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**An Inclusion De-Moderation Hypothesis:
Egyptian Secularists in Democratization**

Talal Alkhadher

**School of Social & Political Science
The University of Edinburgh**

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Abstract and Lay Summary

Democratization could lead to de-moderation. This is the proposed argument of this thesis which studies the impact of political openings on secularist forces in Egypt between 1970 and 2013, a timeframe which crosses Sadat, Mubarak, and the post-revolution periods, witnessing several waves of repression and inclusion. The thesis presents two secular cases: the Tagammu Party, which was pushed towards statism by political liberalization in the 1980s, and the Revolutionary Socialists, who shifted in an anti-institutional direction after democratization in 2011-13. These opposing pathways seem to challenge the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. Introducing the moderation theory to secular actors opens a broad spectrum in which to comprehend the understudied field of Arab secularism and rethinking, and at the same time, the scope of moderation hypotheses. The study demonstrates how these two parties responded to political openings, evaluated political opportunities, and assessed the feasibility of the elections and their capacity to compete with other opposition rivals, namely the Islamists.

Declaration

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Talal Alkhadher

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Note on Transliteration

The transliteration of Arabic words follows the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies. Arabic names have been transliterated according to their most common spellings in English.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASU – Arab Socialist Union
CPSU – Communist Party of the Soviet Union
ECP – Egyptian Communist Party
MB – Muslim Brotherhood
NDP – National Democratic Party
NSF – National Salvation Front
Revsoc – Revolutionary Socialists
SCAF – Supreme Council of Armed Forces
SLP – Socialist Labour Party
SV – Socialists Vanguard
Tagammu – The National Unionist Progressive Party
YSO – Youth Socialists Organization

Chapter One

Introduction

How do political groups *moderate*? This is the central question of a large field of study known as the Moderation Theory. Moderation Theory, a sub-field of Democratic Theory, is a set of hypotheses that explains how political groups abandon radical, violent, or authoritarian orientations in favour of tolerant, compromising, democratic ones. Its central argument is the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, which holds that the greater the democratization and inclusion of political groups in the political system, the more radical groups tend to moderate. Early literature studied socialist, nationalist, and Christian parties in Europe, South America, and post-Soviet countries during earlier waves of democratization. Scholarship on moderation in the Middle East has focused exclusively on Islamists in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, Kuwait, and elsewhere, whose moderation during the previous half-century synchronized with waves of political liberalization and their inclusion in formal politics. However, I found no study applying the moderation theory to non-Islamist actors in the Arabic-speaking Middle East. Islamism has generally overshadowed other secular forces and grabbed the attention of researchers over the last few decades. This is understandable, as the Islamists arguably have been the most prominent opposition force in the region and the primary alternative to the existing regimes. In this regard, and since the rise of Islamism in the 1970s, scholarly attention has moved from the secularists to the Islamists.

Secularists are commonly seen as secondary forces lost between the state and the Islamists. However, they played a crucial role in steering the course of democratization in the region, and are expected to do so in any future political opening. Their role in the Egyptian revolution in particular led many observers to question the conditions and dynamics that shaped their ideas and strategies during and before the revolution. As Amr Hamzawy states, “the question of understanding liberals’ [secularists’] behaviour and preferences and their relation to the state became relevant in the aftermath of July 2013. There are many reasons to go back and revisit the liberal spectrum in Egypt to try to understand why they have been pushing forward undemocratic

choices.”¹ Similarly, Nader Hashemi writes that “the question of democracy in Muslim societies has generated heated debate on the role of mainstream Islamist parties and democratization. Can they moderate their views? Will they respect electoral outcomes? Are they committed to political pluralism? The same questions, however, have been rarely asked of liberal and secular forces who occupy the same political space.”² This study falls in line with these questions.

In the few and short responses to the question of contemporary secularists and, some scholars took an essentialist approach to argue that Egyptian secularists are inherently statist and “authoritarian in nature.”³ Joseph Massad, Abdeslam Maghraoui, and Uday Mehta argue that the core doctrine of liberalism outside its western territory is consistently authoritarian.⁴ Critics of western enlightenment commonly highlight Montesquieu’s supportive justifications for colonialism and Mill’s exclusion of “passive” people from political rights. The essentialist argument accordingly turns to the origins of Egyptian liberal and left-wing intellectuals who emerged around and from the state in the late 19th century—a generation whose concerns were focused on culture, education, and modernization but little on democracy. Included were leaders of political parties, most prominently Ahmad Lutfi Al-Sayyid, the founder of the al-Ummah Party and known as the father of Egyptian liberalism. Lutfy al-Sayyid has widely been described as holding elitist concepts of democracy exclusive to *ahl al-ra’y* [opinion makers], which refers to landowners with large tracts of land and a real stake in society [*aṣḥāb al-maṣāliḥ al-ḥaqīqiyya*]. Similar tendencies were prevalent among the first generation of secularists in the interwar period, including Mohammad Husain Haykal of the Liberal Constitutional Party, and Salama Musa, the co-founder of the Egyptian Socialist Party in the early 1920s, to name some.

¹ Amr Hamzawy, *Anti-Democratic Deceptions - How Egyptian Liberals Endorse Autocracy*, 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=15kz9CVRFHg. Hamzawy is a liberal politician, previous member of Parliament, and a political scientist.

² Dalia F. Fahmy and Daanish Faruqi, *Egypt and the Contradictions of Liberalism: Illiberal Intelligentsia and the Future of Egyptian Democracy*, Studies on Islam, Human Rights, and Democracy (London, England: Oneworld, 2017). Preface.

³ Hamzawy.

⁴ Joseph A. Massad, *Islam in Liberalism* (Chicago, IL, United States: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Abdeslam M. Maghraoui, *Liberalism without Democracy: Nationhood and Citizenship in Egypt, 1922–1936*, (Duke University Press, 2006); Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

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They all shared paternalistic views towards the masses, whom they regarded as passive and malleable for social engineering.⁵

The same applies to the second generation of secular liberal and leftist intellectuals in the 1940s, exemplified in the liberal National Renaissance Society [*Jama 'at al-Nahḍa al-Qawmiyya*] and the communist movement. Disillusioned by the paternalistic and traditionalist tendency of the early liberals and radicalized by the nationalist movement after the second world war, this middle-class generation aimed to expand the liberal experiment by advocating for national emancipation and further rationalization. While the new liberal and leftist trends aimed for a more inclusive democracy, they paradoxically conditioned a top-down political and social reform programme as a prerequisite for democratic development. The “guided democracy” [*demuqrāṭiyya muwajjaha*] and the “just tyrant” [*al-mustabid al-‘ādil*] became prevalent ideas among this cohort of intellectuals which facilitated their cooperation with Nasser’s authoritarian modernization project in the mid-1950s.⁶ This essentialist argument is held implicitly by Amr Hamzawy, Ahmed Abdel-Meguid and Daanish Faruqi, who by and large viewed contemporary Egyptian liberals as “a continuum [of] this particular strand of [earlier] Egyptian liberal thought.”⁷

Indeed, an elitist tendency in some contemporary secularist discourse seems to resonate with that in the first half of the 20th century. One example is what Hamzawy says about the liberals’ call for a two-class system. “After the first referendum in March 2011, where 80 per cent was in favour of the Islamists, I heard some liberals suggesting we should introduce a two class system, making the votes of educated Egyptians more valuable, and that such an idea was often raised after electoral results.”⁸ Nevertheless, the essentialist argument struggles to prove a clear continuum between these generations. Unlike the Islamist school of thought, embodied in enduring and coherent social movements like the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) which makes it

⁵ On the first generation liberals and democracy see Israel Gershoni, “Liberal Democratic Legacies in Modern Egypt: The Role of the Intellectuals, 1900–1950” *Institute of Advanced Studies*, 2012.

⁶ On this second generation of secular intellectuals see Roel Meijer, *The Quest for Modernity: Secular Liberal and Left-Wing Political Thought in Egypt, 1945-1958* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

⁷ Hamzawy, *Anti-Democratic Deceptions*; Ahmed Abdel-Meguid and Daanish Faruqi, “The truncated debate: Egyptian liberals, Islamists, and ideological statism”, in *Egypt and the Contradictions of Liberalism.*, ed Fahmy and Faruqi, 264.

⁸ Hamzawy, *Anti-Democratic Deceptions*.

possible to trace the flow of its ideas and mark its shifts, the secular intellectual legacy is scattered between various and discontinued groups and free-floating intellectuals. Accordingly, proving a continuum line, as some have suggested, from Lutfy al-Sayyed to Mohammad Abul-Ghar and Hazem al-Biblawi or from Salama Musa to Alaa' al-Aswani and Rif'at al-Sa'id needs extraordinary evidence.⁹ This approach further ignores the reviews and critiques many late secular intellectuals levelled against their “predecessors,” precisely regarding their elitism and mistrust towards mass participation and their criticism of the liberal and Nasserist experiments.¹⁰ It also ignores the moments when both liberals and leftists stood against the state leadership of Sadat and Mubarak. Democratic ideas generally have matured across the Egyptian political spectrum since the 1970s, which necessitates using a contextualist approach to understand the dynamics of ideological transformations.

The essentialist view argues that a political group's actions are determined by its ideology, and while the group may adopt new tactics, its ideology remains constant. In the field of studying political Islam, Olivier Roy distinguishes two approaches: an “essentialist view” which “holds that the Islamists are fundamentally ideological and that any concessions they make to secularist principles or institutions are purely tactical,” and secondly a “contextual view” that believes that Islamists adapt to circumstances which do not only change their tactics but their ideology too.¹¹ Nawaf al-Qudaimi's study on Salafism in the revolution, *Idea-Producing Practices [Al-Mumārasa Al-Muntija Lil-Afkār]*, has a strong contextualist tendency.¹² Ideological justification always comes after practical acceptance, al-Qudaimi asserts. “We debated Salafis for ages, trying to convince them of democracy, and overnight, they established political parties and became staunch defenders of democratic legitimacy.”¹³ While the first approach factors ideological foundations and historical experiences, the latter views ideology as malleable to opportunity structures and organizational threats. Both factors play a role in determining behaviour, and the

⁹ Atef Shehat, “Al-Yasār Wal-Liberaliyyun Wa Mustaqbal Al-Thawara,” *Awraq Ishtirākiyya*, May 2011, 22 edition.

¹⁰ What comes to mind are the writings of Rif'at al-Sa'id and Abdul-Ghaffar Shukur of the Tagammu Party, Wahid Abdul-Meguid of al-Wafd, all of whom have criticized the early generation of liberals and nationalists yet endorsed the military coup in 2013.

¹¹ Roy, “Political Islam After the Arab Spring,” November 2017, www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/2017-10-16/political-islam-after-arab-spring.

¹² Nawaf Al-Qudaimi, *Al-Islamiyyun Wa Rabi' Al-Thawrat: Al-Mumārasa Al-Muntija Lil-Afkār [Islamists and the Spring of Revolutions: Idea-Producing Practices]* (Arab Centre for Research & Policy Studies, 2012).

¹³ Personal correspondence with author, 2019.

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conflict between ideological commitments and practical compulsions is commonly experienced on personal and communal levels. Ideas last long and do not easily wither. They survive because they evolve and adapt to new conditions and place-specific norms. This also means that they change. The scope of change varies and is hardly predictable. Usually, ideological concessions are made on relatively peripheral aspects to maintain the core doctrine of the ideology.

Democracy, at least in its procedural sense, is not central to any ideology. Even for sincere democrats across the ideological spectrum, democracy is a virtue and moral commitment but not an end. The core values of religion, civility, progress, individual freedoms, and social justice prove to weigh more than democracy for its adherents. Ideas on democracy are thus more subject to socio-political realities and more likely to be adopted or sacrificed. A contextualist approach is thus suitable for the question of political groups and democracy.

Thesis question, approach, and argument

The Moderation Theory is a contextualist theoretical framework investigating the effects of inclusion, exclusion, electoral competition and other variables on a political group's behaviour and ideas, especially in regard to democracy. It is comprehensively applied to Islamist movements, yet has never examined secularists who occupy the same political space. This gap opens up a broad field in which to comprehend the under-studied Arab secularism and rethinking, and at the same time, the scope of moderation hypotheses. By focusing on Islamists, the literature is limited to large movements that likely benefit from political openings and are rewarded for their moderation. The Islamists' organizational and mobilization superiority over other groups makes them the leading oppositional force and the closest to power in free elections, a factor which encourages them to push for democratic openings and present themselves to local and international audiences as a moderate and responsible alternative to the regime. Going back to foundational literature on moderation that is applied to socialist groups, Samuel Huntington describes the dynamics of their moderation as a trade-off for power.¹⁴ While moderation starts as strategic behaviour, and ideological moderation follows through a process of justification and "democratic habituation", the inducement of political gains remains the essential trigger for moderation.¹⁵

¹⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Julian J. Rothbaum Distinguished Lecture Series; v.4 (Norman; London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

¹⁵ Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, "The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January 2004): 205; Jillian Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist*

This thesis studies secularism in a dominantly religious society. The question it proposes is, how does inclusion affect the secular forces which lack the strength to achieve considerable electoral gains? What impact would political openings have on smaller political forces? The case of the secularists in Egypt is particularly interesting, where inclusion has led them to radicalization. Secular forces have “always been caught between an overbearing state and a largely Islamist opposition,” thereby emerging as the largest opposition force since the 1980s.¹⁶ Far from being homogeneous, secularists varied in how they perceived and dealt with these two poles and accordingly took different pathways and had different justifications for their stance. Therefore, an understanding of the secularists’ ideas and strategies should consider their perspectives towards the regime and the Islamists and how they perceive their electoral opportunities. By using two secular opposition movements as case studies, The National Progressive Unionist Party or *Tagammu*, and the Revolutionary Socialists [*al-Ishtirākiyyūn al-Thawriyyūn* or *Revsoc*], this thesis argues that inclusion could lead to either statism, that is, aligning with an authoritarian regime, or anti-institutionalism—rejecting formal politics.

The following sections define and identify *secularism* and *secularists* in the Egyptian context, map and classify the secularist opposition groups in contemporary Egypt, and explain the two case selections.

Secularism and secularists defined

It became common to categorize the main political forces in contemporary Egypt as a triangular-shaped structure: the regime, Islamists, and secularists. “The three major players” after the fall of Mubarak, Alfred Stepan and Juan J. Linz tell us, are “the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), and secular liberals.”¹⁷ William Zartman also states that a “triangular relationship emerged involving the military (SCAF) backed by the courts, the Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), and the uprisers

Parties in Jordan and Yemen (Cambridge, England ; New York, N.Y. Cambridge: Cambridge, England ; New York, N.Y. : Cambridge University Press, 2006). 149.

¹⁶ Michele Dunne and Amr Hamzawy, “Egypt’s Secular Political Parties: A Struggle for Identity and Independence,” 2017.

¹⁷ Alfred C. Stepan and Juan J. Linz, “Democratization Theory and the ‘Arab Spring,’” *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 2 (2013): 21.

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(street, left, and liberals).”¹⁸ This categorization was also common way before 2011 and beyond Egypt. For example, Marina Ottaway and Hamzawy describe the secular forces in several Arab countries in the 2000s as a block “caught in the middle of fighting on two fronts... [; the] regime that allow little legal space for free political activity on one side and popular Islamist movements that are clearly in the ascendancy.”¹⁹ The triangular categorization, or —excluding the state— the Islamist-secular dichotomy, dates back to the 1990s and late 80s, and is acknowledged by many Egyptian observers who constantly discuss *The Conflict Between the Religious and Secular Currents in Modern and Contemporary Arab Thought*, *The Islamic Secular Dialogue*, or *The Dialogue Between the Islamists and the Secularists*.²⁰ As discussed further, this categorization faces challenges in defining and identifying the Islamists and the secularists and the ideological and strategic overlap between them. However, despite the fact that they “do not encompass the totality of the political landscape”, as Malika Zeghal states, the “efforts to define politics outside of this dichotomy did not succeed.”²¹

It is challenging conceptually to distinguish between the Islamists and the secularists, sometimes called the “civic forces” [*al-Quwa al-Madaniyya*], “the liberals”, or occasionally simply referred to as “non-Islamists.”²² While it is widely agreed that the term Islamists refers to identifiable religious movements, predominantly the MB and other Islamic groups in its orbit, it is disputed what to call their counterparts. *Madaniyya* [civility] is often used; a vague term and a euphemism for “secular” preferred by the secularists over secularism that has been polluted and distorted in the Arabic public discourse. In the Arabic context, *madaniyya* is usually used as an antonym for theocracy. It dates back to Sheikh Mohammad Abdu (d.1905), Al-Azhar’s Grand Imam, who

¹⁸ William Zartman, “Negotiations in Transitions: A Conceptual Framework”. In *Arab Spring: Negotiating in the Shadow of the Intifadat* (University of Georgia Press, 2015). 27

¹⁹ Marina Ottaway and Amr Hamzawy, “Fighting on Two Fronts: Secular Parties in the Arab World,” *Carnegie Endowment*, 2007.

²⁰ Mohammad Kamel Dhaher, *As-Sira’ Bayn At-Tayarin Ad-Diyni Wa- ‘Ilmānii Fi Al-Fikr Al-Arabi Al-Hadith Wal-Mu’aser* [*The Conflict Between the Religious and Secular Currents in Modern and Contemporary Arab Thought*] (Beirut: Dar Al-Bairuni, 1994); Tariq Al-Bishri, *Al-Hiwar Al-Islami Al- ‘Ilmāni* [*Islamic-Secular Dialogue*] (Cairo: Dar Al-Shuruq, 1996); Mohammed Amarah, *Al-Hiwar Bayna Al-Islamiyyin wal- ‘Ilmāniyyin* [*The Dialogue Between the Islamists and the Secularists*], (Cairo: Nahdat Masr, 2000).

²¹ Malika Zeghal, “Competing Ways of Life: Islamism, Secularism, and Public Order in the Tunisian Transition: Competing Ways of Life,” *Constellations* (Oxford, England) 20, no. 2 (2013): 264

²² See for example Michael Wahid Hanna, “Egypt’s Non-Islamist Parties,” *Adelphi Series* 55,(2015); Ebtisam Hussein, “Non-Islamist Parties in Post-2011 Egypt: Winners in an MB-Free Political Sphere,” *Review of Economics & Political Science* (2019); Dina S. Shehata, “Islamists and Non-Islamists in the Egyptian Opposition: Patterns of Conflict and Cooperation” (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2007).

first employed it to emphasize that Islam has no religious authority. Secular forces tended to identify as madani to distinguish themselves from those who called for a “religious state.” Interestingly, from Hasan Al-Banna (d.1948) to Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, Islamist thinkers have also used the term “civil state” as a synonym for the Islamic state: “The Islamic state is necessarily a civil state.”²³ The claim over the word by both the Islamists and their counterparts makes it a useless analytic category and it is better to eschew it.

Several scholars like Charles Kurzman, Christoph Schumann and Roel Meijer also problematized using the term *liberal* as an analytic category to describe a particular ideology or group and instead argued that the liberal discourse is diffused throughout the Arab ideological spectrum.²⁴ Kurzman utilizes the term *liberal Islam* to refer to a contemporary tradition of Muslim intellectuals who take a progressive stance on political pluralism, freedom of thought, and the rights of women and non-Muslims, grounding their liberal positions on authentic Islamic references.²⁵ Kurzman’s list of Egyptian Muslim liberals includes figures like Fuad Zakariyya, Muhammad Khalafallah and Hasan Hanafi, who were associated with the leftist Tagammu Party, and Faraj Fuda who had ties with al-Wafd, but interestingly, also included al-Qaradawi, the most influential contemporary scholar and ideologue of the MB, as well as Islamist intellectuals Fahmi Huwaidi and Mohammad Salim al-Awwa, whose works are influential among the MB.²⁶ Kurzman’s concept of liberalism is inclusive of figures from across the Arab ideological spectrum, some of whom are sharply at odds with each other. Al-Qaradawi and Zakariyya represented two rival poles and had a famous debate in 1985 entitled *Islam and Secularism Face to Face*, both identified by Kurzman as liberals. Christoph Schumann accordingly argues that the term liberal should not be limited to persons and groups who term themselves liberal. Instead, “liberal ideas could be found historically in all ideologies and schools of political thought, such as nationalism, Islamic populism, and socialism, [although] in many cases, they coexisted with

²³ The Muslim Brotherhood, “Barnamij Hizb Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin,” August 2007.

²⁴ Meir Hatina and Christoph Schumann, *Arab Liberal Thought after 1967: Old Dilemmas, New Perceptions*, First edition. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). 7

²⁵ Charles Kurzman, “introduction” in *Liberal Islam: A Source Book* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). 3-26.

²⁶ Raymond William Baker, *Islam without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

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illiberal ideas within the same parties, institutions, and journals.”²⁷ Meijer correspondingly asserts that all Arab ideological currents mixed liberal and illiberal aspects: “Neither liberalism nor other ideologies occur in pure form in the Middle East. There are individuals who can be called liberals, but it is difficult to find pure liberal currents, or any other pure currents for that matter, in the region.”²⁸

Hamzawy also questioned the meaning of liberalism in the Arabic context, arguing that the term cannot be defined by any Western benchmarking.²⁹ Unlike its European origin, which is based on the limitation of the state’s interference in economic and social domains, Arab liberalism has a different tradition that emerged in the interwar period and understood the state as the central modernizing and enlightening agent. With this understanding, it becomes further confusing to distinguish between Egyptian liberals and leftists who share the same maximalist conception of the state, so “why should we call them liberals in the first place?” Moreover, he argues that one of the most explicit programmatic and intellectual statements made by generations of Arab liberal figures, who did not shrink from it, is the need to separate religion from politics, “so the question is why shouldn’t we call them seculars?” asks Hamzawy.³⁰ His point correlates with many Egyptian secular intellectual accounts which defined liberalism in this way. Milad Hanna, for example, a leader of the Tagammu Party, considered the separation of religion and state the main characteristic of the “liberal current” [*at-tayyār al-liberāli*] that emerged in the 1920s. That is to distinguish them from “religious fundamentalism,” which advocates that Islam is both religion and state.³¹

Although the term “secular” is no less confusing, it is a more accurate and indicative to describe the Islamists’ counterparts since the central matter of dispute between the two camps is how they perceive the role and nature of religion. Many attempts to identify secularists and Islamists in Egypt—or the Arab world broadly—made *Shari‘a* or reference to Islam the benchmark of

²⁷ Christoph Schumann, “Introduction” in *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean: Late 19th Century until the 1960s*, Social, Economic, and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia; v. 104 (Leiden: Brill, 2008). 3

²⁸ Roel Meijer, “Liberalism in the Middle East and the Issue of Citizenship Rights”. In Hatina and Schumann, *Arab Liberal Thought after 1967*. 66.

²⁹ Hamzawy, *Anti-Democratic Deceptions*.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Milad Hanna, “Al-‘Ilmāniyya Wal-Mujtama’ Al-Madani”. *Al-Ahālī*. October 19, 1992.

distinction between the two. Tariq al-Bishri distinguishes between those of the “Islamic orientation” who “view Islam as the source of legitimacy, a standard of reference, and a framework for social and political order and modes of behaviour, and those [secularists] who dismiss that”³². Similarly, according to Michele Dunne and Hamzawy, “secular parties’ defining characteristic is that they are not based on a religious ideology... [or] religion is not among the pillars of their platforms”³³.

Technically speaking, many Egyptian parties identified as secular express their adherence to Islam and include Shari‘a in their programmes, and some express that very strongly. For example, in the *Al-Wafd Programme in the House of Representatives Elections* in 2015, the party listed its “fixed values” [*qiyam wa thawābet al-Wafd*]. The first one states that “[we] believe that Islam is the religion of the state and that the principles of Islamic Shari‘a are the primary source of legislation. As for our partners in the homeland, the Copts of Egypt, they have the right to abide by their religious laws in their personal status, religious affairs, and chose their spiritual leaders.”³⁴ The party’s leader Sayyed Badawi made this even more explicit in his rejection of secularism. Speaking to the party’s electoral candidates at an internal conference in 2011:

You represent a party with a great national heritage which will continue to believe that the principles of Islamic law are the main source of legislation, and will continue to believe in the right of people of other monotheistic religions to invoke their laws in their personal status... We reject secularism that separates religion from the state, just as we reject the theocratic state that makes clerics control the state. Islam is not exclusive to a particular party or current. Islam is for all Egyptians. It is a religion for the Muslim and civilization and culture for the Christian.

In words which sound identical to the Islamist discourse, Badawi added that “political authority in Islam is civil, and the ruler in Islam is a civilian chosen by the people at the ballot box, which is the legitimate alternative to allegiance [*bai‘a*]. The ruler in Islam is watched and held accountable by the people... and the jurisprudential rule [*al-qā‘ida al-fiqhiyya*] states that in worldly matters and governance and politics, ‘what people consider good is considered good by

³² Al-Bishri Tariq, *Al-Ḥiwar Al-Islami Al-‘Ilmāni [Islamic-Secular Dialogue]*, 8.

³³ Dunne and Hamzawy, “Egypt’s Secular Political Parties: A Struggle for Identity and Independence.” 3.

³⁴ “Barnamaj Al-Wafd Fi Intikhābāt Majlis Al-Nuwwab,” Al-Wafd, 2015, accessed April 29, 2021, alwafd.news/916010-برنامج-الوفد-فى-انتخابات-مجلس-النواب.

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God’.”³⁵ The leader of the leftist Karamah party, Hamdeen Sabahi, further stated that “the ardour [*ghīra*] of those in the civic current [*at-tayyār al-madani*] towards Shari‘a is like the ardour of those belonging to the Islamic current, and perhaps more than them.”³⁶ Similar statements can be found in the discourse and programmes of other secular parties.

Some observers and scholars may consider these statements a “lip service to Shari‘a” or merely an acceptance of Islam as a component of the national identity.³⁷ Interestingly, some scholars of Islamism would say the same for the Islamists, arguing that behind their religious rhetoric are secular concepts and programmes. By analyzing the evolution of their discourse, Sumita Pahwa, Olivier Roy, and Katerina Dalacoura argue that throughout decades of political participation in the modern nation-state system, the MB’s ideology has been in a process of “secularization.”³⁸ The MB had to secularize its discourse to appeal to broader local and international audiences, providing non-religious justifications for its religious causes, simultaneously finding “religious justification for its political activism to stay true to its core religious mission”, a condition Pahwa called “hybrid secularized Islamism.” The result of this adaptation is that Islam gradually came to be framed more in identitarian terms as the nation’s cultural heritage rather than faith, and Shari‘a became framed as moral codes, while the specifics of its implementation were downplayed. Roy considers this a *failure of political Islam*, coming “from the fact that it tried to compete with secularization on its own ground: the political sphere (nation, state, citizen, constitution, legal system). Attempts to politicize religion in this way always end up secularizing it”. Heba Ra’uof Ezzet and Wael Hallaq parallelly argue that the modern nation-state in which

³⁵ “Al-Badawi: Narfuḍ Faṣl Ad-Dīn ‘An Ad-Dawlah,” AL-Wafd, 2011, accessed April 29, 2021, alwafd.news/انتخابات-مصر/120686-البدوي-نرفض-فصل-الدين-عن-الدولة.

³⁶ “Sabahi: Ghiratuna ‘ala Al-Shari‘a Mithlu At-Tayyār Al-Islami wa Akthar,” accessed January 16, 2021, www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/255823.

³⁷ Tarek Masoud, *Counting Islam: Religion, Class, and Elections in Egypt*, Problems of International Politics (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1.

³⁸ Sumita Pahwa, “Secularizing Islamism and Islamizing Democracy: The Political and Ideational Evolution of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers 1984-2012”, *Mediterranean Politics* (Frank Cass & Co.) 18, no. 2 (2013): 189–206; Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994); Katerina Dalacoura, “Islamism, Secularization, Secularity: The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt as a Phenomenon of a Secular Age,” *Economy and Society* 47, no. 2 (April 3, 2018): 313–34.

the Islamists became captive is a “black hole that devours ideology and ethics” and inevitably pragmatizes and secularizes its actors.³⁹

From the above description of the Islamists’ evolution, the mode of secularization that they adopted is rather a differentiation between the divine and the mundane, and a procedural distinction between religious and non-religious institutions, not a marginalization or declination of religion, to use Jose Casanova’s classifications.⁴⁰ Dalacoura adds another mode of secularity to Islamism. Her analysis of the MB draws on Charles Taylor, who distinguished between three modes of secularity: 1) secularity as the privatization or marginalization of religion (emptying the public sphere from God); 2) secularity as the fall-off of religious practices and beliefs; and 3) secularity as the belief in God becomes one among other options. Whereas the first two modes of secularity are about the privatization or declination of religion, the latter is about the condition of belief. Taylor argues that, unlike pre-modern societies where the belief in God was unchallenged and unproblematic and thus the default option, non-belief has become the default position in the *secular age* we live in. A believer, even a staunch one, realizes that faith is “one human possibility among others.”

While this condition, Taylor argues, is palpable in the West, Dalacoura argues that we should not exclude the Middle East from seeing it living in a secular age. Islamism, or Islamic revivalism, of which the former is part and parcel, is seen as one manifestation of Islam in the modern age; one that it juxtaposes and is usually in conflict with folk and traditional Islam and aims to reform it. It is thus a modern phenomenon, a product of modernity, and even an agent for modernization.⁴¹ Islamism has no genealogy to the pre-modern Islamic doctrinal or jurisprudential schools. It first emerged in the 1920s as a response to secularization— the decline of religious practices and the institutional marginalization of religion. A second rise of Islamism was in the 1970s after two decades of domination by secular ideologies; Arab nationalism, socialism, and Marxism. Religious revivalism in Egypt, Dalacoura argues, shares similar

³⁹ Heba Raouf, “The Political Imagination for Islamists, before and after the State,” 2015. 10; Wael B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity’s Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

⁴⁰ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁴¹ Mohammed Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam* (University of Michigan Press, 2009). 34.

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characteristics with the phenomena Taylor described in Europe. Indeed, In Egypt, faith has not tailed off as has happened in Europe, and belief is still the default position. However, belief has become one option among others in Egypt as “intensive religiosity became a set of identifiable objectives that is consciously adopted and deliberately pursued by the faithful individual.”⁴² The modern form of Islamic belief that Islamism proposes and its new spirit and ideas are “consciously (re)adopted” and result from personal decisions. It is more likely to be embraced rather than inherited. Conversions to and from Islamism are common in Muslim societies. MB members were “born-again Muslims, [and] often distance themselves from the older generation and/or their families”. In this sense, “the Brotherhood must be seen, if not as a secular movement, at the very least as a phenomenon of a secular age.”⁴³

Islamism, in this sense, cannot be seen as starkly opposed to secularism unless the latter solely means the decline or privatization of religion. The overlap between the political proposals of Islamism and secularism in the Arab context seems broader than is assumed, where many observers describe the Islamist-secular debate as an “illusionary conflict” and “a false dichotomy.”⁴⁴ The conflict has little to do with the debate on the role of Shari‘a in the constitution, but more about political influence and mutual mistrusts and fears.⁴⁵ As Zeghal notes, the battle lines between the Islamists and secularists were not about the political form of the regime on which the two sides agreed but on the content, norms, and limits of the public order.⁴⁶ “What seems to differentiate them more clearly is their understanding of cultural mores

⁴² Dalacoura, “Islamism, Secularization, Secularity.” 325

⁴³ Ibid. 326

⁴⁴ Mohammad Al-Kayyal, “Şira‘at Wahmiyya Fi Ab‘ād Aş-Şira’ Al-Islāmi-Al-‘Ilmāni,” *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* (blog), September 24, 2020, bit.ly/2PUo3o2.

⁴⁵ Hisham Ja‘far, “Al-Islāmawīyya Wal-‘Ilmāniyya Fi Al-Rabi‘ Al-‘Arabi: Taghṭiyat Al-Istiṭābat [Islamism and secularism in the Arab Spring: Covering polarizations],” Al-Jazeera Net, accessed May 3, 2021, www.aljazeera.net/opinions/2021/1/31/الإسلامويةوالعلمانيةفي-الربيع.

⁴⁶ Zeghal derives the notion *public order* from Hussein Ali Agrama who demonstrated how the public order [*al-nizam al-‘ām*] is invoked in the Egyptian judiciary system. He defines public order “as those laws and values that are essential to a state’s social and legal cohesion and that are usually held by the majority of its citizens”. The public order is originally a European concept. Although a secular one, it includes local customs and religious values, which makes it always paradoxical and controversial. These paradoxes of the public order are not specific to Egypt, but also a feature of the public order as defined within European law, from which Egypt derived. See “Secularism, Sovereignty, Indeterminacy: Is Egypt a Secular or a Religious State?” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, no. 3 (2010): 495–523.

and identity politics,” making Islamism and secularism “two competing ways of life,” rather than two systematic theoretical modalities for the state.⁴⁷

The overlap between secularism and Islamism in the Egyptian context on religious, national and modern themes is part of the theoretical overlap and interdependency between the secular and the religious realms.⁴⁸ Accordingly, to propose a working definition for the purpose of this thesis, I view secularism and Islamism as two competing modern ideologies that have different perspectives on the role and nature of religion in the modern world. *Ideology* is defined as “a set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved.”⁴⁹ Secular ideologies are those shades of endeavours that accommodate, control, domesticate, and privatize religion to discipline it with modernity’s standards. They could range between anti-religious, neutral, or religious-friendly— based on common classifications which identify the two edges of secularism: passive and assertive, accommodationist and separationist, weak and strong, partial and comprehensive.⁵⁰ Such binaries usually refer to the extent of separation, whether the separation is limited to the political, exceeds it to the social, or further chases it to the private domain. On the other hand, Islamist ideologies have different endeavours to reform, rationalize, or refashion religion to preserve it in the modern era. While both are modern ideologies, Islamism, by proposing modernity guided by Islam, prioritizes religion over modernity, while in secularism, religion is secondary— coming from the fact that Islamist parties originated from religious organizations and circles which essentially had religious objectives.⁵¹ Though it could be accommodating to religion, secularism deals with it as a burden on modernity, viewing it as

⁴⁷ Zeghal, “Competing Ways of Life.”

⁴⁸ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003). 25; Abdullahi An-Na’im, “Islam and Secularism”, in *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age*. 218

⁴⁹ Robert Erikson & Kent L Tedin, *American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content, and Impact*, 6th ed., Updated. (New York: Longman, 2003).

⁵⁰ Ahmet T. Kuru, “Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles, and State Policies toward Religion,” *World Politics* 59, no. 4 (2007); Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, “Varieties of Legal Secularism” in *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age*. 109; Abdullahi An-Na’im, “Islam and Secularism”. 226 – 227; Abduwhab Al-Messeri, *Al-‘Imāniyya Al-Juz’iyya Wal-‘Imāniyya Al-Shāmila* (Cairo: Dar Al-Shuruq, 2002).

⁵¹ In Rachid Al-Ghanouchi’s words, “The conflict today is not between a modernist project and an anti-modern project, but between two projects, one of which wants modernity without Islam and the other wants it with Islam”. www.facebook.com/rached.ghannoushi/posts/724146900955250; Tarek Masoud defines “Islamist parties as those that arise out of Islamic pietist movements.” He refrains from using the call for Shari’a as a definitional benchmark, since many other secular identified parties also recognize Shari’a and Islam in their platforms. However, he considers secularists’ recognition of Islam nothing but a lip-service. See Masoud, *Counting Islam*. 1.

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non-rational and intolerant, thus should be banished from the public sphere or at best contained and co-opted. I consider secularism an ideology, although some would argue that it is a political procedure or statecraft; however, procedural secularism falls easily into an ideology the moment it holds a particular view of religion, which entails a theory of what religion can and cannot do.⁵² For simplicity, it could be said very broadly that Islamism seeks to expand or preserve the role of religion in public, while secularism seeks to control or downsize it.

Mapping Egyptian secular forces

Now, as we defined the secularists and Islamists, the second challenge is identifying the secularists in Egypt. While the Islamist camp under the leadership of the MB enjoys a higher degree of coherence and organizational stability, the secular camp is dispersed, ideologically and behaviourally heterogeneous, and thus complicated to grasp. The secular spectrum could be categorized ideologically as liberals, Marxists, Nasserists, and nationalists, and organizationally as official parties, social movements, and NGOs. They vary in size, organizational form, and representation in the successive Parliamentary Assemblies. Active official parties that qualify as secular jumped in number from a handful in the 1980s to over twenty in 2006 and doubled after 2011.⁵³ In addition to parties, secular political actors in Egypt are also embodied by independent journalists, syndicalists and youth activists, who act individually or in small organized groups.

The secular spectrum is thus broad and could be classified on many bases. A classical classification is the one that divides the secularist spectrum into leftists and liberals or left and right. For many reasons, this classification is not helpful. We know that some secular forces tend towards a state-led economy, others lean more towards a free market, some are socio-culturally conservative, and others are relatively liberal. Nevertheless, these differentials have little to say about the secular forces' position in the Egyptian political scene. A left-right taxonomy of Egyptian secular forces was arguably conceivable before the 1980s, when liberal and leftist forces dominated the political scene. In the mid-1970s, and after two decades of a one-party system, Sadat introduced the three tribunes; the left (Tagammu Party), the right (the Liberal Party or *al-Ahrar*), and placed his ruling party (the Arab Socialist Egypt Party, later the National Democratic Party) at the "centre" of political life. This state construct spectrum became even

⁵² José Casanova, "The Secular and Secularisms," *Social Research* 76, no. 4 (2009): 1051.

⁵³ Ottaway and Hamzawy, "Secular Parties in the Arab World." 7.

more misleading when the state co-opted large factions from the left and the right, splitting them into pro-state and anti-state. The rise of the Islamists as the leading opposition force in the late 1980s has further blurred the lines between the leftists and the liberals, dividing the country's spectrum into Islamism and secularism. As a result, the contestation and the national debate was no longer centred around economic policies but around culture and identity. Liberal and leftist factions turned to downplay their differences and sought to build a "madani" front to confront the new rising force. The secular coalitions and electoral alliances formed after the revolution, the Egyptian Block and the Revolution Continues, combining parties from the left and the right, were not based on ideological lines, urging for a non-ideological categorization of the secular spectrum.

Dunne and Hamzawy alternatively suggested a taxonomy based on the proximity to the state, that is, pro-state and anti-state parties.⁵⁴ While they applied this taxonomy in the post-coup period, it can usefully map the secular forces in the four previous decades. In the same way, some observers furthermore added a generational and structural classification, distinguishing between traditional secular parties, especially those established in the 1970s, and non-official parties and groups which arose in the mid-1990s and 2000s, where the former are co-opted, tending to align more with the state, and the latter are more independent and anti-regime.⁵⁵ In line with this taxonomy, I select the Tagammu Party and the Revolutionary Socialists as representatives of the two sides of the secular spectrum, demonstrating how inclusion led Tagammu in a statist direction, and the Revsoc became anti-institutional—two opposite pathways which challenge the inclusion-moderation hypothesis.

Case selection

The case selection is based on five criteria:

1. Effectiveness, having a palpable presence in the Egyptian political scene, either by having representation in the parliament or the street.
2. The availability of sufficient primary resources which articulate the party's ideas and is published consistently throughout the studied period.

⁵⁴ Dunne and Hamzawy, "Egypt's Secular Political Parties: A Struggle for Identity and Independence." 5.

⁵⁵ Holger Albrecht, *Raging against the Machine: Political Opposition under Authoritarianism in Egypt*, Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2013).

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3. Organizational stability and sustainability that is sufficient to trace and mark the shifts in its trajectory.
4. Secularness. I was keen to choose parties who at least identify as secularists or accept this identification. I thus excluded parties like al-Wafd, who had loose and contradictory stances and internal division towards the religious-secular debate, and tried hard to distance themselves from the secular category.
5. Oppositionness. I also considered selecting parties that at least identified as opposition or were initially an opposition. More about the definition of opposition in chapter two.

Time and space frame

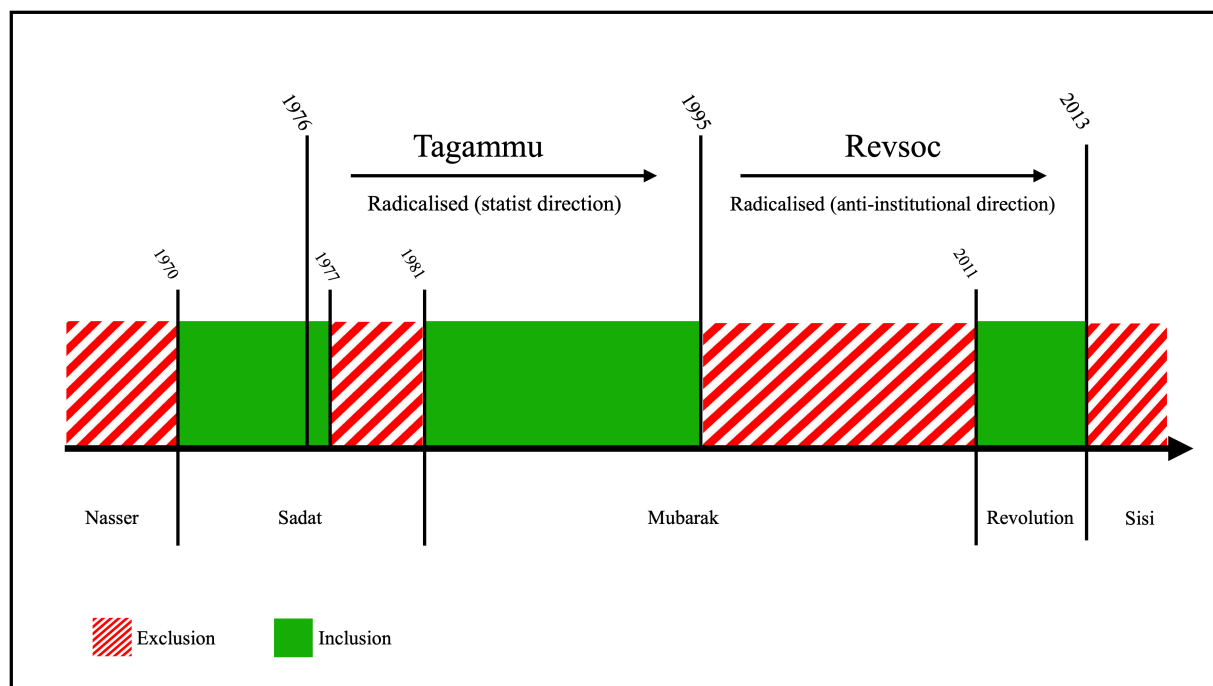


Figure 1: Egypt's historical timeline of exclusion and inclusion periods

For the last half a century, Egypt has represented a liberalized authoritarian space. Different competing political forces operate in the political margin which expands and narrows occasionally. Since the mid-20th century, the country has witnessed several waves of exclusion and inclusion. Diagram one above illustrates Egypt's historical timeline since Nasser, showing the approximate periods of exclusion (in diagonal red) and inclusion (in solid green). Coming after Nasser's one-party period, which was exclusive and repressive, Sadat in the early 1970s launched a political liberalization and a multi-party system. Although Leftists were selectively

restricted, a margin for participation was offered for opposition forces in the parliament and on university campuses. This did not last long, as Sadat turned against all opposition forces soon after the 1977 uprisings and the Camp David Treaty in 1978. In the early 1980s, Mubarak released Sadat's prisoners and re-launched political liberalization. Mubarak's liberalization was more inclusive, permitting the participation of Islamists and easing restrictions on leftists. Again, this inclusion came to an end in the mid-1990s after the Islamists gained major victories in various elections. Although the margin expanded briefly in the early 2000s, political participation in general remained highly restricted under Mubarak until the 2011 revolution. Finally, after the revolution in 2011 and the coup in 2013 inclusion and exclusion periods were respectively phased in. The thesis studies the trajectory of the Tagammu Party from 1976 to 1995, and the Revolutionary Socialists from 1995 to 2013. Both periods are characterized by a transition from relatively exclusive to inclusive conditions.

Tagammu

At least until the 1990s, the Tagammu Party was the legal representative of the left, the largest secularist opposition party under Sadat and Mubarak and a stronghold for secularist intellectuals. Unlike smaller secularist groups, Tagammu is relatively more organized. Its organization has remained coherent since 1976. Since then, it has contested all parliamentary elections, making it possible to trace the shifts in its performance and ideology. The party has a newspaper, periodicals, and a plethora of published documents and intellectual production which can be relied on.

Tagammu presents a case of an opposition political group that held democratic aspirations and then turned to align with the regime throughout the inclusion period. In contrast to many accounts that consider official Egyptian parties essentially supportive to the state, and especially Tagammu, which is seen as a state creation, I argue that this position was not inevitable. Tagammu was born in the mid-1970s as a hardline opposition and remained so for over a decade. The party's founders came from communist and Nasserist backgrounds and were incorporated into the Nasserist bureaucracy in the 1960s, a cohort whose ideology held conflicting democratic and authoritarian aspects. Sadat's de-socialization and political liberalization not only caused the leftists of Tagammu to sink into the opposition but also to democratize their stances and self-critique many of their previous statist ideas—they moderated. Despite its modest success in the

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1976 elections, Tagammu was the only official opposition party, the only one to confront Sadat for parliamentary seats. Although Sadat's Egypt was characterized by political liberalization, the state saw the left as a serious threat and imposed selective restrictions on them to reduce their powerful presence. It was thus a period of exclusion for the left. Since the Muslim Brothers had not yet entered the political arena and the leftist movements still had momentum, Tagammu saw an opportunity to play the role of the leading opposition party. Until the mid-1980s, Tagammu was at the spearhead of the opposition, sharply attacking the state, investing heavily in democracy and pluralism discourse, and reaching out to cooperate with the nascent Islamist opposition. A move towards being a loyal opposition only occurred in the late 1980s, interestingly after Mubarak had enhanced political liberalization and eased restrictions on the left. After failing in two parliamentary elections in the 1980s and the landslide victories of the MB, which appeared to become the main beneficiary of political liberalization, Tagammu radicalized in a statist direction, allied with the state to confront the Islamists, and eventually endorsed the regime's crackdown on the opposition. Tagammu came to believe that the cultural ground in Egypt was not yet ready for democracy and became occupied with cultural critique, countering terrorism and fundamentalism. In the early 90s, Tagammu officially declared postponing the struggle for democracy until the cultural battle is won.

The Revolutionary Socialists

The Revsoc, which appeared in the mid-1990s, represents a younger generation of secularists who distanced themselves from the co-opted secularists and continued their anti-systemic opposition to the state. Unlike other small secular groups, the Revsoc enjoys a higher degree of organizational sustainability and constant literature production. Their activism gained momentum with the demonstrations and strikes across the 2000s. Starting from Cairo, they expanded their recruitment to other parts of the country, establishing offices in major cities and student clubs in universities. As a group based on Trotskyist tradition, the Revsoc had many reasons to distance themselves from Tagammu, whom they perceived as bureaucratic socialists who betrayed the workers and veered away from the democratic path. Despite their "continuous revolution" principle, the Revsoc in the 2000s justified participation in the parliamentary elections and cooperation with bourgeois opposition forces. An internal debate within the Revsoc around the 2005 parliamentary elections settled on running in the elections and coordinating with

other opposition candidates. It fully engaged with cross-ideological initiatives like Kefaya, April 6, and the National Association for Change which included liberal and Islamist forces. As a Marxist secular organization, it is no surprise that the Revsoc shared with other secularists their opposition to Islamism. Nevertheless, their slogan “sometimes with the Islamists, never with the state” reflects the group’s priorities; a relative tolerance towards those who are repressed and principled opposition to those in power. Unlike Tagammu, who engaged in a cultural war with the MB, the Revsoc’s main criticism of the MB was not related to their “religious extremism” but rather to their reformism and contradictory economic position. They perceived the MB as a bourgeois party that, apart from its conservative social and economic tendency, has an interest in democratization and was an ally in their struggle against the military regime.

These moderate stances, even though arguably strategic ones, vanished after the 2011 revolution. The unprecedented free conditions after January 2011 placed the Revsoc in confrontation with Islamist and liberal parties who were better-organized and prepared for electoral contestation. Like Tagammu and many other secular parties, political inclusion revealed the Revsoc’s weak electoral capacity. One month after Mubarak’s ousting, the Revsoc turned abruptly against all the parties who negotiated the transition with the Security Council, and accordingly rejected all procedures on the road map that followed. They refused to participate in the elections and challenged the legitimacy of elections and referendums. The Revsoc’s relative tolerance towards the MB in Mubarak’s era stalled after the revolution; nevertheless, it was keen not to fall into supporting the military and the *fulūl* [remnants of Mubarak’s regime]. It alternatively opted to remain in protest and initiate strikes throughout the period to June 2013, declaring the continuity of the revolution, and ultimately campaigned with Tamarod. The Revsoc, soon after the coup, faced internal divisions between those who declared it a coup and others who considered it a continuation of the January revolution. This division led to a split between many of its leaders who sanctioned the coup, including Kamal Khalil, its founder and first leader.

Both Tagammu and the Revsoc lacked the ability to compete and mobilize voters in free elections. Inclusion conditions appeared to empower the Islamists and revealed mobilization disparities vis-à-vis their secularist counterparts. Inclusion hardly offered a political incentive for either secularist party; a crucial element of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. The literature on moderation presents some instances where democratization had no moderating effect on a

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political group.⁵⁶ However, in the case of Tagammu and the Revsoc, puzzling is not their lack of moderation after inclusion but rather their radicalization. More mystifying is that they radicalized in two different directions— the first went upwards, the second downwards. Apart from their different pathways, both felt alienated in a more democratized order. With their weak mobilization capacity and poor electoral performance, democratization seemed to undermine their organizational existence. For Tagammu, democratization would only pave the way for MB rule, which they deemed a reactionary force and a threat to the country's secularity. A survival option was thus a temporary alliance with the regime, using the state's platforms for education and enlightenment and deferring the democratic cause. Their statist legacy in the 1960s should later have eased their return to cooperation with the state under Mubarak. As for the Revsoc, they represent a younger leftist generation of the 1970s, who grew up in a period of exclusion, and came only to perceive themselves as opposing the state. Lacking electoral capacity, street politics seemed more in tune with their protest ideology and mode of activism. The 2011 revolution and labour strikes opened a new avenue for recruiting and mobilization. The organization thrived in workplaces and protest squares, multiplied its membership, and gained more appeal than it would have done in neighbourhoods and around ballot boxes. The intensifying revolutionary atmosphere led them to overplay revolutionary sentiments and gamble on popular mobilization, hence the electoral choice not only appeared unattractive but also undermined the Revsoc's discursive purity and their organizational existence.

Primary resources

Secondary sources on Tagammu and the Revsoc are scarce. The only study available in English on Tagammu is an article by Raymond Hinnebusch published in 1981, assessing the party's early years under Sadat.⁵⁷ Another study in Arabic, a 1992 Master's dissertation by Iman Mohammad Hassan, also covers the party's experience up to the late 1980s.⁵⁸ One article can be found on the Revsoc, by Irina Tsaregorodtseva, overviewing the organization's activity in the post revolution

⁵⁶ The case of the Islamists in Yemen, is argued by Jillian Schwedler. See *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen* (Cambridge, England; New York, N.Y. Cambridge: Cambridge, England; New York, N.Y. : Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁵⁷ Raymond Hinnebusch, "The National Progressive Unionist Party: The Nationalist-Left Opposition in Post-Populist Egypt," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1981): 325–51.

⁵⁸ Eman Mohammad Hassan, "Ḥizb At-Tagammu: Al-Bunyah Wa Ad-Dawr As-Siyāsī Fi Itār At-Ta'addudiyya As-Siyāsīyysh Al-Muqayyada," in *At-Taṭawur As-Siyāsī Fi Miṣr 1982 -1992* (Cairo: Center for Political Research and Studies, 1994).

period.⁵⁹ This is a challenge, but could also be an added value for this study to explore the two prominent, though under-studied parties.

Few online interviews were conducted. However, the thesis thus relies on the massive reserve of publications left by the two parties, thanks to both parties' richly documented and archived materials. For Tagammu, I rely on a collection of publications:

- 1) *Majallat at-Ṭalī'a* (1965 –1977). This periodical published under Nasser's commission was edited by Marxists who had been incorporated into the Nasserist state bureaucracy. By the mid-1970s, *at-Ṭalī'a* became the de-facto mouthpiece of the Tagammu party until it was banned in 1977.⁶⁰
- 2) *Al-Ahāli Weekly* (1978 –1995). This weekly newspaper has hitherto been the primary mouthpiece of Tagammu. It represents the party's stance and statements on different issues and hosts the writings of its intellectuals and other secularists in its orbit.⁶¹
- 3) *Kitāb al-Ahāli* [Al-Ahāli book] (1984 –) *Al-Ahāli* is the party's quasi-monthly book aiming to educate its audience and raise awareness of national and regional socio-political and cultural challenges. The series includes issues for Egyptian and Arab leftist intellectuals, besides some translated publications. I collected the books from different places; some digital copies were found online, some were in the British Library, and others I received from Egypt with friends' assistance.
- 4) *Majallat al-Yasār* (1990 – 1997), is a monthly periodical published by Tagammu which also addressed intellectual issues and was a bastion for leftist secular intellectuals in line with the party.⁶²
- 5) The party's electoral programmes and internal conference reports.
- 6) A special focus is given to the party leaders and prominent intellectuals' books, articles, and statements: Khaled Mohieddin, Rif'at al-Sa'id, Lufi Al-Khuli, Abdulghaffar Shukur, and others who will be introduced throughout the thesis.

