# Coercion and Conciliation
# The Mubarak Regime and Illegal Opposition in Egypt


by


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**Abstract**

For almost three decades Egypt has been ruled under the guise of constitutional democracy by an authoritative government headed by President Hosni Mubarak. The opportunity for Egyptians to engage in political opposition through state-authorized avenues has been carefully manipulated by the regime for its own profit. Illegal opposition has therefore become one of the sole areas where real political dialogue can occur outside of the control of the regime. Notwithstanding widespread popular discontent and limited regime popularity the illegal opposition has still been unable to bring about reform. Using frameworks on authoritarianism and corporatism this paper examines how the regime has been able to prevent the illegal opposition from mobilizing enough popular support to change Egyptian leadership. Illegal opposition is divided into religious and secular sections to highlight how the unique controls used by the government in each case. This paper traces the evolution of both groups during the Mubarak regime and finds that state's masterful ability to offset coercion with conciliation has been instrumental towards its continued survival.

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# Introduction

## Research Agenda

The political situation in Egypt has remained relatively stagnant over the past thirty years despite a great deal of social and economic change in the country and the region. President Hosni Mubarak, currently 81 years of age, has been in office since 1981 and shows no signs of allowing the executive power to leave his family. His son, Gamal Mubarak, has recently embarked upon an ascendant political career that suggests he may attempt to succeed his father in 2011. However, this does not mean that Egyptians are satisfied with the situation. There is a great deal of discontent in society towards President Mubarak, who is viewed as self-serving and abusive of his powers. Elections have long been viewed as an ineffective mechanism of regime change, and there have been sporadic eruptions of social and political unrest that seek to create a more balanced government. To date none of these have been successful; but why is this the case? Traditional theories on authoritarian regimes offer many factors that contribute to their durability such as a tolerant political culture, use of mechanisms of coercion, and centralization of sources of income. Once the opposition is able to win small victories over the regime, small cracks will form in its legitimacy and it may potentially become unstable. However this theory fails to recognize that sometimes an authoritative regime can survive even when it does not win every battle against the opposition. This paper will ask the following question: "How has the Mubarak regime balanced coercion and conciliation with the unofficial opposition in order to remain in power?" The regime has been intelligent enough to rely on blunt force against certain enemies, but must give in to demands that would be more controversial domestically or internationally. By carefully picking fights when advantageous

and retreating when disadvantageous, Mubarak has navigated as head of state for three decades. This tactic may seem counterintuitive, but the ambivalent love-hate relationship between the state and opposition has contributed to a remarkably stable executive in Egypt. In addition to theories of authoritarianism, I will be using the framework of corporatism to help clarify my argument. Corporatism is broadly defined as "the organization of society by functional groups . . . rather than on an individualistic basis and, instead of genuine pluralism . . . the organization, regulation, and control of these groups under state authority."[1] In the case of Egypt, I am looking at opposition groups, which will be divided into two spheres.

There are a variety of theories that seek to understand exactly how the Mubarak regime has stayed in power, and just as many that seek to determine his strength. According to some, Mubarak remains the undisputed leader and there are few (if any) cracks in the columns supporting his regime. Many believe power will pass to his son in an undisputed "election" and little will change. Yet another group views Egypt as ripe for a social and religious revolution. One potential candidate for this is the Muslim Brotherhood, a grassroots religious movement that the regime perceives as one of its most viable challengers, but that has been politically subdued for the past half century. Another theory of succession views secular, democratic movements as the only way forward. Although this theory of succession has yet to become as widespread as activists would like, many are working to mobilize support against the re-election of a Mubarak to the presidency in 2011. Furthermore, past efforts like Kifaya, an Egyptian social protest movement, show that it is possible to directly challenge the regime by uniting a broad coalition of various actors. Finally, another group believes that change can only

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[1] Howard J. Wiarda, "Whatever Happened to Corporatism and Authoritarianism in Latin America?" in *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America - Revisited*, ed. Howard J. Wiarda (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2004), 3.

come from within the regime itself. Whether this is through an opposition party, the judiciary, or even elections themselves, this group sees little alternative to working within the current system to effect change. There are two types of opposition which have relations with the regime; official, government authorized opposition, and unofficial (i.e. illegal) opposition. The former is an important aspect of the regime's stability, but will not be covered in this paper precisely because the government has control over it. Political parties, professional syndicates, and other legal forms of opposition have little autonomy and therefore are poor models to illustrate how the regime deals with dissent. A more interesting dilemma would be to look at unofficial opposition groups precisely because they are not within the realm of direct control by the government. By virtue of being illegal, these groups face unique and challenging problems, while simultaneously having opportunities that official opposition groups do not. For the most part, one can divide the most important unofficial opposition groups into two broad categories. The first part of this paper will look at the definitive religious group in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood. In this section I will examine how the MB represents social change that has already occurred, and whether it has successfully found cracks in the authoritarian pillars of the Egyptian regime or not. To provide contrast the second part will investigate secular unofficial opposition, including labor and protest movements. This section will focus especially on corporatist forms of control used by the state, and the methods it uses to impose those controls over various groups in society. The reason for separation between secular and religious opposition is to provide an opportunity to investigate the different techniques used by the regime to keep each group under control. Although there is often cooperation and overlap

between the two, my theory assumes that the regime tries to keep them separate to the best of its ability and develop independent strategies to manipulate them.

An important distinction between my work and the work of others who study authoritarian regimes is that I will not attempt to prove whether the durability of these regimes is due to their own strength or to the weakness of the opposition. Instead, I will assume from the beginning that the Mubarak regime is not invulnerable to criticism by the opposition. In fact, this paper will argue the opposite; that the regime is very concerned with the opposition and uses careful discretion to prevent circumstances which could pose a risk to its survival. Since the power possessed by the regime necessarily has limits, it must balance strategies to keep the opposition manageable. To determine how this dynamic works, I will have to focus on a specific area of research that details how both the regime and the opposition are responsible for the current political system. This research will be qualitative, and will employ the concept of corporatism while attempting to explain the phenomenon of Egyptian authoritarianism.

The significance of this work is that it could be applied to the current situation in Egypt by any politically active citizen. Understanding how a regime reacts to criticism or opposition and being able to predict whether it will use coercion or conciliation will make it much easier to obtain results. The stakes of political contention in authoritarian countries like Egypt are exceedingly high, and a misjudgment on the part of the opposition can lead to years, decades, or even a lifetime in prison (or death). My paper will also determine which type of opposition has been most effective in pursuing its goals; a useful determination for future politicians. The machinery of state is enormous in Egypt and anyone serious about regime change cannot afford to join an ineffective faction. Finally, this work is critical because it can be used to show the

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opposition how cooperation can be a useful tool for success. There has been remarkably little unification by the opposition in Egypt to fight for common goals, and when it has occurred it has suffered from poor administration and lack of consensus. By seeing which issues the regime is willing to debate, diverse and previously incompatible groups might be able to work towards a wider goal instead of pulling in opposite directions. Collective action is one of the worst fears of the Mubarak regime, which is why it constantly reverts between coercion and conciliation in an effort to disunite and manipulate the opposition.

This paper will be situated in a larger body of work covering the nature of authoritarian regimes and corporatism. Although the Mubarak regime is extremely concerned with international aid and its appearance in the international forum, I will not look directly at these factors since they lie outside my thematic boundaries. This is not to say their impact will not be noted or discussed; simply that a deep, inter-state prognosis will not be provided. First I will examine what sort of mechanisms are used to either compel or coax the opposition into behaving how the regime desires. This research will be highly relevant to the field of international relations, because it will offer analysis on the relationship between the Egyptian regime and its opposition, which may be extrapolated to other theocratic regimes within the region. In many cases authoritarian leaders lack the resources or popularity to enforce their will on every issue; by understanding this dynamic in Egypt one could try to apply this knowledge to many other regimes. Furthermore, by looking at the social and political opposition to an authoritarian regime, and documenting why it has failed for the last 30 years, my paper will provide insight into how better to structure opposition in the future. Throughout my paper I

will also refer to the regime's use of corporatism to control functional groups and ensure the autocracy of the state.

**Research Design**

As mentioned earlier, this paper will focus on two groups within the unofficial opposition; the secular and the non-secular. To find this data I will be using primarily scholarly articles and books centered on authoritarianism and corporatism and applying them to the case of Egypt. Attempting to generalize how the regime uses coercion and conciliation will not be easy, but I can hypothesize at this point that the dynamics will be slightly different for each of the two groups. To help me generalize I will concentrate only on the most important components of each group and the highest-stake interactions between them and the regime. For example, elections in Egypt are very important in spite of their distortions because they are often turning points for regime behavior. As such, analysis of presidential and parliamentary elections will be a significant part of this paper.

My thesis will assume that the opposition groups are willing (to some extent) to compete with the regime for an alternate vision of society, and to combat this the regime must vary between using tools of coercion and tools of co-option. Over-employing one or the other could potentially pose a risk to the regime's survival, because the thesis also assumes that the regime's hold on power is precarious. To explore this thesis the paper will examine a variety of instances where there is competition between the opposition and the Mubarak regime and see the results. Afterwards, I can ascertain a better understanding of how different challenges to the regime lead to different responses. To find this data I will primarily rely on scholarly articles that explain the interaction between the group and the regime. I can find most of these articles

either in online databases such as EBSCO, ProQuest, LexisNexis, JSTOR, etc. or from books in the library. Where necessary, I will also use newspaper articles from Egypt and international sources that discuss the interaction between the regime and these groups. While doing so I will be careful to note the presence of potential bias or propaganda. To do this I will try to avoid state-run media sources in favor of independent or international ones. Unfortunately this approach poses the risk of outsider bias, so I will have to do my best to independently verify events by looking at several different sources. When possible, I will try to balance official sources with opposition sources, such as publications by members of the Kifaya movement or Muslim Brotherhood.

