



CEDEJ Tuesday Seminar  
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## Egypt's Trading Giant: El-Nasr Trading Company in West Africa, 1958-1971

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During the late 1950s, Egypt played a significant role in supporting many African liberation movements seeking independence. Many studies have

contributed to reveal and assess Egypt's role in Africa from political perspectives (Mazrui, 1964; Ismael, 1968; Akinsanya, 1980; Yousuf, 1985; Tignor, 1987; Burton, 2019; Megahed, 2022). However, little is known so far about the economic aspects. This paper investigates the role of one of Egypt's biggest ventures which aimed at establishing economic ties with the newly independent African countries. El-Nasr company was established in 1958 with private capital (estimated over 75,000\$). The company was subsequently nationalized in 1961 and since then started to adopt the clear objective of exporting manufactured goods to external markets, particularly in Africa, and in return, importing main commodities. Within the first half of the 1960s, the company succeeded to establish more than 17 offices in African countries, mainly in West Africa. Mohamed Ghanem, the first director of this state-owned company, commented in his memoirs on the efforts paid by El-Nasr company, "it was mainly constructed to replace the dominating colonial powers with intra-African trade".

By focusing of the role of El-Nasr company, the paper, thus, addresses one of the overlooked aspects of African anti-

colonial resistance: the attempts through which African countries have tried to establish inter-trade linkages. Although the company witnessed challenges and some flaws in the application of trade exchanges between Egypt and other newly independent African countries, it showed success in exports and imports in some commodities and goods, such as textile trade with Nigeria and cocoa beans imports from Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

The paper draws its insights from newly established datasets of the total exports and imports between Egypt and different countries in West Africa. Thereby, it has relied on new archival materials. Part of it has been conducted at the African Département- Egyptian National Archives (*Dar al-Kutub al-Qawmiyya al-Miṣriyya*), the National Archives of the United Kingdom, the annual reports of El-Nasr Trading Company and various archives from African Countries.

Dr Mostafa Abdelaal is an Assistant Professor of African History at the Faculty of African Postgraduate Studies, Cairo University, and an AfOx Visiting Fellow at the African Studies Centre, University of Oxford. He also co-coordinates the Economic History Working Group of the Young Scholars Initiative (YSI-INET).

Dr Abdelaal holds a PhD in Economic History from the University of Cambridge, where his dissertation examined state resources and modern manufacturing in Zambia. His research explores the intersections of industrial and environmental history in Africa, with a particular focus on the socio-economic transformations driven by extractive industries and infrastructural development.

He is currently working in developing his PhD into a book, provisionally titled: *“Extractive Industries, Modern Manufacturing, and the Unsettled Communities in Zambia, 1924–1992,”* investigates the historical challenges of industrial diversification and community adaptation in resource-dependent regions. More broadly, his scholarship engages with questions of economic independence, extractive economies, and resource nationalization in Africa and the Global South, linking local experiences to global narratives of industrialization and ecological change. He is the Managing Editor of *Ifriqiyyāt* and has extensive experience as a researcher and editor.