⁵⁹ Irina Tsaregorodtseva, "The Revolutionary Socialists in Post-"Arab Spring" Egypt," *Socialism and Democracy* 31, no. 1 (2017): 125–43.

⁶⁰ A digital archive is available on Dar Al-Mandumah.

⁶¹ A digital archive is available on the Egyptian Press Archive of CEDEJ website.

⁶² A digital archive was found on *Internet Archive* website. archive.org/details/20200509_20200509_1954. See also Khaled Abd Elhameed's Facebook page, www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10156893422476442&id=633031441.

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For the Revsoc, all their main publications are archived on their website. I focus on:

- 1) *Majallat Awrāq Ishtirākiyya* (2003 –).
- 2) *Jarīdat Al-Ishtiraki* (2006 –).

This quasi-monthly and weekly journal and newspaper contains the party's political statements and comments on daily issues, besides their general intellectual theorizations. I give special focus to the Revsoc's official statements and publications by its leading representatives: Kamal Khalil, Sameh Naguib, Haitham Mohammadain, Hossam al-Hamalawy.

For both parties, I have arranged and scanned their materials in chronological order, focusing on themes related to democracy and elections, alongside their position towards the state and other ideological rivals, marking the differences in these themes before and after the periods of inclusion. These themes are indicative aspects of political moderation in the Egyptian context, as I further argue in chapter two.

The structure of the thesis

After this introductory chapter, chapter two presents the theoretical framework of the thesis. It defines the meaning of moderation, reviews and critiques the literature on the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, and justifies its applicability to the two selected secular cases.

Chapters three and four are on the Tagammu Party. Chapter three presents Tagammu's trajectory from 1976 to 1984. It shows how the left, who founded Tagammu, moderated during this period. The chapter begins with an overview of Tagammu's foundational ideas and statist legacy prior to Sadat. It then demonstrates the left's descent from the state bureaucracy and the establishment of the Tagammu Party, repositioning the left against the state, and forming the first and leading opposition party to Sadat. It shows how Tagammu democratized its discourse, embraced the principles of liberal democracy, revised its previous statist and vanguardist tendencies, and criticized the Nasserist authoritarian experiment. How Tagammu perceived and justified participating in elections is then argued. Considering the state as the first political opponent and willing to challenge it through the ballot box, I show how Tagammu adopted religious rhetoric to widen its constituency and keep up with the nascent religious resurgence. I also demonstrate how

it eased its stance toward liberals and religious trends and attempted to build cross-ideological alliances. Such evolutions marked a significant shift from its hard line secularist and statist communist legacy.

Chapter four addresses the de-moderation of Tagammu from 1984 to 1995. The chapter begins with a brief illustration of two developments in Egypt in the mid-1980s: Mubarak's liberalization policies and the rise of Islamism. It then analyses the change in Tagammu's discourse in the aftermath of the 1984 and 1987 parliamentary elections, showing how they perceived their defeat and the Islamists' victories. The chapter ends by showing how Tagammu, by the early 1990s, repositioned itself back in alliance with the state and reoriented its mission towards cultural critique and countering extremism. The chapter details how the party's leaders and intellectuals justified and navigated this shift.

Chapters five and six are on the Revolutionary Socialists. Chapter five starts by describing the emergence of a new generation of secular leftists in the late 1990s and the Revsoc specifically, which marked a departure from the statist left. I demonstrate how they read the Egyptian political scene at the turn of the millennium, how they perceived the state, the statist secularists, the Islamists, and how they positioned themselves in alliance with the latter. I then move to present how the Revsoc calculated political activism with the existing system and how they justified stepping into the parliamentary elections and supporting liberal presidential candidates in 2005 and 2010. The chapter's timeframe ends in January 2011. Chapter six addresses the Revsoc's radicalization pathway after the ousting of Mubarak. It shows how the inclusive phase positioned the opposition forces in competition with each other. As many revolutionary youths were inexperienced or financially incapable of electoral contestation, the Revsoc resorted to rejecting democratic procedures. The chapter demonstrates the shift in the Revsoc's stance towards electoral participation and formal politics.

The thesis ends with a concluding chapter that discusses the limitations and contribution of this study, and the prospects of the Moderation Theory.

Chapter Two

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework: The Moderation Theory

This chapter begins by surveying the meanings of moderation in the literature and settles on a definition that is adequate for the purpose of this research. Then, it will review the dynamics of moderation, that is, how scholars found a causal relationship between moderation and inclusion, exclusion, and other variables. The chapter ends by discussing how the inclusion-moderation hypothesis could help explain the trajectory of Tagammu and the Revolutionary Socialist (Revsoc) parties. While the hypothesis holds that political groups moderate, motivated by political gains and building on their mobilizational capacity, I argue that inclusion can be unrewarding or even undermining for some groups, leading them to de-moderate in statist or anti-institutional directions.

What is moderation?

The meaning of moderation is contested. Jillian Schwedler writes: “scholars have never entirely agreed on precise definitions for the core concepts such as moderates and radicals.”⁶³ I share that discomfort with many towards the term, which carries moral connotations and has been misused and weaponized in political debates. However, in academia, there is a large body of literature where this notion is central. I believe the term can still be useful if it is carefully defined. In political science, moderation sometimes refers to a group’s behavioural commitment to work within the state’s legal frame, to “play by the rules,” and to denounce violent or revolutionary means. In other usages, the term is stretched to include the group’s views and stances towards religion, social matters, and even foreign policy.⁶⁴ As the International Crisis Group describes, the moderate and radical labels have been used to distinguish “between those with whom Western governments feel they can ‘do business’ (the moderates) and those with whom they cannot or will not.”⁶⁵ Generally, definitions of moderation could be classified into three categories: moderation as a description of the behaviour or strategies; moderation as a description of the ideology or worldviews; and moderation as a description of a process of a relative change in either behaviour or/and ideology.

⁶³ Jillian Schwedler, “Conclusion: New Directions in the Study of Islamist Politics,” in *Islamists and the Politics of the Arab Uprisings: Governance, Pluralization and Contention* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2018), 360.

⁶⁴ Charles Kurzman and Ijlal Naqvi, “Do Muslims Vote Islamic?” *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 2 (2010): 50–63; Robert S Leiken and Steven Brooke, “The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood,” *Foreign Affairs*, 2007.

⁶⁵ “Understanding Islamism” (International Crisis Group, 2005).

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The inclusion-moderation literature was influenced by the works of Stathis Kalyvas, Adam Przeworski and John Sprague on the Christian and socialist parties in Western Europe in the early 1900s, and Samuel Huntington on the socialists in the third wave of democratization.⁶⁶ This early literature on moderation has used *moderation* and *radicalism* in a behavioural way. In these studies, moderates are those who accept the status quo and seek gradual or minor changes by working within the existing legal frame, while the radicals seek sharp and thorough changes through revolutionary or violent means. As Schwedler describes it, moderates and radicals were used to distinguish between those who would not “rock the boat” and those who “seek to overthrow the system entirely.”⁶⁷ By this approach, political groups who choose to contest elections and commit to the existing political rules are usually labelled as moderates, and those who challenge the existing rules, refuse the offered space and tend to use violence or revolutionary means are the radicals.

This approach assumes that the existing system is democratic, reasonably open for pluralist participation, and offers political groups a space for political options. The assumption is based on the inclusive conditions in Western Europe in the early 20th century, where the moderate/radical labels were used to describe socialist and religious parties regarding their willingness to work within the democratic or democratizing systems. In these democracies, a call for a thorough change is a call for a shift away from liberal democracy, thus radicalism is equivalent to authoritarianism. In a non-democratic condition that lacks these spaces and options, the moderate/ radical binary could be entirely overturned. Under authoritarianism, seeking minimum democracy and freedom would be a demand for a thorough change, and democratizers would qualify as radicals. On the other hand, soft-liners who play by the rules could fall into supporting authoritarianism. In this approach, moderates and radicals are not necessarily equated with democrats and authoritarians. Moderates are only equated with democrats under a consolidated democratic system.

In post-Nasser Egypt, as in many other Arab countries like Kuwait, Jordan, and Morocco, the political situation floats at a point between democracy and absolutism. Having frequent

⁶⁶ Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Cornell University Press, 1996); Adam Przeworski and John Sprague, *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism* (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Huntington, *The Third Wave*.

⁶⁷ Jillian Schwedler, “Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis,” *World Politics* 63, no. 2 (2011): 350.

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parliamentary elections and a margin for political participation, scholars called this situation liberalizing authoritarianism, semi-authoritarianism, stalled democracy, and pseudo-democracy.⁶⁸ In this condition, equating “playing by the rules” with democracy becomes complicated. What is the best strategy for pro-democracy opposition? Should they work within the rules set by an authoritarian regime, participate in manipulated elections and limited power assemblies, try to push the limits, or refrain from acknowledging its legitimacy, boycott elections, and seek un-institutional means? The conventional wisdom by optimistic transitologists who hoped that “electoral dynamics le[a]d from authoritarianism to democracy” recommended opposition groups to compromise, participate in the elections even in fairly poor conditions, and avoid what could provoke anti-democratic reactions from the regime.⁶⁹ Those who did so were widely labelled as moderates and assumed that electoral dynamics would lead them to further moderation.⁷⁰

This behavioural approach to moderation is commonly critiqued for its focus on the group’s exterior and neglect of its ideology. “[D]emocracy... is much more than balloting,” argues Bassam Tibi, “[d]emocracy is above all a political culture of pluralism and disagreement, based on core values combined with the acceptance of diversity.”⁷¹ For Tibi, a political group may choose to adhere to democratic procedures and play by the rules but still embrace extreme and illiberal values and use democracy to apply undemocratic agendas. It is their ideas and intentions that should be assessed, not merely their behaviour. Accordingly, alongside behavioural moderation, later scholarship offered the concept of ideological moderation, which Schwedler defines “not as behavioural change, but a change in ideology from a rigid and closed worldview to one relatively more open and tolerant of alternative perspectives.”⁷² Or, in Janine Clark’s words, “moderation expresses itself in terms of Islamists’ greater acceptance of and understanding of democracy, political liberties, and the rights of women and minorities.”⁷³ As this approach to moderation looks into a group’s perspectives and views, some scholars attempted to set specific values or issues as indicators of moderation. The indicators are commonly the embracement of the principles of

⁶⁸ Huntington, *The Third Wave*; Eva Rana Bellin, *Stalled Democracy: Capital, Labor, and the Paradox of State-Sponsored Development* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Frédéric Volpi, “Pseudo-Democracy in the Muslim World,” *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 6 (2004): 1061–78.

⁶⁹ Huntington, *The Third Wave*. Guidelines for Democratizers 1: Reforming Authoritarian Systems

⁷⁰ Ibid; Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen*.

⁷¹ Bassam Tibi, “Why They Can’t Be Democratic,” *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008): 43–48.

⁷² Schwedler, “Can Islamists Become Moderates?” 359.

⁷³ Janine A. Clark, “The Conditions of Islamist Moderation: Unpacking Cross-Ideological Cooperation in Jordan,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, no. 04 (November 2006): 514.

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democracy, pluralism, tolerance, and equal rights but also extended to more specific issues. For example, in her comprehensive study on the MB in Egypt, Carrie Wickham has determined a set of moderation indicators. She:

“consider[s] whether Islamist groups have renounced violence and come to support the democratic alternation of power... whether they moved toward greater toleration of the expression of values and perspectives that conflict with their own... whether they have deepened their commitment to the legal guarantee of individual rights and freedoms, including the right to make life choices (with respect to styles of dress, forms of recreation, social interactions, and sexual conduct) that violate Islamic mandates as they define them... the extent to which they have embraced the principle of equal citizenship rights, both for Muslims and non-Muslims and for men and women, with the latter extending to support for gender equality in the “private” domains of marriage, divorce, and inheritance... that they do not necessarily entail or require a shift from a religious frame of reference to a secular one, though they do require a fundamental break with the letter and spirit of Shari‘a rulings inherited from the past”.⁷⁴

More specifically, in a study that sought the ideological moderation of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) in Jordan, Clark examined that by looking into their stances on three legal amendments, which were raised for public and parliamentary discussion. The amendments are Law 340 or honour-crimes law, the women parliamentary quota, and the Personal Status Law. She argues that these women’s issues provide insight “into Islamists’ position on individual rights and freedoms.”⁷⁵ In studying the MB and al-Wasat Party in Egypt, Sumita Pahwa and Barbra Zollner also argue that religious conservatism, and conservative views in social and family issues curtailed their “level of ideological moderation,” and prevented them from “fully accepting liberal democratic values.”⁷⁶ Charles Kurzman and Ijlal Naqvi add views on Shari‘ah and foreign policy to the moderation formula. They studied the change in the Islamic parties’ electoral platforms in several Muslim majority countries between the 1960s and 2008. They proved an increase in the themes of rights of religious minorities,

⁷⁴ Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, 21–22.

⁷⁵ Clark, “The Conditions of Islamist Moderation.” 540.

⁷⁶ Sumita Pahwa, “Pathways of Islamist Adaptation: The Egyptian Muslim Brothers’ Lessons for Inclusion Moderation Theory,” *Democratization*, 2017, 1066–84; Barbara Zollner, “Does Participation Lead to Moderation? Understanding Changes In,” in *Egyptian Islamist Parties Post-Arab Spring*. in Rivetti, Paola and Kraetzschmar, Hendrik Eds. *Islamists and the Politics of the Arab Uprisings: Governance, Pluralization and Contention*, 2018. 156.

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democracy, women's rights, and a decrease in Shari'a implementation, ban on interest, mention of jihad and opposition to Israel. They state accordingly that "Islamic parties have liberalized (moderated) their stances significantly over the past several decades."⁷⁷

Approaches that linked moderation to some of these views have marked Western Liberalism as the standard. "Cognitive and ontological bias," says Khalil al-Anani, and the "orientalist approach," says Hassan Abu Haniyeh, intervene in shaping some definitions of moderation.⁷⁸ The inclusion-moderation literature makes the notion of "Islamic moderation" useless because "according to its orientalist and culturalist perspective, an Islamic moderation means renouncing Islam and entering the prospect of secularization."⁷⁹ Wickham, likewise, openly expected a possible counter critique to her set of indicators which might argue to reflect the values and issues in the West. She transparently "concede[s] that the types of changes described above are consistent with [her] own culturally specific values and preferences. Yet [she] would argue that no social science research is in fact value-free and that our normative preferences do not pre-empt a sober-minded analysis of real-world trends, as long as we consciously guard against the temptation to exaggerate features that conform with our preferences and to ignore, discount, or attempt to explain away those that do not."⁸⁰

To avoid this dialectic, some researchers took a relativist approach and tried to consider country-specific dimensions. Murat Somer argues that a moderate actor's norms and ideas are "determined by the nature of a country's centre." He defines moderation "as an adjustment to at least some attributes of the centre in a particular country at a certain time." He distinguishes between a universal and country-specific centre, arguing that moderation consists of both dimensions. The universal dimensions entail political actors' consideration of the world order and the norms and strategies of its dominant actors. A country-specific centre is determined by the dominant actors in the political and civil society: the interests and values of the state's apparatus and institutions, the main parties, and economic powers, in addition to the interests and values of the median voter, intellectuals and influencers.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Kurzman and Naqvi, "Do Muslims Vote Islamic?" 57–59.

⁷⁸ Khalil Al-Anani, "The Islamists' Paradox: Inclusion and Moderation" Ahram Online, accessed February 22, 2021, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/P/4/71454/Opinion/The-Islamists-paradox-Inclusion-and-moderation.aspx>; Hassan Abu Haniyeh, "Min Al-Islam As-Siyāsi Ila Ma Ba'dah: Niqash Fil-Mafāhīm Wal-Utrūḥāt," in *Mā Ba'd Al-Islām As-Siyāsi [Post Political Islam]* (Amman: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2018). 44.

⁷⁹ Abu Haniyeh, "Min Al-Islam As-Siyāsi Ila Ma Ba'dah: Niqash Fil-Mafāhīm Wal-Utrūḥāt." 44.

⁸⁰ Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, 22–23.

⁸¹ Murat Somer, "Moderation of Religious and Secular Politics, a Country's 'Centre' and Democratization," *Democratization* 21, no. 2 (2014): 244–67.

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Güneş Murat Tezcür has also equated moderation with the reconciliation with the prevailing principles of the people. Moderation, he states, is “a process through which political actors espouse ideas that do not contradict the principles of popular sovereignty, political pluralism, and limits on arbitrary state authority.” In his comparative study between reformists in Iran and Türkiye, he noted that “The RF [Reform Front in Iran] had to appear more Islamist than it actually was, [while] the JDP [or AKP in Türkiye], more secular.” While both were cases of moderation, the AKP declared its adherence to Türkiye’s secularist tradition, which dominates the country’s political centre, and The RF in Iran had to “declare that they were following Khomeini’s path and would recapture the democratic promise of the 1979 revolution.”⁸²

Equating moderation with centrism also reflects how the inclusion-moderation hypothesis worked. In many cases where the hypothesis was proved positive, inclusion generally moved political actors to the country’s centre, however that centre is characterized. The “Move to the center” is the phrase Huntington used to describe the moderation of socialist parties in the “third wave” countries.⁸³ Their moderation was manifested by their acceptance of capitalism, the autonomy of the military, the monarchy and the church. Moderation thus is not necessarily a move in a secular direction. The “selective moderation” of the MB in Egypt, Annette Ranko tells us, was also shaped by the regime’s national discourse and independent media. While the MB’s acceptance of the democratic principles was evident in the political realm, they remained conservative in the realm of morality. That was, Ranko convincingly argued, because the national discourse, even the one held by the state, was morally conservative.⁸⁴ Some scholars in this relativist vein also tended to perceive moderation as a process rather than an ending point, in Schwedler’s words, “a movement along a continuum from radical to moderate.”⁸⁵

⁸² Güneş Murat Tezcür, “The Moderation Theory Revisited: The Case of Islamic Political Actors,” *Party Politics* 16, no. 1 (2010): 69–88.

⁸³ Huntington, *The Third Wave*. 171.

⁸⁴ Annette Ranko, “Selective Moderation of the Muslim Brotherhood under Mubarak – The Role of the Egyptian Regime’s Discourse and of Islamist Political Inclusion,” *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 55, no. 3 (2014): 493–517.

⁸⁵ Jillian Schwedler, “Islamists in Power? Inclusion, Moderation, and the Arab Uprisings,” *Middle East Development Journal* 5, no. 1 (2013). 3.

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Based on this discussion, in tune with the relativist approach, and settling on a concordant definition, I define moderation as a relative shift in a group's ideology towards the tenets of liberal democracy and a behavioural commitment to democratic procedures whenever participation is possible. To take it as a universal concept, liberal democracy has to be defined by its minimalist principles and procedural sense. Idealist and higher standards of democracy could be controversial, empirically immeasurable, and hard to apply in this field of study. An account of a group's beliefs and deep intentions also could not be certain, but it is its behaviour and discourse which could be examined. In line with Robert Dahl's two dimensions of his Polyarchy, contestation and participation, liberal democracy is based on a number of benchmarks which include the expression of popular sovereignty; rotation of power through regular free and fair competitive elections; equal rights to vote and contest; equal right to form parties and civil organizations; freedom of the press, expression, political communication and organization; separation of powers; and equal civil rights. Dahl's definition has been a guideline for many scholars who advanced the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, like Samuel Huntington, Annette Ranko, Jillian Schwedler, and others.

In this field of study, radicalization and moderation are antonyms. And since liberal democracy is the end point for moderation, radicalization thus is a move in the opposite direction — a shift away from liberal democracy. However, scholars have used radicalization with two meanings. One form of radicalism is violence, revolutionary, and anti-institutionalism, where participation is reasonably possible. This is the common meaning of the term. Another form is statism, supporting authoritarian regimes and blocking democratic reforms. For example, Menderes Çınar, and Bashirov and Lancaster described the Turkish AKP's increase in power and attempt to dominate the state as a form of radicalization.⁸⁶ Somer also uses radicalization to describe secular actors in Türkiye who “became radicalized and more supportive of military praetorianism against the Islamists.”⁸⁷ Both pathways obstruct the implementation of democracy and are understood as a shift away from moderation. The first is authoritarian from below, and the other from above. To avoid confusion in the term radicalization, I use *de-moderation* to describe both directions.

⁸⁶ Menderes Çınar, “From Moderation to De-Moderation: Democratic Backsliding of the AKP in Turkey,” in *The Politics of Islamism*, Middle East Today (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 127–57; See also Galib Bashirov and Caroline Lancaster, “End of Moderation: The Radicalization of AKP in Turkey,” *Democratization* 25, no. 7 (2018): 1210–30.

⁸⁷ Somer, “Moderation of Religious and Secular Politics.” 259.

The dynamics of moderation

The inclusion-moderation argument is rooted in the idea that the inclusion of radical groups triggers various processes that lead to their moderation. The dynamics of their moderation begin with responding to the political incentives offered by participation and adherence to the system. By entering the electoral process, the dynamics of electoral contestation, which includes negotiation and vote maximising, tame the extreme ideas and move them from the edges of their ideological spectrum towards the centre where they become closer to broader constituency. The aim to of maximizing votes is a turning point where they begin to compromise and adjust their political rhetoric, tolerate the prevailed norms and demands, and reapproach the mainstream.

By being incorporated in the electoral process and accepting the rules of democratic contestation, the group's behavioural moderation is arguably achieved. Scholars suggest that ideological moderation usually follows or parallels behavioural moderation, and can be generated by other effects. Wickham, Ashour, and Clark put forward that social interactions, cross-ideological debates and cooperation break the group from its insular network and could consolidate ideological moderation. Other scholars have inverted the inclusion-moderation hypotheses and suggest that doses of repression and negative discourse by the regime or local and international critics could also generate internal revisions and produce a defensive moderation.⁸⁸ Schwedler and Ashour added that ideological moderation could also be influenced by the extent of charismatic leaders' ability to justify the behavioural transitions for their members.⁸⁹

However, the process of behavioural and ideological moderation in the first place is usually triggered by the institutional inducements of participation. For all other moderation effects to occur, the group must be hooked into the electoral system and respond positively to its incentives. Such incentives include the right to form organizations and legal parties, publish

⁸⁸ Wickham, "The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January 2004): 205; See also Ranko, "Selective Moderation of the Muslim Brotherhood under Mubarak"; Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone, "Moderation through Exclusion? The Journey of the Tunisian Ennahda from Fundamentalist to Conservative Party," *Democratization* 20, no. 5 (2013): 857–75; Courtney Freer, "Exclusion-Moderation in the Gulf Context: Tracing the Development of Pragmatic Islamism in Kuwait," *Middle Eastern Studies* 54, no. 1 (2018): 1–21; Shadi Hamid, *Temptations of Power: Islamists and Illiberal Democracy in a New Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2014).

⁸⁹ Ashour, *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements*; Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation*.

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newspapers, and ultimately maximize the share of power. In Huntington's words, "moderation was the price for power," or a "trade for participation," as is the case for socialist parties in Spain, Portugal, and Greece in the late 20th century who "won their victories and achieved the tolerance."⁹⁰ The political opportunity structure here is the first and crucial effect in the moderation process. Schwedler puts these moderation effects in sequence: "If such a victory could not be assured, participation could not be [ideologically] justified," describing how Islamists in Jordan first strategically moderated, then by justifying this choice, ideological moderation occurred.⁹¹ Wickham, in the same vein, also argued that strategic moderation or a behavioural adaptation to democratic procedures could lead to "democratic habituation" where "the mask becomes the face."⁹² Needless to say, unchecked power and securing a comfortable electoral majority could reduce the group's need to maximize votes and motivation to compromise.⁹³ Nevertheless, the moderation process occurs for a vote-maximizing group through its endeavours and journey to empowerment. Forecasting empowerment in further liberalization and meaningful victory in freer elections is the spark of moderation and the "vehicle of democratization".⁹⁴

It should not be neglected that the Islamists' strong mobilization capacity, and thus belief that democracy would bring them to power, was a strong motivation to champion democracy. Islamist intellectuals often stressed to their audiences that Islam would thrive with democracy and freedom, and the *Umma* will choose Shari'a whenever it is consulted.⁹⁵ Even under conditions of exclusion, as in the case of the Tunisian Islamists, their moderation in the 1990s was motivated by their popularity. Their exclusion in the early 90s was preceded by stunning results in the 1989 parliamentary election, and thus, a victory for pro-religious forces in prospective political liberalization was foreseeable.⁹⁶ This also applies to al-Wasat Party in Egypt and the Islamists in Kuwait, where Wickham and Freer argued that exclusion led to their moderation. Their analysis seems to neglect the fact that prior to their exclusion, these

⁹⁰ Huntington, *The Third Wave*. 169.

⁹¹ *Faith in Moderation*. 156.

⁹² Wickham, "The Path to Moderation." 225.

⁹³ Pahwa, "Pathways of Islamist Adaptation: The Egyptian Muslim Brothers' Lessons for Inclusion Moderation Theory."

⁹⁴ Huntington, *The Third Wave*. 174.

⁹⁵ This idea is expressed by many Islamists thinkers. See Nawaf AL-Qudaimi, *Ashwāq Al-Hurriyya: Muārabāt Al-Mawqif As-Salafi Min Ad-Dīmuqrāṭiyya* (Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Publishing, 2012); Abdullah Al-Maliki, *Siyādat Al-Umma Qabla Taṭbīq Al-Shari'a* (Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Publishing, 2012). The phrase "Al-ḥurriyya qabl al-Shari'a [freedom before Shari'a]" is widely stressed for instance by Yusuf Al-Qaradawi Tariq Al-Suwaïdan, and Abdul-Karim Bakkar.

⁹⁶ Despite the rigged results, Al-Nahdha claimed to win 40% of the seats. See *Intikhābāt 1989*, al-Nahdha website. bit.ly/3etLoqw.

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Islamist groups experienced inclusion and electoral participation and had already been hooked into their incentives. Being victims of repression might have led them to value democracy more, thus enhancing their moderation, however, their moderation had been triggered before that.

An inclusion de-moderation hypothesis

Studies on moderation present some instances where inclusion had little or no moderating effect on a political group. One case Schwedler proposes is the Islamists in Yemen for whom, despite their inclusion, the lack of intra party discussions prevented their moderation.⁹⁷

Puzzling, however, with regard to Tagammu and the Revsoc, is not their lack of moderation but rather their de-moderation under inclusion. Even more puzzling is that they de-moderated in two different ways. Güneş Murat Tezcür's article on the PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan) in Türkiye presents one example of an inclusion de-moderation situation.⁹⁸ His article, *When Democratization Radicalizes*, addresses why the PKK remobilized their armed forces during a time of democratic reform in the early 2000s.⁹⁹ The PKK, which survived warfare with the Turkish state during the 1980s, settled on withdrawing its militants from Türkiye during a period of state suppression of the Kurdish identity, an escalating military campaign and the capture of its leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1999. In September of the same year, Ocalan called for an end to the armed struggle and declared the party's willingness to be legally recognized. Such declaration was based on the Turkish state's earlier signals for democratic reform and the inclusion of the Kurds as a component of its national identity. The democratic reforms between 1999 and 2004, which synchronized with Türkiye's endeavours to join the European Union, were the most ambitious in the republic's history. The package of constitutional amendments included liberalizing the press and political parties, increasing civilian control over the military, and diversifying the state's education and broadcasting languages to include Kurdish. These changes were accompanied by the toleration of Kurdish culture within the broader public sphere. Militant engagements and casualties decreased on both sides, and Kurdish legal activity expanded. By channelling the Kurdish nationalist cause through formal politics, the PKK-influenced party, *Demokratik Toplum Partisi*, had to compete with the rising and ambitious AKP, which was well established in party politics and

⁹⁷ Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation*.

⁹⁸ To my knowledge, this is the only study arguing for an inclusion de-moderation relationship in Middle East studies. It is also the only study on the moderation of a non-Islamist actor.

⁹⁹ Güneş Murat Tezcür, "When Democratization Radicalizes: The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Turkey," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 6 (2010): 775–89.

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keen to appeal to the Kurds. The AKP's massive success in that period reached a broad sector of middle-class Kurds and won over Kurdish constituencies in local and parliamentary elections, taking votes from the Kurdish nationalist movement. Losing Kurdish votes to a rival not only undermined the movement's hegemony over its ethnic constituency, but was also an organizational threat to its very existence. By demobilizing its combatants, its primary organizational resource, and performing poorly at the ballot box, moderation appeared to be a losing strategy. In 2004, the PKK resumed its guerrilla tactics in Türkiye. A few years later, when democratic reforms slowed down, the improvement in the Kurdish nationalists' performance in the 2009 local elections brought the PKK back to a peaceful negotiation table.

Tezcür argued that radicalism could provide adequate conditions for an organization to survive, capitalize on material and discursive benefits, and strengthen the members' sense of comradeship and solidarity. An "insurgent organization is likely to radicalize rather than moderate if democratic reforms introduce competition from other organizations that effectively challenge its control over [its] ... constituency. [It thus] has strong incentives to engage in armed action and provoke state repression because it gains recruits by portraying itself as the only defender of the constituency."¹⁰⁰ Tezcür's premise emanates from organization theory, which holds that organizations could prioritize survival and organizational gains over their (sincere) ends. Social Movement theorists have already integrated organization theory, bridging between the two fields, and argue that social movements are small forms of organizations that rationally behave and calculate their actions and feel the tension between their causes and moral commitments and the goal to survive.¹⁰¹ Moderation theorists do acknowledge the role of Political Opportunity Structure (POS) in triggering a group's moderation. The POS, however, focuses on the opportunities and incentives which could be captured or missed, but underestimate the risks and threats that could generate defensive actions. Integrating organization theory with moderation theory could explain cases where democratization could pose an organizational threat to a group's existence. Inclusion may have the repercussion of generating de-moderation when it alienates opposition forces that lack the capacity and will to capture new opportunities and adapt to the dynamics of formal politics and electoral competition. I argue that this explains the trajectory of both Tagammu and the Revsoc.

¹⁰⁰ Tezcür, "When Democratization Radicalizes," 777-78.

¹⁰¹ John L. Campbell, "Where Do We Stand? Common Mechanisms in Organizations and Social Movements Research," in *Social Movements and Organization Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 41-68.

The PKK scenario resembles the conditions of the Revsoc in the post-revolution period, where electoral legitimacy was perceived as a challenge to “revolutionary legitimacy.” The democratic transition convened after Mubarak’s ousting moved the centre of political action from the streets to elected institutions, invoking resistance from revolutionary youths. The case of Tagammu confirms a conventional proposition by democratization theorists in the 1980s, which states that too much pressure from below could threaten not only the regime but also “moderate” reformers, and “evoke strong defensive and anti-democratic reactions.”¹⁰² Agreeing with this proposition, Nancy Bermeo adds that the pivotal elites’ reaction to mass mobilization depends on its level of threat.¹⁰³ She argues that pivotal elites (including reformer incumbents and opposition) would sponsor elections if they expected to win and hold “extremists” in check. Her rule states that if the “elites forecast the extremists’ victory, they will reject democracy because they see democracy as an intolerable threat, as happened in China in 1989.” And if they “forecast the extremists’ defeat and moderates’ victory” or “their own victory”, they “may accept democracy” respectively as “a means of escape” or “a form of legitimization” as happened in Greece, Peru, Spain, and Portugal in the mid-1970s. “Extremism” in Bermeo’s model “lies in the eyes of the beholder.” The threatening popular organizations could be militant groups and organized labour, or “students and other relatively well-educated urban groups, [which represent] nonelite but formally organized actors who are perceived as extremists by existing elites.”

Modes of opposition

I consider the Tagammu party and the Revsoc initially as *opposition*. Therefore, before ending this chapter, I would like to discuss the meaning of opposition and the modes of opposition in Egypt. Secularist actors in Egypt were distributed in different ranks of the political and societal hierarchy. Some held governmental positions; ministers, judges and deans of universities, members of the ruling party, editors of state-sponsored newspapers and TV channels. Others were also known as opposition: official parties such as Tagammu and al-Wafd, and outlawed parties and organizations like the communist and the Nasserist groups

¹⁰² Terry Lynn Karl, “Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America,” *Comparative Politics* 23, no. 1 (1990): 1–21; Myron Weiner, “Empirical Democratic Theory and the Transition from Authoritarianism to Democracy,” *PS (Washington, D.C. : 1968)* 20, no. 4 (1987): 861–66; Samuel P. Huntington, “Will More Countries Become Democratic?,” *Political Science Quarterly* 99, no. 2 (1984): 193–218; Daniel H. Levine, “Paradigm Lost: Dependence to Democracy,” *World Politics* 40, no. 3 (1988): 377–94; Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

¹⁰³ Nancy Bermeo, “Myths of Moderation: Confrontation and Conflict during Democratic Transitions,” *Comparative Politics* 29, no. 3 (1997): 305–22.

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since the seventies and liberal and leftist forces which emerged in the 1990s and 2000s. Some, at some point, were anti-institutional, like the Revolutionary Socialists in the 1990s, and some were violent, like *Tanzīm Thawrat Miṣr* [Egypt's Revolution Organization]—a militant Nasserist group in the mid-1980s. It is thus useful to borrow Holger Albrecht's "modes of dissent and opposition," which, instead of the firm regime-opposition dichotomy used in the early democratization literature, distinguishes between different levels of dissent within and outside the regime.¹⁰⁴

Albrecht's module initially differentiates between dissent, opposition and resistance. Dissent is a broad concept that "may appear between father and son, wife and husband, colleagues at the workplace, and certainly in the political realm too: between parts of the government or government versus opposition". Albrecht uses *integrated dissent* to refer to incumbents and institutions within the regime that disagree with the central power (presidency/SCAF) or other governmental institutions on some policies and ideas. The judiciary, al-Azhar, the ministries of culture and education, factions of the NDP, and state-owned media institutions like al-Ahram, al-Akhbar, and Ruz al-Yusuf, are all state apparatus that hold different positions on economic policies, international relations, and social and religious issues and contest internal struggles to push forward certain policies. Integrated dissents are integral pillars of the regime and work in the state's interest [*maslahat ad-dawla*]. They thus share the state's authoritarian nature and have little motivation to push for democratic changes. Unlike integrated dissents, an opposition is a political dissent outside the regime. Albrecht distinguishes between three levels of opposition; loyal, tolerated, and anti-system oppositions. *Loyal opposition*, Albrecht argues, is explicitly or implicitly supportive of the authoritarian regime. It might oppose policies and pressure for certain reforms, but at the same time fear popular pressure from below and thus have no desire for further inclusion. It is highly dependent on the state, satisfied with few official positions and seats in the parliament, but has no will to challenge the regime over incumbencies. Albrecht's examples of loyal opposition are legal parties, like al-Wafd and Tagammu. *Tolerated opposition* refers to civil society organizations (CSO), liberal-leftist protest groups and intellectuals, and labour movements. The latter are tolerated—sometimes—because of their elitist nature, lack of mass

¹⁰⁴ Holger Albrecht, "How Can Opposition Support Authoritarianism? Lessons from Egypt," *Democratization* 12, no. 3 (2005): 378–97; Albrecht, *Raging against the Machine: Political Opposition under Authoritarianism in Egypt*, First edition., Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2013).

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base, or their partial demands (improving human rights conditions or fair wages). For instance, Albrecht argues that mass strikes and labour demonstrations are usually contained; their leaders could be harassed by the security forces but not crushed because their demands are not anti-regime. Human rights activists and elitist pro-democratic groups whose advocacy for democracy is indeed anti-regime, are tolerated for lacking the capacity to mobilize in high numbers.

Anti-system opposition refers to office-seeking opposition movements with the potential or the claim to replace the state's incumbents. By anti-system, Albrecht does not mean anti-institutional, anti-formal politics, nor anti-democratic, but anti-regime.¹⁰⁵ An anti-system opposition is willing to comply with the state's rules and structure and exploit elections, legal loopholes, and possible margins to challenge the regime or *rage against the machine*. It is an "opposition of principles" and keeps "a profound ideological [and practical] distance ... towards both the government and the systemic margins within which the concerned political regime operates."¹⁰⁶ His example is the MB and its offshoot organizations which are dependant and based on societal support, but theoretically can refer to others. Both loyal and non-loyal opposition share "a minimum degree of mutual acceptance" that regulates their relationship with the regime and distinguishes them from *resistance* groups, like Islamist militants, who use all options to combat the regime, including violence and anti-institutional means. This model thus classifies different modes of dissent regarding its aims, relationship to the regime, mode of activity or the way it interacts with the regime, and the state's reaction to it. A tabulation of his module is drawn below.

¹⁰⁵ Albrecht, *Raging against the Machine*. 11

¹⁰⁶ Albrecht, "Political Opposition and Authoritarian Rule in Egypt" (Eberhard-Karls Universität Tübingen, 2007). 79

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Table 1: Tabulation of Holger Albrecht's module of modes of dissent, opposition, and resistance

	Mode of dissent	Example	Relationship to the regime	Interaction with the regime	Aims	Regime’s reaction
Regime	Integrated Dissent	Al-Azhar, judiciary... etc	Part of the regime	Internal disputes are usually managed non-publicly	Influencing state policies	It is part of the regime, though have internal contestations with the other state institutions
Opposition	Loyal Opposition	Official political parties	Dependent <i>on</i> the regime	Degree of mutual acceptance (play by the rules)		Encouraged-supported
	Tolerated Opposition	CSOs, HR activists, labour movements	Dependent <i>from</i> the regime		Tolerated-restricted	
	Anti-system Opposition	Mass movements (MB)			Restricted - repressed	
Resistance	Resistance	Islamist militants		No mutual acceptance		Repressed

The descriptions and boundaries between these ranks are not rigid, and it could be debatable where to place certain groups. The module maps the opposition forces roughly in the second half of Mubarak's period. However, its terms and descriptions can guide my analysis for the previous and following periods. What could be built on Albrecht's analysis is showing how opposition groups ascend or descend from one level to another. He placed all legal parties in the loyal opposition category. This reasonably describes the opposition landscape since the mid-1990s. Despite dismissing the considerable differences between legal parties regarding their attitudes towards the regime, he also dismisses some legal parties' significant change from anti-systemic opposition in the seventies and eighties to loyal ones in the nineties. It is true that the regime indeed has tools to manipulate, influence and pressure legal parties, but that does not fully explain how such parties are co-opted. Legal parties' loyalty to the regime was not inevitable. At least for the first decade from their establishment in the late-70s, the opposition parties (al-Wafd, Tagammu, Socialist Labour Party) did not seem fully content with the game rules set by the regime and showed persistence in pushing the limits. Their discourse and political alliances with other opposition groups seemed an anti-systemic action,

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and they were not always tolerated. While Tagammu was co-opted in the late 80s and al-Wafd arguably co-opted in the mid-90s, the SLP was suspended in 2000 and faced attempts to suspend its newspaper in the 90s for its disloyal opposition. Besides, the regime's refusal to grant legal status to al-Karama, the MB, and al-Wasat indicates that legality is not a guaranteed strategy for co-opting parties. Unlike many accounts that consider Tagammu a state-created party, thus inevitably loyal opposition, I argue that it was an anti-system opposition from its birth in 1976 and only began to turn into a loyal opposition from the late 1980s. As for the Revsoc, I will show that they fluctuated between anti-system opposition in exclusion and resistance in inclusion.

Conclusion

While moderation is still a contested term, it could be agreed that democracy is its primary currency and ultimate end. De-moderation is a shift in the opposite direction. Though scholars attribute moderation to several effects, the fixed variable in all moderation cases is the empowerment inducement that participation offers. In a liberalized authoritarian polity where an ancient regime is still in power, the empowerment inducement mainly attracts opposition groups who are more organized and/or more confident in the popular outputs. Weak or unorganized opposition groups, though they may hold democratic aspirations, may find political openings unrewarding, undermining, or threatening to bring unpreferable alternatives. In such cases, inclusion can lead to statist or anti-institutional pathways.

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The moderation of Tagammu Party under Sadat

Among the first three parties to emerge in post-Nasser Egypt was the National Progressive Unionist Party (NPUP or Tagammu), established in 1976, alongside two others, the Egyptian Arab Socialist Party, which represented Sadat's regime, and the Liberal Party. The three parties branched from the Arab Socialist Union [ASU] —Gamal Abdel-Nasser's (Nasser) sole party since 1962— and its founders were previously part of the Nasserist regime. Tagammu —literally the *gathering*— was meant to unite the different lines of leftist forces. The party became the legal representative and the largest stronghold for secular leftists for a long time during Sadat and Mubarak's tenure. With no exception, the founders of Tagammu also had a statist legacy, coming mainly from communist organizations and socialist intelligentsia that reconciled with Nasserism in the late 1950s, and held leading positions in Nasser's bureaucracy, especially in media platforms. Their writings in the 1960s were marked by justifying the autocratic rule and associating democracy with scientific progression, national independence, and many things except “participation and contestation”— the anchors of liberal democracy.

Nevertheless, one can see a contrasting image when looking at Tagammu's discourse and behaviour during its first decade. Since the first day of its establishment, the party showed a hardliner stance against the regime and acted as a leading and responsible opposition force in Egypt. In a departure from their *integrated dissent* status under Nasser, the leftists of Tagammu in the 1970s shifted to an *anti-system opposition*. The intellectuals of Tagammu openly self-criticized their apologetic experience under Nasserism and revised many of their statist and vanguardist ideas. Those ideas were accompanied by sharp opposition and pungent criticism of Sadat, maintaining a significant distance from the state and strategically choosing to challenge it from below. Tagammu participated in parliamentary elections and tried to recruit and represent a broader spectrum of progressive intelligentsia, including elements from religious backgrounds—a level of diversity and unity that the communist movement previously lacked. This endeavour to diversify and unite the progressive forces and reach out to broader constituencies led the party to soften its secular discourse, co-opt the resurgent religious wave, and sometimes frame its programme in religious rhetoric. Most remarkable was its democratic discourse, which appeared

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to be in line with the principles of liberal democracy, acknowledging the importance of mass participation and other rival forces' right to political competition, including their historical adversaries—the bourgeois liberals and the Islamists.

This democratic and anti-systemic attitude remained until the late-1980s when Tagammu took a reverse path towards a loyal opposition, which I will discuss in the following chapter.

Nonetheless, during its first decade, Tagammu moderated. A political inclusion also marked this period, witnessing relative openings in press freedom and plural parliamentary and syndical elections. However, while Tagammu chose to exploit this margin, the left was selectively repressed and exposed to state-led anti-leftist discourse. The 1970s, thus, are generally regarded as a period of repression to the left. The democratic shift in the leftists of Tagammu from the 1970s to the mid-1980s, relative to their previous period, makes it a suitable candidate case study for the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. Tagammu's moderation could be attributed to multiple factors, including *political learning* and moderate doses of repression, but crucial, I argue, is the leftists' perceived opportunity to lead the Egyptian opposition and benefit the most, among other rivals, from electoral liberalization. Although the 1967 defeat badly damaged the Nasserist image, Nasserism and leftism in Egypt were not over. A renewal wave of leftist movements arose in the early 1970s and remained active throughout the decade. The movement was marked by its democratic demands and appeared to be the main political challenge to Sadat for most of his reign. Islamism, although historians mark its revival in the early 70s, organizationally was still in a rehabilitation stage. It had not yet appeared as a leading opposition force or an alternative to the existing regime, at least not in the eyes of the leftist opposition or the regime. Tagammu, as the sole legal representative of the left, thus saw an opportunity in the 70s to build on the Nasserist legacy, whose ideals were still popular, recruit and mobilize the leftist forces and gain power by electoral contestation.

This chapter explains the democratization of Tagammu's discourse and the distancing of its relationship with the state from 1970 to 1981. To prove such a shift, an overview of Tagammu's previous situation is needed; that is, the communist movement in the 50s and 60s, their ideas and relationship with the state and rivals, with a particular focus on the constellation later to be the founders and leaders of the Tagammu Party. Besides secondary resources, primary ones are

consulted from the writings of leading figures of Tagammu in different journals of the period, mainly *aṭ-Ṭalī‘a* Journal, besides party documents and electoral programmes and leftists' memoirs.

The origins of Tagammu: An ideological and historical background

Historians of the Egyptian left-wing acknowledge three waves of communist and leftist movements. The first was in the early 1920s, marked by the establishment of the first Egyptian Socialist Party in August 1921, which a year later was renamed the Egyptian Communist Party (ECP). The first wave did not last long; as soon as in 1924, the movement faced a deadly crackdown, ending its nascent activities. The second wave emerged in the early 1940s and lasted until the dissolution of the two main communist organizations in 1964. It was the longest and the most active period for communists in Egypt. The third wave came in the 1970s when Tagammu Party was formed. It was founded by a group of the younger generation of the second wave; those who were in their twenties and teenage years by the time of the July 1952 revolution. They had experienced the internationalist orientation of the Egyptian communist movement and later its nationalist orientation under Nasser's co-optation.

High modernism

Their Leninist-Marxist background shaped their *high modernist* ideology, one which was rigorously secular and would place them in an antagonist position against traditional values and religious institutions and movements.¹⁰⁷ According to James C. Scott, high modernism implies strong confidence in scientific and technical progress and its ability to master nature and societies. It speaks about improving the human condition with the authority of scientific knowledge, embodied in technocrats, experts and intellectuals, and tends to disallow other competing sources of judgment. High modernism sharply disconnects with history and tradition. Since many inherited moral and religious values and social structures appear to lack reason, they should be rearranged on a rational and scientific basis. A clear manifestation of high modernism belief appeared in the Soviet experience; however, it can be found across the spectrum from left

¹⁰⁷ On the second wave of Egyptian communism and its high modernist ideology see Meijer, *The Quest for Modernity*.

to right.¹⁰⁸ One of the main features of high modernism is its firm belief in the state as the primary modernizing agent and, consequently, belief in the malleability of society. High modernism thus could be authoritarian, despite its championing of mass education. In its light version, it tends to marginalize those it deems unqualified for scientific planning. At its most extreme, it crushes civil society, especially where religious and traditional organizations have a strong presence and tend to challenge its central authority. It also banishes politics, where political interests can only obstruct rational and scientific programmes designed by the experts. Many high modernists carry democratic aspirations. They definitely crusade for emancipation from patriarchist authoritarianism in social and political structures, however, their democratic and emancipatory tendencies can conflict with high modernist convictions.¹⁰⁹

High modernist convictions found fertile ground in the young Egyptian generation of the 1940s, disillusioned by the paternalistic relations in family and politics and the rising resentment against the parliamentary system and British occupation. On various levels, it infiltrated the second wave of communists and other progressive liberals and socialists through European and Egyptian middle-class communists, who lost touch with their traditional milieus and had more contact with Western culture. High modernism in Egypt was not free from democratic tendencies. Communist organizations throughout the 1940s and 1950s have stood with labour unions, student movements, and civil societies against the patronage of the “feudal” and “bourgeois” parties. They initially welcomed the 1923 constitution and expressed their will to participate in the parliamentary system.¹¹⁰ However, their exclusion from participation and the disappointing developments of the liberal experience enhanced their high modernism and avant-guard convictions, reflecting the conflict later in the 1950s between scientific progress and democratic ideals.

The boundaries of the national front

From the communist experience, the founders of Tagammu were also influenced by the *national front* idea. In the mid-1930s, as many communist parties in Europe faced the threat of the rising

¹⁰⁸ For an analysis of Lenin’s high modernism see James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, Yale Agrarian Studies (New Haven, Conn. ; Yale University Press, 1998). 147.

¹⁰⁹ Scott. 4-5, 93-94.

¹¹⁰ Meijer, *The Quest for Modernity*. 98-99

right-wing parties, they turned their focus to maintaining democracy and tended to align with other progressive classes. This threat was accompanied by their realization of their marginal mobilization strength among other political forces and their need to build alliances to achieve minimum aims. The example of the French popular front was influential. The broad coalition the French Communist party joined, including social democrats and petit bourgeoisie, confining the confrontation against the fascists and limited capitalist families, proved successful with its sweeping victory in the 1936 elections. Simultaneously, the Communist International (Comintern) had also moderated its stance towards national alliances. Unlike its confrontational strategies in its first six congresses, where it discouraged national alliances and labelled social democrats as social fascists, after the developments in Europe and the pressure from European communist delegates, the seventh Comintern in 1936 endorsed the front strategy. The French popular front and the Comintern's new strategy shaped the Egyptian communists' second wave and shifted it towards a nationalist orientation.¹¹¹

Until the mid-1940s, the communist movements in Egypt were predominantly formed and led by Europeans and Jews. Their political issues focused on global development, mainly in Europe, and were less oriented towards Egyptian and Arab politics. Despite the internationalist orientation of communist ideology, a group of communists in Egypt sought to Egyptianize Marxism and focus the movement's programme on Egypt's national challenges. A communist leader who championed the idea of Egyptianizing the movement, Henry Curiel, born in Egypt to Italian Jewish parents, formed the Egyptian Movement for National Liberation [*al-Ḥaraka al-Miṣriyya li-Taḥarrur al-Waṭani*, or *Hamitu*] in 1943. He then co-founded with Hillel Schwartz its extension movement, the Democratic Movement for National Liberation [*al-Ḥaraka al-Dīmuqrāṭiyyalī-Taḥarrur al-Waṭani*, or *Ḥaditu*], in 1947. Both successive movements recruited Egyptian members and became the largest communist organization of their time. More Egyptianization of the movement occurred after the Arab-Israeli war and Ḥaditu's endorsement of the UN's partition plan for Palestine and establishing the Jewish state in Palestine, following the Soviet Union's position. The organization was publicly accused of being Zionist, and Jewish

¹¹¹ Meijer. 96 – 106.

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and foreign leaders were blamed by Egyptian comrades for orienting the movement away from Arab and Egyptian national interests.¹¹²

New organizations and splinter groups from Ḥaditu emerged in response to the movement's orientation and foreign leadership problems. Among many, a group led by Fu'ad Mursi and Ismael Sabry Abdullah (both later were co-founders of Tagammu), freshly returning from Paris after accomplishing their higher degrees, formed The Egyptian Communist Party—known as al-Raya. They criticized Ḥaditu for its foreignism and aimed to correct the path of the movement and direct it towards Egypt's national interests. By showing appreciation for the role of Jews and non-Egyptians in pioneering communism in Egypt and some of their efforts for Egyptianization, indigenous Egyptian intellectuals problematized their domination of the movement. They believed that they were not only unlinked to the tissues of Egyptian realities but also that their disproportionate existence in the movement made it a target for public attack and an obstacle for mass recruiting.¹¹³ By the end of the 1940s, the internationalist orientation was over.¹¹⁴ Many foreign elements receded from Ḥaditu's leadership, and the communist movement became dominantly led by indigenous middle-class intellectuals.

The Egyptianization process brought the movement to the centre of the national issue. According to Tariq al-Bishri, “the national issue” [*al-mas'ala al-Waṭaniyya*] at that time was centred firstly on democracy and the stance towards the monarchy and its large following of bourgeois allies, secondly on national emancipation from the British occupation, and last on the social issue.¹¹⁵ The social issue, mainly the struggle of the labourers, did not wither from the communist discourse, but its priority competed with the two former issues. Communist intellectuals came to believe that solving the social issue was dependent on a democratic revolution and national liberation. The front strategy activated in the mid-1940s, and the leading communist organizations began to advocate for a national democratic front which they hoped to lead. Membership of all communist organizations at their height was approximately 3000, the same

¹¹² Joel Beinin, “The Communist Movement and Nationalist Political Discourse in Nasirist Egypt,” *Middle East Journal* 41, no. 4 (1987): 568–84.

¹¹³ Ibid. 573–574

¹¹⁴ Abdulqader Yasin, *Al-Ḥaraka Al-Shuū'iyya Al-Miṣriyya [The Egyptian Communist Movement 1921 -1965]* (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 2012).