**Literature Review**

In the following section I will focus on arguments detailing with the broad traits of authoritarian regimes. Looking at the theories that are designed to determine the strengths and weaknesses of authoritarian regimes will allow me to apply these to the specific case of Egypt under Mubarak. The theories below will serve to define the conditions which I will use to distill the main incidences of coercion. One of these conditions emphasizes the importance of political culture throughout the state-building process. James Warhola examines the development of authoritarianism in Muscovic Russia (starting in the 1500s) and compares it to the development of democracies in the West. The modern entrenchment of autocracy in Russia can be attributed to the historical establishment of a "patrimonial state" which concentrates huge amounts of power into the hands of the few.[2] Early Russian leaders claimed that autocracy was a

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[2] James W. Warhola, "Revisiting the Russian "Constrained Autocracy": "Absolutism" and Natural Rights Theories in Russia and the West," in *Civil Society and the Search for Justice in Russia,* eds. Christopher Marsh and Nikolas K. Gvosdev (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002), 20.

"transitional form" of government, but the development path that the state took over the next several centuries only served to deepen its autocratic nature.[3] Furthermore, the concept of patrimonialism was directly drawn from Russian concepts of family life during the period. Another reason for the durability of authoritarianism occurred during state-building itself, during which time were developed "...concepts and practices which both engendered and drove on the 'gathering of power.'"[4] As the state began centralizing power and improving its financial and war-making capabilities, alternative sources of social and political power were cut off for the following centuries. This is comparable to the Egyptian process of industrialization and state-building which became a national priority during the Nasser presidency. Political freedom was traditionally viewed as a trade-off for the modernization projects that continued through the Sadat presidency and into the Mubarak years, but recently this has been challenged in the wake of economic troubles and rising poverty. Without the benefits of economic development, political repression is a difficult concept to accept.

The normalization of authoritarianism as a contributor to its stubbornness is also alluded to by Nicola Pratt. To Pratt, the political culture of a state determines the degree of authoritarianism it will institute. However her definition of "political culture" is the social practice of ascribing meaning to things in peoples' lives, and it is flexible enough to change over time. Pratt's focus on Arab states leads her to attributing the lingering effects of colonialism as a central reason for this authoritarian political culture. This is because foreign domination creates the expansion of "post-independence state institutions such as the police,

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 27.

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the military economic enterprises, and the bureaucracy."[5] As these resources expand, power

concentrates into the hands of the few and states start to gravitate back towards the model that

they were accustomed to under colonialism. Once the state becomes in charge of

modernization, individuals and social organizations become dependent on it and willing to trade

socioeconomic benefits for regime accountability.[6] Individuals or organizations may disagree

with the methods used by the regime, but the normalization of autocracy means that they will

rarely oppose the system as a whole. For Pratt, the only way of overturning authoritarianism is

by "contesting the national modernization project of the post-independence era and

conceptualizing a counter-hegemonic project."[7] This will become especially important when

looking at the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), since its mission is largely social and has many

outreach programs. If the MB succeeds in taking over some of the functions that have

traditionally been provided by the state, such as education, relief, and welfare, how does this

undermine the contract as proposed by Pratt? Will the Egyptian people hold the state

accountable for its actions if they have access to these fundamental necessities from a different

source? This is indeed an interesting theory to look at, and is one which may partially explains

why the state has been so wary of the Muslim Brotherhood.

     The third author who agrees the durability of authoritarianism lies with the strength of

the regime is Eva Bellin. Bellin is not satisfied with the scholarly arguments blaming autocracy

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[5] Nicola Pratt, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Arab World (*Boulder, CO: Lynne Riener, 2007), 5-6.

[6] Ibid., 9.

[7] Ibid., 13.

on the failure of civil society to develop "democratic prerequisites."[8] She also rejects the idea

that state-controlled economies and cultures unfriendly to democracy have anything to do with

authoritarianism. Instead, the strength, coherence, and effectiveness of the state's "coercive

apparatus" is what allows it to "face down popular disaffection and survive significant

illegitimacy."[9] Bellin then gives four variables that can be used to judge the strength of a state's

coercive apparatus, including; maintenance of fiscal health and the ability to pay security

forces, support of international support networks, institutionalization of the security

establishment, and the level of popular mobilization faced by the regime and costs of

repression.[10] Bellin's argument provides a unique counterpoint to the other sources because she

places the survivability of the regime almost completely out of the hands of the society that

makes it up. One of the weaknesses in her argument is that she contradicts herself by denying

the influence of "democratic prerequisites," while simultaneously listing popular mobilization

(a precursor of democracy) as one of the ways to judge the strength of a state's coercive

apparatus.

     As we have seen above, patrimonialism, centralization of power, and coercion are

powerful tools used by authoritarian states to maintain their grip on power. However we must

also look at some of the instances where the regime cannot successfully use coercion to enforce

its will and must rely on cooperation. One of the main notions cited by theorists to promote the

downfall of authoritarianism and the emergence of democracy is civil society. According to

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[8] Eva Bellin, "Coercive Institutions and Coercive Leaders," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, eds. Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist (Boulder, CO: Lynne Riener, 2005), 24.

[9] Ibid., 25.

[10] Ibid., 28.

David Herbert this is problematic, because scholars rarely explain why this view is the case. In fact, the concept of civil society has taken on a utopian element, meaning it has been proclaimed as the ideal obstacle to oppression because it helps a state with "civilizing, democratizing, and socially integrating influence."[11] This normative definition only harms scholars trying to study the scholars who want to find out how civil society actually works as opposed to how it should ideally work. As a step towards this direction, Herbert posits that civil society itself does not usually fight oppression directly; it must be accompanied by "regulated economic and political societies and a self-limiting state."[12] Furthermore, he states that when civil society does combat authoritarianism, it tends to adopt the organizational characteristics of the regime and even uses Egypt as an example of this. This perspective will be very useful in my paper, because it insinuates that by fighting authoritarianism, civil society itself becomes authoritarian.

In another theoretical perspective based on the Soviet experience, author Moshe Lewin determines that civil society emerges not as a way to combat authoritarianism but as a signal of political and economic change that has already happened and may continue to happen. In the USSR a combination of vast changes in the Soviet social system signaled a resurgence of civil society, which would eventually have enormous repercussions throughout the whole authoritarian system. The most important of these changes were those occurring in the social system such as development of urbanization, industrialization, and professional classes.[13] These

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[11] David Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society: Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003), 62.

[12] Ibid., 93.

[13] Moshe Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon (*Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), viii.

were able to gain momentum because of the failure of political and economic reforms instituted

by the state, and the state's unwillingness to allow political reform. Society is not isolated from

the government, since social groups (some who are members of the emerging civil society)

make up the government and therefore have an impact on it. Nevertheless, this is a long,

arduous process that takes place over decades and is fraught with setbacks and constant

oppression. This case can be applied to Egyptian authoritarianism very well, especially in light

of the recent electoral reforms initiated by the Mubarak regime as an attempt to address

domestic complaints aimed at the electoral process as a whole.

Finally, Maryjane Osa and Kurt Schock look at authoritarian regimes and make the

argument that they all have cracks; the objective of the opposition is to find them and exploit

them. To them, less emphasis should be placed on state power as the determinant of regime

durability and more should be concentrated on finding opportunities for mobilization.

Nevertheless, these author's views concur to some degree with those of Bellin, because they

argue that opportunities tend to arise when the regime's coercive mechanisms malfunction.[14]

These opportunities are exploitable because they lower the cost of collective action against the

regime, and sometimes are the only way of toppling it. To Osa and Schock, the real challenge

then is not to topple weakened authoritarian regimes, but to mobilize against those that are

stable and consolidated. Towards this end they offer several common "cracks in the monolith"

that often present themselves, including; elite divisions, influential allies, media access, and

existence of social networks.[15] This is not to say that cracks in the monolith are always

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[14] Maryjane Osa and Kurt Schock, "A Long, Hard Slog: Political Opportunities, Social Networks and the Mobilization in Non-Democracies," in *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change,* ed. Patrick G. Coy (Oxford, UK: Elsevier, 2007), 128.

[15] Ibid., 129.

apparent or easily exploitable, simply that it is possible to do so. When regime change does

occur it is often hailed as sudden and unexpected by the media, when in fact it was the result of

a "long, hard slog" which took place over years or decades.[16]

In addition to the theories of authoritarianism listed above I will be using the idea of

corporatism to explore interaction between the regime and unofficial opposition in Egypt. Any

discussion of corporatism must refer to Philippe C. Schmitter, a scholar widely seen as one of

the creators of the framework. Schmitter argues that corporatism is better seen as an

"empirically bounded specification" as opposed to an abstract ideology.[17] The following

definition of corporatism submitted by Schmitter is of central importance to my paper;

> Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the
> constituent units are organized into... functionally differentiated categories,
> recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate
> representational monopoly...in exchange for observing certain controls on . . .
> demands.[18]

How does this definition apply to the case of Egypt? We can see this happening with the

Muslim Brotherhood, who are technically an illegal organization. However it actually has

"independent" members of the organization in the legislative assembly, who operate there with

the implicit consent of the regime so long as they do not cross certain boundaries. The same is

true for labor or protest movements; the regime creates "front" political parties which

technically represent the will of a certain movement but are actually subject to strict

government controls. This means that in many cases the unofficial opposition will have to

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[16] Ibid., 126.

[17] Schmitter, Philippe C., "Still the Century of Corporatism?" *The Review of Politics* 36 No. 1 (1974), 93.

[18] Ibid., 93-4.

decide whether to boycott these supposed avenues of participation (such as elections) or submit to their controls. In the case of the latter, unofficial opposition becomes official opposition.

Another so-called "forefather" of corporatist theory is Howard J. Wiarda, who applies it to Latin American countries. Wiarda argues that although corporatism there has been largely outlawed, "follow up legislation" or other reforms have yet to be enacted to prevent many states from continue using corporatism.[19] He also argues that corporatist practices are very prevalent in the areas of labor unions and social policy areas.[20] Wiarda makes an interesting link between corporatism and authoritarianism by stating that although they have been abolished by law, in fact they continue side by side with democracy and free associability "where democracy is incomplete and under institutionalized."[21] These contradictory narratives are what interests Wiarda, and cause him to ask whether countries in Latin America can balance or blend such an arrangement. A similar question will be asked during my study of Egypt's opposition, since I am searching for a way to unite authoritarianism and corporatism to explain when coercion and conciliation have been used to make groups "play by the rules" of the regime.

