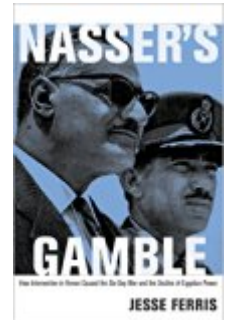


**Jesse Ferris.** *Nasser's Gamble: How Intervention in Yemen Caused the Six-Day War and the Decline of Egyptian Power.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013. x + 342 pp. \$45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-691-15514-2.



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**Commissioned by** Margaret Sankey (Air University)

The Six-Day War of 1967 and subsequent events pushed Egypt's support of the rebellion against the monarchy in Yemen into the background. This is unfortunate because history is very complex; individual events must be examined within light of all the interrelationships involved. Jesse Ferris does this for the Egyptian involvement in the revolt in Yemen. In doing so he shows how several historical processes influenced each other. These include not only the revolt in Yemen, but also general international relations among states in the Middle East, and two "cold wars." One cold war is the well-known one between the communist world and Western nations; the other, the cold war between Nasser and his rivals in the Arab Middle East. The latter is well described in Malcolm Kerr's *The Arab Cold War: Gamal Abd al-Nasr and His Rivals, 1958-1970* (1971), as well as other works. The "other" cold war is the subject of many books and articles. Less attention has been turned to events in what was then North Yemen, where the revolt oc-

curred, and British-run Aden, now part of a united Yemen.

*Nasser's Gamble* is a good attempt to pull all of these complexities together. Ferris begins with an introduction that discusses the origins of Nasser's vision and how that fit into the situation in the Middle East in the 1950s. This includes his expansion of "Arab socialism" to include Syria, while emphasizing that he sought a third alternative to dependence on either of the two competing power alliances in the international Cold War. Ferris also introduces the reader to the "Arab Cold War" between Nasser, his allies, and the monarchs of the Middle East. The reader next moves from Syria's breaking of ties with Egypt in 1961 to Nasser's decision to support the republicans in revolt against the monarch in Yemen in 1962. Next, Ferris describes the support the USSR gave to Egypt in Yemen, coincidentally at the same time as the Cuban missile crisis in the international Cold War. Following this was deterioration of relations between Egypt and the United States, which had been good since Eisenhower forced Britain,

France, and Israel to back off after the 1956 attempt to return control of the Suez Canal to Western powers, accompanied by Israeli occupation of the Sinai Peninsula. Next is a chapter that fleshes this out in the 1960s as the United States moved closer to support of Israel and became alarmed about the revolt in Yemen, which it feared might herald problems for the Saudi monarchy, an increasingly important nation because of its oil wealth. U.S. aid to Egypt stopped, which drove Egypt into the arms of the USSR for support, described in a separate chapter. This brought the international Cold War into play in the Middle East in addition to the Arab Cold War and the Arab-Israeli conflict, which was already a volatile situation. The author then moves to Egypt's involvement in Yemen, its impact on domestic affairs, and the expense and casualties that led Nasser to declare that Yemen was Egypt's Vietnam, a no-win situation. Ferris follows this with an analysis of the negotiations between Egypt, who sided with the revolution in Yemen, and Saudi Arabia, who supported the return of the monarchy. Essential here were the efforts by both sides in the Arab Cold War to connect the war in Yemen to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The concluding chapter asserts that these convoluted events led to and actually caused the Six-Day War that was so disastrous to Egypt.

Ferris's book is an expansion of his PhD dissertation at Princeton, very well written, based on credible sources not formerly available, and well documented. His bibliographical notes and extensive list of sources will lead readers to plenty of materials for further investigation. A native of Israel and veteran of the Israeli Defense Forces, Ferris is now vice president of the Israel Democracy Institute, where he puts to use his experience as a historian of the Middle East. He states that much of his work is "revisionist" in nature, which I interpret as the normal process of historical study, rather than the commonly held assumption that "revisionists" seek to sweep disturbing historical events such as the Holocaust under the rug. With

this in mind, Jesse Ferris's study of the impact of the Egyptian involvement in Yemen on other world events is valuable, subject to continued "revision." That is what professional historians do.

The fact that Yemen is again in the news because of U.S. use of drones against Islamic terrorists should make this book of particular interest. How this will affect the future of a united Yemen that includes British Aden perched on one side of the entry of the Red Sea into the Indian Ocean, will be important to international trade routes.

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