¹¹⁵ Tariq Al-Bishri, *Al-Ḥaraka As-Siyāsiyya Fi Miṣr [The Political Movement in Egypt]* (Dar Al-Shuruq, 2002). 455

number as Muslim Brotherhood branches at that time, and marginal to the number of bourgeois parties like al-Wafd and Young Egypt, which also competed to lead the national movement.¹¹⁶ Communists debated internally to draw the boundaries of the front, which, deriving from the popular front in France and the Comintern strategy, sharply divided the forces into progressives on one side and reactionaries and fascists on the other. In general, the communists accepted the inclusion of al-Wafd. They criticized its traditional and bourgeois character but acknowledged its mass mobilization strength and appreciated its democratic tendency and left-wing component, the Wafdist Vanguard [*aṭ-Ṭalī'a al-Wafdiyya*], which they hoped to enlarge. That was the overall position of the two major communist organizations, Ḥaditu and the Workers Vanguard (also known as the New Dawn). A minor current, represented by al-Raya, the third major organization and the smallest of the three, was more oriented towards a working-class front, refusing the inclusion of bourgeois forces who, in terms of their mass superiority, might swallow the communist movement and steal its socialist programme.¹¹⁷

While the communists' position in relation to al-Wafd and the bourgeois forces was oscillating and debatable, their position towards the MB and Young Egypt (the Socialist Party) was consensually clear. As the communists adopted the national front strategy, they were keen not to slip into the discourse of nationalism and authenticity. Communist intellectuals, even those who fervently supported al-Wafd, remained sincere to the Marxist analysis of history; critical of what they considered traditionalism and reactionary thought, regarding nationalism and authenticity as false consciousness that misleads society from its real challenges.¹¹⁸ While part of this criticism was directed at conservative liberals, the full attack was directed at the MB and Young Egypt, whom they considering as fascist and reactionary forces, and thus out of the national front.

Apart from the clear ideological contrast, the cleavage was also based on their competition in leading the national movement. The so-called national movement [*al-Ḥaraka al-Waṭaniyya*] in the 1940s was a popular wave larger than any specific organization.¹¹⁹ At the height of the

¹¹⁶ Ziad Munson, "Islamic Mobilization: Social Movement Theory and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood," *Sociological Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (2001): 497.

¹¹⁷ Al-Bishri, *Al-Ḥaraka As-Siyāsiyya Fi Miṣr [The Political Movement in Egypt]*. 534

¹¹⁸ Meijer, *The Quest for Modernity*. 106-108

¹¹⁹ Al-Bishri, *Al-Ḥaraka As-Siyāsiyya Fi Miṣr [The Political Movement in Egypt]*. 182.

popular uprising against the British occupation in 1946, the communists initiated in February the National Committee for Workers and students [*al-lajna al-waṭaniyya*], which included left-wing Wafdist youths and progressive students and intellectuals.¹²⁰ Whereas this committee appeared to be under the communists' leadership, Young Egypt and the MB formed the National Committee [*al-lajna al-qawmiyya*] a few days later, which included the Peasant Socialist Party, the Egyptian Front (Ali Maher's group), and students and youths from the National [*al-Waṭani*] and Liberal Constitutionalist parties. The committee marked the height of the Islamist and communist tensions and ignited scathing attacks in the years that followed from all communist organizations: Ḥaditu, Iskra, the Worker's Vanguard, and the ECP (al-Raya).¹²¹ Despite the communists' account of the MB and Young Egypt as fascists being extreme, the bourgeois outlook of the committee, its support for prime minister Ismail Sidqi and its ambivalent position towards the monarch gave the communists a reason to designate the MB and Young Egypt on the reactionary side. From the MB side, the communists' anti-religious and pro-Soviet discourse, their foreign leadership and westernized outlook, and endorsement of the partition plan gave them a reason to regard the "communist colonization" and "occupation" as another face of the British.¹²² The two committees, or two competing national fronts, did not last more than a few months; however, they shaped the map of alliances until the rise of the military regime. In the words of the communist historian Abdulqader Yasin, "when the military movement dissolved the Muslim Brotherhood, the Workers Vanguard [New Dawn] had seen it as a dissolution of feudalists, English servants, and non-democratic force which have no place inside the unified front... a non-democratic organization thus should not be treated democratically."¹²³ Despite a slight improvement in the communists' relationship with the Socialist Party (Young Egypt) and some MB revolutionary members in the early 50s, further initiatives until their respective dissolution in 1952 and 1954 hardly brought them together with the communists.

¹²⁰ Al-Bishri. 180.

¹²¹ Meijer, *The Quest for Modernity*. 117-119.

¹²² See Hasan Al-Banna, "Naṣiḥa Wa I'dhār", The Muslim Brotherhood Daily Newspaper, May 9, 1947. See also Abdelhalim, *Al-Ikhwān Al-Muslimūn: Aḥdath Ṣana'at At-Tarīkh [The Muslim Brotherhood: Events Made History]*, 5th ed. (Cairo: Dar Al-Da'wah, 1994). 483.

¹²³ Yasin, *Al-Ḥaraka Al-Shu'ū'iyya Al-Miṣriyya [The Egyptian Communist Movement 1921 -1965]*. 114

Authoritarian modernism

The voluntary dissolution of the two major communist parties in 1964 and the enrolment of their members in the Arab Socialist Union as individuals came after a complex tragedy and the severe repression communists faced in prison. Repression and the military's absolute rule were significant factors in their co-optation in the state. However, an ideological acceptance and endorsement of the Nasserist state's modernizing and nationalist role were also present in the communist discourse of the late 50s and 60s. The insightful analyses by Joel Benin and Roel Meijer attribute the communist support of Nasser to their nationalist and high modernist convictions. The constraints of the political reality revealed the conflict between their emancipation and modernization aspirations with democracy.

By the eve of July 1952, Ḥaditu had around 2000 members, Workers' Vanguard had 300, the ECP al-Raya had less than 100.¹²⁴ Having some Free Officers as members of Ḥaditu, the latter endorsed the former's takeover, while other communist organizations were cautious and sceptical, waiting for the clouds to clear.¹²⁵ The first test for communist democratic principles was the incident of Kafr ed-Dawwar in August 1952. To most of the communists, it became clear that the revolution was heading towards military authoritarianism. Communist organizations condemned the army's extreme behaviour against the workers and declared their opposition to the officers, except Ḥaditu, which stated that the labour movement was penetrated and "instigated by the remnants of reactionaries and imperialism, [and that the] criminal acts [of the workers] benefit no one except the enemies of the nation."¹²⁶ In the following month, two workers from Kafr ed-Dawwar were executed. As Ḥaditu did not expect the execution, they began to rethink their stance towards the officers throughout the following months when the military junta banned all political parties in January 1953, closed their newspapers, and announced itself in February a Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), claiming authority over the whole country.¹²⁷ Ḥaditu turned against the military and stated that "the military dictatorship has begun a new chapter, aimed at consolidating its absolute tyranny and autocracy through the

¹²⁴ Ibid. 98.

¹²⁵ Rifa'at Al-Sa'id, *Tarīkh Al-Ḥaraka Al-Shuyu'iyya Fi Miṣr [The Communist Movement's History in Egypt] 1920-1988*, vol. 5 (Cairo: Dar AL-Thaqafah Al-Jadidah, 1989), 346.

¹²⁶ Tareq Y. Ismael and Rifa'at Al-Sa'id, *The Communist Movement in Egypt, 1920-1988* (Syracuse University Press, 1990), 71.

¹²⁷ Ismael and Rifa'at Al-Sa'id, 75.

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declaration of the republic. The declaration aims to limit popular freedoms. ...Naguib has decreed himself its president, becoming, in essence, an absolute military dictator. The people will not recognize the establishment of an Egyptian Republic unless it comes as a result of a direct popular referendum in which the workers, peasants, merchants, and all groups of people participate.”¹²⁸ Ḥaditu furthermore called for a unified front and declared a charter of their goals and demands, which included “immediate parliamentary elections, the abolition of martial law and all other emergency laws, ... [and] widening the rights and freedoms of workers, the most important of which is the right to strike.”¹²⁹ By September 1953, Ḥaditu and the rest of the communists and left-wing liberals were united in opposing the RCC.

The communists opposed the RCC until September 1955, when the latter launched a foreign policy oriented towards the Eastern bloc, manifested in the Czechoslovak arms deal. The communists endorsed this step and began reconsidering their stance toward the RCC. The Workers Vanguard was the first to declare its cooperation with the regime, followed by the rest. Meanwhile, Ḥaditu initiated a new coalition with six small organizations, which had split over its apologetic stance in the Kafr ed-Dawwar incident. In February of the same year, they regrouped to form a united opposition front— the Unified Egyptian Communist Party (UECP). Its opposition orientation did not last long; it soon, in March 1956, started praising Nasser for his new anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist decisions. Despite criticising the undemocratic character of the RCC and the harsh security measures against dissents, the UECP granted the RCC an unconditional endorsement.¹³⁰ While the UECP and the Workers Vanguard were enthusiastically endorsing the regime, only a few communists led by al-Raya were still unwilling to buy its new anti-imperialist orientation, considering it a “fascist bankruptcy”.

The communists’ support for Nasser increased, and al-Raya’s opposition began to soften after the nationalization of the Suez Canal in July 1956 and the tripartite attack in October. After the war, Nasser declared his socialist reforms and became an international symbol for Third World liberation movements, earning popularity among the nationalist masses and a broad base of

¹²⁸ Quoted in Ibid, 75. *A Call for Students*, leaflet signed by Ḥaditu-Alexandria.

¹²⁹ “Workers of Egypt Unite, Workers of the World Unite,” *Al-Wagib*, January 1, 1953.

¹³⁰ Beinín, “The Communist Movement and Nationalist Political Discourse in Nasirist Egypt.” 576

workers and peasants. With Nasser being at the height of his power, all the communists were unified behind this new ideological creation; Nasserism. As described by Ḥaditu member Sa'ad Rahmi, "the unification process [of the communists] corresponded to the rise in a new Nasserist trend. It was a new ideological creation."¹³¹ In June 1957, the UECP and al-Raya merged to form the United Egyptian Communist Party. Then, with the accession of the Workers Vanguard (the New Dawn), The Egyptian Communist Party (ECP-8 January) was established on January 8, 1958. In a later evaluation, Fu'ad Mursi regarded this unification as a complete reorientation of communism toward Arab Nationalism.

The communists' support for Nasser was a strategic move and cannot solely be attributed to fear and repression. Communist parties abroad, namely the Lebanese, Iraqis, and Italians, supported and influenced the Egyptian communists' unification in supporting Nasserist nationalism.¹³² The recommendations of the CPSU's 20th Congress in 1956 for communist parties around the world to soften their stance towards the newly independent states and national bourgeoisie also pushed Egyptian communists in this nationalist direction.¹³³ Their strategy was to unite with the officers, providing them with a programme, and steer them towards applying democracy.¹³⁴ By settling on this strategy, the communists had to legitimize military rule and defend its democratic intentions. In 1957, the three major communist organizations which formed the ECP-8 January stated that "the colonizers and their agents are shedding crocodile tears for what they call violating freedoms in Egypt, ignoring that the Egyptian people and all the patriots have never ever one day enjoyed [freedom] as they do today."¹³⁵

Still, with these concessions, Nasser did not permit any legal charter for the ECP and restricted their activities inside the nationalist framework. The communists were denied the right to participate in the Liberation Rally elections, and their candidates were banned. From 1953 to 1958, Nasser's prisons were not free from communists, which indicates that relations were not improving. Hundreds of Ḥaditu members were sentenced for years, including the young Rif'at

¹³¹ Quoted in Ismael and Rif'at al-Sa'id, *The Communist Movement in Egypt, 1920-1988*, 107.

¹³² Ismael and Rifa'at Al-Sa'id, 107.

¹³³ Yasin, *Al-Ḥaraka Al-Shu'ū'iyya Al-Miṣriyya [The Egyptian Communist Movement 1921 -1965]*. 128

¹³⁴ Ibid. 109

¹³⁵ Ibid. 129

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al-Sa'id, the later leader of Tagammu. The biggest challenges the communists had to face were yet to come, after the formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) and the new nationalist government of Qassim in Iraq. Nasser proposed a sole party rule for the UAR, which meant banning all Syrian parties, including the Syrian Communist Party. In contrast with the subordinate role of the communists in Egypt, Iraqi communists maintained a close alliance with Qassim and enjoyed a good position within the new state. Under these new developments, the ECP began recalculating its role under Nasser's hegemony. A competition arose between Nasser and Qassim on pan-Arabism leadership, paralleled by a sharp internal debate in the ECP to determine their position between the two projects. With the influence of the Iraqi communists, most of the communist factions in the ECP settled on allying with Iraq, except Ḥaditu elements which remained loyal to Nasser. As a result, Ḥaditu members split from ECP-8 January and became known in 1959 as the ECP-Ḥaditu. By the end of 1958, Nasser began his crackdown by arresting ECP members, which reached a thousand by April 1959. As for the ECP-Ḥaditu group, a meeting in November 1958 was held between their representative Mahmud Amin Alim and Anwar Sadat, the general secretary of the National Union at the time. They expressed their willingness to cooperate with the regime and join the Union, in return retaining their independence and reserving some freedom of activity. No conditions were accepted other than dissolving the party and integrating into the National Union as individuals. With the regime's firm and threatening language, only a few members obeyed, but overall, ECP-Ḥaditu was reluctant, and they consequently faced the same fate as all the communists.

In prison, under harsh abuse and being tortured to death, communists kept expressing their support to Nasser, appealing for relent and offering unconditional cooperation. The crackdown began to relax after the overthrow of Qassim and the rise of Ba'athists in Iraq and Syria, as well as improving relations with the Kremlin. With Khrushchev's visit to Cairo in 1964, Nasser released the communists who voluntarily dissolved the two major communist parties. Many of them joined the Arab Socialist Union (ASU), Nasser's sole party.

A new meaning for freedom and democracy

The dramatical metamorphosis in communist positions in the mid-1960s was accompanied by an ideological change where the very concepts of democracy and freedom were redefined. The meaning of *ḥurriyya* [freedom] in the communist discourse turned to focus on national liberty,

emancipation from colonial and reactionary powers, the masses' consciousness and people's discipline under the revolutionary leadership, while at the same time attacking the liberal concept of freedom and the multiparty parliamentary system. A sample of this reorientation can be seen in the writings of Mahmud Amin al-ʿAlim (d. 2009), a respected representative of the communists and a leading member later in Tagammu. In an article entitled *The Meaning Of Freedom In Our New Society*, al-ʿAlim compares the freedoms in the pre-revolutionary liberal era and freedoms after the revolution. Overall, he undoubtedly finds the latter more democratic and representing the true value of freedom.

Which is freer, Egypt before the revolution of July 23, 1952, or Egypt after? Before 1952, there were parties in Egypt, constitutional battles, parliament, elections, cabinets that rise and fall, newspapers and magazines owned by parties or individuals, a parliamentary opposition, and so on. In revolutionary Egypt, there are neither parties nor party conflict; there is no parliamentary opposition in the traditional sense and no individual ownership of newspapers and magazines. Which of the two modes is freer? There is no doubt that, despite the glorious democratic activity, the constitutional and democratic gains that the people were grabbing in pre-revolutionary Egypt, the content of freedom at that time meant the freedom of reactionism, feudalism, great capitalists and colonialism essentially. The parliaments did not represent the people's true will... [But] when the revolution of 1952 took place, the highest foundations of freedom were achieved.... The transfer of power in Egypt on July 23, 1952, from the hands of reaction and colonialism to the national hands, is considered in itself a change in the general content of freedom in Egypt.¹³⁶

By undermining the liberal concept of freedom based on individualism, bureaucracy, and conflicting interest of political parties, al-ʿAlim introduces a revolutionary concept of freedom based on popular assemblies, collective cooperation, and consolidation with the ASU and its vanguardist organization.

The path of freedom in our country is not the path of liberal parliamentarism, not the path of multi-partyism, but rather the path of the revolutionary alliance of the working people

¹³⁶ Mahmud Amin Al-ʿAlim, "Ma'na al-Ḥuriyya Fi Muġtama'ina al-Jadīd [The Meaning Of Freedom in Our New Society]," *Al-Hilal*, July 1, 1964, 6–12.

forces and the leading revolutionary organization, it is the path of the popular parliament and people's councils, the path of the majority of workers and peasants, the path of collective leadership and popular control... The concept of freedom among the masses is still a mysterious one, with liberal remnants spreading from it. The [liberal] values of freedom...are still in many areas slogans more than real facts. Old customs, individualism and bureaucratic and passive devices remain high walls in the face of new [revolutionary] values.

The revolutionary concept of freedom, however, entails "cooperation and revolutionary integration between all the progressive forces in our country ... within the framework of the Socialist Union and its vanguard organization, as through it, the content of freedom itself unlimitedly grows. The revolutionary concept of freedom should be popularized and launched in the factory, the courts, the economic institution, the cooperative society, the school, saloons, and educational institutions."¹³⁷ In a high modernist fashion, al-ʿAlim expands on his understanding of freedom by associating it with discipline, scientific progress, social evolution, development, and human dominance over laws of nature and social necessities. The path of freedom in our country, he continues, is "the path of conscious people's control of the laws of their economic, social and political life and their effective participation in directing them, the path of unlimited economic development."¹³⁸

While the meaning of freedom has been redefined, democracy has been either undermined or perceived to be exclusive to progressive forces. Al-ʿAlim described class-based democracy as "a democracy for the overwhelming majority of the working people, but it is also a dictatorship against the exploitative minority... However, while the working class establishes this dictatorship, it establishes it temporarily with the intention of eliminating the remnants of the bourgeois dictatorship, and eliminating exploitative production relations and establishing new socialist production relations... Here, real equality is achieved, and true democracy is available, which is the abolition of democracy, in its political sense as a state of class oppression and coercion."¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Ibid, 9–12.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 12.

¹³⁹ Mahmud Amin Al-ʿAlim, "Al-Dīmuqrāṭiyya Wa-l-Mariksia [Democracy and Marxism]," *Al-Hilal*, June 1, 1965, 72–73.

As the leader of the ECP-al-Raya, Mursi represents the stubborn trend of communists who showed resistance to the military regime's discourse and its attempt for co-optation. Al-Raya was dominantly an organization of intellectuals, relatively small, and its political role was marginal until the revolution when it began to attract more support from students for its ideological consistency and principled position against the "fascist" military rule.¹⁴⁰ In a similar fashion, Fu'ad Mursi also reconciled with the military's leadership in the mid-1960s and introduced an Egyptian way of democracy. In an article, *The Arabic Implementation of Socialism in Egyptian Reality*, Mursi legitimized the military rule, stating that "our way to socialism" is the Free Officers', those young soldiers, sons of peasants who took the journey to socialism through their struggle against imperialism and the war for Palestine, proving their authentic revolutionary sense.¹⁴¹ Legitimizing the officers' socialist pathway led him to justify its repressive measures against its opponents. "The possibility of a socialist transformation in Egypt depends in the first place on the rapidity in crushing [*saḥq*] the exploiter forces."¹⁴² Like al-'Alim, Mursi firmly attacked the "false bourgeoisie democracy" and its "façade institutions" and proposed that "real democracy is the one for working people [*al-sha'b al-āmil*]; those forces who accept the social transformation."¹⁴³ He thus considered "the establishment of the ASU... [which] represents workers and peasants... and depriving the reactionaries political rights... a democratic revolutionary transformation."¹⁴⁴ Mursi saw Nasser's charter of 1961 as a genuinely Egyptian democratic experience. "It is not the Soviet democratic way, neither the bourgeoisie democratic way, but a way that considers the conditions of our revolution". The Egyptian experience proposed two principles of socialist democracy. Firstly, allocating half the seats of the national and local assemblies and corporate boards for workers and peasants. This quorum is the most important democratic principle and a minimum standard for any democracy not only because these workers were previously deprived and deserve representation, but mainly because the end of democracy is production, thus it is "a democracy for producers." The second principle of Egypt's democracy manifested in the ASU and the SV, which united all the national forces in

¹⁴⁰ Beinun, "The Communist Movement and Nationalist Political Discourse in Nasirist Egypt". 571

¹⁴¹ Fuad Mursi, "At-Taṭbīq Al-'Arabi Lil-Ishtirākiyya Fil-Wāqē' Al-'Arabi". *Aṭ-Ṭalī'a*. July 1965. 96

¹⁴² Ibid. 77

¹⁴³ Ibid. 78

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 79

one popular organization, and led the socialist transformation and educated generations of new socialists.¹⁴⁵

Communist discourse generally in the 1960s was in the same direction regarding democracy. Many other writings like those of Lutfi al-Khuli and Mohammad al-Khafif theorized “the form of democracy [*shakl ad-Dimuqārṭiyya*]” in Egypt or “the concept and way of democracy in the charter,” justifying the unilateral political organization as a democratic experience, which suggests that that was the dominant position of the communists.¹⁴⁶ Besides these written stances, communists paraxially joined the ranks of the state’s vanguardist organization and became incumbents of the state for at least a decade, until the mid-1970s.

The statist legacy: Tagammu in the Arab Socialist Union

After 1962, Nasser established the ASU to succeed the Liberation Rally and the National Union.¹⁴⁷ Parallel to the ASU, he formed *Tanzīm al-Talī’ah al-Sirrī* [Secret Vanguardist Organization or Socialist Vanguard, SV] and *Munazamat al-Shabāb al-Ishtiraki*, the Youth Socialists Organization (YSO). The idea of Nasser’s unions was inspired by the Portuguese National Union of Salazar, and the League of Communists of Yugoslavia inspired his SV.¹⁴⁸ The law of the ASU states that this organization is “the socialist vanguard that leads the masses, expresses its will and guides national action, and effectively controls its functioning and proper line under the principles of the charter.” The ASU was a broad umbrella meant to control political activities in the country by co-opting members of state institutions and NGOs. The SV is a secret body within the ASU that selectively recruits elements qualified for leadership. As a broad and open organization, memberships in the ASU reached five million, while the SV, the core structure of the ASU, reached 30 thousand.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 78-79

¹⁴⁶ 79. See for example Lutfi al-Khuli, “Abdel-Nasser.. Munāḍilan Wa Ra’isan Lil-Jumhūriyya”. *Aṭ-Ṭalī’a*. February 1965. 7-5. See also Mohammad Al-Khafif, “Ad-Dīmuqrāṭiyya Wal *Tanzim* Al-Siyāsii: Mafūm Wa Tariq Ad-Dīmuqrāṭiyya Fil-Mithāq”. *Aṭ-Ṭalī’a*. February 1965. 11-18.

¹⁴⁷ Liberation Rally (1953 -1957), the National Union (1957 – 1962), the Arab Socialist Union (1962 – 1976).

¹⁴⁸ Ahmad Hamrush, *Mujtama’ Gamal Abdel Nasser [The Society of Gamal Abdel Nasser]* (Cairo: Madbuli, 1992); *Shahid Ala-l-Asr: Interview with Abdul-Ghaffar Shukur*, 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=3366iW74dD0.

¹⁴⁹ Hosni, *Abdul Nasser Wa-l-Tanzim Aṭ-Ṭalī’i Al-Sirrī [Nasser and The Secret Vanguard Organization] 1963-1971*, 20.

After their release from prison, some 250 communists joined the ASU and assumed active positions. By recruiting them, Nasser aimed to benefit from their intellectual skills in education and mobilization and simultaneously de-radicalize them and keep them close under his monitoring. On the other side, communists, after review and transformation during their imprisonment, became convinced that Nasserism and Marxism stood on one front and perceived a chance to play a role in building Egypt's modern republic. Among the veteran communist figures to join the SV was Mahmud Amin al-ʿAlim, a leader of the dissolved ECP-Ḥaditu, who influenced the dissolution of the party and the participation in Nasser's organizations. Al-ʿAlim was fired in 1954 from Cairo University in connection with his critical writings against authoritarian military rule. He was later imprisoned between 1959 and 1964 during the crackdown on communists. He then served as a board member of the SV's general secretariat. Khaled Mohieddin, Rifʿat al-Saʿid, and Fuʿad Mursi were previously members of Ḥaditu and the ECP and played active roles in the SV, and formed al-Tagammu Party ten years later. Khaled Mohieddin was a communist officer and a co-founder of the Free Officers Organization. Despite his loyalty to the free officers and Nasser, his communist tendencies and ties with Ḥaditu created tension with Nasser. Mohieddin resigned from the RCC and moved to Switzerland for three years on account of his conflict with Nasser in the March crisis.¹⁵⁰ He then returned at Nasser's invitation to head *al-Masāʾ* newspaper, which was soon suspended, in 1959. Mohieddin later joined the SV in 1965 when Nasser again appointed him to head *Akhbar al-Youm* newspaper, one of the most popular newspapers in Egypt since 1944.¹⁵¹ He formed a unit for the SV in the newspaper where he recruited journalists; among them was Rifʿat al-Saʿid.¹⁵² Al-Saʿid was a young member of Ḥaditu. He was under 16 when he was arrested for the first time in 1947 under monarchical rule. He was in his mid-twenties when he was imprisoned again from 1955 to 1958 under Nasser. Regarding al-Saʿid's writing qualifications, he was appointed to many media platforms, including *Akhbar al-Youm* and *Majallat at-Taḥrīʿa*. Having previously been a leader of the ECP al-Raya, the most reluctant communist faction of the military regime, Fuʿad Mursi was among the prisoners exposed to the most severe torture and harshest treatment. Mursi was also

¹⁵⁰ Khaled Mohieddin, *Wa-l-Aan Atakallam [And Now I Talk]* (Cairo: Alahram Centre, 1992), 341. March Crisis was a conflict among the Free Officers in 1954 between Naguib and Nasser.

¹⁵¹ Hamrush, *Mujtamaʾ Gamal Abdel Nasser [The Society of Gamal Abdel Nasser]*.

¹⁵² Hosni, *Abdul Nasser Wa-l-Tanzim Al-Taliʿi Al-Sirri [Nasser and The Secret Vanguard Organization] 1963-1971*. 52.

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among those who joined the SV and in 1969 was appointed a member of Majlis Al-Umma, the parliament. Abdul-Ghaffar Shukur also was one of the founders of Al-Tagammu who served in Nasser's organizations. Shukur never joined a communist group. He was a young socialist activist who grew up under the rise of Nasserism. Shukur was 18 years old in 1953 when he founded a branch of the Liberation Rally –Nasser's first organization– in his village.¹⁵³ He then ran for the National Union and was later appointed assistant secretary of education in the YSO.

Many other communists were incorporated into media outlets, most prominently *aṭ-Ṭalī'a Journal*, commissioned by Nasser in 1965 and published by al-Ahram, a governmental institution at the time. The journal was one of the major accommodations for many communists, namely Lutfi al-Khuli, al-Sa'id, Abu Yusuf Saif, and Ismail Sabri Abdallah, who worked under the supervision of Nasser's man Mohamed Hassanein Heikal. In general, communists were writers, academics and journalists. They were incorporated to fill intellectual and mobilizing gaps which the officers lacked. In 1963, Nasser formed the YSO, which aimed to recruit and educate the youths on the "revolution's principles" [*mabādi' al-thawra*].¹⁵⁴ He was impressed with the robustness of the communists and the Muslim Brother's organizations for what he saw because of their organizational strictness and explicit ideologies. The lack of a clear ideology of the "revolution's principles" prompted him to form a committee to work on writing an "ideological programme" [*barnāmiḡ fikrī*]. He invited a host of intellectuals to write a "balanced programme" based on the "revolution's charter."¹⁵⁵ They wrote educational lectures on revolution, socialism, Egypt's history and foreign policy, Palestine, Arab nationalism and unionism¹⁵⁶. By May 1967, the YSO had educated and trained 250,000 young women and men and recruited 30,000 members. Shukur proudly argues that the YSO successfully built a

¹⁵³ *Shāhid 'Ala-l-'Asr: Interview with Abdul-Ghaffar Shukur.*

¹⁵⁴ Abdul-Ghaffar Shukur, *Munazzamat Al-shabāb Al-Ishtirākī: Tajruba Miṣriyyia Fi I'dād Al-Qiyādāt [Youth Socialist Organization: An Egyptian Experience in Preparing Leaders]* (Beirut: Centre for Arabic Unity Studies, n.d.), 138.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid 137.

¹⁵⁶ Some titles of the written lectures: the necessity of the revolution, the popular organization, Egypt's foreign policy, Palestine and Arab unionism, Arab nationalism, Egyptian society under feudalism, Egyptian society from feudalism to capitalism, the agricultural situation, the inevitability of the socialist solution, the spiritual values and the socialist society, the Arabic struggle history, Egyptian youth's history and their future role, studies in democracy, the revolutionary forces and counter forces, the art of managing and mobilizing youths, the nature of this period and the duty towards it, private property in Islam, Islam's approach in building the individual and the community. See Ibid, 139–40.

generation of progressive leaders for Egypt who carried the revolution's principles after Nasser.¹⁵⁷ Despite his young age, Shukur said that he was promoted to his position on account of his intellectual qualifications. Some leftists like Shukur believed they were contributing to a genuine socialist project. Despite their reservations about Nasserism, others realized it was their best chance ever to act as state experts and advisers and benefit from their given platforms in modernizing society. Since their activism in Egypt began, leftists had never been closer to the state's resources and facilities than these few years.

The communists' experience under Nasserism manifested the high modernist predicament; full integration with the national and social emancipation while accepting to postpone democratic reforms and sacrifice civil society. The nationalist and anti-imperialist stances were not only what impressed the communists about the military regime. Toppling the feudalist and traditional strata from power positions and cutting imperialist influence was a major goal of the national movement's demands, but it was only one stage towards the modern independent state. The regime's radical modernization steps were no less impressive to the communists and leftist liberals. By adapting the discourse of state planning and rationalization and launching large industrial projects like the High Dam and Suez Canal, the officers incorporated almost the whole of the national movement's programme, except democracy. The old institutional structures based on clientelism and favouritism were replaced by new ones based on qualification and profession. Intellectuals were assigned to the top of the new economic institutions and given the role of experts, planners, and opinion-makers. Despite their authoritarian fashion, these reforms for modernists were too good to pass. Loud cheers from the people and intellectuals for the regime's modernization projects undermined the discourse of democratic reform and pushed it into the defensive. It also proved that national liberation and progress do not necessarily require democracy. The few who remained sincere to democratic principles could only submit to the top-down modernization, hoping that it would set the ground later for a modern democratic society.

The de-attachment from the state

Nasser's co-option of the leftist groups began to disintegrate after the 1967 defeat. According to Shukur, the idea of authoritarian modernism was damaged in the eyes of Nasser's admirers.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 11.

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Members of the Youth Socialist Organization began to split, and a re-emergence of leftist opposition manifested in the student uprising of 1968.¹⁵⁸ The defeat also had an internal impact on the state incumbents' mood, fostering an anti-socialist trend within the ASU whose preferences were towards the Western camp. Sadat inherited an ASU which witnessed internal divisions, and within less than a year from his coming to power, on 15 May 1971, he launched what was known as the corrective revolution — the counter-revolution or political apostasy as leftists describe it— where he eliminated the leftists and Nasserists from leading state positions. The corrective revolution was an internal coup that relegated the leftists from the ruling ranks to the opposition. The ASU's unity was at stake with the leftists' resistance to Sadat's reorientation, and a sole party system became unmanageable. Besides the internal challenge, opening towards the liberal West, pushed Sadat into establishing a pluralistic parliamentary system. By 1976, he had established the three *manāber* [tribunes or platforms]; the left, the right, and the centre, which officially declared as parties a year later. The right forces –liberals and Islamists– who had been eliminated over the previous two decades were not much of a concern for Sadat then. However, it was the left, the Nasserists in particular, whom he wanted to defuse, control, and distract. He handed the left tribune to the communists, who were considered a small faction in the broader leftist trend and refused to give the Nasserists any official recognition, a move which Sadat thought would eliminate the Nasserists and divide the leftist camp. According to Rif'at al-Sa'id, Sadat thought he was handing it to “disciplined and gauranteed” leaders.¹⁵⁹

Sadat underestimated the communists in Tagammu, presided over by Mohieddin and al-Sa'id, who succeeded in making the party a broad secular leftist front, gathering Nasserist and nationalist [*Qawmiyyūn*] groups along with “social democrats” and “enlightened religious sheikhs.” The party recruited 150,000 membership registrations during its first year, of which 20,000 were active members. The party created hundreds of units in villages and factories throughout the following years and expanded its branches to almost all provinces in the country, becoming the largest secular opposition party.¹⁶⁰ Some leftist groups remained sceptical of the

¹⁵⁸ *Shāhid 'Ala-l- 'Asr: Interview with Abdul-Ghaffar Shukur.*

¹⁵⁹ Rif'at al-Sa'id, “Al-Ittiḥād Al-Ishtirākī: Maḥadhīr 'Adidah Wa Makhraj Wahīd”. *Aṭ-Ṭalī'a*. July 1975. 35.

¹⁶⁰ Eman Mohammad Hassan, “Ḥizb At-Tagammu: Al-Bunya Wa Ad-Dawr As-Siyāsī Fī Itār At-Ta'addudiyya As-Siyāsīyysh Al-Muqayyada,” in *At-Taṭawur As-Siyāsī Fī Miṣr 1982 -1992* (Cairo: Center for Political Research and Studies, 1994); Raymond Hinnebusch, “The National Progressive Unionist Party: The Nationalist-Left Opposition in Post-Populist Egypt,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1981): 338.

party's oppositionness; having emerged from the ASU, it was accused of being a state creation and a loyal opposition. Such accusations by Islamists, some secularists, and observers kept chasing the party for decades. However, there are many reasons to believe that Tagammu in the 1970s was an anti-systemic opposition and significantly distanced from the state.

Despite their statist legacy, being part of Nasser's autocratic establishment and socialized with its bureaucrats, those founders of Tagammu were from the mid-lower ranks of its hierarchy, and never made it to the top positions which were reserved for officers. Except for Mohieddine, who was an ex-officer, the leaders of Tagammu were civilians, mainly intellectuals and writers. They were employed as editors of media platforms like *Majallat Aṭ-Ṭalī'a* and *Al-Akhbar* newspaper, or lecturers and trainers in education platforms like the YSO. As civilians and communists, they felt inferior to the officers.¹⁶¹ In Lutfy al-Khuli's words, "although some progressive elements reached some positions in the organization, they were always exposed to eradication and siege". Although an officer, Mohieddin's role in Nasser's state was editor-in-chief of *al-Masā'* then *al-Akhbār* newspapers. He was a member of both the free officers and Ḥaditu organizations and was known for having an unsteady relationship with Nasser since his resignation from the RCC in 1954, over the revolution's divergence from its democratic promise.¹⁶² The communists, as shown, had a democratic tendency since the late 1940s and were hardly co-opted by Nasser in the mid-1960s. They grudgingly joined Nasser's organization and oscillated between endorsing his progressive socialist programme and criticizing his semi-fascist and repressive state. In a complex compromise, many leftists and progressives at that time reconciled with the idea of a temporarily "just dictatorship" which liberates the country from colonial hegemony and sets the conditions for progress and social justice. The 1967 defeat undermined this idea and revived the democratic tendency among the left. And while their compromise under Nasser was because of the small opportunity offered to them to play the role of the revolution's apostles, Sadat offered them nothing and began a systematic campaign to remove them from the state's institutions.

The expulsion of the Soviet experts in July 1972 was a crucial moment in the communists' position in the state, since their incorporation in 1964 was part of a deal with Moscow. In February 1973, Sadat removed many communists from their assigned posts, along with other

¹⁶¹ Rifat al-Sa'id, *Ta'ammulat Fi An-Nasserīyya [Reflections on Nasserism]* (Damascus: A-Mada, 2000). 124,

¹⁶² Mohieddin, *Wa-l-Aan Atakallam [And Now I Talk]*.

progressive and liberal intellectuals, after they signed a petition to Sadat known as *khiṭāb al-Hakīm* [al-Hakim's letter], calling for the release of students arrested in December 1972. Except for two icons, Tawfiq al-Hakim and Naguib Mahfuz, all the signatory intellectuals were expelled from the ASU, including some communists of *aṭ-Ṭalī'a*, and were banned from further publishing.¹⁶³ The Sinai II agreement in September 1975 cut the last link between the statist left and the state. The last few remaining communists in the state bureaucracy began to descend from their state positions to form the nucleus of Tagammu or join the re-established communist parties. As Gennaro Gervasio evaluated, what "all the multi-oriented group of Tagammu had in common is their increasing gap with the authority which shortly became irreversible."¹⁶⁴ By the October 1976 elections, Tagammu was considerably distanced from the state and seen by Sadat as a competitive party and a possible threat.

The clash with the state

Tagammu's war with the state commenced immediately after the elections. A chain of clashes started in January 1977 when the party supported the "bread riot" —the mass demonstrations in Egypt's leading cities in reaction to the state's lifting of subsidies on foodstuffs. The government accused Tagammu of inflaming the demonstrations, arrested 200 members, and expelled the party from the ASU premises. A few months after the demonstrations, the state suspended *Majallat aṭ-Ṭalī'a* which had become Tagammu's defacto mouthpiece. Tagammu's confrontation with the regime has cost it many of its registered members who left or became inactive to avoid the risk of being associated with the party, but at the same time, it attracted many principled leftists who came to see the "authenticity" of its opposition. As some of its leaders commented, "it helped to separate the committed believers from the opportunists."¹⁶⁵ The tension synchronized with Tagammu's performance in the parliament. Despite its modest gains in the October 1976 elections, its three (or four) MPs led by Mohieddine formed an oppositional parliamentary block, along with the 12 members of al-Wafd and two independent Islamists.¹⁶⁶ Despite disagreements on economic and social policies, Tagammu stood beside other opposition

¹⁶³ Gennaro Gervasio, *Al-Haraka al-Markisiyya fi Miṣr 1967 - 1981 [The Marxist Movement in Egypt] Translation of (Intellettuali e Marxismo in Egitto)* (Cairo: National Centre for Translation, 2010). 264.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 286.

¹⁶⁵ Hinnebusch, "The National Progressive Unionist Party." 336.

¹⁶⁶ The New Wafd Party was established in January 1978. 20 Wafdist MPs contested the 1976 elections independently and joined the party later at its establishment. Though the MB did not participate in the parliamentary elections, two MPs were widely counted on the MB: Sheikh Salah Abu Ismail and Mohammad Eid.

members and confronted Sadat's violation of his democratic promises. They sharply attacked his mismanagement and corrupt capitalization policies and his visit to Jerusalem in October 1977.

Outside the assembly, Tagammu challenged the state by launching its newspaper *al-Ahālī* in February 1978 and expanding its political network to more areas. Its opposition crossed red lines in directing criticism at Sadat personally. Sadat saw that the leftist opposition had become out of control and began a repressive campaign in the spring of 1978 that included banning Tagammu's newspaper six months after its first issue and publicly accusing the party of being atheists and agents of the Soviets.¹⁶⁷ Sadat's crackdown included mass arrest of Tagammu's members, including its second man, al-Sa'id, after an article he wrote criticising the first lady, Jehan al-Sadat. As for Mohieddin's relationship with Sadat, his previous free officer comrade, it came to an end with the Camp David treaty.¹⁶⁸ Tagammu challenged the suspension of *al-Ahālī* by publishing *At-Taqqaddum* [The Progress] and distributing it behind the eyes of security agents.¹⁶⁹ During the same period, Tagammu's MPs continued their trenchant opposition in the parliament, which peaked with the Camp David treaty in September 1978. The escalation ultimately led to the dissolution of the parliament in April 1979. The 28th of April was its last session, where the treaty was discussed in a highly tensioned atmosphere. The vast majority of the assembly was loyal to the regime. Three hundred and twenty-nine members voted with the treaty, the exceptions being 17 members in the opposition: the four members of Tagammu, besides two Islamists, Wafdists and nationalists. The parliament was dissolved the next day.¹⁷⁰

The parliamentary elections that followed in June 1979 were severely rigged, and the assembly was free from any opposition members except for two independent nationalists. None of Tagammu's 34 candidates won, not even its charismatic leader Mohieddine, whose proponents were prevented from entering the polls. Another candidate of Tagammu, Ahmad Taha, was arrested and accused of being a Soviet spy.¹⁷¹ Sadat's de-liberalization and restrictive measures

¹⁶⁷ *Akher Khitab Lil-Sadat: Hizb at-Tagammu al-Mulhiden*, 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHcyxQ5TSK8.

¹⁶⁸ "Mohieddin was a believer in institutional work and the rotation of power" *elwatannews*, May 7, 2018, www.elwatannews.com/news/details/3340855.

¹⁶⁹ Gervasio. 325.

¹⁷⁰ Said Al-Shahhat, "Thata Yawm 11 April 1979.. as-Sadat Yhul Majlis al-Sha'b," *Al-Yaum As-Sabe'*, April 11, 2018, www.youm7.com/story/2018/4/11/3738878/السادات-يحل-11-إبريل-1979.

¹⁷¹ Gervasio. 308-309.

towards Tagammu seemed a clear message that its opposition had crossed the boundaries and its activities were no longer tolerated. Failing to co-opt the legal left, Sadat facilitated the creation of the Socialist Labour Party in 1978 (an extension of the early socialist Young Egypt) to outweigh Tagammu, allowing them 23 seats in the 1979 Assembly. Sadat's law of shame, issued in January 1980, which prohibits advocating for anti-religious ideas and counters loyalty to foreign agents, was believed to target the leftists. In a challenging move, Tagammu called its first conference in Cairo on 10th and 11th of April 1980, which gathered 400 members despite the heightened security conditions. The conference reaffirmed its friendship with the Soviet Union and its stance against the normalization with Israel. The conference discussed founding a "national front" against the regime, incorporating all opposition forces, including the MB, who appeared to share with Tagammu many of its stances against Sadat.¹⁷²

The escalation of the national opposition movement ultimately led to the September 1981 mass arrests. During 1980, Sadat faced a large wave of opposition from different directions: Islamists and leftists in universities, leftists in labour movements, the liberal Wafdists and Nasserists in professional syndicates, and the Coptic Church, not to mention militant Islamists, were all in open confrontation with Sadat. Tagammu party might be not have been the largest opposition block –in terms of mobilization capacity– but it was the only standing official party among the opposition at the time.¹⁷³ This status made Tagammu carry the burden and perceive itself as a leading party that hoped to recruit the unorganized leftists and nationalists, and retrieve and reactivate the thousands of lost cadres. The arrests of September numbering over 1500 individuals represented liberals, MB, radical Islamists, nationalists, including Tagammu's leaders, who were detained until April 1982, at the beginning of Mubarak's reign. Throughout these tribulations, democracy and mass participation became essential pillars in Tagammu's discourse, stronger and more evident than ever before.

Democratic Revivalism

Since the early 1970s, the quest for democracy was back at the centre of the national discussion. Sadat's declaration of his *infitah* policy in May 1971 was propagated as a new era of political

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Al-Wafd was voluntarily suspended in 1978 after a few months from its re-establishment. SPL was also a small state-created party in September 1978 which lately joined the opposition in 1980.

liberalization. This democratic propagation was accompanied by attacks on the Nasserist one-party experience and the leftist authoritarian stance. Looking at Tagammu's publications in the 1970s, mainly *aṭ-Ṭalī'a*, one can see an evolution in the leftists' understanding of democracy. Some of the discussions on democracy were responses to criticisms they published openly on their platforms and reflected on, but overall, the left did not seem in a defensive position. The leftists' revisions started earlier in 1967, emphasizing their intention to criticize the ASU one-party system and demand democratic reforms, and attacking the "reactionary right [for] riding the democratic wave".¹⁷⁴ More remarkable was the left's high confidence in their mass mobilization capacity and their ability to win elections in fair and free elections.

In a late reflection on this period, Abdul-Ghaffar Shukur confirms that the Leninist understanding of dictatorship of the proletariat "was the theoretical basis of democracy that inspired the Egyptian left in various degrees, but now, it surpassed this concept and criticizes it."¹⁷⁵ In a similar reflection on the left's ideological transformation, Hussein Abdulrazeq (d. 2018), the late general secretary of Tagammu, also iterated that "the historical experiences have brought down the concepts of the vanguards who act on behalf of the masses in determining their interests, and the one-party and class dictatorship ideas that sacrifice democracy."¹⁷⁶ In a closer look at *aṭ-Ṭalī'a*, leftists began revising their understanding of democracy in 1971. The first issue to be criticized was the one-party system and the concept of vanguardism. "We must emphasize that our objective critique to the SV ...[is that] it did not stand as a democratic organization, and did not serve the cause of democratic evolution."¹⁷⁷ In their evaluation, the ASU and its vanguard organization had been penetrated and dominated by reactionary right opportunists. Those "reactionists" manipulated the ASU membership and rigged its internal elections during the 1960s to exclude progressive elements from influential positions. The "socialist transformation" cannot be led by those. What caused this diversion was the organization's high security and secrecy leadership and lack of internal competition, which are eventually the fate of any one-party experience. Earlier calls were made in the late 1960s to "expand the suffrage of

¹⁷⁴ Abu Yusuf Saif, "Bina' Al-Ittihad Al-Ishtirāki Bid-Dīmuqrāṭiyya". *Aṭ-Ṭalī'a*. July 1971. 11.

¹⁷⁵ Abdul-Ghaffar Shukur, "Mawqif Al-Yasār Al-Miṣry Min Qadhiyyat Ad-Dīmuqrāṭiyya [Egyptian Left's Position From Democracy]," *Markaz Dirasat Al-Wihdah Al-Arabiyya*, 2006, 111.

¹⁷⁶ Hussein Abdulrazeq, "Ad-Dīmuqrāṭiyya," in *Miṣr Wa Qadhaya;-Mustaqbal* (Cairo: Al-Ahālī, 1997).

¹⁷⁷ Abu Yusuf Saif. 19.

the ASU” and represent the diversity of the “progressive forces alliance” within it.¹⁷⁸ While these calls were still sincere to the monist vanguardist system, the calls later in the early 1970s marked an end to these convictions.

A multi-party system was thus required. That was the logical conclusion the left drew from criticizing the ASU experience. It was a sizeable ideological transition, a break from vanguardist conceptions, and a significant stride towards accepting pluralist democracy. During the following years until 1976, the left discussed a new form of multi-partyism. Since Sadat’s earlier call for political liberalization, the left was expecting pluralist elections, but the extent of pluralism was still not determined. The left welcomed the pluralist step but worried at the same time about repeating the pre-1952 multi-party experience. They acknowledged that progressive and nationalist [*waṭaniyya*] forces are diverse and come from different social and ideological backgrounds. It is healthy for these forces to establish their parties and democratically represent their interests, but “multi-partism could turn into dictatorship” if this right is extended to reactionary and capitalist bourgeois forces. Early discussions proposed pluralism within the framework of the alliance of progressive forces [*iṭar taḥāluf al-quwa at-taqaddumiyya*], a “democracy for producers, not a democracy for parasites.”¹⁷⁹ These discussions recall the communists’ debates in the 1940s around the boundaries of the national front, except that the Islamists were not mentioned at all. The battle was mainly between the left and the “rightist” state and its capitalist allies. The left’s non-inclusive proposals were attacked by pro-state media and criticized by other liberal and socialist forces. Some of these critiques were republished and debated in *aṭ-Ṭalī‘a* and helped in softening the leftists’ position.¹⁸⁰ Eventually, with the arrival of the 1976 elections, Tagammu had to legitimize the multi-party system and justify its participation and competition with rightist and bourgeois parties.

The 1976 elections: Egypt is leftist

Tagammu entered the 1976 elections with the slogan *Al-Mushāraka Al-Sha‘biyya Tarīq At-Taḥrīr wat-Taghyīr* [Mass Participation is the Way to Liberation and Change]. By the eve of the

¹⁷⁸ Jamal Al-Atifī, “Tawsi’ Qā‘idat Al-Intikhābāt Fil-Ittiḥād Al-Ishtirākī”. *Aṭ-Ṭalī‘a*. May 1968. 40-42.

¹⁷⁹ Lutfī Al-Khulī, “Demoqāṭiyyat Al-Muntijīn La Demoqrāṭiyyat Al-Ṭufāiliyyīn”. *Aṭ-Ṭalī‘a*. March 1976. 11.

¹⁸⁰ Mohammad Amer, “Mashru‘ Barnāmij At-Tagammu’ Al-Waṭani At-Taqaddumi: Mulaḥadhāt Naqdiyya”. *Aṭ-Ṭalī‘a*. July 1976. 124-129.

elections, they clearly accepted the right of all forces and orientations for political participation, including the liberal bourgeoisie and Islamists, sometimes with the caveat that they should respect pluralism.¹⁸¹ By taking this position, Tagammu had entered the domain of liberal democracy. As in Raymond Hinnebusch's evaluation of Tagammu's programme, "[t]he Progressive's model of democratization is Western-style political liberalism, including full freedom of political activity, competitive elections for all offices including the Presidency, and strong legislative and judicial powers to check executive."¹⁸²

Tagammu entered the elections with low expectations and no trust in its integrity or its opponents' commitment to democracy. They clearly expressed their view that they were facing a "dictator party" that did not mind using all sorts of "ideological terrorist" [*irhāb fikrī*] means to maintain its domination.¹⁸³ They did not expect to win a majority, however, Tagammu's decision to contest the elections was based on their belief in its feasibility. Tagammu's discussions before and after elections show that one reason for participation was to challenge the regime's narratives, raise awareness and promote their ideas, and recruit more adherents.¹⁸⁴ The party's serious participation was meant to embarrass other parties, push them to improve their political programmes, and thus improve the democratic process.¹⁸⁵

Another reason for participation is that they believed they could gain a large parliamentary share. Despite its small achievements, three (or four) seats out of 350, Tagammu had good reason to believe that in fair conditions it would achieve more. Tagammu obtained 8 per cent of the popular vote, which, owing to the single-seat constituency's voting system, translates to one per cent of the seats. Tagammu would have obtained 20 seats if the elections had been under a system of proportional representation.¹⁸⁶ In their analysis of the election results, the party (tribune, at that time) considered those few seats a successful achievement, overcoming the regime's will to limit the left to two seats.¹⁸⁷ According to al-Khuli's assessment of the party's

¹⁸¹ Abu Yusuf Saif and Rif'at al-Sa'id, "Intikhābāt 76 fī Miṣr". Aṭ-Ṭalī'a. December 1976. 49-76.

¹⁸² Raymond Hinnebusch. 330.

¹⁸³ Abu Yusuf Saif and Rif'at al-Sa'id. 75.

¹⁸⁴ Mustafā Asī, "Tajrubati Al-Intikhabīyya". Aṭ-Ṭalī'a. January 1977. 77.

¹⁸⁵ Abu Yusuf Saif and Rif'at al-Sa'id. 60-61.

¹⁸⁶ Hinnebusch, "The National Progressive Unionist Party". 341.

¹⁸⁷ "Al-Yasār Ba'd Al-Intikhābāt Wa Ba'd Al-Aḥzāb". Aṭ-Ṭalī'a. December 1976. 5.

performance in the elections, Tagammu had run in the elections within six months of its establishment and with few resources and little preparation. The left did not run with its full capacity, fielding only 65 candidates, since its organizational structure was still under construction. Many other leftists ran independently or were hesitant to participate and support the leftist legal representative. Tagammu also contested the elections with no mouthpiece or previous experience while being confronted and severely targeted by the *centre* tribune, which was equipped with the state's media and resources. Taking into account these conditions and the manipulation of the election process, Tagammu believed that the left was underrepresented in the parliament and, as al-Khuli estimated, the party's representation should have reached 30 seats.¹⁸⁸

Tagammu also was confident of the people's progressive orientation and their tendency toward leftist programmes. Despite the regime's radical shift from left to right, the ideals of the July revolution were still popular. The 1970s witnessed the rise of the Egyptian's so-called third leftist movement that started on university campuses, peaking in 1973, and then moved to syndicates and labour movements until the second half of the decade.¹⁸⁹ This period marked a revival of the communist parties which had been dissolved under Nasser like the Egyptian Communist Party (ECP), the Egyptian Communist Party-8 January (ECP-8 Jan), the Egyptian Labour Communist Party (ELCP), and the Trotskyists. Others were newly-formed Nasserist and nationalist groups. Tagammu was not alone. It was surrounded by countless leftist organizations of different shades, which it was keen to incorporate and mobilize. Tagammu already had connections with some of them. Many leftists held dual membership of Tagammu and other organizations, including al-ʿAlim, the leader of the revived ECP.¹⁹⁰ The left thus had a reason to believe in "the wide spread of Marxist thought... [which] occupies one third of the world," and is still in "expansion, not decay."¹⁹¹ And since Egypt took the path of national liberation and socialism, "there is no fear on socialism... no force can take us back," and the "reactionary has no future in Egypt."¹⁹² In an interview with Muhammad Hassanein Heikal in *aṭ-Ṭalīʿa* in 1975,

¹⁸⁸ Lutfi Al-Khuli, "Al-Yasār Ma Baʿd Al-Intikhābāt Wa Baʿd Al-Aḥzāb," *Aṭ-Ṭalīʿa*, December 1976. 5-12

¹⁸⁹ Gervasio, *Al-Haraka al-Markisiyya fi Miṣr*.

¹⁹⁰ The ECP was fully incorporated in Tagammu. Mahmud Amin al-ʿAlimran the 1987 elections under Tagammu's Party list. He Was also an editor in al-Yasār Journal published by Tagammu in 1990.

¹⁹¹ Ismael Sabry Abdullah, "Al-lininiyya Wa Azmat Al-Markisiyya Al-Rahinah". *Aṭ-Ṭalīʿa*. April 1970.

