



MILITARY CAMPAIGNS AND DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY OF EGYPT IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE ERA OF THE 18TH DYNASTY

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Abstract

The article highlights the 18th Dynasty, the beginning of the New Kingdom. Egypt was a fragmented state and in decline, but with the rise of the 18th Dynasty, Egypt was able to restore its unity and become the most powerful nation. The pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty pursued an active foreign policy in the Middle East, as the Middle East was a strategically important region due to its trade routes for Egypt.

Keywords: New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, diplomacy, Middle East, Ancient Egypt, military campaigns, Palestine, Syria

INTRODUCTION

The unification of the country under Ahmose I opened a new chapter in the history of the Neo-Egyptian Kingdom, marked not only by internal consolidation but also by active expansion beyond its traditional borders. The recapture of control over the entire country after the expulsion of the Hyksos marked the beginning of the New Kingdom, when Egypt, for the first time in its history, emerged as a dominant power in the Near East.

The strengthening of political power and the concentration of resources allowed Egyptian rulers to develop a large-scale foreign policy aimed at securing their borders and expanding their spheres of influence. Military campaigns in Canaan and Syria were strategically important, as they not only blocked potential threats from neighboring countries but also gave Egypt control over key resources and trade routes. The conquered territories became a source of wealth, including



through tribute sent to Egypt, which strengthened the state's economic base and allowed it to support a large army and grandiose construction projects. Along with military might, Egypt actively utilized diplomatic tools, turning neighboring powers into allies or client states. Dynastic marriages, the exchange of gifts, and the signing of peace treaties strengthened the position of Egyptian pharaohs as the supreme arbiters of international affairs. At the same time, Egypt sought not only political but also cultural dominance. Temples were built in conquered regions, the cult of Egyptian gods was promoted, and elements of Egyptian art and writing were disseminated, shaping the perception of Egypt as the center of the civilized world [4].

The New Kingdom marked the era when Egypt first recognized itself as a force capable of determining order beyond the Nile Valley. The restoration of the country's unity provided not only internal stability but also the opportunity for systemic influence on international processes. Egypt's foreign policy during this period reflected not only a desire for security but also an ambition to become an undisputed hegemon, whose influence was felt from the Nubian Desert to the eastern Mediterranean.

METHODOLOGY

In studying the foreign policy of the New Egyptian state, a combination of general scientific and historical methods was employed to fully elucidate the foreign policy processes of a unified Egypt during the New Kingdom. The use of multiple approaches was necessitated by the need to consider the problem from both a temporal and structural perspective, as well as to consider the specific nature of the source material.

Primarily, a historical-genetic method was employed, allowing us to trace the dynamics of the formation of a unified Egyptian state from the period of Hyksos rule to the final consolidation of power in the Near East during the New Kingdom. This method allowed us to identify cause-and-effect relationships between individual events and processes: the struggle against the Hyksos contributed to the transformation of the Egyptian army into an organized and disciplined force, forged in lengthy campaigns and sieges, where the pharaoh simultaneously served as supreme commander-in-chief and head of state [2]. The Egyptians realized that



war could be a source of significant material wealth, sparking a desire for further conquest that persisted for centuries.

A chronological method was used to organize this material. It allowed us to examine the foreign policy activities of the pharaohs of the 18th dynasties in a strict time sequence, allowing us to identify key stages: resistance to the Hyksos, military campaigns in the Middle East, and the subsequent strengthening of Egypt.

Furthermore, we used a historical-typological method, which allowed us to classify the military strength of the Neo-Egyptian state according to specific characteristics: the introduction of horses into Egyptian warfare by the Hyksos was an important stage in the evolution of the Egyptian army. Although a fully-fledged cavalry in the modern sense did not exist at that time, the use of chariots was a revolutionary achievement. Egyptian artisans quickly mastered the technology of their manufacture, and soon the pharaohs' stables were stocked with thousands of high-quality horses brought from Asia. This provided Egyptian troops with a significant advantage on the battlefield [6].

The ideographic (narrative) method was of particular importance in the study of the foreign policy of the Neo-Egyptian state. The result of this research was a detailed examination of the introduction of ancient Egyptian foreign policy by such pharaohs of the 18th dynasty as Ahmose I, Amenhotep I, Thutmose I, Thutmose II, Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV, and Amenhotep III [3].

RESULTS

The study revealed a number of patterns characterizing the foreign policy of the New Egyptian Empire.

