

# **The Strategical-Geo-Political Importance Of Suez Canal**

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# **The Strategical Geo-Political Importance Of Suez Canal**

## **Introduction**

**I**n this water globe, the planet Earth, the great importance of the waterways that connect the commercial areas, between the buyer and the seller, between the attacker and the defender, between different civilizations and cultures. How, then, if this waterway was created, not by a natural path, but rather created by the exacerbated human need. The need for human contact, the commercial need and the military need, all and all kinds of needs were combined to achieve one goal, to facilitate passage, although it does not necessarily have a direct benefits or interest with the countries and political entities adjacent to this geographical area.

The Suez Canal is one of the most important waterways on the planet, due to many geopolitical, commercial, economic, cultural, military and strategic reasons. Some of them have to do with the geographical location of the canal, and some have to do with the political situation in the region in which it is stationed, which makes it a geopolitical and geostrategic dimension, as the oceans, seas, rivers and waterways are strengths for the party that can control it in the event of war and peace alike.

The Suez Canal is a new geographic landmark, created by the human hand, that passed through many political stages, from the stage of who imposes its sovereignty over it, to the stage of its exploitation in war, to several stages in times of peace. A hundred and sixty-two years have passed since it was excavated, and its importance has increased and not decreased, as it has become the best, fittest and cheapest alternative to the Cape of Good Hope corridor.

The Suez Canal passes through the lands of Egypt, and its life began under the Ottoman-Turkish complicity with the European West, the United Kingdom, or at that time it was called the Great British Kingdom, and the French Second Republic, which was known as the French Constitutional Kingdom. Therefore, there is a fundamental and essential questions about sovereignty over it, and the financial returns to it.

The main and most important question is about the geopolitical importance of the canal, as the area in which the Suez Canal is located is the Arab region, which went through several crises, including the collapse of the Ottoman Sultanate, which reshaped and redrawn the countries of the region, in addition to the revolution that removed and erased the monarchy from Egypt - In its old, traditional form - that is, the Free Officers Revolution led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, which in turn led to a fundamental change in the political situation in the region extending from the Middle East to North Africa, leading to a change in the political equations in the world, due to the geopolitical position of Egypt and the ideological political position of Gamal Abdel Nasser. Reaching the stage of peace and peace with the new cancerous entity in the Middle East and Egypt's transformation into harmful capitalism.

There is an event, in March of 2021, that brought back to the attention the importance of the geopolitical and geostrategic location of the Suez Canal, namely the incident of the ship, which deviated from its course due to a slight storm, due to which world trade stopped for several days.

All that we have mentioned leads us to a basic question, the basic research **problem**, namely, how was the Suez Canal exploited at the geopolitical and geostrategic levels?

To answer this problem, we will adopt the historical narrative curriculum as the basic one, and the descriptive analytical method as an adjunct method, according to a codification process divided as follows:

**The First Section:** The Importance of The Site and The Historical Approach:

Chapter One: Geographical Coordinates and Their Importance.

Chapter Two: Excavation, Construction, and The Sovereignty Crisis.

**The Second Section:** The Geopolitical Exploitation of The Site:

Chapter One: The Triple Aggression And The 9 Years Closing.

Chapter Two: Ever Green Crisis in 2021.

**The Conclusion**

**The First Section:**

**The Importance of The Site and The Historical Approach**

The strait is a channel of water that connects two large bodies of water to each other, located between two large areas of land and straits, and is usually representative of the connection of strategic areas, as it reduces distances and costs, and man looked at it and sought it throughout history, some of which are natural that have been exploited, and some of them are industrial corridors that have been created for high economic viability, such as the Suez Canal or the Panama Canal. There are many important paths and straits in the world, but not every strait possess the same amount of importance.

Maritime security is one of the most important factors in energy security in our world today, especially since more than half of the global production of oil is transported through tankers that reach the final consumer through the so-called “choke points”, which are narrow sea lanes that can be exposed. There are many reasons for interruptions, including piracy.

Threats are numerous, and the challenges facing maritime corridors and straits across the world vary between attempts by regional and international powers to impose their hegemony with different tools over large maritime areas and ranges.

The importance of warding off risks from shipping lanes is that they represent the “lung of the world” and the “lifelines” of human beings, and with their account guaranteeing the flow of movement and not only water between parts of the world, and despite their vital importance in commercial operations, they, on the other hand, constitute “points Soft” can be targeted and threatened with relative ease, through various operations, whether by targeting these passages and straits, or ships and tankers, and attacking their properties.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mohamad Abdul-Kader Khalil: “Challenges of shipping lanes in the international arena”, The Magazine, 9 September 2019, on the website:

<https://arb.majalla.com/node/76031/%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9> , date of visit: 27 April 2021, op.cit.

