (109°F) in the daytime. Winter temperatures in the desert range from 0°C (32°F) at night to 18°C (64°F) in the daytime.¹⁵



*Camels travelling in hot and dry desert, Mesr
Flickr / my Life, the Universe and Everything*

Rainfall is light and occurs mainly along the coast. In most areas, Egypt receives less than 80 mm (3 in) of rain annually. The wettest area is around Alexandria, with about 175 mm (7 in) of annual rainfall. Cairo receives only about 25 mm (1 in) of rainfall annually, although humidity is high. South of Cairo, there is very little rainfall at all; some areas go years without rain. These extreme dry spells may be followed by heavy rainfall and dangerous flash floods.^{16, 17}

Bodies of Water



*Nile River on Aswan
Flickr / George Lezenby*

Egyptians rely on the Nile River for their water supply.¹⁸ The Nile provides most of the country's water needs for irrigation.¹⁹ The Nile is Egypt's only major river and supports almost all of its agriculture.²⁰ The Nile is the longest river in the world. It is 6,650 km (4,132 mi) long, 1,200 km of which is in Egypt.^{21, 22} The Nile River sustained Egypt as a great civilization for 5,000 years. The river's silt contains volcanic minerals and organic materials that are used as a natural fertilizer.²³

The Nile originates in the high lakes of Ethiopia and Uganda. Its tributaries are the White Nile (out of Uganda) and Blue Nile (out of Ethiopia). At Khartoum in Sudan, these tributaries merge into one river, the Nile. It passes through six cataracts, shallow areas of rapids that historically blocked navigation except during the summer floods. The Nile then flows through Egypt, from south to north, and empties into the Mediterranean Sea.²⁴

At Aswan, the Aswan High Dam harnesses the Nile to create Lake Nasser. Egypt shares the artificial lake with Sudan, which calls it Lake Nubia. Water from the lake provides irrigation for hundreds of thousands of acres of land and has allowed for more agricultural rotations per year.²⁵

Lake Bardawil

Lake Bardawil is a large, saline lagoon on the north coast of the Sinai Peninsula. It is approximately 30 km (18.6 mi) long and 14 km (8.6 mi) wide at its widest point. The lake is shallow, only about 3 m (9.8 ft) deep, and is separated from the

Mediterranean Sea by a narrow sandbar. The Zaranik Protectorate is a wetland on the eastern end of Lake Bardawil. The wetland is the least polluted in Egypt and one of the least polluted sites in the Mediterranean region. It serves as a wintering and staging area for many waterfowl that migrate from southern Europe and Russia.^{26, 27}



Lake Bardawil
Flickr / MEDASSET

Major Cities

City	Population
Cairo (al-Qahirah)	12,000,000 ²⁸
Alexandria (al-Iskandariyah)	4,950,000 ²⁹
Port Said (Bur Said)	570,000 ³⁰
Suez (as-Suways)	485,000 ³¹
Aswan	266,000 ³²

Cairo

Cairo (al-Qahira), the capital of Egypt, is one of the largest urban areas in the world. In 2016, an estimated 22.8 million people, or a quarter of all Egyptians, lived in Greater Cairo.^{33, 34} The Cairo metropolitan area extends along both sides of the Nile.^{35, 36, 37}



Cairo on Nile
Flickr / Ahmed Helal

Cairo was established in the 10th century by Egypt's Fatimid rulers, and quickly became an important link on the east-west trade route and a major center of Islamic learning. In the 19th century, Egypt's rulers tried to impose a European character on the city, with boulevards and plazas.³⁸

Cairo grew rapidly in the 20th century, especially during the industrial development that followed World War II. In the 1980s, Cairo experienced annual population increases of nearly 300,000.³⁹ Because of the housing shortage that followed the population increase, many people resorted to living in illegally constructed buildings or unconventional locations such as cemeteries and garbage dumps.^{40, 41, 42} Public services such as trash collection and transportation, as well as access to safe water resources, have been seriously overburdened.^{43, 44, 45} To ease overcrowding and other problems caused by rapid growth, a new, yet unnamed administrative capital is being built some 45 km (28 mi) to the east of Cairo.⁴⁶



Historic Cairo
Wikimedia / Véronique Dauge

Cairo (meaning “victorious” in Arabic) is full of cultural sites such as temples, churches, museums, an opera house, and Islamic monuments.⁴⁷ This cosmopolitan city is marked by Arab, European, and African influences. The city’s medieval markets coexist alongside modern commercial enterprises.⁴⁸ The city of Giza, considered part of Greater Cairo, is home to the Great Pyramid of Giza, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and Cairo University.^{49, 50, 51} Cairo owes

its popularity as a tourist destination to its proximity to many of Egypt’s famous archeological sites.⁵²

Alexandria

Egypt’s second-largest city, Alexandria, lies on the Mediterranean coast, west of the Nile Delta. Alexandria was founded by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE and has been a major port ever since. In the ancient world, Alexandria was known to be the center of learning and culture.^{53, 54} Some scholars regard Alexandria as the birthplace of Western science.⁵⁵ The Lighthouse of Alexandria, another Wonder of the Ancient World, stood 135 m (440 ft) tall on the nearby island of



Alexandria skyline from Qaitbay Citadel
Wikimedia / ASaber91

Pharos. It was gradually destroyed by a series of earthquakes in the 10th and 14th centuries CE.⁵⁶

Alexandria's sea trade with Europe declined from the 16th to the 18th centuries, after the trade route around the Cape of Good Hope was discovered. However, trade and export of goods to Europe were revived in the 19th century. With maritime expansion came population growth. Between 1821 and the end of the 19th century, Alexandria's population grew from 12,500 to 320,000.⁵⁷

Alexandria remains the main port of Egypt. It handles three-quarters of Egypt's foreign trade and consists of two harbors.⁵⁸ The city's industrial base includes oil refineries, textile mills, chemical and metal plants, and food-processing facilities.⁵⁹ Today, the city's population is around 4.9 million.⁶⁰

Port Said

Located on the northern tip of the Suez Canal on the Mediterranean Sea, Port Said has been an active port since the late 19th century. Builders of the Suez Canal founded the city in 1859 as a camp for canal workers. Since then, the population of Port Said has grown to approximately 600,000.⁶¹ Port Said today is a location for maritime and canal maintenance.^{62, 63}



City of Port Said
Wikimedia / Enrico Stocchi

The city suffered due to the closing of the Suez Canal from 1967-75 as a result of the Arab-Israeli wars. Port Said was rebuilt after the conflicts, helped by a government-supported tax-free industrial zone. Industries include textiles, clothing, glass, china, automobile batteries and tires, watches, and cosmetics. Port Said also has electrical plants and rail service.^{64, 65}

Suez

Suez, located at the southern end of the Suez Canal, lies at the northernmost point of the Gulf of Suez, the Red Sea's western arm. The city of Suez has served as a commercial port since the 7th century. Today, Suez is one of Egypt's largest ports and functions as both a refueling station and holding area for ships traveling through the canal. Oil

is stored, refined, and transported by pipelines to Alexandria and Cairo. Suez is also a manufacturing center for petroleum products, fertilizers, and paper. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 made it possible for ships to travel between Europe and Asia. Infrastructure associated with the canal helped Suez develop into a modern city. Suez is linked by rail to Cairo (135 km, or 84 mi, to the west). With a population of around half a million, the city is slightly smaller than Port Said.⁶⁶



Suez Canal
Flickr / Jeff Salmore

The Suez Canal was closed after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, blocking the shortest link from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea. During the October War of 1973, almost 80% of the town of Suez was destroyed. When the canal reopened in 1975, Suez became a tax-free industrial zone.⁶⁷

Aswan



Aswan
Flickr / Shawn Clover

Aswan, one of the most polluted cities in the world, lies on the east bank of the Nile in southern Egypt. Located on the first cataract (rapids) of the Nile, Aswan marked the southern boundary of pharaonic Egypt. Roman, Turkish, and British armies later used the city as a garrison.^{68, 69}

Aswan became an industrial center after 1960, when hydroelectric production began in the region. More recent industries include a fertilizer plant and mining operations for hematite and iron ore. Aswan has a population of roughly 270,000. The Aswan High Dam is south of the city. Today, visitors sail in *feluccas* and visit the many historical sites in the area, including the pre-dynastic ruins on Elephantine Island.^{70, 71}

Environmental Issues

Egypt faces daunting environmental challenges. The amount of arable land is severely limited. Around 95% of Egypt's entire population lives in the Nile Valley and Delta, overburdening the land and river.⁷² Egypt is almost entirely desert, and people depend heavily on the Nile for water.⁷³ This fact, when combined with rapid population growth, has led to an overdependence on the Nile as well as loss of agricultural land to urbanization.⁷⁴



*Pile of waste in front of a mosque
Flickr / Wolfgang Sterneck*

Air pollution is a major challenge for Egypt, one that has been exacerbated by pollutants and polluting practices such as industrial waste, vehicle emissions, and the burning of solid waste and agricultural residues.⁷⁵

Oil pollution off the coasts threatens beach and marine habitats. Water pollution, another environmental problem, results from industrial waste, untreated sewage, and pesticides. Climate change is increasing Egypt's vulnerability to high temperatures, rising sea levels, and water shortages, and is negatively impacting agricultural productivity and tourism.⁷⁶



*Aswan High Dam
Flickr / Terry Feuerborn*

The Aswan High Dam has had mixed results for the country. Built on the Nile between 1960 and 1970, the dam provides Egypt with hydroelectric power and consistent irrigation, which guarantees agricultural productivity. However, the dam blocks the flow of nutrients to the Nile River Delta, which has caused a decrease in certain fish populations that rely on minerals from the silt. Moreover, the dam causes soil erosion, and poor drainage of newly irrigated lands leads to increased salinization of soils

downstream. Over half the already scarce farmland in Egypt has been harmed by salt from brackish irrigated water; some farmland soil is now rated as medium or poor.⁷⁷

Natural Hazards

Egypt suffers from hazards associated with its desert environment. Periodic droughts occur, sometimes followed by flash floods.⁷⁸ Ferocious sandstorms rage throughout the country, disrupting sea and air travel and blocking visibility.⁷⁹ Swirling clouds of dust, which can be seen on satellite imagery, blow over Egypt and northern Africa.⁸⁰



*Sandstorms in Wadi Al-Hitan
Flickr / Hendrik Lux*

A hot wind, known as *khamsin*, blows across Africa's north coast, including Egypt, in the spring.⁸¹ It usually arrives in April, but it may be as early as March, or as late as May. The winds reach up to 140 kph (87 mph) or more, carrying dirt and sand from the desert.^{82, 83} The temperature of the blowing air can be as high as 40° C (104° F). The wind blows for approximately 50 days, causing illness in people and animals and damage to crops and buildings.^{84, 85}

Egypt has a history of high-magnitude earthquakes. This region is an active seismic zone; earthquakes have been reported here as early as 1068 CE.⁸⁶ An earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale struck near the same area in November 1995 and was felt from Sudan to Syria. Some cities reported heavy damage, which was mainly due to the poor quality of construction along with inadequate building materials and maintenance.⁸⁷ Some of the earthquakes in Egypt have resulted in widespread death and injuries.⁸⁸

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Egypt in Perspective

Chapter 1 | Geography

Assessment

1. The Sinai Peninsula is an important agricultural region in northern Egypt.
2. The Suez Canal links the Mediterranean and the Red seas.
3. The source of the Nile River is in Sudan.
4. The Western Desert makes up about two-thirds of Egypt's land area.
5. Port Said was founded in the 7th century CE by Arabs, shortly after the Arab conquest of Egypt.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. False



Battle of the Pyramids under Napoleon Bonaparte, July 21, 1798
Wikimedia Commons

Chapter 2 | Egypt in Perspective

History

Introduction

Egypt is the site of one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Settlements in the bountiful Nile River Valley near Merimde on the western delta date back as far as 7000 BCE.¹ As settlements grew into agricultural societies, two kingdoms, Upper and Lower Egypt, emerged and became unified around 3000 BCE. Over the next three thousand years, a series of dynasties witnessed vast cultural achievements, including hieroglyphic writing and the pyramids. Internal weakness and bankruptcy left the empire vulnerable to several invasions.² During Roman rule (31 BCE to 642 CE), Egypt established its own Christian (Coptic) Church. Later, Arabs ruled Egypt for six centuries and introduced Islam and the Arabic language. During rule by the Mamluks

and Ottomans (1250-1798), Egypt became an Islamic state with an Arabic-speaking majority.^{3, 4, 5, 6}

Modern European influence began with the French invasion of 1798 and continued with the British occupation in 1882. Egypt gained partial independence in 1922 and full sovereignty after the army overthrew the British-backed monarchy in 1952. Since then, Egypt has seen few presidents (only six by 2018), been in five conflicts with Israel (1948, 1956, 1967, 1969-70, and 1973), and seen repressive regimes incapable of managing the country's socio-economic problems.^{7, 8} These conditions have led to the assassination of a president, terrorist attacks, and popular uprisings.^{9, 10} In 2012, Egyptians chose a democratically elected president for the first time, but gross mismanagement of the country led to his abrupt ouster at the hands of the military in 2013. The current leadership is attempting to restore Egypt's faltering economy and contain a simmering Islamist insurgency.¹¹

Ancient History

Between 8000 and 5000 BCE, nomads were moving through Upper and Lower Egypt from central Africa and Asia.¹² Settlements began in the Nile Valley, where the rich silt deposits on the valley floor supported land cultivation. Agriculture and towns began to appear in the sixth millennium BCE. It was during this late pre-dynastic period that hieroglyphs (writing symbols) emerged.¹³



*Hieroglyph for King Peribsen's name, Second Dynasty
Wikimedia / Udimu*

Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt

Loosely formed confederations known as Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt were clashing over territorial encroachments and competition in the fourth millennium BCE. Upper and Lower Egypt were united under Upper Egyptian King Narmer in 3100 BCE. King Narmer's strong central rule in this first Egyptian dynasty was a harbinger of the bureaucratic governments that followed.^{14, 15}

