Introduction

For decades, the doctrine of the unity of the Nile valley united Egyptians of all political and nationalist stripes. Egyptians regarded Sudan as an integral part of their homeland, and as such, they battled to rid the entire Nile valley of British imperialism and subsequently unite its inhabitants under the Egyptian crown. This book provides a revised account of the history of that doctrine. It offers a critical examination of the central stages in the historical development of the issue, while concentrating on the defining decade (1943–1953) that witnessed two contradictory currents: the pinnacle of Egypt's struggle to advance its doctrine of the unity of the Nile valley, and the demise of that very doctrine and the subsequent shattering of a consensual nationalist dream.

Ever since Muhammad 'Ali's forces occupied Sudan in 1820–1821, Egyptians considered Sudan as an integral part of Egypt. The occupation of Sudan was derived from purely imperialistic considerations – political, strategic, and economic. Muhammad 'Ali, who arrived in Egypt in 1801 as a young Ottoman officer, managed cunningly and ruthlessly to be appointed Ottoman governor of the province of Egypt in 1805. After he consolidated his hegemony over Egypt, he decided to build up his own empire. The occupation of Sudan was part of his expansionist policy to establish regional hegemony. From that stage on, Egyptians regarded Sudan as "our historic fatherland" – an inseparable part of Egypt throughout history.[1]

Egypt's involvement in modern time – directly and indirectly – with Sudan and the Sudanese may be divided into several major historical phases: first, from its occupation until the rise of the Mahdi movement in the early 1880s; second, after a short period of Mahdi rule, Sudan was reconquered by Egyptian and British forces (1896–1898), and in January 1899 the two countries concluded the condominium treaty, establishing dual Anglo–Egyptian rule over Sudan – a British imperialist invention; and third, the condominium epoch (1899–1953) and the transitional period of Sudanese self-government (1953–1956), which led to independent Sudan.

The case of Sudan was quite unique: an internally divided country (north and south) that was ruled (1899–1956) by two foreign imperialist powers, one regional and the other global – Egypt and Britain. Formally, Egypt ruled Sudan on behalf of the Ottoman Empire until 1914. However, practically speaking, prior to British occupation (1882), Egypt was an autonomous entity with a separate army and independent foreign and domestic policies. Common wisdom suggests that colonialism "is a form of domination – the control by individuals or groups over the territory and/or behavior of other individuals or groups." It is also often seen as a form of economic exploitation and a "culture-change process."[2]

Why were Egyptians so determined to control Sudan? As this study shows there were several reasons. A central one was control over the Nile, Egypt's lifeline, which passes through Sudan. Controlling Sudan would make it easier to closely monitor the flow of the Nile water and safeguard its sources from neighboring countries. Economically, the utilization and exploitation of Sudan's natural resources and agrarian land were weighty considerations. Furthermore, Sudan could have accommodated substantial Egyptian emigration, especially among peasants, which could solve one of Egypt's most acute problems: its high population density. Moreover, Egyptian writers spoke of a cultural and civilizational mission, giving expression to fantasies of controlling and civilizing Sudan, especially the non-Arab and non-Muslim southern Sudan, where the population was diverse in ethnic and linguistic terms.

Nevertheless, neither Egyptian nor British rule over Sudan may be characterized as "settler colonialism," according to which "settlers in significant number migrate permanently to the colony from the colonizing power." Imperialism is a more suitable definition as it suggests that only "few, if any, permanent settlers from the imperial homeland migrate to the colony."[3] Egyptian emigration into Sudan was made impossible as Britain as the dominant partner in the condominium exercised full control over the influx of Egyptians into Sudan.

Anti-British sentiments in Egypt had grown constantly throughout the condominium period. The unity of the Nile valley was a national consensual issue uniting "territorialists and supra-Egyptianist spokesmen alike."[4] Nevertheless, their vantage points of a united Egyptian–Sudanese country differed. Whereas territorial nationalists emphasized the centrality of material factors, Islamic nationalists considered both Egypt and Sudan as an integral part of *al-Umma al-Islamiyya*.[5]

The Egyptian nationalist consensus, seeking unification of the Nile valley under the Egyptian crown, was shared by all political groups, with one exception: the Egyptian communists were the only group that viewed the Sudanese as equals, a people who should have their own right to

self-determination and to shape their own future. The slogan of the mainstream ran: "the unity of the Nile valley: one Nile, one people, one king" [*wahdat wadi al-nil – Nil wahid – sha'b wahid – malik wahid*]. The communists promoted a very different slogan: "political and economic independence and a common struggle with the Sudanese people and its right to self-determination" [*al-istiqlal al-siyasi wa-al-iqtisadi wa-al-kifah al-mushtarak ma'a al-sha'b al-sudani wa-haqhu fi taqrir masirihi*].[6]