## Chapter One: Geographical Coordinates and Their Importance:

The Middle East region is historically one of the regions most affected by the interactions and contexts of international competition, and this is evident now in the direct involvement of international forces in the region's issues, and the willingness of states to pursue a more active foreign policy in it, in addition to re-evaluating their positions and their direction to settle hot issues in the region, Its reluctance to use qualitative **military force** to contain atypical threats, especially those related to the dynamics of the flow and supply of **energy** from the Middle East to the industrialized Western world.

However, this **international competition** comes in the context of intense regional competition in the region, and this competition is absent from the logic of the Cold War, as each of the two poles was willing to bear an economic or military cost to attract and neutralize countries belonging to the other camp, or prevent them from joining it. The present is based on realizing direct gains in favor of power maximization. Although this strength is more evident - so far - at the regional levels than at the global level.

The international system is based on the literature on securing freedom of navigation in the sea straits. Chapter Three of the United Nations Convention on the **Law of the Sea** contains some general provisions and definitions for it. Where the provisions of this section apply to about 250 marine sites around the world. Therefore, it was necessary militarily and strategically to classify these corridors into different classes in order for them to be dealt with within the framework of deployment, response and maritime insurance plans.<sup>1</sup>

It can be classified as: International strategic straits like the Straits of Bab al-Mandab, Hormuz, the Bosphorus, and Malacca. Continental straits, which are shared by more than one country or located between a large island and a continental coast and are more than 12 nautical miles wide) such as the Taiwan Strait that separates it from China, the Strait of Mind between India and Sri Lanka, the straits of Florida and Yakutan in the Caribbean Sea, and the Strait of Dover

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<sup>1</sup> Mohamad Hassan: "Conflict over the straits in the Middle East and Egyptian treatment methods", ECSSTUDIES, 28 November 2019, on the website: <https://marsad.ecsstudies.com/14394/> , date of visit: 25 April, 2021, op.cit.

separating the English Channel and the North Sea. Territorial straits, featuring canals and natural straits less than 12 nautical miles wide.<sup>1</sup>

The straits located in the Middle East are within the classification of **strategic international corridors**, which made international powers put them at the top of their plans for insurance and maritime proliferation, especially since these straits oversee supply lines for more than half of the world's **oil**.

According to previous overlaps on security, energy and trade issues, strategic corridors are given great attention in insurance due to being considered in the norm of international security and geo-strategists planners. Chokepoints are easy to control strategic from hostile entities and then influence the maps of international distribution and spread in a short time. **The Suez Crisis of 1956** and the Cuban Crisis of 1962 were within this framework.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of the sea straits from the regional perspective lies in the fact that they are on the list of grand strategy goals of the regional forces active and competing over the central state. Whereas, the plans to extend influence and control in the expansion projects in the region, will not be completed without controlling the joints of the straits and the presence off their shores.

In this regard, the major powers attach great importance to controlling and being present off the sea straits for fixed strategic goals related to expansionary and tactical projects, subject to international developments and mutual deterrence operations. It can be explained from the most involved in the use of force to the least.

As for the geopolitical importance of the **Suez Canal**, it is divided into more than one side or source, the first being Egypt's geographical, historical and geopolitical location. Egypt, a country **linking northeast Africa with the Middle East**, dates to the time of the pharaohs. Millennia-old monuments sit along the fertile Nile River Valley, including Giza's colossal Pyramids and Great Sphinx as well as Luxor's hieroglyph-lined Karnak Temple and Valley of the Kings tombs. The capital, Cairo, is home to Ottoman landmarks like Muhammad Ali Mosque and the Egyptian Museum, a trove of antiquities.

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<sup>1</sup> Robin Mills: "Risky Routes", Brookings, 17 April 2016, on the website: <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/en-energy-transit-security-mills-2.pdf> , Date of visit: 22 April 2021, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup> Same citation, op.cit.

Egypt was one of the most important regions in the Islamic State, the Arab Kingdoms, the Mamluk Sultanate, and the Ottoman Sultanate. The geopolitical importance of Egypt is due to its geographical location that connects the two oldest continents and because of its Nile, as it is said, “Egypt is the gift of the Nile,” and because of the fertility of the agricultural lands adjacent to the Nile, and the huge population throughout history compared to the population density in the rest of the world.

The geopolitical importance of Egypt appeared in many stages, including the Roman occupation, including the Islamic conquests during the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs – Rashidin - then the Crusader military attacks and then the revolts against the Ottoman Sultanate, up to the occupation of Egypt during the revolt of Muhammad Ali Pasha the Great of the Arab Middle East, which could have ended The Ottoman Sultanate, up to the stage of the Free Officers Revolution and the rule of Gamal Abdel Nasser, who formed the leadership of the Arab nation in the face of the occupation entity “Israel”.