With the emergence of a centralized government, Egypt's economic and political institutions became subject to the authority of a god-king. The central government became a bureaucracy that employed state officials, soldiers, public workers, and others to serve the growing state. During this early dynastic period, civil servants and



*Sphinx with pyramids built during the Old Kingdom
Flickr / Roderick Eime*

artisans created the foundations of the pharaonic civilization and its traditions of art and learning. Memphis was established as the capital of the unified country.¹⁶

Egypt's ancient history includes 31 to 34 dynasties, one of the longest-lasting civilizations in history. Vast periods known as "kingdoms" encompass many dynasties and span centuries. During intermediate periods between kingdoms, Upper and Lower Egypt were ruled partially or entirely by foreign

powers. The first kingdom in Egypt was the Old Kingdom, between approximately 2625 and 2130 BCE, during the age of the pyramids.¹⁷ The next period was the Middle Kingdom, which lasted until around 1630 BCE and saw the emergence of a middle class. The last period was the New Kingdom, lasting until 1075 BCE. The New Kingdom was the age of great pharaonic conquests.¹⁸

Decline of Imperial Egypt

The New Kingdom was followed by an intermediate period (1075-656 BCE) which saw the demise of the empire. Egypt was nearly bankrupt by 1000 BCE. The country fragmented into small, constantly fighting, fiefdoms. Royal tombs were looted, and the ruling classes became increasingly corrupt. Nubia took advantage of Egypt's internal weakness, seized the throne, and ruled for over 100 years. Other invaders dominated Egypt - including Libyans, Persians, and Assyrians from Mesopotamia - until the arrival of Alexander the Great.¹⁹



*Golden burial mask from the mummy
of Tutankhamun, New Kingdom
Wikimedia / RolandUnger*

Greek and Roman Rule (332 BCE-642 CE)

In 332 BCE, Alexander the Great drove the Persians out of Egypt. Seen by Egyptians as a liberator, he was crowned pharaoh. He founded the city of Alexandria, which became the cultural and economic center of the known world. It housed the Library of Alexandria, the ancient world's greatest archive of knowledge.^{20, 21, 22, 23}



*Coptic Orthodox Church in Sharm el Sheik
Flickr / Mikele*

The Ptolemaic Kingdom

The period between 332 and 30 BCE marked the end of ancient Egypt as a political entity. Ptolemy, one of Alexander's generals, took power after Alexander's death. Egyptian and Hellenic culture fused productively, and the dynasty that Ptolemy founded ruled for three centuries. Internal strife, however, weakened the Ptolemaic rule. The last ruler, Cleopatra, and her husband Marc Anthony, committed suicide before being captured by the forces of Octavian, who became the first Roman emperor Augustus.²⁴

Roman Province of Egypt



*Ancient Roman theaters in Alexandria
Wikimedia / Neithsabes*

The final decline of ancient Egyptian culture occurred under Roman rule (30 BCE-642 CE). The Romans established trading posts throughout Egypt and demanded that Egyptian farmers provide them a steady supply of grain and produce. Rome subdued the population by destroying the native culture, levying oppressive taxes, and demanding compliance with Roman law. The Egyptian religion gradually disappeared, along with the spoken language, which eventually

merged into Coptic. Hieroglyphic writing and the knowledge of how to decipher it also disappeared. The Greek alphabet was used for writing, and the library of Alexandria was destroyed.^{25, 26, 27}

The Islamic Conquest and Arab Rule (642–1250)

The Arab prophet Muhammad founded Islam in the 7th century and unified the tribes of Arabia around the new religion. Islam began expanding rapidly into other regions, and in 642, an army led by Amr ibn al-As arrived from the Arabian Desert and conquered Egypt. The army's encampment, al-Fustat, was the first capital of Muslim Egypt and later became part of the Cairo metropolis. From that time forward, the historical capitals of Egypt (Memphis, Thebes, and Alexandria) declined. Their temples and monuments fell into ruin and became quarries mined for buildings of the new Islamic regime.²⁸



Locator map of the Aegyptus province in the Roman Empire (30 BCE-642 CE)
Wikimedia / Shadowfox

The Arab invasion occurred at a time when Egyptians were resentful of their Eastern Roman Empire rulers. Thus, Egyptians were more willing to accept the new language and religion of their conquerors. In 969 CE Fatimid rulers of Egypt built a new city near al-Fustat, calling it al-Mansuriyah and later al-Qahirah (Cairo). The Fatimid dynasty ruled from Cairo for two centuries.²⁹



Mosque of Amr ibn al-As originally built in 642 AD
Wikimedia / M mousa 86

During that period, the Arabic language became increasingly popular. Sunni Islam gradually replaced traditional polytheism; Islam coexisted alongside the Coptic Orthodox sect of Christianity. It was not until the 13th century, however, that a Muslim majority emerged in Egypt.³⁰

From the 11th to the 13th centuries, Christian armies from the West went to war against Islam, trying to reclaim sites associated with Biblical events. When the Crusaders reached Egypt, they were driven back by a Muslim army led by Salah al-Din (Saladin). Saladin established the Ayyubid dynasty, which ruled from 1171 to 1250. During his rule, he began to build a wall surrounding Cairo, and he built the Citadel, which still stands today. Egypt became a center for theological studies and saw cultural growth and prosperity.^{31, 32}

Mamluk Expansion and Ottoman Rule (1250–1805)



Selim I, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire
Wikimedia / Bilinmiyor

For the next two centuries, Egypt was ruled by the Mamluks (a militaristic group who had originally been Turkish slaves), followed by the Turkish Ottomans. Under the Mamluks' ruthless leadership, Egypt conquered Syria and Palestine and controlled the thriving Mediterranean trade in partnership with Venice. In the 15th century, however, the power of this partnership weakened. Vasco da Gama's discovery of a sea route around the Cape of Good Hope meant European merchants could now bypass Cairo on their voyages. This development resulted in less wealth for Egypt and a decline in commercial and political power.³³ The Ottoman Empire filled that void, ruling Egypt between 1517 and 1805. The Ottoman rulers of Egypt sent revenues and taxes back to Constantinople, the Turkish capital, leaving

Egyptians impoverished. As the Ottoman Empire went into decline, its hold over Egypt weakened. Ottoman rule was followed by a brief period of French rule.³⁴

The Dawn of Modern Egypt (1798–1882)

In 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt, competing with British interests in the country. His army fought to gain control of Cairo. Unfortunately for Napoleon, England's Admiral Horatio Nelson sank the French fleet at Abu Qir. Because of an Anglo-Ottoman alliance, the French were forced to retreat. Although their time in Egypt was short, the French brought a distinct influence that divided the population and lasted through two centuries of British colonialism. Many members of the Egyptian power elite still consider it prestigious to acquire fluency in French as well as in English. Egypt's judicial system today is also partly based on French law, the Napoleonic Code.^{35, 36}



French invasion of Egypt
Wikimedia Commons



Muhammad Ali of Egypt establishes a modern Navy
Wikimedia / Roke-commonswiki

In 1805, an Ottoman officer from Macedonia named Mohammed Ali Pasha stepped into the power vacuum that was left after the French defeat. He modernized Egypt and created an institutional state structure. Ali's government built canals, introduced public education, and reshaped the military after the French model. Ali also introduced the lucrative cotton industry to Egypt. He is regarded as the founder of modern Egypt. His heirs continued reforms, including establishing a railway system and

one of the world's first postal and telegraph systems. It was also during this time of political expansion that tourists began discovering Egypt and its ancient treasures.³⁷

Ali's Egypt was nominally under Ottoman rule, but Ali wanted to carve out his own empire at Ottoman expense. In 1831, Ali invaded Syria in an attempt to gain Ottoman territory. Britain and other European powers, seeking to maintain Ottoman territorial integrity, allied with Istanbul and rebuffed Ali's forces. In 1841, Ali signed a treaty limiting his rule to Egypt and Sudan and opening up his territory to British trade interests.³⁸

British Occupation (1882–1922)

Ali's most consequential project was planting long-staple cotton and ordering farmers to cultivate this valuable cash crop. Ali's introduction of cotton as a mainstay of the economy had enormous long-term repercussions for future trade and relations with Great Britain and the United States.³⁹



Gathering of Egyptian, Turkish and British royalty at Port Said, 1911
Wikimedia Commons

Many historians believe it was primarily Egypt's cotton industry that led to Great Britain's eventual control of Egypt.

Following the Industrial Revolution, Britain needed raw cotton to supply its markets with finished fabric. After America's decline in the cotton market following the Civil War, Egypt's cotton industry boomed. Egypt became Britain's main a supplier.⁴⁰

Great Britain became deeply invested in the Egyptian economy, giving Egyptian business partners high-interest loans. The Egyptians needed money to develop the booming cotton industry and undertake expensive modernization projects. Debt recovery accompanied by financial reform was the convenient excuse the British gave for their occupation of Egypt in 1882. After the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Egypt was declared independent of Turkey. The British legitimized their presence in Egypt by claiming it a British Protectorate.^{41, 42}

The Suez Canal

The Suez Canal was built between 1859 and 1869 by a French-owned company that used Egyptian forced labor. The canal linked the Red and Mediterranean Seas across 193 km (120 mi) of the western Sinai Peninsula, from Suez in the south to Port Said in the north. By eliminating the need to circumvent Africa, the canal immediately became a strategically important shipping channel and caused Britain to increase its vested interest in Egypt. It gave Britain a direct shipping link to its colonies in India and the Far East. After 1875, the Suez Canal came under British financial control.⁴³



*Extension of Suez Canal, 1880
Flickr / Photographic Heritage*

By agreement, the canal was to remain open to marine traffic of all nations in war or peace. However, such use has at times been denied. In World War II, for instance, Great Britain controlled the canal and closed it to German shipping, and Egypt later blocked its use to Israel for a few years. Because of its strategic importance, the Suez Canal has also been subject to attacks. Both the Suez Crisis of 1956 and the Arab-Israeli War of 1967 saw the canal's closure in the aftermath of war. Throughout its history, the Suez Canal has served the interests of other nations as much as those of Egypt.⁴⁴

British Colonialism and Egyptian Nationalism



Nationalists demonstrating in Cairo in 1919
Wikimedia Commons

The British were committed to maintaining control over trade and the use of the Suez Canal. They ruled Egypt indirectly, allowing Mohammed Ali's heirs to remain on the throne and used other local rulers and officials as intermediaries for British rule. This had the effect of dividing and weakening the population by pitting their interests against each other.⁴⁵

Indirect rule could not hide British control of the legal system, schools, army, and economy. The British modernized the country and instituted reforms such as abolishing Nile tolls, which had a positive economic effect. The colonial government improved infrastructure, built canals, railway and telegraph lines, and improved the ports. The economic benefits accrued mainly to the British officials and the Egyptian landowners ruling in their name. The positive aspects of British rule could not offset the people's desire to control their own destiny. Britain's rigid colonial regime and its policies of control in every aspect of life planted the seeds of a nationalist movement.⁴⁶

A nationalist movement known as Pan-Arabism, which originated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, helped motivate opposition to British rule. As literacy increased in the Middle East, political views became widely shared and discussed. The Arab world began moving toward political unification and renewed interest in a caliphate form of government. Pan-Arabism found expression in various nationalist groups. One example was the nationalist Wafd Party, whose leader, Saad Zaghlul, was elected Egypt's prime minister for 10 months in 1924. His demands for Egyptian independence led to his persecution by the British, and he is still considered a national hero in Egypt today.⁴⁷

Pan-Arabism and the Muslim Brotherhood



Al-Banna with Egyptian, Palestinian and Algerian political and religious figures in Cairo in 1947
Wikimedia / Mohamed Ali Eltaher Collection

One of the Pan-Arabism offshoots was the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna, an elementary school teacher. The group's philosophy was shaped by Sayyid Qutb, a civil servant in Egypt's education ministry. Qutub's radical Islamic views were shaped by the repressive Arab regimes of his day and by a 1940s study trip to the United States, which he came to view as spiritually and morally bankrupt. He published several works in the 1950s and 1960s extolling traditional Islamic virtues and laying out an

ideal Islamic society. He was executed in 1966 by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser. The Brotherhood mixed religion with politics, charitable institutions, and education, and promoted social cohesion around Islamic principles. Its social assistance to the common people made it popular, and the organization grew quickly. In 1948, the official political arm of the Brotherhood was legalized but limited strictly as a religious organization.^{48, 49}

Movement toward Independence

Several events mark Egypt's move toward independence. In 1922, after World War I, Egypt achieved partial independence as a parliamentary monarchy with a constitution. Britain, however, had installed King Fu'ad, a weak monarch whom they were able to influence, to make sure he upheld British interests. Britain also remained responsible for the defense of the Suez Canal. The Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, signed in 1936, required Britain to withdraw all troops from Egypt, yet allowed for two additional decades of British control of the canal. In reaction to continued British presence, Egyptian officer Gamal Abdel Nasser formed the Free Officers Movement within the army. They began plotting to overthrow the pro-British government, now headed by King Fu'ad's successor, King Faruq.^{50, 51}



Nasser raising the Egyptian flag over the Suez Canal to celebrate the British military withdrawal, June 1956
Wikimedia Commons

In January 1952, “Black Saturday,” anti-British riots broke out in Cairo. Then, in July 1952, in a drive to set a nationalist direction, Nasser and his army officers seized power and deposed King Faruq in a bloodless coup. The officers appointed Mohammad Naguib as the country’s new leader. In June 1953, the monarchy and political parties were abolished, and Egypt was declared a republic, with Naguib as prime minister. Real power, however, was in the hands of the Revolutionary Command Council, headed by Nasser. When Naguib and Nasser diverged in their views on reform, Naguib was removed from power and Nasser took over in 1954. A treaty with the British that year led to British withdrawal from the country. Finally, in January 1956, Nasser declared Egypt a socialist state and himself as president. He also introduced a new constitution but retained the one-party political system. Thus, the revolution Nasser had launched on pan-Arabist grounds succeeded in its initial phase.⁵²