Was the unity of the Nile valley a manifestation of an "imagined community," to employ Benedict Anderson's concept on the development of national identity, or was it an "imaginary community," a product of the Egyptian colonialist vision? Anderson defines an "imagined community" as a group in which people living in the same administrative unit, usually a state, share similar life experiences, i.e., their daily lives are shaped by a similar economic, political, and social reality. Anderson's concept is based on the assumption that the majority of the people living within a territory share that collective identity.[7] By contrast, the reality molding daily life experience in Egypt and Sudan was rather diverse, and most people inhabiting Sudan did not share the Egyptian vision of a unified Nile valley under the Egyptian crown. An "imaginary community" can thus be depicted as an imposed identity by a dominant community/group of people on other groups of peoples inhabiting a disputed "common territory" who do not share or accept that identity, as was the case with Egypt seeking to expand its sovereignty over Sudan.

The troubled Anglo–Egyptian relations of the late nineteenth century through the late 1950s have been the subject of many studies. These studies have placed great emphasis on the various political, social, economic, and cultural issues related to the question of Sudan.[8] As these studies have shown, soon after the conclusion of World War II, successive Egyptian governments launched a large-scale campaign to promote Egypt's interests in Sudan – a campaign that the British attempted to thwart by any means necessary. The British exploited their substantial leverage as the dominant power in both Egypt and Sudan to reduce Egyptian influence in Sudan to the greatest extent possible. In addition, some studies have addressed the Anglo–Egyptian struggle over control of the Sudanese educational system.[9] They examine Britain's activity in the field of education and illustrate the way in which it developed, nurtured, and improved the Sudanese educational system to promote Sudanese national identity and encourage anti-Egyptian separatist tendencies.

Several studies, mostly in Arabic, have directly and indirectly dealt with the subject of the unity of the Nile valley. They may be divided into two main groups: those written by Egyptian academics and intellectuals before and after Sudan's independence, and those written by Sudanese

thinkers mainly in the post-independence era. The two groups represent contradictory approaches vis-à-vis Egypt's claims for a united Nile valley. In general, Egyptian writers wrote favorably of the colonialist experience in Sudan; the blame for thwarting the prospect of a united Nile valley was placed mainly with Britain and to a certain extent with Sudanese territorial nationalists. These studies focused on the political and social aspects of the problematic triangle of Anglo–Egyptian–Sudanese relations.[10]

We can learn from these works that until the early 1950s, Egypt's demand to unite the Nile valley was supported by all successive governments including the new military regime during its first months in power. These governments categorically refused to come to terms with Britain on any agreement in which Sudan would be separated from Egypt. Britain, for its part, took every possible measure to split the two countries; it had its own reasons for, and interests in, such an outcome. Perhaps the most prominent work to describe and analyze in detail the political stages in Egypt's twofold struggle for independence and for the unity of the Nile valley is Muhammad 'Abd al-Hamid Ahmad Hannawi's *Ma'rakat al-jala' wa-wahdat wadi al-nil, 1945–1954* (Cairo, 1998). His study was based mostly on British and Egyptian archival material, official documents, and impressive secondary sources and interviews.

However, the methods, tactics, and arguments employed on both the diplomatic and the propaganda levels by Egyptian politicians and intellectuals to justify the call for unity and to persuade the international community to support its realization have not yet received attention in the literature. Moreover, the internal, at times stormy, political and public polemic discourse within Egypt still awaits thorough, systematic, and critical examination.

This book endeavors to address these issues. It describes and analyzes the intense Egyptian efforts to prove categorically that Egypt and Sudan constituted a single territorial unit. These efforts, as it demonstrates, were clustered around several dominant theoretical layers: history, geography, economy, culture, and ethnography. Furthermore, the book takes pains to explain the ideological, social, and political undercurrents that led to the dramatic shift in 1953 in the stance of Egypt's new military regime, which allowed the Sudanese people to exercise their right to self-determination, thus paving the way for the demise of the idea of the unity of the Nile valley.

Aims, Methods, and Approaches

This study has two objectives. The first is political: to demonstrate that the question of Sudan was in fact an integral part of Egypt's general foreign

policy, formulated in the years immediately following World War II. The second is to survey and analyze the internal political and public debates on the unity of the Nile valley. The study utilizes an exceptional and valuable typology of interest groups in Egypt and provides important insights into the elements of both consensus and diversity in Egyptian national and nationalist thought at a crucial turning point in the development of Egyptian self-definition and self-awareness. The study is therefore composed of two interconnected tiers: politics and ideology.

