

## Regime Security Considerations and US–Egyptian Relations during the Kennedy years\*

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### 정권안보의 추구와 케네디 행정부 시기 미국-이집트 관계

본 연구는 제3세계 동맹을 설명하는 과정에서 정치 지도자들에 대한 내부적 위협을 강조하는 기존 이론들을 토대로 케네디 행정부 시기 가말 압둘 나세르의 정권 안보에 대한 추구가 미국과의 관계 개선을 방해하는 주요 변수로 나타나게 되었음을 역사적 사례 연구의 관점에서 규명하고자 하였다. 1961년 시리아 쿠데타는 나세르의 군사적 반란 위협에 대한 위협인식을 고조시키고 아랍 국가간 규범 경쟁의 가속화 속에서 서방 세계에 의한 이집트 체제 전복의 의구심을 강화시키는 사건으로 규정될 수 있었다. 반면 케네디 행정부는 UAR로부터 시리아의 탈퇴라는 동일한 사건을 나세르의 관심을 국내 경제 문제로 돌릴 수 있는 호기로 인식하였다. 특히 이러한 미국과 이집트 간의 인식의 상이성 하에서 나세르의 정권안보에 대한 우려는 미국이 중재하고자 했던 지역 문제에 대한 비타협적 태도를 양산하는 원인으로 작용하였다. 왜냐하면 지역 문제에 대한 나세르의 양보는 지역 경쟁 국가들로부터 미국과의 협력의 대가로 혁명적 신념을 버리려 한다는 정치적, 언어적 공격의 대상이 될 수 있었기 때문이다. 이러한 측면에서 케네디 행정부 시기 미국과 이집트의 관계는 내부적 위협으로 인한 나세르의 정권 안보의 추구라는 변수가 양국 간 화해 협력을 방해하는 원인으로 규정될 수 있는 역사적 사례로 평가해 볼 수 있다.

\* This work was presented at 2014 KAIS conference and the 10th Conference of AFMA in December 2014 and also used as part of Kangsuk Kim's PhD Dissertation.

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**[Key Words: Regime Security, The breakup of the UAR, Gamal Abdel Nasser, US-Egyptian relations, Internal Threats, Ideological Attack, Third World Alignment]**

## I . Introduction

Contrary to traditional alignment theories such as realist balance of power theory and Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory (Walt 1987), various existing literature put emphasis on internal threats in explaining Third World states' alignment. Steven David's theory of omnibalancing shares the realist understanding of international anarchy, accepting the predominance of power, interests and rationality in international politics (David 1991, 236). However, despite these basically realist traditions, the theory of omnibalancing put emphasis on the role of internal threats to leadership in understanding alignment choices of Third World states (David 1991, 239), and Third World security issues are fundamentally dissimilar from those of developed countries (Ayoob 1991). It also stressed "the leader of the state rather than the state itself" as the suitable unit of analysis for explaining the alignment decisions of Third World (David 1991, 237). With this in mind, the significance of ideological threats on the security of incumbent regimes in the Middle East is receiving increasing attention. For example, ideological threats emanating from abroad to the domestic stability were identified in the Middle East (Gause III 2003-4, 274). This importance of ideological threats is due to the pervasiveness of transnational identities in the Middle East which can make leaders more vulnerable to verbal attacks from regional rivals or ambitious leaders who appeal to publics of other countries for support against their own governments (Gause III 2003-4, 278). In light of these theoretical considerations, it can be said that not only assassination attempts and coups but also ideological threats of regional opponents to Nasser's

incumbency included substantial internal threats.

Through in-depth case study of U.S-Egyptian relations based on these theoretical considerations, this study argues that the President of UAR, Gamal Abdel Nasser's defiance of the Kennedy administration can be partially driven by his search for regime security. In other words, this article attempts to outline an alternative reading of US-Egyptian relations during the Kennedy years with an emphasis on Nasser's desire to increase his regime security, thus preventing the emergence of a constructive relationship with the United States.

