

Dictatorship of the Pious: The Theological Dimension of Muslim Extremism in Egypt,
1954-1997

by

Ibrahim Badawi

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
March 2010

© Copyright by Ibrahim Badawi, 2010

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

The undersigned hereby certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance a thesis entitled “Dictatorship of the Pious: The Theological Dimension of Muslim Extremism in Egypt, 1954-1997” by Ibrahim Badawi in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dated: March 19, 2010

Supervisor: _____

Readers: _____

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

DATE: March 19, 2010

AUTHOR: Ibrahim Badawi

TITLE: Dictatorship of the Pious: The Theological Dimension of Muslim
Extremism in Egypt, 1954-1997

DEPARTMENT OR SCHOOL: Department of History

DEGREE: MA CONVOCATION: May YEAR: 2010

Permission is herewith granted to Dalhousie University to circulate and to have copied for non-commercial purposes, at its discretion, the above title upon the request of individuals or institutions.

Signature of Author

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

The author attests that permission has been obtained for the use of any copyrighted material appearing in the thesis (other than the brief excerpts requiring only proper acknowledgement in scholarly writing), and that all such use is clearly acknowledged.

Table of Contents

Abstract	vi
Acknowledgments	vii
Glossary	viii
Chapter1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: The Theological Dimension of Militant Extremism	17
The Islamist Worldview and its Epistemological Parameters.....	22
<i>Jahiliyyah, Takfir, and Jihad: Normative and Extremist Interpretations</i>	29
The <i>Khawarij</i> : Islamic History’s First Extremists.....	38
Conclusion.....	42
Chapter 3: Nasser’s Torture Chambers and <i>Milestones</i>: The Birth of Militant Theology, 1954-1971	44
Sayyid Qutb’s Intellectual Development.....	47
The Muslim Brotherhood and the Revolution.....	51
Nasser’s Persecution and the Birth of Extremist Theology.....	53
The <i>Jahiliyyah</i> of the 20 th Century.....	60
Conclusion: The Transition to the Second Phase.....	66
Chapter 4: The Second Phase: Islamic Resurgence, Revolutionary Islamism and the Radical <i>Jam ‘at</i>, 1971-1981	70
Egypt Under Sadat: De-Nasserization and Islamic Resurgence.....	74
Islamism in the Sadat Era: Reform vs. Revolution.....	79
<i>Jam ‘at al-Faniyyah al- ‘Askariyyah</i>	84
<i>al-Takfir Wal Hijra</i>	87
<i>al-Jihad al-Islami</i>	93

Conclusion.....	96
Chapter 5: Failure and Disbandment: The Final Phase.....	98
The State of Militant Groups after Sadat.....	100
Abdul Rahman, al-Zawahiri, the Afghan Mythology, and the new <i>Jahiliyyah</i> ...	103
The Extremist’s Failure to Topple Mubarak: 1990-1997.....	109
Conclusion.....	112
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	115
Bibliography.....	126

Abstract

This thesis explores how Egypt's militant extremists used theological sources and the methodology of Islamic juridical-religious thought as instruments of legitimization for acts of political violence. Most studies dealing with the topic of Muslim extremism in Egypt are defined by a dominant interpretive paradigm, which treats Muslim extremists as political reactionaries, responding to a variety of political, economic, social, and cultural grievances. Although such grievances certainly played an important role in the development of extremism, the theological dimension of extremist ideologies has been drastically understudied.

This thesis puts forth two correlative arguments. First, this thesis argues that the phenomenon of Muslim extremism in Egypt cannot be fully understood, without understanding its theological dimension. Secondly, this thesis argues that the historical trajectory of extremism and militant theological thought in Egypt from 1954-1997 unfolded in three distinct and heterogeneous phases, each with its own unique characteristics.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Amal Ghazal for her guidance throughout this project and for always pushing me to do my best through her firm but gentle supervision. I would also like to thank Dr. Jerry Bannister for chairing my defense committee, Dr. Colin Mitchell and Dr. Jamie Whidden for their insights and comments on my thesis and Dr. C.M. Bell for helping me tweak my funding proposal. Very special thanks goes to my wonderful parents. As people that experienced this period in Egypt's history first hand, they have provided me with invaluable insights and were always happy to help me find and translate sources. Last but not least, I would like to thank my delightful wife for her patience and support and for happily assuming the role of family breadwinner while I completed my studies.

Glossary

<i>'Alim</i>	(Plural <i>'ulama</i>) An Islamic legal scholar. Can also refer to scientists or scholar in any field of study.
<i>Amir</i>	Leader, commander, ruler or prince.
<i>Awqaf</i>	Religious endowment s
<i>Fatwa</i>	A formal religious decree or legal ruling
<i>Fiqh</i>	Islamic jurisprudence
<i>Hadith</i>	(Plural <i>Ahadith</i>) Records of the Prophet Muhammad's deeds and sayings. Used interchangeably with the word <i>Sunnah</i> .
<i>Hakimiyyah</i>	Sovereignty. The supreme governmental and legal authority
<i>Ijtihad</i>	The process of making legal decisions through independent interpretations of Islamic sources
<i>Jahiliyyah</i>	Ignorance. The antithesis of <i>Hakimiyyah</i> , and the condition of any place or society where Allah is not held as the supreme sovereign
<i>Jihad</i>	Struggle for the cause of God. Includes military struggle
<i>Kafir</i>	(Plural <i>kuffar</i>) Disbeliever, infidel.
<i>Mufti</i>	A Islamic scholar and interpreter of Islamic Law with the authority to issue <i>fatwas</i> .
<i>Ridda</i>	Apostasy. <i>Irtidad</i> is the act of apostasy and <i>murtadd</i> is the apostate.
<i>Shari'ah</i>	Islamic Law. Everything that was revealed by Allah to govern the affairs of human life.
<i>Shura</i>	Consultation. A <i>shura</i> council is a consultative council of Islamic jurists
<i>Sirah</i>	The biography and history of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions
<i>Takfir</i>	Excommunication
<i>'Ulama</i>	(Singular <i>'Alim</i>) Religious Intelligentsia.

Chapter 1: Introduction

On October 6, 1952, roughly three months after the Free Officer's Revolution in Egypt, the front page of the Egyptian periodical *al-Risalah*, featured the reaction of Sayyid Qutb, who at the time was an appointed advisor to the Revolutionary Command Council.¹ A highly optimistic Qutb lauded the revolution as “a new dawn” and “a blessed move of the army, made not for the sake of an individual or a body or a party. Rather, it is for the sake of us, the people.”² In the months immediately before and after the revolution, Qutb had met regularly with a certain Gamal Abdul Nasser and expressed a strong loyalty to him and confidence in his leadership.³ Twelve years later, in November of 1964, Wahba Books published *Milestones*, Qutb's last and most influential work. In it, he denounced his former colleague Nasser as a *kafir* (infidel), the iniquitous prince of a *jahili* (ignorant or pagan) society, who had usurped God's sovereignty and made himself the object of worship of his subjects.⁴ Qutb called on Muslims to “free themselves” from the clutches of this *jahili* society and its *jahili* leadership.⁵

Milestones would come to be regarded by scholars as the definitive “manifesto of Sunni extremism and the justification for terrorism.”⁶ More than four decades after the publication of *Milestones*, Sayyid Qutb is still invoked as the man

¹ Qutb was appointed as an advisor on cultural affairs to the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), but later resigned because of the new regime's refusal to establish an Islamic State. Roxanne L. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 60.

² Sayyid Qutb, “Nahnu al-sha'ab nurid,” *al-Risalah*, no. 1005. (October 6, 1952): 1105.

³ This was expressed in an interview with Attorney al-Damardash al-I'qali in Sulayman al-Hakim, *Asrar al-Ilaqah al-khasah bayna Abdul Nasser wa-al Ikhwan*, (Cairo: 1996), p. 50.

⁴ Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 59.

⁵ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, (Kuwait: al-Faisal Press, 1989), p. 34, Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt*, p. 59.

⁶ R. Scott Appleby, “History in the Fundamentalist Imagination,” *The Journal of American History*, vol. 89 no. 2 (Sept. 2002), p. 507.

who “more than anyone else... inspired generations of Jihadis, including al-Qaeda’s senior leaders Osama Bin Laden and his deputies.”⁷ The ubiquitary influence of the ideas articulated in *Milestones* ossified Sayyid Qutb’s legacy, earning him such titles as “the father of militant jihad,” and “the philosopher of Islamic terror,” and made Qutb a requisite figure in the vast body of literature dealing with the topic of Muslim extremism.⁸

The historiography on the subject of extremism in modern Egypt largely adheres to a conventional wisdom which treats Muslim extremists as the product of a variety of sociopolitical, economic or cultural grievances and draws a direct lineage between Sayyid Qutb and the emergence of later militant groups in Egypt. Amidst the almost exclusive emphasis on the undoubtedly relevant and important factors of political, social, and economic grievances, and the attention given to the supposed prepotency of Sayyid Qutb, the importance of the theological dimension of militant extremism has been almost entirely overlooked. While these grievances provide the environment that allows extremism to fester, violent acts in the name of Islam can only take place when killing is legitimized and justified by theological reasoning. In this sense, radical theology can be seen as the instrument of legitimization for political violence, providing not only the justification of violence, but also the

⁷ Fawwaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy: The New Definition of Jihad*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 4.

⁸ John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 8, Paul Berman, “The Philosopher of Islamic Terror,” *New York Times Magazine*, March 23, 2003.

motivation to perform violent acts, as acts of religious piety and even religious obligation.⁹

This thesis intends to address this gap in the literature by dissecting the anatomy of radical theology in Egypt, highlighting its importance, explaining its origins, defining the thought processes that led to the development of extremist doctrines, defining the theological doctrines developed by radical groups in Egypt and offering an original interpretation of the historical trajectory and development of militant extremist thought in Egypt from its emergence in the early 1950s to its relative decline in the late 1990s.¹⁰

Most of the literature on the emergence of militant extremism in Egypt can be assigned to one of two categories: works surveying the historical development of militant extremism and works analyzing Qutb's intellectual discourse. The first category consists of studies on the political, social, and economic dimensions of Islamic resurgence, which almost invariably allude to the conventional wisdom that post-revolutionary Egypt failed to satisfy both the material and spiritual needs of Egyptian society, and that discontented Egyptians turned to Islam for philosophical and ideological comfort. According to this perspective, disillusioned Egyptians resorted to Islam as a result of the failure of other options, resulting in a politicization of Islam. Through this process, Islam became a spearhead for socio-political

⁹ For instance, Muhammad Abdul Salam Faraj, chief ideologue of the Islamic Jihad movement argued that waging war against the *kaffir* rulers of the Arab world is a religious obligation for all "true" Muslims.

¹⁰ "Relative decline" is meant in the context of the significant loss of credibility and public sympathy for extremist groups among Egypt's masses, which appears to have ossified in the early to late 1990s.

resistance, which would often appear in the form of violent extremism.¹¹ In other words, militant extremism is seen as a variety of political Islam and a reactionary force to political, social, or economic grievances such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, misrule by dictatorial leaders, and economic subjugation under Western neo-imperialism.¹²

Gilles Kepel, the foremost authority on extremism in Egypt concludes that Egyptian militants are “the living symbols... of the failure of the independent state’s modernization projects,” and that Egyptian extremism has made its discourse “the crucible in which all dissident demands are forged.”¹³ Emmanuel Sivan, another authority on radicalism sees extremism as the result of a combination of political grievances and a fierce rejection of modernity and Western values.¹⁴ This view is echoed by Charles Adams who sees the wrath of Egyptian extremists as “directed, not at modernization as such, but at the things which have accompanied it and the people who have led it: the increasing dependence upon alien values, continuing military impotence resulting in part from the strength of U.S.-supported Israel, economic subjugation to foreign powers... and ineffectiveness of allegedly corrupt and inefficient leadership.”¹⁵

¹¹ For instance R. Hrair Dekmejian stresses the importance of the “Islamic alternative,” in the context of the failure of secular alternatives, and the crisis of legitimacy confronting regimes in the Muslim World. R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World*. 2nd ed. (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995).

¹² This view is expressed in Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) and, Bassam Tibi, *Islam: Between Culture and Politics*, New York: Palgrave, 2001.

¹³ Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt*, p. 218.

¹⁴ Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

¹⁵ Charles Adams, “Foreword,” in J.G.G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat’s Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East*, (New York: MacMillan, 1986), p. xiii.

Sociological studies such as Uri Kupferschmidt's "Reformist and Militant Islam in Urban and Rural Egypt," and Sa'ad Eddin Ibrahim's "Reform and Frustration in Egypt," have attributed the phenomenon of militancy to economic frustrations resulting from Sadat's *infatih* policies and social alienation, resulting from the impact of urbanization and the subsequent breaking of traditional solidarities and communal ties.¹⁶ Other studies have taken a broader approach, synthesizing various issues such as dissatisfaction with corrupt and incompetent leadership and Muslim antipathy towards the injection of alien Western culture and values in the Arab world.¹⁷ Within this first category, militant extremism is almost universally seen as the product of social, political, or economic grievances and the convenience of Islam as a refuge from these grievances combined with its ability to serve as a vehicle of political resistance. This standard approach has defined the conventional wisdom, and provided the basic assumptions of the dominant interpretive paradigm, assumptions which are carried into the second category of literature.

The second category of literature, which deals with the intellectual dimension of Egyptian extremism, consists almost entirely of invariable analyses and assessments of Sayyid Qutb's discourse and his significance as the forefather of extremism in Egypt and in the Arab world in general. Authors such as Sayed Khatab,

¹⁶ Uri Kupferschmidt, "Reformist and Militant Islam in Urban and Rural Egypt," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 23 (1987), pp. 403-418, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Reform and Frustration in Egypt," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 7 no. 4 (Oct. 1996), pp. 125-135.

¹⁷ Ahmad Moussali, *Moderate and Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Quest for Modernity, Legitimacy, and the Islamic State*, (Gainesville: The University of Florida Press, 1999), Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), Hamied M. Ansari, "Islamic Militants in Egyptian Politics," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, (March 1984), p. 123, Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World*, (New York: Routledge, 1992).

Ibrahim Abu Rabi', Yvonne Haddad, Ahmad Moussali, and Adnan Musallam, have provided a number of analyses of Qutb's intellectual discourse and interpretations of his political and ideological philosophy.¹⁸ Although these works focus on the intellectual dimension of militant extremism rather than external factors, the conclusions reached by studies in this second category reflect the dominant tendency to treat Muslim extremism as a reactionary force to political, economic, and social grievances. Both Yvonne Haddad and Ibrahim Abu Rabi' conclude that Sayyid Qutb's radical thought developed in response to Nasserism, and resulted from disillusionment with all other solutions, and a decision to create his own.¹⁹ Ahmad Moussali concludes that militant fundamentalism "can be attributed to the crises of contemporary social and political life,"²⁰ and Adnan Musallam believes that Sayyid Qutb's ideas "reflect the Egyptian social, economic, and political conditions."²¹

Since Gilles Kepel's *Muslim Extremism in Egypt* and Emmanuel Sivan's *Radical Islam* set the parameters for the interpretation of extremism in modern Egypt, a dominant historiographical trend has emerged. This interpretive paradigm - which aims to explain the ideological root of militant groups in Egypt, and has been repeated and reiterated in almost all subsequent studies on the topic - draws upon a simple

¹⁸ Ibrahim Abu Rabi', "Sayyid Qutb: From Religious Realism to Radical Social Criticism," *Islamic Quarterly*, vol. 28 no. 2 (1984), pp. 103-126, Sayed Khatab, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb: The Theory of Jahiliyya*, Sayed Khatab, *The Power of Sovereignty: The Political and Ideological Philosophy of Sayyid Qutb*, (London: Routledge, 2006), Yvonne Y. Haddad, "The Qur'anic Justification for an Islamic Revolution: The Views of Sayyid Qutb," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 37 no. 1 (1983), pp. 14-

29 Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival," in John L. Esposito, ed., *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 67-98, Ahmad Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Qutb* (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1992), Adnan A. Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism*, (Westport: Praeger, 2005).

¹⁹ Haddad, "Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival", p. 68, Ibrahim Abu Rabi', *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World*, (New York: Routledge, 2006). p.165.

²⁰ Ahmad Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, p. 239.

²¹ Adnan Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad*, p. ix.

formula, developing a linear and mono-causal relationship between Sayyid Qutb and the emergence of later militant groups in Egypt.²² While this approach may be correct in pointing to Qutb as the root of militant thought, it provides little more than a retrospective conclusion, extracting and isolating Qutbian thought from the context in which it developed, and overlooking the role of theology as an epistemological and methodological framework through which Qutbian, and other militant thought was formulated, developed and articulated.²³

While political, social, economic and cultural circumstances define the historical context under which extremist thought has emerged, the extremist discourse of 20th century Egyptian militants has invariably manifested in a theological context, is articulated in theological terms and is formulated using theological-juristic methodologies. Although the arguments made by Egyptian extremists advocating the use of violence against the state, against foreign powers and even against civilians were meant to serve political or ideological goals, these arguments were formulated within the epistemological context of Islamic theological thought, articulated using the methodological framework of Islamic jurisprudence, and were developed using Islamic sources.

The conventional wisdom is sufficient in explaining why radical ideas such as those of Qutb were popularized and utilized by many of Egypt's Islamist revolutionaries, rather than remaining as obscure doctrines of an esoteric and

²² See Barbara Zollner, "Prison Talk: The Muslim Brotherhood's Internal Struggle During Gamal Abdel Nasser's Persecution, 1954-1971," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, (2007) 39: pp. 411-433.

²³ *Ibid.* p.411.

harmless fringe.²⁴ However, the absence of studies on the theological dimension of Muslim extremism in Egypt raises a number of important and unanswered questions.

This thesis puts forth two correlative arguments. First, this thesis argues that the phenomenon of Muslim extremism cannot be fully understood without understanding its theological dimension. As such, the emergence of Muslim extremism in Egypt should not be treated simply as a reaction to political or socio-economic grievances, a rejection of modernity, or a product of the Egyptian regimes' refusal to implement an Islamic state.

The phenomenon of Muslim extremism in modern Egypt can be seen as the product of a complex process, in which certain political, social, cultural, or other grievances were addressed and deliberated inside the conceptual, ontological and epistemological parameters of classical Islamic theology, and the sociopolitical and intellectual context of the Islamist worldview. Subsequently, the perceived solutions to these grievances were hashed out within the methodological framework of classical Islamic juridical-religious thought, or *fiqh*. The result of this process was the production of a discourse that is theological in its formulation, development, methodology and articulation. Although it would be inaccurate to identify theology as a singular cause of Muslim extremism or to argue that extremist ideologies are based solely on theology, theological thought must be acknowledged as essential to extremist ideologies, functioning as the instrument of legitimization for acts of political violence. After 1954, a process took place in Egypt, in which Sayyid Qutb and many other Egyptians were transformed from relatively mainstream Islamists

²⁴ See "Islamism in North Africa I: The Legacy of History," and "Islamism in North Africa II: Egypt's Opportunity," *ICG Middle East and North Africa Briefing*, Cairo/Brussels: 20 April, 2004.

into radical militants. There are a number of complex dynamics that were involved in this process, and theological thought is one of the most crucial, yet understudied dynamics of this process.

Secondly, this thesis will argue that the historical trajectory of Muslim extremism in Egypt from the early 1950s to the late 1990s is defined by three distinct and heterogeneous phases, each defined by different characteristics. These three phases can be categorized into: a formative phase from 1954 to 1971, a climatic phase from 1971-1981, and an anticlimactic phase from 1981-present.²⁵ The characteristics of these phases were shaped largely by the changing political, social, and economic landscapes of Gamal Abdul Nasser's, Anwar Sadat's and Hosni Mubarak's Egypt.

It must be acknowledged at the outset that no single cause can be identified as wholly responsible for the emergence of extremism. It is a complex phenomenon with various interrelated causes that can include religious, political, social, economic, psychological, and intellectual factors, or a combination of all of these. In this sense, the purpose of this essay is not to attempt to identify a singular cause of extremism in modern Egypt, nor to argue that theological thought is the primary cause, but rather, to explore the theological dimension of extremism as a crucial component of a broader process. If militant extremism can be seen as the product of a complex process involving many inter-related factors, theology must be acknowledged as an essential part of this process, as it functions as an epistemological and ontological predicate, provides the methodological framework

²⁵It should be noted that the three phases characterized here, as well as the characteristics of these phases as subsequently described, is, to the best of my knowledge, an original argument that does not exist in any of the current literature on the subject, and the conclusions reached have been derived through an examination of several primary sources.

and sources through which militant extremist thought is formulated, developed, and articulated, and serves as the instrument of legitimization for extremist ideology and the justification for violent political revolution.

Although it is acknowledged that historical context, particularly, political and socioeconomic circumstances, cannot be separated from the study of political behavior, this thesis will proceed on the assumption that “there are crucial interrelationships and complex connections between the intellectual life of a society and its political development.”²⁶ As Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski have pointed out: “the political behavior of a people in any given society can be understood only in relation to the intellectual context in which political action occurs... political behavior is often, if not always motivated by ideological considerations, and therefore worldviews and values are an integral component of any explanation of political developments.”²⁷ If militant extremist discourse can be seen as a derivative of an intellectual context, defined by certain values and worldviews, these values and worldviews must be treated as the starting point from which to begin an enquiry into the theological dimension of extremism.

The second chapter of this thesis will introduce the theological dimension of extremist thought, explain its importance, and delineate the mechanics of the broader process through which extremist discourse is produced, explaining the role of the theological component of this process. The second chapter will begin by outlining the intellectual, political, social, epistemological, ontological, and methodological parameters of the broader system of thought and worldview from which extremist discourse is

²⁶Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900-1930*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. viii.

deduced. Once this system of thought is defined, the process through which various grievances are deliberated within this system of thought to create extremist discourse will be explained.

The third chapter will show how this broader process began to unfold in Nasser's Egypt, by connecting the broader intellectual context and conceptual framework of extremist thought, with the specific historical context and circumstances under which extremist thought emerged. This chapter will delineate the first phase, from 1954 to 1971, which represents the birth of radical theology. Following a failed assassination attempt against Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser in October of 1954, the Egyptian government began large scale arrests of the members of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement. This chapter will argue that the radical theological doctrines of *takfir* and *jahiliyyah*, which became the basis for the legitimization of violence by Egyptian extremists, were the product of an independent thought process, induced by the appalling torture and abuse of the Muslim Brothers in Nasser's prisons. Using primary source materials, including books and memoirs of Muslim Brothers who were tortured in Nasser's prisons, this chapter will also define, in clear terms, the thought process that led to the development of these radical theological doctrines. Hashing out their grievances within the methodological framework of Islamic juridical-religious thought, these prisoners reached the conclusion that Egyptian society was in a state of *jahiliyyah* or ignorance, and was being ruled by *kuffar* or unbelievers. According to this perspective, true Muslims were not only justified, but commanded as a religious obligation, to overthrow the Egyptian government by violent means if necessary. This phase produced the radical theological doctrines of *takfir* (excommunication) and *jahiliyyah* (ignorance),

²⁷ *Ibid.*

two precepts that would become the fundamental predicates of radical theology for subsequent decades. Among the Muslim Brothers enduring the appalling torture was Sayyid Qutb, who gave these doctrines a concrete conceptual framework with the publication of his incredibly influential book, *Milestones*.

The fourth chapter will elucidate the characteristics of the second phase in the development of radical theology, which began with the release of Islamist prisoners in a 1971 general amnesty following Sadat's 'corrective revolution.'²⁸ This second phase represents the adolescence of extremist theology, a period colored by the aura of martyrdom surrounding Sayyid Qutb following his execution on August 29, 1966. This second phase represents a significant cornerstone in the historical trajectory of radical theology. Theological doctrines which had been developed in prison, motivated by torture, and were relatively exclusive to Nasser's prisoners, were transplanted into Egyptian society, and adopted by a younger generation of Egyptian radicals who had never experienced the brutality of Nasser's prisons. It was at this stage that economic and socio-political grievances supplanted torture as fuel for the fire of extremism.

Following the defeat of the Arabs in the 1967 war with Israel, and the death of Nasser, Islamism experienced a large scale resurgence that would be defined by two distinct trends: reformist Islamism and revolutionary Islamism. Armed with *Milestones*, revolutionary Islamists with militant propensities possessed a solid conceptual framework from which to develop their perceived solutions to the contemporary problems of the Egyptian state and society. Using this framework,

²⁸ The 'corrective revolution' is discussed in Derek Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society, 1945-1990*, (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 105-121.

radicals further developed the ideas contained in *Milestones*, creating more extreme and violent theological doctrines. The theological doctrines that were developed in Nasser's prisons, were further radicalized into complete political-religious belief systems, and began manifesting into a number of acts of terrorism in Sadat's Egypt.²⁹ The death of Nasser, and the relatively lenient policies of his successor Anwar Sadat, failed to reverse the damage that was done in the Nasser years, and did not extinguish the fire of radicalism, a fire that would be fueled by events such as Sadat's visit to Israel and the subsequent signing of Camp David Accords in 1978. The self-proclaimed title of *al-Rai's al-Mu'min* (The Believing President) did not protect Egyptian President Anwar Sadat from assassination in 1981 at the hands of the Islamic Jihad, a group that declared Sadat to be a *kafir*. However, it was not radicals from the Nasser era who had orchestrated this attack, but a younger generation of extremists who had never experienced the brutality of Nasser's prisons, and were only children during the age of Qutb and his contemporaries. This chapter will demonstrate how theological doctrines that were developed in Nasser's prisons, were transplanted into Egyptian society, adopted by a younger generation of radicals, and further radicalized. This chapter will also demonstrate how, during this process, torture was supplanted by political and socio-economic grievances, and the ambitions of revolutionary Islamist movements as the motivation for extremism.

The fifth chapter of this thesis will explore the third and final phase, which began to unfold under the changes brought about under the reign of Honsi Mubarak, and continues into the present. Until the early 1990s, acts of terrorism by radical

²⁹ The three major acts of terrorism during this phase was the kidnapping and murder of Muhammad al-Dhahabi, a former minister of *awqaf* in 1977 by the Takfir wal Hijra, the attempted coup in

groups in Egypt exclusively targeted Egyptian government officials and members of the official clergy. In 1992, gunmen opened fire on a Nile cruiser carrying 140 German tourists, the first of over two dozen subsequent attacks against Western tourists. This attack was the product of a third phase in the development of radical theology in Egypt, as new theological doctrines emerged, encouraging the use of violence against Western tourists and Egyptian civilians. This chapter will examine the discourse of more recent extremist ideologues, such as Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman and Ayman al-Zawahiri, to determine how and why theological doctrines encouraging the use of violence against the West, civilians or otherwise, were developed and implemented.

The theological doctrines of extremist groups in Egypt will be defined through an examination of two categories of published primary sources. The first category will consist of the books, pamphlets, manifestos and press interviews of the leaders and ideologues from the violent extremist groups that emerged in Egypt from the early 1950s to the late 1990s. This category of primary source material will include literature such as Sayyid Qutb's *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Milestones), Muhammad Abdul Salam Faraj's *Al Faridah al-Gha'iba* (The Neglected Obligation), and Ayman al-Zawahiri's *Fursan Tahta Liwa' al-Naby* (Knights Under the Prophet's Banner). Through an analysis of extremist discourse, supplemented by an examination of Islamic sources including the Qur'an and *Hadith* (Prophetic Tradition), this thesis will define and explain the theological doctrines developed by radical groups in Egypt, define the reasoning behind these doctrines and explain how and to what extent the development of these doctrines were shaped by the historical context in which they emerged.