The Nasser Presidency (1956–1970)

Nasser was a popular leader in Egypt and throughout the Middle East. His support of Arab nationalism and anti-colonial movements endeared him to many. He supported Algerian and sub-Saharan struggles for independence and co-founded the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Under his leadership, a new middle class emerged, women gained more rights, corruption was reduced, land reforms were made, and industrialization was accelerated. Nasser ruled for 18 years, but his autocratic ways gained him some enemies within Egypt, and his staunch nationalism made him enemies in the West. In 1954, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to assassinate Nasser. Six members of the Brotherhood were put to death, 4,000 were arrested, and thousands escaped to Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.^{53, 54, 55}



Nasser signing unity pact with Syrian president al-Quwatli, forming the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958
Wikimedia Commons

In 1958, the United Arab Republic (UAR), a union of Egypt and Syria, was created. This new unified government abolished Egyptian and Syrian citizenship and considered the combined territory to be an Arab homeland. In 1961, Syria withdrew from the UAR.^{56, 57}

Nationalization of the Suez Canal

Nasser's relations with the West turned unexpectedly sour over his plans to finance a dam that could control Nile floods and increase the generation of electrical power. Britain, the United States, and the World Bank withdrew loans they had promised for the construction of the dam because of Nasser's economic ties to the Soviet Union, which threatened the Western bloc's regional control. Nasser then decided to nationalize the Suez Canal to secure funds for the dam, which he did



*Building of Suez Canal Authority in port said
Wikimedia / Abdelrhman 1990*

in 1956. By standing up to British imperial pressure, Nasser became the symbolic leader of Arab nationalism. The Soviet Union and its allies also supported him.^{58, 59}

Suez Crisis



*Smoke rises from oil tanks at the Suez Canal hit during
the Anglo-French assault on Port Said in 1956
Wikimedia / Fleet Air Arm*

In 1956, in what became known as the Suez Crisis, Britain, France, and Israel attacked Egypt to reestablish British control. Britain bombed and destroyed the Egyptian Air Force; British, French, and Israeli forces invaded the Sinai Peninsula and the Canal Zone.⁶⁰ The United States was angered at not being informed of the invasion and alarmed at the possibility of Soviet intervention on behalf of Egypt. U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles took Egypt's side. In response, England, France, and Israel withdrew from the Sinai. The UN

sent troops to restore peace, and they remained in Egypt until 1967. The resolution of the crisis promoted pan-Arab nationalism and completed the transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute into an Israeli-Arab one. Egypt reopened the Suez Canal after the war to all ships except those of Israel; Nasser nationalized remaining British and French assets in Egypt.^{61, 62, 63}

The Six-Day War (1967 War)

In May 1967, Nasser closed the Straits of Tiran, all isolating the economically important Israeli port of Eilat, and expelled the UN force that was stationed to keep the peace between the two countries. In response, Israel launched a surprise attack on 5 June, which destroyed Egypt's air force. Six days later, Israel had control of the entire Sinai Peninsula. This defeat was humiliating for Egypt and a blow to Arab nationalism. The Suez Canal remained closed for eight years, and Israel took over control of the Gaza Strip (from Egypt), the Golan Heights (from Syria); the West Bank and East Jerusalem were seized from Jordan.^{64, 65}



Conquest of Sinai by Israel, June 5-6, 1967
Wikimedia Commons

The Anwar Sadat Presidency (1970–1981)



President Anwar Sadat
Flickr / Abdullah Manaz

Nasser died in 1970, and he was succeeded by Anwar Sadat. Sadat promoted a fundamental shift toward peace with Israel, believing it key to Egypt's development. He saw that endless war with Israel would only damage Egypt's economy, stability, and growth as a nation. He first offered a concession based on a UN resolution that called for the return to pre-1967 borders. Egypt would enter into a peace agreement with Israel if Israel withdrew from Sinai and Gaza. This attempt to reach a settlement, however, was rejected by both the United States and Israel.⁶⁶

October War

Sadat calculated that a forceful military campaign against Israel might strengthen his negotiating position. On 6 October 1973, on the Jewish Yom Kippur holiday, Egyptian

and Syrian forces mounted surprise attacks against Israel. After initial gains, the Arab forces were rebuffed by the Israeli military, aided by a last-minute weapons shipment from the United States. A UN-brokered ceasefire was declared on 25 October.^{67, 68}

Camp David Peace Accord

After the Yom Kippur War, Sadat began to negotiate for peace. In 1977, Sadat made history when he became the first Arab leader to visit Israel and give a speech before its legislature.⁶⁹ In 1978, the Camp David Accords, mediated by President Jimmy Carter, were signed in Washington, DC. As a framework for peace, Israel agreed to return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. In return, Egypt recognized Israel's right to exist as a nation. A year later, in 1979, the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab nation was signed. The negotiations for a separate peace agreement with Israel was seen by the Arab world as a betrayal because it weakened their collective power to confront Israel. In 1979, the Arab League suspended Egypt from among its ranks; Egypt's membership would be reinstated in 1989.^{70, 71, 72}



*President Carter shaking hands with Sadat and Begin at the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979
Flickr / Government Press Office*

On 6 October 1981, Sadat was assassinated while watching a parade that commemorated the October war by soldiers who were members of the Islamist group Egyptian Islamic Jihad. The motives for the assassination included Sadat's peace deal with Israel, along with the economic hardship and government corruption.^{73, 74, 75}

On 6 October 1981, Sadat was assassinated while watching a parade that commemorated the October war by soldiers who were members of the Islamist group Egyptian Islamic Jihad. The motives for the assassination included Sadat's peace deal with Israel, along with the economic hardship and government corruption.^{73, 74, 75}

The Mubarak Presidency (1981–2011)

Hosni Mubarak, a former air force commander, succeeded Sadat as president and remained in office for 30 years. Under his leadership, Egypt's peace with Israel was upheld. At the same time, Mubarak consolidated his status as a leader of the Arab world.⁷⁶

Opposition to the Government

Political turmoil followed Egypt's relative calm during the first decade of Mubarak's rule. A population explosion in the 1980s led to joblessness and low standards of living.

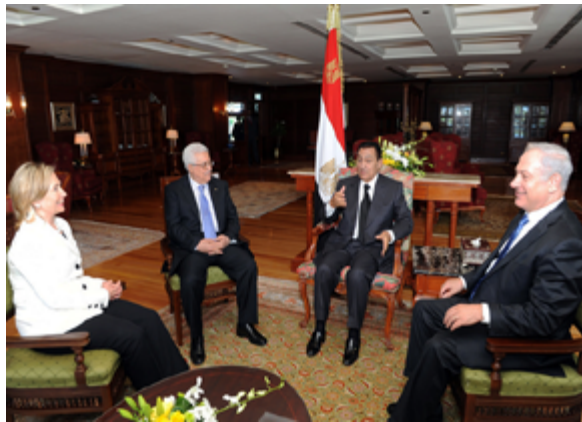
Additionally, the government increasingly blocked any opposition to its policies. Radical Islamists turned to force a change in society. They made frequent attempts to kill the president and members of his cabinet, and they targeted tourism, one of the major sources of revenue, to weaken the state. Several attacks took place, the most well-known being the murder of 58 tourists in Luxor in 1997. The Mubarak regime reacted with repression and mass arrests, trying to stabilize the country.⁷⁷



*Mubarak swearing the oath in 1981
Flickr / Zeinab Mohamed*

The government reacted to internal pressures, cracking down on anti-Western and anti-government Islamist elements, and curtailing democratic freedoms in the process. Bloggers who criticized the president or the government were arrested.⁷⁸

Reform



*Mubarak meeting with Clinton, Abbas, and Netanyahu
at Sharm el-Sheikh in 2010
Flickr / U.S. Department of State*

In response to ongoing demands for political reform, the government changed the constitution in 2005 to allow more activity by opposition parties. This plan to liberalize backfired, however, and resulted in substantial electoral gains for the Muslim Brotherhood. Although the Mubarak regime maintained a ban on religious parties because they could deepen sectarian divisions, members of the brotherhood circumvented this restriction by running as independents. They won a record number of seats in the 2005 election.^{79, 80}

President Mubarak won his fifth consecutive term in 2005, but there was growing concern over the increasing power of the Muslim Brotherhood. On 15 February 2007, security forces arrested several Brotherhood members on various charges. The Brotherhood responded to threats of being excluded from the political process by announcing its plans to register as a legal political party.^{81, 82} That same year, the Egyptian Parliament made controversial amendments to the constitution. The changes

strengthened police powers and removed judicial supervision of elections. They also prohibited all religious-based political activity, which barred the Muslim Brotherhood from its intended legal status as a political party.⁸³

Arab Spring

Inspired by the popular uprising that ousted former President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia in January 2011, Egyptians began their own mass movement against unemployment, poverty, and corruption. Aided by social media, hundreds of thousands gathered in Tahrir Square in Cairo and across the nation in a “Day of Rage” on 25 January. For 18 days Egyptians protested, calling for the resignation of Mubarak. Hundreds were arrested, and over 800 people died and Tahrir Square became the symbol of the protest movement.⁸⁴



*Massive protests at Tahrir Square in 2011
Flickr / Gigi Ibrahim*

Mubarak responded by dismissing his cabinet, appointing a vice president, and promising to step down at the end of his term in September, but the demonstrators demanded his immediate resignation. Mubarak resigned on 11 February 2011, and transferred power to the army. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) suspended the constitution and dissolved the legislature. On 19 March, Egyptians approved constitutional reforms that would pave the way for parliamentary elections, followed by a presidential election.⁸⁵ Mubarak and his two sons were detained and charged with corruption and murder.^{86, 87}

The Morsi Presidency

Islamist parties dominated parliamentary elections held from late 2011 to mid-2012, although SCAF later invalidated the results. In presidential elections in June 2012, Mohammed Morsi, head of the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party, won a runoff against a former minister in Mubarak’s cabinet.⁸⁸

As president, Morsi immediately set out to consolidate power for himself and the Brotherhood. He granted himself outsize powers, clashed with the judiciary, and challenged the military. He also allowed the drafting of a new constitution to be

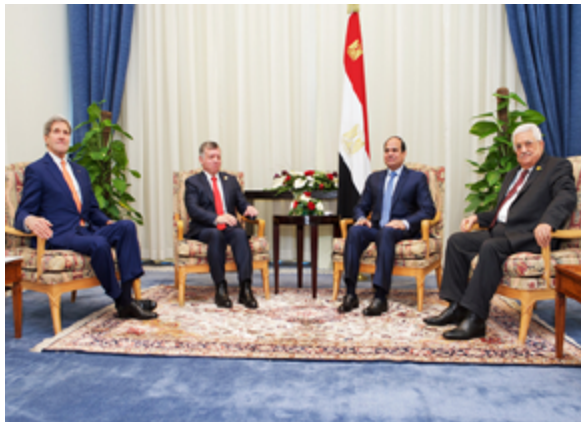
controlled solely by Islamists, to the exclusion of seculars, liberals, and Christians.⁸⁹

Morsi's political maneuvers and his neglect of Egypt's worsening economy, infrastructure, and internal security led to massive demonstrations and violent clashes between his detractors and supporters in the summer of 2013. As the standoff worsened in July, the military intervened and removed Morsi from power, suspended the constitution, and installed an interim administration. Morsi and other Muslim Brotherhood leaders were arrested, prompting violent demonstrations during which security forces killed over a thousand people. The Brotherhood was outlawed in September 2013, and many of its leaders were tried and sentenced to death.⁹⁰



*President Mohamed Morsi
Wikimedia / Wilson Dias / Abr*

Current Events



*Egyptian President Sisi with U.S. Secretary of State Kerry, King Abdullah and President Abbas, Sharm el-Sheikh, 2015
Flickr / U.S. Department of State*

In late 2013, the interim government created a new constitution which protected the autonomy of the military and police. General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, whom Morsi had appointed as the head of the military, was widely perceived as the architect of Morsi's fall and the true holder of political authority. Sisi won 96% of the vote in presidential elections in May 2014, marking a return to rule by a military-backed strongman.^{91, 92}

Under Sisi's rule, Egypt has continued to struggle with economic stagnation, unemployment, and security threats. Billions of dollars in aid from Gulf states and the IMF have done little to curb the country's significant economic crisis. Sisi has shown himself very willing to use Mubarak-style repressive tactics to silence political dissent and activism. Morsi's ouster enlivened an Islamist anti-government insurgency in the northern Sinai. The militants, affiliated with the Islamic State, conduct sporadic attacks against places of worship, government officials, security forces, and tourists, causing hundreds of casualties.^{93, 94, 95}

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Chapter 2 | History

Assessment

1. Ancient Egyptian culture and language disappeared under Roman rule.
2. The United Arab Republic (UAR) united Egypt and Syria into one state.
3. An Ottoman officer is considered the founder of Modern Egypt.
4. Egypt gained independence at the end of World War I, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.
5. After the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, Egypt began a transition to democracy.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. False



*Livestock market in Cairo
Flickr / Nasser Nour*

Chapter 3 | Egypt in Perspective

Economy

Introduction

Historically, the Egyptian economy was based on agriculture. Agricultural production, however, was limited by the small amount of arable land and has not kept pace with the growing population. In addition, powerful families of the ruling class traditionally have controlled peasants' lives and their land. Attempted land reform has failed to redress this imbalance, and most peasants remain landless and poor. Although industrialization in Egypt began in the 19th century, the economy remained dependent on agriculture until the mid-20th century. At that time, hydrocarbon processing began to play a larger role.^{1, 2}

The political upheaval of 2011 weakened an already weak economy. After coming to power in 2014, President Sisi has attempted to make Egypt business-friendly in the hopes of reviving Egypt's economy. In 2017, Egypt and the International Monetary Fund reached an agreement on a USD 12 billion loan disbursement. Egypt's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by over 4% each year between 2015 and 2017 as the economy became more decentralized and market-oriented.^{3, 4, 5}