This case serves as a good example that demonstrates how regime insecurity affected the failure to form a U.S.-Egyptian Cold War alliance. First of all, Nasser's stance on the United States was quite ambivalent as he pursued a strategy which strove to maintain economic cooperation with the Kennedy administration while simultaneously defying it politically. In this sense, Nasser's attitude toward the Kennedy administration should have been called into the question (Gerges 1995, 308). Under the Public Law 480 agreement, American policymakers dramatically increased economic aid to Egypt, believing that American interests would be further advanced by engaging in business with Nasser (Little 1988, 502). However, Nasser refused all requests from the Kennedy administration to cooperate on regional agendas such as the Palestinian question and the Yemeni civil war although he hoped to obtain American help, mainly for economic purposes. Despite the seemingly amicable relations, Nasser used Kennedy's misinterpretation to his advantage and thus gained American support and received economic aid (Barrett 2010, 194).

In clarifying the reasons for Nasser's disobedience of the United States, his concern for regime security is an important variable. The breakup of the UAR in 1961 increased the possibility of coups and assassination attempts against the Nasser regime. Since then, despite Egypt's benefit from aligning with the United States,



threats to Nasser's political survival prevented him from conceding core Arab concerns and foreign ventures in order to avoid appearing domestically vulnerable to regional Arab rivals seeking to diminish his validity. In other words, internal threats to the Egyptian leader prevented the Nasser regime from focusing its energy on domestic politics, which is what the Kennedy administration really wanted. This is due to Nasser's belief that concessions on regional issues would have offered Arab rivals an opportunity accusing him of abandoning the creed of his revolutionary cause in return for cooperation with the United States. Thus, serious internal threats include ideological challenge of regional rivals to his legitimacy as the leader of Arab nationalism.

This research is based on extensive research of primary documents in explaining political history in order to elucidate the interrelationship between Nasser's defiance of the Kennedy administration and his consideration of regime security. In particular, the telegrams and reports sent by the American Embassy in Cairo to Washington contained in the Record Group 84 (Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State) documents provide considerable support to my argument. The significance of this article is to present alternative explanations for the history of U.S.-Egyptian relations from which conclusions can be drawn in order not only to give implications on understanding foreign policy of Arab states but also to anticipate the future of U.S.-Egyptian relations. Given the historical parallels between Nasser and current Egyptian President, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, U.S relations with Nasser's government seems to serve as an important lesson in establishing a friendly relationship between the United States and Egypt today (Springborg 2014). Given this historical case study, al-Sisi's concerns about regime insecurity in such a divided society might provoke conflicts between United States and Egypt in the foreseeable future despite incentives and constraints of U.S. administrations in order to maintain solid U.S.-Egyptian alliance.

## II. The breakup of the UAR and Increased Threats to Nasser’s Incumbency

The American Embassy in Cairo issued warnings about the possibility of a military rebellion in Syria before the outbreak of the coup of September 28, 1961. On August 8, 1960, an unconfirmed but plausible report saying that “storm warnings were mounting that action was being planned to overthrow the Syrian regime” was collected by the Embassy.<sup>1)</sup> Cairo sent a telegram to the American government on December 22, 1960 indicating that there was substantial evidence of Syrian military discontent with Egyptian ascendancy and usurpation of key positions in the military.<sup>2)</sup> As anticipated by the American government, Nasser was surprised when Syria declared independence from the UAR. The American Embassy in Cairo described Nasser’s state of mind: the news that Nasser had to deliver was “far worse than the tripartite aggression in 1956” since “this was a blow delivered by an Arab hand at the Arab nation.”<sup>3)</sup> Nasser repeatedly denounced the Syrian secession “as a treasonous plot backed by imperialism, the allies of imperialism, and Arab reactionaries both in Syria and elsewhere in the Arab world.” (Jankowski 2002, 175). In addition, Egyptian media ardently attacked the Syrian coup focusing on three major themes: “the revolt was a blow to Arab unity; it was sided and abetted by capitalistic, imperialistic forces, and the UAR [would] emerge from the crisis as

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1) “From Amin H. Meyer to Mr. Jones, Syrian Storm Warnings, August 8, 1960,” *Records Relating to United Arab Republic Affairs, compiled 1956 – 1962*, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, NARA, Box 2, 1.