1974 by the Islamic Liberation Organization, and the assassination of Sadat in 1981 by the Islamic Jihad.

The second category will consist of books, memoirs and other publications of leaders and members of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement and more moderate Egyptian Islamists.³⁰ This will include publications such as Omar al-Tilimisani's book *Dhikriyat la Mudhakkarat* (Notes not a Memoir), Hasan al-Hudaybi's monograph *Du'at la Qudat* (Preachers not Judges) and Jabir Rizq's firsthand account of the torture endured by himself and his cellmates in *Madhabih al-Ikhwān fi Sujun Nasser* (The Massacres of the Muslim Brothers in Nasser's Prisons). As Barbara Zollner has pointed out: "The Brotherhood was, and remains caught between divergent sentiments: between acceptance and rejection of Qutbian thought." Leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood such as al-Tilmisani and al-Hudaybi adopted a moderate stance and engaged in debates with militants, attempting to discredit their extremist theological doctrines.³¹ As men who witnessed the emergence of militant thought in Nasser's prisons first-hand, their literature provides valuable insight into the causes and thought processes that resulted in the production of militant theology.

Acts of terrorism by Muslim extremists in modern Egypt can be attributed to five *jama'at*, or organizations, all of which have come to attention through major acts of terrorism, and emerged at different stages in Egypt's history: *al-Jihad al-Islami* (The Islamic Jihad), *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* (the Islamic Group) *al-Takfir wal Hijra* (Excommunication and Exodus), *Jam'at al-Faniyyah al-'Askariyyah* (The Technical Military Group) and *al-Najuna min al-Nar* (The Survivors from Hellfire). Extremist theological doctrines among Egyptian militant groups were not wholly and

³⁰This will not include works from Azhari scholars and other "official" *Ulama* whose unquestioning support of the state following Nasser's nationalization of the religious intelligentsia do not reflect true Islamist tendencies.

axiomatically based on a static set of doctrines, and radical theology appears to have gone through several stages of development. For instance, acts of violence by extremist groups in the 1950s and 1960s exclusively targeted the Egyptian state. In the late 1970s, radical *jama'at* began targeting members of the official '*Ulama* (religious intelligentsia) in addition to the state.³² During the late 1980s, attacks against Egyptian civilians began to occur, and beginning in the early 1990s, Egyptian extremists began attacking tourists.³³ Based on this pattern, it would appear that radical theology has evolved and adapted to legitimize the use of violence against varying targets, and that the evolution of extremist theology was shaped largely by the historical context in which it developed. Furthermore, the theological doctrines of these extremist groups were not uniform, and marked ideological and theological differences existed between the various militant groups. Progressing in a linear and chronological fashion, this thesis will begin by analyzing the earliest discourse of Egyptian extremists and will progress chronologically, examining the discourse of subsequent extremist groups to determine how extremist theology evolved and developed from its exclusive targeting of the Egyptian state in the mid 1950s, to the targeting of Western tourists and Egyptian civilians in early to late 1990s.

³¹For instance, al-Hudaybi argued that the extremist instrument of *takfir* (excommunication) has no basis in Islamic legal theory, and that it is not permissible to declare apostasy on someone who claims to be a Muslim.

³²For instance, the Excommunication and Exodus (Takfir Wal Hijra) group kidnapped and murdered Muhammad al-Dhahabi, an official clergyman in 1977.

³³In 1987, the Survivors from Hellfire attempted to assassinate an Egyptian newspaper editor. The first attack against Western tourists took place in 1992, when gunmen opened fire on a Nile cruiser carrying 140 German tourists. Over two dozen attacks on tourists have taken place in Egypt since then.

Chapter Two: The Theological Dimension of Extremism

On December 14, 1981, roughly two months after the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, the Cairo newspaper *al-Ahrar* proudly announced: “*Al-Ahrar* exclusively publishes the complete text of the constitution of terrorism: *al-Faridah al-Gha'iba*.”¹ *Al-Faridah al-Gha'iba*, which literally translates as “The Neglected Obligation,” - that is, the obligation of *qital* (fighting), one of the various dimensions of the Islamic duty of *jihād* (struggle in the way of God) - was authored by a certain Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj, the leader (*amir*) and chief ideologue of *al-Jihad al-Islami* (The Islamic Jihad), the organization responsible for Sadat’s murder. At the time of *al-Ahrar*’s publication of the document, Faraj awaited trial at the Tura Liman prison on the outskirts of Cairo. The version of *al-Faridah* that appeared in *al-Ahrar* is believed to have been based on a copy in the possession of Faraj’s lawyer.² A Jordanian reprint of the document would appear after the execution of Faraj, containing a preface that called its author a *shahid* (martyr). A third version of *al-Faridah*, believed to be the most accurate, would be published by the Egyptian Ministry of *Awqaf* in 1983.³

As Faraj himself, together with the four actual assassins, stood on trial for Sadat’s murder, the publication of the document by *al-Ahrar* provided the Egyptian public with a detailed outlining of the *Weltanschauung* of *al-Jihad al-Islami*, a group whose doctrine and actions arguably represent the climax of extremism in modern Egypt. The core thesis of *al-Faridah* left nothing to ambiguity, obstinately asserting that Egypt was being ruled by an illegitimate government of infidels, and that it was not only the duty, but the

¹ J.G.G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat’s Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East*, (New York: Macmillan, 1986)*al-Ahrar*, (December 14, 1981), p. 2.

² *Ibid.*

³ The version used in this study is the *Awqaf* version, as it is believed to be the most accurate.

religious obligation of all true Muslims to overthrow this government by violent force. In its place, Faraj argued, an Islamic state ruled by a Caliphate and governed strictly by *Shari'ah* law must be erected.

Although this document was little more than a foolish call to arms against the Egyptian regime, and a self-justification for the murder of the Egyptian President, there is evidence that the ideas expressed in *al-Faridah* enjoyed a certain level of sympathy from the Egyptian public. The editors of the leftist *al-Ahrar* preceded the publication of the document with a lengthy deposition, gravely warning its readers of the dangerous nature of Faraj's ideas, a warning that would have not been necessary, had the document represented little more than the banter of an esoteric and harmless fringe. J.G.G. Jansen notes that the Egyptian weekly periodical *al-Liwa' al-Islami* "From the very beginning its successive issues contained allusions to the contents of the Faridah," and "on February 25, 1982 we read an explicit discussion of the Faridah and its theories which was to be continued in the following numbers of the weekly."⁴ According to Jansen, the author of *al-Faridah* and his method of argument "seems especially to have severely shocked and deeply impressed the Egyptian Muslim readers of the pamphlet," including many "moderate Muslims."⁵ Perhaps the most compelling evidence of public sympathy towards the contents of *al-Faridah* is the fact that Shaykh Jadd al-Haqq, none other than the official *Mufti* of Egypt at the time, felt compelled to issue an official refutation of the document shortly after its publication, actions that would have not been necessary had Faraj's ideas not been taken seriously.⁶

⁴ J.G.G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty*, p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶ Muhammad Ma'tuq, "Egypt's Mufti Replies to the Booklet, 'The Neglected Obligation,'" *Al-Majallah* vol. 2 no. 97 (December 19, 1981), p. 14. Shaykh Jadd al Haqq Ali Jadd, "The Mufti's Reply to

The fact that a document as radical and belligerent as *al-Faridah* could enjoy the sympathy of a large number of Egyptians, including many “moderates,” may present the temptation to make certain inferences regarding the political sensibilities of Egypt’s masses. However, a careful examination of the actual contents of the document, and of Faraj’s methods of argument, helps clarify precisely why Faraj’s ideas were not only taken seriously, but also appear to have impressed its Egyptian readers.

As a group that was clearly responding to very specific political circumstances, and trying to achieve clearly outlined political goals, one might expect the doctrine of *al-Jihad al-Islami* to consist of an indictment of the Egyptian regime, an outlining of the problems with contemporary Egyptian politics and society, and an argument as to how they possess the solutions. Rather, Faraj begins his work with the prayers that are customary before Friday sermons and religious congregations:

Glory be to God. We praise Him, we ask for His help, we ask Him to forgive us, we ask Him to give us guidance. We seek protection from God against the wickedness of our souls and against the evilness of our acts. If God sends someone on the right path, no one can send him astray. If God sends someone astray, no one can guide him. I bear witness that there is no god but God, and I acknowledge that Muhammad is his Messenger. The most reliable speech is the book of God and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad, peace be upon him.⁷

What follows throughout the pages of *al-Faridah al-Gha’iba* is quotation upon quotation from the Qur’an, *Hadith* (Islamic Tradition), and the works of famous Muslim scholars and jurists, followed by Faraj’s commentary on the meaning and implications of these

the Book: The Absent Obligation,” in *Redefining Community in the Middle East: Old Answers to New Problems*, Center for the Study of the Modern Arab World, (Beirut: Dar al-Mashreq Publications, 1981). The Mufti’s original refutation was published in *al-Ahram*, in August, 1981.

⁷ Muhammad Abd al-Salaam Faraj, *al-Faridah al-Gha’iba*, (Cairo: 1983), p. 1.

quotations. In a work of only thirty-one pages⁸, Faraj quotes sixty-two *Hadith*, cites fifty-three verses from the Qur'an, and makes fifty-six lengthy references to the works of iconic Islamic scholars, such as Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i, and Ibn Taymiyya, making citations of religious sources the overwhelming bulk of the pamphlet.⁹ Neither Sadat, nor any other contemporary political figures, were specifically mentioned even once by name.¹⁰

Faraj's core argument, that the government of Egypt was illegitimate, and that it was the religious obligation of all Muslims to go to war against the Egyptian state, was based entirely on theological reasoning and was constructed through interpretations of Islamic sources that would have been very persuasive to the committed Muslim not trained in the nuances of Islamic juristic methodology. Faraj had not been appealing to the political, economic, or social grievances of Egyptians, but had been appealing to their sense of faith and religious obligation. A devout Muslim reading this document would likely find nothing but religious sincerity, an impressive knowledge of Islamic sources, and a compelling case as to theological validity of Faraj's arguments. Although *al-Faridah* was clearly formulated within the context of specific political circumstances in Egypt, and set out to accomplish political goals that were very clearly outlined, the document itself was not a political work, nor an ideological manifesto. In essence, *al-Faridah* was a work of theology, more precisely, a work of *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence).

As an example of extremist thought *par excellence*, *al-Faridah* and its contents are only one instance of several documents that provide compelling evidence of the

⁸ This is the number of pages in the official version published by the Ministry of Awqaf.

⁹ These numbers for quotes are from my own personal counting Faraj's references throughout the document. The majority of these quotes were of Ibn Taymiyyah. Interestingly, Faraj quotes all four of the Imams of the four major *madhahib* frequently.

importance of theological thought as a crucial component of the broader process that creates the production of extremist discourse. The purpose of this chapter is to delineate the mechanics of this broader process, and explain the importance of the theology as a crucial component of that process.

Egypt's extremist thinkers were men who came from the Islamist camp, with regard to their political and social worldview. Understanding the values and worldview of Egypt's extremist thinkers is a crucial component of any explanation of the development of their ideologies. The first part of this chapter will explore the fundamentals of the Islamist worldview, the foundation of Islamic epistemology and the role of theology in the formation of knowledge and law. Although Egypt's militants were Islamists, the theological doctrines of Egypt's extremists fall far outside of normative Islamic teachings and are outside of mainstream Islamist thought. The second part of this chapter will explain the basics of Islamic jurisprudential thought, in order to show how militants were able to develop their radical doctrines within the framework of juridical-religious sources and methodology. The third part of this chapter will define the radicalized doctrines of *jahiliyyah* (ignorance), *takfir* (excommunication), and *jihad* (struggle), three classical Islamic concepts which were radicalized by extremists and became the nucleus of militant thought and the justification for subsequent acts of violence. Finally, this chapter will unravel the mechanics of the broader process through which extremist discourse is produced, and explain how theological thought fits into this process. Militant extremism is the product of a complex and dynamic process involving many inter-related factors that can include political, social, economic, intellectual, and religious reasons. In the case of 20th century Egypt, this complex process can be defined as a process where specific

¹⁰ They were, however, implied and alluded to.

political, social, economic, or other grievances were addressed and deliberated, inside the conceptual, ontological and epistemological context of classical Islamic theology, and the Islamist worldview. Subsequently, the perceived solutions to these grievances were hashed out within the methodological framework of classical Islamic juridical-religious thought. The result of this process was the production of discourse that is theological in origin, formulation, development, methodology and articulation. Before proceeding to explain how this process began to unfold in 20th century Egypt, the inner workings of the process itself must be defined. To clarify the mechanics of this process, the final section of this chapter will draw upon the example of the *Khawarij*, an extremist faction that emerged in the 7th century C.E. splitting into several sub-factions, a number of which engaged in acts of indiscriminate violence and terrorism. The emergence of the *Khawarij* and the development of their theological thought are strikingly similar to that of 20th century Egyptian militants, making their history an excellent frame of reference.

The Islamist Worldview and its Epistemological Parameters

It is widely acknowledged that although militant thought falls outside of normative Islamic teachings, 20th century Muslim extremist thought can be defined as an aberrant derivative of political Islamism. Egypt's militant thinkers were Islamists, who developed their ideas within the general parameters of the Islamist understanding of epistemology, law, governance, politics and society. In other words, militant extremist thought is the intellectual descendent of the Islamist political and social worldview. By virtue of the fact that the political and intellectual origins of militant extremist thought can be traced to Islamism, a proper enquiry into the theological dimension of extremism must situate and

contextualize the role and importance of Islamic theology within mainstream Islamist thought, and the Islamist worldview.

It is crucial to recognize that for Islamists, Islam is not merely a religion and Islamic theology is not merely a system of theological thought.¹¹ For most Islamists, Islam is recognized as a system of *shumul*,¹² a comprehensive and all-encompassing system, designed to govern all dimensions of human existence on earth. This includes the political dimension, by defining the framework of governance and rules for conduct of the state; the legal dimension, by providing the source of all levels of law and juristic reasoning and legal enforcement; and the social and moral dimensions, by dictating the acceptable moral conduct of the human being and acceptable social norms.

The tenets, characteristics, and structure of this all-encompassing system are deduced entirely through the study of primary religious texts, which are believed to possess the quality of *wahy* (divine revelation), containing knowledge and wisdom that greatly supersedes human reasoning or man-made legislation. This system is predicated on the concept of Divine Unity, a systemic unity of the universe in all of its various manifestations. God singularly defines the premise of creation and determines the functioning of world systems through the process of the divine laws that are provided in the Qur'an for comprehension and application by mankind. In this sense, the Islamic worldview is predicated upon epistemological and ontological categories that are supra-rational. The Islamic worldview is thereby, "the comprehensive and universalizing, overarching and complementing design of reality that is premised on the epistemology of Divine Unity and is

¹¹ It is recognized that there are many shades of Islamism. However, certain ideas are universally accepted, including *shumul*.

evolved into intellection through the process-orientation model of unification of the of knowledge in world-systems as derived from the primal source of Divine Unity.”¹³ It is based on this worldview, and within the epistemological framework of this all-encompassing system, a system defined by theology and religious texts, that the Egyptian militants of the 20th century would develop and articulate their thought.

Within this all-encompassing system, human conduct and political and social systems are approbated through religious legal sanctioning. From a juristic perspective, Islamic religious texts are the fundamental sources of Islamic epistemology, and, subsequently, these texts are used to create the legal norms, obligations, and prohibitions of the Islamic state and society. In the Islamist political system, the legitimacy and conduct of the state, the development, implementation, and enforcement of law, and the acceptable moral behavior of individual human beings, as well as all other dimensions of existence such as political economy and international relations, are determined through the practice of *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence). *Fiqh*, which literally translates as “deep understanding” or “full comprehension,” can be defined as the process of deducing law, governmental structure, and all other aspects of affairs related to the management of human life from these religious texts. Because of the polysemous, and sometimes conflicting messages contained in these religious sources, the Muslim community (*ummah*) has, over the centuries, developed the complex and intricate discipline of *‘Ilm Usul al-Fiqh*, or the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence, a methodological framework within which the parameters of juridical-religious reasoning and epistemology are to be deduced.

¹² The Islamic concept of *shumul* is discussed in detail in Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, *Religion and Politics: Foundations and Repudiation of False Allegations*, (Dublin: European Council for Fatwa and Research, 2007).

The supreme source of Islamic jurisprudence is the Qur'an, which is, to Muslims, the verbatim word of God, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, and contains God's Divine Laws and commandments to mankind. The Qur'an is believed to have been preserved in its original form and language, exactly as it was revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad, and, as such, the authenticity of its contents cannot be questioned, making it the supreme source of Divine Law. Secondary to the Qur'an is the *Hadith*, used interchangeably with the word *Sunnah*, which can be defined as records of the Prophet Muhammad's words, actions, prescriptions and prohibitions. Unlike the Qur'an, the authenticity of *Hadith*, which were compiled after Muhammad's death and have been subject to extensive forgery and fabrication, are subject to scrutiny. Although the *Hadith* is secondary in importance to the Qur'an, it has provided the bulk of the material from which most Islamic laws have been derived.¹⁴ Through these religious sources, the legal norms, moral obligations, prescriptions, and prohibitions that define the framework of this all-encompassing system are deduced. Finally, the discipline of Islamic jurisprudence has developed the sanctioning instrument of *ijma'* (consensus), whereby the leading jurists of the Muslim community reach a consensus on a technical legal ruling, rendering it conclusive, and epistemologically certain.¹⁵

Within this hierarchy of epistemic sources, there are evolutionary stages of knowledge formation, beginning first with the Divine Laws of the Qur'an, which are interpreted in light of the *Hadith*, and applied to the specific circumstances of world-systems such as law, governance, and politics through *ijtihad* (reasoning), and *fiqh* (jurisprudence).

¹³ Masadul Alam Choudhury, *The Islamic Worldview: Socio-Scientific Perspectives*, (New York: Kegan Paul International, 2000), p. 9.

¹⁴ See Wael B. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-81.

This is supplemented by *ijma'* (consensus) among Islamic religious scholars on certain legal interpretations.

It is important to note that the formulation of Islamic Law has been a constantly evolving process that has been defined by changing historical circumstances. In other words, there is no definitive, collective body of Islamic Law. Thus, Islamic Law is not, and never has been set in stone, and is in no way reducible to a monolithic set of doctrines devoid of any influence from historical circumstances. Historically, Islamic Law has been evolving, and continues to evolve to adapt to changing global circumstances and realities. Indeed, changing global realities often demand new interpretations and re-assessments of widely-held juristic rulings. In this sense, there is always an opening for new interpretations, and it is through this opening that extremist theology is germinated.

The polysemous nature of the Qur'an, and the polysemantic nature of the Arabic language, combined with frequent conflicts between different messages expressed in the Qur'an and those expressed in *Hadith*, make it virtually impossible to form a universal and monolithic body of Islamic law that is uniform in all aspects. The verses of the Qur'an that contain legal content can be categorized into the definitive (*qat'i*), and the speculative (*zanni*). The definitive verses are those which are expressed in clear, specific language, have only one meaning, and are not open to different interpretations. Examples of definitive legal verses are "The adulterer, whether a man or a woman, flog them each one hundred stripes,"¹⁶ or "those who accuse chaste women of adultery and fail to bring four witnesses (to prove it), flog them eighty stripes."¹⁷ The quantitative elements of these verses, namely

¹⁶ *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*, translated by Saheeh International, (Jeddah: Abul Qasim Publishing House, 1997), 2:196.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24:4.

“one hundred stripes,” and “eighty stripes,” are unequivocal, and thus not open to interpretation.¹⁸

Speculative legal verses are expressed in polysemantic language and are open to a wide variety of interpretations. For instance, in the Qur’anic chapter *Surat al-Ma’ida*, verse 33, the Qur’an outlines the penalty to be levied against those who commit the crime of *hirabah*, a polysemantic term that can be interpreted to mean either highway robbery, or alternately, waging war on the community and its legitimate leadership: “The punishment of those who wage war against God and His Messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is that they should be killed or crucified or their hands and feet should be cut off on opposite sides, or they should be banished from the earth.”¹⁹ Here, confusion arises because of the provision of three different penalties for the crime. It is not clearly stated which of these three penalties is to be applied to the offender, leaving this verse open to a wide range of interpretations. The majority of Muslim jurists uphold that if the criminal commits both killing and robbery, the penalty is execution, when he commits robbery only, the penalty is mutilation of the hands and feet, and when neither robbery, nor murder is committed the punishment is exile.

Within this same verse, confusion even arises on the meaning of the statement “banished from the earth” (*yunfaw min al-ard*). The term “banishment” (*nafy*) in this verse, is usually interpreted by jurists to mean exile from the place in which the offence is committed. However, Hanafi jurists argue that one cannot be “banished from the face of the earth” by any method other than death and that because death and exile are two different penalties, *nafy* must be taken to mean imprisonment. Hanafi jurists further argue that if the

¹⁸ See Mohammad Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1991), p. 21.

offender is merely expelled from one territory to another, harm is not likely to be prevented as the offender may commit further offences. As such, the Hanafis argue that the phrase *Nafy* means imprisonment and not exile, while the Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali jurists maintain the literal interpretation of *Nafy* as exile.²⁰

The above is only one example of the vast complexities involved in deriving legal rulings from the Qur'an. In many cases, the scope of disagreement between Muslim jurists over the interpretation of the Qur'an is vast. Mahmud Shaltut notes that, at times, seven or eight different juristic conclusions can be reached on the same issue.²¹

Muslim jurists and modern scholars are in agreement that the Qur'an contains some 500 verses with legal content.²² Because the majority of these legal verses are of the speculative (*zanni*) variety, an almost infinite combination of various interpretations is possible. The same problematic of interpreting the legal content of the Qur'an can be applied to the *Hadith*, many of which are allegorical and can have multiple implications, and are interpreted in a variety of ways. The speculative verses of the Qur'an, and allegorical *Hadith* provide a crucial pivot through which militant doctrines can be formulated. The diversity of opinion within the realm of Islamic Jurisprudence allows militants to choose the views that are most amenable to their political propensities, while the acceptance and permissibility of different interpretations, allow militants to purport a sense of religious authority to their own interpretations.

¹⁹ *Qur'an*, 5:33.

²⁰ Mohammad Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, pp. 22-28.

²¹ Mahmud Shaltut, *Aqidaha wa-Shari'ah*, (Kuwait:Matabi' Dar al-Qalam, 1966), pp. 499-500.

²² Wael Hallaq, *Islamic Legal Theories*, p. 3.

Jahiliyyah, Takfir, and Jihad: Normative and Extremist Interpretations

In the militant discourse of Egypt's 20th century extremists, the justification for the use of violence has been primarily based upon three radicalized doctrines, which are used variably in different examples of extremist discourse. These three doctrines, which are derived from classical Islamic teachings are as follows: 1. The religious obligation of *Jihad*, a profound term that encompasses many meanings, including, *inter alia*, military struggle, 2. The crime of *Ridda* (apostasy), which would later mutate into the arbitrary practice of *Takfir* (excommunication), and 3. The concept *Jahiliyyah* (ignorance), a Qur'anic term with a largely historical context, frequently used to describe the condition of the pagans of pre-Islamic Arabia. These three concepts are crucial to an understanding of the theology of militant extremism in 20th century Egypt. Virtually all militant arguments of 20th century Egyptian extremists that have justified, advocated, or encouraged the use of violence are predicated on one or more of these three concepts, and subsequent acts of violence are carried out under these pretenses.

The development, use, and manifestation of these three concepts into acts of political violence in 20th century Egypt – which will be discussed in the following chapters – are directly connected to the political, social, economic, and other grievances of Egyptian militants, their perceived solutions to these grievances, and the need to rationalize and justify the application of these perceived solutions within the epistemological and ontological framework of Islamic theological thought. This process is made possible only through the permissibility of different interpretations of Islamic sources within Islamic law, and through the multiple meanings that the legal content of these sources ostensibly provides. Because these three concepts are essentially radicalized re-interpretations of

classical Islamic doctrines, it is important to define the normative interpretation of these doctrines, in order to clearly show how these concepts are twisted to suit political purposes.

Jahiliyyah is a complex term that encompasses both a meaning and a referent. In other words, *jahiliyyah* subsumes two meanings, the Arabic lexical meaning, and the Islamic conceptual meaning which was shaped largely by the early history of Islam and embodies certain connotative qualities. The term *jahiliyyah* is an abstract noun that derives from the Arabic root *jahl* (ignorance), the antithesis of knowledge (*ilm*). Edward Lane lists some of its various meanings as “foolishness, wrong conduct... pride, arrogance, obscenity, abusiveness, stupidity, impudence, profligacy, neglecting the truth, or the right, or working to ruin the truth.”²³ In its traditional Arabic meaning *jahiliyyah* connotes a human condition, although it also encompasses adjectival meanings such as ‘*jahili* people,’ ‘*jahili* society,’ ‘*jahili* system,’ and ‘*jahili* behavior.’²⁴

The Islamic concept of *jahiliyyah*, which has its own unique meaning, is rooted both in the Qur’an and in the early history of Islam. For Muslims, the Qur’an “established a new system of life. It corrected the contradictions of a pre-Islamic world where thought, belief, and conceptions regarding political, economic, social, intellectual and moral spheres were in error.”²⁵ Among these new conceptions was the Qur’anic concept of Sovereignty (*Hakimiyyah*), a new system of government in which God, and not man, is recognized as the sole sovereign over earth. God must be recognized as the supreme ruler of earth, and all political systems and governments must submit to God’s sovereignty by implementing His Laws. Politics and governance in the Islamic worldview thus divides

²³ Edward W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 477.

²⁴ Syed Khatab, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb*, p. 16.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

the world into two binary opposites struggling for control of the future: Islam, which recognizes and implements God's sovereignty over earth, and *jahiliyyah*, which violates and rejects it.

In an historical context, *jahiliyyah* also developed profound meanings as the term used to describe the condition of the pre-Islamic, Arab pagans. In pre-Islamic times, the people of Arabia were polytheistic idol worshippers, whose society was characterized by barbarism, chaos, moral vice, and constant tribal warfare.²⁶ While preaching their message of Islam to the *jahili* pagans of Mecca, Muhammad and his small group of followers were severely persecuted, tortured, and killed, forcing them to flee Mecca and undertake a *Hijra* (exodus), to the nearby city of Medina where they established the first ever Islamic state. It was in Medina that Qur'anic verses using the term *jahiliyyah* first appeared. The word *jahiliyyah* appears in the Qur'anic chapters 3, 5, 33, and 48, chapters which scholars unanimously agree were revealed in Medina. At a time when an Islamic state was established, the term *jahiliyyah* was used to distinguish and separate the characteristics of the community of believers from their *jahili* counterparts. In this sense, the Islamic meaning of *jahiliyyah* can be defined as the antithesis of sovereignty (*Hakimiyyah*), a religio-political concept oppositional to the Islamic constitution, state and laws.²⁷ Furthermore, the meaning of *jahiliyyah* is also an essential part of the collective memory of Muslims, and is used to define a specific period in history, which evokes powerful and profound meanings of the barbarism, oppression, injustice and

²⁶ For a summary of the condition and customs of pre-Islamic Arabia see Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), and Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies 2nd ed.*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 3-15.