¹⁹² Ibrahim Yunes, "Abdel-Nasser Wa Aḥzāb All-Muʿaradhah". *Aṭ-Ṭalīʿa*. February 1975. 110; Salah Issa. "Mustaqbal A-Rajʿiyya Fi Miṣr". *Aṭ-Ṭalīʿa*. November 1974. 144.

he stated that “the major current in the Egyptian masses is the Nasserist current. ... The three million workers ... and half a million students in universities are products of the Nasserist experience. All of those have read the charter [the ASU charter of 1962] and grew up in time of Egypt’s national revolution. Their real affiliation is Nasserist, and they mobilize in the Nasserist direction.”¹⁹³ These movements of students, workers, and peasants are the “vast majority” of Egyptians, and the “*right* is a small, isolated minority which will crash into the [progressive] masses.”¹⁹⁴ *Aṭ-Ṭalī‘a*’s analysis considered these movements as a leftist resurgence, a “new left.”¹⁹⁵ The conclusion of this confidence in the masses’ awareness is that “democracy without a doubt will always create and support the most progressive current, and that there is no life for reactionism in the free democratic arena. No one fears democracy except the enemies of progression.”¹⁹⁶

Co-opting Islamism

With this confidence in the masses’ progressiveness, the left was aware of the emergent religious orientations. The left appeared to sense the rise of an Islamic resurgence soon after the 1967 defeat in Nasser’s tenure, several years before the release of the imprisoned Islamists. Some early calls after the Naksa to reconcile socialism or Marxism with Islam came from the leftist camp. One of the earliest responses was an article in March 1968 in *al-Kātib* journal on *Religion and Socialism* by Khalid Mohieddine, marking a Marxist early positive encounter with Islam after the defeat.¹⁹⁷ An article on *Socialism and Islam* in January 1970, and another one on *Marxism and Studying the Islamic World* in March of the same year marked the first appearances of *Islam* in *aṭ-Ṭalī‘a* since its establishment in January 1965.¹⁹⁸ The two articles were transcriptions of seminars and discussion panels held earlier in Cairo, bringing together Roger Garaudy and Maxime Rodinson with Egyptian Marxists, including Mohieddine, al-Khuli,

¹⁹³ Muhammad Hasanain Heikal. “‘An An-Nāsseriyya”. *Aṭ-Ṭalī‘a*. February 1975. 64.

¹⁹⁴ Lutfi AlKhuli, “Miṣriyyun Lāken ‘Arab Wa Taqaddumiyyūn”. *Aṭ-Ṭalī‘a*. March 1975. 5-10; See also “Naḥwa Taqyīm Mawḍu‘i Li Ḥarakāt Al-Jamāhīr Al-Sha‘abiyya”. *Aṭ-Ṭalī‘a*. December. 1973. 51-54.

¹⁹⁵ Dawud Aziz, “Al-Yasār al-Jadid: Ḥiwar Maftūḥ Ḥawala Shabāb 1968”. *Aṭ-Ṭalī‘a*. September 1968. 59-71. See also Abdul-Ghaffar Shukr, “Hādhal-Jīl Wa Al-Ridda Al-Mustaḥīla”. October 1976. 37.

¹⁹⁶ Ghali Shukri, “Ad-Dīmuqrāṭiyya Wal-Thaqāfa”. *Aṭ-Ṭalī‘a*. July 1971. 42.

¹⁹⁷ The same title was used to for a book combined a collection of Mohieddine’s articles on this subject from 1968 to 1975. See *Ad-dīn Wal-Ishtirākiyya*. Cairo: Dar Al-Thaqafah Al-Jadidah. n.d.

¹⁹⁸ I found one article on socialism and Islam in *aṭ-Ṭalī‘a* earlier in June 1965 written by al-Bahi al-Khuli, a preacher, previously associated with the MB. The Article reads more likely an attempt to reconcile socialism with Arabism rather than Islam. See “Al-Mujtama‘ Al-Ishtirākī Huwal-Mujtama‘ Al-Insāni Fil-Islam”. *Aṭ-Ṭalī‘a*. June 1965. 60-68.

and Mohammed Amarah, discussing Marxism and socialism's compatibility with Islam. Diagnosing the failure of the nationalist project as lacking an indigenous ideological basis, a number of Marxist and secular nationalist intellectuals began to move in an Islamic direction, putting more pressure on the secularists to adapt to the Islamic wave.¹⁹⁹

Further religious vocabulary entered Tagammu's dictionary on the eve of the November 1976 elections. The party gave more space on its platform for leftist *sheikhs* like Mohammad Ahmad Khalafallah and Khalil Abdelkarim. In that year, *aṭ-Ṭalī'a* was loaded with religious titles like *Applying the Islamic Just, Abu Dhar Al-Ghifarai* The Great Leftist, Religion is Not a War on Progress, The Quest of Monopoly in Shari'a, The Quest of Governance in Shari'a, No Classes in Islam, Left and Right in The Religious Thought, and The Last of Messengers: The Constant and the Variable in Religion*. Those themes were present in all 12 issues in that year (18 articles), compared with no single article in 1973, and only one in 1974. The spirit of these writings appeared close to mainstream Islamists, and some could not tell its difference from the tone of Sheikh Mohammad al-Ghazali or Yusuf Al-Qaradawi. A pamphlet published by The Education Office [*Maktab At-Tathqīf*] of Tagammu Party entitled *Religion and Society* heavily quoted and influenced by Sayyid Qutub's *This Religion [Hadhad-Dīn]*.²⁰⁰

Part of this Islamic discourse carried by the left can reasonably be attributed to personal religiosity. But the timing of its intensified appearance with the elections strongly suggests an adaptation to public norms and an attempt to obtain the broad party-less Islamic votes. The leftists of Tagammu had been receiving criticism and advice from other fellow socialists to "limit Marxism to economic issues" and reconcile with "Egypt's religious nature... to improve their efficiency and influence in Egypt."²⁰¹ The party also received a high volume of letters demanding it to clarify its position on religion and traditions [*turāth*]. The party responded by confirming their "consideration of the principles of Islamic Shari'a an essential basis for all that

¹⁹⁹ On the "conversion" of secularist intellectuals to Islamism, see Hani Nasirah, *Hani Nasirah, Al-Hanin Ilas-Samaa: Dirasah Fi At-Tahawwul Ilal-It-Tijah Al-Islami Fi Miṣr* (Beirut: Markaz Al-Hadharah, 2010). See also Angela Giordani's analysis "The Intellectual Odyssey of Tariq al-Bishri: From Nasserism to Political Islam". *Marasid* 5, no. 2 (2011): 1-32. [in Arabic].

* A companion of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

²⁰⁰ "Ad-dīn Wal-Mujtama'" (Tagammu Party, June 1977) from (Cairo collection), International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam).

²⁰¹ See for example Ahmad Hussein "Risalah Ila Aṭ-Ṭalī'a Min Ahmad Hussein". *Aṭ-Ṭalī'a*. January 1975. 39-42.

we produce of legislations”.²⁰² Although it tried to explain that their understanding of Shari‘a differs from that of the Islamists, Tagammu appeared to submit to Islam as the source of ideological legitimacy. This compromise and eagerness to maximize votes was a move to the country’s new centre.

As for Tagammu’s evaluation of the rise of Islamist movements, they seem have underestimated them. As Islamists did not seem a source of concern to the regime before Camp David, it did not seem to concern the left either. Although signs of an Islamic resurgence appeared in the late 1960s, Islamist movements had not attracted public attention until the end of the 1970s. Sadat began releasing Islamists between 1971 and 1974, old-aged leaders arrested in the 1950s and 1960s and disconnected from social and political reality for two decades. The building of the MB’s organizational structure took more than a decade from the second half of the 1970s to appear in its complete form in 1989.²⁰³ It was gradually built by incorporating the student Islamic Group with the old generation of the MB, which began in 1975, interrupted by the September 1981 arrests, and resumed in 1983. It was thus in progress during the 1970s and 1980s. The rise of the *student* Islamic Group on university campuses, which emerged in 1974, was also interrupted in 1978 after restrictions were applied to stop the uncontrolled Islamic trend. It had not grown to a threatening level, at least not in the eyes of Tagammu, which was more focused on parliamentary politics. Apart from the two independent Islamist MPs in the 1976 assembly, the MB had no remarkable presence at the parliamentary or syndication level. Its first declaration to run for parliament was a few months before the 1984 elections and had not yet appeared as a political movement.²⁰⁴

Tensions between Islamists and the leftists in the 70s were mainly between students. The main arena was on university campuses, where ideological rivalry was accompanied by electoral competition, which sometimes escalated into physical fights. The older generations from both sides had not yet been directly confronted. Scanning all 145 issues of *aṭ-Ṭalī‘a* from 1965 to

²⁰² “Lil-Qawa‘ed Ra’y Fi Bernmāij At-Tagammu Al-Waṭani At-Taḡaddumi Al-Wiḥdawi”. *Aṭ-Ṭalī‘a*. August 1976. 113.

²⁰³ Hussam Tammam, *Abdel-Mun‘im Abul-Futuh: Shāhid ‘Ala Tarīkh Al-Ḥaraka Al-Islamiyya Fi Miṣr 1970-1984* (Cairo: Dar Al-Shuruq, 2012). 128.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 98.

1977, there is no attack on the MB except in two articles by Wahid Abdel-Majid in October 1976 and January 1977. The articles were a response to the re-establishment of the *ad-Da'wah* journal in July 1976, the MB's mouthpiece, which officially declared "the return of the MB." *Aṭ-Ṭalī'a*'s attack on the MB was overall moderate. After welcoming the return of *ad-Da'wah* and its contribution to cultural diversity, the articles attack the MB's "contradictory" positions between respecting the state's constitution and declaring at the same time the Quran above the constitution, which threatens the national unity [*al-Wiḥda al-Waṭaniyya*]. *Aṭ-Ṭalī'a*'s editors allowed for a response on behalf of the MB, which was published in the following issue. *Ad-Da'wah*, on its behalf, has also begun skirmishes with the left, attacking communism and atheism. However, when the polemics between the two journals were just about to escalate, the Camp David Treaty in 1978 soon placed the Islamists and the left on the same side against Sadat, reorienting their opposition to the state's foreign policy. And although the left perceived the Islamists as Sadat's allies in the early seventies, the perceived Islamist-Sadat honeymoon was obviously over after the peace treaty.²⁰⁵ In parliament, Tagammu's fraternity with the two Islamist delegates in confronting the vast majority of the regime-loyal assembly tempered the Islamist-secular rivalry. The Iranian revolution in 1979 also made some leftists rethink the Islamists as a potential progressive force and a possible ally in confronting reactionaries.²⁰⁶

Conclusion

By the end of Sadat's period, the Tagammu party was an anti-system opposition, and its leaders were significantly distanced from the state's incumbents and establishments. Alongside the institutional distance, a sharp ideological gap separates the party from the state's orientation. Considering itself a continuation of the July revolution principles, Tagammu clashed with the Sadatist state over almost every aspect of its policies and they seemed to have nothing in common. Cutting ties with the Soviets and allying with the US, the unilateral normalization with Israel, the capitalization of the economy, besides its "Islamization" orientation, represented a complete contrast to their *nationalist, unionist, socialist* and *secular progressive* ideology.

As in Nancy Bermeo's concept of "political learning", which suggests that "crises... [and] the experience of dictatorship can produce important cognitive change", the 1967 crisis, and the

²⁰⁵ Ibid. 111

²⁰⁶ Gervasio, *Al-Ḥaraka al-Markisiyya fi Miṣr*. 311

failure of the authoritarian experience under the ASU pushed the left to revise its vanguardist ideas.²⁰⁷ Political inclusion under Sadat, accompanied by Tagammu's exposure to selective doses of repression and intensive media attack, helped to enhance and expand its democratic stances and understandings, generating a defensive moderation. Simultaneously, the regime's propagation of a pseudo-democratic discourse had also led the left to counter it with a genuine one that was more liberal and inclusive— generating an offensive moderation.

Most crucial to Tagammu's moderation was its behaviour as a vote-maximising party and perceiving itself as the main alternative to the regime. Tagammu was the only standing opposition party. No matter how true that is, according to its calculations it was representing the vast majority of workers and peasants and believers in the revolution's principles. This position reflects its eagerness to recruit, appeal to the street, widen its bases, soften its communist secular discourse, and converge with other opposition forces. The left's ideological revisions translated paraxially in challenging the authoritarian state, participating in both parliamentary elections. Their anti-system opposition was neither anti-institutional nor loyal. They exploited the offered margin and kept pushing the limits for more liberalization. The regime was its first opponent; thus, ideological cleavages with Wafdists and the MB were played down to confront the shared enemy. Tagammu was independent and distanced from the regime and willing to achieve its political objectives democratically from below.

²⁰⁷ Nancy Bermeo, "Democracy and the Lessons of Dictatorship," *Comparative Politics* 24 (1992): 273.

Chapter Four

Inclusion and Statism of the Legal Left

Tagammu Under Mubarak 1981 -1995

Tagammu Party's pathway under Mubarak in the 80s and 90s is demonstrated in this chapter. It shows how the party shifted from an anti-system to loyal opposition. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, after being incorporated into Nasser's regime, the left of Tagammu in the 1970s distanced themselves from the state and were relegated to the ranks of the opposition. As Sadat's rule seemed to reverse the pathway of Nasserism, shifting the state from left to right, Tagammu presented itself as a continuation of the principles of the July revolution, proposing a challenging alternative to the regime's discourse. Tagammu's opposition was a moderate one. The state-led political liberalization brought the leftists into the territory of liberal democracy. In an ideological departure from the one-partyism vanguardist convictions of the 1960s, Tagammu made it clear that it accepted political pluralism inclusive of its rivals, liberals and Islamists, whom it had earlier deemed as reactionaries and endorsed their exclusion. In praxis, Tagammu accepted to play the game and participate in the elections; a move meant to challenge the regime's discourse, and a strategy to mobilize and recruit. This mode of opposition in an authoritarian rule, playing formal politics to challenge the legitimacy of the ruling elites, is what Holger Albrecht termed an *anti-systemic opposition*. That is, to distinguish it from *loyal opposition*, which plays formal politics in support of the regime, and *resistance* which rejects formal politics and takes anti-institutional or militant forms.

I argue that Tagammu's moderation was encouraged by the political incentives it perceived in electoral participation. Beyond the benefits of the legal framework, Tagammu found it achievable to pursue socialist transformation by democratic means. As it read the socio-political scene in the 1970s, Tagammu found the progressive ideals of the July revolution still popular and represented most of the populace. Although it could be traced to the late 1960s, the religious resurgence was still at a primitive stage in the 1970s and not yet conspicuous. It was a leftist resurgence that was apparent and expected to rise and pour into the leftists' ballot boxes. In addition, Tagammu in the 1970s was not just the only legal choice of the leftists but also the only

legal opposition party in the country. Excluding the loyal Socialist Labour Party (SLP), the New Wafd that only lasted for a few months before self-dissolving in 1978, and also excluding the recovering apolitical and party-less Muslim Brothers, Tagammu remained the sole standing opposition party in the 1970s which hoped to obtain the opposition votes. Their eight per cent acquisition of votes in the 1976 elections was not bad. I showed in the previous chapter how Tagammu's evaluation of the election's outcome was positive. Since it was their first parliamentary experience, contesting elections six months after forming the party and without a mouthpiece, the leaders had many reasons to believe that further liberalization and fairer elections were promising for more gains.

This advantage was no longer perceived in the late 1980s. In what seemed a political and cultural turnover, secularists saw the rise of the religious resurgence and Islamic movements unstoppable and uncompetable on democratic grounds. Tagammu's disappointing electoral outcomes in the 1980s, accompanied by the Islamists' landslide in all electoral contestations, led the former to think of a different strategy. By the turn of the 1990s, Tagammu took a statist direction and appeared compatible with the regime in many stances, endorsing de-liberalization and restrictions on the parliament and professional syndicates and countering "religious extremism." Unlike the 1970s, Tagammu in the 1990s seemed inharmonious with the other opposition forces and unwilling to challenge the status quo. In what seemed an avoidance of electoral contestation and support of the regime, Tagammu unilaterally participated in the 1990 parliamentary elections which the opposition forces boycotted; and boycotted the 1992 provincial elections in which the opposition participated. It accepted Mubarak's nomination of its secretary general to the upper house of the parliament, an offer the party had rejected in the 1980s, and accepted many intellectual positions offered by the state in cultural and educational institutions, which meant confronting "fundamentalism" and promoting "enlightenment". Instead of challenging the regime, the primary opponent became Islamism. Tagammu became occupied with countering its discourse and, as Hazem Kandil described, postponed the democratic struggle until the cultural battle was won.²⁰⁸ This shift from an anti-system to a loyal opposition did not occur without undermining democratic aspects of their ideology.

²⁰⁸ Hazem Kandil, "On the Margins of Defeat: A Sociology of Arab Intellectuals Under Authoritarianism," in *The Changing Middle East: A New Look at Regional Dynamics* (American University in Cairo Press, 2010). 108

This chapter demonstrates how this shift occurred and how it was ideologically justified. First, it shows how critical Tagammu was of Mubarak through the 80s. It then moves to show how the party assessed their poor results in the 1984 and 1987 parliamentary elections. It also shows how they perceived and evaluated the rise of the Islamic resurgence and Islamic activism in the mid-1980s. Finally, the chapter ends by demonstrating how the party aligned with the state and how cultural reform became prioritized above democratization. For this purpose, primary resources are analyzed, which include the party's documents, electoral programmes and publications, especially the *al-Ahālī* weekly newspaper, the periodical *al-Ahālī* book [*Kitāb al-Ahālī*], *al-Yasār Magazine*, and the writings and interviews of the party's leading representatives and intellectuals.

Mubarak is Sadat

Tagammu received Mubarak's rule with the same attitude it left Sadat. In many ways, Mubarak's three decades were overall a continuation of Sadat's path. However, Mubarak's witness to Sadat's assassination made him wary of the same fate and careful in dealing with the opposition forces. Seeking to build his legitimacy, he made three slight moves. First, on foreign policy, he limited the scope of normalization with Israel to the economic and diplomatic level and stopped the cultural interaction set by Sadat. After Sadat's tense relations with Arab states regarding unilateral peace, Mubarak gradually managed to rebuild Arab ties during the Iraqi-Iranian war, taking Egypt a small step back to its Arab unionist image. Second, to bolster a democratic image and cool down the opposition, he relaunched political liberalization and slightly widened the margin of participation which lasted until the early 1990s. Third, Mubarak stopped further Islamization, and his image looked more secular. Despite tolerating the moderate Islamists and giving al-Azhar more space to counter the radicals, Mubarak abandoned the "religious president" character on which Sadat tried to build his legitimacy, and instead of *dawlat al-'Ilmi wal-Īmān* [the state of faith and science], Mubarak promoted *dawlat al-Mu'assasāt Wal-Qānūn* [The state of law and institutions].²⁰⁹ Besides these moves, a crucial change in his view towards the opposition was that the Islamists became the first fear of the regime, no longer the leftists.

²⁰⁹ Mubarak's speech on October 14, 1981. See also Hishām 'Awadī, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy: The Muslim Brothers and Mubarak, 1982-2000*, Library of Modern Middle East Studies 46 (London; Tauris, 2004).

Tagammu's anti-systemic attitude accompanied the party through the first third of Mubarak's rule, considering it a "New Sadatism."²¹⁰ The party's initial reception of Mubarak could be examined in a statement on his first presidential candidacy released on October 11, 1981, a few days after Sadat's assassination and before Mubarak was named president. The statement begins with condemning violence and the assassination of Sadat, and then dwells on condemning the state's "repression of freedoms and terrorism against the opposition" and violation of democracy which evokes counter violence. The statement shows that the rise of militant Islamists has not changed Tagammu's oppositionness and stance towards the state. The party considered Mubarak's first statements a continuation of Sadat's policies, so it would principally keep opposing them.

The statements of the presidential candidate Hosni Mubarak and his message to the people's assembly adopts all the stances of the former president Anwar al-Sadat. Such stances our party opposed and considered our opposition to them the party's central political and national activity. Those stances are the Camp David Treaty, the correlation with the American agendas in the region, and the economic policy that led to the populace's suffering. In commitment to our party's orientation and political stances, and regarding the presidential candidate's statements, we are obliged to say 'no' in the coming the [presidential] referendum.²¹¹

Mubarak began his reign by releasing political prisoners, meeting the leaders of the opposition parties, including Khalid Mohieddin, promising a plural parliamentary system, and allowing the *al-Ahālī* newspaper to restart publication in May 1982. Despite that, Tagammu's critical tone towards the regime remained consistent. Since restoring their gazettes, their discourse through the *al-Ahālī* weekly newspaper and the *al-Ahālī* monthly book continued to criticize the ruling party and "parasitical capitalists" around the regime, the government and its policies.²¹² What Mubarak wanted to be an implicit agreement with the opposition on the red lines for journalism did not seem to go well. He soon launched a media campaign on the opposition newspapers,

²¹⁰ Ismail Sabri Abdallah, "As-Sadatiyya Al-Jadidah". *Al-Ahālī*, June 4, 1986.

²¹¹ "Tagammu's Statement On Electing Mubarak" in *Lihatha Nu'aridh Mubarak [For This We Oppose Mubarak]* (Cairo, 1987). 497-498.

²¹² "We Differ with President Mubarak in Diagnosing Egypt's Problems, and These Are the Reasons: Economic Openness Is Responsible for All of Our Problems [Nakhtalif Ma' Alra'is Mubarak Fi Tashkhis Mashakil Miṣr Wahathihi Hi al'asbab: Al-Infitah al-Iqtisadi Huwa al-Mas'ul a'an Kul Mashakilina]," *Al-Ahālī*, August 11, 1982.

mainly *al-Ahāli* and *al-Wafd* at that time, accusing them of smearing, deviation from objectivity, and crossing the boundaries of freedom of expression. Mubarak's statements escalated the critical tone from Tagammu, which began to target the president personally. *Al-Ahāli* described Mubarak's attitude against the opposition parties as a restoration to the last days of Sadat and a pathway towards another "September" — a reference to Sadat's clash with the opposition in September 1981 and the mass arrest that led to his assassination.²¹³ Just like Sadat, Mubarak's "Sadatist forces" were repeating the same strategy, stepping back in the first stages to absorb the democratic demands and diffuse the opposition, and once in power, "moved from the defensive to the attack."²¹⁴

Al-Ahāli editorial written by Mohieddin shows a detailed evaluation of Mubarak's first year in the presidency and a sample of the party's discourse and relationship with the state throughout most of the 1980s. In *An Open Letter to President Mubarak*, Mohieddin expresses the party's appreciation of Mubarak's early steps of releasing political prisoners, meeting the opposition, and promising them democratic reforms. However, "Tagammu made clear demands for achieving minimum democratic life in Egypt," including "lifting the emergency law, ... abolishing the parties' law [of 1977] and permitting all political forces to form parties without any restrictions or conditions, ... a real independence of the judiciary, ... [and] guarantee fair elections, free from the state's interference." But a year after Mubarak's presidency, Mohieddin continues, the president ignored all these demands and was still infringing the fundamentals of democracy. "In a way that recalls the days of September 1981"... Mubarak's campaign against the opposition "accused Tagammu of treason, lack of faith and patriotism." In return, Mohieddin, who in this editorial was addressing Hosni Mubarak personally, described him as being on top of the "dictator forces."²¹⁵

Beyond the rhetoric clash, unlike Sadat, Mubarak had not launched further measures to restrict Tagammu— no arrests or banning of newspapers. Mubarak's assessment found the left weaker than it was in the 70s, no longer posing a considerable threat. His focus on countering the

²¹³ Fu'ad Musri, "Ta'mim Al-Mu'aradhah: Hal Bada'al 'Add at-Tanazuli Lil-Wusul Ila Semptember Akhar [Coopting the Opposition: Has a Clock down began for Another September]". *Al-Ahāli*, May 11, 1983.

²¹⁴ "Mubarak 'Inda Muftaraq Turuq [Mubarak on Crossroads]". *Al-Ahāli*, May 25, 1983.

²¹⁵ Khalid Mohieddin, "Khitab Maftuh Ila Ar-Ra'is Mubarak". *Al-Ahāli*. September 29, 1982.

militant Islamists made him appear more tolerant of the official opposition parties. This tolerance did not make Tagammu's opposition any softer. The ceiling of their opposition discourse was unprecedentedly high and disturbing to Mubarak, especially when it came from Mohieddin, a discreet leader and a former Free Officer who had no previous record in raising the opposition bar to this level against his peer comrades, Nasser and Sadat. A degree of mutual understanding nevertheless remained, as Mohieddin emphasized, Tagammu "operate[d] within the legitimate legal framework which is chained by un-constitutional laws and restrictions to freedoms." While recognizing the limits, the party pushed to stretch the margins for more democratic participation. By addressing Mubarak as "Mr. president [*siyādat ar-ra'īs*]," Tagammu accepted his defacto presidency but did not want to grant it to him easily. The party used all possible legal tactics to restrict and challenge Mubarak's authority; not least was leading the 'no' campaign in the two presidency referendums in the 80s. One of the issues Tagammu raised against Mubarak on the eve of the 1984 parliamentary elections was his dual presidency in the state and the National Democratic Party (NDP).²¹⁶ Tagammu launched a campaign criticizing the president's attendance at the NDP meetings and rallies, which inevitably meant his interference in the People's Assembly. While playing by the rules, Tagammu's opposition discourse was noticeably sharp and appeared to be fighting to neutralize the president and curtail his authority.

Alongside this oppositional attitude, Tagammu stressed demands for a plural democratic system and called for uniting all opposition forces against the regime, appearing to fight to strengthen other opposition forces, including the Islamists.²¹⁷ Until the late 80s, Tagammu seldom attacked the MB and hardly made a case against the militant Islamists. Wherever violence and militant groups were mentioned, the reference was mainly about the state's repressive measures and failure to accommodate democratic demands. Tagammu criticized the state's arbitrary detention of the Islamists, attacking Mubarak for being personally in charge of torture, and defended their

²¹⁶ See for example "Hizbiyyat Ar-Ra'īs [The President's Partisanship]". *Al-Ahālī*. January 15, 1984; see also "Limadha Nuṭālib Bitahyīd Ar-Ra'īs [Why Do We Demand the President's Neutralization]". *Al-Ahālī*. February 1, 1984.

²¹⁷ "Hizb at-Tagammu yad'u ila Takātuf al-quwa al-waṭaniyya li ta'kīd ad-Dīmuqrāṭiyya wa taṣfiyat aṭ-ṭufailiyyīn wal-qaḍāa' 'ala al-fasād wa waqf tadahwur al-ma'īsha [Tagammu Party calls for the joining of national forces to affirm democracy, eliminate parasites, eliminate corruption and stop the deterioration of living]". *Al-Ahālī*, May 25, 1983.

right to a fair trial.²¹⁸ Moreover, the party challenged the regime's excuses for extending the emergency law for countering terrorism, refusing to suspend democratic life and depriving all opposition forces of their full political rights for some marginal militant groups. Interestingly, in what seemed a subscript to the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, Mohieddin stated that "violence and terrorism does not turn into a danger that threatens the society's security and stability except in the absence of democracy and the state's imposition of restrictions and resort to violence, repression, and emergency laws. The only response to these dangers is by democracy, and more democracy."²¹⁹ Clearly, by distinguishing the militant Islamists from others, Tagammu defended the mainstream Islamists' right to form political parties. Mohieddin mentioned that the emergency law "has been used against politicians, either from leftist currents or Islamist and Christian political currents."²²⁰ *Al-Ahāli* editorial also attacked the 1977 law of parties which "deprived important and active forces of the society like the political Islam [*tayyār al-Islam as-siyāsī*] and political Christian currents, the Nasserist and Communists from forming legal parties," affirming that there can be "no real democracy in Egypt without the participation of religious and Marxist currents."²²¹

Tagammu's critical tone continued to appear intensely throughout the 1980s. In October 1987, the party published *Lihādha Nu'areḍ Mubarak [For This We Oppose Mubarak]*, a special issue of the *al-Ahāli* book series on Mubarak's second candidacy for president. The book contains a massive collection of the party's statements, *al-Ahāli* editorials and articles by leading leftist writers, and sarcastic caricatures published since 1982, all of which are critical of Mubarak's person. This collection, besides the content of Tagammu's discourse through *al-Ahāli*, suggests that until the last years of the decade, the party considered Mubarak its first opponent, regarding his party as "the obscurantists anti-democratic forces," prioritizing confronting the regime over any other political force.²²² In this endeavour, they tolerated the MB, played down the

²¹⁸ Hussein Abdul-Raziq, "The Judiciary Puts Mubarak and His Government in a Hard Trouble". *Al-Ahāli*, November 14, 1984.

²¹⁹ Mohieddin, "Khitāb Maftūḥ Ila Ar-Ra'īs Mubarak".

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ "Ilghaa' Al-Qawanin Sayyi'at As-Sum'ah [Abolishing Bad Reputation Laws]," *Al-Ahāli*. June 27, 1984; *Al-Ahāli*, December 8, 1982. 3.

²²² Mohieddin, "Khitāb Maftūḥ Ila Ar-Ra'īs Mubarak."

ideological differences, and its democratic programme appeared plural and consistent. Tagammu's attitude only started to take a different course after the electoral outcomes.

Re-evaluating the mission: Electoral fail and cultural turnover in 1984-1987

Tagammu entered the 1984 people's assembly election with the same spirit and confidence that it had in 1976. If the 1979 election is to be discounted for its extreme unfairness, the 1976 results become the last measurable survey of the left's performance and popularity. In that assembly, Tagammu's four MPs were at the forefront of the minor opposition block that contained independent nationalists and liberals. Eight years since 1976 is quite a lengthy period loaded with local and international developments, and the political forces were about to reveal their mobilization capacity and the country's new mood.

Unlike those previously, the 1984 elections were to be ruled totally by a closed lists system, which meant that participation was exclusive to official parties. The closed lists were theoretically advantageous for parties which would be able to co-opt ambitious non-partisan candidates and file them under their lists. Until the last months before the elections, the main running competitors appeared to be the NDP, al-Wafd, besides the Liberal [al-Ahrar], and the Socialist Labour [SLP or al-ʿAmal] parties. The MB had only decided to run in the election, for the first time, a few weeks earlier under al-Wafd lists. With the SLP's semi-Islamic tendency and reputation as pro-state, Tagammu remained the only choice for secular leftist votes. The same eight per cent threshold remained in this election, which Tagammu previously achieved in more challenging conditions. The confidence and legacy that Tagammu set pride in would keep the party in its anti-systemic opposition ranks, with the hope of restoring its role and bases. The party ran a strong electoral campaign and programme, *Our Programme to Salvage Egypt*, which recalled its courageous role and struggle in the 1976 assembly. The programme expressed its demand for "a republican parliamentary democratic system based on partisan pluralism with no conditions... and the right for all forces and political trends and classes for establishing its independent parties without restrictions or exclusion."²²³

²²³ "Barnāmijuna li-Inqādh Miṣr [Our Programme to Salvage Egypt," 1979, (Cairo collection), International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam). 74-75.

Chapter Four

Table 2: Results of the Egyptian Parliamentary Elections from 1976 to 2010

Party	1976	1979	1984	1987	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
NDP	295	339	390	348	384	417	390	330	420
Tagammu	3	0	0	0	5	5	6	1	5
Al-Wafd	—	—	50	36	b	6	7	5	6
Al-Ahrar	15	3	0	6	b	1	1	0	—
SLP	—	23	0	16	b	—	—	—	—
MB	—	—	8	38	b	1	17	88	1
Nasserist	—	—	—	—	b	1	2	0	0
Other parties							1	1	4
Independents	47	1	—	4	55	13	20	19	68
Non-elected members	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	10
Total	360	366	448	448	444	444	444	454	514

Results are calculated from different sources. Some slight differences are mainly in the numbers of independents and the NDP, where independents mostly join the NDP after winning. In the 1979 elections, around 12 independents were claimed to represent al-Wafd, and two were MB-oriented. The extent of the state's intervention in the elections varied, the elections in 1979, 1995, and 2010 being the most extremely rigged, and the 1984, 1987, 2000, and 2005 were relatively freer. In the 1970s elections, the state's interventions were selectively targeting Tagammu. From 1984 onwards, the state targeted the MB. All parties boycotted the 1990 election except Tagammu.

(b) Boycotted elections. (—) Did not contest elections.

The electoral outcomes were unexpectedly disappointing for Tagammu. Unsurprising was the NDP's obtaining over 80 per cent of the seats, a share the ruling party preserved in all elections under Sadat and Mubarak, leaving the remaining seats for the competing opposition forces.

Acknowledging the regime's intervention and manipulation to secure its share, the residue left to the other forces remains revealing. Tagammu were halfway to the threshold (4.2 per cent), failing to secure a place in the assembly, coming behind the SLP, which was close to crossing the threshold (7.1 per cent), and above al-Ahrar (0.7 per cent). The Wafd-MB alliance won 58 seats, eight were for the MB, together obtaining 15 per cent of the popular votes and becoming the only representatives of the opposition in the assembly.

Tagammu denied the results of the elections which they prepared for early, and "contested it with mettle and courage."²²⁴ The party's response to the outcome can be seen through Fu'ad Mursi

²²⁴ Fu'ad Mursi, "Barlamān Bila Yasār, Barlamān Bila Mu'āraḍa [A Parliament Without the Left, A Parliament Without an Opposition]," in *Lihādha Nu'arid Mubarak [For This We Oppose Mubarak]*, 174.

and Hussein Abdul-Raziq, who stated that the elections were entirely rigged and the regime selectively targeted Tagammu. They argued that the 8 per cent threshold regulated in 1976 was initially meant to exclude the left, believing that the left would not be able to reach it. The regime back then underestimated the left— Tagammu “have passed the threshold... and its popularity increased among the masses” and since then, the regime “had to use all means in the electoral battle [to stop the left], using lies, fraud, and violence.”²²⁵ Tagammu could not accept that these results reflected any truth about the Egyptian’s orientations or political weight [*wazn siyāsi* or popularity]. “The official results of the elections suggests that the masses [*al-jamāhīr*] chose the reactionaries and thieves... and that is the opposite of the truth which the masses deposited in the ballot boxes. ... We know our outstanding weight [*waznuna al-rājeḥ*] among the masses, and the masses know our weight...and we don’t need a testimony from the minister of interior on the masses’ trust and love to us.”²²⁶

For Tagammu, the left was selectively targeted because they comprise the only genuine opposition. “A parliament without the left is a parliament without an opposition. Cancelling the left from the parliamentary life is a cancellation to the only opposition that meritoriously deserve this label.”²²⁷ Tagammu writers then turned to attack al-Wafd as “the smaller partner” of the ruling party and the other face of reactionary. “The two parties in reality are one party, or two branches of one policy...and despite that the New al-Wafd contains patriotic and democratic personnel, it substantially shares the same policies.” Al-Wafd’s role thus is no more than a “complement” or “a competitor” to the NDP on the same agenda, “not an opposition to it.” Such elections that brought reactionaries and excluded the left are “fraud and its results are void, the elections are fraud and its results are void, the elections are fraud and its results are void”, or in Abdulrazeq’s words, “the elections are fraud.. fraud.. fraud.”²²⁸

Mursi and Abdelrazeq’s responses read more as a shock and a disappointing reaction. Their language differs from that of Lutfi al-Khuli’s and al-Sa‘id’s calm evaluation in the wake of the

²²⁵ Ibid, 175.

²²⁶ Ibid, 173-175.

²²⁷ Ibid, 175.

²²⁸ Hussein Abdul-Raziq, “Rad ‘Ala Ra’īs Al-Ḥizb Al-Waṭānī [A Response to the NDP President],” *Al-Aḥālī*, June 27, 1984.

1976 elections, which, although they complained about manipulation and selective targeting of the left, read more comfortably and objectively. Their optimism and faith in the election's feasibility began to shake. Mursi's stress on the left's popularity can only confirm Tagammu's expectations and the self-confidence it had before the elections. The regime's intervention in the elections gave little support to Tagammu's narrative that the left was singled out and thus under-represented. The narrative enjoyed validity in the Sadat days, but under Mubarak, it was the Islamists, not the left, who were mainly targeted in the elections.²²⁹

The years following confirmed Tagammu's doubts about their mobilization capacity vis-à-vis the Islamists. They came to see the rise of the Islamists' succession in civil associations and the people's assembly as a political and cultural threat to the secular nature of its project. The MB's modest gain in 1984 was followed by an extraordinary one in the 1987 parliamentary elections. Their electoral sweep extended to the professional syndicates and faculty clubs, gaining the majority of seats in Asyut University's faculty club in 1985, Cairo University's faculty club and the doctors' syndicate in 1986, the engineers' syndicate in 1987 and Zagazig University's faculty club in 1993. And while the boards of these associations –since Sadat's tenure and before the Islamists' victories– were semi-controlled by the state, the Islamists' victory in the Lawyer's syndicate in 1992 was an overthrow of a longstanding secular liberal and nationalist stronghold.²³⁰

The chain of electoral victories that began in the second half of the 1980s was a clear sign of the Islamic resurgence's triumph over secular nationalist and leftist ideologies which dominated society and politics in the 1960s. Islamic resurgence or revivalism is a broad term for a multifaceted phenomenon that generally refers to the rise of religious practices and discourse and greater adoption of religion as a source of legitimacy and morality among ordinary Muslims. It includes the remarkable increase in the manifestations of religiosity— the number of mosques, the percentage of inhabitants and women wearing the hijab. It also includes the rise of Islamic activism— the Islamic-based banking and finance companies and Islamic philanthropic and education NGOs. The most associated –or conflated– with Islamic resurgence is the rise of a

²²⁹ Tarek Masoud, *Counting Islam: Religion, Class, and Elections in Egypt*, Problems of International Politics (Cambridge University Press, 2014). 50.

²³⁰ Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* (Princeton; Princeton University, 2013), 46–75.

broad spectrum of Islamist movements and groups, which have benefited from and contributed to the wave. The manifestations of the Islamic resurgence and the reasons behind them are comprehensively discussed. My point is to locate when it became seen as a “phenomenon.” Although signs of religious resurgence appeared throughout the 1970s or may even be traced back to the late 1960s, secularists, as well as observers, researchers and even Islamists themselves, only began to be aware of it and take it seriously in the mid-1980s. Digitally scanning the phrase *al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya* (and *ad-Diniyya*) in one of Egypt’s authoritative newspapers, *al-Ahram*, the phrase appeared once in the 1970s, in 1977, and had little appearance after Sadat’s assassination, showing only two to three times a year in 1982 to 1984. The phrase’s appearance in the newspaper then jumped to over ten times in 1985 and the three following years. A similar pattern could be found in *al-Riyadh* newspaper, a leading newspaper in Saudi Arabia. The term was absent in the 1970s, appeared up to three times a year for most of the 1980s, tripling from 1987 onwards, suggesting that only since these years has the phrase entered the Arab public deliberative domain.²³¹

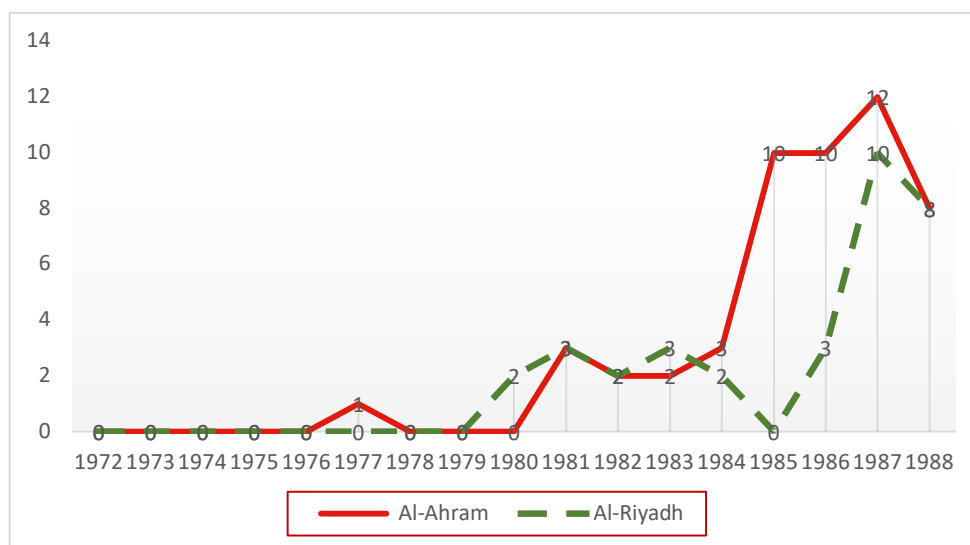


Figure 2: The frequency of the phrase *Sahwa Islamiyya (ad-Diniyya)* in *Al-Ahram* 1970-1987

²³¹ I scanned the phrase in *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Riyadh* Digital Archive on East View Global Press. The service reads and scans the texts in the microfilm copy. It is possible that the scanner misses capturing some words, however, it remains a good indicator of the phrase’s usage frequency.

In *al-Ahālī*, abundant articles and reports appeared discussing the Islamic turāth [tradition], Islamic *saḥwa*, *shari‘a*, and “new Salafism” soon after the 1984 parliamentary elections. On September 24, 1984, *al-Ahālī* published a full-page report with the heading: “The new heritagists: an intellectual apostasy, or an awakening?,” covering a seminar where a hub of intellectuals discussing the new religious wave. The page shows prominent intellectuals like Jalal Amin, Mahmud al-‘Alim, Abdul-Azim Anis with sub-texts: “They are talking about one aspect of the turath,” “the return to the turath at any horizon and any way.”²³² Similar themes appeared in *al-Ahālī* starting from the same year; themes that had rarely been touched on before, addressing concern about the new religious culture and began to consume a portion of the secularists’ intellectual effort.²³³ It is within the 1984 parliamentary session that “Islam and secularism” became a topic of public debate, and secularists, associated with Tagammu in particular, began the first wave of cultural engagement with the Islamic resurgence and debated with the Islamists. The flow of engagements included Farag Foda’s publications, *Before the Fall* (1985), *A dialogue on Secularism* (1987), *Terrorism* (1987), Fu’ad Zakariya’s *Truth and Illusion in the Contemporary Islamic Movement* (1986 and *The Islamic Awakening in the Balance of Reason* (1987), and Khalil Abdul-Karim’s *For Applying Shari‘a, not for Governing* (1987).²³⁴ One also can recall the famous and first-of-its-kind public debate in 1985 on *Islam and Secularism* between Fuad Zakariyya and Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, held by the Doctors’ syndicates in Darul-Hikmah.

Egypt’s culture and national identity have been a concern for Tagammu since its early years, when the party formed “The Committee for Defending the National Culture” on March 26, 1979. Nevertheless, from the seventies until the mid-eighties, the cultural threat for Tagammu was not an Islamic –or an Islamist– one, but instead the “foreign cultural invasion”: Americanism, Zionism, and capitalism.²³⁵ Throughout the 1970s, Tagammu waged a cultural war against the

²³² *Al-Ahālī*, September 24, 1984.

²³³ “The issues of Authenticity and Contemporaryity in an Arab symposium; The seminar’s discussions reveal the crisis of the new Salafists”. *Al-Ahālī*, October 10, 1984. See also “It is not true that we have forgotten culture,” *Al-Ahālī*, August 1, 1984.

²³⁴ Abdul-Karim was a member of Tagammu. Foda and Zakariya were embraced by Tagammu and frequent contributors in *al-Ahālī* in the second half of the 1980s. Foda resigned from *al-Wafd* in objection to their alliance with the MB in 1984.

²³⁵ “The American cultural invasion promotes violence, consumption and material values,” *Al-Ahālī*, December 1, 1982.

“parasites” and *infītāhiyyūn* [from *infītah*, the openers] who were “degenerating the Egyptian culture” with their subordination policies and promotion of westernization, consumerism and stratification. A Gramscian account would regard this nationalist discourse as a counter-hegemony to the regime’s rightist cultural hegemony. Interestingly, a Gramscian account also regards Islamism as a counter-hegemony against the regime’s secular nationalism. However, it was not until the mid-1980s that Tagammu’s cultural discourse turned to counter Islamism—a rival counter-hegemonic discourse.

Secularists’ responses to the religious wave varied between directly attacking it and attempting to accommodate or rationalize it. While some secularist voices openly expressed resentment towards manifestations of religiosity like men’s beards and “the hijab phenomenon,” other encounters tried to propose different interpretations of the sacred texts and religion’s role and suggest alternative consultations of the Islamic heritage.²³⁶ As shown in the previous chapter, Tagammu’s co-optation of the religious discourse in the early days of the resurgence in the 1970s was an initiative taken from a challenger position. However, the secularists’ resort to religion since the mid-1980s has turned into a defensive strategy. By attempting to counter the Islamists and al-Azhar on religious discursive grounds, secularists enhanced religion’s role and further undermined their secular position, appearing weak and inconsistent. In a later reflection on the secular “enlightenment [*tanwīr*]” discourse in this period, the secular intellectual Sherif Yunus saw secularists’ “efforts in confronting fundamentalism and portraying nationalist principles [*waṭaniyya*] as the ‘correct Islam’ weird and could convince no one.” Enlightenment, goes Yunus, directing his words to fellow secularists, is not and should not be conflated with “religious reform.” Religious reform is a religious cause, and despite how progressive “liberal Islam” can be, “it remains restricted by the authority of the [religious] texts’ [*hākimiyyat al-Naṣ*].” Enlightenment as a secular project has nothing to do with the texts. Providing alternative interpretations [*ta’wīl*] is none of its business. “In reality, secularism wants to get rid of the texts’ authority... [but] the hypocritical practice of secularism can only confirm its defensive position, empower the fundamental principle... and empty the secular cause from any meaning.”²³⁷

²³⁶ Mohammad Ahmad Khalafallah, “As-Sultah As-Siyāsiyya Sa’adat ‘ala Intishar Zahirat Al-Hijab [The Political Authority Helped Spreading the Hijab Phenomenon],” *Al-Ahālī*, October 5.

²³⁷ Sherif Yunus, *Su’al Al-Huwiyya: Al-Huwiyya Wa Sulṭat Al-Muthaqaf Fi ‘Aṣr Ma Ba’d Al-Ḥadatha [The Question of Identity: Identity and Authority of the Intellectual in the Postmodern Era]*, (Cairo: Merit, 1999). 17- 22.

Despite some explicit and hard-line positions, secularist responses in Egypt cannot be dubbed as anti-religious altogether, but overall, they undoubtedly saw the prevalent religious discourse carried by both the Islamists and the *ulama* as undefeatable and a threatening mark of cultural degeneration. Dina Khawaga describes secularists' reception of the "Islamic-awakening" as a case of "moral panic" [*hala` akhlāqī*], the fear that "what is sacred to the nation was being undermined by what is sacred to religion."²³⁸ The term is used to describe an over-fear of a group of people or a particular cultural behaviour that is perceived as dangerously deviant and poses a threat to society's values and interests. According to Fu'ad Zakariyya, "the widespread spread of Islamic trends in their current form is a stark manifestation of the lack of awareness among the masses." These trends are undefeatable, perhaps not because of the quality of their arguments, but because they are in very large numbers; "tens of thousands of youths who are serious in their desire for reform... [but] their big problem in [his] view, is that they do not use their minds."²³⁹ Secularists found themselves in a disadvantaged discursive position, especially if they wanted to win public debates, recruit cadres or obtain votes. Zakariyya expresses this defensiveness at the beginning of his speech in the Darul-Hikma debate, "any public debate in Egypt between Islam and secularism... means that the secular side has lost the debate from the outset."²⁴⁰

During the 1984 assembly, the Tagammu party was out of the main party-political arena, watching the al-Wafd-MB alliance leading the opposition in the assembly, while re-evaluating its role, its strength, and the new cultural and political reality. Tagammu's loss in the elections, its decline in popularity, and confused position towards the religious discourse were fertile conditions for internal divisions. The party experienced disputes between different ideological factions, namely the Marxists at the top of the party and a broad trend of Nasserists who suffered marginalization and lack of internal democracy. The disputes led to the resignation of the party's secretary in al-Qana province with a group of Nasserists in the summer of 1985. Similar waves

²³⁸ Quoted in Talal Asad, "Thinking About Tradition, Religion, and Politics in Egypt Today," *Critical Inquiry* 42, no. 1 (2015). 190.

²³⁹ Fu'ad Zakariyya, *Al-Haqīqa Wal-Wahm Fil-Ḥaraka al-Islamiyya al-Mu'asirah [The Truth and Illusion in the Contemporary Islamic Movement]* (Cairo: Dar Al-Fikr, 1986), 15-17.

²⁴⁰ Zakariyya in the Islam and Secularism debate in 1985. *Munadharat Al-Islam Wal-'Ilmāniyya*, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=nX61dnFqsZl.

of resignations and splits occurred during this period by Nasserists and Nationalists [*Qawmiyyūn*] who, regarding their Arabist orientation, began to accuse the party of being “alien from the soil and the people of Egypt.”²⁴¹ Other splits continued throughout the second half of the 1980s, with many members joining the Nasserist Party, which was established later in 1992. The vacuum left by the Nasserists had shaped Tagammu into an even more secularist and isolated image.

Disputes in the party also occurred, for the first time, among those who wanted to cooperate with the regime and those who wanted to keep their distance from it. After the May 1984 elections, Mubarak offered designated seats in the Shura Council (the upper house) for the parties without representation in the parliament. A parliamentary seat offered to Milad Hanna—a member of Tagammu’s general committee—inflamed an internal debate on reviewing the relationship with the state. Hanna’s supporters were few. For most members, accepting the offer would undermine the party’s independence and opposition orientation. Al-Ahrar and the SLP parties accepted, while Tagammu’s general committee in June 1984 unanimously rejected the designation and suspended Hanna’s membership for accepting the seat. Later in October, the party re-activated Hanna’s membership but decided to downgrade him from his leading position.²⁴²

Until the next elections in 1987, Tagammu was still within the frame of an anti-system opposition. Apart from the early low voices that expressed their preference to ease the stance towards the state, the party overall kept the same distance and critical tone. The Islamic resurgence “phenomenon” attracted much of the party’s attention, however, direct attacks towards the MB were still limited. It was not until the aftermath of the 1987 elections that the party’s dramatic shifts began to appear.

The Islamists and the state: Revisiting the enemy of democracy: 1987 -1990

The 1984 assembly dissolved in February 1987 after the opposition’s pressure to change the electoral law. The opposition challenged the results of the 1984 elections and the constitutionality of the electoral law (No. 114 in 1983), which deprives independent candidates

²⁴¹ Wahid Abdul-Majid, *Al-Aḥzāb Al-Miṣriyya Min Ad-Dakhil [The Egyptian Parties from Inside]* (Al-Ahram, 1995).

²⁴² Abdul-Majid.

of participating in elections and restricts them only to parties. The law also sets a high threshold of 8 per cent for party representation. If parties fail to achieve the threshold, their votes go to the biggest party, in all probability to the ruling National Democratic Party NDP. As a result, Mubarak amended the electoral law in December 1986, allowing 10 per cent of the seats for independent candidates. The amendment also distributed the votes of parties that failed to reach the threshold to the winning parties in proportion to their representative quotas.

The new amendments allowed small political forces to field candidates as independents, and the small parties had the opportunity to re-arrange themselves and find new tactics for the upcoming elections. Proceeding from the 1984 election experience, small parties which failed to gain representation in the previous assembly sought to form coalitions to pass the threshold. After a conference of opposition forces on February 7, 1987, negotiations ran between the SLP, al-Ahrar, besides the MB and the Nasserists with al-Wafd to run under the latter's umbrella. Al-Wafd's experience in allying with the MB, although electorally successful, was not free from cost. The alliance with the MB irritated hardliner secularists and Copts within the party, causing them to leave the party and join the NDP.²⁴³ The fear of the MB's rise reached even the party's most pragmatic and conservative leaders who had engineered the alliance. The junior partner in 1984 could no longer be co-opted and accept a subordinate role. One month before the elections, in an attempt to restore al-Wafd's traditional secular image, the party's leader Fu'ad Serageddin declared the party's rejection of the formation of religious parties. An earlier statement of Serageddin also showed al-Wafd's preference to have a "British" two-party system, exclusive to the NDP and the New Wafd, the "two strong and basic parties that have enough self-confidence to enable them to pursue the democratic path far from the provocation to which some segments of the petty opposition might resort."²⁴⁴ Pressure on the party also came from a proportion of the party's businessmen who found this alliance too challenging to the state and restricting to their businesses and party's resources. After internal deliberations, al-Wafd chose to run alone, mainly because of its ability to reach the threshold alone and avoid a clash with the regime and further internal disputes. The liberal al-Ahrar and the Socialist Labour, which earlier declared their Islamic orientation, eventually tended towards the MB, forming an "Islamic Alliance." As an

²⁴³ Mona Makram-Ebeid, "Political Opposition in Egypt: Democratic Myth or Reality?" *The Middle East Journal* 43, no. 3 (1989). 425-426.