Yet Egypt's economy is still hampered by government intervention, state-run industries, a bloated public sector, and substantial but ineffective subsidies. Egypt's resources are insufficient to provide jobs and food for a growing population. For many, the standard of living remains low. The country's main sources of hard currency are tourism, gas and oil exports, remittances from Egyptian workers abroad, foreign aid, and Suez Canal tolls - almost all of which are vulnerable to outside shocks or are controlled by the government.⁶

Agriculture

Egypt's agriculture sector is closely tied to the Nile River. Only 3% of Egypt is arable land, most of it in the Nile Delta and along the Nile between Aswan and Cairo. The land is very fertile, allowing for multiple crops per year. The completion of the Aswan High Dam in 1970 made it possible to control the Nile's annual flood for the first time in history. Over 400,000 he (1,000,000 ac) were reclaimed for farming, although a similar amount of land has been lost to industry and urbanization.^{7, 8, 9}



Agricultural field
Wikimedia / MJJR

Agriculture contributes 11.9% of Egypt's GDP and employs about 25% of the labor force. About 45% of the women in Egypt's labor force work in agriculture and over 55% of Egypt's overall employment is agriculture-related. Unusual for a developing country, Egypt's agriculture is focused on commercial, not subsistence, production. Heavy investment in irrigation and farming techniques, government regulation, and crop rotation ensure a high yield of crops.^{10, 11, 12}

Cotton is one of Egypt's main agricultural products. Egypt is the main producer of long-staple cotton in the world, supplying one-third of the global crop. Egyptian long-staple cotton is highly sought-after for its smoothness and durability. Other important crops are corn,

rice, wheat, sugarcane, tomatoes, sugar beets, and many fruits. The most important livestock are water buffalo, asses, cattle, sheep, and goats. Since the construction of the Aswan High Dam, a freshwater fishing industry has developed in Lake Nasser.^{13, 14}

Industry

Egypt's major industries are textiles, food processing, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, hydrocarbons, construction, cement, metals, and light manufacturing. Industry contributes 32.9% to Egypt's GDP and employs 23.5% of the labor force. Egypt's industrial growth has varied over the past decade, being negatively impacted by the 2011 revolution and the subsequent political instability. In 2016, the industrial production growth rate was 3.5%.^{15, 16}



*A dyeing factory in the back streets of Cairo
Flickr / Kate Andrews*

Manufacturing, an industrial sub-sector, accounts for 16.6% of Egypt's GDP. Manufacturing activities include producing building materials and pharmaceutical products and processing textiles, food, and consumer goods. Most large manufacturing is state-owned, but the government has begun to sell holdings to the private sector.^{17, 18} In recent years, manufacturing has been hampered by a lack of skilled labor and stifling industrial policies. Egypt hopes to expand the manufacturing sector, in part by developing industrial zones.^{19, 20}

Energy



*An offshore platform in the Darfeel Gas Field
Wikimedia / Abdallamagdy*

Egypt has proven oil reserves of 4.4 billion barrels and proven natural gas reserves of 78 trillion cubic feet. Oil production is 723,000 barrels per day, approximately half of which comes from the Abu Sennan area of the Western Desert.^{21, 22} In 2017, Egypt produced about 5.1 billion cubic feet of natural gas per day. Recently discovered natural gas fields at Zohr, North Alexandria, and Nooros are expected to double natural gas production by 2020.²³

An increasing part of Egypt's daily energy production is going toward meeting the country's growing energy needs. The high domestic demand for electricity is driven by economic growth and rapid urbanization and has led to severe power shortages and rolling blackouts. Almost all of Egypt's petroleum is being used domestically, negating the possibility of its use as a source of hard currency.²⁴ Egypt has an ongoing policy of subsidizing fuel and electricity for its citizens.²⁵



*Wind turbine at Zaafarana
Wikimedia / Hatem Moushir*

Given the high demand for energy and the inadequacy of oil and gas production, Egypt is attempting to expand renewable energy sources such as hydroelectricity, solar, and wind to derive 20% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020. The Aswan High Dam is a significant source of hydroelectric power, supplying 5-10% of the country's energy needs. A grid to connect solar power generation stations is in development in southern Egypt. The project consists of 41 solar power plants and will be the largest facility of its kind in Africa.^{26, 27, 28} The weather in Egypt's Suez Gulf is very suitable for wind energy generation, and the government has established several large-scale wind farms in cooperation with international companies.²⁹

Natural Resources

Since independence, Egyptian administrations have focused on oil and gas, largely ignoring mining. President Nasser nationalized much of the mining industry in the early 1960s. Today, mining and quarrying make up only 0.4% of Egypt's GDP and 1.5% of the country's total exports. The Sukari mine, which is 700 km (434 mi) east of Cairo, is Egypt's only operating gold mine. It produces 440,000 ounces per year.³⁰ Egypt's Eastern Desert is believed to contain vast amounts of mineral deposits worth hundreds of billions of dollars. Thousands of ancient mining sites for gold, silver, and copper exist in the desert.³¹



*Sukari Gold mine
Wikimedia / Taha Ahmed*

Until recently, the global mining industry has shown little interest in Egypt due to the government's terms for mining concessions. In 2014, the government introduced new mining laws, aiming to expand the mining sector to 5% of GDP by 2020. The government has established a free economic zone in the Eastern Desert for mining called the Golden Triangle. In 2017, the Energy Ministry began the process of awarding mining contracts to local and foreign companies for mining concessions in the Eastern Desert and Sinai Peninsula.^{32, 33, 34}

Service Sector



*The Think Tank
Wikimedia / SMart Village*

The service sector accounts for 55.2% of Egypt's GDP, by far the largest share. The service sector includes retail, entertainment, tourism, insurance, banking, and consumer services.³⁵ Egypt is an attractive destination for business process outsourcing (BPO) services, especially for European markets. Egypt's advantages include its close distance to Europe, cultural compatibility, a similar time zone, and a large and highly-educated population. The service industry has

experienced rapid growth since the turn of the millennium, despite the political turmoil of 2011. In a sign of advancement, Egypt's BPO market is increasingly focusing on high-value, specialized services such as product research and development.^{36, 37, 38}

Tourism

Egypt's natural beauty, ancient landmarks, and treasures make the country a unique and impressive tourist destination. The tourism industry has been sluggish since the 2011 revolution, due to political instability and internal security threats. In 2015, a suspected bomb brought down a Russian jet carrying 224 people, shortly after taking off from a Red Sea resort. Deadly militant attacks against mosques and churches take place sporadically.³⁹

Tourism is a crucial part of Egypt's economy, accounting for 12% of the country's GDP and employing some 10% of the labor force. Tourism revenues amounted to USD 3.8 billion in 2016, down from USD 7.4 billion in 2015 and USD 12.5 billion in 2010.⁴⁰

⁴¹ In 2016, 9.3 million tourists visited Egypt, an increase from 5.3 million in 2015,

but down from the peak of 14.5 million in 2010.⁴² The primary countries of origin for international tourists are Germany, Ukraine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and China.⁴³



Tourism
Flickr / Patrick M

Egypt hopes to boost its tourism industry by improving infrastructure and bolstering its international image. In 2017, the transport ministry announced plans to build three new high-speed rail lines to connect Cairo, Alexandria, and Luxor, as well as tram and underground metro projects in Cairo.⁴⁴

That same year, the government arranged for movie star Will Smith and soccer star Lionel Messi to fly to Egypt for photo ops in front of the pyramids.⁴⁵

Banking and Finance

Banking



200 Egyptian pound (EGP)
Wikimedia / Szajci

Egypt's national currency is the Egyptian pound (EGP). In January 2018, USD 1 was worth EGP 17.69.⁴⁶ The Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) formulates and implements the country's monetary policy, with the goals of price stability and low inflation.⁴⁷ In 2017, the CBE lifted strict currency controls that had been imposed following the 2011 revolution,

a sign that the Egyptian economy was recovering. The CBE's foreign reserves were USD 36.7 billion in October 2017.⁴⁸ In 2016, Egypt floated the EGP as part of an economic aid agreement with the International Monetary Fund, leading to rapid inflation.^{49, 50}

There are about 40 banks in the Egyptian banking system, categorized as commercial, non-commercial, public, and private. All banks are under the supervision of the Central Bank of Egypt. Some are specialized banks, such as agriculture or real estate banks. Three large public sector banks - the National Bank of Egypt, Bank Misr, and Banque Du Caire - control 40% of the banking sector.⁵¹

Some 20 foreign banks, many of them Arab, operate in Egypt. These banks seek to facilitate international trade in Egypt and profit from Egypt's improving business climate.⁵² U.S. banks represented in Egypt include Citibank and Bank of New York Mellon.⁵³

Islamic banking has been present in Egypt since the 1960s. In accordance with the prohibition of moneylending under Sharia law, Islamic banking does not rely on charging interest. It operates on risk sharing rather than lending and borrowing. Egyptians became more interested in Islamic banking after losing money through conventional banks during the 2008 global financial crisis. Many conventional banks in Egypt offer Islamic banking services. About 20% of Egyptian bank clients use Islamic banking, and the system constitutes about 8% of Egypt's banking market.⁵⁴



*Central Bank of Egypt
Flickr / Muhammad Mansour*

Finance

Egypt is attempting to attract increased foreign direct investment (FDI) as its economy recovers from the 2011 revolution. A new investment law in 2017 aims to make Egypt more business-friendly by providing tax breaks and rebates while cutting red tape for companies. After the Egyptian pound lost about half of its value against the U.S. dollar in 2017, the cost of Egyptian labor became cheaper and, therefore, attractive to foreign investors. Egypt received about USD 8.7 billion in FDI in 2017, up from USD 6.9 billion the previous year. The government's FDI target is USD 10 billion per year.⁵⁵ ⁵⁶ The main FDI sectors are oil, finance, real estate, manufacturing, construction, and communication. The primary sources of FDI in Egypt are the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Belgium, and Saudi Arabia.⁵⁷

Trade

In 2016, Egypt had a trade deficit of USD 38.7 billion.⁵⁸ In recent years, the imports demanded by Egypt's growing economy have surpassed its export capability.⁵⁹

Egypt's primary export commodities are crude oil and petroleum products, fruits and vegetables, cotton, textiles, metal products, chemicals, and processed food. The country's main export partners are the United Arab Emirates (12.5%),



*Cargo ships at Suez Canal
Flickr / Vyacheslav Argenberg*

Saudi Arabia (7.7%), Italy (6.5%), Turkey (6.3%), the United Kingdom (4.6%), and the United States (4.5%).

The main imported commodities are machinery and equipment, foodstuffs, chemicals, wood products, and fuels. Egypt's main import partners are China (12.9%), Germany (8.7%), the United States (5.3%), Italy (4.5%), Turkey (4.3%), and Saudi Arabia (4.1%).⁶⁰



Cotton vendor
Flickr / Yuen-Ping

Egypt is a signatory to several multilateral trade agreements and has bilateral trade agreements with Arab countries, China, Russia, and the European Union.⁶¹ In 2015, Egypt and 25 other African countries signed the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement (TFTA). The TFTA aims to create an integrated economic community stretching from Egypt to South Africa, including half of the continent's population. It would significantly boost Egypt's exports to growing sub-Saharan markets.⁶²

Standard of Living



Standard urban living, Aswan
Flickr / Ronald Woan

With over 97 million people, Egypt is the most populous Arab country and Africa's third most populous country. Life expectancy at birth is 73 years. The maternal mortality rate is 33 deaths per 100,000 live births, a global ranking of 110. The infant mortality rate ranks 84 globally, with 20.3 deaths per 100,000 live births.^{63, 64}

Egypt spends 5.6% of its GDP on health expenditures. The major infectious diseases are bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, and schistosomiasis. The top causes of death are heart disease, stroke, and cirrhosis of the liver. Major risk factors are tobacco use among males and obesity among females.^{65, 66}

Over 27% of the Egyptian population lives below the poverty line. Egypt defines the poverty line as an income below EGP 5,787 (USD 327) per year and EGP 482 (USD 27)

per month. The number of impoverished Egyptians has been growing in recent years. Increased poverty correlates with increased family size and illiteracy. Higher food prices also play a role in the growth of poverty. Rural Egyptians are poorer than urban ones, but there is greater economic inequality in urban areas.^{67, 68}



*Young child in poor neighborhood
Flickr / Adam Jones*

Egypt's GDP per capita is USD 13,000, earning it a global rank of 119.⁶⁹ Low standards of living was one of the main reasons Egyptians took to the streets in 2011. Egyptians wanted more jobs, healthcare, and education, and less poverty.⁷⁰ Economic weaknesses that were present in 2011 - like inefficient subsidies, stifling business regulations, shoddy infrastructure, and lack of access to finance - largely persist today. Additionally, inflation has also negatively affected the population. The prices of basic goods are increasing at a more rapid rate than salaries.^{71, 72}

Employment

Egypt's unemployment rate is 11.98%. It has been steadily decreasing since the 2011 revolution. Among youth aged 15-24, the unemployment rate is 31.3%.⁷³ Unemployment for women is double that for men. Possessing a college degree is not a guarantee for finding employment. In fact, among Egypt's unemployed youth, university graduates have the highest rate of unemployment.^{74, 75}



*Egyptians working at a brick factory
in the Nile Delta town
Flickr / Adam Jones*

Over eight million Egyptians work outside of Egypt.⁷⁶ Each year, 1.3 million Egyptians receive government permits to travel abroad for work. Over half of migrant laborers head to Saudi Arabia. Significant numbers also go to Kuwait and Italy. Egyptian migrant workers have representation in Egypt's parliament, and there is a government ministry devoted to protecting their interests.⁷⁷ In 2015, workers' remittances constituted 5.5% of Egypt's GDP.⁷⁸

