Davis

THE ISLAMIC IMPULSE

Edited by Barbara Freyer Stowasser

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28. Fortunately, Gellner's mechanical view of Muslim social forces is now receiving the severe criticism that it fully merits. See especially Geertz, "Conjuring with Islam," pp. 25–26, and also Jon Anderson, "Artful Dodging in the Anthropology of the Near East," forthcoming in the *Annual Review of Anthropology*.

29. On this delicate issue, one must take exception to the arch-empiricist, rank atomist stance of some contemporary anthropologists, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, who find it convenient to avoid the Orientalist search for, or presupposition of, essence (hence, Islam, or Great Tradition of liturgical/literary canon) by stressing diversity and randomness within several societal contexts (hence islams, or little traditions, often lacking either canon or literacy). The most extreme statement of this view is Abdul Hamid El-Zein, "Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, VI (1977): 227–54, but especially his critique of Geertz, pp. 227–32, as an essentialist. A less theoretically informed expression of the same distinction may be found at the conclusion of Mortimer, p. 406: "I believe it is more useful, in politics at any rate, to think about Muslims than to think about Islam." What Mortimer, El-Zein, and a host of others who follow their line of analysis miss is what Owens has rightly pointed out in his critique of the format of Mortimer's *Faith and Power*: the "continuous process of interaction" between Muslim nation-states, or better yet, the need "to find a way of explaining what it is about the history, symbols and central tenets of Islam which continues to exercise such a hold over the peoples of so large a region of the globe" (*Times Literary Supplement*, April 22, 1983, p. 405). One does not have to accept the *umma* at face value to explore the value that it obviously does have, at several levels, among Arabs and Asians and Africans, for minority and majority Muslim communities.

3 THE CONCEPT OF REVIVAL AND THE STUDY OF ISLAM AND POLITICS

Eric Davis

The decade following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war witnessed an outpouring of studies on Islam and politics, particularly Islamic radical movements. While producing a considerable amount of descriptive material, this body of literature has been characterized by a striking absence of theory. Most studies have utilized an implicit conceptual framework that grows out of an earlier tradition of Orientalist writings. A central element of this paradigm is the concept of revival or resurgence which suggests the reappearance of Islamic movements in a cyclical or more or less unchanged form. This concept is linked to the broader notion of "Islamic society" which posits that Islamic norms and values are the key determinants of political behavior and the construction of political community in predominantly Muslim countries. One of the major shortcomings of the concept of revival is its failure to address in a systematic fashion the nature of the socioeconomic changes that have occurred within Islamic political movements during the last century. By uncritically accepting the concept of revival, and failing to make explicit the criteria for its application, Western and non-Western scholars alike have presented a reified, reductionist, and ultimately ideological understanding of the relationship between Islam and politics. An escape from this theoretical *cul-de-sac* requires a historical examination of the articulation of Islamic political movements with the surrounding social structure, state formation, competing ideologies, and exogenous forces such as colonialism and the world market. Only in such manner can a dynamic understanding of the relationship between Islam and politics be achieved and a determination made of what has remained constant and what has changed.

To make the analysis more concrete, two manifestations of Islam and politics in Egypt that have frequently been placed within the context of revival will be examined. These are the Islamic reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the Islamic radical movements of the 1970s and the 1980s. The first set of questions to be considered concerns the issue of whether the historical parameters of these two movements can be sharply

delineated. Since Islamic revival implies an ebb and flow in the linkage between Islam and politics, it should be possible to ascertain the beginning and end of periods that are characterized by renewed interest in the political uses of Islam. If this were not the case, and the interest in a politicized Islam were more or less constant, it could be argued that it would be more valid to think in terms of continuity, rather than discontinuity, in the relationship between Islam and politics. If the two movements that are being examined were part of a continuous or uninterrupted process, then what logical meaning could be attributed to the concept of revival or resurgence?

A second set of considerations relates to a comparison between the Islamic reform movement and the more recently identified Islamic revival. To what extent are they similar in their social bases and interpretation of Islam and to what extent do they differ? What were the direct stimuli or catalysts for each movement's formation? Who were their supporters and from what social strata were they drawn? How have they constructed their particular understanding of Islam? What was the relationship of each of the movements to the dominant sociopolitical forces in society, particularly the state, the ruling groups and the global economy? By implication, the concept of revival tells us that there should be great similarity between the two movements. Otherwise, in what sense can one speak of revival?

A third set of questions concerns the validity of describing each of the movements as cohesive and unified. Does the application of the concept of revival to the Islamic reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to the Islamic radicalism of the 1970s and 1980s suggest a cohesiveness and unity that did not and does not now exist? Obviously, all movements that resort to Islamic symbolism utilize a common referent in some sense. How meaningful is it to treat these movements as part of a unified phenomenon if they are using a common symbolic referent? In other words, how are we to reconcile continuity and change in our study of Islam and politics?

In applying the concept of revival to the Islamic movements of both the late nineteenth century and more recent times, scholars are implicitly arguing that great similarities exist between the two phenomena.[1] Indeed, this assumption of a parallelism between the so-called contemporary Islamic revival or resurgence and the earlier Islamic reform does not just encompass these two movements but extends back to the inception of Islam. That is, scholars, particularly those in the Orientalist tradition, often see the genre of Islamic

revival or resurgence as a recurring phenomenon from the establishment of Islam in the seventh century A.D. until the present. The cue for this assumption of parallelism comes from the Qur'an itself. It stems from "the tradition that the Prophet intimated that Islam would need to be revitalized periodically and that in each century Providence would raise up men capable of accomplishing this necessary mission of moral and religious regeneration."[2]

However, the assumption of an isomorphism between the late nineteenth century and the present cannot be sustained under closer scrutiny. The most noticeable difference between the two Islamic political movements is in their respective social bases. The Islamic movements of the 1970s and 1980s enjoy a level of mass support that was lacking during the 1880s, the 1890s, and the first decade of the twentieth century. Furthermore, Islamic reform was much more of a formalized intellectual movement centered around such thinkers as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh, Hifni Nasif, Muhammad Tal'at Harb, Shaykh Hassuna al-Nawawi, and Shaykh Rashid Rida. Unlike the leaders of the Islamic reform movement, the leaders of Islamic radical movements of the 1980s, such as Ahmad Shukri Mustafa and Muhammad 'Abd al-Salam Faraj, are not part of the dominant intellectual paradigm, which is linked to the state, but are considered beyond the law by the government. Their humble backgrounds, their limited education, and their persecution by the state have prevented them from openly producing and distributing anything comparable to the sophisticated body of literature that was the legacy of the Islamic reform movement.

