

Suez Crisis and the Emergence of a National Leader, Nasser and Arab Nationalism 1956-67

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Whenever Suez Crisis 1956 remembered, the sweeping mass movement of Arab Nationalism in the 1950's would be seen as a creation of the event, A factor that never been taken in consideration by all the parties involved in the Suez Crisis, including Nasser himself .

Overwhelming support of Nasser by the people of most Arab Countries was surprising for both Western observers and the Egyptian leader. The Western Powers that dominated the Arab Countries for decades were counting on the elites of land lords, tribe shaykhs and bureaucrats but never thought about the common people¹. For Nasser, it sounded like rediscovery of the potentiality of Arab nationalism that could serve as a hard core of his regional policy, once the Arab peoples proclaimed him as the unchallenged leader of Arab nationalism.

This requires examination of the background of national identity issue in Egypt which influenced the ideas of Nasser's generation in respect, before looking at Nasser's approach to Arabism.

Arab Nationalism in Egyptian Perspective:

Since its early beginnings, the Arab nationalist movement was seen irrelevant to Egypt. In the pre- World War 1 years, the Egyptian nationalist movement which adopted an Ottoman- Muslim orientation had dismissed the activities of the Arab nationalists as an imperialist plot aiming at the destruction of the Muslim Caliphate. Such antagonistic attitude gained consensus of the Egyptian people due to certain socio-cultural reasons, perfectly mirrored by the Wafd's reaction to the recognition of an Arab delegation to the Peace Conference. The leaders of the Wafd had a feeling of humiliation when their request to proceed to Paris was neglected by

the Allied Powers in 1918-1919, and a considerable feeling of resentment over the perceived favourable treatment accorded to the Arabs. In a manifesto issued by the Wafd, addressed to the members of the House of Commons, the Egyptian nationalists expressed a definite sense of the superiority over the Arabs of Western Asia as they never had a separate political existence like Egypt, and had been under Egypt's control, dependent on its economic support. When some Arab nationalist activists suggested to Sa'd Zaghlul in the early 1920's to unify Egyptian and Arab national movements, the leader of the Wafd rejected the idea as being an addition of zeros².

The idea of Arabic-speaking people forming one interrelated unit was presented by the Egyptian nationalist writers of the interwar period as alien, and contradictory to the existence of the modern Egyptian nation –state founded on a territorial basis. Even those who believed that Egypt was culturally a part of the Arab world did not extend their perception of Egypt's relationship with other speakers of Arabic to the political sphere. The sympathy shown by the Egyptian opinion towards the nationalist movements of Syria, Palestine, and the Maghrib, had always been within the perception of brotherly Muslim solidarity. It is noteworthy, that the Muslim – oriented Egyptian organizations; such as the Young Men Muslim Association (a Muslim replica of the YMCA), and the Muslim Brethren were the most concerned with the events of the Arab countries and the first to react to it. Within the Muslim concept of Jihad, the Brethren had taken part in the Palestine war 1948; even the Egyptian masses viewed that war as such.

However, Egypt's involvement in the Arab nationalism was rather political than ideological. The growing interest in the Palestinian Question since 1936, the foundation of Arab League in 1944 with Egypt as headquarters, involvement in the Palestine War 1948, the establishment of Israel and subsequent developments, were political magnets that linked Egypt with her Arab neighbours. Until the 1952 Revolution, Egyptians did not express much more enthusiasm for Arabs than a limited concept of political, economic, and cultural

cooperation between the separate Arab states, and perceived the Arab League's function as one of coordination³

Nasser was not different from his generation, brought up, educated and gained political awareness in the interwar period within the same cultural and political milieu. He was a typical Egyptian nationalist, always showing solidarity with Arab / Muslim people by taking part in demonstrations protesting against French violent actions in Syria and Lebanon, as well as British policy in Egypt and Palestine. He had no experience with any country other than Egypt and the Sudan where he served in the Egyptian army for a limited period. Never been to any Arab or foreign country, Bandung 1955 was his first leg abroad⁴.

Nasser had no interest in ideologies, regardless the fact of being shortly a member of Young Egypt when he was a secondary school boy , a member of Muslim Brethren for a short period when he was a captain , at the same time he approached a communist organization but never been a member . He did not find any of these organizations good enough to achieve national independence. He got his ideas from available literature of the Egyptian political movement in general, without being committed to certain ideology. There is no evidence that he was familiar with the works of Arab nationalism thinkers such as Sati' al-Husri, Michel 'Aflaq or others before 1956.

