

THE PATTERN OF ISLAMIST ACTIVISM IN EGYPT:
STRUCTURAL CORRELATIONS AND
RELATIVE DEPRIVATION

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RELATIVE DEPRIVATION

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Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One.....	7
Chapter Two.....	22
Chapter Three.....	28
Chapter Four.....	36
Chapter Five.....	40
Chapter Six.....	50
Conclusion	59

List of Tables

Table	Page
Fig 1.....	20
Fig 2.....	30
Fig 3.....	46

Introduction

It is hard to deny the significance of the Islamist movement in the contemporary Middle East. Indications of this significance are rampant. Not only have we seen a rise in Islamist terrorism within the past decade or so but we have witnessed the political landscape of the Middle East become increasingly shaped by politicized and mobilized Islamist movements. The recent majority gain of Hamas in the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary election is one example. Similarly so are the gains made by the Muslim Brotherhood in last years' Egyptian parliamentary election, in which the Muslim Brotherhood doubled its representation. The Islamist movement is indeed a substantial force in the politics of the Middle East and global order.

What we are witnessing has been referred to as the consequences of both the Islamic Resurgence (Huntington, 1996) and Islamist activism (Wickham, 2002). In general both labels refer to the same phenomenon, and that is the effort to produce political and societal changes within Middle Eastern states by adherents to or supporters of the Islamist ideology. The Islamist ideology is politicized Islam that essentially believes that the state should be governed according to Sharia, Islamic law, and all political, economic, and social aspects of life should be orientated around and guided by Islam.

A lot of the mainstream, conventional wisdom concerning the Islamist movement portrays its followers as irrational radicals who wish to return to the earlier history of Islam. As William Shepard explains this is a gross generalization, “radical Islamists undoubtedly want to undo many effects of Western-style ‘progress,’ but this is not the same as wanting to turn the clock back” (1987, p.316). To simplify even further, Islamists “not only want progress but insist that Islam is the way to get it” (Shepard, 1987, p.316).

In order to achieve this progress Islamists utilize a broad range of strategies. Some attempt to work through political avenues in order to gradually reform society in accordance with their envisioned Islamist state, such as the contemporary Muslim Brotherhood. While other, more revolutionary groups try to achieve their ends through violence. Such groups include Islamic Jihad, Islamic Group, and any number of Al Qaeda affiliates. Each strategy is part of the larger phenomenon of activism. Carrie Wickham defines activism as “collective challenges, based on common purposes, and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities” (Wickham, 2002, p.5). Islamist activism is thus activism that aspires to, or adheres to the Islamist ideology. Islamist activists engage in the action outlined in the concept of activism in an attempt to make gains in implementing their ideology either through the institutions and systemic confines of the state, as seen by the participation of groups in the parliamentary process, or by violently removing the institutions and system of

the state itself. Therefore activism can include, but is not limited to forms of collective violence, including terrorism.

One explanation for the momentum of the Islamist movement is the idea that it is the consequence of an ongoing and inevitable clash of civilizations. Bernard Lewis explains:

It should now be clear that we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilizations—that perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both. It is crucially important that we on our side should not be provoked into an equally historic but also equally irrational reaction against that rival. (2001, p.26)

According to Lewis the antecedents of the Islamist movement lie in the variables of culture and civilization. The closest he and others who subscribe to this understanding can come to articulating the variable influencing the growth of the Islamist movement is no more than the cultural differences and cultural antipathy that exists between the Islamic civilization and the Judeo-Christian civilization. Included in this antipathy are the feelings of humiliation wrought by the inferiority of Islam and the superiority and dominance of the West. The clash of civilizations paradigm is heavy handed in its focus on cultural differences, clashing civilizations, and resentment that runs along cultural fault lines, stressing that the differences between East and West, Orient and Occident are becoming increasingly irreconcilable and increasingly fuel the Islamist movement. As a result of this observed incompatibility the clash of civilizations theory largely ignores the impact structural elements

have on the growth of the Islamist movement. Lewis's above argument, that structural matters such as government policies and programs are insignificant to the momentum of the Islamist movement illustrates this point. This project categorically rejects his approach. Instead it seeks to observe and establish a correlation between the popular momentum of the Islamist movement and the impact structural change can have on society.

This approach is similar to the political economy model and like other political economy analyses it seeks to correlate "the rise of Islamic activism to the absence of economic prosperity and political freedom in the states of the Middle East and North Africa" (Wickham, 2002, p. 7). Though these factors may be the most self-evident correlations available, this paper seeks to explain in detail how and why economic and political grievances contributed to Islamist activism.

The most pressing understanding necessary to comprehending the popularity of the Islamist movement is the fact that it was not born merely out of poverty and dictatorships. Nor could it have suddenly been born from culture. Some circumstance, or circumstances had to occur in order to produce the movement's current momentum. The approach taken in this project is one that seeks to explain the reemergence of the Islamist movement in the 1970s in Egypt. For the fact that this phenomenon has been observed as resurgence or reemergence suggests that something had to change within the socio-political milieu of Egypt in order for the Islamist movement to possess a social salience it lacked before.

In order to achieve this understanding this paper will work within the theoretical framework that links modernization and a decline in economic opportunities with an increased potential for political unrest. An environment of civil unrest, ripe with riots, rebellion, revolution or terrorism is also an environment ripe with activism. Therefore it is possible to link the rise in Islamist activism with the concept of relative deprivation as found in the work of Robert Ted Gurr (1970) and Samuel Huntington (1968). In essence this project will show the positive correlation between modernization and activism. More specifically it will showcase how Egyptian's value expectations were 1) raised by Nasser's modernizing reforms, 2) frustrated by economic downturn and economic reforms under Sadat, 3) how this frustration contributed to the politicization of the social grievances, and 4) why this politicization adopted an Islamist approach in addressing these grievances.

The first chapter explores the breadth of the Islamism movement, discussing misconceptions about the movement, and dissecting the complexities of thought and behavior within the movement. The second chapter focuses on the relevance of the relative deprivation model for this study, exploring how modernization increases the likelihood for rebellion, revolution, or activism. The third chapter scrutinizes the modernizing reforms carried about by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser. The fourth chapter briefly compares the degree of political repression under Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak while seeking an explanation as to why activism differed under these administrations despite a steady degree of draconian political policies.

The fifth chapter details the failure of the *infitah*, and the sixth chapter discusses the Islamic sectors response to Sadat's economic policies.

Chapter 1:

The Breadth of Islamism

In seeking to understand the contributions of socioeconomic and political elements to Islamist activism it is, of course, important to understand the complexity of the Islamist ideology and Islamist phenomenon. Subject to Western over simplifications and other misconceptions, the Islamist ideology, or Islamism has a wide range of different interpretations among both its adherents and scholars. Just as communism, or socialism differed between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, as well as differing between the Soviet system, Yugoslavian system and Chinese system, what constitutes Islamism differs among polities, factions, and geographical areas. In this sense the Islamist movement is by no means monolithic, rather it is a phenomenon comprised of many different factions who all agree on the implementation of Sharia, Islamic Law. As this chapter will show the term and concept of Sharia is wrought with complexity.

Common Western conceptions of Islamism attribute to the movement “an anti-democratic, hostile philosophy that encourages violence and terrorism and poses a risk to both regional stability and Western interests” (Abed-Kotob, 1995, p.321). Along with this view is the conception that

Islamists are similar to fascists. One author, cited by Ahmad S. Moussalli, expresses this viewpoint:

The neo-Islamic totalitarian movements are essentially fascist movements. They concentrate on mobilizing passion and violence to enlarge the power of their charismatic leader and the solidarity of the movement. They view the material progress primarily as a means of accumulating strength for political expansion and entirely deny individual and social freedom, They champion the values and emotions of a heroic past, but repress all free critical analysis of their past roots or present problems. (Moussalli, 1992, p.12)

The 9/11 Commission continues this idea of Islamism as anti-democratic and also anti-state, claiming that Islamists reject the validity of “parliaments and legislation” (9/11 Commission Report, 2004, p.50). Within the roots of this assessment lies the belief that Islamism is an anti-modern or anti-progressive ideology. Bernard Lewis adds to this perception, stating that Islamist:

fundamentalists perceive the problem of the Muslim World to be not insufficient modernization, but an excess of modernization—and even modernization itself. For them democracy is an alien and infidel intrusion, part of the larger more pernicious influence of the Great Satan and his cohorts.” (2005, p.48).

Lewis goes on, noting that these anti-modern sentiments have “found expression in an increasingly influential literature and in a series of activist movements, the most notable of which is the Muslim Brotherhood” (2005, p.48).

This confrontationist, or incompatibility paradigm is another aspect of the overall clash of civilizations worldview. By regarding Islamism in its totality as incompatible not only with Western concepts of political modernization, but with modernization as a whole, the obvious conclusion of such beliefs is that it

would be impossible for this ideology or phenomenon to exist in the modern era and therefore must be, and inevitably will be shunned, refuted, and challenged at every possible turn.

The other less prevailing conception of Islamism is the argument that “hostility and violence are not inherent in all the factions of the Islamist movement and prudence requires the West to display a willingness to cooperate with what might prove to be an inevitable rising power in the Middle East” (Abded-Kotob, 1995, pp.321-322). From this perspective the Islamist movement is a phenomenon comprised of militant radicals and parliamentary reformers.

It is from the militant factions that the West perceives the Islamists as fascists, backward, or totalitarian. Images of the Taliban’s Afghanistan come to mind, as do rural areas of Pakistan and of course the extreme measures of Islamist terror groups. To conclude that all of these examples are evidence of the entire Islamist movement is to ignore the complexity of the movement and the understanding of Sharia itself.