²⁷ Syed Khatab, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb*, p. 32.

cruelty of the pre-Islamic pagan Arabs and the persecution of Muslims by the enemies of God.

In the centuries following the victory of the Muslims over the Meccan pagans and the expansion of the Islamic Empire, *jahiliyyah* would come to be understood largely in an historical context, symbolizing the condition of the pre-Islamic pagan Arabs, and their enmity towards Islam. Although kingdoms and societies outside the Abode of Islam (*dar al-Islam*), were seen to be steeped in *jahiliyyah*, this term was not applied to Muslim rulers or societies ruled by Muslims. It was not until the publication of Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones*, that the term would be used to describe Muslim rulers and societies.

In *Milestones*, Sayyid Qutb described the state of Egyptian society in the following manner: “We are surrounded by *jahiliyyah* today, which is of the same nature as it was during the first period of Islam, perhaps a little deeper. Our whole environment, people's beliefs and ideas, habits and art, rules and laws – is *jahiliyyah* even to the extent that what we consider to be Islamic culture, Islamic sources, Islamic philosophy, and Islamic thought are also constructs of *jahiliyyah*.”²⁸ The Qutbian definition of *jahiliyyah*, which became the foundation of militant extremist thought, had made a groundbreaking ideological innovation. For previous Islamic thinkers, labeling a society that was populated and ruled by Muslims as a society of *jahiliyyah* was unthinkable. Whereas previous Muslim thinkers understood *jahiliyyah* in a largely historical context, Qutb not only insisted that it was a contemporary reality but also that it defined the condition of Egypt, a country populated by practicing Muslims and ruled by leaders who professed their faith in Islam.²⁹ According to Qutb “the whole world is steeped in *jahiliyyah*... this *jahiliyyah* is based on rebellion against God's

²⁸ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 20.

sovereignty (*hakimiyyah*) on earth. It transfers to man one of the greatest attributes of God, namely sovereignty and makes some men lords over others.”³⁰

Qutb’s concept of contemporary *jahiliyyah* was derived from an extreme literalist interpretation of Qur’anic verses asserting the sovereignty of God over earth: “Unbelievers are those who do not judge in accordance with Allah’s revelations... Transgressors are those who do not judge in accordance with Allah’s revelations... Evil-doers are those who do not base their judgments on Allah’s revelations.”³¹ Qutb interpreted “judging according to what God has revealed,” to mean one thing and one thing only: the application of *Shari’ah* law. Because Egypt’s leaders did not rule according to the *Shari’ah*, they could be seen as unbelievers, transgressors, and evil-doers: “any place where the Islamic *Shari’ah* is not enforced and where Islam is not dominant, becomes the home of hostility (*dar-al-Harb*)... A Muslim will remain prepared to fight against it.”³² In this sense, the application of *Shari’ah* law became the sole criterion for the legitimacy of the state, and the sole characteristic that separates a *jahili* regime from a legitimate one. This innovation served two primary purposes. First, it delegitimized the Egyptian regime on the basis that it did not rule according to *Shari’ah* law. Secondly, it assigned the powerful label of *jahiliyyah*, with all of its connotations of barbarism, cruelty, oppression, injustice and enmity towards Islam, upon the contemporary Egyptian state and society.

By arguing that Egypt was not at all an Islamic state or society but one of *jahiliyyah*, and by accusing Egypt’s rulers of violating God’s sovereignty over earth, Qutb opened the

²⁹ In addition to *Milestones*, a detailed discussion of the theory of contemporary *jahiliyyah* can be found in Muhammad Qutb, *The Jahiliyyah of the 20th Century*, (Cairo: Maktabet Wahba, 1964).

³⁰ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 15.

³¹ *Qur’an*. 5: 44-46.

door for the development of *takfir* (excommunication), an instrument of militant thought corollary to the Qutbian concept of *jahiliyyah*. Because of the antithetical and conflicting relationship between Islam and *jahiliyyah*, later militants were able to reason that a *jahil*, by definition, could not also be a true Muslim. The Qutbian definition of *jahiliyyah* allowed later militants to arbitrarily declare *takfir* (excommunication from Islam) upon anyone they perceived to be a *jahil*, which, according to Qutb's definition, could be applied to the Egyptian state and society in its entirety.

The militant instrument of *takfir* was derived from pre-existing Islamic jurisprudential rulings on the crime of apostasy (*irtidad*). Under orthodox Islamic Law, the crime of apostasy has traditionally been interpreted to be a capital offense, punishable by execution.³³ While there are differing interpretations within the Islamic schools of thought as to what constitutes *irtidad*, Islamic law generally requires extremely stringent evidence to pass the judgment of *takfir*, often requiring an Islamic court or *alim* to pass a *fatwa* or decree of *takfir* against an individual or group.³⁴ Historically, charges of *takfir* have been extremely rare and only made in extremely egregious instances such as the case of Musaylama of the Banu Hanifa tribe, who declared himself to be a prophet during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr, resulting in the Ridda Wars.³⁵ In normative Islamic law the judgment of *takfir* can only be declared upon a person, if that person openly declares ,that

³² Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 233.

³³ This has been the consensus among the four major schools of Islamic jurisprudence. See Abdul Qadir 'Ouda, *Al-Tashri' al-Jina'iy al-Islami muqaaranan bil Qanun al-wad'i*, vol. 2. (Beirut: Dar Alkutub al-Araby, n.d.), pp. 720-721. However, the theological argument that *irtidad* is a capital offense has been rejected and refuted repeatedly by scholars throughout Islamic history including Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh, and Rashid Reda. See Taha Jabir al-'Alwani, *La Ikraha fil Din*, (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2006), p. 33.

³⁴ For example, in contrast to the Maliki, Shafi', and Hanbali schools, the Hanafi school of thought maintains that only men and not women should not be punished by death for the crime of *irtidad*. Abdul Qadir 'Ouda, *Al-Tashri'*, p. 721.

they are no longer a Muslim, or openly joins forces with the enemy during a time when the Muslim *ummah* is under attack.³⁶ However, militant extremists would develop *takfir* into a tool that could be used to arbitrarily label rulers, government officials, and even civilians as apostates, and thus subject to the penalty of death, thereby theologically justifying various acts of terrorism.

Finally, having developed theological interpretations that accused Egypt's rulers of being apostates and defining Egyptian society as being in a state of *jahiliyyah*, militant extremists were able to develop their own interpretation of *jihad*, and its applicability in a contemporary context. The Islamic obligation of *jihad* (struggle in the way of God) is one of the more profound and complex Islamic concepts, with an intricate meaning that overarches military, social, and moral affairs. The Prophet Muhammad taught that there are two dimensions of *jihad*. The "greater *jihad*" (*jihad al-akbar*), was described as the internal self-struggle within the human being to attain piety and to fight against urges to commit evil or immoral acts. The Prophet taught that this form of *jihad*, was much more important than the "lesser *jihad*" (*jihad al-asghar*), which includes, among many other components, the military struggle by Muslims collectively seeking to defend the religion or community.³⁷ In this sense, military *jihad* is only one of many aspects of the "lesser *jihad*," and must be conducted only under the moral aegis of the "greater *jihad*."

³⁵ For details on the Ridda wars see P.M. Holt, ed., *The Cambridge History of Islam*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), vol. 1, p. 58, and M.J. Kister, "The Struggle Against Musaylima and the Conquest of Yamama," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, no. 27, (2002), pp. 1-56.

³⁶ For Muslim literature on the development of the law of apostasy in Islam see Mahmud Shaltut, *al-Islam Aqida wa Shari'ah*, 14th ed., (Beirut/Cairo: Dar al-Qalam, 1988), p. 280. See also, Frank Griffel, "Toleration and Exclusion: al-Shafi'i and al-Ghazali on the Treatment of Apostates," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, vol. 64, no. 3 (2003), pp. 339-354.

³⁷ See Bernard K. Freamon, "Martyrdom, Suicide, and The Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History," *Fordham International Law Journal*, vol. 27 (2003): pp. 299-369.

Military *jihad* is the subject of a vast body of Islamic law, which has, throughout history, authorized war and armed struggle in a variety of circumstances and defined the acceptable conduct of war. The normative authorization of *jihad* is found in the Qur’anic verses: “To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged, and verily, Allah is Most Powerful for their aid. They are those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right for no cause except that they say, ‘Our Lord is Allah.’”³⁸ Through these verses, jurists have ruled that if Islam or Muslim communities are threatened or attacked, Muslims are obligated to defend their religion and *ummah*. This form of military *jihad*, defined by the collective right to self-defense, is the normative form of war in Islamic law. The unanimous consensus (*ijma’*) among Muslim jurists is that military *jihad* is a collective religious obligation for Muslims when the Muslim community is under attack, or when the *ummah* is under severe oppression from a foreign occupier.³⁹ However, a series of other Qur’anic verses and *Hadith* dealing with the subject of *jihad* open the possibility for various interpretations of the cases in which the use of violence is permitted, including interpretations justifying *jihad* against illegitimate and oppressive rulers.⁴⁰ Furthermore, these interpretations are developed and applied in light of contemporary circumstances, adding a new dimension of complexity to the issue.

The militant interpretations of *jahiliyyah* and *takfir* provided a new foundation through which the contemporary applicability of military *jihad* could be interpreted. According to Qutbian *jahiliyyah* theory, rulers who claimed to be Muslims but did not implement *Shari’ah* law could be deemed apostates, evil-doers, and transgressors. By

³⁸ *Qur’an*, 22:39-40.

³⁹ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Jihad*, vol. 2, (Cairo: Markaz al-Qaradawi lil Wasatiyyah al-Islamiyyah wal Tajdid, n.d.), p. 232.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

defining Egypt as a regime ruled by apostates and evil doers, militants were able to reason that the Muslim community was under oppression from tyrannical rulers, and that a military *jihad* to liberate the *ummah* from this oppression was the collective obligation of all Muslims. It was through the combination of the openness of interpretation and use of speculative verses in the Qur'an, allegorical *Hadith*, and even literal anachronistic interpretations of the rulings of respected Islamic jurists, that militants like Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj were able to build the case that Muslims were obligated to undertake military *jihad* against the state.

Collectively, the militant interpretations of *jahiliyyah*, *tafkir*, and *jihad*, formed the nucleus of militant thought. Although these were theological rather than ideological doctrines, they did not develop *ex nihilo* and were shaped by the historical circumstances under which they emerged. Earlier in this chapter, it was argued that extremist discourse is the product of a complex process where political, social, economic, or other grievances, and the perceived solutions to these grievances, are deliberated within the intellectual and conceptual context of the Islamist worldview, and the ontological and epistemological context of Islamic juridical-religious reasoning. Before proceeding to explain how this process began to unfold in modern Egypt, and dissecting the characteristics of the various phases in which it unfolded, an historical example can be used, to further define the mechanics of this process. This process is most clearly explainable using the example of the *Khawarij*, a faction of dissident Muslims that emerged during the 7th century C.E., later splitting into a number of sub-factions. Some of the sub-factions of the *Khawarij* resorted to extreme radicalism and engaged in acts of violence against the Islamic state and against innocent civilians, thus making the radical sub factions of the *Khawarij* the first militant

extremists in Islamic history. Although not directly related to extremism in the context of modern Egypt, the militant sub-factions of the *Khawarij* developed their thought, and carried out acts of violence through precisely the same process as the Egyptian militants of the 20th century, making their history an excellent frame of reference.

The Khawarij: Islamic History's First Extremists

Like the militants of 20th century Egypt, the radical factions of the *Khawarij* emerged at a time of political upheaval, and developed their ideas in response to intense political and socioeconomic grievances. During the Caliphate of Uthman (C.E. 644-656), the Muslim *ummah* had already expanded into a vast empire encompassing Arabia, Egypt, and the Fertile Crescent. With the Byzantine and Sassanian armies crushed, the Muslim empire remained on the offensive, fighting to bring Anatolia and the Iranian plateau under Islamic control. Enormous amounts of wealth generated from wartime booty, taxes, and tribute revenue flowed into the Medina, and the provincial capitals of Kufah, Basrah, Damascus and al-Fustat, and fell into the control of provincial governors. With the rudimentary administration that was established in the newly conquered territories, the Caliph lost control over his provincial governors, field commanders, and the proud tribal leaders who refused to submit to any form of government authority, resulting in an uneven allocation of the empire's growing wealth. As the Caliph struggled to discipline the governors of the *ummah*, a growing resentment emerged within the Muslim community over the benefits enjoyed by some of its members, and not by others. This resentment fostered an atmosphere of political tension that eventually degenerated into nearly a century of civil war within the Muslim community, resulting in the division of the Muslim *ummah* into a number of sects and

factions, and creating a host of conflicts and issues within the Muslim community that have not been resolved to this day.⁴¹

Following the assassination of Uthman and the accession of the fourth Caliph Ali, a struggle for the Caliphate ensued between Ali and Mu'awiya, the governor of Syria and a relative of Uthman. Although the origins of the *Khawarij* can arguably be traced to the time of the Prophet Muhammad⁴², their origin is usually traced to the Battle of Siffin, where the armies of Ali and Mu'awiyah met. When Ali, whose forces were on the verge of victory, agreed to end the battle through arbitration, a number of his men mutinied, rejecting both Ali and Mu'awiyah and rose up in arms to rid the Muslim community of both Mu'awiyah and Ali and to purportedly restore the rule of God to the *ummah*. These dissenters would form the collective faction of the *Khawarij*, which would later split into over twenty sub-factions.⁴³

As early as the Battle of Siffin, the *Khawarij* resorted to theology to express their political grievances. The spokesperson of the mutineers on this occasion, Urwa ibn Udayya, furious at Ali for agreeing to end the battle through arbitration, expressed his disapproval of Ali's decision by shouting: "Who are men to arbitrate the affairs of God? There can be no arbitration except by Allah."⁴⁴ To support his opinion, he cited the Qur'anic verse: "The prerogative of command rests with none other than Allah. He declares the truth and he is the best of judges."⁴⁵ Through this verse, the mutineers

⁴¹ For a complete account see Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, *The History of al-Tabari, vol. 17: The First Civil War*, translated by G.R. Hawting, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). This discussion was based on Hawting's Foreword, pp. xi-xxi.

⁴² Some of the known Khariji leaders who were present at the battle of Siffin, are recorded to have had an argument with the Prophet over the allocation of war booty.

⁴³ Al-Baghdadi counts 20 *Khariji* factions or subdivisions. Abdul Qahir al-Baghdadi, *al-Farq bayna al-Firqah*, (Cairo: 1910), p. 55.

⁴⁴ al-Tabari, *The First Civil War*, p. 98.

⁴⁵ *Qur'an*, 6:57.

reasoned that the battle itself was “an affair of God,” and that Ali was violating God’s command by agreeing to a peaceful arbitration rather than allowing God to decide the outcome of the battle.

There are two possible explanations for this. One explanation is that Ibn Udayya and his fellow mutineers, in all of their sincere religious piety, truly believed that Ali was violating the laws of God, and that Ali’s decision to end the Battle through arbitration was such a severe transgression that it warranted his excommunication from Islam and the overthrow of his Caliphate, by violent means if necessary. The more likely explanation is that the mutineers, the leaders of whom had a history of bitter political grievances⁴⁶, disapproved of Ali’s political leadership, and his handling of the conflict with Mu’awiyah, and deliberated these political grievances, and their perceived solutions to them within the epistemological framework of Islamic theological thought, thereby finding a way to theologically justify what they believed needed to be done.

The political and socioeconomic grievances of the *Khawarij* can be interpreted to be a product of their dissatisfaction with the political status quo, where provincial governors disobeyed the Caliph and hoarded the wealth that belonged to the *ummah* resulting in an unfair distribution of wealth throughout the empire. The primary political grievance of the *Khawarij* was against the political leadership of the Caliph Ali, who denied his forces victory at the Battle of Siffin, prohibited his men from capturing the women and children of Mu’awiyah’s side⁴⁷, and allowed the traitor Mu’awiyah to

⁴⁶ Many of who became the leaders of the *khawarij* had made many complaints about the allocation of wealth throughout the reign of the rightly guided caliphs, and some who were present at Siffin even complained to the Prophet Muhammad regarding war booty.

⁴⁷ During this period in history, captives of war were taken as slaves and concubines. The Khawarij later challenged Ali asking why he allowed them to take war booty, and not prisoners. Their specific challenge on the issue of prisoners and war booty was recorded in a debate between Ibn Abbas and a number of early Kharijites. See al-Tabari, *The First Civil War*, pp. 100-105.

escape and return to his position as governor of Syria, thus perpetuating the status quo. Their conclusion was that the Caliphate of Ali was illegitimate. Their perceived solution to these grievances was to overthrow the current Caliphate and replace it with a new Caliph, ostensibly, one from their own ranks. The only way that this goal could be achieved was through a violent overthrow of the state. The ambiguity of the Qur'anic verses asserting the sovereignty of God over earth allowed the *Khawarij* to develop theological interpretations that justified these means.

In their effort to defeat their political opponents, the more radical sub factions of the *Khawarij* engaged in acrobatic juridical-religious reasoning to lend a sense of religious authority and justification to their political actions, which in many cases, included the killing of innocent women and children. The theology of the radical factions of the *Khawarij* represents the first instance in Islamic history of an extreme and radical interpretation of *takfir*, and the subsequent manifestation of this doctrine into acts of violence. In their effort to defeat their political opponents, the *Khawarij* posed the following questions: is he who follows Ali and supports him a *kafir* (infidel) or a *mu'min* (believer)? Is he who follows Mu'awiya and supports him a *kafir* or a *mu'min*?⁴⁸ From these questions, the *Khawarij* reached the conclusion that Ali, Mu'awiya, and their followers and supporters were all 'grave sinners' and as such, could be classified as *kuffar* (infidels). From this conclusion, a broader and more theoretical question was posed: Is a man who has committed a grave sin still to be regarded as a *mu'min*, or is he by that very fact an outright *kafir*?⁴⁹ This question inevitably led to theological discussions regarding the distinction between belief and

⁴⁸ Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of Iman and Islam*, (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1965), p. 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 5.

unbelief. According to Toshihiko Izutsu, a leading authority on Islamic theology, the *Khawarij* gave an almost exclusive attention to the concept of *kufir*, or unbelief.⁵⁰

Citing Qur’anic verses out of context, and interpreting them outside of their normative meaning, the radical sub factions of the *Khawarij* were able to conclude that the Caliph Ali and his supporters, the governor Mu’awiyah and his supporters, the two arbiters at the Battle of Siffin, and all those who were satisfied with the arbitration were disbelieving infidels and apostates, subject to the penalty of death. Furthermore, it was the obligation of every true Muslim to revolt against the illegitimate ruler, through military *jihad*.

Conclusion

The extremism of 20th century Egyptian militants can be understood in terms of the unfolding of the radical sub-factions of the *Khawarij*. In fact, the similarities are striking.⁵¹ Just as the radical factions of the *Khawarij* delegitimized the Caliphate of Ali by accusing him of violating God’s sovereignty, Sayyid Qutb would delegitimize the Egyptian regime by accusing Nasser’s government of the same. Just as the radical factions of the *Khawarij* justified the assassination of Ali by accusing him of being an apostate, so too would Muhammad Abd al-Salaam Faraj’s *al-Jihad* group justify the murder of Sadat by accusing him of the same. Similarly, like the *Khawarij*, Egypt’s 20th century extremists would justify a military *jihad* against the state on the basis of its theological illegitimacy, and would justify the killing of civilians through the arbitrary practice of *takfir*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Use of the term “khawarij” appeared frequently in the discourse of Egypt’s official ‘ulama in their attempts to discredit the extremists. See Jeffrey Kenney, *Muslim Rebels: Kharijites and the Politics of Extremism in Egypt*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Like the violent sub-factions of the *Khawarij*, the emergence of Egyptian extremism began with an assortment of grievances. These grievances and the perceived solutions to these grievances were hashed out within the framework of Islamic theological thought, resulting in a violent extremism that was theological in the intellectual, developmental, and implementational stages. In 20th century Egypt, this process would unfold in three distinct phases, each with its own unique characteristics. The first and formative phase would begin to unfold in 1954, under Nasser's brutal persecution of Egypt's Islamists.

Chapter 3: Nasser's Torture Chambers and *Milestones*: The Birth of Militant Theology, 1954-1971

In 2002, American linguist and author Lawrence Wright wrote:

One line of thinking proposes that America's tragedy on September 11 was born in the prisons of Egypt. Human-rights advocates in Cairo argue that torture created an appetite for revenge, first in Sayyid Qutb and later in his acolytes including Ayman al-Zawahiri. The main targets of the prisoners' wrath, was the secular Egyptian government, but a powerful current of anger was also directed towards the West, which they saw as an enabling force behind the repressive regime. They held the West responsible for corrupting and humiliating Islamic society. Indeed, the theme of humiliation, which is the essence of torture, is important to understanding the radical Islamists' rage. Egypt's prisons became a factory for producing militants whose need for retribution – they called it justice – was all-consuming... the screams of fellow prisoners who were being interrogated kept many men in a state of near madness, even when they weren't tortured themselves.¹

Wright, who received his MA in Linguistics from the American University in Cairo and taught at that same institution for two years, appears to have gained certain insights into the phenomenon of militant extremism from his time spent in Egypt, insights that have not yet been fully explored in authoritative studies on the topic of militant extremism in Egypt. Although Wright merely introduced this idea as “one line of thinking,” and did not provide any further elaboration, he identified a major gap in the dominant interpretive paradigm. The dominant interpretive framework rightly points to Islamic resurgence and a range of political, social, and economic grievances as factors shaping the development of extremism. However, it is often forgotten that the pioneers of militant thought in Egypt, men such as Sayyid Qutb and Mustafa Shukri, experienced Nasser's rule almost entirely from the vantage point of prison cells and torture chambers. In this sense, it was not economic frustration, social dissatisfaction, or the domestic and

¹ Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9-11*, (New York: Random House, 2006), p. 52.

foreign policies of Nasser that were the primary grievance of Egypt's first militants, but rather, the imprisonment and constant torture and persecution that continually defined their existence.

If the production of extremist discourse can be seen as the product of a process in which certain grievances, and the perceived solutions to these grievances, are deliberated within the epistemological context of classical Islamic theology, and the intellectual context of the Islamist worldview, torture and oppression are of central importance to the first phase in the trajectory of militant radicalism in 20th century Egypt. It was within the epistemological framework of Islamic theological thought that Egypt's first militants tried to understand why they were being imprisoned, tortured and persecuted so brutally. It was through the use of Islamic sources and methods of theological thought that the imprisoned Muslim Brothers hashed out their grievances and came to terms with their circumstances. The humiliation and rage induced by the horrific suffering they endured, created an overwhelming need for revenge, a need that would be developed, justified, and formulated within the framework of Islamic juridical thought.

The period from 1954, when Nasser's government began a dragnet of arrests, imprisoning most members of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement, as well as men who were merely suspected of being members of the movement, to 1971, when most of Nasser's prisoners were released by his successor Anwar Sadat in a general amnesty, represents the birth of radical militant thought in modern Egypt and the first phase in its historical trajectory. During Nasser's rule, a thought process was set in motion among imprisoned Egyptian Islamists. This thought process, which was induced by the brutal torture and abuse suffered by the Muslim Brothers in Nasser's prisons, produced the

radical theological instrument of *takfir*, and the corollary concept of *jahiliyyah*, two radicalized concepts that became the foundation of subsequent militant thought and discourse. These doctrines were shaped largely through the interpretation, and further development of Sayyid Qutb's scathing indictment of Nasser's Egypt as a society of *jahiliyyah*, on a level that surpassed even that of pre-Islamic pagan Arabia, a conclusion reached by Qutb during his twelve year stay in prison.

This chapter will explore the characteristics of this first phase, showing how the process that resulted in the production of extremist discourse unfolded in Nasser's Egypt, by connecting the broader intellectual context and epistemological framework of extremist thought, with the specific historical context and circumstances under which extremist thought emerged during the Nasser era.

Sayyid Qutb's radical doctrines did not develop *ex nihilo*. Qutb's transformation from a relatively mainstream Islamist to a radical militant was a direct product of the historical context under which this transformation occurred, namely, the torture and persecution he endured under Nasser. The first part of this chapter will explore the early intellectual career of Sayyid Qutb, tracing his intellectual development prior to Nasser's persecution of the Egypt's Islamists. The second part of this chapter will discuss the Muslim Brotherhood's relationship with the Free Officer's Revolution and explore the history leading up to their persecution. The third part of this chapter will examine the torture and oppression endured by Egypt's imprisoned Islamists and explain how this oppression directly resulted in the production of militant theological doctrines. The final section of this chapter will analyze the contents of *Milestones*, and explain the connection

between Nasser's oppression of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the development of Sayyid Qutb's theory of *jahiliyyah*.

Sayyid Qutb's Intellectual Development

Prior to the publication of *Milestones*, Sayyid Qutb had written dozens of books, ranging from romantic novels and works on poetry, to literary criticism and politico-religious commentary.² Although some of Qutb's works prior to his imprisonment in 1954 had shown evidence of Islamist leanings and criticisms of the West, the conceptualization of *jahiliyyah* as it appeared in *Milestones* was a far cry from the tone and context of Qutb's previous works. In fact, Hassan Hanafi, a leading Egyptian academic and Muslim intellectual concludes that: "Qutb developed naturally from literature, to patriotism, to socialism, to discovering Islam as containing all these currents. Had his development continued in a natural way, he would have reached scientific socialism as synonymous to Islam, and he would have become one of the pillars of the Islamic left in Egypt and one of its first supporters in the Muslim World."³ While Hanafi's assertion is somewhat questionable, it is relatively clear that in the twelve years between Qutb's optimistic praise of the Free Officers Revolution in 1952, to his declaration of Nasser's Egypt as a society of *jahiliyyah* in 1964, a radical thought process had taken place in the mind of Qutb. In order to fully contextualize the thought process that led Qutb to such conclusions, it is necessary to first examine the conditions under which this thought process developed.

² A list and summary of all of Sayyid Qutb's publications is available in Ahmad Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, pp. 19-55.

³ Hassan Hanafi, *al-Din wa-al-thawrah*, vol. 5, (Cairo: n.d.), pp. 219-220. Quoted in Adnan Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad*, p. 150.