The first labor strike in recorded history took place in Ancient Egypt in the 12th century BCE.⁷⁹ Today, the Egyptian constitution gives workers the right to form unions and to strike peacefully. Strikes in all sectors of the economy are frequent.⁸⁰ In 2015, a high court ruling criminalized strikes by public sector workers. Egyptian labor groups strongly criticized the ruling and saw it as politically-motivated and unconstitutional.⁸¹

Outlook



*Female workers at a factory
Flickr / Nestlé*

While Egypt's economy remains fragile, the near-term economic outlook is optimistic. In January 2018, Egypt's planning minister revised his country's growth forecast for 2017-18 upward, from 5.3 to 5.5%. The growth target for 2018-19 is 6%. Continuing economic growth requires foreign investment and tourists. The government intends to attract by both streamlining investment laws and improving security. The high inflation that followed the floating of the EGP in 2016 is

abating, even as the cheap EGP is making Egyptian exports more competitive.^{82, 83} For the long term, in order to maintain economic momentum, Egypt must increase the participation of women and youth in the labor force, further reform its energy sector, manage its growing debt, and mitigate the increasingly visible negative economic effects of climate change.^{84, 85}

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Assessment

1. Egypt's natural gas fields are located in southern Egypt, near the Sudanese border.
2. Egypt has only one operating gold mine.
3. The Golden Triangle is the fertile region of the Nile River Delta, where most of Egypt's cotton is grown.
4. Egypt is an attractive destination for business process outsourcing (BPO) services.
5. Egypt banned Islamic banking in order to weaken the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5. False



*Wedding in Zamalek
Flickr / Hossam el-Hamalawy*

Chapter 4 | Egypt in Perspective

Society

Introduction

Demographic data that depicts the Egyptian population as a homogenous community of Arabic-speaking “Egyptians” ignores the deeper distinctions within Egyptian heritage. Many Egyptians trace their lineage to Arab settlers who poured into the region in the wake of the Islamic conquest of Egypt in 642 CE. Another segment of the modern Egyptian population is of mixed heritage, descended from the Arab settlers and the peoples who populated the region prior to the Arab conquest. The various peoples of the Mediterranean and the European colonialists also contributed to Egyptian identity. Other Egyptians are descended from Nubians, a people who have a long history associated with Egypt and Sudan; the Nubians are the largest of the country’s minority

ethnic groups. A very small population of Berbers, an indigenous North African people are concentrated in the Siwa Oasis near the Libyan border in the Western Desert. Additionally, the Dom, Egyptian gypsies, are of South Asian descent. In the Sinai Peninsula and along the Red Sea, Bedouin nomads continue to follow their traditional lifestyle.^{1, 2, 3}

Egypt's official language is Arabic, and over 99% of Egyptians speak an Arabic dialect.⁴ Literary Arabic, known as Modern Standard Arabic, is used for writing. A vernacular form of Arabic, called Egyptian Arabic dialect, is commonly spoken. The educated classes are well versed in English and French.⁵

Ethnic Groups and Languages

“Egyptians”



*Egyptian man resting
Flickr / M M*

Egyptians, a catchall demographic category for those of Arab and mixed Arab descent, comprise over 99% of the country's population. The central elements binding these peoples together are the Arabic language and an adherence to Islam; about 90% of all Egyptians are Muslim.⁶

Egyptian speak Egyptian Arabic, a dialect of the Arabic language. Since Egypt is the most populous Arab country, Egyptian Arabic is the most spoken Arabic dialect. Furthermore, most of the Arab world understands Egyptian Arabic, due to the widespread influence of Egyptian cinema and media. Egyptian Arabic has many similarities to Modern Standard Arabic, the standard literary language of the Arab world. Egyptian Arabic has also been influenced by other languages that have been part of Egypt's history, such as Coptic, Turkish, French, and English.⁷

Nubians

Culturally and racially distinct from other Egyptian ethnic groups, the Nubians are more akin to the peoples of Sudan and sub-Saharan Africa. The Nubians are descendants from an ancient civilization that ruled Egypt from approximately 750 to

671 BCE. The historical Nubian homeland covers present-day southern Egypt and Northern Sudan. In the 1960s, some 50,000 Nubians were displaced by the building of the Aswan High Dam. Today, Nubians are petitioning the Egyptian government to reclaim and return to a portion of their ancestral land.^{8, 9, 10} Nubians speak two languages, Kenuzi-Dongola and Nobiin.^{11, 12, 13}



*Nubian man
Flickr / Christiaan Triebert*

Berbers



*Berber women
Flickr / 16:9clue*

The Berbers are an indigenous people of the North African coastline, spreading from Egypt to the Atlantic. They are related to pre-Islamic non-Semitic Egyptians. They dominated North Africa until the region was conquered by the Arabs in the 7th century. Their language belongs to the Afro-Asiatic family and is related to ancient Egyptian and Ethiopian languages. In Egypt, the Berbers live primarily in the Siwa Oasis.^{14, 15}

Dom

The Dom gypsies, who number over 2.2 million, speak Domari, an Indo-Aryan language. They live primarily north of Cairo in the Dakahlia governorate.¹⁶ Some Dom travel the Nile River in large floating communities, trading livestock and practicing folk medicine and divination.¹⁷ The Dom people are subdivided into tribes, some with derogatory Arabic names. The Dom are ignored and marginalized by Egyptian society, and many Egyptians are not aware of their existence. The English word “gypsy” stems from “Egyptian,” due to a medieval misunderstanding of the geographic origins of the Romani people.^{18, 19}

Religion



Islamic Cairo
Flickr / Andrew A. Shenouda

Although Egypt's government is officially secular, Islam is recognized as the official religion. Intolerance, discrimination, and human rights violations against other religious groups and minorities are common.²⁰ Egypt's constitution guarantees freedom of religion, although only Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are officially recognized. Religion is widely practiced throughout the country amid rising political polarization caused by religious fundamentalism.

The majority of Egyptians are Muslim, mostly Sunni, representing 90% of the population. Another 9% are Coptic Christians. Approximately 1% are Christians who belong to Catholic, Protestant, or Levantine (Maronite or Greek Orthodox) churches.²¹

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Jews emigrating from Europe found acceptance within Egypt's ancient Jewish community. Since the establishment of Israel in 1948, this group has experienced discrimination and many emigrated.²² As of 2017, Egypt's Jewish community consisted of 18 members, mostly elderly women.^{23, 24}

Islam

The Prophet Muhammad founded Islam in the beginning of the 7th century CE. After Muhammad died, Muslims were unable to agree upon his successor and split into two sects. The Sunnis favored electing religious leaders based on merit, and the Shi'ites preferred naming religious leaders from among descendants of Muhammad's family. Islam was introduced to Egypt in 642 CE. It eventually replaced the polytheistic religion of the ancient Egyptians and supplanted Coptic Orthodox Christianity among the country's elite.^{25, 26}



Muslim believers praying at the mosque
Flickr / Mosa'ab Elshamy



Muslims praying at the Ibn Tulun Mosque, Cairo
Flickr / Scott D. Haddow

Mainstream Islamic religious practice in Egypt emphasizes Islam's core tenets. Islam requires one to live in accordance with the laws of Allah (God) as set forth in the Quran. Daily life ought to be conducted in accordance with God's will.²⁷

Sufi Islam is a mode of religious expression commonly referred to as Islamic mysticism. Sufism is a term for an eclectic and assorted group identified by unique practices and approaches to their religion. Sufis stress local customs and direct spiritual insight, leaving little need for formal religious leaders. They seek a personal encounter with the divine that may come through meditation, chanting, or even dancing.²⁸

Sufis are also known for saint veneration. That is, they revere those whom they view as endowed with divine grace.²⁹ These venerated individuals, known as *marabouts*, may be teachers, scholars, healers, or people known for their piety or spirituality.³⁰ Today, there more than 70 Sufi orders in Egypt with an estimated 3-4 million members.³¹

Although Egyptians are predominantly Sunni, a strong undercurrent of Shi'a Islam permeates religious expression. The Sufi influence creates a unique blending of Muslim traditions. This is seen most clearly in rural areas, where folk beliefs are transmitted through oral tradition. Folk practices include a belief in saints. People visit shrines where saints are buried, in order to seek cures or intercession for problems such as crop failure. Such shrines can be found in both villages and cities. Foremost among shrines are the ones associated with the Prophet Muhammad's family in Cairo.³²

Coptic Orthodoxy

About 10% of the population in Egypt is Coptic Christian, belonging to the Jacobite branch of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Copts believe Mark the Evangelist founded their church in Alexandria.^{33, 34} The head of the church is the Pope of Alexandria. Copts are expected to pray seven times daily. Priests are permitted to marry prior to ordination; however, they are not permitted to remarry after the passing of a spouse. Monks and nuns are celibate.^{35, 36}

The Copts are the largest religious minority in the Middle East. They are the remnant of a faith that once was prevalent in Egypt. Although the constitution affords them

freedom of religion, the government fails to protect them from discrimination and extremist attacks. Coptic Christians are counted among the most influential people in Egypt, but they are also among the poorest. Nonetheless, they have survived as a strong religious group since the first century and have resisted attempts to marginalize their religion.^{37, 38}



Saint Mark Church, Heliopolis
Flickr / Andrew A. Shenouda

The lack of tight security since the February 2011 revolution has made religious minorities increasingly vulnerable. Islamic militants have attacked worshippers, burned churches, and otherwise oppressed Egyptian Christians.³⁹ Scores have been killed. In the wake of such violence, the government created new laws aimed at protecting minorities, but the effectiveness of such legislation is questionable because violence continues.^{40, 41} In January 2015, Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi became the first Egyptian president to attend the Coptic Christmas mass, a move that was seen as reciprocating the political support he received from Coptic Pope Tawadros II.⁴²

Cuisine



Falafel
Flickr / Alan Teo

Eating customs in Egypt have roots in Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Palestine, and Egypt's own agricultural past. In the modern urban business districts, people order meals at fast-food franchises. Out of economic necessity, poor Egyptians eat mostly grains and vegetables. Even a teacher's salary seldom allows the purchase of meat. The diets of those who are more prosperous include meat on a more regular basis.⁴³

Popular traditional foods include *fuul* (mashed fava beans), which is very inexpensive and available both in restaurants and at outdoor food stands. It is commonly eaten with pita bread (*aysh baladi*). Other popular traditional foods include *falafel* (also known as *ta'amিয়া*), which is fried balls of mashed garbanzo beans and spices. Combinations of these foods make up breakfast, lunch, and dinner for many Egyptians.

Restaurants are common in the cities, serving specialties such as *shawarma*, skewered strips of lamb or chicken stuffed into pita bread; and *feteer*, a pizza-like pastry smothered in honey. Two of the most popular main dishes are *kofta* (ground meat) and *kebab* (grilled lamb or chicken). In accordance with Islamic dietary restrictions, pork is taboo. A popular dessert is *kunafa*, thin strands of pastry arranged on top of a soft cheese or cream base. It is eaten at feasts, including those that end the fast of Ramadan.^{44, 45}

In villages, women bake unleavened bread (*aysh*) in clay ovens. They also make sun bread (*aysh shams*), which is set in the sun to rise before baking. A typical main course consists of rice, vegetables, and *fuul*. If meat is available for special occasions, villagers prepare *fattah*, layers of meat, bread, and rice; seasoned with garlic and vinegar; nuts and yogurt are used for garnish. Food is scooped up with small pieces of bread dipped into serving bowls.⁴⁶



Baking aysh in clay oven
Flickr / David Margowsky

Traditional Dress



Camel rider in galabeya
Flickr / Youssef Abdelaal

Access to international trade routes encouraged the use of various fabrics from around the world, which contributed to the development of a variety of regional styles. The Siwa region, near the Libyan border, is known for silver ornaments and a distinctive “sunburst” design of embroidery used on shawls and clothing, including wedding dresses.⁴⁷ Another original style of dress is found in the northern Sinai, where heavily embroidered black cotton dresses are worn. Dresses in the south are often unadorned or decorated with beads. Contemporary veils often worn in this area are decorated with plastic beads imported from China, rather than the traditional elaborate beadwork of earlier years.⁴⁸

Clothing in rural areas tends to be functional. For instance, among peasants (*fellahin*), a man typically wears a long robe (*galabeya*) made of wool in winter and cotton in

summer. He often protects his head from the heat or cold with a scarf wound like a turban. A rural married woman traditionally wears a brightly colored housedress covered with a black outer layer. She covers her hair with a long veil that often sweeps the ground. Both sexes wear robes which cover the entire body, but the looseness of the robes allows cooling air to circulate. Bedouins dress for the harsh desert climate by wearing robes that absorb the sun's heat but are loose enough to allow cooler air to circulate. Men wind a cloth around their head and neck to prevent the loss of moisture, which helps prevent heatstroke. The cloth also acts as a shield against blowing sand.^{49, 50}

Women of all classes often wear long black veils. In cities, traditional dress exists alongside the contemporary. The *hijab*, a veil that covers only the hair, is worn by female white-collar workers and students. The *hijab* is also worn by women from the working class. Many immigrants adopted the veil because it helps them avoid harassment in the streets.⁵¹ A scarf tucked under the collar is worn more often than an enveloping head garment. The *niqab*, which leaves only a slit for the eyes, was rare in the early 1990s, but it has become more popular among women who prefer to dress conservatively. Some people choose to wear chic or modern Western clothing, such as casual jeans and tennis shoes. There can be risk associated with the casual Western look. Islamists have vocally opposed some Western styles of dress, and unveiled women are sometimes harassed.⁵²



Women in niqab
Flickr / Patrick Findeiss

Gender Issues

In the late 20th century, Egyptian women made some gains in areas of education and professional employment. The constitution of 1956 established equal rights for women in the public sphere, including the rights to vote and hold public office. Women in Egypt have been elected to public office or appointed to important government positions, and women are in top leadership positions in the television industry. However, family law in Egypt reinforces women's unequal status, and increased religious conservatism is making the situation worse.⁵³

Women's rights were weakened when the Sadat government amended the Egyptian Constitution in 1980 and made Shari'a Law the primary source of legislation in Egypt.