For the first one, politics, while investigating the internal and external Egyptian political context, the study asks a number of basic questions:

1. Why was Britain determined to control Sudan, and why were members of Egypt's political elite equally determined to control it?
2. What place did Sudan hold in the context of other nationalist issues in Egypt?
3. Why did the 1952 regime change direction and open the door for a resolution of the Sudan issue? Why were the Free Officers more flexible than their predecessors?

With regard to foreign policy, the study describes and analyzes the factors that created the Anglo–Egyptian labyrinth that subsequently led to Egypt's decision to present its dispute with Britain to the United Nations Security Council in August 1947; Nuqrashi's appeal in August 1947 was rejected by a majority of members of the Security Council. The present book argues that the international diplomatic campaign for the unity of the Nile valley and for a full and speedy evacuation of British troops from Egypt and Sudan taught the Egyptians that their twofold demand was neither convincing nor acceptable to the vast majority of countries.

With regard to internal politics, Egypt's decision to renounce its claims regarding the unity of the Nile valley came only after the downfall of the monarchy. While Gabriel Warburg has shown that cracks appeared in the Egyptian consensus regarding the unity of the Nile valley as early as several weeks before the overthrow of King Faruq,[11] this book argues that the fissures in fact emerged much earlier, in the early 1940s, when the communists appeared to consolidate and present a divergent view regarding the unity of the Nile valley. Although they presented a dissident approach to the Sudan question, opposing the main nationalist current represented by the political establishment – the palace, the parliamentary parties, and extra-parliamentary nationalist and political groups – it was the communist approach that prevailed.

The Free Officers regime that took power in July 1952 made Egypt's liberation its first priority. The Free Officers realized that to gain

international support for their demand of a British troop withdrawal from Egypt, they needed to make substantial concessions in Sudan. It would appear that they embraced some of the communist platform's principles on the Nile valley; one of these was the Sudanese right to self-determination. While displaying a rigid and uncompromising stance throughout the Anglo–Egyptian talks on the liberation of Egypt, insisting on a full and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Egypt, they voiced their willingness to relinquish their demands in Sudan – a moderate, realpolitik stance that would pave the way to an Anglo–Egyptian agreement over Sudan in February 1953.

The second objective of this study – an ideological analysis focusing on the ways and means by which Egypt pursued its propaganda campaign for the unity of the Nile valley – has the following goals:

1. To emphasize the discursive statements and assumptions linking Sudan and Egypt in the latter's attempt at constructing a new, yet very significant, Egyptian anti-imperialist and nationalist narrative.
2. To explain the specific political, economic, and cultural interests that made this narrative so forceful and resilient.

As the Egyptian government was fully aware that the two major nationalist currents – territorial and supra-Egyptian nationalism (see the discussion that follows) – saw Sudan as an integral part of Egypt, it took pains to explain the geographical, ethnographical, cultural, and economic foundations on which the unity of Egypt and Sudan was supposedly built, using the works of leading theoreticians and experts in the study of the Nile valley, while presenting the expressions and forms in which that unity had manifested itself throughout history. Egypt, it was emphasized, was in a better position and was more anxious than Great Britain to prepare the Sudanese for "self-government," because the Egyptians and the Sudanese shared the same language, religion, and race, and both Sudan and Egypt depended on the Nile for their very existence.

In fact, this was no more than Egyptian lip service, devoid of any real political meaning. In a united Egyptian–Sudanese state, the Sudanese would enjoy no more than administrative autonomy; actual control would be left to Egypt. The present book offers a critical assessment of the assertions made by Egypt. It presents a balanced and thorough array of sources for arguments disputing these claims, and sheds light on the origins, relevance, and ramifications of these arguments vis-à-vis the Egyptian "cause." The book examines the reasons why these efforts ultimately failed, questioning whether this "failure" was a result of fallacies underpinning official Egyptian discourse or other factors. The book

also examines why the Egyptians failed to base their case for unity on historical and cultural arguments, trying to ascertain the weakness of these arguments. Moreover, the book attempts to suggest alternative explanations as to why both Egypt and Britain failed to dictate the future of the Sudan.