2) “From Amin H. Meyer to Mr. Lewis Jones, Study of Political Situation in the First (Syrian) Army of the United Arab Republic, December 22, 1960,” *Records Relating to United Arab Republic Affairs, compiled 1956 – 1962*, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, NARA, Box 2, 4.

3) “From the Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, Political Weeka No. 40, October 5, 1961,” *Classified General Records, compiled 1956-1961*, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84, NARA, Box 19, 2.



a stronger nation when the Syrian people overthrown the traitorous leaders of the rebellion.”<sup>4)</sup> The situation was such a setback to his legitimacy that Nasser was even willing to quit the presidency of the UAR (Jankowski 2002, 170).

At the same time, the breakup of the UAR had the potential to incite domestic military rebellion in Egypt as the disgruntled military junta felt that it could exploit the events to overthrow Nasser, who had gone nearly two years without a revolutionary victory (Barrett 2010, 194). According to James Jankowski, it was not long before signals of turbulence in the army were ignited by the loss of Syria surfaced (Jankowski 2002, 171-172). In an inaugural speech to the Preparatory Committee of the National Congress on November 26, 1961, Nasser was forced to negate that any military rebellion had been attempted, stating that “claims of a revolt by the UAR Army in Fayld (Canal Zone) originated from Radio Damascus and proved that Syria was playing the game of imperialism.”<sup>5)</sup> In spite of Nasser’s denial, the American Embassy in Cairo analyzed that Nasser’s comment on a military insurrection signposted that “the rumors to this effect were probably quite strong.”<sup>6)</sup> This illustration demonstrates that Nasser was nervous about factionalism within the Egyptian army encouraged by the Syrian coup. In particular, documents from the American Embassy in Cairo revealed that a trial on military subversion occurred. A telegram from Cairo on December 4, 1961 confirmed the arrest of a faction of retired officers called the Ramadan Group on charges of conspiring against the government.<sup>7)</sup> In addition, Nasser was alarmed by the popularity of

4) “From the Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, Political Weeka No. 40, October 5, 1961,” *Classified General Records, compiled 1956-1961*, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84, NARA, Box 19, 5.

5) “From the Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, Political Weeka No. 48, December 2, 1961,” *Classified General Records, compiled 1956-1961*, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84, NARA, Box 19, 5.

6) “From the Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, Political Weeka No. 48, December 2, 1961,” *Classified General Records, compiled 1956-1961*, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84, NARA, Box 19, 5.

Abdel Hakim Amer, the Chief of Staff of the Egyptian army, since dissatisfied officers had plotted to overthrow him and establish Amer as his replacement in January 1962 (Beattie 1994, 161).

Meanwhile, Nasser's fear of subversion was strengthened by his belief that Western countries would attempt to bring him down. It seemed clear that Nasser believed that the coup was backed directly or indirectly by U.S. covert action. Rumors rapidly spread around Cairo that CIA operatives had played an important role in the event (Kerr 1971, 35). The idea of a conspiracy involving U.S. assistance was reinforced by King Saud's support for the Syrian coup since Saudi Arabia was perceived as the leading American patron state in the Gulf. A regular weekly article in al-Ahram on October 27, 1961 written by the renowned journalist, Muhammad Hassanayn Haykal, accused King Saud of having placed "unlimited funds" at the disposal of the officers who carried out the coup d'état.<sup>8)</sup>

Moreover, suspicions of American involvement in the Syrian coup could have gone back to the historical analogy of the United States' actions in Congo in January 1961. Nasser stated that "the U.S. action in supporting Kasavubu immediately after he had delivered Lumumba up to Tshombe for assassination completely shocked Afro-Asians."<sup>9)</sup> Similarly, Haykal blamed the American government for conspiring in the Congo in his article in al-Ahram, titled by "Frankly Speaking" on February 17, 1961: "The U.S.A. was the true financier to Colonel Mobutu and it was her intelligence service that formulated for him the plan

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7) "Untitled, Secret, December 4, 1961," Classified General Records, compiled 1956-1961, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84, NARA, Box 15, 2.

