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**THESIS**

**POLITICAL EXCLUSION AND VIOLENCE:  
THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENT IN EGYPT**

by

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September 2004

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THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENT IN EGYPT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, persons across the Muslim world have attempted to move their society toward a more religious Islamic path. They have attempted to form political parties and participate in elections, only to be marginalized and repressed. Some have reacted violently, carrying out attacks against government officials and other targets. Typically a cycle of violence, repression and political exclusion transpires.

Democratic reform is not uncomplicated. Both practical considerations and moral ones demand changes in the policies of both the United States and Egypt. The Egyptian government's electoral engineering and interference does not go unnoticed by the world and undermines the legitimacy of the government to its own citizens and the world community alike.

Co-opting moderate Islamists may seem threatening to President Mubarak as well as to Western countries, whose public continues to embrace Orientalist ideas. This study maintains that when moderate Islamists are allowed to participate in politics, they will restrain their stances regarding strict interpretations of Islam, as have the New Islamists in Egypt. The alternative is the status quo, which aside from being immoral in terms of personal liberty is also not workable for those desiring stability in the Middle East.

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This work is dedicated to the concept that all people are created with a desire for personal liberty and freedom: Freedom to participate in their own society and government without infringing on the basic human rights, liberty and security of others in their society.

I am thankful to several professors from the Naval Postgraduate School for their experience, wisdom and feedback regarding this study. Professor Vali Nasr's expertise on Islamism and the Muslim world has been instrumental to the coherence of this study. Professor Anne Marie Baylouny's enthusiasm in class, expertise on social movements in the Middle East and patience in reviewing this work are very much appreciated.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of this work is to establish the relationship between episodes of political violence, carried out by Islamists on the one hand, and conditions of political inclusion afforded to them by the government of Egypt on the other. A large majority of Egyptians are Muslims and many are sympathetic to groups like the Muslim Brotherhood (hereafter referred to as the Brotherhood), who meet many of their needs that cannot or will not be met by the government. Furthermore, Egyptian governments are aware of this popularity and have felt threatened by any group that might mobilize large portions of Egypt's population, especially those that may challenge the government's power. As such, the government has been quick to curtail Islamist consolidation of power through myriad means. Of interest to this study is the government's blocking of Islamist participation in politics and the repercussions of this policy. Christianity in the West has undergone a reformation and as a rule separates government from religion. The Muslim has not had such a reformation however and in many Muslim countries, there is no such separation.

In the United States, the common perception is that Islamic terrorists take actions based solely upon religious or irrational fanatical motivation. There are two main reasons for this perception. The first is failure of the American public to educate themselves regarding the Middle East region, its culture and its circumstances. The second is due to the Middle Eastern (or Egypt in this study) governments' campaigns of misinformation attempting to discredit Islamists that are willing to "work within the

system," given the opportunity. The Egyptian government has often grouped all Islamists together, especially after episodes of anti-government violence carried out by militant Islamists. This can be characterized as naive, since acts of political violence, often dubbed, "terrorism," can be interpreted as rationally calculated choices by a group of actors. In *The New Global Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, Richard Rubenstein provides six possible motives that frequently generate terrorist violence. They are:

- To publicize the activist's cause, provide evidence of its supporters' intensity, and force (enemies and allies) to take it seriously
- To awaken the masses, who have been bribed or coerced into silence, by performing acts of 'heroic,' sacrificial violence that will inspire imitation
- To expose the state...as a brutal and oppressive force requiring violent opposition or overthrow
- To mobilize and activate neutrals or passive sympathizers by catching them in the 'crossfire' between the state and the terrorist fighters
- To eliminate or incapacitate leaders or organizations that might otherwise be effective opponents of the terrorists' cause
- To make territory ungovernable, or governable only at an unacceptable cost, thereby forcing the withdrawal of foreign occupiers or a change of regime.<sup>1</sup>

Anti-American militants in Iraq in 2004, described by many as "terrorists," clearly have many of these motivations. The last two were particularly evident in the summer of 2004.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard E. Rubenstein, "The Psycho-Political Sources of Terrorism." In *The New Global Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, ed. Charles W. Kegley Jr. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), 140.



Numerous renowned scholars describe what they call "expressive" motivations for terrorists like Osama bin Laden. Rubenstein quotes Harvard professor Jessica Stern who claims that bin Laden's motives are expressive because:

- Catastrophic attacks will not achieve the attackers' objectives
- Groups that are expressing anger can continuously change their mission statement
- Expressive terrorism "enables cynical leaders to attract youth who feel humiliated, culturally or personally."<sup>2</sup>

Rubenstein disagrees with this perspective of "expressive terrorism." He argues that Al Qaeda's attack delivered a costly blow to the U.S. economy, publicized the cause, polarized public opinion in the Islamic world, and evoked a violent reaction by the United States.<sup>3</sup> Since these are all goals of Al Qaeda, Rubenstein therefore argues against the idea of terrorism as merely expressive of emotions. Of note, most U.S. military forces have fully departed Prince Sultan airbase in Saudi Arabia for other countries in the region, an expressed goal of bin Laden. While there is still a U.S. military training mission in Saudi Arabia, the majority of forces departed the country in 2003.

A different perspective examines the motivations of persons that are members of underground political organizations. Egypt has historically constrained full democratic participation and has repeatedly repressed or denied access to the government for certain groups (typically those that are most threatening to it). Some of these groups are illegal and as such have had to move underground to survive.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 143.

Della Porta examines existing theories on why persons are motivated to act as part of an underground political organization. According to her, "research shows no typical patterns in the primary socialization of militants, no particular family problems or authoritarian upbringing."<sup>4</sup>

In underground organizations, individual motives are clearly tied to group motivations. In these organizations there is a great need for secrecy. Once a person joins, they develop intense ties to the group and may eventually believe that they either cannot or would not want to live life outside of the organization.<sup>5</sup> This mindset can completely change in a person's life, and is similar to the mindset found in youth gangs in urban areas of the United States where ties to the group are stronger than a casual observer may recognize.

Regarding violence, research and interviews show that "protest repertoires gradually escalated toward violence."<sup>6</sup> Also, once violence starts, states often take harsh repressive action. In international relations theory, one's defensive actions or weapons purchases/procurements can be viewed as offensive by the other side causing escalation of one's own activity. And so it goes, each side undermining each other's security. This is what is called the rational spiral model or security dilemma of conflict escalation.<sup>7</sup> Underground organizations' relations with repressive governments seem similar to the spiral model in

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<sup>4</sup> Donatella Della Porta, "Introduction: On Individual Motivations in Underground Political Organizations." *Social Movements and Violence: Participation in Underground Organizations*, ed. Donatella Della Porta, (Greenwich, CN: JAI Press Inc., 1992) 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Charles L. Glaser, "When Are Arms Races Dangerous: Rational versus Suboptimal Arming" *International Security*, Vol. 28, [website on-line]; <http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?tid=14422&tttype=6> Accessed 2 Aug 2004.

international relations, albeit in an asymmetrical fashion. In this case, the underground organization views the state as de-legitimized once repression begins. Similarly, states often refuse to negotiate with "terrorists" that do not work within "legal," peaceful means. Members of underground organizations often believe that the state has committed the most serious violations of the "rules of the game."<sup>8</sup>

This present study specifically concerns acts of political violence carried out by Egyptian Islamists. These acts are quite variable in their severity and occurrence, suggesting that there may be something more than religious beliefs or fanaticism influencing them. Hopefully a better understanding of the conditions under which Islamist acts of political violence occur can lead to policy steps to alleviate this violence. The present study is an attempt to aid in such understanding.

Additionally, the important implications for United States' foreign policy can not be understated. Catch-all rhetoric regarding cultures and/or Islamists is probably not in the best interest of the United States, since this can actually help to legitimize the actions of militant Islamists who partake in political violence, directed either against their own government or Western states and their interests. During the Cold War, authoritarian nationalist governments were not only tolerated but were supported by Western governments (including the United States), as long as they did not turn toward communism or socialism under the wing of the Soviet Union. In the case of oil-producing Arab countries, the free flow of reasonably-priced oil to the West was a key reason to

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<sup>8</sup> Della Porta, 15.

support regimes. The West cared little about how the countries were run, as long as those two conditions were met.

Undoubtedly, the United States supported many such governments as an alternative to a communist Soviet Satellite state. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, came the realization that many authoritarian regimes remained. Some of these had been supported by the West even though they did not embrace Western values, or even any type of limited democracy. This is a problem the United States was partly responsible for creating and must now take steps to rectify.

#### **A. POLITICAL INCLUSION AND ISLAMISM**

What effect does political inclusion have on the amount of violence perpetrated by Islamists in Egypt? Does it moderate Islamist actions? For this study, I have chosen to examine the case of Egypt. The hypothesis used is that political inclusion of moderate Islamists has a direct negative correlation with the amount of political violence. The thesis builds upon the work of others, especially Mohammed M. Hafez's work, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*. This book contains up to date case studies on predominantly Muslim countries where governments have repressed Islamists especially Algeria and Egypt.

While many feel that democracy cannot exist in Islamic society (including some militant Islamists), some

moderates, including the current Brotherhood in Egypt, have attempted to remain in the "system," running for parliament when elections are held. Historically, the government just prior to elections jails many members of the Brotherhood. This action has in the past empowered the more radical offshoots of the organization to commit acts of violence against the repressive government.

For the purposes of this study, the term "amount" refers to both the frequency and the intensity of the acts of political violence. I propose a scale to measure political inclusion with full political inclusion on one end of the spectrum and violent repression on the other end of the spectrum. Similarly, amounts of political violence can be measured on a scale. At one end of the scale would be periods of peace where there are no violent acts and at the other end would be frequent murders, massacres and assassinations.

A key argument of this study is that the popular legitimacy of political violence increases as political inclusion declines. The concept of popular legitimacy for this study means that a large portion of the public supports an action, therefore making it "legitimate." This support for anti-state violence may be particularly apparent when the government is viewed as elitist and corrupt. I would argue that giving the Islamists freedom to associate politically and participate in truly free elections would delegitimize the militant Islamists while legitimizing moderate members of the movement. Thus, the level of legitimacy of political violence is an important intervening variable.

If my hypothesis is correct, Arab countries

(Egypt in this case) should grant Islamists access to the political system in an effort to delegitimize political violence.

## **B. CURRENT THEORIES REGARDING ISLAMISM AND DEMOCRACY**

There are numerous theories regarding Islam and democracy. They are theories because in the countries of the Muslim world, there is no true democracy. The non-profit group Freedom House conducts an annual survey of countries around the world to determine levels of freedom. They examine political rights and civil liberties using a moderately-sized bank of questions regarding the conditions in each country. Once their data is gathered, Freedom House gives each nation a score from 1 to 7. A score of from 1.0 through 2.5 signifies the highest levels of Freedom House's version of freedom, what they call "free." A score falling in the range of 3.0 to 5.0 is "partly free," while countries with a higher score are deemed "not free." A country with a score of "1.0" is defined as follows (for political rights and civil liberties, respectively):

Countries and territories that receive a rating of 1 for political rights come closest to the ideals suggested by the checklist questions, beginning with free and fair elections. Those who are elected rule, there are competitive parties or other political groupings, and the opposition plays an important role and has actual power. Minority groups have reasonable self-government or can participate in the government through informal consensus.

Countries and territories that receive a rating of 1 come closest to the ideals expressed in the civil liberties checklist, including freedom of expression, assembly, association, education and religion. They are distinguished by an

established and generally equitable system of rule of law. Countries and territories with this rating enjoy free economic activity and tend to strive for equality of opportunity.

At the other end of the spectrum are the countries with a score of "7.0." These countries' conditions are explained as follows (for political rights and civil liberties respectively):

For countries and territories with a rating of 7, political rights are absent or virtually nonexistent as a result of the extremely oppressive nature of the regime or severe oppression in combination with civil war. States and territories in this group may also be marked by extreme violence or warlord rule that dominates political power in the absence of an authoritative, functioning central government.

States and territories with a rating of 7 have virtually no freedom. An overwhelming and justified fear of repression characterizes these societies.<sup>9</sup>

Of interest to this study are the countries of the world with a primarily Muslim populace. The table below is an extract of data found in Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2004 Survey*,<sup>10</sup> showing data for those countries that are predominantly Muslim. While the table does not show all countries it does show a representative grouping of countries:

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<sup>9</sup> Freedom House, "Freedom in the World Methodology", [http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2003/methodology.htm] accessed 2 Aug 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2004", [http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2004/combined2004.pdf] accessed 2 Aug 2004.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Freedom House 2004 Survey Score</b>
Turkey	3.5
Bangladesh	4.0
Kuwait	4.5
Malaysia	4.5
Bahrain	5.0
Jordan	5.0
Morocco	5.0
Yemen	5.0
Algeria	5.5
Pakistan	5.5
Lebanon	5.5
Afghanistan	6.0
Egypt	6.0
Qatar	6.0
Saudi	7.0
Syria	7.0

**Figure 1. Freedom House Survey Scores**

Also of interest for this study is the absence of any predominantly Muslim country being given a rating of "free." About one-third were "partly free," and the rest were "not free." Of particular concern is that five of the eight countries worldwide with a rating of 7.0 were Muslim countries. Egypt, the subject of this study, was given a rating of 6.0, "not free."

While Egypt does hold elections, they always exhibit some form of tampering whether it is preventing voters from reaching polling places or outlawing any "religious" political parties from participating in elections. These episode of interference will be discussed further in the study as they relate to particular periods and governments.



Finally, we could not examine Islam and democracy without looking at some of the challenges regarding the authoritarian governments in the Middle East. Egypt is one of these. Eva Bellin argues compellingly about the difficulties that must be overcome in this regard. She argues that the robustness of the coercive apparatus must be considered when examining Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes and prospects for democracy.<sup>11</sup> She asserts that there are at least four variables that are crucial to the possibility of authoritarian regimes allowing their societies to experiment with democracy.

The first is that, "the robustness of the coercive apparatus is directly linked to maintenance of fiscal health."<sup>12</sup> What this means is that if the coercive apparatus, whether police, military or other force, is well funded for supplies and salaries, it is more likely to support the regime in power.

The second variable of importance is that, "the robustness of the coercive apparatus is also shaped by successful maintenance of international support networks."<sup>13</sup> When the international community supports an authoritarian regime, that regime is more likely to be able to hold onto power. The end of the Cold War is a good example of this theory. When both the United States and the former Soviet Union stopped funding for authoritarian states, they often soon failed and gave way to more democratic states.

Third is that "the robustness of the coercive apparatus, or of its will to repress reform initiatives, is

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<sup>11</sup> Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective." *Comparative Politics* (January 2004). 144.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

inversely related to its level of institutionalization."<sup>14</sup> In other words, when the coercive apparatus view themselves as servants of the public and professionals versus cronies of the regime leaders, In this case, they are less likely to feel they owe something to the regime. A professional military and/or police force is less likely to give the government carte blanche to do as they please when it involves repressing the public.

Lastly, she states that, "the coercive apparatus' capacity and will to hold on to power is shaped by the degree to which it faces a high level of popular mobilization."<sup>15</sup> When governments keep up a high level of repressive activity against their own citizens for a prolonged period of time, the fiscal and social costs mount. Even some of the most repressive regimes realize that these costs can eventually jeopardize their ability to hold power in the future. In places where the population overwhelmingly is able to voice its opposition to the government, that government's power is challenged. According to O'Donnell and Schmitter,

They (authoritarian governments) are regimes that practice dictatorship and repression in the present while promising democracy and freedom in the future. Thus, they can justify themselves in political terms only as transitional powers, while attempting to shift attention to their immediate substantive accomplishments—typically, the achievement of 'social peace' or economic development.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 145

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>16</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 15.