Similarly, it is erroneous to assume that either the Islamic reform movement of the late 1800s or the Islamic radicalism of the contemporary period are as homogeneous as the concept of revival would suggest. The two major proponents of Islamic reform, al-Afghani and 'Abduh, represented very different trends in the movement. Al-Afghani was a déclassé Persian whose writings on Islam were relatively shallow and whose ability to wield influence was largely linked to his relationship with the Ottoman sultan. 'Abduh, on the other hand, was part of a rising Egyptian middle class that was seeking to synthesize Western ideas of economic and technological progress with conservative interpretations of social norms based upon Islam. While al-Afghani was a political activist committed to challenging British imperial interests in the Middle East, 'Abduh was more concerned with working out an accommodation with the

British in Egypt by which the aspiring social class of which he was a part would gradually expand its economic and political influence.[3] Al-Afghani rejected the West; 'Abduh and his colleagues were already partially socialized into its norms. This can be seen by the great lengths to which they went to defend themselves from the attacks of Western Orientalists such as Gabriel Hanoteux. Significantly, many of these defenses were published in European languages, particularly French, showing the extent to which 'Abduh and fellow reformers were concerned with how Europeans, and not just their fellow citizens, viewed Islam as a culture and religion.[4] The radical Islamic organizations that were formed following the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars eschewed any effort to legitimate Islam in the eyes of Westerners. Indeed, their ontology explicitly excluded Western culture, science, and technology. While this position suggests considerable problems for economic and scientific development, contemporary Islamic radicals exhibit little of the ambiguity toward Western society that characterized the Islamic reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Such differences as existed within the Islamic reform movement find their parallel in the 1970s and 1980s. Although groups such as al-Takfir wa-al-Hijra and al-Jihad trace their origins to the once-powerful Muslim Brotherhood, their creation reflects a profound dissatisfaction with the unwillingness of the Muslim Brotherhood to pose a significant challenge to the power and authority of the Egyptian state. To the more radical Islamic movements, the Muslim Brotherhood is a suspect or even treasonous organization. These more radical and youth-oriented groups view their leader (e.g., Ahmad Shukri Mustafa) as a *mahdi* who will rejuvenate Islam and bring salvation to the masses. Such a messianic outlook has never permeated the Muslim Brotherhood; none of its leaders — Hasan al-Banna, Hasan al-Hudaybi, Sayyid Qutb, or 'Umar al-Tilimsani — have ever made pretenses of being a *mahdi*. The new Islamic groups critical of the Muslim Brotherhood have been characterized by a "withdrawal phenomenon." Members have frequently forsaken traditional occupations to enter into communal living arrangements where begging and peddling have been used to sustain the commune. Although this notion of withdrawal from society due to its thoroughly corrupt nature was influenced by Sayyid Qutb's writings, the Muslim Brotherhood has never been sympathetic to it.[5]

According to Orientalist scholarship, the linkage between the

Islamic reform movement and contemporary Islamic political organizations is centered around Rashid Rida and the Salafiyya movement and their relationship to Hasan al-Banna. In depicting the Islamic reform movement as continuing under the aegis of Rida and Salafiyya, and degenerating into the "fundamentalism" of al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood, the traditional Orientalist paradigm creates an intellectual bridge between Islamic reform and the Islamic revival, and suggests the existence of both an isomorphism *and* a historical link between the two eras in question. In other words, this model argues for continuity as well as revival since it presents Islamic radicalism as having persisted over time. Reacting to the challenge of Western values during the nineteenth century, and then again during the 1970s and 1980s, Islam was revived in both instances as a political force. A metaphor appropriate to this type of thinking would be that of volcanic action, with Islamic radicalism seen as always simmering beneath the surface and periodically engaging in violent eruptions. The conceptual difficulty is that this focus fails to distinguish clearly between revival and continuity. How can one speak of revival if Islamic radical movements have been continuous over time?

To challenge this paradigm or model is not to deny that Islam possesses any unitary or homogeneous quality. However, all belief systems, religious or otherwise, are grounded in a human element, and the community of believers that comprises Islam is as socially variegated as any other community of believers. Following Abdallah Laroui, I would argue that the relationship between Islam and politics can be understood only if it is historicized. Islam cannot be discussed as an ideology in abstract terms.[6] Rather, it must be seen as linked to specific individuals or, more importantly, to groups of individuals whose material interests and psychological needs change and develop over time. Although this is not meant to imply linearity — the idea that a society is moving in a teleological sense toward a specific sociopolitical form of organization such as liberalism, secular nationalism, socialism, or a polity based upon Islamic norms — it does mean that ideologies must be linked to changing historical conditions and situated within a well-defined social structure. With these considerations in mind, let me now suggest an alternative approach to understanding the relationship between Islam and politics in modern Egypt.

Islam in Historical Perspective

If we begin with the Islamic reform movement of the late nineteenth century, we find that most scholars have not utilized the type of sociohistorical perspective that has been suggested. Instead the reform movement has been studied almost entirely from the point of view of the history of ideas and the personalities who have expounded them.[7] An important aspect of this approach is its effort to juxtapose Islamic reform to a parallel movement of secular Western liberalism. This juxtaposition is carried out by situating Islamic and Western liberal ideologies within an institutional framework linked to the two major Egyptian political parties of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — the Hizb al-Watani and Hizb al-Umma. It is argued that the first of these parties represented pan-Islamicists supportive of the Ottoman sultan while the latter party represented the rising Anglophile section of the Egyptian upper class linked to the British proconsul, Lord Cromer.