His readings were on the theory of military strategy, political geography, biographies and memories of great national and political leaders. All his readings in English and Arabic on the Middle East were in history, politics, and security issues but nothing on ancient Egypt. From the writings of the advocates of Arabism he was familiar with the works of Abdul-Rahman al-Kawakibi and Shakib Arslan; both combined Islam with Arabism and see the latter as integral part of Islam⁵. This educational and cultural background helped Nasser to formulate his views and ideas including his approach to Arabism.

Strategic Approach to the Arab world:

Nasser maintained that Egyptian national liberation cannot be achieved with the presence of imperial Powers in the region ; the British in Libya , Jordan , Iraq , Aden , the Persian Gulf and southern Arabia, the French in north Africa, and the Zionist state in Palestine. It is difficult for independent Egypt to safeguard her territories with all these foreign garrisons and military bases in the neighbouring countries. It is a matter of national security to push forward national liberation in the Arab world and Africa. The elimination of colonialism is an Egyptian interest not only to strengthen her political position, but also to achieve economic development and build national economy.

These strategic views have been elaborated in his book "Philosophy of the Revolution" (Cairo 1954), with its central theme of the "three circles – Arab, African and Muslim – within which Egyptian power was to unfold. The Arab circle to be prior to others as it attracts Western interests in general and American in particular, due to her rich oil resources and geopolitical situation being a world military route. This makes the national security of Egypt vulnerable and causes concern⁶.

But, what kind of plans Nasser had in mind? The Philosophy of the Revolution kept silent. In fact Nasser was working on it a year earlier. Jean Lacouture's, the correspondent of France-Soir and Le Monde interviewed Nasser in late 1953, few months after the foundation of The Voice of the Arabs broadcast (July 4, 1953). Lacouture's asked Nasser whether he believed any of the innumerable plans for Arab unification could actually be realized. Frankly, Nasser said: "No ... if only because of the rivalry between the two great reigning families, the Saudis and Hashemite. Also because several Arab countries are still totally or partially under foreign domination. But unification can begin, in a modest way, through economic and defence agreements like those which you have in Europe"⁷.

Then, Nasser was telling the truth. The unification of the Arab countries that has been a rosy dream of the advocates of Arabism since the beginning of the twentieth century was not of interest for Nasser who looked at Arab countries within a strategic framework, necessary as it was for the Egyptian national security.

As early as October 1952, Nasser entrusted his comrade Zakaria Mohieddin to establish the "Egyptian General Intelligence Agency" (al-mukhabarat al-'amah) "to safeguard the revolutionary regime at home and abroad". Nasser and Mohieddin have chosen 15 army officers to make the first secret service agents, some were members of the "Free Officers", others were supporters who did not hesitate to join the coup. What concerns us here is the so-called "Arab Affairs Bureau" which has been entrusted to Fat'hi al-Deeb who was a student of Nasser at the Staff College of the Military Academy (1952). In his memories, Deeb admits that he had nothing but common knowledge about the Arab affairs, and has done a lot of reading in order to submit his first report on the "mission" of the Bureau in the Arab World⁸.

As the main assignment of the Bureau was to keep an eye on the places of Western military existence, to identify the nationalist groups or organization concerned with national liberation and how to get use of them, and the possible plans to ignite resistance movement against imperialism all over the Arab world. One of the assignments was to collect information about political movements, parties, organizations, political activities and general trends of opinion in Arab countries.

On March 31, 1953, Major Deeb submitted to Nasser his suggested plan for the Arab Affairs Bureau which included; founding a special broadcast station covering the Arab World to be titled "The Voice of the Arabs" (sawt al-Arab), making studies on the political and social conditions in each country to find out the centres of influence and how to deal with them, with special interest in the political parties which advocate Arab nationalism and their following, carefully selecting some of the Egyptian teachers seconded to Arab countries

to be trained on the method of collecting information and forwarding them to the Bureau, approaching Arab students in the Egyptian universities and schools to act as a source of information and train some of them to disseminate the ideas of the Egyptian revolution in their countries, and recruitment of Arab political refugees in Egypt to meet the demands of the Bureau to agitate people in their respective countries against imperialism and collaborating local governments. Nasser approved all suggested plan except the idea of using Egyptian teachers in Arab countries. Nevertheless, the Bureau started recruiting some of them after 1956.⁹

