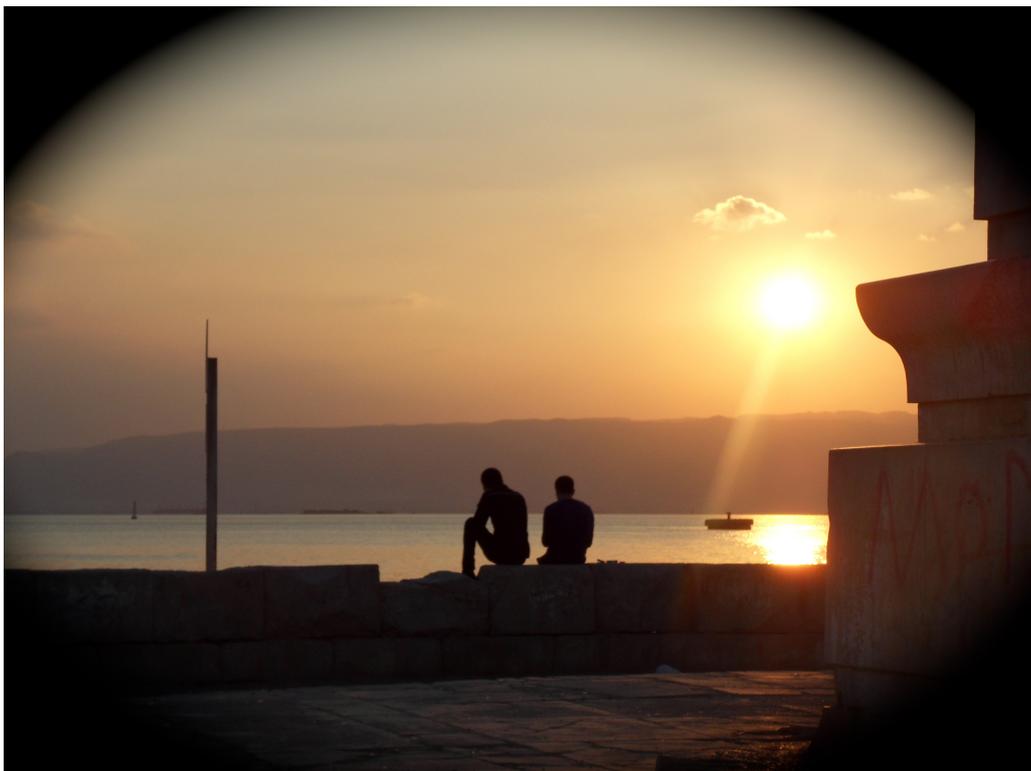


Suez's culture of resistance, its causes and its future.

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July 26, 2015
Master's thesis
MA Middle Eastern Studies: 5854VMATH
Specialization: Modern Middle Eastern Studies
20 EC
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Arba'een Square, Suez, Egypt. November 2012

*“Oh Suez...my homeland...I shall die so you live on...
Oh Suez..., Oh Suez...
Oh my friends let's go...If our lives and homeland are at risk, we'll fight for them
and come back to our town...
For you my hometown...which has always resisted...
For you I'd die, and others would too...
To save my land and my people...”*

Egyptian poem¹ from an unknown writer.

¹ Sherif Salah, “Suez : Cradle of Revolt”, 17 January, 2012, *Al-Jazeera*, accessed on 6 June, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/revolutionthrougharabeyes/2011/12/20111229132934234283.html>

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Acknowledgements

Many thanks to François Pradal who helped me a lot for this work by telling me about his experience as a French journalist in Egypt and especially in Suez during the 2011 uprising. He gave me very useful tips regarding Egypt and the approach to be adopted regarding Suez. He is a very talented journalist of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, truly fascinated by the Arab World, Egypt and Suez. His testimony was overriding for this work.

I also am very grateful to Ayman Mahmoud, who gave me some very useful contacts from Suez. He also delivered me a very interesting testimony as a Suez native. For all this, I want to thank him a lot.

I also want to express my gratitude to Ahmed Nour who made sure I received the fantastic movie he made about his birthplace i.e. *Suez Moug* ['Waves']. He deserves to be far better known for his talent.

Obviously, I want to thank my thesis supervisor Dr. Crystal Ennis for her patience, advice and recommendations. She really made sure that I realize an original and structured work. For this, I want to express my gratitude.

Sincere and true thanks to all my interviewees in Egypt; I thank them even though I respect my word by granting them anonymity. They were very good sources and meeting each one of them was a wonderful and moving experience.

Finally, I want to thank Leiden University and its staff for having accepted to give me the opportunity to work on such a fascinating topic as a final step of my Master in Modern Middle Eastern Studies in Leiden.

I hereby certify that this work has been written by me, and that is not the product of plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct.

Thomas Sélégnny

Introduction

“Very few people know it in the West, but in Egypt it is very known: Suez had the reputation of resistance against Egypt’s enemies. We wanted to show, and we still want to show, that Suez also has the reputation of resistance against dictatorship“².

Suez is a seaport city which is one of the two gates of the Suez Canal. Most media talked about Tahrir Square in Cairo as the epicenter of the Arab Spring in Egypt. However the truth is that Suez was genuinely the center of the unprecedented uprising, as it was the first city to rise up against Mubarak. Likewise, Suez was also sadly known for being the city where the first protester was killed in Egypt during the January 2011 uprisings. Therein, Suez was renowned across Egypt for carrying ‘The Flame of Revolution’. As such, some activists referred to Suez as the ‘Egyptian Sidi Bouzid’³.

As a result, after a first day-trip in the city in November 2012, I decided to delve the reasons that led people to rise up much more fiercely than in the other cities in the area.

A scrutiny regarding Suez compels to pay attention to Suez’s location. As a matter of fact, the location is peculiar and strategic as this seaport city is located at the southern entrance of the Suez Canal. Therefore, the city gathers large factories and commercial activities. This led to labor organizing and activism. In other words, such a ground is like a vulcano as regards the social order protest.

Furthermore, history is a very helpful tool to provide a greater comprehension of what is really at stake in the city. Indeed, Suez’s recent history enables to understand the local population’s frustration that entailed what is called a culture of resistance through the past decades.

The aforesaid frustration that gradually turned into violence and protest was largely due to corruption, and especially cronyism under President Hosni Mubarak. As a matter of fact, the latter used to appoint his cronies to run companies in this key area. Worse, Mubarak’s cronies accustomed to hiring people from their home governorates instead of natives of Suez. Doing so, they fed unemployment and discontent by their discrimination policy, and irresistibly boosted social tenuousness.

² Interview 1 of a 37-years old Egyptian man at el-Ataba, Cairo. 3 September 2014.

³ In reference to the Tunisian town where Mohamed Bouazizi triggered off the –alleged- Arab Spring by setting himself on fire in protest.

Above all that, the police forces were guilty of scandalous abuses in the city. For instance, they committed shameful acts as racketeering, barely concealed bribery, and even torture. In short, in 2011, a war was declared on the police by the residents of Suez who felt hopeless. This war seems to be still ongoing, despite the political turmoils and changes. Therein, Suez is definitely a place that deserves to be scrutinized.

As said above, history is a great –essential- tool to understand what is underway in Suez. Suez started to gain a bright reputation thereafter the 1956 War, against France, the United Kingdom and Israel, for their heroic and renowned resistance. Subsequently, just after the 1967 Six-Day War, the Suez’s inhabitants faced a terrible humiliation by being expelled from their homes. Meanwhile, some of them decided to stay in the city in order to resist. So did they by gathering into militias.

The 1973 Yom Kippour War plays a tremendous role into the city’s history, as people of Suez brought the only genuine victory to Egypt against the Zionist army. Factually, Suez people were compelled to cope with a very harsh siege led by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Indeed, capturing Suez meant controlling the road to Cairo. Therefore, the Israeli forces tried as much as they could to asphyxiate the city and thereby compel its remaining residents⁴ to surrender and seize this strategic crossing point. Yet, despite the lack of everything (freshwater, food, supplies, ammunitions, fuel and electricity), destructions and casualties, the very few number of fighters succeeded to dash out the IDF. Doing so, they confirmed an already-existing prestige across the whole nation. A prestige that may be embodied by the statement: “Suez always resists for Egypt’s sake“⁵

However, in spite of all its prestige after 1973, the city was overwhelmingly neglected by Cairo. Indeed, a deep and collective feeling of ungratefulness grew up in the city, due to its famous role in the two main wars against Israel. The misery grew up significantly, which fed a collective feeling of inward anger and disgust. In other words, the Suez people fought for their country’s freedom. At that time, everyone around Egypt applauded the courage they showed. But now, Suez people must have thought ‘All this for that?’. Such a burgeoning feeling may appear as an open-door to tremendous actions of protest and violence. For a better understanding of all the aforementioned matter, it seems relevant to use an inductive approach. Indeed, many materials and aspects of the matter lead to think that Suez has a proper culture of resistance. Throughout this thesis, I will aim to

⁴ I say *remaining* residents because Israel compelled six years earlier most of the Suez canal cities’ inhabitants (i.e. including Suez) to leave their homes after the 1967 Six-Day War.

⁵ Interview 2 of a 61-years old Egyptian man at Shubra el-Khaymah, Cairo. 5 September 2014.

analyse and explain all the different sources and clues which may lead to believe there is as such a social phenomenon in Suez. It seems to be relevant to use a grounded theory to the analysis of data and to the generation of theory⁶. Doing so, I intend to explore the matter through various fields such as geopolitics, history, geography, sociology and economics. Indeed, I believe that it provides insightful empirical generalizations with little theory. Afterwards, I shall draw a conclusion from that reality through a main hypothesis that aims to go further within the analysis.

Actually, a worthwhile analysis implies a comparison based on theory (from authors who theorized essential themes for my work such as ‘resistance’, ‘culture’, and ‘social revolution’) and facts (that mostly concern Egypt). This approach appears to be the most relevant combination for a critical and impartial approach as regards Suez. Eventually, the project will dedicate a significant part to the analysis of theory, and then historical events. Verily, one cannot understand the specificity of this particular city, that is to say the core of my work, without putting forward theoretical concepts. These concepts are quite overriding for my scrutiny. The peculiar history of Suez must be explored because this leads to think that it gave birth to its current singularity.

Thereby, many reasons lead to believe there is a culture of resistance specific to Suez. If so, was there a reversal from a *nationalist* culture of resistance to a *social* culture of resistance? The main hypothesis of my analysis is largely linked to history. Actually, it is based on the assumption that Suez’s local population was animated by a strong nationalist sentiment for decades. Thus they were pushed to resist fiercely against foreign invasions. For instance, during the Tripartite Aggression in 1956 or during the 1967 and 1973 wars. But now, with its high prestige amid the Egyptian population, Suez literally feels the duty to be at the forefront of the protest against the Government in Cairo. Indeed, there is no more foreign enemy per se since 1979⁷, and people focus more on their own condition. Doing so, they feel the need to rise up to denounce the great social precariousness. Suez people sparked off a thrust which spread all over the country. Even though, their anger is both motivated and based on their own condition, somehow this is a protest that aims to castigate the terrible living conditions of the whole society. Through this, I intend to show that the culture of resistance in Suez must be understood as a *national social* culture of resistance. Indeed, Suez has always been very concerned by Egypt’s future. It is not an ‘island’ politically disconnected of the country. Instead, it seems to be a city culturally specific due

⁶ Bryman, Alan, *Social Research methods*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 27

⁷ Year of the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel.

to its inclination to rise up and resist for the sake of the country. Therein, compared to other Egyptian cities, Suez must be known for its idiosyncrasy regarding resistance.

Eventually, it must be necessary to elaborate analyses on the observed and studied findings concerning the past and the current situation in Suez. Therefore, a short overview of ongoing processes will be done. As such, a great attention will be paid to the expected effects of the construction of the Second Suez Canal, especially as regards the social improvement of Suez's residents. This shall lead to scrutinize what the perception of the Suez people vis-à-vis el-Sisi's regime is, but also how the very first demonstrators of the 2011 uprisings accepted the kind of a start-over pertaining the revolution. All through this chapter, I shall attempt to explain how el-Sisi feels so greatly concerned regarding the social situation in the area. Moreover, Suez appears as a national challenge on this matter due to its geopolitical importance.

As a matter of fact, el-Sisi wants to deal with two matters at a time through this enormous project. He wants to reassure countries that feel worry for their goods transitting by the Canal. Doing so, he wants to bring order back in the area to make sure that Egypt keeps on being able to preserve the cargoes' safety. Meanwhile, he wants to thwart an alternative project, initiated by a hostile country and which aims to skirt the canal. Such a project, if it is carried out, would be a disaster for the Egyptian economy and would boost the social precariousness. By bringing order back in the area and by launching such a bold project, President el-Sisi wants to confirm Egypt's monopoly on the international waterways in the region. He could do so both by bringing order back in Suez by granting jobs and by force, if needed.

All in all, after exploring what is the theory and the most appropriate terms to tackle in order to discuss the culture of resistance in Suez, I will shed light on the recent history of the city. Through this part, I shall enlight how the city gained such a reputation. Eventually, I will put forward the unfolding of the 2011 uprisings and what is still underway in the renowned Red Sea's seaport city. In order to carry out a full and varied research, I used several materials. For example, I worked with newspaper articles and scholars' books, and also used documentaries as much as movies. For instance, I contacted an Egyptian director – Ahmed Nour- who made a movie about his birthplace i.e. Suez. His movie's name is *Moug* ['Waves']. It has been really helpful because he tried to describe the five waves of resistance in Suez. I used it both as a viewpoint and a testimony, as several Suez people expressed themselves into the movie. And naturally, I also used the three interviews that I personally conducted in Egypt during my two-weeks stay in early September 2014.