In a rough breakdown of categorization the spectrum of behavioral orientation of Islamist groups extends from what could be termed traditional Islamists to revolutionary Islamists to reformer Islamists. In most cases the traditional Islamists are reactionary groups, whose reaction to modernity is one of retreat and return to the earlier times of Islam. The most reactionary of Islamist movements are often found in the broader rubric of Wahabbism. The Wahabbi movement was itself a response to the early modernizing, or at least

urbanizing going on within the Ottoman Empire. It has since housed a reactionary response to Westernization, secularization, modernity and progressive Islam. A good example of the reactionary Islamist is found in Saudi Arabia's Wahabbi clerics and the country's Sharia.

In some cases Islamists can appear to be revolutionary. In this sense these groups are revolutionary in their interpretations of Islam and in their advocacy of jihad, or violence. In all reality the revolutionaries pick and choose aspects of modernity that are suitable to their means and reject those which contradict or are seen as harmful to Islam. Both the revolutionary and the reactionary groups are more prone to violence than are those belonging to the reformer camp. It is these militant groups that are called to mind when the conventional term radical Islamist militant is invoked by scholars or the media. This categorization is not meant to be absolutely definitive. There is often confusion surrounding the division between revolutionaries and reformers, as revolutionaries are often reformers who have grown impatient with the progress of their reforms and believe in immediate, militant action. An example is found in the fact that many revolutionary Islamists have at one time or another belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood (MB); however, their violent behavior should not be seen as something condoned by the MB. Again one can witness similar internal debates within a variety of Marxist movements.

The reformist category is modern in the sense that it seeks not to reject modernity, but rather looks to synthesize Islam with modernity. The more

reformist movements are organizations like the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Instead of pursuing a policy of violence the Muslim Brotherhood believes in the gradual growth and spreading of its ideology through the process of good works. Some even go so far as to view the Muslim Brotherhood as a “socialist organization, not a political party” (Aslan, 2005, p.237). This perception stems from the fact that the MB’s “principle concern [is] the reconciling of hearts and minds to God so as to alleviate human suffering, not bring about a political revolution” (Aslan, 2005, p.237). Another author adds, “the return to Islam was envisioned as an evolutionary process to be achieved by means of comprehensive education aimed at everyone...”(Mishal, 2000, p.20). The acceptance of gradualism and evolutionary processes are in direct contrast to the impatience and call for immediacy attributed to radical, militant or revolutionary movements.

Aslan’s claim that the MB is not a political party is not entirely accurate, since the organization has run candidates in parliamentary elections; however, the relevance of Aslan’s statement is the fact that the MB is not militant. This is apparent in the organization’s own statements, like its condemnation of the attacks in Egypt on April 24, 2006. The Muslim Brotherhood, reaffirmed their, “complete rejection of violence to achieve change” (Habib, 2006), and condemned “attacks on innocent people which constitute a flagrant violation of the peaceful teachings of Islam” (Habib, 2006).

The patience and political pragmatism absent in militant groups is further observable in the Muslim Brotherhood's political behavior. In the 1980s the organization formed a coalition with liberal Egyptian political parties in order to gain seats in parliament. Yet Aslan's characterization of the Muslim Brotherhood as apolitical is also in reference to the organization's own understanding and statements concerning any rise to power. The MB claim it does not necessarily seek political power as a political party, rather it seeks to "build Islamic individuals who will then build an Islamic state" (Abed-Kotob, 1995, p.324). The Muslim Brotherhood stresses its commitment to reform society, and not to "the direct exercise of political power" (Abed-Kotob, 1995, p.325). In this sense one could understand that though the MB fields parliamentary candidates it is not its intention to eradicate the parliamentary system or even dominate the apparatus of the state. Rather it appears the MB seeks to participate within the system, reforming the system and creating the environment ripe for the "return to Islam" through the democratic consensus of the governed. The fact that the MB chose to work gradually within the system differentiates them from more extreme movements who themselves advocate rapid, mobilized, violent change of the political structure. Embracing the established political process, and again, the emphasis on gradualism is illustrative of the differences between the reformists and the militant Islamist groups who seek to retreat from and, or eradicate the established system.

Of course the prevalence of the perception of Islamism as a phenomenon opposed to legislatures and the parliamentary process and thus

democracy is understandable when one examines the sayings and slogans of Islamists. One time Muslim Brother Sayyid Qutb expressed the view, paraphrased here by Moussalli, that “man should organize his life and society in accordance with the divine will and revelation [of God], since the Muslim should believe that there is no ruler except God, no legislator except God and no organizer of man’s life and relations and connections with the universe, beings and his fellow man except God” (1992, p.71).

Qutb’s mention of divine will and revelation refers to the Qu’ran and Hadith the two sources from which Sharia is derived. Thus Qutb is referring to the implementation of Sharia, or at least the organization of a state around the concepts of Sharia. The illuminating aspect of Sharia in understanding the complexities of the Islamist movement, the aspect most overlooked by those that attribute a monolithic quality to the movement, is the fact that though Sharia is divine revelation it is by no means absolute.

Sharia, Islamic Law, is taken from the revelation of the Qu’ran and the Hadith. The Qu’ran is the divine word of God, revealed by God to the Prophet Mohamed. The Hadith is the teachings and lessons based off of the Prophet’s life. Sharia is a legal or governing synthesis of the relevant scriptures and teachings within the two, covering “all aspects of Muslim life—public and private, communal and personal alike”(Lewis, 1998, p.223). Yet to regard Sharia as a set of explicit instructions is misleading. In all actuality Sharia, though based on the written scriptures in the Qu’ran and the expressed living examples in the Hadith, is a malleable body of law argued and debated by

Islamic clerics and Islamic-jurists. Bernard Lewis explains the interpretive complexities of Sharia:

While the Sharia admitted no human legislative power in the Islamic state, in practice Muslim rulers and jurists during more than fourteen centuries that have passed since the mission of the Prophet encountered many problems for which revelation provided no explicit answer, and found answers to them. These answers were not seen or presented as enactments or as legislation. If they came from below they were called customs. If they came from above they were called regulations. If they came from the jurists, they were called interpretation.... (1998, p.224)

Another scholar explains, "Law, in the sense of a body of precisely articulated rules, is thus not readily presented in Islam; it must be unearthed by the jurists who become the necessary mediators of divine law" (Masood, 2003, p.2). An appropriate way to view Sharia is, as an integration of customs, concepts of political order, and societal norms filtered through the art of interpretation of the revelation given by God in the Qu'ran and its execution by the Prophet in the Hadith.

This act of interpretation is called *ijtihad*. A western comparison could be made to the process of judicial review. Masood explains "the word *ijtihad* means a total expenditure of effort in the attempt to achieve something whose realization is burdensome or difficult. Commonly referred to as independent reasoning, *ijtihad* is a fundamental Islamic concept..."(2003, p.4). Though the concept of *ijtihad* is found in Sharia, it is also true that around the tenth century the interpretive introspection of the Law ascribed by the concept of *ijtihad* was reduced until the doors of *ijtihad* were closed (Lewis, 2002; Masood, 2003). It was believed that "further inquiry would be without purpose

or meaning” (Masood, 2003, p.4), Lewis adds, “ a consensus emerged among Sunni jurists that all outstanding issues had been resolved” (2002, p.226). It was from this event and point that Sharia was formulated into a body of laws and legal rulings. With this said, however, there are in themselves different interpretations concerning Sharia, such as how it should be applied to the contemporary world. The dissolution of the Caliphate after WWI and the encounter of modernity has diluted any centralized consensus and triggered increase debate about Sharia and ijtiḥad in the Muslim world. This debate is very much alive and ongoing in the Muslim World, and even exists among Islamists themselves.

Among Islamists the more militant Islamists “tend to accept more of the past ijtiḥad of the scholars and emphasize somewhat less the failings of the community of pre-modern times and some what more the distortions caused by Western colonialism” (Shepard, 1987, p.314). In this sense the militant Islamists for the most part uphold the tenth century consensus that all the outstanding issues concerning Sharia had been solved. The plight facing the Middle East and the realms of Islam is not the result of the fallibility of tenth century Sharia, rather it’s the fault of meddling European powers. From this perspective the Islamists are less embracing of modernity, and are not seeking a synthesis between Islam, Sharia, and modernity. Rather they are seeking an escape from modernity and a return to Sharia without synthesizing Sharia and modernity through the process of ijtiḥad. This understanding corresponds to the confrontationist understanding of Islamism and tends to be

the perspective of Saudi Arabian Sharia as well as groups like the Taliban. Any problem of reconciling the modern world with Islam is the fault of the modern world, thus Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan are fundamental in their endorsement and enforcement of the tenth century Sharia.

To the reformer Islamists, on the other hand, the gates of ijtiḥad are indeed open. Members of this category are in agreement with their more extremist comrades that the ordering of society should be based off of Sharia; however, they disagree when it comes to implementing Sharia comprised of tenth century ijtiḥad in their contemporary world. It is Sharia that is divine, ijtiḥad like all human things are fallible as well as malleable. Thus from the view of the reformist Islamists the decisions made by the jurists some several hundred years ago are open to question and reinterpretation. Masood explains the compatibility between reinterpretation and Sharia in that “challenging the Sharia to adapt to changing circumstances is simply disputing a historically conditioned human understanding of Islam and not repudiating Islam itself” (2003, p.5). This approach is being undertaken and understood by progressive and reformists Islamists.