Preparations for the voice of the Arabs as media forum to disseminate the ideas of national liberation had the first priority. It has been inaugurated on July 4, 1953 with a daily program covering general and local affairs of each Arab country. Broadcast matter included the glory of the Arab past, confrontation with the Crusaders and Mongols, and the strategic necessity of national liberation and Arab solidarity. Most of the special messages and political analysis were introduced by Arab political refugees in Cairo. When the French colonial authorities exiled King Mohamed V of Morocco on August 20, 1953, the Voice of the Arabs launched a fierce campaign against imperialism in general and French colonialism in particular. The campaign captured the people's attention in all Arab countries and Sawt al-Arab gained landslide popularity.

On the first inauguration day (July 4, 1954), Nasser made his First speech to the audience of the Voice of the Arabs in which he emphasized the unity of Arab people regardless living in different states, and unity of "fighters of freedom to achieve national independence". He declared that the broadcast linked the "nation of the Nile" with their brethren in Arabism and Islam to struggle against imperialism and the puppet governments created by them. The speech shows how far was the concept of Arab unity or Arab nation meant by Nasser from the idea of Arabism. For him, it was nothing more than solidarity of peoples linked together by culture,

religion and political interests in a long march to liberate the region from foreign domination¹⁰

This propaganda was associated by two major tasks to be carried out by the Arab Affairs Bureau: wide range survey of resistance groups in Aden, Bahrain, Oman, and secret contacts with the political parties and organizations in other Arab countries. Secret programs of military training for the Arab nationalist, including Algerians, were organized in Egypt. Smuggling of military arms into different countries became regular through a network set up by the Bureau. These operations fostered relations between national liberation movements and the Egyptian regime. The Voice of the Arabs was used by these movements to pass coded messages to the resistance units in different fields.

The Western intelligence agencies could not monitor the secret activities of the Arab Affairs Bureau despite the discovery of certain cases of smuggling arms into Algeria by the French colonial authorities that was reported by the French Press. All formal protests made by the British and French governments were about the problems caused by agitating propaganda of the Voice of the Arabs in the countries dominated by them. It was one of the reasons that made them decide to eliminate the Egyptian regime in Suez 1956¹¹.

This strategic approach towards the Arab World adopted by Nasser as necessary measure for the national security of Egypt was perceived differently by the political activists and the people in the Arab countries. They looked at Nasser through their socio-cultural traditional legacy as a saviour, a liberator, and a leader of the Arab nation.

The Anglo-Egyptian Agreement of October 1954 was a remarkable regional development, regardless the article that gave Britain the right to return to the Suez base within five years in case of security emergency in Turkey or any Arab country. The evacuation of the British troops within two years was a valuable precedent in the Arab eyes. It meant that further withdrawals from the region are possible.

It meant also that the last barrier that keeps Egypt away from Palestine and Arab East has been removed, and were expecting Nasser to consider making a move. In fact this issue was not on the agenda of the regime, but the Arab people did not lose hope. They believed that his hands were full with other strategic problems related to the Western defence plans for the Middle East, once he gets through, he would pay more attention to Palestine.

The year 1955 was full of events that made Nasser adored by the Arabs. His contribution to the Bandung non-alignment conference calling for ending all sorts of foreign domination, neutrality and the peoples rights of economic and social development. Nasser's statements were expressions of the demands of the Arab masses.

The policy of Nasser towards the defence projects designed by the West has been appreciated and supported by the common Arabs. It was the first time in history to find an Arab leader who was able to reject any plan suggested by the great Western Powers. All other leaders never dare to negotiate such suggestions. The idea of making the regional defence of the Arab East a matter of national security that would be handled by the Arab states without any foreign participation was reasonable from the view point of Arab nationalists. The endeavours made by Nasser to revive the Arab Joint Defence Agreement of 1951 and the creation of an Egyptian-Syrian military command in 1955 to be jointed later by Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, sounded like an effort to lay down the foundations of Arab Unity. For Nasser it was a kind of shield to protect Arab countries from being dragged into Western strategic defence projects that would risk their national security. He never thought about within the context of Arab unity, he was entrenched at the idea of solidarity based on joint cultural legacy and mutual interests.