During the period on which the book focuses, Egyptian nationalism was dominated by two major groups: those regarded as territorial nationalists, for whom the Nile constituted a chief feature of their identity and who had been determined to see Egypt and Sudan united since the early twentieth century, and those raising the idea of Pan-Arabism, including Sudan, in the late 1930s. The book explores the way in which the Free Officers regime gradually departed from both currents, taking on a new delineation of the collective identity – Egypt for the Egyptians, and the Sudanese right to self-determination. Only after the solution of the Sudanese dispute with Britain did the Free Officers consolidate their trans-territorial nationalist identity in the form of Pan-Arabism. It has been suggested that Pan-Arabism under Nasser, and particularly the initiation of the great project of the High Dam in Aswan, marked the end of the Nile in Egypt's nationalist identity; by closely scrutinizing Egypt's nationalist currents through the lens of the unity of the Nile valley, the present book provides a missing link in the intellectual history of Egypt in general and the place of the unity of the Nile valley in Egypt's nationalist identity in particular.

For the critical examination of the central stages in the historical development of the question of the unity of the Nile valley, 1943 serves as the starting point – a year that witnessed a significant change, as mentioned earlier, in Egypt's initial steps toward an independent foreign policy. The book concludes in 1953 – a year marking the demise of the idea of the unity of the Nile valley following the conclusion of the Anglo–Egyptian agreement, in which Egypt's newly established military regime agreed to renounce its claims to Sudan.[12] The year 1953 is of double significance for the present study: it marked the conclusion of the Anglo–Egyptian agreement as well as the abolition of political parties and the subsequent demise of a free press and the freedom of speech in Egypt. From 1953 on, Egypt's foreign policy transformed dramatically – but that period will not be addressed by this book, except for a few references.

The present book's analysis of the works and studies of Egyptian intellectuals focuses on two layers: "establishment intellectuals" acting within the framework of the regime and those acting independently in a variety of intellectual frameworks. Here the research draws a distinction between various ideological-political schools, representing a wide array

of sociopolitical organizations. To this end, the book thoroughly and systematically analyzes daily newspapers, journals, and other forums expressing the prevailing beliefs of the various political factions. For instance, for left-wing groups, the analysis relies on Egyptian publications such as *al-Fajr al-Jadid, al-Damir, al-Jamahir, al-Majalla al-Jadida, Kifah al-Sha'b, Umdurman, Kifah al-Umma,* and *al-Bashir*.

The discussion of the ongoing debate among such right-wing groups as the Muslim Brothers and *Misr al-Fatat* (Young Egypt) directs us to such publications as *Wadi al-Nil, al-Nadhir, al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, Misr al-Fatat,* and *al-Risala*. The analysis of the views and approaches presented by liberal intellectuals associated with political parties such as the Wafd and the Liberal Constitutionalists focuses on such publications as *al-Jihad, al-Misri, al-Balagh al-Usbu'i, al-Balagh, al-Siyasa al-Usbu'iyya, al-Siyasa*. Independent views and ideas were found in such publications as *al-Ahram, al-Musawwar, al-Hilal, al-Muqattam, Ruz al-Yusuf* , and *al-Asas*. The study argues that although almost all groups shared the belief that Egypt and Sudan constituted one entity, it is critically important to analyze the various arguments that they put forward; each came to the subject from a different perspective and approach.

Research has been carried out using historical methods, paying careful attention to the cross-feeding between political history and the history of ideas. The subject of the unity of the Nile valley was both a major staple of Egypt's foreign policy and an ideological issue with which many Egyptian intellectual circles were preoccupied. The study analyzes the Egyptian anti-imperialist and nationalist narrative of the unity of the Nile valley in terms of discourse and perspective. The complex issue of ideology vis-à-vis realpolitik is thoroughly examined, and the book provides an inquiry into whether the question of the unity of the Nile valley was first built around a cohesive ideology and then translated into political action, or vice versa. Did Egyptian intellectuals of all nationalist stripes, both inside and outside of the establishment, consolidate their attitudes regarding the future of Sudan as a result of the then-ongoing rivalry between the British and the Egyptian governments regarding hegemony over the region? Were their pronouncements and writings drafted as responses to the political and diplomatic context, as an attempt to shape that context, or perhaps as both? To clarify such issues this study utilizes methods and insights drawn from intellectual history and the history of ideas. These fields help to balance the internal/textualist approach and the external/contextualist approach, both of which are applied to this study.[13]

