Revolution without Movement, Movement without Revolution: Comparing Islamist Activism in Iran and Egypt

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Why did Iran of the late 1970s with a thriving economy, wealthy middle class, repressive political system, massive military might, and powerful international allies go through an Islamic revolution, while Egypt of the early 1990s with similar international allies, but poorer economy, impoverished large middle classes, and a more liberal political system did not go beyond developing an Islamist movement?[1]

EXPLAINING THE REVOLUTION

Mainstream scholarship views the Iranian revolution as an outcome of an ideological process, the culmination of a long-lasting Islamic movement which had been evolving since the late 1960s. Hamid Dabashi's impressive work seems to suggest that in this "deeply religious society," the Islamists spent a long time preparing for an Islamic takeover. Through the institutions of mosque, *hawzeh* (theological seminary) sermons, preaching, and publications, they were busy with recruiting, organizing, training, and mobilizing their resources so that they could gain power when internal and international opportunities presented themselves.[2] Similarly, for Mansoor Moaddel, the

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[1] In 1978 the per-capita income in Iran was $2,400, compared to $660 in Egypt in 1988. During the 1970s, some 15 percent of Tehran's population lived in the squatter areas (and about 15 percent in slums), whereas this figure for Cairo in the early 1990s was 50 percent.

[2] Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 110. For instance, Said A. Arjomand states that "in 1961–78 . . . the religious institutions came under relentless attack by the Pahlavi state and had to court the masses more assiduously in order to mobilize them in its defense"; see

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emergence of the "Islamic discourse" in the particular "episode" of 1953–77 culminated in the Islamic revolution.[3]

Although Moaddel and Dabashi focus on internal factors, others such as Anthony Parsons and Nikkie Keddie regard the Islamic revival as the popular assertion of "Muslim identity" against Western political and cultural penetration. Parsons argues that the Iranian revolution was different from other revolutions in that the "bulk of the Shi'i population of Iran knew both what they did not want (the continuation of Pahlavi rule) and what they did want (a government controlled by religious leadership, the historical guardians of the Islamic Iranian tradition)." For Keddie, two additional factors played a role: a growing association between secularism and western control and a government associated with the western powers.[4]

Others have explained the revolution in terms of the breakdown of the traditional social order caused by "social dislocation and normative disturbance." Said Amir Arjomand views this as the result of the socioeconomic changes that the state initiated. Unable to integrate the dislocated and disoriented groups into its own structure, the state pushed them to the arms of the Shi'i clergy, who were ready to mobilize them since the 1960s. The Islamic movement acted as the "rival integrative movement," offering the disoriented with a sense of moral and spiritual community.[5] What happened in 1979, according to Arjomand "was destined to be an Islamic revolution with the goal of establishing a theocracy."[6]

Structural factors and class interests are emphasized by yet another group of scholars. Ervand Abrahamian, Fred Halliday, Mohsen Milani, and Keddie (in her later writings) among others consider the contradiction between socioeconomic development and political autocracy as the main source of conflict and the social classes as major players in the revolution.[7] Parsa Misaq in addition places special emphasis on the role of the state—the high degree of

Arjomand, "Shi'ite Islam and the Revolution in Iran," *Government and Opposition*, 16:2 (1981), 302.

[3] Mansoor Moaddel, *Class, Politics and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); and M. Moaddel, "The Significance of Discourse in the Iranian Revolution: A Reply to Foran," in *Critique: Journal for Critical Studies of the Middle East*, no. 4, (Spring 1994), 65–72. See also an interesting critique of Moaddel by Jhon Forn in his "The Iranian Revolution and the Study of Discourses: A Comment on Moaddel," in *Critique: Journal for Critical Studies of the Middle East*, no. 4 (Spring 1994), 51–63.

[4] Anthony Parsons, "The Iranian Revolution," *Middle East Review*, 1988 (spring), 3–8. Nikkie Keddie, *Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); N. Keddie, "Islamic Revival in the Middle East: A Comparison of Iran and Egypt," in Samih Farsoun, ed., *Arab Society: Continuity and Change* (London, Croom Helm, 1985).

[5] S. A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown* (Oxford University Press, 1988), 106, 197–200.
[6] *Ibid.*, 6.
[7] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions;* Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development;* M. Milani, *The Making of the Islamic Revolution in Iran;* N. Keddie, *Iran and the Muslim World* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

state intervention in capital accumulation eroded the mediating role of the market, rendering the state the target of all conflict and opposition.[8]

I do not intend to offer a thorough assessment of each of these explanations. Undoubtedly, these authors have on the whole shed a valuable light on the complexities of the Iranian revolution. I do propose here to point to two problems. First, despite their differences, these authors grant an overestimated agency to a supposed strong Islamic movement which is said to have evolved since the 1960s or earlier, and to its role in carrying the revolution to victory. This is an assumption which I shall question in this essay. Second, the proposed models, in general, may be able to explain not the revolution per se but help to identify the major causes behind popular resentment and mobilization. One still needs to examine how a massive mobilization and movement articulates into a revolution. Indeed, as Henry Munson argues, most of the factors suggested by the above authors—resentment of foreign domination, authoritarian rule, violation of traditional values, social dislocation, economic downturn, inequality, and state intervention—also existed in some other Middle Eastern countries but did not materialize into revolution.[9] For Egypt, Snow and Marshal maintain cultural imperialism and globalization as the underlying cause of the Islamist movement.[10] Similarly, Burgat and Dowell see Islamism in Egypt and in North Africa as the third phase of anti-colonialism—cultural and discursive independence—after political and economic independence.[11] Meanwhile, Saad Eddin Ibrahim (and more or less Gilles Kepel) among others focus on the national crisis manifested in conflicts with foreign influence, especially the defeat in the 1967 war with Israel, class incongruity, and individual anomie among the educated rural migrants as the major factors which furnished the rise of the Islamist movement since the 1970s.[12] Like the Iranian case, both internal (socio-economic and political) and external (resentment against western domination and the Israel factor) played crucial roles in bringing about Egypt's Islamist activism. So, in what way do Iran and Egypt represent two different trajectories? Why revolution in Iran, but not in Egypt? The question can be addressed not simply in terms of the structural causal analysis but by explaining the link between popular mobilization and revolutions.

[8] Misagh Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989).

[9] Henry Munson, *Islam and Revolution in the Middle East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

[10] Snow and Marshal, "Cultural Imperialism. Social Movements, and Islamic Revival," in *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change*, vol. 7 (1989), 131–52.

[11] F. Burga and W. Dowell, *The Islamic Movement in North Africa*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993).

[12] Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Islamic Groups: Methodological Note and Preliminary Findings," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 12 (1980), 423–53; G. Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND REVOLUTIONS

None of the major models of collective action has theorized the dynamics of the transformation from collective action to revolution. They are concerned largely with explaining causes of social discontent and revolutionary crisis.[13] For James Davies, "Revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal."[14] As in Gurr's "relative deprivation" thesis, what seems to mediate between these objective processes and the occurrence of revolution is the psychological mood of the people, their expectations, and frustrations.[15] But as the resource mobilization theorists have pointed out, the mood of a people may not lead to action unless they are able to mobilize the necessary resources by creating appropriate opportunities. In this context, Tilly's important concepts—*opportunity,* or those factors which facilitate collective action, and *suppression,* or those which restrict it—are particularly useful.[16] And so are the degree of the legitimacy of the authorities, the dynamics of the use of violence, and the division within the elites which Quee-Young Kim highlighted.[17] Yet these theorists fail to capture the complex dynamics of the interaction between the contenders and state during the revolutionary process.

Popular discontents, whatever their cause, may give rise to two types of mobilization. The first type, protest or insurrectionary movements, like Iran's revolutionary movement during 1978, aims solely to negate the existing order; they may or may not be able to build an alternative structure. The second, social movements, aim to alter the dominant arrangements but also attempt to establish alternative institutions and value systems before a total change. The European Socialist movements, Poland's Solidarity, and some Islamist movements, represent such a pattern. In general, such social movements are more or less structured and require the durable efforts of a relatively large number of people to produce social change. These movements may be composed of diverse activities with pervasive institutional ramifications within civil society. As constituents of alternative institutions and cultural settings, they differ from such free-form collective actions as riots or street demonstrations or from rigidly structured interest groups which concern only their own members. Social movements are also different from power-seeking political parties, small cliques like secret discussion groups, and underground guerrilla

[13] See, for instance, Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[14] James Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," *American Sociological Review,* 27:1 (February 1962), 6.

[15] Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

[16] Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution,* 1978.

[17] Quee-Young Kim, "Disjunctive Justice and Revolutionary Movement: The 4.19 (Sa-il-gu) Upheaval and the Fall of the Syngman Rhee Regime in South Korea," in Quee-Young Kim, ed., *Revolutions in the Third World* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 56–70.

organizations without mass support. Yet they may be connected to these kinds of activities, share many features with them, or even transform into one another (such as the Rifah Party or the Islamic movement in Turkey?). They are, moreover, distinct from revolutions, in that the latter refers to processes of pervasive, usually violent and rapid change, where the political authority collapses and is replaced by the contenders.[18]

Protest movements which may culminate in insurrections, on the other hand, are usually transitory and do not last long. Either they achieve their goal or get suppressed. The most critical element for protest movements is sustainability, since they directly challenge the political authority. Nevertheless, in some rare cases, a protest movement may transform itself into a more structured and institutionalized social movement or even into an interest group. Jadwiga Staniszkis has referred to Solidarity's transformation during September 1980 and March 1981 from a national movement into a trade union position as "Poland's self-limiting revolution."[19] Solidarity regained its original status after the crackdown by the military regime in 1981 and reemerged in the late 1980s after the "Gorbachev revolution."[20]

Because they are institutionalized within the civil society, social movements—unlike protest actions and insurrections—are able to sustain and persist longer when confronted with the state. However, precisely because of this dynamics, they are likely to turn away from a revolutionary or insurrectionary character by struggling, instead, within an existing arrangement. Many factors contribute to this. The first has to do with the temporal element. Unlike an insurrectionary movement which does not have much time (because it either crushes or gets crushed), social movements function within a longer span of time, during which people can ask questions, debate key issues, and be clear about the aims of the movement. Various ideas and consequently divergent tendencies develop. While clarity and differentiation mark the salient features of a social movement, ambiguity and unity are the hallmarks of insurrectionary actions. Second, because of the positive changes that they may generate, social movements may modify the conditions of their own existence. For instance, the unemployed movement in Iran in 1979 undermined itself partly because it achieved some of its goals.[21] Unlike the protest movements or insurrections which only negate the prevailing order, social movements tend

[18] More precisely, a revolution is, in Huntington's words, "a rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and government activity and politics." See S. Huntington, "Modernization and Revolution," in Claude, E. Welch and M. B. Taintor, eds., *Revolution and Political Change* (1972), 22.

[19] Jadwiga Staniszkis, *Poland's Sef-Limiting Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 17.

[20] P. Kuczynski and K. Nowak, "The Solidarity Movement in Relation to Society and the State," in L. Kriesberg *et al.*, eds., *Research in Social Movement, Conflicts and Change*, vol. 10 (Greenwich: Connecticut, Jai Press Inc., 1988).