Muslim women’s groups are taking the reformist track and using the verses of the Qu’ran as well as ijtiḥad to promote women’s rights in the Muslim world. Isabella Coleman points out:

On the sensitive subject of polygamy, for example, one verse of the Koran says, ‘Marry those women who are lawful for you, up to two, three or four, but only if you can treat them all equally.’ Later in the same chapter, however, the Koran reads, ‘No matter how you try you will never able to treat your wives equally.’ Many Muslim scholars today read the two together, as an effective endorsement of

monogamy. Many tribal communities, on the other hand, focus on the former verse alone and cite it as a justification for having multiple wives. (2006, p.27)

Despite the closing of ijtiḥad some Muslim scholars have continued to engage in interpreting Sharia. Even radical Islamists like Sayyid Qutb are not opposed to reopening the doors of ijtiḥad. As Moussalli explains, “ for the fundamentalists, these branches of knowledge (traditions of philosophy, theology and jurisprudence), especially the political and intellectual as opposed to the ritual, have to be reevaluated and verified by a new direct interpretation of Islam” (1992, p.217). Shepard classifies those who endorse the re-opening of ijtiḥad as Islamist modernists. This classification contains both radical and reformists groups. According to this perspective Muslims should “not rely on the ‘medieval synthesis’ represented by the four schools of jurisprudence but they [should] go back directly to the Qu’ran and the Sunna to seek fresh interpretation and synthesis for modern times, and also...superstitions derived from local pre-Islamic cultures [should] be eliminated” (Shepard, 1987, p.311).

The following chart (Fig 1) shows the orientation towards the parliamentary process and attitudinal position of ijtiḥad among Islamist groups. In the spectrum of the phenomenon of Islamism there exists in one corner the reactionary elements. The Wahabbi movements in general are more reactionary to any change, reject modern political systems, and are less interested in opening the gates of ijtiḥad. These factors place them in the upper orientation, making them more militant towards parliamentary political

systems and institutions. For them perfection was in the past and perfection can only result in preferring the past to the present. These groups should be considered to be radical in methods but traditional in interpretation of Sharia. In the case of Saudi Arabia the fact that Sharia is the law of the land, it is not as so much behaviorally militant as it is traditional. In the case of the Taliban, the ongoing struggle for control of Afghanistan and opposition to a reformed set of laws puts it in the upper left quadrant. To the reactionary movements ijthihad is closed and their implementation of Sharia relies mostly on the ijthihad of the tenth century consensus.

There are then revolutionary groups in another corner, who are more likely to utilize radical/militant methods, and are also more radical in their use of ijthihad to challenge the consensus of the medieval jurists. These groups can appear more fundamental than their tenth century counterparts; some examples are seen with Al Qaeda and Islamic Jihad, both of which endorse using ijthihad as a means to make Sharia more fundamental. These groups wish to construct society closer to the original revelations in the Qu'ran and the practices in the Hadith and therefore believe in engaging in ijthihad. Unlike the reformists; however, and more like the reactionaries, the revolutionaries hold such a fundamental view that any un-Islamic system is illegitimate, and thus must be met and dispatched through violence.

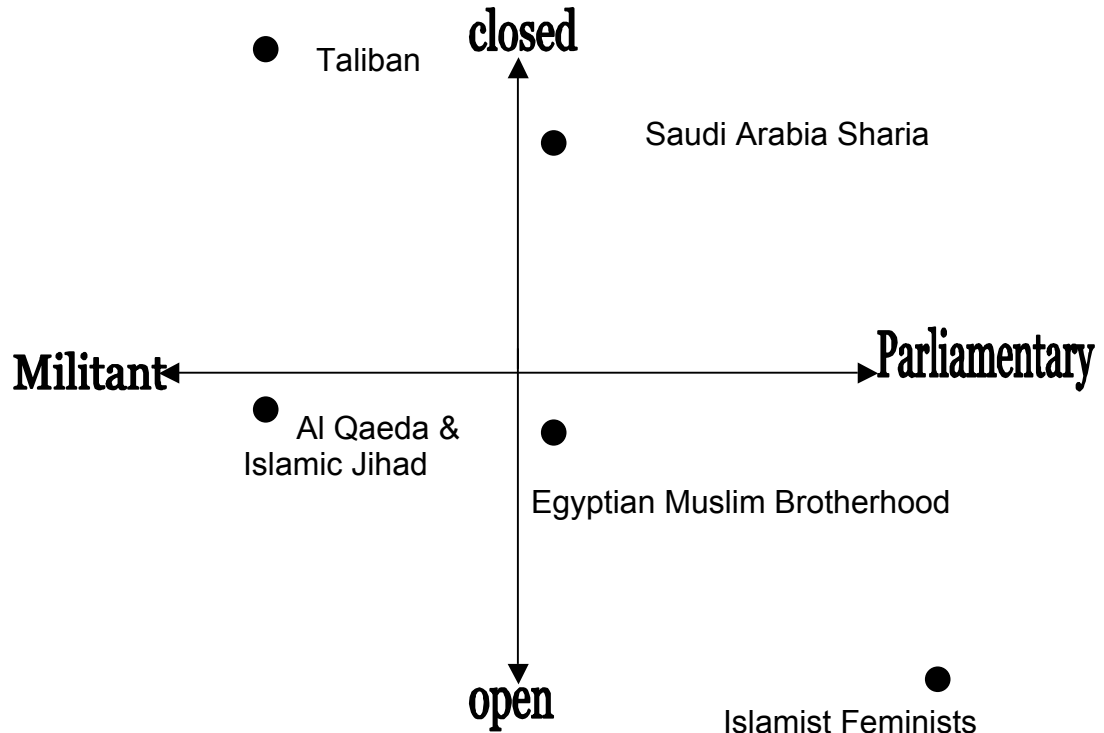
Finally, the reformists are in the opposite corner of the militant reactionaries' acceptance of the tenth century consensus, and opposed to the revolutionaries' militancy. The Islamist reformists are less militant and less

fundamental, but more open in their use of ijtiḥād as an attempt to uncover a unity of synthesis between modernity and Islam. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is parliamentary in the sense that they are willing to gradually work within the established Egyptian political system and through the democratic process. Their attitude towards ijtiḥād is one in which the doors are open and the debate over Sharia's character still on going. In all likelihood the MB's conception of Sharia, even one that could conceivably become more compatible than the tenth century Sharia with the modern world, would tend to be considered conservative by Western liberal standards.

The Islamist Feminists; however, are even farther along the spectrum of reform and engaging in ijtiḥād. Unlike the Wahabbi movements, the Islamist Feminists reject the closure of ijtiḥād, and the tenth century consensus. Unlike the Muslim Brothers' the Islamist Feminist engage in the debate over Sharia through ijtiḥād in the attempt to construct a starkly liberal form of Islamic Law.

The consensus within Islamism is one that believes there should be, within Muslim countries "an Islamic system where Islamic law is executed where the idea of Islam rules and where its principles and regulations define the kind of government and form of society" (Abed-Kotob, 1995, p.323). The agreement among Islamists remains at the level of a philosophical or theoretical consensus. There is no definitive, or explicit model of governance in which Islamists have all come to endorse or agree on. To what end such a system would enact the Sharia of the tenth century, or engage and encourage

continued ijihad, and attempt to reconcile modernity with Islam, or return to the medieval age of Islam depends on the orientation of the Islamist group who comes to power.



Islamist attitudes towards ijihad and parliamentary participation (Fig 1)

The differences within Islamism are important to understand when searching for an explanation of the ideology's phenomenon. The confrontationist perspective of perceiving Islamism as a monolithic, totalitarian ideology in which individual freedoms are curtailed and oppression is almost guaranteed, leads one to expect a strong fanaticism in the movement's supporters. This assumption can dilute the relevance of any investigation. A similar example is seen in what was once the conventional wisdom of

German support for Nazism. The argument suggested that Nazis were bad people and therefore bad people became Nazis. The contemporary, conventional argument for Islamism is that Islamism is fanatical; therefore Islamic fanatics become Islamists. This approach prompts scholars to ask the question: why are Muslims attracted to a fanatical ideology? Or why are Muslims becoming more fanatical? Scholars throughout the literature have attempted to offer answers to these questions, using explanations of humiliation at the hands of the West, a crisis of identity, and the disorienting effects of the modern world on the Muslim/Arab mind.

By looking at the Islamist ideology as one that is indeed fragmented, and open to a certain amount of popular influence, moderate positions, and reformist approaches the explanations for its popularity shift considerably. No longer is anti-modern fanaticism the sole and sufficient explanation for the popularity of the Islamist movement. For how can the confrontationist scholars explain the fanaticism of a reformer, a moderate, or an Islamist feminist? Therefore it is necessary to search for other relationships that can explain the growing support and gaining momentum of the Islamist movement.

Chapter 2:

The Relevance of Relative Deprivation

The Islamist movement in Egypt can be dissected into three periods. The first, beginning with the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 and extending to approximately 1952, is regarded as a period of emergence. During the 1940s the Islamist movement was strong, political, and worked with other dissident groups in expelling British and foreign influence (Goldschmidt, 2004). After the 1952 Revolution, Nasser and the Free Officers persecuted the Islamist movement's leading members in the Muslim Brotherhood, as they were the strongest rivals to the military's power. This persecution, imprisonment and liquidation began the second period that lasted from 1952 to roughly 1970. Though the Muslim Brotherhood was banned and under assault from the regime, Nasser's repression of Islamists does not fully account for the lack of public receptiveness to the Islamist ideology. As this paper will explain and elaborate on it was during this period that the sustainability of the Islamist movement diminished and lost ground against the rise of Arab Socialism and nationalism. However, in the third and present period, the Islamist resurgence, the Islamist ideology returned as a counter worldview to the secular Egyptian system, reemerging stronger than

ever before and has sustained itself for thirty plus years, seemingly gaining momentum within each decade.