Literature review

The topic combines specific aspects proper to the city of Suez. A rather important part of theory due to the concepts elaborated throughout this scrutiny. Therefore through this literature review, I aim at comparing perspectives on the same phenomenon, on the same historical event, and on the same concept.

In order to carry out a worthwhile literature review, I analyzed three books. Meanwhile, I used other books and a certain number of news articles that delve aspects of my topic. Two of them are books based on facts and analyses. The other is by far more theoretical. The first one's title is *Soldiers, Spies and Statesmen. Egypt's Road to Revolt*, written by Hazem Kandil. The second book is *Lineages of Revolt. Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East*, written by Adam Hanieh. It was helpful to gather data and interpretations on the matter. And the last one, much more theoretical is *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, written by Theda Skocpol. This book was very useful to understand the differences as regards social concepts that I will mention below.

All three of these books helped me to elaborate a nuanced analysis concerning the topic of my thesis. Indeed, they provide clear and different visions about the social phenomenon at stake in Suez. Despite the global aspect of these books of great quality, they allow the researcher who works on Suez to clutch the great dynamics in the city known for its inclination for resistance.

The books are far-reaching indeed, because there is a scale of magnitude difference in the study areas. A. Hanieh chose to study the impact of capitalism in all the Arab World, including Maghreb countries and Israel. But the comparison that he undertook was quite interesting. As a matter of fact, I could compare the social situations in peculiar areas with Suez. For instance, it was very interesting to read about the 2008 Gafsa revolt in Tunisia. The unemployed workers on temporary contracts, high school students and families of those who worked in the region's phosphate mines walked out. All this entailed a fierce repression from the government⁸. It was relatively striking to compare Gafsa with Suez because, even though Gafsa is a mining town while Suez is a port, both cities embody a key-sector for their national economies. However, they both felt the need to rise up against precariousness. They even accuse the government to be responsible for their miserable social condition because their respective governments generate tremendous incomes thanks to these two places. This

⁸ Hanieh, Adam, *Lineages of Revolt. Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013), 162

leads to understand that specific places are more likely to revolt if they bring a lot to the country. Unfortunately, they still live in shantytowns, due to corruption and, somehow, ungratefulness of the government.

In the case of Suez, there is even superstition from Mubarak as an explanation of precariousness. As a matter of fact, 30 years ago, a soothsayer reportedly looked at Mubarak's eyes and told him "Your end will be in Suez!"⁹. Of course, it seems to be certainly a legend, but it must be taken into account because he neglected the city during all his 'reign'. He never came to visit one of the most important ports of the country and the capital of one of the largest Egypt's governorates¹⁰. While the previous Egyptian presidents –such as Nasser or Sadat¹¹- all paid a lot of attention to the city.

However, as both Hanieh and Kandil mention, going on strike does not mean being ready for the revolution, because significant protests occurred in Egypt between 2004 and 2009. 1,900 had taken place involving 1,7 million workers in strike actions¹². Kandil is even more accurate¹³: " [...] aggressive privatization and the government's wholesale abandonment of the public sector triggered numerous labor strikes : 161 strikes in 2001, 86 in 2003, the violent April 6 national strike of 2008, and more than 700 in 2010. In fact, between 2001 and 2011, perhaps 2 million workers participated in strikes"¹⁴.

One of the main disagreements between Hanieh and Skocpol is based on the Marxist approach. Hanieh dedicates a significant part to the Marxist approach so as to explain what happened in the Arab World in 2011, including in Egypt. Doing so, he wants to denounce the system of classes which is "always a social relation which is continually being made and remade in an ongoing process of accumulation"¹⁵. According to him, the history of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is a "long-standing struggle between the 'authoritarian state' and 'economic and political liberalization'" with a direct correlation between economic performance and the degree of democracy¹⁶. In short, Hanieh considers that most of the burning issues in the Arab World, so Egypt included, are due to a new imperialism called liberalism. Thereby, all these strikes should be interpreted as waves of

⁹ Nour, Ahmed, *Moug* ['Waves'], Nour, Ahmed, 2012

¹⁰ Boraie, Eihab, 30 January, 2014, "Waves : Suez's untold revolution," *Cairo Scene*, <http://www.cairoscene.com/ViewArticle.aspx?AId=2357-Waves-Suez%27s-Untold-Revolution>

¹¹ Kandil, Hazem, *Soldiers, Spies, and Statesmen. Egypt's Road to Revolt*, (London: Verso, 2014), 105

¹² *Ibid*, 162

¹³ Kandil 2014, p. 217

¹⁴ Ghoneim, *Azmat*, "The Egyptian Intifada in Historical Perspective.", *Benin*, 113-115

¹⁵ Hanieh 2013, p.6

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 5

convulsions before the storm, that is, the revolution. Besides, liberalism is also strongly criticised by Kandil. He denounces the fact that “Sadat made with the Americans, a deal to transform Egypt from a potentially ‘industrial state to a service state,’ a perpetually dependent market on foreign products and largesse¹⁷ .

Furthermore, Kandil adds that this new Egyptian economy’s outline of produced “thousands of millionnaires in an overwhelmingly poor society¹⁸ . In addition, these millionnaires were not jobs creators but rather speculators such as “importers, moneychangers, and middlemen, as well as rehabilitated ‘ancien regime’ landowners¹⁹ . In other words, this ‘new nomenklatura’ constituted “a full-blown comprador bourgeoisie, or simply a mafia...the consequence is the same²⁰ . All this transformation was part of an open-door economic policy called Infitah, implemented by Mubarak during the 1980s. It was in the same vein as his predecessor Sadat. That policy created this tiny privileged class, they did not take part neither in the industry nor the employment. The gap became larger significantly between the extreme privileged class and other segments of the Egyptian population, somewhat on the model of post-Soviet Russia. Indicatively, Kandil highlights at that time, 20 percent of the population owned 5 percent of the national income. Still worse, the share of the richest 10 percent was 33 percent; and that of the richest 20 percent was more than 50 percent of the national income²¹ .

All this to bring out there was a significant issue as regards the redistribution of wealth. They seems to agree on the explanation that it was overwhelmingly due to the economic policy of liberalization. This matter is quite central in this topic due to its impact in the region of Suez. As a matter of fact, Mubarak’s regime had had a time of long grace period because of the oil boom of the 1970s. Naturally, the oil boom entailed an increase of the country’s revenue from oil exports and from the increase of the traffic always denser in the Suez Canal. Indeed, “Over one third of the state revenue came from these sources, as opposed to less than 50% from taxes. (...) The Suez Canal administration chaneled in \$1 billion annually. However, oil prices plummeted from \$36 a barrel in 1980 to \$12 in 1986. The collapse was felt in Egypt in 1986 as exports were sliced in half from \$2.26 billion to \$1.2 billion, and Suez Canal tariffs dropped from \$1 billion to less than \$900 million²² .

¹⁷ Kandil 2014, p. 161

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 204

¹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰ Springborg, Robert, *Mubarak’s Egypt : fragmentation of the political order*, (Westview Press, 1989), 87

²¹ Kandil 2014, p. 204

²² *Ibid*

Kandil asserts that liberalization made Egypt dependent on the stock market and a prey of choice for speculators. Whereas Skocpol asserts that “All states have grown up in given geopolitical and world-economic contexts”²³.

Skocpol allows another approach of the revolution per se. Actually, her arguments about revolutions from above and below induces a modification, nay a repudiation, of classical Marxist arguments about modes of production and class conflicts in revolutions. Therein Skocpol is opposed to Hanieh and even, in some respects, Kandil (albeit more moderate). In fact, she shares Weber’s ideas concerning historical political sociology, that is, she argues for “the explanatory relevance of bureaucratization, degrees of state centralization, and patterns of institutionalized political relationships between dominant classes and monarchs and their staffs”²⁴. This approach is overlooked by Hanieh, which seems plenty rocked by Nasserian romance, happy to quote an excerpt from Nasser’s work about revolutions *Falsafat al-Thawrah* ("Philosophy of the Revolution"). While precisely Skocpol advocates for a structuralism that “deromanticized -and to some degree devillainized- revolutions”²⁵. Thereby, she calls for a cold and pragmatic analysis of a social phenomenon. Skocpol provides a significant enlightenment to this topic which is focused on the *culture* of resistance in the city of Suez. As Sewell, she deems a culture as “constitutive of social order”²⁶. As such, her assessment is that in each social revolution, a new system of culture suddenly replaces an old one. She even goes further by asserting that “multiple ‘cultural idioms’ always coexist in societies and in revolutionary situations”²⁷. This is very helpful to forge a comprehensive backbone of a research about what the feeling shared by Suez’s inhabitants is as regards resistance.

Besides, the first chapter of this thesis aims at delving concepts as ‘culture’, ‘resistance’ and what is exactly a ‘culture of resistance’. Furthermore, Skocpol adds that “ideologies are forged –and constantly reworked- by groups engaged in political conflicts over state-building and social change. No one cultural system will ever give (...) ‘the key’ to the processes and outcomes of revolutionary conflicts”²⁸. It is actually a key aspect of my research in the extent that I must deal with the specificities of the region, of Egypt and of the

²³ Skocpol, Theda, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 8

²⁴ *Ibid*, 11

²⁵ *Ibid*, 9

²⁶ *Ibid*, 14

²⁷ *Ibid*, 15

²⁸ *Ibid*.

city of Suez. In fact, there is not a single pattern to explain, or rather to emulate, Suez's culture of resistance on another.

Nevertheless, some social-theorists made interesting researches quite worthwhile to carry out a scrutiny about commonalities. Despite the myriad of areas explored by Skocpol, she conveys a relevant idea through a pretty good argument in suggesting that "a truly comparative-historical analysis of the role of cultural idioms and ideological movements in revolutions would encourage to discover and explain variations across modern social revolutions, as well as similarities"²⁹. The argument is relevant concerning Suez. As a matter of fact, a social movement of protest occurred in the city. Subsequently religious movements (salafi movements and the Muslim Brotherhood) and leftist organizations fed the protest so that to keep on resisting.

However, Skocpol underscores an aspect about social revolutions which is not very obvious for a researcher and that may be useful for a worthwhile study. She asserts that within a state-centered framework, basically, the most fertile ground, in revolutionary state-building, is the capacity of a morally confident leadership to create coercive organizations and to mobilize popular support through militias, committees of surveillance and the like. Yet, "socioeconomic conditions cannot explain where revolutionary movements have gained strong followings"³⁰. Therein she opposes frontally Kandil and Hanieh that explain a large part of the 2011 protest movements by socioeconomic data. Although Hanieh qualifies his remarks at the very end of his book by saying "As this book has emphasized, imperialism, the nature of neoliberal transformation, and the pervasiveness of autocracy are all internally related aspects of capitalism in the Middle East. All these aspects shaped the form that the 2008 financial crisis took and its specific ramifications for the region. Seen from this perspective, the roots of the 2011 uprisings are certainly not be found in a single factor (such as authoritarianism, poverty, food prices, unemployment, and so forth) but, just as importantly, the roots are 'multicausal'³¹. This statement is paramount because it compels the researcher to be cautious about the uprising's roots explanations— at a lower scale- in a city such as Suez.

Kandil denounces mightily Mubarak's mismanagement concerning the Egyptian economy and puts forward the crucial problem of corruption (unlike Hanieh, at least not enough) in mentioning, for instance, the great scandal of corruption in the Gulf of Suez

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ *Ibid*, 19

³¹ Hanieh 2013, p. 173

involving one of the lieutenants of the Mubarak regime: Ahmed Ezz³². My assessment is that corruption is one of the most tremendous Egypt's problems. Thereby, the population of Suez may have been fed up by so much bribery and cronyism, accompanied by the government, in an environment where social despair is ubiquitous³³. As he rightly summarizes, under Mubarak, "Egypt had become a failed state in the eyes of its own people [where] corruption had become a way of life"³⁴.

Another aspect tackled by Kandil seems to be taken into account, that is, Islamist movements. Even though it is depicted on the national scale, it certainly concerns Suez since the city became one of the 'neats' of the salafis and Islamist movements after the 2011 uprising³⁵. Kandil asserts that "the Muslim Brotherhood is the alter ego of the old regime"³⁶. While their strength seemed to be, on the contrary, the main political force against the Mubarak regime. Yet, Skocpol seems more lukewarm than Kandil about this complex aspect of social revolutions, especially when she mentions the Iranian revolution's case. She makes a statement that is applicable to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt by saying "social revolutions have not been caused by avowedly revolutionary movements in which an ideological leadership mobilizes mass support to overthrow an existing system in the name of a new alternative. Avowedly revolutionary leaderships have often been absent or politically marginal until after the collapse of prerevolutionary regimes. And popular groups [...] have contributed to revolutionary transformations by revolting for concrete ideals and goals separate from those espoused by the revolutionary leaderships that end up consolidating revolutions by building up new state organizations"³⁷. That is indeed exactly what happened in Egypt, and in turn, in Suez. As a matter of fact, since Nasser, the Muslim Brotherhood were either imprisoned (let us mention *inter alia* the renowned case of Sayyid Qutb³⁸) or working clandestinely for the fringe of the poorer population through clientelistic social initiatives characters. They were doing so, through a dense network of charitable institutions. As Hanieh mentions throughout his part called 'The Muslim Brotherhood and the Counterrevolution': "One attempted solution to this challenge of restoring the old

³² I shall explain more in details this scandal in the second chapter.

