

## Logan Stuart

### How China's Response to the Suez Canal Crisis Helped Shape Sino-Egyptian Relations

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**Abstract:** Gamal Abdel Nasser used his strong response to the 1956 Suez Canal crisis to elevate his political position in Egypt. However, Nasser and Egypt did not respond to European and Israeli aggression alone. World-wide political pressure transformed the Suez Canal Crisis into a turning point where the United States and Soviet Union would surpass French and British global dominance. However, China also played a substantial role in aiding Egypt. In a recognition of Egypt's analogical circumstances of ideological struggle versus imperial powers and out of a desire to establish stronger relations in the area, China used their state response to Suez to build stronger connections with both Nasser and Egypt. As a result, the foundations were laid for more positive Chinese-Egyptian relations for the next several decades. The Bandung Conference of the mid-1950s may have been the start of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and Egypt, but it was a common ideological struggle against imperialism and China's fervent support for Egypt during the Suez Canal Crisis that ultimately solidified Sino-Egyptian diplomacy.

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In October of 1956, French, British, and Israeli troops mounted an offensive against the Egyptian military in the Sinai Peninsula and along the Suez Canal.<sup>1</sup> Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt's head of state, had previously nationalized the canal in July of 1956 as a bold statement against imperial powers. Israel struck first and invaded the Sinai Peninsula up to the eastern side of the canal, while British and French soldiers fought down the west bank of the canal.<sup>2</sup> While the Suez Crisis was a military embarrassment for the Egyptians, Nasser was able to spin his failure into a political victory and condemn the tripartite aggressors on the global stage, leading to the expulsion of the foreign militaries.<sup>3</sup> With the traditional imperial powers of France and England effectively expelled from Egypt by the end of the crisis, both the United States and the Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> "Milestones: 1953-1960," Office of the Historian, accessed October 29, 2020, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/suez>.

<sup>2</sup> "What Was the Suez Crisis?" HISTORY, accessed October 29, 2020, <https://www.history.com/news/what-was-the-suez-crisis>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Union would open a new front in their nascent Cold War as they began to vie for influence in Egypt and the Middle East.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, the People's Republic of China was just emerging as a communist and global power after the China Communist Party's victory over the Kuomintang 1949. While the PRC supported the Soviet agenda to spread communism, China had its own international diplomatic goals. The fledgling country had recently been granted a seat on the United Nations' Security Council in recognition of the country's struggle and sacrifices against Japan in WWII.<sup>5</sup> While the United Nations played a critical role in resolving the Suez Canal Crisis and other Middle Eastern conflicts, the seat had been delegated to the Republic of China--Chiang Kai-shek's government--and not the PRC, the Communist government that had expelled the ROC from the mainland in 1949. The PRC did not receive the Security Council seat until 1971, meaning they did not have authority to act through the United Nations to intervene in the Suez Canal Crisis.<sup>6</sup> Despite this obstacle, the PRC still steadfastly supported Egypt through the diplomatic channels available, in return for Egypt's support in helping the PRC take over the UN seat allotted to China. In addition to the Soviet Union and the United States, who were both vying to be Egypt's preeminent ally, the PRC was also a major influence and supporting figure for Egypt during the Suez Canal Crisis. China saw Egypt as both an ideological ally and strategic partner, as well as a necessity for their diplomatic goals. Through China's support of Egypt during the Suez incident, relations improved drastically between the two nations, serving as the basis for relatively strong diplomatic ties up to the present.

Some of the earliest evidence of the PRC's support for Egypt during the Suez Canal Crisis stems from the *人民日报* (*People's Daily*), a state-controlled newspaper outlet. While the impact of the Chinese response to the Suez Canal Crisis has been analyzed in the past, this paper seeks to analyze this significant world event by looking through a series of primary sources not included in other analyses like *Arab-Chinese Relations (With Special Emphasis on Egyptian-Chinese Relations 1950-1971)*, "Bandung 1955; Little Histories," *Communist China's Interaction with the Arab Nationalists Since the Bandung Conference*, *The Middle East in China's Foreign Policy 1949-1977*, or "Sino-Arab Relations".<sup>7</sup> Relying heavily on the *People's Daily*, a government publicized