In the case of Egypt, the state has been able to hold its authoritarian power since gaining its independence from Britain by alternately repressing Islamist forces and appeasing the masses with such issues as Arab nationalism, anti-Zionism or free university education. The latter came with the promise of cushy government employment following graduation. After awhile, none of these appeasements appeared to satisfy an Egyptian public unable to obtain the most basic government services. At times when the government has not been able to provide these services, the masses have increasingly turned toward Islamic charity for a helping hand. This gives the Islamists mass appeal and possibilities for popular mobilization in the future.

### **C. ISLAMIST REASONS WHY DEMOCRACY CAN OR CANNOT WORK IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES**

Two prominent Islamist groups in Egypt, the *Gemaa* and al-Jihad "rejected democracy as a secular innovation that is thoroughly un-Islamic and, more importantly, cannot be Islamized."<sup>17</sup> Reasons these groups give for this view are that, "democracy gives the right to legislate to someone other than God, which is equivalent to deifying the people...The only way to reaffirm God's sovereignty is by making his laws (sharia) the sole source of legislation."<sup>18</sup> Sheikh Abd al-Rahman (currently imprisoned in the United States for his role in the 1993 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center) demonstrates *Gemaa's* disdain for secular law and Western thought in his writings by stating that, "it (secular law), derived from Western thought,

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<sup>17</sup> Mohammed M. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 181.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

which is alien to the religion of Islam, must be eliminated...the ruler who has replaced God's law with constitutional law 'must be fought until he returns to God's law...or he must be uprooted.'"<sup>19</sup> In Jordan, the concept of the primacy of *sharia* is explained by Ahmad Qutash al-Azayida, an Islamist Deputy of the Lower House in Jordan. He states, "Islamic law is what all Muslims want and the rule of the majority is democracy."<sup>20</sup>

Other Islamist groups have a starkly different perspective regarding democracy. For example, the Brotherhood, "believes that democracy and pluralism are not only permissible but also desirable because they are an essential part of the Islamic notion of consultation (shura)."<sup>21</sup> Quoting one Muslim Brother, `Isam al-`Aryan supports democratic reform this way, "the Brothers consider constitutional rule to be closest to Islamic rule...We are the first to call for and apply democracy. We are devoted to it until death."<sup>22</sup> The Brotherhood enjoys a larger following in Egypt compared to either the *Gemaa* or al-Jihad. This may be a sign that the Muslims in Egypt at large, hold a more moderate view of democracy and do not support the views of the *Gemaa* or al-Jihad.

#### **D. ARAB COUNTRIES' REASONS FOR NOT POLITICALLY INVOLVING ISLAMISTS**

Most governments in the Arab world are authoritarian regimes. While some profess to be democratic and actually have elections, the reality is that the leader of the

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<sup>19</sup> Denis J. Sullivan and Sana Abed-Kotob, *Islam in Contemporary Egypt: Civil Society vs. the State* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999) 85.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Pipes, "Are Today's Islamic Movements Compatible with Democracy?", Middle East Forum [available from <http://www.meforum.org/article/pipes/347>] accessed 2 Aug 2004

<sup>21</sup> Hafez, 181.

<sup>22</sup> Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 48.

country usually has such power that the important part of the elections always goes in favor of the leader. Opposition groups may win some seats in a legislative body however these are usually only in a consultative role to the state's leader. Islamists that argue against democracy argue that electing officials to such a powerless body legitimizes the government while undermining their own goals. While there may be some truth in this, it could be argued that some representation is better than none at all.

In Egypt, President Mubarak claims to be moving his country down the path toward democracy. In order to maintain legitimacy, Mubarak may have to allow more participation by Islamists in politics. According to Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, "an authoritarian regime's pursuit of democratic legitimacy may force it to accommodate opposition actors that it could suppress by force."<sup>23</sup>

Talk of democracy in Egypt notwithstanding, the Mubarak government has faced direct challenges from violent Islamists in the form of assassination attempts, attacks on tourists and other targets in an attempt to delegitimize the regime. When these situations have occurred in the past, the Egyptian government has cut a broad swath of repression of all Islamists stating that the more violent ones are simply branches of groups like the Brotherhood. The government's rationale for repressing all Islamists is what the Mubarak government calls, "drying the springs."<sup>24</sup> Even though certain people such as the "New Islamists" have consistently "spoken out strongly and consistently against

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<sup>23</sup> Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2002), 222.

<sup>24</sup> Raymond W. Baker, *Islam Without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003) 22.

extremist violence,"<sup>25</sup> the government has had a policy that is, "aimed to eliminate all independent sources of religiousness in society with the rationalization that they feed extremism."<sup>26</sup>

Finally, a further reason Arab countries may not want to allow participation by Islamists in a democratic forum is that authoritarian regimes generally have an overarching goal of regime survival at all costs. These regimes know that given the chance to mobilize the people, Islamists may challenge the power of the state leading to regime change. The moderates are seen by the government as the biggest challenge to their legitimacy rather than the *jihadi* militants. For this reason, Egyptian leaders have tolerated the non-militant Islamists only slightly more than the militant ones. Raymond Baker states that:

In effect, the regime understood moderate Islam as its most serious opposition. Instead of turning to the Islamist moderates as allies against extremism, the regime sought aggressively to dry up all the Islamist sources for engagement in public life. Quite deliberately, this policy blurred the distinction between moderate and extremist Islamists.<sup>27</sup>

Leaders of these regimes lead lives of power and luxuries which would obviously be gone once they are removed from power. Additionally, authoritarian rulers often have a short lifespan after being removed from power.

#### **E. WESTERN CONCERNS ABOUT ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY**

Some of the West's concerns about Islam and democracy are a result of Western perceptions of the region. When

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid..

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 38.

violent Islamists state that democracy is incompatible with Islam, some agree and use this as a reason to repress Islamists. These type of statements make better newspaper headlines than statement by moderates that are accommodative of democratic principles.

The United States' policy in the Middle East has never had democracy as its paramount goal. The goal has always been stable governments willing to sell oil to the world market at a "reasonable" price. The other chief goal was that of geopolitical influence and power. This was of great importance during the Cold War, which had a polarizing effect on the countries of the world. The Middle East was no exception.

During and even before the Cold War, the United States supported governments that yielded to American influence and had policies friendly to the U.S. and its interests. Some of these governments offer the least freedom to their citizens yet they were supported by the United States. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt described this situation this way (discussing the United States' relationship with Nicaragua's dictator, Anastasio Somoza) "they may be sons of bitches but at least they are our sons of bitches."<sup>28</sup> This mindset demonstrates that loyalty to the United States has been a more powerful reason for foreign policy decisions than has the spread of democracy.

The United States supported the government of the Shah of Iran until he was deposed during the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. Since that time, the United States has

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<sup>28</sup> Clement Henry and Robert Springborg, *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 32.

had a very suspicious policy toward persons endeavoring to establish an Islamic government.

Another concern regarding democracy in Muslim countries is the concept of "one person, one vote, one time." This theory implies the following; "they worry that Islamist parties would come to power through elections and then impose their own brand of tyranny, cutting democracy short and implementing anti-American foreign policies to boot."<sup>29</sup> This theory has yet to be tested however. The situation in Algeria would have been interesting to follow had the Islamists that won the election there been allowed to take the leadership of the government. Many theorists predict that had the Islamists gained power, they would have had to moderate their positions in order to maintain legitimacy amongst the Algerian people. Instead, the election results were disallowed and the military forced their own views on the country, thus ending the chance of peaceful democratic reform in Algeria for years to come.

While some of these issues may be cause for concern, it is premature to believe that any Islamist election victory will mean the end of democracy for that country. More likely is the scenario that the Islamists will have to learn to share power with the other elected representatives as they have in Lebanon.

#### **F. WESTERN REASONS FOR ENCOURAGING DEMOCRACIES IN ARAB STATES**

There are numerous reasons the United States should encourage the spread of democracy across Arab states. First, according to modern democratic peace theory (and

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<sup>29</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, "Causes for 9/11: U.S. Support for Repressive Regimes?" [[http://cfrterrorism.org/causes/regimes\\_print.html](http://cfrterrorism.org/causes/regimes_print.html)] accessed 3 Aug 2004.



statistics) is that democracies rarely fight wars with other democracies. While there have been some anomalies since the concept of democracy was put into practice, the theory is a pretty solid one.

Secondly, the Arab world is a prime source of fossil fuels to the world. Having democracies (that in theory would not fight each other) would stabilize the region and help with a steady supply of fuel exports thus helping to stimulate the world economy.

Thirdly and perhaps the most important reason democracy should be encouraged in the region is a moral one. While it may be difficult to keep corruption out of democracies in the region, democracies are a better moral alternative to the current authoritarian regimes in the region that play favorites, are rife with bureaucratic ineptness, repress their own people and simply are not the best stewards of the state's resources. Democracy should be encouraged simply because we believe that individual liberty is a right that all humans share and is the best vehicle for ensuring such liberty.

Finally, involving Islamists in a democratic process may moderate violent behavior and empower those Islamists that want to have a democratic process. Pushing the jihadis toward the edge of societal opinion would not be a bad thing.

#### **G. OVERVIEW OF THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENT IN EGYPT**

Egypt is the birthplace of modern Islamism in the Muslim world. Hassan al-Banna, formed the society of Muslim Brothers (the Muslim Brotherhood or *Ikhwan*) in 1928. Al-Banna was educated and trained as a teacher and

taught Arabic. At the age of twenty-two, he became fed up with the corruption of the government, the colonial rule of the British and the factionalism of Muslims whom al-Banna asserted were turning away from true Islam and were turning toward Western values.<sup>30</sup> According to Walid Abdelnasser, the formation of the Brotherhood was as a reaction to a number of events such as: "the fall of the Islamic *Khalifa* (caliph) in 1924, the colonization of the Muslim world by Western powers, and the spread of westernization in Muslim countries."<sup>31</sup> Probably the most prevalent of these three was the matter of colonization. The Brotherhood recruited based upon forming an Islamic state, reintroduction of a caliph, implementation of *sharia* (Islamic law based upon the Quran) and above all, expulsion of the British colonialists from Egypt. Al-Banna also "believed that any territory where a Muslim lived was a part of the Muslim world and should be defended. He treated any country which transgressed against the Muslim homeland as a tyrannical state that should be resisted in all manners."<sup>32</sup>

The basic premise of the Brotherhood is that "...all difficulties in Islamic society stemmed from a deviation from the ideals of early Islam."<sup>33</sup> Al-Banna described his goals for the Brotherhood as follows:

You are not a benevolent society, nor a political party, nor a local organization having limited purposes. Rather, you are a new soul in the heart of the nation to give it life by means of the Quran...When asked what it is you propagate, reply

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<sup>30</sup> David Waines, *An Introduction to Islam* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 240.

<sup>31</sup> Walid Abdelnasser: *The Islamic Movement In Egypt: Perceptions of International Relations 1967-1981*. (London: Kegan Paul International. 1994), 33.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>33</sup> Derek Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-1984* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, Inc. 1985), 21.

that it is Islam, the message of Muhammad, the religion that contains within it government...If you are told that you are political, answer that Islam admits no distinction.<sup>34</sup>

The Brotherhood quickly grew across Egypt and its membership totaled between one and two million people by 1949.<sup>35</sup> The popularity of the group and the leadership's statement that *sharia* should replace Egypt's secular law led King Farouk to ban the Brotherhood in 1948. These actions began a spiral of actions that would put the Brotherhood and Egypt's government at odds until the present time. The Egyptian Prime Minister, Majmud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi was assassinated by a Muslim Brother shortly after the group was banned. "in retribution, the regime arranged for al-Banna's assassination by the secret police on 12 February 1949."<sup>36</sup>

Cycles of inclusion and repression of the Brotherhood have been the government's hallmark since this time. Another significant leader of the Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb was imprisoned and hanged by the government in 1969. Qutb had more radical views than his predecessors and was not afraid to put them to paper. His book, *Milestones*, Qutb calls for *jihād* in order to further the cause of Islam. He discredits the secular government which Qutb describes in the following way:

These (government appointed Muslim scholars) have adopted the Western concept of 'religion', which is merely a name for 'belief' in the heart, having no relation to the practical affairs of life, and therefore they conceive of religious

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>35</sup> Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 42.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 42.

war as a war to impose belief on people's hearts. But this is not the case with Islam...the way of life ordained by God for all mankind.<sup>37</sup>

All of the Egyptian governments that have followed King Farouk have alternated in their relationship with the Brotherhood. In the early 1990s, when the Brotherhood was again legal, they did very well in elections, even though the government made it difficult for them to do so. It would seem that over the long-haul that the Brotherhood has been and will continue to be the greatest challenge to the legitimacy of the regime. Their anti-government rhetoric has moderated since the death of Qutb and they have become very active both as a political party (when allowed) but more so as a non-governmental organization (NGO) providing services and charity to people across Egypt.

Around the time of President Gamal Abdel Nasser's death in 1970, the Islamist movement in Egypt was gaining in strength yet was also polarizing between the moderate Islamists like the Brotherhood and the *jihadi* followers of Sayyid Qutb's (among other Islamist leaders) writings. The 1967 war with Israel had gone badly for then-President Nasser's military and many of the Islamists placed the blame on the secular Egyptian government. In the years that followed, students began forming groups known as *Gemaa* (or *Jamaa*) *Islamia* or 'Islamic Groups', hereafter referred to as "*Gemaa*." These groups gained momentum by offering "an 'Islamic solution' to the social crisis that was affecting Egyptian universities at the time. In the 1970s, the numbers of (students) more than doubled while university

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<sup>37</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Mother Mosque Foundation, no date) 76.

infrastructure remained unchanged.”<sup>38</sup> The Nasser government had guaranteed such educations to people qualifying for them and then even guaranteed government employment. This obviously was a promise the government could not keep.

The Egyptian government and the *Gemaa* were allies until President Sadat flew to Jerusalem to hold peace talks with the Israeli government.<sup>39</sup> After this time, the *Gemaa* and the government became increasingly at odds. Finally, the Sadat government arrested over one thousand political opponents in the fall of 1981. Shortly, thereafter an Egyptian Army lieutenant and brother of an imprisoned *Gemaa* leader assassinated President Sadat.<sup>40</sup>

Repressive actions after the death of Sadat did not stop the militant actions of *Gemaa* members. In the 1990s they were responsible for the killing of numerous tourists as well as anti-government actions.

Another group formed in 1971, out of the ideas established by Sayyid Qutb was *Takfir wal Hijra* (roughly translated as Denouncement and Holy Flight). The “denouncement” is in reference to the declaration that both Egyptian citizens and their government were infidels and were legitimate targets for *jihad*.<sup>41</sup> The “Holy Flight” portion of the group’s name refers to the Prophet Mohammad’s flight from Mecca to Medina in order to both withdraw from “infidel society” and to establish and give military training to believers.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002) 82-83.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>40</sup> Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 75.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

*Takfir wal Hijra* members have directly challenged the Egyptian state through attacks and assassinations. The state in turn has fought the group and execute some of its' members. This group has changed names over time it is still active in Egypt.

The last major Islamist group discussed in this chapter for the purposes of this overview is *al-Jihad*. This group also formed in the 1970s. In contrast to *Gemaa*, *al-Jihad* did not believe that preaching the Islamic message would be helpful until the impious regime had been destroyed and, overthrown and replaced by an Islamic state.<sup>43</sup> This group's leaders consisted of Ayman al-Zawahiri (now known as Osama bin-Laden's deputy), and the notorious blind cleric, Shaykh Abd al-Rahman.<sup>44</sup> *Al-Jihad* in similar fashion to other militant groups has endeavored to attack the state directly through assassinations and other destabilizing actions. Again the state violently repressed members when and where it could. Today, it is said that *al-Jihad* and *al-Qaeda* have merged into one organization.

