

Paper 2



Free  
Sample

History for the IB Diploma Programme



# Authoritarian Rule (from 1750 CE onwards)

**Pearson**

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Nasser (1952–70)

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## Key concepts:

- ▶ Cause and consequence
- ▶ Continuity and change
- ▶ Significance
- ▶ Perspectives

## Introduction

Before we start looking at Nasser's Egypt, we need to understand some background context. Nasser was not the first to lead a revolution. Egypt has a long history of uprisings. In 1879, Ahmed Urabi led the Urabi revolt of 1879–82 against the government of the time, which was supposedly under the control of the Ottoman Empire (though it was also being controlled by, and was in debt to, European powers). The Ottoman Empire ruled much of North Africa, West Asia, and Southeastern Europe from the late 13th century to the early 20th century. It was broken up after the First World War, and its Arab regions became **mandates** controlled by Britain and France. Egypt's ties to the Ottoman Empire were severed in 1914, however, when Britain declared it a **protectorate**.

The next major mass uprising in Egypt, this time under direct British **occupation**, came with the 1919 Egyptian Revolution. This took place because Egyptian leaders were exiled by the British, who hoped to deny Egyptian independence following the First World War and subsequent **Paris Peace Conference**.

## The Israel–Palestine conflict

One of the reasons for Nasser's success in the 1952 coup was Egypt's role in the Israel–Palestine conflict, which can be traced to Britain's support for the creation of a Jewish homeland in its policy statement of 1917: the Balfour Declaration. When Britain took over the **Palestine Mandate**, it gave followers of Zionism (see Info box) political influence in the mandatory government but denied this to Palestinian Arab people.

This eventually led to violence, culminating in the Arab revolt in Palestine of 1936–39, which Britain violently suppressed. Britain issued a White Paper in 1939 which restricted Jewish immigration and continued to impose restrictions after the Second World War. Zionist agencies combined forces to fight the British. The issue was eventually bought before the newly-created United Nations (UN), which voted in Resolution 181 in 1947 to partition the Palestine Mandate into a Jewish state and an Arab state.

While some Jewish groups and Zionist leaders welcomed this plan, most Palestinian Arabs rejected it, saying it violated the UN's own charter (in particular, its principle of national self-determination) and for various other reasons (population numbers, proposed borders, and resources). Despite making up two-thirds of the population, Palestinian Arabs were allocated just 45 percent of the land of Mandatory Palestine, with fewer fertile areas and economic resources. This resulted in a brutal civil war between Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine over 1947 and 1948, leading to around 300,000 Palestinian Arab people being expelled and becoming refugees.

Israel's declaration of independence on 15 May 1948 led to the First 1948 Arab–Israeli War when the armies of Egypt, Transjordan (later to become Jordan), Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq entered the area, turning this into a war between states. A further 400,000 to 500,000 Palestinian Arab people were expelled. While officially attempting to prevent the expulsion of Palestinian Arab people, countries like Transjordan and Egypt occupied parts of the former mandate, the West Bank, and the newly-created Gaza Strip respectively, which became home to 500,000 to 550,000 refugees. It is therefore important to note that while the Israeli–Palestine conflict and the Arab–Israeli conflict are connected (for example, Nasser's pan-Arabism includes support for the Palestinian cause), they should be viewed as distinct.

## Zionism



Zionism refers to a Jewish nationalist movement that emerged in late 19th-century Europe and that came to advocate the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Ottoman-controlled Palestine. Zionism has encompassed a range of ideological strands, including differing views on whether that homeland should take the form of a sovereign state. Zionism is not comparable with Jewish identity—not all Jewish people are Zionists, and not all Zionists are Jewish. Zionism is widely regarded as the guiding national ideology of the State of Israel, as reflected in the 1948 Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel and in several of Israel's basic laws.

## The Arab world

The 'Arab world' or 'the Arab people' are terms used in this chapter to refer to countries where Arabic is the main language and where people share common cultural and historical ties. Seven of these countries founded the Arab League in 1945 (North Yemen, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Transjordan, Iraq, and Egypt) to 'draw closer the relations between member states and coordinate collaboration between them.' Some have argued that the Arab League was only created because the image of Arab unity helped to legitimize Arab states. The League now includes 22 Arab countries. Palestinians are also part of the Arab world but because of their expulsion in the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, others, like Nasser, have spoken for them.

## Timeline

The timeline below covers events related to authoritarian rule in Egypt from 1918 onwards.