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "What Is the Security Council?" United Nations Security Council, accessed October 29, 2020, <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/what-security-council>. ; Lirong Ma, "China's Cultural and Public Diplomacy to Countries in the Middle East." *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (In Asia)*, Volume 4, no. 2 (2010): 34.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>7</sup> Mou'im Nasser-Eddine, *Arab-Chinese Relations (with Special Emphasis on Egyptian-Chinese Relations 1950-1971)* (Beirut: Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1972); Antonia Finnane and Derek McDougall, *Bandung 1955; Little Histories* (Clayton: Monash University Press, 2012); Joseph E. Khalili, *Communist China's Interaction with the Arab Nationalists Since the Bandung Conference* (New York: Exposition Press, 1970); Yitzhak Shichor, *The Middle*

newspaper, this essay seeks to analyze the motivations and nature of China's response through what the Communist Party of China allowed to be published. The article also touches on more recent developments between China and Egypt, mainly the Belt and Road Initiative, that have not been written about in depth within the context of the Suez Canal Crisis.

Israeli troops began the attack on Egypt on October 29, 1956 and were quickly followed by French and British forces.<sup>8</sup> Just six days after the first Israeli attack, the *People's Daily* published an article titled “保卫苏伊士！” (“Defend Suez!”).<sup>9</sup> The article is a repudiation of imperialist aggression “justified” by Anglo-French cries for “freedom of navigation” through the Suez Canal.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the blatant rhetorical attacks towards the Western powers, the article also explicitly portrays the Egyptians in a positive manner. The Egyptian cities and people are frequently described as “peaceful”.<sup>11</sup> The first paragraph concludes after a mournful description of the bombings and attacks on Egyptian installations with the strong statement, “这真是可恶之至！” (this is really damnable).<sup>12</sup> The article sharply criticizes British and French hypocrisy in their statements about intervening in Suez to prevent violence between Egypt and Israel, pointing out that both countries voted against United Nations resolutions to mediate Israeli-Egyptian issues, as well as the cooperation of French military planes with Israeli attacks.<sup>13</sup> The article concludes with a particularly strong indictment of the tripartite aggressors, reading: “英法殖民者已经走上同全世界人民为敌的可耻道路...我们全力支援埃及·保卫苏伊士·打败侵略者！” (“England and France together have already begun down the shameful path of being the enemies of all the people of the world... We stand behind Egypt with our full strength, defend the Suez Canal, and defeat the invaders!”).<sup>14</sup> The message could not be clearer for the hundreds of millions of Chinese readers of the newspaper. To China, Egypt was the hero of the incident, pitted against foreign and malicious invaders. The *People's Daily* has been described as the “guiding light” for the millions of Chinese Marxists and the Communist party, and Mao Zedong's personal secretary,

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*East in China's Foreign Policy, 1949-1977* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Khalili, “Sino-Arab Relations,” *Asian Survey* 8, no. 8 (1968): 678–90.

<sup>8</sup> “What Was the Suez Crisis?”

<sup>9</sup> 崔奇, “保卫苏伊士”, *人民日报*, published November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1956. Retrieved from (1946-2012) 图文电子版. Translations provided by Logan Stuart.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Original translation for “peaceful” was “和平.”

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Hu Qiaomu, headed the newspaper.<sup>15</sup> The closeness in position and relationship between Mao and Hu Qiaomu exhibits the weight that the *People's Daily* was utilizing in their publications in favor of Egypt.

It was obvious that the PRC intended to mold public opinion towards condemnation of the European interference with the Suez Canal Crisis through the manner in which the *People's Daily* decried foreign interventionism in Egypt. China did not merely denounce Western aggression, but also expressed support for Gamal Abdel Nasser. On November 11, 1956, days after their "Defend Suez!" article, the *People's Daily* released another piece titled "纳赛尔重申埃及决心维护主权和独立 '只要埃及领土上有一名外国兵·苏伊士运河就不会通航,'" ("Nasser reaffirms Egypt's determination to defend its sovereignty, 'Even if there is only one foreign soldier in Egypt, the Suez Canal will not let ships through'").<sup>16</sup> In addition to the title, the article covers a speech given by Nasser at Cairo's Al-Azhar University about Egypt's stance on the dilemma.<sup>17</sup> The coverage is very partial to Nasser, and frequently includes his quotes that parallel the rhetoric from the CCP's own struggle against both the KMT and Western powers. Specifically, the *People's Daily* often uses the verb that literally means "exerting/struggling to the utmost" when discussing both the CCP's ascendancy over China and Nasser's fight against "imperial nations".<sup>18</sup> Nasser was even compared to Mao Zedong, portrayed as a vibrant leader propelling his people through a struggle against imperialist powers and absolutely unwilling to yield to foreign pressure. The commonalities between the two countries and their struggles against imperialism help to form the strong rhetoric that relates China and Egypt and helps garner mutual sympathy for each nation's situations.