The Suez Canal is an **artificial double-passage waterway** in Egypt, with a length of **193 km** and linking the **Mediterranean and Red seas**, divided longitudinally into two parts, north and south of the Bitter Lakes, and transversely into two corridors in most parts to allow ships to cross in two directions at the same time between **Europe and Asia**. It is the fastest sea passage between the **two continents** and provides an average of 15 days of journey time via the **Cape of Good Hope**.

The Suez Canal is considered the **shortest road** linking the East and the West because of its unique geographical location, and it is an important global navigation channel that connects between the Mediterranean Sea at Port Said and the Red Sea at Suez. This unique location imposes on it a character of special importance to the world and to Egypt as well.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of the canal increases with the development and growth of maritime transport and global trade; As maritime transport is the cheapest means of transportation, and therefore more than **80% of the volume of world trade** is transported through sea routes and channels (seaborne trade). Saving time and

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<sup>1</sup> Suez Canal Authority: “Why Suez Canal?”, on the website:  
<https://www.suezcanal.gov.eg/english/About/Pages/WhySuezCanal.aspx> , date of visit: 22 April 2021.

distance is what the canal achieves, and thus saving in operating costs for ships passing through it, confirms the importance of this canal.<sup>1</sup>

The geographical location of the Suez Canal makes it the shortest route between East and West compared to the Cape of Good Hope. The Canal Road achieves savings in the distance between the ports north and south of the canal, which translates into a saving in time, fuel consumption and ship operating costs.

The competing roads for the Suez Canal are the Strait of Cape of Good Hope and the North Sea Road, that is, passing through eastern Russia, but they are more expensive than the Suez Canal, the longest period of travel, and they are not passable at all times, due to the snow season in winter. This enabled the Egyptian state to exploit it politically and militarily, in addition to the economic and commercial benefits it acquired.

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<sup>1</sup> Same Citation.



## Chapter Two: Excavation, Construction, and The Sovereignty Crisis:

Historians have agreed that the Pharaoh of Egypt, **Senusret III**, was the first to think of building a canal linking the Red and Mediterranean seas. However, the actual history of the Suez Canal starts from the first concession decree, and the subsequent decrees, up to the drilling process that began on **25 April 1859**, when the first ax was struck in the Suez Canal works in the city of “Parma” - currently Port Said site - with the participation of about 20 thousand workers. Egyptians who performed their duty in extremely dire humanitarian conditions.<sup>1</sup>

Since its inauguration on **17 November 1869**, the canal has gone through historical stages and witnessed major developments and events, most notably the nationalization decision that restored rights to their owners, exposing them to closure after the 1967 war, and then opening it in June 1975.

Back to the point, after Vasco Dayama discovered the Cape of Good Hope, the economy and trade of Mamluk Egypt, the economy of Venice, Naples, and Genoa were severely affected, so what was among the Venetian princes, but they came to Egypt in 1501 to offer to the Ghuri Sultan the idea of dispensing with caravan routes and replacing them with transportation across the Nile by digging a canal connecting Seas Red and white.<sup>2</sup>

When the French Revolution erupted, it entered into bloody armed conflicts with the kingdoms of Europe and was able to defeat them. **France** wanted to cut through the British colonies in India by **occupying Egypt**, so the French campaign against Egypt was in 1798. The government of the dictatorship that was ruling France gave a direct order to Napoleon Bonaparte to launch a campaign to dig a canal. Seas connects the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, and it was called the Seas Canal. Napoleon left Cairo with a group of engineers headed by an engineer named Lauber to inspect the engineering site at Suez. However, Lubert persuaded Napoleon to abandon the project, believing that the level of the Red Sea was higher

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<sup>1</sup> Suez Canal Authority: “Historical Outline”, on the website: <https://www.suezcanal.gov.eg/english/About/SuezCanal/Pages/CanalHistory.aspx> , date of visit: 28 April 2021, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup> William B. Fisher: “Suez Canal”, 26 March 2021, on the website: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Suez-Canal> , date of visit: 29 April 2021, op.cit.

than the level of the Mediterranean, and fearing that Egypt would be drowned as a result of digging the canal.<sup>1</sup>

Napoleon returned to Cairo without achieving his goal. Then a group of engineers who graduated from the Polytechnic School took over the project, and they were called “Saint Simonian”. They came to Egypt in the era of **Muhammad Ali in 1832** and obtained a permit from him to go to the site again. The level of Seas, however, Muhammad Ali **rejected the project** of digging the canal except on two conditions: the first is that the major powers guarantee the neutrality of the canal, in the interest of Egypt's independence, and the second is that the canal is fully funded from the Egyptian treasury, which showed Muhammad Ali Pasha's acumen and farsightedness about the consequences of digging the canal, However, the two conditions were rejected by the French side.<sup>2</sup>