³³ Kandil 2014, p. 215

³⁴ *Ibid*, 218

³⁵ Pradal, François, "Plongée dans l'Égypte rebelle : Suez entre salafisme et révolution." *Le Monde diplomatique*, 31 January 2012, <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2012/01/PRADAL/47160>

³⁶ *Ibid*, 253

³⁷ Skocpol 1994, p. 241

³⁸ Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) is a renowned intellectual Egyptian figure. He was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood during the 1950s. In 1966, he was sentenced to death after being convicted of plotting the assassination of President Nasser.

patterns of rule focused upon parties coming out the tradition of political Islam, most notably the once-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. Much like Mubarak's NDP, the organization had a deep penetration across the country, including in rural areas, and was thereby able to play an important ideological and mobilizational role. It had taken a pernicious position in the February and September 2011 strike waves, repeatedly acting to undermine independent workers' actions and demobilize movements on the streets³⁹. In short, as Napoleon Bonaparte said "In the revolutions, there are two kinds of people: those who make them and those who benefit". The Muslim Brotherhood clearly took advantage of the mass popular protest by trying to get the laurels of the revolution, despite the limited role they played⁴⁰. By doing so, they initiated a certain slide into what Kandil calls "religious fascism"⁴¹. They succeeded to achieve this political goal, in spite of the early warnings of representatives of independent workers' organizations in more than forty factories and workplaces. It is not so surprising from workers' representatives because they are known for being ideologically close to leftist movements⁴². They noted the "strikes, occupations, and demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of workers across Egypt [is the evidence of the] social aspect of this revolution and [we want] to prevent the revolution being taken away from those at its base who should be its beneficiaries"⁴³. One of their main demands was the dissolution of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) as "one of the most important symbols of corruption under the defunct regime"⁴⁴ which is the evidence that corruption must be one of the key aspects of this research work.

In short, all these books are good materials to rely on in order to understand how the Islamist movements succeeded to combine the social demand of the workers in Suez within an Islamic framework. Nevertheless, more Islam was not the top priority amongst the demands for the demonstrators. Instead, they wanted a reform of the minimum (and maximum) wage, job security, renationalization of privatized companies, and the right to take industrial action⁴⁵. All these books, Hanieh's, Kandil's and Skocpol's, emphasize one common thing which is applicable to Suez: the religious movements, whether the Salafis or

³⁹ Hanieh 2013, p. 169

⁴⁰ Even though, some authors such as Marc Lynch testifies that "*Muslim Brotherhood had played a key role in holding Tahrir and keeping the protests alive (...)*." (Lynch, Marc, *The Arab Uprising. The Unfinished Revolutions of the Middle East*, (New York : Public Affairs, 2012), 152).

⁴¹ Kandil 2014, p. 263

⁴² I noticed this reality through my researches (news articles) and the interviews that I conducted in Egypt.

⁴³ Hanieh, Adam, *Lineages of Revolt. Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East*, (Chicago : Haymarket Books, 2013), 168

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

the Muslim Brotherhood, capitalized on the social tenuousness to get a political weight. As regards the Muslim Brotherhood, they got out from the cold after being persecuted for decades, but as Kandil reminds “[the Islamists] are not fundamentally opposed to authoritarianism, as long as they are not its victims⁴⁶”. All along this scrutiny, I shall make sure to clearly distinguish the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis. This is paramount to do so because the two religious movements did not adopt the same policy stance. They are not perceived by the civilian population in the same way, they have clear different roots and they are not backed up by the same foreign actors. I shall depen this matter through the third chapter.

Eventually, a final aspect needs to be explored i.e. the different perceptions of the Egyptian army. Popular belief would like to present the army as an institution with full powers, using a corruption and the industry at its disposal to impose its view over the country. This belief is overwhelmingly shared by Hanieh⁴⁷ who depicts the institution of the army as the keeper of the capitalist interests. Above all when he says that “In Egypt [and Tunisia], the potential overthrow of regime figureheads [...]presented the military and capitalist class with the challenge of taking charge of the transition, as opposing the movement might lead to its deepening radicalization. For this reason, the military in both cases essentially deserted the autocrats, attempting to steer the direction of transition in a manner that would ensure the continued stability of capitalist relations⁴⁸”. In other words, according to Hanieh, the army chose to foster an Islamist movement, unlikely to spread chaos through the country, at the expense of political parties with political programs listed on the left, that is, eager to really work for the social question but not having to maintain order in their priorities. These parties were, for instance, the National Salvation Front (NSF), Mohamed ElBaradei (a displayed liberal alternative), Hamdeen Sabahi’s Nasserist political party al-Karama (Dignity), or the youth movement al-Tayar al Sha’bi (Popular Current), and they were all set aside by the army because the militaries consider they would put Egypt in a shambles⁴⁹. Even though the 2011 uprising, in Suez and elsewhere across the country, showed that Egyptian people desperately demanded a social improvement not a reinforcement of Islam. On the contrary, Kandil really tries to turn down the aforementioned assumption about the army. He even called a subpart “The Myth of Military Privileges

⁴⁶ Kandil 2014, p. 240

⁴⁷ And also authors such as Marc Lynch (Lynch, Marc, *The Arab Uprising. The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East*, (New York, Public Affairs, 2013)

⁴⁸ Hanieh 2013, p. 164

⁴⁹ Kandil 2014, p. 253

Under Mubarak⁵⁰. According to Kandil, Mubarak provided some privileges to the army in order to keep control over the institution and, meanwhile, he ensured a certain security to his regime fostering the police and the Egyptian intelligence. Kandil rightly mentions “After Mubarak was deposed, a Financial Times commentator confessed that the army’s “reputed economic ‘empire’... is considerably more modest in volume than is commonly believed, and has probably shrunk in proportion to a national economy that has grown by more than 3 percent annually since 2003...[and] although a few generals are rumored to have become rich, the main purpose [behind the military’s economic activities]...is to ameliorate the impact of a rapidly privatizing economy on the living standards of officers⁵⁰.”

To sum up, the military’s activity covered the necessities without really generating a noteworthy surplus. The main Kandil’s assumption is the army was intrinsically tied with the [geopolitical] alliances decided under Sadat. Gradually the army could not bear its new political role and it led the dignitaries to defect with the Mubarak regime when the 2011 uprising blew up, getting the key role of the arbitrator⁵¹. Skocpol tackles the topic of the army in the social revolution. Surprisingly, the first connection that stroke me most was with the 1905 Russian Revolution when she says “what accounts for the failure of the Revolution of 1905 was the Czarist regime’s ability to rely upon the army to repress popular disturbances. Skillful tactics were involved: the regime bought time to organize repression and assure military loyalty with well-timed liberal concessions (...)”⁵².“ The connection with Egypt is obvious insofar as the Egyptian army did not topple Mubarak because they got guarantees from his regime. However, when the regime started to be threatened [in Suez and, subsequently, in Cairo] the army had to make a choice: whether they save the regime and the privileges they got along the past decades (but without a leading role on the political scene) or a defection with Mubarak regime, that is, a conservation of its privileges and a leading role, meaning that the military decide what are the most desirable alternative forces for Egypt and for them.

At the end, they made the second choice with a large popular support. They refused to shoot the demonstrators and by doing so, they grabbed a significant sympathy of public opinion. Some could say they just stood by passively, yet, on purpose. For the demonstrators in Suez and elsewhere, the main popular enemy was not the army but the police forces, as I

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 183

⁵¹ A role they confirmed with the 3 July, 2013 ‘Coup’ and el-Sisi’s nomination as the Head of State

⁵² Skocpol 1994, p. 141

shall explain through the second chapter. The police forces were indeed found guilty of literally shameful abuses that boosted Suez's inhabitants' outcry⁵³.

However, should we really talk about fraternizations between the demonstrators and the army? This question requires cautiousness. As a matter of fact, taking into account all the events that occurred in the 2011 uprising, not at the onset. Seemingly, the soldiers just received the order not to intervene. In other words, the Egyptian staff decided to use the strategy 'Wait and see' while the police forces quelled brutally the demonstrators in Suez and, then in Cairo. The general staff gave orders to stay by passively. Nevertheless, a recurring clear demand was expressed in Suez all along the 2011 uprising: "Down with the military rule!" which means that a very convoluted relationship existed between the protesters and the military⁵⁴. The aforementioned relationship is even more complicated since el-Sisi decided to crush the last protestors so that to bring order back in the area. The military power seems to be well decided to put an end to the perennial chaos in Suez by a fierce repression. But also by promising a social improvement through the construction of the New Suez Canal that would grant a lot of jobs to the local population of a marginalized area.

Thereafter, when the army noticed that Mubarak was about to be toppled, the generals knew that power was about to fall in their hands like a 'ripe piece of fruit'. Therein, the army was a significant factor of the 2011 uprising as it was in many other social revolutions. It seems necessary to underscore the complicated relationships between the army and the city of Suez. As a matter of fact, for a certain time, Suez had a significant sympathy for the army, merely due to the city's location at the frontline of the war against the Israeli archenemy. The most meaningful example is when the Defence Minister under Sadat - Ahmed Badawy (1927-1981) - enjoyed considerable popularity after defending famously Suez against an imminent Israeli invasion in 1973⁵⁵. He was renowned as a war hero for having protected the city.

However, the army faded, as in the rest of the country for the benefit of the police forces, much more loyal to the regime. As Skocpol identifies, there is a combination of structural conditions conducive to social revolutions and as in France and China likewise,

⁵³ Kouddous, Sharif Abdel, 13 December, 2011, "Egpt Heads to the Polls, Round II," *Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting*, <http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/egypt-suez-parliamentary-elections-vote-citizens-military-protest-clashes>

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Kandil 2014, p. 145

“Administrative and military breakdowns of old-regime states [are] one major condition for the occurrence of social revolution“⁵⁶.

However, that failure from administrative and military bodies are not enough to trigger social revolutions since local socioeconomic and political conditions matter. Here is the scrutiny that I intend to do concerning Suez since my assessment is that the local socioeconomic aspects in Suez were paramount for the 2011 uprising. However, the army also played a role in the 2011 uprising. Indeed, in late 2010, many Suezis complained their city became “military garrison“⁵⁷. However, what really decided Cairo to place Suez in high alert was not the assassination of a military but a high-ranking police general. It leads me to think that police forces were the true enemy for the overwhelming part of the Suez population. I will explore this approach through the third chapter.

In sum, I intend to tackle many aspects of Suez’s idiosyncrasy because the literature is dense, the data combine history, politics, geopolitics, social policy and economics. In addition, obviously, I shall need to use specific concepts elaborated by social-theorists. I shall do so through the first chapter. As a matter of fact, it is necessary to delve culture idioms, notions such as resistance, revolution and social revolutions in order to grasp what is at stake in the seaport city of Suez. Last but not least, I could highlight the fact that, beyond a certain point, a peculiar pattern of social revolution exists in Suez.

⁵⁶ Skocpol 1994, p. 5

⁵⁷ El-Ghobashy, Mona, “The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution,”*Middle East Research and Information Project*, published in MER 258, accessed on 2 July, 2015, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer258/praxis-egyptian-revolution>

Chapter 1: Resistance, culture, Suez, and the culture of resistance.

“The masses go into a revolution not with a prepared plan of social reconstruction but with a sharp feeling that they cannot endure the old regime.”

Leo Trotsky⁵⁸.

a. What is resistance?

As said above, this part requires to introduce a certain theoretical framework based on the concepts elaborated by social-theorists, in order to define what is really at stake in Suez. Resistance is intrinsically tied with revolution and notions as contention, protest or power struggle. As such, I intend to elaborate a definition of resistance based on the research work of social-theorists.

For many reasons, there is a myriad of definitions of resistance, and Resistance studies are largely linked to Social Movements studies, Terrorism studies and Subaltern Studies. As Foucault underscores through *The Order of Discourse*, power is always a matter of subordinate positions⁵⁹. Hence, resistance is the kind of actions which dissolves, undermines, questions or challenges such subordination, and, ultimately, produce somehow ‘non-subordinate relations’. Indeed, resistance demands a subaltern or subordinate position in relation to power. Therein, it comes from below –as Skocpol points out⁶⁰- but it is not fundamentally or even necessarily “good”.