As the single individual blamed almost entirely for the emergence of radical militant thought, Sayyid Qutb's early life presents somewhat of a paradox. In the early 19th century a westernization process had begun in Egypt. Born in 1906, Qutb would come of age in what has been called "the liberal age" in Egypt, where many of the results of this westernization process, such as the adoption of a secular educational system and penetration of western culture, had become evident in many aspects of Egyptian life. Qutb received a liberal education in a western style preparatory and secondary school and earned a BA in education in 1933, after which he was immediately employed as a teacher. Qutb quickly joined the ranks of Egypt's leftist liberal thinkers, becoming an ardent student and defender of figures such as Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad and Taha Husayn, intellectuals who had generated controversy and scorn from hard-line Islamists for their liberal views, including those regarding the role of Muslim women in society.⁴

During the 1920s and 1930s, Qutb, an avid reader and admirer of English poet Thomas Hardy, had published a number of works, most of which reflected a belief in values such as modernism, secularism, liberalism, and the idea of the West as a model that should be followed and imitated in the Middle East.⁵ Although Qutb never rejected or repudiated Islam during his secularist literary career, his position on religion during this time was that of a "Muslim secularist."⁶

By the mid-1930s, Egypt has been experiencing strong reactions against rampant westernization. The liberal political establishment in Egypt had neither achieved

⁴Ahmad Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, p. 22.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶This is according to Hisham Sharabi's definition of a "Muslim secularist": "this secularist was a Muslim (hence to be differentiated from the Christian westernizing intellectuals) and that he was not religiously oriented (hence to be differentiated from the Muslim traditionalists and reformers)." See Hisham Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years, 1875-1914*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1970), pp. 8-9, 18-23.

independence for the Nile valley, nor found a solution to Egypt's plethora of social problems. An increased interest in Islamic studies among Egyptian intellectuals accompanied the expansion of Muslim activist groups, the expression of anti-Western views and the promotion of pan-Arab ideas as "East versus West" became the theme of the day.⁷ Among the intellectuals taking an increased interest in Islamic Studies was Qutb himself, who in the late 1930s, rediscovered his "beautiful and beloved Qur'an." Abandoning his secular views, Qutb would reorient himself intellectually in the late 1940s and begin leaning towards Egyptian nationalism, Pan-Arabism, and anti-Westernism.⁸

In 1948, after being employed by the Egyptian Ministry of Education, Qutb was assigned to the United States, with the task of studying American pedagogical methods and bringing his findings back to Egypt. A corollary purpose was to get Sayyid positively impressed with American culture. Sayyid would certainly be impressed, but not in the manner his employers had intended.

Qutb's two years in the United States from 1948 to 1950, arguably played a defining role in hardening Qutb's Islamic zeal and completing his transition from a secularist to an Islamist. According to Adnan Musallam: "Qutb's stay in the United States reinforced his earlier belief that the Islamic way of life was man's only salvation from the abyss of godless capitalism."⁹ In his travelogue "The America that I have Seen: In the Scale of Human Values," Qutb expressed extreme shock and disgust at the moral standards of Americans, which he likened to that of animals: "I fear that a balance may not exist between America's material greatness and the quality of its people. And I fear

⁷ Adnan Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad*, p. 107.

⁸ *Ibid.*

that the wheel of life will have turned and the book of time will have closed and America will have added nothing, or next to nothing, to the account of morals that distinguishes man from object, and indeed, mankind from animals.”¹⁰ It was also during this time that Qutb’s writings began to reflect strong Islamist leanings. His 1949 monograph “Social Justice in Islam,” written during his time in America, expressed, for the first time in his literary career, a belief in Islam as a complete system that embodies all aspects of life including politics and government.¹¹

When Qutb, with his newfound Islamic zeal returned home in 1950, Egypt was rumbling with revolution. Public dissatisfaction with the political status quo had reached a fever pitch in a period described as “a period of intense frustration for the Egyptian people... Financial and sexual scandals touching the king became the staple of Cairo gossip. Stories of faulty weapons supplied to the army in Palestine under contracts which had been profitable to the king and his courtiers were widely circulated. So were stories of the rigging of the Alexandria cotton market for the profit of the Wafdist ministers.”¹² From 1950 to 1952, Qutb would engage in an independent Islamic intellectual career, producing a number of works including several political agitations in Egyptian periodicals.

From 1951 to 1952, Qutb was “gradually drawn into the Muslim Brothers’ orbit... when he began to contribute regularly to their publications.” By 1952, Qutb had vigorously joined the Brotherhood in their campaign for pan-Islamic unity and the

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹⁰ Sayyid Qutb, “*The America that I have Seen: In the Scale of Human Values*,” (Cairo: Kashf ul Shubuhah Publications, n.d.), p.1.

¹¹ Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, translated by John B. Hardie, (Oneonta: Islamic Publications International, 2000).

¹² J.C.B. Richmond, *Egypt, 1798-1952: Her Advance Towards a Modern Identity*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 215.

establishment of a viable Islamic bloc. On the eve of the revolution, Qutb had become all but the mouthpiece of the Muslim Brotherhood's political agenda.

The Muslim Brotherhood and the Revolution

For the Muslim Brotherhood, the coming revolution presented a once in a lifetime opportunity to achieve their dream: the establishment of an Islamic state in Egypt. As early as 1940, strong ties had been established between dissidents in the Egyptian army and the Muslim Brotherhood Movement.¹³ Understanding the need for the support and sympathy of Egypt's largest and most powerful grassroots movement, the revolutionaries in the Egyptian military made several overtures to the leaders of the Movement and established a close working relationship. The Muslim Brotherhood Movement had become the logical choice for an "alliance between the army and a people's party, working together with no open ties, until the appropriate time."¹⁴ By the late 1940s, members of the Free Officers and the Muslim Brotherhood had been sharing the details of the planned revolution.

The Muslim Brotherhood, under the false impression that once Egypt's monarchy was removed, an Islamic state would begin to be implemented, threw their full support behind the revolution. When the Free Officers seized power on July 23, 1952, the Brotherhood acted as the civil arm of the revolution, helping to "maintain order and security." According to one account:

Without the enthusiastic support of the Moslem Brotherhood, Mohammad Naguib's movement might already have met the fate of the half dozen Egyptian governments that preceded it in the year 1952. The Brotherhood

¹³ Al Banna formed working ties with Sadat at this time. See Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 96.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

was a full participant in Naguib's coup last summer and much of his success since then can be attributed... to their support.¹⁵

The Brotherhood, which came to regard the revolution as "our revolution," celebrated joyfully, unaware that roughly two years later, the regime that they helped bring into power would imprison, torture, and execute their members and virtually destroy the movement in its entirety.

In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood enjoyed a short honeymoon with the Free Officers, with many of their members appointed to positions in the newly formed Cabinet. However, this honeymoon would be short lived and a bitter conflict would emerge once the Brotherhood realized that Neguib's and later Nasser's government had no intention of turning Egypt into an Islamic state.

From the outset - beginning with the official declaration of support for the new regime made by the Brotherhood three days after the revolution - the Brothers "made reiterated pronouncements, publicly and also privately to the government, about the need for establishing government on the basis of Islam."¹⁶ With no intentions of ceding to the Brotherhood's demands, Nasser moved to marginalize the Brotherhood from the new regime and silence their demands for a commanding voice in Egypt's affairs of state. With his earliest political moves Nasser would begin to shatter the Brotherhood's dreams of an Islamic state, causing the movement to withdraw its support for the new regime and setting in motion a climate of antipathy that would reach a fever pitch in 1954, when the Egyptian cabinet decided to dissolve the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁷ As the Brotherhood's

¹⁵ Donald Peters, "The Moslem Brotherhood: Terrorists or Just Zealots?," *The Reporter*, (March 17, 1953), p. 8.

¹⁶ Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 107.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

criticism of the regime became more vocal, it had become clear that this movement, many of whose members were hardened soldiers with military training, represented a tangible threat to Nasser's power. To ensure that his power remained intact, the Brotherhood would have to be dismantled.

Nasser's Persecution and the Birth of Extremist Theology

On the evening of October 26, 1954, as Nasser addressed a crowd of his supporters from a balcony at al-Manshiyah Square in Alexandria, the President was fired at eight times. The failed assassination attempt, according to Richard Mitchell, had been planned by the Secret Apparatus of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁸ Whether this incident was indeed the work of the Secret Apparatus or a government conspiracy as many of the Muslim Brothers have asserted, it provided Nasser with the justification he needed to completely dismantle the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁹ Nasser launched a dragnet of arrests, instructing his Intelligence Police to arrest all known members of the Muslim Brotherhood, including men who were merely suspected of being members.

Following the al-Manshiyah incident, Sayyid Qutb was accused of being a member of the Brotherhood's Secret Apparatus and in charge of their secret publications. Qutb, who maintained his innocence, argued that this incident was set up by the Nasser regime to sever relations between the Free Officers and the Muslim Brothers. The real reason, it was argued, was the junta's fear of losing power.²⁰ In October of 1954, Qutb, who had no plausible links to the assassination attempt, was arrested under charges of conspiracy to overthrow the government and terrorism.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-151.

¹⁹ For example Jabir Rizq called the failed assassination attempt a "theatrical play," on the part of the Egyptian government, which was fabricated to give Nasser an excuse to dismantle the movement. Jabir Rizq, *Madhabih al-Ikhwan fi Sujun Nasser*, (Cairo: Dar al-I'tisam, 1977), pp. 20-28.

The Syrian weekly newsmagazine *al-Shihab* reported that when military officers entered Qutb's home to arrest him, he was bedridden with a high fever. He was handcuffed and escorted to the prison on foot, fainting and falling on the ground due to extreme agony. When he arrived at the prison, he was confronted by the infamous Hamzah Bisuni, commander of the jail, as well as several officers from the Egyptian *Mukhabarat*, or Intelligence Police.²¹ Ahmad Moussali narrates that no sooner had Qutb stepped into the jail, than the jail staff savagely beat him and abused him for two hours, then locked him in a cage with a trained military dog, which gripping his thigh with its jaws, dragged him back and forth. Qutb was then transferred to a cell, where he was continuously interrogated for seven hours.²² This was merely an introduction to what Qutb would endure for the twelve years he spent in prison, and the conditions that produced the thought process which culminated in *Milestones*.

Jabir Rizq, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood who was arrested and held in the same prison as Qutb, produced the most detailed first-hand account available of the conditions in the Cairo military prison where the Muslim Brothers were held. Rizq, a Cairo journalist and member of the Muslim Brotherhood was arrested by the Egyptian Intelligence Police on August 21, 1965. Rizq was transferred to the Cairo military prison, where the Muslim Brothers were being held. Rizq was released in 1971, and in 1977 published *The Massacres of the Muslim Brothers in Nasser's Prisons*. Rizq's account provides a link to an important, but little explored area that is crucial to an understanding of the development of militant thought. It was within the confines of Nasser's prisons that the tenets of radical theological thought were conceived, and that the first, and most

²⁰ Ahmad Moussali, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, p. 34.

²¹ Asaf Hussain, *Islamic Movements in Egypt, Syria and Jordan*, (London: Mansell, 1983), p. 91.

important work of militant discourse was produced. Rizq's account provides the most detailed first-hand account available, of the conditions that defined the existence of the imprisoned Muslim Brothers, and, subsequently, the context in which militant thought first emerged in modern Egypt.

According to Rizq, a favorite slogan of the prison guards at the military prison was "if Allah himself came down from the sky, we would put him in a prison cell."²³ Rizq also recalls that Muhammad Awwad, a fellow prisoner who was tortured to death at the prison, was told by a prison guard that "If Allah has a *jahannam*, (hellfire) we have a *jahannam* too."²⁴ Within his first two weeks in prison, Rizq witnessed several of his cellmates being taken from their cells and being returned several hours later as "shredded, bloody carcasses, their bodies torn to pieces and on the brink of death... many never returned to their cells and were taken to the desert to be buried."²⁵

Rizq, who was interrogated himself, observed many of the atrocities against his fellow inmates from his cell, as prisoners were tortured in the prison courtyard in full view of the other prisoners as a form of psychological torture. Victims would have their hands and feet bound together and would be suspended upside down from a metal pole, as two to four prison guards would simultaneously whip them from head to toe with braided horsewhips or metal chains. According to Rizq, this was the most common form of torture, which very few of the prisoners had escaped.²⁶ In some cases this was administered twice a day. Prisoners would be sodomized with sharp metal rods and would have bellows inserted in their rectums which the prison guards would use to pump

²² Ahmad Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, p. 34.

²³ Jabir Rizq, *Madhabih al-Ikhwan*, p. 122.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 108.

air into their bowels.²⁷ Prisoners would be locked in small cells with starving prison dogs for days at a time, or locked for weeks at a time in cells known to prisoners as “the hole,” which were too small to even sit or lie down in, forcing the body into an excruciating position.²⁸ Drowning, electrocution, burning with fire or hot metal rods, genital mutilation and solitary confinement for extreme lengths of time were among the other customary forms of torture.²⁹ Rizq reports that several of the prisoners either died or lost their sanity due to the severity of the torture.³⁰

Given the conditions narrated by Rizq, it is not surprising that Qutb and other prisoners developed militant ideas. If the conditions of Nasser’s prisons were enough to drive prisoners to insanity, it is not surprising then, that these conditions would lead to radical thought. The suffering and humiliation endured by the imprisoned Brothers produced an intense rage and an overwhelming need for retribution. It was in theological terms that the prisoners deliberated their humiliation and rage, and justified their need for revenge. The result of this process was the creation of the radicalized theological doctrine of *takfir*, a fundamental precept of militant thought and theology.

Omar al-Tilmisani, a leading figure of the Muslim Brotherhood, who was among the imprisoned and tortured, provides an important glimpse into the thought process that produced the doctrine of *takfir*. Al-Tilmisani recalls the following:

And when we were in the prisons enduring the unimaginable brutality of torture from the prison guards of Abdul Nasser, some of the tortured imagined that it is impossible for a Muslim heart, with even atom’s weight of *iman* (faith), to inflict such horrible savagery. What had befallen on them could only come from the worst and most vicious enemies of the Muslims. In

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

the midst of this unbelievable horror, the idea of *takfir* began to sprout in the mind of some of the prisoners. The behavior of the prison guards and the *mukhabarat* (intelligence police) was feeding this growing idea of *takfir*, which began solidify in the minds of these young people who sleep on torture and wake up on torture.³¹

An important observation can be derived from al-Tilmisani's account. The thought process which led to the radicalization of *takfir* was not exclusive to Sayyid Qutb, but had taken root in the minds of several of the prisoners, and had been the product of the suffering they endured. The imprisoned Brothers reasoned that no true Muslim could be capable of inflicting such brutal savagery. As such, they determined those responsible for their imprisonment and torture could not possibly be Muslims, but were disbelievers (*kuffar*), guilty of the crime of apostasy, a crime punishable by death.

According to al-Tilmisani, the idea of *takfir* became widespread among the prisoners until the news reached Hasan al-Hudaybi, al-Banna's successor as leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. Hudaybi called several meetings with the prisoners to discourage this type of thinking. At the end of these meetings, the prisoners would appear to be convinced of the errors in their thinking, but as soon as they returned to their suffering in the prison, they would revert to their previous thinking.³² Eventually, al-Hudaybi gave up trying to convince these prisoners, and devoted his energies to writing his book *Preachers not Judges*.³³

³¹ Omar al-Tilmisani, *Dhikrayat la Mudhakkirat*, (Cairo: Dar al-Tawzee' al-Nashar al-Islamiyya, 1985), p. 113.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Hudaybi would attempt to theologially discredit the radical doctrine of *takfir* in this book. Hasan al-Hudaybi, *Du'a la Quda*, (Cairo: Dar al-Tiba'a wal Nashar al-Islami, 1977).

Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi offers a more detailed analysis of the thought process outlined in al-Tilmisani's account.³⁴ According to al-Qaradawi, the origin of militant *takfir* can be attributed to a series of questions that the imprisoned Brothers asked themselves. The first set of questions was as follows: "Why are we subjected to this torture? What crime have we committed? Have we said anything other than that Allah is our Lord, Islam is our path, and the Qur'an is our constitution? Could commitment to Islam in a Muslim country be regarded as a crime for which we are being tortured in this way?"

These questions would lead to a second set of questions: "Who are these beasts who torture us, degrade our humanity, curse our religion, dishonor our sacred beliefs, mock our religious devotions and even dare to disrespect our Lord? One of their high ranking officials once said: 'Bring me this Lord of yours and I will put him in jail.' Could these people be regarded as Muslims? What is apostasy if these people are Muslims? There is no doubt that these are *kuffar* who must be expelled from the fold of Islam."

These questions, in turn, led to further reasoning: "If this is our judgment of those who torture us to death, what should our judgment of their masters be? What judgment should be made against the leaders and rulers in authority who not only refuse to rule in accordance with Allah's injunctions but also wage war against those who call for the application of His *Shari'ah*? In comparison with the former, the latter are worse in their disbelief and more categorical in their apostasy which is expressed in the Qur'an: 'If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed they are no better than unbelievers.'" (5:47).

³⁴ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Al-Sahwah al-Islamiya bayn al-Juhud wa-l Tatarruf*, (Cairo/Beirut: 1984), p. 128.

Having reached these conclusions, the imprisoned militants raised further questions: “What do you think of the rulers who do not judge in accordance with the light of what Allah has revealed, and who torture those who call for the application of His *Shari’ah*? Those who agreed with them that such rulers are infidels were regarded as friends; those who did not as enemies, even *kuffar*, claiming that he who holds any doubt about the *kufir* of a *kafir*, is himself a *kafir*.” Finally, the Brothers reasoned that those who submit to, and obey such rulers are also *kuffar*, because, it was claimed, he who submits to a *kafir* is himself a *kafir*.³⁵

Here, al-Qaradawi outlines, in very clear terms, the progression of thought that led to the radical instrument of *takfir*, a thought process that is validated by the account of Omar al-Tilmisani, a first-hand observer. It was through such reasoning that the imprisoned militants armed themselves with a theological tool that would enable them to arbitrarily label individuals and groups as apostates from Islam and subject to the penalty of death, thus justifying retribution. The imprisoned militants came to terms with their circumstances through a process of theological thought that was a direct product of the suffering and humiliation they endured in Nasser’s prisons. By deliberating their grievances, and the perceived solution to these grievances within the epistemological framework of Islamic theological thought, the imprisoned militants developed the doctrine of *takfir*, a theological instrument which could be used to justify revenge against their oppressors. The radical doctrine of *takfir*, would be compounded by the corollary concept of *jahiliyyah*, an idea developed by Sayyid Qutb in *Milestones*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

The *Jahiliyyah* of the 20th Century

To try and come to terms with why he was being imprisoned and tortured, Sayyid Qutb turned to Islamic sources such as the Qur'an and *Sirah* (Islamic Tradition). Qutb would hash out his grievances within the framework of Islamic theological thought, eventually producing the radicalized interpretation of the concept of *jahiliyyah*, a corollary to the instrument of *takfir*, which had already been spreading among the imprisoned Muslim Brothers.

The centrality of torture to the progression of thought that led to Qutb's conceptualization of *jahiliyyah* is evident in *Milestones*. Throughout *Milestones*, the words "torture," and "oppression," appear wherever Qutb describes the struggles of the Muslims. For instance, in the first chapter of *Milestones*, when discussing early history of Islam, Qutb writes: "The Muslim encountered nothing burdensome except the torture and oppression... no pressure from the *jahili* society would have any effect on his continuing steadfastness. We are also surrounded by *jahiliyya* today, which is of the same nature as it was during the first period of Islam, perhaps a little deeper."³⁶ Here, Qutb qualifies the torture and oppression of Muslims as a major characteristic of *jahiliyyah* societies, a characteristic that existed in the *jahiliyyah* of pagan Arabia, and a characteristic that Qutb experienced firsthand in the "deeper" *jahiliyyah* of Nasser's Egypt.

Qutb's final chapter, "This is the Road," opens with the Qur'anic story of the People of the Pit, in *Surat al-Buruj* of the Qur'an: "doomed were the makers of the pit, abundantly supplied with fuel as they sat by it and watched what they did with the Believers... Indeed, for those who persecute the believing men and women, and later do

³⁶ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, pp. 31-32.

not repent, is the penalty of Hell.”³⁷ Qutb’s selection of this verse to open his final chapter illustrates the centrality of torture and oppression to the development of his thought. Qutb insists that the story of the makers of the Pit as told in the Qur’anic chapter *Al-Buruj* “requires deep thought by those among the Believers, to whatever time and place they belong.”³⁸ Qutb’s emphasis on the story of the Pit, which he describes as a story of “profound truths,” indicates that this story was of paramount importance and meaning to Qutb who appears to have made a parallel between the People of the Pit and his own experiences in Nasser’s prisons.

Qutb describes the persecutions faced by believers from the People of the Pit in the following manner: “This is the story of a group of people who believed in God and openly proclaimed their belief. They encountered tyrannical and oppressive enemies who were bent on denying the right of a human being to believe in the All-Mighty God.”³⁹ Here, the first question posed by al-Qaradawi is reflected. Sayyid Qutb, who maintained his innocence from any involvement in the 1954 assassination attempt, believed that he had done nothing wrong, and was being brutally oppressed for nothing more than proclaiming that “Allah is my Lord, Islam is my way of life, and the Qur’an is my constitution.” In this sense, Nasser’s regime took a place in Qutb’s thought that was likened to the tyrannical and oppressive People of the Pit, who were bent on denying the right to believe in Allah, and to follow His path. Qutb continues: “But the faith in the hearts of the Believers raised them above all persecution... The threat of torture did not

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 281. *Qur’an*, 85: 1-16.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 282. Similar interpretations are found in Qutb’s *tafsir* (commentary) on the same Qur’anic surah. Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur’an*, vol. 30, translated by M. Salahi and Ahur Shamis, (London: MWH Publishers, 1979), pp. 111-119.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

shake them, they never recanted and they burned in the fire until death.”⁴⁰ Here, Qutb again equates torture with the eternal struggles of the Muslims. In vivid language that was clearly colored by the horrors of Nasser’s prisons, Qutb describes the believers as being pitted against:

arrogant, mischievous, criminal, and degraded people. And these criminals sat by the pit of the fire, watching how the believers suffered and writhed in pain. They sat there to enjoy the sight of how fire consumes living beings and how the bodies of these noble souls were reduced to cinders and ashes. And when some young man or woman, some child or old man from among these believers was thrown into the fire, their diabolical pleasure would reach a new height, and shouts of mad joy would escape their lips at the sight of blood and pieces of flesh.⁴¹

The way in which Qutb describes the People of the Pit produces an eerie parallel with the way in which Jabir Rizq described his captors in his account of the prison experience. Qutb’s chilling take on how the People of the Pit took great pleasure in torturing the believers is reflected in Jabir Rizq’s account of several of Nasser’s prison guards, who, according to Rizq, took great pleasure in their abuses.⁴² For Qutb, the story of the pit epitomized the everlasting struggle between “the Believers and their enemies,”⁴³ a struggle which Qutb very much believed himself to be a part of.

In *Milestones*, Qutb would draw upon historic parallels between various circumstances faced by Muslims throughout Islamic history, and the circumstances faced by himself and his brothers in Nasser’s prisons. The link connecting these two parallels, was the torture and persecution faced by Muslims living in societies of *jahiliyyah*. By drawing on these parallels, Qutb was able to reason that the only society capable of

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

⁴² Jabir Rizq, *Madhabih al-Ikhwān*, p. 124.

⁴³ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 300.

brutally persecuting and torturing Muslims for no other reason than their religious convictions was, necessarily, a society of *jahiliyyah*. Although Qutb only wrote of *jahiliyyah* in vague terms, he had developed a groundbreaking ideological innovation. Whereas previous Islamic thinkers understood the term *jahiliyyah* in a largely historical context, Qutb insisted that *jahiliyyah* was a contemporary reality.⁴⁴

With the radicalized concept of *jahiliyyah* defined, Qutb was then able to use this concept to delegitimize the Egyptian state, and propose his solutions to this problem using Islamic juridical-religious methods. Qutb argued that the current state of *jahiliyyah* was “based on rebellion against God’s sovereignty on earth (*hakimiyyah*),”⁴⁵ a clear reference to a number of Qur’anic verses asserting the indivisibility of God’s sovereignty over earth.⁴⁶ Using these Qur’anic verses, Qutb was able to reason that any regime that did not rule according to the *Shari’ah* was in violation of God’s commandments, and were thus *jahili*, and illegitimate regimes.

For much of the history of Islam, a strong religiously-sanctioned tradition was in force of obedience to the ruler and state. The standard interpretation among *sunni* scholars was that it is forbidden to revolt against a legitimate ruler. A number of well-known Muslim scholars and jurists throughout history also reasoned that even if a ruler is not ideal, and may even be oppressive, Muslims should not rebel for the sake of maintaining the unity of the Muslim community (*ummah*).⁴⁷ In many cases, Muslim rulers maintained a symbiotic relationship with members of the religious intelligentsia

⁴⁴ This argument was also made by Indian Muslim thinker Abu al A’la al-Mawdudi, widely believed to have had a great influence on Qutb. For a discussion on al-Mawdudi’s influence on Qutb see Adnan Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad*, pp. 150-152.

⁴⁵ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 11

⁴⁶ See *Qur’an*, 5:44-46.

⁴⁷ For a thorough discussion on the jurisprudence regarding obedience to the ruler see Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Jihad*, vol. 2, pp. 996-997.

(*‘ulama*). Often, the *‘ulama* would provide religious legitimacy to the state and rulers, in exchange for security or material benefits. Qutb’s idea was revolutionary in the sense that he completely rejected this deeply entrenched tradition and used the Qur’an to reason that the application of *Shari’ah* was the sole criterion for the legitimacy of the state. By arguing that Egypt under Nasser was not at all an Islamic society or country, but in a state of *jahiliyyah*, similar to, and perhaps even worse than that of pagan, pre-Islamic Arabia, Qutb undermined the strong sense of solidarity and *ummah*, that was traditionally in force among the Muslim community, and subverted the classic, and religiously sanctioned tradition of obedience to the ruler and the state.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the idea of *jahiliyyah* as a contemporary reality and the assertion that Muslims in Egypt were being attacked and persecuted by the enemies of Islam, necessarily implied that a defensive *jihad* against the *jahili* oppressors was a collective obligation of the Muslim community: “any place where the Islamic Shari’ah is not enforced and where Islam is not dominant, becomes the home of hostility (*dar-ul-harb*)... A Muslim will remain prepared to fight against it.”⁴⁹

With the state delegitimized, Qutb was then able to propose his solutions. For Qutb, the solution to the problem of contemporary *jahiliyyah* was to “re-establish once more its (Islam’s) world leadership.”⁵⁰ According to Qutb, in order to bring about the revival of Islam, “it is necessary that there should be a vanguard which sets out with this determination and then keeps walking on the path, marching through the vast ocean of *jahiliyyah* which has encompassed the entire world.” Qutb continues “I have written *Milestones* for this vanguard which I consider to be a waiting reality about to be

⁴⁸ Barry Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism in Egyptian Politics*, (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 14.

⁴⁹ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 233.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

materialized... The milestones will necessarily be determined by the light of the first source of this faith – the Holy Qur’an – and from its basic teachings.”⁵¹

Qutb would come to terms with his circumstances and deliberate his grievances entirely within the epistemological framework of Islamic theological thought and the intellectual context of the Islamist worldview. His analysis and indictment of the Nasser regime and his proposed solution would be formulated almost entirely through the use of Islamic sources, especially the Qur’an, and would be articulated using the methods of Islamic theological thought.