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>1879–82</b>           | Ahmed Urabi leads a revolt, resulting in a British invasion and occupation   |
| <b>1906</b>              | Denshawai Incident   |
| <b>1918 (15 January)</b> | Gamal Abdel Nasser is born in Alexandria, Egypt  |
| <b>1919</b>              | The 1919 Egyptian Revolution   |
| <b>1922</b>              | Britain grants Egypt the Unilateral Declaration of Egyptian Independence   |
| <b>1928</b>              | Muslim Brotherhood founded by Hassan al-Banna  |
| <b>1935 (November)</b>   | Nasser leads a student demonstration against British rule  |
| <b>1936</b>              | Anglo-Egyptian Treaty  |
| <b>1937</b>              | King Farouk I becomes king of Egypt  |
| <b>1937 (March)</b>      | Nasser enters the Royal Military Academy in Cairo  |
| <b>1942</b>              | Abdeen Palace Incident   |
| <b>1945</b>              | Founding of the Arab League in Cairo   |
| <b>1948–49</b>           | First Arab–Israeli War   |
| <b>1952 (January)</b>    | Battle of Ismailia followed by 'Black Saturday'  |
| <b>1952 (July)</b>       | The Free Officers take power from King Farouk I in a coup and establish the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC)  |
| <b>1952 (September)</b>  | First land reform law  |
| <b>1953 (January)</b>    | RCC bans political parties   |
| <b>1953 (June)</b>       | Monarchy abolished, and Egypt is declared a republic; Mohamed Naguib is appointed president and prime minister; Nasser appointed deputy prime minister |
| <b>1953 (July)</b>       | Voice of the Arabs radio station launched  |
| <b>1954 (February)</b>   | Naguib resigns as president but is reinstated  |
| <b>1954 (April)</b>      | Nasser replaces Naguib as prime minister   |
| <b>1954 (19 October)</b> | Nasser signs the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement  |
| <b>1954 (26 October)</b> | Muslim Brotherhood assassination attempt on Nasser   |
| <b>1954 (November)</b>   | Naguib removed from power  |
| <b>1954–62</b>           | Nasser supports Algerian independence in the Algerian War of Independence  |
| <b>1955 (February)</b>   | Israeli raid on Gaza   |
| <b>1955 (April)</b>      | Nasser attends the Bandung Conference in Indonesia   |

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>1956 (January)</b>      | Constitution enacted  |
| <b>1956 (June)</b>         | Nasser becomes president  |
| <b>1956 (July)</b>         | Nasser nationalizes the Suez Canal, prompting the Second Arab-Israeli War, also known as the Suez Crisis                      |
| <b>1958–61</b>             | Nasser leads the United Arab Republic (UAR)   |
| <b>1962 (May)</b>          | Nasser issues the National Charter  |
| <b>1962–70</b>             | Nasser sends Egyptian troops to intervene in the North Yemeni Civil War   |
| <b>1964 (May)</b>          | Palestinian Liberation Organization established in Cairo  |
| <b>1964 (October)</b>      | Nasser hosts the second Non-Aligned Movement summit in Cairo  |
| <b>1967 (June)</b>         | Israel takes over the Sinai from Egypt in the Third Arab-Israeli War; Nasser resigns but due to popular support is reinstated |
| <b>1969 (November)</b>     | Nasser facilitates the Cairo Agreement  |
| <b>1970 (27 September)</b> | Nasser hosts the 1970 Arab League summit  |
| <b>1970 (28 September)</b> | Nasser dies and is succeeded by Anwar Sadat   |

### Inquiry question: Why did authoritarian rule emerge?

Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–70), president of Egypt from 1956 to 1970, is the leader most associated with authoritarian rule in **republican** Egypt. His rule, according to historian Robert Stephens, was characterized by the championing of Arab **nationalism**, an attempt to redistribute wealth, the development of **infrastructure**, the suppression of opposition, and an active foreign policy.

#### Activity 1

ATL Thinking skills, Communication skills

In pairs, discuss what characteristics Nasser shares with other authoritarian rulers? What criteria do you think rulers need to meet to qualify as authoritarian?