The arms deal with the Soviets in the same year was a ratification of his credentials as a tough fighter of imperialism and defender of national interests. The nationalization of Suez Canal was a strictly Egyptian and eminently nationalistic act accomplished with a view

to purely Egyptian interests. But the statements Nasser made that day in Alexandria suddenly linked him to the Arab world, making him finally the tribune of its mute masses from Baghdad to Morocco. Egypt occupied a place that any dynamism in her politics would cast a shadow over Arabism, and project all the Arab expectations upon her. This may explain the reactions of the Arab masses to the nationalization of Suez and the subsequent aggression¹²

Magnet of Arabism:

On January 1958, Nasser has been interviewed by the French journalist Jacques Banjoist - Mèchin who published it in his *Printemps Arabe* (Paris 1963). He asked Nasser: "You are planning to create a Pan-Arab empire, are you not going to make a new form of imperialism?" He replied: "Not at all, not at all. I do not want to forge an empire; I want to lead a nation to self-awareness. More over, I do not like the word "Pan-Arab", which was created by analogy with Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism... I wish to conquer no foreign land in the name of the Arab nation. I want only to assemble the members of this nation who once gathered, will have no need for an additional living space... I am not a conqueror ". When Bensoit -Mechin asked Nasser whether he believed the unity of Egypt and Syria "probable ". He answered: "No, not probable but certain." When the journalist asked about the time, Nasser said: "Perhaps during the course of 1958, perhaps later. It is not up to me to decide ... it is not a question of annexation, but of union. The matter is still premature... I shall wait until the Syrians express desire for it ... I am not a conqueror ... I am a magnet ".¹³

It was Suez that made Nasser a magnet of Arabism by making him the dominant leader in the Arab world .His leadership was not based on any constitutional or institutional foundations. It was based on the consent of the Arab masses through the traditional cultural practice of bay'a (acclamation) when choosing a tribal sheikh or a Caliph with a unique exception, there was not any processions or formalities involved.

The strong reactions of the Arab people to Nasser's Campaign against Baghdad Pact made Nasser more convinced to foster links between Egypt and the Arabs. The Egyptian Constitution of January 1956 identified Egypt as an "Arab" country. The preamble reads: "We the Egyptian People who recognize our existence within the great Arab world, we appreciate our responsibilities and commitment to join forces with our Arab fellows to achieve dignity and glory of Arab nation". The First article stated that "Egypt is an Arab sovereign state, and the Egyptian people are part of the Arab nation". The constitution marked a turning point in Egypt's previous affiliation to a territorial nationalism, a departure from Egyptianism to Arabism. This closer linking of the Egyptians and Arabs was an asset of Nasser's leadership of Arab people.¹⁴

Suez brought Egypt and other Arab countries closer together in two ways. It confirmed Nasser's belief that Arab solidarity was an indispensable part of Egyptian national security, not only for defence against Israel, but also because of the deterrent effort on the West of Arab control of oil-fields and pipelines. There is no evidence that Arab solidarity made him think about its value as a decisive military asset against Israel, because there was not any indication of military confrontation with Israel in his statements or actions other than calling for commitment to UN resolutions regarding Palestine. The sympathies aroused by Suez and the admiration for Nasser's success in handling the crisis had created a new emotional bond between Egyptians and other Arabs, especially in Syria¹⁵.

Nasser has been encouraged by his Suez success to widen the dimensions of his Arab role taking advantage of the weakness and instability of the other Arab states through an active Arab policy. His main target was to strengthen Arab position on international political arena and prevent any attempts to drag the region into the spheres of influence of great Powers.

This active Arab policy heavily burdened Egypt and had negative effects on a developing economy, kept the country involved in series of conflicts with the forces against which the revolution was directed. The remnants of the British colonialism in the East, the Arab governments which collaborate with Western Powers and hinder social development, continued conflict with France over the countries of the Maghrib and commitment to the Algerian revolution, and the political parties and organizations which opposed Nasser's Arab policies and labelled by him as rivals Arab revolution¹⁶.

