FROM NATIONALISM TO REVOLUTIONARY ISLAM

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7 Ideology, Social Class and Islamic Radicalism in Modern Egypt

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One of the most significant phenomena in the contemporary Middle East is the eruption of Islamic movements. Under the banner of Islam, mass social movements have taken shape in Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt, as well as in Iran, both to force the secularism of Islamic orthodoxy and the dominance of secularism and modernization. The most prominent Arab states are those which have experienced a fundamental transformation. The revival of Islam in Egypt and the Middle East is not just a religious phenomenon, but a political one as well. It is a social movement, a mass movement, that has its roots in the social and economic conditions of the people. The movement is a reflection of the needs of the people, their aspirations, and their efforts to change their circumstances. The movement is a manifestation of the people's desire for justice, freedom, and equality. It is a manifestation of the people's desire to be masters of their own destiny. The movement is a reflection of the people's struggle against oppression and exploitation. It is a reflection of the people's struggle for their rights and freedoms. The movement is a reflection of the people's struggle for their dignity and their humanity.
to the radical fundamentalism of **Rebawi** ideologues such as **Hasan al-Banna**.

At one level, this model is very seductive since it offers a very integrated argument which is placed in an historical perspective. Nevertheless, it suffers from conceptual flaws. First and foremost is the emphasis on change in the realm of ideas. This leads to a concentration on the thought of major Islamic thinkers and hence to an elitist bias. How this thought resonates with the needs of the society at large is largely left to the imagination. As regards Moslem Brotherhood and other Islamic radical groups, this means that we learn much about the ideologies of the movement but little about its mass following.

A second conceptual flaw is a tendency to view Islamic society (assuming for a moment that such a notion is of conceptual utility) in terms of decay, breakdown and social-pathology. Rather than seeing Islamic radicalism as an attempt to regenerate a corporate unity that repairs the breakdown of traditional institutions, such as the extended family, and to help its adherents cope with rapid social change, it is viewed as a pathological and xenophobic response to alien views with which it refuses to come to terms.

Finally, this approach fails to stratify Islamic societies. Thus all Moslems are lumped together as one undifferentiated social unit. This prevents an understanding of why some Moslems and not others, are attracted to Islamic political movements. It is precisely this problem which the 'sociological' model attempts to confront.

The sociological model may be designated as such because it seeks to account for the social bases and recruitment patterns of Islamic radical groups. The early studies of the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt said little or nothing about the social composition of the movement. In the most comprehensive analysis of the Moslem Brotherhood to date, Richard Mitchell (1969) offers a limited amount of data on members associated during the late 1940s and after the purported assassination attempt on President Nasser in 1954. In a study completed in 1969, it was possible to expand on Mitchell's data and construct a sample of over 650 Moslem Brothers arrested between 1947 and 1954. Through the analysis of these data, an effort was made to interrelate such variables as occupation, education, place of birth, age, political activity and intensity of commitment to the Moslem Brotherhood (Davis, 1970).

Most recently, Sa'd al-Din Ibrahim conducted a similar type of study through interviews with imprisoned members of al-Jama'at al-Muslinim (Jama'at al-tahfee wal-hijra). This research illuminated many fascinating aspects about the social backgrounds of those drawn to Islamic radical movements, such as early socialisation, which are much less clear from statistical data gained from trial records (Ibrahim, 1989).

The sociological model proved to be of greater conceptual utility than the ideological approach in demonstrating that the Moslem Brotherhood and its offshoots in Egypt recruited from a particular stratum of society, and in offering hypotheses to explain this recruitment pattern. It also introduced, albeit implicitly, a notion of process or change. By arguing that Islamic militants were drawn from members of the urban lower class who were both horizontally and vertically mobile, and who were hostile to the religious establishment and Egypt's political class, these studies posed questions which could only be adequately answered by understanding the life-experiences of Islamic militants over time. In other words, if Islamic militants were predominantly recruited from recent migrants to urban areas, what caused these individuals to leave the countryside? What factors caused them to seek upward mobility and why were they so hostile to the 'ulama' and to those who control the state? Unlike the ideological model which posited no more than a vaguely defined struggle between the values of occidental and orient, the sociological model introduced the notion of conflict among social groups within Egypt and suggested that only through a more defined historical perspective, one that was not limited to a formalistic study of ideology, could the sources and ultimate outcome of this conflict be understood.