Such a dichotomy is seriously misleading. In reality the bifurcation in thought was less pronounced. First, many prominent writers of the period had close ties to both political tendencies. Second, what differences did exist between the political parties were based more upon kinship and peer networks than upon sharply defined class or ideological differences.[8] For example, the most prominent advocate of Islamic reform, Muhammad ʻAbduh, was closely linked to many of the large landowning families that, two years after his death, founded the Hizb al-Umma in 1907. ʻAbduh was particularly important to the rising agrarian bourgeoisie because he provided Islamic justification for new financial practices such as government involvements in opening a postal savings bank and the awarding of interest on bank deposits.[9]

Muhammad Talʻat Harb was another prominent member of the emerging Egyptian bourgeoisie. Harb was both a member the Hizb al-Watani and later a founder of the Hizb al-Umma. He wrote extensively on Islam and economic issues. Of particular significance were his attacks on Qasim Amin for advocating the elimination of veiling. In promoting economic reforms, while remaining socially conservative, Harb followed ʻAbduh and other prominent figures of the period.[10] It is also significant that Harb was, in the same moment, both an extremely devout and conservative Muslim and the most innovative economic reformer in the history of modern Egypt. This challenges another dichotomy between modernity and tradition, which stems from a reductionist interpretation of Weber, that asserts that devout Muslims are incapable of coming to grips with techniques of modern capitalist enterprise.[11] Just as it is erroneous to argue that ideology led to a sharp dichotomy between political tendencies at the turn of the century in Egypt, so it is invalid to argue that the responses of individuals or groups toward aspects of Western technology and economic development can be differentiated on the basis of ideology. To make the more general point, the excessive focus on ideology by many students of Islam and politics, coupled with a failure to incorporate other elements of social change, tends to lead to predictions about behavior patterns, political affiliations, and responses to the West that often prove to be invalid.

The class dimension of the Islamic reform movement in Egypt becomes clearer if we realize that the intent of these writings was to provide an ideological justification for promoting capital accumulation while sustaining prevailing modes of childhood socialization and hence the reproduction of society according to prevailing norms. In other words, Egyptian intellectuals associated with the reform movement, such as ʻAbduh and Harb, sought political and economic change that would correspond to their changing class status. At the same time, they sought to prevent any change in values resulting from the corrosive impact of Western imperialism on the traditional norms or resulting from the upward mobility of members of their social stratum.

Here it is important to recognize the intersection of social class, gender relations, and ideology. Supporters of the Islamic reform movement, such as ʻAbduh, Harb, Nasif, al-Nawawi and others were drawn from a class of small to medium landholders or rural petite bourgeoisie. This social stratum experienced considerable trauma during the nineteenth century as the cotton economy expanded and Egypt was integrated into the world market. In many villages, the strength of the extended family gradually eroded as family members were forced to sell their land and migrate to urban areas. Once in urban areas, these migrants often were able to establish a new economic base through education and entry into an expanding government bureaucracy.[12]

Islam and Gender Relations

Although it is difficult to document the psychological dispositions of members of the upwardly mobile petite bourgeoisie at the turn of

the twentieth century, it can be argued that the intensity of the debate surrounding questions of gender, particularly as they related to the family, reflected the anxiety of the advocates of reform, all of whom were male, about their own social status during a period of significant social change. By this logic, male members of the petite bourgeoisie felt that Western imperialism not only had the potential to interfere with their accumulation of capital but also threatened their position within the hierarchy of gender relations. Given this anxiety, which is quite evident in the writings of Harb and others, it is understandable why questions of gender should have been so central to the debates of the turn of the century. Power over women became a mechanism whereby urban men could reassert their authority and retain a sense of control over their destiny. Since the family was the most important social institution in the village, the urban kin of the rural petite bourgeoisie sought to maintain its cohesiveness.

Gender relations (in the form of a retention of the traditional family structure), social class, and ideology interacted in three ways. First, it was the vertically and horizontally mobile rural petite bourgeoisie that championed the traditional family, whose key role was the socialization of youth into traditional norms and values. Second, the continuity of the traditional family was not just a means for petit bourgeois males to retain their power within the existing hierarchy of gender relations but also represented a metaphor for achieving status and power within other hierarchies such as the economic and political spheres. Third, the fierce desire to prevent change in the power relations between men and women in the family structure reflected a yearning or nostalgia for a more simple, structured, and stable rural life that was in the process of being transformed.

From Islamic Reform to the Muslim Brotherhood

The Islamic reform movement eventually dissipated as many of its intellectual leaders moved away from their youthful radicalism. Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh became the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Muhammad Tal'at Harb left the realm of writings on religion and social values to concentrate upon economic issues and the founding of Bank Misr and the Misr Group, while the 'Abd al-Raziq family came to advocate a privatized notion of religion that, in effect, divorced religion and politics. Only Rashid Rida remained as a somewhat iconoclastic figure working to carry on the original aims of Islamic reform.

Although individual leaders may have changed their political outlook, the conditions that originally radicalized members of the rural petite bourgeoisie continued to intensify. It should come as no surprise that this environment stimulated the founding in 1928 of the first mass-based Islamic radical movement, the Society of the Muslim Brothers. Orientalists have viewed the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood as an extension of the Islamic reform movement begun by al-Afghani and 'Abduh. H.A.R. Gibb and others argue that the organization was a logical outgrowth of the efforts of the founders of the Islamic reform movement to discourage excessive exegesis of Islamic texts, thereby promoting a return to the essentials of Islam. According to this view, al-Banna took these efforts to an extreme, thus leading to the fundamentalism that came to characterize the relationship between Islam and politics after the decline of the Islamic reform movement.[13]

What this conceptualization ignores is the differing social context from which the advocates of Islamic reform emerged, as opposed to the circumstances surrounding the rise of Hasan al-Banna and the supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. While many advocates of Islamic reform had succeeded in entering the ranks of the small agrarian and even smaller industrial bourgeoisie, changes that subsequently occurred in Egyptian society largely eliminated such opportunities for upward mobility by the time of the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood during the 1930s and 1940s. Economic conditions in the Egyptian Delta had deteriorated through increased land fragmentation, exploitation of the peasantry by usurers, neglect of the agricultural sector by the large landowning class, and the failure of economic growth to keep pace with the rise in population.