²⁴⁴ Quoted in Ibid. 426

extension to Young Egypt, the SLP had very early Arabo-Islamic tendencies. Declaring its Islamic orientation was thus not very surprising; however, as a socialist party, it was also a potential ally to Tagammu which the latter sought to attract. The Nasserists who used to run under Tagammu chose to run for the independent seats. Earlier in the year, they established their newspaper, the *Arab Voice*, appearing more in an independent and organized form. By losing the Nasserists and the SLP, Tagammu, who had never felt more isolated, ended up running with no coalition.

The results of the April 1987 parliamentary elections were catastrophic for Tagammu. Once again, Tagammu failed to reach the electoral threshold by gaining 2.2 per cent of the votes, dropping from the 4.8 per cent it had in 1984, and accordingly had no representation: not even its chairman and charismatic leader Khaled Mohieddin who ran through the individuals' seats. Al-Wafd alone secured 36 seats, and the Islamic alliance gained 60 seats; 36 of them were for the MB. Through this, the leadership of the opposition transformed from the "secular" Wafd to the Islamists for the first time in Egypt's modern history. Tagammu's disappointing results flamed broad internal disputes and public discussion throughout the following years on the reasons behind the deterioration in the party's performance. The leaders openly agreed that the government's intervention in the elections is not a sufficient explanation and should not be "a peg on which [it] attach [its] mistakes and justify the meagre results."²⁴⁵ The "recession" [*inḥisār*] of the left, and "the secular orientation" since then, has become a phrase acknowledged and widely discussed among secularist leaders and activists. And no matter what explanations the secularists proffer for the huge mobilization disparities between them and the Islamists, whether they were discursive or organizational factors, it became more evident than ever before that not even in fairer elections would they be able to compete with them.

The shift in power relations between the Islamists and non-Islamist opposition forces brought the Islamists under Tagammu's fire. A high volume of articles and reports appeared to attack the Islamists directly, mainly the MB, and discuss the threat of "Islamic extremism," sectarianism, *irḥāb fīkri* [intellectual terrorism] and the *raj'ī* [reactionary] and *Ḍalāmi* [obscurant] thought. The most prominent voice in this trend was Rif'at al-Sa'id, the party's

²⁴⁵ A leader of Tagammu, quoted in Abdul-Majid, *Al-Aḥzāb Al-Miṣriyya Min Ad-Dakhil* [Egyptian Parties From Inside].

general secretary (the second man) and later on its chairman (the first man), who dedicated a large proportion of his authorship and political discourse after the elections to intensively and sharply countering Islamism. By looking into the archives of *al-Ahālī* weekly newspaper, al-Saʿīd published eight articles in 1988, in which five articles contained a cynical reference to the Islamists. In 1990, 11 articles out of 17 published in *al-Ahālī* were about Islamists, religious extremists, Shariʿa, and the Caliphate. I did not find any reference to those themes in al-Saʿīd's writings before April 1987.²⁴⁶ The other themes in his articles were mainly around Egypt's history, the history of leftists in Egypt, and mild critics of the government. To a less degree, other writers in *al-Ahālī*, including reports and coverages by the editorial board, took the same path.

A hard-line oppositional voice in *al-Ahālī* remained present after the 1987 elections, usually by other leading figures and writers; namely the chief editor Hussain Abdulraziq who kept viewing the regime as the party's first opponent and was less involved in polemics with the Islamists. Overall, during the term of the 1987 assembly, *al-Ahālī* appeared to oppose both the Islamists and the regime and attack them evenly. Some articles attack the Islamists and the regime together, framing it as an alliance between the two. In another narrative, the regime was held responsible for producing Islamism and nourishing the Islamic discourse.²⁴⁷ Officially, the party preserved its opposition line through its declared stances against the regime policies and its objection to renewing Mubarak's presidency in the October 1987 referendum— although internally began to debate the party's situation and future strategies.²⁴⁸ However, a vocal current came out publicly in the party's gazette urging the necessity for creating “a secular front” and discussing the option of the “leftist forces and Tagammu's cooperation with the ruling party to protect the constitution and the law against the so-called political Islam current.”²⁴⁹ The pro-state voices that emerged in 1984 became louder at the end of the 1980s and eventually succeeded in re-directing the party's strategy and alliances.

²⁴⁶ I relied on the Egyptian Press Archive of CEDEJ.

²⁴⁷ Essa, Salah “Terrorism Incubation Policy,” *Al-Ahālī*, September 9, 1987. See also: Badawy, Hassan “In student elections: the administration and Islamist groups compete with the left,” *Al-Ahālī*, November 12, 1986.

²⁴⁸ “Tagammu opposes Mubarak's candidacy,” *Al-Ahālī*, September 9, 1987.

²⁴⁹ Ismail Al-Mahdawi, “Secularism and the Islamic trend,” *Al-Ahālī*, August 19, 1987. See also Ahmad Abd al-Hamid Sharaf, “The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to Parliament and the 18 families that govern the economy,” *Al-Ahālī*, May 27, 1987.

Post-1990 politics: avoiding the electoral game, fusing with the state

For the second time in Mubarak's era, the 1987 assembly dissolved in May 1990. The dissolution was legally based on the unconstitutionality of the previous electoral law, which combined individual nominations and lists for the elections. Politically, Mubarak wanted to downsize and reduce the ceiling of the opposition, whose popularity and democratic demands and pressures were beginning to tell. Mubarak's de-liberalization intentions appeared in the Shura Council elections in 1989, where he blocked all the MB from succession, despite the large number of candidates it fielded. The opposition forces saw that the regime's intention was to heavily rig the next people's assembly elections and exclude the opposition parties from parliament. This led them to meet before the elections to issue the "People's Charter for Democratic Reform," signed by Fu'ad Serageddin of al-Wafd, Khaled Mohieddin of Tagammu, Mostafa Kamel Mourad of al-Ahrar, Ibrahim Shukry of SLP, Ma'mun al-Hudhaibi of the MB, and Ibrahim Al-Badrawi on behalf of the Communists, in addition to the Nasserists and a group of politicians and intellectuals including Farag Fouda. The charter focused on three demands: to lift the emergency law, hold the elections under judicial supervision instead of that of the interior ministry, and give the right to establish parties and issue newspapers. The opposition made the condition that these demands should be met before participation in the 1990 elections. The regime did not respond; consequently, all the opposition forces boycotted the elections. As the elections approached, only Tagammu ran, with the NDP, breaking the opposition boycott, and secured six seats.

Tagammu's participation faced severe criticism from the opposition forces who considered it a line-up with the regime. Khaled Mohieddin, who was returned to the Assembly, responded to critics in an interview published in *al-Ahālī* by saying that "the party's participation was a right step which renewed the party's activity and sent vitality into its veins." Mohieddin's words reflect his organizational sense, that is, his concern about the survival and revival of his party. In the same interview, Mohieddin also praised the police's "neutral" management of the elections, stating that "the police did not interfere in most cases and that is the real gain." He explained the state's lack of interference by its willingness to be part of the new world order which respects human rights and democracy. He also affirmed that "our ideas did not change" and justified the

party's participation by "representing all the opposition inside the Assembly and those outside."²⁵⁰

Tagammu began to admit that they could no longer mobilize their bases and compete with other parties. Since the late 1970s, the party's mobilization capacity had been in a steady decline, falling from 150,000 registered members in 1977 to around 25,000 in 1990.²⁵¹ Two years later, in November 1992, the opposition parties were working towards the provincial elections [*al-Maḥalliyyāt*]. The elections came at a time when Mubarak wanted to return the boycotting opposition back to the game. After minor reforms to the al-Maḥalliyyat election system that supposedly ensured more fairness, the opposition parties that boycotted the previous parliamentary elections decided to participate. The big challenge of an al-Maḥalliyyat election for the competing parties is that it requires the fielding of large numbers of candidates—for over 5000 seats and from all districts, provincials and towns—if they want to contest them all.²⁵² The elections were held in over 421 districts all over the country. The NDP was the only party able to field lists in all of them. The MB who participated under the SLP ran in 307 districts, al-Wafd in 123, the nascent Nasserist Party managed to run in 13, al-Ahrar and the Green Party each participated in 9 districts, and the Egyptian Arab Socialist Party in one. In contrast with the opposition parties again, Tagammu was the only party to boycott this election, justifying that the electoral system is not constitutional nor democratic.²⁵³

Tagammu's avoidance of electoral contestations led it to condone or even support the state's de-liberalization procedures in the mid-1990s. The clearest example of that was the party's stance on law 100 in 1993, officially named the "Law Concerning the Insurance of Democracy within the Syndicates," publicly known as the new professional syndicates' law. The law initially transferred the syndicates' elections from the authority of the syndicates themselves to the hands of the courts, over which the state had control. It also restricted the framework of the syndicates'

²⁵⁰ "Khaled Mohieldin: Tagammu will rebuild itself in light of the electoral battle experience", *Al-Ahālī*, December 12, 1990.

²⁵¹ Ibrahim G Aoudé, "From National Bourgeois Development To 'Infitah': Egypt 1952-1992," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 16, No. 1 (1994): 17.

²⁵² The elections were supposed to be over 2769 district (33,678 seat), but for some reason was limited to 421 which represents only 15 percent of the districts. The NPD won all the other ones.

²⁵³ "Al-Umma Fi 'Ām: Taqrīr Ḥawli [The Nation in a Year: An Annual Report," (Markaz Ad-Dirasāt Al-Ḥaḍāriyya, 1993-1992). 300-303.

activities and prohibited any fundraising for activities outside its specialities; a bill meant to end the syndicates' aid and services for the public, challenging the state's role as the main care provider. One example was the earthquake relief in 1992, which was embarrassing to the state. Most significantly, the law stipulated that 50 per cent of the eligible voters of the association must participate for an election to be valid. A lower quorum of 30 per cent is required for two following rounds if the first is not decisive. Failing to achieve the thresholds, the association's boards would then revert to a Cairo court's authority, which would then assign the board members.

The law that Mubarak passed through a compliant parliament in February 1993 was meant to control professional syndicates and was specifically designed to stop the Islamists' success in them. Mubarak sold the bill as a procedure to encourage more participation in the elections and ensure that no "minority" group controls the associations. The regime's contradiction was apparent. Apart from its manipulation, voter turnout in previous parliamentary elections had never exceeded 20 per cent of eligible voters. The voter's turnout in the syndicates hovered around 50 per cent, reaching slightly lower in some syndicates like Engineering and the Lawyers, and slightly higher in others. The state's claim about a minority of Islamists monopolizing the boards also lacked credibility. In most of the syndicates, the Islamists could not win without coalitions. Although the best organized, the Islamists' lists usually included others associated with al-Wafd, the Nasserists or even the NDP, and always left the top position [chief or *naqīb*] for independent syndicalist leaders.²⁵⁴ In the Pharmacists' syndicate elections that followed in 1994, the Islamists' lists won with a high turnover exceeding the 50 per cent quorum. The Pharmacists syndicate interestingly had a large number of Copts who comprised 30 per cent of its members, and the Islamists' victory was strikingly sufficient to gain support from a proportion of Copts.²⁵⁵ However, in Engineering and the Bar, the Islamists were tripped up by the new law, and the state eventually took the syndicates under its control.

Aside from the MB, which was affected the most by it, the law was confronted by many political forces, with the SLP and al-Wafd showing a clear-cut opposition stance. Compared to theirs,

²⁵⁴ Dina Shehata, *Islamists and Secularists in Egypt: Opposition, Conflict & Cooperation*, vol. 17, Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics (London: Routledge, 2010).

²⁵⁵ Geneive Abdo, *No God but God: Egypt and the Triumph of Islam*. (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2000). 101.

Tagammu's position appeared ambivalent and supportive of the law. Being the only party represented in the parliament besides the NDP, Tagammu's MPs showed nominal opposition to the law on the day of its legislation. However, they did little to hide their endorsement. In a detailed expression of the party's account, the general secretary al-Sa'id gave a lengthy introduction to the party's "opposition to the domination of minority Islamist currents on the syndicates... and misusing its funds on purposes that does not serve the professionals' interests." He then criticized the government for taking "non-democratic actions in confronting the non-democratic Islamist groups," as this is not an ideal way to counter "terrorism." Al-Sa'id then showed overall approval of the law, except for slight technical issues. "Tagammu does not oppose amendments that allow more participation in the syndicates' election," however, he suggested a slight lower quorum of 25 per cent turnout (instead of 30) in the third round, if the turnout did not meet the standards in the first two rounds.²⁵⁶

The law's ramifications appeared two years later when the court ordered the seizure of the Bar and Engineering syndicates and placed them under its trusteeship. Tensions between the state and the Islamists peaked as the police broke into the Engineering syndicate headquarters to execute the adjudication and hand over the syndicate to the court's custody. A number of journalists and lawyers stood beside syndicate leaders, arguing with the officers and challenging the order's legality. As the case was again raised publicly, *Al-Ahālī* joined the media campaign in attacking the Islamist syndicalists and supporting the state seizure of the syndicates.²⁵⁷

"Tagammu has always called for judicial supervision on the [syndicate] elections," said Tagammu's MP Al-Badri Farghali, "this supervision achieves more integrity for the elections. Tagammu party thus does not reject the amendment [the law 100] but endorses it."²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ "Al-Ḥukūma Tughāmir Bitafkīk Al-Mawqif Al-Muwahḥad Minal-Irhāb [The Government Risks Deconstructing the Unified Position Against Terrorism]." *Al-Ahālī*, February 17, 1993.

²⁵⁷ See for example: "Amwāl Al-Aytām Fi Naqābāt Al-Ikhwān [The Orphans' Money in the Ikhwān's Syndicates]," *Al-Ahālī*, May 31, 1995; "Ta'dilat Al-Qanun 100 Takhdīm Al-Jamī' [The Law 100 Amendments Benefits All]," *Al-Ahālī*, March 16, 1995; "Tawattur Fin-Naqābāt Al-Mihaniyya.. Ila Ayan? Al-Muḥamūn: Da'wa Farḍ Al-Ḥirāsa Hadafuha Al-Ḥifāḍ 'Ala Amwāl An-Naqāba [Tensions in The Professional Syndicates.. To Where? The Lawyers: The Lawsuit of Imposing Guardianship aims To Protect the Sydicate's Financial Resources]," *Al-Ahālī*, March 29, 1995.

²⁵⁸ *Al-Mutamarridūn: 3 Naqābāt Mihaniyya Bain 22 Naqāba Tu'arīḍ Ta'dīlāt Qānūn An- Naqābāt* [The Rebels: 3 Professional Syndicates Among 22 Opposes The Syndicates Law Amendments]," *Akhbar Al-Youm*, February 18, 1995.

Tagammu's avoidance of electoral contestations made them more acceptable to the state's assignments. From the early 1990s, many of the party's figures were assigned to state-led cultural and educational institutions and semi-official newspapers. The party ultimately accepted Mubarak's offer to appoint its general secretary, al-Sa'id, to the Shura Council in 1995, among the ten seats the president could assign. A decade earlier, such an assignment was a red line for Tagammu. Al-Sa'id remained an appointed member of the Shura Council until the 2011 revolution. Those assignments would ease the party's opposition to the state. In parliament, as in the newspaper, Tagammu kept raising progressive issues and demanding social reform favouring the middle and lower classes, including agriculture, industry, education, housing and health care. However, the party's opposition had become downgraded, from opposing Mubarak or the regime to opposing some parts of it. Looking into the party's overall discourse from the seventies until the late eighties, the president –Sadat, then Mubarak– was addressed personally and referred to as responsible for the country's problems. Such an outsider view used to see the regime as a whole entity and seek a thorough replacement for its incumbents. From 1990 onwards, *al-Ahālī* rarely published negative references to the presidency. In an insider dissent approach, Tagammu's criticisms became directed at officials, ministers, governmental institutions, and the ruling party, but not at the head of the regime. And instead of office-seeking and vote maximizing, its highest ambitions became to influence policies and participate in steering the state. Al-Sa'id justified the transformation in Tagammu's political attitude towards the state as a new strategy of the "low ceilings" [*siyāsāt al-asqūf al-Munkhafīda*]. The low ceilings is "a philosophical idea, that is to propose a programme, but if the masses do not respond to it, or if the circumstances change, then you reduce your declared demands. Reducing your demands does not mean the reduction of strategic positions. So, whoever directs this to me as an accusation he does not understand philosophy basically."²⁵⁹

Democracy after enlightenment: A new cultural mission

The masses' lack of response in Tagammu's view was a result of the Islamist rise on the political and cultural level, which al-Sa'id frames as the most existential problem for Egypt; "when this ideology [the MB] disappears, my problems will end."²⁶⁰ In contrast to the party's programme in

²⁵⁹ "Rif'at al-Sa'id: The Ministers Are Deceiving the President.. I Advise 'Abdel-Al' to Take a Sedative before the Sessions ... Dialogue," Masrawy.com, March 17, 2017. accessed July 18, 2020,

²⁶⁰ *A Dialogue with Rif'at al-Sa'id the Leader of Tagammu Party - Barnamig Hiwar al-Yawm*, 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXXAXnRqfms.

1984 that demanded the right for all trends to establish parties with no conditions, including the Islamists, Tagammu's concept of democracy later had no room for the Islamists. The existence of a strong Islamist force would legitimize suspending the democratic march and work within the existing rule until "the obscurantist forces" were eradicated. In its programme in 1993, *Our Programme for Change*, the party stated that

"[o]ur struggle for change is about providing a democratic alternative. We are with the forces that want change, and at the same time against other forces that want change in a direction that conflicts with the interests of the great majority of citizens and against democracy. We will not pave the way for these powers –especially the obscurantist forces concealed with religion– to rise to power. The urgent duty now is the success of the democratic alternative in winning over the masses and benefiting from the widest possible workspace under the existing governance until the possibility of establishing a democratic national authority becomes available."²⁶¹

To lay the grounds for democracy, Tagammu began to mobilize its media and intellectual efforts to confront the Islamists, counter the prevalent religious culture, and advocate the necessity for secularism. This transformation can be measured by the dramatic change in the themes of the party's publications. *Al-Ahālī* book [*Kitāb al-Ahālī*] is the party's periodical publication which aims to raise awareness of the nation to the region's socio-political and cultural challenges. The series included issues for Egyptian and Arab leftist intellectuals, besides some translated publications. 1984 saw the first issue of the series entitled *The Future of Democracy in Egypt* by Khaled Mohieddin, and until 2002, the series numbered 75 issues. Until the 22nd issue at the end of 1989, the themes of the publications were overwhelmingly (15 out of 22) around democracy and social equality, anti-Sadat, anti-Mubarak, and critiques of their neoliberal policy and their American and Israeli allies. Such themes read as a counter-hegemony to the regime and a direct or indirect challenge to the political status quo. Other issues were around Soviet politics, education, and national security, and only one issue in 1987 was about the Shari'a— which reads as an encounter with Islamism. From the 23rd issue in 1990 until 2002, counter-Islamism and

²⁶¹ Our Programme for Change, February 1993. (Cairo collection), International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam).

religious and cultural critique became the dominant theme, taking around one-third of the issues (14 books), and only six can be classified as counter-regime. Chart one below illustrates the distribution of the themes of *Kitāb al-Ahālī* Series from 1984 to 2002. Rifʿat al-Saʿid's authorship took a similar pattern where his publications between 1966 and 2018 reached 63 books. From 1994, 24 books out of 41 were on Islamism, religious critique, religious fundamentalism, and secularism, while one book only on this genre was published before that in 1977. His other themes were about Egyptian history generally, socialists' history and biography, novels, memoirs, and compilations of his articles. The charts in figures three and four below demonstrate the distribution of themes in *Kitāb al-Ahālī* (1984-2002) and al-Saʿid's authored books (1966-2018). Tables three and four at the end of the chapter show the list of *al-Ahālī* book series and Rifʿat al-Saʿid's book publications. The tables show the themes, keywords, and the general orientation of those publications. The charts and tables show that the late eighties and early nineties were a turning point in the secular leftists' intellectual priorities.

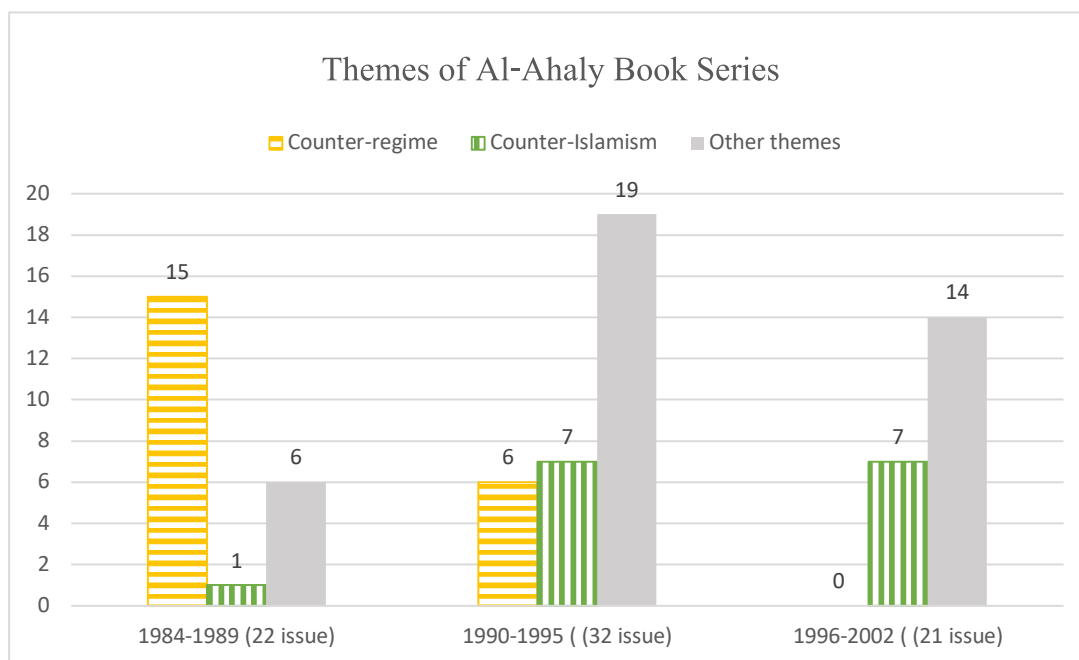


Figure 3: Distribution of the themes of *Kitāb al-Ahālī* Series from 1984 to 2002 (82 books in total)

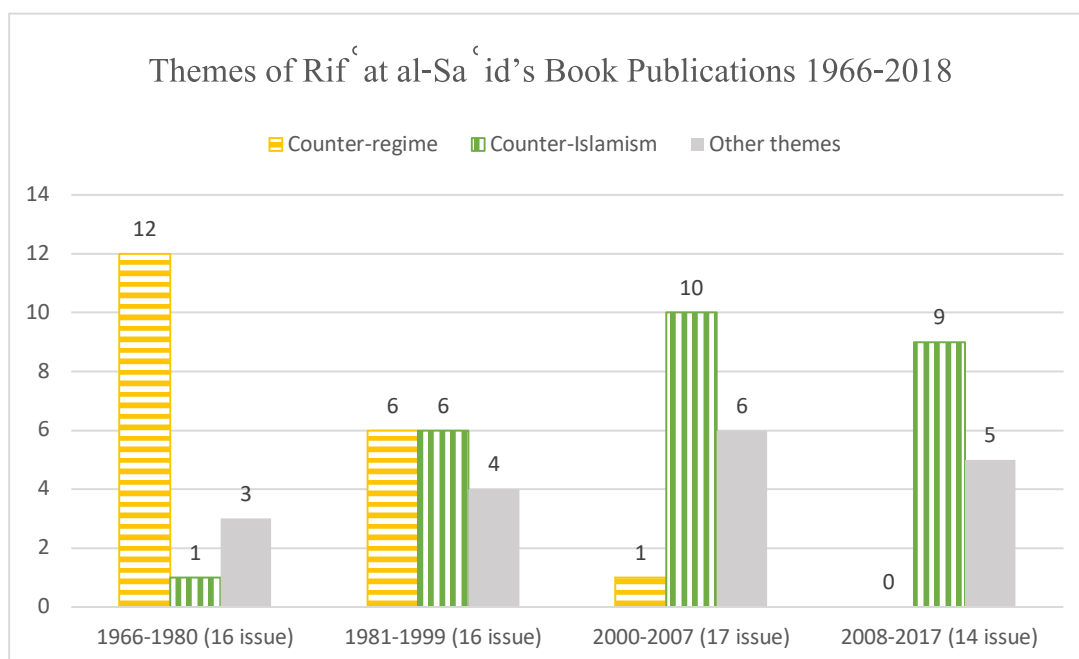


Figure 4; Distribution of Rifʿat al-Saʿid's book publications from 1966 to 2018 (63 books in total)

Secularists' writings in the nineties became embraced by the state. While Tagammu intellectuals in the 1980s used their publishing sources, mainly Dar al-Ahālī, which publishes the party's newspaper journals, besides other comrade presses like *Dar al-Thaāfa al-Jāīda*, in the 1990s, they were welcome to use the state platforms. In response to the escalation of the violent attacks by al-Jihad and the Islamic Group in the early 1990s, the General Egyptian Book Organization (*Al-Hayʿa al-ʿĀmma al-Miṣriyya lil-Kitāb*), a governmental institution, launched a series of publications headed by Jaber Asfour entitled *al-Muwājahā* [The Confrontation] which aimed to revive Egypt's enlightenment tradition and "confront" what was perceived as the Islamist cultural hegemony.²⁶² The project called upon many secular intellectuals to publish in this genre therefore many of Tagammu's intellectuals, including Fuʿad Mursi, Farida an-Naqqash, Salah Essa, Milad Hanna, Mahmud Amin al-ʿAlim, and al-Saʿid, became main contributors to the project, directing their writing towards *tanwīr*, national unity, cultural and religious critique, and arts and literature.

²⁶² Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab, *Enlightenment on the Eve of the Revolution: The Egyptian and Syrian Debates* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 12.

Conclusion

The trajectory of Tagammu almost ended at this point in the mid-nineties. No significant changes occurred afterwards, other than a more statist attitude and more mobilizational weakness. I argued in the previous chapter that Tagammu's moderation under Sadat's selective repression was attributed to their strong mobilization capacity and the opportunity to share state power through elections. Such capacity and opportunity were gone for the Islamists in the 1980s. Proceeding from an organization theory explanation, Tagammu saw democratization that paves the way for Islamism as an organizational threat. The case also endorses Nancy Bermeo's argument that the rise of popular organizations perceived as extremists could evoke anti-democratic reactions from pro-democracy reformers.

Interestingly, Tagammu did not take an anti-institutional pathway; instead, it took a statist one. In his article *Suqūṭ at-Tanwīr al-Ḥukūmi* [The Fall of the Governmental Enlightenment], Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid suggests two explanations for the secularists' cooperation with the *sulṭa* [authority]. One reason is that they saw the military regime as more democratic and "civic" [*madani*] than the Islamists. This group of secularists became convinced that the military state, despite its authoritarianism, is after all a secular state and worth defending against the religious state. Second, since losing the ability to mass mobilize, they believed that working from within the regime was possible and feasible for change.²⁶³ An additional explanation could be related to their statist legacy in the sixties and early seventies, where many Marxists and secular Nationalists were part of the regime and held positions in state-led institutions. Even after two decades of being in the ranks of the opposition, Tagammu leaders held on to the self-perception of being statemen and policymakers. Such a statist asset would ease their return to the state and cut the way in any revolutionary direction. Although their experience under Nasser was not pleasant, the working environment under the state was at least familiar, and they chose to give statism under Mubarak another chance.

The stances toward the regime and the Islamists were the basis for divisions and demobilization in the secular camp. Some have entirely quit electoral politics and headed towards other forms of

²⁶³ Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, "Suqūṭ at-Tanwīr al-Ḥukūmi [The Fall of the Governmental Enlightenment]," rowaqnasrabuzaid.wordpress.com/.

Chapter Four

activism; journalism, media, and literature production, all of which are relatively apolitical, less contentious, and individualistically based. This “activism from the margin,” as Marie Duboc puts it, reflected some secularists’ “social fatigue,” their feeling of alienation from their social and political environment, and refrain from trying to bring an alternative to the status quo.²⁶⁴ Since 1976, Tagammu has stood as the largest and most influential secularist organization. Its statist fate paved the way for the emergence of new secular parties and groups in the mid 1990s, mainly by a younger generation that had no statist experience. These groups would bargain on standing against the state and choose to tolerate the Islamists. The two following chapters will discuss one of these groups, the Revolutionary Socialists, and see how they responded to political conditions in the 2000s and post-January 2011.

²⁶⁴ Marie Duboc, “Egyptian Leftist Intellectuals’ Activism From The Margins,” in *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa* (Stanford University Press, 2013), 51.

Tabulation of al-Ahālī and Rifʿat al-Saʿīd's book publications

Note: The two tables below show all the publications of the *Al-Ahālī* Book Series [*Silsilat Kitāb Al-Ahālī*] from 1984 to 2017 (table 2) and all publications of Rifʿat al-Saʿīd, the general secretary of the Tagammu Party, from 1966 to 2018 (table 3). They are sorted in chronological order.

Kitāb al-Ahālī is Tagammu's periodical intellectual publication which addresses broad audiences and aims to educate on social and political issues. Its editorial board includes a stellar line-up of the party's intellectuals: Khalid Mohieddin, Lutfi Waked, Salah Essa, Hussein Abdelrazeq, Abdulghaffar Shukur, Abu Saif Yusuf, Abdulazim Anis, Mohammad Ahmad Khalafallah, and others. The book series and al-Saʿīd's publications show the change in the party's interests during the specified periods. The issues raised are diverse but can be classified into two broad categories in terms of their orientation. The first is themes oriented to counter the regime and challenge the political status quo. Such orientation includes themes related to democracy, socialism, the socialist movement, Marxism, imperialism, neoliberalism, and the peace treaty with Israel. The second category comprises themes countering Islamism, including topics on extremism, fundamentalism, sectarianism, enlightenment, and cultural and religious critique. The first category is labelled as "counter-regime," and highlighted in yellow, and the second category is labelled as "counter-Islamism," and highlighted in green. Other books that could not be categorized into these two specified categories or whose content I could not identify are left un-highlighted. The two tables show a similar pattern. While the themes in the seventies and eighties were dominantly counter-regime oriented, countering Islamism became the dominant theme in the early nineties. Table 3 for al-Saʿīd's books includes the publisher. Until the end of the eighties, his books were mainly published by independent and left-wing publishing houses like al-Ahālī, Dar at-Ṭalīʿa, Dar al-Thaqafah al-Jadidah. However, many of his later books were published by state-owned publishers like the General Egyptian Book Organization.

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Table 3: *Al-Ahāli Book series published from 1984 to 2017*

Book No.	year	Title	Title in Arabic	Author	Themes	Orientation
1	1984	The Future of Democracy in Egypt	مستقبل الديمقراطية في مصر	Khalid Mohieddin	Democracy	Counter-regime
2	1984	The Quranic Foundations for Progress	الأسس القرآنية للتقدم	Mohammad A. Khalafallah	Socialism, Progress, Islam and social justice	
3	1984	In reforming What Infitah Corrupted	في إصلاح ما أفسده الانفتاح	Ibrahim Al-Esawi	Sadat, Neoliberalism	Counter-regime
4	1984	The Plight of Education in Egypt	محنة التعليم في مصر	Saad Ismail Ali	Education, Socialism	
5	1985	Supporting the Rich and Supporting the Poor	دعم الأغنياء ودعم الفقراء	Tagammu economists	Socialism, Neoliberalism	Counter-regime
6	1985	Shall we Destruct the High Dam?	هل نهدم السد العالي	Philip Jallab	Nasserism, socialism, Neoliberalism	Counter-regime
7	1985	Bankers and Pashas	بنوك وباشوات	David Landes. Translated by Anis Abdulazim	Anti-colonialism, Anti-Neoliberalism	Counter-regime
8	1985	The Trial of Reagan	محكمة ريغان	Translated by Bayumi Qindil	Anti-Imperialism	Counter-regime
9	1986	They are Ruining Education	إنهم يخربون التعليم	Saad Ismail Ali	Education, Socialism	
10	1986	Happened at Camp David	حدث في كامب ديفيد	Translated by Ibrahim Mansur	Sadat, Israel, Normalization	Counter-regime
11	1986	Sadat Political School and the Egyptian left	مدرسة السادات السياسية واليسار المصري	Lutfi Al-Khuli	Sadat, the Left, Israel	Counter-regime
12	1986	The Lost Peace at Camp David	السلام الضائع في كامب ديفيد	Mohammad Ibrahim Kamil	Sadat, Israel, Normalization	Counter-regime
13	1986	Government, People and so on	حكومة وأهالي وخلافه	Salah Essa and Bahjat	Caricatures, Mubarak	Counter-regime
14	1987	To Apply Shari'a .. Not to govern	لتطبيق الشريعة.. لا للحكم	Khalil Abdelkarim	Islamic rule, Refuting Islamism	Counter-Islamism
15	1987	The counter-revolution in Egypt	الثورة المضادة في مصر	Ghali Shukri	Sadat, Neoliberalism, Dictatorship, Israel	Counter-regime
16	1987	For that we Oppose Mubarak	لهذا نعارض مبارك	Khalid Mohieddin et al	Mubarak	Counter-regime
17	1989	The Nile is in danger	النيل في خطر	Kamil Zahidi	Sadat, Israel	Counter-regime
18	1989	Sadats: Mask and Truth– Memoirs of Muhammad Abd al-Salam al-Zayat	السادات القناع والحقيقة: مذكرات محمد عبدالسلام الزيات	Mohammad Al-Zayyat and Fu'adMursi	Sadat, Neoliberalism	Counter-regime
19	1989	The Crisis of the Socialist System: Issues for Discussion	أزمة النظام الاشتراكي: قضايا للنقاش	Ibrahim Saadiddin	Global Socialism	
20	1989	A Second Look at Arab Nationalism	نظرة ثانية إلى القومية العربية	Fuad Mursi	Socialising Arabism, Democracy	Counter-regime
21	1989	Governmental Development Plan: Dreams and Serious Alternative Reality	خطة التنمية الحكومية: الأحلام والواقع البديل الجاد	Ibrahim Al-Esawi et al	Development, National Security	
22	1989	Naguib Mahfouz - Image and example	نجيب محفوظ - الصورة والمثال	Latifa Al-Zayyat	Literary criticism	
23	1990	Diary of a Diplomat in the Arab countries	يوميات دبلوماسي في بلاد العرب	Nikolai Novikov and Vladimir Vinogradov	Memoir of Soviet ambassadors to Egypt	
24	1990	History's Great Gamble: What Gorbachev Bets?	مقامرة التاريخ الكبرى: على ماذا يراهن جورباتشوف؟	Fuad Zakariyya	Perestroika, Global Socialism, Soviet Union	
25	1990	Perestroika and the Future of Socialism	البيروستروكا ومستقبل الاشتراكية	Panel discussion: Multiple Speakers	Perestroika, Global Socialism, Soviet Union	
26	1990	Islam and Throne: Religion and the State in Saudi Arabia	الإسلام والعرش: الدين والدولة في السعودية	Ayman Yasinin. Traslated by Sayyid Zahran	Political Islam, Saudi Arabia, Juhaiman, Wahabism, King Abdulaziz	Counter-Islamism
27	1990	Sadati Rhetoric: Analysing the Ideological Field of Sadist Rhetoric	الخطاب الساداتي: تحليل الحقل الأيديولوجي للخطاب الساداتي	AbdelAlim Mohammad	Sadat, Neoliberalism	Counter-regime
28	1990	Hassan al-Banna: when, how, and why? The Muslim Brotherhood and Workers: Political Islam from Extremism to More Extremism	حسن البنا : متى؟ وكيف؟ ولماذا؟ الإخوان المسلمون والعمال : الإسلام السياسي من التطرف إلى المزيد من التطرف	Rif'atal-Sa'id	Hassan Al-Banna, Muslim Brotherhood	Counter-Islamism
29	1990	Copts in a Changing Country	الأقباط في وطن متغير	Ghali Shuri	National Unity, Sectarianism, Cultural critique, Copts	Counter-Islamism
30	1990	Free Officers Revolution in Egypt	ثورة الضباط الأحرار في مصر	A.F. Kovtonovitch Traslated by Azzah Al-Khamisi	History, July Revolution, Nasser	
31	1991	Political Battles	معارك سياسية	Fuad Mursi	—	
32	1991	For this we oppose the government: the response of the parliamentary unit of the Progressive National Unionist Party to the government statement in March 1999	لهذا نعارض الحكومة : رد الهيئة البرلمانية لحزب التجمع الوطني التقدمي الوحدوي على بيان الحكومة مارس ١٩٩٩	Khalid Mohieddin et al	Mubarak, People's Assembly	Counter-regime
33	1991	Capitalism, Communism and Coexistence	التعايش بين الرأسمالية والشيوعية	John Kenneth Galbraith	Capitalism, Socialism	Counter-regime
34	1991	Egypt's Agricultural Development, 1800-1980: Technical And Social Change	التطور الزراعي في مصر ١٨٠٠-١٩٨٠	Alan Richards		
35	1991	Creation of World Poverty	صناعة الفقر العالمي	Teresa Hayter	Imperialism, Neoliberalism	Counter-regime
36	1991	A Thousand Days of Revolution	ألف يوم من الثورة	Multiple Authors	Chilean Revolution, Socialism in Chile	
37	1991	Moscow knows tears	موسكو تعرف الدموع	Ahmad Al-Khamisi and Hussein Abelraziq	Fall of the Soviets, Global Socialism	
38	1991	Critique of the Feminist movement [Class Struggle and Women's Liberation, 1640 to te Present day]	نقد الحركة النسوانية [النضال الطبقي وتحرير المرأة]	Tony Cliff and Faridah Al-Naqqash	Global Socialism, Feminism	
39	1992	Tales from the Homeland Notebook	حكايات من دفتر الوطن	Salah Essa	Tales, literature, Patriotism	
40	1992	Humans Without a Price: Problems of Human Resource Development in the Era of Infitah	بشر بلا ثمن: مشكلات تطور الموارد البشرية في عصر الانفتاح	أحمد الحصري تقديم إسماعيل صبري عبدالله	Sadat, Neoliberalism	Counter-regime
41	1992	Palestinian Intifada Society	مجتمع الانتفاضة الفلسطينية	Abdulqader Yasin	Palestine, Class, Intifada, Socialism	
42	1993	The Culture of Terrorism	الإرهاب	Naom Chomsky		
43	1993	Our program for change	برنامجنا للتغيير	Tagammu Party	Democracy, Countering Terrorism	Counter-Islamism
44	1993	Brain Creation: A Study of the Relationship between Education and Ideology	صناعة العقل: دراسة في العلاقة بين التربية والأيولوجيا	Shibl Badran	A Marxist view for education in Egypt	
45	1993	Workers and Politics: The Political Role of the Labor Movement in Egypt from 1952-1981	العمال والسياسة: الدور السياسي للحركة العمالية في مصر من ١٩٥٢-١٩٨١	Huwaida Adli	Socialism, Labour movement	

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46	1993	Foreign Issues During the Mubarak Era	القضايا الخارجية في عهد مبارك	Amr Hashem and Osamah Al-Ghazali Harb	Egyptian political parties and foreign policies	
47	4/1993	Al-Mansouri: A Pioneer of Socialist Thought	المنصوري: من رواد الفكر الاشتراكي	Mohmmad Abul-Is'ad	–	
48	1994	A Homeland Project: The Story of the Egyptian Doctor Mohamed Ghoneim and Kidney Diseases Center in Mansoura	مشروع للوطن : حكاية الطبيب المصري محمد غنيم ومركز امراض الكلى بالمنصورة	Hussein Abd Rabuh and Iman Yahya	–	
49	3/1994	Political Alliances and Joint Work in Egypt: 1976 - 1993: An Analytical Study	التحالفات السياسية والعمل المشترك في مصر: ١٩٧٦ – ١٩٩٣ : دراسة تحليلية لمركز البحوث العربية	Abdulghaffar Shukur	Democracy, Pluralism, Political reform	Counter-regime
50	1994	Culture of a random system: mind excommunication and the mind of thinking	ثقافة النظام العشوائي: تكفير العقل وعقل التفكير	Ghali Shukri	Counter-Islamism, Islamic thought critique	Counter-Islamism
51	1995	The Intellectual Foundations of the Islamic Left: Ideological Basis of the Islamic Left	الاسس الفكرية لليسار الإسلامي: قواعد عقائد اليسار الإسلامي	Khalil Abdelkarim	Socialism and Islamic, Islamic thought critique	Counter-Islamism
52	1995	Confrontation: A dialogue between Rif atSaid and Adel Hussein on moderation and extremism in Islam	المواجهة: حوار بين رجعت السعيد وعادل حسين حول الاعتدال والتطرف في الإسلام	Mohammad Said Ashmawi, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, Khalil Abdelkarim et al	Moderation, Extremism	Counter-Islamism
53	1995	The Political Strike in Sudan	الإضراب السياسي في السودان	Abdulqadir Yasin	–	
54	1995	Political Party Functions in Restricted Pluralism: A Case Study of the Tagammu Party in Egypt 1976-1991	وظائف الأحزاب السياسية في نظم التعددية المقيدة: دراسة حالة حزب التجمع في مصر ١٩٧٦-١٩٩١	Eman Mohammad Hassan	Masters' thesis	
55	1996	Nectar of Years	رحيق السنين	Samir Hanna Sadiq	Literature, Articles	
56	1996	Against Islamification	ضد التأسلم	Rif atal-Sa'id		Counter-Islamism
57		?				
58	1997	Copts of the Twentieth Century: Politicians andMonks Behind Bars	أقباط القرن العشرين: ساسة و رهبان وراء القضبان	Milad Hanna		
59	1997	Forty Years After the Aggression: Port Said .. the Days of Resistance	أربعون عاما على العدوان : بور سعيد .. أيام المقاومة	Kamal Al-Qelsh	On the battle of Port Said	
60	1997	Egypt and Future Issues: Preparatory work for the Program Committee of the Tagammu Party	مصر وقضايا المستقبل: الأعمال التحضيرية للجنة البرنامج بحزب التجمع	Ismail Sabri and Khalid Mohieddin	–	
61	1998	The Left, Democracy, and Islam	اليسار الديمقراطي والتاسلم	Rif atal-Sa'id		Counter-Islamism
62	1998	The Clash of Authenticity and Contemporaryity Between Mahmoud Shaker and Louis Awad	صدام الأصالة والمعاصرة بين محمود شاكر ولويس عوض	Nassim Mijalli	Islamic-Fundamentalism, Reason, Enlightenment, modernasim	Counter-Islamism
63	1998	Impoverishment in the Mainland of Egypt: The Effects of Structural Adjustment Policies on Egyptian Society	الإفقار في بر مصر: آثار سياسات التكيف الهيكلية في المجتمع المصري	Mohammad Abu Mandur	–	
64	1999	Building a Popular Participation Community: General Program of the Progressive Unionist National Union Party: For Egypt a Country for Freedom, Socialism, and Unity	بناء مجتمع المشاركة الشعبية: البرنامج العام لحزب التجمع الوطني التقدمي الوحدوي: من أجل مصر وطنًا للحرية والاشتراكية والوحدة	The Party	General programme, Democracy, Pluralism, Political reform, Socialism, Freedoms, National Unity, Social Justice	Counter-Islamism Counter-regime
65	1999	Globalization and Political Islam	العولمة والإسلام السياسي	Sharif Hatatah		Counter-Islamism
66		Secularism between Islam, reason and Islamification	العلمانية بين الإسلام والعقل والتاسلم	Rif atal-Sa'id	Islamic thought critique, Secularism, Fundamentalism	Counter-Islamism
67	2000	Religion and Social Conflict in Egypt 1970-1985	الدين والصراع الاجتماعي في مصر ١٩٧٠-١٩٨٥	Abdullah Shalabi	Islamic resurgence, Islamic movements	Counter-Islamism
68	2000	Tagammu in Parliament: Defending the Nation, Defending the citizens	التجمع في البرلمان : دفاعا عن الوطن، دفاعا عن المواطنين	Mohammad Farag and Intisar Bader	–	
69	2000	Our Deputies in the Parliament	نوابنا في البرلمان	Adel Baker	–	
70	2001	A working woman in the 2000 elections	امرأة عاملة في انتخابات 2000	Amina Shafiq	Feminism	
71	2001	Israeli Space Weapons: More Dangerous than a Nuclear Bomb: A Threat to the Arab Nation	اسلحة الفضاء الاسرائيلية: اخطر من القنبلة النووية : تهديد للامة العربية	Bahij Nassar	Israel, Foreign policy	
72		?				
73	2002	Political Islamification and its Tributaries: The Muslim Brotherhood	التاسلم السياسي وروافده: الإخوان المسلمون	Rif atal-Sa'id		Counter-Islamism
74		?				
75	2002	Originally it was the Memory	الأصل كانت الذاكرة	Sharif Hatath	–	
76	2003	What After the Fall of Baghdad: A Study of the American War Secrets and its Repercussions	ماذا بعد سقوط بغداد: دراسة في اسرار الحرب الامريكية وتداعياتها	Mihammad farag	Political analysis of Gulf War	
77	2005	National Renaissance: Arab Culture	النهضة القومية: الثقافة العربية	Gariyan	Arab thought, Enlightenment	
78	2004	The Intifada's Resilience and the National Program's Merits, A Political and Critical Review and National Solutions: A Palestinian View	صمود الانتفاضة واستحقاقات البرنامج الوطني. مراجعة سياسية ونقدية وحلول وطنية : وجهة نظر فلسطينية			
79	2008	Egyptian Contributions on the Crisis of the Socialist System, the Development of the Capitalist System, and the Future Socialism	مساهمات مصرية حول أزمة النظام الاشتراكي وتطور النظام الرأسمالي واشتراكية المستقبل	Ibrahim Saadiddin	Globalization, Privatization, Socialism	
80		?				
81		?				
82	2017	Renaissance Dam Politics: Egypt, the Nile Basin countries, and the world	بوليتيكا سد النهضة : مصر ودول حوض النيل والعالم	Abdelfattah mutawe	Development, National Security	

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Table 4: Rif'atSaid's book publication from 1966 - 2017

Year	Book Title	Arabic Title	Publisher	Themes	Orientation	Notes
1966	The Social Basis of the Urabi Revolution	الأساس الاجتماعي للثورة العرابية	Madbouly	History, Urabi Revolution	Counter-regime	
1969	History of Socialist Thought in Egypt	تاريخ الفكر الاشتراكي في مصر	Dar Al-Thaqafah Al-Jadidah	Socialist History, Socialist Thought	Counter-regime	A leftist publisher, founded in 1968 by opponents Muhammad Yusuf Al-Jundi & Sonallah Ibrahim
1970	Isam Ad-din Hafna Nasif	عصام الدين حفني ناصف	Ruz Al-Yusef	Biography of a socialist rebellion	Counter-regime	
1971	Niqola Haddad.. A B Egyptian Socialism	نقولا حداد.. أ ب إسرائيلي	At-Talaye' Series	Biography of a socialist	Counter-regime	
1972	Egyptian Left 1925 - 1949	اليسار المصري 1925 - 1940	Dar At-Tali' a- Beruit	Socialist History	Counter-regime	
1973	Three Lebanese In Cairo; Shibli Shmayyel, Farah Anton, Rafiq Jabur	ثلاثة لبنانيين في القاهرة: شبلي شميل، فرح أنطون، رفيق جبور	Dar At-Tali' a- Beruit	Biography of a socialist		
1974	Egyptian Left and The Palestainian Case	اليسار المصري والقضية الفلسطينية	Dar Al-Thaqafah Al-Jadidah	Leftism, Palestine, Imperialism	Counter-regime	
1975	Nasserist's Papers in an Ultimately Secret File	أوراق ناصرية في ملف سرى للغاية	Dar Al-Thaqafah Al-Jadidah	Socialist History, Nasserism	Counter-regime	
1975	History of Socialist Movement in Egypt 1900 - 1925	تاريخ الحركة الاشتراكية في مصر 1925-1900	Dar Al-Thaqafah Al-Jadidah	Socialist History	Counter-regime	
1976	Saad Zaghlul.. Between Right and Left	سعد زغلول.. بين اليمين واليسار	Dar Al-Qadhaya	Biography, Leftism, Capitalism		
1976	Mustafa An-Nahhas.. The Political Leader and Srtugger	مصطفى النحاس .. السياسي والزعيم المناضل	Dar Al-Qadhaya	Biography		
1977	Hassan Al-Banna: When, How, and Why?	حسن البنا .. متى وكيف ولماذا؟	Madbouly	Biography of An Islamist, Islamism	Counter-Islamism	Re-printed in the 1990s and 2000s by different publishers
1977	History of Egyptian Leftist Organizations 1940 - 1950	تاريخ المنظمات اليسارية المصرية 1950 - 1940	Dar Al-Thaqafah Al-Jadidah	Socialist History	Counter-regime	
1977	Leftist Journalism in Egypt 1925 - 1948	الصحافة اليسارية في مصر 1948-1925	Madbouly	Socialist History	Counter-regime	
1979	Ahmed Hussain .. Words and Situations	أحمد حسين .. كلمات ومواقف	Dar Al-Arabi	Biography of A Socialist	Counter-regime	
1980	Writtings in History	كتابات في التاريخ	Dar Al-Thaqafah Al-Jadidah	Egyptian History		
1982	The Spit	البصقة (رواية)	Dar Ibn Khaldun	Novel, Prison Literature		
1983	Egyptian Left Organizations 1957 - 1950	منظمات اليسار المصري 1957 - 1950	Dar Al-Thaqafah Al-Jadidah	Socialist History	Counter-regime	
1984	Pages from Egypt's History	صفحات من تاريخ مصر	Dar Al-Thaqafah Al-Jadidah	History		
1991	Mohammad Farid: The Situation and Tragedy	محمد فريد: الموقف والمأساة	General Egyptian Book Organization	Biography of a Socialist		*Publisher : The General Egyptian Book Organization-- An official governmental organization under the ministry of culture
1991	What Happened to Egypt-- Muslims and Copts	ماذا جرى لمصر -- مسلمون وأقباط	Al-Amal	Articles		
1991	Future's Marxism	ماركسية المستقبل	Al-Amal	Marxism, Democracy	Counter-regime	
1994	Islamists: Terrorism and Sectarian strife	الماتسليمون: الارهاب والفتنة الطائفية	Al-Ahāli	Islamism, Sectarianism	Counter-Islamism	
1994	The Social Basis of Urabist Revolution	الأساس الاجتماعي للثورة العرابية	General Egyptian Book Organization	Egyptian Army		The same book of 1966, re-Printed by GEBO with a new intro on the role and national loyalty of the Egyptian Army
1995	Terrorism: Islam or Islamification	الارهاب إسلام أم تأسلم	Sanai for Pubications	Islamism	Counter-Islamism	
1996	Islamification: An armed Ideology	التأسلم فكر مسلح	Dar at-Tali' a Al-Jadidah - Syria	Islamism	Counter-Islamism	
1996	Against Islamification	ضد التأسلم	Al-Ahāli	Islamism	Counter-Islamism	
1998	Marx's Marxism: Would We Renew or Dissipate it?	ماركسية ماركس هل نجدها أم نبددها	Al-Ahāli	Marxism	Counter-regime	
1998	The Crime: The Documents of Shuhdi Atiyya Assassination	الجريمة وثائق اغتيال شهدي عطية	Dar Shuhdi	Socialist History, Biography of a Socialist rebellion	Counter-regime	
1998	Writings on Marxism	كتابات عن الماركسية	Al-Amal	Marxism	Counter-regime	
1999	Mere Memories (3 volumes)	مجرد ذكريات (٣ أجزاء)	General Egyptian Book Organization	History, Autobiography		
1999	Egypt.. Enlightenment Through a Needle Hole	مصر.. التنوير عبر ثقب إبرة	General Egyptian Book Organization	Biography of Enlightenment, Secularism, Fundamentalism	Counter-Islamism	
2000	Reflections on Nasserism	تأملات في الناصرية	Dar Al-Thaqafah - Syria	Socialist History		
2001	Words in Politics	كلام في السياسة	General Egyptian Book Organization	-		

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2002	Egyptian Political Trends: A Critical view– Marxists, Brotherhood, the Nasserites, Tagammu	التيارات السياسية المصرية رؤية نقدية: الماركسيون، الإخوان، الناصريون، التجمع	General Egyptian Book Organization	Islamism, Leftism	Counter-Islamism	
2002	Liberal Turbans in the Square of Reason and Liberty	عمائم الليبرالية في ساحة العقل والحرية	Al-Mada - Damascus	Biography of modern liberal clerics, liberalism, Islamism, Fundamentalism	Counter-Islamism	
2002	Political Islamification and its Tributaries: Muslim Brothers	التأسلم السياسي وروافده: الإخوان المسلمون	Al-Ahāli	Islamism, Muslim Brotherhood	Counter-Islamism	
2003	Democracy and Pluralism: A study in the Distance Between Theory and Practice	الديمقراطية والتعددية: دراسة في المسافة بين النظرية والتطبيق	Al-Amal	Democracy, pluralism	Counter-regime	
2003	Egyptian Political Leaderships	الزعامة السياسية المصرية	Dar Akhbar Al-Youm	Biographies, History		
2003	Egyptian Liberalism: Intelligentsia and Al-Wafd Party	الليبرالية المصرية: المثقفون وحزب الوفد	Al-Ahāli	Liberalism, Al-Wafd		Re-printed in 2007 by GEBO
2004	Islamificate Terrorism: Hassan Al-Banna and His Pupils From Sayyed Qutb to Daesh	الإرهاب المتأسلم "حسن البنا وتألميذه من سيد قطب إلى داعش"	General Egyptian Book Organization	Islamism, Biographies	Counter-Islamism	
2004	Political Islamification: Hassan Al-Banna the Armed Sheikh	التأسلم السياسي: حسن البنا الشيخ المسلح	Dar Akhbar Al-Youm	Biography, Islamism	Counter-Islamism	
2004	Islamificists, What have They Done to Islam and to Us?	المتأسلمون ماذا فعلوا بالإسلام وبنا	General Egyptian Book Organization	Islamism	Counter-Islamism	Book sponsored by Suzan Mubarak – included in the special series of [Family Library- مكتبة الأسرة]
2005	Political Islamification: The Comers From The Brothers' Cloak	التأسلم السياسي: الآتون من عباءة الإخوان	Dar Akhbar Al-Youm	Biographies, Islamism	Counter-Islamism	
2005	Articles on Section 76	مقالات المادة 76	Al-Amal	Constitutional amendment, Gamal Mubarak	Counter-regime	
2006	Political Islamification: Muslim Brothers an Exemplar	التأسلم السياسي: جماعة الإخوان نموذجا	General Egyptian Book Organization	Islamism	Counter-Islamism	
2007	Delusions of Caliphate	أوهام الخلافة	Dar Al-Hilal	Islamism, Cultural Critique	Counter-Islamism	
2007	Doctrinal Trends in Egyptian Politics	التيارات العقائدية في السياسة المصرية	Al-Amal	Islamism, Fundamentalists	Counter-Islamism	
2007	So Spoke Juha - Articles in the Love of the Homeland	هكذا تكلم جحا – مقالات في عشق الوطن	Dar Miṣr Al-Mahrusah	Literature		
2008	The Crisis of Arab and Islamic Thought	أزمة الفكر العربي والإسلامي	الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب	Cultural critique, Islamic heritage, Salafism, fundamentalism	Counter-Islamism	
2008	Riots of Writing	شغب الكتابة	Sanabel	–		
2009	The 1919 Revolution - Social Forces and Their Role - an attempt for a new vision	ثورة 1919 – القوى الاجتماعية ودورها – محاولة لرؤية جديدة	General Egyptian Book Organization	History, biography, 1919 revolution		
2010	National Unity yes or no (Articles)	الوحدة الوطنية نعم أم لا (مقالات)	General Egyptian Book Organization	National unity, Sectarianism,	Counter-Islamism	
2010	The Civil State and the Slogan of the Caliphate: Egypt, Afghanistan, Somalia	الدولة المدنية وشعار الخلافة: مصر، أفغانستان، الصومال	Al-Amal	Islamism, Cultural Critique, Khilafah	Counter-Islamism	
2011	Egypt, to where? Liberalism or Islamism (articles)	مصر إلى أين؟ الليبرالية أم التأسلم (مقالات)	–	Islamism	Counter-Islamism	
2011	Pre-revolutionary Articles. Post-revolution Articles	مقالات ما قبل الثورة . مقالات ما بعد الثورة	Al-Shuruq	–		
2013	The Conflict Between Islam and Islamification (Historical Insight)	الصراع بين الإسلام والتأسلم (رؤية تاريخية)	General Egyptian Book Organization	Islamism, Religious Critique	Counter-Islamism	
2014	Egypt with Women: Against Discrimination, Underdevelopment, and Islamification	مصر مع المرأة: ضد التمييز والتخلف والتأسلم	Amal	Islamism, Feminism	Counter-Islamism	
2014	The History of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Destiny (3 volumes)	تاريخ جماعة الإخوان المسيرة والمصير (مجلد من ٣ أجزاء)	General Egyptian Book Organization	Islamism, History	Counter-Islamism	
2014	Renovators and Islamists	مجددون ومتأسلمون	Al-Ahram	Islamism, Biographies	Counter-Islamism	
2015	The Conflicts of the Early Days in Islam: When, How, and Why?	صراعات الأيام الأولى في الإسلام متى؟ وكيف؟ ولماذا؟	Amal	Religious critique	Counter-Islamism	
2016	When Renovation Renovates Itself	عندما يجدد التجديد نفسه	Amal			
2018	Modern Egypt Builders: The Egyptian Mind, How Was it Formed And Was it Renovated– Thinkers, Philosophers, Intellectuals, Writers, Poets, Clerics, Politicians	بناة مصر الحديثة: العقل المصري كيف تكون وكيف تجدد: مفكرون - فلاسفة - مثقفون - أدباء - شعراء - رجال دين - سياسيون	General Egyptian Book Organization	Egypt history, Biography		

Chapter Five

The Rise of Anti-State Secularists

The Revolutionary Socialists and Formal Politics in the 2000s

This and the following chapter mark and analyse the shifts of the Revolutionary Socialists (Revsoc) between the Mubarak and the post-revolution periods. Radicalized by the regime's repression in the 1990s and disillusioned with formal politics, the Revsoc emerged as an anti-institutional opposition that aimed to change not only the ruling elites but also the entire structure of representative democracy. Subscribing to orthodox Marxism, the Revsoc take a hostile stance towards parliaments and elected bodies under a capitalist system and aspire to a soviet style of democracy.²⁶⁵ Despite this revolutionary ideology, like many Marxist parties in capitalist polities, the Revsoc participated in parliamentary and syndicalist elections during the 2000s under Mubarak, cooperated with the bourgeoisie and reformist liberals and Islamists, and showed some compromise, although tacitly, with formal politics. Paradoxically, after the January 2011 revolution, contrary to the conventional inclusion-moderation argument, the Revsoc took an anti-institutional direction throughout the transitional period, when opportunities for formal politics were unquestionably more inclusive than previously. What is puzzling is not their lack of moderation, but by boycotting the elections and referendums and cutting ties with parties that negotiated with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the Revsoc seemed to de-moderate in a period of extensive inclusion.