Much of the foundational literature on corporatism focuses on the relationship between the state and labor organizations in Latin America, so it is no surprise that the article by Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier entitled Inducements versus Constraints: Disaggregating "Corporatism" does the same. Collier and Collier are slightly more critical of corporatism than Wiarda and Schmitter and take the view that corporatism in general is really only useful as a

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[19] Howard J. Wiarda, "Whatever Happened to Corporatism and Authoritarianism in Latin America?" in *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America - Revisited*, ed. Howard J. Wiarda (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2004), 20.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 22.

"first approximation" because it misses many finite details of politics.[22] They define

corporatism as a "non pluralist system of group representation" in contrast to one with

competing groups and one with total suppression of groups.[23] Yet because this definition

applies to so many different cases Collier and Collier question whether it is too broad to be

useful. In order to fix this problem they offer two solutions; either we can use corporatism as a

blanket term that may occur in different degrees, or we can separate it into its component parts

and note the presence of each piece. They choose the second solution, and to help them

disaggregate corporatism, they break it into provisions that give the organizations more power

at the cost of the state (inducements) and those that do the exact opposite (constraints).[24] For

my paper, corporatism is being used in a similar way because I am investigating what sort of

factors entice (or coerce) an illegal opposition group to cooperate with the government or

remain illegal.

The above literature provides my paper with a starting point to analyze the nature of

authoritarian regimes and then focus in on the Mubarak regime. I can definitively say that

scholars focus on patrimonialism, centralization of power, coercive apparatuses, state-centric

modernization, post-colonialism, and normalization of repression as some of the assertive tools

of authoritarianism regimes. On the other hand, the emergence of opposition, even in its early

stages and even if it does not directly challenge the regime, may serve as an indicator of

weaknesses in the regime. Corporatism is a broad term which can be useful in determining how

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[22] Collier, Ruth Berins and David Collier, "Inducements versus Constraints: Disaggregating 'Corporatism.'" *The American Political Science Review* 73 No. 4 (1979), 967.

[23] Ibid., 968.

[24] Ibid., 969.

a state interacts with a rival power group within its own society, especially when that society is authoritarian or incompletely democratic (as is the case with Egypt). Assuming I am able to determine what role the opposition plays in Egypt's authoritarianism, I can then use this to determine the use of coercion and conciliation.

**Setting the Stage: What is the Unofficial Opposition Up Against?**

To better understand the interaction between the regime and the unofficial opposition groups that will be covered in this paper, it will be necessary to explain some historical context and to briefly explain certain aspects of the Egyptian Constitution, the legal system, and the political system. The balancing of conciliation and coercion could only take place in a system with very specific rules, and one must understand these rules to understand the process. The first of the structures that lend stability to the regime is the structure of the constitution itself, and the adoption of the emergency laws. Adopted in 1971 by public referendum, the constitution was created with the priorities of the executive taking precedence over a true representative democracy. The president's powers give him immense influence over ensuring that his party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), retains a two-thirds majority in the legislature (consisting of the People's Assembly, or lower house, and the Shura Council, or upper house). This percentage is the number required by the constitution for a party to select a presidential candidate and for constitutional amendments to be made. Even if there is a provision that the executive dislikes in the constitution, he is able to change it almost at will. As far as official (i.e. approved by the regime) opposition parties go, the criteria for forming new parties is extremely difficult especially considering the influence of the regime in the Political Parties Committee of the Shura Council (which handles political applications and

general party affairs). Only several opposition parties have ever been able to "successfully" participate in party life, none of which has ever won more than a few percent of the total seats in the legislature. According to the constitution, parties cannot be created on the basis of religion, social class, or the same platform as another party. What this means in effect is that no party can be created which "could possibly appeal to a widespread regional, religious or working-class constituency."[25]

In hand with the original constitution are the Emergency Laws, which have been in place almost continuously since 1967. These emergency laws, renewed every three years, give the executive convenient loopholes around "pesky" democratic constitutional structures. One of the more distasteful practices established under the emergency laws is a process called "recurrent detention," whereby prosecutors can detain any citizen for up to thirty days without charges.[26] This can continue indefinitely since after thirty days a prisoner can be recaptured and transferred to another location for thirty days. Human rights organizations have tried to bring this practice to light; between 1991 and 1996 they documented almost eight thousand incidents of recurrent detention. Furthermore, according to the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, in 90% of cases the detainees suffered from torture and were not allowed legal representation or family visits.[27] When this practice is too unwieldy, the president himself can simply detain anyone he deems poses "...a threat to security and public order."[28] As can be seen, the

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[25] Stacher, Joshua A. "Parties Over: The Demise of Egypt's Opposition Parties." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31 No. 2 (2004) : 220.

[26] Moustafa, Tamir. "Law Versus the State: The Judicialization of Politics in Egypt." *Law and Social Inquiry* 28 No. 4 (2003), 907.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

emergency laws create a highly authoritarian atmosphere and provide opposition members few openings.

Control over the security forces, including the military and the police, is delegated to the executive by the constitution. In addition to being important tools of coercion these institutions also provide employment and social services for hundreds of thousands of young Egyptians, which makes them even more effective tools. Some estimates guess that the military trains 12% of all Egyptian males, giving it a huge amount of influence and power.[29] To add further incentives, many officers in the military receive benefits such as increased salaries and better quality housing or healthcare.

Finally, Egypt relies to a large degree on foreign aid from the US. US policy towards Egypt is aimed at "maintaining regional stability, improving bilateral relations, continuing military cooperation, and sustaining the March 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty."[30] The US has given Egypt an annual average of more than two billion dollars in economic and foreign assistance.[31] This aid also comes as an 'assured entitlement' for having made peace with Israel, and an incentive to ensure that it maintains this peace.[32]  In addition to peace with Israel, Egypt is often viewed as having extensive political influence throughout the Middle East due to its size, history, military, diplomatic strength, and diplomatic expertise."[33] Therefore the US views

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[29] Sharp, Jeremy M. "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations." *Congressional Research Service* (2009), 21.

[30] Ibid., 2.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Clarke, Duncan L. "US Security Assistance to Egypt and Israel: Politically Untouchable?" *Middle East Journal 51* (1997), 204.

[33] B.J. Jordan and Robert J. Pauly, Jr., "The Centrality of Egypt to the Future of the Greater Middle East." In *Strategic Interests in the Middle East*, eds. Jack Covarrubias and Tom Lansford (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 169.

Egyptian stability imperative to its other goals; especially the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and greater Middle Eastern stability. Another reason the US provides aid is due to its concern with the rising importance of Islam in politics, and the belief that a "secular" Mubarak is the lesser of two evils (this will be discussed further). However, much of the aid intended to benefit the people of Egypt has instead been snatched up by the regime, which has ironically resulted in those people being increasingly attracted to the social services provided by Islamic organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood.[34]

The final political institution that needs to be mentioned is the professional syndicate. Syndicates are associations of professionals that hold meetings and are granted some powers by the regime. Historically they were once a source of concern for the regime, but in recent years they have been reined in and have lost much of their influence over professional issues.[35] Syndicates have traditionally functioned more like a social gathering forum where personal connections can facilitate upward social mobility. Even the large syndicates with tens of thousands of members do not frequently attract more than a several hundred to their annual meetings.[36] Furthermore, the regime has instituted measures to help guarantee it remains in control of most of these organizations.

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[34] Ibid., 161.

[35] Robert Springborg, "Patterns of Association in the Egyptian Political Elite." In *Political Elites in the Middle East*, ed. George Lenczowski (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1975), 104.

[36] Ibid., 105.

# The Muslim Brotherhood

## Origins of the Brotherhood

In this section, I will be looking at the methods of control used by the regime to keep the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) from expanding to the point of challenging the political rule of the regime. Evidently, the MB has already reached the point that it poses a threat to the regime, especially considering its social breadth and popularity among the urban poor. Its social networks and support systems supply hundreds of thousands of Egyptians with services that the government is unwilling or unable to provide, and disassembly of these networks is at this point not an option for Mubarak. However, the regime has been able to prevent the MB from becoming an official opposition movement. This is the essential goal of its conciliation and coercion, because the MB has proven its ability to decentralize power and present a counter-narrative to the current state. Additionally, the social nature of the MB means that it has many different avenues for undermining the pillars of power that sustain the Mubarak government. In the upcoming sections, I will first examine the rise of the MB and the regime's realization of the threat the MB posed to it. I will then look at increasingly bold MB efforts to make themselves part of the political system, and the regime's refusal to allow this to happen. Finally, I will examine how the relationship between the two has settled into either a mutually beneficial relationship, or a political stalemate, depending on the perspective taken. What can be generalized from all of this is the regime's tendency to prefer stalemate to confrontation, but its willingness to use force whenever the MB begins to mobilize politically.

The MB is one of the best organized opposition group in the Egyptian political arena, and has become a powerful point of contention for the regime. Formed in Egypt in 1928 by

Hasan al-Banna, the MB has garnered support throughout Egypt and the entire Middle East. As an organization one of its fundamental beliefs is that of tawheed, or the belief in the 'unity of God' and that Islam plays a role in all aspects of life, including politics.[37] One of its central slogans is, "Islam is the Solution," and it promotes the establishment of shari'a as a legal system and the adoption of Islamic law by the state.[38] However this should not necessarily be interpreted as a rejection of democracy. In 1989 the spokesperson of the MB released the following statement; "'[In Egypt] there is a certain degree of democracy; we [i.e. the Brotherhood] guard and hold on to it. It is important to confirm the democratic pursuit in practice."[39] In June 1991 the MB and several other opposition groups committed themselves to democracy by issuing a ten-point consensus for political reform which supported liberal ideals such as human rights, freedom of the press, independence of the judiciary, and an end to emergency law.[40] Although the MB has not answered specifically how shari'a and democracy would interact should it be instituted, one can see that the MB (at least on the surface) is not a radical, antidemocratic organization as many in the West have come to believe.