One factor that led to the emergence of Nasser's rule was frustration with King Farouk I's reign of Egypt from 1936 to 1952. The Free Officers (a group of 12 Egyptian nationalist officers, including Nasser and Mohamed Naguib, first president of republican Egypt) staged a coup d'état in 1952. The first official statement released by the Free Officers listed the following reasons for the coup: corruption, an unstable government, an ill-equipped army, and the Egyptian defeat in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

#### Conceptual focus: Cause and consequence

Nasser came to power as a *consequence* of a coup d'état carried out by the Free Officers on 22–23 July 1952. The coup had many *causes*, roughly divided into long-term and short-term: the former included a developing awareness of Egypt as a unique nation but under the continuing control of foreign powers (first the Ottomans and Europeans, then the British); the latter included Egypt's weak performance in the First Arab-Israeli War of 1948, compounded by a corrupt political class and successive unstable governments. The coup was overwhelmingly nonviolent, suggesting that Egypt was poised for change.



Figure 4.1 Gamal Abdel Nasser, 1960.

Opposition to foreign rule is significant in the emergence of authoritarian rule and represents a common theme in Egyptian political life. Combined with other, new ideas, a frustrated social class, the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and economic grievances, it was not surprising that Farouk was toppled.

#### Activity 2

ATL Communication skills

The events of 1952 are sometimes referred to as the '1952 Egyptian Revolution'. To what extent could the events of 1952 be described as a 'revolution'? If it is more appropriate to refer to the events as a coup, does this change our understanding of its legacy?

### Line of inquiry: Role of ideas

The Free Officers did not have a clear agenda; however, they did describe six 'guiding principles' in 1951:

- putting an end to the British occupation and defeating its Egyptian supporters
- eliminating inequalities in land ownership
- ending capitalism's domination of political power
- establishing social equality
- forming a strong popular army
- establishing a 'healthy democratic life.'

To better understand the 1952 coup and the government which formed as a result, it is more informative to look at the ideas that shaped Egyptian life, both long-term and short-term. Each idea is connected to a developing awareness and confidence in Egypt as a unique entity belonging to a broader Arab nation. These ideas are nationalism; **pan-Arabism** and **political Islam**.

#### Nationalism

When the Urabi revolt took place in 1879 as a result of European (Franco-British) influence over Egypt, demonstrators chanted the slogan 'Egypt for the Egyptians.' While this sounded like a nationalist slogan, historian Eugene Rogan suggests it was a call for freedom from European and **Circassian** interference rather than independence. Urabi was quick to pledge his loyalty to the Ottoman sultan, the ruling power. He wanted a constitution which would limit European influence on Egypt's political and economic life.

In Egypt, nationalism was associated with Christian communities in the Balkans, like the Greeks, who looked to withdraw from the Ottoman Empire and who were supported by European powers. This changed when the British occupied Egypt in 1882. Nationalism, then, meant returning to being ruled by the Ottomans but with respect for Egyptian customs.

A distinct Egyptian nationalism began to emerge by the end of the 19th century. The movement was strengthened by the British occupation, and by events such as the Denshawai Incident in 1906, which saw harsh punishments given to locals for their alleged involvement in the death of a British officer.



#### Arab-Israeli wars

There were four Arab-Israeli wars, known by different names:

- the First Arab-Israeli War (1948), also known as the 1948 Arab-Israeli War
- the Second Arab-Israeli War (1956), also known as the Suez Crisis or the Tripartite Aggression
- the Third Arab-Israeli War (1967), also known as the June War or the Six-Day War
- the Fourth Arab-Israeli War (1973), also known as the October War or the Yom Kippur War.



#### Denshawai Incident

In Denshawai, a village northwest of Cairo, a shooting-party of British officers was attacked by local **fellahin** ('fellas') who believed that the officers were killing their pigeons. During the ensuing events, one officer died of heatstroke (or concussion, depending on the account), and an Egyptian villager who tried to help him was beaten to death by British troops. In response, the British consul-general, Lord Cromer, ordered severe reprisals. Four villagers were sentenced to death by hanging, and 17 others were flogged or imprisoned, with the punishments carried out in the presence of the local population.

**Labor battalions**

These were groups of fellahin who were conscripted, often by force, to support the British war effort as part of the Egyptian Labor Corps and the Transport Camel Corps. They dug ditches, built roads and railways, loaded supplies, and were often exposed to dangerous conditions. It is estimated that some 100,000 Egyptians served, becoming a symbol of British oppression which would contribute to the 1919 Revolution.

**Activity 3**

ATL Thinking skills

Is it possible that a popular movement can start in response to one event? Consider the Denshawai Incident. Could opposition to British rule have been caused by just one incident, however serious it was, or was it only a spark which lit the tension and anger that had already been building?

The First World War accelerated the call for Egyptian independence. The British declared Egypt a protectorate, taking control over Egypt's foreign affairs and defense, and ending Ottoman control. The hardships endured by Egyptians during the war – where a third of men aged between 17 and 35 were **conscripted** into labor battalions and where buildings, animals, and crops were taken – called into question the nature of the occupation.