Perhaps one of the most obvious questions to ask when looking at this pattern of the Islamist movement in Egypt is, Why the 1970s? What was different about the 70s then the 60s? For one the 1970s were a great period of upheaval, turmoil and change within Egypt. The conventional wisdom attributes this turbulence and the rise of Islamist activism as consequences of Egypt's defeat in 1967 and in Sadat's peace proposal with Israel at Camp David in 1978. There is no doubt that these events had an influence on the Islamist movement, but to causally link the growth of the Islamist movement with these events is too simplistic and still leaves lingering questions. For one it lacks a relevant explanation as to why the Islamist movement faded in popularity and momentum during the 1950s and 1960s. This recession occurred despite the fact that Israel existed during this period and initially defeated Egypt in the 1948 War. It appears that a historical explanation, based solely on events, as well as one based on differences of civilization as observed by the confrontationist theorists are both lacking. Therefore another explanation is needed in order to explain the resurgence of the Islamist movement. The most likely and relevant explanation is one that scrutinizes the structural shifts in Egypt throughout the post-revolution period.

This project's focus of structural explanations for Islamist activism works out of the theoretical framework of what produces civil unrest, as seen in Gurr (1970) and Huntington (1968). The 1970s resurgence of the Islamist

movement can be explained by the concept of relative deprivation. The concept of relative deprivation is defined as “a perceived discrepancy between man’s value expectations and their value capabilities. Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining or maintaining, given the social means available to them” (Gurr, 1970, p.13). When the populace’s expectations are increased but the capabilities to achieve those expectations are not, social tension and discontent intensify. Gurr links civil unrest, or rebellion, with relative deprivation, stating, “discontent arising from the perception of relative deprivation is the basic instigating condition for participation in collective violence” (1970, p.13). The mobilization of this discontent is what I am referring to as activism, though the definition of this term has already been given due to its prominence in this project it bears repeating. Activism is “collective challenges, based on common purposes, and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities” (Wickham, 2002, p.5).

A key component in creating an environment salient to these effects of relative deprivation is modernization. In other words without modernization the impact of relative deprivation on mobilizing broad based dissent is diminished. Huntington explains “the principle aspects of modernization [are] urbanization, industrialization, secularization, democratization, education, [and] media participation” (1968, p.32). Since not all of these aspects are

necessarily present in all modernization processes the more important understanding is that “modernization is a multi-faced process involving changes in all areas of human thought and activity” (Huntington, 1968, p.32). Huntington and Gurr both agree that modernization facilitates a shift in both people’s perceived value capabilities and value expectations. Like Gurr, Huntington too notes the potential for a gap to develop “between aspirations and expectations, want formation and want satisfaction, or the aspirations function and the level-of-living function” (1968, p.54).

In countries of low modernization it is usually some part of the elite who rebel. Coup leaders and rebels are members of the modernized sector of society. This is the case in just about every Third World uprising, and it is indeed the case of the Free Officers revolt in Egypt (Davies, 1962). The Free Officers came from the most modernized institution in Egypt, the military. Despite the hatred of the British and their puppet King the populace did not rebel, rather change had to come from an elite segment of society. Modernization does not necessarily have to be present for rebellion to occur; however, one could argue that in order for there to be broad mobilization of discontent, or what this project refers to as activism the means for mass participation in politics must exist, this capability is obtained through modernization and antagonized through relative deprivation. Again Huntington offers an explanation:

More than by anything else, the modern state is distinguished from the traditional state by the broadened extent to which people participate in politics and are affected by politics in large-scale political units...the most fundamental aspect of modernization consequently is the

participation in politics beyond the village or town level by social groups throughout the society and the development of new political institutions, such as political parties, to organize that participation. (1968, p.36)

Modernization is an important accelerant in fomenting strong activism. The broader the modernization the more potential there is for broader activism. In order to have widespread civil unrest, enough to foment sustained activism the society must also be broadly modernized or in the process of such modernization.

Relative deprivation and modernization go hand in hand. Huntington lays the logical basis from which this association can be derived by explaining the effects of modernization, “modernization involves the fundamental shift in values, attitudes and expectations. Traditional man expected continuity in nature and society and did not believe in the capacity of man to change or control either. Modern man, in contrast accepts the possibility of change and believes in its desirability” (1968, p.32). Here the desire for change is synonymous as the desire for progress, such as a higher standard of living, a more equitable society, and a more just society. The ability to dream of progressive change also grants one the ability to perceive regressive change, and thus intensify the likelihood for rebellion. Huntington’s modern man differs from the traditional man in the sense that he is one of several modern men who are mobilized, and modernized enough to participate in politics. Thus the impact of a perceived regression of wellbeing on a modernized populace has a stronger potential to create unrest on a mass scale.

Looking at the post-revolutionary period of Egypt (1952 to present) one sees that it is a clear case study, fitting the model of civil unrest wrought by relative deprivation. The reforms made during Nasser's regime increased the value expectations and value capabilities of Egyptians. In the 1970s the value capabilities were reversed, creating a conflict between expectations and capabilities. The resulting demonstrations, riots, and terrorist attacks of the 1970s were not only examples of civil unrest and the mass participation in politics they were also the beginning signs of Islamist activism. Thus the popular gain under Nasser, broad modernization coupled with social reforms, and the perception, or reality of a reversal in these gains under Sadat will explain the recession and resurgence of the Islamist movement.

Chapter 3:

Nasser's Revolution and Reforms

Looking at the post-revolutionary period of Egypt (1952 to present) there is a clear correlation between Gurr's theory of relative deprivation and the events of unrest in the 1970s. After all, the 1970s saw an increase in demonstrations, riots, and terrorist attacks. Yet in order to understand how the concept of relative deprivation became a relevant variable in Egypt's social and political strife it is necessary to understand the modernizing and progressive reforms of Arab Socialism. Goldschmidt explains:

[Socialism] in predominantly Muslim states...is rarely used in the purely Marxian sense, for Muslims can never deny the primacy of the one God above mundane material interests, nor can they accept the a historical dynamic based on class struggles. In Egypt the *socialism* has commonly been applied to state ownership and management of the means of production. (2004, p.134)

When the Free Officers over threw King Farouk in 1952 they published a six-point plan. The main tenets of this plan were: the removal of the British; the liquidation of the feudal system; the liquidation of a powerful, wealthy elite; the establishment of social equality; building a powerful army; and establishing a democracy (Aburish, 2004). The themes of social and economic justice in the plan were later incorporated into the responsibilities of the Egyptian state expressed in the government's 1956 constitution, and were

reiterated in the 1962 charter. The state was to guarantee every Egyptian “the individual freedom of speech and thought, freedom of religious belief, freedom from class exploitation, right to a job according to his abilities and interests, medical care and old age insurance, and the right to free education which suits his abilities” (Dekmejian, 1971, p.139).

Though the degree to which the state prohibited free speech rather than protected it and the extent to which Nasser attempted to create a democracy out of his dictatorship can be debated, the state did carry out many reforms along the lines of the expressed ideals in the constitution and the six-point plan. Most notably Egyptian society was transformed in the areas of land reform, income distribution, education, employment, social security, and healthcare. Prior to the reign of Nasser there were no state run social programs in Egypt. Pensions did not exist, nor did healthcare, and education for the most part was something for the well off. Egypt was slow to modernize and largely functioned on its feudal roots, especially in the countryside. The nation’s feudal structure and limited modernization aided the British in propping up their King, and co-opting the power of the country’s wealthy elite. Nasser’s rule and the implementation of Arab Socialism encompassed the first large scale attempt to restructure and modernize Egyptian society.

The first major step in post-revolution Egypt aimed at implementing social justice and modernization was the 1952 Agrarian Reform Act. The act limited the number of *feddans* (one *feddan* equals about an acre) one

individual could own to 200. The law was aimed at breaking up the strong landholders of the upper class and was the first step in dismantling the feudal system. Furthermore “the law provided for the formation of agricultural cooperatives, worker’s unions and regulated tenant landowner relations” (Dekmejian, 1971, p.123).

The land reform law accomplished just what it set out to do. It dissolved the traditional power base and created a broader distribution of wealth. According to one author the land reform produced strikingly higher yields in agricultural production (Ghonemy, 1968). The increase in output plus the dispersal of land ownership had the effect of decreasing poverty. Prior to the land reform 94 percent of all peasant landowners owned less than one feddan (Ghonemy, 1968, p.74). Given this fact the following chart illustrates the levels of inequality in the feudal system.

Size of feddan (acre) holdings	Average annual net income in £
More than 200	15,026
More than 50-200	1,920
More than 5-50	320
More than 1-5	54
One feddan or less	8

(Fig 2)¹

¹ National Income From Agriculture, 1945-7, Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Economics (Government Press, Cairo, 1948), Table 11, p. 41 (in Arabic) £E (Egyptian Pound)=US \$ 2.22. (Ghonemy, 1968, p.74).

Given that 94 percent of Egyptian peasants prior to the land reform measure made only 8 £ annually, a more equitable distribution of land coupled with a higher output of production would invariably lead to an increase in income for a large portion of the population. The land reform was the first major step in restructuring the Egyptian economy and society. As Ghonemy explains “the redistribution of land and the reduction of rents were to constitute a direct attack on poverty and the extreme inequality of income distribution” (1968, p.74). Though hard numbers of income growth are hard to come by or do not exist, given the reality of the land distribution and the increase in productivity it is almost certain that income levels grew, and as a consequence so did mobility.