The relationship between the Egyptian state and the MB is complex, especially considering that in 1954 the MB was declared by Nasser an illegal organization and forbidden from forming a political arm.[41] Even as an unofficial organization the MB has been able to expand its social and political influence to an unprecedented level, starting under the presidency

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[37] Chris Harnisch and Quinn Mecham. "Democratic Ideology in Islamist Opposition? The Muslim Brotherhood's 'Civil State." *Middle Eastern Studies* 45 No. 2 (2009), 191.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 192.

[41] Nicola Pratt, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Arab World (*Boulder, CO: Lynne Riener, 2007), 135.

of Anwar Sadat. After a period of heavy oppression under Nasser came to a close in 1970, Sadat began to encourage the political participation of Islamist groups as a way of counterbalancing "leftist forces" in the country.[42] Although Sadat tolerated the resurgence of the MB, he never removed the illegal status that it had been assigned under the Nasser presidency. Following the assassination of Sadat, the MB began another renewed period of political participation, culminating in the elections of 1984 and 1987 during which the opposition (mostly comprised of the MB) won about 20% of seats in the national parliament.[43] However, the arrival of radical jihadist Islamic groups in the 1990s signaled the end of this period and prompted the Mubarak regime to crack down on all Islamist groups; violent and nonviolent alike. Between 2000 and 2005, there began a period of political liberalization which resulted in several elections that went surprisingly well for the MB, but following this the regime began yet another period of brutal crackdowns that deflated the nascent hopes of the organization.

The Muslim Brotherhood is an especially interesting case in Egyptian politics because it has continually sought political legitimization from the regime but has been denied in every instance. The regime sees the MB as a threat, and by keeping it classified as an illegal organization it has the ultimate leverage; the state can thus justify any action it may undertake against the MB, whether or not this action is politically motivated or not. One of the claims the regime has made to defend this classification, especially in the mid 1990s, is that the MB is a "terrorist" organization. Unfortunately this view has been blindly accepted by many in the West, which makes it all the more difficult to understand what the MBs goals truly are.

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[42] Michelle Dunne and Amr Hamzawy, "Political Reform in Egypt," in *Beyond the Facade: Political Reform in the Arab World*, eds. Marina Ottaway and Julia Choucair-Vizoso (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008), 18.

[43] Ibid.

Other than Islamic governance, a definitive MB political agenda has been difficult to

ascertain. Potentially this might be a defense used by the MB to avoid being seen as a political

threat by the regime. However, throughout their history there have occasionally been hints

which explain their aspirations. Starting in the middle of the 1990s, the MB began writing

pamphlets that detailed their position on controversial topics, such as women's rights and

political participation.[44] Many of the authors of these pamphlets were arrested  by the regime,

and its distribution was severely restricted. This taught the MB a lesson about outlining

definitively political goals. Nevertheless, according to Bruce Rutherford, one can extrapolate

that the MB desires a "civil state governed by Islam."[45] This is not meant to be a divine state,

but one which enforces shari'a for religious purposes. He calls this type of rule "Islamic

constitutionalism," and adds that it is supposed to "apply equally to ruler and ruled, [contribute

to] the creation of institutions that regulate and constrain power, and the protection of many

civil and political rights."[46] In other words, the MB seeks social transformation through the

state's application of Islam.

It is rather straightforward why the regime would interpret these demands as a threat,

especially with reference to the mention of institutions that "regulate and constrain power."

Were the MB to gain real political power, it could potentially introduce institutions or

networks that create greater opportunities for the opposition, and weaken the state's ability to

use coercion against the opposition. A result of this would be an undermining of the state's

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[44] Bruce Rutherford, "What Do Egypt's Islamists Want? Moderate Islam and the Rise of Islamic Constitutionalism." *Middle East Journal* 60 no. 4 (2006) : 720.

[45] Ibid., 730.

[46] Ibid., 726.

authoritarian controls over society and a general weakening of the authoritarian pillars that allow it to stay in power. The emphasis on shari'a, in spite of the state's rhetoric, really has no bearing on its need to control the MB. What matters is that the MBs message is fundamentally opposed to the society that the state seeks to impose. To relate back to the theoretical framework offered in the literature review, we can see that in some ways the MB has been "probing" the regime for "cracks in the monolith" which it can exploit to its own advantage.

**Steady Gains and a Swift Response**

The relationship of the MB with the regime is one which perfectly demonstrates how the NDP shifts between incentives and coercion in order to serve their interests. As previously mentioned, the early years under Mubarak following the assassination of Sadat were relatively uninhibited. During this time, the MB focused on building "popular constituencies through their religious work and the provision of social services."[47] The MB was extremely successful in this respect, and throughout the 1980s especially began the process of working its way into the public space using a grassroots, bottom-up approach.[48] In fact, there is a growing scholarly consensus that the MB is developing in new and unanticipated ways, and that it has integrated itself into Egyptian society to the point of being part of everyday life.[49] This possibility of creating "change from within" is exactly what the regime fears, and is the primary reason why the regime has needed to keep the MB illegal. In spite of its fear of the MB, the regime has not always felt the need to crack down upon its members. In the early years of Mubarak's

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[47] Alaa al-Din Arafat. *In Pursuit of Legitimacy: The Muslim Brothers and Mubarak (*New York: Tauris, 2004), 171.

[48] David Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society: Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003), 267.

[49] Ibid., 268.

presidency following Sadat's assassination, his grip on power was extremely weak and many did not think he would last very long in office. According to one author, Mubarak needed to "defuse tensions in state-society relations caused by Sadat," and the only way to do so was to distance himself from Sadat and commit to the rule of law.[50] Sadat's peace with Israel was an extremely controversial act that eventually led to his death, and upon inheritance of the presidency Mubarak had no legitimacy except legal legitimacy (he was the vice-president under Sadat). Since he was not a charismatic leader like Nasser, he needed to rely on "populist legitimacy" and legislative and judicial processes.[51]

For the first seven years of his presidency, Mubarak therefore largely respected court rulings and the opinion of the parliament. During this time that Mubarak spent gaining allies, the MB was tolerated with little harassment and, like Mubarak, spent the early 1980s building its members and spreading its influence to different areas of society. This is significant because it shows when the state has less control over different aspects of society, it resorts to an accommodative approach. Corporatism only works to sustain authoritarian regimes if the state has direct influence over the different compartments of society. Since Mubarak was not elected and had no power base, he spent the beginning of his presidency building up the coercive mechanisms of the state while keeping a relatively cordial attitude towards the illegal opposition.

As mentioned, the MB remained mostly unnoticed at the outset of Mubarak's presidency and in the 1984 parliamentary elections was allowed to participate unofficially in an

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[50] Hesham Al-Awadi, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy: The Muslim Brothers and Mubarak, 1982-2000* (New York: Taurus, 2004), 52-7.

[51] Ibid., 53.

alliance with one of the official political parties, called the New Wafd Party. At the time

Mubarak was not very worried about the MB, and by allowing this he could claim that the

elections were more free than those held under Sadat (and boost his legitimacy). The MB did

well in the elections, but not well enough to threaten the NDP majority. In the years between

1984 an 1987, however, the regime began to fear for its own survival and become suspicious of

the creeping influence of the MB. Before the 1987 elections there were a series of unexpected

riots which were due to "a general feeling of frustration with the state's failure to secure basic

needs."[52] For the first time, Mubarak needed to rely on the security apparatus to punish the

protestors and quell the riots. The MB continued to expand its social and charitable programs

throughout these years, and even started to move into political leadership positions in

syndicates, unions, clubs, and other areas (thus entering into the official, state-sanctioned

opposition!). During the 1987 elections, the MB decided to support the re-election of Mubarak

as a tactical move, since they could not have stopped it even if they had withdrawn their

support. However, when the results from the elections came in, the regime was shocked. The

NDP only obtained 70% of parliamentary seats - the lowest percentage since 1952 for the ruling

party.[53] It was a moment of realization for Mubarak, because he realized that the MB's ability

to coordinate all of its political, social, and economic influence during the election had

undermined the controls that the state had tried to initiate. In essence, without the ability to

organize and manipulate various groups within the state, the regime's corporatist controls over

these groups would not be enough to remain in power. The MB had acted as the single unifier

for all of these various sectors of society, and even though they supported Mubarak's

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[52] Ibid., 99.

[53] Ibid., 113.

presidential bid, he realized that in the future - should the MB be unchecked - they might not take the same course of action.

The reach of the MB continued to expand, and in 1987 the MB won fifty-four out of sixty-one contested seats on the Engineer's Association, a professional syndicate with considerable influence.[54] In 1988 members of the MB won all twelve seats on the Medical Doctor's Association, and in 1992 they took control of the Lawyer's Association by winning eighteen of twenty-four seats during its elections.[55] The significance of these political events is enormous, not only because the regime was worried about losing its control over the professional syndicates, but also because it was a public embarrassment for the regime. Control over the syndicates provided a financial opportunity for the MB to further its social programs, such as health insurance and housing for tens of thousands of Egyptians by using the membership dues from the syndicates. The response of the regime to these events was a heavy-handed one - it passed Syndicate Law 100 which was targeted specifically at the MB and made it much more difficult for syndicate elections to go in their favor. The law required a 50% participatory quota for a vote to be considered legitimate, and failing this, appointment of the syndicate seat would then fall to a government appointed judge.[56] Since most syndicate elections rarely have a turnout anywhere near 50%, this effectively allowed the regime to hand pick appointees. Additionally, there were a variety of other laws that were passed to handicap the MB, combined with strategic arrests before legislative elections to deter the MB from submitting candidates as independents. One can see that control over the syndicates was a vital

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[54] Arafat, *The Mubarak Leadership and the Future of Democracy in Egypt,* 172.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

goal of the regime, because it provided the opportunity to isolate and manipulate a potential route of opposition. Syndicates are generally composed of well-educated professionals, which is a group highly prone to protest and political mobilization.