Like Tagammu and other secular forces, the Revsoc had limited appeal and a base that was too small for mobilizing into votes at the ballot. The organization began attracting some interest from students, intellectuals, and workers through demonstrations that started in the early 2000s. Opposition youths and disillusioned workers were the main pool for recruitment. In an attempt to take the organization a step further and gain recognition among the broader opposition forces, the Revsoc contested the 2005 parliamentary elections and participated in student and labour

²⁶⁵ By orthodox Marxism, I mean the developments of Marxism that remain in the tenants of Marx and Engels' core ideas and strategies. It is contrasted with reformist or revisionist Marxism which is represented by Social Democratic parties. One of its central characteristics is that capitalism cannot be reformed, and that any attempt to do so from within would drag its reformers into its contradictions. As such, Leninism, Trotskyism, and Luxemburgism falls under the umbrella of orthodox Marxism.

union elections. Participation was seen as a measurement of their mobilization capacity and a tool to expand it. As they expected, they did not do well but were at least satisfied with the mobilization process accompanying the electoral contest. The 2011 revolution and the labour strikes that began two years earlier opened a new avenue for activism and mobilization, more in tune with the Revsoc's protest ideology and mode of activism. By participating in street protests and factory strikes, the Revsoc multiplied their numbers and gained more appeal than they would have done in neighbourhoods and around ballot boxes. However, the intensifying revolutionary atmosphere led the Revsoc to overplay revolutionary sentiments and bet on popular mobilization, hence the electoral choice not only appeared unattractive but also undermined the Revsoc's revolutionary purity and its organizational existence.²⁶⁶

The Revsoc's case represents a broad sector of the groups of the 2000s' generation. At the turn of the millennium, a new wave of secular leftist movements emerged in Egypt and initiated many activities throughout the first decade. After the revolution, these groups were referred to as the "revolutionary youths." Disillusioned with the pro-state secular parties and intellectuals, these youth groups presented themselves as principled opposition and democratic forces. Descending from different shades of Marxist, Nasserist, and some liberal traditions, all were distinguished by their manifest hostility to the regime and persistent challenging of it. These groups were fluid, decentralized, leaderless, and nomadic. Issue-based movements like Kifaya and April 6, and names of journalists, lawyers, and activists could be identified when looking at the co-initiated campaigns and demonstrations, but one can hardly find a distinct organized group that can be traced and studied over a lengthy period. One of few exceptions are the Revsoc, a small but distinct organized group, which stood as an active political agent within this broad youth movement. And although the Revsoc, on some occasions, took slightly more distinct positions from other peer groups, their overall attitude resembled many of their parallels in the secular youth movement.

This chapter focuses on the Revsoc organization under Mubarak and their relationship with formal politics, Islamists and bourgeois forces in the 2000s, and how and why they participated

²⁶⁶ On revolutionary purity in Egypt, see Hesham Sallam, "Letting Go of Revolutionary Purity," *Jadaliyya*, January 25, 2014, www.jadaliyya.com/Details/30139.

in elections. Relative to the 1990s, the first half of the 2000s witnessed a slight and brief liberalization. However, in comparison with the post-revolution period, I will regard the decade overall as a period of exclusion. There are hardly any scholarly writings about the Revsoc; thus, I present a background of their foundation and ideological background. I rely heavily on materials published by the Revsoc. Their writings are copious and articulate about their ideas and tactics and cover their day-to-day stances from the late 1990s until the time of writing. I also rely on interviews conducted with leaders and cadres of the organization and other activists and observers engaged with it.

The Origins of the Revolutionary Socialists

Historical background

The Revsoc are a post-Soviet Union (USSR) Marxist current. Contrary to the early Egyptian communist organizations, which flourished from the 1920s to the 1940s with the rise of the USSR, interestingly, the Revsoc emerged with the demise of communism in the early 1990s. As a Trotskyist current, the Revsoc find no inspiration in the USSR and have little sympathy towards it. Except for the short but good days of Lenin, the USSR, since the rise of Stalinism, has not only turned to authoritarianism but more particularly deviated into a form of capitalism, *state capitalism*. Thus, according to Trotskyist analysis, the fall of the USSR was the failure of a capitalist state, not a socialist one. The same analysis is also applied to socialist Egypt under Nasser. Trotskyism, which was an early dissenter in the USSR, stood in the early 1990s in a solid and clean discursive position, free from the apologetic burden of mainstream “Stalinist” and Nasserist leftists.²⁶⁷ With the damage that pro-USSR communists endured with its demise, a Trotskyist anti-USSR discourse became more appealing to Egyptian socialists.

Since the mid-1920s, Trotskyism has risen as a distinct Marxist faction, a rival to Stalinism, and gained more supporters and adherents following Leon Trotsky’s assassination in 1940. Nevertheless, Trotskyism had an insignificant presence in Egypt before the 1990s. Historians of Egyptian communism, even those who were keen to highlight the marginalized factions, mention in barely a few lines Trotskyist groups such as the *al-Ḥaraka al-Shuu’iyya al-*

²⁶⁷ Most of the Marxist organizations in Egypt were supportive of and inspired by the USSR under the period of Stalin and beyond. Notably the Marxists of the Tagammu Party, and the Communist Egyptian Party which descends from *Ḥaditu* (See chapter three). It is worth noting that the Revsoc call members of those parties “Stalinists.”

Thawriyya [Communist Revolutionary Movement], and *al-Fan wal-Hurriyya* [Art and Freedom], both of which emerged and dissolved during the 1940s, and the *al-‘Uṣba al-Trotiskiyya* (or *al-‘Uṣba al-Shuu’iyya al-Thawriyya*) [Trotskyist league] which was short-lived in the mid-1970s.²⁶⁸ Whereas the Stalinist communists in Egypt since the 1920s had received intangible support from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Fourth International Trotskyists were globally repressed by both Western and Soviet agents, and thus could hardly provide any inspiration to Egyptians. More remarkable is that the first generation of the Revsoc in the 1990s did not consider themselves an extension of any Egyptian communist current and could not find an Egyptian Trotskyist tradition to revive.

Although the Revsoc’s later documents stretch their existence back to the late 1980s, a foundational moment cannot be determined. According to interviews with second-generation leaders, a first-generation in the early 1990s began to form a nucleus of what later became known as the Revolutionary Socialists. They came primarily from three leftist circles. The first and foremost circle was a small group of Egyptian and Palestinian Marxists from the American University in Cairo. A second circle was centred in Cairo university, led by the Human Rights activist Hisham Mubarak, named *al-Shurūq*, and was a remnant group of the January-8 Communist Party (mid-1970s to mid-1980s), known for its Maoist orientation and refusal to Nasserism. The last tributary of the Revsoc was a remnant of the *al-‘Uṣba al-Trotiskiyya*.²⁶⁹ Those groups all shared disillusionment with pro-state communism, which dominated the Egyptian leftist movement, exemplified by Tagammu and the Egyptian Communist Parties. They also shared an antagonist position against the USSR and Nasserism, which ideologically reflected a general suspicion against the state. Coming out of the 1980s, a catastrophic decade for the leftists in Egypt and worldwide, those remnants of anti-state Marxists were in a process of reorientation, looking for a new Marxism that works for a post-USSR world.

²⁶⁸ Gennaro Gervasio, *Al-Haraka al-Markisiyya fi Miṣr 1967 - 1981 [The Marxist Movement in Egypt] Translation of (Intellettuali e Marxismo in Egitto)* (Cairo: National Centre for Translation, 2010), 352-355; Abdulqader Yasin, *Al-Haraka Al-Shuu’iyya Al-Miṣriyya [The Egyptian Communist Movement 1921 -1965]* (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 2012). 51-52

²⁶⁹ Interview with Hossam al-Hamalawy.

At this time, in the early 1990s, these anti-state leftist groups began to know and circulate the writings of Tony Cliff and the publications of his Socialist Review Group, and a Revsoc nucleus began to formulate around his thought.²⁷⁰ The first banner raised was a periodical, *Majallat al-Ishtirākiyya al-Thawriyya* [Journal of Revolutionary Socialism], published in March 1993, issued intermittently and narrowly distributed on campuses. Still, it was a tangible mark of the Revsoc's first existence. The periodical was followed by the founding of *Markaz ad-Dirāsāt al-Ishtirākiyya* [Centre for Socialist Studies] in 1996 by Kamal Khalil, in a small office in Giza, where pamphlets and periodicals began to be published more regularly and in greater abundance. Many of the publications consisted of articles written by Egyptian and Arab Marxists, some anonymous, and translations of the Socialist Review Group writings of Cliff, Chris Harman, and John Molyneux, reflecting an internationalist impression of its orientation. The main activity of the Revsoc until the end of the decade was focused on education. Although many publications discussed the need for a revolutionary party, their discourse was highly theoretical: Marxist thought and analysis of global politics, with little day-to-day local politics. There were no actual activities on the ground, except modest appearances at strikes in workplaces and booths on campuses, hanging the Revolutionary Socialist banner, selling and handing out their publications, and talking and debating with students.²⁷¹

It was not until the turn of the millennium that the Revsoc's cadres became noticed in demonstrations and strikes and were present in meetings with unionist leaders and other opposition parties and movements. They began to release statements on a semi-daily basis in 2002, addressing the public, mobilizing and orienting adherents, and commenting on local politics, in a form closer to an organized political force.

Ideological background

In the first issue of *Revolutionary Socialism*, their first-ever periodical, the Revsoc were keen to introduce themselves as a distinguished leftist line, fundamentally different from those “reformist” or “statist” leftists.

²⁷⁰ Ibid. Tony Cliff (1917-2000) was a Marxist theorist, known for reviving and developing Trotsky's tradition and leading the Socialist Workers' Party and the Socialist Review Group in the UK.

²⁷¹ Interview with al-Hamalawy.

The main difference between the political line of this journal and all other leftist conceptions is that ...socialism is workers' authority in itself, and therefore the theory of the revolution is not in the seizure and management of the bourgeois state apparatus for the benefit of working masses. The revolution's theory consists of the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus itself and its immediate replacement by a workers' state apparatus whose chief component is workers' councils and armed workers' militias.²⁷²

By this opening statement, the Revsoc not only differentiated themselves from a co-opted left, namely Tagammu, the ECP, and the Nasserists, but also drew a clear line between themselves and hard-line opposition conceptions that sought to replace the ruling elites and capture state apparatus. Under a capitalist military regime that lasted for many decades, all institutions were entirely corrupted and could not be reformed.

This analysis of the state includes elected institutions, even professional syndicates and trade unions. "Trade unions are capitalist organizations of the workers. The logic of establishing them is to gather workers and improve the conditions of their exploitation, not to lift exploitation."²⁷³ It also included, first and foremost, the parliament. The state to the Revsoc, as in classic Marxist terminology, means whole bodies of government from the executive, judiciary, and legislative, to the army and police.²⁷⁴ This differs from what Arab liberal and Islamist opposition usually mean by the state, which refer to the central authority or *sulṭa*, excluding elected institutions that are relatively autonomous. The state, in their usage, tends to be limited to what can be called "repressive state apparatus," or "sovereign ministries" [*al-wizārāt al-siyādiyya*], a term imported from the lexicon of Arabic politics, which falls directly under the power of the dominant class: the ministries of defence, interior, justice, information and foreign affairs. The Revsoc repeatedly refuted those who "feel that the only hope for a better world is to elect the right person or party in the parliament under a democratic parliamentary life, like electing the labour Party in Britain or the Communist Party in France, or even seek for building a democratic parliamentary system in a dictator state like Egypt." This decisive position stems from the "failure" and

²⁷² "Matha Na'ni Bi Diktatoriyyat al-Prolitaria [What Do We Mean by Proletariat Dictatorship]," *Majallat al-Ishtirākiyya al-Thawriyya*, March 1, 1993. revsoc.me/-4198.

²⁷³ "Al-Markisiyya Wal-'Amal An-Naqabi [Marxism and Syndical Activism]," *Majallat al-Ishtirākiyya al-Thawriyya*, August 1, 1995. revsoc.me/-4905.

²⁷⁴ David Held, "Direct Democracy" in *Models of Democracy*. (Cambridge, UK; Polity, 2006). 103-108.

“betrayal” experiences of socialist reformist parties worldwide. First, as in Chile in 1973, when an elected socialist government and a parliament full of socialists could not survive obstacles or coups by bourgeois forces, state bureaucracy, and the military. Elected bodies are weak, restricted, and under permanent threat of being toppled. Secondly, where the Revsoc seemed to be aware of the inclusion-moderation effect, a socialist parliament under a “bourgeois democracy” is exposed to falling into compromises, preoccupation with day-to-day politics, or diverting towards rightist agendas as in WW1 Germany, thus abandoning the ultimate socialist goal.²⁷⁵

Alongside these Luxemburgist arguments, the Revsoc’s anti-parliamentarian position also stems from the “bourgeois elections’ logic” that requires providing services and promises to the masses in exchange for votes, a game which the socialists are unwilling or unable to play. Elected bodies are “service institutions.” They “are based on providing services to the masses to build political presence among them.” This “toxic” relationship is based on the “negativity of the masses.” It spoils them, “deepens their unconsciousness,” and “treats them as children.” Besides, the Revsoc also argued that these service activities needed large funds, which, if to be provided internally, could only be achieved by members’ donations in a large mass movement, which leftists in Egypt lack.²⁷⁶

Accordingly, what has to be done is to stage a massive revolution that entirely demolishes state institutions and alternatively builds new ones that are directly elected by the people— *direct democracy* or *soviet democracy*. Direct or soviet democracy are the terms the Revsoc often use and propose as an alternative to representative or liberal democracy.²⁷⁷ While examples for representative democracy are nearly all Western-style democracies, the inspiring historical examples for direct democracy are the short-lived government of the Paris Commune in 1871 and Soviet rule in the Leninist period (1917-1924). A reader of Marxism can trace many ideas

²⁷⁵ “Hal Yumkin Taḥqīq Al-Ishtirākiyya ‘Abr Al-Barlamān? [Can Socialism Be Achieved Through the Parliament?],” *Majallat al-Ishtirākiyya al-Thawriyya*, August 1, 2000. revsoc.me/-5586.

²⁷⁶ “Al-Yasār Al-Miṣri Wal-Mu’assasāt Al-Khadamiyya [The Egyptian Left and the Service Institutions],” *Majallat al-Ishtirākiyya al-Thawriyya*, June, 1995. revsoc.me/-3986

²⁷⁷ Ad-Dīmuqrāṭiyya Al-Burjuwāziyya Wad-Dīmuqrāṭiyya Al-‘Ummāliyya [Bourgeoisie Democracy and Workers’ Democracy], *Majallat Al-Sharāra*, March 1996; Mohammad Mukhtar, Ad-Dīmuqrāṭiyya Al-Mubashirah Ka Badil [Direct Democracy as an Alternative], December 6, 2013. revsoc.me/-12810.

and proposals on direct democracy to their Marxist origins, which is rich and interpretable; however, it is my intention to present it as how it was understood and expressed by the Revsoc.

Theoretically, in a direct or soviet democracy, soviets are the basic and foundational units of the political system.²⁷⁸ Soviets are elected councils formed by workers in factories, professionals of each profession, farmers or soldiers of a land or barrack, or locals in each district. These basic councils elect or send delegates to higher councils, upwards towards the state's supreme institutions. The critical point is that these basic councils are presupposed to form autonomously from the state, organically and spontaneously instigated by the people (workers in particular) who are sufficiently conscious to organize themselves and set up agreed rules and regulations. This consciousness is expected to develop through accumulated lessons that workers learn in their workplaces and syndicates. Unlike representative democracy, where the social contract or constitutions are written by leading elites and powerful forces (military, bourgeois, political parties, religious institutions, royal family...), in a direct democracy, social contracts start from the bottom. Thus, unlike reformist democrats who are advised in transitional periods by liberal transitologists to take part in negotiations with the ruling elites to set new contracts or advance old ones, revolutionary socialists would prioritize their involvement in critical political moments to mobilize workers, form councils, and continue deconstructing the old regime.

Direct democracy is argued to offer “a truly complete democracy”, which transcends the insufficiencies of democracies in capitalist states. It claims many advantages, including broader suffrage and voters' direct and immediate power to question and revoke their elected delegates, who do not enjoy special immunities or fiscal privileges. The Revsoc frame the socialist democratic society in a bright moralistic lens where elected delegates and administrators are *apolitical*, i.e. comradely and interest free, contrary to existing democracies which are ruled by “bureaucrats and professional [*muhtarifin*] politicians.”²⁷⁹ These conceived claims are hard to validate owing to the limitation of experiences where direct democracy was inspired— two

²⁷⁸ For more theorization of the direct democracy by the Revsoc see “Ad-Dīmuqrāṭiyya Wa Diktatoriyyat Al-Brulitariya [Democracy and the dictatorship of the Proletariat],” *Majallat al-Ishtirākiyya al-Thawriyya*, May, 1999; “Dour Al-Sovierrat fi Al-Thawrah Al-Rusiyya [Soviets' Role in the Russian Revolution],” August 4, 2012. revsoc.me/-4301.

²⁷⁹ “Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.” *Professional politicians* is used here in a negative sense, indicating wily or deceitful.

months in the Paris Commune and seven years of Lenin's Soviet— notwithstanding the time distance between the two occurrences. Historians and political scientists are divided on how seriously to take direct democracy claims, which some would describe as utopian and ambitious.²⁸⁰ However, revolutionary socialists in Egypt advocate it wholeheartedly and seem confident in their blogs and public spaces to debate and respond to critiques, equipped with historical lessons and Marxist analysis. Revsoc intellectuals seem aware of the imperfections of the previous socialist experiences and are able to suggest solutions and guarantees to avoid divergence towards an authoritarian fate. They further theorize how the revolutionary party should be built in a decentralized form to avoid exploiters and bureaucratization.

As the Revsoc propose it, direct democracy does not offer or stem from a different value system than liberal representative democracy but claims to achieve its values better. "Socialism can be seen as the pinnacle of progressive bourgeois democracy, ...when workers fight for liberal democratic demands, they do not fight for formal institutions like the parliament, but for ideas like equality, freedom, justice and rights."²⁸¹ The Revsoc stress that "worker's councils should represent all parties and orientations *except for exploiters and fascists* [emphasis added]."²⁸² When I asked Hossam al-Hamalawy if landowners or Islamists can run elections and form parties in a soviet democracy, he said, "of course, but it is unlikely for them to win. In a socialist society where workers are conscious enough to control their factories and form their own councils, let's see who will choose them." Some aspects of these proposals *hint* at non-pluralism and the disappearance of classes and popular social currents that are unlikely to disappear in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, the Revsoc's stubbornness to confront absolutism and tyranny gives an indication of their embrace of democratic ends (emancipation, rule of the people, justice, equality). Such struggle, as al-Hamalawy expresses, comes from talented well-educated youths who sacrificed many personal opportunities for this cause.

²⁸⁰ More discussion on Soviet democracy in Held, *Models of Democracy*. 96-124; See also David Priestland, "Soviet Democracy, 1917—91," *European History Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2002): 111–30.

²⁸¹ "Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

²⁸² John Molyneux and Ezis Qassim, "Anarchism - a Critical View from a Marxist Perspective," 2012, revsoc.me/publications/22716/4-الأناركية.

With the Islamists against the state

In their march to overthrow the state, the Revsoc in the early 2000s made a clear decision to be on the side of whoever stood against it. That would mean siding with the Muslim Brothers (MB), the largest opposition movement in Mubarak's period, which the Revsoc explicitly stood alongside whenever they clashed with the state— *with the Islamists, sometimes, against the state, always*, and against the Islamists whenever they appease the state.²⁸³ Such a position was not only tactical, but also stemmed from an accommodative view towards religion, and a genuine class analysis of the MB, regarding them a bourgeois movement with democratic interests. The view was influenced by Chris Harman, whose pamphlet *The Prophet and the Proletariat* in 1994 introduced an approach to Islamism that was new to mainstream leftists in Egypt.²⁸⁴

Egypt-wise, this outlook is first and best presented by Sameh Naguib, a sociologist and leading member in the Revsoc, in a pamphlet entitled *The Muslim Brothers, a Socialist View*. Naguib stresses that the mainstream leftist view of the MB was catastrophic to the Egyptian leftist movement, a stance that led them to align with a capitalist state. Such a position portrayed the progressives as complicit with authoritarianism, and Islamism as the most authentic opposition. Naguib begins his analysis by demonstrating the dominant leftist view, mainly influenced by two Egyptian Marxists, Samir Amin and Rif'atal-Sa'id.²⁸⁵ This view could be summarized as follows. First, with all their types and groups, Islamists are merely political organizations that aim to reach power. They are not actually religious but use religion to achieve their purposes. Second, the division between reformist Islamists like the MB and other militant factions is nothing but a division of roles that all lead to the same goal: to reach power. Third, Islamists, of every persuasion, are reactionary fascist forces, hostile to progress, modernity and enlightenment. Fourth, Islamism is merely an instrument for the capitalist strata, which only serves their own interests. A conflict, should it occur, between the Islamists and the regime would merely be a competition to seize power between different sectors of the same capitalist

²⁸³ Kamal Khalil, "Kayfa Tara al-Mu'aradha Su'ud Al-Ikhwan [How Does the Opposition View the Rise of the Muslim Brothers?]," *Majallat Awraq Ishtirakiyya*. January 2006. revsoc.me/-8006.

²⁸⁴ See Harman, *The Prophet and the Proletariat: Islamic Fundamentalism, Class & Revolution* (International Socialism Journal, 1994), www.marxists.org/archive/harman/1994/xx/islam.htm.

²⁸⁵ Part of this leftist view is discussed in chapters three and four of this thesis.

strata. Finally, there is no confrontation between Islamism and imperialism, Zionism, and neoliberalism— they all compliment and serve each other.²⁸⁶

Amin and al-Sa‘id, who shaped these views, Naguib argues, uses a “mechanical materialist philosophy” derived from a “Stalinist tradition” to which they belong. Such a view sees a definite contradiction between religion and progress and an inevitable secularization as class consciousness increases. In al-Sa‘id’s words, Naguib quotes, “As Marxism stresses that it is possible for religion to play a role in the movement for social and political change, this role is only limited in the early revolutionary stages. However, religion’s role decreases and vanishes with the growth of class consciousness. ... Any presence of religion afterwards would be merely an employment and exploitation of religion.” Naguib argues that this view is “a deformation of Marxism,” which is open to multiple revolutionary possibilities and had many manifestations in the twentieth century, including religious liberational movements based on both Marxist and religious foundations.²⁸⁷ Leftism, Naguib explains, “if to be defined as the representation of the poor and oppressed people and the endeavour to change the system to their interest, means that it has a deep root in our Arabo-Islamic tradition,” where leftist currents are represented by ulama [religious scholars] who stand for justice and the poor, against right-wing pro-sultan ulama, who stand to maintain the status-quo.²⁸⁸

Similarities with Naguib’s words on religion are found across the Revsoc’s discourse, which stresses the organization’s pride in including religious cadres. “In countries where religious sentiment prevails, the socialist workers party should acknowledge that the great majority of the workers and of the masses will not be freed from their religious delusions.” The party should accomodate the religious workers, “educate and influence its religious cadres, but not the vice versa.”²⁸⁹ With this accomodation of religion and religious workers, the Revsoc do not try to over frame their discourse with religious justifications as the Tagammu party does. Their overall

²⁸⁶ Sameh Naguib, *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimun: Ru‘yah Ishtirākiyya [The Muslim Brotherhood: A Socialist View]* (Cairo: Center for Socialist Studies, 2006). 4.

²⁸⁷ Ibid. 5.

²⁸⁸ Sameh Naguib, *Muqaddima Fil-Ishtirākiyya Al-Thawriyya [An Introduction to Revolutionary Socialism]*. August 27, 2010. revsoc.me/-7127

²⁸⁹ Ghiyath Na‘isah, *Al-Mawqif Al-Markisi min Al-Zāhira Ad-dīniyya [The Marxist Position Towards the Religious Phenomenon]*. February 23, 2010. revsoc.me/-5365

position towards religion appears neutral. Religion is welcomed wherever it stands with the oppressed in their class struggle. Religion may demise, unlamented, but “the only means through which the Marxists believe in the demise of religion is through its gradual disappearance as a result of the demise of its social causes such as dispossession, exploitation and persecution, but never through prevention or repression.”²⁹⁰ For that reason, the Revsoc seldom discuss culture and enlightenment or make up an issue of religious fundamentalism and carefully avoid engaging in an Islamic-secular debate, which is a losing battle. “Yes, Marxism is an atheist materialist philosophy, we cannot deny that,” says al-Hamalway, “but never go to war against our Lord [means religion], because our Lord eventually will win.”²⁹¹ The Revsoc thus clearly decided to postpone the religious question and focus on class struggle and confronting the state.

The Revsoc’s view of the MB follows their view of religion. The MB are comrades in as much as they oppose the state and support the working class. Naguib’s central criticism of the MB, however, lies in their reformist, centrist, and accordingly contradictory economic and political positions. The two main issues on which the MB should be judged are their position on neoliberalism and imperialism. The MB here are viewed as a trans-class movement, which combines all classes from upper to poor, uniting them by religious ties. From a Marxist perspective, this unity is contradictory and unsustainable, and the movement is divisible in any critical moment. This explains the frequent conflicts between conservative and revolutionary elements within the movement. It also explains their oscillation in fully confronting the regime and willingness to maintain ties and negotiate with it. And although they do not represent the upper capitalist strata, neither do they represent the working class; hence, they would not stand for radical social change, and would be apprehensive of strikes and uprisings from the very lowest classes. Overall, in stable periods, the MB appear to represent the interests of the middle-class bourgeoisie. The movement denies the possibility of absolute class equality, and all that it calls for is narrowing the social gap through reformist procedures. They stand for regulating progressive tax, Naguib affirms, and fight corruption and monopoly, but at the same time, defend private properties. This “reformist and centrist [*wasatī*] balance between defending private

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Interview with al-Hamalawy.

property and imposing restrictions on large proprietors is a clear expression of the MB's modern middle-class essence.”²⁹²

Besides the MB's indecisive stance towards the state and the working-class, the movement is also indecisive in confronting imperialism. “Does the Muslim Brotherhood propose a working vision to confront the imperialist and Zionist assaults in our region?” asks Naguib. While the MB has consistently called for support of Palestine and confronting American domination, its initiative, proposed by the murshid [supreme guide] in 2004, suggests supporting and activating the Arab League and adhering to International Law— those exact organizations which are shaped and controlled by the imperialist powers and serve their interests. The MB's adherence to international legitimacy extends to following the World Trade Organization and submitting to free-market regulations, which are responsible for impoverishing third-world countries. And although its initiative stresses freeing international organizations from the great power's tutelage, Naguib continues, the MB proposes no steps to achieve that.

By and large, the Revsoc's concern about the MB is not related to its “illiberalism” or “extremism,” but interestingly to its “reformist” and “neoliberal” line. As an overall middle-class bourgeois movement, the Revsoc believe the MB has a real interest in a representative democracy. That is not the ideal democracy to satisfy the working class. However, since the MB is de facto the largest organized opposition, the leftists have no choice but to support this bourgeois force in any struggle against the state for democratic demands, like the independence of the judiciary, abolishing emergency law, and running free and fair elections. “In such case, it is extreme stupidity for the left to claim a third path and stand in a neutral position, or establish its small pure but marginal independent campaigns, just to avoid cooperating with the MB. ... This cooperation does not mean stop criticising the MB when they begin appeasing the regime or divert the struggle to moral reactionary issues.”²⁹³ The Revsoc share with mainstream leftists the argument that the rise of the Islamist movement is attributed to the decline of the leftist forces that created a vacuum for them.²⁹⁴ Some left-wing currents further view the large mass bases that

²⁹² Naguib, *The Muslim Brotherhood: A Socialist View*. 18-21.

²⁹³ Ibid. 40.

²⁹⁴ Interview with al-Hamalwy.

Islamist movements enjoy as “abducted,” “enchanted,” or “misled.”²⁹⁵ Those masses would have chosen the left if there had been a real leftist alternative. In Harman’s words, “many of the individuals attracted to radical versions of Islamism can be influenced by socialists.”²⁹⁶ The approach towards the MB is thus twofold: first, cooperating and engaging with their struggle against the state, and secondly stratifying the movement, splitting the upper from the lower classes, or the conservatives from the revolutionaries within. “Our approach to the movement is to socially stratify it [taqsīmiha ṭabaqiyyan],” says al-Hamalawy.²⁹⁷

By engaging with the MB’s rank and file in the same battle against the state, the left actually competes with the MB, presents a leftist alternative, and “prove[s] to the masses that [the left] are more drastic, stiff, and consistent in confronting imperialism, Zionism, and despotism.”²⁹⁸ The Revsoc believe that there is an opportunity to benefit from escalating the contestation between bourgeois forces and the state, leading those bourgeois reformists to take sides, and creating the space for small revolutionary leftist groups to act and grow. The mass movement created by the MB and other reformist opposition becomes the pool from which the Revsoc can recruit and expand their revolutionary movement. Ali Mansur, a revolutionary socialist, describes this plainly,

[w]e need a joint struggle with the reformist forces that the masses see as the highest and most credible alternative. If the Islamists declare that they stand against the dictatorship, we need to launch a joint campaign with them... This joint campaign will open the door to expanding the movement. This is the way to build a broad movement. This is the way to rapprochement with the masses who are convinced to this day of reformism, moderation, or Islamic conciliatory currents.²⁹⁹

It is thus vital to the Revsoc that major opposition forces like the MB remain standing and supported. For that, the Revsoc have persistently defended MB members against arrest and trials

²⁹⁵ See for example Mustafa Al-Jammal, “Su’ud al-Ḥarakat al-Islamiyya wa As’ilat Al-Yasār Al-Muhrijah [The Rise of the Islamist Movements and the Left’s Embarrassing Questions],” *Majallat Awrāq Ishtirākiyya*. July 2007. revsoc.me/-3891

²⁹⁶ Harman, *The Prophet and the Proletariat*. 24

²⁹⁷ Interview with al-Hamalawy, see also “The contradictions of Islamism”, and “Splitting two ways,” in Harman.

²⁹⁸ Naguib, *The Muslim Brotherhood: A Socialist View*. 40

²⁹⁹ Ali Mansur, “Risalah Ila Al-Yasār Al-Masri [A Letter to the Egyptian Left],” *Jaridiat Rayat Al-Ishtirākiyya*. December 15, 2005. revsoc.me/-5950. *Rayat Al-Ishtirākiyya* [The Socialist Banner] was a bi-monthly newspaper issued between December 2002 and December 2003.

as if they were socialist comrades. They also advocated for the MB to be accepted and included as part of the broad democratic movement, a position that led them into a confrontation with some secularist forces. The strategy, accordingly, is to deepen the MB's conflict with the state, push the bar of its democratic demands forward, and revolutionize and recruit its supporters.

The way to formal politics: 2000 - 2005

In 2005, Egypt witnessed historic parliamentary and presidential elections. Procedurally, for the first time in the republic, the country had a pluralist presidential election. International pressure on the Arab regimes for democratization after 9/11 helped relax political restrictions upon opposition forces and opened more space for participation. Mubarak's regime, surprisingly, took steps to show its serious commitment to political reform. Earlier that year, the Egyptian government amended article 76 of the constitution to allow election of the republic's president from among multiple candidates, superseding the regulations that had applied since 1956 which permitted the president to renew his tenure by a referendum. The new amendment set onerous conditions and requirements for candidates in order that they be able to run. One of the reasons behind Mubarak's amendment was paving the way for his son Jamal to become president. However, the amendment was unsatisfactory, and it was clear to observers and the opposition that the regime had no intention of facing real competition, but despite serious reservations, the opposition forces chose to take advantage of it.

The political environment was also promising for relatively more transparent parliamentary elections.³⁰⁰ The role of the police would be restricted, and the judiciary was to expand its control over supervising the elections. The 2000 parliamentary elections marked the first time the judiciary took partial oversight, but this was limited to inside polling stations and did not cover the whole electoral process, whereas the police had complete control of the perimeter around the polling area. In early 2005, the Judges' Club, the association of judges in Egypt, pushed for more transparency, pressuring the Election Commission to fully supervise the entire process and close any possible loopholes. Domestic and international monitoring agencies were also vocal in demanding more space and closer access to the voting. These demands were met with positive promises from the Election Commission.

³⁰⁰ See Egypt's 2005 *Parliamentary Elections Assessment Report*, International Republican Institute. December 2005.

Without a doubt, the presidential election was manipulated, but the opposition did celebrate a victory. Mubarak was severely attacked by his competitors during the campaign, and his image was shaken by the relatively high polling of his main competitor, Ayman Nour. The government did not take full control over the elections as it had planned. As for the parliamentary elections in November and December of 2005, the first round was relatively fair, and its results were surprising for both the opposition and the government. The police refrained from direct interference, and the government showed some commitment to its promises, before it blatantly decided to rig the second and third rounds in order to change the course of the results. Nevertheless, the political environment before the elections was promising, relative to the dark decade of the 1990s. Exceptional international and domestic factors would encourage the opposition to take that year's presidential and parliamentary elections seriously. Without high expectations, the opposition forces were heavily involved in both elections to test the limits of the regime's promised reforms. More individual activists and new political forces—to exclude official parties—were encouraged to support the elections for the first time, believing that some feasibility of reform was possible.

By the eve of the elections, the Revsoc began to appear as an organized independent group. The Revsoc tend to describe themselves as a current [*tayyār*], but their organized nature and aspiration to form a party qualified them as an organization. After more than ten years of educational activity through their prolific and uninterrupted publications, the small group expanded and gathered more adherents. In November 2003, the State Security prosecution [*Amn ad-Dawla*] arrested a Revsoc member and accused him with four other members of forming a socialist revolutionary “group” [*jamaʿa*] that advocated overthrowing the regime and inciting citizens to participate in illegal demonstrations.³⁰¹ The accusations were dropped by the court, but they indicate how seriously the state had begun to see the Revsoc's size and influence. “Tens of cadres and hundreds of members” around that time.³⁰²

³⁰¹ For more details, see “Ruling of the State Security Emergency Court in the case of the Socialist Revolutionaries 2004,” bit.ly/3BisagO.

³⁰² Interview with al-Hamalwy.

Large demonstrations that took place in Cairo in 2000 in support of the second Palestinian *Intifada* marked a new phase of the Revsoc's political activity. The Intifada demonstrations were followed by a chain of demonstrations and strikes throughout the decade, which many observers, including the Revsoc, believed paved the way for the 2011 revolution. The foreign affairs-related demonstrations that began in support of the Palestinian Intifada and the American war on Iraq in 2003 turned inwards in 2004, against Mubarak, with the *Kifaya* campaign, escalating into mass labour strikes in 2008. The Revsoc were heavily involved in them all. Their participation in these events was instrumental in their growth and central to their recruitment strategy. They wanted to draw a paradigm of a genuine grassroots left that contrasted with the image of elitist leftist parties and intellectuals, which had lost touch with the masses. A "revolutionary party", the Revsoc believed, could only build its popularity and earn people's trust by engaging directly in their struggle.

The political events which the Revsoc engaged in throughout the decade were overall non-revolutionary, at least in their eyes. The broad and ideologically diverse opposition movement, referred to sometimes as the national or democratic movement [*al-Ḥarakah al-Waṭaniyya* or *ad-Dimuqrāṭiyya*], that led most of the political initiatives and campaigns were overwhelmingly reformists. By reformists, I mean even those who wanted to overthrow Mubarak and push the military establishment back to the barracks, and later endorsed the 2011 revolution, but who had no political system in mind other than representative democracy. They viewed the political system as a forged representative democracy, and they wanted it to be as it should be. For most of the decade, at least until the labour strikes in April 2008, the Revsoc had been engaging mainly with middle-class professionals, activists, and students. Within this opposition movement, the Revsoc were a nascent young group surrounded by larger organized forces, elder influencing intellectuals and charismatic politicians and unionists. Despite their loud voice, they were small in number. As eyewitnesses, Frédéric Vairel and Joel Benin noted that the Revsoc's presence at sit-ins was less than that of the MB youth, but the Revsoc's account tends to exaggerate their influence and numbers. "What I saw," Says Vairel, "when the two groups were together is that the MB overwhelmingly dominated their leftist counterparts, bringing the vast majority of the participants; though slogans and mottoes were shared by Kamal Khalil, a leader of the Revolutionary Socialists, and Muhammad Habib from the MB. Joel Beinon observed the

same relation of forces at the Cairo International Conferences opposing the Iraq war and the Israeli occupation of Palestine from 2005 to 2008.”³⁰³

In terms of their role in the opposition movement, Holger Albrecht’s analysis of the different members of Kifaya classified the Revsoc as the “protest pro” type— those “who would not let go the chance to occupy a public stage to spread their leftist and nationalist political formulas.”³⁰⁴ Seeking to find a role and a place in the opposition board meetings, the Revsoc had to adjust their discourse to be in line with the overall opposition’s game and ceiling.³⁰⁵ This minor position pushed them to sign shared petitions and statements that demanded “constitutional reform”, allowed pluralist presidential elections, separation of powers, and proposed “the programme and principles for democratic transition” that aspired to “establish a republican parliamentary system.”³⁰⁶ Interestingly, in response to the 2003 State Security accusations, the Revsoc stated that they should have the right to establish a political party, and that socialists deserved this as part of the nationalist movement [*waṭaniyya*] that had fought for the country’s democracy and national independence since the 1920s.³⁰⁷

Back to the eve of the 2005 elections. The Revsoc enthusiastically declared its intention to contest the parliamentary elections, called for creation of an electoral list, “The List for Change [*Qā’imat At-Taghyīr*],” and nominated Kamal Khalil for the Imbaba constituency.³⁰⁸ Khali’s nomination was welcomed and supported by many youths and prominent figures from the leftist spectrum, including veteran parliamentarians from the Nasserist and Tagammu parties who spoke at his rally. The Revsoc had also declared, at an earlier stage, their support for an

³⁰³ Frederic Vairel and Joel Beinin, *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford University Press, 2013). 266.

³⁰⁴ Holger Albrecht, *Raging against the Machine: Political Opposition under Authoritarianism in Egypt*, First edition, Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2013). 75

³⁰⁵ See this statement where the Revsoc addresses the leaders of Kifaya, commending their efforts in uniting the national forces and calling them to be inclusive in their meetings, affirming on equal representation for all political forces. “On the July 23rd Conference,” June 15, 2005. revsoc.me/-25424

³⁰⁶ See for Example the “Founding Statement” for the Egyptian Movement for Change (Kifaya), signed and shared on the Revsoc’s website. August 8, 2004. revsoc.me/-24594 ; “The Programme and Principles for Real Democratic Transition,” May 20, 2004. revsoc.me/-21998

³⁰⁷ See “Defending Democracy... Defending the Future,” November 25, 2003. revsoc.me/-14508

³⁰⁸ “An Invitation to Join the List for Change,” October 10, 2005. revsoc.me/-25502

opposition candidate in the presidential election, but then retreated to boycotting when later restrictions and adverse intentions from the regime appeared to weaken its feasibility—suggesting an acceptance in principle to presidential elections if free and fair conditions were guaranteed. The decision to run the parliamentary elections had to be accompanied by clear justification. Proposals on direct democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat were remarkably downplayed. And while the Revsoc's initial opinion towards elections, which had been expressed articulately during the previous ten years, was that elections are totally useless, the new view explained some exceptions and advantages.

The Revsoc's journal *Majallat Awraq Ishtirakiyya* dedicated an issue in November 2005 to discussing the people's assembly elections and “why radical socialist parties [*al-aḥzāb al-Ishtirakiyya al-jadhriyya*] in the world are keen to participate in elections, and the limit of the results that the militant [*munāḍil*] left can expect from the electoral process.”³⁰⁹ The discourse seemed to address itself to leftist fellows confused about the Revsoc's overall position towards the elections and tried to convince them to support their decision. The issue included articles written by leading figures, Kamal Khalil, Sameh Naguib, and others, highlighting the same points, suggesting that the decision enjoyed consensus within the organization. Other articles and reports showed great interest in the elections: mapping the alliances and evaluating the programmes of the contesting parties and forces, and analysing their chances of winning. The issue also gave space to reformist names, the Islamist Abdel-Mun'im Abul-Futuh, who wrote on the necessity of uniting the national forces against Mubarak and his son, and calling on all opposition forces to contest the elections fiercely with the aim of securing over a third of the seats; and the economist Nader Faragani who called for “a national coalition [*e'tilāf waṭani*]” to achieve “the national reform [*iṣlāḥ waṭani*]”.

The editorial of the issue (which was likely written by Khalil and Naguib) began by demonstrating three socialist orientations in dealing with elections. The first is completely rejecting, because it is impossible to apply any progress in the parliament, and participation in elections is accordingly a type of opportunism and diversion towards reformist compromise. The

³⁰⁹ It is worth noting that the Revsoc call themselves a *radical* left [*jadhri*]. As discussed in chapter two, radicalism is not necessarily associated with non-democratic.

second, contrastingly, is too optimistic and exaggerates the feasibility of electoral successes. While the first orientation is puritanical, and the second is naïve, a middle way which the Revsoc adopted is to accept participation in parliamentary elections; however, participation is not perceived as a path towards socialism, nor an alternative to engagement with the masses in workplaces and the countryside. “It is not a primary goal in itself; it is a platform for socialist propaganda and exposing reformist myths.”³¹⁰

The primary goal of these elections, however, was to unite the radical leftist forces and form a socialist party, in Naguib’s words. The Revsoc’s involvement in the Egyptian opposition movement and their cooperation with pro-democratic forces was the right thing to do. However, this engagement should not dissolve the socialists in this reformist wave or drive them away from their utmost goal. The socialists’ engagement is meant first to radicalize the opposition movement, and second, to recruit and expand, and thus rise as a distinguished “radical” [*jadhri*] socialist party. “Perhaps the current parliamentary elections and the nomination of socialist activists to the parliament will be the first step towards building the absent party, the leftist struggling party [*al-ḥizb al-yasāri al-munāḍil*].”³¹¹

Khalil’s electoral campaign appeared more optimistic towards the viability of the parliament and the considerable gains it could achieve. His campaign proposed a *Programme for Change* [*Barnāmiḥ lil-Taghyīr*], pledging to be a delegate for the people and defend their interests, and fight “to make the parliament the voice of the people.”

My goal is to be a representative of the people. I dream of actually bearing this title, not in words. Hold me accountable if I am wrong or if I do not do what I say. But I pledge to be one of the few deputies who actually represent the people and defend their interests. As a representative of the people, I will stand against the privatization of factories and public services; I will demand the employment of all the unemployed; I will demand a fair wage for the workers and a fair rent for dwellings, shops, and agricultural lands; I will demand price control and the return of subsidized goods; I will demand free education and free health

³¹⁰ “Intikhābāt Majlis al-Sha‘ab [People Assembly Elections],” *Majallat Awrāq Ishtirākiyya*, February 2005. 18. revsoc.me/wp-content/uploads/11-1.pdf

³¹¹ Sameh Naguib, “Al-Intikhābāt Wa Ma’rakat At-Taghyir Ad-Dimuqrati [Elections and the Battle for Democratic change], *Majallat Awrāq Ishtirākiyya*,” November 2005. 19-21. revsoc.me/wp-content/uploads/11-1.pdf

services. As a representative of the people, I will demand freedom and democracy; I will demand free and fair elections under full judicial oversight; I will fight for the freedom to form parties and unions; I will fight to guarantee all liberties to the people; I will demand laws criminalising torture in police stations and the immediate release of all political detainees; I will stand with the rights of Copts, women and all persecuted people; As a representative of the people, I will stand against normalization with Israel; I will stand against American hegemony and with the Palestinian, Iraqi and Afghan resistance... My goal is to raise the voice of the hardworking people from under the dome of parliament.³¹²

Since Khalil's discourse in his campaign addressed voters, it is understood that some optimism needed to be shown. In another article, interestingly in the same newspaper and on the same day, Khalil addresses fellow comrades, "a letter to the strugglers for change." Here, Khalil slightly lowers the expectations of change that the parliament can make, but confirms that parliament remains an important arena for struggle, and socialists must not leave it.

As a socialist, I know that the path is not the People's Assembly. I have no illusions in the parliament's ability to bring about real change. So why am I trying to get a seat in the parliament? The answer is simple: I am running for the People's Assembly elections in 2005 because I see it as an opportunity to continue our popular struggle for a comprehensive radical change. From this perspective and this standpoint, I will fight the battle. This is how I will deal with the parliament seat if I get it... [I]t would be useful to have parliamentary seats for a handful of campaigners for change. Certainly, they will not change the nature of the institution. They will not make it, for example, issue laws in our interest, the interests of the hardworking and the poor. But they will expose from under the dome [of the parliament] every corruption, every manipulation, every suspicious law, and every legalization of theft. They will mobilize the people to struggle using the parliament.³¹³

³¹² Kamal Khalil, Barnamiji lil-Taghyir [My programme for Change]. *Jaridiat Rayat Al-Ishtirākiyya*. October 15, 2005. revsoc.me/-7915

³¹³ Kamal Khalil, Limatha Rashahtu Nafsi? [Why did I Nominate Myself?] *Jaridiat Rayat Al-Ishtirākiyya*. October 15, 2005. revsoc.me/-7914

From the sum of these discourses on the eve of the elections, it seems evident that the Revsoc reconciled with the idea of participating in elections under an authoritarian capitalist regime. Relative improvements in the elections' transparency and fairness were sufficient to encourage the Revsoc to choose participation. By repeatedly confirming that the parliament is not the place for meaningful change, they indeed wanted to deliver revolutionary socialists to its chamber. The overwhelming reformist nature of the opposition movement had some impact on the Revsoc's choice to participate, but the main driver was their organizational need to build a mass party. The elections in themselves, and the activism in the parliament would bring the Revsoc to the heart of Egyptian politics.