This research intends to scrutinize all the conceptions of resistance. Doing so, I listed three definitions that I consider rather linked to Suez either way. Suez’s resistance against foreign invaders may be seen through Moore’s eyes when he says that resistance is “any activity designed to thwart [the invader’s plans], or perceived by the occupiers as working against their interests”⁶¹. This simple definition seems to illustrate what was the attitude of Suez people whether in 1956 during the Suez Canal War or the Arab-Israeli War in 1967 and especially in 1973. Yet, as I hypothesize, there was a reversal from a *nationalist* culture

⁵⁸ Skocpol 1994, p. 107

⁵⁹ Stoddart, C. J., Mark, “Ideology, Hegemony, Discourse: A critical Review of Theories of Knowledge and Power,” 203-204, *Social thoughts & Research*, vol. 28, University of British Columbia, accessed on March 2, 2015, https://www.academia.edu/3056903/Ideology_hegemony_discourse_A_critical_review_of_theories_of_knowledge_and_power

⁶⁰ Skocpol 1994, p. 8

⁶¹ Moore, Bob, *Resistance in Western Europe*, (Bloomsbury Academic, 2000), 2

of resistance to a *social* culture of resistance. It therefore implies a different approach of resistance itself. Therein, I paid attention to Routledge's definition of resistance as "any action imbued that attempts to challenge, change or retain particular circumstances relating to societal relations, processes and/or institutions [which] imply some form of contestation [and] cannot be separated from practices of domination"⁶². This definition is relatively noteworthy insofar as it provides a clear insight of what may be the springs of the resistance concept, animating Suez's inhabitants. However, the best definition that I listed through my research to qualify the nature of Suez's culture of *resistance* remains by far the one elaborated by Vinthagen and Lilja. It provides a short and clear depiction of what really embodies resistance in the renowned Egyptian seaport nowadays: "[resistance is] a subaltern response to power, a practice that challenges and which might undermine power"⁶³.

Thus, I elaborated what I meant with the term 'resistance', condition *sine qua non* to make headway into my scrutiny. However, my hypothesis is that Suez's inhabitants are animated by a 'culture of resistance'. This means that I must briefly elaborate what I mean by 'culture', in order to respect the concepts forged by social-theorists and, therefore, to link them with my subject of study.

b. What does a culture encompass ?

Providing a definition of 'culture' is not as easy as it seems, but all along my research, Clyde Kluckhohn was very helpful in this regard. He shaped a first definition in 1945 by saying "By culture we mean all those historically designs for living, explicit and implicit rational, and nonrational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behavior of men"⁶⁴. The definition is very relevant and directly linked with my topic insofar, as it puts forward the overriding importance of history in the shared feeling of Suez people regarding resistance. As said above, war is a key aspect of the culture of resistance forged through decades.

But Kluckhohn went even further in 1952 by producing a sharper and more accurate definition: "Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired

⁶² Routledge, Paul, *The Imagineering of Resistance : Pollok Free State and the Practice of Postmodern Politics*, 2, (Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 1997), 361

⁶³ Vinthagen, Stellan, "Understanding "Resistance": Exploring definitions, perspectives, forms and implications," School of Global Studies (Gothenburg University, Sweden, 2007), 4

⁶⁴ Kluckhohn, Clyde, & Kelly, W.H, "The Concept of Culture," *The Science of Man in the World Culture*, (Linton, New York, 1945), 78

and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts ; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values, culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action⁶⁵. This definition matches accurately to my assessment, in the extent that it summarizes the culture of resistance that existed in Suez during the Arab-Israeli Wars (in 1967 and above all in 1973). But also the one that emerged from the aforementioned ‘reversal’ in my hypothesis, that is from a *nationalist* culture of resistance to a *social* culture of resistance. As Skocpol said, “the replacement of one socio-ideological order by another becomes a crucial dimension of the change that needs to be explained for any given revolution⁶⁶.”

In fact, culture means the learned and shared behavior of a community of connected human beings. Nevertheless, a culture lives because it is understood by the others and not because it is a legacy to defend⁶⁷.

c. The culture of resistance: a duty to resist against the odds.

Hence the common feeling of people in Suez may be summarized by Gustave Flaubert’s statement : “Of all politics I understand only one thing: the revolt⁶⁸”. Yet, some scholars –such as Skocpol- objects to the assumption that some places and not others are more likely to trigger intentionally revolutionary processes⁶⁹. According to Skocpol, “class structures and conflicts are not the only basic “structural“ keys to revolutionary causes or outcomes⁷⁰. Instead, analysts need to focus more on the international relationships of old-regime rulers and revolutionary state-builders to dominant and subordinate class. On the one hand, she advocates for an overview of the situation, and not a vision of local analysis. On the other hand, she advocates that *ideology* – and not *culture*- is constitutive of social order⁷¹. And if society is understood as ideologically constituted, then it is not enough to

⁶⁵ Lederach, & Kluckhohn, *Culture : A critical view of concepts and definitions*, (Harvard University Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology, 1952) :47

⁶⁶ Skocpol 1994, p. 202

⁶⁷ Castillo, Monique, “Ne pas faire du djihadiste un adversaire inhumain,“ *Le Bilan du Monde*, 2015

⁶⁸ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, “Can the Subaltern Speak ?“, *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*, (Cary Nelson & Larry Grossberg, 1988), 67

⁶⁹ Skocpol 1994, p. 200

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 14

treat ideology as a possible causal factor, explaining some portion of the change wrought by revolution⁷². However, I disagree with Skocpol's assessment concerning Suez and its inhabitants, even though no wonder that is applicable in other contexts in different areas.

First, as I said, a culture exists because the group of people concerned are self-aware of their own culture i.e. the people want to support their culture, to achieve something noteworthy in order to transmit the culture to their children as their parents did. All through the testimonies⁷³ and the data that I was able to gather on the matter, I heard the same refrain, that is "Resistance is part of our culture!"⁷⁴. This shows that whatever the social classes (provided they suffer abuses of the dictatorship) there is an overwhelming collective feeling of duty to resist.

d. Some clues regarding a culture of resistance in Suez

A culture exists because it is recognized by others. When the 2011 uprisings broke out in January 2011, Suez's anthem was sang on Tahrir Square by the protesters⁷⁵, that is, at the very onset of the revolution. Is it a common thing to hear the anthem of a seaport city at the very beginning of an episode which is an upheaval for Egypt's history? It does not seem to be. This means that the *culture of resistance* in Suez is clearly recognized amongst Egyptians. Suez triggers the resistance thrust. In other words, if Suez rises up, all the nation must do so, as the essential is at stake, just as during the Arab-Israeli wars.

In addition, even now, while the revolutionary spirit founders, it still prevails in Suez –above all through a group of few hundreds people calling themselves the *Afareet* ("the Ghosts"⁷⁶) acting in the very heart of Suez. They are used to gather and chant against the Interior Ministry and military rule. All this happens whereas, in the meantime, there are

⁷² *Ibid*, 202

⁷³ Regardless of their social backgrounds.

⁷⁴ Kouddous, Sharif Abdel, 13 December, 2011, "Egptt Heads to the Polls, Round II," *Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting*, <http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/egypt-suez-parliamentary-elections-vote-citizens-military-protest-clashes>

⁷⁵ Pradal, François, "Plongée dans l'Egypte rebelle : Suez entre salafisme et révolution." *Le Monde diplomatique*, 31 January 2012, <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2012/01/PRADAL/47160>

⁷⁶ They nicknamed themselves "The Ghosts" because they foster cell phones rather than Facebook so that they are less tracked easily by the Interior Ministry. They are used to disperse when the police comes up and reassemble at another location nearby, often running down side streets thus armored personnel carriers are unable to follow. Therefore, the police resorted to chase the protesters on motorcycles.

sprinkled protests in other parts of Egypt⁷⁷. My assessment is that the *Afareet* are not solely an anecdote but rather a cultural embodiment proper to Suez. They seem to express and show something peculiar to Suez's inhabitants: The feeling that they must resist for Egypt's sake. Otherwise, nobody would do so. Nevertheless, as Skocpol underscores, *ideology* is constitutive to a social order⁷⁸. Somehow, a certain ideology entailed the culture of resistance.

Furthermore, the figure of President Gamal Abdel Nasser remains very important in the collective representation in Egypt. Either way, the ideology that sparked off the whole common duty to resist for the people in Suez may be found in Nasser's work about the revolutions *Falsafat al-Thawrah* ('Philosophy of the Revolution'). In this book, he argued that "the revolution is a popular progressive struggle not class struggle [that brought] together peasants, workers, soldiers, intellectuals and national capital [as an alternative to] the alliance of exploitative capital and feudalism"⁷⁹. This was proved in 1956, in 1967, and again in 1973. And the Nasserian precepts have been the idealistic motor of the January 2011 uprising, seemingly still alive nowadays. It still boosts the need to stand up against abuses, corruption, social tenuousness and injustice.

Finally, I could conclude this part by a quote that may illustrate the relationship between Suez and the central power of Cairo⁸⁰, above all at the very end of Mubarak's reign: "If relations of power are dispersed and fragmented throughout the social field, so must resistance to power be"⁸¹.

In the next chapter, I shall delve the concrete reasons of the culture of resistance in Suez. I will pay a significant attention to history throughout the three recent wars that involved Suez's inhabitants, their aftermath, and the social situation before Mubarak's fall. I will also shed light on it by trying to present evidence of the –shameful- abuses that Mubarak regime let do, in highlighting briefly the case of Suez in comparison with other similar cities in Egypt.

⁷⁷ Dean, Laura, 17 February, 2014, "In one Egyptian city, the Arab Spring Spirit Has Not Been Snuffed," *New Republic*, accessed on 4 April, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116636/suez-egyptian-city-where-revolutionary-spirit-persists>

⁷⁸ Skocpol, 14

⁷⁹ Hanieh 2013, p. 25

⁸⁰ Even though, the quote is taken from a book about the links between feminism and resistance, I believe that it is certainly applicable as regards Suez in the extent that the social matter is quite central.

⁸¹ Diamond, Irene, & Quinby, Lee, *Feminism and Foucault : Reflections on Resistance*, (Northeastern, 1988), 185

Chapter 2 : The spirit of Suez.

“[The canal] enables the nations of Asia and Europe to carry on the commerce that is essential if these countries are to maintain well-rounded and prosperous economies. [The Middle East is] a gateway between Eurasia and Africa...with about two thirds of the presently known oil deposits of the world. The nations of Europe are peculiarly dependent upon this supply, and this dependency relates to transportation as well as to production.”

President Eisenhower⁸²

a. Suez and the colonial greediness: the 1956 Tripartite Aggression.

As I previously said, history is by far a significant aspect of Suez's specificity. The seaport city is a key place by dint of its location. It is one of the two gates of one of the most important canals in the world – with Panama Canal - and an essential waterway for world trade. For this reason, Suez has always been a key city to capture for Egypt's foreign enemies. Sure enough, firstly, it means control over half the Canal Zone (the other gate is in Port Said, and Ismailia is the equidistant city from the two canal gates). Secondly, since Suez is the capital of the governorate of the same name, it implies putting under control one of the largest governorates of Northern Egypt. Finally, it means opening the road to Cairo, the Egyptian capital.

Egypt faced three invasions of its territory during the post-World War II period. The first invasion happened in October 1956. That war, which is known in historiography as Suez Crisis or The Tripartite Aggression, was a common-led intervention that involved Britain, France and Israel. The goal was threefold. First, it was to get back Anglo-French control over the Suez Canal. As a matter of fact, President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who toppled the Egyptian king Faruk –known for his complacency vis-à-vis British colonialism- and drew up an anticolonial nationalist ideology, decided to nationalize the Suez Canal on July 30, 1956. This decision was unbearable for the two major colonial powers, as it was perceived as a provocation. The other goal of the intervention was to get rid of Gamal Abdel Nasser⁸³. Doing so, France and Britain needed a local support in the area. Thereby, as part of the secret protocol of Sèvres⁸⁴, in Paris' suburb, France and Britain concluded an alliance

⁸² James Bill & Carl Leiden, *Politics in the Middle East*, (Boston : Little Brown, 1984), 133

⁸³ Kandil 2014, p. 47

⁸⁴ The secret meeting of Sèvres took place between October 21 and 24, 1956.

with Israel. The last goal of the tripartite plot was to afford the young Hebrew State to strike first into Sinai, so that to get control back over the Strait of Tiran and dismantle the Egyptian military arsenal delivered by the Soviets⁸⁵.

The common-led strikes against Egypt concerned three invaders: two of the most industrialized powers in the world and a direct neighbor, well-equipped from a military point of view. For many, Nasser triggered that war because “for months the president had been looking for a pretext to reclaim Egypt’s rights over the Suez Canal. [...] Citing the need to channel the canal’s revenue toward financing the [Aswan] dam, a defiant Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in front of an ecstatic crowd on July 26, 1956⁸⁶. There is a great example of what was really the Nasserist resistance during the Suez War⁸⁷ i.e. a story that may embody the overwhelming feeling in Suez during this key event in modern Egyptian history. “When Nasser got to GHQ [General Headquarter] on October 31, he was advised to surrender himself to the British to spare the country from total destruction. Amer⁸⁸, who was apparently suffering from a nervous breakdown, cried: ‘The air strikes will send the country back a thousand years. I cannot expose my countrymen to such a massacre!’. And Nasser harshly responded to Amer’s pleas for submission: ‘Nobody is going to surrender; everybody is going to fight...your behavior is unmanly; the first shots have hardly been fired. Not only must I take direct command of the army, but I also don’t want you issuing any orders...If you can’t do better than mope like an old hag then you will be court-martialed!’“. This story recounted by Aburish⁸⁹ is quite in line with Nasser’s precepts, elaborated throughout *Falsafat al-thawrah* [‘Philosophy of the Revolution’] quoted above.