There are many other Islamist groups that have existed and still do today in Egypt. These smaller groups will be examined in following chapters as is applicable to the time-period of their existence.

#### **H. OUTLINE OF THE STUDY**

This thesis will use a within case congruence procedure since the dependent and independent variables, the amount of political violence and the amount of political inclusion, have varied greatly over time in

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<sup>43</sup> Kepel, 282.

<sup>44</sup> Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 79.

Egypt. Resources used for this thesis will include books, journal articles, speech texts, and certain websites.

Particular attention will be given to the theories of Mohammed M. Hafez in his book *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*. His conclusion is that there are two policy options for dealing with the governments in the Islamic world. The first option is to continue co-opting repressive authoritarian regimes, a "risky and morally objectionable choice." Hafez argues that a better option is the second one which seeks accommodation with those Islamists "who will work through established rules of conflict resolution and political contestation."<sup>45</sup> He concludes by stating that this requires "a delicate balance between institutional inclusion of moderates and targeted repression of radicals."<sup>46</sup>

In order to look at Egypt as a study area, a chronological study of Islamism in that country will be accomplished. The study will focus on four historical periods from colonialism and King Farouk's regime, through Presidents Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak.

This study will begin with a focus on the early years of the Islamist movement Egypt starting with the founding of the Brotherhood in 1928. Thorough examinations of the motivations of Brotherhood leaders/thinkers like Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb will be discussed to set the stage for Brotherhood doctrine and group motivation. Since a key reason for this group to form is their religion, the influence of Islam on the group will also be studied.

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<sup>45</sup> Hafez, 210.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 210

After forming, the Brotherhood became a regional movement, establishing branches in multiple states throughout the Middle East. While this thesis' focus is on Egypt, the nature of the Brotherhood does have an international aspect which needs to be considered. Not all members of the Brotherhood share the same visions as its leaders. As such some offshoots of the movement have split off into different Islamist groups including some violent groups. Thus other Islamist movements have historically competed with the Brotherhood for a foothold in Egypt. A discussion of these groups will differentiate the motives and methods of them.

Next, this section will focus on an examination of the relationship an examination of the relationship between Islamic violence and political inclusion during the Farouk regime.

The second chapter will follow a chronological study of the Islamist movement in Egypt during the Nasser regime. The Brotherhood had sharp divisions with the government which brewed until a Muslim Brother assassinated Egypt's Prime Minister in 1948. In retribution, the Brotherhood was banned and its founder, Hassan al-Banna was murdered (probably by the government) in 1949. The situation remained tense and Nasser survived an assassination attempt in 1954. Many Muslim Brothers were imprisoned until their release in 1964 when they plotted and carried out another assassination attempt on Nasser. The cycle of inclusion and exclusion continued until Nasser's death in 1970. Obviously, the Brotherhood is the key movement that will be studied during this time period for specific examples for the extent of political inclusion and the resulting



Islamist amount of violent or non-violent behavior.

Upon President Nasser's death, Anwar Sadat was elected to the presidency. This will be the focus of Chapter Three. Similar to the Nasser years, government relations with Islamists were a cycle of political inclusion, political exclusion and a variety of violent political acts by the Islamists culminating in the assassination of President Sadat by an Islamist. Similar to chapter four, this chapter will do an in-depth study of the above-mentioned cycles.

Similarly to the previous two regimes, the Mubarak regime has had a mixed relationship with Islamists. Chapter Four will focus on cycles of inclusion and exclusion that were matched by cycles of violence and non-violence including assassination attempts on both Mubarak and his son (a possible successor to power). During Mubarak's regime, Muslim Brothers have held seats in parliament although not as many as they might have had the elections been truly "free and fair." This chapter will study the last twenty three years of Islamist-government interaction in Egypt as well as possibilities for the near future of Islamism there.

The conclusion will contain a summary of the findings of the research. This will be followed by recommendations for Egypt as well as the Islamists in Egypt. Foreign policy recommendations for the United States regarding promotion of democratic reform in the Middle East conclude the study.

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## II. THE NASSER ERA

During the Presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser, there were cycles of political inclusion and exclusion of Islamists, but mostly exclusion. As with most governments and especially those that are non-democratic, the Nasser government had survival as its main goal. Anything that has or would jeopardize that goal was not tolerated by the government which used every instrument available to survive. This behavior by the government ultimately put it at odds with a least part of its population. In order to attempt to legitimize their behavior, regimes such as the one that existed in Egypt since once the British left, must explain their behavior. This type of regime is seen as often acting in a "schizophrenic" manner. This would seem like to offer some freedom and democracy to their people but not enough to give the people an opportunity to change the government.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, "as for those sectors of the population that are excluded and victimized, the schizophrenic stamp of the regime opens the ideological space within which they can express...their fundamental demand: the removal of the authoritarian regime and its replacement by a democratic one."<sup>48</sup>

The Brotherhood is one of these excluded population sectors . Of course they are not without some blame since members or their offshoots had carried out anti-government attacks, both during King Farouk's reign and later against Nasser's government.

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<sup>47</sup> O'Donnell and. Schmitter, 15.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.,15.

## A. THE FREE OFFICERS COUP AND CONSOLIDATION OF POWER

In 1952, the Free Officers organization staged a coup and overthrew King Farouk, seen by many as a puppet of Great Britain. The Brotherhood had been vehemently opposed to the Farouk government in part due to its close relationship with colonial Britain but also because of repression of its members including the murder of its leader and founder al-Banna. Initially, the Brotherhood supported the Free Officers whom they worked with regarding the Palestine situation and whom were also against the Farouk government. This relationship changed after the coup put the Free Officers in power. In fact, "the Brotherhood went over to the opposition when it became clear that Nasser did not intend to establish an Islamic government. Nasser's government clashed violently with the Brotherhood and suppressed it in 1954..."<sup>49</sup> While the Nasser government and the Brotherhood shared the goal of eradicating the colonial British, they had little else in common. "...While Nasser portrayed his goals as consistent with Islamic precepts (a convergence readily affirmed by clerics on the government payroll), Islam did not figure prominently in either the formation or the justification of his agenda. ... (his rhetoric was secular, nationalist, and revolutionary in tone..."<sup>50</sup> A telling statement by Nasser would eventually highlight the differences between the Islamist's goal of *sharia* and Nasser's secular agenda. "After eighteen months in power, I still don't see how it would be possible to govern according to the Koran...The Koran is a very general text, capable of interpretation, and that is why I don't

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<sup>49</sup> Esposito *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 71.

<sup>50</sup> Wickham, 95.

think its suitable as a source of policy or political doctrine."<sup>51</sup>

The Brotherhood had a considerable following by the 1950s and as such, had a broad powerbase across the country. They had even started many groups of young men called "rovers" that held a paramilitary status all across the country.<sup>52</sup> Shortly after Nasser consolidated his power as the leader of Egypt, he recognized the Brotherhood as a growing presence and possible to challenge his regime. "The latest threat to the regime came from the *Ikhwan* (Muslim Brotherhood) and their assassination attempt on Nasser in October 1954. They were crushed and by the end of the year, the RCC (Revolutionary Command Council, the new name for the Free Officers) had undisputed powers."<sup>53</sup> After wresting power from General Mohammed Naguib, Nasser ruled as Egypt's leader until his death from natural causes in 1970.

#### **B. THE SUEZ CANAL CRISIS AND THE WAR OF 1956**

As President Nasser was trying to consolidate his power across Egypt, he was challenged by the popularity of the Brotherhood that was well entrenched in both civil society and in the military.

To Nasser's credit, he reached an agreement with the British regarding the withdrawal of British troops from Egypt including the canal zone. This was a fortunate move on his part as the removal of foreign power from Egyptian land was wildly popular with the Egyptian people.<sup>54</sup> Due to

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<sup>51</sup> James Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 35.

<sup>52</sup> Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 201.

<sup>53</sup> Hopwood, 88.

<sup>54</sup> P.J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1985), 386-387.

this new development, the government's power grew while the Islamist Brotherhood became marginalized, especially after their failed assassination attempt.

Less than two years after Nasser got the British to agree to leave Egypt, he decided to go one step further and nationalized the Suez Canal zone in 1956. This led to a international crisis and ensuing war with the French, British and Israelis on one side and Egypt on the other. Outside pressure was present however from both the United States and Russia for an end to the conflict and the war ended abruptly with Nasser retaining the canal and again gaining popular Egyptian support.<sup>55</sup> This further marginalized public sympathies with the Brotherhood and entrenched Nasser's popularity for years to come.

### **C. THE BROTHERHOOD FORCED UNDERGROUND**

Nasser banned the Brotherhood in 1954.<sup>56</sup> Not only were they prohibited from associating freely, but many of its leaders were imprisoned.<sup>57</sup> This repressive action may be seen as an indication of the actual power of the *Ikhwan* to motivate and recruit certain segments of Egyptian society. Even though the *Ikhwan* had been banned in 1954, they remained an active underground movement. While they retained their social contacts, they were for the most part underground until the mid-1960s. The Brotherhood were however, "...virtually the only Islamic political organization in Egypt until 1967, excluding the Shabab Muhammad's group, the marginal and short-lived *Jihad* group of 1958, and those members of the Association of Islamic

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<sup>55</sup> Jankowski, 67-68.

<sup>56</sup> Wickham, 10.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

Preaching who were politicized and radicalized under the influence of Sayyid Qutb in the early and mid-1960s."<sup>58</sup> Other Islamist groups would emerge shortly after Nasser's death during the Sadat era.

#### **D. THE BROTHERHOOD RADICALIZES UNDER REPRESSION**

Sayyid Qutb was an important Islamist leader in that he closely followed the teachings of the founder of the *Ikhwan*, Hassan al-Banna. Qutb was actually educated in Colorado in the United States and, "was shocked at the cultural differences between his native Egypt and Colorado. After attending various social events and seeing what he believed to be moral decadence in the West, Qutb actually became a more religiously observant Muslim."<sup>59</sup> In his writings, Qutb describes Americans as being violent by nature and as having little respect for human life... American churches were not places of worship as much as entertainment centers and playgrounds for the sexes. Americans, according to Qutb, were primitive in their sexual life, as illustrated in the words of an American female college student who told him that the sexual issue was not ethical, but merely biological.<sup>60</sup>

Qutb's version of Islamism was particularly radical in that it called all "true believers" to Jihad. He and his followers became a radicalized segment of the Brotherhood and took al-Banna's writings a step further than his own writings. In *Milestones*, Qutb describes his modern version of *Jahiliyya*. Qutb defines this as, "...the worship of some people by others; that is to say, some people become

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<sup>58</sup> Abdelnasser, 17.

<sup>59</sup> Esposito, *Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, 136.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

dominant and make laws for others, regardless of whether these laws are against God's injunctions and without caring for the use or misuse of their authority."<sup>61</sup> A more classical definition of *Jahiliyya* refers to an "age of ignorance."<sup>62</sup> This is otherwise known in the Muslim world as the time before Muhammad was called upon by Allah to be his prophet. This was a time period in Arabia when polytheism was prevalent and the Ka`ba shrine in Mecca contained images of 360 different gods.<sup>63</sup>

Qutb defines his version of Islamist thinking and action further by stating that, "Islam cannot accept any mixing with *Jahiliyyah*, either in its concept or in the modes of living which are derived from this concept."<sup>64</sup> Qutb writes that *jihaad* (or *jihad*) is the Quranic way of removing a government that is *Jahiliyyah*. He describes how Mohammed used *jihad* to further his cause during the days when he was still alive and introducing the ideas of Islam. Qutb, states that he and his followers will and should use *jihad* to remove any *Jahiliyya* leaders (Nasser included) under the following explanation: "This movement uses the methods of preaching and persuasion for reforming ideas and beliefs; and it uses physical power and *jihaad* for abolishing the organizations and authorities of the *Jahili* system, which prevents people from reforming their ideas and beliefs but forces them to obey their erroneous ways and make them serve human lords instead of the Almighty Lord."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Qutb, 130.

<sup>62</sup> Waines. 27.

<sup>63</sup> Malcom Clark, *Islam for Dummies: A Reference for the Rest of us*. (Indianapolis, IN: Wiley Publishing, 2003) 82.

<sup>64</sup> Qutb, 130.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.



## E. THE BROTHERHOOD CHALLENGES THE GOVERNMENT

Perhaps the most striking difference between Sayyid Qutb and earlier Egyptian Islamists like Hassan al-Banna was his willingness to confront the regime head-on in an overt manner. While the Hassan al-Banna's *Ikhwan* did create the militant secret wing in the 1940s known as the Special Order,<sup>66</sup> they did not overtly challenge the legitimacy of the government as a matter of discourse but rather through acts of terrorism. Qutb on the other hand openly declared that Muslim elites and governments were "atheists against whom all true believers should wage holy war."<sup>67</sup> These words were meant to galvanize support for Qutb's views against what he saw as an unrighteous, secular government.

When another attempt was made on Nasser's life in 1965, the Brotherhood (and Qutb) bore the brunt of the blame. They were "massively and ruthlessly suppressed by the government. Qutb and several other leaders were arrested and executed and thousands of Brothers were arrested and tortured, while others went underground or fled the country."<sup>68</sup> After a trial, Qutb was hanged on August 29, 1966.<sup>69</sup> While this event was protested by the Brotherhood at the time, it went relatively unnoticed in the media. Qutb's writing however, would later be recognized as a vital contribution to the Islamist cause, and parallel to other key Islamist figures such as Mawlana Mawdudi of Pakistan and Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Mohamed Heikal, *Autumn of Fury: The Assassination of Sadat*. (New York: Random House, 1983) 123.

<sup>67</sup> John L. Esposito *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*. 138.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Kepel, 23.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

## **F. NASSER SUCCESSFULLY MARGINALIZES THE ISLAMISTS**

President Nasser's government was secular to be sure, however he still remained a Muslim and attempted to use his status as a Muslim as a means to consolidate power. This is in contrast to Mustafa Kemal's (Ataturk) secular regime in Turkey. Kemal believed that the reason for the Ottoman empire's failure was at least partially due to the failure to keep up with the west due to adherence to Islam and Muslim traditions. As such, Kemal made it very difficult for devout Muslims in Turkey after he came to power.

In contrast to his successor, the self-styled, "believer-president," Nasser believed in a minimal role for Islam and none at all in the government (unless it was controlling the mosques and clerics). A good example to demonstrate Nasser's perspective is his discussion during a National Assembly of the United Arab Republic Foreign Relations Committee when he stated, "the religious element should enter into our relations with other countries only in cultural affairs."<sup>71</sup> This context of this conversation was regarding whether religion could play a role in joining Muslim countries in a united effort to deal with Western nations.

When the issue of a new caliphate was brought up to Nasser, he stated that, "...the caliphate is an historical stage whose purposes have come and gone and any discussion of it in current circumstances is a waste of time."<sup>72</sup> Most likely these comments, given in 1954, were a catalyst to the Brotherhood's assassination attempt on Nasser's life later that year. Interestingly, this retribution attack was

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<sup>71</sup> Jankowski, 36.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

likely carried out by the secret Special Order faction of the Brotherhood, which after al-Banna's death was not controlled by the Brotherhood's new Supreme Guide, Hassan el-Hodeibi.<sup>73</sup> Since the reintroduction of a caliph as ruler of the Muslim world was a primary goal, President Nasser's discounting the idea of a modern caliphate may have been viewed by members of the *Ikhwan* as heresy. To the most violent ones, it may have been a motivating factor in the assassination attempt.