Promises made by the British, French, and Americans during the First World War also encouraged Egypt to seek independence. In his Fourteen Points, US President Wilson famously promised the nationalities under Ottoman rule that they could develop independently. At the end of the war the Egyptians, led by Saad Zaghloul, former minister for justice, hoped to present their request for **self-determination** to the Paris Peace Conference. When this was denied and Zaghloul arrested, Egyptians rose up against the British in the 1919 Revolution, the first Arab nationalist movement that had mass support.

**Activity 4**

ATL Research skills, Communication skills

Research Wilson's Fourteen Points. If you were Zaghloul trying to push for Egypt's independence at the Paris Peace Conference, which of Wilson's points would you use? Write a speech outlining your arguments. Why do you think Egypt was not given independence despite Wilson's commitment to self-determination?

The 1919 Revolution also helped women speak out. Huda Sha'arawi (1879–1947) was influential in founding women's organizations (like the Wafdist Women's Central Committee, the first women's political organization in the Arab world) and actively participated in demonstrations against the British occupation.

Egypt was recognized as an independent state by Britain in 1922, but Britain kept the following:

- security of imperial communications
- defense of Egypt from outside aggression
- protection of foreign interests
- continuing control over Sudan.

Stephens calls Egypt's 1922 independence 'false independence.' Judging by repeated attempts by the Egyptian political class to renegotiate its 'independence' and Nasser's actions after his takeover of power, Egyptians were frustrated under continuing British control.

**Activity 5**

ATL Social skills

In groups, write a list of criteria which a state must have to be considered independent. Compare this list with other groups and decide on a class list.



**Figure 4.2** Huda Sha'arawi, circa 1900.



Wafd, the Arabic word for 'delegation,' was the name used to refer to the political party that dominated Egypt until 1952.

**Pan-Arabism**

The Arab Revolt of 1916–18 was the first time pan-Arabism was seriously expressed, in an armed uprising against the Ottoman Empire. The rebels aimed to open another front against the Ottomans in exchange for a British pledge to recognize an independent and unified Arab state. Although the rebels were successful, the British government did not keep their promise.

The illusion of Arab unity was to become clear with the 1948 Arab-Israeli War (see page X), which prompted the Free Officers to take matters into their own hands. Surrounded by the Israeli army in the village of Faluja in southern Palestine, the officers felt let down by their own government. Constantine Zurayk, a Syrian intellectual, described what happened to the Arab people in Palestine as a catastrophe, or **Nakba**.

The agenda for pan-Arabism had been set, which would inspire Nasser's own vision: one which had to take account of Egypt's unique circumstances as the most populous Arab state and its strong sense of identity as a nation state. It would also help explain why pan-Arabism became a guiding principle in his foreign policy.

**Political Islam**

Another important factor in Egyptian life was the role of Islamic **reform**. Like nationalism, this began in the 19th century and was stimulated by Britain's occupation. Some reformers, like Jamal al-Afghani (1838–97), argued that citizens in countries following Islam would benefit from living according to Islamic principles. Other beliefs included:

- adopting constitutions with Islamic principles
- embracing Western science and technology
- improving women's position in society.

**Activity 6**

ATL Research skills

Many of the leading Islamic reformers were educated at Al-Azhar University, one of the most prestigious institutions for Islamic learning in the world. Research how significant this institution is in the development of ideas for change in Egyptian social and political life.

However, it was not until the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 by Egyptian scholar Hassan al-Banna (1906–49) that the role of Islam became a powerful force in Egyptian political life.

Events in Palestine frustrated many Muslim Brotherhood supporters. They opposed the partition of the country as recommended by the UN in 1947, and many of its members volunteered to fight in Palestine even before the start of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

This combination of the ideas of nationalism, pan-Arabism, and political Islam inspired the Free Officers. These ideas were not new, but the circumstances of the early 1950s – in particular in the context of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War – helped to make them popular enough that the Free Officers could act.

**Muslim Brotherhood**



An Islamic organization founded in 1928 by schoolteacher Hassan al-Banna, with its headquarters in Cairo. Al-Banna established the Muslim Brotherhood out of concern over what he saw as the growing influence of Western ideas on Egyptian society. Originally founded as a charitable and social movement, the organization expanded over time into a significant political and social force in Egypt. It was banned by the government in 1948 and again under President Gamal Abdel Nasser following an assassination attempt against him in October 1954.

