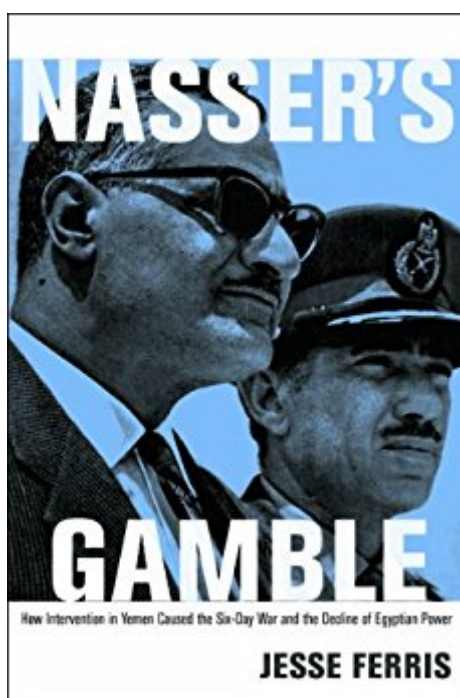


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Nasser's Gamble: How Intervention In Yemen Caused The Six-Day War And The Decline Of Egyptian Power



Synopsis

Nasser's Gamble draws on declassified documents from six countries and original material in Arabic, German, Hebrew, and Russian to present a new understanding of Egypt's disastrous five-year intervention in Yemen, which Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser later referred to as "my Vietnam." Jesse Ferris argues that Nasser's attempt to export the Egyptian revolution to Yemen played a decisive role in destabilizing Egypt's relations with the Cold War powers, tarnishing its image in the Arab world, ruining its economy, and driving its rulers to instigate the fatal series of missteps that led to war with Israel in 1967. Viewing the Six Day War as an unintended consequence of the Saudi-Egyptian struggle over Yemen, Ferris demonstrates that the most important Cold War conflict in the Middle East was not the clash between Israel and its neighbors. It was the inter-Arab struggle between monarchies and republics over power and legitimacy. Egypt's defeat in the "Arab Cold War" set the stage for the rise of Saudi Arabia and political Islam. Bold and provocative, Nasser's Gamble brings to life a critical phase in the modern history of the Middle East. Its compelling analysis of Egypt's fall from power in the 1960s offers new insights into the decline of Arab nationalism, exposing the deep historical roots of the Arab Spring of 2011.

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Customer Reviews

In 1962 Egyptian troops invaded Yemen to support a Republican coup against the monarch of the country. Over the next five years some 150,000 Egyptian troops, along with tens of thousands of Soviet advisers, rotated in and out of the country. At its peak, Egyptian military strength in Yemen reached 70,000 soldiers. Yet the Yemeni Royalists, backed by Saudi Arabia, were able to inflict a series of stunning defeats on Egyptian President Nasser's men and drive them out of the country. Author Jesse Ferris examines whether or not Egyptian involvement in Yemen undermined the readiness of the Egyptian armed forces in their 1967 war with Israel, leading to their defeat. His book is wonderfully researched, brilliantly written, and an admirable read.

This book is written in a very witty style, it should be read by all people who want to understand the decline of Egypt in Nasser's hands. I strongly recommend it

Author Ferris' book about Nasser's Egypt and its futile adventure in Yemen is an excellent history of a conflict that pitted the Arab Pan-nationalism of Nasser with the conservative reactionary regimes of the Middle East. Nasser's precipitous decision to send a small token force to Yemen in order to prop up the revolutionary regime that toppled the Imamate led inevitably to larger and deeper military, economic and political intervention by Egypt in a feudal country governed by tribal politics. This in turn prompted the oil rich neighbors of Yemen, the Saudis, to provide arms and supplies to the dethroned "Royalist" forces that fought the erstwhile revolutionaries. In turn, this brought the Soviets and Americans into play, despite Yemen itself being below both superpowers' radars. Nasser wound up losing American food aid while relying more and more on Soviet assistance, putting him in a corner where his prestige was being undermined in the Arab world and at home by a protracted war of counterinsurgent attrition. The author states the case that this erosion of image compelled Nasser to make bold and provocative moves, such as occupying the Sinai and closing the Gulf of Aqaba, that in turn prompted the Israelis to liquidate the demoralized and overstretched Egyptian army in the Six Day War of 1967. This devastating defeat in effect wrecked pan-Arabism, sidelined Egypt as a player in the Middle East, and made Saudi Arabia the de facto Arab leader. This is an excellent study of Third World politics in the Cold War that for some reason has been neglected. Perhaps if the Russians in 1979 or the Americans in 2001 had absorbed the lessons of a war Nasser described as "his Vietnam" the embarrassment of defeat by ragtag Muslim insurgents could have been avoided. But probably not.

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