Despite its advance over the ideational approach, the sociological model suffers its own analytic shortcomings. If the ideational approach to Islamic radicalism tells us little about the social bases of its adherents, then the sociological approach is anemic in its ability to explain ideology. Ideology is either viewed in terms of a crude materialism or in terms of psycho-social needs. In one instance, it is a reflection of class interests - a response to thwarted ambitions for upward mobility - and in another, a reflection of the social strains caused by the difficulties facing urban migrants steeped in tradition who are trying to adapt to the pressures of city life. This means that the internal structure of Islamic radical thought, causes underlying its changes over time, its emotive power, and the political constraints and advantages it bestows on its adherents are never fully discussed.

A second criticism of the sociological model is its failure to provide an historical context within which to situate the growth and development of Islamic radicalism. Even though the hypotheses offered by this model suggest an historical perspective, it remains implicit and is never clearly articulated. The inadequacy of the sociological model becomes manifest...
Liaison by providing the market demand for land-based crops. It can also be argued that world market forces, aided by the inherent difficulties of capital formation and by both colonial and post-colonial policies, have combined to contribute to the political and social changes that have contributed to the resurgence of Islam as a political force.

In this context, the resurgence of Islam as a political force can be seen as a reaction against the secularization of modern society. The secularization of modern society has led to the loss of traditional values and the erosion of the traditional social order. This has created a vacuum that has been filled by the resurgence of Islam as a political force.

The resurgence of Islam as a political force has taken many forms. In some cases, it has been through the formation of political parties that espouse Islamic principles. In other cases, it has been through the use of violence to achieve political ends. In still other cases, it has been through the use of cultural and religious symbols to appeal to the masses.

The resurgence of Islam as a political force has had a number of significant consequences. It has led to a number of conflicts, both within and between countries. It has also led to the rise of a number of fundamentalist groups, which have often been involved in acts of violence.

In conclusion, the resurgence of Islam as a political force is a complex phenomenon that can be understood only within the context of the larger social, economic, and political changes that have taken place in recent decades.

References:


by seeking refuge in 'true Islam', they will ultimately triumph over their infidel enemies is a classic syndrome associated with coping with social strains (Geertz, 1964). Beyond this, however, ideology plays an important cognitive role for Islamic radicals. It does not merely offer a call to action and a palliative for their alienation. As a rich and complex cultural system which has developed over many centuries, Islam offers a vast symbolic network and thus a medium through which to interpret reality and to provide meaning for the believer. It offers a mechanism in which to re-establish a sense of community and corporate identity that will replace the fragmentation of traditional institutions, especially the extended family. In performing this cognitive function, Islam should not be viewed in the abstract. Islamic radicalism appeals to those who have suffered real or perceived deprivation. Its call to action differs sharply from the quietism of the establishment ulama.

As interpreted and practised by the Moslem Brotherhood and its derivative organisations, Islamic radicalism should not be understood in terms of the concept of revival or resurgence but rather as the politicisation of Islam. It is not as if Egyptians have suddenly 'rediscovered' Islam. Rather the power of the appeal of radical interpretations of Islam throughout the twentieth century, and especially after the Second World War, is a response to a conjunction of processes: the increasing gap in income between rich and poor, the declining legitimacy of the political system, the rising consciousness of the urban middle class, the breakdown of traditional institutions and the need for orienting concepts that will allow disaffected sectors of Egyptian society to cope effectively with conditions of rapid social change.