Mobility is another key piece of the modernization puzzle. As Huntington explained the modernized citizen will be apt to desire change as well as perceive the possibility of change. Social mobility aids the modernizing of individuals as it lets them move through traditional social strata, thus changing or breaking those structural barriers. Huntington explains, “social mobilization, is the process by which major clusters of old social, economic, and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior” (1968, p.33). The disintegration of the feudal system plus the consequential increase in wealth distribution no doubt added to the modernizing of Egyptian peasantry, and thus by challenging the root of the nation’s traditional class and social structures began modernizing the whole of Egypt.

Where the land reform was the first major step in modernizing Egypt, the second step was the education reforms that followed. By lowering tuition costs and raising admission numbers Nasser made primary and higher education more accessible to the population. As Carrie Wickham (2002) points out, this was in part necessary to produce labor for the expanding Egyptian industries, but more importantly education reform was part of Nasser's ideological commitment to social equality and social justice. In 1961 speech Nasser expressed these commitments, saying: "I want a society in which class distinctions are dissolved through the equality of opportunities of all citizens. I want a society in which the free individual can determine his own position by himself, on the basis of his efficiency, capacity and character" (Wickham, 2002, p.25). The expansive access to education worked in tandem with dissolving the traditional social and class structures within Egypt and granted Nasser more popular prestige.

By 1962 the universities were virtually cost free (Wickham, 2002). The universities however, were not open to anyone. Students still had to perform well on their final exams, and the ones who did well were guaranteed admission into the now low-cost university system. The broader accessibility to primary education fed into broadening the socioeconomic demographics of the universities, the low cost of a university education allowed the members of the lower and middle class to attend and potentially alter their social status.

During Nasser's reign "the numbers of students enrolled in primary education per thousand of population increased by 234 percent, and the

number of students enrolled in higher education rose by 325 percent. Annual university enrollments climbed from 51,681 in 1952/53 to 161,517 in 1969/70” (Wickham, 2002, p.25).

In 1962 Nasser took another step to further aid social mobilization and class disintegration by guaranteeing employment for university graduates.

The outflow of university students was directed into employment in a burgeoning state sector. Again Wickham cites the statistics on the policy, noting that “public employment grew by about 70 percent from 1962 to 1970” (2002, p.27). Eventually Nasser’s policy of expanded education and guaranteed employment would create a top-heavy state, detrimental to economic growth and largely lead to the crisis faced by Arab Socialism at the end of the 1960s and in the 1970s.

In addition to the education and land reforms Nasser further enforced the themes of equality and social justice found in the constitution and charter by increasing the state’s control of industry and heavy regulation of the private sector. In July 1961 the regime instituted its most revolutionary reforms to date. These reforms came to be known as the July Laws. Arthur Goldschmidt explains their content:

- 1) the regulation of most industries; 2) the nationalization of such businesses as textiles, tobacco, pharmaceuticals, shipping , and all banks and insurance firms not already under state ownership; 3) income redistribution whereby no Egyptian could receive an annual salary above £E5,000 and incomes above £E 10,000 were to be taxed at 90 percent; and 4) land reform, under which the maximum individual landholding was reduced from 200 to 100 feddans, with the excess to be distributed among the landless peasants, and all future peasant loans would be free of interest. (2004, p.136)

Dekmejian elaborates the July Laws further,

Controls placed on cotton sales, exports, and imports were followed by the closure of the two stock exchanges and the futures market, whereby no shares could be sold. Another regulatory law limited the boards of directors of various firms to a maximum of seven members, two of which were to represent the employees. Law No. 134 authorized the minister of industry to assign production quotas to industrial firms...law No. 117...nationalized the remaining banks and insurance companies, as well as forty two industrial, commercial, and other firms...Another sweeping measure was Law No. 119 which limited the individual ownership to a maximum of £E 10,000 in 145 listed companies...Finally, between October 1961 and January 1962, the property of 850 'reactionaries' was sequestered. (1971, pp. 129-130)

Egypt under Nasser witnessed a forceful reorganization of the traditional societal structures. This was first accomplished with the land reform act, followed by the increased accessibility to education and finally by the nationalization of industries and state regulation of economic affairs. Concerning Gurr's thesis of civil unrest and relative deprivation one sees that the Nasser years most likely fueled the likelihood for a rebellious population in the event of a perceived reversal of expectations. This correlation is found in Davies (1962) j-curve explanation. Gurr, citing Davies' explanation, suggests that, "revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal" (1970, p.52). The prolonged and constant improvement of living standards in people's lives creates within them the expectations for further improvement. If value capabilities decline or stagnate this conflicts with the society's value expectations and thus results in an environment salient for

civil unrest. The changes in Egypt under Nasser, and later the collapse of Arab Socialism and the turmoil of the 1970s fits this model.

In essence the improved living conditions wrought by Arab Socialism in the Nasser era primed the Egyptian population with the necessary expectations garnered by broad modernization that could later turn into mobilized, mass discontent.

Chapter 4:

Beyond Repression.

There is a debate within the literature of Egyptian history concerning the apparent absence of popular opposition under Nasser. Was the absence of this opposition most likely the result of an overall absence of relative deprivation? Or was it the result Nasser's harsh responses to political opposition and dissent? In trying to construct a correlation between relative deprivation and Islamist activism it is necessary to explore what can account for the apparent absence of strong political dissent in Egypt's post-revolution era.

Nasser's Egypt was not without dissent and opposition. As one author explains Nasser "faced opposition from many quarters, including communists, the wealthy, liberals, Islamists, supporters of the old Farouk regime, and others. Nasser's response was to jail or exile as many opponents as he could, occasionally hanging their leaders" (Sorenson, 2003, p.218). Given the existence of political dissent and opposition the question is, What are the differences between this opposition and the activism of the 1970s? The unrest in the 1970s was greater than that of under Nasser's reign, and furthermore terrorism had yet to emerge. In short, and working off of Wickham's analysis the dissent under Nasser was not strong enough, or

formidable enough to be considered activism. Therefore it is necessary to ask why the dissent under Nasser failed to manifest itself into the activism of the 1970s under Nasser's successor Sadat?

One perspective concerns a shift in the level of repression between Nasser and Sadat. Sadat did indeed liberalize Egypt's political system slightly, and briefly allowed Muslim groups to organize on college campuses; however, Sadat's repression against communists, hard line Nasserists, and Islamists was comparable to the actions of Nasser's repression of his regime's adversaries. For example Sadat kept the Law of the State of Emergency that had been in effect since Nasser's usurpation of power. Political dissenters detained under the law could be tried in military courts and were often held for lengthy periods without trial or access to council (Sadat's New Democracy, 1979). Sadat's liberalization was mostly cosmetic, as the newly allowed political parties could not discuss "peace with Israel, superpower relations, economic policies, and of course Sadat's person" (Goldschmidt, 2003, p.176).

Egypt's current leader Hosni Mubarak has kept the tradition of his predecessors alive by jailing large numbers of dissidents throughout his rule. According to one author,

by one account more than 17,000 Islamic militant were arrested for political opposition or militant violence between 1989 and 1997. Taking advantage of the state of emergency that has remained in force in Egypt since President Sadat's assassination in 1981, the government held many Islamists without charge and tried many others in military courts... One former government official charged that even as late as 1999 'tens of thousands of Egyptians were being held without charge

in Egyptian jails'...opposition candidates were intimidated, harassed, and sometimes physically attacked. (Alterman, 2000, p.110)

The fact that all three of Egypt's post-revolution leaders have been authoritarian in nature dilutes the applicability of the repression perspective. The indicator in question is not so much the amount force, but the perception of such force by the general public. This understanding is related to the overall concept of relative deprivation. Gurr explains the state's coercive force can be both a deterrent as well as accelerant to fomenting rebellion. The use of state violence as a threat coupled with the use of imprisonment can anger people. Gurr explains, "imposed sanctions are deprivations, the threat of sanctions is equivalent to the concept of anticipated deprivation, the innate emotional response to both is anger. But sanctions also inhibit violent responses to anger" (1970, p.238). According to Gurr a violent response depends on how legitimate the sanctions and actions of the state are perceived. He states, "the inference is that the more severe and certain are unjustified sanctions, the greater the extent of ultimate political violence" (Gurr, 1970, p.238). The reverse correlation works the same: the more justified sanctions are perceived the less likely there is to be violent opposition. This relationship fits the overall relative deprivation model.

Though a regime may be harsh against its opponents, if such actions are considered justified by the populace then the less likely it is that these actions will fuel their own dissent. If the public perceives repression as being in their interests, i.e. exiling and imprisoning bourgeois reactionaries to

Nasser's land reforms and education measures, then repression is less likely to aid in fomenting dissent, rather it will deter broad based, popular dissent. Members of the public simultaneously conclude dissent would bring about unwanted repression and may also thwart their current gains.

Dekmejian describes both of these constraints in one example: "The authoritarian nature of the system, coupled with the dependence of most intellectuals on government jobs, made the voicing of dissent a rare practice" (1971, p.63). One can easily see how this would apply to the lower and middle classes who were benefiting from Nasser's reign. Nasser and the majority of the public, excluding the groups mentioned previously had a tacit social contract. As long as the regime continued to endorse economic equality while raising both expectations and the capabilities to obtain those expectations political repression was tolerated.

Both the continued and present strength of the Islamist movement and the continued strength of Egypt's authoritarian leaders illustrates that another indicator, one other than repression is responsible for Islamist activism. As explained by Gurr repression alone is not enough to incite strong political opposition. The degree to which repression triggers civil unrest, uprising, or activism is contingent on the general perception of that repression. This understanding is fitting of the relative deprivation model as it underscores the fact that state repression is not an absolute evil, it can be popularly tolerated or popularly opposed depending on the populace's perception and legitimacy of the state's power.