Members of the Muslim Brotherhood emerged from the lower echelons of the rural petite bourgeoisie, which had become politicized as a result of the worsening economic conditions and an upsurge of nationalism in the wake of the 1919 Revolution. This "second wave" of the petite bourgeoisie was far weaker and more fragile than its predecessors who had supported Islamic reform a half century earlier. Data gathered for the period from the early 1930s to the 1970s indicate that this social stratum was comprised largely of families with small but (in the Egyptian context) not inconsequential amounts of land (i.e., a few feddans), as well as small merchants and village artisans. Extremely conservative, this class despised and feared the middle peasantry (*al-a'yan*) that

dominated village life and the absentee landowners who had prospered from the rapid expansion of the cotton economy during the nineteenth century. This marginal sector of the rural petite bourgeoisie likewise feared that it might suffer the fate of the growing ranks of landless peasants who, through their loss of land, had become agrarian wage-laborers.

Members of the petite bourgeoisie brought conservative values with them to urban areas. Since their families had had some material status in the village, their offspring had received an education, usually in a traditional religious school (*kuttab*). Thus, petit bourgeois migrants possessed the skills but not the material resources with which to seek upward mobility. Especially after the 1952 Revolution made higher education more accessible, members of this stratum sought to improve their situation by entering the universities.

The type of ideology characteristic of the Egyptian petite bourgeoisie during the 1930s and 1940s was very specific to the problems faced by a social class that was both geographically mobile and aspired to upward mobility. Its political construction of Islam differed markedly from the manner in which Islam had been cast, decades earlier, by the advocates of a synthesis of Islamic and Western reforms. In expressing a vigorous opposition to big capital, members of the Muslim Brotherhood differed from members of the Islamic reform movement, who ultimately sought reconciliation with foreign capital in the form of a "junior partner" status. In violently attacking Marxism, which was beginning to gain acceptance among some Egyptian intellectuals and political activists during the 1930s and 1940s, the Brotherhood's ideology contained an important element that was absent from the earlier reform movement.

It is true, as Orientalists have argued, that both the Islamic reform movement and the Muslim Brotherhood expressed the notion that the decline of Islam stemmed from the failure of Muslims to follow its true precepts, that they both voiced varying degrees of hostility to the West, and that they emphasized the intrinsic unity of the Muslim community. These similarities should not, however, obscure the significant differences between the two movements. Whereas Islamic reform called for Western imperialism to recognize the influence of the aspiring Egyptian bourgeoisie and give it a role in domestic surplus expropriation, Islamic radicalism of the 1930s and 1940s advocated a corporate

unity of Egyptian Muslims in opposition both to the West and to atheist intellectuals and their supporters among the nascent working class. The Muslim Brotherhood also began to speak to issues that were of interest to the emerging working class population, partly due to competition with other emerging mass-based movements such as the Egyptian Communist Party and Misr al-Fatat.

In many respects, the Islamic radicalism of the Muslim Brotherhood reflected more a rupture than a continuity with the earlier efforts at Islamic reform by al-Afghani, 'Abduh, and the Salafiyya of Rashid Rida. Its construction of ideology points to a process, namely the deepening of underdevelopment in Egyptian society and the attendant spread of political consciousness among the lower middle and lower classes, that had not existed during the late nineteenth century. While many symbols of the two movements had surface similarities, their social referents were very different. For reformists, Islamic unity meant unity of the agrarian bourgeoisie and the petite bourgeoisie in their efforts to force British colonial rule to accommodate their needs. For radicals, unity meant the unity of the urban petite bourgeoisie, often in alliance with the working class, in an effort to totally dislodge British economic and political influence from Egypt. Supporters of Islamic reform accepted much of Western culture — having often received a Western education, learned Western languages, and even formed friendships with foreigners — and advocated educational and legal reforms as means for bringing about social change. Advocacy of this type of political perspective indicated that supporters of the Islamic reform movement already considered themselves part of the dominant political and economic system. The Muslim Brothers faced a much more uncertain environment, and their strident politics and vigorous rejection of Western culture reflected a consciousness that accommodation with Western imperialism was neither desirable nor feasible and that only through struggle, often violent, could change occur.

The one area in which there seems to have been some continuity in ideological terms was in the conceptualization of gender relations. Both the Islamic reform movement and the Muslim Brotherhood sought to circumscribe the economic and social freedom of women in Egyptian society. Even so, gender relations reflected the changes that had taken place in a period of three to four decades. Whereas women of the middle and lower middle

classes had been firmly under the control of their spouses or male siblings at the turn of the century, this control had weakened somewhat among the urban petite bourgeoisie by the 1930s and 1940s. For one, women from this stratum began to enter the labor market since economic constraints necessitated an expansion of family income. Furthermore, women began to enter the universities in significant numbers which reflected an increased recognition that a university degree was a prerequisite for a position in the expanding state bureaucracy. While it must be emphatically underlined that gender inequality remained very real, women had become important to men not just for reproduction but also as a source of additional income for the family.