Ambassador Moushira Khattab
Wikimedia / Mahmoud.khattab

Although the Egyptian constitution guarantees equal rights for all citizens, the Shari'a provision undercuts those rights by denying equality to women in areas of marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. The debate about women's issues also includes the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), censorship that limits the printed discussion of gender issues, and discriminatory laws that affect land ownership and travel rights. A woman, for instance, cannot obtain a passport without written consent from her husband, who may reverse his consent at any time. A backlash has arisen against women's rights advocates who oppose these laws and practices, and they are often accused of being pro-Western and anti-Islamic.^{54, 55}

Female Genital Mutilation

Although many oppose it, female genital mutilation (FGM) is still widely practiced in Egypt. The majority of girls subjected to FGM are often from rural areas and from families whose socioeconomic status is modest to low. For most girls from poor families, the only way to secure their futures is through marriage. A girl who is not cut will have difficulty finding a partner and will face a future of almost certain poverty. A survey from 2014 estimates that 87% of Egyptian women ages 15 to 49 have undergone genital mutilation.^{56, 57}



Egyptian women
Flickr / Tribes of the World

Divorce Laws

The government reformed divorce laws throughout the early years of this millennium, making it easier for women to initiate divorce. At the same time, increased poverty and financial strains caused by inflation and other factors weaken women's ability to pursue their rights and make independent decisions.^{58, 59}

Arts



Relief sculpture, New Kingdom: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and the Royal Princesses blessed by the Aten
Flickr / MCAD Library

Much of the art of Ancient Egypt centered on gods, goddesses, and the lives of pharaohs, who were seen as divine. Paintings and relief sculptures have survived because of the dry climate. They often depicted the afterlife of the deceased or the journey through the underworld.⁶⁰ The funerary text known as the *Book of the Dead* was buried with entombed persons to introduce them to the afterlife. Writers from ancient times also created stories that were intended to entertain, and wrote about medicine, math, astronomy, and agriculture.⁶¹

Modern Art

In the early 20th century, modern art became an expression of Egyptians' aspiration for independence and nationhood. Some Egyptian artists adopted the Neo-Pharaonic style, drawing on Ancient Egyptian classical art. In the 1930s, a collective of surrealist artists founded the Art and Freedom group, which promoted freedom of expression and identified with the European antifascist resistance. A prominent member of this group was Ramses Younan, whose paintings sought to express the Egyptian unconscious. In the 1940s, artists in the Contemporary Art Group distanced themselves from Western styles and explored Egypt's social realities and popular traditions. The 1952 revolution and subsequent political turmoil and external conflicts limited the spread of artistic expression.^{62, 63}

Literature

Egypt has a strong literary tradition, with short stories first appearing in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Egyptian writers have experimented with the novel form; drama and poetry have a widespread and sophisticated audience as well. In 1988, Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz was the first Arab writer to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. His classic work, *Midaq Alley*,



A collection of Naguib Mahfouz's novels
Flickr / Mohd Tarmizi

brought international attention to gaps between rich and poor and other aspects of life in urban Cairo.^{64, 65} Other famous writers are Taha Hussein, who wrote an autobiography called *Al-Ayyam*; Tawfiq al-Hakim, author of *Return of the Spirit*; and Yusuf Idris, a master of the Arabic short story form.⁶⁶

Music and Dance



Lute and double pipe players from a painting found in the Theban tomb of Nebamun, New Kingdom
Wikimedia / Villanueva

Egypt's musical and dance traditions have endured over the centuries. Lutes, harps, and stringed instruments were used in ancient times as well as the present day. One of the most important musical instruments in the Arab world is the *oud*, which is a short-neck wooden string instrument similar to a mandolin, commonly used in North African countries.⁶⁷

Classical music is popular, as are folk songs celebrating traditions or the different seasons. Dancing is always part of celebrations and weddings. Traditions from other countries have blended with those of Egypt. For instance, it was Russian influence combined with Egyptian tradition that led to the development of the Cairo Opera Ballet Company.⁶⁸ Belly dancing, which focuses on fluid, continuous torso movements, may have originated from early Egyptian dances. Belly dancing had its heyday in Egypt in the 1940s and 1950s. Today, belly dancing remains popular, although it has been challenged by the rise of conservative Islam.^{69, 70, 71}

One of Egypt's well-known artists is the legendary Umm Kulthum, the most celebrated singer in the Arab world in the 20th century. With a musical style rooted in traditional classical Arab music, Umm Kulthum often donated the proceeds from her concerts to the Egyptian government or to charities. President Nasser admired her, and she often entertained heads of state. She also identified with Egyptian commoners and village life. She was a spokesperson for Arab culture and a supporter of nationalism after the



Umm Kulthum, the most celebrated singer in the Arab world
Flickr / Tribes of the World

1952 revolution. Although Umm Kulthum has been dead since 1975, she is still highly regarded throughout the Arab world.⁷² Farid El Atrache (1917-1974), the Syrian-born master of the *oud*, singer, composer, and actor, spent most of his career in Egypt and was considered one of the most renowned Arab musicians of the 20th century.⁷³

Cinema

Egyptian cinema, nicknamed “Hollywood on the Nile,” saw its heyday in the 1950s, when it was the third-largest film industry in the world. Because the Egyptian dialect is understood in 22 Arab countries, Egyptian movies were enjoyed throughout the Arab world.⁷⁴ In the 1960s, the Egyptian actor Omar Sharif (1932-2015) rose to international renown, playing Sherif Ali in *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) and the title role in *Doctor Zhivago* (1965).⁷⁵ Actor Adel Imam became famous for comedic roles in the 1970s; today, with over 106 film and TV credits, Imam is one of Egypt’s highest paid actors.⁷⁶



Omar Sharif in *Doctor Zhivago*
Flickr / Susanlenox

After the 2011 revolution, few films were made in Egypt and people were afraid or unable to go to the cinema. However, in recent years, film production has increased and some Egyptians films have enjoyed international recognition and commercial success.⁷⁷

Sports and Recreation



2010 World Cup African qualifying game at Cairo Stadium
Flickr / Muhammad Ghafari

Following the 1952 revolution, the Egyptian government promoted sports and sport culture. Schools at all levels incorporated sports into their curricula and many athletic clubs emerged. Emphasis was placed on traditional Egyptian sports such as weightlifting, wrestling, and swimming. Egyptian weightlifters have won several Olympic medals. But soccer is the most popular sport in contemporary

Egypt. The national team has met with success in international venues, including championships in the African Cup of Nations and qualifying for the World Cup in 1934, 1990, and 2018. The domestic soccer league attracts tens of thousands of spectators to matches.⁷⁸

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Country in Perspective | Egypt

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Egypt in Perspective

Chapter 4 | Society

Assessment

1. Egypt's constitution guarantees freedom of religion.
2. Naguib Mahfouz is one of the most famous Arab composer-musicians in the world.
3. Egyptian Arabic is the most spoken Arabic dialect.
4. *Ful medames* is a basic food staple in the Egyptian diet.
5. Umm Kulthum is a famous nightclub in Cairo.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False



*Egyptian revolution of 2011, Tahrir Square
Flickr / Dan H*

Chapter 5 | Egypt in Perspective

Security

Introduction

Since independence, Egypt has experienced regional wars, military coups, political assassinations, domestic unrest, major terrorist attacks, and has participated in several international conflicts. The nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 led to war with England, France, and Israel. In the 1960s, Egypt intervened in the civil war in Yemen, siding against the royalist forces that were supported by Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Britain. While fighting the decade-long war in Yemen, Egypt suffered a humiliating defeat in the 1967 War with Israel; in 1973, Egypt tried to recover its lost territories by invading the Sinai Peninsula, which had been under Israeli control since 1967. The United States and the Soviet Union intervened to stop all military action in the region

after three weeks of fighting and huge losses. Following the peace agreement with Israel in 1979, Egypt gained some stability, but unresolved issues and new conflicts continued to plague the country. The Arab Spring revolution of 2011 gave Egypt democratic elections and the short-lived, chaotic presidency of Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood. The military coup that toppled Morsi returned Egypt to military rule. Today, Egypt is focused on boosting its economic growth, internal security, and international stature.^{1, 2}

U.S.-Egyptian Relations



*President Trump greets the President of Egypt, El-Sisi, 2017
Wikimedia / The White House*

The U.S.-Egyptian relationship is strategic and mutually beneficial. In the 1970s, the expulsion of Russian military advisors by President Sadat and his support of the peace process with Israel led Egypt to a closer relationship with the United States.³ American administrations invest in Egypt because the country is seen as a moderating influence in a volatile region. After Israel, Egypt is the largest recipient of U.S. aid, having received an annual average of more than USD 2 billion, in mostly military assistance, since 1979.⁴

Some Egyptians see the United States' lack of support for President Hosni Mubarak during the 2011 uprising as a key reason for Mubarak's fall and the turmoil that followed. The Obama administration's support for President Morsi and its disapproval of the military coup that toppled Morsi and led to the Abdel Fattah al-Sisi presidency further stoked many Egyptians' anti-U.S. sentiments. Between 2013 and 2015, the U.S. partially suspended military aid to Egypt to signal displeasure with Sisi's crackdown on dissent. A reboot was expected under the Trump administration, and Sisi had a much-publicized visit to the White House in April 2017. Several months later, however, Washington once again suspended a significant part of its military aid to Egypt due to concerns over Egypt's human rights abuses and its strong ties to North Korea.^{5, 6}

Relations with Neighboring Countries



Arab League Summit 2017
Flickr / European External Action Service

Egypt's geopolitical importance, Arab-Islamic character, and support of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) have shaped its foreign policy. Egypt's geographical position at the crossroads of Africa and the Middle East, and its proximity to Europe and Asia through the Suez Canal have made national security vital. This need led Egypt to seek and maintain diplomatic relations with neighboring countries such as Israel and Sudan. Furthermore, Egypt's extensive history, large population, and military strength give it considerable political influence in the Middle East and the NAM. Egypt was one of the founding members of the Arab League (officially the League of Arab States), which includes 21 other member states from North and East Africa and the Middle East. The Arab League is headquartered in Cairo.^{7, 8}

Israel

Egypt was the first Arab country to recognize Israel. Egypt opposed the creation of a Jewish homeland and fought several wars with Israel before peace between the two countries was negotiated. In 1979, the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, signed by Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin, was a milestone in Arab-Israeli relations. The treaty helped establish borders, full diplomatic relations, and bilateral trade agreements between Israel and Egypt.⁹ The recognition of Israel led to Egypt's 10-year suspension from the Arab League and the assassination of President Sadat.¹⁰ President Hosni Mubarak, who succeeded Sadat, continued to act as an intermediary between Israel and the Arab world.¹¹ During the short-lived presidency of the Islamist Mohamed Morsi, Egypt honored the peace agreement but diplomatic relations between the two countries were extremely strained.¹²



Map of Egypt and Israel
Wikimedia / Davykamanzi

Today, while most Egyptians view Israel as a threat, the relationship between the two countries is much more nuanced.¹³ President Sisi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have cooperated closely yet discreetly on overlapping security and trade interests. To better combat the Islamic State-affiliated jihadists in the northern Sinai Peninsula, Israel has tolerated a heightened presence of the Egyptian military in the area while carrying out a covert airstrike campaign with Egypt's blessing. Egypt has also closed off its portion of the border with the Gaza Strip, complementing Israel's ongoing blockade and restricting Hamas's capabilities.^{14, 15}

Egypt and Israel have also strengthened their economic ties since Sisi became president. Israel owns factories within several free trade zones in Egypt. These factories employ thousands of Egyptians and produce goods for export. The thousands of Israelis crossing the border to enjoy the beaches in the southern Sinai are helping rebuild Egypt's fragile tourism industry. In the energy sector, the two countries are close to a multibillion dollar deal that would allow Israel to export natural gas to Egypt.^{16, 17}

Palestinian Territories – The Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip is a 40 km (25 mi) long and 6-12 km (4-8 mi) wide territory between Israel and the Mediterranean Sea. Egypt's share of the border, on Gaza's south-west, is 11 km (6.8 mi) long. Gaza has a population of 2 million.¹⁸ It is home to the second-largest Palestinian refugee population after Jordan, with 1.1 million refugees of the 4.8 million descendants of the 7 million Palestinians who were displaced between 1946 and 1948, during the first Arab-Israeli war.^{19, 20}



*Map of Egypt and Gaza Strip
Wikimedia / Davykamanzi*

Egypt administered the Gaza Strip from 1948 until Israel gained the territory as a result of the 1967 war.²¹ In 2005, Israel withdrew its troops from Gaza. Hamas has governed the Gaza Strip since 2007; Hamas is considered a terrorist organization by the United States, the European Union, and Israel. Gaza's borders with Israel and Egypt are closed, and the territory's inhabitants are facing a humanitarian crisis.^{22, 23, 24}

In 2017, Egypt and Hamas began negotiations to alleviate Gaza's isolation. Hamas reshuffled its leadership and re-wrote its charter to exclude mention of the Muslim

Brotherhood, which Hamas has been closely associated with in the past. Hamas also established a security buffer zone on its side of the border with Egypt, meant to deter the movement of fighters and weapons in support of the insurgency in North Sinai. In exchange, Egypt is signaling a willingness to loosen its hold on the Rafah border crossing and to work with other Arab states, most notably the United Arab Emirates, to improve the lives and future prospects of Gaza's residents.^{25, 26}

Jordan

The Kingdom of Jordan is a key ally of Egypt, Israel, and the United States. Beginning in 1948, two years after Jordan gained independence, Palestinians started to migrate to Jordan to escape the Arab-Israeli conflicts. The Arab-Israeli wars resulted in Jordan losing territory such as the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Moreover, Palestinian refugees have emerged as the demographic majority in Jordan. In 1984, Jordan was the first country in the Arab League to reestablish relations with Egypt after Egypt's suspension from the league in 1979. In 1994, Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel, following Egypt's lead.²⁷