The fact that torture and oppression played a central role in Qutb’s thought process is evident throughout *Milestones*. In this sense, al-Tilmisani and al-Qaradawi’s explanations of the origins of *takfir* are validated by the contents of *Milestones*. The abuses suffered in prison had set in motion a thought process that led Qutb to conclude that the only society capable of inflicting such oppression upon Muslims was a society ruled by *kuffar* and enemies of Islam, and that the society that stood by and allowed him to be tortured so savagely was a society in a state of *jahiliyyah*. Through this process, the doctrine of *takfir*, the most potent theological weapon of militant radicalism was validated. Although Qutb had never explicitly called for an armed *jihad* against the Egyptian state, existing Islamic Laws would necessarily dictate that if his definition of Nasser’s Egypt was correct, Muslims were justified, if not obligated, to reject and overthrow Nasser and for that matter, any leader who did not establish a truly Islamic state and implement *Shari’ah* law.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Conclusion: The Transition to the Second Phase

In 1964, at the height of his power and confidence, Nasser freed the imprisoned members of the Muslim Brotherhood, including Qutb himself, in a general amnesty. Nasser, like Sadat a decade later, hoped that the Islamists could serve as a tool to counter the threat of the strengthening Marxist left in Egypt.⁵² Muslim Brothers were reinstated into government posts which they had previously held, and were paid salary arrears for the periods of their imprisonment.⁵³ However, this amnesty would be short-lived. In 1965, the Egyptian Intelligence Police caught wind of a supposed plot by members of the Brotherhood to overthrow Nasser.⁵⁴ Although at this time, according to Kepel, the Brotherhood “scarcely represented any real threat,” Nasser was having problems of his own.⁵⁵ With the fiasco of Nasser’s expedition in Yemen and domestic problems emanating from a corrupt state bureaucracy, the “new conspiracy” of the Muslim Brotherhood offered “an ideal scapegoat that would enable the leader to reunite the people behind him.”⁵⁶ On July 29, a second wave of arrests began and the Muslim Brothers were rounded up just as severely as they had been in 1954, under accusations of plotting to overthrow the government. Among those arrested was Sayyid Qutb, who was hanged on 29 August, 1966. Most of those arrested would remain in prison until Sadat’s general amnesty in 1971.

With the publication of *Milestones*, *jahiliyyah* and *takfir* were no longer obscure, uncollected thoughts floating in the minds of Islamist prisoners. Armed with *Milestones*,

⁵² Nasser’s conflict with the Marxist left is discussed in Paul Salem, *Bitter Legacy: Ideology and Politics in the Arab World*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), pp. 147-201.

⁵³ Barry Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, p. 16.

⁵⁴ It is not known whether this plot actually existed, or if it was fabricated by Nasser’s officials. See Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism*, p. 29-32.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

the militant undercurrent in Nasser's prisons now possessed a concrete conceptual framework from which to further hash out their grievances and develop their ideas. Kepel points out that "*Milestones* was a prison work, and it was prisoners who, between 1965 and 1971, made it their manifesto, or at least their source of inspiration."⁵⁷ Qutb had never explicitly recommended the use of guns or bombs, but the implications of his work were clear. If Nasser's Egypt was indeed a society of *jahiliyyah*, ruled by apostates and enemies of Islam, and guilty of the persecution and oppression of the believers, it necessarily followed that armed *jihad* against the Egyptian state and execution of the apostates was legally justified by Islamic Law.

Qutb was not the sole ideologue of the imprisoned Brothers and the prisoners were not unanimously militant. Antithetical to the views of Qutb and *Milestones* was Hasan al-Hudaybi, the Supreme Guide of the Brotherhood. Al-Hudaybi's monograph *Preachers not Judges* was interpreted by many to be a veiled criticism of the recently martyred Qutb's ideas.⁵⁸ Using Islamic jurisprudential methods, Hudaybi criticized the radicalized ideas of *takfir* and *jahiliyyah*, arguing that there was no juristic basis in Islamic Law for declaring anyone who identified himself as a Muslim to be an infidel. Al-Hudaybi's work, which was clearly formulated in response to the spread of radical ideas among the imprisoned Muslim Brothers, was rife with powerful theological arguments, discrediting militant ideas, particularly the practice of *takfir*. With Qutb's *Milestones* on the one hand and Hudaybi's *Preachers not Judges* on the other, the imprisoned Brothers would split into two camps: reformists, who subscribed to the

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

⁵⁸ Rather than directly criticizing Qutb, Hudaybi criticized the Indian thinker Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi who was believed to have had a significant influence on Qutb. However, some observers have

moderate teachings of al-Hudaybi and al-Tilmisani, and radical militant revolutionaries, who were inspired by *Milestones*. This split created a polarity among the Muslim Brothers, which would come to define Egyptian Islamist movements in the coming decades. As Barbara Zollner notes: “the Brotherhood was, and remains caught between two divergent sentiments: between acceptance and rejection of Qutbian thought.”⁵⁹

The experiences of Sayyid Qutb and his fellow cellmates, from their arrests in 1954 to the publication of *Milestones* in 1964, represents the birth of militant thought in modern Egypt. Qutb and his fellow militants reasoned that no true Muslim was capable of inflicting such unimaginable torture and savagery upon their brothers in Islam. Such acts of barbarism could only be committed by infidels and apostates, who were steeped in *jahiliyyah*. Consequently, the rulers who gave these barbarians their orders were even worse apostates and infidels, oppressors and enemies of Islam, ruling a *jahili* society through a *jahili* system. Due to the illegitimacy of the Egyptian regime by virtue of their status as ignorant apostates and oppressors, the waging of a military *jihad* against the state could be argued as a religious obligation of all true Muslims. It was through this progression of thought combined with Qutb’s ability to validate and articulate the results of this thought process in *Milestones* that the radical concepts of *jahiliyyah* and subsequently *takfir* and militant interpretations of *jihad* were introduced and given a concrete conceptual framework. *Milestones* provided a concrete theoretical bedrock, from which to further develop ideas spawned by the pain, rage and humiliation of imprisonment and torture, the overwhelming need for retribution, and the ability to frame these ideas as legitimate juridical-religious rulings. In the following decades, mere

seen this as a veiled criticism of Qutb due to reluctance on the part of Hudaybi to criticize a recently martyred Brother.

concepts such as *jahiliyyah* and *takfir* would evolve into complete religio-political belief systems that would form the basis of Egypt's militant groups. In 1971, when Sadat released most of the Islamist prisoners, the ideas that had been developed in Nasser's prisons would be transplanted into Sadat's Egypt, beginning the second phase in the evolution of Egyptian radicalism.

⁵⁹ Barbara Zollner, "Prison Talk," p. 412.

Chapter 4: The Second Phase: Islamic Resurgence, Revolutionary Islamism and the Radical *Jam 'at*, 1971-1981

The Arab defeat in the war of 1967, the failure of Arab nationalism, the death of Nasser and the drastic changes in Egyptian policy made under the reign of Sadat marked a new phase in the course of Egyptian history, and, subsequently, a new phase in the development of radicalism and militant thought in Egypt. During the Nasser era, Islamism would be eclipsed by Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism, ideologies that offered hope and promise to Arabs for freedom, autonomy, progress, and the restoration of power and prestige to the Arab world. As these ideas captured the hearts and minds of most Egyptians, Egypt's most influential Islamists were political prisoners, many of whom were executed or died during their imprisonment. The Egyptian Islamists who had escaped imprisonment, torture and execution were driven underground and would become a peripheral minority, exercising little influence over a society that was, for the most part, enthralled with Nasser and the promises of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism. While many Egyptians thought of Nasser as the liberator and hero of the Arabs, Egypt's Islamists would come to see his rule as an era of oppression, persecution, barbarism, and brutality.¹

Egypt's humiliating defeat in the 1967 war with Israel enfeebled the legitimacy and enthusiasm accumulated by Nasser. Rather than liberating Palestine from Israeli occupation, the Arabs were defeated and humiliated. Pan-Arabism had failed to unite the Arabs into a single state and had not persuaded them to accept Egyptian leadership. Rather than achieving cultural autonomy, it had appeared as if Western culture and values were destined to supplant Egypt's traditional ways, a development that was concerning

not only to Islamists but to many Egyptians of various political propensities.² Millions of Egyptians that had migrated from rural to urban areas faced displacing shifts in their lives. Increasing urbanization, an erosion of the middle class under Sadat's economic policies and a widening gap between social classes produced intense resentment among Egypt's lower and middle classes. The social, economic, and political problems in Egyptian society were deepening, and the official ideology and political establishment were incapable of explaining what was happening, while the government's proposed solutions were ineffective in dealing with these problems.³ According to leading Egyptian magazine *Rose al-Yusuf*: "The success of the revolution was due to the social class that turned to it. After the 1967 defeat, attitudes of the middle class turned to introversion, withdrawal, and silent political protest, which came to form the basis of the political rejectionist and religious groups."⁴ It was in such an environment that the second phase in the evolution of militant extremism in Egypt developed.

The period from the release of Islamist political prisoners in 1971, to Sadat's assassination in 1981, represents the second phase in the development of extremism in Egypt. During this phase, the radical theological precepts that had been developed in Nasser's prisons were transplanted into Sadat's Egypt, became the source of inspiration for a number of militant organizations, and manifested into a number of acts of terrorism.⁵ It was at this stage that political and socioeconomic grievances supplanted torture as fuel for the fire of radicalism. Sadat would revive the Muslim Brotherhood, end

¹ Barry Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, p. 15.

² See Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam*, pp. 1-15.

³ For one account on the loss of credibility of Nasserism see Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). See also, Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, pp. 15-16.

⁴ *Rose al-Yusuf*, "The Islamic Societies," (September 28, 1981).

the persecution of Islamists, and encourage increased visibility of Islamism in Egyptian civil society and participation in the political process, so long as they were willing to live within the rules of the Sadat system. Nevertheless, Nasser's era of torture and oppression had conceived and left behind a series of theological doctrines that would be embraced and utilized by the religious revolutionary and political rejectionist groups of the Sadat era and would become the foundation of extremist political-religious belief systems and the justification for subsequent acts of violence.

As a result of the persecution of Islamists during the Nasser era, many of Egypt's Islamists, including those released from prison as well as the younger generation whom they influenced, would come to inexorably regard the Egyptian state as the enemy and would become unyielding in their revolutionary ambitions. Sayyid Qutb's idea of contemporary *jahiliyyah* would become the standard principle through which militants would interpret the Egyptian state and society as well as its growing socioeconomic troubles.

Although many of Egypt's Islamists saw Sadat's policies as an opportunity to gain a foothold in the Egyptian political process and pressure the government into making the necessary changes to establish an Islamic state, other Islamists saw Sadat's government as a continuation of *jahiliyyah*, a system not worthy of participation in and a system that could only be removed by force. The death of Nasser and the relatively lenient policies of his successor Anwar Sadat failed to reverse the damage that was done in the Nasser years and did not extinguish the fire of radicalism, a fire that would be fuelled by events such as Sadat's visit to Israel and the subsequent signing of Camp

⁵ The three major acts of terrorism during this phase was the kidnapping and murder of Muhammad al-Dhahabi, a former minister of *Awqaf* in 1977 by the Takfir wal Hijra, the attempted coup in

David Accords in 1978. This chapter will trace the development of extremism during the Sadat era and define the characteristics of this second phase.

The Egypt of Sadat was antithetical to Nasser's Egypt in many respects, including economic, domestic, and foreign policy, as well as in the political propensities of Egypt's masses. The first part of this chapter will discuss the changes to the Egyptian state and society under Sadat. The second part of this chapter will examine the question of reform versus revolution among Egypt's Islamist movements. The third, fourth, and fifth sections will explore the emergence and trace the theological thought of the three extremist militant groups that emerged in the Sadat era: *Jama'at al-Faniyyah al-Askariyyah*, *al-Takfir wal Hijra*, and *al-Jihad al-Islami*.

There are a number of features that distinguish the first phase in the development of extremist thought in Egypt from the second phase. During the first phase, political Islamism was marginalized within Egyptian society and existed in the shadow of Nasserism. In the second phase, Islamism would experience large scale resurgence and would once again become a popular political alternative to much of Egypt's disillusioned masses. During the first phase, Egypt's Islamists were violently repressed and driven underground. In the second phase, the freedoms of Islamists would be largely restored as Sadat would make Islam a key feature of his ideological emphasis, declaring Egypt to be a nation of "Science and Religion" and encouraging increased visibility of Islamist groups and their participation in civil society and in the political process. During the first phase, militant thought was little more than a few obscure and newly developed theological doctrines particular to a fringe group of imprisoned Islamists. Those who subscribed to these theological doctrines possessed virtually no organizational or

1974 by the Islamic Liberation Organization, and the assassination of Sadat in 1981 by the Islamic Jihad.

operational viability and used these doctrines merely as a means to come to terms with their circumstances. In the second phase, these theological doctrines would be further developed into complete political-religious belief systems and those who subscribed to these doctrines would form several organized militant groups that would successfully carry out acts of terrorism in their quest to seize the reins of power in Egypt and implement an Islamic state. During the first phase, radical theological doctrines were relatively exclusive to the tortured and imprisoned Islamists. In the second phase, these ideas would be adopted by a younger generation of Islamists who had never experienced the brutality of Nasser's persecution. During the first phase, imprisonment, persecution and torture defined the grievances of Egypt's militants. During the second phase, these grievances would be supplanted by Egypt's deepening social, economic, and political problems and intense dissatisfaction with the political establishment, problems that were interpreted to be a direct result of a *jahili* system of government and could only be solved through the destruction of the *jahili* system in its entirety and the establishment of an Islamic state or Caliphate. However, although Egypt's political and social landscape would change drastically and the grievances of Egypt's extremists would come to be defined by different circumstances, Islamic theology, epistemology, and juridical-religious thought would continue to serve as the conduit through which radical thought was developed, articulated and justified.

Egypt Under Sadat: De-Nasserization and Islamic Resurgence

When Nasser's vice-President Sadat was confirmed as President in October of 1970, he was viewed by most of Nasser's senior lieutenants as a weak and easily controllable man who would only serve as a temporary leader until Nasser's true

successor emerged.⁶ Sadat would surprise his political opponents, proving to be a shrewd political manipulator, quickly purging his opposition, consolidating his power and beginning large scale de-Nasserization and a complete reversal of Nasserist domestic, economic and foreign policy under the slogan of the “Corrective Revolution.”⁷

Sadat faced two immediate and sensitive political challenges. First, Sadat hoped to bring Egypt into the Western camp in general and into an alliance with the United States in particular.⁸ Sadat’s political strategy was centered on the belief that Egypt’s future success depended on large scale injections of capital, which would be used to create massive infrastructural and industrial developments. These developments would create an economy and infrastructure capable of dealing with Egypt’s growing population and land pressure.⁹ Sadat believed that only Western nations, particularly the United States, were capable of providing the financial resources and technological expertise required to achieve the level of development that he saw as necessary to Egypt’s success.¹⁰ Moreover, Sadat apparently believed that the United States was the only nation capable of resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict through applying political, economic, or even military pressure on Israel.¹¹

Implementation of this strategy required both an ideological shift, away from the

⁶ David Hirst and Irene Beeson, *Sadat*, (Binghamton: Vail-Ballou Press, 1981), pp. 56-59, Mohamed Heikal, *Autumn of Fury: The Assassination of Sadat*, (New York: Random House, 1983), pp. 37-51.

⁷ Hamied Ansari, *Egypt: The Stalled Society*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp. 153-181, Derek Hopwood, *Egypt*, pp. 105-121.

⁸ Abd al-Monein Said Aly and Manfred W. Wenner, “Modern Islamic Reform Movements: The Muslim Brotherhood in Contemporary Egypt,” *Middle East Journal* vol. 36 no. 3 (Summer: 1982), p. 355. See also, John Waterbury, *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat: The Political Economy of Two Regimes*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

⁹ *Ibid.* See also, William Baker, *Sadat and After: Struggles for Egypt’s Political Soul*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), Mark Cooper, *The Transformation of Egypt*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982) and Kirk Beattie, *Egypt During the Sadat Years*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

national socialist emphases of Nasserism and a removal of Egypt from the Soviet orbit of influence and into the Western orbit, as well as an economic shift, away from the protectionist economic policies of Nasser and into a more capitalist based economy. Furthermore, this strategy would also require a marginalization of movements from the Egyptian Left, some of which were strongly Arab nationalist in their foreign policy, egalitarian in their domestic policy, and represented the only viable contender to seize the reins of power in the aftermath of Nasser's death. In order to secure an economic partnership with Western nations, Sadat would opt for the *infitah* (open door) policy, allowing unrestricted foreign investments from the West. Sadat appeared to have been aware that the *infitah* would inevitably increase the gap between social classes and erode the position of the middle class, a situation which could be easily exploited by the political Left. To circumvent this threat, the Left would have to be confronted and marginalized.

To consolidate his power and gain support for his new strategy, Sadat would also be forced to develop and promote an ideological emphasis to fill the void left by Nasserism and to secure new political allies. For a variety of pragmatic reasons, Sadat would choose Islam. Declaring Egypt to be a nation of "Science and Religion," Sadat hoped to marginalize his political opponents from the Egyptian Left, secure the Islamists as political allies, use them to further combat the political left, and ensure continued financial assistance from Saudi Arabia, upon which Egypt had become increasingly dependent.¹²

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² For a detailed analysis see Gil Feiler, *Economic Relations Between Egypt and the Gulf Oil States, 1967-2000*, (Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2003).

According to Barry Rubin, “Sadat’s promotion of Islam was not merely opportunistic. He had pre-revolutionary ties to the Brotherhood and prized his reputation as a man of Islamic piety, an image he would develop into that of the ‘believing president.’” However, Rubin also notes that Sadat had been a member of the tribunals which had earlier destroyed the Muslim Brotherhood and that the Brotherhood’s leaders were aware that their freedom could be quickly withdrawn if they displeased him.

In May of 1971, Sadat ordered the release of the Muslim Brothers still being detained, including the Supreme Leader of the Brotherhood Hasan al-Hudaybi and his future successor Omar al-Tilmisani. Sadat would involve members of the Muslim Brotherhood in the drafting of his new “Permanent Constitution” of September 11, 1971, which stated that “the principles of the Islamic *Shari’ah* are a principal source of legislation.”¹³ Under Sadat, Islam would become a compulsory subject in schools as well as in university curriculum. Sadat’s government would launch two Islamic publications, *al-Liwa’ al-Islami* (“The Islamic Banner”), and *al-Urwah al-Wuthqah* (“The Firm Tie”). Construction of mosques increased on military bases and the army even offered to pay the expenses of soldiers participating in Hajj and ‘Umrah pilgrimages¹⁴ The official ‘*Ulama* and faculty of Al-Azhar were given increased funding and encouraged to participate in civil society. Throughout Egypt, posters of Sadat could be found with the caption “The Believing President” (*al-Ra’is al-Mu’min*).

Sadat’s encouragement of Islamist visibility and participation in civil society would dovetail with an increasing number of Egyptian Muslims, turning to Islamism as a viable political alternative in the wake of the failure of Nasserism. The defeat of June

¹³ *The Permanent Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt*, (Cairo Ministry of Information, nd.)

¹⁴ Rubin. *Islamic Fundamentalism*, p. 20.

1967 had undermined the legitimacy and competence of the Egyptian regime and threw serious doubts on the effectiveness of the Arab nationalist ideology. Massive political reorientation took place as “a serious debate as to the relevance of the country’s major values took place; usually Islam was seen as the only alternative to such other ideologies as socialism and Arab nationalism, even by high-ranking members of the government.”¹⁵ According to Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “Following the Arab defeat of 1967, a tidal wave of religiosity swept the country.”¹⁶ Egyptian writer Mustafa ‘Ashur notes that the Egyptian youth of the 1970s were desperate for a dream to cling on to and a project to fill the vacuum left by the 1967 defeat. Egyptian youth who had previously belonged to nationalist and leftist organizations, began joining Islamist groups en masse. More religiously-inclined youth began to dream of the establishment of an Islamic state and a Caliphate and began striving to make this a reality.¹⁷

On the surface, Sadat’s strategy of attempting to ally his regime with Egypt’s Islamists and their growing ranks was a shrewd political strategy. However, Sadat had failed to convince many Islamists of his commitment to Islam. For a number of Islamists, Sadat’s efforts were little more than lip service to Islam and Sadat’s regime was merely a continuation of Nasser’s *jahiliyyah*. The mention of Islam in the new constitution and in the regime’s slogans was seen as nothing more than a diversion from a corrupt, *jahili* regime. Sadat had severely underestimated a growing current of Islamists who used *Milestones* as their inspiration and would only be satisfied with the complete dismantling

¹⁵ Abd al-Monein, et. al., “Modern Islamic Reform Movements,” p. 345.

¹⁶ Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “Egypt’s Islamic Militants,” p. 10.

¹⁷Mustafa ‘Ashur, “Syed Imam: Reviving Bloody History,” translated by Ahmed el-Gharbawi, *IslamOnline*, Online: Available: http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1199279321027&pagename=Zone-English-Living_Shariah%2FLSELayout, Accessed, January 19, 2010.

of the Western *jahiliyyah* political system and the implementation of a Caliphate governing by absolute *Shari'ah* law.

Islamism in the Sadat Era: Reform vs. Revolution

The resurgence of Islamism in Sadat's Egypt would come to be defined by two distinct trends: reformist Islamist movements such as the newly reoriented Muslim Brotherhood and revolutionary Islamist movements, which would become the basis of Egypt's extremist militant groups. Reformist Islamism in Sadat's Egypt is best exemplified by the Muslim Brotherhood, which after 1971, transformed itself from a revolutionary movement to a reform movement. In 1971 Sadat met with a delegation from the Muslim Brotherhood at the Janaklis rest house in Alexandria and offered them an alliance. By 1975, Sadat had issued a full pardon to all imprisoned members of the Muslim Brotherhood and in 1976, the Brotherhood were permitted to publish their periodical *al-Da'wah*. Understanding the futility of armed revolt, the Brotherhood, under the leadership of Hasan al-Hudaybi and later under the leadership of Omar al-Tilmisani, denounced violence and terrorism and advocated political pluralism and strong parliamentarianism. Although Sadat had not granted the Brotherhood legal status, their long-term strategic goal was to re-establish their structure and influence. The Brotherhood's leaders would define the movement's role as "watchmen" or "guardians," who would prevent the government from straying from principles of Islam. In other words, the Brotherhood constituted itself as "an Islamic pressure group."¹⁸

The Brotherhood sought to gradually attain legal status as a political party and to use the parliamentary system to implement the changes that would eventually bring about an Islamic state, changes that they believed would be demanded by the popular will of

Egyptians. This view was summarized by al-Tilmisani's successor, Muhammad Ahmad Abu al-Nasr: "As Muslims, the government officials are not really against the implementation of *Shari'ah*; it is just that there are pressures to delay its implementation. In the end, however, only what is right prevails; everything else disappears."¹⁹ Over the next three decades, through an unrelenting commitment to peaceful and legal means and shrewd political maneuvers, such using the Wafd and other political parties as conduits for their popular base, the Brotherhood would build an impressive institutional base and carve themselves a strong niche in Egyptian politics.²⁰ However, not all of Egypt's Islamists would share the Brotherhood's patience and belief in the good will and Islamic thinking of Egypt's government officials. According to Saad Eddin Ibrahim, the Brotherhood's decision to discard violence and dedicate the organization to peaceful, legal efforts "was preceded by heated debates among the membership inside and outside Nasir's prisons. Some younger members never accepted the new strategy of 'non-violence' and became the founders of the new *jama'at* and *jam'iyat* as well as a number of relatively apolitical Islamic reform groups."²¹

Qutbian theory, which rejected the idea of political reform in its entirety, would become the foundation of Egypt's revolutionary Islamist movements, which subsequently, became the source of Egypt's radical militant groups. The concept of contemporary *jahiliyyah* and its corollary instrument of *takfir* served as the core ideas that separated the revolutionary Islamist movements from the reform movements.

¹⁸ Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, p. 31.

¹⁹ 'Umar 'Abd al-Sami, "I want a Party, The Brotherhood Did Not Leave the Wafd and Did Not Join the Liberal Party," *Al-Musawwar*, (May 2, 1986), pp. 16-19.

²⁰ See Mona El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, no. 37 (2005), pp. 373-395, and Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, p. 34

²¹ Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Egypt's Islamic Activism in the 1980s," *Third World Quarterly* (April 1988), p. 641.

Whereas the reformist Islamist movements believed that political pressure could force the regime to implement *Shari'ah*, and gradually bring about the changes needed to establish an Islamic state, revolutionary Islamist movements believed that reforming the *jahili* regime was an impossibility and that it could only be removed by force. As Sayyid Qutb had written: “*Jahili* society, because of its *jahili* characteristics, is not worthy to be compromised with... We will not change our own values and concepts either more or less to make a bargain with this *jahili* society. Never!”²²

In an atmosphere characterized by deepening social and economic problems and the “tidal wave of religiosity” sweeping over Egypt, Qutb’s writings had convinced some Islamists that any and all systems of government not based purely on *Shari'ah*, including democracy, were in violation of God’s sovereignty over earth and were thus systems of *jahiliyyah*. Western systems of government, including democracy, were seen as “the great disease,” which had brought mankind to “the brink of a precipice.”²³ Any social, economic, or political problems could be interpreted as symptoms of this greater disease.

The Islamist revolutionaries of the Sadat era believed that the *jahili* regime was consumed by its own power and corruption. In the revolutionary view, these *jahili* rulers would never willingly hand over the reins of power to Islam and would repress, corrupt and persecute its opponents, taking whatever measures were necessary to remain in power. In this sense, as Muhammad Abdul Salaam Faraj would later argue: “Rulers establish their governments by power,” and would “disappear only at sword-point.”²⁴ Because these *jahili* rulers would never willingly give up their power, *jahiliyyah* could

²² Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 21.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁴ Muhammad Faraj, *Al-Faridah*, p. 14.

only be destroyed through violent *jihad*. One Egyptian revolutionary Islamist writer succinctly summarized the position of Egypt's radical revolutionaries as follows:

The *jahiliyyah* does not permit its enemies... to destroy it... How can the Islamic movement use the methods of *jahiliyyah* to destroy *jahiliyyah*?... These institutions are secular *jahiliyyah* institutions arising from secular concepts found in a secular constitution, which must be erased from the face of the earth so that the structure of Islam may be built on it once again.²⁵

Dr. Omar Abdul Rahman, the spiritual advisor to the Islamic Jihad that issued the formal religious decree (*fatwa*) authorizing the assassination of Sadat, concurred:

Muslims thus have a right to rebel against every unjust and despotic ruler. We are convinced to the point of certainty that those despotic rulers will never step down, or change their despotic ways because they were advised to do so or because they were invited to attend international conferences... That is why Muslims must rebel against them... We are not being fooled by the democracy whose praises are being sung. Democracy is a false and misleading phenomenon. God commands us to rebel against those oppressors. He says, 'Fight against them until idolatry is no more and Allah's religion reigns supreme.'²⁶

The Egyptian extremists of the Sadat era were not merely political reactionaries, but were strong believers in a set of powerful theological ideas, ideas that had been born under the torture and persecution of Nasser.