Despite their disapproval, even Islamic radicals were influenced to a limited extent by the ongoing changes in gender relations, as was indicated by the founding of the Society of the Muslim Sisters in 1936. Although always conceived of as an appendage of the Muslim Brotherhood, the participation of women in this organization was significant since it represented the first type of social or political mobilization for many of them. The fact that its members were later to engage in the smuggling of arms and messages to imprisoned Brothers illustrated the sharp differences between them and their politically fragmented sisters of the late nineteenth century.[14] As in the case of the changes in class structure and ideology that have already been discussed, changes in gender relations point to the reductionist fallacy of attempting to force Islamic reform and Islamic radicalism to conform to a simple model of Islamic revival.

Contemporary Islamic Radicalism

One factor that has influenced students of contemporary Islamic radicalism to stress the notion of revival or resurgence is the idea that the Muslim Brotherhood was inactive following its suppression in 1954 and its reappearance along with splinter groups during the early 1970s. Nothing could be further from the truth. The large number of Muslim Brothers imprisoned in 1954 continued to maintain their sense of group solidarity through forming cells in prison. Upon their release between 1959 and 1963, many Brothers immediately began to rebuild the organization throughout Egypt, albeit as a much more fragmented entity. These activities led the government of Gamal Abdel Nasser to arrest over 400 Brothers in 1965 alleging a plot to overthrow the government. Once returned to prison, Brothers reconstituted cells. After having been released during the late 1960s and early 1970s, they began yet again to organize cells throughout urban areas.

The key point here is that even though many of its members were incarcerated between 1954 and the early 1970s, the Brotherhood did not disappear or lose continuity with its past. It seems that, if anything, the Brotherhood and its offshoots had relatively fewer adherents during the 1970s than at the height of the organization's power during the early 1950s when it was estimated to have had almost one million members.[15] In other words, what seems to have remained continuous is the commitment of certain strata of the Egyptian populace to Islamic radical movements, especially urban petit bourgeois youth aspiring to upward mobility. What had changed was the political interpretation of Islam.

These considerations cast serious doubt upon the concept of revival or resurgence. Rather than a new phenomenon, the Islamic radicalism of the 1970s represented a continuity and outgrowth of the Muslim Brotherhood which began to establish its strength during the 1930s. The radicalism of the 1970s had no such revolutionary connections with the Islamic reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries since the two movements differed sharply in terms of social bases, their construction of Islam as a political ideology, and their attitude toward traditional institutions such as gender relations and the family.

Islamic Radicalism under the Infitah

Turning to the so-called Islamic revival of the 1970s itself, many observers have failed to note that the increased strength of Islamic movements was a response in large measure to two factors that had no relationship to Islam *per se*. First, the Egyptian government took an active role in encouraging the legalization and reconstitution of the Muslim Brotherhood. Large numbers of Brothers, who had been imprisoned since 1965, were released following Anwar al-Sadat's "rectification revolution" of May 1971. These policies were part of an effort by the Egyptian government to provide a counterweight to the left wing of the Nasserite movement, which the Sadat regime saw as the main threat to its rule. Efforts were made to strengthen Islamic norms within society. Secondary school students, especially women, were encouraged to wear Islamic garb (*al-zayy al-shar'i*) and emphasis was placed upon the rule of "science and belief" (*al-'ilm wa-al-iman*). The commitment of

Egypt to pan-Arab nationalism was drastically downplayed while provincial Egyptian nationalism (symbolized in the change of the name of the country from the United Arab Republic to the Arab Republic of Egypt and the name of the national airlines from United Arab Airlines to Egypt Air) came to replace it. To some extent therefore, the "Islamic revival" was orchestrated by the state as part of a larger effort to move the country to the right politically, to prepare for peace with Israel, and by weakening the left, to seek the investment of foreign capital under the "open door" policy (*infitah*).

Second, for some sectors of Egyptian society, the attraction to Islamic ideologies during the 1970s reflected as much a negative reaction to the allegedly socialist policies of the Nasser era as a commitment to Islamic radicalism. The massive defeat by Israel in 1967, as well as the increasing economic decline of large segments of the population, undermined the legitimacy of "socialist" approaches to development. Egyptians no longer believed that the state public sector, which had relied upon central planning and many of whose companies had been built with the aid of the Soviet Union, could solve the nation's massive economic and social problems.

It is unnecessary to look to any inherent characteristic or essence of Islam to find the cause for the increased strength of Islamic political movements during the early 1970s. Rather than speak of resurgence, one could instead argue that these movements had been active during the past three to four decades, but had received more prominence during the 1970s due to state policies and the delegitimation of the left. Nevertheless, there also seem to have been dramatic changes in patterns of dress and norms during the 1970s as well as dramatic increases in mosque attendance. Were these phenomena not proof of an Islamic revival?

A distinction needs to be made between religiosity and political Islam. Such changes in patterns of religious observance as the adoption by urban women (mostly from the lower middle class) of Islamic dress or increased mosque attendance in the cities do not necessarily indicate political mobilization. With the increased problems faced by the urban lower middle class in finding employment and housing, and the consequent need to postpone marriage, the existing system of gender relations is undergoing increased stress. Urban areas are extremely crowded and increasingly susceptible to sexual stimuli fostered by the spread of Western consumerism. By adopting "Islamic garb," urban petit bourgeois

women are responding to pressures placed upon them by men who may question their "honor." As such, these women have made a subtle compact with men. They are attempting to appease male insecurities (arising from economic and psychological vulnerability) in return for economic protection in the form of (eventual) marriage.[16] Increased mosque attendance, on the other hand, could be interpreted as a reflection of anxiety felt by vulnerable strata of Egyptian society caused by economic decline and decreasing faith in the government's ability to cope with this decline as much as a renewed interest in radical Islam.[17]

What changed dramatically during the 1970s for the urban petite bourgeoisie was the decline in prospects for upward mobility.[18] This is reflected in the fact that some of the Islamic radical groups, such as al-Takfir wa-al-Hijra, that have given up the idea of upward mobility altogether. This decision is evident in the "withdrawal phenomenon" whereby youth in secondary schools and the universities have dropped out of the educational system or have left employment to join urban communes. These groups reflect the despair of urban lower middle class youth in contemporary Egyptian society.[19]