MEMBERSHIP AND RECRUITMENT

Most studies of Islamic radical movements in Egypt have told us very little about the social composition of their membership. Ideology has proved to be a poor predictor of the social bases of such movements. Given the often crude and simplistic interpretations of Islam in writings of Islamic radicals, the tendency was frequently to assume that the membership of organisations such as the Moslem Brotherhood was drawn from such traditional groups as petty religious functionaries, small merchants and artisans, or from the urban lumpenproletariat. Data obtained from trial records, newspapers, interviews and literary sources indicate that such a perception is misplaced. While it is possible to locate members of these groups in Islamic radical movements, they comprise only a small percentage of the overall membership.

Who then is the typical Moslem Brother or member of an Islamic radical organisation? A surprisingly consistent pattern that persists over almost a fifty year period is that radical groups appeal to, and recruit members from, the urban professional middle class, especially in more recent times, engineers. Contrary to what might be expected, members seem to be those whom modernisation predicted would be secular in their world view given their high level of education, as Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4 indicate.

This occupational pattern requires important qualifications. Although the overwhelming portion of Islamic radicals are drawn from professional and white collar occupations, most are recent immigrants to urban areas. Thus their occupations and educational backgrounds belie a traditional socialisation in the countryside. Another important consideration is that while radicals in urban areas tend to be professionals or part of a white collar salariat, those in the countryside tend to contain a heavy proportion of secondary school teachers.

The high representation of teachers among rural members of the Moslem Brotherhood hints at the relationship between the seemingly secular occupations of urban radicals and rural social structure. Data indicate that urban members of Islamic radical groups are both horizontally and vertically mobile. In other words, these individuals are both migrants from rural areas and aspirants to higher social status as evidenced by their choice of professional education. Although the data are not conclusive, they point to a number of patterns. First, urban radicals frequently were former teachers themselves. Second, urban militants maintain links with their families in the countryside and thus with family members who continue in the teaching profession. Second, school teacher-training entails considerable religious education which is an indicator of the traditional origins of religious radicals. Data also indicate that urban and rural radicals come from a very conservative and tradition-oriented rural social stratum that is comprised of sub-groups of small merchant-artisans, religious functionaries and small landowners. Often the extended family contains elements of each sub-group in addition to providing members of the teaching profession.

From the emphasis on social pathology in much of the literature on 'Islamic revitalism', one would anticipate a considerable amount of disruption of family life among members of Islamic radical organisations. Indeed this is the impression that the Egyptian government
TABLE 7.1 Occupations of members of the Guidance Council of the Modern Brotherhood, 1934 and 1953

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1934</th>
<th>1953</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Civil Servants (inspectors/directors)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men of religion</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University professors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban notables</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-collar employees</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school/teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacists</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Three Members of this category, including Hassan al-Bintia, were teachers in religious institutes.


attempted to promote in the extensive press coverage which was given to the family life of Ahmad Shukei Mustafa, the leader (al-amir) of Jama'at as-sal afri wa al-hijra. While this is certainly true for some radicals, on the whole they seem to come from relatively stable family environments (Ibrahim, 1980, p. 449). The fact that those drawn to Islamic groups

TABLE 7.2 Distribution by occupation of Modern Brothers arrested in 1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percentage of sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>6.7 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businessmen</td>
<td>5.0 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government employees</td>
<td>13.1 (76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>0.4 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military men</td>
<td>6.8 (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>12.3 (74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men of religion</td>
<td>0.5 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>24.1 (145)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisans/Small business/ Petty functionary</td>
<td>9.8 (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>15.8 (95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>3.0 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.5 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0 (601)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


TABLE 7.3 Distribution by occupational group of Modern Brothers arrested in 1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational group</th>
<th>Percentage of sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>11.0 (66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar</td>
<td>55.3 (331)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisan/Small business/ Petty functionary</td>
<td>13.8 (83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled worker</td>
<td>9.3 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled worker</td>
<td>10.7 (65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0 (601)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Same as Table 7.2.

have received a traditional socialisation, have learned basic educational skills, have a knowledge of the basic tenets of Islam and an aspiration for upward mobility suggests a cohesive family structure. What does seem to be the case is that the rural petit-bourgeoisie from which Islamic radicals are drawn is increasingly pressed and marginalised by Egypt’s deteriorating economic conditions.