From direct to representative democracy: 2006 - 2011

The second half of the decade was an extension of the first half. The Revsoc remained in line with these relatively moderate stances up until the revolution. Despite their poor results in the elections, the Revsoc kept their faith in them. Kamal Khalil polled 604 votes in Imbabah, a constituency that consists largely of workers and peasants. That was less than 10 per cent of what the two winning candidates achieved. The results were disappointing, though not very surprising to the Revsoc. Winning was not expected. By condemning manipulation in the elections which selectively targeted the MB, they did not hold the regime responsible for their loss. Although the score was meagre, ranking at the bottom of the table, far away from what was intended to be a step to building a party and a platform for promoting ideas, the Revsoc seemed satisfied to know 600 people from this constituency came out to vote for radical social change.³¹⁴

The Revsoc fiercely advocated participating in all electoral contests in the second half of the decade, including student unions, the trade union elections in 2006, the parliamentary elections in 2010, and the presidential election which was scheduled in 2011.³¹⁵ The organization sustained its decision to participate despite the de-liberalization period that followed 2005. Directly after the 2005 elections, the regime turned back to cracking down on the opposition,

³¹⁴ For the Revsoc's assessment to Khalil's electoral performance, see Mona Imran, "An Activist Testimonial About: The Electoral Battle for Change Candidate Kamal Khalil," *Jaridiat Rayat Al-Ishtirākiyya*. November 15, 2005. revsoc.me/-6616

³¹⁵ For the trade union elections, see "Our Programme for the Trade Union Elections," October 1, 2006. revsoc.me/-25180. For the Revsoc's stance on the presidential elections see, Ashraf Omar, "Al-barad'e wa Hulm Al-Taghyir Al-Mafqud," February 24, 2010. revsoc.me/-5398.

realizing and regretting the risk of the marginal space it offered. Mubarak decided to punish his competitors, imprisoning the presidential candidate Ayman Nour besides winning MPs and leaders from the MB, and returned to the old blatant ways of election rigging. On the eve of the 2010 elections, and with the rise of a public discussion among the opposition forces on whether to participate or boycott, the Revsoc enforced the participation option.³¹⁶ “What remains for us is to fight to expose forgery and deliver the little leftist and honourable elements to the parliament’s seats.”³¹⁷ More impressive is that this persistence in participating in elections was maintained even with the escalation of the labour strikes from December 2006, in which the Revsoc thrived and were heavily engaged, joining unionist leaders in organizing them. The mass strikes were a fertile avenue for recruitment and radicalization, and could have alienated the electoral option. But the Revsoc still saw elections as “the main battle for struggle and the gate for democratic rights and radical social demands,” and stood by this until Mubarak’s last day.³¹⁸

Ties with reformist forces were also maintained. It was too soon to declare an independent revolutionary path, being still a time for education, recruitment and expansion, and it was “a long-time struggle.” In this endeavour, the Revsoc intensified their publications, launched a new newspaper in February 2006, *Jarīdat Ishtirāki* [The Socialist], and kept engaging with all opposition activities. Continuing a series of public seminars they launched in the early 2000s, the Revsoc began to organize annual conferences targeting a broader and more diverse audience. The first conference, *Socialist Days* [*Ayyam Ishtirākiyya*], was in February 2005, and lasted three days. The Revsoc booked the Press Syndicate halls and seminar rooms, and invited local and international speakers to lecture on the left and labour, building the socialist party, class struggle and emancipating women, imperialism and national liberation. Local speakers included prominent leftists like Ahmad Nabil al-Hilali and Abdulghaffar Shukur, and international speakers included Chris Harman and Joel Benin. The conference mainly targeted leftists from different factions, but was open to discussing liberal, Islamist, and nationalist [*qawmi*] “alternative proposals for change” presented by its representatives, Alaa al-Aswani, Mohammad Ihsan Abdelquddous, and Halim Qandil. Similar conferences were held in following years in the

³¹⁶ “The Elections Between Participation and Boycotting,” *Al-Ishtirāki*, November 2010. 10-11

³¹⁷ See al-Ishtirāki editorial, “Let’s Fight for Stopping Forgery and Deliver the Pro-Working Class to the Parliament,” *Al-Ishtirāki*, November 2010. 1

³¹⁸ Ashraf Omar.

same place, holding the same title, expanding its seminars, hosting big-name historians and intellectuals from the region and internationally, and more inclusively including diverse local reformists, Abdelwahab al-Messiri, Heba Raouf, Samir Amin, and Hamdeen Sabahi.³¹⁹

These initiatives placed the young group in a notable position within the democratic movement, and gained them more members and supporters. In turn, they were not free from an ideological tax. Although reserving revolutionary sentiments and demands for radical social change, the Revsoc avoided being so far from the prevailing democratic proposals of the democratic movement. They appeared to be in line with the structure of representative democracy, despite pushing it strongly towards the working class's interests. In 2010, the Revsoc initiated a "popular democratic movement for change," drafting its principles and programme. "Our programme," it states, on the social level, includes imposing progressive tax; setting minimum and maximum bars for wages (narrowing the gap); supporting subsidies; stopping privatization and nationalizing monopolistic companies. On the democratic level, the programme includes "[f]reedom to form political parties, unions, associations and organizations under a civil and democratic state; and [f]ree and fair elections under full judicial supervision at all stages in the elections of the People's Assembly, the Shura Council, local councils, syndicates and trade unions."³²⁰ The programme also included demands related to housing, free education and health insurance, similar to what can be read in an electoral programme of a political party. The discourse and proposals seemed to fall into social democracy— socialism within the framework of liberal democracy. As for direct or soviet democracy, the terms and concepts remarkably have disappeared.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how the Revolutionary Socialists entered the arena of electoral contests. The Revsoc, an orthodox Marxist organization, emerged in the early 1990s with a firm anti-parliamentary ideology, an ideology they preserved until the turn of the third millennium.

³¹⁹ For the 2005 conference's programme, see "Ayam Ishtirākiyya – 2005," 18 February, 2005, www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=31961 ; The 2007 conference "Ayam Ishtirākiyya 2007," November 21, 2007, revsoc.me/-25564 ; for the conference in 2009, see "Ayam Ishtirākiyya Tahta Shi'ar: Azmatuhum wa Badiluna," September 26, 2009, revsoc.me/-14543

³²⁰ "Nahwa Harakah Sha'biyya Demokratiyya Min Ajl Al-Taghyir [Towards a Popular Democratic Movement for Change]," April 18, 2010, Statements, revsoc.me/-23437.

Chapter Five

The small organization began growing in early 2000, and found participating in elections to be an arena for struggle and more expansion. While clearly stating that elections and assemblies would not bring change, the organization chose to participate, a position it took in 2005 and sustained for at least another six years, despite the regime's severe repression and forgery. Becoming involved with the broader democratic movement helped push the Revsoc into the framework of liberal democracy, but the main incentive was the organization's interest in recruitment and propagating its ideas. It could be said that this was only a tactical moderation, without ideological engagement; yet, it resembles the dynamics of many moderation models, which were triggered by political incentives and turned over time to democratic habituation. This moderation, nevertheless, did not last long enough to be established. The following chapter will demonstrate how the Revsoc de-moderated, revived direct democracy proposals, and divorced from formal politics after the revolution, a period of wider inclusion and political openness. Such a fall back, I argue, is attributed to what the Revsoc saw in free and fair elections as undermining their revolutionary discourse and organizational existence.

Chapter Six

Inclusion and Anti-Parliamentarianism: The Revolutionary Socialists in the January Revolution

Within a few weeks of Mubarak's overthrow on February 11, a democratic transitional roadmap was established between the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) and the political forces, and a timetable was scheduled for parliamentary and presidential elections and a constitutional assembly. Restrictions on party formation were lifted, and constraints eased. Registered parties tripled from around 20 before the revolution to over 60, and political activism flourished. Private media outlets blossomed, and freedom of expression reached an unprecedented high. The SCAF, which succeeded Mubarak's rule, stood on a temporary and conditional legitimacy to coordinate the transition. In many ways, the two-and-a-half years following the revolution represented a period of inclusion which sharply contrasted with the previous era. This sudden and immense political opening shaped the attitudes of political forces differently.

As soon as March 2011, political forces began to split into roughly three main orientations. One spearheaded by the Muslim Brothers (MB), and joined by other Islamist parties including a few leftists and liberals, heavily supported the roadmap and fought to keep the elections on schedule. The orientation was represented by the *Democratic Alliance*, an electoral alliance co-founded by the MB's Justice and Freedom Party (JFP) and included the Nasserist Dignity, the liberal Ghad al-Thawrah, besides other Islamists and socialists. The liberal Wafd and Salafi Noor parties were part of the alliance but withdrew later due to disputes over seat shares, but generally remained in favour of the electoral direction. To this orientation, the electoral process offered a feasible and decent exit for the military rule and a legitimate way to pass authority over to civilians. Not surprisingly, this orientation was also motivated by its electoral strength. These forces were either confident of their mobilization capacity or gambled on riding with strong ones. Despite the MB's attempt to diversify the alliance, it could not escape its Islamist stigma. A counter coalition to thwart the Islamists was subsequently formed—the *Egyptian Block*, led by the Free Egyptians party, founded by the billionaire businessman Naguib Sawiris, which included the leftist Tagammu and the liberal Egyptian Social Democratic parties. The Egyptian Block alliance represented an orientation of secularists, Copts, and Mubarak remnants [*fulūl*] who also endorsed

the roadmap led by the SCAF, but, fearing Islamist domination, sought to prolong the transitional period, keep the military establishment as long as possible, and empower it to take a larger role in post-Mubarak politics. This orientation included many secularist figures who were critical of Mubarak's regime before the revolution and tolerated an MB opposition that challenged Mubarak's authority and his party's monopoly in parliament. Nevertheless, they found the post-revolution openness too inclusive and an Islamist majority too much to tolerate. This orientation represents the pro-state side of the secularist spectrum as discussed in chapter one. Their trajectory resembles much of the dynamics and reasons for Tagammu's shift in the early 1990s, where political openings led them to de-moderate in a statist direction. Tagammu's case has been addressed earlier in this thesis; other scholars also addressed the liberals' and leftists' authoritarian diversion in post-revolution Egypt. Therefore, this orientation falls out of the scope of this chapter.³²¹

A third orientation I focus on here is the anti-state secularists, represented by youth groups usually identified as *Shabab al-Thawrah*—the youth of the revolution or the revolutionary youths. How they perceived the post-revolution inclusive conditions, and how they chose street over formal politics, remains understudied. As their label suggests, many were among the frontline of the revolution from its early days. They were comprised mainly of non-Islamist youths, leftists and liberals disillusioned by older generation secularists and their long-standing support for the military. They also included some ex-MB youths who were frustrated by the MB's bureaucracy and opposed its step towards forming a political party. MB youth and activists who were also on the revolution's frontline and fraternized with the youth movement during the last decade were in a difficult position after Mubarak's fall, trying to reconcile between their brothers and youth comrades. They stood on many occasions beside their secular counterparts in streets and squares and, during elections, stood around ballot boxes beside their brothers—thus analytically they were closer to the first orientation. For them, with some reservations, the MB

³²¹ For analysis on Secularist support for the military in the Egyptian revolution, see Talal Asad, "Thinking About Tradition, Religion, and Politics in Egypt Today," *Critical Inquiry* 42, no. 1 (2015): 166–214; See also Dalia F. Fahmy and Daanish Faruqi, *Egypt and the Contradictions of Liberalism: Illiberal Intelligentsia and the Future of Egyptian Democracy*, Studies on Islam, Human Rights, and Democracy (London, England: Oneworld, 2017); Michele Dunne and Amr Hamzawy, "Egypt's Secular Political Parties: A Struggle for Identity and Independence," 2017; Amr Hamzawy: *Anti-Democratic Deceptions - How Egyptian Liberals Endorse Autocracy*, 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=15kz9CVRFHg.

remained a strong and functioning organization still offered an organizational framework for Islamist activists. For secularist youth activists, they had no other choice. Firmly distancing themselves from the second orientation secularists, they established a third orientation which tried to play down ideological sentiments and build a coalition based on the “demands of the revolution”: bread, freedom, and social justice.

The revolutionary youth orientation consisted of numerous groups which were small, divided, and lacked organizational and financial resources. Unlike the first two orientations, the revolutionary youth groups did not materialize into competing political parties nor a successful electoral alliance. One attempt at an alliance was the Revolution Continues Alliance [*Taḥāluf al-Thawrah Mustamirra*], which consisted of smaller alliances: the Socialist Popular Alliance Party (SPA), the Egyptian Alliance Party, and the Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution, besides other smaller post-revolution parties. The Revolution Continues Alliance did not do well in the 2011-2012 parliamentary elections. It won only 1.57 per cent of the popular vote which secured eight seats— seven seats were allocated to one party, the SPA, which dominated the alliance. The SPA was formed after the revolution and was led by ex-members of Tagammu, a veteran generation of leaders and MPs, considerably older and relatively more experienced in electoral politics than their youth allies.³²² The electoral pathway was thus rocky for the youth groups. As the elections approached, youth groups at the bottom of this electoral alliance stopped showing up at electoral campaigns and around ballot boxes and opted for extra-parliamentary ways for political activism.

The Revolutionary Socialists (Revsoc), the case study of this chapter, fell into this revolutionary youth category and are a fair representation of the orientation. The Revsoc were tied to a larger network of counterpart youth groups. At some point, these bonds developed into alliances, the Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution, for instance, and the Coalition for Socialist Forces, who then joined the SPA, the Egyptian Communist Party, the Egyptian Socialist Party and

³²² Leaders of the SPA included Abdul-Ghaffar Shukur, Midhat al-Zahid, former MP Abul-Izz al-Hariri and Khalid Ali— both ran for presidency.

others.³²³ These alliances did not live long, as each group seemed to compete for recruitment and leadership to maintain its autonomy; however, their stance was generally harmonized. Tens of statements and petitions throughout the revolution documented in the Revsoc's archive were collectively written and co-signed by a long list of movements.³²⁴

There is no evidence to assume that the revolutionary youth groups essentially held anti-parliamentarian or anti-institutional ideologies. They ideologically stemmed from Egyptian secular traditions (Nationalists, Nasserists, Leftists, Liberal), which for long had championed formal politics. As for the Revsoc, their ideological background offers a partial understanding of their overall anti-parliamentarian tendency; however, it falls short in explaining their strategic and tactical choices in different conditions. Even in its most anti-parliamentarian vein, Marxism keeps an open door for participation under certain conditions, which can lead to a full acceptance of representative democracy. There are enough examples of Marxist parties around the world that found their way to electoral contestation under capitalist or semi-authoritarian regimes.³²⁵ The Revsoc and the secular youth did, however, have a negative view of the traditional parties that dominated representation in the secular spectrum. The youths' main issue with these older generation secularists was their loyalty to and support of the regime, which negatively stigmatized the secular spectrum for years. Trying to flip this image, secular youths kept a safe distance from state institutions, being wary of any pathway that could lead to co-optation.³²⁶ Co-optation here means the regime's strategy to undermine challenging movements by absorbing them to work with the state without giving them real advantages, thus discrediting them as agents for change.³²⁷ In a pre-revolution Egypt, where Mubarak, for most of his tenure, masterminded

³²³ "Five Socialist Parties Unite to Impact Egyptian Politics," Ahram Online, November 16, 2018, web.archive.org/web/20181116034626/http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/11855/Egypt/Politics-/Five-socialist-parties-unite-to-impact-Egyptian-po.aspx.

³²⁴ To name some of prominent groups: Youth Movement for Justice and Freedom, the National Front for Justice and Democracy, People's Committees to Defend the Revolution, Revolution Youth Union, Socialist People's Alliance Party, Lotus Revolution Coalition, Youth of the National Association for Change, Revolutionary Youth Coalition, Revolutionary Forces Alliance, Coalition of Egypt's Awareness Movements, Musharakah Movement, The Second Egyptian Revolution of Anger, People's Revolutionary Committees, Abbasiya is not a Hospice [*Tikiyya*], Awareness party. See for example this joint statement, "Let us rally in front of the Parliament, end the rule of the military, and prosecute the killers," February 4, 2012. revsoc.me/-14701.

³²⁵ See for example Przeworski and Sprague, *Paper Stones*.

³²⁶ See the discussion in chapter five on the Revolutionary Socialists' view of the Tagammu party and mainstream Egyptian leftists.

³²⁷ Markus Holdo, "Cooptation and Non-Cooptation: Elite Strategies in Response to Social Protest," *Social Movement Studies* 18, no. 4 (2019): 444.

co-optation strategies, formal politics or any non-confrontational interaction with the state became associated with co-optation. This fear of co-optation was primarily felt by secularist youth. Islamists generally did not share this feeling, as their mother organization (the MB) maintained autonomy and showed considerable resistance to co-optation attempts. The secular youth seemed aware of what social movement scholars suggest, that small political groups with fewer resources and organizational skills are more exposed to co-optation.³²⁸ Lacking strength for electoral contestation and avoiding co-optation partially explains how the revolutionary youth adapted themselves to extra-parliamentarian activism.

Puzzling, however, is not only the *extra*-parliamentarianism but the *anti*-parliamentarian direction the revolutionary youth took after the revolution, delegitimizing the transitional roadmap and accordingly delegitimizing the electoral and institutional ramifications. The revolutionary youth were generally an extension of the youth movement politicized during Mubarak's last decade. These youth were part of the broader opposition movement that supported parliamentary participation and aspired for a constitutional democratic republic. Taking an anti-parliamentarian pathway in a period of inclusion presents the empirical puzzle of this chapter. The Revsoc's trajectory followed this pattern. As shown in the previous chapter, under Mubarak's repression, the Revsoc supported and participated in parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005 and 2010, played down direct democracy proposals and lined their discourse with liberal democracy. How did they de-moderate after the revolution when political conditions was incomparably free?

I argue that the free conditions after the revolution presented organizational challenges to the Revsoc. A perspective emanating from the literature, bridging Organization Theory with SMT and that can also be linked to Moderation Theory, suggests that social movements are small forms of organizations which rationally behave and mobilize their resources.³²⁹ They calibrate the tension between their (sincere) causes and commitments and their organizational goals to

³²⁸ Ibid, 445; see also Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

³²⁹ John L. Campbell, "Where Do We Stand? Common Mechanisms in Organizations and Social Movements Research," in Gerald F. Davis et al, *Social Movements and Organization Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 41–68.

survive and maximize their influence. The Revsoc, in addition to many other revolutionary groups, has lived up, though in a fundamental way, to organizational levels— at least by having administrative structures, headquarters, creating websites and Facebook pages, publishing pamphlets and newsletters, and most importantly, establishing credible names. The Revsoc for instance has a periodical newspaper, a small head office in Giza, and a politburo, in what seems a structure of a political party. These youth groups built up political capital through years of struggle against Mubarak, gained momentum during the 18 days they occupied Egyptian squares and became the centre of politics. The transition from a revolutionary situation to a democratic one meant transferring political legitimacy from the streets and squares of the revolution to elected bodies and institutions. By moving to the transitional phase, the youth not only lost the spotlight and their legitimacy but were also pressured to demobilize their primary resources: the revolutionary discourse, tools and repertoire. Such mobilizational resources were developed over many years to undermine a political system, not build one.

What revolution?

Categorically specifying what kind of revolution the January 25 revolt was, and what kind of political opening occurred afterwards, is crucial in evaluating the events throughout this period. The minor change in power structure after Mubarak's leave, and the tragic return of the authoritarian regime three years later, led many observers to avoid calling it a revolution, using instead lower-rank terms like an uprising, a *refolution* (as a middle way between reform and revolution), a coup (against Mubarak), or “a revolution that wasn't”.³³⁰ Nevertheless, those who called it a revolution were not wrong. Unlike the classic paradigm of “social revolutions,” which are long-lasting, involve violence, and seek legitimization thorough social and economic transformation, late transitology scholarship proposes that contemporary revolutions are relatively non-violent, negotiated, short-term, electoral, and modest in their change in power and social and economic achievements.³³¹ In this regard, Charles Tilly proposes a little-demanding

³³⁰ John Keane, “Refolution in the Arab World,” Open Democracy, April 28, 2011, www.opendemocracy.net/en/refolution-in-arab-world/; Alaa Bayoumi, “Illumination of the scenes of the Egyptian army's coup against Mubarak,” (Al-Arabi Al-Jadid, January 25, 2011), www.alaraby.co.uk; “The Revolution That Wasn't,” *TIME Magazine*, July 9, 2012. Front cover. content.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20120709,00.html.

³³¹ For literature on the classic model of “social revolutions,” see Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge: University Press, 1979). For late literature based on late 20th century revolutions, see Sharon Erickson Nepstad, *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century*, Oxford Studies in Culture and Politics (Oxford: University Press, 2011); George Lawson, *Negotiated Revolutions: The Czech Republic, South Africa and Chile* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Samuel P. Huntington, *The*

definition of a revolution where its outcome is “the displacement of one set of power holders by another.” Accordingly, a popular upheaval that results in a change of parliament or cabinet power-holders is thus within the boundaries of a revolution.³³² In this sense, calling January 25 a revolution reasonably describes the events and direction Egypt took until mid-2013.

In more precise, Tilly distinguished between what he called a *revolutionary situation* and a *revolutionary outcome*.³³³ A revolutionary situation is when a mass and intense uprising claims sovereignty and challenges the legitimacy of an existing regime. A successful revolutionary outcome usually takes the form of a convened roadmap promising to hand over power to elected civilians— a democratic transition. Therefore, it is analytically useful to break Egypt’s two-and-a half-years of revolution into two phases: the revolutionary situation which refers to the three weeks from 25 January 2011 until the SCAF’s declaration of a roadmap in the second week of February, and the democratic transition which followed until the military coup.

In a revolutionary situation, the standing constitution and political laws lose their authority. Revolutionaries wage a non-regulated struggle, mobilizing their maximum strength to undermine as much as possible of the regime’s power and impose, as much as they are able, new rules. The claims of the revolution in this episode are high. Revolutionaries are, or intentionally appear, too ambitious and sound to be fighting a zero-sum game. By adopting this attitude, they set the ground for new rules, ultimately constituted in negotiation with the regime itself, or its remnants, as well as other parties. The revolutionary situation usually settles without achieving all the protesters’ demands— the regime does not entirely fall, and social conditions do not satisfactorily improve. A negotiation occurs at an equilibrium point where the regime steps back and makes concessions (sacrificing the heads of the regime and promising a new democratic system) that cool down the popular rage, and the revolutionaries feel that they can achieve no further gains. In the new phase, a regulated struggle within a legal framework continues between

Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century, Julian J. Rothbaum Distinguished Lecture Series ; v.4 (Norman ; London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1978); Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*.

³³² Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*. 193

³³³ Ibid. 189-222; Neil Ketchley employed the term revolutionary situation to refer to the early episode of the Egyptian revolution, see *Egypt in a Time of Revolution: Contentious Politics and the Arab Spring*, Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 5.

the remnants of the regime and the revolutionaries—who now become either an opposition or participant officials in the state. This phase which starts as a “democratic transition”, could become a long or continuous process of democratization.³³⁴ The first phase is temporary and short because it is exhausting and high costly for all parties: the regime, the revolutionaries, and the people, who respectively exhaust their maximum repression capacity, mobilization resources, and patience. Each phase is a different game and has different tools and strategies. In the first phase, it is mainly strikes, sit-ins, demonstrations, and civil disobedience; in the second, it is party politics, elections, journalism, and court battles. Some tools of the revolutionary phase could—or should—continue into the transitional phase; nevertheless, political contestation becomes mainly institutional.

In a revolutionary situation, not all political forces which succeed in mobilization necessarily succeed in maintaining their pivotal role in the following phase. In most cases, the democratic actors who lead the scene in the streets and squares are not the same actors who later lead the democratic transition. As Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan note, revolutionaries in the revolutionary phase are mainly civil society members, including individuals and self-organizing groups and movements autonomous from the state. They are mainly non-professional politicians and are not skilled in formal politics. Official parties and politicians could participate in the revolution by acting as revolutionaries, not as members of the political society. Civil society at best “can destroy a non-democratic regime. However, a full democratic transition, and especially democratic consolidation, must involve political society.”³³⁵ Extra-parliamentary activism after that should not and is not expected to disappear. The role of civil society remains crucial for consolidating democratic transitions and deepening social demands; however, the leading actor of political contestation becomes the political society.³³⁶ Democratization scholars tend to advise

³³⁴ According to Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, a democratic transition is complete “when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government *de facto* has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies *de jure*.” Following a democratic transition is a period where democracy is a process of consolidation. See *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. (Baltimore; Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

³³⁵ Ibid, 8.

³³⁶ A classic liberal approach would regard civil society as a dependent pro-democratic sector that checks on the state to prevent its monopoly. A Gramscian account in contrary would view civil society under an authoritarian regime as an extension of the state and shaped by it. The latter account provides strong empirical evidence from the status of civil society which was totally co-opted under Nasser, in particular, and to a less degree under Sadat and

demobilization while the transitional roadmap is on track and remobilization to preserve the deals in case of a setback.³³⁷ However, they also recommend the autonomy of civil and political societies for a healthy democracy. Linz and Stepan further note the “danger” of democratic groups located in civil society stepping into the development of a political society, carrying a moralistic aversion to “conflict,” “division, and “compromise,” which are intrinsic to the political realm, and pushing forward normative preferences and styles of organization suitable for civil society.³³⁸ The long semi-authoritarian legacy in Egypt did however blur the boundaries between civil and political societies. Official political parties over the past decades functioned mostly as newspapers and social activists, and many social movements stepped up acting as political parties. The MB’s success in both social activism and elections was rather a confusing model for observers and other Egyptian movements across the spectrum.

At the end of the revolutionary situation and the beginning of a democratic transition, not all revolutionaries retreat to their civil society field. Being politicized throughout the revolution, many groups aspire to pursue their political roles. This describes youth social/political movements like the Revsoc, which sit somewhere between civil and political society and seek to upgrade to larger and more organized political parties. These youth movements, however, were not ready for formal politics and found it hard to adjust their discourse and tools to its rules. They were confident of their capabilities as revolutionaries, and it worked. They succeeded in toppling the head of the regime and gaining a large number of adherents through revolutionary activism. This position encouraged them to continue to purge the entire regime, keep expanding their organizations, and refrain from departing the revolutionary situation— *The Revolution Continues*.

Mubarak. The two views can be reconciled. Later liberal transitologists acknowledge that authoritarian states do attempt and succeed in controlling civil society, however, civil society is not necessarily malleable. It usually tends to resist and can turn against the state at any opportunity. Gramsci also believed that the state’s hegemony over civil society is not guaranteed nor inevitable. His call for a counter-hegemony indicates that civil society is a battle zone between the state and pro-democracy movements. Civil society is thus hoped to be emancipated and won by the latter. New middle-way approaches also argued that civil society is not homogeneous and that social movements are part of it, thus marking the democratic struggle within between those who pledge for change and others who resist.

³³⁷ Ibid, 9-10

³³⁸ Ibid, 9-10, 82

The Revsoc in the revolutionary situation: Exploring the boundaries of the 25 January uprising

No Negotiation Without Leaving.

In a disgusting scene we saw a group of those who call themselves the opposition go to negotiate with the regime. We saw them talking to thugs under the portrait of the tyrannical dictator... These negotiators betrayed the slogan of the revolution and betrayed the revolutionaries... We say to those who negotiate with the regime before leaving, you do not represent the revolution... Stop trying to sell our precious blood, otherwise we will consider you enemies of the revolution and we will demand that you be tried as well... How can we negotiate with the regime on the overthrow of the regime? The revolutionaries raised a clear and self-evident slogan: no negotiation before leaving. ... Our task now is not to compromise, negotiate and retreat, but to escalate and stand firm until they leave...

Down with the regime, down with Omar Sulaiman. ³³⁹

The Revsoc were among the first youth groups to call for marching down to Tahrir on January 25th. According to the conventional narrative, it was a call to challenge the celebration of Police Day, when the police earlier beat to death Khalid Saeed, a 28-year-old activist from Alexandria. However, their call to Tahrir was clearly influenced by the recent revolution in Tunisia which celebrated its victory with the departure of its long-standing dictator.³⁴⁰ As the events in Tunisia were still unfolding, Egyptian revolutionaries were not yet sure how far they could go with their revolution. The departure of Ben Ali, however, made it conceivable for Egyptians to imagine Mubarak leaving. Despite the looseness of the revolution's popular chant, *the people want to bring down the regime*, the first and primary target of the revolution was Mubarak. That included his family and very close associates and bodies directly under his command— his cabinet and his party. If there was another governmental body that the revolt wanted to bring down, it was the police (including the Central Security Forces and the Homeland Security) which was the face of

³³⁹ "No Negotiation Without Leaving: The statement of the Revolutionary Socialists," February 7, 2011. revsoc.me/statements/l-tfwd-qbl-lrhyl/

³⁴⁰ The statement of the Egyptian national forces: "The Night Must Vanish.. The Chain Must Be Broken - Together on January 25 under the slogan (Justice - Freedom - Citizenship)," January 21, 2022. revsoc.me/statements/23036/

Egypt's repressive regime and the one that brutally clashed with the protesters. Mubarak and the police *were* the "regime" the people chanted and protested during the days of Tahrir, calling for their overthrow. There was an implicit consensus among most protesters that other regime apparatus could be dealt with later. There was also a conventional conception that the uprisings would eventually lead to negotiation with someone on behalf of the regime, though it should not be before the departure of Mubarak. Ideally, for hardliner protesters, the revolutionary uprising should attempt to topple as many as possible of the corrupt elements in the regime before sitting down to negotiation. The Revsoc's discourse was violent and sharply polarising as would be expected to be in a revolutionary situation.³⁴¹ However, as their statement four days before Mubarak's exit indicates, they were inevitably expecting a negotiation to go ahead. They named two targets though, "the regime," which contextually referred to Mubarak, and his vice-president Omar Sulaiman. In an earlier statement, *The People Want to Bring Down the Regime*, the Revsoc specified their demands: the ousting of Mubarak, the dismissal of Nazif's cabinet, the dissolution of parliament, and the formation of a new government.³⁴² These demands were not directed into a vacuum, they were implicitly addressing a standing authority which could carry them out—either the judiciary or the army. Overthrowing the entire bureaucracy of the regime, however, was not expected nor conceivable for them.

Hour by hour during the revolutionary episode, the revolutionaries re-examined the boundaries of the revolution, the stamina of the protesters and the people's mood; and most crucially, the regime's resilience. In the sequence of events, protesters clashed with the police on the 25th and 28th of January. As the people's response to the call on the 25th was higher than the police expected, the protesters won the day by reaching Tahrir, destroying police stations, and forcing police forces to retreat. The confrontation resumed on the 28th, the "Friday of Anger". As a result of the meaningful victory on the first day, the people's response to the call this time was more than the security forces at their maximum capacity could handle. All police security forces were deployed, including the Central Security Forces. The number of protesters was enormous, the security forces were at their utmost capacity and brutality, and the day was the bloodiest, at the cost of hundreds of martyrs among the protesters. People flowed into the streets, unstoppable,

³⁴¹ See for example "Draw the Weapons and Follow Them," January 25, 2011. revsoc.me/-21162

³⁴² "The People Want to Bring Down the Regime," January 25, 2011. revsoc.me/-16983

and many security force troops were disabled. Before the end of the day, army tanks and APCs (Armoured personnel carriers) began to be deployed in the streets, leaving their barracks for the first time since the 1977 uprising.³⁴³

At least, at that time, the Egyptian Army had widespread respect among large segments of the populace. It enjoyed a broadly perceived image as the protector of the country and the maintainer of homeland security. Although the military establishment is arguably the heart of the Egyptian regime, the generals succeeded in maintaining this positive image, avoiding a direct clash with the people, leaving the repressive and coercive work to other apparatuses. The Army's deployment in the streets evoked mixed feelings of fear and admiration among the protesters. It is not known even today what orders the armed soldiers were given. However, their neutral presence led the protesters to chant for the Army— *the people and the Army are one hand*. In one way or another, the SCAF succeeded in preserving the image of the military institution, containing the popular demands, and bringing the revolutionary situation to its end. On the other hand, the protesters succeeded in neutralizing the soldiers and winning them over to their side. As some scholars argue, this “smart” move to “fraternize” with the armed forces, tactically or spontaneously, was crucial to achieve the goal of overthrowing Mubarak and avoiding further suppression.³⁴⁴ Imagining alternative scenarios, there was no reason to exclude the possibility of a brutal military reaction as happened with the Libyan and Syrian armies, or as with the Egyptian army later in 2013. The protesters succeed in stopping on the right line. The army removed Mubarak and his family on February 11, the SCAF became a defacto interim authority, and the revolutionaries cheered for the army and declared the revolution a victory. This moment was the equilibrium point between the revolutionaries and the regime. Now was the time for negotiation and politics.

The legitimacy of the roadmap

Two days after Mubarak's removal, the parliament was dissolved. Two days later, on February 15, the SCAF declared the suspension of the constitution and the formation of a committee for constitutional amendment, headed by Tariq al-Bishri, a jurist who enjoyed cross-ideological acceptance. The committee was entitled to propose a temporary revised version of the previous

³⁴³ Neil Ketchley, *Egypt in a Time of Revolution*. 46

³⁴⁴ “Fraternization” in *ibid*, 46-77

constitution for the transitional period, amending specifically the constitutional articles related to presidency, political parties, and elections to ease political participation and assure free and accessible elections.³⁴⁵ The committee's proposal was to be ratified by a referendum.

The SCAF's initiative to assign the committee was apparently a democratic step, but also a move to legitimize its authority. Its removal of Mubarak, followed by its proactive initiatives in proposing a transitional roadmap, were popularly met with acceptance and submission to its authority. However, the SCAF's rise to power marked the first fragmentation of the political forces into the three orientations mentioned earlier. In the MB's evaluation, the military still enjoyed popularity and internal stability therefore it did not want to risk a direct confrontation. It chose to take the Turkish route of de-militarizing the state and keeping-in with the army as long as it was responsive to democratic demands. Major secularist forces also endorsed the roadmap and seemed comfortable and secure with the army's presence to balance the Islamists' power. They had concerns about the committee's proposed amendments but eventually submitted to its legitimacy.

The revolutionary youth were hesitant about accepting the roadmap and questioned the army's authority in leading the political scene after Mubarak. The transitional roadmap meant the end of the revolutionaries' role, leaving them feeling marginalized between the army and the larger political parties. The Revsoc denounced Islamist and secularist forces for "betraying the masses" and only being concerned "about democratic change over social demands." One reason for opposing the roadmap was that it synchronized with calls for the workers to be "patient" and defer industrial action. That roadmap was "a desperate attempt by the government, the army, and political groups" to put down the revolution and "dismantle the revolutionary momentum" [*tafkik az-zakham al-thawri*].³⁴⁶ The Revsoc wanted to push the boundaries of the revolution by making further demands. They declared that the regime had not yet fallen, and would not until the

³⁴⁵ Proposed amendments to Article 76 have eased the requirements for presidential candidacy. Amendments to Articles 77 and 139 limit the president in office to two terms of four years, and compel him/her to assign a vice-president. Other amendments empower the judiciary to supervise elections and rule on the matter of parliamentary membership. The committee also proposed that the first elected parliament commission a constituent assembly to draft the new constitution. See "Factbox: Proposed Changes to Egypt's Constitution," *Reuters*, February 26, 2011. www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-constitution-changes-idUSTRE71P28520110226.

³⁴⁶ "Why Do We Reject the Constitutional Amendments," March 14, 2011. revsoc.me/statements/22229/

departure of Shafiq's cabinet and "Mubarak's generals" (the SCAF), and meeting the urgent demands of the workers.³⁴⁷

The Revsoc's cry had little resonance where the popular majority chose to walk in the way of the roadmap. The dilemma the Revsoc faced was that the democratic pathway was apparently open, and political participation seemed widely accessible. Besides, the army appeared responsive to many of the revolutionary demands. The army dismissed Shafiq's cabinet on March 3, after popular pressure to topple Mubarak's last government, and a more acceptable one was assigned under Isam Sharaf.³⁴⁸ The demands for holding the revolution's criminals accountable also appeared on track with the start of the trial of Mubarak and his sons on April 19. It could be argued that the SCAF's responses were nominal and carried no true democratic intention. But apparently, it went on to play the electoral game and responded to some major demands in that direction, thereby it succeeded in preserving its position. The red line for the SCAF, however, was the military establishment itself.

In this state of affairs, political forces across the spectrum rushed to establish parties as soon as the end of February, and preparation for the coming elections became the country's dominant theme. In line with this, the Revsoc internally discussed several options which included forming a legal political party of their own or joining others, namely the SPA. They settled on having their own and declared setting up the Workers' Democratic Party (WDP) [*Hizb al- 'Ummal ad-Dimuqrāti*] ten days after the roadmap declaration, and put forward the first draft of its electoral programme.³⁴⁹ The party was inaugurated by Kemal Khalil in Tahrir square on the first of May—International Workers' Day.³⁵⁰ The party was to represent the workers through industrial

³⁴⁷ "Workers' Demand in the Revolution," February 21, 2011. revsoc.me/statements/23216/; See also "Confronting Mubarak's Generals: The People and the Soldiers Are One Hand," February 21, 2011. revsoc.me/-14580; "Committees to Defend the Revolution Until the Fall of the Regime," February 22, 2011. revsoc.me/-14584.

³⁴⁸ Sharaf's ministry was generally met at the beginning with popular acceptance. Sharaf previously served as minister of transportation in 2004 and resigned after a year, objecting to the government's mismanagement. He went to Tahrir during the revolution and supported the demands for Mubarak's ouster. See "Isam Sharaf," Al-Jazeera Net, accessed May 30, 2022, www.aljazeera.net/encyclopedia/icons/2014/11/6/عصام-شرف.

³⁴⁹ "Workers' Democratic Party Programme Draft- Under Establishment," February 25, 2011.

revsoc.me/statements/22189/. Many following statements by the Revsoc were written under the party's name.

³⁵⁰ "The Declaration of Establishing the Worker's Democratic Party in Tahrir Square," May 1, 2011. www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/128926; "the Workers' Democratic Party: An Establishing Manifesto," May 1, 2011. revsoc.me/statements/22237/. I suggest that the idea of establishing a party was internally disputed.

struggles and through “legislation and over-sight in the parliament,” in a “parliamentarian republic, where the freedom of political parties and syndicates are maintained, and all governmental bodies are elected.”³⁵¹ Also, as the first referendum approached, the Revsoc “call[ed] on the workers of Egypt to go to referendum boxes and vote ‘no’ to the proposed amendments.”³⁵²

The Revsoc however remained reluctant to abide by roadmap procedures. After the results, the Revsoc stated that “revolutionary legitimacy” outweighs “the paper legitimacy”, and the “revolution will never be a paper in a box.”³⁵³ Out of a 42 per cent turnout, over 77 per cent favoured the constitutional amendments, and under 23 per cent opposed them. Proponents of the amendments generally were the large forces with strong mobilization confidence. They were, despite their rivalry, the MB, the Salafis, and ex-NDP (National Democratic Party) members. Conversely, the opponents were the minority forces, which included traditional secularist parties and secular youth revolutionaries. Apart from the sectarian sentiments that accompanied rallying for the referendum, the main driver behind the vote was the electoral capacity. As for the opponents, their declared reasoning for opposing was similar. Both traditional secularist forces (like Tagammu, al-Wafd, and National Association for Change) and youths (like the Revsoc and the Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution) argued that the revolution had overthrown the 1971 constitution. Therefore, an entirely new constitution was required, not an old amended one. Nevertheless, the two sides of the secularist spectrum suggested different ways of drafting a new constitution. Secularist parties mandated the SCAF to declare an interim constitution or form a constituent assembly before elections.³⁵⁴ Revolutionary youths who also demanded an entirely new constitution contrarily opposed any role by the SCAF in the drafting process.

Throughout the transitional period, a trend under Kamal Khalil’s leadership took some different stances from other Revsoc leaders.

³⁵¹ Ibid; “On Workers’ Day, We Affirm: Our revolution Continues,” May 1, 2011. revsoc.me/statements/22233/

³⁵² “Why Do We Reject the Constitutional Amendments.”

³⁵³ “With All Due Respect to the Result of the Referendum.. The revolution Will Not Become a Paper in a Box,” March 20, 2011. revsoc.me/-21124 ; See also “Revolutionary Legitimacy and Paper Legitimacy,” April 29, 2011. revsoc.me/statements/21108/ .

³⁵⁴ Hammam Sarhan, “Constitutional Amendments in Egypt Between Supporters, Opponents and Reserved,” SWI swissinfo.ch, March 17, 2011, accessed May 30, 2022, www.swissinfo.ch/ara/.

However, the Revsoc's proposed way to draft the constitution was ambivalent and ran in a circular sequence. In several statements, the Revsoc suggested "a new constitution derived from the revolutionary legitimacy not from the SCAF," "a new constitution written by the victorious revolutionaries," or "electing a constituent assembly that drafts a new constitution for the country before any elections are held."³⁵⁵ Details on how the elections should be regulated and supervised were left unaddressed. Proposals on managing the transition and choosing an interim authority were no less ambiguous. At various times since the commissioning of Sharaf's cabinet, the Revsoc protested that the government should resign and called for the "formation of a revolutionary government, in which the revolutionaries participate in choosing its ministers."³⁵⁶ In another statement, they called for "an immediate return of the army to its barracks and handing over power to an elected civilian presidential council to complete the tasks of the transitional period."³⁵⁷

The revolutionary youth claimed a moral right for the revolutionaries to possess authority and determine the way of politics after Mubarak. The Revsoc portrayed January 25 as a social revolution, and proposed that the industrial strikes were the crucial factor in bringing down Mubarak. In their analysis, the revolution was an escalated extension of the chain of strikes in Mahallah since the mid-2000s. Demonstrations in streets and squares that dominated the revolutionary scene lasted for over two weeks yet failed to bring down Mubarak, but the workers' strikes did. "Mubarak was not toppled in Tahrir, but in workplaces."³⁵⁸ In some debates with the MB, the Revsoc argued that the MB's guiding models for the Egyptian revolution were the East European and Indonesian revolutions in the 1990s "which toppled dictator regimes and reproduced the same ruling elites". But January 25 does not belong in this category of revolution

³⁵⁵ "No for the Constitutional Amendments," March 8, 2011. revsoc.me/-14590 ; "Why Do We Reject the Constitutional Amendments."; Combined Statement, "Why We Return to Tahrir on the 27th of May," May 23, 2011. revsoc.me/-14611 .

³⁵⁶ "Resignation or apology," March 15, 2011. revsoc.me/-14594.

³⁵⁷ "Only Civil Disobedience Can Impose the Will of the Masses," July 9, 2011. revsoc.me/statements/22765/

³⁵⁸ *Podcast 11 | An Interview with Journalist and Activist Hossam Al-hamlawy*, 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsepGaE8e6Y. Opposing this proposition, See also "Al-Mahallah Workers were the First to Overthrow Mubarak and will be the First to Overthrow his Regime," *Jarīdat al-Ishtirāki*, April 7, 2012. 1-2. Ketchley argues that the divisive factors for Mubarak's ousting were the protesters' violent clashes with the police which caused a malfunctioning of its repressive capacity, and then the fraternization tactics which neutralized the armed soldiers. These happened during the first week of the uprisings. Industrial strikes were uncoordinated and small in number, and only began escalating after February 7— too late to be particularly crucial, See *Egypt in a Time of Revolution*. 159-160.

and should not be guided by it. “The compass of the Egyptian revolution is not these uncompleted revolutions usually known as the democratic transition revolutions. The compass of the Egyptian revolution is the great mass revolutions in modern history, the French and the Russian, and that was clear from the first 18 days of the [Egyptian] revolution.”³⁵⁹ The intensity of strikes even increased after Mubarak, in February and March, to reach unprecedented heights, which enhanced the Revsoc’s belief that they could continue toppling “small Mubaraks” by general strikes and maintaining the same level of demonstrations.³⁶⁰

Several times during the transitional period, the Revsoc tried to repeat the revolutionary scenario. One of their main attempts was on November 18 and the days following. At that time, the relationship between the MB and the revolutionary youth was going through a sticky patch, and their cooperation had stalled. The rift between the secularists in general and the Islamists reached a new level after the July 29 *millioniyya* (one-million-person demonstration)—the Friday of Popular Will and the United Front. The call was initiated by the Islamist forces in response to what was known as the Silmi Document—a document named after the Deputy Prime Minister Ali al-Silmi, stipulating supra-constitutional principles that granted the SCAF complete financial and political autonomy. At that time, the document was a draft being brandished and entertained by the Egyptian media and some secularist forces. The supra-constitutional principles threatened Islamists in two ways. Politically, it hinted at the SCAF’s intention to breach the roadmap and remain in power. Ideologically, Islamists were offended by what they saw as an undemocratic attempt to devalue the elected assembly. Salafi forces were among the vociferous callers for the demonstration. Many non-Islamist parties besides the revolutionary youths welcomed—or even initiated—the call to stand against the document, but on condition that the Islamists raised no Islamic chants. On the day of the *millioniyya*, which was meant to “unite the popular front,” secularist forces were surprised by the large Salafi turnout, chanting and raising Islamic banners supporting Shari‘a.³⁶¹ Consequently, secularist forces left the square, condemning the Islamists’ breach of the deal, thereafter calling the day the Friday of Kandahar. The event was damaging to the MB’s image and cross-ideological relationships. It had no other way but to join the

³⁵⁹ “Let Us Oppose the Counter-Revolution’s Constitution,” December 14, 2012. revsoc.me/statements/22904/.

³⁶⁰ *My Interview with Hossam Al-hamalawy*, February 12, 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPN0UkSUAgg.

³⁶¹ Stéphane Lacroix, *Sheikhs and Politicians- Inside the New Egyptian Salafism*. Brookings Doha Centre Publications. 4

Chapter Six

condemnation of the slogans and criticize the Salafis. The MB and Salafi stances were compatible earlier in the constitutional amendments' referendum, and both intended to run the elections together under the banner of the Democratic Alliance. However, after that, a split in the Islamist spectrum widened, and the Salafis eventually left the alliance, later forming an *Islamic Alliance* with other Islamist forces a few weeks before the elections. As for secularist revolutionary youths, the MB's condemnation of the events did not seem strong enough, and they lost them too.

In an unusual turn of events, the two sides called for a *millioniyya* on Friday, November 18 — The Friday of the One Demand. Further to the results of the constitutional referendum, the MB did not mobilize in the streets to its full capacity. It did not want to overuse street mobilization as long as the transition process was on track. MB groups occasionally joined protests for social demands and the prosecution of the old regime members, including on July 29 when they mobilized en masse against the SCAF, but there was no official decision at the leadership level to mobilize. The Friday of the One Demand was one of the few times the MB's leadership called upon all their members to demonstrate. The call to mobilize came after the official issuance of the Silmi-document in November, a few days before the parliamentary elections, when parties were expected to be busy rallying for it. The document's publication at this time showed a serious reluctance on the part of the SCAF to hand over power to civilians. In response, the MB went down to Tahrir with its Gazette, headed "Egyptians return to Tahrir to defend the gains of the revolution."³⁶² The demands were precise: revoking the supra-constitutional principles and pledging to hand over power to an elected government before July 2012.

As the MB and their Islamist allies went to Tahrir to protect the transition, the revolutionary youths went there for another reason. For the Revsoc and their allies, Friday the 18th was a re-revolution. "Our demands today are our demands on January 25th. We are still struggling to overthrow the regime."³⁶³ On the eve of the demonstrations, the MB succeeded in getting the government to drop the Silmi document and obtain the SCAF's word to run presidential elections

³⁶² *Al-Hurriyya wal-Adala*, November 18, 2011. 1.

³⁶³ "25 January -18 November: The Revolution Continues," November 18, 2011. revsoc.me/-14672; See also "Political forces call for a *millioniyya* of the 'military step down' on Friday," Al-Masry Al-Youm, November 23, 2011, www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/128225.

on time and hand over power before July. However, since the call for the Friday demonstration has already been spread, the MB spent the day in Tahrir.³⁶⁴ At the end of the day, most political forces, the MB cadres included, left the square and went back to their electoral preparations. As for the revolutionary youths, along with a few other protesters, their demands were not yet met, and they chose to stay overnight in the square.

The following days became known as the events of Muhammad Mahmud Street, commonly described as a second revolutionary wave. Protesters' revolutionary demands and tactics, and the security forces' level of brutality against them, all resembled the revolutionary situation that had led to Mubarak's overthrow. Nevertheless, the events of Muhammad Mahmud Street differed dramatically in the number of protesters, only tens of thousands, and consequently differed in its unsuccessful outcome. On Saturday morning, the 19th, security forces stormed the protesters and coercively cleared Tahrir, to start a six-day clash with the protesters over occupation of the square. The protesters' central demand was the overthrow of the military council and to see an immediate power handover to a "civilian presidential council" before the upcoming elections.³⁶⁵ Trying to repeat the dynamics of January 25 and 28, protesters in November sought to handicap the security forces. Muhammad Mahmud Street, which witnessed most of the clashes, branches off from Tahrir square and leads 700 metres to Sheikh Raihan Street, where the main building of the interior ministry is located. Regarding the reason behind the presence on this site, protesters claimed they wanted to block the security forces from flowing into Tahrir. The narrative of the interior ministry claimed that protesters were marching to attack the ministry's building. The security forces placed concrete barriers on November 24 to block the protesters from moving in the ministry's direction. In either narrative, the concentration of events for six days on the street leading to the interior ministry building indicates that the protesters were not entirely in a defensive position. This time, the security forces not only outnumbered the protesters, but were re-organized, fully prepared, came with upgraded coercive weapons and tear gas, and were overly violent. More than just dispersing the protesters, the security forces' shots intentionally

³⁶⁴ *Al-Hurriyya wal-Adala*, November 23, 2011. 1.

³⁶⁵ "April 6: We Will Continue the Protest Until the Demands Are Achieved", *Alwafd News*, November 23, 2011, alwafd.news/الشارع-السياسي/125690-6-أبريل-سنواصل-الاعتصام-حتى-نتحقق-المطالب.

targeted heads and eyes in what seemed to be a testing and practising of their suppression capacity.³⁶⁶

Also, in a repeat of the January days, the protesters tried the same fraternization tactic with the army forces who arrived on the site. Trying to neutralize the soldiers, the protesters chanted “the people and the army are one hand.” Attempts to stratify the military were used several times in earlier protests in late February, April, and July in a disastrous demonstration that marched towards the Ministry of Defence. The “neutral” army forces who stood beside the people’s will to overthrow Mubarak had turned to violently crush any further protest against the SCAF. The Revsoc affirmed that they chanted “the people and the soldiers [*al-junūd*] are one hand against Mubarak Generals,”

and this chant basically meant that conscripts, officers, and junior officers, are the sons of this nation and come from its downtrodden and middle classes. They suffer the same forms of social oppression and class exploitation as the Egyptians. Thus, they will not accept to take up arms in the face of the revolutionaries, and they could even support the revolution at the right moment. Major Ahmed Shoman’s joining of the Tahrir revolution was the first indication of this position.³⁶⁷

This time, it did not work either. The armed forces joined the security forces to storm the demonstrations and jointly shot and beat the protesters. The events ended with a cabinet change— the dismissal of Isam Sharaf and the appointment of Kemal al-Janazuri, a previous prime minister under Mubarak. The protesters’ loss was huge, 70 were killed and 2000 wounded for no tangible gain. The SCAF remained in place and restored confidence in its suppression.

From anti-military to anti-Parliament

The week spent in Mohammad Mahmud Street clashing with the security forces also came at the cost of the revolutionary youth missing the parliamentary elections. The Revsoc argued that the

³⁶⁶ “Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights Investigations: Interior Ministry Bullets Aimed at Causing Permanent Disabilities among the Demonstrators,” Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, November 26, 2011, eipr.org/press/.

³⁶⁷ Down With the Military Council: Our Revolution Continues Until Overthrowing the Regime,” April 8, 2011. revsoc.me/statements/20333/; see also “In confronting Mubarak Generals: The People and the Soldiers Are One Hand,” February 21, 2011. revsoc.me/-14580.

November events made it impossible “to participate in the elections while the martyrs’ blood is still flowing by the hands of the same council that supervises them.” The Revsoc blamed the Islamists for leaving the square on Friday and went to the elections amid a revolutionary wave.³⁶⁸ Nevertheless, signs of the revolutionary youth’s determination to boycott the elections began to rise earlier in the autumn.³⁶⁹ That included youth groups who declared joining electoral coalitions earlier in the spring and registered official parties like the Revsoc’s WDP, indicating an initial will for participation. In a mass demonstration on July 8 (The Friday of Saving the Revolution), leftist revolutionary youth demanded a deferral of the parliamentary elections initially scheduled in September to give the new political groups time for preparation.³⁷⁰ The revolutionary youth succeeded in putting pressure on the Prime Minister to delay the elections until the end of November. As the elections approached, the revolutionary youth were evaluating their potential roles as political parties compared to their existing role as protesters. Despite their aspirations to pursue formal political roles, few invested time and effort to fulfil that. Street politics was more appealing with regard to their resources and massive success as protesters. The Revsoc’s investment in revolutionary discourse and mobilization in the streets and workplaces earned them broad adherents and supporters, and their activities became larger and busier. Their numbers multiplied after January 25 from tens of cadres and hundreds of members to hundreds of cadres and thousands of members.³⁷¹ By the time they mobilized in this direction, the idea of practising party politics was becoming unreconcilable.

As the parliamentary elections were approaching, it became more evident to the revolutionary youth that they would not fare very well in the elections and they became more afraid of losing their credibility in the streets. According to some members of the Revsoc, the project of the WDP failed, its founders and members withdrew and a few remained with Khalil.³⁷² The Revsoc since autumn had begun doubting the integrity of the elections, warning of “elections that would

³⁶⁸ “Towards a Revolutionary Council to Lead the Revolution,” November 26, 2011. revsoc.me/-14682 .

³⁶⁹ Marc Lynch, “Will Egypt’s Activists Boycott the Election?” *Foreign Policy* (blog), accessed June 8, 2022, foreignpolicy.com/2011/09/06/will-egypts-activists-boycott-the-election/.