While the early years of the Nasser regime saw few acts of political violence by Islamists, during the latter part of his administration, Islamism did stage a comeback. There are numerous dynamics that acted upon the situation. According to Wickham, "He (Nasser) banned all opposition groups and imposed state control over sites where they had formerly reached out to the mass public. At the same time, the regime robbed such groups of a key constituency through the co-optation of educated, lower-middle-class youth."<sup>74</sup> These tactics were not violently opposed by the Islamists for the two reasons mentioned above however this required a more in-depth examination. First, when Nasser banned all opposition groups, he did so from a position of strength and charisma. The Free Officers and consequently the RCC was the first group that had successfully staged a revolution and actually put Egyptians in charge of Egypt for the first time in centuries. Nasser was a very charismatic person which, coupled with the success of the coup made him popular among Egyptians.

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<sup>73</sup> Heikal, 124.

<sup>74</sup> Wickham, 21.

#### **G. NASSER'S SOCIALIST ECONOMIC AGENDA**

Nasser began lowering university fees and tuition and eventually made university education virtually free of charge. After their university educations were complete, the graduates were guaranteed comfortable government jobs. It is hard to mobilize popular support against such a generous regime. This time the ideas of the Islamists could not compete with the socialist programs of the government that were very popular at the time and across the Arab world.

The problem with all of these government benefits is that over time, they became unsustainable in Egypt and the people's devotion to Nasser waned. The economic problems, coupled with the disaster in the 1967 war with Israel left a place for the Islamists to identify with certain Egyptians and stage a comeback.

Not only had Egypt done badly in the "Six-Day War" but they had been spending nearly twenty-five percent of national income on defense spending, exacerbating the economic problems already facing Egypt.<sup>75</sup> These failures militarily and economically would eventually give the Islamists an audience ready to hear a different perspective than that of Arab nationalism or Nasserism.

#### **H. CONCLUSION—NASSER'S LEADERSHIP SUSTAINED THE CONSOLIDATION OF POWER**

While all of these problems may have helped Islamists to organize, it was still difficult for them. According to Diane Singerman, "Islamist movements cannot easily organize

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<sup>75</sup> Vatikiotis, 409.

mass, centralized, bureaucratic organizations; their governments will not let them. Their sympathizers may increase, but the resources for repression at the hands of the Egyptian, (and other) governments are huge.”<sup>76</sup> This is one of the central arguments of Eva Bellin regarding why democracy has a tough time taking hold in modern Arab states. She argues that when authoritarian regimes maintain such a robust style of government with well-funded military and police as well as a strong base of international support, amongst other factors, the likelihood of democracy occurring is small.<sup>77</sup>

In the case of the Egyptian government during the Nasser regime, it is difficult to argue the counter to the theory central to this study: governments politically isolating themselves from the people, not allowing participation and repressing certain groups seen as a challenge to the government, will ultimately lead some anti-government citizens to take violent action in the absence of other means of action being made available to them. The Islamists (or any other group) were never democratically included in the political arena during the Nasser era in Egypt.

When Gamal Abdel Nasser died in 1970, he left Anwar Sadat with myriad problems including: high unemployment, disenfranchised college graduates that were promised government jobs only to be rewarded with years of wait, a corrupt bureaucracy and a socialist system that was not working for most Egyptians. When Sadat became the president

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<sup>76</sup> Singerman, Diane. *The Networked World of Islamist Social Movements*. Edited by Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism, a Social Movement Theory Approach*, (Bloomington; Indiana University Press. 2004), 156.

<sup>77</sup> Bellin, 144.

after Nasser's death, these issues could not be ignored by the Egyptian government thus putting certain reforms to address these issues on the top of Sadat's "to-do" list.

### III. THE SADAT ERA

Upon President Gamal Abdel Nasser's death in 1970, his vice president, Anwar al-Sadat, succeeded him as the President of Egypt. When Sadat first came to power, he, "seemed content to rule in the shadow of Nasser, as was symbolized by the placement of his picture in public places and government offices alongside of, not in place of, Nasser's."<sup>78</sup> Sadat however, was more religious than was Nasser. Nasser seemed to be acting out his Muslim "duties," such as the Hajj and daily prayers, in an effort to maintain a following of faithful Muslims, rather than as a sincere act of worship. Sadat, on the other hand was regarded as a more devout Muslim. He even termed himself the "Believer-President." As an example of Egyptian society's early views of Sadat, a university professor and Islamic activist, Hasan Hanafi observed:

President Sadat has been given the title "the Believer-President." He is always called by his first name Muhammad. He is shown in the mass media in his white *jallabiya*, going to the mosque or coming out of it, with a rosary in one hand, Moses stick in the other, and with a prayer mark on his forehead...He murmurs in prayer, closes his eyes and shows signs of humility and devotion. He begins his speeches with "In the name of God," and ends them with Quranic verses signifying modesty and asking for forgiveness.<sup>79</sup>

While President Nasser saw the Brotherhood as a definite challenge to his authority, especially during the early

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<sup>78</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 212.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

years of his regime, Sadat had always been somewhat sympathetic to their cause.

#### **A. SADAT'S HISTORY WITH THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD**

Interestingly, Sadat's connection with the Brotherhood began before the Free Officers overthrew King Farouk in 1952. As early as 1940, the Free Officers had tried to form an alliance with the Brotherhood. Then-Colonel Anwar al-Sadat made contact (as a representative of the Free Officers) with Hassan al-Banna in order to consider allying with the Brotherhood against the government. Both sides saw possible benefits in enlarging their powerbase for a future coup attempt. Sadat and al-Banna continued to meet occasionally for the next two years.<sup>80</sup> Their discussions likely focused on their anti-colonial thoughts and ways to both rid Egypt of the British and to install a regime palatable both to the Brotherhood and to the military.

In 1942, Colonel Sadat was arrested for his continued contact with German agents.<sup>81</sup> His meetings with them were no doubt an effort to garner Germany's favor and remove the British from Egypt. In the context of the Second World War, the British were very protective of their influence in Egypt and control of it and the Suez Canal for strategic reasons. The British had been fighting General Rommel's German army in the deserts of North Africa and were in danger of losing the region to the Nazis. As such any Egyptian suspected of collusion with the enemies of Britain was taken out of circulation and imprisoned.

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<sup>80</sup> Mitchell, 25.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 25.



Sadat escaped from prison in November of 1944 and almost immediately resumed his meetings with Hasan al-Banna. During this time al-Banna made an interesting request of Sadat. Al-Banna asked if Sadat might arrange a meeting between King Farouk and himself in order to reconcile their differences. Sadat used his influence with a friend, King Farouk's physician who did bring the matter up to the king in 1945. The king rebuffed the idea however and the matter never went any further.<sup>82</sup>

Initially, al-Banna wanted the Free Officers to join the militant wing of the Brotherhood which would have meant they would have had to swear an oath of allegiance to al-Banna. Of course the Free Officers never did so. The two groups kept communication lines open but each had its own vision for the future of Egypt. These visions diverged, with the Brotherhood's goal of an Islamic state standing in contrast of the secular views of key Free Officers. As Harris wrote, "...it is apparent from Colonel al-Sadat's account that each group was extremely wary of the other, and that each group sought to augment its own strength with the help of the other."<sup>83</sup> After the 1940s the Brotherhood never really had as close a relationship with either the Free Officers or the Egyptian government. The secular governments have had different goals and a different vision of Egypt's future than the Brotherhood.

Important to the environment during President Sadat's rule are the effects of the 1967 war with Israel. The Israelis badly defeated the Arab armies and the Islamists stated that the Arab armies' defeat was due to their

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>83</sup> Christina Phelps Harris, *Nationalism and Revolution in Egypt: The Role of the Muslim Brotherhood* (Westport, Connecticut: Hyperion Press, 1981.) 180-181.

government's lack of proper religiousness and piety, in contrast to the Israelis who were faithful to their religion and God. Therefore they had God on their side. In the years following the 1967 war, some of the Brotherhood began to become disillusioned with the compromises and moderate stance of the organization and broke off into their own groups.

#### **B. SADAT, THE NASSERISTS AND ISLAMISM**

Sadat inherited specific situations upon Nasser's death in 1970 that influenced the course of events. Nasser had the liberal policy of providing free education for Egyptian youth at the universities and providing them with comfortable government jobs upon graduation. This was Nasser's way of including the populace, but he did not appreciate that this policy set a standard which could not be maintained. While the university system could grow to accommodate more students, the government bureaucracy could not, even when salaries were frozen during periods of inflation. Jobs were created when there was no need. Eventually, the government had to make people wait to obtain government employment after graduation. Some that were eventually able to find work in the government had waited at least ten years. Others realized that they would not find meaningful work and took jobs that were "beneath" their social status. While President Nasser received public adoration for his programs, President Sadat had to pay the price of breaking the truth to the populace that the government could no longer sustain these programs.

At the time of President Gamal Abdel Nasser's death and Sadat's rise to the presidency in 1970, the

Nasserists in the government still wielded considerable power. Sadat had never really bought in to Nasser's socialism and Arab nationalism ideologies. Shortly after becoming the president he perceived a challenge to his authority by the Nasserists that remained in the government. In a move that surprised many, Sadat carried out his "corrective revolution" on 15 May of 1971.<sup>84</sup> Sadat's former vice president and over 100 other Nasserists were arrested and charged with plotting to overthrow Sadat's government. Many of these men had resigned their government positions in the days before the arrests, possibly in preparation for a coup against Sadat. Regardless, any activities they intended to take against Sadat were preempted by their arrests and imprisonment.<sup>85</sup>

In conjunction with his corrective revolution, Sadat began to co-opt some of Egypt's Islamists freeing some from prison and encouraging the development of Islamist student groups. In retrospect, this was definitely a maneuver to balance the political power of any remaining Nasserists. At the same time Egyptian Islamism became notably polarized between the moderate Islamists like the Brotherhood and the *jihadi* followers of Sayyid Qutb's (among other Islamist leaders) writings. New freedom for the Islamists paved the way for a new direction for the Brotherhood. They spoke out against violence<sup>86</sup> and tried to change Egypt by altering the individual's view of the state. To this end, they provided more education and services for Egyptians.

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<sup>84</sup> Kepel, 65.

<sup>85</sup> OnWar.com *The Corrective Revolution in Egypt 1971*  
[<http://www.onwar.com/aced/data/echo/egypt1971a.htm>] Accessed 15 Sep 2004.

<sup>86</sup> Wickham, 113.

### C. THE VIOLENT FRINGE OF EGYTIAN ISLAMISM

Some of the Islamists broke with the Brotherhood when they became impatient with the Brotherhood's increasingly moderate policies. Some of these spin-off groups included: the *Shabab Muhammad* group, the *Jama't al-Muslimin* (Society of Muslims) also known as *al-Takfir Wal-Hijra* (Excommunication and Holy Migration), hereafter referred to simply as *Takfir*, and *al-Jihad*. Members of the latter would eventually assassinate President Sadat. All three of these groups carried out violent attacks against targets in Egypt during Sadat's rule. According to Mohammed Hafez, "both (*Shabab Muhammad and Takfir*) of these organizations adopted a distinctively radical ideology and engaged in violent activities against the state. However their violence was limited to a few noteworthy incidents and both quickly succumbed to state repression."<sup>87</sup> Probably the largest Islamist group in Egypt during the 1970s in addition to the Brotherhood was the *Gemaa Islamiyya or Gemaa*.

Adding to the Islamists' anti-government sentiments was the failure of the 1967 war with Israel for then-President Nasser's military, for which blame was placed on the secular government. In the year after President Nasser died, Sadat began to release most Brotherhood members that Nasser had imprisoned years earlier.<sup>88</sup> By this, Sadat was hoping to create legitimacy and co-opt from the Islamists. In addition to this act of "good-will," Sadat also promoted the building of mosques and supported the creation of Islamic student organizations or *Gemaa*, on university campuses to counter the influence of the Nasserites and

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<sup>87</sup> Hafez, 32.

<sup>88</sup> Kepel, 63.

other leftist organizations.<sup>89</sup> These groups gained momentum by offering "an 'Islamic solution' to the social crisis that was affecting Egyptian universities at the time. In the 1970s, the numbers of (students) more than doubled while university infrastructure remained unchanged."<sup>90</sup> Sadat encouraged the growth of the *Gemaa* in order to counter his political opponents. Sadat gave support to these new *Gemaa* by instructing members of the Egyptian government to "create an Islamic *tayyar* (movement)," and stating, "I want us to raise Muslim boys, and to spend money on them, so they can become our anchor in the University."<sup>91</sup> Sadat's followers did help some of the new *Gemaa* by "organizing summer camps for university students."<sup>92</sup>

The *Gemaa* would eventually become popular enough to win the elections across the country. This included elections at the faculty, university, and national levels. This demonstrates a move away from socialism toward the ideas of the Islamists as student and instructors such as Cairo University's faculty of engineering made this ideological shift.<sup>93</sup>

These student groups would eventually become strong in Egypt and form a powerful group. This *Gemaa Islamiya* eventually turned into a *jihadi* group with the now notorious blind cleric, Sheikh Abdul al-Rahman, as their spiritual leader.<sup>94</sup> Sheikh al-Rahman is currently serving a prison sentence in the United States after being convicted

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<sup>89</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press. 1996), 174.

<sup>90</sup> Kepel, 82-83.

<sup>91</sup> Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 73.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>93</sup> Wickham, 116.

<sup>94</sup> Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 79.

in the 1993 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center buildings in New York.

The elation of the newly freed Islamists and their recent recruits quickly turned to agitation against Israel. They pressed the Sadat government to take military action, not only to expel the Israelis from the Sinai Peninsula which was lost during the 1967 war, but also to recapture Jerusalem for all the *umma* (i.e. the worldwide Islamic community). In line with Islamist wishes, Sadat attacked Israel in 1973. This at first appeared to produce success for the Egyptians, however the Israeli military turned the tables and surrounded the Egyptian Third Army in the middle of the Sinai Peninsula. As a consequence, the attack on Israel was lauded by the Islamists, but the results were mixed for Egypt.

The Egyptian government and the *Gemaa* were allies until President Sadat flew to Jerusalem to hold peace talks with the Israeli government.<sup>95</sup> After this time, the *Gemaa* and the government became increasingly at odds. Finally, the Sadat government arrested over one thousand political opponents in the fall of 1981. Shortly thereafter, an Egyptian Army Lieutenant and brother of an imprisoned *Gemaa* leader, assassinated President Sadat.<sup>96</sup>

A different Islamist group formed in 1971, out of the ideas established by Sayyid Qutb was *Takfir wal Hijra* (roughly translated as Denouncement and Holy Flight). The "denouncement" is in reference to the declaration that both Egyptian citizens and their government were infidels and

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>96</sup> Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 75.

were legitimate targets for *jihad*.<sup>97</sup> The "Holy Flight" portion of the group's name refers to the Prophet Mohammad's flight from Mecca to Medina in order to both withdraw from "infidel society" and to establish and give military training to believers.<sup>98</sup>

*Takfir wal Hijra* members have directly challenged the Egyptian state through military attacks and assassinations. The state in turn fought the group and executed some of its' members. The group has changed names over time and is still active in Egypt.