TABLE 7.4 Occupations of Modern Brothers brought to trial in 1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>(31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school teachers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks/low level bureaucrats</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>(14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students (scientist)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small factory owners/shopkeepers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractors/merchants</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level bureaucrats/factory directors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men (and women) of religion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students (other)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled workers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: al-Ahram, al-Jamhuriya; issues from December-February, 1965. (NB: This sample is only preliminary since over 700 Modern Brothers were arrested during 1965.)
Even though the rural families from which Islamic radicals are drawn seem still to be cohesive, they do not seem to be able to provide material and psychological protection for their members who seek upward mobility. It is instructive to contrast this type of family with the rural notable family from which Egypt’s dominant political elite recruits its members. Despite land reform, the rural notable family still possesses significant tracts of land. From its strong rural base, it has been able to situate its members in the armed forces, the state apparatus, the dominant parties, and parliaments, the security network, and in the public sector (Rinder, 1979). By contrast, the rural petty bourgeois family cannot provide the same level of protection or influence (al-asas). Thus the upwardly mobile member of the family finds himself the most vulnerable of Egyptian life, especially in large urban areas such as Cairo and Alexandria. Attempting to cope with urban life becomes particularly problematic if a rural migrant has received a university degree and is unable to find satisfactory employment. Even if employment is located, considerable status inconsistency can result since white collar employment often does not allow the individual to maintain a decent standard of living commensurate with his social status.

In this regard, it is not coincidental that the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic radical groups have chosen to refer to their primary organisational unit as ‘the family’ (al-asas). In foraging cells in major urban centres and in provincial capitals, Islamic groups seek to reconstruct the corporate unity of traditional rural life. The ‘Islamic family’ thus provides a sense of identity and protection within what is perceived to be a hostile and capricious environment.

Despite the economic issues, much discussion among Muslim Brothers within the ‘family’ or cell dealt with trying to cope with the changing mores and values of Egyptian society, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. The deep concern among all these radicals with finding a ‘pure’ woman who would be suitable as a wife, and with trying to deal with their sexuality as a result of increased sexual stimuli, point once again to the impact of traditional socialisation. Given the very conservative and ascetic nature of rural petty bourgeois society, the cosmopolitan and materially oriented character of urban life which allowed for more contact with members of the opposite sex, especially in the university, posed very threatening temptations not found in the village. The cell provided the opportunity to assert one’s complete elevation to purity and hence a refuge from the corrupt outside world. In recruiting members, Islamic radical movements form an extensive institutional infrastructure and symbolic nexus which is not available to competing political groups. First, over one hundred Islamic fraternal and charitable organisations are officially registered in Egypt. Second, the mosque provides an additional source of recruitment, especially since this provides an opportunity to observe who are the most devout among those saying their prayers. Since the mosque is not merely a place of prayer but also a social institution, it is frequently used by Islamic militants to organise religious study circles which is frequently done after the Friday prayer. It further provides an opportunity to raise money since donations can be collected for the purchase of religious texts. Third, radicals frequently invoke the obligation of the zakat or tax on personal wealth for the sake of charity as an additional source of funds. Of course, recruitment to groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood is often based upon family networks or social ties established at the university. Nevertheless, the ability to manipulate Islam confers an organisational advantage on radical organisations over competing political groups, especially those on the left such as the Nasserites and communists.

