

## ANCIENT HISTORY: EGYPT

### To what extent was Ramesses II's foreign policy significant?

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Ramesses II's foreign policy was significant to a certain extent. His role in the Battle of Kadesh did not benefit Egypt dramatically and resulted in several vassal states to oppose Egyptians rule during the years after. However, his diplomatic marriage with the Hittite princess cemented the significant treaty which contributed to Egypt's continual peace concerning issues north. Despite this, his representation of himself in propaganda as an effective warrior concerning foreign policy was not accurate.

Ramesses II's foreign policy was significant to a certain extent as his role in the Battle of Kadesh did not generate many successes for Egypt due to his naivety in military strategy. Ramesses II's aim in the campaign demonstrated his understanding of the importance of Kadesh in enhancing Egypt's economic position. However, his lack of military intelligence and strategy significantly contributed to the non-victorious result of the battle. By believing Hittite spies and allowing his army divisions to be separated, Ramesses II led himself into a vulnerable position, indicative of his lack of military intelligence. Despite this, Ramesses II inaccurately represents the battle all over temple walls at Abu Simbel, Karnak, Luxor and the Ramesseum as an enormous success. The military mistakes made in the battle were covered by his use of propaganda which represented him as a strong warrior pharaoh and firmly linked him with the god Amun. However, the Battle of Kadesh did not result in Egypt conquering the Hittites or gaining control of Kadesh but instead resulted in the Egyptian retreat followed by the Hittites which led to a decrease in Egyptian military strength and their image as a dominant and superior nation was weakened. Although his campaign demonstrated intelligent aims and his ability to present failure as victorious, it marked a severe failure to Egypt's military strength and his role as a military tactician. Therefore, Ramesses II's foreign policy was significant to a certain extent.

The failure to show dominance in the Battle of Kadesh demonstrates the certain extent of the success of Ramesses II's foreign policy as it resulted in Egypt's vassal states and the states near Palestine to revolt. Although Ramesses II could present the Battle of Kadesh as a victory in Egypt, he still had to take action against the states which had seen Egypt's weakness and began to revolt and refuse to pay tribute. Although this was a result of weakness in his foreign policy, Ramesses was able to represent his campaigns over these states such as Tunip and Dapur in years 8-10 as easy victories as he is depicted in reliefs of the campaign at Dapur wearing no protective armour to emphasise his link with Amun as his protector. Through these campaigns, Ramesses re-took states which had been lost and ensured that tribute was paid to reaffirm his power over other nations and according to Hayes, despite his weaknesses, Egypt prospered as successfully as under the great pharaohs. Ramesses II's success in reaffirming Egypt's power over vassal states allowed him to fulfil his role of the warrior pharaoh such as his description in the Hymn to Ramesses in which he is described with superhuman qualities. Despite the significant mistakes made by Ramesses II in his early career he managed to reaffirm his power and dominance over vassal states through the development of his military and tactical intelligence and according to J.A. Wilson, although he showed complete lack of efficiency as a general in Kadesh, he was courageous in managing to lead Egypt back into good order. Therefore, Ramesses II's foreign policy was significant to a certain extent.

The diplomatic marriage and treaty between the Egyptians and the Hittites was very significant as it marked Ramesses II's shift from a military focus to diplomacy and contributed to the peace between the two nations for the remainder of his reign. Despite Ramesses II's repeated attempts to gain control of Hittite land through his many campaigns, Kitchen believes that he eventually realised that he would not be able to make any major achievements. Ramesses II's agreement was also due to the rising power in Syria which would rival both the Hittites and the Egyptians. The diplomatic marriage between Ramesses II and the Hittite princess, Maatnefrure, was vital to cement the relationship between the two empires and the Egyptian-Hittite Treaty involved many aspects which

would be advantageous to Egyptian foreign relations in maintaining peace for future years. The treaty which Ramesses II signed with Hattusilis III in Year 21 allowed the nations to call upon the other for assistance in future disputes as well as for general help and suggestions. Ramesses II wrote many letters to the Hittite king who replied which sustained good relations between the two empires. However, Ramesses II still ensured Egypt's slight dominance over the Hittites, despite calling each other brothers and being equal in terms of the treaty, by refusing to send an Egyptian princess to be married out of Egypt. Despite this, the wedding between Ramesses and Maatnefrure, depicted on Abu Simbel, as well as his willingness to give up his military desires up north demonstrates his commitment to the treaty in order to maintain peace and prosperity for the Egyptian people during his reign. Therefore, the foreign policy of Ramesses developed throughout his reign so that he maintained peace for Egypt. However, his initial foreign policy saw many weaknesses, thus his foreign policy was significant to a certain extent.

Ramesses II's foreign policy, although following aims that would be beneficial for the empire, lacked strategy to ensure success. As his decisions and intelligence developed, his aims of foreign policy could be achieved more easily. Therefore, Ramesses II's foreign policy resulted in small successes at the beginning of his reign, however developed to benefit Egypt and ensure prosperity throughout his reign. Thus, his foreign policy was significant to a certain extent.