The key role of Ahmose I in the expulsion of the Hyksos and the formation of the foundations of the New Kingdom has been revealed. Ahmose I was the founder of the 18th Dynasty of Ancient Egypt and played a key role in the expulsion of the Hyksos, which marked the beginning of the New Kingdom. Although Ahmose's primary military activity focused on combating the Hyksos and unifying Egypt, he also conducted military campaigns in the Middle East. One example is the campaign in Palestine and the capture of Sharukhen: the Hyksos



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retreated from Egypt to what is now the southern Levant, where they fortified themselves in the city of Sharukhen (possibly in the area of modern-day Gaza). The pharaoh did not stop at expelling the Hyksos from Egypt. He pursued them into Palestine and laid siege to the city of Sharukhen. The siege lasted three years, and after its capture, Ahmose I finally destroyed the Hyksos influence in the region. This success strengthened Egypt's position in the Middle East.

Specifically, after defeating the Hyksos, Ahmose I took a number of measures to consolidate Egyptian influence in the Levant region (Palestine and Syria). He sought to regain control of the important trade routes linking Egypt with Asia and establish vassal relations with the rulers of local city-states. Ahmose I's military actions laid the foundation for the subsequent campaigns of conquest by the pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty, which transformed Egypt into a powerful empire. It can be concluded that during Ahmose I's wars in Asia, all the small states of Palestine, Phoenicia, and Syria, previously under Hyksos rule, recognized Egyptian supremacy after his victory [1]. It has been shown that Amenhotep I's major task was strengthening Egypt's internal borders following the major conquests of Ahmose I. He pursued a policy of power consolidation and administrative reforms to ensure stability in the country and the territories under his control.

Amenhotep I's military actions were part of Egypt's long-term strategy to control the Near East and maintain regional dominance, which continued throughout the New Kingdom [4].

The significance of the campaigns of Thutmose I, the first Egyptian ruler to reach the Euphrates, has been established. Thutmose I was the third pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty of the New Kingdom and the first to conduct major military campaigns that significantly expanded Egyptian influence in the Near East. His military campaigns marked the beginning of a period of active Egyptian expansion, which continued under his successors.

Egypt sought to establish and strengthen its influence in the Levant (Palestine and Syria), where important trade routes existed. Before the reign of Thutmose I, Egypt already controlled some territories in the region, but its authority was incomplete, and local rulers could resist Egyptian influence.



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Thutmose I led a campaign into Syria, crossed the Euphrates River, and reached its headwaters. According to inscriptions, he was the first Egyptian pharaoh to reach the Euphrates, marking an important milestone in the history of Egyptian expansion into the Middle East [8].

Egypt's main adversaries in the north were the Mitanni, rulers of a large state in Mesopotamia. Although Egyptian sources do not provide details of specific battles with the Mitanni, it is known that Thutmose I waged military action against them. His campaign was a demonstration of Egyptian power and cemented Egyptian influence in the Levant.

Furthermore, local rulers in the Eastern Mediterranean often favored Mitanni over Egyptian domination. Unlike Egypt, which possessed a significant administrative apparatus and demanded large tribute from conquered territories, Mitanni and later the Hittite kingdom were less demanding in this regard. Consequently, at the end of the 16th century BC, Thutmose I found himself engaged in a difficult war against the Mitanni king Sutarna I, who sought to reclaim northern Syria. Military action took place directly along the Euphrates River, highlighting the strategic importance of this region for control of key trade and communication routes in the Eastern Mediterranean. [9]

It has been determined that Thutmose II's military campaigns were primarily demonstrative and stabilizing. Despite the limited sources, it has been established that his actions contributed to the preservation of Egyptian influence in Canaan and Syria and prevented the weakening of Egypt's position in the region.

It has been established that the reign of Thutmose III marked a turning point in the history of Egyptian foreign policy. Thutmose III was one of the most famous and successful pharaohs of Ancient Egypt, nicknamed the "Napoleon of Egypt" for his numerous and brilliant military campaigns. His reign was marked by Egypt's extensive expansion into the Middle East, making the country the most powerful power in the region at the time.

The Battle of Megiddo was a key engagement during the reign of Thutmose III. He personally led the Egyptian army and made the bold decision to advance through a narrow gorge, giving him a strategic advantage. The Egyptians defeated the coalition and laid siege to the city of Megiddo, which soon surrendered. As a



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result, Egyptian power in Syria and Palestine was strengthened, with control over key trade routes.

His subsequent campaign against Mitanni should also be mentioned. After his victory at Megiddo, Thutmose III undertook approximately 16 more campaigns in the Levant and Syria, gradually advancing further north. During his campaigns, he encountered the powerful Mitanni state, one of Egypt's main rivals in the region. Thutmose III crossed the Euphrates, invading Mitanni territory, defeating its forces, and establishing Egyptian influence in northern Syria.

An important result of these campaigns was the creation of a network of Egyptian vassals and allies, which ensured stability in the conquered territories.

Thutmose III established garrisons and controlled important fortresses and cities, such as Byblos and Tyre, which were key to his control of the eastern Mediterranean.