IDEOLOGY

Islam in radical or fundamentalist thinking reflects the social experiences and class character of its adherents but should not be reduced to these categories. Radical Islamic ideology provides a source of strengths and constraints for organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the ijtimāʿ al-adīb wuḥud. Ideology is an important determinant of these organisations’ ability to mobilise support, provide an alternative to the ideological dominance of the ruling class, and ultimately their ability to seize political power. It is important to distinguish between ideologues and activists when discussing radical interpretations of Islam. Clearly, most activists are aware of the basic tenets of Islam but are unfamiliar with the sophisticated doctrinal disputes that have characterised the discourse among prominent ‘ulama and religious thinkers over the centuries. By radical Islamic ideology, I mean the writings of prominent Muslim Brothers such as Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb and ‘Umar al-Tilmissani and leaders of more radical Islamic groups such as Ahmad Shukri Mustafa and Salih al-Sirriyya, the former head of the Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb al-tahrir al-islamī). Perhaps the most striking feature of radical Islamic ideology is its
The symbols of liberalism do little to mediate reality for the Moslem Brother or member of more radical Islamic groups whose contacts with Western culture are minimal at best. The atomism and individualism of liberal thought offers little to the aspirant of upward mobility who finds his path to success blocked or only partially achieved. Indeed, if liberal symbols were to be taken seriously, they would suggest that failure to achieve success and the accompanying psychological trauma are the responsibility of the individual not the society at large. Politically, Egypt’s experiment with liberalism since the turn of the century produced great differentials of wealth, collaboration with British imperialism, the loss of Palestine to Zionism and increasing secularization and hence in the view of Islamic radicals, moral corruption of society.

Marxist symbols are equally inadequate in performing a cognitive function for the lower middle classes. Marxist symbols are most appropriate for those who have lost all ties with existing society and who have nothing to lose and everything to gain through the revolutionary transformation of society. Future-oriented rather than past-oriented symbols provide a prism through which to understand reality for the urban factory worker or agrarian wage labourer. They offer little to the political activist of rural petit-bourgeoisie origin who is trying to achieve social mobility but who is still tied and committed to traditional structures.

The symbols of Arab or Nasserite socialism are even less resonant with social reality than those of bourgeois liberalism and Marxism since they are much more ad hoc, have a shorter history and are treated with such cynicism by their own proponents. That neither freedom, socialism nor unity were ever on the verge of being implemented in Egypt or the Arab world under President Nasser was not lost on those who were attracted to the Moslem Brotherhood and its derivative organisations. The repression of the political Right and Left, the loss of two wars to Israel, the deteriorating economic situation and the corruption within the state apparatus and public sector created utter contempt among the lower middle class for Arab socialist ideology. Worse yet, Arab socialism was seen as facilitating the infiltration of more radical communist ideas and hence the ultimate takeover of Egypt by Marxist forces.12

Radical Islamic ideology in Egypt thus serves to interpret reality in such a way as to fulfill the material and psychological needs of its adherents. Its symbols posit the fundamental unity and integrity of society as found in the Holy Qur’an and in the application of Islamic law

unitary or holistic character. At the social level, the tenacious emphasis on the integrated nature of Islam and the assertion that its doctrines encompass all aspects of man’s existence reflect the desire to utilize Islam as a means to resist the increasing fragmentation of social life. Islam becomes a way of restoring the corporate unity of Egyptian society which Islamic radicals perceived to exist from the vantage point of their early socialism in the countryside.

This emphasis on a unitary, holistic Islam is very compatible with the overall world-view of the rural petit-bourgeoisie. It has been argued that there is no contradiction between the fact that such a large percentage of Islamic militants have been educated in the natural sciences and still subscribe to radical interpretations of Islam. Since the natural sciences stress an absolute approach to knowledge (either something is right or it is wrong), it is erroneous to assume that a ‘modern’ education will necessarily erode a traditional consciousness which likewise emphasizes absolute categories of thought.

If there is a ‘fit’ between the traditional world view of the rural petit-bourgeoisie and the manner in which Islamic radicalism is articulated in urban centres, then such a statement still fails to explain the way in which such thought mediates reality for its followers and the advantages and shortcomings of such mediation. In emphasizing the total character of Islam, radical Islamic ideology provides not only for the psychological needs of its adherents but also provides a comprehensive explanation of a complex and changing social reality. Moreover, it does this using symbols which possess strong emotive power since they are ones with which members of the lower middle class have been acquainted since early childhood and they evoke memories of a romanticised past in which life was integrated and devoid of conflict.