The last major Islamist group discussed for the purposes of this overview is *al-Jihad*. This group also formed in the 1970s. In contrast to *Gemaa Islamia*, *al-Jihad* did not believe that preaching the Islamic message would be helpful until the impious regime had been destroyed, overthrown, and replaced by an Islamic state.<sup>99</sup> This group's leaders consisted of Ayman al-Zawahiri (Osama bin-Laden's deputy), and the notorious blind cleric, Shaykh Abd al-Rahman.<sup>100</sup> *Al-Jihad*, in similar fashion to other militant groups, has tried to attack the state directly through assassinations and other destabilizing actions. Again the state violently repressed members when and where it could. Today, it is alleged that *al-Jihad* and *al-Qaeda* have merged into one organization.

While President Nasser did not allow full participation of all political groups in elections, he did allow some. He may have thought that "something is better than nothing," but this could have been mistaken. Allowing

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>99</sup> Kepel, 282.

<sup>100</sup> Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 79.

certain groups to have power and prestige separated them from other groups which were marginalized by the regime. This created fissures in the stability of Egypt that would eventually lead to deeper cracks in the fiber of society. In addition to the political situation in Egypt, there were a few other conditions that Nasser created and Sadat inherited that would eventually set his regime up for internal strife.

#### **D. ECONOMIC CHALLENGES GENERATE UNREST**

Alongside the challenges of free education and guaranteed government jobs for college graduates were drastic economic changes during Sadat's presidency. While Egypt does have some oil reserves, most of their income during the oil boom in the Middle East came in the form of worker remittances. Egypt's plethora of unemployed educated workers migrated to the Gulf States and Libya to seek lucrative employment positions in the oil industry. Workers sent large portions of their pay back to Egypt where it infused the economy. Statistically, Egypt's gross domestic product grew at an average rate of 9 percent annually between 1974 and 1984. This had the effect of doubling the per capita income, raising it from \$334 to \$700 over this same time period.<sup>101</sup> While much of this income was integrated into normal state-run coffers, some of it went into new Islamic banks and investment companies. Wickham states that this "private economy was effectively controlled by eighteen families and their close associates; Brotherhood members accounted for eight. Another study also calculated that Brotherhood interest might control more

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<sup>101</sup> Wickham, 96.



than 40 percent of all economic ventures, many of them centered on real estate and currency speculation."<sup>102</sup> The effect of this was that Islamists controlled considerable financial resources, a trend which began during the Sadat presidency. This fiscal clout makes the government less able to simply ignore the Islamists as their influence on Egypt's economy cannot be understated.

In late 1976, Sadat's government suffered a setback due to Nasser's previous socialist economic policies, which proved popular amongst the public and politically difficult to retract. Food in Egypt was heavily subsidized by the government. The rapid population growth of the urban poor dependent upon these food subsidies, coupled with the government's guarantee of jobs to college graduates, left the government saddled with debt. Even the infusion of cash into the economy due to the oil boom in the Middle East was not enough to overcome these difficulties. Sadat believed that his only option at the time was to turn to the World Bank for loans to pay off some of its debt. In order to satisfy the World Bank the Sadat government announced an end to the food subsidies as well as a freeze on government bonuses and pay increases.<sup>103</sup> The Egyptian public's reaction was swift and violent. There was heavy rioting across the country and the army had to be used to quell the riots. Rioters targeted government offices and signs of wealth and corruption across the country (such as large cars). In the city of Cairo, seventy-seven people were killed due to the rioting.<sup>104</sup> This time, the anti-government violence won out (except for those killed during the rioting), and Sadat

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>103</sup> Hopwood, 109.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 109.

rescinded his orders. Eventually however, Sadat slowly re-enacted his orders to carry out these World Bank recommendations. Interestingly, Sadat blamed the Egyptian Marxists for the riots and hundreds of them were arrested.<sup>105</sup> While the outcome of this event was a real economic change for Sadat and Egypt, this was a definite blow to his popularity.

Nineteen seventy-seven continued to be a violent year across Egypt. In July of that year, members of the militant Islamist group *Takfir wal-Hijra* kidnapped a prominent cleric, Husayn al-Dhahabi. Al-Dhahabi was a teacher at the famous al-Azhar University and had also been a former Minister of Religious Endowments. After the *Takfir's* demands were not met, al-Dhahabi was murdered. The Egyptian government retaliated by executing the leaders of both the *Takfir* and the *Shabab Muhammad*. Additionally many members of these groups were tried by military courts and imprisoned.<sup>106</sup>

#### **E. ELECTION LAW REFORM**

Even though some political freedoms such as voting had been allowed in Egypt, the Sadat government kept implementing new laws to keep control of the government firmly in its grasp. In June of 1977 a bill was passed in the Assembly which, "stipulated that no party would be allowed to function unless it had twenty parliamentary members, an obvious move to silence the opposition."<sup>107</sup> Electoral law manipulation such as this has frequently been used to change the political outcome of elections to suit

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>106</sup> Esposito, *Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, 140.

<sup>107</sup> Hopwood, 114.

the needs of the government, not just in Egypt but around the world where authoritarian regimes have the power to change electoral law.

#### **F. WAR AND PEACE WITH ISRAEL**

What is widely regarded as one of the Islamist's biggest critiques of Sadat was his peace with Israel. While the 1973 war was immensely popular with the Islamists, the peace treaty resulting after the war was not. After all, the Brotherhood had historically fought with the Palestinians and had ultimate designs of unifying the *umma*. This *umma* includes all Muslims including the Palestinian people. Nasser while a socialist, at least had a goal of unifying Muslim Arabs under the United Arab Republic (UAR) banner. Sadat on the other hand was more concerned with Egypt proper. In fact, a trend Sadat encouraged was that of "Egypt First." To demonstrate this, Sadat changed the official name of the country to the Arab Republic of Egypt.<sup>108</sup> This "downsizing" of the goal of a unified Muslim Arab cause may have disappointed the Islamists, due to their dream of reunifying the *umma* under a caliphate.

In April of 1974, the Islamist militant group Shabab Muhammed (a spin-off group from the Brotherhood) successfully captured the Technical Military Academy in Cairo. While underground groups had not been specifically targeted for repression during this time, they were indeed outlawed by the government. Their lack of patience with the government compared with their relatively moderate Brotherhood parent organization. The government was thus

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<sup>108</sup> Ibrahim A. Karawan, "Sadat and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Revisited," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 26, No.2 (May, 1994) 252.

galvanized against them. The Shabab's coup attempt was stopped rather quickly and the government restored order to the area.<sup>109</sup>

In November of 1977, Sadat made his historic visit to Jerusalem to make peace with the Israelis.<sup>110</sup> This was of course criticized by the Islamists as peace was akin to giving in to the Zionists and giving them the holy city containing the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Following further unrest by Islamist students Sadat took numerous key actions over the next few years which would limit the political activity of the Islamists. The first was to pass "vice" laws which made it illegal to criticize the regime.<sup>111</sup> Next, when faced with increasing unrest from young Islamists and students, Sadat decreed the dissolution of student unions, known to be a hotbed for Islamist activity and recruiting.<sup>112</sup> This is telling for Sadat's grip on power in Egypt, since Sadat himself was partly responsible for the formation of *Gemaa* groups to balance the power of the Nasserists early in his presidency.

#### **G. THE SPIRAL OF UNREST, REPRESSION AND VIOLENCE**

Finally, in 1981, events came to a violent climax in Egypt. Coptic Christians and Muslims fought each other, both blaming the government for not fixing the situation. Sadat made his most sweeping repressive gestures during that time. The Coptic Pope Shenouda was suspended from his office, the Brotherhood and thirteen religious organizations were declared to be illegal, over sixty-five

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<sup>109</sup> Esposito and Voll, 174.

<sup>110</sup> Hopwood, 115.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>112</sup> Wickham, 66.

mosques were taken over by the government and over 1,500 people were arrested. There were even signs of the government crumbling from within when Sadat's premier Mustafa Khalil, and his government resigned. Further feeding the Islamist movement, Sadat ordered a mass arrest of over 1,500 more religious activists.<sup>113</sup> This repression was a sign that Sadat either no longer needed the Islamists to balance the power of the Nasserists or that they were becoming too powerful and might challenge Sadat's government for power. A small group of these men (members of *al-Jihad*) finally had reached a breaking point and assassinated President Anwar Al-Sadat on October 6, 1981 while he watched a military parade.<sup>114</sup> This escalation and culmination of violence came years after the Sadat regime repressed the Islamist movement in Egypt, and prevented them from access to government institutions with real decision-making power. By this observation I do not apologize for Islamists act of political violence, but rather attempt to understand the turn to political violence. Such a turn often comes when groups are denied other avenues of influence in the government.

In conclusion, Sadat's regime did begin by attempting to win over the Islamists, freeing them from prison and encouraging some of their activities since they balanced the Nasserists. Over time however, the Islamists grew impatient with Sadat's rhetoric, repression, and lack of political inclusion. Most actions that the Islamists took, whether violent or not, were seen by the Sadat regime as a challenge to his regime. Thus Sadat decided to repress

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<sup>113</sup> Vatikiotis, 420-421.

<sup>114</sup> Esposito, *Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, 142.

them. This conclusion supports the thesis of this study, that repression of Islamists has a direct relationship to their eventual targeting of the government with political violence. While compelling, definite proof of this thesis would require an example of true political inclusion of the Islamists, which did not occur during the Sadat era.

#### IV. THE MUBARAK ERA

President Anwar Sadat had been reviewing a troop procession celebrating the anniversary of the crossing of the Suez Canal on 6 October of 1981 when suddenly, Army Lieutenant Khalid Ahmad Shawqi al-Islambouli and some other soldiers suddenly attacked the reviewing party as they looked on.<sup>115</sup> President Sadat was killed as well as seven other people in the reviewing stand. Vice President Hosni Mubarak was among the twenty-eight people injured.<sup>116</sup>

This assassination occurred one month after Sadat had rounded up and imprisoned over one thousand political opponents. One of those arrested, imprisoned and tortured was a *Gemaa* leader named Muhammad al-Islambouli, the brother of Sadat's assassin.<sup>117</sup> The day after Sadat's death, the People's Assembly nominated Mubarak to succeed Sadat as president. Mubarak was elected and took office on the 13 October, 1981.<sup>118</sup> Mubarak promised to follow in Sadat's footsteps and manner of leadership making no major changes in the day to day operations of the government of Egypt.

Mubarak was born into an upper middle class family. He joined the air force in 1950, became a pilot and successful leader. He was trained as a pilot in the Soviet Union and was appointed to command the bomber forces during the Yemen civil war from 1962 through 1967.<sup>119</sup> He progressed through the ranks until he become Chief of Staff in 1969 and then the commander in chief in 1972. Sadat valued his

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<sup>115</sup> Vatikiotis, 421.

<sup>116</sup> Hopwood, 183.

<sup>117</sup> Sullivan and Amed-Kotob, 75.

<sup>118</sup> Vatikiotis, 434.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

relationship with Mubarak and as such gave him key governmental positions including the deputy minister of war before finally appointing him to be vice president in 1975.<sup>120</sup>

#### **A. MUBARAK'S FIRST YEARS IN OFFICE**

Following Mubarak's election to fill Sadat's shoes as the President of Egypt, a first order of business was to seek justice for the assassination attack. Lieutenant Islambouli and members of his group confessed to the killings and were not remorseful. During his confession, Lt. Islambouli stated, "I killed him but I am not guilty. I did what I did for the sake of religion and of my country. I killed the pharaoh."<sup>121</sup>

Islambouli and his co-conspirators were members of the Islamist group *al-Jihad* and followed the leadership of an electrical engineer named Abdessalam Faraj. Faraj was a follower of the teachings of Sayyid Qutb who advocated militant action against what he saw as *jahiliyya* or impious governments and leaders. As such, Faraj wrote a pamphlet translated as *The Hidden Imperative* or *The Missing Obligation*. The subject of this obligation was "the ulema's obligation to declare  *Jihad* against any ruler failing to implement the precepts of Islam, even if he calls himself a Muslim. In Faraj's view, the religious clerics of Egypt had betrayed their trust."<sup>122</sup> In the eyes of *al-Jihad*, this betrayal of trust allowed persons in the organization to make their own judgments and rulings against the government

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<sup>120</sup> Encyclopedia of the Orient. "Hosni Mubarak" [<http://i-cias.com/e.o/mubarak.htm>]. Accessed 31 Aug 2004.

<sup>121</sup> Hopwood 183.

<sup>122</sup> Kepel, 86.



that in this case called for the overthrow of the government including the assassination of Sadat. Faraj declared Jihad against the government and President Sadat calling him an "apostate of Islam fed at the tables of imperialism and Zionism."<sup>123</sup> Interestingly, Faraj was equally critical of moderate Islamists such as the Brotherhood. *Al-Jihad* viewed the Brothers as a group that only served to strengthen the Egyptian government by participating in a political process. *Al-Jihad's* group view was that the government did not intend to share power with any Islamists.

Shortly after Sadat's assassination, *al-Jihad* cells initiated numerous attacks around Egypt in an attempt to overthrow the government. The 1979 Iranian revolution was still on the mind of many in the Middle East, and the Egyptian Islamists were no exception. The attacks following Sadat's death were intended to create an anti-government uprising across Egypt, in turn causing a revolution. *Al-Jihad* had planned to capture the radio and television stations in Cairo in order to announce the start of the revolution. As history shows, however, they were not successful in capturing the station and the coup attempt failed. Nonetheless, small riots occurred around the country in the days following, particularly in Asyut in Upper Egypt.<sup>124</sup>

Shortly after the government regained control of the situation, thousands of *al-Jihad* members were arrested. More than three hundred were charged with murder and other high crimes, including attempted overthrow of the

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>124</sup> Sullivan and Amed-Kotob, 81.

government. On 15 April 1982 five of the assassins were executed by firing squad or hanging. Later that year the government passed sentence on eighty-nine other conspirators with prison terms ranging from three years to life in prison. In a show of defiance, the one-hundred seventy-four people acquitted staged a demonstration outside the prison upon their release and were heard chanting, "Islamic revolution is coming."<sup>125</sup>

While Mubarak did voice his commitment to the policies of Sadat, he actually made some conciliatory moves toward militants and dissidents in 1982 by releasing several high-profile individuals Sadat had earlier imprisoned. This included journalist and author Mohamad Heikal, feminist leader Dr. Nawal al-Sadawi and numerous Muslim Brothers including the editor of the Brother's journal *al-Dawa*.<sup>126</sup> This move may have been an attempt to placate the Islamists and other elements of Egyptian society that were critical of the government's heavy-handed policies. It may have been a gesture to empower the more moderate Islamists while the government continued to repress the militant ones, especially those belonging to *al-Jihad* and the *Gemaa*. In Mubarak's favor was a perception that the president was a fair man, punishing the corruption of high-ranking individuals. For example, President Sadat's brother Ismat had been accused of corruption, and Mubarak permitted the criminal trial take place without government intervention.<sup>127</sup> This was seen by some as a sign that President Mubarak was at least attempting to make the government more transparent and less corrupt.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>126</sup> Vatikiotis, 434.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 435.

Although Mubarak has at times taken steps to minimize at least the perceptions of corruption in the Egyptian government, the government has taken strong steps in order to limit government access for opposition groups. There is no question that in modern Egyptian history, the most powerful movement has been the Islamist movement. Far and away the forerunner in sheer numbers of people as well as in political influence has been and is the Brotherhood. At certain times during Mubarak's tenure, the Brotherhood put forward a formidable legitimate challenge to the government, such as the parliamentary elections of 1987 where Islamists won twenty-two percent of the seats in the parliament. More often than not however, the government used many various means to limit the power of opposition groups. In order for the government to retain a measure of legitimacy (at least with foreign governments or agencies). much of the means of limiting Islamist power has been legal, such as election law "reform" or the passing of new laws. As will become evident, each of these laws limits the power of groups that would oppose the government's power hold.