However, the Suez Canal Crisis was not the first time that the Chinese media covered Nasser. The two countries had been working towards solidifying relations for over a year before the Suez crisis, beginning with the Bandung Conference in April of 1955. China was seeking to strengthen relationships with other Middle Eastern countries and was cognizant of addressing Islam in their relationship with the Arab countries, including Egypt. Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai ensured that Chinese Muslims were involved in Sino-Egyptian relations, and even took a copy of *The Koran* to Bandung.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "China Peoples Daily," AP Archive, accessed November 18, 2020, <http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/1c07c0840520e240050be9c77db928d1>; "Historian: Hu Qiaomu," Alpha History, accessed November 18, 2020, <https://alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/historian-hu-qiaomu/>.

<sup>16</sup> "纳赛尔重申埃及决心维护主权和独立 '只要埃及领土上有一名外国兵，苏伊士运河就不会通航。'" *人民日报*, published November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1956.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. Verb for "exerting/struggling to the utmost" is "拼搏." "Imperial nations" is "帝国国家."

<sup>19</sup> Ma, "China's Cultural and Public Diplomacy to Countries in the Middle East."

The Bandung Conference was another major moment for Chinese foreign relations, particularly Sino-Egyptian relations. Hosted by Indonesia, the Bandung Conference was intended to unite Asian, African, and Arab countries that possessed a significant portion of the world's population but were still taken advantage of by imperialist forces.<sup>20</sup> Many of these countries were considered "non-aligned" in the context of the Cold War and were also hoping to bolster their status as independent nations away from American or Soviet influence. Among the 29 countries that were present at the conference, 22 of them recognized the ROC as an official country, or had official lines of communication with Taipei instead of with the PRC.<sup>21</sup> PRC Premier Zhou Enlai was granted the difficult task of creating the foundations for diplomatic relations with the Bandung states. His dialogue with Egypt was uniquely important for Chinese military and economic interests in the region. Nasser was also present at Bandung, and the two prominent government officials met at this time.<sup>22</sup> The two men discussed the Arab-Israeli conflict in depth, and Nasser's anti-imperialist sentiment resonated strongly with the Chinese delegation.<sup>23</sup> In addition to agreeing to support the Egyptian cause against Israel, while backing Egypt, Yemen, and Syria over the more established Arab kingdoms of Iraq and Saudi Arabia, the PRC also promised to refrain from imposing their communist ideologies on both Egypt and Africa as a whole.<sup>24</sup>

In the Cold War era of constant turmoil between capitalism and communism, Nasser's Egypt strategically toyed with loyalties to United States and Soviet Union, accepting help from both but committing to neither for its own gain. Unlike the Americans and Soviets, the PRC explicitly stated that the young nation would not engage in ideological warfare. This stance would eventually pay off for the PRC. After the Bandung Conference, the PRC inched closer to its ultimate goal of diplomatic recognition from Egypt and other conference attendees, as well as a series of new economic and cultural exchange treaties with Egypt.<sup>25</sup> China required this diplomatic recognition from every nation they had a relationship with, but they saw Egypt as a regional power and Nasser as a vibrant leader in the Arab world, capable of affecting change through Africa and the Middle East. The *People's Daily* circulated a caption of a picture from April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1955, marking the new stage in Sino-Egyptian relations: "周总理在出席亚非会议时设宴招待埃及总理纳赛尔的情形," or "Premier Zhou holds a banquet for the honor of Egyptian Premier

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<sup>20</sup> Alanoud Alsahbah, "China's Relations with the Arab World Post Bandung Conference : An Overview 1955 - 1975," *UPF Journal of World History*, Volume 9 (2017): 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*; Finnane and McDougall, *Bandung 1955*; Ma, "China's Cultural and Public Diplomacy to Countries in the Middle East."