The strength of such symbols becomes even more apparent when juxtaposed to those of the major competing ideologies: liberalism, Arab socialism and Marxism. All three ideologies come under major attack in the writings of Islamic radicals. Liberalism is associated with capitalism, while socialist ideologies are seen as part of a conspiracy to turn Egypt into a communist society which would be beholden to the Soviet Union. Both liberal-capitalist and communist concepts are seen as belonging to imported ideologies that seek to encourage the social disintegration of Egyptian society. Capitalism fosters social decay through unprincipled competition and exploitation of the middle and working classes while communism encourages internal conflict through its doctrine of the inherent conflict between the owners of capital and the producing classes.
Radical Islamic thought informs its followers that society is experiencing difficulties because its leaders and members of the community have strayed from the path of Islam. Greed, corruption and atheism all threaten to fragment society and prevent it from effectively现存. Through such argumentation, the Islamic radical is given categories which help both to explain the social decay around him and his own thwarted ambitions for upward mobility. These categories provide a sense of community or group solidarity within the framework of the faith. Deviant Tendencies in the Community of Believers. Used in this way, Islamic symbols place the militant at a higher moral level than other members of society and thus place him in the position of serving a divine mission as he seeks to restore God's will on earth. This mediates reality in a very effective manner but it also holds out the prospect that time is on the side of the believer.

Although radical Islamic thought is unitary in scope, it should not be seen as a static ideology. Here the inadequacies of viewing such thought in terms of social pathology become apparent. For if Khawan ideology is to be seen as an irrational aberration of Islam that is meant to offer solace to its adherents then it is not to explain the organisation, sophistication of radical Islamic groups which hope to seize power. Far from being totally irrational, Islamic ideology in Egypt is structured and teleological. It provides a political programme and hence, a vision, however impossible, of a future society under its hegemony. Radical Islamic thought stresses the unity of Islam not just to serve the psychological needs of its followers, and to help explain reality to them, but also to counterpose itself to the dominant ideologies - both in the religious and political spheres. The notion of a rigidified Islam which refuses to confront social change, which many Orientalists see inherent in radical or fundamentalist interpretations of Islam, seems much more characteristic of the positivism of establishment Islam. Certainly relations between the Azharite 'ulama and the Moslem Brotherhood have always been conflictual. In the case of the ta'fiir wal shi'ima group, relations became so acrimonious that they led to the shi'ima group, relations became so acrimonious that they led to the shi'ima group becoming a separate faction. In the case of the ultra-conservative Salafis, their attempts to gain more influence in Egyptian society. More recently the 'ulama have been seen as acquiescing to the renewed influence of Western capitalism over Egypt's economic and social life and its rapprochement with Israel. The struggle between the unitary view of Islam in its radical variants and the positivist orientation of the establishment 'ulama is perhaps best illustrated in the dispute between Shuykh Muhammad Husayn al-Dhahabi, an Azhari scholar and former minister of religious endowments and Azhar affairs, and the Sayyids al-ta'fiir wal shi'ima which kidnapped and assassinated him in 1977. While the causes for al-Dhahabi's killing are still not entirely clear, the main reason seems to be his attack on radical Islamic groups entitled, 'Deviants: Tendencies in the Community of Believers'. This view is also expressed in greater detail below. What concerns us here is a chapter entitled, 'The Deviant Tendency in explanation according to those who claim that the Qur'an contains all the universal sciences in general and in detail'.