Islamic Radicalism, Class Struggle, and Ideological Transformation

What these developments suggest is a very significant transformation of the internal class struggle in Egypt. On the one hand, the contemporary Islamic radical movement has increasingly become comprised of members who defy simple class characterizations since they either lack stable occupations or have consciously rejected efforts to achieve upward mobility. On the other hand, it might be argued that the shrinking opportunities for upward mobility in Egyptian society mean that the Islamic movement will assume more of a class dimension. Since the Egyptian social stratification has become more rigid, individuals will be forced to remain in their social class and thus the lines of conflict will become more sharply defined and acute. Prospects are that violence will increase, but that this violence, as the assassinations and attacks of the past decade indicate, will not be directed toward well-defined ends. This lack of a well-articulated ideology can be attributed to the physical withdrawal of many contemporary Islamic radicals, through failure to enter the occupational structure, as well as a psychological

withdrawal represented in the total rejection of existing societal norms. An indeterminate economic status and an aversion to the surrounding society have contributed to the vague understanding by Islamic radicals of their group interests and the larger historical forces shaping their destiny. The recent downturn in the price of oil forcing many Egyptians working abroad to return to an economy ill equipped to absorb them will no doubt exacerbate these trends.

Ideology, in the form of the political construction of Islam, underwent a significant change during the 1970s. As economic conditions for the lower classes have worsened, youthful Islamic radicals (in contrast to the older Muslim Brothers) have felt an increasing need to incorporate a socioeconomic program into their interpretation of Islam. This is evident in the increased impact of socialist ideas, even if not articulated as such, upon radical Islamic doctrine. The emergence of an ideological tendency along the lines of thought of the Iranian thinker ʻAli Shariʻati — one that would attempt to synthesize Islam and certain Marxist tenets — is a distinct possibility in Egypt, and indeed may be already under way.[20] Although gender relations continue to be couched in traditional terms, the exchange of wives among the déclassé members of al-Takfir wa-al-Hijra commune represents an ideologically sanctioned sexual exploitation (by the group's former leader, Ahmad Shukri Mustafa) which has not appeared in modern Islamic radical organizations heretofore.

The Conceptual Poverty of "Islamic Revival"

This synoptic overview of Islamic movements in Egypt from the late nineteenth century to the present suggests that the concept of revival or resurgence is of limited analytic utility. Since the Islamic reform movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, and contemporary Islamic radicalism, both in its more accommodationist and radical forms, have all attributed different political meanings to Islam, the notion of revival suggests a similarity and cohesiveness of thought that does not exist. Furthermore, we have seen that Islamic protest movements, reacting to the deepening of underdevelopment and increased Western influence, and drawn largely from different sectors of the petite bourgeoisie, have existed in continuous form since the late nineteenth century. However, the political and economic options open to each of these protest movements have

radically changed. In this context, it makes more sense to speak in terms of the evolution of the political uses of Islam rather than notions of rupture or the cyclical character of Islamic radicalism implied by notions of revival or resurgence. Having made an argument for the need to historicize the study of Islam and politics, let us turn to the treatment of two other theoretical referents mentioned at the beginning of this essay, namely those of social structure and ideology.

While the concept of *ʻasabiyya* or tribal solidarity is often invoked to explain the solidarity of such diverse groups as the Khawarij, the Wahhabis, and the Sanusiyya, little effort has been made to explain what motivates particular groups of Muslims, and not others, to articulate radical Islamic ideologies at particular points in time. Considerable causal significance is attributed to the role of the leader, such as Muhammad ibn ʻAbd al-Wahhab, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, and Hasan al-Banna, in existing studies of the rise of radical Islamic movements. Were scholars of Islamic movements to take a social structural analysis seriously, they would be required not only to determine the social origins of the movement's membership, but also to try to explain the structure or configuration of conflict within the overall society and to situate Islamic radicals within such a structure. Any systematic analysis of this type would necessitate discarding the notion of Islamic society, since no longer could it be argued that the behavior of all Muslims resonates according to the same norms. It is in this sense that the atomism that characterizes the study of Islamic movements is logically linked to the ahistorical approach discussed earlier. A methodology incorporating both history and social structure would require disaggregating the society under scrutiny and moving beyond such simple dichotomies as traditional or orthodox versus alternative Islam.[21] Such concepts offer no sense of the motion of society, since they cannot theoretically differentiate the seventh from the twentieth century.

The obverse of the neo-Orientalist model is an extreme position that largely denies any causal significance to Islam by reducing it to class. Faced with the strength of Islamic political movements during the last decade, Marxists in particular have been forced to reevaluate this position and to "rediscover Islam."[22] To insinuate that Islam is merely "the opiate of the masses" is to do an injustice not only to the sociopolitical reality of countries in which Islam is a major force but also to the sophistication of much Marxian analysis

of ideology and consciousness. Some of the most subtle and nuanced theorizing in this regard is contained in the writing of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci's notion of hegemony and its derivative concept of the "historic bloc" suggests that ideologies are rarely class-specific. Any portrayal of a secular and Westernized bourgeoisie and laboring class becomes too simplistic.[23] As Gramsci argues, the institutions of civil society always embody the ideology of the hegemonic or would-be hegemonic class or class coalition. Hegemony is a historical process that requires time to become institutionalized as the ruling classes attempt, with each new generation, to mold and "fine-tune" the dominant ideology.[24]

Hegemony implies an acceptance of a fundamental ideology across classes and through this process the potential for creating a historic bloc.[25] To refer to this acceptance or accommodation by the dominated classes as false consciousness would be reductionist since it is often possible for the hegemonic class(es) to offer strata outside the ruling circle material benefits and not just psychological or symbolic palliatives. The Nasserite effort to create hegemony entailed a conjuncture in which an ideology purporting to be socialist expropriated a small landed and industrial bourgeoisie but gave lucrative public sector directorships, and high-level positions in the army and the bureaucracy, to a sizable sector of the upper middle and middle classes while simultaneously extending wage, pension, and educational benefits to the urban petite bourgeoisie and working class. This is but one example of conditions under which a single ideology can permeate large segments of society drawn from different social classes.