The year 1990 was also significant because the MB decided to boycott the elections, calling them a "false democratic facade" and marking the first formal confrontation between the MB and the regime.[57] In 1991, the MB took an extremely critical position of the 1991 Madrid peace talks for the Arab-Israeli conflict, which was attended by the regime. The supreme guide of the MB directly challenged the state and its leaders for their participation in the conference, and staged a mass protest against the talks which was attended by more than twenty thousand people.[58] As a response the regime arrested almost two hundred people from the rally.

The early 1990s marked a drastic change in policy for the regime away from toleration towards coercion. So far, one can generalize three main MB developments which became worries for the state; its undermining of corporatist controls, its explicit challenge to state policies, and its furnishing of an "alternative" to the state for basic necessities. The first factor was most clearly viewed by the MB's expansion into numerous areas of society, and its ability to unite these groups for political goals. A united, grassroots movement with unified political goals is unacceptable in any corporatist state by its very nature unless it is subject to heavy controls by the state; in Egypt this is no different. However the problem is that the popularity

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[57] Joel Campagna, ""From Accommodation to Confrontation: The Muslim Brotherhood in the Mubarak Years." *Journal of International Affairs* 50 no. 1 (1996) : 286.

[58] Ibid., 287.

of the MB had raised the cost of using coercion, so the state had to develop justifications for its use of force (these will be discussed soon).

Secondly, by directly challenging state policies the MB was setting a precedent of protest and undermining the state's legitimacy. As a warning to any other potential protests, the regime felt compelled to resort to intimidation and bullying. The third factor, providing an alternative to the state, is a huge crack in the legitimacy of the state because it erodes people's willingness to tolerate repression in exchange for economic benefits. With an alternative provider of basic needs, it makes no sense for people to turn to the state if they can get the same services from a different source (the MB). A perfect illustration of this crisis for the state was demonstrated in the 1992 Sayyeda Zeinab earthquake. Essam El-Eryan was an activist in the 1970s who became a lawyer and a doctor, and throughout his career was highly critical of the regime. He joined the MB and worked for several different student and professional associations, and at the time of his arrest he was the deputy secretary of the Medical Association, a prominent professional association in Egypt.[59] In 1992 there was a devastating earthquake in Sayyeda Zeinab, which received a great deal of international media attention because of the slow and ineffective response of the regime. Undeterred, Eryan decided to use his influence in the Association to set up tents for doctors, disperse aid, and treat the wounded.[60] This snub and the resulting public relations catastrophe was unbearable for the regime; Mubarak sent troops to destroy the tents and arrested Eryan on charges of "...organizing a group, holding gatherings and disseminating leaflets critical of the

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[59] Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society*, 270.

[60] Ibid.

government."[61] This shows unequivocally that the regime is more concerned with its image than helping its own people and that crossing a certain line, even for humanitarian purposes, will result in severe consequences.

**The End of Accommodation**

Starting in the early 1990s Egypt and the Middle East as a whole witnessed a huge increase in Islamist violence. Groups such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad or al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya dedicated their members to a violent overthrow of the state and replacement with a completely Islamic one. The regime mounted an offensive against all Islamic groups, whether violent or otherwise, which provided them with the excuse they sought to crack down on the MB. In a 1994 interview with the New York Times, Mubarak said that "this whole problem of terrorism throughout the Middle East is a by-product of our own, illegal Muslim Brotherhood."[62] The state mounted a media offensive against the MB, routinely calling it a terrorist organization and incorrectly claiming that it sought the violent overthrow of the state. In spite of this the MB decided to field 170 parliamentary candidates for the 1995 elections in alliance with the Wafd party.[63] Had all of these members won their respective localities, they could have threatened the NDP majority, an unacceptable result for the regime.

The response to the MB 'disobedience' was particularly severe - in the fall, the regime sent police to attack the MB headquarters and arrested some of its leading members, including several members of parliament.[64] In total over one thousand MB members were arrested before

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[61] Ibid.

[62] Campagna, "From Accommodation to Confrontation," 298.

[63] Al-Awadi, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy*, 171-3.

[64] Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society*, 270.

the elections to send a powerful message; 'don't vote for the Muslim Brotherhood.'[65] Members of the Brotherhood who tried to bring these abuses to the attention of the public were also arrested. The state decided to try the aforementioned senior MB members in military courts, and sentenced the majority of them to 3-5 years of hard labor.[66] This effectively precluded most high-up MB leaders from any political participation for the next 10 years, due to a law which barred from politics anyone who had been arrested for two times the duration of their jail sentence.[67]

When President Mubarak began his term in 1999, he promised to uphold a Supreme Court ruling that called for the judicial supervision of parliamentary elections.[68] This promise marked a narrow era of liberalization, and in these elections independent candidates (some of which were MB) won more than half of the 444 seats of the People's Assembly (lower parliamentary house).[69] This occurred in spite of mass arrests of MB candidates and campaign workers and intimidation outside polling stations and was a considerable source of embarrassment for the regime.[70] Ultimately the NDP was able to convince most of the independents (the majority were former NDP members) to rejoin the party, so it was able to maintain an 87% majority in parliament.[71] Although the election was marred by fraud and

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[65] Arafat, *The Mubarak Leadership and the Future of Democracy in Egypt*, 172-3.

[66] Al-Awadi, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy*, 175.

[67] Campagna, "From Accommodation to Confrontation," 302.

[68] Dunne and Hamzawy, "Political Reform in Egypt," 19.

[69] Ibid., 20.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

intimidation, it was the first time Mubarak had allowed the judiciary to supervise elections and was an indirect way of admitting that the election system was flawed.[72]

The 2005 parliamentary elections took place in a vastly different political landscape; following the 9/11 attacks and the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, Mubarak was under pressure from the US and domestic groups to embrace democratic reforms. Additionally the formation of political protest groups (to be discussed later) and the opening of public discourse on democracy emboldened the MB to enter the political arena to a larger degree. Prior to the elections they organized a demonstration of 10,000 individuals, during which several hundred individuals (or several thousand, depending on the account) were arrested on the spot.[73] In May of that same year the MB organized forty-one surprise rallies around the country, which were attended by a combined total of seventy thousand people from eighteen governorates.[74] In response, the government arrested some the top members of the MB. Two days later another demonstration was organized which resulted in widespread violent crackdowns, and the death of a demonstrator. How did the regime respond? Mubarak announced a reform that would for the first time allow multiple candidates to run in the presidential elections.[75]

What can be learned from the above series of events leading up to the 2005 elections? First, one can plainly see that once the MB decided to "cross the invisible line" and demonstrate directly against the regime it was subjected to pure blunt force. Police arrests, beatings, harassment, and coercive tactics were employed to send a simple but powerful

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[72] Ibid., 19.

[73] Arafat, *The Mubarak Leadership and the Future of Democracy in Egypt*, 172.

[74] Ibid., 173.

[75] Ibid.

message. Just as telling however, was the decision by Mubarak to open up presidential elections

to multiple candidates. While the MB was not happy with this reform (since they were still not

able to submit official candidates due to their illegal status) it showed that the regime is not

invulnerable to criticism and public outcry. Mubarak essentially acknowledged that the

situation was getting out of control, and even though he used coercion initially to assert control

he eventually had to conciliate. Naturally the terms of conciliation were overtly in his favor and

did not make a large difference during the presidential election, since he was re-elected.

However it does show that Mubarak is concerned at least with the appearance of legitimacy, no

matter how hollow it may be.

In the face of violent suppression and mass arrests prior to the 2005 parliamentary

elections, the MB was able to win more than 20% of seats in the People's Assembly and the

NDP won only 34% of races outright.[76] The regime accepted the eighty-eight seats won by the

MB, but there was a price to be paid for this victory. Mubarak began a media slander campaign

using state-controlled television and publications, and tried to drum up fear yet again by

portraying the MB as radical and dangerous.[77] Ironically this campaign backfired, and made the

MB even more popular. To counter this popularity the NDP decided to postpone municipal

council elections by two years to stop further MB gains. The regime also temporarily halted the

publication of the weekly MB newsletter, and arrested almost seven hundred MB members

within two months of the elections.[78] These crackdowns were part of an effort to destroy the

optimism that had been created by MB election victory, as well as to intimidate the MB to pass

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[76] Dunne and Hamzawy, "Political Reform in Egypt," 21.

[77] Arafat, *The Mubarak Leadership and the Future of Democracy in Egypt*, 173.

[78] Ibid., 174.

NDP-friendly legislation.[79] In fact the MB was beginning to move towards even greater

political participation, and began to call for peaceful participation in legal politics and "the

gradual implementation of political reforms as the only viable strategy to democratize Egypt."[80]

Between 2006-2007 the MB engage in a political campaign to free two judges who had

criticized the regime for vote rigging and corruption in the 2005 elections.[81] In May of 2006 the

MB played a major role in protests organized throughout Cairo, including a 'stand in' outside of

parliament. During April and May roughly 700 protestors were arrested, with 85% of them

coming from the MB.[82] The regime punished the MB in other ways as well, seizing, "millions of

dollars in assets" and arresting "some of the group's top financiers" for belonging to an illegal

organization and distributing illegal literature.[83] This response was vital on the part of the

regime, because the above actions were intended to unite different parts of society (media,

judiciary, official opposition, business interests) that Mubarak wanted to keep detached.

**A Period of Reform**

Following the NDP humiliation in the 2005 parliamentary elections Mubarak embarked

on a series of reforms between 2005 and 2007 which were meant to create the appearance of

legitimacy while further cementing NDP control over the government.  This sort of reaction

was not a surprise for many Egyptians, who had seen firsthand the regime's reaction to

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[79] Ibid., 176.

[80] Dunne and Hamzawy, "Political Reform in Egypt," 21.

[81] Shadi Hamid, "Islamists and Nonviolent Action," In *Civilian Jihad*, ed. Maria Stephan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 74.