[21] See Asef Bayat, "Workless Revolutionaries: The Movement of the Unemployed in Iran, 1979," *International Review of Social History*, 42:2 (Summer 1997), 159–85.

also to construct alternative institutions and value systems. In this process, they develop, for instance, alternative credit systems for the poor as well as clinics, factories, mutual aid, housing, and systems of social protection, all of which may fulfill some of the needs of their constituencies. Besides, they also give rise to social and cultural sub-systems which usually coexist, albeit with tension, within the dominant order. Alternative electoral systems in autonomous unions, syndicates, neighborhoods and associations for the excluded groups are a few of their institutional manifestations. Finally, alternative religious and cultural organizations—schools, holidays, charities, political parties as well as those dealing with music, art, customs, and even laws—are set up to serve as a moral community in which excluded people can feel at home. The Austrian socialist movement in the 1920s and Egyptian Islamic activism represent two examples.

Some neo-Durkheimian social theorists, such as Arjomand, view such institutions as the embodiment of an "integrative community" which breeds opposition to dominant institutions and value systems (as in Iran). However, instead of political opposition, such arrangements are likely to lead to what Guenther Roth (in an analysis of Social Democracy in Imperial Germany) calls "negative integration"—partial economic and political inclusion combined with alternative cultural and social existence.[22] On the other hand, integration theorists such as Bendix and Lipset (pointing to the Western European trade union movement) have argued that institutionalization of this nature helps contenders develop interests in the prevailing system and working within it.[23] However, I wish to emphasize that social movements do not simply integrate the contenders into a system, they also produce some real change and generate sub-systems within which the actors operate and reproduce themselves. Instead of leading to a sudden revolutionary transformation, these movements often both coexist and compete with the dominant social arrangement. Unlike insurrectionist movements, they do not or cannot undo political authority, although this does not mean that they are integrated in the sense of ideological and political co-optation because the very operation of the movement signifies considerable change for its members. Rather, in a sense, it conjures up Gramscian "passive revolution" (or a "war of position") which aims not simply at capturing state power (as the insurrectionists do in their "frontal attack") but focuses on the gradual capture and possession of the society by exerting moral and intellectual leadership over civil institutions and processes.[24] A true revolution, for Gramsci, is not just winning the state power but winning the society by institutional, intellectual, and moral hegemony. "A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise leadership before winning

[22] Guenther Roth, *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany: A Study of Working Class Isolation and National Integration* (Totowa, NJ: 1963), 170.

[23] Bendix, *Nation-Building*, 86–89; Lipset, *Political Man*, 70–73.

[24] Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 106–114; 206–8.

governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power)."[25] Although "passive revolution" represents a conscious strategy, its consequences reflect those of the social movements.

Whereas "frontal attacks" or insurrections are likely to occur in societies in which civil institutions are minimally available to mediate between the government and the people, passive revolution occurs where a strong civil society prevails. But the passive revolution, the "revolution of the spirit," is prolonged, "complex, difficult," and calls for "exceptional qualities of patience and inventive spirit."[26] The reformist core of social movements and passive revolution must be evident from both their "integrating" impacts and the conscious strategy of the movements which give priority to changing the society rather than to capturing governmental power. This is radically distinguished from the insurrectionary movements whose aim is frontal attack against the government (the war of maneuver), which results in a different outcome.

In this essay I argue that Iran experienced an insurrectionary movement aimed at capturing the state power; Egypt, on the other hand, developed with a degree of relative openness, a pervasive Islamic social movement which operated and brought about significant changes within the civil society but failed to alter the political structure. In other words, Iran witnessed an Islamic revolution without a strong Islamic movement; but Egypt experienced a movement without a revolution. Three major factors were involved in this equation: differing political and social statuses of the clergy, differences in the ways that Islam was articulated and practiced, and finally different degrees of political control in the two countries. In the following pages I will elaborate on these two trajectories and their implications for revolutionary and reformist outcomes.

THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION IN IRAN

On February 11, 1979, Tehran radio announced the victory of the Iranian revolution with feverish jubilation. This heralded the end of a 2,500-year-old monarchy. A mood of ecstasy overtook the populace who rushed into the streets en mass. Women milled through the crowd, handing out candies and *sharbat,* sweet drinks. Vehicles sounded their horns in unison, beaming their lights as they drove down the main streets, which only days before had witnessed bloody clashes between the protesters and the army. These same streets were now being patrolled by the revolutionary militias, the Pasdaran. For those present, it was a day of incomparable victory.

The victory day was the culmination of over eighteen months of mass demonstrations, bloody confrontations, massive industrial actions, a general strike, and many political maneuverings. Yet the genesis of the revolution

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[25] *Ibid.,* 207.   [26] Joseph Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought,* 192.

must be traced to structural changes that had been underway since the 1930s, when the country began undergoing a process of modernization. This process was accelerated especially after the coup 1953 engineered by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which toppled nationalist prime minister, Mohammad Mosaddeq, and reinstated the Shah. This structural change resulted in many conflicts, the chief among them being the contradiction between socioeconomic change and political underdevelopment.[27] In addition to these structural causes, certain accelerating factors—state inefficiency, corruption and a sense of injustice among many sectors of the Iranian society—were also involved.

The policy of modernization and economic change, initiated by the state under both Reza Shah (1925–46) and his son, the late Shah, resulted in the growth of new social forces, a development that dismayed traditional social groups. By the late 1970s, a large and well-to-do modern middle class, modern youth, public women, an industrial working class, in addition to a new poor—slum and squatter dwellers dominated the social scene. With the exception of the latter, all these groups represented the beneficiaries of the economic development, who enjoyed relatively high status and comparable economic rewards. However, the persistence of the Shah's anachronistic autocracy (political underdevelopment) prevented these thriving social layers from participating in the political process, something that angered them. At the very same time, the old social groups—a segment of the traditional bazaares, the old strata of the urban middle class, the clergy and those adherent to Islamic institutions—were also frustrated by the modernization strategy because it undermined their economic interests and social status.

When all the institutional channels that could have given expression to the discontent were closed, the populace became increasingly alienated from the state. In the meantime, corruption, inefficiency, a sense of injustice, and a feeling of moral outrage characterized the social psychology of many Iranians. So, during the tense years of the 1970s, at the height of the Shah's authoritarian rule and remarkable economic development, many people (except perhaps the upper class and landed peasantry) seemed dissatisfied, albeit for different reasons. But all were united in blaming the Shah and his western allies for that state of affairs. It is not surprising, then, that the language of dissent and protests was largely anti-monarchy, anti-imperialist, third worldist, and even nationalist, turning towards the end to religious discourse.

The opportunity for popular mobilization arrived with what we used to call the "Carterite breeze" (*Nasseem-e Carteri*). President Carter's human rights policy in the late 1970s forced the Shah to offer a political space for a limited

[27] See Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); N. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution;* Mohsen Milani, *The Making of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (Boulder: Westvew Press, 1986); Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development* (London: Penguin Books, 1979).

degree of expression. This expression, in the process, was cumulatively built up and in the course of less than two years swept aside the monarchy. It all began with a limited relaxation on censorship, allowing some literary and intellectual activities (in the Goethe Institute and in the universities in Tehran) and public gatherings by political Islamists (in Oquba Mosque). It continued with the distribution, by the intellectuals and liberal politicians, of openly critical letters to high-level officials. In the midst of this, an insulting article in a daily paper, *Ettilaat,* against Ayatollah Khomeini triggered a demonstration in the shrine city of Qum which left some demonstrators killed. To commemorate this death, a large-scale demonstration took place in the Azeri city of Tabriz in the north. This marked the beginning of a chain of events which formed a nation-wide revolutionary protest movement in which diverse segments of the population, modern and traditional, religious and secular, men and women, massively participated and in which the ʿulamā came to exert its leadership. But why did the clergy in particular lead the revolution?

For over twenty-five years of autocratic rule, since the 1953 coup, any effective secular political parties and non-governmental organizations had been removed or destroyed. The coup crushed both the nationalist and communist movements; trade unions were infiltrated by the secret police, SAVAK; publications were strictly censored; and there remained hardly any effective non-governmental organizations (NGOs).[28] The primary source of organized political dissent came from the underground guerrilla organizations, Marxist Fedaian and radical Islamic Mujahedin, whose activities were limited to isolated armed operations.[29] Student activism also remained restricted, limited either to campus politics inside the country or to events carried out by the Iranian students abroad. In short, the secular groupings, while badly dissatisfied, were disorganized and without leadership.

Unlike secular groups, however, the clergy had the comparative advantage of possessing invaluable institutional capacity, including its own hierarchical order, over 10,000 mosques, Husseiniehs, Huwzehs, and associations which acted as vital means of communication among the revolutionary contenders. Young Islamists, both girls and boys along with young clergymen linked the institution of the ʿulamā to the people. A hierarchical order facilitated unified decision making and a systematic flow of order and information; and in mosques higher-level decisions were disseminated to both the activists and the general public. In short, beyond the lack of a credible alternative, this institutional capacity and a remarkable ambiguity in the message of the clergy

[28] On the anti-democratic nature of the Shah's regime and its political implications, see Fred Halliday. *Iran: Dictatorship and Development* (London: Penguin, 1977) (on SAVAK activities); Habib Lajevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985); Homa Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran* (London: Macmillan, 1982).

[29] On guerrilla activities in Iran, see Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development;* Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions.*

ensured the ʿulamā's leadership. That leadership was maintained due to the relatively rapid conclusion of revolutionary events; there was little time for debate and dissent for a social movement to emerge and a possible alternative leadership to develop. Thus, the nascent Islamic movement of the 1970s rapidly transformed into a state. Islamization unfolded largely after the victory of the Islamic revolution and was enforced largely from above by the Islamic state. It was manifested in the establishment of the *valaya-ti faqih,* or the rule of clergy, Islamic legal system, restrictive policies on women, and Islamic cultural practices and institutions.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE AND THE DECLINE OF ISLAM

This analysis does not underestimate the significance of political Islam before the Islamic revolution. Indeed, the history of political Islam in Iran goes as far back as that in Egypt, at least to the late nineteenth century. The role of the Iranian ʿulamā in the Tobacco movement—the first nationalist-religious movement against foreign influence—and their impact in the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–06, as well as the Jangali movement of the mid-1920s, are well documented.[30] Yet their legitimacy, political orientation (largely due to their social heterogeneity), and thus political efficacy fluctuated markedly in different periods. To preserve their special interests as a status group, along with their judiciary prerogatives and economic benefits, clerical figures such as Shaikh Fadlullah Nouri turned to become staunch opponents of the 1906 Constitution, leading "the vast majority of the constitutionalist ʿulamā"[31] toward a *mashruʿa,* or an Islamic constitution. Although mashruʿa politics failed, the country being occupied by the Russians and British during the First World War, Islamic leaders found yet another ground to combine nationalism and anti-government politics. Many local uprisings and movements emerged throughout the country. From 1917 on, Mirza Kouchik Khan, a dynamic Islamic preacher from Rasht, along with secular revolutionaries such as Khalu Qurban and Ehsanallh Khan, led a spectacular movement (Jangalies) which controlled much of the Caspian Sea Province of Gilan.[32]

The post-Second World War period witnessed intense activities of such grand clergymen as Ayatollah Kashani and the Fedaian-i Islam in the politics of the nationalist movement led by Mohammed Mosaddeq and in the urban riots of 1963, when Ayatollah Khomeini emerged as a resolute politico-

[30] Nikki Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891–92* (London: Frank Cass, 1966). Hamid Alghar, *Religion and Politics.* Said A. Arjomand, "The Ulama's Traditionalist Opposition to Parliamentarism: 1907–1909,: in *Middle Eastern Studies,* 17:2 (1981), 421–33.