Chapter 5:

The *Infitah*: The False Promise of Prosperity

By the 1970s Nasser's Revolution was unraveling. The reforms were proving to be unstable and unsustainable. The rapid restructuring of Egyptian society combined with an increasingly expanding state sector increased pressure on the Egyptian state and economy. Under the measures of Arab Socialism the Egyptian state had been induced into an artificial expansion that was ultimately unsustainable. The state expansion spilled over into other societal zones, such as education and migration, and no doubt raised the value expectations of the Egyptian public, especially the lower and middle classes who benefited the most from Nasser's land, education, and economic reforms. The increase in education, the state guarantee of employment, and the mobilization of the populace exacerbated the strength of the state and at the same time threatened its stability. It appears that the planners of Arab Socialism based their policies less on reality and more on political benefits to the regime and an optimistic forecast. For example,

The Five Year Plan (1960-1965) projected that by the end of the period development would be completely financed from within the economy: but in reality outside aid multiplied from about 10 million annually in the fifties to 100 million pounds in 1964. The 7% annual growth forecast was around 4%. Public expenses...rose from 500 million pounds in 1960 to 1.2 billion in 1966. The number of state employees more than doubled and the public debt went from 70 million pounds to 350 million pounds. (Johnson, 1972, p.8)

In addition to these stresses on the state and economy another dilemma brought about by both the expansion of education and state services was the rapid flow of migrants from the rural areas of Egypt to its urban centers of Cairo and Alexandria, where services were more readily available. The problem with this migration was the rate of employment did not correspond with the rate of migration and population growth. The new residents of the city taxed the state economic system more than they contributed to it. To further aggravate matters, the cities were not prepared to sufficiently absorb these bucolic migrants and the migrants themselves were not apt to assimilate into urban culture and lifestyles. Saad Ibrahim describes this population as urban villagers who “live in, but are not of the city” (1975, p.39). A large segment of these urban villagers are “floating internal refugees with no homes but city streets. They attend no school, do no work, have no cash, buy no goods” (Ibrahim, 1975, p.39). Ibrahim also notes that these urban villagers account for half of Cairo’s population (1975).

Where most models, either capitalist or socialist, regard urbanization as a phenomenon that corresponds with modernization and growth, growing urban populations can be disproportionate to development. In the case of Cairo and Alexandria these cities had an influx of peasant populations leaving their life of rural labor and entering an environment that was not developed enough to turn them into proletarians. Thus they remained peasants in an environment not designed for a peasant population. In the case of Egypt,

urban growth “instead of stimulating modernization, [functioned] as a pathologic acceleration of urban cancer” (Ibrahim, 1975, p.41).

A comparison of the rate of public employment to that of private employment illustrates another example of disproportionate growth. According to Wickham, “Public employment grew by about 70 percent from 1962 to 1970, at a time when growth in national employment as a whole did not exceed 20 percent” (2002, p.27). The huge rate of state employment shows the direct dependence of many Egyptians on state jobs, and even more so the public’s overall reliance on the state sector.

By the 1970s, Egypt was faced with two major problems, both consequences of Arab Socialism. The first dealt with how the state could continue to function at such an asymmetrical rate of growth, subsequently the second concerned how the public could deal with either a collapsing state or the restructuring of the state. The Egyptian government was left with no easy choice. It could continue down the path of Arab Socialism, to what end no one knew. Or it could attempt to restructure Nasser’s reform and reduce the public’s reliance on the state.

The death of Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1970 was just the first major change in what would become a decade of more reforms, upheaval, and ultimately a rise in Islamist activism. Nasser’s successor, Anwar Sadat, took the helm of a nation-state that was under an immense amount of internal and external pressures. As mentioned above Arab Socialism was under an immense amount of stress, Nasser’s pan Arabism

had been challenged by Israel's victory in 1967, and the forces outside of the Middle East, the US and the USSR, continued to pressure Egypt to play its role as one of their Cold War pawns. Both these external and internal pressures threatened to add to the instability and insecurity of Egyptian society.

Beginning in the 1970s and coinciding with Sadat's rise to power Egypt took steps to alleviate these problems. The first of which was the expulsion of Soviet advisors in 1972, followed by the launching of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Both these measure were designed to aid Egypt's relationship with the West. The implementation of the Open Door Economic Policy (ODEP), the *infitah*, was the final measure in what was envisioned as Egypt's integration into the global capitalist system and a new westward alignment, particularly towards the United States. The *infitah* liquidated Egypt's Soviet leaning Cold War alignment and wholly relinquished the nation's claim of positive-neutrality.

Though all three of these seminal events were interdependent, the *infitah* was perhaps the most important. Though there are numerous consequences of the *infitah* the most important one concerning this project is the consequences the *infitah* had on Islamist activism in Egypt. There was a major problem with this plan. While the *infitah* sought to reduce the socialist role of the state by allowing free markets and an inflow of foreign capital, Egypt's leaders coached the new measure in an optimistic language, promising the public more prosperity. The results of the *infitah* were opposite

of its promise. Essentially the problem is in the fact that Nasser modernized Egypt through Arab Socialism while Sadat attempted to turn Egypt away from socialism and to capitalism. This turn to capitalism could not meet the needs promised to the public by Arab Socialism nor did the results of the *infitah* correspond to its optimistic forecast.

The *infitah* or “open door” policy was first outlined in the October Paper in 1974. As one author explains, the formula in the October Paper was that “Arab (as well as Western) capital would be wed to western technology and lured to an emerging market economy in Egypt” (Baker, 1978, p.136). The promise of this formula lay in the assumption that an open door would create an “in flow of foreign capital, improved access to advanced technology, a role for indigenous capital in an expanding private sector, and vast new employment opportunities for Egyptian labor” (Baker, 1978, p.136). All of these factors would presumably lead to the growth and development of Egypt and its reintegration into the global free market.

Rather than being a full reversal from Arab Socialism, the Open Door Economic Policy seems to have been intended to continue in the spirit of Nasser’s vision, yet deal with the problems created by the socialist structure. The October Paper “formally claimed loyalty to the principles of the Nasserite Revolution, including socialism and Arab nationalism, but argued that their mode of application must adapt to changing times” (Goldschmidt, 2004, p.169). The Egyptian Finance Minister Abdel Azziz Hegazy explained “we needed nationalization to build up our infrastructures and give work to people.

Now we have moved into a new stage. Those state companies have to start being profitable. And now there is a place for foreign investment” (A Look Inside, 1974, p.72). Whether or not Sadat and his advisors truly believed the Policy was in step with Nasserists concepts, or if this was just the rhetoric used to placate the populace and left wing, is hard to tell. However, it is unlikely that Sadat would engineer a policy to purposely weaken the stability and autonomy of his state. With this in mind the most appropriate way to regard the *infitah* is as a policy and formula crafted by Egyptians, yet one whose implementation came under the heavy influence of international finance organizations and foreign advisors.

The fact is, the *infitah* failed to attract the large sums of Western investment. Arab investment came in greater amounts and the Egyptian bourgeoisie “celebrated their return from the Nasserite wilderness” (Goldschmidt, 2004, p.170), but rather than attract investment what the open door policy attracted more than anything was international debt. As one critic cites “the country’s total foreign debt, under 3 billion in 1973, had grown to 16 billion by 1979” (Weinbaum, 1986, p.119). Another adds external debt “increased on an average of 28 percent per year under Sadat, compared to 13 percent over the previous ten years” (Stork, 1982, p.12). The following chart illustrates this annual increase in Egypt’s debt in the years after the *infitah*’s implementation.

Medium and long term loan and grant commitments (\$ million)

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
US	–	60.8	458.4	731.3	818.5	839.6
W. Germany	59.1	83.1	99.8	91.4	107.8	158.1
France	–	40.0	81.4	113.0	–	107.0
Japan	11.3	22.7	178.6	39.2	85.9	16.3
Arab States	905.0	1,603.0	2,774.0	1,072.0	1,751.0	885.0
World Bank/ IDA	74.9	140.0	132.0	197.0	370.0	164.0

(Fig 3)²

One of the main points of the ODEP was to confirm to the West and other investors that their investments would be safe from the state seizures that occurred as a result of the July Laws. By providing protections against nationalization and inviting the input of foreign consultants, Egypt was able to illustrate its sincerity in protecting private property. This security along with the over all opening of the market allowed Egypt to obtain loans larger than it ever had under Nasser. In the immediate post-*infatih* period Egypt received a loan from the World Bank for US \$227 million dollars. Prior to this “the largest loan Egypt had ever received from the World Bank was for US \$60 million” (Goldschmidt, 2004, p.169). Thus the policy allowed Egypt to receive loans

² Source: Ikram, (Stork, 1982 p.12).

that were presumably based on projected returns of capital gained through the Open Door Economic Policy.

Of course the Policy never lived up to these projections. As a whole “the expectations raised of Sadat’s economic solution [were] not fulfilled. Heightened class conflict [were] the result. Hardships for Egypt’s people implicit in the limited results of the program [were] not borne equally. Social cleavages [were] widened as a result of the differential impact, and social violence reminiscent of the 1940s [had] surfaced” (Baker, 1978, p.149).

The role of foreign interests in the Policy and its failure should not be underestimated. After all the fundamentals of the *infitah*’s formula revolved around foreign investment, which easily became foreign involvement “in encouraging, coaching, and pressuring Egypt to further liberalize its economy” (Dessouki, 1981, p.411). This should not come as a surprise as “developing countries are highly susceptible to external influences—given such countries low degree of political institutionalization, political and social instability, the general structure of international economic relations, and most importantly their dependence upon the outside world in almost every respect—from food to armaments” (Dessouki, 1981, p.412).