All the society must fight against invaders at any cost in the name of Motherland. There is no exception. Some critic analysts might compare this philosophy to *Levée en masse* (“mass uprising“, or “mass mobilization“), in reference to the term used for mass

⁸⁵ S. I. Troen, “The Protocol of Sèvres: British/ French. Israeli Against Egypt, 1956,“ *Israel Studies*, Volume 1, 2, Fall 1996, 124

⁸⁶ Kandil 2014, p. 46

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 48

⁸⁸ Mohamed Abdel Hakim Amer (1919-1967) is an Egyptian general who was commander-in-chief of the Egyptian army in 1956.

⁸⁹ Said K. Aburish, *Nasser: The Last Arab*, (New York: Gerald Duckworth & Co, 2004), 119

conscription during the French Revolutionary Wars or the Volkssturm⁹⁰ - the German national militia during the last months of WWII⁹¹.

Suez was never captured during this war but a strong popular resistance was organized under the supervision of Zakariyyā Muhyi al-Dīn (1918-2012), one of Nasser's henchmen, who paid special attention in organizing resistance in the canal cities⁹². Although Egypt was soundly defeated by the striking force of the two colonial powers and their Israeli ally, it is undoubtedly a political triumph for Nasser. "The president displayed great agility in mobilizing popular resistance and securing diplomatic support out of all proportion to his country's strength. His arousing speeches and confident attitude inspired Egyptians to resist fiercely, and the stories of their heroic defiance are still part of the folklore of the citizens of the canal cities"⁹³.

Yet, it is certainly much more than a *folklore* in Suez, but genuinely a part of Suez's inhabitants culture. The Suez War is a milestone for Egypt and, at a lower scale, for Suez as it laid the groundwork for a powerful and transgenerational ideology to resist the oppressor. Even Hanieh supports my standpoint when he says "The overthrow of colonially backed monarchies, the nationalization of the Suez Canal, and the later confrontations around Israel are potent indications (...). All these points of resistance generated widespread sympathy and deep-seated feelings of pride among all layers of Arab society. Millions of people hold a genuine nostalgia for this era that remains indelibly inscribed in political and cultural practices to the present day"⁹⁴.

However, I do not intend to explore further Nasserism but I deem that it provides great clues in understanding the spirit of resistance in Suez. Resistance did not provide victory to Egypt during this war but diplomatic action with the two superpowers of that time i.e. the Soviet Union and the United States. Nasser is a revolutionary who got rid of colonial control over his country. The Egyptian people, boosted by nationalist pride, were logically ready to fight for a nationalist cause –in this case, the invasion of their country. As Skocpol says "the various international contexts in which third-world revolutions have occurred become crucial in conditioning the new regimes that have emerged from them. One basic aspect of the international situation is the relationship between a country undergoing

⁹⁰ Which means literally 'people's storm'.

⁹¹ After all, Guy Mollet (1905-1975), the French Prime Minister of that time, did not hesitate to describe *Falsafat al-thawrah* as 'Nasser's *Mein Kampf*' (K.Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of an Empire in the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 145

⁹² Kandil 2014, p. 49

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Hanieh 2013, p. 25

revolution and the great powers, whatever they may be in a given phase of world history. Military, economic and cultural aspects of such relations all need to be considered⁹⁵. The geopolitical context of this crisis is overriding to take into account: for the first time, Egyptian people humiliated their oppressors, that is to say the colonial powers. The memory is still vivid in Suez for obvious reasons: Suez suffered two other wars against Israel, against another oppressor. I will end this subpart by quoting Skocpol, who very rightly says “we can expect aspirations for equality and dignity, both within nations and on the international stage, to flow again and again into military mass mobilization. Arguably, this is the mission that revolutionized regimes perform best. In the face of serious (but not overwhelming) foreign threats, they excel at motivating the formerly excluded to die for the glory of their national states⁹⁶”.

b. Nationalism, Nasserism and the Six-Day War: Suez and the great disaster.

Actually, the Tripartite Aggression gave credit to the Nasserist revolution amongst the population, as it undoubtedly was a political victory. Yet, even though this project does not intend to delve Nasserism per se, a political game proper to that time is worth to mention because one cannot simply explain the past and current culture of resistance in Suez by Nasserism. It is solely an explanation. Egypt was not politically united behind President Nasser, and fierce struggles occurred at that time in the sense that “the 1950s and 1960s were characterized by sharp confrontations with the Left, independent worker movements, and other struggles. These movements were tolerated at points, and their discourses were often absorbed into language of ruling regimes (as can be seen in the frequent refrain of ‘Arab socialism’), but all Arab nationalist movements aimed at demobilizing and persecuting any left-wing forces that attempted to strengthen the autonomous mobilization of workers and other social forces⁹⁷”.

I believe that it confirms my assessment that a *nationalist* culture of resistance was animating the population and not a *social* culture of resistance, specifically in the canal cities and above all in Suez. Nasser was a great figure who succeeded by using political weapons at the expense of military ones to achieve glorious victory. Thus, despite political infighting within the Egyptian society, Nasser enjoyed nearly blind support from Egyptian civil

⁹⁵ Skocpol 1994, p. 288

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 296.

⁹⁷ Hanieh 2013, p. 26

society. His victory against the colonial powers paved the way to another war, i.e. the 1967 Six-Day War against Egypt's archenemy: Israel. That war was much less victorious and Suez was at the frontline.

Actually, it was a terrible disaster for Egypt and its Arab allies. The war took place between June 5 and 10, 1967 and destroyed most of the Egyptian airforce. At the onset of that war, the Egyptian government decided to close the Suez Canal, besides fifteen cargo ships were trapped inside⁹⁸ for the whole closure of the canal, until 1975. After the war, Israeli troops were on one side of the canal and Egyptian troops on the other.

c. The forced migration.

A little-known consequence of that war occurred amidst the Israeli victory: the forced migration. Following the occupation of Egypt's Sinai peninsula, the Egyptian sovereignty was transiently suspended on the Suez Canal and the three governorates on its west bank⁹⁹. The three canal cities were evacuated and over 60 percent of their residents were compelled to leave in other parts of the country. Indicatively, the total number of forced migrants is around 750,000 people¹⁰⁰. In Suez, in 1960, there were around 120,000 inhabitants¹⁰¹. It means that around 72,000 Suezis residents were forced to leave their city. Many migrants settled in Sharqyya governorate, the nearest of the Canal Zone. Zagazig, the capital of the aforesaid governorate, absorbed 56,000 migrants of the canal area itself, which means 6 or 7 percent of all the migrants. For all these years, between the 1967 defeat and the next Arab-Israeli war of 1973, there were many skirmishes between Egyptian soldiers and especially between the remaining inhabitants of Suez organized as a kind of militia¹⁰² and the IDF¹⁰³.

The 1967 defeat of Egypt and its allies is the biggest disaster after the defeat of the 1948 Palestine War. Somehow, a new 'Nakba'¹⁰⁴. However, for most of the residents of

⁹⁸ These cargo ships were famous for their nickname 'The Yellow Fleet'. Sure enough, their nickname derived from their yellow appearance as they were increasingly covered in a desert sand swept on board.

⁹⁹ Port Said in the North, Ismailia in the middle and Suez in the south.

¹⁰⁰ Zohry, Ayman & Harrell-Bond, Barbara, "Contemporary Egyptian Migration: An Overview of Voluntary and Forced Migration," *Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Programme*, (Cairo, American University of Cairo, 2003), 23

¹⁰¹ "The City of Suez", *Ask-Aladdin*, www.Ask-aladdin.com/Egypt_cities/Suez.html

¹⁰² Rabinovich, Abraham, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter that Transformed the Middle East*, (New York, Schocken Books, 2005), 466

¹⁰³ Feyrer, James, "Distance, Trade, and Income – The 1967 to 1973 Closing of the Suez Canal as a Natural Experiment," (Darmouth College and NBER, 2009), 5

¹⁰⁴ Arabic word which means 'catastrophe' in reference to the defeat against Israel after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and that entailed the exodus of hundreds of thousands Palestinians.

Suez, the trauma is much more important as they had to leave their homes and their city. A deep and legitimate desire of revenge against Israel grew significantly, amongst those who were forced to leave. They were chewing that daily humiliation until the next war. Through an interview I conducted in Egypt, an elderly who lived that exodus told me “We were living the same fate as the Palestinians because of the same oppressor!”¹⁰⁵.

All of this to say that that backlash of the Six-Day War significantly boosted the already-existing culture of resistance in Suez. Politically speaking, Israel’s victory entailed a decisive turning point in the evolution of Arab nationalism, meaning that Israel’s victory triggered a disastrous “blow to the notions of Arab unity and resistance that had crystallized most sharply in Nasser’s Egypt. The military defeat was symbolically reinforced by Nasser’s death in 1970 and the coming to power of Anwar Sadat (1918-1981), who subsequently moved to reverse many of Nasser’s more radical policies”¹⁰⁶.

Furthermore, that dire episode of Suez’s history taught many things to Suez’s inhabitants. Among others, they could not expect miracles from the Nasserist revolutionary government in Cairo. One may assume the frustration and the desillusion they felt. The elderly that I interviewed (quoted above) even told me “We expected a response from Nasser because we could not imagine that he would abandon us like that. But nothing happened. We had to find a way by ourselves.”¹⁰⁷ As such, “[...]structural transformations of states have provided the opportunities and provocations for a large proportion of violent political conflicts; that agents of the state are the most active perpetrators of violence; and that “war bears a crucial relationship to revolution“ both through its impact upon coercive capacities and through its effect on governmental demands upon subject populations”¹⁰⁸. But on the other hand, [Tilly’s stress upon] multiple sovereignty as the defining characteristic of revolution trivializes – inadvertently, no doubt –role of the state. The state is not seen as determining by its own strength or weakness whether or not a revolutionary situation can emerge at all. Instead it is portrayed as an organization competing for popular support on more or less equal terms with one or more fully formed revolutionary organizations or blocs. Societal members are envisaged as able to choose freely and deliberately whether to support

¹⁰⁵ Interview 2. 61-years old Egyptian man at Shubra al-Khaymah, Cairo. 5 September 2014.

¹⁰⁶ Hanieh 2013, p. 29

¹⁰⁷ Interview 2.

¹⁰⁸ Tilly, Charles, Tilly, Louise, & Tilly, Richard, *The Rebellious Century, 1830-1930*, (Cambridge, Harvard University press, 1975), 532

the government or a revolutionary organization, with their choices determining whether or not a revolutionary situation develops¹⁰⁹.

d. The Yom Kippur War: Suez's acclaim amidst another disaster for Egypt.

In 1973, following the War of Attrition¹¹⁰ (characterized by many skirmishes between Egyptian and Israeli armies on a Cold War background), Egypt's situation was disastrous. The country was still trying to recover from a defeat with dire consequences, that is, the destruction of its airforce (among others), a significant swath of its territory was occupied by a foreign power. The Canal's closure entailed the loss of one-third of Egypt's annual incomes¹¹¹. Nasser was dead (in 1971) and the Nasserist Arab revolutionary spirit came up violently against the Israeli bulldozer. Egypt - also called *Umm el Dunya*¹¹² ("The Mother of the World") – which was a great hope for the whole Arab World was humiliated. And to top it all, many of its citizens were forced to leave their homes. Obviously, a revenge was to be anticipated so that to take back the Suez Canal, Sinai and to show Israel that Egyptians "could jeopardize its security"¹¹³. In this context, Anwar Sadat became Nasser's successor and the supreme leader of Egypt.

As said above, the Canal was the cease fire line¹¹⁴ and naturally, in case of a new war, the canal cities would be at the frontline because the Egyptians will have to cross the Canal at the outbreak of hostilities. Or rather to resume the hostilities. This is why Sadat met the troops stationed in Suez on May 12, 1971, to make sure they were ready to fight when he gives the order to attack¹¹⁵. The war took place from October 6 to 25, 1973. I shall not elaborate all the unfolding of this war. Instead I shall pay attention to a noteworthy event that concerns Suez: what is remembered as the Battle of Suez.

The battle took place at the very end of the war on October 24-25, 1973. A cease fire was decided under the patronage of the United Nations (U.N.). But the Israelis wanted to

¹⁰⁹ Skocpol 1994, p. 110

¹¹⁰ Morris, Benny, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001*, (New York : Vintage Books- Random house, 2001), 360-363

¹¹¹ Kandil 2014, p. 204

¹¹² Abdallah, Farah, "Umm El Dunya: Discovering the Real Egypt," June 30, 2013, *Georgetown University. Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs*, accessed on May 5, 2015, <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/letters/umm-el-dunya-discovering-the-real-egypt>

¹¹³ Kandil 2014, p. 124

¹¹⁴ Feyrer, James, "Distance, Trade, and Income – The 1967 to 1973 Closing of the Suez Canal as a Natural Experiment," (Darmouth College and NBER, 2009), 5

¹¹⁵ Kandil 2014, p. 105

capture Suez, in order to surround a symbolic city presumed to hold supplies of the Third Egyptian Army. Whilst Port Said and several Delta cities were bombed by Israeli fighters¹¹⁶, Suez was relatively spared. The IDF wanted to capture Suez before the looming arrival of the U.N. observers to the front. The Israeli staff assumed that Suez was hardly defended because they made sure the city was isolated from the rest of the country.