[31] See Said A. Arjomand, "The Ulama's Traditionalist Opposition to Parliamentarism: 1907–1909," in *Middle Eastern Studies,* 17:2 (1981), 186. Unlike Arjomand, Ervand Abrahamian, a historian of Iran, believes that most of the clergy remained supportive of Constitutionalism (personal communication).

[32] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions,* 111–2.

religious figure.[33] Following this turmoil, he was forced to leave for an exile in Turkey, then Iraq, and in the midst of the Islamic revolution, was transferred to Paris, where he became the leader of the revolution. The events of July 1963 were to mark the last major showdown of the Islamists in the streets until the Islamic Revolution of 1979. In all of these episodes Islam played an effective political role in mobilizing its supporters because both Islam (as a faith, paradigm, and discourse) and the Islamic leaders enjoyed a great deal of legitimacy among their followers. However, that role had begun to decline since the reign of Reza Shah (1925–41).

Reza Shah, the father of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, emerged during the conditions of remarkable political instability and social insecurity spread by years of upheavals, civil war, foreign occupation, and nomadic uprisings— conditions which breed the desire for "strong leaders." Brought to power by a British-engineered coup, he set out to establish a strong state on the image of the West and its third-world variant, the Turkish Republic headed by Kamal Ataturk. He aimed to build a unified modern state founded upon secular nationalism, educational development, and state capitalism.[34] Many of these measures seriously undermined the institutions of Islam and the ʿulamā.

To begin with, the Judiciary, up to then under the influence of the clergy, was entirely restructured; modern educated lawyers replaced traditional judges; French Civil Codes took the place of most Islamic laws; and the secular judges determined the nature of cases deemed to be raised in secular or religious courts. Reza Shah, in addition, restricted religious festivals, commemorations, passion plays, and other practices that affected public life. The establishment of a modern system of taxation, along with that of Ministry of *Awqaf* (Endowments), deprived the clergy of a sizable segment of religious tax income; and, with this, the economic independence which the ʿulamā had enjoyed for the previous two centuries was threatened. But more important, educational reform played a lasting part in Reza Shah's secular dreams. Setting up unified state-run schools meant that traditional institutions of learning controlled by the clergy and a curriculum dominated by the teaching of Qurʾan, grammar, rhetoric, and logic in *maktabs* and *madresehs* lost their preeminence. Thus, while students in both modern primary schools and colleges grew more than five-fold between 1925–41,[35] the number of *talabehs* (theological students) in madresehs fell from over 5,500 in 1929–30 to fewer than 1,340 in 1937. Indeed, even the children of many prominent ʿulamā preferred and moved into the modern administrative occupations.[36] The social and intellectual impact of modern schooling was also far-reaching. With its

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[33] For more details, see Shahroukh Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1980), 99–105.

[34] Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 140.

[35] Calculated from data provided by Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 144–45.

[36] See Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 316.

emphasis on diversified subjects, it offered and facilitated alternative discourses, scientific rationality, and secular practices instead of religious paradigms. Moreover, modern schools, along with other public places such as parks, cinemas, cafes, factories, and offices, contributed to the movement of urban women from domestic seclusion into the public domain with men.[37] Reza Shah's relentless war against the veil was already under way. Notwithstanding his patriarchism, he forcefully outlawed the *chador,* a long veil of a single piece, and required high officials to bring their wives to public events.

These measures, introduced in drastic and often brutal ways, undermined the clergy profoundly but neither eliminated them nor killed religious sentiments among people. The policies, however, did make accessible alternative secular ways of living, thinking, and reasoning, while offering diversified role models and sources of legitimacy. It is perhaps not surprising that after the Allies removed Reza Shah and during an unprecedented democratic experience between 1941 and 1953, various sorts of secular, nationalist, radical, and Marxist ideologies flourished. Islam as a faith, discourse, and mobilizing force continued to decline. A few women who had been forced to unveil under Reza Shah returned to wearing the traditional chador after his fall; the remainder, along with the new generations of women, continued with their new identities.[38] Although the number of talabehs increased,[39] political Islam declined drastically. Under Ayatollah Broujerdi, the *marja' taqleed,* the Hawzeh remained apolitical. When one segment of the ʿulamā together with bazaares supported the nationalization of oil, the Ayatollah chose to remain neutral. In the end, the clergy's fear of the Tudeh Party's growth under Prime Minister Mosaddeq allied them with the 1953 coup which toppled the nationalist leader.[40] There seems to be evidence to suggest a decline in religious practice among ordinary people. An eyewitness account during the Mosaddeq era reported about the mosques which had been emptied of the masses.[41] While it is likely that in general popular religious sentiments remained, new venues of popular expression nevertheless opened up in political parties, artistic circles, associations, trade unions, and the like. Now millions of ordinary men and women joined or sympathized with movements which were known to be secular, radical, and Marxist. Mosaddeq, the secular leader of the struggle to

[37] Interestingly, after the Islamic Revolution, the mayor of Tehran, Karbaschi, was attacked by conservative student weekly, *Payam-i Naneshju,* because he had made hundreds of public parks and green spots in the city where men and women could mingle in public.

[38] See Bagher Moʾmeni, "Islam-i Mowjoud, Islam-i Mowʾoud," in *Noghteh,* 1:1 (1995), 74 (in Persian). See also Vida Behnam, "Zan, Khanevadeh va Tajaddod," *Iran Nameh,* 11:2 (spring 1993), 234 (in Persian).

[39] See Akhavi, *Religion and Politics,* 187, Appendixes.

[40] Ahmad Ashraf, "Zamineh-ye Ijtemaii-ye Sonnatgeraii va Tajaddodkhahui" [Social Framework of Traditionalism and Modernism in Iran], in *Iran-Nameh,* 11:2 (Spring 1993), 177 (in Persian).

[41] Jami, *Gozashteh Chiraq-i Rah-i Ayandeh Ast* [A History of Modern Iran], (London: Jami (in Persian), 1978).

nationalize the Iranian oil industry, became a national hero in the early 1950s. His National Front, an alliance of various secular nationalist parties was rivaled only by the more cohesive Tudeh, or Communist Party. With over 25,000 members, and some 300,000 sympathizers in the early 1950s, it enjoyed support among workers, women, intellectuals, artists, military officers, students, teachers, professionals, the urban underclass, and even some peasants. Despite police restrictions, it became the most effective organization in the country,[42] leading the most powerful communist movement in the Middle East.[43]

THE POST-COUP ERA: ACCELERATING THE CHANGE

The coup d'état of 1953, planned by the CIA, was designed to end the Premiership of Mohammad Mosaddeq and reinstate the authority of the Shah. It thus ended the democratic experience, crushed both the secular nationalist and communist movements, and pushed political Islam on to the sidelines. It consolidated a regime that was to manifest a model of modernization in the periphery. The post-coup era, notably the 1960s and 1970s, represented a period of remarkable economic growth, integration in the world market, urbanization, and social change—all initiated primarily by the autocratic state of the Shah, safeguarded by a notorious secret police, SAVAK. This new phase of modernization enhanced many programs that Reza Shah had initiated. It promoted the ascendancy of modern classes—the professional-bureaucratic and technocratic intelligentsia, industrial working class, public women, and modern youth—at the cost of traditional social groups and ideals: the feudal class, bazaaries, the ʿulamā, and the institutions of Islam in general.

The post-coup regime became the closest ally of the United States in the region. It joined western military, political, and economic treaties to become a satellite of the West. In a big push for modernization, the Shah inaugurated in 1963 the "White Revolution" in which land reform, women enfranchisement, and the Literacy Corps were the most important elements with far-reaching social consequences. Land reform, in particular, curtailed the power of feudal lords, converted the peasantry into either small landowners or rural proletariat who then migrated to cities, developed commodity relations in the countryside, and expanded communications between villages and cities and within the countryside in general.

In the meantime, rising oil prices contributed to a remarkable annual growth rate of over 11 percent for the entire 1963–72 period, a rate that jumped again to a staggering 30 percent during 1974 and 1975. Oil income was able to finance impressive programs of industrialization and national education. Between 1963 and 78, Iran's industrial output rose almost twelve fold, with an

[42] Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 321.
[43] Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development* (London: Penguin, 1979).

average growth rate of 72 percent per year.[44] This meant that the industrial working class of factory and workshop workers grew to a sizable portion of the population constituting one-third of the total work force in 1977.[45] The modernization strategy also boosted a large and fairly prosperous new middle class by means of expanding modern education. The literate urban population grew from 33 percent in 1956 to 65 percent in 1976, with 50 percent rate for women. In 1978, some 175,000 students were enrolled in 236 institutions of higher education in addition to some 80,000 students outside Iran.[46] One third of these students were female. Education became an important vehicle for social mobility, contributing to the growth of modern middle class. Thus, the number of students, professors, teachers, writers, doctors, lawyers, technocrats, and bureaucrats increased from 16.5 percent of the urban labor force in 1966 to over 33 percent, or over 1.9 million persons by 1976, including 300,000 women. A strong modern middle class had been created.[47]

Parallel to these developments, other traditional social groups were losing ground. The feudal class, among them many important members of the clergy, had virtually withered away. Its members gradually moved into commerce, speculation, and industry. A large segment of the bazaar, well over 500,000 retail and wholesalers, felt the impact of the invasion of modern financial institutions, trade companies, shopping centers, large factories, and new tastes.[48] While some surely resisted the invasion, others lost the battle, and still many more began to conform to the reality of modernization by trading foreign goods, employing modern trade relations and language.[49] By the eve of the Revolution, the Bazaar was sociologically, if not politically, divided.[50] The political divide came only after the revolution manifesting along the lines of Banisadr, who was supported by the more modernist and well-off bazaaries, and the clergy backed by the more traditional-minded and small scale traders.

More than anybody, the clergy was on the defensive on the economic, political and social fronts. In economic terms, land reform, together with the establishment in 1963 of the Organization of Endowment cut back the main source of clergy's income from *Awqaf*. Earlier, Reza Shah's administrative

[44] Homa Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 276.

[45] Asef Bayat, *Workers and Revolution in Iran* (London, Zed Books, 1987), 25.

[46] Mehrdad Arman, "Naqsh-e Javanan dar Enqelab" [The Role of the Youths in the Iranian Revolution], in *Kankash: A Persian Journal of History and Politics*, no. 5 (Fall 1988), 95 (in Persian).

[47] On these, see M. Milani, *The Making of the Iranian Islamic Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 115–9.

[48] M. Milani, *The Making*, 116.

[49] The generally modern or foreign nature of merchandise in Tehran bazaar becomes clearer when one casually compares it with those in bazaars of Cairo or Istanbul.