Map of Egypt and Jordan
Wikimedia / Davykananzi

Egypt has historically exported large amounts of natural gas to Jordan, providing 80% of Jordan's electricity needs.²⁸ Today, both Jordan and Egypt import natural gas from Israel's recently discovered reserves. To bypass the northern Sinai Peninsula, where gas pipelines have been sabotaged in the past, Israeli gas reaches Egypt through a pipeline that passes through Jordan.^{29, 30}

In late 2017, Jordan found itself at diplomatic odds with Egypt over the United States' decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Jordan, along with Turkey and Qatar, opposed the decision, due to its implications of a diminished future Palestinian state. Egypt, along with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, appeared less inclined to dispute the U.S. move.^{31, 32}

Sudan

British-Egyptian rule in Sudan ended when the Republic of Sudan became independent in 1956. Egypt-Sudan relations have been strained at times. Sudan supported Egypt's peace treaty with Israel and helped Egypt's reintegration into the Arab League. After President Omar al-Bashir's Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation (RCC-NS) military coup in 1989, relations began to sour. Egypt gave political asylum to some of Bashir's political opponents. Sudan, in turn, harbored Egyptian Islamists and terrorist organizations, actions that placed it on the United States' list of state sponsors of terrorism in 1993.³³ Relations deteriorated further when Sudan supported Iraq during the Gulf War (1990-91). Finally, in 1995, an assassination attempt on President Mubarak in Ethiopia nearly sent the two countries into war.³⁴



*Map of Egypt and Sudan
Wikimedia / Davykananzi*

Relations improved following a 2001 meeting in which Mubarak pledged his support for ending civil conflict in Sudan. Cairo indicated that it would not detain Bashir on Egyptian territory.³⁵ (Sudan's president is wanted by the International Criminal Court on charges of crimes against humanity, war crimes in Darfur, and genocide.) Prior to South Sudan's secession in 2011, Egypt was Sudan's second-largest import partner.^{36, 37}

Today, Egypt and Sudan have some diplomatic disagreements. Both countries claim the Hala'ib Triangle, a 20,500 sq km (7,915 sq mi) area on the Egypt-Sudan border. Egypt, which controls the territory, attempted to formally assert its sovereignty over it in 2016, causing Sudan to complain to the United Nations and recall its ambassador from Cairo. Water rights to the Nile River are also a source of tension. Sudan supports Ethiopia's construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which will dam the Blue Nile to create a reservoir and generate hydroelectricity. Egypt strongly opposes the dam because it will diminish Egyptian access to the Nile's waters.³⁸

Libya

Egyptian-Libyan relations have a long, shared history, and there have been periods of strain. Muammar al-Qaddafi, Libya's president for more than four decades, was strongly anti-western and pro-Arab nationalist and attempted several unsuccessful unity efforts with other Arab states, including Egypt.^{39, 40, 41}



Map of Egypt and Libya
Wikimedia / Davykamanzi

Qaddafi's meddling in the internal affairs of other countries, subversion, and threats in pursuing his agenda alienated him from the rest the Arab world. In the mid-1970s, as Egyptian President Anwar Sadat sought peace with Israelis and ended Egypt's alliance with the Soviet Union, Qaddafi was turning to the Soviets for weapons and was suspicious of Sadat's peace initiatives. A brief border war erupted in July 1977, and Libya broke off diplomatic relations with Egypt when the Arab-Israeli peace treaty was signed in 1979.⁴²



Mubarak meeting Qaddafi in Cairo
Flickr / Abdullah Manaz

Egyptian-Libyan relations improved after Hosni Mubarak came to power in 1981. Mubarak was an ally to Qaddafi for security and economic reasons. Unlike Sudan, which was a safe haven for Egyptian Islamists, Libya turned militants over to Egypt.⁴³ In addition, the two countries had strong economic ties. After the UN imposed sanctions and a flight ban on Libya in the wake the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, Egypt kept its borders with Libya open, which helped sustain Libya's economy.⁴⁴

During the Arab Spring of 2011, the ripples of antigovernment mass protests across the Middle East and North Africa reached Libya, eventually leading to Qaddafi's capture and death at the hands of rebels.^{45, 46} Post-Qaddafi Libya has been torn by a complex struggle for control among political factions, armed militias, and extremist groups. The violence and instability have affected Egypt. Militants have killed dozens of Egyptians living in Libya, many of them Christians, prompting retaliatory

Egyptian airstrikes on militant targets. Militants use the porous Egypt-Libya border to transport weapons and fighters in support of operations in Libya and in Egypt's North Sinai. Egypt has been slow to extradite Qaddafi-era figures who live and operate in Egypt. Despite professed neutrality in the struggle to control Libya, President Sisi supports the Libyan National Army of General Khalifa Haftar, whom he views as the most reliable partner to help stabilize the situation.⁴⁷

Cyber Security

Egyptian companies and institutions have been the targets of numerous cyberattacks. Egypt has become one of the prominent hosts of malicious IP addresses in Africa. Furthermore, extremist and terrorist organizations operating in Egypt use the internet to recruit new members, obtain funding, and spread extremist ideology. The situation has led Egypt to make considerable investments in cyber security.⁴⁸ In 2009, the government created the Computer Emergency Response Team to bolster government and banking IT infrastructure. In 2015, Egypt established a high-level cyber security council, staffed by representatives of key ministries such as defense, intelligence, and interior. The council is tasked with setting cyber security policy and addressing cyber threats to the nation's infrastructure and networks.⁴⁹ That same year saw the introduction of a cybercrime bill that defined illicit online activity and imposed fines and prison time for cybercrimes.⁵⁰ In 2017, Egypt ranked 14th in the Global Cybersecurity Index among 165 member states of the International Telecommunication Union. The index measures members' commitment to national and global cybersecurity.⁵¹



*Bright Star 2017 exercise at Mohamed Naguib Base, 2017
DoD / Staff Sgt. Michael Battles*

Yet Egypt's cyber security efforts have sparked allegations of intrusive surveillance into people's online activities in order to suppress political opposition and nontraditional social mores. During the 2011 uprising, the government moved to shut down internet access in an effort to disrupt protesters' communications.⁵² After the ouster of President Morsi in 2013, Egyptian officials monitored online communications to detect loyalty to the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood and dissent against the Sisi regime. The following year, the government greatly enhanced its surveillance capabilities to include geolocation and tracking. The 2015 cybersecurity law was

seen as excessively broad and harsh. Government prosecutors can use the law to expand beyond surveillance of political dissenters and Islamists to human rights defenders, LGBT groups, religious skeptics, and entire communities deemed as potential threats. Authorities can also censor online activities such as insults, slander, profanity, and immorality.^{53, 54, 55}

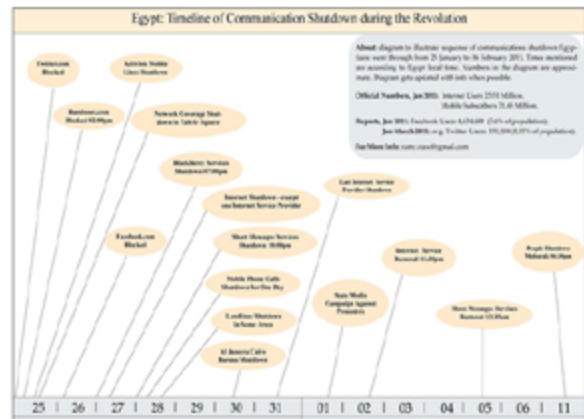


Diagram illustrating sequence of communications shutdown
Wikimedia / Ramy Raouf

Police Force

The Ministry of Interior is in direct control of law enforcement and security in Egypt. It supervises all paramilitary and police functions. The military and paramilitary are conscripted. Paramilitary units include the Central Security Forces (CSF), which is the largest branch, the National Guard, the Border Guard Forces, and the Coast Guard. CSF living conditions are meager and the pay is low.^{56, 57}

Egypt’s modern police force emerged after the 1952 revolution that overthrew the British-backed monarchy. Under President Nasser, who belonged to the Free Officers Movement that ousted the monarchy, the police became a force to be feared. During the 2011 uprising, a key demand of the protestors included bringing the police to justice for their brutality and the restructuring of the police force.^{58, 59} During his brief rule, President Morsi failed to enact police reforms, and quickly lost the support of the security apparatus as his policies became increasingly pro-Islamist.^{60, 61}



Riot Police Force
Flickr / Ramy Raouf

Since coming to power in 2013, President Sisi has re-established the police as a fearsome instrument of the state. Security forces are alleged to routinely and systematically use torture techniques such as beatings, stress positions, electric shocks, and rape. The Ministry of the Interior has resisted reform and accountability.^{62, 63} In March 2018, in the wake of international media reporting about human rights abuses in Egypt, President Sisi made a public declaration that criticism of the police and armed forces would be considered high treason and not tolerated.⁶⁴

Military

Following the overthrow of the monarchy in the coup of 1952, all but one of Egypt's presidents emerged from the armed forces. The exception, Mohamed Morsi, was toppled by a military coup after one year in office. The armed forces also control much of the economy, including the tourism sector.⁶⁵ Egypt has one of the largest armed forces in the Arab world and is considered the 13th most powerful military globally.^{66, 67}



*Egyptian troops from the United Nations MONUSCO peacekeeping mission
Wikimedia / MONUSCO Photos*

Egypt's armed forces include the Army, Air Force, Air Defense, and Navy.⁶⁸ The armed forces have over 454,000 active duty personnel and 875,000 reservists.⁶⁹ Egyptian males ages 18 to 30 years old are conscripted for 12 to 36-month terms and a further 9 years in the reserves. Over 1.5 million Egyptians are estimated to reach military age every year.⁷⁰



*Egyptian military police
Wikimedia / Gigi Ibrahim*

Africa. As of December 2017, those missions included Western Sahara (MINUSRO), Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Mali (MINUSMA), Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), and Darfur (UNAMID).⁷³

The equipment used by the armed forces comes from the United States, Western Europe, and the former Soviet Union; Soviet equipment is slowly being replaced with more modern equipment. Egypt's budget for military expenditures constitutes 1.67% of the country's GDP.⁷¹ Egypt is one of a few nations in the region to have a defense industry.⁷²

Egyptian personnel have participated in a number of UN peacekeeping missions in

Army

Egypt's army is the largest of the armed forces; approximately 340,000 active duty personnel and 375,000 reservists fill the army's ranks.⁷⁴ The order of battle is composed of 2 regular infantry brigades, 2 motorized infantry brigades, 31 mechanized infantry brigades, 21 armor brigades, 15 artillery brigades, 2 heavy mortar brigades, a commando/counterterrorism unit (approximately 1,300 strong), 2 air mobile brigades, and 1 airborne brigade. Major installations are located in Alexandria, Assiut, Aswan, Cairo, El-Arish, Hawamidiya, Ismailiya, Luxor, Mersa Matruh, Port Said, Sidi Buraimi, Sharm al-Sheikh, and Suez.⁷⁵



Egyptian soldiers with M113 armored personnel carriers during Operation Desert Shield
Wikimedia / U.S. Air Force

Egypt has an impressive array of sophisticated and modern weaponry in its arsenal, acquired from domestic and international manufactures. The army has over 4,000 tanks, including more than 1,000 M1A1 Abrams tanks. Additionally, the army utilizes more than 1,300 reconnaissance and infantry fighting vehicles, nearly 14,000 armored fighting vehicles, nearly 900 self-propelled artillery guns, over 2,000 towed artillery guns, and nearly 1,500 rocket launchers.^{76, 77}

Air Force



Egyptian F-4E
Wikimedia / National Archives and Records Administration

The Egyptian Air Force is composed of approximately 30,000 active duty personnel; the air force is a highly professional, efficient, and well-trained organization. Its order of battle is comprised of 7 fighter regiments, 3 attack helicopter regiments, 3 transport regiments (including commando units), 3 helicopter regiments (including commando units), 1 transport helicopter regiment, 1 air expeditionary wing brigade, and 1 electronic countermeasures brigade.