After ten years of research and studies, they reached an engineering design that was adopted upon the implementation of the project within the Suez Canal Studies Company, which is an Austrian company established for this purpose and includes three teams: a French team and an Italian, German, Austrian and English team, and each team consists of ten members in addition to Each team was headed by an engineer, so Paulino Talbot was the head of the French team, Negrelli was the head of the Italian, German, and Austrian team. Robert Stephon is president of the English team. The company's capital was fixed at **150,000 francs**, with each team contributing **50,000 francs** to the capital. While the semi-sole ruler of Egypt was the **Khedive Ismail**, after the death of the predecessor Saiid Pasha, who gave the right of **excellence** to the European comity do dig and benefit from the canal for **99 years**.<sup>3</sup>

France had conspired with England against Egypt before the opening of the Suez Canal for international navigation, while England wanted to tighten its control over Egypt and the Canal, and undermine Egypt's reputation with the aim of British control over its colonies in India in the face of the position of Khedive Ismail, who

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<sup>1</sup> Used Reference: William B. Fisher, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup> Mounir Zahran: “Views of the Suez Canal from historical, political, legal and economic angles”, 18 September 2019, on the website: <https://ecfa-egypt.org/2019/11/18/%D9%86%D8%B8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%82%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%B3-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1/?lang=ar> , date of visit: 22 April 2021, op.cit.

<sup>3</sup> Same citation, op.cit.

sought to remove obstacles and material and political obstacles to the success of the Suez.

Khedive Ismail wrote a letter to a secretary to Napoleon III on the 6st of August 1869, and the canal was about to open, explaining the sacrifices that Egypt had suffered in establishing the canal, that stirred among the people a **bitter feeling** that must be taken into account. But Napoleon III sided with De Lesseps, who was the representative of France in this agreement, the party that constituted a burden on the Egyptian people and on the relations between Egypt at the time and France.<sup>1</sup>

The result of the **French arbitration** consisting of 5 members was the dispute of Khedive Ismail with De Lesseps and the Canal Company in 1864, which was approved by the Emperor on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1864. Abolishing the system of forced labor in the employment of Egyptian workers, which means that foreign workers were not subject to the system of **forced labor**. The assignment of the lands that the Khedive had previously granted to the company in exchange for compensation, which is 60 thousand hectares, equivalent to 30 million francs obtained by the company.<sup>2</sup>

And Determining the appropriate **compensation** for the return of lands and the company's failure to fulfill its obligations towards the workers, whether in terms of wages or their food quota, and the company's earnings as a result are estimated at about 4,500,000 francs, and this amount allocates them from the value of the required compensation, so the amount becomes 33,500,000 francs. The concession for digging the canal starts from the date it was opened for navigation and not from the date the company acquired the lands allocated to the salty and fresh canals.<sup>3</sup>

In return, the company requested an amount of 9 million francs as interest for the capital for each year due to the delay in carrying out the work for a long period, but the arbitration court recognized that this delay was not caused by the Egyptian government because the conditions imposed by the Sublime Chapter limit the authority of the governor of Egypt, and therefore considered it The court has the force of majeure, and yet imposed on the governor to pay half the interest required, i.e. 4,500,000 francs. Thus, the amount of compensation required for canceling the

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<sup>1</sup> Used Reference: William B. Fisher, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup> Used Reference: Mounir Zahran, op.cit.

<sup>3</sup> History Chanel: "Construction of The Suez Canal", 30 March 2021, on the website: <https://www.history.com/topics/africa/suez-canal> , date of visit: 30 April 2021, op.cit.

regulations for Egyptian workers, including the forced labor system, remained at 38,000,000 francs.<sup>1</sup>

And that the Egyptian government reimburses the company for the cost of the works that have been accomplished in the freshwater canal or that is underway, and an amount of 10 million francs has been estimated for that, and that the company carries out maintenance work at the expense of the Egyptian government with the right of the company to benefit from the fresh canal until the digging of the marine canal is completed. The compensation paid by the Egyptian government to the company is 84 million francs, to be paid over 16 years.

It is noted that the countries most benefited from the Suez Canal in terms of ship tonnage and percentage until the canal was nationalized in 1956, it was in the following order: Britain, followed by Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, France, followed by Norway, Greece, Japan, Denmark, and then the United States.

France occupied an advanced position in the first years after the opening of the canal, then it was replaced by the Netherlands and Germany during the First World War, and Italy ranked second in 1936 in the aftermath of the Ethiopian War, **with 20% of the global traffic** in the canal.<sup>2</sup>

However, Egypt did not benefit from this canal in any material or moral return at the official, popular and social levels. Rather, the British occupation authorities had imposed on it to pay compensation and a decree to the Suez Canal Management Company, which forced Khedive Ismail and then King Farouk to sell Egypt's share of the canal in order to pay France and Britain shared their **debts**, in different proportions. In light of the lack of Egyptian sovereignty over this channel, and the administrative and military control of the European powers over it.