8) "From the Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, Political Weeka No, 44, November 2, 1961," Classified General Records, compiled 1956-1961, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84, NARA, Box 19, 4.

9) "From the Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, Conversation with President Nasser, March 23, 1961," *Classified General Records, compiled 1956-1961*, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84, NARA, Box 17, 2.



of his coup d'état against Lumumba and it was her intelligence service that placed a dagger in his hand to stab his leader Patrice Lumumba in the back.”<sup>10)</sup>

Above all, Nasser's doubts were further determined in October 1961 when the Egyptian intelligence service discovered a conspiracy by the French government to overthrow him. A report written by the American Embassy in Cairo explained that a total of nine suspects were arrested on the accusation that they “(1) collected political, economic, and military information through services of paid informers and unscrupulous persons; (2) set up an espionage network; (3) issued anti-UAR leaflets, printing materials belonging to [the] Swiss Embassy; and (4) smuggled funds of foreigners from [the] country.”<sup>11)</sup> On December 1, 1961, the Arabic magazine *Musawwar* uncovered a story about French espionage when top Egyptian journalist Mustafa Amin interviewed the spies in prison.<sup>12)</sup> This story revealed that the agents from France plotted to oust Nasser through diverse maneuvers such as propaganda attacks, assistance of Israeli covert action, and stimulation of coup as revealed in the following excerpts from an interview with the French spy sumamed Belivier.<sup>13)</sup> The main reason for the French attempt to assassinate Nasser was his opposition to the French presence in Algeria.<sup>14)</sup> According to the American Embassy in Cairo, it was

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10) “From the Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, Al Ahram (February 17, 1961), March 14, 1961,” *Classified General Records*, compiled 1956-1961, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84, NARA, Box 17. 2.

11) “From the Embassy in Cairo to the Secretary State, Washington, November 27, 1961,” *Classified General Records*, compiled 1956-1961, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84, NARA, Box 15, 1.

12) According to document sent by the American Embassy in Cairo, the article of the Arabic magazine *Musawwar* on December 1 reported how Mustafa Amin succeeded in entering the prison and spent one day with the French spies talking to them, listening to their confessions and knowing the inside story of their secrets: how they thought of assassinating Nasser.

13) “From the Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, Embtel 266, December 1, 1961,” *Classified General Records*, compiled 1956-1961, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84, NARA, Box 15, 2-3.

14) “From the Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, Re French ‘Spy Case’, November 30, 1961,” *Classified General Records*, compiled 1956-1961, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of



clear that the French espionage turned out to be real threat to the Nasser regime. The embassy assessed the situation as follows: “it certainly [came] at [a] convenient time to provide distraction from [the] regime’s problems and further evidence that its troubles [sprang] from imperialist plotting.”<sup>15)</sup>

Furthermore, the breakup of the UAR deepened the struggle for regional hegemony producing “rigid political polarization between Egypt and the conservative camp led by Saudi Arabia,” (Dawisha 1975, 48) thus contributing to Nasser’s vulnerability to criticism from his rivals. For example, following the dissolution of the UAR, Nasser attacked the House of Saud, the Hashemites, and the new rulers of Syria accusing them of being “reactionists who were [in a] life or death battle with Egypt.” (Jankowski 2002, 178). Above all, “the war of nerves” between Egypt and Syria continued, causing Nasser to be concerned about propaganda attacks coming from the new Syrian government through Radio Damascus.<sup>16)</sup> With regard to this deepened regional conflict in the wake of Syria’s secession, Malcolm H. Kerr states that by condemning the conservative monarchies before they were willing to criticize Egyptian government, Nasser turned the situation favorable for him, and put them on the defensive from the perspective of their own people (Kerr 1971, 27).