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

Nasser.”<sup>26</sup> Zhou’s banquet, although not rare at international conferences, singled out Nasser among all of the attendees for individual recognition, ensuring its coverage by the party-led news outlet and an opportunity to curry favor with Nasser himself. China was pleased to have a new powerful ally in Egypt and continued to work to strengthen their diplomatic relationship with Nasser. The Egyptian leader was pleased to have additional backing in conflicts with Israel, and another entity to safeguard the country from either Soviet or American hegemony.

The Suez Canal Crisis was the opportunity China needed to solidify its relatively new friendship with Egypt. The PRC’s support for Egypt and the Arab world extended beyond strong rhetoric in the state-run newspaper. In the initial days of the Suez Canal Crisis, Israel demolished the Egyptian air force. In a show of China’s governmental backing of Egypt, it sent \$4.7 million (USD) in immediate aid payments in 1956.<sup>27</sup> The money was important for the Egyptian military to maintain supplies and purchase weapons. The Chinese government may also have played a sizeable role in helping Egypt acquire arms from Czechoslovakia a year prior in 1955 as well.<sup>28</sup> In addition to monetary assistance, the Egyptian embassy in Beijing noted that November 1956 saw more than a quarter million applications received from Chinese nationals to fight with Egypt.<sup>29</sup> These volunteers were willing to actually travel to Egypt to fight against imperialism and tripartite aggression. Clearly, the *People’s Daily* articles and other Chinese propaganda had a massive impact in garnering tangible support for the Egyptian cause. While few to none actually made the journey to join in the fight against France, Great Britain, and Israel, China’s very real and tangible support of Egypt did not go unnoticed. A Syrian representative in Beijing expressed that China’s response to the Suez Crisis “will be engraved forever on the heart and spirit of the Arab people,” and that “China will find a friend in the Arab people who are fighting like Chinese people on the question of peace.”<sup>30</sup> In summary, the Suez Crisis and prior Bandung Conference laid the foundation for China to develop further ties with Egypt and the Arab world. The two were engaged in analogous struggles, and the words of this Syrian representative illustrate that it was not just Egypt that witnessed China’s support.

Sino-Egyptian joint prerogatives produced wide-ranging effects. Other Arab-bloc states and African countries began to follow Egypt’s precedent in recognizing the PRC as the legitimate political entity over the ROC.<sup>31</sup> Taiwan continued to hold the Security Council seat set aside for China, but Nasser’s acknowledgement of the PRC’s legitimacy was an enormous step towards

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<sup>26</sup> 钱嗣杰, “图片,” *人民日报*, published April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1955. Retrieved from (1946-2012) 图文电子版.

<sup>27</sup> Khalili, “Sino-Arab Relations;” Alsahbah, “China’s Relations with the Arab World Post Bandung Conference.””

<sup>28</sup> John Calabrese, “China and the Middle East (1950-1988),” (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1991), 10.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.; Alsahbah, “China’s Relations with the Arab World Post Bandung Conference.”

<sup>30</sup> Khalili, “Sino-Arab Relations.”

<sup>31</sup> Kyle Haddad-Fonda, “Revolutionary Allies,” (PhD thesis, Oxford University), 13.

the country's international recognition. In return for Nasser's support of the relatively new communist government in China, Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and the PRC approved his ambitious plans to unite Egypt and Syria into the United Arab Republic.<sup>32</sup> To help support the infant UAR's claim to legitimacy, the *People's Daily* published an article two days after the formal merge between Egypt and Syria titled "纳赛尔强调阿拉伯民族团结 指出埃叙联合有利于对付侵略和分化。苏联等十五国承认阿拉伯联合共和国," ("Nasser Reinforces Arab Unity and the Potential Egyptian-Syrian Ability to Resist Aggression. The Soviet Union and 15 Other Countries Recognize the New United Arab Republic").<sup>33</sup> As noted in the title, China was one of the first countries to officially recognize this new union, showcasing China's eagerness to maintain positive relations with Egypt and Nasser. Once again, China recognized a similar situation to their own: a nation ardently pushing for diplomatic recognition. The *People's Daily* article makes it abundantly clear that Nasser's new state had received 99.99% of voter support from Egyptians, and 99.98% support from Syrian voters.<sup>34</sup> Both Nasser and Mao clearly desired the benefits of establishing this quid pro quo relationship of mutual diplomatic recognition and cooperation.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive bonds between the PRC and Egypt formed during the Bandung Conference and Suez Canal Crisis of the 1950s, things had begun to sour by the end of the decade. Between 1959 and 1962, they deteriorated significantly. The UAR began to fall apart. Egyptians had dominated the Republic's politics: the shared Arab identity of Egypt and Syria no longer masked their other stark differences.<sup>35</sup> Even further, the CCP had supported Syrian revolutionary communists who sought to remove Syria from Nasser's political ideologies and the UAR, and turn it into a communist state.<sup>36</sup> China did not openly back revolution or the removal of Nasser, but they did provide sanctuary to several Syrian communist expatriates in Beijing, granting them opportunities to espouse their virulent rhetoric denouncing Nasser's government.<sup>37</sup>