In this sense, the critique of the study of Islam and politics cannot simply rest with the negation of a reified or transhistorical concept of Islamic society but rather must seek to understand how the myths and values of the past have come to shape the conflicts of the present. While the concept of Islamic society is unacceptable in its reified form, so too is the reduction of Islam to social class or false consciousness and hence its treatment as epiphenomenon. The challenge becomes one of combining unity and diversity in the analysis of social change: how do we ascertain the contours of political discourse that Islam has provided from the past and how different classes or blocs have come to shape this tradition according to their contemporary material interests and psychological needs?

While focusing upon the construction and maintenance of hegemony Gramsci also sought to elaborate its contradictions. To

return to the Egyptian experience, the attempt by Nasserism (and its sister ideologies of Arab socialism in Algeria, Syria, and Iraq) to become hegemonic succumbed to the contradictions of accumulation. Requiring new infusions of capital and access to Western technology, the Egyptian bourgeoisie of the 1970s — created under Nasser but only really flourishing under Sadat — could no longer tolerate the populist corporatism of the late 1950s and 1960s with its heavy social welfare burdens and its egalitarian and anti-imperialist rhetoric. Material conditions impeded the acceptance of a new ideology that sought to combine Western liberal notions fostering accumulation with Islamic norms of political community intended to give the Sadat regime a mass base. Although the regime released large numbers of Islamic radicals from prison and used them to counter the residual influence of Nasserites and their leftist supporters, and was able to offer minor educational and political reforms intended to enhance the regime's "Islamic" credentials, it was unable to reward the classes which it wanted to incorporate into a new historic bloc with significant material benefits either in the form of economic rewards or political power. Thus the Sadat regime's attempt to construct hegemony was even less successful than that of Nasser.

These developments in Egypt during the 1970s point to the double-edged character of the notion of hegemony. In its effort to form a historic bloc, a ruling class will seek to generalize its own interests to other segments of society and, of course, to as large a segment as possible. This creates standards of norms of behavior to which the ruling class often cannot or will not conform. Such was the case for the Egyptian bourgeoisie during the 1970s. Although the political class articulated norms that resonate with the needs and interests of large segments of society, the bourgeoisie's behavior was often so inconsistent with such norms (e.g., the well-known corruption within the Sadat family itself), that the attempt to construct a new hegemonic ideology ultimately failed to take hold among significant sectors of the subordinate classes.

Perhaps the most cogent argument for situating ideologies in a cross-class context is to be found in Marxian theory itself. In those countries in which Islam plays an important role in politics, what Marx refers to as the relations of production have only relatively recently begun the transformation from a precapitalist past. The integration of the countries of the Middle East into the world market began in a significant fashion during the early to mid-

nineteenth century. Only during the twentieth century did industrial development take place, with the concomitant development of a small, albeit often radical, working class. Social scientists working in the liberal tradition often view this state of affairs as the persistence of tradition and the corresponding lack of development of modernity. Another way in which they express this relationship is to argue that the values of rural society continue to predominate over those of urban society.

In the Marxian view, however, the weakness of industrial capital signifies that the peasantry is often not sharply differentiated from the urban working class and that members of the urban and rural petite bourgeoisie are often linked to one another by kinship ties as well as to sectors of the laboring classes from which they have only recently been separated. In this context, it is not difficult to understand how large segments of society can share similar ideologies given the lack of class differentiation and the close ties of members of the ruling classes to the mass base of society from which they have only recently emerged. In short, the construction of hegemony in societies like Egypt is problematic. While material conditions may impede the efforts of the dominant classes to construct hegemony, the relative fluidity of the social structure, represented in the persistence of kinship and regional ties that cut across class lines, still provides the opportunity for the creation of sociopolitical coalitions that span broad sectors of society.

To conclude, efforts to gain a deeper understanding of Islamic political movements require a more systematic historical methodology and a more sophisticated understanding of social structure and ideology. The concept of revival or resurgence of Islam, and its attendant notions of fundamentalism and Islamic society, work against such an understanding due to their transhistorical nature. Likewise, mechanistic attempts to link ideology and social class in a one-to-one relationship fail to comprehend many of the subtleties involved in the social mobilization of supporters of Islamic movements and the manner in which the construction of ideologies can serve to promote either hegemony or conflict in society. This essay has examined some of the shortcomings of the genre of literature dealing with the revival of Islam and suggested some possible remedies. Above all, what is needed at present is not ever larger quantities of facts about Islamic radical movements but greater theoretical rigor in their interpretation.