For Qutb and his followers, the solution was clear: "When the purpose is to abolish the existing system and replace it with a new system, then it stands to reason that this new system should also come into the battlefield as an organized movement and a viable group."²⁷ The various radical militant groups that began to form throughout Egypt would come to see themselves as the vanguard prophesized by Qutb and motivated by the

²⁵ Samir Irshadi, "Islam in Egypt is Shaking the Dust Off Itself and Moving Forward Unrelentlessly," *Kayhan al-Arabi*, (February 21, 1987), *Translated in Joint Publications Research Service Report (JPRS): Near East/South Asia Report (NES)*, (April 10, 1987).

belief that “wherever an Islamic community exists... it has a God-given right to step forward and take control of the political authority so that it may establish the Divine system on earth.”²⁸

Although Sadat’s efforts to secure the Islamists as political allies were initially successful²⁹, he had drastically underestimated the power of the idea of contemporary *jahiliyyah* and the uncompromising demand among many Islamists for the immediate implementation of an Islamic state and Caliphate. Among the Islamist revolutionary movements, Sadat’s efforts to secure Egypt’s Islamists as political allies would produce the opposite of the intended result. With the increased freedom afforded to Islamist activity, books such as Sayyid Qutb’s *Milestones*, Muhammad Qutb’s *The Jahiliyyah of the 20th Century*, and Jabir Rizq’s *The Slaughter of the Muslim Brothers in Nasser’s Prisons*, filled the shelves of bookstores throughout Cairo. Many Islamist revolutionaries openly preached violent revolution in mosques and on university campuses.³⁰ Rather than convincing the revolutionary Islamists that Sadat was a “believing president” and an ally of Islam, these freedoms provided a public and open venue for discourse on the theories of contemporary *jahiliyyah* and the need to destroy Egypt’s *jahili* political system. Under Nasser, the brutal repression of Islamists prevented the *jahiliyyah* theorists and *takfiris* from developing any organizational or operational viability. Under the freedoms of Sadat’s Egypt, Muslim extremists and militants were able to form organized political

²⁶ “Interview with Dr. ‘Umar Abd al-Rahman,” *Al-‘Ahd*, (January 17, 1987), translated in *JPRS: NES*, (March 17, 1987), pp. 9-10.

²⁷ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, pp. 46-47.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

²⁹ For instance, the Brotherhood supported Sadat in the 1974 election. For a more detailed discussion see Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “An Islamic Alternative in Egypt: The Muslim Brotherhood and Sadat,” *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 4, pp. 75-93 and Israel Elad-Altman, “Democracy, Elections and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, vol. 4 (2006), pp. 24-37.

resistance groups, while the increased religiosity among Egyptians, combined with deepening socioeconomic problems, provided fertile grounds for recruitment.

Qutbian theory provided a means through which a revolutionary political idea - that of violently overthrowing the state to seize power and implement a new political system - could be made to conform to the theological, epistemological, and ontological frameworks of Islamic thought. Using Islamic juridical-religious methodology, a number of charismatic revolutionary Islamists, well-learned in the Qur'an, *Ahadith*, and *Sirah*, would use Qutbian theory as a foundation to develop their own belief systems, systems that defined the three major terrorist groups of the Sadat era: The *Takfir wal Hijra*, *Jama'at al-Faniyyah al-'Askariyyah* or the Technical Military Group, and the Islamic Jihad.

Jama'at al-Faniyyah al-'Askariyyah

The first of these three organizations to come to the attention of the Egyptian authorities was the Technical Military Group, an obscure militant cell led by Salah Saryyah. Saryyah, a member of the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, was a Palestinian, born near Haifa, who had moved to Jordan and eventually settled in Cairo in 1971. Preaching to students at the universities of Cairo, Alexandria, al-Azhar, and the Cairo Technical Military Academy, Saryyah accumulated a following of disciples and began planning a coup d'etat. The Technical Military Group would choose April 18, 1974 as the date of their coup. Saryyah's group had planned that certain members of his cell, who were also students at the Technical Military Academy in Heliopolis, would seize control of the academy's armory, attack the presidential cortege that was scheduled

³⁰ On the activity of Islamist revolutionaries on university campuses, see Barry Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, pp. 63-78.

to pass nearby and assassinate Sadat.³¹ The plot failed when guards on the grounds of the Military Academy opened fire on the mutineers. The group was effectively destroyed, and ceased to exist when its members were arrested and Sariyyah, as well as his top aide, were sentenced to death and executed.

Sariyyah's written manifesto *Iman* (Faith) had never gained widespread readership or exposure in Egypt and has become virtually impossible to obtain, making it difficult to analyze his theological thought. As David Sagiv notes: "Salah Sariyyah and his comrades did not leave behind any documents or writings from which one could gain a deeper understanding of their views, as the organization was based on absolute secrecy."³² However, in the early 1980s, Egyptian scholar Saad Eddin Ibrahim was granted access to extensively interview 21 imprisoned members of the Technical Military Group, still carrying out their sentences. The information collected by Ibrahim verifies that the group's ideology was grounded in Islamic theological sources and developed using juridical-religious methodologies. According to Ibrahim, the core principles of the group's ideology was characterized by the axiomatic belief that mankind's sole purpose in life was carry out the will of God, and that the operational context of this purpose is clearly outlined in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. The carrying out of God's will was not limited to individual responsibility but it was the religious obligation of righteous Muslims to establish a social order in the moral image of the Qur'an. Members of the group maintained that all of Egypt's external setbacks and internal socioeconomic ills were a

³¹ Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism*, p. 94.

³² David Sagiv, *Fundamentalism and Intellectuals in Egypt, 1973-1993*, (London: Frank Cass, 1995), p. 52.

direct result of the regime's refusal to fully implement *Shari'ah* law.³³ In other words, the militants of the Technical Military Group interpreted all of Egypt's political and socioeconomic problems strictly within the parameters of Islamic sources and within the epistemological and ontological context of the Islamist worldview.

According to Ibrahim's interviewees, Sariyyah presided over a *shura* (consultation of jurists) council of 12 members. Sariyyah, as well as the 12 members of the council were regarded as the group's most well-learned in Islamic sources and thus the most qualified Islamic jurists. The group developed its strategies by using Islamic religious sources and the methodologies of *fiqh* to issue rulings on certain matters, and ratified these rulings through consensus (*ijma'*). According to Ibrahim: "Those interviewed could remember only one occasion when Sariyyah was unable to sway the council to his point of view: the timing of the violent attack on the regime. Sariyyah estimated their chances of success at the time as no more than 30 percent. All but one member argued that even if success was not assured, their action would be "an outrage for God," – propaganda by deed. Sariyyah was obliged to go along in accordance with the *shura* principle which the group had adopted from the very beginning."³⁴

The ideology of the Technical Military Group, like Egypt's other militant groups, was developed using theology. The grievances of its members, which they identified as "the moral decay, poverty, disease, illiteracy, and spread of vices" in Egyptian society, were interpreted and hashed out entirely within the epistemological context of Islamic sources, and were blamed on a political leaders who had "no fear of God" and deviated

³³ Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Egypt's Islamic Militants," p. 7. See also, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Groups: Methodological Note and Preliminary Findings," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 12 (1980), pp. 423-453.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

from the correct path embodied in the *Shari'ah*. Their perceived solution to these grievances: the overthrow of the corrupt *jahili* regime through violent *jihad*, and implementation of a Caliphate ruling by *Shari'ah* law, was developed entirely through a *shura* council of members who considered themselves qualified and legitimate Islamic jurists, and used the instruments of Islamic juridical-religious methodology to justify their actions.

Al-Takfir wal Hijra

In 1977, another extremist group, *al-Takfir wal Hijra*, would capture Egypt's attention. *Al-Takfir's* origins can be traced to a theological debate among Nasser's prisoners following the execution of Qutb in 1965. Having argued that Nasser's Egypt was a *jahili* society, Qutb maintained that Muslims must engage in *tafseel* (detachment, separation or withdrawal) from the evils of this *jahiliyyah*.³⁵ Following Qutb's execution in 1965, a bitter debate broke out among many of the imprisoned Muslim Brothers regarding the implied meaning of *tafseel*. More moderate Brothers interpreted withdrawal to mean only spiritual detachment from the moral decay and corruption that plagued society, while more militant Brothers understood it to mean complete and total separation from Egyptian society in its entirety.³⁶ Led by Sheikh Ali Abduh Isma'il, a young al-Azhar graduate, members of the *mufasala kamila* or 'total separation' faction, preached a complete excommunication of all Egyptians from the fold of Islam. Using Qutb's theory of *jahiliyyah*, Isma'il developed and validated a completely arbitrary practice of *takfir*. If, as Sayyid Qutb argued, Egyptian society was in a state of *jahiliyyah*, Isma'il reasoned

³⁵ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, pp. 31-35.

³⁶ Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism*, p. 74.

that those living in and embracing this *jahili* society must be regarded as *jahili* themselves, and as such, must be deemed as apostates.

Drawing upon early Islamic history, Isma'il's faction compared their position to that of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers in pagan Mecca. Like the Prophet and his followers, they argued, they were being persecuted by a *jahili* society. Just as the Prophet and his followers had made an exodus (*Hijra*), from Mecca to Medina, only to return and conquer Mecca when they had built up enough strength, so too would the members of the total separation faction make their own exodus from Egyptian society forming a new community of "true" Muslims who would gather new followers and build their strength until they were capable of overthrowing the *jahili* Egyptian regime and replacing it with an Islamic State. It was based on such thinking that the *Takfir wal Hijra* group emerged in the early 1970s under the leadership of Shukri Mustafa, a member of Ali Isma'il's faction.

Fellow prisoners who did not swear their allegiance to Ali Isma'il were declared to be apostates. Members of the opposing factions in the prison mutually refused to greet each other, and at times came to blows, resulting in several interventions from Hasan al-Hudaybi. Al-Hudaybi eventually managed to convince Ali Isma'il of the errors in his thinking. Ismail later renounced *takfir* and the group eventually dissolved, but Shukri Mustafa adamantly clung to these views.³⁷

Shukri Mustafa was released from prison on October 16, 1971 and quickly began to establish a reputation in Islamist circles. Preaching the ideas that were developed in prison, Shukri established the Society of Muslims, later to be labeled by the Egyptian

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

press as *al-Takfir wal Hijra* or the Excommunication and Exodus.³⁸ By 1972, Shukri had gathered a significant number of followers, attracting the attention of the Intelligence Police. Early in 1973, several members of the Society of Muslims were arrested, and Shukri's writings were seized. The group then began wandering through the mountain grottoes of Egypt, actually implementing their own version of *hijra*.

In 1976, *al-Jihad al-Islami* began recruiting members from Shukri's society. Shukri, who considered leaving his group as equivalent to leaving Islam, deemed defectors from the Society of Muslims as apostates and thus subject to punishment by death. Shukri launched a campaign against dissidents in his group, attempting to arrest, try, and execute the defectors, sparking a police intervention. On July 3, 1977, after failing to successfully apprehend and administer trials to defectors from the group, the *Takfir wal Hijra* kidnapped Muhammad al-Dhahabi, a former Minister of *Awqaf*, hoping to gain leverage in the attempt to hold trials for *al-Takfir's* former disciples.³⁹ When the Egyptian government responded with further repression, the *Takfir wal Hijra* murdered al-Dhahabi. Shortly afterwards, hundreds of its members were arrested, and five members including Shukri Mustafa himself, were executed. Following Shukri's execution, the group ceased to exist.

Like Sariyyah's literature, texts written by Mustafa are not accessible. Mustafa's manifesto *Kitab al-Khalifa* (The Book of the Caliphate), which was held by Mustafa in manuscript form, was seized by the Egyptian Intelligence Police and never released to the public, making a full analysis of his theological thought difficult. In 1985, Rajab Madgur, a former member of *al-Takfir* published the monograph *Al-Takfir wal-Hijra*, in which he

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

discussed Mustafa's thought.⁴⁰ Mustafa's work was described as being primarily based on *Milestones*, with some of Mustafa's own extremist innovations added. Mustafa adopted an extreme literalist interpretation of the historical meaning of *jahiliyyah*, used in the context of the conflict between Muhammad and his companions and the pre-Islamic Arab pagans, and its contemporary applicability:

The only way to establish an Islamic state is according to the precepts of the Prophet of Islam. Thus there is no way to avoid the *Hijra* (exodus), because the death of the infidels and the defeat of their state cannot take place while the faithful still live among them. *Al-Sunnah* (the tradition) is that the Muslims will leave the land of the infidels. Only the infidels will remain, and only then will suffering come upon them.⁴¹

Mustafa's theological thought can also be assessed through the fragments of information available from his trial, which were analyzed in Kepel's work.⁴² The criminal trial of *al-Takfir wal Hijra* was held in three in camera sessions on the sixth, seventh, and eighth of November 1977.⁴³ When asked by the judge to explain his doctrine, Mustafa stated first that any knowledge that does not originate from the Qur'an is false and forbidden knowledge: "The Muslim is obligated to seek his path and knowledge before God alone, and so-called knowledge, which is actually no knowledge at all because it is not founded in the Lord, is forbidden."⁴⁴ In other words, Qur'anic epistemology was the only permitted form of knowledge.

Mustafa argued that the four major schools of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence had closed the doors of *ijtihad*, so that "they and their texts would become objects of veneration... they had indeed become idols (*asnam*) worshipped like the deities of a

⁴⁰ Madgur's book itself was not accessible to me, but is discussed briefly in David Sagiv, *Fundamentalism and Intellectuals*, pp. 47-49.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁴² Kepel, *Muslim Extremism*, pp. 77-81.

pagan pantheon.”⁴⁵ Since the *ulama* “closed the doors of *ijtihad*,” the history of Islam “has been the story of the *ulema*’s complicity with the princes. It now devolves upon Shukri, who has been chosen by God and is guided by Him on the Straight path, to reopen these doors, to interpret the Qur’an and *Sunnah* as he understands them, and to derive a Law from them”⁴⁶ Kepel’s analysis of Mustafa’s court transcripts confirms that like the Technical Military Group, *al-Takfir*’s ideology was rooted in theology, and in absurd interpretations of Islamic sources, which the militants believed to be products of legitimate Islamic jurisprudence.

During the second phase in the development of Muslim extremism in Egypt, the ideas of *takfir* and *jahiliyyah* were transplanted from the prisons of Nasser to Sadat’s Egypt, where these doctrines were adopted and further radicalized by a younger generation of militants. Certain historic circumstances - the failure of Nasserism, the defeat of 1967, and the resurgence of Islamism - would help popularize a revolutionary political idea: that of overthrowing the Egyptian state by force and implementing an Islamic system characterized by *Shar’iah* law. The militant theological doctrines developed under torture in Nasser’s prisons, particularly those articulated in Qutb’s *Milestones*, became attractive to Egypt’s revolutionary Islamists and would give this political idea a foundation of theological legitimacy, through which the revolutionary ambitions of Egyptian radicals could be fitted into the framework of Islamic epistemology, ontology, and jurisprudence. Revolutionary Islamists who dreamed of the implementation of a Caliphate governing Egypt according to *Shari’ah* law, could

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

theologically justify a violent revolution using Qutbian *jahiliyyah* theory to legitimate arbitrary use of the instrument of *takfir*, and call for an armed *jihad* against the state.

Sadat's political gamble was to encourage the development of a socially conservative Islamist movement, and use al-Azhar and the state-controlled religious intelligentsia to promote a moderate, pro-government Islamic message. In exchange for their political support, Sadat would allow moderate Islamists considerable freedom and autonomy. It was up to the moderate Islamists to hold the line against the more radical interpretations of Islam.⁴⁷ The emergence of the Technical Military Group and *al-Takfir wal Hijra* sent shockwaves through Egypt and exposed the official clergy's inability to cope with the growing problem of radical theology. In 1977, after Sadat travelled to Israel to make peace, his relations with Egypt's Islamists were laid to waste.

For the duration of his tenure, Sadat had ignored the growing problem of militant extremism, underestimating its strength and refusing to accept the necessity of a confrontation with militant groups. One of his close advisors once warned "We ought to crack down before it's too late. Otherwise, they will have us all shot at the first opportunity."⁴⁸ Upon returning from Israel, Sadat would finally be convinced of the necessity for a campaign of repression. On September 2, 1981, Sadat would issue a decree ordering the arrests of 1,536 known and suspected militants. However, this effort would prove to be too little too late and would not protect him from murder at the hands of the *Jihad al-Islami*, (Islamic Jihad), the group responsible for his assassination and a

⁴⁷ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 83.

⁴⁸ Eric Rouleau, Judith Tucker and Jim Paul "Who Killed Sadat?" *MERIP Reports*, no. 103 (February 1982): 3-5.

group that exemplifies the characteristics of the second phase in the development of radical theology.

Al-Jihad al-Islami

The leader and chief ideologue of the *Jihad al-Islami*, was a young engineer by the name of Muhammad Abdul Salam Faraj, who worked as an administrator at the Cairo University. Born in 1956, Faraj was only eight years old when *Milestones* was published and had only reached the age of twenty five when he helped orchestrate the assassination of Sadat. The theology of the *Jihad al-Islami* is captured in Faraj's infamous pamphlet, *al-Faridah al-Gha'iba* (The Neglected Obligation) which became the manifesto of *al-Jihad al-Islami*.

Building upon the established doctrines of *jahiliyyah* and *takfir*, Faraj developed an extremely violent radical theology, giving almost exclusive attention to violent *jihad*. The context of Faraj's discourse was implicit in the title of his pamphlet. The obligation that has been neglected, according to Faraj, is the obligation of military *jihad*, which he saw as "the only way to the return and the establishment of the glory of Islam."⁴⁹ Clearly influenced by Qutb's indictment of Egyptian society as being in a state of *jahiliyyah*, Faraj took this idea further, writing that "the idols of this world can only be made to disappear through the power of the sword."⁵⁰ For Faraj, the image cultivated by Sadat as the "Believing President," was a worthless assertion against the fact that Egypt was not being governed by *Shari'ah* law. As such, Faraj argued that *jihad* of the sword was an obligation for all true Muslims:

⁴⁹ Muhammad Abdul Salam Faraj, "Al-Faridah al-Ghaiba," translated by J.G.G. Jansen in J.G.G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty*, p. 161.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

“The establishment of an Islamic State is an obligation for the Muslims... if such a state cannot be established without war, then this war is an obligation as well.”⁵¹

More shocking than this was the capricious criterion outlined by Faraj regarding who should be targets of this obligatory war. Faraj wrote that “the rulers of this age are in apostasy from Islam even though they pray and fast and claim to be Muslim. It is a well established rule of Islamic Law that the punishment of an apostate will be heavier than the punishment of someone who is by origin a *kafir*... an apostate has to be killed in all circumstances, he does not have the right to profess his new religion against the payment of a *gizya* (head tax).”⁵² Here, the instrument of *takfir* was taken to violent new heights. If, according to Faraj, a Muslim could be declared as an apostate even if he prays, fasts, and professes to be a Muslim, then what was to be made of Muslims who missed one of their daily prayers, did not fast, or did not pay *zakat* (obligatory charity)? Faraj answers this question in a shocking manner:

If such people make a public formal confession of their faith by saying that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Messenger, but, at the same time refuse to carry out the five daily prayers, then it is obligatory to fight them. If they refuse to pay the religious tax (*zakat*), it is obligatory to fight them until they pay *zakat*. Similarly, if they refuse to keep the fast of the month of Ramadan or to perform pilgrimage to the *Ka'bah*, and similarly if they refuse to forbid abominations or adultery or gambling or anything else that is forbidden by the laws of Islam. Similarly if they refuse to compel to what is good and to prohibit what is bad and refuse to fight against the infidels (*jihad al-kuffar*) until they surrender to the Muslims and humbly pay the *gizya*.⁵³

With *al-Faridah al-Gha'iba*, Faraj may have developed the most extreme and violent understanding of *takfir* in Islamic history. Even the most radical factions of the *Khawarij* did

⁵¹ Faraj, “al-Faridah,” p. 165.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171.

not appear to have taken *takfir* to this extreme.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Faraj incorporated into the doctrines of *takfir*, and *jahiliyyah* his own innovation that violent *jihad* is an immediate religious obligation in the contemporary context.⁵⁵

Al-Jihad al-Islami began to form in 1979, absorbing members from various other radical groups.⁵⁶ In 1980, the leaders of *al-Jihad* formed a *majlis al-shura*, or consultative council, with Faraj as its *amir*.⁵⁷ Among its members were Abbud Abdul-Latif al-Zumor, an Egyptian Army Colonel who provided military expertise to the group and Khalid al-Islambouli, a bright former medical student from a highly regarded family and a graduate of the Military Academy with honors.⁵⁸ Motivated, in part, by Sadat's visit to Israel, and the subsequent signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978, but likely more motivated by Sadat's September 2, 1981 decree ordering the arrest of militants, Khalid al-Islambouli proposed to Faraj a plot to assassinate Sadat. Al-Islambouli had been put in command of an armored transport vehicle that was scheduled to participate in a military parade, commemorating Egypt's crossing of the Suez Canal in the 1973 War. Al-Islambouli saw this as a rare opportunity to get close to Sadat.⁵⁹ The plan and its feasibility was reviewed and approved by the leaders of the *Jihad al-Islami*, against the protests of Colonel al-Zumor who argued that the group was not yet ready for a full revolt against the government.⁶⁰ On

⁵⁴ The *Khawarij* declared *takfir* on the basis of committing a 'grave sin' not simply for the trivial reasons given by Faraj.

⁵⁵ Groups such as the *Takfir wal Hijra* supported a delayed rather than an immediate *jihad*. They understood themselves to be in a position of weakness, and hoped to build strength until the time for *jihad* was appropriate.

⁵⁶ This included members from a *tanzim* founded by a teenaged Ayman al-Zawahiri in the mid-1960's following the execution of Sayyid Qutb. See Nemat Guenena, *The Jihad: An Islamic Alternative in Egypt*, (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1986), p. 53. See also Mustapha Kamel al-Sayyid, "The Other Face of the Islamist Movement," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, no. 33 (January 2003), pp 3-28.

⁵⁷ Nemat Guenena, *The Jihad*, p. 53.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 68-69.

⁵⁹ Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism*, p. 210.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 210-212.

October 6, 1981, after a bullet riddled Sadat fell to the ground, al-Islambouli declared: “I killed the Pharaoh!”

Conclusion

It was the imprisoned Muslim Brothers of the Nasser era who had paved the way for Faraj and others. Faraj, Sarriyyah, and Mustafa were theological innovators, but only in the sense that they had built upon the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of *jahiliyyah* and *takfir*, precepts that were developed and conceptualized by the imprisoned and tortured Muslim Brothers of the Nasser era. Without the torture endured by the Muslim Brothers in Nasser’s prisons, it is unlikely that the doctrines of *takfir* and *jahiliyyah* would have developed. Without a clear conceptual definition of *jahiliyyah* and *takfir*, later generations of militants, such as Faraj would not have had a tangible theological framework from which to develop their ideologies. The conditions in Nasser’s prisons had started the fire of radical theology in Egypt, a fire that would not remain confined in the isolation of these prisons.⁶¹ For the generation of radicals who had never experienced the brutality of Egyptian prisons, these radical theological doctrines would become a means to justify the use of force to achieve their dream of an Islamic Caliphate that would erase Egypt’s problems and create a perfect Islamic society.

There is often a temptation among students of Egypt’s history to view extremist revolutionary movements strictly in a political and socioeconomic context. This approach is certainly justifiable, given the fact that the political and socioeconomic circumstances played a key role in defining and shaping the development of Egyptian extremism. Organized extremist groups emerged at a time when Nasserism had failed, Egypt had been

⁶¹ It should be noted here that this was an experience specific to Egypt. The emergence of radical theology in other regions warrants separate country by country case studies.

defeated and humiliated by Israel and the hopes and dreams of Arabs were shattered. Egyptians turned to Islam to fill the ideological void left behind from the failure of Nasserism and looked to Islamism as a solution to a plethora of growing economic and social problems. The refusal of the Egyptian regime to immediately address these problems by adopting the Islamist ideology and implementing an Islamic state, led to impatience, extremism and eventually, to violence and terrorism. As such, extremists have often been viewed as political reactionaries. Such an approach, although not entirely incorrect, ignores the immeasurable importance of the theological dimension of extremism. Although the ideologies of men like Qutb, Abdul Rahman, and Faraj were largely political, these ideologies, as well as the means through which they could be achieved, were developed using the sources and methods of theological thought.

Chapter 5: Failure and Disbandment: The Final Phase

Like the Manshiyah Park incident of 1954, the assassination of Sadat in 1981 would become another turning point in the development of militant extremism in Egypt and trigger a new phase in its historical trajectory. The failure of extremist militants to seize power from the Egyptian government during the 1970s and 1980s and implement a theocratic dictatorship would lead to a reassessment of their strategy and tactics. Growing increasingly frustrated with their failures, Egypt's militants began pushing Qutbian doctrine to the extreme, developing new theological rulings that justified the use of violence against new targets. Whereas the militant groups in the previous two phases focused their attention almost exclusively on the state and on government officials, the third phase would see militants begin killing foreign tourists and Egyptian civilians.

This third phase is characterized by the development of a series of new tactics and strategies by the radical militant groups, eventually culminating in abandonment of the goal of seizing power in Egypt, a refocusing of their battle onto the West - particularly the United States - rather than the Egyptian regime, and the virtual disbandment of Egypt's extremist revolutionary groups as they were absorbed into global *Jihadi* movements, like *al-Qaida*. This chapter will explore the characteristics of this third and final phase, which continues to define the present state of Muslim extremism in Egypt.

In the early 1990s, Egypt's two remaining extremist groups: *al-Jihad* and *al-Jama'a al Islamiyya* (The Islamic Group) waged a war of attrition against the Mubarak regime, including attacks against tourists, assassinations of public figures and attempted

assassinations of government officials, including Mubarak himself.¹ By 1997, through the use of ruthless tactics, Mubarak's forces managed to crush the radical insurgency. As it became clear that challenging the Egyptian state militarily was a losing proposition, most of Egypt's extremists would join international *jihadist* groups such as Bin Laden's following and the revolutionary movement seeking to seize power in Egypt and implement an Islamic dictatorship would dissolve.

Under Mubarak, the widening gap between social classes that began under the *infitah*, would continue to expand and would be compounded by endemic corruption in all levels government. Large portions of Egypt's population fell into in poverty, while a number of Egyptians shamelessly lavished in tremendous wealth. The freedom that Islamists enjoyed under Sadat would be replaced with a return to repression, imprisonment and torture of any Islamists suspected of political dissidence. In an interview with Mary Anne Weaver, Omar Abdul Rahman would succinctly summarize the grievances of militants during the third phase:

There are many factors involved- political, economic, social and religious. People are suffering. They live below the poverty level, while Mubarak and his gang deposit billions of dollars in American and Swiss banks. The jails are full of Islamist prisoners who are tortured in the most heinous ways. And now even detention is not enough. Now he's begun killing people inside mosques. It's systematic now. Mubarak rules Egypt with an iron fist, under emergency law. People live in a police state."²

¹ Some notable attacks during this period include the assassination of Farag Fouda, an Egyptian intellectual, co-founder of the Egyptian Future Party, and an outspoken critic of Muslim extremism, as well as an attempted assassination of Naguib Mahfouz, the Arab World's only Nobel Laureate in literature.

² Mary Anne Weaver, *A Portrait of Egypt: A Journey Through the World of Militant Islam*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), pp. 116-117.