Another major point of conflict between China and Egypt was China's actions in Tibet. In response to the Tibetan Revolt of the late 1950s, the PRC had dispatched heavily equipped military units to eliminate the Tibetan combatants. Over 10,000 Tibetans were killed in Lhasa alone. The Dalai Lama, a peaceful religious figure, was exiled to India for fear of execution by

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, page 15.

<sup>33</sup> "纳赛尔强调阿拉伯民族团结 指出埃叙联合有利于对付侵略和分化 苏联等十五国承认阿拉伯联合共和国," *人民日报*, published February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1958.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Eli Pôde and Elie Podeh, *The Decline of Arab Unity: The Rise and Fall of the United Arabic Republic*, (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), 152.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 150.

<sup>37</sup> Haddad-Fonda, "Revolutionary Allies," 15.

the PRC.<sup>38</sup> Egypt viewed China's actions as hypocrisy in the context of the PRC's voracious advocacy against the imperialist actions of Western nations.<sup>39</sup> Like France, Great Britain, and Israel with Egypt, China was trying to subdue a weaker entity that clamored for sovereignty against exploitative conditions. These two issues strained Sino-Egyptian relations and necessitated further measures to attempt to rebuild the bonds to previous levels of strength.

In recognition of this diplomatic tension and continued strategic importance of positive relations with Egypt, Zhou Enlai began his Middle Eastern and African tour of 1963 with visits to Egypt and Algeria: China's strongest regional allies.<sup>40</sup> During this expedition Cairo warmly received Zhou with banquets and official ceremonies in his honor. Zhou had come to Egypt with three main points to announce for China's foreign policy in the region. The first was that China would fully support Arab self-determination and independence from foreign intervention.<sup>41</sup> This was a reaffirmation of China's stance during the Suez Canal Crisis; China wanted to ensure that the other global superpowers and imperial powers would not be able to grab further political dominance in the region. Second, China restated their non-biased and neutral stance towards the nations of the Middle East and Africa, an important tenet of the nation's Cold War strategy.<sup>42</sup> Instead of seeking to emulate the Soviet Union or United States, China approached Egypt and its neighbors with respect for their own self-determination. The contrast was stark and was both noticed and appreciated by the Arab nations. Finally, in a direct appeal to China's relationship with Nasser, Zhou repeatedly emphasized China's support for the unity and sovereignty of Arab nations.<sup>43</sup> In effect, Beijing was placating Nasser's crowning philosophy of pan-Arabism: that all Arab nations and people shared common values and should unite into a single country. In addition to attempting a direct appeal to Nasser's personal goals, the PRC was also reflecting their own "One China Policy:" that all parts of China—including Tibet, Taiwan, and Xinjiang—should be united as well. While this endeavor by Zhou to regain Egypt's trust and full support did not lead to the desired ironclad relationship between the two states, it still marked the beginning of the PRC repairing Sino-Egyptian relations. Subsequently, China and Egypt released a joint communique in 1964, calling for mutual scientific cooperation. In September of 1965, the Chinese Scientific Instruments Exhibition opened in Cairo with Chinese funding.<sup>44</sup> While these were relatively modest achievements, they opened the door for further Sino-Egyptian cooperation through the remainder of the twentieth century.

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<sup>38</sup> George Patterson, , "China and Tibet: Background to the Revolt," *The China Quarterly*, no. 1 (1960): 8.