[50] Personal communication with Tahereh Qaderi, the author of a Ph.D thesis on bazaar in Iran in 1970s (available at the University of Kent at Canterbury, England, 1985). The political reflection of this division was revealed only one year after the revolution when different segments of the bazaar exhibited support to different political leadership. They were notably divided between supporters of President Bani Sadr and Ayatollah Beheshti.

reform had already diminished the fees the ʿulamā were entitled to in their legal and clerical duties such as registration of titles.[51] What remained was *haqq-i imam* and *khoums,* contributions from the faithful. In political terms, the historic ally of the clergy, the traditional bazaaries and the feudal class, were both seriously debilitated. At the same time, other social groups—such as the middle class, women in the public domain, and modern youth— developed, but most of them expressed little affinity with the institutions of Islam, thus further undermining the social legitimacy of religious institutions. I can recall back in the 1960s, my village classmates would question the village mulla because they felt he lacked modern knowledge, and in turn the mullahs expressed their dismay of the youth who, they felt, no longer listened to their preaching. The number of madrasahs declined by 1968 to only 138 most of which had only a handful of students. "Some continued to exist as monuments of landmarks more than instructional institutions."[52] Hence, Ayatollah Mutahhari's acknowledgment as early as 1963 of this sad truth that "materialistic philosophy has its appeal among Iranian youths."[53] He blamed this on the ʿulamā's failure and on their dated practices.[54]

Indeed, this onslaught of secular tendencies made some Muslim leaders rethink their practices and modernize their strategy. The opportune time came when a vacuum was created following the death in 1961 of Ayatollah Broujer-di, the *marjʾ-i taqlid.* A group of like-minded ʿulamā and Islamic intellectuals began to present Islam in an attractive modern language, mixing Islamic discourse with rational scientific concepts, paying particular attention to concerns of everyday life.[55] Instead of jurisprudence or religious rituals, they discussed Darwin's evolution, Sartre's existentialism, and Marx's materialism. As an engineer, Mehdi Bazargan was particularly emphatic that hard scientific discourse had to be used to arrive at religious conclusions. Sympathetic clergy followed suit. The leaders of Freedom Movement, a remnant of Mosaddeq National Front (including Mehdi Bazargan, Morteza Mutahhari, Beheshti, Allameh Tabatabaii, and Mahmoud Taleqani, most of whom were to become leaders of the Islamic Revolution) organized monthly seminars around the

[51] Akhavi, *Religion and Politics,* 134–5.   [52] *Ibid.,* 129.

[53] This concern seemed to continue even up to the eve of the Revolution. During the famous lectures of Oqba Mosque organized by modernist clergy in Fall 1977, I could observe how most of the preaching, in particular those of Ayatollah Motahhari and Mehdi Bazargan, centered on attacking rival secular, materialist and Marxist ideas. In the final evening which was devoted to discussing participants' questions and comments, I presented a critical review of Bazargan's lecture. The angry response of Ayatollah Mutahhari to my comments pointed to a sense of insecurity of Islamists at the time.

[54] Morteza Mutahhari, "Rahbari-ye Nasl-i Javan" (Leading the Youths), in *Goftar-i Mah,* no. 3 (1986), pp. 46–48.

[55] Ali Ashtiani, "Ehyaʾ-e Fikr-e Dini va Sarkardegui-ye Islam-e Syassi dar Inqilab-e Iran," in *Kankash: A Persian Journal of History and Politics,* no. 6 (Fall 1989) (in Persian); see also Ali Mirsepassi-Ashtiani, "The Crisis of Secularism and Political Islam in Iran," in *Social Text,* 12:3 (Spring 1994), 51–84.

theme of *marja'iyat va velayat dar Islam*; (the source of immulation and leadership). These seminars continued under the rubric of *Maktab-i Tashayo* but still paid little attention to strictly Qur'anic teachings or traditional Shi'i texts; instead, they maintained their emphasis on modern scientific language. They published a journal, *Maktab-i Tashayo*, which printed articles on such themes as "Leading the Young Generation," "The Law of Causality in Human Science and Religion," and "Islam and the Proclamation of Human rights." A similar publication, *Goftar-e Mah*, also carried comparable contributions. These reformist Muslim leaders even resorted to sociological surveys to learn what the youth thought about Islam. Such developments were the beginning of what came to be known as *Ehya'-e Fikr-e Islami* (or, reviving Islamic thought) which characterized political Islam throughout the 1960s and the early 1970s until it was overshadowed by the radical Islamist, Ali Shariati. It was manifested in Islamic publications, the organization of Islamic study groups, and the establishment of Islamic schools. The Islamic schools were different from the madrasahs in that they combined a regular curriculum with Islamic extra-curriculum activities, including *tafseer* and Qur'an recitation sessions, Islamic entertainment, daily collective prayers, and alternative weekends. Their mission was to create "true" Muslim individuals.

This trend surely represented a significant shift in the socialization and politicization of Islam. However, this and its contemporary religiosity were far from a mass social movement and bore little resemblance to the Egyptian or Algerian versions in the early 1990s. In Iran, the Maktab- i Tashayo and similar activities remained weak, isolated, and elitist. Only three issues of their two periodicals were published. As historian Reza Afshari points out, Ayatollah Khomeini's most significant contributions to the Islamic ideology, *velayat-e Faqih*, was unknown to some of his most ardent followers.[56] Contrary to the prevailing assumption, there is not adequate evidence suggesting that the ʿulamā resorted to making an appeal to the masses.[57] Indeed, none of the major leaders paid a particular attention to the mustaz'afin as a special class. A review of 88 sermons, messages, and letters by Ayatollah Khomeini attests that in the 15 years prior to the revolution, he made only 8 passing references to lower-class people, compared to 50 references to educated youth, students, and universities.[58] In turn, Ayatollah Mutahhari's elitist ap-

[56] See Reza Afshari, "A Critique of Dabashi's Reconstruction of Islamic Ideology as a Prerequisite for the Iranian Revolution," in *Critique: Journal of Critical Studies of the Middle East*, no. 5 (Fall 1994), 76.

[57] This assumption is made by Akhavi, *Religion and Politics*, 101; Arjomand, *The Turban*; Mottahedeh, *The Mantle*; and Kazemi, *The Unknown*.

[58] See Ayatollah Rouhullah Khomeini, *Sahife-ye Nour*, collected works compiled and edited by the Ministry of National Guidance (Tehran, 1982). Interestingly, the term *mustaz'afin* appeared in his language only during the height of the revolution (Aban 1357), when he used it merely to repudiate the leftists by attempting to offer an alternative conceptualization of the poor. For a more detailed discussion see Asef Bayat, *Street Politics: Poor people's Movements in Iran, 1977–1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

proach is clear through his warnings about *avaam-zadegui*, or populism[59]; for Ali Shariati, intellectuals, not the popular masses, constituted the revolutionary force.[60] For these Muslim leaders, then, the critical mass was not the mustaz'afin but the educated youth.

Indeed, some evidence seems to point to the growth of Islamic books, tapes, and associations in general during the late 1960s and 1970s. Accounts are given in 1976 about, for instance, 48 publishers of religious books in Tehran, the sale of 490,000 copies of *Mafatih al-Jnan*, 13 centers of recording and distribution of tapes, approximately 12,300 religious associations in Tehran, of which 1,800 had formal titles.[61] Despite serious doubts on the accuracy of these figures,[62] many scholars take these as "firm evidence" of a "religious movement" in the 1960s and 1970s which presumably underlay the Islamic Revolution.[63]

To begin with, the censorship policies after 1966 caused a general decline in volumes of published works in non-religious subjects and, thus, an increase in relative proportion of religious books.[64] It is interesting to note that immediately after the revolution, when censorship was removed, secular periodicals, books, pamphlets, and tapes flourished, on a massive scale. According to the Iranian Publication Association, more than 2 million books were published in the country within the first six months of 1979.[65] Whereas the highest circulation for the largest daily in Tehran (*Keyhan*) was recorded at 300,000 in 1978, the circulation of Tehran's two major evening dailies (*Keyhan* and *Ettila'at*) reportedly surpassed 1.5 million in the early months of the revolution, and the leftist morning newspaper, *Aynadegan*, hovered at around 400,000. On the whole, over 100 newspapers and periodicals began to work or resumed publication in Tehran alone in the post-revolutionary months.[66]

In addition, most of the religious publications put out before the revolution

[59] See Anonymous, ed., *Bahthi dar Bare-ye Marja'iyyat va Ruhaniyyat*, 183 (in Persian).

[60] Ali Shariati, *Jahatguiri-ye Tabaqati-ye Islam* (Tehran, 1980, in Persian).

[61] Arjoman, "Shi'it Islam and the Revolution in Iran," *Government and Opposition*, 16:3 (1981), 311–3.

[62] The number of books can be verified by reference to UNESCO statistical sources. However, on the number of Islamic Associations, only those formal titles, numbering 1,800, are reliable. It is impossible to verify the other categories. Of the 1,800, it is not clear how many were really viable or existed only in name.

[63] See also Mirsepassi-Ashtiani, *The Crisis*, 77; Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle*, Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

[64] Akhavi, *Religion and Politics*, 160. It is important to note that at the time Iran had one of the most severe censorship policies in the world. About censorship on popular press, see also William Milliard, "Popular Press in Iran," in *Gof-O-Gou*, no. 4 (Tehran, 1994) (in Persian).

[65] See Majid Tehranian, *Socio-Economic and Communication Indicators in Development Planning: A Case Study of Iran* (Paris: UNESCO, 1980), 63.

[66] On these figures, see Majid Tehranian, *Socio-Economic*, 56–57. The total number of registered periodicals jumped from 104 in 1975 to 227 in 1980, one year after the revolution. However, a crackdown on oppositional publications and organizations reduced the number to a mere 66. In other words, some 161 periodicals, almost all secular, were banned publication. For figures see Markaz'i Amar-e Iran, *Iran dar Aa'ine-ye Amaar*, no. 4 (Tehran), 1363.

hardly represented political Islam. Instead, they were either practical guides on religious rituals, preaching on morality, or scholarly inquiries into mysticism or theosophy.[67] While it may be true that *Maktab-e Islam*, a journal of the Hawzeh in Qum, had reportedly high circulation in the late 1960s, it always refused to publish reformist or political materials[68]; and, *Mafatih al-jnan* represented, according to Ali Shariati, no more than "the most other-worldly aspect of fossilized traditional shiʻism."[69]

One should also be cautious about the success of the Islamic schools in spreading religious messages or, for that matter, political Islam. In my own three-year experience in one of them in the 1960s, the Islamic programs were the least attractive to most students,[70] and the clerical instructors the least popular with the many of us who, in the end, felt the pressure of institutional indoctrination and left the school for secular counterparts. The somber mood of the Islamic entertainment could hardly compete with the non-religious fun which the students actively sought. On the other hand, there is a widespread assumption that the *mustazʻafin*, the poor, knew the mullas and joined the revolution through such Islamic institutions as *heyʻats*, the ethnic-based and ad-hoc religious setups. Contrary to what is claimed,[71] while they did bring together many shiʻi poor, the heyʻats were hardly the sites of political mobilization. My own direct observations confirm a young squatter's view that the functions of the heyʻats remained limited to "socializing," "sacrificing Imam Hussein and weeping [for his dead body]."[72] The urban poor went under the political banner of the ʻulamā only just before the insurrection of February 1979.[73] In short, the significance of religious publications and institutions for political Islam lay not much in their ideological impact during the 1960s and the 1970s but in their networking capacity and mobilizing role on the eve of the revolution.