During his campaigns, the Egyptian army captured much booty, including both valuable goods and prisoners, who bolstered the Egyptian army and economy. Through his campaigns, Thutmose III ensured an influx of wealth into Egypt. Trophies, tribute, and goods from conquered territories strengthened the economy and supported the prosperity of his state. Under his reign, Egypt became the region's commercial and military hub, controlling key routes through the Levant and Syria.

Thutmose III created the largest empire in ancient Egyptian history, extending Egyptian influence as far north as the Euphrates River. He successfully ensured stability in the Middle East for several decades. Thutmose III established a network of tributary rulers who paid tribute to Egypt and acknowledged its authority, ensuring control over a vast territory with minimal military expenditure.

Thutmose III was a brilliant strategist and military leader; his campaigns in the Middle East became an important part of Egyptian history and made Egypt the dominant power in the region for many years.

It is shown that Amenhotep II continued to maintain power in Asia primarily by suppressing rebellions and intimidating opponents, using harsh punitive measures. His campaigns strengthened Egypt's position but did not result in significant territorial gains. It has been established that under Thutmose IV, the



emphasis shifted from a policy of conquest to diplomatic methods. His reign was marked by the beginning of the normalization of relations with Mitanni, including through dynastic marriages, which became a new tool for consolidating Egyptian influence [9].

It has been revealed that Amenhotep III finally established the diplomatic vector of Egyptian foreign policy. His use of marriage alliances, international correspondence, and a network of residents allowed Egypt to maintain a dominant position in the Eastern Mediterranean without the need for large-scale military campaigns.

DISCUSSION

The study demonstrates that the military campaigns and foreign policy activities of the first pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty played a decisive role in the emergence of Egypt as a great power. The analysis reveals that the struggle against the Hyksos became the starting point for large-scale transformations in the military and public administration, which contributed to Egypt's transformation into an empire [1].

These findings suggest that military expansion in its early stages was primarily reactive, aimed at eliminating threats and ensuring border security. However, under Thutmose III, it evolved into a systematic policy of conquest, which not only expanded Egypt's territorial boundaries but also ensured an influx of material and cultural resources. Thus, the war against the Hyksos became the impetus for the development of a new model of military organization, distinguished by discipline, constant training, and a clear hierarchy.

The analysis also revealed that, beginning in the mid-18th Dynasty, particularly under Amenhotep III, military pressure gradually gave way to diplomacy. Egypt actively utilized international marriages, correspondence with Near Eastern rulers, and a system of treaties, indicating a shift from brute force to more flexible and long-term instruments of influence. This approach not only strengthened Egypt's position but also allowed it to act as an arbiter in the region's international relations [5].

A comparison with other ancient Eastern states, such as Mitanni and the Hittite Empire, confirms that it was the combination of military might and sophisticated



diplomacy that ensured Egypt's long-term leadership. This provides grounds for viewing the 18th Dynasty as the moment of the formation of a new type of statehood—an empire based not only on conquest but also on international alliances, vassalage, and cultural expansion [7].

Thus, a discussion of the results allows us to conclude that the reign of the 18th Dynasty pharaohs marked a turning point in Egyptian history, defining its place within the system of Near Eastern powers and laying the foundations for imperial development that remained significant throughout the following centuries.

CONCLUSION

The study found that the military campaigns of the New Kingdom pharaohs in the Middle East were driven by a combination of strategic, economic, and political factors. First, control of Syria and Palestine provided Egypt with access to essential resources and vital trade routes. Second, conquests allowed for the creation of buffer zones and guaranteed the state's security from external threats. Third, military victories contributed to the strengthening of the pharaohs' power, their legitimization, and the sacralization of the ruler's image. Finally, the creation of a system of vassal states ensured economic benefits and long-term political influence for Egypt in the region.

The study showed that maintaining stable relations with neighboring states, such as the Mitanni Kingdom to the north, was of strategic importance for Ancient Egypt. To strengthen these ties, Egypt actively utilized diplomatic channels, dynastic marriages, and trade. Stability and peace in the region became especially important against the backdrop of the growing influence of new imperialist powers such as Assyria and Babylonia, whose influence was growing in the Middle Eastern political arena.

We examined one of the most famous pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty, Thutmose III, who played a significant role in the foreign policy of the Neo-Egyptian Empire. He conducted a series of successful military campaigns, expanding Egypt's territory and establishing control over a large part of the Nile region. In addition to military action, Egypt's foreign policy also included various diplomatic activities and cultural exchanges. Egypt maintained close relations



with the ancient states of Mesopotamia, Phoenicia, and Crete, exchanging goods, ideas, and cultural achievements.

Thus, Egypt's policy of conquest not only contributed to the strengthening of its military and economic might but also became a crucial factor in its emergence as one of the leading powers of the Ancient East.

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