#### **B. BARRIERS TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

The first law of importance that still has an effect on the Islamist movement was passed during the Nasser regime: Law 32. This law regulates non-governmental (NGO) activity in Egypt. According to this law, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) has the ultimate power to regulate anything having to do with NGOs in Egypt. It has the powers of "registration, control, supervision, regulation,

oversight, management, direction, appointment etc.”<sup>128</sup>  
Specific examples of the powers of MOSA regarding NGOs are as follows:

MOSA may refuse an association permission to be formed, prevent money from coming to an association from abroad, appoint a temporary board of directors, dissolve an association and transfer its money to another, merge two or more associations doing similar activities, deny permission to raise fund through donations and other methods of collecting money for social purposes. The authorization granting such control and oversight goes on and on throughout the text of the law.<sup>129</sup>

These examples demonstrate the far-reaching powers the government has given its own ministry to rein in any NGOs that would pretend to leach power from the government. MOSA is but one layer of oversight and bureaucracy that NGOs must endure in order to carry out their desired functions.

A related piece of legislation, Law 43, was passed in 1979. This is the law of local administration and gives each of Egypt's 26 governorates administrative powers over NGOs.<sup>130</sup> This law demonstrates the Egyptian government's dedication to the oversight of NGO activities and bureaucratic layering of challenges potential opposition groups and/or NGOs must go through.

While the Egyptian government has not given many concessions to Islamists, it did offer one that moves toward all Islamist's goal of the implementation of *sharia*. In an attempt to court the favor of the Islamists, in 1980, the Egyptian government amended Article 2 of its

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<sup>128</sup> Denis J. Sullivan, "State and Civil Society in Conflict in Egypt," *Middle East Affairs Journal* Vol. 3, nos. 1-2, (Winter/Spring 1997), pp. 76.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

constitution, "making Islamic *sharia* the only source of legislation."<sup>131</sup> This was applauded by the Brotherhood as a move toward the eventual implementation of a true *sharia* legal system. While this amendment does seem to give credence to the moderate Islamists, the government has been quick to curtail the influence and power of groups such as the Brotherhood when the government felt challenged.

The main contemporary barrier to political participation in Egypt is arguably the Emergency Law, which has been in effect since Sadat's death in 1981. This law "gives the government sweeping authority and control over societal activities and authorizes censorship of printed materials, restrictions on meetings and gathering, and arrests on the basis of suspicion."<sup>132</sup> As will be illustrated throughout this study this law has been and is used extensively to suit the needs of the government to rein in militants and to serve its ultimate goal of retaining power. Thousands of Egyptians have been detained without trial over of the last two decades or have been tried by an emergency court, which does not use the same rules as a normal civil court in Egypt. According to the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch/Middle East, hundreds of episodes of torture have been carried out by governmental officials under the auspices of this Emergency Law. Of course, those that challenge the power of the regime are most at risk for such punishment, therefore Islamists make up a large portion of those treated in this manner by their own government.<sup>133</sup> The broad and non-specific powers contained in this law allow

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<sup>131</sup> Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 57.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

the government to have true authoritarian power over goings on in Egypt.

**C. THE BROTHERHOOD CREATES A NICHE IN SOCIETY**

Despite operating under the constraints of Law 32 and the Emergency Law, the Brotherhood was nevertheless able to establish itself as a viable political force by providing services and goods to the people, often better than the government. Further, the Brotherhood appealed to Muslim Egyptian's sense of community and identity.

The penetration of the Brotherhood in professional associations in Egypt such as the bar association, engineer associations and physicians associations exemplifies how well the Islamists are respected across the country. The leadership of many of these organizations as well as NGOs is largely made up of Brotherhood members who are indeed Islamists themselves. The Brotherhood seeks to change society and governments from the bottom up, rather than by coup or other violent means. Winning elections of unions or prestigious professional associations demonstrates that the Brotherhood is moving toward the attainment of this goal.

Vital to the resurgence of Islamist popularity is their ability to see the problems of ordinary Egyptians and meet their various needs. The Brotherhood has an advanced system of such support networks across Egypt to help solve problems that the government is either unable or unwilling to address. These include such issues as health care, education, banking/loans, legal services/consultations, and job training. While the Islamists are not able to solve all of these problems, "...the fact that they are trying tells the ordinary Egyptian that these people, from their own

communities, at least care and that the government, its corrupt and lazy bureaucracy, and especially its powerful and effective security forces do not care, are not trying to help, and are in fact making matters worse.”<sup>134</sup>

According to Munson, the Brotherhood’s ability and method of moving into new areas was critical to their success in Egyptian society. The organization typically moves into new areas by first establishing a mosque. After providing religious teaching to members of the community and receiving *zakat* and other income, the new center would start some sort of public service in order to attract a following. This included building schools, clinics, or running youth programs. The rapid expansion of the Brotherhood and its spirit of public service quickly made it a popular group with ordinary Egyptians.<sup>135</sup>

In addition to providing for basic needs, some Islamist groups offer other incentives for joining their movements. The Brotherhood for example, is an important part of the social fabric of communities where people not only can be a positive contribution to a group but can also receive benefits for themselves and their families. This sometimes includes employment networks, dating/marriage opportunities and even day care services amongst members of the community of Islamists.<sup>136</sup>

All of the above-mentioned factors are reasons Egyptians would want to join or at least support the Islamists. The Islamists are often sincere in their efforts to help people and remain part of the community, while the

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<sup>134</sup> Sullivan, 70.

<sup>135</sup> Ziad Munson, “Islamic Mobilization: Social Movement Theory and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.” *The Sociological Quarterly* 42, no.4 (2001): 501.

<sup>136</sup> Wickham, 153.

government is viewed as corrupt, bureaucratic and inefficient. This very popularity of the Islamists is what makes them a threat to the Mubarak government, even though the Brotherhood has denounced violence and has expressed their intentions to work within legal means, accommodating the government and taking the opportunities afforded them legally.

#### **D. MUBARAK ACCOMMODATES THE MODERATE ISLAMISTS**

The Mubarak government was initially accommodating to the Brotherhood and other peaceful Islamists after Sadat's assassination. One theory is that the government knew its position was tenuous and wanted to consolidate power by accommodating Islamists who denounced anti-government violence. Another theory is that Mubarak sincerely wanted to move toward a more democratic society. The former is more likely than the latter in light of history and the regional political landscape. Meanwhile, Sadat's assassins were tried and executed for their crime.

This brief moment in the early 1980s shows an interesting snapshot of a mix of selective accommodation of peaceful Islamists and discriminate repression of violent Islamists. This short period of time reflects the recommendations by Hafez on how Islamists should be treated by governments as they strive for increased democratization. In fact Hafez states, "governments in the Muslim world, and the Western states that take them as their allies...must exercise a delicate balance between institutional inclusion of moderates and targeted



repression of radicals."<sup>137</sup> The only other option for policymakers and governments is to continue with the status quo by excluding Islamists from political participation and repressing them as a group which would serve only to legitimize and empower the radicals among them.<sup>138</sup>

#### **E. ISLAMISTS EXCLUDED FROM POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

This opportunity to move toward democratization and inclusion of the Islamists was interrupted in the mid 1980s by new laws. These new anti-inclusion laws were spurred by numerous circumstances. The first was the explosive growth of Islamist organizations and influence across Egypt. Starting in the universities and professional associations, the Brotherhood won elections in these groups across the campuses of Egypt. Students who had been activists during the Sadat era were now employed either in government or in the private sector but maintained the Islamist views attained during their days as students. These maturing professionals started to take leadership roles in society and thus were seen as a challenge to the government.

The second factor increasing Islamist power was the rapid expansion of the Islamic banking sector across the Muslim world. The Middle East oil business had now been a high growth industry for decades, and while Egypt did not have a large petroleum reserve, many Egyptians had worked in the Arabian peninsula's oil industry. They sent their newfound wealth home to Egypt, and deposited it in Islamic banks. These banks did not pay interest, currently interpreted in Islamic law as usury, but rather an annual

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<sup>137</sup> Hafez, 210.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

return. Usury is forbidden in the Quran and thus is not permissible. Nevertheless, some Islamic banks or investment companies offered annual returns of nearly 25 percent! These banks were very successful: they had ties to the black market and experience in thwarting government scrutiny, and benefited from religious leaders' blessings. They were hailed as following *sharia* while conventional banks were criticized through *fatwas* (religious rulings).

In 1988 the government stepped in and reversed its earlier support of Islamic financial institutions. The fear was that the Islamists would amass enough financial resources to empower the Brothers in bolder steps against the government. The government decided to run a campaign against these companies. Egyptian newspapers that had earlier run advertisements for these financial institutions now ran columns against them alleging ties to militant extremists. Allegations of fraud were also put forth. The result was a rush by some members of the public to withdraw their funds, driving a few of the institutions to file for bankruptcy.<sup>139</sup> Again, the government took action when it felt there might have been a threat to its power and influence, despite the fact that this threat took the form of a peaceful legitimate challenge and not a violent coup threat.

#### **F. ISLAMISTS AND ELECTION PARTICIPATION**

Electoral manifestations of the growing influence of the Brotherhood and other Islamists across Egypt were clear during the parliamentary elections of 1984, when 58 seats out of 448 (13 percent) of the seats were won by opposition

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<sup>139</sup> Kepel, 280-281.

groups. Three years later opposition candidates won 100 out of 458 (22 percent) seats in parliament. Of these 100 seats, Brotherhood candidates won thirty-six. This made the Brotherhood the leading opposition group in the parliament after the elections in 1987. In order to retain this newly found freedom, Brotherhood leaders steadfastly maintained their commitment to pluralism, nonviolence and gradual change in Egypt. An interesting aspect of this acquiescence to the government's legitimacy was that the Brotherhood supported Mubarak's nomination for re-election to the Presidency in 1987.<sup>140</sup>

The more radical elements of the Islamist movement criticized the Brotherhood for participating in the electoral process. They argued that true political access was denied since the legislative branch has no real decision-making power. However, Mustapha Mashhur, the fifth general guide of the Brotherhood, gave five reasons for participating in the electoral process:

- Through the prominent parliamentary platform and immunity granted to (them), the Brotherhood could clarify the meaning of its slogan "Islam is the Solution," which is one of the means of commanding the good and prohibiting the forbidden.
- Through the parliamentary platform the Brotherhood could hold the government and the ruling party accountable for their policies as well as attempt to persuade them to adopt an alternative path. If the Brotherhood does not succeed it still benefits because it let the people know its position while exposing its opponent.
- Participating in elections is akin to public education, for it allows the people to hear

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<sup>140</sup> Hafez, 48-49.

the message of the Brotherhood during campaigns.

- Participating in elections is akin to a public referendum on the slogan "Islam is the Solution," thus allowing the Brotherhood to gauge its public support.
- Through election campaigns and parliament, the Brotherhood could discover its opponents and what they hide in their hearts. It also allows the Brotherhood to discover the supporters of the movement who are willing to defend it with their pens and tongues.<sup>141</sup>

The later part of the 1980s saw few acts of political violence in Egypt. An Islamist group known as "Survivors from Hell Fire" did attempt three assassinations against two different former ministers of the interior and the editor of a secular magazine. None of these attempts was successful.<sup>142</sup> Perhaps this brief period of the state's accommodation of moderate Islamists again had a marginalizing effect on the *jihadi* groups.

#### **G. NEW ELECTION REFORM AND POLITICAL EXCLUSION**

The 1990s ushered in a new era in politics in Egypt. The government again saw that the Islamists were gaining in public support and took steps to change the outcome of the 1990 parliamentary elections. In 1990, the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that the current election laws unfairly discriminated against independent candidates, and declared the previous parliamentary elections nullified. President Mubarak subsequently disbanded the parliament and appointed a legal team to draft new election laws.<sup>143</sup> Soon

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<sup>141</sup> In *al-Liwa al-Islami*, (June 1987); Hafez; 50.

<sup>142</sup> Hafez 52.

<sup>143</sup> Pripstein-Posusney, "Behind the Ballot Box: Authoritarian Elections and Oppositional Strategies in the Middle East" *Middle East Report*, no. 209, (Winter, 1998) 15.

after, the state issued new electoral Laws 201, 202, and 206 to replace the now-defunct Law 188. While these laws did allow for individual candidates, they did not satisfy the Islamists. One drastic effect of new Law 206 was that it gerrymandered the districts in order to heavily favor the ruling NDP. The opposition groups had no input in the content of the new laws. The result of these laws was upsetting enough to opposition groups that they decided to boycott the 1990 parliamentary elections in order to delegitimize the outcome. The result of these elections was that less than two percent of the seats went to the opposition.

#### **H. ANTI-STATE VIOLENCE ESCALATES**

The period between the 1990 and 1995 elections was marked by government exclusion and repression of Islamists including members of the Brotherhood. The government probably realized that its support base was low due to several factors, including the government's unpopular support of coalition forces in the Gulf War as well as the 1990 election boycott by the Islamists. These factors may have helped lead to drastic rises in the numbers of acts of political violence carried out by Islamists across Egypt from 1992 through 1997. During this five year period, according to official figures, 1,442 people died due to such incidents of violence.<sup>144</sup> Members of *Gemaa* and *al-Jihad* carried out most of these acts while the Brotherhood continued to shun violence.

While it is unknown whether there is a direct connection between the government's political exclusion and

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<sup>144</sup> Hafez, 34.

repression of Islamists and the acts of violence during this period, trends indicate that when moderate groups like the Brotherhood are repressed and excluded, the radicals are empowered to act out violently. When the government indiscriminately represses all Islamists, the *jihadi* groups are able to more convincingly argue that the moderates attempting political participation are merely prolonging the inevitable by legitimizing an oppressive regime that never intends to share power with Islamists. Additionally, members of the society at large that are not Islamists but rather interested Muslims may ascribe legitimacy to certain acts of violence in these circumstances. Their support is generally turned off by the violence when innocent bystanders are killed or injured.

Interestingly, as the acts of anti-state violence increased, the government tightened its grip on the control of Islamist groups by passing more laws. In 1992, the Antiterrorism Law was passed giving the government the power to execute people for just belonging to a "terrorist" group.<sup>145</sup> Indeed as the *Gemaa* increasingly challenged government hegemony violently, especially in Upper Egypt, the state also became more violent. The number of Islamists killed increased each year from 1992 through 1995, as the government initiated a shoot-to-kill policy regarding Islamists confronting the authorities. Nineteen ninety-five was indeed a violent year: over 200 Islamists were killed during clashes with authorities. Meanwhile, thousands of Islamists and their supporters and family members were

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<sup>145</sup> Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 127.

arrested and detained in the period through the 1990s until violence ceased in 1998.<sup>146</sup>

## I. MUBARAK INCREASES REPRESSION

If the early 1980s were a doorway to an opportunity to move toward democracy due to accommodation of moderate Islamists and repression of the violent ones, then the early 1990s were the opposite. The state felt insecure due to numerous clashes with Islamists. Other Arab regional political concerns such as the Egypt's support of coalition forces during the unpopular Gulf War caused domestic unrest and complicated the issues. Thus it carried out a massive crackdown on Islamists starting in 1992, the same year the attacks on tourists had begun. Much of the unrest was in Upper Egypt, a known stronghold of the *Gemaa*. While part of this unrest is likely anti-state Islamism under the auspices of the teachings of Sayyid Qutb, another element of this unrest was probably due to domestic, regional politics. The problem is the domination of southern Egypt by northern Egyptians. Fandy writes, "The focus on poverty and injustice in the south seems to be a dominant theme in *al-Gemaa's* pronouncements. Unlike the Brotherhood, *al-Gemaa's* main writings do not dwell on larger Middle Eastern questions such as pan-Arabism, the Palestinian question, or Israel and the West."<sup>147</sup> Whereas many members of the Brotherhood were physicians and engineers, most of the *Gemaa* were from the lower or middle classes.