The State of Militant Groups after Sadat

Unlike the previous extremist groups of Egypt which were effectively wiped out after committing acts of terrorism, the much larger and more organized *al-Jihad* managed to survive the crackdown following Sadat's assassination and fell under the spiritual guidance of a middle-aged medical doctor named Ayman al-Zawahiri. Arrested in October of 1981, al-Zawahiri, one of the original founders of *al-Jihad* and an astute student of Muhammad Abd al-Salaam Faraj, was among 302 prisoners who were accused of aiding or planning the assassination of Sadat. Like his predecessors from the Nasser era, al-Zawahiri was subjected to brutal torture, which, according to Montassir al-Zayyat, al-Zawahiri's cellmate, lawyer and biographer: "transformed him from a relatively moderate force in *al-Jihad* to a violent and implacable extremist."³ Video footage from the opening day of the trial, December 4, 1982, captured al-Zawahiri screaming in broken English from behind the bars of a cage: "we suffered the severest inhuman treatment. They kicked us, they beat us, they whipped us with electric cables, they shocked us with electricity! They shocked us with electricity! And they used the wild dogs! And they used the wild dogs! And they hung us over the edges of the doors with our hands tied at the back!... So where is democracy? Where is freedom? Where is human rights? Where is justice? Where is justice? We will never forget! We will never forget!"⁴

While serving his three year prison sentence, al-Zawahiri would make the acquaintance of Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, accused by authorities of being a leader of

³ Montassir al-Zayyat, *Ayman al-Zawahiri Kama 'Arafstahoo*, (Cairo: Dar Misr al-Mahroosa, 2002), Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower*, p. 52.

⁴ Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower*, p. 55.

al-Jihad by virtue of his *fatwa* authorizing Sadat's murder.⁵ As a doctor of theology from al-Azhar and an unyielding extremist, Abdul Rahman was a militant theologian *par excellence*. His status as an *Azhar* graduate gave him a high level of religious credibility, while his knowledge of Islamic sources and jurisprudential methodology gave him the know-how to create whatever *fatwas* were needed to justify the use of any violent tactics he saw as necessary. Using the Qur'anic verses "Those who do not judge according to what Allah has revealed are disbelievers" and "Those who do not judge according to what Allah has revealed are wrong-doers,"⁶ Abdul Rahman reasoned that Sadat was an unbeliever and an apostate, since his government did not rule Egypt according to *Shari'ah* law. Abdul Rahman's declaration of Sadat as an 'unbeliever,' was essentially a license to kill him under the established *Shari'ah* punishment for apostasy, even though he claimed himself to be the "Believing President." Abdul Rahman had long been a spiritual advisor to both *al-Jihad* and *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya*, a group that had formed in the 1970s on Cairo's University campuses, and would begin engaging in acts of terrorism in the 1990s. By 1980, Abdul Rahman had become the *amir* of *al-Jama'a*. The theological and strategic development of militant extremism during the third phase would be defined primarily by al-Zawahiri and Abdul Rahman. Al-Zawahiri would help shape the strategic vision of the extremist militant movement, while Abdul Rahman's *fatwas* would give the extremists license to engage in whatever acts of violence were seen as necessary.

While in prison, *al-Jihad* and *al-Jama'a* began collaborating under the spiritual guidance of Abdul Rahman. Although both groups shared the common goal of destroying

⁵ Abdul Rahman would later be acquitted, but remained in prison for the three years that it took to complete the trial.

the *jahili* government and seizing power, this cooperation would be short-lived, due to stark differences in their ideology and tactics as well as disputes over leadership. Bitter debates ensued over the best method to achieve their revolution and over who should lead it. Al-Zawahiri's biographer and cellmate noted a heated exchange in which "Zawahiri pointed out that *Shari'a* states that the *amir* cannot be blind. Sheikh Omar countered that *Shari'a* also decrees that the *amir* cannot be a prisoner. The rivalry between the two men became extreme."⁷ Polarized by two discordant personalities, *al-Jihad* and *al-Jama'a* would fail to merge into a single organization, but would maintain a symbiotic relationship.⁸

For the earlier part of the 1980s, Egypt's most influential extremists remained in prison, with little operational capability. After their release, members of *al-Jihad* and *al-Jama'a*, would temporarily be engrossed with a new calling. As criminal convicts, unwelcome in their home country and under the watchful eye of Mubarak's intelligence police, a large number of *al-Jihad* and *al-Jama'a*'s ranks would flee Egypt and take up arms joining the resistance against the Soviets in Afghanistan.⁹ Both al-Zawahiri and Abdul Rahman would temporarily shift their focus away from the goal of an Egyptian revolution, to the Afghan cause.¹⁰

With most of Egypt's radicals either in prison or fighting alongside the Afghan *Mujahedin* (resistance fighters), the 1980s would be a largely uneventful decade for the Egyptian extremist revolutionary movements, save for a brief incident in 1987. In the

⁶ *Qur'an*, 5: 44-45.

⁷ Montassir al-Zayat, *Ayman al-Zawahiri*, p. 180, Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower*, p. 57.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ According to Rubin an estimated 300-700 members of *al-Jihad* travelled to Afghanistan to fight with the *Mujaheddin* against the Soviets. Barry Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, p. 157.

early 1980s, an estimated 30-70 members of *al-Jihad* formed an obscure new group, calling themselves *al-Najuna min al-Nar* (The Survivors from Hellfire or Those Who have been Spared from Hell).¹¹ Basing their theology on the Qutbian premise that the government was an illegitimate regime of infidels, The Survivors' issued a series of Islamic legal rulings that it was permissible to confiscate government funds and to kill government officials who did not observe *Shari'a* law. In 1987, the group's *amir*, Abd al-Qawi Muhammad Kazim, ordered the assassination of two former interior ministers Hasan Abu Basha, Nabawi Ismail, who was involved in anti-radical repression, and Makram Muhammad Ahmad, a newspaper editor for *al-Musawwar*, and outspoken critic of Muslim extremists.¹² The assassination attempts would fail, and the Survivors From Hellfire would be destroyed in the subsequent roundups, where most of its members were either killed or captured by the police.¹³

Although the 1980s were relatively uneventful years for terrorist activity in Egypt, several important developments would shape the future of the Egyptian extremist revolutionary movement, namely, the Afghan resistance against the Soviets from 1979-1988 and the development of new *fatwas*, justifying a range of new violent tactics, the majority of which would be the product of Omar Abdul Rahman.

Abdul Rahman, al-Zawahiri, the Afghan Mythology, and the “Greater” *Jahiliyyah*

In 1984, one year after Abdul Rahman's release, a journalist from the Arabic journal *al-Yamamah* managed to track down the sheikh in rural Egypt for an interview. When asked about his *fatwa* authorizing Sadat's murder, he replied: “Islam thinks that a

¹⁰Abdul Rahman would travel frequently to Pakistan and Afghanistan to help recruit fighters for the Afghan cause, and al-Zawahiri would travel to Afghanistan and volunteer as a medic. See pp. of this chapter

¹¹ Barry Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, p. 59.

ruler who commits an act that deviates from God is guilty of disobeying God. If a ruler does not rule according to the book of God and if he spurns the law of Islam, then he may be truly regarded as an unjust non-believer and a sinful ruler.”¹⁴ To emphasize his point Abdul Rahman cited the Quranic verses 44, 45 and 46 of *Surat al-Ma’ida* “Unbelievers are those who do not judge in accordance with Allah’s revelations... Transgressors are those who do not judge in accordance with Allah’s revelations... Evil-doers are those who do not base their judgements on Allah’s revelations.”¹⁵ The interviewer then asked if Abdul Rahman still subscribed to the same opinions, to which he replied: “The opinions I have after the trial are the same ones I had before the trial. I can say that my opinions have become more steadfast and forceful.” Abdul Rahman vowed to continue his efforts “I will preach among the people and I will advocate the will of God... with more power than I had before the trial. I know now for certain, more than I did before, that God defends those who believe. God grants victory to those who champion their faith.”¹⁶

Like most of his militant contemporaries, Abdul Rahman would find a new calling in the Afghan struggle against the Soviets, where he would focus his preaching. *The Boston Globe* would report that throughout the 1980s, the “Blind Sheikh,” was “a spiritual leader of the CIA-backed mujahedin.”¹⁷ Through his involvement with the recruitment of fighters for the Afghan cause, Abdul Rahman would form an absurd alliance. According to the *Atlantic Monthly*, Abdul Rahman “became involved with the

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ “Acquitted *al-Jihad* Member Discusses Case: Interview with Umar Abd al’Rahman,” *Al-Yamamah*, no. 825 (October 24, 1984), translated in *JPRS, Near East and South Asia Report*, (December 28, 1984), pp. 12-19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, *Qur’an*, 5: 44-46.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Charles Sennott, “After Bombings, America Faces up to Prejudice,” *The Boston Globe*, (June 21, 1995).

US and Pakistani intelligence officials who were orchestrating the [Afghan] war. The sixty or so CIA and Special Forces officers based there considered him a ‘valuable asset,’ according to one of them, and overlooked his anti-Western message and incitement to holy war because they wanted him to help unify the *mujaheddin* groups.”¹⁸ In 1990, one year after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the CIA would reward Abdul Rahman with a visa to enter the United States, despite his name being listed on the terrorist watch list.¹⁹

From his base in New Jersey, Abdul Rahman would become the primary source of theological guidance for *al-Jihad* and *al-Jama'a* in Egypt. Although Abdul Rahman did not produce a written manifesto, his Arabic sermons would be recorded on audio cassettes which were widely distributed among his followers.²⁰ Abdul Rahman’s *fatwas* would play a seminal role in the adoption of new violent tactics by the militants during their insurgency against the Mubarak regime, including attacks against tourists. Like his colleague al-Zawahiri, Abdul Rahman would diverge from the thought of previous militants like Qutb and Faraj, who focused almost exclusively on overthrowing the Egyptian regime. Abdul Rahman would come to view the Egyptian regime as a product of the greater *jahiliyyah* of the West, which he believed was launching an assault against Islam. According to Rahman, the *jahili* rulers of Egypt were little more than puppets,

¹⁸ Mary Anne Weaver, “Blowback: The CIA poured billions into a jihad against Soviet-Occupied Afghanistan creating a militant Islamist Abraham Lincoln Brigade believed to have been involved in bombings from Islamabad to New York. Is Bosnia Next?” *The Atlantic Monthly*, (May, 1996), pp. 24-29.

¹⁹ See Peter Lance, *Triple Cross*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), p. 20 and Robert Friedman, “The CIA’s Jihad,” *The New Yorker*, (March 16, 1995), pp. 38-47.

²⁰ Abdul Rahman conducted an interview with *TIME* magazine, following his incarceration for his involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center Bombing. See William Dowel, “Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman: Defending Islam,” *TIME* (October 9, 1995).

following orders from their Western *jahili* masters. Mubarak was little more than “the obedient dog of the West.”²¹

In an interview with *Time* magazine, Abdul Rahman explained his perception on the contemporary applicability of *jihad*, which he would come to view as a legitimate defensive war, not only against the *jahili* rulers at home, but against the West, which was perceived to be their masters:

Self-defense is legal in all religions. This is called jihad in Islam. The West has misinterpreted this concept. People who are defending their lands are called terrorists. Of course, this interpretation is useful to the West. It legitimizes attacks against any country in the Third World. Americans call them terrorists, and they take it to the U.N. in order to take legal action. And the U.N. does whatever the U.S. tells it to do.²²

Having argued that Islam was under attack from the West, and that Muslims were responsible for waging a legitimate defensive *jihad*, his juridical-religious reasoning turned to the conduct and tactics of *jihad*. Abdul Rahman rejected the standard *Shari'a* rulings on the conduct of military *jihad*, which strictly prohibits the killing of civilians and argued that the death of innocents is merely “an exchange of violence,” from a legitimate wartime act.²³ Abdul Rahman’s *fatwas*, which would become the source of theological guidance for *al-Jihad* and *al-Jama'a* in their war against the Mubarak regime, would expand to encourage acts of violence against unarmed civilians, including tourists. In one of his recorded sermons, the Sheikh remarked:

I send recordings to Cairo in which I call upon my people to attack tourists. I explain to them that we must stop tourism to Egypt. Tourism is a plague. [Western] women come dressed in provocative clothing in order to arouse the believers. Tourists use drugs, they party all night in the clubs and casinos,

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.* When asked by the interviewer: “How do you feel about a car bomb that kills people who are simply walking on the street?” Abdul Rahman replied: “If it is taken during wartime and people are hurt and have to face violence, it is an act of exchanging violence.”

and feel up the belly dancers. And our people [the Egyptians] their eyes are popping out from envy in trying to imitate the infidel tourists.²⁴

Abdul Rahman who described himself as “the spiritual mentor of *al-Jama'a*,” would openly admit his role in theologically justifying attacks against tourists. In an interview with American journalist Mary Anne Weaver, Abdul Rahman was asked “Were the attacks against tourists justified?” to which he replied “Tourists are not being attacked, tourism is. Although I must add that tourists should respect our religion-tourism is not alcohol, gambling and nightclubs.” Abdul Rahman continued “But to prove my point that it’s the industry that’s under attack, four tour buses were blown up recently outside the museum in Cairo, but only after the tourists had left them and gone inside... so killing the tourists is not our goal.”²⁵

Like his former colleague, Ayman al-Zawahiri would also come to perceive the West as the greater enemy and the primary source of *jahiliyyah*. After serving his three year prison sentence, al-Zawahiri was released from prison in 1984 and fled to Saudi Arabia, where he met Usama bin Laden and finally travelled to Peshawar in 1986 to join the Afghan cause. Through his time in Afghanistan, al-Zawahiri would gain pivotal insights that would shape both his views and the future of *al-Jihad* in Egypt. Al-Zawahiri’s goal had been to rebuild his organization from exile, increase its strength and numbers and when the time was right, seize power from Mubarak and build his utopian Islamic dictatorship. By fighting against the USSR, perceived to be one of the great superpowers of the world, al-Zawahiri began to envision a broader goal: not just of

²⁴ Yedioth Athronoth, “The Sheikh Who Murdered Egyptian Tourism,” *The Israeli Daily* (January 1, 1993), translated and quoted in “ Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Muslim Brotherhood,” *The Nizkor Project*, (Online), Available: <http://www.nizkor.org/ftp.cgi/orgs/american/adl/hamas/hamas-islamic-jihad> Accessed: January 1, 2010.

establishing the rule of Islam in Egypt, but of the global restoration of “true” Islam.²⁶ For several years, al-Zawahiri mulled the question of whether the primary target of his *Jihad* organization should be the *jahili* Egyptian state, or the greater *jahiliyyah* of the Western superpowers. As al-Zawahiri noted in his memoir *Knights Under the Prophet’s Banner*:

The problem of finding a secure base for *jihād* activity in Egypt used to occupy me a lot, in view of the pursuits to which we were subjected by the security forces and because of Egypt’s flat terrain which made government control easy, for the River Nile runs in its narrow valley between two deserts that have no vegetation of water. Such a terrain made guerrilla warfare in Egypt impossible...*During my contacts and dealings with Afghanistan, several vitally important facts became clear to me...The Muslim youths began to have doubts about who was the enemy. Was it the foreign enemy that occupied Muslim territory, or was it the domestic enemy that prohibited government by Islamic shari’a, repressed the Muslims and disseminated immorality under the slogans of progressiveness, liberty, nationalism, and liberation.* This situation led the homeland to the brink of the abyss of domestic ruin and surrender to the foreign enemy, exactly like the current situation of the majority of our [Arab] countries under the aegis of the new world order...*In Afghanistan the picture was perfectly clear: A Muslim nation carrying out jihad under the banner of Islam, versus a foreign enemy that was an infidel aggressor backed by a corrupt apostatic regime at home.* [emphasis added]²⁷

The finalization of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union would breathe new life into the Egyptian militant revolutionaries. According to al-Zawahiri “the *jihād* battles in Afghanistan destroyed... the USSR, a superpower with the largest land army in the world.”²⁸ A great mythology was born, in which the Islamists who had participated in the Afghan war perceived themselves to be responsible for the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Arab *Mujahedin* perceived this as God granting a small and outnumbered force the power to

²⁵ Mary Anne Weaver, *Portrait of Egypt*, pp. 116-118.

²⁶ This is expressed at some length in al-Zawahiri’s memoir “Knights Under the Prophet’s Banner.”

destroy a great superpower. According to Omar Abdul Rahman: “How could the Afghan people have expelled a superpower? It was only with Allah’s help.” When asked about the three billion dollars provided to the *Mujahedin* by the CIA, the sheikh replied: “Without Allah, it would not have been possible with three *hundred* billion dollars. Allah is the stronger partner of the two. The U.S. government had been trying to destroy the Soviet Union since 1945. It could never have done it alone.”²⁹ The Afghan war would leave *al-Jihad* and *al-Jama’a* with hundreds of battle hardened members, reinvigorated with confidence. The mythology of the *Mujahedin’s* destruction of the Soviet Union appears to have been a major factor behind the Egyptian militants attempt to topple Mubarak’s regime and seize power in the 1990s.

The Extremist’s Failure to Topple Mubarak: 1990-1997

The first shots of the extremist’s war with Mubarak were fired on October 12, 1990, when members of *al-Jihad* attempted to assassinate Interior Minister Abdul Halim Mousa. By mistake, parliament speaker Rif’at Maghub and his body guards were killed instead. Innumerable acts of violence, and clashes with the police and security forces would follow, as “clash followed clash and shoot-out followed shoot-out, year after year.”³⁰ Throughout the 1990s, Egypt experienced waves of violence, too numerous to mention, including the slaughtering of unarmed Coptic Egyptians, massacres of foreign tourists and Egyptian civilians, assassinations against government officials and public figures, and guerrilla warfare against Egyptian security forces. Some notable attacks include the stabbing of Naguib Mahfouz, the Arab world’s only Nobel laureate in

²⁷ Ayman al-Zawahiri, “Knights Under the Prophet’s Banner,” translated in *JPRS Near East and South Asia Report*, (December 12, 2001).

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Mary Anne Weaver, *Portrait of Egypt*, p. 121.

literature in 1994, the assassination of the chief of Egypt's security services Major General Raouf Khayrat in 1994, an assassination attempt against Mubarak in Addis Ababa in 1996, and the massacre of 18 Greek tourists outside the Egyptian museum in Cairo in 1996. From New York, Abdul Rahman would send audio cassettes advocating "a merciless war, a no-holds-barred battle against the pharaohs and atheists of Egypt."³¹

Mubarak's response was equally brutal, with waves of police raids, dragnets of arrests, torture, imprisonment and dozens of executions. Mubarak's strategy of unrelenting repression would prove to be successful, despite Abdul Rahman's calls to "disperse them before they disperse you. Fear not their threats. They are a motley of cowards. They are in their death throes and will be crushed under your feet like dirty insects."³² By the second half of the decade, the *al-Jihad* and *al-Jama'as* military capabilities were crushed, and the majority of the militant group's ranks had either been arrested, executed, or killed in gun battles with the police.³³

The last gasp of the insurgency would come in April 1997. Armed with automatic firearms and butcher knives, six members of *al-Jama'a* descended on the Temple of Hatshepsut in Luxor, with a group of tourists trapped inside. For forty five minutes the militants executed and mutilated the trapped tourists. Fifty-eight foreign tourists and four Egyptians were killed in the massacre, including a five year old British boy and four Japanese couples on their honeymoons. One Swiss woman claimed to have watched her father decapitated in front of her.³⁴ The body of one elderly Japanese man was found eviscerated with a pamphlet in his body that read "No to tourists in Egypt" and was

³⁰ Barry Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, p. 158.

³¹ *Al-Ahram*, (December 22, 1992), translated in *FBIS NES* (December 23, 1992).

³² *Ibid.*

signed, “Omar Abdul Rahman’s Squadron of Havoc and Destruction – the *Jama’a al-Islamiyya*.”³⁵ Following the massacre, the attackers hijacked a bus looking for more tourists to kill, but ran into a police checkpoint and retreated to the hills during the subsequent shootout. As the attackers fled, they were chased by tour guides and villagers riding scooters and donkeys, who had little more to fight with than stones and shovels.³⁶

The Luxor attack would bring Egypt into a state of shock and would break the back of the militant movement. Revolted, ashamed and angered, the population would decisively turn against the militants: “Political parties, religious leaders, and civil society organizations condemned the attack and called on the government to escalate the confrontation against terrorism. The Muslim Brotherhood... portrayed the attackers as having ‘no conscience or religion,’ and warned its members not to have any association with *al-Jama’a* sympathizers.”³⁷ With Egyptians increasingly protesting and denouncing the militants and denying them any shelter or safe bases from which to operate, the militant movements would be unable to withstand a prolonged confrontation with the government.³⁸ The wrath of Egypt’s people, combined with the subsequent roundups of Egyptian security forces, would end the militant revolutionary movement in Egypt and would mark the last turning point in the third and final phase of Egyptian extremism’s historical trajectory. Already severely weakened and lacking any sympathy or backing from the public, *al-Jama’a* and *al-Jihad*’s operations in Egypt would dissolve. According to Lawrence Wright “Luxor proved to be the turning point in the counterterrorist

³³ Fawwaz Gerges, “The End of the Islamist Insurgency in Egypt?: Costs and Prospects,” *Middle East Journal*, vol. 54 no. 4 (Autumn 2000), pp. 592-612.

³⁴ Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower*, pp. 257-259.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Fawwaz Gerges, “The End of the Islamist Insurgency,” p. 594.

campaign in Egypt... Their support evaporated, and without the consent of the population, there was nowhere for them to hide. In the five years before Luxor Islamist terror groups had killed more than 1,200 people, many of them foreigners. After Luxor, the attacks by Islamists simply stopped.”³⁹

Conclusion

In the years following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, Egypt’s revolutionary extremists wavered between two strategic ideas: the battle against the *jahili* regime at home, or the greater battle against the forces of *jahiliyyah* from the West. It was not until Mubarak’s forces crushed the armed revolt by *al-Jihad* and *al-Jama’a* and with it, the hopes of any viable plan to seize power in Egypt, that Egypt’s revolutionary extremist movement would abandon the goal of destroying the Egyptian enemy and re-focus their efforts on the Western enemy. Egypt’s extremists would realize that their hope of seizing power in Egypt was an unattainable goal, and would either join Bin Laden’s international *jihadi* movement, or dissolve altogether, concluding the third and final phase of Egyptian extremism.

In 1998, al-Zawahiri and the remnants of his *al-Jihad* movement, as well as remnants of *al-Jama’a* would be absorbed into *al-Qaida*. On February of 1998, *Al-Quds al-Arabi* in London published the *fatwa* of a new coalition which was signed by Usama bin Laden individually and included the signatures of Ayman al-Zawahiri as leader of *al-Jihad*, and Rifa’i Taha, as leader of *al-Jama’a*.⁴⁰ The *fatwa* of the new coalition declared that the United States had “declared war on God, his Messenger and Muslims.” Citing

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Mark Huband, *Warriors of the Prophet: The Struggle for Islam*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998, p. 110.

³⁹ Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower*, p. 258.

Qur'anic verses, the group declared that it is the religious obligation of all Muslims to "kill Americans and their allies, civilian and military," until their armies moved out of the lands of Islam "defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim."⁴¹ Members of *al-Jihad* would either join al-Zawahiri or leave the group altogether, while *al-Jama'a*, most of whose remaining members were in prison, would cease to exist on any meaningful level and in 2003, its remaining leaders would denounce violence and apologize for their involvement in terrorism.⁴²

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the strategies of Egypt's militant groups were based on the assumption that through their violent actions, they would expose the weakness of the regime and would trigger a revolution, causing the Egyptian masses to rise up in support of their cause and overthrow the state. The militant's strategies were based on the false calculation that they embodied the popular will of the Egyptian people and that the Egyptian masses would rally to their side.⁴³ Rather than bringing about a revolution, their actions shocked and repulsed most Egyptians. During the second wave of terrorism in the 1990s, the militants further alienated themselves from the Egyptian people. The attacks against unarmed Copts, government officials and innocent civilians during the second wave of terror in the 1990s eliminated any sympathy they may have enjoyed and ended the second wave of extremist growth in Egypt. Their attacks against tourists not only repulsed and angered most Egyptians, but also affected the livelihood of the many that depended on the tourism industry: "A major percentage of the Egyptian

⁴⁰ "Fatwa: 'Kill Americans Everywhere'" *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, (February 23, 1998), p. 1. For an English translation of the Fatwa as it appeared in *Al-Quds*, see "Al-Qaeda's Fatwa" *PBS Online NewsHour*, (Online) Available: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1998.html

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Jailan Halawi, "A New Page? In a sign of historic reconciliation, three of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyyah's members were released after 22 years behind bars," *al-Ahram Weekly*, no. 659 (October 9-15, 2003).

population... depended on tourism for its livelihood. Whatever their political or religious preferences, they had to confront a sudden fall in their standard of living; this economic hardship eventually alienated them from those who had brought it about.”⁴⁴

Egypt’s Muslim extremists based their political ideology on a theological doctrine that any Muslim who did not support their cause was a *jahil* and an apostate from Islam. Calling their fellow Egyptians ignorant apostates served to alienate the militant groups from the Egyptian people rather than endear them. Islamists preaching militant interpretations of Islam would gain few followers, while those who resorted to violence would be imprisoned or executed. The ideologies of Egypt’s extremists were “too far out of Egyptian Islam’s mainstream to generate any sort of mass appeal.”⁴⁵

⁴³ See Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “Egypt’s Islamic Militants,” pp. 7-10.

⁴⁴ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad*, p. 289.

⁴⁵ Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, p. 24.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has been predicated on the assumption that in order to fully understand the political behavior of a people in any given society, this behavior must be examined in relation to the intellectual life of a society and the culture, values and worldviews of its people. Existing literature on the subject of Muslim extremism in Egypt rightly points to factors such as Islamic resurgence, the failure of ideologies like Nasserism, Pan-Arabism and socialism, and to a variety of socio-political grievances, but fails to fully connect these historical developments to a crucial dimension of the intellectual context in which they emerged, namely, the epistemological, ontological, and juridical parameters of Islamic theological thought. This thesis has been concerned with addressing this gap in the historiography and contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of Muslim extremism in modern Egypt, a phenomenon that cannot be fully understood without understanding its theological dimension. The goal of this thesis has been to call attention to the importance of theological thought to militant ideologies by showing how theology is used as an instrument of legitimization for acts of political violence, to connect the development of radical theological thought with broader historical developments and to illustrate how the historical trajectory of militant thought in modern Egypt unfolded in three distinct phases.

As Islamists, the figures who developed militant extremist thought were men whose worldviews and values were defined by their faith. In the Islamist worldview, Islamic sources and theological thought are seen as the source of guidance for the management of all aspects of human existence including the political, social, and moral dimensions. As such, questions regarding the legitimacy of the state, the application of

law, war, violence and revolution, are deliberated within the epistemological and ontological framework of Islamic theological thought and interpretations are deduced using the methodological framework of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Delegitimizing the state and its rulers, punishing civilians for crimes, and the justification for any acts of violence, killing, or waging of war must be sanctioned by juridical-religious legal rulings that are reached using Islamic sources and the methodology of Islamic jurisprudence. Although the extremist discourse of Egypt's militants was ideological in the sense that it sought to achieve certain political goals, it was a discourse that was rooted, predicated and deduced from theology.