Nasser lacked a political forum to handle these endless disputes; he had not any political party with an ideological framework similar to the Baath Party or well trained cadres able to tackle daily manoeuvres. He knew that his Nationalist Union was a government made organization to fill the vacuum on the political arena created by the abolition of the liberal parties and ban of Muslim Brethren and communism. It was a fragile front aiming at mobilization of the people's support. In fact, Nasser had no experience of party organization, but was talented in secret organization. Therefore, secret service was his favourite apparatus, he entrusted the Arab Affairs Bureau to do the job, but it was not always doing it properly. All contacts with Arab activists in the Arab world were done by the Bureau officers stationed in the Egyptian embassies. Their activities included encouraging and supporting coups, smuggling arms, funding opposition groups, and sponsoring certain journals. Sometimes, the Bureau was victim of fraud, dealing or supporting wrong persons, but most of the remarkable achievements from Oman to Algeria were theirs. As far as the Arab masses were concerned, Nasser was satisfied with the magnetic power of his charisma. It might explain why his approach to Arabism did not survive his death, leaving all the activities in the hands of secret service deprived many devoted Arab nationalists from getting the advantage of Egypt's support because they refrained from involvement with a secret service apparatus.

In his memories Major Deeb, the director of Arab Affairs Bureau, justified the activities of the Bureau as being essential for the security of those who collaborated with Nasser. But he complained of the "opportunists" who betrayed the confidence bestowed on them¹⁷.

It is worth mentioning that Egypt did not dictate any conditions on the Arab nationalist groups or movements that turned to her for support. Egypt neither imposed her guardianship on them, nor forced them to act within certain limits. Nasser believed that local movements were very much aware of their own field and able to decide what could be better for their own countries. As he mentioned to Bensoit- Me'chim in 1958, he never thought of being an empire builder. His decisions were not based on the services which the Arabs rendered, or even could have rendered, in the most dramatic moments of Suez crisis. His determination was confirmed rather by the risks taken by, and for, the Arabs.

Nasser's Perspective of the Arab Unity:

Arab unity, or making an Arab nation-state out of the Ottoman provinces of the Arab East was the main target of the Arab Nationalist movement before World War I, the Arab revolution of 1916 and Arab support of the Allies were considered by the Arabs as decisive steps towards the creation of the Arab state, but they were rewarded by the Anglo-French plan that fragmented the region into a number of mandated states and the creation of a national home for Jews in Palestine. The emergence of Nasser as unchallenged leader of the Arabs in 1956 was associated with the revival of hope in making the unity dream come true. Nasser was seen by the Arab masses as a new Saladin who could unify the fragmented Arab states into a strong one able to defend the national interests and restore the old glory of the Arabs.

His background as an army officer, and his experience in strategy, and his pragmatism, made him very much aware of the difficulties involved in creating a unified Arab state. But it was risky for his

popularity to let the Arab people down. Considering all these circumstances, Nasser developed his own perspective of Arab unity.

During 1956 and the initiatives for union with Egypt came from Syria, and were inspired by the Baath Party. As a result of Suez, the Baath began increasingly to think of Nasser as the instrument who might be used to realize their concept of Arab unity.

Nasser did not show any interest in the idea of a constitutional merger on confederal lines when it was suggested by President Kuwatly of Syria in February 1957. Egypt was not ready then to appreciate the idea for serious reasons: the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai was about to be completed, the Egyptian economy was weak, and the Egyptians were not prepared to accept such development. In an interview with the Indian journalist Karanjia, (March 1957) Nasser said: "I am not thinking in terms of any federation or confederation for the present I would prefer organizations like the Arab League, for formidable links between Arab states". He had predicated that merger of Egypt and Syria would arouse international storms, and had wide repercussions on the other Arab governments and on the policies of the Great Powers¹⁸.

Finally, Nasser caution did not prevent him from the creation of the UAR as a result of merger. He could not resist for long the Syrian offer based on the serious problems of regional security and domestic instability in Syria. Although the experiment ended in September 1961 by a tragic coup, Nasser kept the title of the United Arab Republic overlooking the bitter feelings of the Egyptians who were eager to restore the name of Egypt. Nasser wanted to show that he was committed to the cause of Arab nationalism. When the revolution of Yemen occurred the year next to the secession of Syria, he could not refrain from supporting it without making proper calculations, just to prove to his foes that the statements of the National Charter of May 21, 1962 were real. To defend the Arab area was "primarily the responsibility of the armed forces of the UAR".

In the National Charter, Nasser elaborated on the way to achieve Arab unity. Historical and natural factors imposed on the responsibility of being the nucleus state of Arabism. But the methods of seeking unity need not, in Nasser's view, repeat those of the nineteenth-century experiments in national unity, such as those of Germany and Italy. He asserted that unity could not be imposed; it should be peaceful in character and unanimously accepted by the people.