More important, taking these as a sole indication of Islamic revival, especially when they are seen in retrospect, downplays a significant parallel phenomenon, that is, a strong secular tendency that was developing at the very same time, a subject almost totally overlooked by the post-revolutionary scholarship. Above, I pointed to the historical bases of secular behavior in Iran: widespread modern education, the expansion of communication, and the erosion of economic and social position of the clergy. The trend reached its peak in

[67] See Akhavi, *Religion and Politics*, 161–2.   [68] *Ibid.*, 138.

[69] The phrase is Amir Arjomand's; see his "Shiʻite Islam and the Revolution in Iran" (1981), 312.

[70] My own school, Taheri-ye Eslami, which had both primary and secondary levels, was part of the Islamic conglomerate, *Jameʻe-ye Taʻlimat-e Eslami*.

[71] See, for instance, Farhad Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution in Iran* (New York: New York University, 1980); Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985).

[72] Ali Banuazizi, "Alounaknishinan-i Khiaban-i Professor Brown," in *Alifba*, 2:3 (Summer 1362/1983), 59.

[73] For an analysis of the role of the urban poor in the Iranian Revolution, see Asef Bayat, *Street Politics: Poor Peoples' Movements in Iran* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), ch.3.

the very decade in which the Islamic revolution occurred. Unlike the 1940s, when communist, nationalist, and intellectual movements manifested in the major secular institutions, the Shah's dictatorship in the 1970s largely deprived the society of comparable institutions. Instead, there was a tremendous boost in the production and consumption of secular journals, cinemas, western movies, pop music cassettes, popular singers, youth centers (*khane-ye Javanan*), bars promoting alcohol drinks, Caspian Sea holidays, and the vast popularity of western-produced television programs.[74] The number of movie viewers increased by over 50 percent between 1969 and 1975, nearly twice as much as that of urban population growth in the same period. During the 1970s, over 500 foreign films a year, one-fourth American, were shown in the Iranian cinemas. Beyond that, by 1975 about 50 percent of urban families had acquired television sets, compared to less than 4 percent in 1960, with about 65 percent of total households owning radio sets.[75] This media succeeded by the late 1970 in shaping a highly secular popular culture embodied in the songs and performances of dozens of popular singers and actors, such as Gougoush, Fardin, Aghasi, and Sousan. These were at a time when cinema, radio, and television were condemned by religious-minded people, since in Ayatollah Khomeini's views, these media were being "used to corrupt our youth."[76]

It was such a background that rendered Islamic leaders skeptical about any political change. Although many scholars writing after the revolution magnified the extent of an Islamic movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Shariati's letter to his son (in the late 1960s) shows how he was frustrated, pessimistic, and bitter with the people who had remained disinterested in his mission.[77] Even Ayatollah Khomeini in 1970 thought that it might take two centuries to overthrow the Iranian monarchy.[78]

Indeed, the popularity of Ali Shariati, a modernist Islamic intellectual, during the mid-1970s seemed to begin an Islamic movement, although it remained limited to political discourse among Muslim intelligentsia and hardly assumed any institutional form within the civil society, whether in associations, NGOs, syndicates, schools, neighborhoods, workplaces or media, in contrast to Egypt during the early 1990s. Although the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization was influenced by Shariati's ideas, it did not receive a mass following until after the revolution.[79] The Islamic movement in pre-revolution

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[74] It is important to note that, unlike attending mosques, shrines, or *hey'ats*, these were commodities for which ordinary and middle-income people had to pay. I exclude those leisure items which only the rich could afford to consume, such as cabarets, European holidays (as opposed to attending Hajj).

[75] On these figures, see UNESCO, *Statistical Yearbook* (Paris: various years).

[76] Cited in Hamid Nafici, "Iranian Cinema under the Islamic Republic," *American Anthropologist*, 97:3 (September 1995), 548.

[77] In Reza Afshari, *A Critique*, 80.

[78] Ruhollah Khomeini, *Hokumat-e Eslami: Eslam Din-e Syasat Ast* (n.p. 1970 [1392 Arabic year]), 160.

[79] On Mujahedin, see Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin* (London: Tauris, 1989).

Iran proved, in short, to be a late starter. There remained no time for political Islam to evolve into a mass social movement. In Iran, an Islamic movement was in the making when it was interrupted by an Islamic Revolution.

THE EGYPTIAN ISLAMIST MOVEMENT

Unlike Iran, however, Egypt developed a strong and pervasive Islamist movement by the early 1990s. The popular image of the Islamist Movement in Egypt is represented in the protracted war of attrition between the militant Islamists, notably members of the Jihad and al-Jama'a al-Islamiya, and the state, beginning since the assassination of President Sadat in September 1981. It was also manifested in attacking Christian Copts, western tourists, secular Muslim thinkers, and the image of Shaikh Omar Abdur-Rahman, the spiritual leader of al-Jama'a al-Islamiya, who was detained in the United States for his alleged involvement in the bombing of the World Trade Center. Indeed, during 1993 alone, the confrontations between these Islamists and the government forces left 1,106 killed or wounded, and 17,191 arrested.[80] Several attempts were made to kill politicians, security heads, and public figures. In addition, a number of cinemas, cafes, video shops, Nile cruisers, and banks also became the target of bombing campaigns. Despite its dramatic appearance, this militant trend was by far less influential and pervasive than the gradualist and non-violent trend. The more significant was the growth of religiosity in general, which further fed the spread of political Islam within the civil institutions.

Islamist revival in Egypt expanded from below through a pervasive social movement which began in the 1920s but spread rapidly after the early 1970s, reaching its peak in the early 1990s. It manifested itself in a vast spectrum of groups, encompassing, on one end the violent militants, the non-violent and gradualist Islamic coalition (El-Ekhwan and Hizbul'Amal), and the individualist sufi orders. At the other end, it also included Al-Azhar and a number of institutions of the secular state, including the Ministry of Awqaf and the Supreme Islamic Council. The 1980s experienced a dramatic increase in the number of *ahli,* or private mosques. Officials reported that the number of non-governmental mosques had increased sharply from 40,000 in 1981 to 70,000 in 1989.[81] Many of these mosques served as places for alternative and often dissenting religious messages. Over 4,000 Islamic associations existed in the early 1990s, also a rise of over 100 percent since 1975. The period saw a spectacular popularity in the production and sale of Islamic books, pamphlets, and religious cassettes. In 1994, over one quarter of books published were religious, a 25 percent rise since 1985.[82] About 85 percent of books sold

[80] In Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "The Changing Face of Egypt's Islamic Activism: How Much of a Threat?," Ibn Khaldoun Center's papers (Cairo, May 1995), p. 7.

[81] Stated respectively by the minister of awqaf in *Jarida Mayo* (2 January 1989) and an offical of the ministry in Al-Ahram (5 December 1981), cited in Hala Mustafa, *Al-Dawla wal-Harakāt al-Islamiyya al-Mu'arida* (Cairo: Al-Mahrousa Publications, 1995), 409. It is worth noting that the government-sponsored mosques increased by only 40 percent between the mid-1970s and the late 1980s.

[82] Data obtained from the Egyptian Ministry of Culture (November 1995).

during the 1995 Cairo book fair were Islamic.[83] The tapes of figures such as Shaikh Kishk, numbering over a thousand, were on sale in their millions. Dozens of Islamic newspapers, weeklies, and monthlies had high circulation rates.[84] Radio Quran, a channel devoted entirely to religious matters, maintained its highest popularity in this period, while in contrast, movie viewers and production of domestic films declined.[85] Self-censorship emerged in the production of television programs in response to pressure on the state by popular sentiment, and religious programs increased by 50 percent between 1975 and 1990.[86] Islamic sentiment was particularly expressed in a marked decline of alcohol consumption, bars, liquor stores, and night clubs for Egyptians.

At the same time, Islamic activism in the last two decades penetrated a variety of civil institutions, mass media, formal education, and community social services. By the early 1990s, the Muslim Brotherhood was able to control Egypt's major professional syndicates—doctors, engineers, pharmacists, lawyers, dentists, commerce, college professors, as well as the student unions. In general, the 4,000 Islamic NGOs outdid the 9,000 secular ones. They were widely believed to be financed, managed, and to function better than others.[87] The Muslim Brothers were also involved in creating Islamic investment companies in the early 1980s until the government cracked down on them. With returns as high as 20 percent return, the companies were considered by many to subsidize the low-income groups in society. In addition to civil activism, the Islamic coalition (of Muslim Brotherhood with the Labour Party) made considerable headway in the local and national elections.

[83] Personal communication with Professor Mustafa El-Sayyed of Cairo University (1996).

[84] The newspapers included Al-Sha'b of the Islamist Labor Party, Al-Nour of Liberal Party/ Muslims Brotherhood. Al-Moslimoun and Al-Moslim Al-Moasir are international dailies. Others included Al-Liwa'a Al-Islami, of the National Democratic Party; Aqidati, an Al-Azhar sanctioned journal; and Liwa' Al-Islam (published weekly). Periodicals included: Al-Mukhtar Al-Islami (MB), Minbar El-Sharq (Labor Party), Al-Tasawaf Al-Islami (the Sufi Council), Minbar Al-Islam and Al-Azhar (Al-Azhar Institute). Al-Muslim Al-Saqir (Islamic children). In addition, a number of dailies and weeklies are published by the leading Islamic political organizations and parties. They include: Al-Ahrar (daily), Al-Aharar (weekly), Al-Haqiqah (weekly), Al-Nour (weekly), Al-Osrat el-Arabi (weekly), plus over 30 specialized or regional related publications, such as El-Orouba, Shabab el-Aharar, Ahrar el-Saiid, and Ahrar El-Hilwan. Despite this, some Islamists protest the "crisis of religious publications in contemporary Egypt." See for instance, articles in Liwa Al-Islam, 50:2 (October 1995), 11–15; El-Wasat, no. 195, 23/10/1995, pp. 32–34.

[85] See UNESCO publications; also Simon Brindle "Egypt's Film Industry," Business Monthly: Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt, 11:6 (July 1995), shows a steady reduction in the production of domestic movies.

[86] See Nagwa Al-Fawal, Al-Barnamag Al-Dini-yya Fi Al-Televzion Al-Masri (Cairo: National Center for Sociological and Criminological Studies, 1994). Data for television religious programs in 1990 extracted from the above source; for 1975, it was obtained from a sample of daily television programs printed in the daily paper, Al-Ahram.

[87] S. Ibrahim, The Changing Face, 4. It is believed that the number of Islamic NGOs in fact exceeded this. In the Ministry of Social Affairs's figures, many religious PVOs are actually hidden under such categories as "multiple" NGOs. So, taking these into account, the Islamic PVOs have grown since the 1970s to reach at least 50 percent of the total welfare NGOs, that is, over 5,000 in the early 1990s. See Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Grassroots Participation in the Development of Egypt," in Cairo Papers in Social Science, 19:3 (1997).