Although the militant discourse of Egypt's extremists was expressed in theological terms, it must be examined in light of the historical circumstances under which it emerged. The emergence of militant thought was the product of a broad and complex process, in which various socio-political grievances and the perceived solutions to these grievances were deliberated within the epistemological context of Islamic theological thought. In this sense, Islamic theology itself was not the cause of militant extremism, but rather, it was a range of historical circumstances and socio-political grievances that shaped extremist theological interpretations. Within this broader process, theological thought played a crucial role, functioning as the epistemological and discursive dictum through which the perceived solutions to these grievances could be legitimated. In fact, theological discourse was the only acceptable form of articulation for extremist political ideas, as theology was the only means through which extremists could create moral justification for the violence that they advocated. Extremist theology cannot be reduced to a static and monolithic discourse, but has been constantly evolving and was

shaped largely by the historical context in which it emerged. For the 20th century militant extremists of Egypt, theological thought functioned as the instrument of authorization for acts that were largely politically motivated.

Acts of violence by Egyptian extremists would be legitimized by three religio-political doctrines. The idea of contemporary *jahiliyyah* functioned as a means of delegitimizing the state and labeling Egyptian society and its rulers with a powerful epithet that connoted barbarism, brutality, oppression and the antithesis of Islam. A belief in the Qutbian theory of *jahiliyyah* compounded the development of *takfir*, which provided militants with a tool to arbitrarily pass the judgment of apostasy on individuals, thus making them subject to the penalty of death under classical Islamic law. By developing juridical-religious rulings that declared Egypt to be ruled by an illegitimate regime of infidels, militants were able to develop their own interpretations on the contemporary applicability of military *jihad*, arguing that waging war against the state and its *jahili* rulers to seize power and implement an Islamic state was justified, if not obligatory.

The inception of extremist thought in Egypt can be traced to the torture chambers of Gamal Abdul Nasser's prisons. Under unimaginable torment and suffering, the imprisoned Islamists reasoned that no true Muslim was capable of inflicting such savagery upon their brothers in Islam. As such, it was determined that those responsible for their suffering could be deemed as apostates who must be expelled from the fold of Islam. It was in this context that the extremist theological instrument of *takfir* was born. Militants could use *takfir* arbitrarily as a tool to theologially justify the killing of

individuals by virtue of their apostasy from Islam and the existing juridical rulings on the Islamic punishment for apostasy.

For Sayyid Qutb, the only society capable of persecuting Muslims in such a barbaric fashion was a society of *jahiliyyah*. Using the Qur'an and *Sirah* to come to terms with his circumstances, Qutb reinvented the Islamic concept of *jahiliyyah* and created a new interpretive framework through which militants would come to understand the contemporary Egyptian state and society. By arguing that Egypt was not at all an Islamic country or society, but one that was steeped in a *jahiliyyah* so deep that it surpassed even that of pre-Islamic pagan Arabia, Qutb's *Milestones* would play a seminal role in the later development of militant ideas. The theory of contemporary *jahiliyyah* delegitimized the Egyptian regime, corroborated the development and use of *takfir* and justified the waging of a military *jihad* against the *jahili* apostate rulers. The humiliation and rage induced by the horrific suffering they endured created an overwhelming need for retribution and revenge. By deliberating their grievances within the epistemological framework of Islamic theological thought, the imprisoned Islamists were able to develop the radical theological interpretations of *takfir* and *jahiliyyah*, ideas that delegitimized the Egyptian regime and theologically justified revenge against their captors, and ideas that became the foundation for the development of subsequent militant thought. With *Milestones*, Sayyid Qutb created a concrete conceptual framework from which later militants could develop theological interpretations that justified the use of violence against the state, against government officials, and later, against foreign tourists and Egyptian civilians.

The first and formative phase in the development of militant thought in Egypt emerged at a time when the ideologies of Nasserism and Pan-Arabism had captured the

hearts and minds of most Egyptians. Under Nasser, Islamists faced oppression, persecution, torture and execution, while their political ideology existed in the shadow of Nasserism. During the second phase, ideas that had been developed in Gamal Abdul Nasser's prisons would be transplanted into Anwar Sadat's Egypt, while torture and oppression would be supplanted by socioeconomic grievances and a strong fervor among many Islamists for the immediate establishment of an Islamic state.

The Arab defeat in the war of 1967, the death of Nasser, and the age of Sadat, marked a new phase in the course of Egyptian history, and subsequently, a new phase in the historical trajectory of militant extremism. The humiliation suffered by the Arabs in their defeat to Israel and the failure of the Nasserist and Pan-Arab ideologies to achieve all that they had promised, would leave Egypt in a state of disillusionment. Islamism would experience large scale resurgence, as Egyptians searched for an ideology to fill the void left behind by Nasserism.

The resurgence of Islamism in Egypt would dovetail with drastic changes in policy under Anwar Sadat. Seeking to secure the Islamists as political allies, Sadat would release the Islamists that had been imprisoned under Nasser, encourage Islamist visibility and participation in civil society and the political process, would declare Egypt to be a nation of "Science and Religion" and would describe himself as "The Believing President." Islamists no longer had to contend with the persecution of the Nasser era and enjoyed a great deal of freedom and autonomy under Sadat. While many Islamists viewed this freedom as an opportunity to gain a foothold in the Egyptian political process and pressure the government into making the necessary changes to bring about rule by *Shari'ah* law, other Islamists rejected reform in favor of revolution.

Sadat's *infatih* policy created increasing urbanization, an erosion of the middle class and a widening gap between social classes, resulting in intense resentment among Egypt's lower and middle classes. Millions of Egyptians who had migrated from rural to urban areas experienced shock and displacement, while Western values and culture seemed destined to replace Egypt's traditional ways. The political, social, and economic problems in Egyptian society were deepening and the government was unable to create effective solutions. For many Islamists, Sayyid Qutb's ideas provided an easy explanation to all of Egypt's problems. All of Egypt's socioeconomic troubles could be seen as a product of the *jahiliyyah* of Egypt's political system and these problems could be easily solved with the establishment of a utopian Islamic state, ruled by *Shari'ah* law.

For those dreaming of the immediate establishment of a Caliphate in Egypt, the ideas of Qutb provided an important source of inspiration and an attractive set of beliefs. Using Qutbian doctrine to accuse the regime of being an illegitimate government of apostates, revolutionary Islamists found a way to theologially justify a violent Islamic revolution. Extremist theological doctrines born in Nasser's prisons would be adopted by the revolutionary Islamists of the Sadat era and would be further radicalized. Whereas the militants in the Nasser era accused the regime and its officials of apostasy on the basis of their persecution, torture and killing of Muslims, the militants of the Sadat era would develop these ideas further, arguing that any ruler who did not rule according to *Shari'ah* law and government officials participating in this government were infidels and apostates from Islam. Consequently, militants could use existing Islamic *Shari'ah* rulings on the rules and conduct of war, to reason the waging of a military *jihad* to free Egypt from its

oppressive and apostatic rulers and implement a Caliphate was the collective duty of all true Muslims.

During this second phase, theology continued to serve as the conduit for the development of militant thought. Charismatic revolutionary Islamists, with a rudimentary knowledge Islamic sources, would pose as *fuqaha'* (Islamic jurists) and use juridical-religious methodology to develop Qutbian ideas to new extremes. Shukri Mustafa and his *Takfir wal Hijra* would further radicalize the doctrine of *takfir*, by perceiving himself and his followers to be the only true Muslims and declaring that any Egyptian Muslims that did not belong to their organization were infidels and apostates from Islam. It was under such theological pretences, that *al-Takfir* justified their attempt to try and execute members who had defected from their group and legitimized the murder of Muhammad al-Dhahabi. Salah Sariyyah and his Technical Military Group was governed by a *shura* council of 12 members who were regarded as the group's most well-learned in Islamic sources, and thus the most qualified Islamic jurists. The group developed its ideas by using Islamic religious sources and juridical-religious methodologies to issue *fatwas* that justified the use of violence to seize power from the Egyptian regime in order to implement the will of God on earth. *Al-Jihad al-Islami's* dogma was based on a 31 page pamphlet that quoted sixty-two *Ahadith*, fifty-three verses from the Qur'an, and fifty-six quotations from the works of Islamic scholars, to build the case that it was the religious obligation of all true Muslims to wage war against the Egyptian regime, and replace it with an Islamic Caliphate. For *al-Takfir*, the Technical Military Group, and *al-Jihad*, theological doctrines that were developed under torture in Nasser's prisons, had become a means to justify the use of violence to achieve their dream of an Islamic Caliphate that would erase Egypt's problems

and create a perfect Islamic society. The ideas and discourse of Egypt's militant groups were theological at their very core.

The tidal wave of Islamic religiosity sweeping over Egypt, combined with Egypt's deepening socioeconomic troubles, provided fertile grounds for recruitment into militant organizations that sought to seize power in Egypt and implement a dictatorship of the pious. However, despite emerging during a period of large scale Islamic revival, revolutionary militant Islamists remained on the fringes of Egyptian society. Accusing Egypt, a nation populated by practicing Muslims, of being a society of *jahiliyyah* gained the militants few followers, while their ideas and actions were condemned and discredited by more mainstream Islamist thinkers, including the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹ Egypt's militants subscribed to a set of beliefs that were too far outside of Egyptian Islam's mainstream to generate any sort of mass appeal. Nevertheless, Egypt's militant groups operated on the false calculation that they embodied the popular will of the Egyptian people, and that their violent actions would trigger a popular revolution.² It was under such pretences that Egypt's militants tried and failed to seize power through the Technical Military Group's attempted coup in 1974 and *al-Jihad's* assassination of Sadat in 1981.

Sadat's assassination marked yet another turning point in the historical trajectory of Egypt's militants. The freedom enjoyed by Islamists under Sadat would be replaced with a return to repression under Mubarak. Severely weakened by the crackdown

¹ For discussions on the anti-extremist rhetoric of Egyptian Islamists see J.G.G. Jasnsen, *The Neglected Duty*, pp. 35-146 and Jeffrey Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, pp. 89-184. Hasan al-Hudaybi's *Preachers Not Judges* is another example of a work with powerful theological arguments against militant ideas.

² See Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Egypt's Islamic Militants."

following Sadat's murder, many of Egypt's remaining militants would find a new calling in the Afghan struggle against Soviet occupation.

The involvement of Egyptian militants in the Afghan war would play a key role in defining the characteristics of the third phase in their development. Two primary developments would shape the future of Egypt's militants. First, by fighting against a foreign aggressor, militants were introduced to a new idea and a new focus for their *jihad*. Whereas militants in the previous two phases focused their efforts exclusively on overthrowing the Egyptian regime at home, the militants of the third phase would begin to envision a greater battle against the forces of *jahiliyyah* from abroad, particularly, against the United States. Secondly, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union would reinvigorate the militant movement and create a lasting mythology. The Arab *mujahedin* would perceive themselves to be solely responsible for the destruction of a superpower which created the false belief that, with the help of God, they were capable of militarily destroying the world's superpowers. This false mythology appears to have been a major factor behind the militants attempt to topple Mubarak's regime in the 1990s.

As in the previous two phases, theology would continue to serve as the instrument of authorization for acts of violence. In their attempt to topple Mubarak, the militants reasoned that by destroying the Egyptian tourism industry, they would economically cripple the Mubarak regime and weaken it to the point where revolution was inevitable. To justify these means, new *fatwas* were developed by men such as Omar Abdul Rahman that theologically justified attacking tourists and other civilians, arguing that they were carriers of *jahiliyyah* in the war against Islam and thus fair game in the militant's *jihad*.

As in the previous phase, the militants miscalculated their support among Egypt's people. Rather than bringing about a revolution, their actions shocked and repulsed most Egyptians and exposed their political and moral bankruptcy, drawing condemnation and calls for the government to escalate its confrontation with extremism. Following the Luxor attack of 1997, the revolutionary militant movement in Egypt would be crushed, and would fade into virtual irrelevance.

During the third phase, militant ideology would waver between two ideas: focusing their battle against the *jahili* regime at home, or against the greater *jahiliyyah* of the Western powers. It was not until the militant insurgency in Egypt was crushed, along with any realistic hopes of seizing power from Mubarak, that militants pragmatically abandoned their fight against the *jahili* rulers at home, and refocused their battle upon the West, perceived to be the ultimate source of *jahiliyyah*.

With the failure, disbandment and repression of Egypt's militant revolutionary Islamists as well as the Muslim Brotherhood's growing popularity and continued participation in the political process, it appears as if reformist Islamism has gained the upper hand in the battle between revolutionary versus reformist Islamism. However, militant extremism remains a volatile and unpredictable force. Under Mubarak, many Islamists continue to be subjected to the same torture and persecution that radicalized men such as Sayyid Qutb and Shukri Mustafa. Egypt's socio-economic troubles continue to grow with endemic corruption in all levels of the Egyptian government, a western supported dictatorship posing as a democracy, and an increasing gap between social classes, as many Egyptians live in poverty, while a certain few lavish in extraordinary wealth and luxury. Save for the wealthy few, Egyptians are largely dissatisfied, if not

disgusted and angered with the political status quo. Although Mubarak has successfully maintained the status quo throughout his tenure, largely through the use of repression against political dissidents, the current situation in Egypt is one that cannot be maintained indefinitely. Egypt remains a nation that may be inching closer and closer to the brink of revolution

Bibliography

Arabic Articles, Books and Translated Documents

- ‘Abd al-Sami, Umar. “I want a Party, The Brotherhood Did Not Leave the Wafd and Did Not Join the Liberal Party.” *Al-Musawwar*. May 2, 1986. pp. 16-19.
- al-‘Alwani, Taha Jabir. *La Ikraha fil Din*. (No Compulsion in Religion). Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2006.
- al-Baghdadi, Abdul Qahir. *al-Farq bayna al-Firqah*. (The Differences Between Groups). Cairo: 1910.
- al-Hakim, Sulayman. *Asrar al-Ilaqah al-khasah bayna Abdul Nasser wa-al Ikhwan*. (Secrets of the Private Relations between Abdul Nasser and the Muslim Brotherhood). Cairo: 1996.
- al-Haqq, Ali Jadd. “The Mufti’s Reply to the Book: The Absent Obligation.” in *Redefining Community in the Middle East: Old Answers to New Problems*, Center for the Study of the Modern Arab World. Beirut: Dar al-Mashreq Publications, 1981.
- al-Hudaybi, Hasan. *Du’at la Qudat*. (Preachers not Judges). Cairo: Dar al-Tiba’a wal Nashar al-Islami, 1977.
- al-Qaradawi, Yusuf. *Al-Sahwah al-Islamiya bayn al-Juhud wa-l Tatarruf*. (Islamic Awakening: Between Rejection and Extremism). Cairo/Beirut: 1984.
- _____. *Fiqh al-Jihad*. (The Jurisprudence of Jihad). 2 vols. Cairo: Markaz al-Qaradawi lil Wasatiyyah al-Islamiyyah wal Tajdid, n.d.
- _____. *Al-din wal Siyasa Ta’sil wa Rad Shubuhah*. (Religion and Politics: Foundations and Repudiation of False Allegations). Dublin: European Council for Fatwa and Research, 2007.
- al-Tilmisani, Omar. *Dhikrayat la Mudhakkirat*. (Notes not a Memoir). Cairo: Dar al-Tawzee’ al-Nashar al-Islamiyya, 1985.
- al-Zawahiri, Ayman. “Knights Under the Prophet’s Banner.” translated in *JPRS Near East and South Asia Report*. (December 12, 2001).
- al-Zayat, Montassir. *Ayman al-Zawahiri Kama ‘Araftahoo*. (Ayman al-Zawahiri as I Knew Him). Cairo: Dar Misr al-Mahroosa, 2002.

- ‘Ashur, Mustafa. “Syed Imam: Reviving Bloody History.” Translated by Ahmed el-Gharbawi. *IslamOnline*. (Online). Available: http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1199279321027&pagename=Zone-English-Living_Shariah%2FLSELayout, Accessed, January 19, 2010.
- Faraj, Muhammad Abd al-Salaam. *al-Faridah al-Gha’iba*. (The Neglected Obligation). Cairo: 1983.
- Hanafi, Hassan. *al-Din wa-al-thawrah*. (Religion and Revolution). vol. 5. Cairo: n.d.
- Irshadi, Samir. “Islam in Egypt is Shaking the Dust Off Itself and Moving Forward Unrelentlessly.” *Kayhan al-Arabi*. (February 21, 1987). Translated in *Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS): Near East/South Asia Report (NES)* (April 10, 1987).
- Ma’tuq, Muhammad. “Egypt’s Mufti Replies to the Booklet, ‘The Neglected Obligation.’” *Al-Majallah*. vol. 2 no. 97 December 19, 1981. p.14.
- ‘Ouda, Abdul Qadir. *Al-Tashri’ al-Jina’iy al-Islami muqaaranan bil Qanun al-wad’i*. (Criminal Jurisprudence as compared to Secular Law). vol. 2. Beirut: Dar Alkutub al-Araby, n.d.
- “Acquitted *al-Jihad* Member Discusses Case: Interview with Umar Abd al’Rahman.” *Al-Yammah*. no. 825 (October 24, 1984). Translated in *JPRS, Near East and South Asia Report*. (December 28, 1984).
- “Fatwa: ‘Kill Americans Everywhere.’” *Al-Quds al-Arabi*. February 23, 1998.
- “Interview with Dr. ‘Umar Abd al-Rahman.” *Al-‘Ahd*. January 17, 1987. Translated in *Joint Publications Research Service Report (JPRS): Near East/South Asia Report (NES)*. (March 17, 1987).
- “The Islamic Societies.” *Rose al-Yusuf*. September 28, 1981.
- Qutb, Muhammad. *Jahiliyyat al-Qarn al ‘Irshrin*. (*The Jahiliyyah of the 20th Century*). Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1964.
- Qutb, Sayyid. “*The America that I have Seen: In the Scale of Human Values*.” Cairo: Kashf ul Shubuhat Publications, n.d.
- _____. *In the Shade of the Qur’an*. vol. 30. Translated by M. Salahi and Ahur Shamis. London: MWH Publishers, 1979.
- _____. *Milestones*. Kuwait: al-Faisal Press, 1989.

_____. *Social Justice in Islam*. Translated by John B. Hardie. Oneonta: Islamic Publications International, 2000.

_____. "Nahnu al-sha'ab nurid." (We the People Want). *al-Risalah*. no. 1005. (October 6, 1952): 1105.

Rizq, Jabir. *Madhabih al-Ikhwan fi Sujun Nasser*. (The Massacres of the Muslim Brothers in Nasser's Prisons). Cairo: Dar al-I'tisam, 1977.

English Literature

"Islamism in North Africa I: The Legacy of History," and "Islamism in North Africa II: Egypt's Opportunity." *ICG Middle East and North Africa Briefing*. Cairo/Brussels: 20 April, 2004.

Abu Rabi', Ibrahim. "Sayyid Qutb: From Religious Realism to Radical Social Criticism." *Islamic Quarterly*, vol. 28 no. 2 (1984): 103-126,

Abu Rabi', Ibrahim. *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Adams, Charles. "Foreword," in J.G.G. Jansen. *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East*. New York: MacMillan, 1986. pp. vii-xvi.

Ajami, Fouad. *The Arab Predicament*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

al-Sayyid, Mustapha Kamel. "The Other Face of the Islamist Movement." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. no. 33 (January 2003): 3-28.

al-Tabari, Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir. *The History of al-Tabari, vol. 17: The First Civil War*. Translated by G.R. Hawting. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.

Aly, Abd al-Monein Said and Manfred W. Wenner. "Modern Islamic Reform Movements: The Muslim Brotherhood in Contemporary Egypt." *Middle East Journal*. vol. 36 no. 3 (Summer: 1982): 336-361.

Ansari, Hamied M. "Islamic Militants in Egyptian Politics." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, (March 1984): 123-144.

Ansari, Hamied. *Egypt: The Stalled Society*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Appleby, Scott R. "History in the Fundamentalist Imagination." *The Journal of American History*. vol. 89 no. 2 (September, 2002): 498-511.

- Athronoth, Yedioth. "The Sheikh Who Murdered Egyptian Tourism." *The Israeli Daily*. January 1, 1993.
- Ayubi, Nazih. *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Baker, William. *Sadat and After: Struggles for Egypt's Political Soul*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- Beattie, Kirk *Egypt During the Sadat Years*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).
- Berman, Paul. "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror." *New York Times Magazine*. March 23, 2003.
- Choudhury, Masadul Alam. *The Islamic Worldview: Socio-Scientific Perspectives*. New York: Kegan Paul International, 2000.
- Cooper, Mark. *The Transformation of Egypt*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982.
- Dekmejian, R. Hrair. *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World*. 2nd ed. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995.
- Donald Peters, "The Moslem Brotherhood: Terrorists or Just Zealots?" *The Reporter*. March 17, 1953.
- Dowel, William. "Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman: Defending Islam." *TIME*. October 9, 1995.
- Elad-Altman, Israel. "Democracy, Elections and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood." *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*. vol. 4 (2006): pp. 24-37.
- El-Ghobashy, Mona. "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. no. 37 (2005): pp. 373-395.
- Esposito, John L. *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Euben, Roxanne L. *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Feiler, Gil. *Economic Relations Between Egypt and the Gulf Oil States, 1967-2000*. Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2003.

- Freamon, Bernard K. "Martyrdom, Suicide, and The Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History." *Fordham International Law Journal*. vol. 27 (2003): 299-369.
- Friedman, Robert. "The CIA's Jihad." *The New Yorker*. March 16, 1995.
- Gerges, Fawwaz. "The End of the Islamist Insurgency in Egypt? Costs and Prospects." *Middle East Journal*. vol. 54 no. 4 (Autumn 2000): 592-612.
- Gerges, Fawwaz. *The Far Enemy: The New Definition of Jihad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- Gershoni, Israel and James Jankowski. *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900-1930*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Griffel, Frank "Toleration and Exclusion: al-Shafi'i and al-Ghazali on the Treatment of Apostates." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*. vol. 64, no. 3 (2003): 339-354.
- Guenena, Nemat. *The Jihad: An Islamic Alternative in Egypt*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1986.
- Haddad, Yvonne Y. "Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival." in John L. Esposito., ed. *Voices of Resurgent Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983. pp. 67-98.
- Haddad, Yvonne Y. "The Qur'anic Justification for an Islamic Revolution: The Views of Sayyid Qutb." *Middle East Journal*. vol. 37 no. 1 (1983): 14-29.
- Halawi, Jailan. "A New Page? In a sign of historic reconciliation, three of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyyah's members were released after 22 years behind bars." *al-Ahram Weekly*. no. 659. (October 9-15, 2003).
- Hallaq, Wael B. *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Heikal, Mohamed. *Autumn of Fury: The Assassination of Sadat*. New York: Random House, 1983.
- Hirst, David and Irene Beeson. *Sadat*. Binghamton: Vail-Ballou Press, 1981.
- Holt, P.M. ed., *The Cambridge History of Islam*. vol.1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Hopwood, Derek. *Egypt: Politics and Society, 1945-1990*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Hourani, Albert. *A History of the Arab Peoples*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

- Huband, Mark. *Warriors of the Prophet: The Struggle for Islam*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1998.
- Hussain, Asaf. *Islamic Movements in Egypt, Syria and Jordan*. London: Mansell, 1983.
- Ibrahim, Saad Eddin. "Egypt's Islamic Activism in the 1980s." *Third World Quarterly*. (April 1988): 632-657.
- Ibrahim, Saad Eddin. "Egypt's Islamic Militants." *MERIP Reports*. no. 103 (Feb, 1982): 5-14.
- Ibrahim, Saad Eddin. "Reform and Frustration in Egypt." *Journal of Democracy*. vol. 7 no. 4 (Oct. 1996): 125-135.
- Izutsu, Toshihiko. *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of Iman and Islam*. Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies.
- Jansen, J.G.G. *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East*. New York: Macmillan, 1986.
- Kamali, Mohammad. *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1991.
- Kenney, Jeffrey. *Muslim Rebels: Kharijites and the Politics of Extremism in Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Kepel, Gilles. *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Kepel, Gilles. *Muslim Extremism in Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- Khatab, Sayed. *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb: The Theory of Jahiliyya*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Khatab, Sayed. *The Power of Sovereignty: The Political and Ideological Philosophy of Sayyid Qutb*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Kister, M.J. "The Struggle Against Musaylima and the Conquest of Yamama." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*. no. 27, (2002): pp. 1-56.
- Kupferschmidt, Uri. "Reformist and Militant Islam in Urban and Rural Egypt." *Middle Eastern Studies*. vol. 23 (1987): 403-418.
- Lance, Peter. *Triple Cross*. New York: Harper Collins, 2006.

- Lane, Edward W. *Arabic-English Lexicon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.
- Lapidus, Ira. *A History of Islamic Societies 2nd ed.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Mousalli, Ahmad. *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Qutb*. Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1992.
- Moussali, Ahmad. *Moderate and Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Quest for Modernity, Legitimacy, and the Islamic State*. Gainesville: The University of Florida Press, 1999.
- Musallam, Adnan A. *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism*. Westport: Praeger, 2005.
- Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Richmond, J.C.B. *Egypt, 1798-1952: Her Advance Towards a Modern Identity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977.
- Rubin, Barry. *Islamic Fundamentalism in Egyptian Politics*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "An Islamic Alternative in Egypt: The Muslim Brotherhood and Sadat." *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 4. pp. 75-93.
- Saad Eddin Ibrahim. "Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Groups: Methodological Note and Preliminary Findings." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. vol. 12 (1980): 423- 453.
- Sagiv, David. *Fundamentalism and Intellectuals in Egypt, 1973-1993*. London: Frank Cass, 1995.
- Salem, Paul. *Bitter Legacy: Ideology and Politics in the Arab World*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994.
- Sennot, Charles. "After Bombings, America Faces up to Prejudice." *The Boston Globe*. June 21, 1995.
- Shaltut, Mahmud. *al-Islam Aqida wa Shari'ah. 14th ed.* Beirut/Cairo: Dar al-Qalam, 1988.
- Shaltut, Mahmud. *Aqidaha wa-Shari'ah*. Kuwait:Matabi' Dar al-Qalam, 1966.

- Sharabi, Hisham. *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years, 1875-1914*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1970.
- Sivan, Emmanuel. *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- The Permanent Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt*. Cairo Ministry of Information, nd.
- The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*. Translated by Saheeh International. Jeddah: Abul Qasim Publishing House, 1997.
- Tibi, Bassam. *Islam: Between Culture and Politics*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.
- Tibi, Bassam. *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
- Waterbury, John. *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat: The Political Economy of Two Regimes*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Weaver, Mary Anne. "Blowback: The CIA poured billions into a jihad against Soviet-Occupied Afghanistan creating a militant Islamist Abraham Lincoln Brigade believed to have been involved in bombings from Islamabad to New York. Is Bosnia Next?" *The Atlantic Monthly*. (May, 1996): 24-29.
- _____. *A Portrait of Egypt: A Journey Through the World of Militant Islam*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.
- Wright, Lawrence. *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9-11*. New York: Random House, 2006.
- Zollner, Barbara. "Prison Talk: The Muslim Brotherhood's Internal Struggle During Gamal Abdel Nasser's Persecution, 1954-1971." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. no. 39 (2007): 411-433.