Nasser placed some definitions of the stages towards unity under his new concepts. Any Arab government that represents the will and struggle of the people in achievement of national independence is a step towards unity. Any partial unity in the Arab world expressing popular will of two or more of the Arab peoples would be an advanced step towards unity. The UAR must propagate her call for unity, being her bounden duty to support every popular national movement. But it should avoid being involved in local party disputes in any Arab state. Nasser has chosen the social policies of Arab states to judge them. The aim of the UAR, according to the Charter, was to establish a union of cooperation between the nationalist popular progressive movements in the Arab world¹⁹.

If one looks carefully at the "stages" of Arab unity, introduced by Nasser in the National Charter, might find out that it was impossible to be applied to any Arab country at that time. It has been used only to justify Egypt's involvement in Yemen. The war in Yemen had costed Egypt dear in men, money, and international goodwill. It played its part indirectly in the events leading to the disaster of the 1967 war with Israel.

Nasser's perspective of Arab unity, indicated in the Charter could be one of broad sympathy and a means of communication between people who participate in a common drama or share the same cause. In 1967, Emmanuel d'Astier, a French journalist asked Nasser whether he felt more Arab than Egyptian, he answered: "I am Egyptian, and I feel Arab because I am deeply affected by the fortunes and misfortunes, wherever they may occur"²⁰. It shows that

Nasser's Arab commitment has always been within the concept of solidarity and continued to be seen within the approach of national security.

Conclusion:

The emergence of Nasser as unchallenged popular leader of Arab nationalism was primarily based on acts not words. Other Arab leaders had radio stations, and some were better speakers. Nasser's main asset was not the "Voice of Arabs" but the economic and social reforms in Egypt, the Soviet arms deal, the non-alignment, the encouragement and support of national liberation movements, the struggle against Western defence plans for the Middle East, the nationalization of Suez Canal Company and the bold resistance of Suez aggression. Nasser's speeches and actions were concerned with "dignity", with the struggle against national despair and the restoration of people's sense of their own worth after long centuries of humiliation, oppression and self-doubt. This sounded like a mission for the Arabs in general and Egyptians in particular.

In the Arab traditional culture legacy, oppressed and humiliated people who lack the minimum substance and suffer depreciation are expected to be guided by a heaven sent saviour, a Mahdi, or Messiah, to restore missing dignity, to enforce justice, and establish welfare. For the Arab masses, Nasser was that kind of person. Nasser was still the most influential Arab leader despite the failure of the Egyptian-Syrian merger, the costly involvement in the Yemen, the lack of progress towards solving the Palestine problem, and the suspicion and hostility of other Arab governments. He was the most powerful symbol of radical Pan Arab nationalism with its aspirations of complete independence from foreign powers, Arab unity, modernization and greater social justice.

Two events sounded strange to Western observers: the resignation of Nasser in the evening of June 8, 1967 that triggered demonstrations of millions of people in Cairo and major Arab capitals, to be repeated in his funeral (end of September 1970). For

those who are alien to the Arab cultural heritage, it was difficult to understand or even appreciate. Let us have a look on Jean Lacouture's description of both events and his impression about them²¹.

In his comment on people's reaction on Nasser's resignation, he wrote:" These cries, this weeping over the departure of vanquished man, as clearly responsible for disaster as any leader had ever been, a man had badly miscalculated the risks This grief was surely the apotheosis of the special rapport between this leader and the masses, a rapport of personification and incorporation."

Lacouture's wrote about the funeral of Nasser: "..... A strange reconquest .He who had held Egypt like a familiar prey, to remodel her and impart to her the measure and form of his unchecked dream, now found himself on the other side of death, himself seized and devoured by his spell bound people. The personification of power, the identification between the leader and the masses, had led to an epic reincarnation ..."

Such action cannot be explained within the concept of charisma, as it is designed a distinctive feature of a person and a certain quality of relations between a personality and popular masses. The disappearing of such gifted personality terminates his or her relations with the masses. But in the case of Nasser and the Arab masses, it was a relation between a "saint" and his adherents, a relation of faith, a spiritual relation that does not need physical configuration.

This may explain why the demonstrations of 2002 against war in Iraq, in Arab world, were holding Nasser's photos from Mauritania to Bahrain and so did the demonstrations on protest of Israeli aggression in Lebanon (July- August 2006). At the time of national despair and humiliation people look for a saviour, remembering Nasser as a symbol of national salvation.

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