<sup>39</sup> Haddad-Fonda, "Revolutionary Allies," 15.

<sup>40</sup> Alsabbah, "China's Relations with the Arab World Post Bandung Conference.""

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*; Khalili, "Sino-Arab Relations."



The Bandung Conference and Suez Canal Crisis may have been the time of greatest Chinese support for Gamal Abdel Nasser, but he was still afforded national respect throughout the rest his life. When he died in September of 1970, the *People's Daily* released a short piece on Nasser's death, “为悼念纳赛尔总统逝世 北京上海天津等地政府机关和港口三十日下半旗一天,” (“To mourn Nasser's passing, government bureaucracies in Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and other places lowered flags to half-mast for the 30<sup>th</sup>”).<sup>45</sup> This particular piece is incredibly short and simply notes the motivations behind the half-masted flags, without discussing Nasser's life or accomplishments.<sup>46</sup> In fact, without even enough information for a whole paragraph, the article is only really noteworthy for its insight into China taking the time to openly respect another global leader. Nasser received the honor of a concrete expression of Chinese governmental recognition, something many Chinese and other foreign dignitaries did not receive. However, the article was reflective of the state of Sino-Egyptian relations. China was still cognizant of the importance of outwardly showing respect and support for Egypt but was no longer willing to provide the positive propagandist rhetoric that Nasser had previously received during the Suez Crisis. A year later in October of 1971, Egypt, along with most of the African and Arab nations, voted affirmatively on United Nations Resolution 2758 to replace the ROC's Security Council seat with one filled by the PRC.<sup>47</sup> China's diplomatic support for Egypt had finally paid off.

Today, Sino-Egyptian relations remain one of the more important partnerships that China has in the Middle East and North Africa. In 2013, Xi Jinping unveiled his Belt and Road Initiative, a plan for massive infrastructure investment into underdeveloped countries across the world.<sup>48</sup> The Belt and Road Initiative is an ambitious agenda to build roads, railroads, ports, airports, and educational exchanges that are centered in China but include 138 countries in total.<sup>49</sup> Egypt's strategic location as the overland bridge between the Middle East and Africa in addition to its continued possession of the Suez Canal have led to China prioritizing diplomacy and investment for the country. Many of the Belt and Road's marine routes rely on passage through the Suez Canal to reach European and North African members.<sup>50</sup> Previously, China utilized political capital from their relations with Egypt in response to the Suez Crisis to achieve one of their primary goals of international diplomatic recognition. Today, China is leaning on their continued relations with Egypt to push their largest foreign policy agenda of connecting the world through infrastructural development. Nearly 70 years after the culmination of the Suez Canal Crisis, the

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<sup>45</sup> “为悼念纳赛尔总统逝世 北京上海天津等地政府机关和港口三十日下半旗一天。” *人民日报*, September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1970. Retrieved from (1946-2012) 图文电子版.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, “China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative,” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed 28, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

Sino-Egyptian relationship born from it laid the foundation for their international cooperation through the Belt and Road Initiative.

Although Sino-Egyptian relations began with The Bandung Conference of 1955, it was the Chinese response to the tripartite aggression of Israel, France, and Great Britain during the Suez Canal Crisis that solidified this relationship. Through the state-run newspaper publications of the *People's Daily*, the Chinese government espoused exuberant enthusiasm for Nasser and Egypt during the 1950s. However, that support was eventually upended by a gradual deterioration of Sino-Egyptian relations in the decades afterwards. While the relationship may not have remained as strong as either country initially intended, it weathered a series of agitations and continued to be beneficial for both nations. Egypt received strong support against imperialist powers, fervent backing for Nasser and his pan-Arabism, as well as the comfort of knowing China had no intentions to compete with the Soviet Union or United States in Cold War conflicts. China earned Egypt's support for their primary diplomatic goal of establishing state legitimacy, establishing a powerful regional partnership that has continued to be of importance decades later. The relationship was not just a strategic one; both nations saw their own existential crises within the other. Mao and Nasser's "One China" and "Pan-Arabic" ideologies reflected each other and both leaders strove for international legitimacy for their respective nations. After a century of exploitation by Western countries and Japan, the injustice of the Suez Canal Crisis resonated strongly in China. As a result, the Suez Canal Crisis largely shaped an important diplomatic relationship of the twentieth century.

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