In this chapter, it is clear that al-Dhahabi seeks to dispute the notion that 'engineering, medicine and philosophy' and all sciences can be located in the Qur'an. The Qur'an is a means towards the betterment of mankind and not a comprehensive source of knowledge. The view of the Qur'an as a comprehensive source of knowledge, al-Dhahabi argues, impedes scientific and technological studies which are crucial for the betterment of humanity (al-Dhahabi, 1975, pp. 81-8). It is clear from al-Dhahabi's arguments and those of other establishment 'ulama that they seek to disaggregate the very categories which radical Islamic thought views in unitary terms. Thus religion, science and politics are discrete and self-contained spheres of thought and action which do not possess any necessary interrelationship. This positivist and essentially secular view of reality serves the interests of the ruling class in Egypt in two fundamental ways. First, it separates religion and politics in an attempt to prevent oppositional groups from using Islam to challenge the ruling class's ideological dominance. Second, it precludes any attempt to place constraints on the accumulation process through invoking edicts derived from Islam. If, for example, it could be argued that Qur'an did not contain all necessary scientific knowledge, or that it did contain all necessary scientific knowledge, this would place serious restrictions on economic development since such an assertion could be used to de-legitimize technological and scientific innovations borrowed from non-Islamic societies. When considered in conjunction with the political dimensions of radical Islamic ideology, it is easy to visualize how such arguments could have a significant impact on the process of accumulation in Egyptian society and the control over this process by...
Islamic Radicalism and State Power

Islamic organisations in Egypt and the discussion of recruitment patterns and ideology which characterise such movements. It is now common to refer to the more extreme ponto of view in Islamic movements in Egypt which, while unable to secure power through conventional channels, continue to pose a serious challenge to the government. The influence of Islamic political actors is felt within the parliamentary framework as well as the political system itself. These actors provide a political platform for groups that might pose a threat of seizing power were they to enter into a new coalition with other groups. This is particularly true with regard to the Muslim Brotherhood, which has shown considerable influence in recent elections.

The Muslim Brotherhood was first established in 1928 and has since become a significant political force in Egypt. It has been a vocal opponent of the government, and its supporters have engaged in peaceful protests and demonstrations. The Brotherhood's goals include the establishment of an Islamic state and the spread of Islamic values and principles. The organisation has been active in both local and national politics, and its members have been involved in a variety of social and economic initiatives. Despite its political influence, the Brotherhood has faced significant opposition from the government and other political groups. This has led to a number of legal challenges and restrictions on the organisation's activities.

While the Muslim Brotherhood has been a significant political force in Egypt, it has also faced significant challenges. The government has been critical of the organisation's activities and has taken steps to limit its influence. In recent years, the government has been accused of cracking down on the organisation, including through the use of arrests and trials. Despite these challenges, the Brotherhood remains a significant political presence in Egypt, and its members continue to work towards their goals. The organisation's influence and impact on Egyptian society is likely to continue to be a significant factor in the country's political landscape.
important generational split had emerged in the Islamic radical movement in Egypt during the 1970s. This split brought into question the future of the movement and its potential to continue to influence the political landscape of Egypt. The split was characterized by the conflict between the older, more experienced members of the movement, who had been active in the 1960s and 1970s, and the younger generation, who had grown up in a different political climate and had different perspectives on the goals and methods of the movement.

The older members of the movement had been involved in the student protests and demonstrations of the 1960s and 1970s, and they were committed to advocating for Islamic radical change in Egypt. The younger generation, on the other hand, were more focused on the political challenges of the time and were less interested in the historical struggles of the past. This split was further exacerbated by the fact that the older members of the movement were more inclined to use violence and或其他 illegal means to achieve their goals, while the younger generation was more focused on peaceful activism.

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increasing prominence of the concept of withdrawal. In this sense, the situation of the Egyptian regime was comparable to that of the Sudanese in the years before 1975, when the government was in a state of crisis and the regime was under intense pressure. The Sudanese regime was able to maintain its grip on power by taking a series of measures, including the arrest and detention of political opponents, the imposition of martial law, and the restriction of freedom of expression. These measures were designed to prevent the emergence of a significant opposition movement and to restore stability to the country.

The Egyptian regime faced a similar challenge in the years following the 1975 coup. The military junta was determined to maintain its grip on power and to prevent the emergence of a significant opposition movement. The regime took a series of measures, including the arrest and detention of political opponents, the imposition of martial law, and the restriction of freedom of expression. These measures were designed to prevent the emergence of a significant opposition movement and to restore stability to the country.