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<sup>1</sup> Used reference: History Chanel: "Construction of The Suez Canal", op.cit.

<sup>2</sup> Same citation, op.cit.

## **The Second Section:**

### **The Geopolitical Exploitation of The Site**

The Middle East region occupies a strategic position in the global system so that it seems to you that there is no place in the world equal to the same importance as this region, and from here emerges the geopolitical dimension of the Middle East region.

But in terms of controlling concepts, we have to differentiate between two concepts that are related, but they are different. The first concept is political geography and the second is geopolitics. The first refers to the objective reality of a state in terms of its location on the map, and it is in most cases stable except in rare cases when a state tries to change this reality, either through diplomacy or by military force.

As for the concept of geopolitics, it is, unlike the first, dynamic and changing. Geopolitics looks at political geography and its implications for the security and prosperity of the state in its relations with this reality or given and its implications. The geopolitical reality may change despite the stability of geopolitics.

There are several examples from the Middle East that illustrate how changes occurred in the geopolitical outlook of the region despite the persistence and unchanged political geography of the region. In the forties of the last century, many changes occurred, exemplified by the Jewish occupation of Palestine.

In the fifties of the same century, great geopolitical transformations took place due to the Nasser revolution, and in the seventies a radical change took place, embodied by the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and the Iranian revolution

## Chapter One: The Triple Aggression And The 9 Years Closing:

In the year **1947** the **political geography** of the Middle East began to change radically from what was familiar to the region, as the first and second world wars, the collapse of the Ottoman Sultanate, and the **re-division of Arab regions** according to the British-French agreement, between the British Foreign Ministers of Sykes and French Picot, became a different political entity governing the sovereignty of Palestine. There is now an enemy for all neighboring countries occupying the area bordering Egypt, which is the region separating Asia and Africa on the Asian side, as is the case with Egypt on the African side.

This prompted, as was the case with the displacement of the Palestinians from their land, the newly created Arab political entities to accept the war offer presented by Israel, the United Kingdom, and France in 1948. Of course, Egypt had a prominent role in this defensive war - although the only Arab army that advanced into the Palestinian interior was the small Lebanese army numerically - but the catastrophic “**Nakba**” that afflicted the Arabs was a fundamental catalyst for a fundamental **political change** that afflicted the Arab nation as a whole, namely, the Free Officers Revolution led by Jamal Abdel Nasser from behind the scenes, with what it carried of political, social and economic concepts and values that changed the face of history, not just Egypt.

Egypt, in the interval between the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Nasserite revolution, was subject to the absolute monarchy, with a torn constitutional envelope, under which it was subject to the British military rule under the name of a **mandate**, but through the application of direct military rule for a state defeated in the war, as it was subordinate to the collapsing Ottoman Sultanate. Of course, with the extreme poverty, hunger and unemployment that dominated the peoples of the Arab world and Egypt, more precisely for our research.

After the defeat of the Arab armies in the Palestine War in 1948 and the declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel, many Egyptian army officers held the responsibility for the corruption of the situation in the army and the military defeat on the shoulders of King Farouk I and the government. One of the officers participating in the Palestine war and he performed an unconventional performance during the operations, he established the **Free Officers**

**Organization.** The organization included a group of low-ranking officers (at that time) with the blessing of Major General Muhammad Najib, who was not a member of it and at that time had been elected president of the club. The officers did not enjoy the love of King Farouk.<sup>1</sup>

The Free Officers Movement is a peaceful change movement that took the form of a military coup, led by Egyptian army officers led by Mohamed Najib at midnight on **23<sup>rd</sup> of July 1952**, and succeeded in seizing the army staff building in the Dome Bridge in Cairo and the command centers in Abbasiya and seizing the radio building and major facilities in Cairo. And the arrest of some ministers and senior leaders of the ruling monarchy. At seven o'clock in the morning of 23<sup>rd</sup> of July, Major General Mohamed Najib broadcast a statement to the people announcing that the army would carry out a movement in the interest of the homeland.<sup>2</sup>

The Free Officers Movement, the Egyptian Revolution and President **Gamal Abdel Nasser** achieved important successes in changing the Arab viewpoint on the criteria of strength and weakness, about the goals of the Arab nation, about race as the basis of the ideological orientation instead of subordination or religious orientation, about the common history among the peoples of the region and about similar customs, traditions and culture Among all Arab peoples.