As said above, a militia of 5,000 men compounded the town's defense force¹¹⁷. Therefore, the IDF started to asphyxiate the city by cutting off all the sources of oil, fresh water and electricity. Nonetheless, after a certain hesitation because they did not know the capacity of the defense forces, they chose to enter the city. The Israelis assumed Suez would not resist. Indeed, most Egyptian soldiers surrendered for the past few days. Subsequently, a series of very fierce urban fights took place. The Israeli forces were literally ambushed and suffered heavy fire from all sides. They simply did not know where they came from. Ahmed Badawy (1927-1981), who would later become Egypt's Defense Minister, is famous for having organized the resistance against the Israeli invasion of Suez¹¹⁸. The 5,000 men who defended the city with small arms and assault rifles managed a real military exploit. They destroyed several Israeli tanks and trapped a whole company in the building of Arba'een Police Station¹¹⁹.

All in all, 80 Israeli soldiers were killed, 120 wounded¹²⁰ and the whole company was compelled to run away from the city. The Israelis faced their first real defeat because they were compelled to retreat due to fighters who defended boldly and frantically their city. All this episode of Suez's history leads to think like Mazzini: "Insurrection by means of guerilla bands is the true method of warfare for all nations desirous of emancipating themselves from a foreign yoke. It is invincible, indestructible"¹²¹.

Suez was in ruins, but the residents got a tremendous prestige all around the country. They did not surrender and they resisted against the 'Invincible Enemy'. Even the Israelis "admitted how fierce the resistance was"¹²² by comparing the battle of Suez to the Battle of

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 132

¹¹⁷ Rabinovich 2005, p. 466

¹¹⁸ Kandil 2014, p. 145

¹¹⁹ I shall mention this renowned place of Suez later for another reason.

¹²⁰ Rabinovich 2005, p. 475

¹²¹ Gillespie, Alexander, *A History of the Laws of War with Regards to Combatants and Captives*, (Oxford, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), 68

¹²² Kandil 2014, p. 135

Stalingrad¹²³. The cease fire took effect and one of the conditions for the peace agreement, negotiated between Kissinger¹²⁴ and Sadat, was that “the Suez Canal would never be closed to Israeli navigation [and] the Suez Canal cities would be rebuilt, expanded, and heavily populated as a guarantee against the eruption of future conflicts¹²⁵ . As regards Suez and its residents, it is really the apex of the rising culture of resistance by dint of the bravery they showed. The fighters of Suez saved the honor of the whole country. This episode was each time mentioned in all the documentaries and movies about Suez. My interviewees also mentioned this great moment of Suez’s history, meaning that the Battle of Suez is a great example of resistance for the whole Egyptian popular culture. For Suez’s residents, it is certainly a key moment of their history, somewhat on the French model of the 14 July.

e. Suez under Hosni Mubarak: corruption, impoverishment and police state.

Yet, after this glorious moment in Suez’s history, Kandil so rightly called this period ‘The Long Lull Before the Perfect Storm: Revolt in January 2011’. Sure enough, Egypt faced significant economic problems. The 1973 war was a political success, but “was estimated to have cost \$40 billion, and the general fiscal squeeze caused by rising food and energy imports led Sadat to seek loans from US and European lenders as well as regional zones of surplus capital such¹²⁶. The peace agreement signed on March 26, 1979, between Egypt and Israel, was largely the result of tough pressure of Washington and was not understood by the residents of Suez. While the city was slowly rebuilding, Sadat was assassinated on October 6, 1981 and Hosni Mubarak succeeded him at the Head of Egypt. Slowly but surely, corruption and cronyism settled in Egypt, including in Suez, and the police was placed on a pedestal¹²⁷ to give place to abuses. In fact, policemen began to act as thugs¹²⁸. “The average Egyptian can be dragged into a police station and tortured simply because a police officer doesn’t like his face¹²⁹ .[...] Torture in criminal cases was so brutal

¹²³ Dupuy, N. Trevor, *Elusive Victory: The Arab israeli Wars, 1947-1974*, (New York, Hunt Publishing Company, 1992), 540

¹²⁴ Kissinger (1923-...) was the United States Secretary of State in 1973.

¹²⁵ Shazly, Saad El-Din, *The Crossing of The Suez: The October War (1973)*, (London, Third World Centre for Research and Publishing, 1980), 96

¹²⁶ Hanieh 2013, p. 31

¹²⁷ Kandil 2014, p. 193

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 196

¹²⁹ *Ibid*.

that in several instances suspects admitted to murder (a crime punishable by death) only to discover afterward that their alleged ‘victims’ were still alive¹³⁰.

In 2008, Egyptian human rights organizations deplored 916 cases of police violence against nonpolitical citizens¹³¹. In Suez, known for being ‘The Bride of the Red Sea’ by the Egyptians, the social infrastructures disappeared gradually to give place to organs of repression such as the sadly famous orphanage turned into a police station: Arba’een police station¹³². Under Mubarak, that place was a symbol of corruption, torture ... and many nicknamed it ‘The Egyptian Abu Ghraib’ in reference to the sorrowfully renowned Iraqi prison where U.S. soldiers committed shameful acts of torture and humiliation.

As regards corruption and cronyism, the Egyptian capitalists-turned-politicians turned their back on the severe social problems of Egypt as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, deteriorating public services, urban congestion, shantytowns and the like. They were not only richer, but also more demanding therein their business expansion required the state to deregulate the economy, privatize public companies, reduce subsidies for the poor and taxes for the rich, and allow them cheap access to public resources¹³³. Hence Mubarak “allocated 67, 200 square kilometers (an area equivalent to the size of Palestine, Lebanon, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain combined) worth £E 800 billion to favored investors. Mubarak’s cronies were appointed to the most important positions and they used to hire shamefully people from their own governorates instead of Suez workers¹³⁴. As an example illustrating the unheard corruption that took place in Suez under Mubarak, the case of Ahmed Ezz¹³⁵ seems emblematic. Ezz acquired 21 million square meters at the price of £E 4 per meter in the industrial area of the Gulf of Suez, only to resell it to foreign companies for £E 1, 000 per meter a couple years later¹³⁶. All that with the blessing of the ‘Rais’¹³⁷.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Nour, Ahmed, *Moug* [‘Waves’], Nour, Ahmed, 2012

¹³³ Kandil 2014, p. 213

¹³⁴ Dean, Laura, 17 February, 2014, “In one Egyptian city, the Arab Spring Spirit Has Not Been Snuffed,” *New Republic*, accessed on 4 April, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116636/suez-egyptian-city-where-revolutionary-spirit-persists>

¹³⁵ He is an Egyptian businessman and politician. Former owner of Ezz Steel, he was a figurehead of the National Democratic Party – Mubarak’s party.

¹³⁶ Kandil 2014, p. 215

¹³⁷ The Egyptian Arabic word to talk about the president.

Above all that, due to a promising project called the Kuraymat Project¹³⁸, it seems that there are 80 percent more parasites in the water of Suez¹³⁹. Yet, it is not very surprising in a country where 79 percent Egyptians have no access to clean drinking water and a proper sewage system¹⁴⁰. “Consequently, the drinking water is foul-tasting and has many impurities resulting in intestinal and kidney diseases and cancers¹⁴¹. Such terrible living-conditions merely feed a burgeoning outcry.

To summarize what is the situation on the eve of the January 2011 uprising, here is a seaport city that proved its deep loyalty to the nation of Egypt. Its residents fought fiercely against foreign invaders. They even defeated a never-beaten foe, i.e. Israel, that threatened to capture their city. No other town or battalion succeeded to do so. In Suez, humiliation and fear changed sides due to resistance -some may say heroism. For this, the city got a tremendous prestige around Egypt and even beyond its borders.

Yet, subsequently, Suez faced up dictatorship and its darkest aspects, that is to say, an obnoxious and intolerable corruption characterized by cronyism, mass unemployment – especially among the young people¹⁴², a wild and fierce police repression epitomized by acts of torture and abuses, and miserable living conditions. Some residents in Suez even say “Suez is the only place where still-alive heroes live in cemeteries¹⁴³. In other words, Suez gradually became a tremendous shantytown while the port and the canal generated enormous incomes to the Egyptian economy. On November 29, 2010, a high-ranked police general was assassinated in Suez¹⁴⁴ “in plain sight by a former informant, whose trial turned into an exposé of the gendarmerie’s brutal methods¹⁴⁵; then the match was ready to be lit to ignite the barrels of explosives. Regarding the Arab Spring, the revolution is “a set of

¹³⁸ A project in all the North of Egypt, that aims to provide electricity network, by the construction of 150MW integrated solar combined cycle power plant which is alternative to thermal power plants, thereby contributing to mitigation of climate change through the reduction of greenhouse gas emission.

¹³⁹ Nour, Ahmed, *Moug* [‘Waves’], Nour, Ahmed, 2012

¹⁴⁰ Kandil 2014, p. 216

¹⁴¹ Benin, Joel, “Revolutions and Repression on the Banks of the Suez Canal,” *Jadaliyya*, July 12, 2011, accessed on February 1, 2015, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2116/revolution-and-repression-on-the-banks-of-the-suez>

¹⁴² Lynch, Marc, *The Arab Uprising. The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East*, (New York, Public Affairs, 2013), 10

¹⁴³ Sherif Salah, “Suez : Cradle of Revolt”, 17 January, 2012, *Al-Jazeera*, accessed on 6 June, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/revolutionthrougharabeyes/2011/12/20111229132934234283.html>

¹⁴⁴ Benin, Joel, “Revolutions and Repression on the Banks of the Suez Canal,” *Jadaliyya*, July 12, 2011, accessed on February 1, 2015, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2116/revolution-and-repression-on-the-banks-of-the-suez>

¹⁴⁵ El-Ghobashy, Mona, “The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution,” *Middle East Research and Information Project*, published in MER 258, accessed on 2 July, 2015, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer258/praxis-egyptian-revolution>

cultural and organizational forms thoroughly socially embedded in the urban communal enclaves that became the centers of popular resistance(...)¹⁴⁶. Suez is one these *urban communal enclaves that became the centers of resistance*.

In the next chapter, I will elaborate the unfolding of the 2011 uprising in Suez and its aftermath. I intend to shed light on the struggles for the revolutionary leadership between religious movements and Leftist movements. Then, I shall mention the short Morsi's presidency insofar as revolution has stepped up at that time. Finally, I shall scrutinize the current situation by analyzing both the still-ongoing protest movements and the construction of the new Suez Canal. Doing so, I intend to delve the impact of the project on the city of Suez and its residents.

¹⁴⁶ Skocpol 1994, p. 250

Chapter 3: How does Suez face Egypt's history.

"(...) If the dam of autocracy is broken, a sea of angry people will flood the country".

Hazem Kandil¹⁴⁷

a. January 2011: Suez, source of the Egyptian revolutionary thrust.

As said above, Suez is rather different from other Canal cities as many large factories and commercial activities are settled in the seaport city, unlike Isma'iliyya and Port Said which are solely focused on the Canal traffic. There are five main districts in Suez¹⁴⁸ and three main ports: Port Tawfik, Petroleum Dock, and Attaka Port¹⁴⁹. Naturally, it led to a labor organizing and activism in the city, due to the cosmopolitan nature of the workforce.

The 2011 Egyptian uprising took place on January 25, 2011. When the demonstrations were relatively peaceful in cities like Cairo or Alexandria, the demonstration in Suez was dramatically violent. The police shot three protestors and one of them died. He was a university student¹⁵⁰. Thereafter, Qalyoubiyya and Suez were placed on high alert by Cairo¹⁵¹. After that, Suez became 'The Flame of Revolution'. Rage seized demonstrators for that murder, and they burnt up most of the police stations in the city. Above all, the aforementioned Arba'een Police Station was the main symbol to be burst. Arguably, the ultimate fault, i.e. the young student murder, finally convinced the demonstrators that the policemen were merely hoodlums that had to be fought. The movement became so important that the situation grew out of control. Beyond a certain point, the bloodiest confrontations took place in Suez. Even the Chief of Security Forces complained in an official memo that his men were "not prepared to meet the massive demonstrations because the State Security Investigations Sector¹⁵² reports were 'not taken seriously'¹⁵³. It means that the Egyptian intelligence was aware that something was up in Suez, but Cairo

¹⁴⁷ Kandil 2014, p. 233

¹⁴⁸ Arba'een District, Suez District, Ganayen District, Faisal District, and Attaka District.

¹⁴⁹ Al-Adabiya Port may be included too, even though it is not really located in the Suez municipality but a bit further on the western side of the Red Sea.

¹⁵⁰ Kandil 2014, p. 223

¹⁵¹ El-Ghobashy, Mona, "The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution," *Middle East Research and Information Project*, published in MER 258, accessed on 2 July, 2015, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer258/praxis-egyptian-revolution>

¹⁵² The highest national internal security authority under Mubarak. Thereafter the revolution, the head of the agency was arrested under suspicion of ordering the killings of protestors and the agency was dissolved on March 15, 2011.

¹⁵³ Osama Khaled, Head of the Central Security Forces in the Suez Canal Zone, quoted by Kandil, p. 236.

disregarded it. Hence, the security forces were outnumbered and for a while Suez was empty of police forces. However, Suez deserves its pride in being the epicenter of the revolution because when Tahrir Square in Cairo became genuinely the emblematic square of the revolution, many testimonies attest that the protesting crowd sung the anthem of Suez as a rallying song¹⁵⁴.

c. Resisting for a social improvement.