Major installations are located at Abu Suwayr, al-Mansurah, Almaza, Al-Zaqaziq, Beni Suef, Bilbays, Birma, Cairo, al-Minya, Fayid, Gebel al-Basur, Hurghada, Inshas, Jiyanklis, Kom Awshim, Mersa Matruh, and Wadi al-Jandali.⁷⁸

Egyptian Air Force equipment is composed of high-end Western- and Chinese-designed aircraft and some Soviet-era relics. Multi-role fighters include U.S.-manufactured variants of the F-16, totaling roughly 200 aircraft, and around 60 French-manufactured Mirage 5SDE and 5E2 aircraft. Ground attack aircrafts include 52 Chengdu F-7B interceptors,²⁸ McDonnell Douglas F-4E Phantom II fighter-bombers, and 40 Soviet-made MiG-21MF Fishbed-J fighters. Additionally, a dozen German/French-manufactured Alpha Jet MS2 light attack aircraft provide counter insurgency capabilities. Transport aircraft are primarily composed of various Western-manufactured craft. Rotary wing aircraft of Soviet, British, French, and American models include AH-64D Apache and SA 3342L Gazelle attack helicopters, Mi-8 Hip assault helicopters, CH-47D Chinook transports, WS-61 Commando utility helicopters, and Kaman SH-2G(E) Seasprite anti-submarine helicopters.⁷⁹

Air Defense



Egypt became the Rafale's first international customer when it officially ordered 24 Rafales
Wikimedia / Tim Felce

Frequently discussed as though it were part and parcel of the Air Force, Egypt's Air Defense actually represents a separate command structure. This branch of the service has approximately 70,000 active personnel. It is comprised of three fighter regiments stationed at al-Mansurah, Mersa Matruh, and Fayid. Its primary assets are around a dozen French-manufactured Mirage 2000EM interceptors, a handful of Mirage 5SDR reconnaissance/fighter bombers, and 4 Beechcraft 1900C electronic intelligence/surveillance turboprop aircraft.⁸⁰ Additionally, the Air Defense possesses U.S.-manufactured AN/TPS-63 and AN/TPS-93 radar systems and more than two dozen MIM-72A Chaparral surface-to-air self-propelled rocket launcher systems, which utilize the AIM-9 Sidewinder missile. Other assets include surface-to-air systems of various manufacture and origin.^{81, 82, 83}

Navy

Traditionally the most underdeveloped branch of the Egyptian military, the Navy has experienced significant upgrades in the past few decades. Comprised of roughly 18,500 active duty personnel, including the coast guard, and 14,000 reservists, the Navy is divided into two fleets: the Mediterranean Fleet, with bases at Abu Qir, Alexandria, Mersa Matruh, Port Said, and Suez, and the Red Sea Fleet, with bases at Hurghada, Safaqa, and Berenice. Additionally, the Navy has two naval aviation squadrons: the 11th Squadron, tasked with anti-ship operations, and the 75th Squadron, tasked with anti-submarine operations. Both are stationed in Alexandria. The Navy is equipped with 2 Knox-class frigates, 4 Oliver Hazard Perry-class frigates, 2 Jianghu I (Type 053) frigates, 2 Descubierta-class corvettes, and a wide array of fast attack craft, landing craft, minesweepers, and swift boats.⁸⁴



*Mistral-class amphibious assault ship
Wikimedia / Simon4888*

Issues Affecting Stability

Terrorism



*The Taba Hilton hotel after the bombings in 2004
Flickr / Hossam el-Hamalawy*

Islamist terrorists tried to undermine the Mubarak regime through several attacks, mostly on the tourism sector. Attacks occurred in Cairo in April 2005 and February 2009, Dahab in 2006, Sharm al-Sheikh in 2005, and Taba in 2004.^{85, 86} In 1997, militants carried out a massacre at Luxor that killed 62 people, mostly tourists. That event prompted a sustained crackdown by President Mubarak that broke the back of an Islamist insurgency in southern Egypt.^{87, 88}

Militants began waging an anti-government insurgency immediately after the loss of power of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013. President Sisi countered with a sustained

antiterrorism campaign that stifled political freedom in the name of improving security, but his efforts have not been successful. Egyptian security forces have killed thousands of suspected terrorists since 2013, but the insurgency continues to grow. Egypt's security apparatus is beset by intelligence failures and a lack of coordination among agencies. Egypt's leadership is still working to develop an effective antiterrorism strategy. In October 2017, President Sisi reshuffled top military and law enforcement officials. Much of the military aid Egypt receives from the United States each year is designated for fighting terrorism.^{89, 90}

The main location for the insurgency is the restive province of North Sinai. In the past, militants there used tunnels into the neighboring Gaza Strip to smuggle weapons and fighters. Militants also used North Sinai as a base and safe haven for attacks on Israel. More recently, battle-hardened Islamic State fighters returning from Syria and Iraq have strengthened the ranks of Sinai militants.

Wilayat Sinai, also known as Daesh Sinai and formerly known as Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, is the primary terrorist group in North Sinai and Egypt's most active militant group. The group is also active in popular areas of the Western Desert.^{91, 92} The group declared allegiance to the Islamic State in 2014 and began targeting Christians and non-Sunni Muslims. In 2015, it downed a Russian plane, which was carrying tourists from the Red Sea, killing 224 people.^{93, 94, 95}

In recent years, attacks have broadened from security forces to include civilian targets. In May 2017, militants attacked a group of Coptic Christians, killing 29. In November 2017, militants killed 305 people at a Sufi mosque in Bir al-Abed, North Sinai. It was the deadliest terrorist attack in Egypt's history. In response, the government launched airstrikes in the area, at what it called terrorist targets.⁹⁶ Due to sustained terrorist attacks against the civilian population in North Sinai, Bedouin tribes, who usually distrust the central government, have stepped up their cooperation with security forces.⁹⁷

Elsewhere in Egypt, other insurgent groups are staging anti-government attacks. Ansar al-Islam is an Egyptian militant group linked to al-Qaeda; it took



The Egyptian Task Force 777
Wikimedia / يس ش

responsibility for an attack in Egypt's Western Desert in October 2017 that killed at least 16 policemen. The true number of policemen killed was likely closer to 50.⁹⁸ A small militant group called Hasm, which emerged in 2016, has claimed responsibility for several attacks in the Cairo area, which targeted police officers and judges. Hasm is believed to be the militant arm of the Muslim Brotherhood.⁹⁹

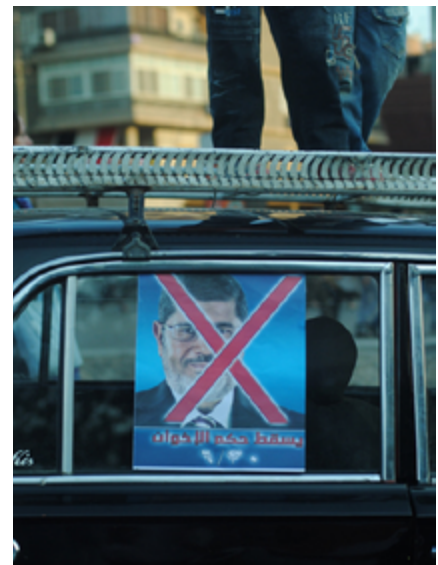
Civil Unrest and Civil Rights



Protests at Tahrir Square in 2011
Flickr / Hossam el-Hamalawy

During Hosni Mubarak's 30-year rule, Egypt was not an electoral democracy because elections were designed to ensure the success of the ruling party, and freedom of the press, assembly, and association were restricted. Egypt was a police state where open dissent was rare and not tolerated. In 2011, thousands of protesters took to the streets throughout Egypt, demanding Mubarak's immediate resignation and an end to the repressive regime. After 18 days of mass demonstrations, Mubarak stepped down and placed the military in charge of the government.¹⁰⁰

Mohamed Morsi's brief presidency saw a vibrant free press, despite some attempts to silence outlets critical of the regime. Frequent popular demonstrations occurred, especially as Morsi's mismanagement of the economy became apparent.¹⁰¹ After summarily removing Morsi from power one year into his rule, the regime of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was motivated to restore order and stability. Sisi not only resorted to Mubarak-era style crackdowns, but intensified those tactics. In August 2013, six weeks after Morsi's removal, police and army forces ruthlessly cleared a pro-Morsi encampment near the Rabaa al-Adawiya Mosque in Cairo, killing at least 800 people. The massacre was the worst mass killing in modern Egyptian history and marked the end of the Arab Spring in Egypt.^{102, 103} A new law that passed in November 2013 gave security forces free reign against



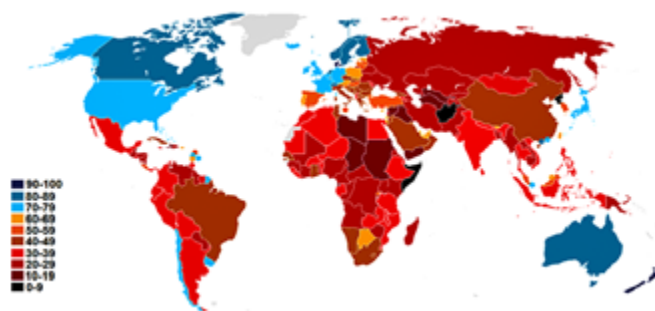
Egyptian Anti-Morsi protest
Wikimedia / Lilian Wagdy

demonstrators, allowing for the use of lethal force. The law effectively banned all opposition protests in Egypt.¹⁰⁴

As the Sisi regime failed to improve the economic and social prospects of Egyptians, sporadic demonstrations continued. The regime responded forcefully, breaking up gatherings with police batons and tear gas, arresting organizers before demonstrations were underway, and staging pro-government counterdemonstrations to sway public opinion. Independent journalists, human rights advocates, and members of the Muslim Brotherhood were arrested.^{105, 106}

Corruption

There is a perception of widespread corruption within the Egyptian government.^{107, 108} In 2017, Egypt ranked 117th out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, which gauges the population's perception of public sector corruption.¹⁰⁹ Because of impunity, weak accountability, and lack of transparency, corruption has infiltrated all levels of society.¹¹⁰ Even though bribery is a criminal act, such behavior continues in businesses, the public sector, and in government ministries.^{111, 112}



Corruption Perception index 2013
Wikimedia / Ruben.2196

The Sisi regime has been swift to suppress allegations of corruption, even from within its own ranks. In late 2015, Hisham Geneina, the leader of Egypt's anti-corruption agency, reported that government corruption had cost the country USD 68 billion over a four year period. Geneina's announcement received swift criticism from government officials and the media. President Sisi fired Geneina in March 2016, and in July 2016 Geneina, was fined and sentenced to one year in prison for spreading false information.^{113, 114}

Water and Food Insecurity

Egypt faces significant challenges in water and food security. Of Egypt's 3.1 million hectares (7,660,266 acres) of arable land in the Nile River Valley, 11,736 hectares (29,000 acres) are lost every year to desertification, rapid population growth, construction work, and rising sea levels. Egyptians use 85% of the Nile's water for agricultural purposes.



*Huge group of individual pumps, Nile delta
Flickr / Water Alternatives*

The middle and northern sections of the Nile River Delta have started to dry up. Over 750,000 hectares (1,853,290 acres) in the Delta have been lost because of rising groundwater and poor farming practices. Egypt imports 60% of its food.¹¹⁵

The primary threats to Egypt's water security are misuse of water resources, uneven water distribution, and inefficient irrigation techniques. The country's internal renewable water resources are

shrinking as population grows. The eventual completion of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam threatens to cut the Nile's fresh water flow to Egypt by 25%. The United Nations warns that Egypt could run out of water by 2025.^{116, 117}

Outlook

President Sisi is expected to secure a second term in the 2018 presidential elections. His expected victory will likely continue the gradual economic reforms and fragile stability he has achieved since taking power in 2013. But his strongman rule will also see a continuation of harsh political repression and curtailing of individual freedoms - the price Egyptians have been asked to pay for the promise of stability and prosperity.¹¹⁸ Sisi must also contend with the ongoing Islamist insurgency in North Sinai. The militants' tactics are likely to become more daring and violent as they seek to convince Egyptians that the state security forces will not protect them.¹¹⁹



*Sunset in Cairo
Flickr / Gwenael Piaser*

Egypt's biggest long-term threat is perhaps its growing population. From its current size of 93 million, the population is projected to grow to 150 million by 2050. The growth will likely exacerbate food and water shortages, increase unemployment, and strain the fragile internal stability. Growing urbanization along the Nile will replace more and more farmland, and Egypt will be forced to import even more food,

straining financial resources. Because the average Egyptian uses 160,000 gallons of water a year, most of it from the Nile, water shortages will become more acute as the population grows.¹²⁰

A second major long-term threat is climate change. Rising sea levels in the Mediterranean have caused salt water to seep into the Nile Delta and River, affecting drinking and irrigation water and making agricultural land infertile. Sixty percent of the Nile Delta is predicted to be unusable and another 20% submerged in water by 2100. Rising sea levels are also causing coastal erosion along the Mediterranean, threatening coastal communities.^{121, 122}

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Egypt in Perspective

Chapter 5 | Security

Assessment

1. The visit of Egypt's president to the White House in 2017 upgraded relations between the U.S. and Egypt.
2. Egypt ranks high on the Global Cybersecurity Index.
3. Middle East leaders praised Egypt for signing a peace agreement with Israel in 1979.
4. Historically, diplomatic ties between Egypt and Sudan have been strong.
5. Egypt has one of the largest armed forces in the Arab world.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. False; 4. False; 5. True

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Further Readings and Resources

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Egypt in Perspective

Final Assessment

1. Alexandria is a port city.
2. An international treaty has kept the Suez Canal open during times of war.
3. Cairo has been the capital of Egypt since the great pharaonic civilizations.
4. *Oud* is a traditional lamb dish, eaten at the end of Ramadan.
5. Egypt was the first Arab neighbor to sign a peace treaty with Israel.
6. President Nasser supported the Muslim Brotherhood and gave their leader, Sayyid Qutb, a post in his cabinet.
7. Egyptians who work abroad are important to the Egyptian economy.
8. Large desalinization plants and the construction of efficient irrigation systems ensure Egypt's water security.
9. The Suez Crisis was triggered by the nationalization of the Suez Canal.
10. The Aswan High Dam is located on the Nile River.

11. Youth unemployment is a serious problem for Egypt.
12. *Khamsin* is the largest oasis in the Egypt's Western Desert.
13. Cotton is one of Egypt's main agricultural products.
14. Tahrir Square is the giant stone relief sculpture that records the Arabs' conquest of Egypt.
15. Berbers are a small, non-Arab minority that lives primarily in Eastern Desert.
16. The practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) was nearly eradicated by a successful government campaign.
17. Egypt's Air Force is highly professional, efficient, and well trained.
18. Recent discoveries of large natural gas fields ended Egypt's commitment to renewable energy sources.
19. The most active terrorist group in Egypt pledged alliance to the Islamic State (IS).
20. Urban women rarely use a head cover, especially white-collar workers and students.
21. The Nile River empties into the Red Sea.

22. Coptic Christians have become targets for militant Islamists after the 2011 revolution.
23. Poverty has been steadily decreasing since the 2011 revolution.
24. Bedouin tribes collaborate with the security forces in North Sinai against terrorist groups.
25. By sealing the border with Libya after Qaddafi's fall, Sisi's regime was able to contain the violence from spilling into Egypt.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. False; 3. False; 4. False; 5. True; 6. False; 7. True; 8. False; 9. True; 10. True; 11. True; 12. False; 13. True; 14. False; 15. True; 16. False; 17. True; 18. False; 19. True; 20. False; 21. False; 22. True; 23. False; 24. True; 25. False