**Capitulations**



These were contracts between the Ottoman Empire and Christian powers to encourage European investment in return for privileges enjoyed by European residents in the Ottoman Empire. Capitulations were controversial, as they meant that residents from foreign countries were above the law.

Fedayeen is an Arabic term meaning 'those who sacrifice themselves.' It is also used to describe Armenian, Iranian, and Palestinian fighters seeking independence.



**Activity 7**

ATL Thinking skills

Complete the following table on the role of ideas.

|                 | Reasons for | Main advocates | Impact of |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|-----------|
| Nationalism     |             |                |           |
| Pan-Arabism     |             |                |           |
| Political Islam |             |                |           |



**Checkpoint**

What role did ideas play in influencing the actions of political groups in Egypt during the first half of the 20th century?

**Line of inquiry: Social factors**

Social factors, in particular anti-British sentiment and the perceived corruption of the political class, helped to explain why the coup against the **monarchy** was popular. There was no serious attempt to take back control in a counter-revolution against the Free Officers.

**Anti-British sentiment**

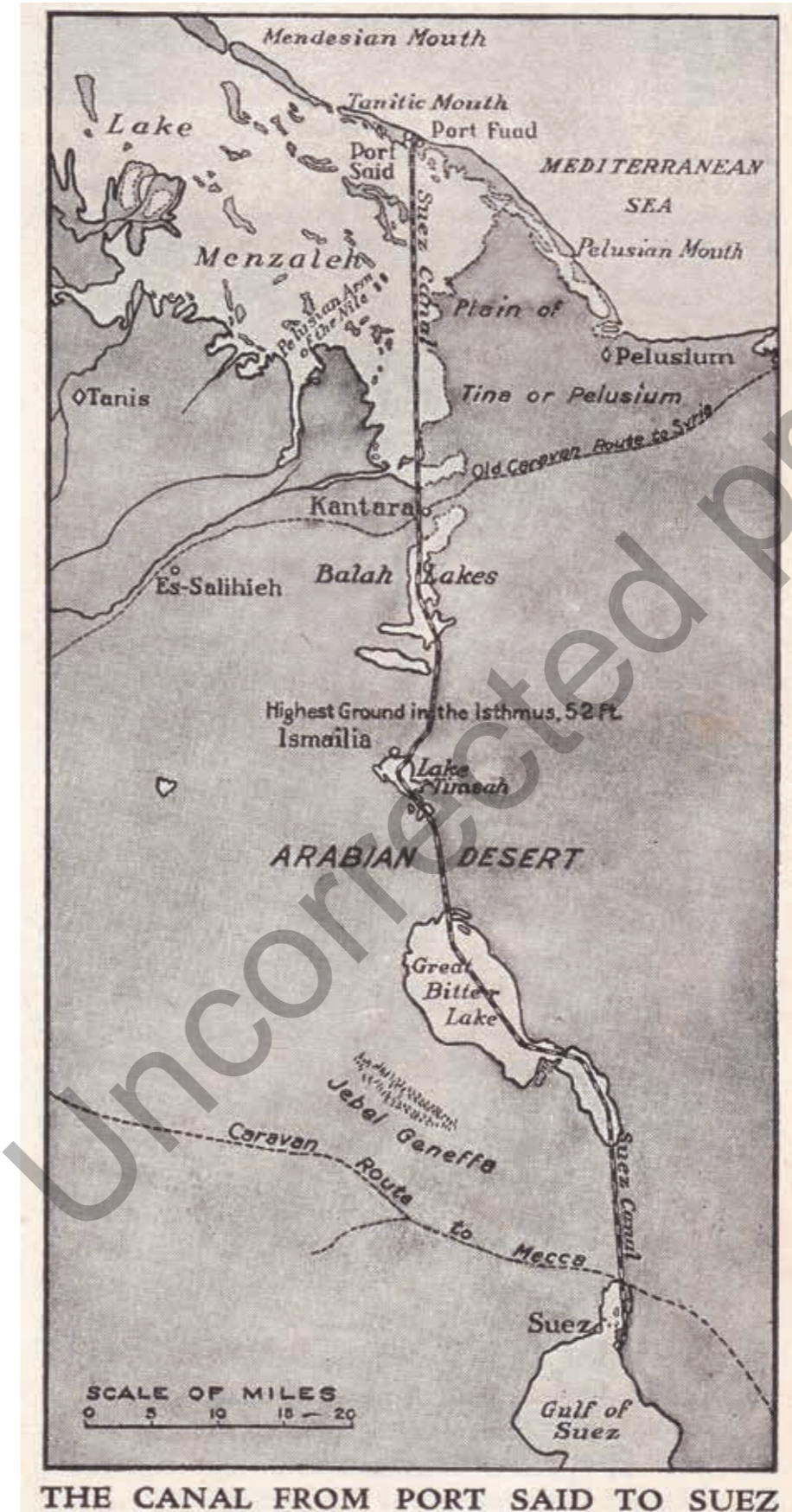
Anti-British sentiment reached its peak in early 1952. Since the First World War, Egyptian nationalists had attempted to gain independence from the British. Following Britain's declaration of Egyptian independence in 1922, agreements were made to limit British control:

- The Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 required the British to withdraw its forces, except those stationed at the Suez Canal, for a period of 20 years.
- The 1937 Montreux Convention cancelled the capitulations.

Elections in 1950 resulted in a victory for the Wafd, which attempted to renegotiate the terms of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. When the talks failed, the government cancelled the terms of the treaty, which the British rejected – the Suez Canal was too important to the British to give up. This was significant for two reasons:

1. It was the first time that the government openly sympathized with nationalists who would use violence to achieve their aims.
2. It led to the increasing popularity of the fedayeen – fighters who were ready to sacrifice themselves to see the end of British control.

On 25 January 1952, the British attacked an Egyptian police station in Ismailia after its occupants refused to surrender, resulting in 46 Egyptian officers being killed and 72 wounded, in what became known as the Battle of Ismailia. But it was the events of the next day, Black Saturday, which showed how unpopular the British presence had become. Demonstrations in Cairo quickly led to violence in which foreigners were killed and much of the wealthiest areas burned. The king hesitated but eventually ordered the army to take control. The events of Black Saturday reflected both frustration with foreign influence in Egypt and the weakness of the monarchy – lessons which the Free Officers learned.



**Figure 4.3** Map of the Suez Canal, 1930s. The Suez Canal is the quickest sea route between Europe and Asia.

### Corruption of the political class

Black Saturday acted as a trigger for the coup which took place six months later. Historian Eugene Rogan (from his *The Arabs: A History*) claims that until Black Saturday the Free Officers had not decided on toppling the government but on challenging imperialism. After Black Saturday they openly discussed overthrowing King Farouk and set the date for the coup, November 1952 – but the coup took place on 23 July. In December 1951, a vote was taken to elect Mohamed Naguib as the president of the Egyptian Officers' Club. But in July 1952, King Farouk decided that he would reverse this decision. The king's reversal of the Egyptian Officers' Club's decision to appoint Naguib not only demonstrated the volatility of political decision-making on the eve of the 1952 revolution, but also suggested growing royal suspicion and highlighted the precarious position of the Free Officers, helping to explain why they decided to act sooner.



#### Checkpoint

Write two paragraphs on the following and say how these contributed to the 1952 coup:

- frustration with the political class
- anti-British sentiment.

Which do you think had a greater impact on the coup?

### Line of inquiry: Role of conflict

As suggested by the first official statement released by the Free Officers, the role of conflict – especially the 1948 Arab-Israeli War – was a significant cause of the coup. Other conflicts (the long-standing conflict with Britain over its continuing influence in Egypt, and the conflict between Egyptian elites – symbolized by the king – and the people) were a reminder of the government's weakness. There is little doubt that the role of conflict contributed to the Free Officer coup, but could it have taken place without other factors?

#### 1948 Arab-Israeli War

The 1948 Arab-Israeli War led to a military coup in Syria in March 1949, a guerrilla campaign to overthrow the government in Lebanon in July 1949, and the assassination of King Abdullah of Jordan in July 1951. The war also led to political chaos in Egypt.

It is not because Egypt lost territory in the war. In fact, it had gained the Gaza Strip from what was formerly Mandatory Palestine (Jordan had gained the West Bank). Yet, Egypt and other Arab League states were shaken by the war. Three factors played a role in showing the Free Officers that promises made by their leaders were empty:

1. Arab League forces were weaker than Israeli forces: while Egypt sent the largest force (10,000 troops), the combined forces of the Arab states (25,000 in May 1948) fought against a larger and better equipped Israeli army of 35,000 in May 1948, 65,000 in July, and 96,000 in December.
2. Arab League states lacked a unified goal: while some fought to preserve Arab land (battalions of volunteers sent by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood for example), others, like Jordan, hoped to secure territory (King Abdullah signing a non-aggression pact with the future Israeli prime minister Golda Meir in November 1947).