The matters that enabled the Nasserite rule to build a popular political base changed the standards of power and thought in the Arab world, which brought about profound changes in the geopolitics of the region towards the world. What gained him strength at the **domestic and international levels**, so that he could do what he was calling for as a liberation movement and confront the major powers, based on his new geopolitical position.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of July 1956, Gamal Abdel Nasser from Mansheya Square in Alexandria announced the decision to nationalize the Suez Canal Company, after the United States withdrew the offer to finance the High Dam in a way that was insulting to Egypt, and then Britain and the World Bank followed suit. Following the decision, Britain lodged a protest, which was rejected by Gamal Abdel Nasser, on the grounds that nationalization is an act of Egyptian sovereignty.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On War: "Egyptian Revolution 1952", on the website: <https://www.onwar.com/aced/data/echo/egypt1952b.htm>, date of visit: 29 April 2021, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup> Same Citation, op.cit.

<sup>3</sup> IWM: "Why Was The Suez Crisis So Important?", on the website: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/why-was-the-suez-crisis-so-important>, date of visit: 28 April 2021, op.cit.

The Suez Canal Beneficiaries Authority withdrew the foreign guides in the canal to prove that Egypt is unable to manage the canal alone, but Egypt proved the opposite and was able to operate the canal under an Egyptian administration headed by the engineer of the nationalization process, Mahmoud Yunus, accompanied by his colleagues Abdel Hamid Abu Bakr and Mohamed Ezzat Adel.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the decision to nationalize the International Company for the Suez Canal Maritime, which the Egyptian people were enthusiastic about in July 1956, was the beginning of the heavy losses that the Egyptian people and economy suffered, and among its repercussions was a prelude and reasons for the 1967 setback, when President Gamal Abdel Nasser demanded the withdrawal of the international emergency forces from Sinai, which Egypt agreed to. 1956, as the price for Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai in 1957, and the imposition of a blockade on the Gulf of Aqaba in front of Israeli shipping, so some have criticized the decision to nationalize the Suez Canal.

The decision to nationalize the Suez Canal included a clause compensating the British shareholders in the Suez Canal Company, whose shares amounted to 44% of the shares. The rest of the shareholders, most of them French, saw in this decision a legal (de jure) confiscation of their money, just as the British shareholders saw - in the same decision - a de facto confiscation of their money, because they did not believe that the Egyptian regime is under the leadership of President Gamal Abd. Al-Nasser will actually fulfill the compensation stipulated in the nationalization decision.<sup>2</sup>

The **tripartite aggression** or the 1956 war is a war launched by Britain, France and Israel against Egypt in 1956, and it is the **second Arab-Israeli wars** after the 1948 war, and is one of the most important global events that contributed to determining the future of international balance after World War II, and was decisive in the decline of the star Traditional colonial powers, and new stars shine on the international stage.

The roots of the **Suez crisis** began to emerge after the signing of the **evacuation** agreement in 1954 after Egyptian-British negotiations accompanied by fierce popular resistance to the English forces in the canal. Nasser's relationship with Western countries looked good during that period, especially with the approval of

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<sup>1</sup> Used Reference: IWM, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup> Used Reference: Mounir Zahran, op.cit.



the World Bank, with US-British support, to grant Egypt a loan to finance the High Dam project, which Abdel Nasser had aspired to achieve an agricultural and **industrial boom** in the country. In that period, border skirmishes have been going on intermittently between the Arab countries and Israel since the 1948 war.<sup>1</sup>

And then began the **cleaning** process of the canal, which ended on 11 April 1957, and cost 8.5 million dollars. Among the legal consequences of that military adventure was the **severance of diplomatic relations** by Egypt with both France and England on October 31, 1956, the placing of English and French possessions under guardianship, and the cancellation of the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 1954 agreement between Egypt and England on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1957, retroactively extending to the date of the aggression.<sup>2</sup>

Matters did not end there, rather the nationalization war was followed by the Israeli war on the Arabs in **1967**, but the Egyptian front was able to rebuild its popular and geopolitical forces, so it was able to **exploit the geostrategic importance** of the Suez Canal, which prompted it to close the canal for nine years. Beginning in the year 1967 and the start of military actions, which ended with the signing of the second president of the Egyptian Republic, **Anwar Sadat**, of a **peace agreement** and mutual recognition of **Israel** as a political entity present on the Palestinian territories.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Used Reference: On War, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup> Moqatel: "War of 1956 – Egypt", on the website:

<http://www.mugatel.com/openshare/Behoth/Siasia2/Harb56/sec072.htm> , date of visit: 1 May 2021, op.cit.

<sup>3</sup> BBC: "The 1967 war: Will the Arabs live a "new setback" on the 53rd anniversary of the defeat?", 8 July 2020, on the website: <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/inthepress-52964488> , date of visit: 25 April 2021, op.cit.