[82] Ibid., 75.

[83] Ibid., 67.

insolence. However, not all aspects of the reforms were unfavorable to the opposition, which illustrates further the central thesis of this paper, that coercion is often accompanied by conciliation. One of the more important reforms initiated changed presidential elections into a direct popular election, as opposed to the previous system whereby the presidential candidate was nominated by the People's Assembly and then voted for in a "yes or no" referendum. Under the new system the only requirement for nominating a candidate would be for a party to hold at least 5% of seats in the People's Assembly (lower house of Parliament) and the Shura Council (upper house).[84] As such, this amendment (intentionally) excluded the MB from nominating a presidential candidate (since it is not a recognized party). In 2007 the quota was lowered to 3%, but this made no difference for the same reason listed above. For an independent candidate to be considered he would have to obtain endorsements from 250 elected government officials, a nearly impossible feat considering the NDP controlled legislature would never approve any candidate who actually posed a threat.

Three further constitutional reforms that were aimed squarely at the MB were Articles 5, 62, and 179, enacted in 2007. Article 5 formally constitutionalized the Political Parties Law, which was the law put in place to prevent the MB from becoming a political party by banning any political activity or party "within any religious frame of reference."[85] Placing it into the constitution makes repeal of this article impossible without an overwhelming legislative majority. The amendment to article 62 of the constitution did away with the district system that had been in place since 1990 for parliamentary elections; a system which the MB had used

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[84] Dunne and Hamzawy, "Political Reform in Egypt," 26.

[85] Ibid., 28.

to great effect to gain seats under the guise of fielding candidates as "independents."[86] Finally, article 179 constitutionalized the procedures of the emergency laws which had been enacted by Mubarak following the assassination of Sadat. The emergency laws, which are in effect even to the present day, give the president vast powers to disregard human rights, due process, and other rights which are supposedly guaranteed by the constitution. The most significant among these is a stipulation that allows Mubarak to send civilians to military courts, and to suspend human rights if he deems it necessary to fight terrorism.[87] Essentially this gives him free reign to detain suspects indefinitely, a tactic he has used repeatedly against members of the MB.

**Political Stalemate?**

As contradictory as it may seem, in some ways the tactics employed by the MB may actually help to keep the Mubarak regime in power. The very fact that they are a religious organization makes them an easy target for international audiences, many of whom are unaware of the moderate nature of the MB. Additionally, this religious nature means that few Western powers will protest when the Egyptian government cracks down on them; the memory of violent Egyptian jihadist groups in the 1990s is just as fresh as the 1979 Iranian revolution and the election of Hamas (even though the MB does not have a military wing). MB success in parliamentary elections is a double edged sword; triumph is almost certainly followed by crushing suppression, and it allows Mubarak to "raise the alarm" regarding the threat of non-secular Islamist movements, which many countries (the US especially) are incredibly averse towards. In fact Mubarak uses this very often as a way to "scare the United States" and to

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[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid., 28-9.

ensure that a steady flow of foreign aid does not dry up.[88] Finally, the existence of the MB has

perhaps contributed to the marginalization of secular groups, although this is purely

speculative.

Ultimately, the Mubarak dominated NDP is afraid of the Muslim Brotherhood "...not

because they are Islamists but because they are a viable, popular, and relatively uncorrupt

alternative to the incumbent regime."[89] One can see countless examples that demonstrate the

regime is afraid of political participation by the MB, not of its religious underpinnings. In 2007

an Egyptian newspaper leaked information that the MB was going to formally draft a political

platform, the first time since 1928.[90] Within two days police arrested 34 senior members of the

MB, and transferred 40 others to a military tribunal. Less than a week after the leak security

forces arrested two MPs affiliated with the MB and charged them with "involvement in

terrorism, money laundering, and forming a paramilitary militia."[91] The MPs were released

several hours after their arrest, but the severity of the response clearly exhibits how averse the

NDP is to political participation by the MB.

Neither the Mubarak regime nor the MB has ever sought an open confrontation with the

other. Why is this the case? The most likely answer probably centers on the high costs of

combating each other. In an open confrontation, the regime would lose a huge amount of

support in the face of the widespread popularity of the MB, which could provoke some sort of

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[88] Arafat, *The Mubarak Leadership and the Future of Democracy in Egypt*, 134.

[89] Ibid., 182.

[90] Ibid., 176.

[91] Ibid.

political upheaval.[92] Conversely the MB as a nonviolent movement is not equipped to fight back against the huge security apparatus controlled by the state. Additionally, the goals of the MB are not necessarily electoral; they want an Islamic society but do not necessarily need to use politics to achieve this. Its social programs, including "schools, hospitals, banks, businesses, mosques, foundations, day care centers, thrift shops, social clubs, facilities for the disabled, detoxification centers, and boy scout troops" enlist millions of Egyptians.[93] To disassemble these networks the regime would need to deprive millions of people of jobs, healthcare, welfare, and other services not sufficiently provided by itself. This move is too costly even for Mubarak, so he has reached a sort of unspoken agreement with the MB which steers their behavior. For their part, the MB is consistently trying to push the boundaries of its political objectives without stepping over the line that leads to violent crackdowns and arrests. The regime allows the MB to exist and to submit 'independent' candidates but refuses to acknowledge them as a legal political party. In order to maintain this balancing act it has been necessary for it to alternate between heavy-handedness and conciliation, and to keep a strong check on the MB without inciting the wrath of its own population.

This section has covered a large amount of material, but despite this it is possible to dilute several important generalities from the interaction between the MB and the regime. Primary among these we can see that the regime has devoted most of its efforts to preventing the MB from becoming politically mobilized. By allowing the MB to field candidates as independents, it provides an avenue of political participation without giving them official accreditation among the legal opposition. This conciliatory gesture has been accompanied by

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[92] Ibid., 182-3.

[93] Hamid, "Islamists and Nonviolent Action," 69.

harsh retaliations when the MB steps out of line and asks for too much. Often, crossing this line involves direct criticism of the regime or assumption of duties that are usually fulfilled by the state. These are so important for the regime's authoritarian structure, because they are essential to the [degrading] social contract between the government and the people.

## Illegal Secular Opposition

### Roots of Labor Protests

Labor organizations in Egypt best exemplify the corporatist controls which I explained in the literature review. Traditionally, the regime has granted labor organizations "representational monopolies" or preferential treatment, in exchange for keeping workers quiet. However, this corporatist contract has begun to fall apart, in no small part due to economic hardships facing Egypt and the inability of the regime to provide job security. This has caused an increase in illegal labor protests, which are faced with various responses by the regime.

The first association that comes to mind during a discussion of labor organization is the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU). Formed by Gamal Nasser in the 1950s, the GFTU is to this day the only legal labor union in Egypt. In fact, for all employees of public-owned companies membership in the GFTU is mandatory.[94] As a result the union has grown to enormous proportions; in 2007 it consisted of two thousand local committees with nearly five million members under its control.[95] Based on the regime's panicky response to the MBs growing membership, it might appear curious that it would continue to encourage the growth of

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[94] "Card-Carrying Members," *Business Today Egypt*, January 2006, http://www.businesstodayegypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=6257 (accessed April 10, 2010).

[95] Ibid.

a huge organization like the GFTU. On second glance, however, we can see that the GFTU has become (in some ways) a bureaucratic asset for Mubarak. In addition to becoming increasingly stratified so that the top union officials are less accountable to their constituents, the selection process of its leadership has been manipulated so that regime-friendly presidents can remain in power for long periods of time. According to Robert Bianchi, this has resulted in a "self-perpetuating elite" whereby federation presidents remain in office for tens of years, if not longer.[96] In the mid-1980s, "thirteen of twenty-three presidents had been in office for ten years or more, and four had managed to survive for at least nineteen years."[97] In spite of the regime's control over the leadership of the GFTU, it has not been completely successful in controlling the majority of workers who make up that membership.[98] The GFTU has never functioned as an intermediary between common laborers and the state; in fact, the GFTU has never supported a strike instigated by its members throughout its entire history.[99] Since this paper is focused on illegal opposition, I will therefore concentrate on protests organized outside the confines of the regime-dominated GFTU.

Much of the regime's inability to appease the common worker can be traced to the economic issues facing Egypt. In the 1970s President Sadat initiated a period of economic reform called "infitah," or the open door policy. These were supposed to be accompanied by International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) suggested reforms to privatize

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[96] Robert Bianchi, *Unruly Corporatism: Associational Life in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 141.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Hishaam D. Aidi, *Redeploying the State: Corporatism, Neoliberalism, and Coalition Politics* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 138.

[99] *Business Today Egypt*, 2006.

businesses and modernize the Egyptian economy. Privatization of public business was a highly

contentious issue, because as much as 71% of the total workforce was employed by state-owned

enterprises at the beginning of Mubarak's presidency.[100] Under the traditional social contract

which had been in place during the presidencies of Nasser and Sadat, labor groups traded

"worker restraint" in exchange for "material and organizational benefits from the state."[101]

Since privatization is often accompanied by massive layoffs, these IMF and WB reforms were

slow to be implemented because doing so would fundamentally alter this bargain between state

and labor. Job security continued to be one of the most important services traditionally

provided by the state, and we can see this in Labor Law 137 which was passed in 1981. This

law made it extremely difficult for managers of state-owned enterprises to fire workers, even if

their job was unnecessary or "redundant."[102] To an extent this was successful, but a side effect

of the imposed inefficiency was a stagnating economy, increasing foreign debt, and

skyrocketing unemployment into the 1990s.[103] Eventually, the regime was unable to continue

on the path of the past, and Mubarak decided to implement many of the IMF and WB reforms

in 1990 and 1991.

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[100] Boyan Belev, *Forcing Freedom: Political Control of Privatization and Economic Opening in Egypt and Tunisia* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 149.

[101] Eva Bellin, "Contingent Democrats: Industrialists, Labor, and Democratization in Late-Developing Countries." *World Politics* 52 no. 2 (2000) : 203-4.