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Islamic Radicals in Modern Egypt

in symbols from a socio-economic to a cultural emphasis which means that until now, Islamic political groups have offered little of substance to the lower classes. Given the presupposition of reading and writing skills which are required for even the most basic religious tractates, illiterate or semi-literate peasants and workers are unable to relate to radical Islamic writings and the study circles in which these writings are discussed. Furthermore, peasants and workers have not been socialised into a petty bourgeois consciousness which would make the symbols of Islamic radicalism relevant to their lives.

In conclusion, the chances of Islamic radical groups seizing power in Egypt seem remote in light of their own internal cleavages and their inability to form a powerful coalition with the upper middle class or to mobilise the masses behind their cause. At best, these groups seem destined to play a supporting role on the historical stage. Their power, then, ultimately seems to be determined in large measure by the extent to which they are manipulated by the dominant class which currently controls Egyptian society. This class, whose interests and destiny seem increasingly to be tied to foreign capital through the 'open door' policy, will probably only find it useful to mobilise support from Islamic radical movements if there is a strong challenge from the left. At the same time, radical Islamic groups may refuse to support the regime given their increasing alienation from it because of widespread corruption and the refusal of the state to reconstitute society according to their own interpretations of Islam. The result will most likely be a fragmented Egyptian polity picking the 'neo-liberal' coalition of Anwar al-Sadat's successors against an increasingly vocal Islamic radical movement and a Nasserite and Marxists left.

NOTES


2. This organisation refers to itself as al-Jam'a al-Muslima. However, the name which the Egyptian government has attached to it—Jama'at al-tahrir wa-al-fadila (the association which accuses society of disbelief and advocates withdrawal from it)—has come to be the one by which it is commonly known.

3. A comparative example which highlights the importance of world market-forces in fostering the growth of Islamic radical movements in Egypt can be found in the emergence of the Gask Emunim and other militant Jewish groups in Israel. As in Egypt, a bureaucratically top heavy 'socialist' model of development proved unable to provide adequate capital and technologically modernisation for significant economic growth. The result was the turn to a much more laissez-faire model of development, similar to Egypt's infulness; and the undermining of the legitimacy of leftist ideologies in general. The attempt by groups such as the Gask Emunim to recapture the 'pioneering spirit' of the early laborers and to define Israeli society in more Jewish and nationalist terms suggests a crisis of authenticity which is similar to that being experienced in Egypt. These arguments are developed in greater detail in my forthcoming book-length study which compares the Modern Brotherhood and the Gask Emunim and their radical offshoots.


8. cf. note Table 1, p. 11.

9. Interview with a former Moslem Brother from Damietta, December, 1978; al-Ahram, 19 April 1966, where a young brother met Suyud Qirb in Ra's el-Dirar to help him find a 'Zonja ahlul'.

10. al-Ahram, 28 April, 4, 5 May 1966; 11 July 1977; the pilgrimage also provides organisational opportunities for Islamic radical groups in bringing together large numbers of the faithful at al-Mukka, al-Ahram, 17 May 1966.

11. al-Ahram, 16 February; 13, 14 July 1966.

12. al-Ahram, 19 April, 2, 4 May 1966, 8 July 1977.


14. al-Ahram, 4-7-8; Al-Ahram 7 March 1977.

15. A similar phenomenon occurred in the Sudan during the 1970s as Moslem radicals were able to oust leftists from all student organisations and take control of them. Personal communication from a Sudanese professor from the University of Juba, 17 October 1981.


19. Compare, for example, Suyud Qirb's earlier writings such as Ma alka al-islam wa-al-hamayyat (1952), with Ma'alime fi-al-tariq (1964).

20. al-Ahram, 1 May 1966.

21. al-Ahram, 7, 8 July 1977.

22. al-Ahram, 9, 16, 11 July 1977; it is also interesting that all marriages within the group were arranged by its leader, Ahmad Shkru Motaafa.

23. For example. 'Organisationally the brotherhood made a concerted attempt to recruit the workers of the mill in al-Maahalla al-Kubra... But the Brotherhood only succeeded in acquiring a following among the managerial employees' (Carson, 69, 1957, p. 369).