The *Gemaa* increased its activities and carried out many attacks on various public figures including the

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<sup>146</sup> Hafez, 85-87.

<sup>147</sup> Mamoun Fandy, "Egypt's Islamic Group: Regional Revenge?" *Middle East Journal*, vol 48, no.4, (Autumn 1994) 610.

Egyptian minister of information, Sawat Shair, the former minister of the interior General Hasan al-Alfi, Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz and the popular secular journalist Farag Foda.<sup>148</sup>

Partially in response to these acts by the *Gemaa*, the Egyptian government passed the Antiterrorism Law of 1992. This new law was similar to other previous laws in that it gave the government sweeping powers. This time, the law allowed the government to execute people for merely belonging to a "terrorist" group.<sup>149</sup>

Another step the government took to reign in the influence of the Islamists was to obtain more control over private mosques. The Ministry of Religious Endowments had the power to incorporate any mosques not currently overseen by the government. In 1992 the government announced that it intended to nationalize all 140,000 such private mosques throughout Egypt.<sup>150</sup> This was an ambitious goal, however, since the government needed to train and employ new imams (prayer leaders) for each mosque. According to Dr. Muhammad Ali Mahgub, the minister in charge of the operation, the main target of the initial action was an area of Upper Egypt around Asyut, Minya and Sohag, where there were 1,750 mosques that were known to be controlled by "extremists." Further, according to Mahgub, the cost of taking such nationalizing action was projected at 300 million Egyptian pounds.<sup>151</sup> Perhaps the biggest challenge was the shortage of imams. Initially the government hired all 5,000 graduated

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<sup>148</sup> Jeffrey A. Nedoroscik, "Extremist Groups in Egypt" *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 14, no 2 (Summer 2002) 60.

<sup>149</sup> Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 127.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>151</sup> Wickham, 107.



from the al-Azhar school in 1992 and also began a program to train an additional 15,000 new imams. In the end however, the state's goals could not be met and they were forced to allow some Islamist organizations to operate in at least some of the mosques throughout Egypt.<sup>152</sup>

As the high levels of violence continued in Egypt through 1992 and into 1993, the government took further actions to marginalize Islamists. Until the new "Syndicates Law" was passed in 1993, the professional associations throughout Egypt were mostly led by Islamists, chiefly member of the Brotherhood. This sector of Egypt's civil society had been gradually courted by the Islamists and by the late 1980s managed to become the most numerous groups of persons elected to the leadership posts of organizations such as the Egyptian Medical Association, the Egyptian Pharmacists Association and other prestigious white-collar organizations. Notably, the elections for board members of these associations have typically low voter turnout on the order of 23 percent or less.<sup>153</sup>

The state realized these associations had influence across Egypt and became alarmed when they realized that the Brotherhood had taken over most of the leadership of these professional associations. In a manner similar to their electoral engineering actions for national elections, the 1993 Syndicates Law took advantage of the low voter turnouts for these associations by ruling that at least 50 percent of organization members must vote in order for the elections to be considered valid.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 106-107.

<sup>153</sup> Saad Eddin Ibrahim, *Egypt, Islam and Democracy: Twelve Critical Essays*. (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1996), 59.

<sup>154</sup> Hafez, 54.

Almost as interesting as the legislation itself was the manner in which it was passed into law. When opposition (Islamist) members of parliament heard that such a law might be in the works, they insisted upon being involved in the writing of the legislation. The government denied such a law was being considered until 15 February 1993 when it was proposed in the parliament. Two days later, the law was enacted. The true hegemony of the government and ability of the executive (President Mubarak) to pass laws was revealed in this legislative show of force.<sup>155</sup>

The Mubarak government continued the spiral of repression and violence by passing the Egyptian Universities Act amendment in 1994. In the spirit of the Syndicates Law passed the previous year, this amendment sought to limit the influence of Islamists, this time in academic circles. The academic departments of many universities across Egypt had elected Islamists as their academic deans, giving Islamists more power in Egyptian society. The government dissolved this practice with new rules, giving government authorities powers to appoint academic deans across Egypt.<sup>156</sup>

While this type of repression was less blatant, the government took direct actions against Islamists in 1994. First, an Islamist lawyer died in state custody one day after his arrest and the government was not open about the cause of death. Following the announcement of his death, hundreds of lawyers marched in protest of the state's brutality. Thirty three of them were arrested, many of whom

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Joel Campana, "From Accommodation to Confrontation: The Muslim Brotherhood in the Mubarak Years." *Journal of International Affairs* 50, no.1 (Summer 1996), 295.

were members of the Brotherhood.<sup>157</sup> Finally, in 1994, the state again outlawed the Brotherhood. Mubarak stated that the "Muslim Brotherhood is an illegal organization...behind most activities of the troublemakers camp."<sup>158</sup> The Brotherhood publicly denounced violence and attempted to distance themselves from groups like *Gemaa* and *al-Jihad*. This brought the Brotherhood more public support from ordinary Egyptians, support which was probably more threatening to the regime than the militant attacks by the *jihadis*. Nonetheless, the government targeted the Brotherhood with repression in the mid-90s by attempting to tie them to the activities of violent Islamists. During this period the state argued that the "Muslim Brotherhood and the jihadists are two sides of the same coin...The (Brotherhood) and the *Gemaa*, the regime argued, engaged in role distribution to achieve their goal of destabilizing and toppling the regime."<sup>159</sup>

The counter argument to this view is that the Islamists were anything but unified in their goals and denounced each others' activities publicly. Even the regime's activities betrayed its public denouncement of the Brotherhood and *Gemaa* as co-conspiratorial groups, evidenced by the lenient sentencing received by Brotherhood members compared to the more radical Islamists arrested by the state.<sup>160</sup> While the Brotherhood members were repressed by the state, members of the *Gemaa* received even harsher treatment at the hands of the state. While the Brotherhood members received lighter sentences and shorter detention

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

<sup>159</sup> Hafez, 88.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

periods, the *Gemaa* faced mass arrests and extrajudicial killings by the state.<sup>161</sup> This does demonstrate that the state engaged in selective repression.

Nineteen ninety five saw the further intensification of violence as the *Gemaa* attempted to assassinate President Mubarak in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The government's reaction was "ruthless repression, and in the end, the tide swung decisively in its favor. The *Gemaa* had failed to mobilize the urban masses...and was now obliged to fall back on sporadic sorties against tourists, Copts, and policemen from its bases in the Nile Valley."<sup>162</sup>

#### **J. ELECTION TAMPERING AND INTERFERENCE**

That same year, 1995 was another parliamentary election year. Due to the assassination attempt on the president, the government was in no mood to accommodate the Islamists in their election bids. The government openly stated that the elections would be free and fair and that opposition parties would be allowed. Contrary to government claims however, opposition leaders and human rights groups stated that the 1995 parliamentary elections were characterized by a high level of repression and interference.<sup>163</sup> All told, the 1995 elections were probably the most repressive elections to date. Shortly before the elections, the government made strong moves against the opposition, mainly the Brotherhood. Shortly before the election, the government closed the Cairo offices of the Brotherhood and arrested fifty-four Brotherhood members (many were political candidates), on charges that they had

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<sup>161</sup> Hafez, 91.

<sup>162</sup> Kepel, 294.

<sup>163</sup> Pripstein-Posusney, 42.

engaged in "unconstitutional activities." These men were sentenced by military courts to jail sentences ranging from three to five years. Then the government's Interior Minister Hasa al-Alfi announced that the Brothers, *al-Jihad*, and *Gemaa* were all part of the same group, and the night before the election over one thousand brothers were arrested.<sup>164</sup> Finally, when the elections were held the government resorted to intimidation, ballot stuffing, and outright violence on election day. When the elections were completed 50 people had been killed and nearly 900 were wounded. Needless to say the Islamists did not fare well in the 1995 elections with the ruling NDP party "winning" 94 percent of the seats.<sup>165</sup>

Fortunately, the 2000 elections were a departure from the repressive policies of the past. Prior to the elections, Egypt's constitutional court had ruled that the previous two parliamentary elections were invalid since they were not judicially supervised. Thus, the court declared the results from the previous two elections invalid. Shortly thereafter, the government passed election reform laws that made them subject to the oversight and scrutiny of Egypt's judiciary. While government representatives praised the Mubarak regime for conducting "free and fair" elections, Islamists were again blocked from full participation. Brotherhood members were arrested prior to the elections and interference was noted at certain polling stations. Nonetheless, opposition seats more than doubled from the 1995 elections and Brotherhood

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<sup>164</sup> Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 53.

<sup>165</sup> Pripstein-Posusney, 42.

members managed to garner seventeen seats in the parliament<sup>166</sup> by running as independents.<sup>167</sup>

Since gaining independence from Britain, Egypt has never had "free and fair" elections in a Western sense. Egypt's elections have historically been marred by out and out vote rigging, gerrymandering, arresting and jailing opposition party members, banning certain opposition (usually Islamist) parties and finally changing election laws to suit the needs of the government in a given election. As Egypt moves toward the next elections in 2005 when Mubarak is up for re-election, it will be interesting to see just how "free and fair" the elections will be.

There is room for hope as Egypt's election laws have recently empowered the judiciary with some oversight in an attempt to legitimize the elections. There have been some important judicial decisions in recent years that actually demonstrate this power. An example from June of 2000 shows that the Constitutional Court actually struck down the government's new law restricting civil associations and institutions. According to Wickham, this judicial power should not be overstated since "if Egypt's judges have limited the regime's freedom of maneuver, it is only because the regime has chosen to honor their decisions."<sup>168</sup>

#### **K. GEMAA VIOLENCE BACKFIRES**

Toward the late 1990s the government's brutal repression of Islamists, especially members of the *Gemaa* began to become successful. Actual acts of violent incidents seemed to be on the wane until the *Gemaa* attacked

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<sup>166</sup> Wickham, 223-224.

<sup>167</sup> James Badcock, "Egypt: The Wheels of Change," *The Middle East*, (December, 2003) 25.

<sup>168</sup> Wickham, 224.

and killed 58 tourists in Luxor on 17 November 1997.<sup>169</sup> This attack devastated Egypt's tourism industry and economy. The Islamists in turn lost any hope of getting the sympathies of the Egyptian public. Interestingly, different factional leaders of the *Gemaa* released conflicting statements after the Luxor massacre, some praising the attack while others denounced it. Eventually, *Gemaa* leaders including the imprisoned (in the United States for the 1993 World Trade Center bombing) Shaikh Abdul Rahman called for a unilateral cease-fire with the government that actually took place in November of 1998. Once the Egyptian government realized that the *Gemaa* were sincere in their cease-fire declaration, some concessions were made including the release of some imprisoned members.<sup>170</sup>

Although the government seemed to come to a sort of "agreement" with the *Gemaa* after periods of severe repression, the violence-denouncing Brotherhood continued to be the real challenge to the government due to their immersion in society. In 1999, the government demonstrated their concern over the power of the Brotherhood by arresting twenty Brotherhood leaders "including prominent members of the Lawyers', Engineers', Doctors', Pharmacists', and Veterinarians' Associations."<sup>171</sup> After a long and much publicized trial, fifteen of the twenty received prison terms for belonging to an illegal group and planning to overthrow the government.<sup>172</sup>

Wickham states that the government had three goals in this arrest and trial. The first was to increase the risks

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<sup>169</sup> Nedoroscik, 49.

<sup>170</sup> Hafez, 137.

<sup>171</sup> Wickham, 215.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

of membership in an Islamist political group (the Brotherhood). The second goal was to transform the public image of the Brotherhood from a moderate, peaceful group to that of a radical group that endangered the government and thus the stability of Egypt. This was accomplished through the tactical use of the media. The final goal of the government was to prevent these influential and popular members of the Brotherhood from running for office in both the parliament and in the professional associations.<sup>173</sup>

#### **L. MUBARAK MAINTAINS THE STATUS QUO**

Examining the violence, arrests, and deaths of Islamists since Sadat's death in 1981<sup>174</sup> demonstrates that the Mubarak regime has not allowed much political opportunity for opposition groups, especially the Islamist ones. The government appears to have taken reactionary and mostly indiscriminate measures after Islamists have been able to mobilize, which according to Mohammad Hafez is not very effective. Hafez argues that more effective tactics would include institutional inclusion of moderates while targeting known radicals with repressive activities.<sup>175</sup> This behavior in theory would empower the moderates, marginalize the radicals and give the government a legitimacy they cannot gain by repressing broad groups of people.

My analysis shows that the government's denial of political opportunities is cyclical, corresponding to election periods. While periods between elections have been

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>174</sup> Hafez' book, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World* has a wealth of statistics regarding acts of violence in Egypt from 1970 through 2001. Also, numbers of persons arrested in Egypt from 1992 through 1997 as well as Islamists killed during the same time period. 33, 86-87.

<sup>175</sup> Hafez, 210.



relatively peaceful in Egypt in recent years, it is difficult to judge whether the government is being either inclusive or repressive as both parties have much more at stake during the election periods than during the "in-between" years. The upcoming 2005 elections should be scrutinized to determine if indeed any real electoral reforms have taken place in Egypt, or if the status quo remains. Conventional wisdom and cynicism point toward the latter, as authoritarian regimes are loath to share any power with would-be challengers.

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## V. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OR EXCLUSION OF THE ISLAMISTS?

### A. MODERN ISLAMISM IN EGYPT: CYCLES OF VIOLENCE, REPRESSION AND CO-OPTATION

When modern Islamism began in 1928 with the Brotherhood, it was mostly an anti-colonial and pro-caliphate group of people. It was also a reaction to the corruption of government and the westernization of Egypt which Hasan al-Banna viewed as a seed for the decline in moral values across Egypt. In al-Banna's views, Islam was (and is) the "solution" to all problems. As the Brotherhood rapidly grew in the first 25 years of its existence it became bolder and took an active role in the 1948 war on the side of the Palestinians, alongside Egyptian government troops. While critical of King Farouk's complicity with the British, the Brotherhood did attempt to persuade the King to adopt *sharia*.

When King Farouk felt his regime was threatened by the Brotherhood and banned them, violence between the two spiraled, resulting in the deaths of the Egyptian prime minister and al-Banna.

While there was not much political inclusion of any citizens during the days of King Farouk, the banning of the Brotherhood galvanized the organization. Since they already had decades to build and take root across Egypt, banning such an established organization had negative consequences for the government. Certainly, repressing the Brotherhood rather than co-opting them did not help the Farouk government, which was already limited by its lack of independent status. Certainly, the British would not have tolerated the imposition of *sharia* across Egypt any more

than Farouk would have. In the context of the times, therefore, it is questionable how much say Farouk really had in how the Brotherhood was treated. Nonetheless, attempts by al-Banna to meet with the King fell on deaf ears, and both the government and the Brotherhood continued their escalating levels of violence.

No other group actively challenged the Farouk government's power the way the Brotherhood did until the Free Officers' coup established a new government in 1952. Had the Farouk government not banned the Brotherhood but rather at least given them an audience for their grievances, it is likely that the assassination of the prime minister would not have occurred. Other than this one prominent act of violence carried out by Brotherhood members, there were no other major acts of anti-government violence carried out during Farouk's rein. In the context of the nature of the Farouk regime it is difficult to theorize what the Brotherhood's course of action would have been had they not been banned. However, King Farouk's reign and its violence can be interpreted in light of this study's thesis, that groups included in the government in some way, even through co-optation, are forced to moderate as they try to balance their member's goals with the room they have been given by the government.