All things considered, internal stability in Egypt was jeopardized by the Syrian coup. Syria’s secession increased Nasser’s compulsion to defend his regime because he assumed that it had the potential to arouse both a spontaneous domestic military coup and subversion from Western countries such as France and the United States. At the time of the secession, dissatisfied military officers in Egypt felt it was high

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State, Record Group 84, NARA, Box 13, 2.

15) “From the Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, Re Paris Tel 43 to Cairo, Cairo to Dept 892, November 27, 1961,” *Classified General Records, compiled 1956-1961*, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84, NARA, Box 13, 2.

16) “From the Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, Political Weeka No. 44, November 8, 1961,” *Classified General Records, compiled 1956-1961*, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84, NARA, Box 19, 3.



time to get rid of Nasser, whose political legitimacy had been severely damaged. In addition, Nasser's conviction that the coup was backed directly or indirectly by covert American actions, along with the discovery of French espionage and the historical analogy of the coup in Congo, contributed to his heightened concern for survival.

### III. Kennedy's effort to Turn Nasser's Energy Inward

The Kennedy administration inspected what the Syrian coup meant for American foreign policy towards Egypt and the new Syrian regime. At a crossroads in its relationship with Egypt, Washington wanted to evade "another Aswan Dam fiasco" by encouraging the country to turn toward economic development as its major goal (FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. 17, No. 163). Robert W. Komer, a member of the National Security Council, was convinced that Syria's secession from the UAR was the chance to adjust Nasser's drive inwards to tackle domestic economic problems: "Nasser seems to have concluded from the Syrian failure that, instead of trying so hard to promote revolution elsewhere, he had better turn inward toward solving Egypt's own colossal problems." (FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. 17, No. 173) A similar evaluation of the American government also appeared in the following memorandum:

The United States would continue to use whatever good offices it had with Nasser and the UAR in the hope that such continued United States efforts would be instrumental in diverting Nasser from his extracurricular activities, and in encouraging him to turn his attention inwardly to constructive endeavors. ... Our hope is that gradually we can turn UAR attention towards its internal problems, thus creating a UAR need for



tranquility, which should be reflected in greater calm and peace in the area generally (FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. 18, Near East, 1962-1963, No. 71).

Given the fact that the modernization theory had played a fundamental ideology of the Kennedy's foreign policy towards the Third world, Nasser's changes of interests towards domestic economic issues really contributed to the success of the policy based on such theory. Related to this, Roby C. Barrett states that "the hope was that American financial assistance would keep Nasser from seeking Soviet help, and would persuade him to focus on domestic reforms." (Barrett 2010, 203) In some respects, American economic aid would be seen as "the bait" offered by the Kennedy administration (FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. 17, No. 279). Based on modernization theory, aid was regarded as "a weapon in the Cold War" intent on keeping Egypt oriented towards the American sphere of influence and away from its Soviet rival (Merrill 1994, 178).

This strategic calculation contributed to significant increases of American aid to Egypt in order to help Nasser focus on internal affairs (Gerges 1995, 303). Thus, on January 10, 1962, the United States suggested proposals aimed at strengthening its relations with Egypt in three ways: satisfying Egyptian aid requests, dispatching an American economic adviser; and inviting Nasser to visit Washington (FRUS 1961-1963, Vol.17, No. 171). In addition, the Kennedy administration approved in October 1962 endowment of \$431.8 million worth of food aid between 1963 and 1965 (Gerges 1995, 294). The U.S.-Egyptian rapprochement was on the right track when Chester Bowles and Edward Mason, the Harvard University economist, made their successful visit to Cairo, and set the stage for the UAR Minister of Economy, Abdel Moneim Kaissouni, to visit the United States. The Department of State considered these reciprocal visits by high-ranking official to be a sign that Egypt had begun to imbed itself in the Free World, thereby reducing some of the fundamental



problems which had prompted its orientation towards the pro-Soviet sphere of influence (FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. 17, No. 276).