From 12 seats in Parliament in 1984, the number of Brotherhood delegates reached 38 seats in 1987.[88]

As a mass movement, support for the Muslim Brothers came from diverse social groups, ranging from segments of the business community to lower classes, with old, young, male and female members. Yet its backbone originated from members of the modern middle class. On the other hand, activists of the militant groups were mostly young men (between 20 and 30 years) with rural or provincial background, primarily educated, many with college degrees, or professionals, who resided in Cairo's lower class neighborhoods or large villages of Middle Egypt. The early 1900s witnessed entry of younger (average age 21) and less-educated members (only 30 percent being university educated, compared to 64 percent in the 1970s) into the ranks of the militants.[89] Lower-middle-class youth appeared to be new players in radical Islamism. Although organized labor remained in general out of Islamists' reach, the relationship between the urban poor and Islamists is complex. I will suggest below that, contrary to common perception, Islamic social welfare organizations were not places for Islamists political activism. On the other hand, it is true that while many radical activists in Greater Cairo, for instance, come from or reside in slums or shanty towns, this in itself does not necessarily point to their political presence among the poor. High rent and visibility are sufficient reasons for a militant to dwell in a cheaper and a hide-out locality.[90] In fact, a pervasive housing crisis has made a spatially "marginalized" middle class a peculiar Egyptian urban phenomenon. Although the episodes of Cairo earthquakes in 1992 and flooding in upper Egypt in 1994 pointed to the Islamists' attempt to build a social basis among the poor, these were largely occasional activities.

Political Islam in Egypt in this period reflected primarily the rebellion of the impoverished middle class who were frustrated by a feeling of moral outrage.[91] Their high expectations, an outcome of their high education and thus social status, were dampened in the job market, which offered few prospects for economic success. A product of Nasser's welfare-state boom, this segment represented the losers of Sadat's *infitah* policy—one which

[88] *Ibid,* 4.

[89] See Ne'mat Guenena, "The Changing Face of Egypt's Islamic Activism: 1974–1995" (unpublished manuscript, Ibn Khaldoun Center for Developmental Studies, Cairo, September 1995), 7–8.

[90] Indeed, some evidence suggests that the spread of militants in the slums of Cairo began in the 1970s when, after the dismantling of Al-Takfir wa al-Hegra, escapee militants from upper Egypt sought refuge in the overcrowded and invisible informal communities, *'ashwaiyyat'*. See Ali Essawi, *El-Ashwaiyyat wa Tagarob Al-Tanmiyyah* (Cairo: Cairo University, 1995).

[91] Evidence for social profile of militant Islamists may be found in Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Islamic Groups"; Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt,* 210–18; and Ne'mat Guenena, *The Jihad': An 'Islamic Alternative' in Egypt.* Although Akhwan got support from different social layers, nevertheless the new (educated, professional, and *muwazzafin*) middle class was the major player. No detailed study has been published on the social profile of the El-Ekhwan. However, their clear influence in the professional associations point to their largely urban middle class constituency.

opened the country to western economic, political, and cultural influence, as well as a rapprochement with the Jewish enemy. Islamism in Egypt represented an ideological package which negated all the perceived causes of such a state of deprivation—economic dependency, cultural sell-out, and national humiliation (1967 defeat by the Israelis and then Camp David Accord). In view of all the failed ideologies, chiefly Nasserite socialism and Sadat's capitalism, and of the conditions of western cultural, political, and economic onslaught, Islam, was seen as the only indigenous doctrine that could bring about a genuine change.

Such an articulated ideology in political Islam belonged clearly to the core, the cadres and activists. Beyond those, there were many others in the outer concentric circles of the movement, such as the lower-class elements, who found in Islamism not the leaders' ideologies but, largely in pragmatic terms, the only viable opposition to the status quo. These fringe groups, "free riders," often articulated no coherent ideology of their own, nor did they even internalize that of the leadership. Indeed, they would have turned to almost any social force which offered them a way out of their impasse and the prospect of a dignified future. Similar strata had followed the Wafd in the 1920s and 1930s, then Nasser in the 1950s and the 1960s. Both were secular to the bone but offered credible alternatives.[92]

POLITICAL VERSUS SOCIAL ISLAM

Why did Islamist activism in Egypt assume a social movement character, whereas in Iran it was narrowly politicized? It is often noted that shi'ism is a tradition which, unlike its Sunni counterpart, mixes religion with politics and, as an oppressed sect, constitutes an inherently revolutionary tradition. The Shi'i and Sunni branches of Islam surely take different approaches to the issue of rule, or *hakimiyya*. Yet both regard Islam as politics; and, as Zubaida and Keddie note, there is nothing inherently revolutionary about shi'ism's character. In Sunnism, the community determines political authority. In Shi'ism, however, only the imams have the legitimacy to rule the umma. In reality, this transpired in the time of shi'i imams. After the occultation of the last, twelfth, imam, the issue remained in controversy for over a century until the Qajar period in Iran, when shi'i scholars were divided into the two schools, the akhbari and usuli. The former stressed the literal following of the Prophet's traditions; the latter recognized the concept of ijtihad, which granted power to the 'ulamā to interpret the Prophet's sunna and stipulate new injunctions if deemed necessary. Although the clergy gained an unprecedented prominence, they were not yet entitled to exercise full authority on behalf of the imams. As such, Ayatollah Khomeini's concept of *Hokoumat-e Islami* (Islamic Government), written in 1971, represents simply a new invention in the shi'i tradi-

tion[93]; and its invocation after the revolution was largely the result of political circumstances at the time which ensured the clergy's leadership.[94] Yet, as Alghar and Keddie among others have noted, certain historical and institutional specificities in shi'i Islam contributed to the political versus social character of Islamist activism in Iran.

In both Iran and Egypt, the clergy constitute a distinct status group who despite internal differentiation (along seniority position and economic status) share common interests in terms of the security of income and social and spiritual legitimacy. But their political and social positions in the two countries differed. Unlike in Iran, where religious affairs were the exclusive prerogative of traditionalist Shi-i clergy, who became opposition leaders, in Egypt the administration of religious affairs was extended to lay activists who spread their message through massive associational work within civil society. In the eighteenth century, the ʿulamā of Egypt were an integral part of the ruling elite and acted as a medium between the elites and the people. By the time Mohammed Ali consolidated his power, the ʿulamā had become a formidable power which the Egyptian leader could not afford to ignore. He first bought off their support by offering them income from farm tax and endowments and a prerogative of consultation on political matters, then later subordinated them by denying them those privileges and making them paid employees of the state. The ʿulamā, nevertheless, remained a significant component of the anti-colonial movement.[95] Opposition of ʿulamā to British rule continued most notably with the activities of Al-Afghani and Mohammed Abdu, and later Rashid Reda. As Islamic reformers, they struggled not only against foreign domination but also attempted to reformulate Islam to rival with the western progress—a measure that some modernist ʿulamā in Iran began as late as the 1960s.

As a component of the state, however, the political role of the ʿulamā remained limited only to nationalist postures. On domestic matters, except for some clerical figures, they remained by and large complacent. ʿUlamā's dependence on the state was further intensified by Nasser, who in 1955 abol-

[93] For a fine discussion on this matter, see Hamid Enayat, "The Concept of Valayat-i Faqih in Imam Khomeini," in *Kiyan*, 6:34 (January–February 1997, in Persian). Published in English in James Piscatori, ed., *Islam in the Political Process* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983). A more detailed account may be found in Ahmad K. Moussavi, *Religious Authority in Shiʿite Islam: "From the Office of Mufti to the Institution of Marja"* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC Publication, 1996), especially ch. 8.

[94] In his memoir, Bani Sadr, the first president of the Islamic Republic and one of the closest aides of Ayatollah Khomeini in Paris, says: "In Paris, Khomeini did not believe that the Shah would fall. Two or three times a week I would reassure him that the Shah would relinquish power. . . . Reporters would ask him "what is your frame of reference, your model? what is an Islamic state?" We weighed our answers carefully. To what period of our history could we refer? The Abbasid dynasty? The Umayyads? Or the period of first caliphs? *We had to formulate an ideology worthy of a revolution*: (cited in *Al-Ahram Weekly* (Egypt, 26 October, 1995, p. 5) (added emphasis).

[95] See Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge, 1988), 617–20.

ished religious courts, put all endowments under state control, and then took over Al-Azhar and Islamic education in 1961. Despite a similar move in Iran in the 1960s, which seriously curtailed the clergy's control over shrines and mawqufat, they nevertheless maintained their autonomy by relying on themselves (many of them were landowners), on bazaaris with which they had close ties, and on small voluntary religious donations.[96]

Thus in Egypt, it was not the ʿulamā but the lay Islamic activists who took the banner of opposing internal rulers. Hence, the emergence of the Society of Muslim Brothers (MB) in 1928 during Egypt's liberal era (1919–52), when the secular-nationalist Wafdist Party and the Royal family ruled the country. The MB was founded by Hassan El-Banna, a school teacher from Ismailiya who was dismayed by the imperialist economic domination of his country; corruption and degradation of Muslims, especially those in the younger generation; and the decadence of the kings. His messages found appeal among a vast array of Egyptian citizens who came to believe that theirs was a society of Jahiliya. The Brotherhood grew rapidly from having only four branches in 1929 to 2,000 branches in 1949, with about one million activists and sympathizers at its peak. The activists came from various walks of life, but the core originated from the rising urban middle classes who felt the crunch of "foreign economic control which limited the prospects for the new bourgeoisie."[97] Hassan El-Banna was assassinated by police in 1949 and was replaced by Hassan el-Hudaybi as the spiritual guide.

Despite its close connection with the Free Officers, the MB went through a series of suppressions after the 1952 Revolution by Nasser, a nationalist leader committed to modernism, secularism, nationalism, and later to socialist ideas.[98] Such MB figures as Sayyed Qutb, a major ideologue, were sent to jail and executed; and the State outlawed the organization. After Nasser, a split has divided the movement between the revolutionary views like those of Sayyed Qutb and the gradualist views of Hassan al-Hudaybi. Both sides agreed that Egyptian society and polity was one of Jahili, which was characterized by the worship of man by man, and the sovereignty of man over man. While both strived for an alternative Islamic state and society, they differed on the ways to achieve such order. Sayyed Qutb advocated action and movement, regarding non-actives as non-Muslims. Hudaybi, on the other hand, called for discourse, preaching and daʿwa for the Islamic cause. Both wings shared an opposition to Zionism, crusaders, communism, secularism, and Nasserism. This schism was to mark the origin of the split between today's militant and

the reformist Islamic coalition (with Muslim Brothers). From the revolution-
ary trend emerged al-Takfir wal-Hejra, Jama'at Islamiya (both crushed during
Sadat), al-Jihad, and al-Jama'a al-Islamiya (active to date).[99]

The Muslim Brothers owed much of their success to their associational
character—their commitment to social mobilization within the civil society
through organizing cells, alternative mosques, schools, youth associations,
women's organizations, clinics, work cooperatives, as well as athletics and
paramilitary groups. This strategy solidified the grass-roots basis of the MB,
turning it into a mass social movement that spread Islamic sentiments in the
society, integrating them into people's everyday lives.

In turn, the spread of Islamic sentiments (aided by both the failure of the
liberal experiment and the mistrust of secular liberalism which in the 1940s
was associated with colonialism) pushed the Egyptian secularists to give way
to Islam.[100] As Lapidus notes, in this period, the secular intelligentsia "ac-
cepted an Islamic framework, and attempted to compromise between Islam
and modernity. The net effect was not so much to rescue secularism as to
legitimize the Muslim revival."[101] Yet it was a peculiar kind of revivalism, in
that the fusion of Islamic symbols into the people's everyday life contributed
to the production of a somewhat secularized religion.