The Nasser government faced a different situation. The Free Officers came to power under the premise of pushing the British out of Egypt and establishing a new system of government. When Nasser assumed the leadership of Egypt, he banned the Brotherhood almost immediately as he saw them as a challenge to his consolidation of power, particularly due to their assassination attempt on him in 1954.

Furthermore, Nasser did not feel he needed a coalition with the Islamists, therefore in his view, marginalizing them was of low risk. Nasser had his own ideas for that quickly became popular in Egypt. His ability to play the Russians and West against each other, his socialist Arab nationalism and his personal charisma made him popular, at least until the defeat of the 1967 war with Israel.

This defeat at the hands of the Israelis gave the Islamists an avenue for verbal attacks against the credibility of the secular Nasser government. They argued that the Israelis had been true to their faith and thus succeeded in battle against Arab armies guided by governments not following Islam.

The group of Islamists that attempted to assassinate Nasser a second time in 1965 gave Nasser reason to again brutally repress anyone that got in his way. Their leader, Qutb, was executed and became a martyr for militant Islamists in Egypt for years to come.

In the end, Nasser retained power, successfully repressing anyone that attempted to challenge his vision for Egypt up until his death in 1970. His repression was brutal and indiscriminate. Qutb wrote of an occasion where twenty-one of his Islamist prison-mates were attacked by prison guards and allowed to die in an inhumane fashion.<sup>176</sup> This example demonstrates the brutality of Nasser's regime. Unlike the following two governments, the Nasser government never sought to co-opt the Islamists but rather indiscriminately repressed them, similar to his predecessor, King Farouk.

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<sup>176</sup> Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 43.

Due to the lack in variation in Nasser's policies, it is again difficult to study or imagine a case where moderate Islamists were given a voice in governmental policies. The last two governments of Egypt make for more interesting study as they both have allowed some levels of political participation by Islamists.

The Sadat government enlisted the support of Islamists shortly after coming to power in 1970. President Sadat was not a socialist, unlike his predecessor, and may have actually had a lingering soft spot for the Brotherhood since his meetings with Hasan al-Banna in the 1940s.

Moreover, Sadat was a more devout Muslim than his predecessor and as such, he released certain Islamists from prison. He then co-opted a segment of Islamists to balance against the still-powerful Nasserists inside and outside the government in Egypt. This was the main reason Sadat tried to appease the Islamists

Once more given free reign, the Islamist movement again grew. The now-peaceful Brotherhood had denounced violence, but offshoots of the group were more militant. Implementation of *sharia* was not negotiable for them.

The single largest topic of disagreement with the Sadat regime for the Islamists was peace with Israel. After Sadat made his trip to Israel, the Islamists were mobilized and began to take anti-government action. In response, Sadat tightened his grip on the Islamists' by passing new, restrictive laws, limiting their governmental power and influence.

This exclusion of the Islamists from the positions of power they held and expected to continue holding marked the start of a spiral of violence leading up to Sadat's

assassination. Repression became widespread and reactive, which only served to legitimize the behavior of the *jihadis* among some sectors of Egyptian society. In the months before Sadat's death, his policies would become more repressive than ever during his regime.

The actions of the Sadat regime and reactions of the Islamists, especially toward the end of the regime, support the thesis that when Islamists are politically excluded (as they were here) they turn to their only remaining avenue to force their point: violence.

The subsequent government in Egypt, under Mubarak, is similar to Sadat's in that he at times allowed Islamists to participate in government and other public realms, but at other times erected large barriers to participation. The last twenty four years in Egypt have been the most interesting for the subject of this study, since there have been cycles of repression and political inclusion of Islamists. Recently, the Islamists have been frequently included when the government feels secure in its consolidation of power, and Mubarak's government pays public lip-service to the concept of democracy. As we have seen, however, the Mubarak government has become more authoritarian of late and has used the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks to consolidate his power using the goal of fighting terrorism.

Egypt has taken some small steps to appear more reform minded. This includes the establishment of the new National Council for Human Rights in January of 2004. Mubarak even appointed former U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-

Ghali as head of the council.<sup>177</sup> The bottom line is while Mubarak has often taken such symbolic steps toward political reform, political access is no more a reality now than it was when Mubarak came to power in 1981. The Emergency Law is still in effect even though Sadat's death occurred over twenty years ago. This never-ending emergency defies logic and dilutes the real meaning of an emergency, defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "a serious, unexpected, and potentially dangerous situation requiring immediate action."<sup>178</sup> Of course the assassination of Sadat was an emergency, however, this study argues that the continuation of this particular law is an exercise in duplicity.

Even Boutros-Ghali expressed a desire to do away with the Emergency Law eventually. For the most part, though, he sides with the government that appointed him to his position. He stated, "In light of the fundamentalist terrorism that we are all now familiar with, security problems at times take precedence over the protection of civil liberties."<sup>179</sup> The bottom line is that the Egyptian government will continue its policies, typical for an authoritarian regime, until either internal or external pressures force a change.

#### **B. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STATUS QUO IN EGYPT**

If the Egyptian government does not substantively change its election law, or if it continues its policy of electoral interference, there will be repercussions. The

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<sup>177</sup> Paul Schemm, "Talk of Reform," *Middle East International*, 16 April 2004, 25.

<sup>178</sup> Compact Oxford English Dictionary, [[http://www.askoxford.com/concise\\_oed/emergency](http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/emergency)] Accessed 15 September 2004.

<sup>179</sup> Schemm, "Talk of Reform," 25.



electorate showed its apathy toward recent Shura Council (the upper house of parliament) elections when only ten to twenty percent of rural voters and less than ten percent of urban voters participated.<sup>180</sup> The Shura Council is only consultative in nature and one third of its members are appointed by the executive. This election result may indicate that Egyptians have therefore become indifferent to such elections knowing that they have little real power to change anything with their vote.

The public does seem to demonstrate more activism regarding elections for the People's Assembly (the lower house of parliament). Yet constant electoral interference in elections, including jailing of opposition candidates and intimidation of voters at polling places, continue to overshadow the fairness of these elections.

All of the indiscriminate repression by the Egyptian government will almost surely result in an eventual backlash as citizens lose hope for their likelihood of a truly representative government. As ordinary Egyptian Muslims begin to rely less upon their government and increasingly receive services and support from Islamists groups such as the Brotherhood, the government's legitimacy and even necessity in the populace's daily lives may be lost. Government actions have created a scenario favorable to the ongoing legitimation of the Islamists, particularly the Brotherhood which is entrenched in Egyptian society.

As long as Islamists like the Brotherhood continue to meet social needs that the government cannot or will not meet, and the government continues to repress "peaceful" Islamists, the public will continue to gravitate toward the

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<sup>180</sup> Paul Schemm, "Reshuffle Rumors," *Middle East International*, 11 June 2004, 25.

Islamists. Maintenance of the status quo will not be acceptable, since certain Islamists are bound to tire of patiently working within the system to no avail. Episodes of anti-state violence will likely follow, as the government's tight-fisted control is unable to stop an organized and popular social trend. Unless the Egyptian government is willing to tolerate anti-state violence, bona fide changes toward democracy must be made.

### **C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EGYPT'S ISLAMISTS**

Egypt has the most developed and diverse group of Islamists in the world. The history of the modern Islamist movement has deep roots in the Brotherhood dating back to 1928, when their main goals were anti-colonialism and the spreading of the message of Islam.

These Islamists have at times been violent, attacking not only Egyptian government targets but also foreign tourists. An example of the latter was the attack at Luxor in 1997. Islamists have carried out assassination attempts against every President in Egypt's history and were successful in killing Sadat as well as King Farouk's prime minister. Even though Hasan al-Banna denounced the attack, it is widely believed that he approved of it prior to being carried out.

Many prominent Islamists in Egypt such as the late Muhammad al-Ghazzaly are quick to denounce violence. Yet they are equally motivated to call upon the Egyptian government to initiate reform and stop acts of indiscriminate repression.<sup>181</sup> Ghazzaly was a member of an informal group of intellectuals calling themselves the "New

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<sup>181</sup> Baker, 84.

Islamists.” This group unequivocally denounces Islamist violence. They maintain that radical leaders of certain Islamist groups are misleading their followers by teaching an extreme version of Islam and undermining the prospects for peaceful reform. These New Islamists and others, such as the Brotherhood who are quick to denounce Islamist violence, are the Islamist’s best opportunity to reform the government in Egypt, I argue. The Mubarak regime has shown its apprehension of the power of the Brotherhood by indiscriminately repressing them, often before and during elections when the government risks losing parliamentary seats to the Islamists.

This study maintains that moderate Islamists who are willing to work within the bounds of peaceful democratic change could learn from the African National Congress (ANC) during the *Apartheid* era in South Africa. The scenario was quite different in South Africa, since race was the dividing line between the white elites in power and the black majority excluded from it. The important similarity is that an elite group of people held exclusive power for decades without allowing the majority of the population true political inclusion. In the meantime, the government became notorious for its policies of non-judicial imprisonment and torture of those perceived as a regime threat.

In this case, during the 1980s the ANC and its black members had been classified as a terrorist group by the U.S. government.<sup>182</sup> This was due to their violent acts against government targets. The South African government

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<sup>182</sup> Mona N. Younis. *Liberation and Democratization: The South African and Palestinian National Movements*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, 13.

enjoyed the support of the U.S. until the ANC became an imminent threat to the government. At the same time, the ANC became successful in publicizing its plight to the world community.<sup>183</sup>

This is the important lesson for the Islamists. While they seem to have been successful in penetrating Egyptian society, unlike the ANC they are not able to challenge the regime politically, physically or by mobilizing all of the workers across Egypt in an effort to withhold their labor power. Additionally, they have not done well in publicizing their plight to the West. The United States and Europe continue to support the government, or at least remain neutral and uninvolved. The Islamists should press the world community for greater scrutiny of the actions of the government against its own citizens. Groups like Amnesty International and Freedom House publish reports critical of the government, but this is insufficient. Western governments must be directly engaged in some way by moderate Islamists. These Islamists must continually trumpet their support of the democratic process.

#### **D. DOMESTIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EGYPT**

It is human nature for people to covet power, especially once they have it and are able to experience its abilities. This is particularly the case for authoritarian governments. Even during changes in leadership, this style of government seems to maintain its momentum due to cronyism and a viable lack of alternatives acceptable to those in power. One only needs to look at recent examples of leadership change in North Korea, Syria, Jordan: Kim

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 10.

Jong Il, Bashar Assad and King Abdullah have all basically followed in their father's footsteps, making no significant changes to their nations' policies. The international community was particularly interested in the first two of these changes, expectant the new policies would be implemented with the new government. Yet the status quo has been the norm.

President Mubarak and his government have changed numerous government laws during his tenure. Some of these have been applauded, particularly judicial oversight of elections. Still, election interference has been the norm. Even if parliamentary elections were free and fair, ultimate power continues to rest with the President. Obviously the Mubarak government has been afraid to let the Islamists win a majority of seats, fearing the legitimation of popular criticisms against the executive branch as it continues to overrule Islamist-generated legislation.

Egypt heavily restricts the press and freedoms of assembly and association. Interestingly however is the fact that Egypt does not restrict use of the internet or satellite television.<sup>184</sup> Knowledge is power, and this freedom of information in Egypt could eventually motivate people against the corruption, repression and non-inclusive aspects of their government. As the government continues to publicize itself as a promoter of democracy, all the while inhibiting true power-sharing, an increase in frustration among Islamists is bound to occur. History shows that this will probably result in the formation of new militant groups willing to take violent action, even as the

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<sup>184</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2003. Egypt* [<http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2003/countryratings/egypt.htm>] Accessed 4 August 2004.

Brotherhood and *Gemaa* denounce bloodshed. This outcome plays into the government's hands, since they will then be able to promote their anti-Islamist agenda by grouping all Islamists together.

Hopefully, however, Mubarak will follow Sadat's boldness in taking Egypt in a new direction. True moves toward democracy will only further legitimate the government and isolate violent Islamists, as the moderates share power with the government. The Arab world shares the dubious distinction of having no true democracies. Mubarak would do well to again demonstrate that Egypt can take bold new steps, this time toward political inclusion to the benefit of all Egyptians.

#### **E. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY**

Since the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979, the U.S. has given large amounts of aid to both countries. In the context of the Cold War, it was helpful for the United States to have friends in the Middle East, and providing a lucrative aid package was one way to preserve such friendships. Egypt's Suez canal gives it a strategic importance in the region, due to the need to ensure safe passage of ships. This is especially important for those carrying oil and liquid natural gas to the world market.

The United States continues to provide financial aid to Egypt on the order of \$1.3 billion annually in military

aid. Additionally, the U.S. Agency for International Development gave Egypt over \$25 billion in aid between 1975 and 2002.<sup>185</sup>

These policies suited the United States' need for allies and regional stability during the Cold War, but today they are of dubious value. From a military power perspective, both Israel and Egypt are far more powerful than their neighbors and are not a threat to each other due to their peace treaty. Israel's military is more than able to deter any state from any direct military confrontation, due to its modern forces and the widespread belief it has nuclear weapons. Egypt is also militarily powerful, and not at risk from its neighbors either.

An important side effect of this continued support to Egypt, meant to maintain and modernize its military, is the creation of a powerful coercive apparatus zealously protecting the sitting government. Eva Bellin argues that the removal of a robust coercive apparatus is necessary for a nation to move toward a democratic transition and consolidation.<sup>186</sup> As long as the U.S. supports a strong military in Egypt, Mubarak is not under any real domestic threat to reform.

Thus, the U.S. needs to re-examine its foreign policy objectives not only in Egypt but across the Arab world in general, where many authoritarian regimes are American allies. During the Cold War, the unofficial U.S. government policy was to support "friendly" authoritarian governments as long as they were allies and not sympathetic to the Soviets.

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<sup>185</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Background Note: Egypt* [<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5309.htm>] Accessed 16 September 2004

<sup>186</sup> Bellin, 152.

Sadly, in the context of the fear of global thermonuclear war, such a foreign policy may have been justified. Contemporary U.S. foreign policy can no longer support such governments, since the concepts of liberty and freedom have become ingrained values. Supporting these regimes has a price. This study theorizes that this price may be that the U.S. and its interests become targets for Islamists, whose repressive governments have long been allies of the U.S.

Regardless of the outcome in Iraq in the next few years, U.S. foreign policies need to shift toward placing a higher importance on democratic reform. As contemporary international relations theory posits, democracies do not wage war against other democracies. If stability is indeed the goal in the Middle East, democratic reform needs to be assertively pushed, and Egypt is a good place to start. Truthfully, neither Egypt nor Israel needs the massive military aid the U.S. provides annually. If this aid continues, laws should be passed to make it contingent upon democratic reform and subject to external scrutiny. The United States' recognition of the popularity of moderate Islamists may also go a long way toward decreasing some of the negative perceptions of the U.S. by Arab public opinion.

#### **F. DEMOCRATIC REFORM RECOMMENDED FOR EGYPT**

Democratic reform is not uncomplicated. However, both practical considerations and moral ones demand changes in the policies of both the United States and Egypt. The government's electoral engineering and interference does not go unnoticed by the rest of the world and undermines



the legitimacy of the government both to Egyptian citizens and the world community.

Co-opting moderate Islamists may seem threatening to Mubarak as well as to Western countries, whose public continues to embrace Orientalist ideas however, this study maintains that when moderate Islamists are allowed to participate in politics, they will restrain their stances regarding strict interpretations of Islam, as have the New Islamists in Egypt. The alternative is the status quo, which aside from being immoral in terms of personal liberty is also not workable for those desiring stability in the Middle East.

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