To investigate the nature of the interrelations between intelligentsia and regime, the book draws on the sociological models of Edward Shils

and S. N. Eisenstadt.[14] Here, the book considers whether the Egyptian political elite encouraged "producer" intellectuals or "reproducer" intellectuals, as per our sociological paradigms. Parallel to this, the book assesses the particular role played by those intellectuals acting within the framework of the regime. The book examines the studies and writings of such academic experts as Muhammad Shafiq Ghurbal, 'Abbas Mustafa 'Ammar, Ahmad Badawi, 'Abd al-Rahman Zaki, and Ibrahim Nashi in soliciting their services to the ruling elite. It also examines works by independent and politically oriented scholars such as 'Abd al-Rahman al-Rafi'i, Sulayman Huzayyin, Rashid Al-Barawi (Rashed El-Barawy), Muhammad Fu'ad Shukri, and others who were active at the time, and closely scrutinizes works by post-revolutionary scholars, including Yunan Labib Rizq, 'Abd al-'Azim Muhammad Ibrahim Ramadan, and many others. The book also sheds light on the nature and patterns of the intellectual activities of anti-governmental groups, both left and right wing. The book examines the extent to which these intellectual activities fell in line with the paradigm of the "dissident intellectual" suggested by J. P. Nettl and Edgar Morin.[15] The book aims to determine whether a direct connection existed between the modes of action employed by them in advancing their suggested solution and their political thoughts and theories regarding the future of Sudan. For the conceptualizations of the role of intellectuals and the processes of framing narratives of contention in the broader field of social movement, the analysis also draws on the works of scholars, such as Carl Boggs's *Social Movements and Political Power* and Alberto Melucci's *Nomads of the Present*.[16]

The book offers a critical examination of the assertions made by Egyptian historians and geographers that the unity of the Nile valley was not a modern phenomenon but rather a deeply rooted historical reality. For example, it investigates the validity and historical foundations of the assertion that the ancient monuments of Egypt indicate that Egypt had been closely united with Lower and Upper Nubia (Sudan) since the earliest days of history and that the relations that continuously developed between the northern and southern parts of the Nile valley had never been interrupted. Is it true that Egypt and Sudan, as Salim Hasan stated, "could never dispense with each other for the very strong reasons, which bound them into one single unit, completely indivisible, even if their inhabitants thought otherwise"?[17]

Egyptian geographers concentrated their arguments on the vital importance of the Nile to the land through which it flows, particularly Egypt. They proposed that Egypt should implement a tight net of works and projects in Sudan to guarantee the required water supply. The present study employs certain aspects of Karl Wittfogel's theory of

"hydraulic civilization," which focuses on the dependence of societies, mainly in historically underdeveloped areas (China, in particular), on the broad expansion of irrigation works. According to Wittfogel, extensive irrigation requires centralized coordination and direction by an authoritarian leadership – in his words, "a despotic ruler." Since both Egypt and Sudan were "hydraulic societies," it is quite obvious that Egyptian geographers granted the "leading role" to Egypt – "a colonialism that could exist between brothers," to borrow Eve Troutt Powell's phrase.[18]

While analyzing the ethnographic assertions made by Egyptian sociologists and anthropologists, my discussion draws on theories and definitions of ethnicity from the social sciences, such as Max Weber's definition of an ethnic group. According to Weber, an ethnic group is not a spontaneously developed community, or a group with specific geographical location, but "a group of people who believe they have ancestors in common from the past."[19] Weber's concept runs counter to arguments made by some Egyptian theoreticians, according to which geography and ethnography are interrelated in the Nile valley. The study discusses the historical rationale and theoretical foundations of these hegemonic and colonialist assertions.

The book draws upon a plethora of sources. Primary sources, studied in the original Arabic, consist of official documents, books, and essays, as well as articles by Egyptian academics, theoreticians, ideologues, journalists, politicians, and other intellectuals. These are used to elucidate the internal ideological discourse at each stage in the historical development of the question of the unity of the Nile valley. To describe and analyze the political context (i.e., the development of political events regarding the future of Sudan and Egypt's demand to form a unified state in the Nile valley), much of the source material is gleaned from archives in Egypt, Britain, India, the Netherlands, Russia, and the United States.

The fact that the Indian National Archives in Bombay and New Delhi are so rife with official Egyptian documents can be explained by the fact that since the conclusion of World War II, both India and Egypt had been embroiled in a struggle for national liberation against Britain; the existence of a common adversary provided the nations with a common ground for political cooperation, which would gradually give rise to solid, friendly relations. Egypt looked to India as a rising Asian power to help it gain international support in its dispute with Britain. As the Indian archives reveal, Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian leader, took great interest in the events unfolding in Western Asia and Egypt.

The book also makes use of the archives of the International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam), whose rare collections of Egyptian left-wing