[102] Belev, *Forcing Freedom*, 159.

[103] Hans Lofgren. "Economic Policy in Egypt: A Breakdown in Reform Resistance?" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 no. 3 (1993) : 407.

**Types of Illegal Labor Protests**

At this point, I will look at several examples of labor protests which are characteristic of the 1980s. The protests that the Mubarak regime has faced since 1981 are very often "entitlement protests," or protests that occur in response to something the workers feel they are entitled to that has been taken away.[104] An good example of this is that of the Esco Textile factory strike in the mid-1980s. In 1981 law was passed which was interpreted by a 1984 court ruling to mean that workers at the textile factory should receive one paid day off per week.[105] The management of the factory rejected this, and in 1986 the workers brought the case to an appeals court, which also found in favor of the workers. Once again the management rejected the ruling, so ten thousand workers from the factory (more than half of all employees) staged a sit in and seized the company from the management, but continued to work throughout. The strike ended a few days later when the company agreed to negotiate, and workers were granted a sizable number of the demands they had made. However, after several months the workers were still unhappy with the terms of settlement and demanded even greater compensation. They decided to stage another sit-in, but on the third day the regime sent police to storm the building to disperse the protestors, arresting more than five hundred in the process.[106]

Another example of an entitlement protest was the 1986 train drivers strike, which was met with extreme harshness by the regime. Beginning in 1982 train drivers voiced their grievances to the government regarding working conditions, and for the next three years were

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[104] Marsha Pripstein Posusney. "Irrational Workers: The Moral Economy of Labor Protest in Egypt." *World Politics* 46 no. 1 (1993) : 100.

[105] Ibid., 109.

[106] Ibid., 117.

repeatedly promised by transportation ministers that their grievances would be addressed.

When this failed to happen, the drivers began a letter-writing campaign, which was also

unsuccessful. Finally, in 1985 they staged a sit-in at their headquarters. When the deputy

minister of transportation personally promised the protestors that his superior would meet with

them later in the week, they ended the sit-in. However, they were disappointed once again when

the minister cancelled this meeting and after appealing to Mubarak and other senior ministers

through a second letter campaign, finally decided to take drastic measures. In 1986 the drivers

went on strike and stopped running the trains. In response, the regime ordered the army to start

an emergency bus service, and then sent police to beat the striking workers. Over 100 of them

were arrested and tried in military courts; which are only supposed to be for armed terrorists.[107]

With this business completed, the minister finally decided to meet with the workers and grant

them most of the concessions they had been demanding from the beginning. Some were even

offered stipends to return to work at their previous positions!

From these examples we can see how the regime responded to the various tactics that

were used by the protest groups. In the first example there was very little regime involvement

at all until the very end of the ordeal. Essentially, local authorities were allowed to deal with

the problem up until the second sit-in. In the latter example we can also see that the regime did

not take interest until the 1985 sit-in, when the deputy minister of transportation himself

promised these workers that his superior would meet them to discuss their grievances.

Ultimately, although both campaigns were ended forcibly by the security apparatus, the manner

of force varied greatly between the two because of the nature of work and the methods of

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[107] Ibid., 117.

protest of each group. In the Esco protests workers belonged to the textile industry; which although commercially valuable, is not a matter of great national importance. Additionally, the workers at the textile factory staged their sit-in but continued to work during it, thus showing that they were 'loyal to the national cause' and were not protesting anything other than a specific set of grievances.[108] This technique of continuing to work during sit-ins has become quite common for labor protests during the Nasser and Sadat presidencies, in addition to Mubarak's. Early tactics of the train drivers protest were also met with a mild government response. Three years of complaints were answered only with empty promises, and the initial letter-writing campaign was largely ignored. In both cases, we can see something innocuous about the type of protests. In a sense, they proclaim that the groups are still loyal to the state, but that they only want certain specific grievances to be managed. By using non-threatening methods of protest, they appear less oppositional to the regime and are more difficult to punish. However, these tactics are quite often unsuccessful, so the group must then decide whether they want to take the next step and risk reprisal.

The 'next step' for both of these groups was to step over the line of non-threatening protest and cross into the dangerous area of directly challenging the interests of the regime. In doing so they tested the corporatist controls which have been vital for the regime's ability to impose its will. The textile workers crossed this line when they decided to continue with their sit-in even after efforts had been made to accommodate their demands. If this action had gone unpunished, other nascent protest groups might suppose weakness on the part of the regime. For the train drivers, the issue at stake was more than just corporatist controls; it was a matter

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108 Ibid., 112.

of national priority. Train drivers on strike, unlike textile workers, can cause substantial

economic and material harm to the country as a whole. This is a prime example of the blending

of corporatism and authoritarianism, because it demonstrates how the economic pillar of

authoritarianism can be degraded when corporatist controls become dysfunctional. In this

instance the regime did not have a choice about whether to use coercion or conciliation, since

conciliation would have rewarded an action that undermined its authority.

Despite the vicious and seemingly arbitrary response of the regime to illegal labor

protests, they have continued to increase in the 1990s and afterwards. Between 1998 and 1999

there were 287 worker protests, including 90 strikes, compared to 37 strikes between 1988 and

1989.[109] The regime has recognized this rapid increase in malcontent, and decided to pass the

Unified Labor Law of 2003 which allowed workers to strike so long as they sought approval

from the GFTU.[110] Obviously this was not a genuine measure of reform - given the NDP control

over the GFTU - and it has done little to decrease extra-legal protests. In 2006 a strike at a

textile factory at 'Ghazl El-Mahalla' set off a series of other textile protests throughout the

northern region. Especially notable among these copycat protests was a December, 2007

incident at the biggest textile factory in Egypt, Mahalla al-Kubra.[111] Workers at this factory

staged a protest to dispute a company decision not to pay bonuses, and after five days the

company decided to pay them 75% of their bonuses. More significantly, the workers at this

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[109] Pratt, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Arab World*, 142.

[110] Joel Beinin and Hossam el-Hamalawy, "Egyptian Textile Workers Confront the New Economic Order," *Middle East Report Online*, March 25, 2007, http://www.merip.org/mero/mero032507.html (accessed April 10, 2010).

[111] Robert Stevens, "Textile Workers Protest Trade Union Collaboration with Employers," *World Socialist Website,* February 12, 2007, http://www.wsws.org/articles/2007/feb2007/egyp-f12.shtml (accessed April 10, 2010).

company exhibited contempt for the local branch of the GFTU, called the General Union of

Textile Workers (GUTW). Workers accused the GUTW of trying to sabotage strikes, and even

charged them of having been fraudulently elected.[112] They then presented a petition of thirteen

thousand signatures to the GFTU demanding that the leaders of the GUTW be impeached, and

threatened to form an independent trade union if their demands were not met. For opponents of

the regime, this provides hope that sometime in the future labor organizations will be able to

break free of the legal restraints of the GFTU and fill a more worker-oriented role.

      The state's willingness to use coercion against 'illegal' labor protests, or those that do

not comply with the GFTU, shows that it values its historical corporatist relationship with

labor and seeks to maintain the status quo. However, increasing economic hardship has eroded

the corporatist social contract, and its most important stipulation (the guarantee of a job) is no

longer assured. The recent decision to begin privatization of state-owned industries has further

alienated workers from the regime-dominated GFTU and prompted many of them to stage

large-scale protests. However, despite the scale and success rate of these demonstrations, labor

has yet to organize beyond specific entitlement protests. Workers have demonstrated their

ability to unite one one specific time for one specific reason, but collective action on a larger

scale has not occurred. Therefore, the state has been able to use conciliation on specific issues

(when pressured) combined with sporadic coercion.This coercion often makes labor activists

rethink the costs of arranging a protest which directly challenges the regime or imposes an

economic cost, because both of these actions are ones which the state has shown little

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[112] Ibid.

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toleration for. Drawing this "line" is one of the more effective ways the state has resisted the increasing pressure placed on it by Egyptian labor.

**Egyptian Movement for Change**

As we have seen above, labor protests have continued to occur during the past several years, and there is good reason to believe that they will continue in the future in some form. In this next section I will examine groups that have used more vocal forms of protest, and have taken a more personal approach to protesting the regime. These groups were able to open the political system to unprecedented levels between 2004 - 2006 by directly challenging the regime itself and organizing highly publicized rallies. Moreover, these movements were able to challenge the Egyptian political culture of political remiss and present a "counter narrative;" one of the prerequisites for a successful confrontation with authoritarianism. However, eventually the preponderance of this movement crumbled from internal dissent and the pressure of the state coercive apparatus. The overwhelming lesson from this section is that when directly confronted in the face of political opportunity, the regime will offer meaningless reforms to appear legitimate while simultaneously taking action to hide the extent of its coercion.

The beginning of the mid-decade protests started in 2002, when the Anti-Globalization Egyptian Group (AGEG) was founded. During the visit of the World Bank president to Egypt, several hundred activists gathered to protest unemployment, poverty, workers' rights, Israeli occupation, and the war on Iraq.[113] This protest was part a larger anti-globalization movement that was being felt around the globe, and later in 2002 Cairo was host to the International Campaign Against US Aggression on Iraq. At this conference delegates issued the Cairo

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[113] Pratt, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Arab World,* 177.

Declaration, which linked resistance to US hegemony with globalization and the occupation of Palestine and Iraq. By 2003, the delegation had changed its name to reflect this statement, calling itself the "International Campaign Against US and Zionist Occupation." Further conferences were organized in 2005 and 2006, at which point the Egyptian protest organization "Kefaya" (Enough!) organized a demonstration at the end of the conference against the Egyptian regime and its cooperation with the US. These protests were tolerated to an unusual degree, especially when compared to some of the earlier labor protests that made specific criticisms of the regime. Also during that period the Egyptian government allowed an anti-war "contained" protest to take place at Cairo Stadium, which was attended by one hundred thousand people.[114] There were police abuses against the anti-war demonstrators but not to a large degree.