Whereas the secularization of religious symbols has been a feature of the
Islam of Egypt, Iran, on the contrary, has held religion and its symbols in an
exalted position, emphasizing the sacred and esoteric nature of Islam. The
Iranian, for example, would treat the Qur'an with great deference, placing it in
assigned holy locations, where it rests in that protected place until it is taken
out to be read on a special occasion. In Egypt, on the other hand, it is not
uncommon to see a taxi driver switching between playing Egyptian pop music
and reciting the holy book. In contrast to Egypt, where religious occasions are
by and large popular festivals (*eids*), they are seen by an Iranian Muslim as
sober, sad, and serious affairs, often associated with death and mourning. The
playful and highly festive mood of the Egyptian Ramadan is comparable only
to the Iranian *Nowrooz* (new year festivities). Islamic pop music is a common
feature in Egypt's cultural and religious landscape, where popular singers
perform songs about the Prophet Mohammed accompanied by a full backup
band with synthesizer and electric guitar. It would be, however, unthinkable
for an Iranian Muslim to imagine Gougoush singing about Imam Hussein. In

[99] On radical Islamic groups, see Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt;* Saad Eddin
Ibrahim, "Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Islamic Groups," *International Journal of Middle Eastern
Studies,* no. 12 (1980); Hamid Ansari, "The Islamic Militants in Egyptian Politics," *International
Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* 16: (March 1984), 418–33; Uri Kumferschmidt, "Reformist
and Militant Islam in Urban and Rural Egypt," *Middle Eastern Studies,* vol. 23 (October 1987),
403–18. See also various issues of *Civil Society* (Ibn Khaldoun Center for Developmental Stud-
ies, Cairo).

[100] Afaf Lutfi El-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univer-
sity Press, 1991); Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1988).

[101] See Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies,* 627.

short, in contrast to Iran, where modernity and religion and the mundane and sacred were treated as mutually exclusive, Egypt experienced some kind of cultural hybridity in which religion remained by and large dominant.[102] Consequently, binary oppositional identities of religious and traditional versus the secular and modern identities were by far more pronounced in the Iran of the 1970s than the Egypt of the 1980s and 1990s. Like Turkey today and unlike Egypt, Iranian society was deeply divided along secular and religious lines. The implications of these different forms of religious practices vis-à-vis the social and political status of the clergy in the two countries were highly significant.

The 'ulamā in Iran were frustrated by the overall cultural change, rapid westernization, and secular behavior, which during the 1950s and 1960s threatened their social and cultural legitimacy. Modern educated youth particularly began to dismiss the clergy and the institution of religion in general. The source of this evil was perceived by the 'ulamā as the corrupt regime and its western allies. These conditions then turned the 'ulamā to oppositional politics which targeted the state. The experience of clergy in Egypt, however, was different. Despite the rise of modern ideas and social groups (such as the middle classes, educated youth and public women), Al-Azhar (and non-clerical Islam) still enjoyed a great deal of respect and legitimacy among Egyptian Muslims; and despite the upsurge of political Islam, Al-Azhar continues to represent religious orthodoxy in the country. Friday sermons of Al-Azhar are well attended; its publications have mass circulation; and millions of people are still attracted to Sheikh Sha'rawi's television lectures (khotabas). Today, young modern Egyptians do not shy away from embracing traditional Islam. As someone who had observed the religious laxity of Iranian youth during the early 1970s, I was astonished by the extent of religiosity of the westernized middle- and upper-class Egyptian youths who spoke with reverence about Islamic precepts and the clergy's authority. Consequently, not only had different segments of Egyptian society—the youth, the traditionalists, the 'ulamā, and the state—found something to cherish about their Islam, the clergy did not experience as much frustration, resentment, and political dissent as their Iranian counterparts. They continued to maintain a great deal of social constituency and religious legitimacy.[103] Nevertheless, similar to the political Islamists, the 'ulamā also remained committed to Islamizing the society, albeit not by seizing political power, but by da'wa.

[102] In Egypt, one can notice this in the day-to-day behavior of upper- or upper-middle-class families. While young people get married in fancy hotels like Merriott or Hilton, I have not observed alcohol being served on such occasions. Young girls and boys from westernized classes mostly fast during the Ramadan, many regularly pray and shout respect for Islam and the clergy. In contrast, in Iran of the late 1960s and 1970s, modern classes in general expressed a great laxity in observing religion.

[103] It is only very recently, in January 1997, that a group of clergy formed a group, The Ulema Front, distinct from the official Al-Azhar, in response to the government's encroachment on their prerogatives, which included requests for permission to preach in the mosques and to bring private mosques under the control of the Ministry of Awqaf. See Al-Hayat (January 25, 1997), 7.

REFORMIST OUTCOME

Thus, strategically, two different approaches to Islamic change differentiated Iran and Egypt. The Iranian experience conjures up Gramsci's "frontal attack" or insurrectionary mode, whereas Egyptian Islamists pursued "passive revolution" with reformist consequences. Hardly familiar with Antonio Gramsci, Hasan El-Banna echoed this strategy many years ago:

Our duty as Muslim Brothers is to work for the reform of our selves, of our hearts and souls, by connecting them to God the all-high; then to organize our society so that it becomes a virtuous community which calls for the good and forbids evil-doing, then from the community will arise the good state.[104]

Mustafa Mashur, the present Ekhwan's leader points to the same approach: "All we ask is an Islamic state based on shari'a . . . It may take us a century to establish an Islamic state. Our principles should be bequeathed to future generations and there should be no deviation from these principles."[105] In a recent encounter in a Cairo mosque, a militant young man accused the shaikh of political complicity. The shaikh, a young man wearing a suit and necktie, responded that the task was not a matter of anti-government political agitation but "building an ideological infrastructure" and creating a truly Muslim society at the base.[106]

The Muslim Brothers had begun to put their passive revolution, to build that ideological infrastructure into practice years earlier through extensive networks and grass-roots structures. Not only did these networks spread Islamic sentiments, they concomitantly served to fulfill some fundamental material and spiritual needs of the ordinary Egyptians. By doing so, the movement unintentionally provided conditions for a "negative integration" of its constituency, since those networks and activities devised coping mechanisms and a moral community in which many contenders felt at home. Guilian Denoeux's argument that reformist outcomes occur only when the leaderships in such institutions adopt conciliatory strategy is partly true, but it disregards the objective (reformist) impact these networks often have over the perception of the constituency and the dynamics of the movements.[107] In Egypt, Islamic associations played a crucial institutional role in this process of both integration and change.

In the last two decades, the shortcomings of the traditional top-down planning and implementing development objectives in Egypt boosted the expansion of the local and small-scale development projects, especially the NGOs. Islamic associations, often centered in ahli mosques, were quick to utilize the opportunity and grew extensively. They accounted for one third of the total

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[104] Hasan Al-Banna. *Nadarat fi Islah al-Nafs wal-Mujtana'* (Cairo: Maktaba al-I'itisam, 1980), 62–63.
[105] In an interview in *Al-Ahram Weekly* (November 16–22, 1995), 2.
[106] I observed this interaction in a mosque in Cairo, in October 1996.
[107] See Guilian Denoeux, *Urban Unrest in the Middle East: A Comparative Study of Informal Networks in Egypt, Iran, and Lebanon* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

private voluntary organizations (PVOs) in the late 1980s,[108] and at least 50 percent of all welfare associations, or 5,000 PVOs in the early 1990s, offering charity and health services to millions of Egyptian poor.[109] Indeed, it appeared that the mosques came to provide alternative support services to the low-income to compensate for the government's withdrawal from its social provisions after more liberal economic policies. As a typical association, the Islamic CDA in Ezbat Zein in Cairo, for example, offered classes on the Qur'an but also provided a sewing center, day care, medical treatment, remedial tutoring, a food cooperative, and septic tank cleaning.[110] Others offered video clubs, computer training centers, and other services to cater for the needs of such groups as the high school graduates who are the potential recruits of the radical political Islamists. The availability of both funding (in the form of *zakat* from businesses and migrant workers in the Persian Gulf) and the spirit of voluntarism (scarce in today's Egypt) rendered these associations comparatively advantageous.[111] The government supported the initiative only to the extent that this sector shouldered a portion of the government's burden of providing social services.

What made these practices Islamic was the combination of an alternative to both the state and the private sector, the religious conviction of some of their activists, zakat funding, and especially the provision of affordable social services. Yet for many involved in them, these associations simply provided a job or, for some, even a business. Contrary to the common perception, Islamic social welfare organizations were not places where Islamists conducted political mobilization, but simply acted as service organizations. The vast majority of these NGOs had no link to political Islam. Only a few were related to Muslim Brothers and only a handful to the radical Islamists.[112]

However, unlike the Islamic associations, the Islamic-dominated professional syndicates were all allied with the Muslim Brotherhood. The Ekhwan managed by the early 1990s to control the major professional syndicates and, in others, to constitute a formidable opposition. The influence of the Islamists meanwhile caused a dramatic increase in membership of many unions such as the Teachers Union, which grew from 250,000 in 1985 to 750,000 by 1992.[113]

[108] Al-Ahram Strategic Studies Center, *Taqrir Halat Eddiniyya fi Misr* (Cairo, 1996), 236–7.
[109] See Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Egyptian Law 32 On Egypt's Private Sector Organizations: A Critical Assessment" (Cairo: Ibn Khaldoun Center for Development Studies, November 1996, Working Papers, No. 3, pp. 34–35).
[110] See Denis Sullivan, *Private Voluntary Organizations in Egypt* (Miami University Press of Florida, 1994), 65–68.
[111] In 1990, for instance, about 5,400 zakat committees spread in the mosques. They were operated in ways that were similar to the Naser Social Bank, which was set up in 1971, funding social and charity activities, Qu'ran recitation classes, and building new mosques. During 1990, some two million poor people benefited from this. See Amani Qandil and Sarah Ben-Nafisah, *Al-Jamaiyyat Al-Ahliyya fi Misr* (Cairo: Al-Ahram Center for Strategic Studies, 1995), 61, 282–3.
[112] *Ibid.*, 282.
[113] See Amani Qandil, "Taqdim Adaa' El-Islamiyn fi-Nniqabat Al-Maniyya" (Cairo: CEDEJ/Cairo University, 1993).

The popularity of these syndicates had largely to do with the performance of the Islamist leaderships: They fought corruption, increased members' income, created systems of social welfare, found jobs for unemployed members, set up consumer cooperatives, established sub-syndicates and social clubs, and did a great deal of political mobilization.[114] An exemplary activity was their rapid mobilization during the Cairo earthquakes in 1992 and flooding in upper Egypt in 1994. The syndicates became so powerful and vocal that the government saw no choice but to curtail them by both legal means and the arrest of their leading members.[115]

In providing social services, the Muslim Brothers were not alone. Indeed, their grass-roots activities compelled other social forces to enter into the competition, hoping to share the political space. Al-Azhar, for instance, began to offer similar grass-roots social services as oppositional Islamists.[116] In addition, the Egyptian government's measures to upgrade slums and squatter areas in the early 1990s clearly reflected the incident of Imbaba, a slum area in Cairo, in 1991, when militant Islamists had created, according to foreign media, "a state within the state." Similarly, secular groups, in particular secular NGOs seemed to work hard to offer their own piecemeal alternatives. An estimated five million poor benefited from the health, educational, financial, and community services of Egyptian PVOs in 1990.[117] As in many other similar experiences, the net result of such an intense competition was both to mobilize the critical mass and to provide a coping mechanism of a political, economic, and spiritual nature.