Subsequently, the workers of Suez went on strikes¹⁵⁵ in order to get a 40 percent wage increase and better working conditions¹⁵⁶. Actually, unions existed under Mubarak – Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) - but it was used by the regime as a political weapon to lull the workers¹⁵⁷. A statement signed by many factories called for its dissolution as “one of the most important symbols of corruption under the defunct regime”¹⁵⁸. Furthermore, the toppling of Mubarak did not satisfy the workers. Indeed, first the transitional military power refused the wage increase, and second, the strikers faced a surreal logic, that is their wages and labor conditions were set by parliamentary legislation. Yet, unfortunately since there was no Parliament, their conditions of employment could not be changed by the proper legal procedures¹⁵⁹. A rather vicious way to block any kind of urgent social reform.

The strikes expressed the workers’ objection to that logic and after Suez, Cairo, Alexandria, many other places went on strike to claim a basic social improvement such as in Damietta and other Canal cities¹⁶⁰. Nevertheless, it is not the first time that Egypt faces a literal wave of strikes. Between 2001 and 2011, around 2 million workers participated in

¹⁵⁴ Pradal, François, “Plongée dans l’Egypte rebelle : Suez entre salafisme et révolution.” *Le Monde diplomatique*, 31 January 2012

¹⁵⁵ Shadid, Anthony, “Suez Canal Workers Join Broad Strikes in Egypt”, *The New York Times*, February 17, 2011, accessed on April 4, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/18/world/middleeast/18egypt.html>

¹⁵⁶ Benin, Joel, “Revolutions and Repression on the Banks of the Suez Canal,” *Jadaliyya*, July 12, 2011, accessed on February 1, 2015, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2116/revolution-and-repression-on-the-banks-of-the-suez>

¹⁵⁷ Shadid, Anthony, “Suez Canal Workers Join Broad Strikes in Egypt”, *The New York Times*, February 17, 2011, accessed on April 4, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/18/world/middleeast/18egypt.html>

¹⁵⁸ Hanieh 2013, p. 169

¹⁵⁹ Benin, Joel, “Revolutions and Repression on the Banks of the Suez Canal,” *Jadaliyya*, July 12, 2011, accessed on February 1, 2015, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2116/revolution-and-repression-on-the-banks-of-the-suez>

¹⁶⁰ Shadid, Anthony, “Suez Canal Workers Join Broad Strikes in Egypt”, *The New York Times*, February 17, 2011, accessed on April 4, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/18/world/middleeast/18egypt.html>

strikes¹⁶¹. Even though, the regime used clientelism as a tool to alleviate the tensions, it is the first time that such a wave occurs as part of a revolution. In addition, when Mubarak dismissed, the military remained uncompromising and did not accept the protesters' demands. Military power adamantly refused any type of reforms, while merely be granted basic social claims.

“Egypt had become a failed state in the eyes of its own people“¹⁶² says Kandil. Possibly in the rest of the country but in Suez the struggle continued. “The social unrest resulting from the shrinking of social benefits, the steady rise in price levels, the laying off of thousands of public – and private-sector workers, and the systematic and rabid corruption inflicting economic life required constant repression“¹⁶³. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) was determined to crush the revolutionary process by quelling the protest movement. Doing so, they encouraged a trend of diminishing returns on popular protests, with ever smaller numbers turning up and less consensus on the demands to be pressed. The SCAF could do it by spurring on that trend with a nasty media campaign designed to tarnish the nationalist credentials of key protest groups, to emphasize an alleged popular desire for a return to normalcy, and to fan class resentments against the protest movements¹⁶⁴. Thereafter, the opinion rapidly turned against the protestors, as they disrupted traffic and their tent city inhibited local businesses¹⁶⁵.

d. The religious and Leftist movements in Suez: common resistance against the military rule.

However, in Suez, all the social upheaval happened as part of a struggle between Leftist movements and religious groups i.e. Salafi groups and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). The Suez Canal Zone has always been an area wherein religion is deeply implanted amongst the local population. For instance, Isma'illiyya is the birthplace of Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the city remained for a long time the headquarter of the MB. Yet, the Salafi movements had long stayed out of politics. But they rapidly organized into several political parties¹⁶⁶ and jumped into the political realm. Both

¹⁶¹ Kandil, Hazem, *Soldiers, Spies, and Statesmen. Egypt's Road to Revolt*, (London: Verso, 2014), 217

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 218

¹⁶³ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁴ Lynch 2013, p. 151

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

religious movements had their assets to convince the local population. The MB was perceived as the main opposition force to Mubarak's regime. They have been persecuted for decades, and went into hiding whilst they made charity actions with funds sent from allied countries (Qatar or Turkey *inter alia*). However, one of the main differences within their respective role in the revolution is that the MB played a key role in keeping the protests alive¹⁶⁷, whereas the Salafi groups solely took advantage of the situation. They both advocate for the "Islamic" choice. Nevertheless, everything is a matter of degree of political ambition concerning the aforesaid choice. Just as the MB, the Salafi groups built their network. They had two popular television stations (financially supported by Saudi Arabia), well-known personalities, and a significant network of charitable institutions. Yet, mainstream Egyptians tended to find the Salafi groups more frightful than the Brotherhood. For example, their way of dressing¹⁶⁸ marked them as alien within urban Egyptian society. Furthermore, their retrograde views on gender and on liberal values raised serious concerns (even amongst those who reconciled themselves to the Brotherhood's place in Egyptian democracy¹⁶⁹).

In any case, both the MB and the Salafis tried to take advantage of the social tenuousness of the fringe of the most marginalized population, especially the youth. Sure enough, indicatively the unemployment reached 60 percent in Egypt from July 2007 to July 2009 for people between 15 and 24¹⁷⁰ (which presents evidence that it was largely a phenomenon of youth). Worse, 1, 11 million had fallen below the poverty line prior to the global crisis itself¹⁷¹. The religious movements were clearly determined to capitalize on pervasive poverty. In Suez, they certainly found a very fertile ground to do so.

The other main opposition force in Suez was the Leftist movement, especially what is called the April 6 Youth Movement. The name of this political group is based on the violent strikes of April 6, 2008 in El-Mahalla El-Kubra, Northern Egypt. The organization was created in order to support the workers who decided to go on strike. The group is peculiarly active in Suez by organizing sit-ins in Maydan al-Arba'een square¹⁷² and has connections with the Afareets (mentioned above). Its critics accuse the organization to be a bourgeois liberal and idealistic group (somewhat on the model of the French students during

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Untrimmed beards for men and the *niqab* for women.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁷⁰ Hanieh 2013, p. 146

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² The main square of downtown Suez.

the May 1968 events). In fact, it is a mainly upper-middle class group but with an important ideological and mobilizational role for the workers. However, some militants may undermine the message of the organization by making literally eccentric and wacky demands like the independence of Suez and the management of the waterway¹⁷³.

Of course there are much other Leftist –or at least liberal- movements, such as the Nasserist groups, but they all splintered and they could not get any leadership. Nevertheless, the antagonism between religious movements and the liberal ones should be nuanced because, at the end, they are somehow allies –at least *objective* allies- because they all want the end of the military rule¹⁷⁴. Under Morsi, the MB was at power thus the onlookers could stare at weird demonstrations gathering Salafis and liberal groups while they are supposed to be diametrically opposed. Yet, they were pursuing the same immediate political goal.

e. Suez and the new Suez Canal: a highly political project.

When Morsi was overthrown and el-Sisi took power over, Cairo’s main goal regarding Suez was to bring order back while alleviating the social situation. In fact, el-Sisi faced a great challenge as regards the Suez Canal, and this challenge is largely connected to the culture of resistance in Suez. All along the revolution and its convulsions, the world trade did not stop and many ship cargoes continued to transit by the canal. The ships’ crews were puzzled witnesses of the chaos that occurred in the city. Gradually, some countries began to fear random protesters attacks on some of their cargoes. Egypt was unresponsive to the number of stable countries in the region (due to the social turmoils and the violence that took place). Consequently, some governments such as China’s sought an alternative to bypass the Suez Canal. That is how -in collaboration with the Israeli government- they elaborated a project called ‘Red-Med’ that would have been a high speed rail line connecting Eilat¹⁷⁵ to Ashdod, Israel’s largest Mediterranean port¹⁷⁶. All the project would have enabled Israel to leverage its alleged status as the most stable country in the Middle East. According

¹⁷³ Benin, Joel, “Revolutions and Repression on the Banks of the Suez Canal,” *Jadaliyya*, July 12, 2011, accessed on February 1, 2015, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2116/revolution-and-repression-on-the-banks-of-the-suez>

¹⁷⁴ Dean, Laura, 17 February, 2014, “In one Egyptian city, the Arab Spring Spirit Has Not Been Snuffed,” *New Republic*, accessed on 4 April, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116636/suez-egyptian-city-where-revolutionary-spirit-persists>

¹⁷⁵ Israel’s Red Sea port.

¹⁷⁶ Emont, Jon, ‘Will Bibi’s Chinese Choo-Choo Train Save Israel and Transform the Middle East?’, *Tablet. A new read on Jewish Life*, June 16, 2014, accessed on September 8, 2014, <http://tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/175373/red-med-link-china-israel>

to the project, Israel was to built ship cargoes transit infrastructures through a railway freight connecting the Far East to Europe¹⁷⁷. Even though the workers in Suez always said, over and over, they did not intend to attack any boat passing through the Canal¹⁷⁸; it did not seem quite convincing.

When el-Sisi took over, he was determined to solve this problem as soon as possible. Indeed, such a project would have been a dreadful economical disaster for Egypt: the Canal is one of its main sources of revenue. Therein, he dedicated a significant part of his first speech at the General Assembly of the U.N. to the high expectations as regards the New Suez Canal. His discourse was rather clear and limpid: “[Egypt is] a state that is determined to achieve growth, prosperity and a promise in the future to the aspiration of its people. To achieve that, Egypt began implementing an ambitious comprehensive program to spur development till 2030 with the aim to lay the foundations of free market economy which is capable of attracting investments in a secure and stable environment. The new Suez Canal project (...) is a proof of the seriousness of our attempt and of the resolve the new Egypt to forge a better tomorrow for its children and youth”¹⁷⁹. This is why, to reach a *secure and stable environment*, he committed to bring order back in Suez by quelling the demonstrators. This is why he committed to bring order back in Suez by quelling the demonstrators. He significantly increased repression in the city¹⁸⁰. Yet, meanwhile he gave guarantees to the protesters by pledging that an alternative project was about to be launched that will create jobs and infrastructures. Hence President el-Sisi launched the construction of the new Suez Canal during a ceremony held on August 5th, 2014. The project is ambitious and is supposed to jump-start Egypt’s sagging economy. Sure enough, within a year¹⁸¹, Egypt is doubling the current canal with a 72 kilometers (44.7 miles) long new channel that will enable 97 ships per day (23 currently) to bypass the already-existing canal by 2023¹⁸².

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Shadid, Anthony, “Suez Canal Workers Join Broad Strikes in Egypt“, *The New York Times*, February 17, 2011, accessed on April 4, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/18/world/middleeast/18egypt.html>

¹⁷⁹ General Assembly Speeches, “Egypt’s President Addresses the U.N.“, *The New York Times*, President Abdel Fatah el-Sisi of Egypt spoke (...) at the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly, 24 September, 2014, accessed on 26 September, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/video/world/middleeast/100000003136018/egypts-president-addresses-the-un.html>

¹⁸⁰ Dean, Laura, 17 February, 2014, “In one Egyptian city, the Arab Spring Spirit Has Not Been Snuffed“, *New Republic*, accessed on 4 April, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116636/suez-egyptian-city-where-revolutionary-spirit-persists>

¹⁸¹ While it is supposed to take three years according to experts on the matter.

¹⁸² Guerin, Orla, ‘Egypt seeks to build confidence with second Suez Canal’, *BBC News*, Cairo, January 22, 2015, accessed on January 25, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30895545>

Furthermore, the project is supposed to speed up the transit, that is, the ships will take only eleven hours to transit (down from eighteen)¹⁸³. It will thoroughly reshape the whole Suez Canal Zone in the extent the project is expected to generate more than one million jobs¹⁸⁴. The mega-project will definitely empower the region, marginalized hitherto. The project cost is significant: £E 60 billion¹⁸⁵ i.e. \$8 billion. To pay for, “the government decided to base the primary funding on investment certificates issued by the Suez Canal Authority to Egyptian nationals through Egyptian national banks. Annual interest up to 12% was added on the value of these certificates to encourage Egyptians to buy them”¹⁸⁶.

Yet, the project, remains arguable despite its ambition. First, it gives no solid guarantee in the extent that some experts are quite doubtful regarding its economic impact. The Suez Canal Authority projected the New Suez Canal will generate \$13.2 billion per year by 2023 (up from \$5.3 billion currently)¹⁸⁷. However, some experts such as Omar al-Shenety¹⁸⁸ belie the enthusiasm of the Egyptian authorities by saying: “I cannot confirm that digging the new canal to increase [the canal’s] capacity, and thus allow the navigation of a larger number of vessels, will bring about a significant boom in the canal’s projected revenues”¹⁸⁹. Therein, there are few chances this project –which was already on Mubarak’s and Morsi’s desk¹⁹⁰- enables the achievement of the desired figures and revenues in view of doubling the number of vessels passing through the Suez Canal. Indeed, this is mainly linked to the global trade movement which increases by 2 or 3 Percent in regular periods¹⁹¹.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Golia, Maria, ‘The New Suez Canal Project and Egypt’s Economic Future’, *Middle East institute*, December 19, 2014, accessed on January 25, 2015, <http://www.mei.edu/content/article/new-suez-canal-project-and-egypt%E2%80%99s-economic-future>

¹⁸⁵ Mayault, isabelle, ‘Le nouveau canal de Suez sera terminé l’été prochain’, *La Tribune*, January 20, 2015, accessed on January 24, 2015, <http://www.latribune.fr/actualites/economie/international/20150120tribc9807d063/le-nouveau-canal-de-suez-sera-terme-pour-l-ete-prochain.html>

¹⁸⁶ Aman, Ayah, ‘Question remain on Egypt’s Suez Canal Project’, *Al Monitor*, August 26, 2014, accessed on March 5, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/fr/originals/2014/08/egypt-sisi-project-new-canal-suez-feasible-economy.html#>

¹⁸⁷ Guerin, Orla, ‘Egypt seeks to build confidence with second Suez Canal’, *BBC News*, Cairo, January 22, 2015, accessed on January 25, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30895545>

¹⁸⁸ An economist and chief operating officer of Multiples Investment Group.