³⁷⁰ Juan Ricardo Cole, “Egypt’s New Left versus the Military Junta,” *Social Research* 79, no. 2 (2012): 491. See also “July 8 millionyya to ‘save the revolution,’” Al-Ahram Gate. June 26, 2011. gate.ahram.org.eg/News/86889.aspx .

³⁷¹ Interviews.

³⁷² Interviews.

be the bloodiest and most fraudulent in the history of Egypt.”³⁷³ In early September, the WDP declared its withdrawal from the electoral race.

The Workers Democratic Party believes that the upcoming elections will take place within a political climate that is hostile to democracy and the workers’ demands for a fair distribution of wealth. This climate will inevitably result in the reproduction of Mubarak’s parliaments, which passed corrupt and privatization legislation... Our party announces:... No elections under the military rule, and no elections under fascist laws that are hostile to the popular masses.³⁷⁴

In the direction of delegitimizing the parliamentary elections, the Revsoc also turned to attack the participant secularist and Islamist forces which “colluded with the SCAF”, driven by “frenzy desire to infiltrate to the parliament,” and capture “narrow partisan gains.”³⁷⁵ The Revsoc’s language and attitude towards the forces represented in the parliament became no less hostile than their attitude towards the military regime and its thugs— both now being seen as counter-revolutionary partners. The parliamentary forces seemed to be even more threatening to the revolutionary youth than the military regime had been when it threatened the revolution, but the parliament posed an existential threat to the revolutionaries themselves. Using many expressions, the Revsoc revealed that fear from those “desperate for elections to delegitimize the revolutionary protests and displace it with the parliament legitimacy.”³⁷⁶

At the assembly’s opening session, the Revsoc mobilized to create an alternative parliament, announcing that “the people want the legitimacy from the Square [*al-Maidān*].”³⁷⁷ During the assembly’s first week, the Revsoc led several marches to “besiege the Parliament” and dictate

³⁷³ “The People Want to Continue the Revolution,” September 10, 2011. revsoc.me/statements/lshb-yryd-stkml-lthwr/ .

³⁷⁴ “No Elections Under the Military Rule and Under the Sword of their Courts,” September 7, 2011. revsoc.me/statements/22798/ .

³⁷⁵ “A Political Suicide for the Coalition of Colluding with the Military Council,” October 2, 2011. revsoc.me/-14659 .

³⁷⁶ “Egypt on the Path of the Revolution,” December 19, 2011. revsoc.me/-20978 .

³⁷⁷ “The People Want the Legitimacy from the Maidan,” January 26, 2012. revsoc.me/-14692 . The assembly’s opening session was held on January 23.

the demands of the revolution.³⁷⁸ In one sit-in in early February, youth movements listed their revolutionary demands, which included demanding that the Parliament “immediately purge the entire ministry of the interior,” prosecute all police and military officers accused of killing the revolutionaries, dismiss the attorney general, dismiss the new cabinet, and immediately hand over power to a revolutionary government before the upcoming presidential elections.³⁷⁹ While the demands wanted to push the nascent Parliament into a clash with the regime’s established apparatus, the revolutionary youth did not expect the Parliament to be able to do that.

In justifying the rationale behind this attitude, Sameh Naguib explains that the Parliament be overburdened with unattainable demands to show its limits and deficits to the people. In the wake of the electoral results, Naguib proposed a familiar tripartite categorization of the political forces: the revolutionaries, the counter-revolutionaries, and the reformists (the parliamentary parties). As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Naguib had held this taxonomy since the pre-revolution period under Mubarak. During that period of exclusion, the Revsoc’s approach to the reformists was to cooperate and engage with their struggles against the dictatorship. However, in the inclusive period after the revolution, the reformists became seen as an obstacle to completing the revolution’s social demands, thus must be targeted and exposed. “We want this Parliament to be under permanent siege of the masses to strongly pressure the deputies to achieve the demands. This will be the beginning of the people’s awareness of the limitations of the Parliament, and the limitations of the Ikhwan... These demands are an integral part of the process of exposing the reformist forces to the masses who voted for them.” The people’s disenchantment with the parliament, accordingly, would push them to seek an alternative parliament and pave the way for more inclusive alternative democracies.

We are at the beginning of the revolution, and the coming battles will determine the form of the real democratic alternative that the masses will create, not only an alternative to the old regime and the Military Council but also an alternative to the powerless Parliament.

As we are still at the beginning of the second year of the revolution, battles will erupt all

³⁷⁸ “Occupying the Companies and Besieging the Parliament is Our Way to Achieve the Workers’ Demands,” January 30, 2012. revsoc.me/statements/21355/ ; “Let us Rally in Front of the Parliament and End the Military Rule and Prosecute the Killers,” February 4, 2012. revsoc.me/-14701 .

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

over the country, strikes will continue, and labour and social protests will enter the heart of the battle.³⁸⁰

Calls to form “grassroot” [*qa ‘idiyya*] and “popular” [*sha ‘biyya*] councils” synchronized with the launching of the parliamentary sessions. Those councils were not to complement the Parliament but to “compete” and operate “away” from it.³⁸¹ Proposals on “direct democracy” and a “workers’ state” were revived at the beginning of the revolution’s second year after having been significantly downplayed since the turn of the Millennium. These themes began to run prominently through the Revsoc’s discourse and became foregrounded in their newspaper which speaks to a broader public.³⁸² The form and features of the “democratic alternative”, as Naguib suggests, will be determined later by the masses and shaped as they continue their revolution.

The Revsoc’s position towards the Constituent Assembly was consistent with their position towards the Parliament. Heated public discussions about nominating the Constituent Assembly members took place during March under a secularist-Islamist rivalry. In the negotiations between parliamentary forces, the MB’s Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) proposed that 60 per cent of the assembly be represented by members of Parliament, and 40 per cent by non-parliamentary technocrats and representatives of civil society, including al-Azhar and the Church, the military and the judiciary, youth movements, professional and trade unions. To minimize the Islamist parliamentary majority, secularist parties pushed for 70 per cent representation from outside the parliament, and the Salafis in contrast pushed for larger parliamentary representation. The negotiations settled on fifty-fifty, and the first Constituent Assembly was created on March 24.³⁸³ The Revsoc’s opposition to the constitution was declared before the formation of the Assembly. In a statement published on March 22, the Assembly was first regarded as illegitimate in principle since it was a consequence of an illegitimate process from the very beginning. The

³⁸⁰ Sameh Naguib, “The Revolutionary Socialists and the Initiative to Hand Over Power to the Parliament,” January 24, 2012. revsoc.me/-5660.

³⁸¹ Ibid; “The Strike is Our Weapon,” *Jarīdat Al-Ishtirākī*, February 10, 2012. 6.

³⁸² *Jarīdat Al-Ishtirākī*, January 25, 2012. 2, 9, 13, 14. See also Nasr Abdelrahman, “The Illusions of the Parliament,” *Jarīdat Al-Ishtirākī*, February 17, 2012. 3. An archive of al-Ishtirākī newspaper can be found here. revsoc.me/eshteraky/.

³⁸³ “Controversy continues in Egypt about the Constitution Committee,” Al-Jazeera Net, March 18, 2012, www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2012/3/18/جدل-مستمر-بمصر-حول-لجنة-الدستور; “Approval of Egypt’s Constituent Assembly,” Al-Jazeera Net, March 17, 2012, www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2012/3/17/إقرار-الجمعية-التأسيسية-للدستور-مصر.

main point against the assembly, though, was that it was dominated by elitist members, writing a constitution for the vast majority of people they did not represent. This committee

will only write what preserves these elites' interests and control over the levers of power and wealth in the country. In this committee, the owners of the capital will determine the rules of the relationship with the worker, the rights of poor patients will be determined by the owner of the private hospital, the rights of education by the owners of private schools, the rights of the poor peasants by the landowner, the rights of the Copts by the fundamentalist Islamist, and will talk about equality by those who believe that women are 'awra [intimate]. In this committee, representatives of the Military Council will decide their role in the coming period without affecting their political authority or dominance over half of the country's economy.

What constitution will this committee promulgate? By virtue of the ones who wrote it, it is a constitution with no legitimacy before it is issued.³⁸⁴

The Revsoc kept away from secularist-Islamist polarization and viewed this ideological division with moral antipathy, portraying it as a conflict between two sides from the same elitist class. And despite the assembly's "diverse appearance", it only represented the privileged. The Church and the Coptic businessmen in the assembly thus did not represent the Coptic protesters killed in Maspero, the elite women members knew nothing about the suffering of the poor and oppressed women in the country, and those members from the "yellow [governmental]" Trade Union did not represent the workers.³⁸⁵ In accordance with this stance, the Revsoc showed no significant opposition to the SCAF's constitutional declaration in June to dissolve the Parliament, considering it a "military coup [against] political forces who are voracious for power."³⁸⁶ Morsi's later attempt to repeal the SCAF's declaration and retrieve the Parliament was met with questioning on whether this "aims to increase the Brotherhood's share of power." The SCAF's effort to abort the revolution thus could not be confronted by restoring the Parliament but by "moving the battle from closed-rooms and courtrooms to streets, factories and universities."³⁸⁷

³⁸⁴ "Who Writes the Constitution?" revsoc.me/-14722 .

³⁸⁵ "Despite the Military Coup, the Revolution Continues Until the Fall of the Regime," June 14, 2012. revsoc.me/-14762 .

³⁸⁶ Ibid

³⁸⁷ "Statement on the Revolutionary Socialists' Position on the Return of the Parliament: Yes to Delegitimize the Military Rule," July 11, 2012. revsoc.me/statements/21516/ .

Against the state, against the Islamists

By this time, with the beginning of Morsi's presidency, the deteriorating Revsoc-MB relationship became irreversible. The once ally against the state became its first opponent, and the motion "sometimes with the Islamists, always against the state" stalled as the MB itself became the state. Even through fair elections, the MB's approach to power had been met with scepticism. Such doctrinal scepticism from the state and power has been embedded in sectors of the Egyptian democratic movement, which had been kept excluded for decades and came to perceive themselves only as an opposition. The secularist-Islamist polarization at that moment could have played a role in the Revsoc's enmity towards the MB, but their attack on leftist and liberal parties for their approach to power as well, indicates that the Revsoc's attitude would not differ much if a non-Islamist party were in the MB's position.

The MB came to be portrayed identically to the military and the *fulūl*, "two sides of one coin," and Morsi was framed as Mubarak. In many statements, the Revsoc accused the MB of maintaining its subordinate relations with Washington and Israel, continuing the same neoliberal policies, and refraining from prosecuting the generals, thus reproducing the same old regime.³⁸⁸ The Revsoc's stance provoked a reaction from the MB in their newspaper, accusing them of creating chaos and disrupting the democratic transition. Some brothers advocated fighting back and not yielding to their pressure. Others under the direction of Mohammad al-Beltagy tried to keep the relationship with the Revsoc until the end of 2012. MB members like al-Beltagy had an old comradeship with secularist youths that dated back to the mid-2000s and enjoyed credit for being in Tahrir on day one of the January revolution. This credit did not last long, as MB-Revsoc relations worsened when the MB left Tahrir square on the eve of the parliamentary elections. In the November events on Mohammad Mahmoud Street, al-Beltagy with a group of Islamists went back to the streets to stand with the protesters. He was remonstrated by some revolutionary youth, who accused the MB of betraying them, and was forced to leave the square.³⁸⁹ As a

³⁸⁸ Naguib, "The military and the Ikhwan are Two Faces of One Coin: the American Dollar," January 21, 2012. revsoc.me/-5614; See also "The revolution Enter's a New Phase," July 24, 2012. revsoc.me/-14769; "Power and Wealth for the People," *Jarīdat al-Ishtirāki*, January 18, 2012. 3; "Down with Mohammad Morsi Mubarak," October 11, 2012. revsoc.me/-14794. "Down with The Ikhwan and Fulūl Alliance," August 31, 2012. revsoc.me/-14778.

³⁸⁹ For an anti-Beltagy account see Alaa Azmi, "An Ikhwani Betrayal in Muhammad Mahmoud," Mubtada, November 22, 2014. www.mobtada.com/cases/2583823; See also for a pro-Beltagy view "Al-Beltagi to the

member of the Guidance Bureau and deputy head of the FJP, al-Beltagy was, in the end, a man of the Muslim Brothers. As a previously member of Parliament, he was also a man of formal politics. His stances had to oppose protesting movements at some point, including his criticism to the surrounding of the Ittihadiyya Palace. Al-Beltagy tried to restore relations in July 2012 when he chaired public consultative round tables to draft the constitution. The Revsoc turned down his invitation to the Shura Assembly [Upper House] to participate in the discussions, calling it a “consultative show.”³⁹⁰ The MB’s initiative was met with mistrust among the revolutionary youth. Many came to believe that members like al-Beltagy were playing the *good cop*, and just as in Mubarak’s regime, the MB was now using co-optation strategies. As one activist put it, “al-Beltagi are one of the Ikhwan messengers, which the *Jamā‘a* sends” to “flirt with the *maidān* [Tahrir square], ...woo the youth [and] ride the wave.”³⁹¹

The Revsoc seemed to apply its stratification tactic, pressuring Islamist activists and youth to take sides. They simultaneously spoke proudly about Salafī workers who stood bravely at the picket lines and controlled their workplaces during the strikes while Islamist parties were busy with the political process. Some hope at the beginning was placed on revolutionary Islamists, where the Revsoc tried to highlight Hazem Abu Isma‘il’s anti-SCAF position and sympathize with his exclusion from the presidential race.³⁹² Revolutionary salafis were unhappy with the MB’s gesture to the SCAF and fulūl forces, and had many reasons to de-legitimize the transitional process after the exclusion of their presidential candidate. A portion of Islamist youth did distance themselves from the MB and joined the revolutionary youth, however, revolutionary salafi and left-wing Islamist parties and groups eventually bandwagoned with the MB.

From the beginning of 2012, the MB was deemed a counter-revolutionary force, and the Revsoc declared their intention to overthrow the MB’s president before Morsi was nominated. At the time when Kharait al-Shater was to be the MB’s candidate, Naguib firmly believed that the MB

Brotherhood, Commenting on the Events of Muhammad Mahmoud: The Revolutionary Youth Have the Right to Anger, and we Must Review Our Position,” Sada al-Balad, November 19, 2012. www.elbalad.news/679331 .

³⁹⁰ “The Revolution’s Constitution is to be Written by the Revolutionaries,” July 9, 2012. revsoc.me/statements/21539/ .

³⁹¹ Azmi, “An Ikhwan Betrayal in Muhammad Mahmoud.”

³⁹² See “The Massacre Council Should be Tried,” May 3, 2012. revsoc.me/-14743 ; “Towards the Inauguration of the Second Egyptian Revolution,” April 16, 2012. revsoc.me/statements/21527/ .

candidate was a consensual one who had approval among the generals, the businessmen, and the US policymakers.

The candidate of the counter-revolution, whether it was consensual like Khairat al-Shater or not... we must organize against him the largest possible campaign to persuade the masses not to elect him by all possible propaganda and incitement means. The revolutionary forces must unite to work to bring down the Brotherhood's and the military's candidate. And even if we fail to bring him down, the first revolutionary battle will be against that new president.³⁹³

Despite their determination to bring down the candidates of the counter-revolution, the Revsoc did not show support for any other presidential candidate. As the first round approached, the Revsoc declared, "In the Presidential Elections: We Support the Revolution and its Objectives." Broad popular participation in the elections pressured the Revsoc to show engagement with the elections and avoid declaring an explicit boycott. "Our position now and always will be wherever the masses are... our duty is not to leave or rise above the masses, and engage with the struggle by exposing the candidates of the military and MB's alliance."³⁹⁴ But the Revsoc declared no support to any candidate. Three days before the presidential elections, Wael Khalil, a Revsoc member, declared his support for Abdel-Mun'im Abul-Futuh. The Revsoc disowned Khalil's declaration, stating that his choice did not represent the movement which did "not stand behind any candidate, since the candidates associated with the revolution did not agree on nominating one of them."³⁹⁵ In the second round, where the military candidate appeared to compete with the MB, the Revsoc made the point that they were facing "two enemies", and tried to convince their cadres to prioritize bringing down Shafiq in the elections, and to bring down Morsi later. It was a choice between a "general which will send tanks to confront the masses, and an opportunist's oscillatory Brother who could be pressured from below and exposed to his audience."³⁹⁶

³⁹³ Naguib, "Military and Brotherhood Marriage: Where to?" *Jarīdat al-Ishtirāki*, April 7, 2012. 3

³⁹⁴ "In the Presidential Elections: We Support the Revolution and its Objectives," *Jarīdat al-Ishtirāki*, March 30, 2012. 2

³⁹⁵ "Clarification Regarding Colleague Wael Khalil," May 22, 2012. revsoc.me/statements/21015/.

³⁹⁶ "Down with Shafiq, Down with the New Mubarak," May 28, 2012. revsoc.me/statements/16946/; see also "To the Comrades: On the Statement of the Second Round of the Presidential Elections," June 4, 2012, revsoc.me/-14473.

A few days after Morsi took office, the Revsoc started mobilizing against the president and supported a workers' protest in front of the Ittihadiya Palace.³⁹⁷ Within a week of his presidency and after intending to make his first foreign trip to Saudi Arabia, the Revsoc declared: "we will challenge and expose Muhammad Morsi and his brothers for their concessions and appeasement to the military and the remnants of the old regime, their hostile social program to the masses' interests, and in their submission to the Gulf monarchs and to their masters in America and Tel Aviv."³⁹⁸ And in less than two months, the Revsoc chanted the first "Down with Muhammad Morsi."³⁹⁹ The prompt critical stance toward the MB president indicates the mutual mistrust that started earlier, from the March referendum, when the two parties split to compete over two different post-Mubarak pathways.

Many moves and decrees by Morsi were promptly interpreted as counter-revolutionary or a Brotherhoodization of the state. These included decisions that looked compatible with the revolutionary demands. One example was the dismissal of Sami Anan and Muhammad Tantawi, the two senior generals in the SCAF. Since Morsi's arrival in office, he was surrounded by the old regime powers, the SCAF and the Constitutional Court. The new president had to confront the court's interference which began with dissolving the Parliament and first Constituent Assembly, besides other constitutional declarations which arguably compromised Morsi's authority. In a strike back on the SCAF, Morsi consigned Anan and Tantawi to retirement, downgrading them as presidential advisers. He honoured them for their "invaluable services to the nation" in what seemed to be a safe exit for the two generals, and replaced them with younger officers. While some forces celebrated this move, the Revsoc did not seem comfortable. In a statement that addressed the Revsoc's stance on this issue, Morsi was condemned for honouring the "killers" and protecting them from prosecution. "If Muhammad Morsi had promised retribution for the blood of the martyrs, then these are the killers who stood before him, honoured and awarded them the highest decorations, instead of prosecuting them for killing the

³⁹⁷ "Workers' sit-ins Surrounds the Presidential Palace," July 8, 2012. revsoc.me/-14768.

³⁹⁸ "The Revolution Enters a New Phase," July 8, 2012. revsoc.me/-14769.

³⁹⁹ "No to Silencing.. No to Imprisoning Journalists.. Down with Mohamed Morsi Mubarak," August 23, 2012. revsoc.me/-14777. The chant comes with a court's decree to detain the Editor of al-Dustur Newspaper after accusing the newspaper of promoting that Morsi manipulated the elections, and that he is selling Saini to the Palestinians.

revolutionaries.” The Revsoc also opposed replacing the generals with others, instead of dismissing the entire Military Council, believing that the newly assigned generals were associated with the Brothers. “Sorry, Morsi, the revolution did not call for replacing the military by the military, nor the fulūl by the Ikhwan.”⁴⁰⁰

Another example was the dismissal of the attorney general, Abdelmajid Mahmoud. Mahmoud’s dismissal came after a court decision on the “camel day” case, acquitting the officers accused of killing the protesters during the demonstrations against Mubarak. In the Revsoc’s response to the dismissal, the attorney general was not mentioned. The president was fervently attacked for taking over 100 days in office to dismiss him, giving him the time to acquit the killers, thus, “the martyrs’ blood is on Morsi’s neck.”⁴⁰¹ Two days after the dismissal, the Cassation Court abolished Morsi’s decision and restored Attorney General Mahmoud. The court’s decision provoked a large-scale outrage, but the Revsoc’s fire once again targeted Morsi, stating that restoring Mahmoud can only “reveal the nature of the alliance between the Brotherhood and the Mubarak state institutions... Morsi’s regime proved its seriousness in reconciling with the repressive institutions of the judiciary, the Ministry of the Interior, the armed forces, the intelligence services and others, whatever the costs... Down with Morsi and Abdulmajid.”⁴⁰² Thus, Morsi seemed unable to gain the Revsoc’s trust, and the Revsoc did not want to grant it whatsoever.

The Revsoc’s third way to June 30

The Revsoc were the first, in August, before any other forces to chant for overthrowing Morsi. At the end of 2012, the demands for Morsi’s ousting were widespread. Of course, Morsi’s opponents were not only the Revsoc, but different coalitions of secularist forces, the fulūl, and revolutionary youth movements, besides broad popular sectors, and the Revsoc carefully tried to position themselves in the pure revolutionary way and not to blend with counter-revolutionary forces. On November 22, after Morsi’s constitutional declaration, secularist figures and parties formed the National Salvation Front. Its main demands were Morsi’s departure, urgent

⁴⁰⁰ “No Safe Exit for the Military Killing Council,” August 14, 2012. revsoc.me/-14774 ; See also Anne Alexander, *Bread, Freedom, Social Justice Workers and the Egyptian Revolution*. (London: Zed Books, 2014). The ‘Brotherhoodization’ of the state? 304-310.

⁴⁰¹ “The Dismissal is Not Enough: The Martyrs Blood is on your neck, Morsi,” October 12, 2012. revsoc.me/-14795.

⁴⁰² “Down with Morsi and Abdulmajid,” October 14, 2012. revsoc.me/statements/ysqt-mrsy-wbd-lmjyd/.

presidential elections and a new constituent assembly. The rift between secularist parties and the MB had also been growing since the March referendum and while drafting the constitution. Feeling empowered by the military, secularists turned down the MB's calls to join the government, withdrew from the Constituent Assembly in mid-November, and hoped that the Military Council would form a new one.⁴⁰³ Since Morsi's election, the Court had interfered in dissolving the People's Assembly, the first Constituent Assembly, and repealing his dismissal of the attorney general. In an attempt to anticipate the Court's interference, the president's constitutional declaration secured the Shura and the Constituent assemblies from being dissolved, besides immunizing his decisions against the court's authority. The Revsoc's opposition to the declaration had by now become expected, calling it a "fascist dictator declaration that makes the president a new Pharaoh and grants him unprecedented divine authorities," and re-chanted for Morsi's ousting. Yet, the Revsoc became more aware of the *fulūl*'s chant to topple the president too, and that their discourse and endeavours sounded compatible with each other.

With its prominent counter-revolutionary components, the Salvation Front could not co-opt the revolutionary youth or gain their trust. Despite mutual objectives, most revolutionary youth groups kept a distance and sought to be distinguished. The Revsoc made it clear soon after its emergence that standing beside this Front is "a historic mistake" and "any alliance with these forces is a betrayal for the revolution."⁴⁰⁴ On April 12, 2013, a group of youth activists created the Tamarod [Rebellion] campaign, declaring a petition that aimed to collect 15 million signatures for an early presidential election by June 30. Tamarod was promoted as a grassroots movement initiated by non-partisan youths. Apart from the exaggerated claims, the movement gained a massive number of supporters and broad endorsement from youth groups and secularist parties in just a few days. Despite suspicious signs, the Revsoc found in Tamarod an ideal opportunity for a revolutionary front representing a *third way* between the MB and the *fulūl*. Tamarod's idea of collecting signatures equivalent to the number of votes Morsi had in the elections was "creative" and perfectly suited to the revolutionary legitimacy argument. "What is genuine and distinguished in this campaign, Tamarod, is that it stems directly from a popular

⁴⁰³ Dunne and Hamzawy, "Egypt's Secular Political Parties." 15-21

⁴⁰⁴ "A new Beginning for the Egyptian Revolution," November 28, 2012. revsoc.me/statements/23099/ .

initiative, and opens a space for revolutionary activism from below.” And “by collecting millions of signatures, it broke the MB’s mighty electoral machine which relies on ‘oil and sugar’ [metaphor for social service].”⁴⁰⁵ At the end of May, in their headquarters, the Revsoc declared they would join Tamarod, inviting its spokesperson Mahmoud Badr and two other co-founders to hold a joint press conference where they explained the campaign’s cause and ideas. “The founders of Tamarod are our comrades, and we are here to officially and clearly declare our strong support to this campaign,” said Haitham Mohammadain, a leading member of the Revsoc.⁴⁰⁶

In their assessment of the political scene during the few weeks leading to June 30, the Revsoc believed that the Tamarod movement would overcome the National Salvation Front, “When the Masses Arrive, the Fulūl Vanishes.”⁴⁰⁷ With the escalation of anti-Morsi mobilizations, the Revsoc’s plan was to get more people on their side and keep exposing the fulūl and deprive them of taking credit for toppling Morsi. While the Revsoc under Mubarak had criticized the unfeasible endeavour by some secularist groups to seek a third way and struggle in isolation against both the Islamists and the regime, they believed that the third way was now capable of fighting on two fronts. The huge momentum and media coverage Tamarod gained, and the claim of achieving over 20 million signatures seemed promising.

As for the Revsoc’s assessment of the military establishment, they saw it as vulnerable and in a defensive position, and the scenario of a military coup unlikely. In accordance with the premise that the MB was protecting the military by being a buffer against the revolutionaries, the Revsoc believed that the SCAF was unwilling to sacrifice its ally.

It was necessary for the Military Council to find a *madani* [non-military] rescuer who was able to absorb the revolution. And here came the deal with the Ikhwan: grant us a safe exit and preserve our privileges, and we shall grant you a peaceful transition and a share of

⁴⁰⁵ Ashraf Omar, “The Way to 30 June and Beyond,” *Jarīdat al-Ishtirāki*, June 20, 2013. Editorial; “On the Way for Continuing the Revolution.. The Revolutionary Socialists in Tamarrud Campaign,” May 19, 2013. revsoc.me/-14836

⁴⁰⁶ Akhbar al-Youm “Revolutionary Socialists Support Tamarrud Rebellion Campaign,” YouTube video, 5:26, May 29, 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=oracK-NDPOk ; Yaqin, “The Revolutionary Socialists: Tamarrud Movement will be the Beginning of f Morsi and his Clan’s Return into Prisons Again,” YouTube video, 4:50, www.youtube.com/watch?v=9R1JZz2uVPo.

⁴⁰⁷ *Jarīdat al-Ishtirāki*, June 30, 2013. 7

power. So, what are the military establishment's options? It either sticks to this deal with the Ikhwan and bets on their ability to pass this constitution, or turns against them [*yanqalib 'alaihim*]. But the second option is extremely dangerous for the leaders of the military establishment.⁴⁰⁸

When the 30th of June came, the Revsoc did not hesitate to call it a revolution. It was the revolutionary situation that they had tried to revive since the fall of Mubarak. On the eve of the coup, with the protesters taking over the MB's offices and provincial headquarters, the Revsoc saw it as a manifestation of direct democracy. It was "an unprecedented revolutionary situation against a failed president. A revolution that is taking over power and closing city halls and removing the MB governors, affirming the principle of direct democracy. For that we call workers and masses to form their popular councils in workplaces and neighbourhoods."⁴⁰⁹ The Revsoc was alarmed though by Abdulfattah al-Sisi's speech on July 1 reciting the SCAF's first declaration, but a military coup was still not expected. Instead, they feared a military deal with Morsi in which power would be handed over to the speaker of the Shura Assembly—Morsi's brother-in-law.⁴¹⁰ When the SCAF's second declaration was announced on July 3, Tamarod's leader Mahmoud Badr appeared behind al-Sisi, alongside Mohammad al-Barade'i of the National Salvation Front. Nevertheless, the Revsoc read the scene the same way they read the SCAF declaration that removed Mubarak. It was a revolution that *forced* the Military establishment to sacrifice the head of the regime in response to pressure from the masses, and in fear of the revolution's escalation to bring down the entire capitalist regime. And most remarkably, it was an act of direct democracy, not a coup. Naguib's comment on July 4 is worth quoting here.

The American and European bourgeois governments and media are trying to describe what is happening in Egypt as a mere military coup against a democratically elected president, a coup against the nominal democratic "legitimacy." But what really happened was that the legitimacy of mass democracy has overcome the nominal ballot democracy... What happened in Egypt is the pinnacle of democracy, the revolution of millions to a direct government overthrow. As for the military removal of Morsi, it was only a foregone result

⁴⁰⁸ "Let Us Oppose the Counter-Revolution's Constitution."

⁴⁰⁹ "Don't Leave the Squares... All the Power to the People," July 2, 2012. revsoc.me/-14842 .

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

after the military establishment saw that the masses had settled the matter in the streets and squares of Egypt. On July 3, 2013, Sisi did what Tantawi did before him [to Mubarak] on February 11, 2011, which was a submission to the will of the rebellious masses, not out of revolutionary fervour or patriotism, but out of fear of revolution. If Sisi did not interfere in removing Morsi, it would have turned into a comprehensive social revolution that brought down the entire capitalist state with its military commands.⁴¹¹

Similar to how they dealt with Mubarak's overthrow, the Revsoc urged the protesters to stay in the squares, continue their struggle against the military establishment, and resist the fulūl's attempts to "steal the revolution." They made it clear that they did not demand overthrowing the MB only to be replaced with the military. While cheers for the military's intervention were dominating Tahrir square, the Revsoc found themselves in a minority position, and their call to oppose both the MB and the military went unheard. The Revsoc could not attack the military without being accused of compromising their stance against the MB. Those accusations came even from the revolutionary youth movement, which was divided between celebrating the military's intervention and opposing it. Such division also occurred within the Revsoc, where a group behind Kamal Khalil left the movement to declare full endorsement of the military. Khalil accused his Revsoc fellows (namely Naguib, al-Hamalawy, and Mohammadain) of taking a dual stance which only made them "servants of the MB."⁴¹² With this sharp polarization, the Revsoc could hardly find the third revolutionary front that it hoped for.

Conclusion and post-coup revisions

This chapter explains how the Revolutionary Socialists paradoxically de-moderated through the most democratized period in Egypt's modern history. I showed in the previous chapter that the Revsoc's approaches under Mubarak's exclusion period were relatively more moderate. After the coup and the beginning of the ongoing exclusive period in Egypt, the Revsoc interestingly returned to a moderate pathway, expressing acceptance to negotiate with the military and willingness to support formal politics. It took several months for the military coup to unfold and for observers to absorb the scene. For the Revsoc, it was a matter of time to revise the idea of an MB-SCAF coalition and re-evaluate the capacity of the military establishment and the

⁴¹¹ Naguib, "Four Days Shaked the World," July 4, 2013. [revsoc.me/-11983](https://www.revsoc.me/-11983).

⁴¹² Kamal Khalil, 2014, Facebook, July 3, 2014, www.facebook.com/kamal.khalil.52/posts/744563162263111.

revolutionary front. After repressing the Islamists, the army soon began its crackdown on the leftist and liberal opposition. Three weeks after storming Rabaa and al-Nahda squares, Haitham Mohammadain, among other Revsoc members, was arrested.⁴¹³

By the time the presidential elections were held in May 2014, the military had suppressed all the opposition parties and eliminated any threat from the remnants of the revolutionary groups. The elections were more of a presidential referendum, and winning was determined for al-Sisi, who declared gaining 97 per cent of the popular vote. Given these conditions, it was surprising that the Revsoc encouraged participation in the elections and call for support for Hamdeen Sabahi. “Under the retreat of the revolutionary situation among the masses, the offense of the counter-revolution, the return of a more brutal police state, and laws restricting freedoms and constricting the labour movement, the presidential elections come while the counter-revolution seeks to finish off revolutionary forces... Therefore, the Revolutionary Socialists believe that participating in the elections, and not boycotting them, is the appropriate decision for the current political situation.”⁴¹⁴ Standing against widespread accounts that tended towards boycotting, the Revsoc argued that “revolutions can have middle solutions,” and that it is “dangerous” to believe that “the revolution is always in the street.”⁴¹⁵ Some arguments were based on Marxist reasonings and lessons from the Bolshevik revolution that support exploiting every possible margin and—quoting Lenin—contesting every possible election, even that of the association of funeral directors.⁴¹⁶

The Revsoc’s ceiling of demands had also dropped. The revolutionary demands, which once were a revolutionary government and purging of the ministry of the interior, morphed into releasing detained activists and the right to protest. “Yes, these are reformist demands,” argues one Revsoc member, but “the revolutionary way passes through partial reformist struggles.”⁴¹⁷ The concept of the revolution had also been redefined to be closer to the meaning of reform.

⁴¹³ “Freedom for the Rebellions, Freedom for Haitham Mohammadain,” September 6, 2013, revsoc.me/-14861.

⁴¹⁴ “The Revolutionary Socialist Statement Regarding the Presidential Elections,” April 27, 2014, revsoc.me/statements/23387/.

⁴¹⁵ Wassim Wajdi, “Why Will I Not Boycott the Elections and Elect the Reformist Hamdeen Sabahi?” May 7, 2014, revsoc.me/politics/24796/.

⁴¹⁶ Interview with al-Hamalawy.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

“The revolution, by definition, is a long and complex process, and not an overnight event. Rather... it is a process that consists of steps forward, backward and to the side, and considers the balance of power.”⁴¹⁸ Further revisions were published in the following years, showing Revsoc’s return to some pre-revolution convictions. In April 2014, Naguib republished his 2006 pamphlet, *The MB, a Socialist View*, where he called upon the leftists to align with Islamists and avoid struggling in isolation. In a later reflection on the Egyptian revolution, he self-criticized the movement’s call for a third way and mobilizing against Morsi on June 30. “The Revolutionary Socialists’ decision to go down [to the streets] that day was a result of miscalculation of balances of power.... And if we want to find the reasons for this mistake, in my account, it was over-optimistically revolutionary, and the influence of the anti-Ikhwan hysteria among the left.”⁴¹⁹ Al-Hamalawy later also stated that it is now reasonable to negotiate with the military establishment if that would ease restrictions and accept working within the margins if offered. “Despite that [he] personally would not do that, but he understand[s] the position of other dissidents if they do so.”⁴²⁰

This chapter offers an account of the circumstances in which opposition groups employ non-radical approaches for political change where democratic ones are possible. Contrary to the inclusion-moderation argument, the Revsoc’s case suggests that inclusion could de-moderate. Democratization in some cases could alienate insurgent groups which lack the capacity and will to capture new opportunities and the dynamics of electoral contestation, thus leading in anti-institutional directions. The new institutions and approaches that emerged in the democratized period could undermine those who enjoyed acceptance in the exclusion period. The Revsoc would have achieved meagre gains in the election and lost their street credibility if they had stepped into formal politics. Their electoral experiences in the parliament and student unions before the revolution were not pleasant. Their street politics activism was in contrary successful. The choice to remain as a protest movement was a rational one, taken under careful calculation. Declaring a political party in May 2011 indicates the Revsoc’s early hesitant intentions and approval for electoral politics. The Revsoc’s ideology per se thus does not explain their

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Naguib, “On the Left and the Stance Towards Political Islam and Counter-Revolution in Egypt,” January 22, 2016,

⁴²⁰ “Podcast 11 | An Interview With Hossam Al-hamlawy.”

behaviour. They did not boycott elections and call for a revolutionary government because they are Trotskyist Marxists. Like other ideologies, the Marxist tradition is rich and diverse and can be consulted to justify conflicting pathways. The role of ideas in shaping behaviours remains important. In many cases, a group's political behaviour could be predicated or explained by its ideological background. However, it is not singularly decisive. Between the edges of the *idealist* position, which states that ideas create the world, and the *materialist*, which states that ideas are the product of the world, I take the middle ground that sees ideas evolving and adapting to social and political circumstances.⁴²¹ An account that considers Organization Theory can explain that political groups could take approaches that prioritize their survival rather than achieving their declared objectives. A group's tendency to survive could be unintentional or in some cases justified as the group's survival is necessary for the cause. The pattern of the Revsoc resembles the case of many revolutionary youth groups in Egypt that come from different ideological backgrounds. In a possible political opening in the future, their moderation could depend on how they adapt to the dynamics of institutional competition and how they view their competitors.

⁴²¹ David Inglis and John Hughson, *Confronting Culture: Sociological Vistas* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2003).

Conclusion and Final Remarks

Much ink has been split on the issue of democracy and democratization in the Arab world. Missing the third wave of democratization and the unpleasant fate of the Arab Spring has put the region under scholarly examination, questioning almost every possible aspect, from cultural dimensions to rentier economy, the status of civil society, and the robustness of authoritarian regimes.⁴²² Among this large body of literature, a line of studies revolves around the role of local forces and vital social movements in the democratic process. It evaluates the extent to which such movements are democratic and how they become more democratic. While a special focus was given to the Islamists, little attention has been given to secularist parties.

The secular spectrum in Egypt is broad and diverse, and I argued that the ideological categorization of Egyptian secularists into liberals, leftists, Nasserists, and nationalists, does little to explain their attitudes. These categorizations had lost much of their significance since the late 1980s when the ideological rivalry turned to be between secularism in general and Islamism. These secular forces became divided on how to deal with the Islamists and thus how to deal with the state. An alternative categorization adopted here is based on the proximity to the state, splitting the secular spectrum into pro-state and anti-state. Accordingly, two Egyptian secular parties were chosen from two sides of the aisle—the Tagammu Party, which had enjoyed a close relationship with the state since the early 1990s, and the Revolutionary Socialists, which represented anti-state secularist forces.

The analytical approach used here to study the two parties was the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. Such an approach in the scope of Middle East studies has seldom been applied to non-Islamist actors. By introducing it to secular actors, moderation theories enter new horizons of cases and possibilities. This thesis studied the trajectory of the two secularist parties, examining their change of behaviour and discourse under exclusion and inclusion. For such

⁴²² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Touchstone, 1998); Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*, Revised second edition.. (London: Verso, 2013); Saadeddine Ibrahim, *Azmat Ad-Dīmuqrāṭiyya Fil-Waṭan Al-Arabi [The Crisis of Democracy in the Arab World]* (Centre for Arabic Unity Studies, 1984); Steven Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World,” *Policy File* (The Brookings Institution, 2007); Eva Bellin, “The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective,” *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (2004): 139–57; Joshua Stacher, *Adaptable Autocrats: Regime Power in Egypt and Syria*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020).

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examination, two long-durée period slots were chosen where each party was at its height of activity. These periods begin with political closure and end with opening. Tagammu Party was studied from 1975 to 1995, and the Revsoc from 1995 to 2013. I argued that the two parties were initially moderate; at the start of each time frame, their discourse fell in the range of representative democracy and behaviourally they were staunch advocates of democratization. They both, at some point, participated in elections and supported formal politics under the sovereignty of an authoritarian rule. The parties however de-moderated with political openings by the end of the time frame.

In the 1970s, the left was perceived as the main opposition force in the country. With the Muslim Brothers being under rehabilitation and the New Wafd self-dissolving within a few months of its re-emergence, Tagammu remained the only standing opposition party. Electoral participation in 1976 led the party leaders to compromise many aspects of the pre-party narrow communist appeal they had held in the 50s and 60s and adopt a new broad leftist programme which was more inclusive and plural. The party succeeded in uniting factions from different shades of Marxists, Nasserists, and social democrats, creating a broad progressive front. Such organizational and ideological unity was unprecedented in the leftist history of Egypt. The party expanded its branches across provinces and succeeded in recruiting tens of thousands of members. In its first electoral experience, Tagammu gained over eight per cent of the popular vote, which the party evaluated positively considering the level of Sadat's repression and the party's nascent experience and limited resources. Tagammu's MPs led the minority opposition block in the Assembly and fought against the state's economic and foreign policies, pushing Sadat to dissolve the assembly in 1979 after one day of debating the Camp David Treaty. The critical tone of the party's gazettes, *al-Ahālī* newspaper and *aṭ-Ṭalī'a* periodical led to their confiscation and invoked a harsh attack from the state. The party leaders were frequently harassed and arrested by security forces and attacked by state led-media outlets. In an assembly session, Sadat personally attacked Tagammu members, accusing them of atheism and disloyalty. This position disapproved the accusations from the other side of being a state-created party that is supportive of the regime. In its march against Sadat's repression, Tagammu fought for more political liberalization. In a break with the old vanguardist conception of democracy, their discourse in the 70s shows adherence to the principles of representative democracy, the assertion

of mass participation and stood for the inclusion of capitalist and religious parties. At that time, in the late 1970s, leftist forces still enjoyed momentum, and Tagammu had many reasons to perceive an opportunity to invest in the large leftist base. A slow cultural shift had been in progress since the 1970s and only appeared tangible in the late 1980s, with the Islamists' landslide gains in parliamentary and syndicalist elections paralleled with the decline of the secular leftist performance. The rise of a historical rival that the mainstream left viewed as reactionary and fascist channelled Tagammu's options to align with Mubarak, endorse his de-liberalization in the mid-1990s and co-operate with the state in countering "extremism."

The statist fate of the most prominent representative of the left and the stronghold of secular intellectuals opened the door for new secular forces to emerge and refresh the liberal and leftist causes. The Revsoc emerged in the mid-1990s as an anti-state Marxist group, trying to correct the image of the left, which was stigmatized by loyalty to the regime. The Revsoc's early writings in the 1990s read as sharply anti-parliamentarian, advocates for direct democracy and worker's soviets. These themes were remarkably downplayed at the cusp of the millennium when the Revsoc began to engage cross-ideologically with the broad opposition movement in the 2000s, which marched for democratization and constitutional reforms. Trying to secure a position within the movement, the Revsoc participated and supported parliamentary and presidential elections, and adjusted their discourse which sounded by the eve of the revolution in tune with the structure of representative democracy.

The political openings after the January revolution reversed the Revsoc's moderation and took them back in an anti-institutional direction. After taking a prominent role in the street alongside revolutionary youths during the days leading to Mubarak's ouster, the Revsoc felt alienated by the democratic transition, which only handed over the fruit of the revolution to large organized forces. Failing to adapt to the dynamics of formal politics and build a competing electoral coalition, the Revsoc sought to undermine the transitional process, delegitimizing the electoral outcomes, and called for the continuation of the revolution. They called for overthrowing the entire regime, purging all governmental institutions and down to workplace owners and CEOs. The Revsoc waged war against all the forces participating in elections and negotiated the

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transition with the military establishment. Challenging the elected Parliament, the Revsoc called for alternative grass-roots councils and a revolutionary government commissioned by the revolts.

Although the accuracy of the inclusion-moderation relationship generated a significant amount of debate, the general argument proved positive in countless cases, thus remaining a useful framework. Scholars who advanced the inclusion-moderation hypotheses did acknowledge that inclusion per se is not solely decisive, and tried to unpack the argument and tease out the mechanisms and inner variables. Intra-party discussions, negotiations and cross-ideological engagements, the role of party leaders, and doses of repression are all reasonable moderation effects. However, I argued that the political opportunity structure constructs the cornerstone in the dynamics of the moderation process. Political actors who lack the incentives or fail to perceive the opportunities of inclusion in the first place are unlikely to moderate via other moderation effects. The two cases of the Tagammu Party and the Revsoc counter the conventional inclusion-moderation relationship and propose an inclusion de-moderation hypothesis. They open the door to study scenarios where political openings pose a challenge or threat for opposition parties.

For both parties, their roles and organizational existence under inclusion were at stake. With the rise of Islamism, secularists in Tagammu's direction feared losing their status as the leading opposition and agents of change. In a way that reveals his organizational concern, Khaled Mohieddin justified Tagammu's participation in the 1990s parliamentary elections (when all opposition forces boycotted) as "a step to renew the party's activity and sen[d] vitality into its veins." The party's cooperation with Mubarak secured them five to six parliamentary seats in the 1990s and 2000s after being totally absent in the 1980s. It also gained them an assigned member in the Shura Assembly and other state positions. By using state platforms, leftists in Tagammu's direction pursued new intellectual roles as cultural critics and missionaries of enlightenment. As for the Revsoc, the democratic transition challenges their *raison d'être* as an organization with a revolutionary mission. By defending the revolutionary legitimacy, the Revsoc and other youth groups were defending their roles as agents of change. Institutionalizing political competition would hand over this role to elected bodies who would become the primary political actors, and downgrade street politics to secondary importance. This thesis suggests incorporating aspects of

Organization Theory into Moderation Theory. Looking at the organizational dimensions is one way to explain how political organizations (parties and social movements) respond to risks and disadvantageous conditions, how these conditions can reshape their ideas and strategies, and how sometimes their will to survive overcomes their initial goal for change.

One thing that remains to be explained is why Tagammu de-moderated in a statist direction while the Revsoc went the opposite way, downwards. An ideological factor could be a reason here. The threat Tagammu Party perceived was from a rival opposition force deemed an extremist outsider and alien to Egypt's political society and national movement [*al-ḥaraka al-waṭaniyya*], pushing the party towards resorting to state power to suppress it. As for the Revsoc, the threat was from an "insider," and a "reformist" force compliant with the military establishment, thus required a pure revolutionary front to confront them. Historical experiences could also play a role in influencing their choices. Tagammu's statist legacy in the 1960s could have eased their return later to cooperate with the state under Mubarak. Despite being expelled from the state in the early 1970s, the party members kept holding to their self-perception as statemen and policymakers. Even after two decades in the opposition ranks, Tagammu's way back to the state was thus familiar and a safe bargain. As for the Revsoc, they represented a younger leftist generation of the 1970s, who grew up in a period of exclusion. Their first interaction with the state met with repression and from then onwards they could only perceive themselves as an opposition. Lacking electoral capacity since their emergence made them invest in street politics and develop creative protest tools which seemed more feasible. The 2011 revolution and labour strikes opened a new avenue for recruiting and expand their street activism. The organization thrived in workplaces and squares, multiplied its membership, and gained more appeal than it would have done in neighbourhoods and around ballot boxes. The intensifying revolutionary atmosphere led them to overlay revolutionary sentiments and bet on popular mobilization. When free elections came, and appeared to undermine their role and discursive purity, their long protest experience and investment in street politics could only direct them in an un-institutional direction.

Limitations

The change in a group's behaviour and ideas cannot be attributed to just one or two factors. Although the organizational argument provides a reasonable explanation for the studied parties'

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general directions, pure materialist explanations do not encompass the complexity of social behaviour. One thing that could not be fully explained is the variation in the attitudes within each party. For instance, although Tagammu's decision to co-operate with the regime was backed by many leaders in the party, some leaders did not want it to be stark and unconditional. Hussein Abdulrazeq and Abdulghaffar Shukur were among some who preserved a critical tone against the state and refused state assignments. Some younger generation of Tagammu members would argue that it is the leaders at the top, especially Rif'at al-Sa'id, who are responsible for bringing the party into the arms of the regime, attributing this behaviour to the leaders' persona. Similar variations could be seen within the Revsoc. For example, Hossam al-Hamalwy and Sameh Naguib were more cautious of participation in elections than Kamal Khalil who was more willing to do so. Personal preference and moral commitments can play a role in steering parties' attitudes in countless and unpredicted directions, limiting the accuracy and generality of social theories. Another mystery is not knowing which factor is more decisive in shaping political behaviour and under what conditions each factor activates. When do ideological commitments and historical backgrounds withstand the inducements and threats of socio-political circumstances, and how far can ideas change with adaptations and concessions? Developing a hypothesis for these questions in further research would be a great contribution.

Much of the work in this study was on analyzing the events and discourses to draw an account of the parties' behaviour and ideology. Fact-checking is an easy task. But it is the discourse analysis that always risks misinterpretation, the more ambitious a study is in extracting what is behind the words. Texts and discourses analyzed in this study were translated and interpreted in the most conservative and conceivable manner, and behaviour was analyzed in the most reasonable way possible. The analyses do not claim to reveal deep intentions and wills, nor are they of this study's concern. In the political realm, as Abdullah al-Nafisi reiterates, what matters are the results. Wills, good or bad, are neither examinable nor important.

Another limitation is the difficult conditions currently in Egypt as well as most Arab-speaking Middle East countries. The years have been hard for Egyptian politicians and activists since the military coup, as well as for researchers on Egypt. With many of them being either imprisoned, dispersed, deceased, or not comfortable to speak, fieldwork was not possible, and few interviews

were conducted. During the time of this research between 2018 and 2022, the first rank of Tagammu founders died, Mohieddine, Abdulrazeq and Shukur, and younger representatives of the party today can hardly provide a primary testimony for the selected timeframe. A few interviews were conducted with people from and around the Revsoc, and there were more dialogues with youth activists in the revolution, virtually and in person. The rich archives and massive publications and online materials of the two parties were extraordinarily useful. However, a few more good interviews could have filled some remaining gaps and spared me long days mining the archives.

Prospects for future studies

The waves of the Arab Spring which crossed the Arabic-speaking Middle East from Bahrain to Morocco had its celebrators and resisters. The resistance by ancient regimes is reasonably understood. Puzzling however is the resistance from groups who are marginalized, minorities, and/or known for their democratic credentials. Some interesting cases demand a close examination of how they perceived the Arab Uprisings, how they evaluated their risks and opportunities in democratization, and how they are expected to respond to possible political openings ahead. One example I can think of is the Islamists in Bahrain: their case resembles the trajectory of pro-state liberals and leftists in Egypt. Contrary to most mainstream Islamists in the Arab world who celebrated the uprisings, the Bahraini Muslim Brothers [al-Islah] show an opposite pathway. Forecasting the win of the Shiite forces which arguably represent more than half of the population, the MB sided with the Sunni monarchy. In the Sunni Islamist narrative, the uprisings were sectarian and served an Iranian agenda. Despite their inclusion in parliamentary politics since the constitutional amendments in 2002, their moderation was restricted not only by their ties with members of the royal family but also by the presence of a stronger rival opposition. Al-Islah contested all three parliamentary elections before the uprisings: 2002, 2006, and 2010, achieving 17.5 per cent in the first two and then dropping to 5 per cent in the last one. The largest Shiite force, al-Wifaq Society, on the other side boycotted the first elections, then achieved 42 per cent and 45 per cent in 2006 and 2010 respectively. Al-Islah struggled to manage the tension between its conflicting priorities: political reform and protecting the country's "Arab Islamic [read Sunni] identity" from the "sectarian danger," whereas the

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democratic discourse of al-Wifaq appeared more consistent.⁴²³ A political opening in Bahrain would be more advantageous for the Shiite opposition and threaten the privileges of Sunni Islamists.

Another case in question is the Shiite block in the Kuwaiti Parliament, which unlike its Bahraini counterparts, stood to support the government during the mass demonstrations in 2011 and 2012. In Kuwait, where political participation legitimizes the emirate, the parliamentary contestation is simply between the opposition block which seeks to push the limits of participation and the “loyalists” (or royalists) who tends to back the government. The two sides equally share the parliamentary seats, and the Shiite block which stands on the loyalist side preserves roughly 16 per cent of them. The Shiite block is not homogeneous, however: for at least the last 20 years, seven out of eight Shiite MP’s have voted consistently with the government. Sectarianism in Kuwait is secondary and cannot fully explain the Shiite position. Both the opposition and the royal family share the same Sunni denomination and the same conservative and tribal characteristics. The opposition force generally shares more identity commonality and familial ties with the loyalists than the Shiite component does. The parliamentary experience in Kuwait goes back to 1962, and all ideological and denominational components have been included and incorporated in the political system for over 60 years. The Shiite force in Kuwait is thus one interesting case that calls for a closer examination of its position and preferences.

By focusing mainly on the Islamists, the Middle East inclusion-moderation literature examines large opposition movements which are widely seen as alternative forces to the existing regimes. Regarding their mobilizational superiority, the moderation literature tends to focus on the vertical interplay they have with the regime and neglect their horizontal interplay with other opposition rivals. “Attitudes towards democratization,” Huntington tells us, are based on complex calculations and variables. In one dimension, it depends on the interactions and power relations between the opposition and the regime, between the reformers and hardliners in the regime; and between the different opposition poles.⁴²⁴ One suggestion this thesis proposes is studying the minority forces’ behaviour in democratization or under liberalized autocracies,

⁴²³ Al-Islah Society, *Khitabuna Al-Fikri*, 2018. <http://www.aleslah.org/ar/post/publications/10021>.

⁴²⁴ Huntington, *The Third Wave*.

Chapter seven

especially where the opposition landscape is divided over foundational social and cultural matters. This study presents a case of a secular minority in a dominantly religious society and in competition with stronger Islamist forces. However, much of the inclusion de-moderation assumptions can apply to other minority forces. Minority forces in Arab majority countries could be ideological, as in the case of secularists or Islamists where they are a minority, racial like the Kurds and Persians, denominational like the Shiites, or religious like the Copts and Christians. How would they perceive the force in power, and the alternative opposition force, how would they respond to democratization, what are their options, and what determines their directions?

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