Beyond improving material conditions, the Islamist movement in Egypt also offered alienated constituencies with an alternative social, cultural, and moral community within which the rival secular and western culture seemed less threatening. Facing the conditions of rapid globalization and western cultural penetration, these communities provided the traditionalists both with an expression of discontent and a moral safety net. The ritual of weekly gatherings that spread across the small and big cities reflected not only a cultural protest but also materialized a Durkheimian social solidarity, security, and moral integration—the contradictory conditions to which Arlene Mac-Leod referred when she called the new veiling among Cairian women a way of "accommodating protest."[118] The Young Men's Muslim Association, with its over 2,000 members just in Tanta, for instance, offered youth libraries, sport facilities, language and computer classes, video and television sessions,

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[114] *Ibid.* Also based upon my interview with a member of Doctors Syndicate (Cairo, 1990).
[115] The Law 100/1993 ruled that a syndicate election would be legitimate if at least 50 percent of the total membership cast votes. Seventeen syndicates rejected this law, leading to major confrontations with the government.
[116] See *El-Liwa El-Islami* (September 28, 1995, p. 15).
[117] Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Egyptian Law 32," 34.
[118] Arlene MacLeod, *Accommodating Protest: Working Women, the New Veiling, and Change in Cairo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

lectures, tours, and holidays.[119] In hundreds of urban neighborhood gatherings (*halaqat*), women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds grouped together weekly not only to learn about Islamic precepts but also to gain a sense of belonging to a moral community. In another domain, Islamic-dominated syndicates became the places where members, mostly excluded from national political processes, could really participate in decision making and be confident that their votes be counted. The syndicates were the site of the struggle for human rights, where issues like political prisoners and the Palestinian cause could be discussed; activists could collect donations for the victims of Bosnia, Iraq, and Chechnia[120]; and Hajj pilgrimages could be organized for members. Even young adults could stay away from opulent Egyptian hotel marriage ceremonies by organizing "Islamic weddings."

The growing number of Islamic private schools accounted for the development of yet another institution of both religious dissent and integration. In addition to a decent education (*ta'lim*) which, the Muslims believed could not be obtained from a feeble and "morally misguided" national education system, these schools socialized their pupils into morality and the virtues of Islam (*tarbiyya*). Different from the Azhari institutions, these new institutions were not dissimilar to my own Islamic school in Tehran back in the late 1960s, where the daily collective prayers, religious classes, camps, and alternative leisure defined its Islamic identity but on a scale that was much larger in Egypt than in Iran.[121]

In short, during the 1990s, contestation in Egypt at the level of culture and moral virtues became even more fierce (perhaps because it was less costly) than that in the provision of material welfare. There, "true Islam," both in idea and in deed, became the subject of an intense competition between various contenders, including the seculars, the net result being further concessions by secularists and the spread of Islamic ideas. This included not only variants of political Islam but also the modernists (for example, Mustafa Mahmoud) as well as the secular state which had already made significant concessions to Islamist revivalism. State-controlled television cut back many of the "immoral" shows and increased Islamic programming after the early 1980s. In the same period, the government nationalized many mosques, hiring thousands of shaikhs to offer sermons during the month of Ramadan. The number of Imams who worked for the Ministry of Awqaf increased more than three-fold, from 6,000 in 1982 to 22,000 by 1996. In the same period, the number of groups memorizing the Qur'an jumped from 900 to about 1,200.[122] In 1993, the government launched the program, "Caravans of Light," which sent *awqaf*

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[119] See Denis Sullivan, *Private Voluntary Associations in Egypt*, 73.

[120] Amani Qandil, "Taqdim Adaa' El-Islamiyyn."

[121] On the Egyptian Islamic schools, I have relied on Linda Herrera's study of these schools for 1995–96.

[122] *El-Liwa El-Islam* (December 5, 1996), 14.

employees and Azhar graduates to spread its message of Islam throughout the country.[123] Al-Azhar had already begun to expand its grass-roots activities tremendously in the past decade. In 1995, it controlled well over 10,000 mosques, over 6,000 educational institutions ranging form primary schools, Qur'an classes, to branches of the University and close to 1.25 million students.[124] As graduates of Al-Azhar and local *kuttabs*, every year thousands were added to the rank of the ʿulamā.[125] On the other hand, the ruling National Democratic Party and the secular elite figures began to offer their own brands of Islam. Such Islamic weeklies as *El-Liwa el-Islami* (by the ruling National Democratic Party) and *Aqidati* (by a westernized publisher) were established to "spread correct Islamic thought and culture among Egyptian youth."[126] Ironically, both publications exhibit a traditionalist and at times remarkably fundamentalist versions of Islam.[127] The Army also joined the race in 1989 by putting out its Islamic monthly, *Al-Mujahid*. Such competition fed further into a traditional popular religiosity in which, unlike Iran's shariati type of nascent Islamic revivalism, had the effect of rather isolating modernists.

At any rate, by the early 1990s, it appeared as though the prevalence of such communities and the conduct of their members equaled a partial realization of the notion of an Islamic society. Side by side, with great strides towards building an "Islamic infrastructure," the integrationist and even acquiescent consequences of these measures became ever more apparent. This angered the revolutionaries, rendering them demoralized. The latter expressed concern about the conciliatory ʿulamā and "apolitical" preaching and the mosques' messages. Although these Islamists blamed the growing police surveillance for this, which was partially true, nevertheless the reformist consequences of Egypt's Islamist movement played a crucial role.[128]

These concerns signified not only a widespread debate in the Egyptian society but also considerable differentiations and divisions within its Islamist movement (various militant groups, reformist Muslim Brothers and its internal fractions, to Al-Azhar and its internal discontent, certain state institutions such as courts, and the various Sufi orders). The intense competition for "true Islam" and "correct strategy" for change espoused a heated controversy; even as it offered an opportunity in which people could put hard questions not only

[123] The incompetence of the preachers, however, partially led to the failure of the program. See Diana Digges, "The Government School: The Next Generation of Imams in Apolitical Islam," *Cairo Times* (18 September–1 October 1997), 7.

[124] *Ibid.*

[125] See *El-Liwa El-Islami* (September 28, 1995), 15.

[126] Statement made by Ahmed ʿUmar Hashim, the president of Al-Azhar University, in *Aqidati* (November 7, 1995), 3.

[127] *El-Liwa El-Islami*, which has a respectable circulation, supported the "fundamentalist" critiques of Professor Abu-Zaid and sided with the conservative tendencies of the Beijing Women's Conference.

[128] See Heba Rauf in *Shaub* (January 3, 1997), 9. See also the interview with the author in March 1997.

to the politicians but also the Islamic opposition—a phenomenon totally absent from the Iranian political scene prior to the Islamic Revolution. It is important to note that these debates and expressions owed much to a relative political openness in the Egypt society. The space available in Egypt for the political parties, press, and NGOs in the 1980s, however limited, was unparalleled to that under the Shah in Iran during the 1970s. During the 1980s, Egypt, unlike Iran, enjoyed a multi-party political system with nine parties, periodic elections, opposition newspapers, popular criticism of the government (unthinkable in some Arab states), and—most important—a judiciary that maintained its independence from the political authorities. But competition and controversy within the Islamist movement was also important in another respect. They implied a relative clarity on political views, a diversity of positions, internal dissent, and thus disunity—things which characterize a social movement and are anomalous to a revolutionary scenario. Revolutions, unlike social movements, rest on high degree of unity, generality, and ambiguity. Unlike in Egypt, these elements were clearly present in Iran. The autocracy of the Shah, the sole leadership of the clergy resulting from the Shiʻi clergy's hierarchical structure, lack of time for debate and dissent, and thus a remarkable ambiguity in the discourse of the revolution provided that astonishing unity.[129]

In the meantime, the perseverance of both the Islamists and the state in Egypt created a political equilibrium in which neither party was ensured of a total victory. The Islamic Revolution in Iran, just like the socialist Revolution in Russia, surely bolstered similar movements in other parts of the world. Yet its very victory, in a sense, prevented similar scenarios in other countries, principally because it made incumbent states more vigilant while carrying out some reforms. Thus, not only did the Egyptian political regime remain intact, but it began by the mid-1990s to intensify pressure on even moderate Islamists. The emergency law barring public assembly was maintained. In 1992, a new Anti-Terrorism Law made preventive detention legal and restricted the opposition press. In 1993, the government used Law 100 to limit the success of Islamic candidates by interfering with the election procedures of the syndicates. Similar policies were used in the universities to restrict the election of Islamists to leadership positions. The Ministry of Awqaf screened and mon-

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[129] Of course, unity can be built by political coalitions, but this requires an hegemonic element to enforce consensus on other dissenting parties. This was lacking in Egypt. An indignant and well-organized clergy might have played that role as in Iran; but in Egypt, the ʻulamā were not in political opposition. Nevertheless, if the situation changes, the Al-Azhar and its ʻulamā are likely to join the bandwagon, even becoming major actors in an Islamic order. Indeed, even today there are signs that this state institution may be used by militant young muslims, Egyptians and foreigners alike, who acquire Islamic knowledge while maintaining a critical stand against conciliatory politics of the Al-Azhar. Unrest in the Al-Azahar University during October 1995 when many students protested the government arrests and military trials of Muslim Brothers point to the political potential of this institution. For details, see Al-Ahram Weekly and Aqidati during the last two weeks of October and the first week of November 1995.

itored Islamic preachers. Those without the ministry's permit were not allowed to operate.[130] Finally, the state accelerated its policy of taking over ahli mosques to the point where the Ministry of Awqaf was claiming to nationalize an average of 9,000 mosques a year.[131] This pressure further exacerbated controversies and rifts within the movement. Internal division within the Ekhwan led to a split in 1996 from which Hizb El-Wasat emerged. While pleased with the divisions, the government refused to recognize the splinter group. Notwithstanding these developments, Islamic reforms from below continued unheeded. Egypt in the early 1990s was undergoing such an Islamic social change which was so significant that would have been unthinkable for the Iranian clergy under the Shah. Egypt, thus, experienced the persistence of an Islamic movement without an Islamic revolution, whereas, Iran underwent a revolution without a strong Islamic movement. By the mid-1980s, it looked as if Iran had begun to experience a "post-Islamist" phase,[132] a return from revolutionary ideology, the Egyptian Islamist movement was in the grip of three major challenges: an increase in hostility from the state; an acceleration of economic, political, and cultural globalization, and the revelation of what Oliver Roy termed the "failure of political Islam."[133] This was not good news for Egypt's Islamists.

[130] *El-Liaw al-Islami* (28 November 1979), 2.
[131] *Cairo Times* (18 September–1 October 1997), 7.
[132] See Asef Bayat, "The Coming of a Post-Islamist Society," in *Critique: Journal for the Critical Studies of the Middle East*, no. 9 (Fall 1996), 43–52.
[133] Oliver Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).