The above series of events appears inconsistent to previous regime action against protests, but in fact the lack of coercion make complete sense. Not only were these protests part of a larger, global protest movement against globalization and the war in Iraq, but they were also mostly outwardly focused. Whereas labor protests demanded specific changes, anti-war protests were more of an expression of discontent aimed generally at the US and supporters of its war. In this context, an alliance of reformist movements began a campaign in late 2004 with the goal of changing the political landscape. Many of the dozen movements that took part in this movement had taken part in anti-war protests, and so had become more experienced at organizing protests and recruiting members. Most famous among this coalition was Kefaya, but also included was the National Rally for Democratic Transition (NRDT), Journalists for

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[114] Ibid., 180.

Change, Doctors for change, Intellectuals for Change, Writers for Change, Workers for Change, and Youth for Change.[115] Kefaya, also known as the Egyptian Movement for Change, was formed in September 2004 when hundreds of Egyptian intellectuals gathered at a conference to discuss the issue of executive power.[116] Kefaya was never designed to be a political party; from the outset its creators designated it as a "movement," thus making it illegal under Egyptian law. The word Kefaya means "enough" in Arabic, and symbolizes the groups' call for the end of Mubarak's rule, the establishment of a true parliamentary republic, constitutional and judicial reforms, the end of emergency rule, and accountable governance.[117] Kefaya was also completely unique because of the diversity of its membership, which was comprised of low-level, middle-level, and high-level professionals, as well as academics and politicians.

**Rise and Fall of the Movement**

The tactics used by Kefaya relied on openness, transparency, and peaceful protest.[118] Street rallies sometimes attracted thousands, and in April 2005 the group was able to co-organize simultaneous protests in thirteen cities around Egypt against the constitutional amendments allowing multiple candidates to run for the presidency.[119] Furthermore, later that year Kefaya protested the referendum on Article 76, (which was the amendment that allowed multiple presidential candidates) and were attacked by thugs and plainclothes police. Kefaya

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[115] Arafat, *The Mubarak Leadership and the Future of Democracy in Egypt*, 157-8.

[116] Nadia Oweidat and others, *The Kefaya Movement: A Case Study of a Grassroots Reform Initiative,* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2008), 10.

[117] Ibid., 11.

[118] Ibid., 17.

[119] Sherif Mansour, "Enough Is Not Enough-Egypt's Kefaya." In *Civilian Jihad,* ed. Maria Stephan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 209.

activists videotaped beatings and sexual molestation of several women, and spread them widely

over the internet.[120] This was especially shocking to Egyptians, because many of them had

never seen documented evidence of regime brutality. In June of that year Kefaya organized a

candlelight vigil in front of the mausoleum of Saad Zaghul, a national hero, that was attended

by two thousand people. This was described in al-Ahram Weekly as "the most organized and

impressive demonstration by the reform movement to date," but the success was short-lived.[121]

A month later police attacked a group of Kefaya activists who were protesting Mubarak's

candidacy in the upcoming elections as a means of punishment. Other regime tactics, before

and after this crackdown, were aimed towards harassing leadership and repressing protests. In

two instances, senior leaders of Kefaya were kidnapped and beaten; one of these men was taken

to a police station, tortured, and repeatedly sodomized.[122] Harsh crackdowns by the regime,

combined with internal dissent, frustration, and the failure to prevent the 2005 re-election of

Mubarak all contributed to the decline of Kefaya in 2006, and by 2007 one of its founding

members pronounced it "dead."[123]

Kefaya's meteoric rise and fall has been an enormous topic of discussion for members of

the Egyptian opposition. Perhaps the most significant impact that the movement left on the

face of politics was its complete uniqueness to other forms of opposition; for the first time in

fifty years, protests were agitating solely for the purpose of political liberalization.[124] Unlike

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[120] Ibid., 210.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid., 211.

[123] Ibid., 212.

[124] Rabab El-Mahdi, "Enough!: Egypt's Quest for Democracy." *Comparative Political Studies* 42 no. 8 (2009) : 1013.

labor protests or the MB, Kefaya did not push for economic or regional concerns. Their campaign sought to increase the accountability of the regime and end the Mubarak presidency, and it sought this through avenues outside of traditional political opposition. This may explain why Mubarak was so sluggish in his response; he may not have known how to respond! Indeed, in some cases Kefaya was successful in negating the advantage conferred to the regime by its coercive mechanisms. By filming police raids of protests and the ensuing abuses, Kefaya raised the cost of coercion for the regime and severely weakened one of the pillars of authoritarianism. However, the government was able to wear down the protest movement with constant harassment and refusal to concede authentic amendments. Kefaya rallies never reached more than twenty-five hundred participants; this was likely a result of fear of regime reprisal on the part of the Egyptian public.[125] The regime understood that if Kefaya had expanded its membership to a significant level, it could have posed a considerable threat to its survival. Accordingly, it decided to coerce Kefaya with tactics to prevent the expansion of membership, such as sending plainclothes 'thugs' to break up rallies. This tactic allowed the regime to deny accountability of the beatings to foreign or ignorant observers, but locals knew that they were acting on behalf of the regime. Additionally, by using arrests and kidnappings, they regime imposed further costs on political participation through nonconventional means. Much of the lower class was dissuaded from joining in this way, because if they were thrown in jail for several weeks, their families at home would have no way of earning money to buy even basic necessities such as food.

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[125] Ibid., 1014.

**Conclusion**

**Bringing Everything Together**

Political opposition in Egypt has reached the point that pursuit of true reform using the mechanisms permitted by the regime is nearly inconceivable. Constitutional reforms, regime infiltration of opposition parties, controls over funding, electoral engineering, and many other fine-tuned controls have successfully kept Mubarak in power since 1981. While some aspects of the official opposition, especially the judiciary, show some promising intentions for reform, it is unlikely that they alone will be able to change the system from within. Consequently, I have focused this paper on the illegal opposition within Egypt and its relationship within the regime. This illegal opposition faces an uphill battle with a regime that has used conditioning to "train" opposition how to behave. Using the literature on authoritarianism, I have shown how the regime has sought to maintain the pillars of power which have ensured its survival. The Muslim Brotherhood has been one of the main challengers on this front because it has the ability to provide services which are usually provided by the state. Social welfare programs and relief efforts have therefore been particularly controversial with the state. The foremost threat that the MB poses to the state, however, is that of political mobilization. Were the MB to run as an official party against the NDP in a monitored election, it would be difficult to predict the outcome. The very fact that an organized, broad-based, moderate movement exists in Egypt is enough to cause panic to the regime.

To appease the MB the regime has occasionally given it limited political space to participate as independents, but this has never been guaranteed constitutionally. As a balance, the regime will occasionally use coercion to show the MB what the cost of an uninhibited

confrontation between the two groups would look like. We can start to generalize that the regime prefers to avoid confrontation, and instead to offer some sort of preliminary "reform" or "concession." Ordinarily these concessions do very little to change the status quo, and so the opposition must then decide whether it wants to pursue the matter further. If they do, they can expect a rapid coercive response which is aimed at dissuading future dissent.

The literature on corporatism plays a larger role in the relationship between the regime and illegal labor protests. As previously mentioned, the Egyptian state under Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak provided the guarantee of employment in exchange for worker passivity and free license in its actions. By providing this benefit the regime was able to entice labor to support most of its initiatives and to keep it as a relatively pro-government force (see the GFTU). However, economic troubles and rising unemployment, combined with decreasing wages and the threat of privatization have forced Mubarak to take measures that have undermined this corporatist arrangement. Laborers are no longer guaranteed employment, and so their pledge of passivity has become less binding. To an extent, the regime is tolerant of these sporadic protests because they are for disconnected, single-issue complaints. So long as the labor protests do not call for a larger reform movement, and do not impose an economic cost on the regime, conciliation is often the outcome. However, as I showed with the example of the train drivers, when laborers engage in activities that have a direct impact on the regime's ability to govern, the response is just as heavy-handed as with the MB.

Finally, the recent emergence and evaporation of the political protest movement Kefaya was an unexpected but successful model for future political protest. The regime learned its lesson from the rise of the MB, and chose not to grant unofficial political representation to

members of Kefaya. Instead, it focused its efforts on coercion and preventing the expansion of the membership of the movement. Providing high costs to joining Kefaya was the only way to ensure that the broad-based coalition did not expand to the point of unmanageability. However, the regime had to be careful, because Kefaya did everything in its power to neutralize one of the central pillars to Egyptian authoritarianism; that of the the security apparatus and coercion. Kefaya gained national and international notoriety in large part because of the regime's heavy-handed response to its protests. The documentation of police abuses, torture, and arrests showed many people the true face of the regime. However, by suffering these abuses the Kefaya movement eventually succumbed to them.

Overall, the decision to divide this paper into sections covering religious and secular illegal opposition provided useful, if only to highlight that neither receives worse or better treatment than the other. The regime will make unique excuses to justify coercive action against each group, but other than this there was very little evidence that one or the other was seen as a greater threat simply because it was religious or secular. This is an interesting finding because it shows that the nature of an opposition movement is irrelevant when it is facing up against the Egyptian regime; what really matters is how much a threat it poses to the regime, and how easily the regime can control the group.

**The Future of Egypt?**

From this paper it is difficult to draw any conclusive speculations about the future of Egyptian illegal opposition movements. I have shown that the MB and the regime are currently in a political stand-off, but this could go in either group's favor depending on the

circumstances. If the MB is allowed to continue its social expansion it may eventually have enough popular support to force political recognition by the regime, at which point it may defeat the NDP through elections. What the MB decides to do should this happen is difficult to predict.

Additionally, there has been an increasing number of labor protests and Kefaya-style protests in the lead-up to the upcoming presidential elections. Many people believe that unlike 2005, Mubarak will not be able to run for president again, especially considering his age and recent health problems. There are a variety of speculations guessing who would take his place, which range from a military coup to succession by his son Gamal. Whatever happens, we can rest assured that the MB, labor movements, and political protest movements will play a role. What remains to be seen is whether this role is one of assuming power, or one of subjugation under it.

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