¹⁸⁹ Aman, Ayah, ‘Question remain on Egypt’s Suez Canal Project’, *Al Monitor*, August 26, 2014, accessed on March 5, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/fr/originals/2014/08/egypt-sisi-project-new-canal-suez-feasible-economy.html#>

¹⁹⁰ AFP, ‘L’Egypte lance le creusement d’un nouveau canal de Suez’, August 6, 2014, accessed on May 3, 2015, http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2014/08/06/l-egypte-lance-le-creusement-d-un-nouveau-canal-de-suez_1076268

¹⁹¹ Aman, Ayah, ‘Question remain on Egypt’s Suez Canal Project’, *Al Monitor*, August 26, 2014, accessed on March 5, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/fr/originals/2014/08/egypt-sisi-project-new-canal-suez-feasible-economy.html#>

Finally, in spite of the strong media campaign that promises a radical change in Egypt, many residents of the Suez Canal Zone (i.e. including Suez) express their doubt, their fear or their opposition to this project¹⁹². Sure enough, as I noticed through my research and my journey in Egypt, many people in Cairo -and main cities such as Alexandria- support the project (because it appears as a wayout for Egypt's economy) but in Suez, they fear the jobs will be granted to non-native people of Suez. In other words, the military government will send unemployed people from other parts of Egypt to get these promised jobs in order to decongest overcrowded cities like Cairo. However, the military power, embodied by el-Sisi, seems to be resolute and determined to go through with this project against the odds. At the end, the regime seems to be "provoking the revolutionaries in order to polarize them"¹⁹³. The nearly ultimate goal is to annihilate any protest by tackling its source. To conclude on an optimistic note, one might say "every revolution has its counterrevolution –that is a sign the revolution is for real"¹⁹⁴. Indeed, el-Sisi is said to be the "Egyptian Bonaparte"¹⁹⁵ meaning that he is a military who aims at bringing order back for the country's sake and its economy, no matter whether he tramples the revolutionary ideals or not. Because this phase of counterrevolution fits precisely in a much wider and progressive revolutionary process in time¹⁹⁶.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ "Egypt Under Sisi," *Vice News*, March 7, 2014, accessed on April 6, 2015, <https://news.vice.com/video/egypt-under-sisi>

¹⁹⁴ Mills, C. Wright, *Listen, Yankee : The Revolution in Cuba. The Outspoken Controversial Book about What is Really Happening in Cuba*, (New York : Ballantine Books, 1960), chapter 3, introduction.

¹⁹⁵ Interview 1. A 37-years old Egyptian man at el-Ataba, Cairo. 3 September 2014.

¹⁹⁶ Trager, Eric, 'Egypt's Durable Misery. Why Sisi's regime Is Stable,' *Foreign Affairs*, July 21, 2015, accessed on July 22, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/egypt/2015-07-21/egypts-durable-misery>

Conclusion

“All of Suez people took part in the protest. Those who didn’t march in Al-Arbaeen Square helped by distributing masks to protect protesters from the gas. Others handed out soft drinks to people. It was an amazing scene of unity, a familiar one in Suez. We were all inspired by Ibrahim Suleiman who attacked the police station in 1973 to free it from Israeli occupation. This was an occupation too but the enemy was different. The israelis occupied our land, while this regime occupied our minds. We wanted to free our minds “

Hussein Al-Shazly, a protester in Suez.¹⁹⁷

All through the scrutiny, I strived to shed light on the fact that Suez people triggered something which is a milestone in Egypt’s history. They were the source of an unprecedented tidal wave in the country’s history. They sparked off “an exceptionally rapid, intense, and nearly simultaneous explosion of popular protest”¹⁹⁸. The mass protests of January 25, 2011 in Egypt were the “pivotal moment that transformed local domestic political struggles into a single, coherent, regional uprising”¹⁹⁹. And all the uprising turned into a revolution in Suez because of the first protester killed by the police. As said above, the police forces behaved like merciless thugs, largely the source of a gradual hue and cry as regards Suez’s inhabitants. This could not last any longer after that revolting blunder. The young demonstrator killed embodies the match lighting the barrel of gasoline. The revolution bemoaned its first martyr.

The renowned inclination of Suez people to rise up, whether against a foreign invasion or an enemy of within i.e. the regime, is now explained by history. In addition, I tried to show the reversal that took place between the 1979 peace treaty agreement (between Egypt and the archenemy Israel) and the 2011 uprising. When there was a foreign enemy to fight, the living conditions were secondary because, at least, they were “free“ and not occupied. They were not forced to leave their households. In other words, the fight was the top priority for all of them. The spontaneous, unquestioning and formidable mobilization of the local population in Suez commanded respect and afforded a great victory amidst an endless series of defeats against the IDF. But when the Israeli foe was no longer a problem,

¹⁹⁷ Sherif Salah, ‘‘Suez : Cradle of Revolt’’, 17 January, 2012, *Al-Jazeera*, accessed on 6 June, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/revolutionthrougharabeyes/2011/12/20111229132934234283.html>

¹⁹⁸ Lynch 2013, p. 9

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 84.

a slow and gradual reversal took place. Suez was undoubtedly famous for its capability to resist in any circumstances, even if the whole city was burning. Therefore, for having been capable of standing up against the Zionist enemy, the residents of Suez got a tremendous prestige. Suez was a synonym of resistance for everyone in Egypt. A culture of resistance was associated with the famous seaport city in the collective memory as a significant part of the city's inhabitants' identity.

Yet, as the time and the dictatorship of Mubarak, the living conditions became the new top concern in Suez: no fresh water, no jobs, shameful corruption, police oppression... There was clearly quite a reversal from a *nationalist* culture of resistance to a *social* culture of resistance. In other words, “the message of these protests reverberated throughout the silent majority [of Egyptian society], revealing the fact that it was possible (...) to shake off fear of the regime”²⁰⁰. All the protest triggered in Suez entailed the overthrow of Mubarak, a president corrupt to the bone who ruled the country by an iron hand.

Therein, the revolution was a success, but after the failed attempt of the Muslim Brotherhood to rule the country and the July 3, 2013 ‘coup’²⁰¹, the military takeover. While the rest of the country seems jaded by all the political turmoils, Suez keeps on mobilizing a syncretism of political movements. Whether they are religious (Salafi, Muslim Brethren) or liberal (April 6 Youth Movement) so that to express their common desire not to give up the fight initiated in 2011²⁰². Even though they do not pursue the same ultimate goal, their common aim is the end of the military rule, that is, a nationwide goal. This can be seen through the actions of the aforementioned *Afareet*. Herein, Suez deserves the name of *Flame of the Revolution*, despite the great efforts made by el-Sisi’s government to transform this previously marginalized area through the New Suez Canal project. One more thing seems noteworthy: the resistance in Suez is and has always been collective. There is not a figure that floats from the crowd. It is also an aspect of the idiosyncrasy of Suez. Although in three years, nothing seems to have really changed [in Suez], “the street has failed to

²⁰⁰ Hanieh 2013, p. 163

²⁰¹ Many Egyptians reject the term ‘coup’ to prefer “new revolution” because more than 10 million people demonstrated during Summer 2013 to support the initiative of el-Sisi. And as says Kandil: “Egyptians consciously preferred the risk of backtracking toward military rule to the certainty of sliding into religious fascism.” (Kandil, p. 263).

²⁰² Dean, Laura, 17 February, 2014, “In one Egyptian city, the Arab Spring Spirit Has Not Been Snuffed,” *New Republic*, accessed on 4 April, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116636/suez-egyptian-city-where-revolutionary-spirit-persists>

produce leaders; and the leaders have failed to adjust to the radical mood of the street²⁰³. In addition, a foreign phobia grew lately in Suez for fear of spies. This can be explained by the foiled Israel attempt to take advantage of the chaotic situation in the area to spy activities related to the Canal²⁰⁴. As far as I am concerned, most of my contacts from Suez dissuaded me from going to Suez during my second stay in Egypt. I had to finish my interviews in Cairo.

Yet, despite the reinforcement of the repression forces ordered by el-Sisi's government to crush the protest in Suez once and for all, the struggle continues against the odds. And this relentlessness for the sake of values such as justice, democracy, freedom and dignity, which are not solely words, may lead anyone to think that while "for the moment the country remains divided; once again Suez may offer a window to offer what's to come"²⁰⁵. Herein, Suez is animated by a *national social* culture of resistance that aims at mobilizing the whole Egyptian society for a better future.

Eventually, the words of Martin Luther King Jr. seem to have resound amongst the people of Suez when he said magnificently "change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom. A man can't ride you unless your back is bent"²⁰⁶.

²⁰³ Kandil 2014, p. 261

²⁰⁴ 'Egypt jails Suez Canal Official over Spying for Israel', *Ahram Online*, December 21, 2014, accessed on February 4, 2015, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/118465/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-jails-Suez-Canal-official-over-spying-for-Is.aspx>

²⁰⁵ Dean, Laura, 17 February, 2014, "In one Egyptian city, the Arab Spring Spirit Has Not Been Snuffed," *New Republic*, accessed on 4 April, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116636/suez-egyptian-city-where-revolutionary-spirit-persists>

²⁰⁶ Atlien, "In Remembrance: Dr ; Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)", *Straight from the A*, January 20, 2014, accessed on April 15, 2015, <http://straightfromthea.com/2014/01/20/in-remembrance-dr-martin-luther-king-jr-1929-1968-quotes-photos-2/>

Methodology review

All through this project, I strived to provide a theoretical framework to my scrutiny. For instance, I paid a significant attention to the different terms and vocabulary that I used. Working on such a topic requires a certain discipline insofar as many social-theorists dedicated most of their careers to elaborate appropriate definitions that I had to deal with. It was necessary to use their work, in order to carry out a worthwhile analysis regarding the culture of resistance in Suez.

Sure enough, as an evidence of my discipline concerning theory, I even devoted all the first part of my project to shed light on the complexity of theoretical matters connected to my topic. Subsequently, all through the two empirical chapters, I tried to combine facts, explanations and analysis while providing, again, a theoretical framework because a worthy academic work such as a thesis must be included within a structure.

Thereby, as regards the paradigm, I adopted a deductive research approach because the whole ‘backbone‘ of my study is based on the process whereby the researcher expresses a theory, then a hypothesis. Hereafter, a data collection is done that entails findings. Therefore, I chose a quantitative research strategy because the principal orientation to the role of theory was deductive²⁰⁷. My study was based on testing theory by gathering data. In other words, history, findings, and analyses on facts were the essential tools to present evidence of my initial theory. At the end, the hypothesis was confirmed, that is, there is indeed a culture of resistance proper to Suez²⁰⁸. Doing so, it was necessary to incorporate the practices and the norms of the natural scientific model as regards the epistemological orientation²⁰⁹. Moreover, it was overriding to pursue a certain objectivism regarding the ontological orientation of work. Indeed, I compelled me to analyze a view of social reality as an external, that is, while remaining objective. In addition, my work on Suez’s culture of resistance may be perceived as deductivism since “the purpose of theory is to generate hypotheses that can be tested and that will thereby allow explanations(...) to be assessed.”²¹⁰ As a matter of fact, given that the main hypothesis concerns the reversal between a *nationalist* culture of resistance to a *social* culture of resistance. I also worked with several newspapers articles in order to demonstrate the relevance and truthfulness of my

²⁰⁷ Bryman 2012, p. 36

²⁰⁸ Bryman 2012, p. 24

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

aforementioned hypothesis. Meanwhile, I tried to diversify the origins of these sources because I deem articles are the best sources for such a matter regarding facts.

Eventually, I incorporated excerpts of the interviews that I conducted in Egypt in September 2014. However, as I promised to the interviewees, I never mentioned any name on purpose. As a matter of fact, the only condition to accept to answer my questions was to grant anonymity to the interviewees through my work. However, I may say that I strived to diversify my interviewees' profiles. For instance, one of them is a cost-controller in Suez for MAERSK company. Another is a taxi driver who was born in Suez and lived the Forced Migration in 1967, and another is a Suez native student who got involved in the 2011 uprising. Thus I strived to get a range of diverse profiles, even though I wish I could have interviewed women from Suez because I would have been interested in knowing their perception of Suez's culture of resistance.

Eventually, I chose to end this scrutiny with a quotation from Martin Luther King because I thought Suez's culture of resistance and the Afro-American community's may be an interesting correlation.



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