Economic liberalization did little to aid the Egyptian public. At the mercy of foreign nations and institutions like the IMF and World Bank, Egypt enacted policies that were disastrous in promoting stability and strong development. These policies only seemed to promote a reduction in sovereignty and aid the profitability of foreign investment.

Examples of these policies included: cuts in food subsidies, the establishment of free trade zones, which included investment incentives such as “tax exemption for the company and no income tax for foreign employees” (Baker, 1978, p.145). To further illustrate how the Policy favored foreigners over Egyptians it is worth noting that: “Egyptian labor requirements were eased for companies outside the free zone and removed for companies in the free zone” (Baker, 1978, p.145). World Bank members advised: “it would further appear desirable to reconsider the role of worker’s economic rights” (Abdel-Khalek, 1981, p.402). And the entire “dismantling of public sector institutions” was recommended (Dessouki, 1981, p.414). In short the *infitah* became a policy more about privatization and profit than it was about progress, development and the public.

The reality of the *infitah*, despite what its stated intent was, was not lost on the Egyptian people. In the years that followed the *infitah* implementation unrest simmered among the populace. Moves to privatize the inflated public sectors that had grown at a rate disproportionately larger than the economy, antagonized the employees of these sectors. In 1976 Cairo witnessed “perhaps the largest strike in 20 years” (“Popular Opposition,” 1976, p.23) when the bus drivers and other public employees went on strike. The fact that the strike was broken up by the police and the army no doubt led to further the feeling of frustration among Egyptians.

Another example of civil unrest in Egypt is the 1977 food riots. The *New York Times* reported “thousands of Egyptian students and workers

stormed through central Cairo and other cities in an outburst of anger over price increases ordered by the Government..." ("Thousands in Egypt," 1977, p.7). The *Times* also reported the reduction in subsidies came at the urging of the IMF (Tanner, 1977). The riots left 100 people dead and 800 injured ("Egypt Raises Some Prices," 1978). Resistance to the reforms initiated by ODEP and recommended by foreign advisors came from both the public sector as well as the populace.

Based on the examples given above and over all assessments by other sources (Baker, 1978; Dessouki, 1981; Abdel-Khalek, 1981; Goldschmidt, 2004; Wickham, 2002) the *infitah* failed to promote stability and prosperity in Egypt. Instead it wrought instability, exasperated social cleavages, and revealed the harsher aspects of the authoritarian state, all the while binding Egypt into a cycle of debt and dependency. Overall the widespread skepticism of the *infitah* existed to such an extent that Baker observed at the time that, "the mass of the Egyptian people do not require arcane analyses of the shortcomings of the open door policy nor statistical confirmation of income distribution studies to know that their standard of living is eroding sharply" (1981, p.379). Thus the failure of the *infitah* crafted the sharp reversal of fortune, or at the least the popular perception of a sharp reversal necessary to foment an environment ripe for civil unrest.

Chapter 6:

The Response of the Islamic Sector

The Muslim Brotherhood is credited as being the first major Islamist organization in Egypt. Since it was founded in 1928 the Brotherhood has been a centralizing figure of Islamist activism both in Egypt and in other parts of the Middle East. This organization's level of involvement in society and politics has fluctuated over the years. At the outset of its founding it was mostly a charitable, social organization set on "reconciling modern life with Islamic values" (Aslan, 2005, p.236) through the "Islamization of society" (Aslan, 2005, p.236) by gaining followers due to good works. At the same time however, the Brotherhood hovered on the periphery of politics in the making of the modern Middle East. Though the nation-states and their leaders were the major players in inter-war and post-war periods, the role of the Muslim Brotherhood is something despots, dictators and scholars have had to contend with in order to obtain any meaningful analysis of the present day Middle East.

Though the popularity of the Islamist movement has fluctuated in Egypt, it should be understood that among Islamists the Muslim Brotherhood has continuously been the most prominent organization. Thus during the decline of the Islamist movement under Nasser the Muslim Brotherhood was still the strongest Islamist entity and their strength needed to be monitored

and repressed as much as possible. Yet as mentioned previously, Nasser's repression is not enough to explain the absence of Islamist activism.

Saad Ibrahim explains that, 'the MB has been a grassroots movement with an appeal mainly to lower-middle classes' (2002, p.36). Noting this Ibrahim concludes that "the Nasser led July Revolution appealed to the same constituency" (2002, p.36). Ibrahim's observation reinforces the already mentioned understanding that under Nasser there was little incentive to rebel. Since Nasser and the MB apparently shared and appealed to the same constituency, the lower and middle classes under Nasser would have been less attracted to a rival movement or rival ideology. If the regime failed to appeal to the lower middle classes' interests this same constituency would lessen both its loyalty and complacency under the ruling regime, which is precisely what happened under Sadat.

The reversal of Arab Socialism and the reintegration into the world capitalist system under the *infitah* angered many Egyptians, as the open door policy failed to live up to its expectations and weakened the socialist state sector. Subsequently the Islamist movement reemerged as a politically potent force. The Muslim Brotherhood in particular was able to reemerge from its Nasser-era isolation and seeming irrelevance into a strong reckoning force.

Even though this paper focuses on structural factors contributing to the rise in Islamist activism it is not possible to ignore specific decisions of the Egyptian leadership that helped lead to the Islamist resurgence. Most notably

is the laxity of certain laws concerning Islamists at the beginning of Sadat's rule.

From his beginning days in power Sadat was already perceivably different from Nasser. Sadat's reign can be best characterized as a move away from the ideologies of the left and towards a more right leaning worldview. This is seen both in Sadat's international behavior as well as in his domestic policies.

As early as 1972 Sadat began liquidating Egypt's relationship with the Soviets. He expelled the USSR military advisors from the country, frustrated by Russia's reluctance to give Egypt the weapons it desired. At this time the US and Russia were promoting a Middle East policy of no war, no peace hoping to maintain the post-1967 status quo. With the Egyptian defeat in 1967 Sadat was under political pressure to regain Egypt's fallen honor, as well as the Sinai Peninsula. On October 6, 1973 Sadat launched the Yom Kippur War and crossed the Suez into the Israeli occupied Sinai. Henry Kissinger explains Sadat's strategy:

Every American and Israeli assessment before October 1973 had agreed that Egypt and Syria lacked the military capabilities to regain territory by force of arms. What no one understood at first was that Sadat was aiming not for conquest but to change the equilibrium in negotiations he intended to start. The shock of war; he reasoned would enable both sides, Israeli as well as Egypt, to show flexibility that was impossible while Israel considered itself militarily supreme....
(Kissinger, 2003, p.12)

The flexing of Egyptian muscle told the Israelis, but particularly the US that Egypt could not be ignored. The expulsion of the Soviets illustrated Egypt's

cessation as a communist client state and invited US alignment in a region that was mostly hostile to US interests.

By distancing his nation from the USSR and maneuvering towards the US, Sadat created more political turmoil. A nation raised on the concepts of Arab Socialism, even if it was internationally unaligned would not quietly swallow the idea of integration within a US dominated capitalist-imperialist system. At the same time the sentences of members of the Muslim Brotherhood, jailed under Nasser, were set to expire and large numbers were released from prison. Sadat saw the opportunity to take care of two problems at the same time.

In order to counter the complaints and power of the socialists and communists Sadat used the Islamists as a means to siphon off the strength of leftist opposition. Sadat allowed and encouraged the formation of Islamic student associations in the hopes “of developing an effective counterweight to the leftist groups that dominated student politics at the time” (Wickham, 2002, p.96). Sadat also began referring to himself as “the believer president” in order to foster an Islamic aura absent in Nasser, and of course to help co-opt the new Islamist groups.

Sadat believed that by weakening the political vitality of the left with the Islamist right he would create less opposition to his liberal economic policies. This allowed the Islamist organizations to create and foster a political movement and infrastructure that did indeed rival the left, yet this plan backfired. The analysis, and critiques of the Open Door Economic Policy from

the Islamists was “nearly identical with that of the secular left” (Ibrahim, 2002, p40). In fact instead of dividing the opposition Sadat created two wings from which dissent and criticism could take center stage, the broad “opposition to the West and the westernization of the open door [provided] an important bridge between the left and the religious right” (Baker, 1981, p.382). The fact that both the left and the right were united in their criticism of the *infitah* helps illustrate the significance of the socioeconomic factors in fueling activism.

The Islamists’ critique of the *infitah* reads as if it could have been written by the social democrats, or other left leaning movements. For example one MB publication discussed the causes of the 1977 riots and popular discontent, explaining that, “The ruling party and its deputies are isolated from the people who reject the latest economic measures...those who burned and looted public and private property would not have done so had they felt any sense of belonging to this country or sharing in its wealth...they are poor, humiliated, and bitter” (Ibrahim, 2002, p.40).

Another article entitled “Don’t Hide Your Heads in the Sand” traces the origins of resentment and disdain towards the regime by listing three contributors to the public’s unrest. The first criticism cited is rampant social injustice, followed by excessive dream selling, and thirdly a neglect of religious education and piety among the nation’s leadership. According to the author of the article:

the ruling class in Egypt has appropriated for itself unprecedented privileges. The average citizen perceives glaring inequality... The gap between expectations and achievement sharpened the contradictions created by injustice. The suffering of the average citizen has intensified

due to the multiplicity of problems in his daily life—transportation, food, clothing, and housing. Prices have skyrocketed with every sunrise, while incomes of the majority have remained the same or declined...Meanwhile the state and the class which controls authority are building luxury housing and living conspicuously. (Ibrahim, 2002, pp.40-41)

Meanwhile the left voiced similar concerns as Baker observes:

The disquiet of the poor and their intellectual sympathizers is heightened by the sense that the benefits of Nasserist socialism are being taken from them...Despite repeated official disclaimers, the emphasis on the role of the private sector built into the open door has stimulated widespread fears that a weakening and then dismantling of the public sector is in the offing. Such apprehensions are concentrated on the left of the political spectrum...(1981, p.380)

The criticism of economic policy from both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian left shows that the *infitah's* policies and consequences were the primary sources of frustration among Egyptians. The similarity in the opposition from communists, Nasserites and the dissenting voice from the Muslim Brotherhood illustrate a general complaint about the socio-economic programs of the 1970s. Thus everyone's unhappiness, frustration, and grievances were in response, not to Israel or Western Civilization rather they were the consequence of reversing the public's wellbeing, or a perceived reversal of their wellbeing. The anti-western complaints rose from structural effects of capitalism and the consequential decrease in Egyptian material wellbeing, not out of cultural hatreds.