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Notes

1. There is extensive literature on Islamic revival or resurgence during the 1970s and 1980s. For some of the more recent writings, see 'Abd al-Moneim Said Aly and Manfred W. Wenner, "Modern Islamic Reform Movements: The Muslim Brotherhood in Contemporary Egypt," *The Middle East Journal*, 36, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 336–361; Edward Mortimer, *Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982); the special issue of the *Middle East Journal*, 37, no. 1 (Winter 1983) on Islamic revival; John Esposito (ed.), *Islam and Development* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1980); the perceptive study by Michael Gilsenan, *Recognizing Islam* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982); and, most recently, Giles Keppel, *The Prophet & Pharaoh: Muslim Extremism in Egypt* (London: Al-Saqi Books, 1985).
2. M.A. Zaki Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 74 et passim.
3. E. Van Donzel, B. Lewis, and C.H. Pellet, *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.G. Brill, 1978), p. 141.
4. See, for example, Muhammad Tal'at Harb's defense of Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh, *L'Europe et l'Islam: M.G. Hanoteux et le Cheik Mohammed Abdou* (Cairo: Imprimerie Jean Politis, 1905), pp. 3–18, 72–78.
5. Sayyid Qutb, *Ma'alim fi al-tariq* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, n.d.).
6. Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), esp. chapter 4, "Historicism and the Arab Intellectual."
7. The studies of H.A.R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947); *Islamic Society and the West*, vol. 1, parts I and II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950); and *Whither Islam?* (London: Gollancz, 1932); Malcolm Kerr, *Islamic Reform* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966); and Elie Kedourie, *Afghani and Abduh* (London, 1966).
8. For further details on this point, see my study, *Challenging Colonialism: Bank Misr and Egyptian Industrialization, 1920–1941* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 48–50.
9. Ibid., p. 72.
10. It is interesting to compare the conservatism of Harb's writings on social issues, such as the controversy over the veil and women's roles in Muslim society, and his conservative views on Islam with the innovative, one might even say radical, character of his writings on economic issues. Compare *Al-mar'a wa-al-hijab* (Cairo: al-Turqi Press, 1899), *Fasl al-khitab fi al-mar'a wa-al-hijab* (Cairo: al-Turqi Press, 1901), *L'Europe et l'Islam*, and *Tarikh duwal al-'arab wa-al-Islam*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Jaridat Turk Press, 1905), with *Qanat al-Suways* (Cairo: al-Jarida Press, 1910), and *'Ilaj Misr al-iqtisadi wa mashru' bank al-Misriyyin* (Cairo: al-Jarida Press, 1911) in which he argued for the founding of a national bank to challenge foreign domination of the Egyptian economy.

11. On this issue, see the writings of Maxime Rodinson, *Islam and Capitalism* (Austin, TX and London: University of Texas Press, 1978), pp. 148–152; Alvin W. Goulder, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (New York: Avon Books, 1970), pp. 178–183; and Bryan Turner, *Weber and Islam* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), esp. pp. 151–70.

12. See my study, "Ideology, Social Class and Islamic Radicalism in Modern Egypt," in S. Arjomand (ed.), *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam* (London and Albany, NY: Macmillan and State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 142–43, which presents data on the social bases of the Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoots between the early 1930s and the 1970s.

13. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam*, pp. 109, 119–20.

14. See, for example, 'Abd al-Halim Khafaji, *Hiwar ma'a al-shuyu'iyyin fi aqbiyat al-sujun* (Kuwait: Maktabat al-Falah, 1979).

15. Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), P. 328.

16. Of course, this social dynamic underscores the dependent political and economic status of urban lower middle class women in contemporary Egypt.

17. Increased mosque attendance represents yet another of those categories that fails to place Islam in its social context. Have, for example, more upper class Egyptians been attending mosques? The answer is obvious; it is the more economically vulnerable Egyptians who have manifested this behavior.

18. While prospects for upward mobility were enhanced somewhat during the 1970s by the employment of urban lower middle class Egyptians in Libya and the Gulf, the recent decline in oil prices setting in motion a "reverse migration" indicates that the "oil boom" was a temporary phenomenon.

19. Gilsenan, *Recognizing Islam*, pp. 221, 226–28.

20. One example of such a synthesis can be found in the Egyptian journal, *Al-yasar al-Islami* (The Islamic Left), published by the religious and social thinker, Dr. Hasan Hanafi. See also the incipient socialist thinking in Ahmad Shukri Mustafa's critique of contemporary Egyptian society in Keppel, *The Prophet & Pharaoh*, pp. 78–90.

21. See, for example, the distinction between "elitist institutional" and "alternative Islam" in Fadwa El Guindi, "Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic: Egypt's Contemporary Islamic Movement," *Social Problems*, vol. 28, no. 4 (April 1981): 465, 473.

22. Among those who have "rediscovered Islam" are such prominent Egyptian leftist intellectuals as 'Adil Husayn, Tariq al-Bishri, and Saad Eddin Ibrahim. Conversation with El Sayed Yassin, Princeton University, May 1983.

23. Even in Iran, which is perhaps the closest approximation of such a model, the bourgeoisie was not unified, being divided between the royalists and the national front; the middle and working classes contained large numbers of secularists and Marxists, and socialist ideologies had strong roots among sectors of the industrial working class, especially the oil workers.

24. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), pp. 5–23, 25–43, 125–205, 210–18.

25. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), pp. 23–24, 56–58; Martin Carnoy, *The State and Political Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 74–75.

4 ISLAM AND ARAB NATIONALISM

Bassam Tibi

Throughout the modern era, the Middle East has been confronted with two compelling ideas: secular nationalism and the Islamic precept calling for the creation of the universal *umma* (community) of the faithful.[1] A study of this encounter between Islam and secular ideologies leads automatically to an inquiry into the major concerns of modern Islam — something which cannot be understood through an approach based exclusively on a textual analysis of dogmatic Islamic writings.[2] To be sure, traditional Orientalist scholars and Islamic fundamentalists would contest the preceding statement by appealing to the notion of "Islamic essence." They deny the necessity of studying the historical context in which the Islamic faith emerged and developed. To Islamic fundamentalists any difference between the realities of Islam and the contents of traditional or traditionalist writings is merely a deviation or falling away from the aforementioned essence,[3] while to some German Orientalist scholars the study of reality is considered to be the job of social scientists, of whom these Orientalists habitually speak with contempt. But since our present purpose in studying the relationship between Islam and secular ideologies[4] is not exegetic, the focus here will be on sociopolitical realities. In particular, one should note that the traditionalist assumption of Islam's immutability and monolithic universality does not hold up under scrutiny, for the story of Islam has been marked by both cultural diversity[5] and historical variation.[6] These characteristics enrich Islam, and should not be dismissed as deviations from an Islamic essence that exists only in dogmatic literature.

Our point of departure since the nineteenth century is the assumption that global interdependence has maintained in existence a world society linking all nations. This world society is the end result of the spread of European influence and technology during the period of colonialism. In the course of this process, the European market turned into the world market and bourgeois society into world society. The political units of interaction in this new setting are the nation-states. The Islamic peoples have been incorporated (or more precisely forcibly integrated) into this new