## Chapter Two: Ever Green Crisis in 2021:

After explaining and elaborating on the importance of the Suez Canal for global trade and maritime transport between all continents, the continents of the old world and the continents of the modern world, the geopolitical and geostrategic importance and the existing conflict in the Middle East region and the trade and transit competition in the region, we can now come to the Evergreen incident, that happened in the **23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2021**.

Evergreen is the shipping company that owns huge ships running all over the world, in the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2021, a ship called **Ever Given**, owned by the **Evergreen** company, closed the Suez canal in front of the whole world, traders and sovereigns, by a small incident, not so important or aggressive to anyone, with no assault or breach of peace.

As we already mentioned, the Suez Canal is artificial and was built by humans. During the period in which they were dug, the available technologies were very rudimentary. The equipment consisted of pickaxes, shovels, mules, horses and oxen, and of course the human labor that was used for forced labor for the benefit of the European company, which is controlled by Britain, France and Austria. The things that were printed led to many deaths due to exhaustion, fatigue, malnutrition and living.

We mention these details to reach the state of the canal that was not renewed or properly maintained, we do not deny the attempts of former Presidents **Hosni Mubarak** and the current **Abdel Fattah al-Sisi** to develop the Suez Canal, but in terms of creating a parallel canal to the Suez Canal and not expanding it, and in terms of making a bridge to cross cars and transit from above the channel. Consequently, the canal from 1969 to the present day is still at the same depth (which is approximately 24 meters) and the same width (which equals approximately 200 meters), and it has not been expanded to be able to absorb the technical development that afflicted the world and enabled them to manufacture ships, ships and warships wider than the corridor, this strait even.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sputnik: "New details and secrets about the delinquent ship in the Suez Canal", 26 March 2021, on the website: <https://arabic.sputniknews.com/world/202103261048480464-%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%8A%D9%84-%D9%88%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A9->

The Ever Given, Evergreen's ship got off its course due to a slight wind storm, because it was standing on the side of one of the canal corridors for administrative reasons that prevented it from crossing. It was not supposed to be difficult or difficult to resolve, but the basic idea is the inability of Egypt, not only to expand the canal, It is also about resolving the crisis in the necessary form and in the necessary time. This pushed the citizens of the world to cynicism, countries to anxiety, and companies to search for safer alternatives.

The misdemeanor of the giant Taiwanese cargo ship, Ever Given, which led to the **disruption of navigation** in the Suez Canal, sparked a great interaction on various social media platforms, in light of the world's preoccupation with the accident and its repercussions, and in the midst of very limited Egyptian media coverage that almost reaches the point of obscuring the accident.

A picture published on Tuesday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2021 showed the giant Taiwanese cargo ship Ever Given - 400 meters in length and 59 meters in width, with a cargo capacity of 200,000 tons - being stuck in the canal, and crossing traffic was completely stopped, at a time when excavators and rescue ships were trying Cleared it, while no Egyptian official statement appeared until Wednesday morning.<sup>1</sup>

The Egyptian authorities' efforts continued to float the giant ship, without succeeding until Wednesday evening in accomplishing the mission and restoring movement to the globally important shipping artery.

This was an unprecedented global issue, and an issue of public opinion. The pioneers of social media platforms criticized what they described as the extreme slow and blackout in the Egyptian authorities and media dealing with the incident, and the absence of the official Egyptian narrative, which left the scene for the stories of various international media outlets, with what they may carry of exaggerations or false information.<sup>2</sup>

Others criticized the Suez Canal Authority's handling of the accident technically, as it appeared that the equipment used to free the container tanker was modest according to the images that were circulated for rescue operations, and the giant

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<sup>1</sup> Same citation, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup> Same Citation, op.cit.

marine cranes and rigs that appeared in such incidents were absent, especially since the accident took place in the new branch that was It is assumed to contain the most modern equipment designed to deal with similar situations.<sup>1</sup>

The interaction of the pioneers of social media platforms with the incident was not limited to the critical side, as some chose the angle to emphasize that the accident proves the importance of the Egyptian Suez Canal as one of the most important axes of global trade, calling for more attention to the channel, and more speed and professionalism in solving problems, in light of the trend The attention of the whole world to Egypt.