However, American policymakers mistakenly presumed the breakup of the UAR to be an opportunity to turn Nasser's energy towards domestic affairs without considering its impacts on Nasser's heightened concerns of regime security. Also, it was naïve for American policymakers to assume that the event would be an occasion to increase economic aid based on modernization theory. Rather, Nasser preferred to prioritize regional affairs, and Syria's succession necessitated a display of his sincere commitment to Arab causes in order to protect himself from accusations from Arab rivals. Accordingly, it was inevitable that Nasser "turned back to foreign adventures," when Washington tried to turn Nasser inward (FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. 18, Near East, 1962-1963, No. 145). This study will examine further the reason why Nasser stubbornly opposed all the requests of the Kennedy administration.

#### IV. Ideological Threats and Nasser's Defiance of the Kennedy Administration

Why did Nasser tenaciously reject any concession of regional matters to the American government including repatriation of the Palestinian refugees and withdrawal of Egyptian troops from the Yemeni Civil War? This is due to the fact that Nasser was primarily afraid of the allegation that he was likely to abandon Arab causes in return for American economic aid. This kind of ideological attack was dangerous in light of the polarized relationship between Egypt and the conservative Arab countries. For example, Nasser was more concerned about political consequences of the U.S-Israeli weapon deal than Israel's military buildup itself, as

discovered in the subsequent account by Ambassador Badeau after his meetings with Nasser:

Nasser dwelt chiefly on political repercussions missile sale, seeming unperturbed by military implications. . . . . In particular he noted that Israeli issue (is) now hottest theme of intra-Arab propaganda warfare and is being used particularly by Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia as weapon to attack UAR with accusation that American price for continuing substantial UAR aid program is Nasser's acquiescence in softer Israeli line (FRUS 1961-1963, Vol 18, Near East, 1962-1963, No. 31).

Thus Nasser's inflexible assertiveness stemmed from attempts of regional competitors to delegitimize his regime despite American efforts to solve the Palestinian refugee problem under the Johnston Plan. (See Barrett 2010, 209-201) Haykal argued that "this resulted from attempts by Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria to undermine Nasser by claiming that he had sold out the Palestinians in return for US aid." (Barrett 2010, 204)

Above all, the U.S.-Egyptian friction regarding Yemen was one of the most important problems the Kennedy administration had to deal with. It is reasonable to assume that Nasser perceived the Yemeni coup as a golden opportunity to restore his seriously diminished prestige as an Arab leader (Dawisha 1975, 49-50). Nasser's intervention in Yemen was a tactic to consolidate his prestige as a leader of Arab nationalism after suffering shameful breakup of the UAR (Gerges 1995). In this regard, Nasser could not doctrinally abandon Yemen because withdrawal of Egyptian troops would have improved the repute and confidence of the reactionary forces in the Arab countries and would have immensely weakened his standing as an Arab leader (Dawisha 1975, 49-50).

Furthermore, Nasser's stubborn repudiation to Kennedy's request to pull out



Egyptian troops from Yemen was a derivative of his aspiration to maintain domestic stability. Polarization in the Arab world led Nasser to be chiefly concerned with Arabs' perception of an Egyptian withdrawal from Yemen prior to achieving a satisfactory result. For example, the UAR Ambassador to Washington Mostafa Kamel told President Kennedy that although Egypt agreed with the American proposal to disengage from Yemen, Nasser could not withdraw swiftly because he feared that "his own people would ask why he sent 30,000 soldiers to Yemen and why possibly 5,000 died" in case of a lack of appropriate excuses (FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. 18, Near East, 1962-1963, No. 302). Accordingly, Ambassador Badeau wrongly assumed that "there are few problems directly between USG [US government] and UAR, the possibility of friction lying almost exclusively in 'third world' situations. Arabian Peninsula is such 'third [world] country'" (FRUS 1961-1963, Near East, 1962-1963, Vol. 18, Near East, 1962-1963, No. 82) Given that regime security explicitly affected Nasser's decisions regarding regional matters, Yemen was not just an insignificant third world country as the United States had imagined, but a country which was essential to his own survival.