Thus as already explained, but reiterated here: the socialist reforms under Nasser created a rise in the Egyptian standard of living through modernization, this further fueled an increase in not only value expectations

but also value capabilities among the Egyptian middle and lower classes. The increased development consequential to these reforms however, was unsustainable. The burdens of socialism on the state and economy were troublesome alone. The rapid rates of growth in the Egypt's urban centers only put greater stress on the system. As a result state sector growth and urban expansion along with popular expectations continued at a rate disproportionate to the growth of sustainable development, employment and capabilities. The problems became paramount at the beginning of the 1970s. To stave off a social and economic collapse Sadat drafted the ODEP. In order to stymie left-wing opposition to economic liberalization Sadat encouraged the growth of Islamic groups. The *infitah*'s failure to attract foreign investment and uncanny ability to attract foreign debt complicated the problems of Egypt's development, further antagonizing the nation's instability and social unrest. As the reliance on the state diminished and the state's public sector weakened the newly resurrected, well-financed Islamic sector increased in its importance of providing services for the well being of Egyptians.

In addition to encouraging the development of Islamic groups Sadat also aided in the development of an Islamic sector of society. For example Sadat passed legislation making any building containing a Mosque tax exempt. Outside influences, mainly patrons in the Gulf-states contributed to the proliferation of private mosques. As Wickham explains, estimates of private mosque expansion in Egypt showed an increase "from 20,000 in 1970 to more than 46,000 in 1981" (2002, p.96).

These private mosques worked as their own network creating a structure of community services that ran parallel to those of the state. Ibrahim describes some of the services noting that, “among the widespread facilities are the medical services to be found in more than twenty thousand non-governmental mosques...Similar educational and other social services are rendered by nonviolent Islamic activists. Often these are located on the premises of non-governmental mosques” (Ibrahim, 2002, p.60). Wickham reinforces Ibrahim’s observations of the mosques’ social and economic significance stating that: “in addition to hosting daily and Friday noon prayers, private mosques often provided a wide variety of religious and community services...[these] might include a health clinic, kindergarten, charity distribution” (2002, p.98).

The private mosque played an important role, “particularly in low income neighborhoods on the periphery of Cairo, where government services were scarce and networks of communal self-help were underdeveloped, the local mosque and its satellite institutions often became focal points of community social life” (Wickham, 2002, p.98). As Ibrahim observes the Islamists set about “establishing concrete Islamic alternatives to the socioeconomic institutions of the state” (Ibrahim, 2002, p.61).

The difference between the Islamist response and the left’s response is in the importance of the mosque as a remedy to collapsing socialism. Where the left was only able to demand political and economic reform, the Islamists demanded these changes while offering aid and relief from the

shocks of Sadat's reforms. The class cleavages, rising prices, and perceived inequalities in the dissemination of privileges between the ruling class and other classes created an environment salient to rebellion, civil unrest, but most importantly activism. Several groups opposed the *infitah* and had the same sentiments towards Sadat's regime; however, the rise of Islamist activism, and its sustain comes not from complaints against the regime by organization's like the Muslim Brotherhood, but rather both are a result of the popular plight of the people and the Islamists' direct response to this plight by lessening social and economic hardships. The importance of these Islamic institutions allowed the popular unrest wrought by the *infitah* to be siphoned into, and sculpted by the Islamist ideology.

Conclusion

Anwar Sadat was assassinated on October 6, 1981. As tempting as it is to use Sadat's assassination as a conclusive example of his unpopularity in comparison with Nasser one should refrain from such a comparison, as there were several attempts on Nasser's life. A more significant comparison can be made not in how they died, but rather in how they were missed. Said K. Aburish (2004) estimates the number of mourners who took to the streets after Nasser's death to be between four and five million. The *New York Times* explained that "Gamal Abdel Nasser was buried after a tumultuous, frenzied, funeral procession through streets packed with millions..." (Anderson, 1970, p.1). The article goes on to articulate the scale and intensity of grief among the Egyptians:

People broke through the ranks of troops, defying flailing batons, to touch and kiss the coffin. The soldiers, who had been marching solemnly in step were swept aside, infiltrated and surrounded. 'Lets us carry him!' men cried as they grabbed at the coffin. 'He is ours....' Thousands shouted and waved handkerchiefs in farewell to their leader...the people raised banners and black-framed portraits of Nasser and shouted his name. (Anderson, 1970, p.1)

In contrast to the intense public mourning for Nasser is the absence of grief and abundance of confusion on behalf of many Egyptian's sentiments towards Sadat. Marie-Christine Aulas describes the atmosphere surrounding Sadat's funeral, noting first that the most striking aspect of the service was,

the silence of the population, unusual among a people not accustomed to hiding their feelings...Equally unusual was the decision of the authorities to hold the funeral far from any urban center...People did not express their sorrow in the usual fashion—by composing dirges or by taking up the traditional and moving refrain of national unity...on the contrary: as soon as the funeral was over, jokes sprang up on every side...vied in irony, sarcasm and scorn toward the deceased. Thus did Egypt break with its traditions, graphically displaying the changes that had taken place during the course of Sadat's presidency. (1982, p.6)

Yet, which changes are Aulas referring to? The conventional and confrontationists scholars largely perceive public disaffection for Sadat as a consequence of his peace deal with Israel. There is a certain amount of relevance to this argument; however, to view the attitudinal changes in Egypt's population only through the spectrum of the Israeli/Arab conflict is far too narrow. The Egyptian defeat of 1967 certainly had an impact on public perceptions and legitimacy of the state, yet when Nasser tried to step down there were large public protests against the move. Thus it seems the defeat of 1967 was not enough alone to create public discontent and activism. Even though Nasser was not forced out of office the legacy of 1967 certainly had an impact on Egyptian attitudes towards Arab Socialism and Pan Arabism throughout the 1970s, yet its significance is over emphasized.

Some will still argue that the significance of the Camp David Accord was the event that spurred the Islamist resurgence. Camp David no doubt played a significant role in further alienating Sadat from the Egyptian public. This alienation came from the fact that Camp David contradicted Sadat's statements made in Jerusalem in 1977, where he claimed, "I did not come to

you with a view to concluding a separate peace agreement between Egypt and Israel...no separate peace between Egypt and Israel—or between any confrontation state and Israel—could secure a lasting and just peace in the region as a whole” (Smith, 2001, p.396). Despite this statement Camp David resulted in a “separate peace” and left out any solution to the Palestinian problem. The perceived failure of Camp David certainly added to the frustration of the Egyptians with Sadat; however, it did not cause them. Rather it was only another failed promise after a decade of failing promises. The riots of 1977 and the protests of 1976 all happened prior to Camp David. The criticism of Camp David, much like the criticism of the *infitah* came from all sectors and ideologies within Egypt, not only the Islamists.

The perception that there exists a near causal relationship between 1967, Camp David and the resurgence of the Islamist movement ignores the impact of the seismic changes that Egypt underwent in the post-revolutionary period, and the emergence of the modern Egyptian state. Instead of focusing only on Egypt’s foreign policy and regional role, any attempt to explain the Islamist movement should look at the tumultuous changes in Egyptian society. First there were the reforms under Nasser, and then the near reversal of these reforms under Sadat. The environment of civil unrest, wrought by relative deprivation in 1970s Egypt created a crisis in which the Islamic sector could adequately respond. The results of the 1967 war and Camp David are events that took place within the foreground of Egyptian political and social

life. These two events must be viewed within the context of a background that was comprised of three decades worth of modernization and social change.

When seeking an explanation of the pattern of Islamist activism less emphasis should be put on Israel and notions of Arab and Muslim vehemence. The most significant changes are those that have more to do with the impact modernization had on the populaces' own social, political and economic orientations. As this paper has argued the restructuring of Egyptian society from one largely based on a feudal system to a socialist system, and later to a free market capitalist system most certainly plays a significant role in the rise of Islamist activism. These changes and their consequences on the perceptions of Egyptians, as well as the consequences in their physical and material life, has led to discontent and mobilization. Thus it appears that this activism is correlated to relative deprivation as opposed to being a broad cultural reaction to Western Civilization.

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This project explores the structural contributors to the rise of Islamist activism in Egypt in the 1970s by working out of the theoretical framework of relative deprivation. This paper explains how the modernizing reforms in Egypt during the Nasser regime contributed to an increase in value expectations and value capabilities among the Egyptian populace. This attempt at broad modernization laid the groundwork for mass participation in politics and the mobilized, political discontent that emerged during the economic crises of the 1970s. The reduction of state services during the *infitah* was replaced by charitable organizations from the Islamic sector of Egyptian society. By replacing the services of the state, the Islamist movement was able to capitalize on public dissatisfaction towards Egypt's leaders, and orient large swaths of the Egyptian public towards the Islamist ideology.

Advisor's Approval: _____

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