A number of them also criticized the attempt to put in the name of the Egyptian captain, **Marwa El Silahdar**, who some claimed was the captain of the ship that ran aground in the canal, before it became clear that she was working on board the ship Aida 4, owned by the Egyptian Authority for the Safety of Navigation, and designated for supplying lighthouses and lighthouses, and is also used in Training students of the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport.<sup>2</sup>

Reuters reported that the Gulf Agency Egypt Ltd. Shipping “GAC” has retreated from what it mentioned previously that the delinquent vessel was partially floated, noting that Egyptian media sites close to the authority have circulated in the past few hours pictures and videos of what they said It is the regularity of the navigation movement in the Suez Canal.<sup>3</sup>

The authority reassured - in a statement - that the navigation traffic was once again organized through the original course of the canal, and stressed that it spares no effort to ensure the regularity of navigation and serve the global trade movement. Due to the passage of a dust storm in the country, the wind speed reached 40 knots. This led to the loss of the ability to steer the ship, and then to its stranding in the new **branch that** was inaugurated by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in 2015, and it sparked a great debate about its feasibility and the cost of digging it.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Amro Jamal: “The stranding of a giant ship in the Suez Canal raises a storm of interaction on communication platforms”, AlJazeera, 24 March 2021, on the website:

<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/politics/2021/3/24/%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%AC%D8%B2%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%AB-%D9%82%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%B3> , Date of visit: 26 April 2021, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup> Same citation, op.cit.

<sup>3</sup> Reuters: “A closer look - how is a giant container ship blocking the Suez Canal?”, 25 March 2021, on the website: <https://www.reuters.com/article/ship-suezcanal-ea6-idARAKBN2BH30T> , date of visit: 30 April 2021, op.cit.

<sup>4</sup> Same Citation.

And the head of the Suez Canal Authority, **Lieutenant General Osama Rabie**, said earlier on Wednesday morning - during a telephone conversation with the Egyptian “Extra News” channel - that the authority is dealing with many similar cases, but this ship is relatively large, saying, “**The canal is exposed to such situations and passes through it**”. “A large number of ships per year, with more than 18 thousand ships passing through, and **we are exposed to such a situation once or twice a year**. There were 8 tugboats working to float the ship, and a tug was increased, and the total became 9 for the speed of salvaging the ship”.<sup>1</sup>

What makes matters worse, as the Egyptian bodies concerned with managing the Suez Canal affairs are fully aware of the risks and threats to which the canal is exposed on a permanent, frequent and continuous basis, and have not attempted to improve any of their capabilities, energies, or tools necessary to deal with such cases, knowing that the ships that They are heavy and large global trade ships passing through the canal with enormous tonnage, in order to be able to meet the needs of humanity as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> Oussama Rabie: “Rescue units and Authority tugs continue their efforts to rescue and float the delinquent ship”, Extra News TV, Egypt, 24 March 2021, on the website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFr5Y0EgUcY> , date of visit: 29 April 2021, op.cit.

## Conclusion

Natural waterways have always been of great importance in international relations, in international trade, in wars, and in land and water transport. How if this waterway was created and artificial because it was the result of human need for it? Is this not more important for humans than the natural passages and divine straits? Of course, global trade will not stop at the importance of a single waterway, even if it is the link between Africa, South and East Asia and Europe. There were always other roads before the introduction of this channel, but they reduced the costs and time of shipping and trade.

The importance and geopolitical and geostrategic position cannot be overlooked, except that no one was able to actually control it with the right to control. Rather, international interests have always been in control, with the exception of Gamal Abdel Nasser, who dealt with the channel as a matter of sovereignty, subject to Egyptian affairs only.

The Suez Canal went through many historical stages, the first is the stage of thought and thinking, which is the stage of the Pharaohs, the second stage was the establishment and extortion by European political entities, which extended from the year 1859 to the year 1956 and the nationalization of the new national socialist system of the canal, led by President Gamal Abdel Nasser, and the third phase It is the stage of the non-sovereign opening of the canal in the era of President Anwar Sadat, and the stage of balance between sovereignty and international interests and neglect of development and care, and it is the stage that extends from the arrival of the President Mubarak, to the Evergreen crisis in 2021 under the rule of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi.

These historical stages that passed through the canal were due to the change of the geopolitical features of the region, from the weak Ottoman conspiracy against the Arabs under its sovereignty, and the second change was caused by the emergence of an anti-Arab political entity in a region and not aligned with crimes, represented by the Israeli entity and the emergence of the project that is an alternative to absolute monarchy under Farouk's rule in Egypt. It is the Free Officers Revolution. The third change is represented by the doctrinal change that has existed in Egypt over time, which is also known as the third generation according to sociology, which is the stage of consuming what was built by the ancestors. Will we witness

an additional change in the movement of history regarding the geopolitics of the region and the canal soon, depending on the recent crisis?

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## Table of Content

**Introduction..... P.2**

**The First Section: The Importance of The Site and The Historical Approach...P.4**

Chapter One: Geographical Coordinates and Their Importance.....P.5

Chapter Two: Excavation, Construction, and The Sovereignty Crisis.....P.9

**The Second Section: The Geopolitical Exploitation of The Site.....P.13**

Chapter One: The Triple Aggression And The 9 Years Closing.....P.14

Chapter Two: Ever Green Crisis in 2021.....P.18

**The Conclusion.....P.22**

**References.....P.24**

**Table of Content ..... P.26**