Consequently, it was almost impossible for the American government to mediate the Yemeni civil war since Egypt considered the event as the critical problem on its own survival. As the American efforts to calm this predicament went down the drain, Kennedy was being criticized for American support for Nasser which encouraged him to pursue expansionist policies (FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. 18, Near East, 1962-1963, No. 222). In the end, despite Washington's exertions to develop relations with the Egyptian government under domestic opposition to such policy, as President Kennedy confessed (FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol. 18, Near East, 1962-1963, No. 175), the failure of American intermediation of these regional affairs inevitably brought about intensified discordance between United States and Egypt. After Egypt never backed down over the issue, the United States warned Nasser that if progress

was not made, there would be a “very real danger of eventual Congressional action directly to ban aid.” (FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. 18, Near East, 1962-1963, No 379) However, Kennedy’s ineffective threats to shut off aid deteriorated U.S.-Egyptian relations for the remainder of the Kennedy administration, a quandary which lingered after the inauguration of President Lyndon Johnson.

## V. Conclusions

This article attempts to show an alternative reading of US-Egyptian relations during the Kennedy years in the context of Nasser’s search for regime security. The breakup of the UAR increased Nasser’s perception of threats to his incumbency. In other words, Syria’s secession from the UAR heightened Nasser’s suspicion of a military coup, covert action by Western countries, and it reinforced inter-Arab normative confrontation. Reports from the American Embassy in Cairo clearly confirmed this theory, given the discovery of conspiracy by the disgruntled retired military officers and Nasser’s ironically strong denial that any coup was even attempted. Frustrated military officers felt that it was the proper time to eliminate Nasser, who had damaged his domestic legitimacy. In addition, Nasser’s conviction that the United States played an important role in the Syrian subversion, the historical parallel to the revolt in Congo, and the discovery of the French espionage escalated his concerns for political survival.

Meanwhile, considerations about regime security were not the motivating factor in Kennedy’s foreign policy towards Egypt. Based on modernization theory, American policymakers misinterpreted the collapse of the UAR as an opportunity to turn Nasser’s energy toward domestic agendas and significantly increased economic aid



to Egypt. However, this calculation can be resulted from misunderstanding the nature of the indissoluble link between domestic legitimacy and regional affairs in the Arab world. In this sense, the rapprochement during the Kennedy years was also predetermined to be easily broken because of Nasser's defiance of any concession of regional matters to the American government. Indeed abandoning Yemeni or Palestinian questions would have enormously destabilized his legitimacy as a leader of Arab nationalism after suffering the dishonorable breakup of the UAR. In particular, Nasser's position on these issues had the potential to make him more vulnerable to ideological threats from regional rivals. Given Nasser's regime insecurity under these kinds of verbal attacks from regional opponents, it is almost impossible to form a friendly relationship between the United States and Egypt.

The findings give theoretical implications on international relations. A theory of international relations focusing on internal threats provided a more accurate understanding of Nasser's motivations during the Kennedy years. The findings also give policy implications to illuminate upcoming U.S.-Egyptian relations. Given the seeds of contemporary conflicts in Egyptian society, unless American policymakers carefully consider current Egyptian President's threats to his political survival, the U.S. administration's foreign policy to consolidate strategic cooperative relationship with Egypt will bring only limited success.

[주제어: 정권안보, UAR의 해체, 가말 압둘 나세르, 미국-이집트 관계, 내부적 위협, 이념적 공격, 제3세계 동맹]





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**논문접수일:** 2016년 09월 20일  
**심사완료일:** 2016년 10월 04일  
**게재확정일:** 2016년 10월 19일

