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Megan Rose Mulcahy
Macalester College, megan.rose.mulcahy@gmail.com

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‘Islam is the solution’

Demystifying Islamization in Morocco and Egypt

by Megan Rose Mulcahy
Professor Mohammed Bamyeh, International Studies
April 30, 2007

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Cairo, Egypt, 2006

For my parents, who imbued me with the love of learning.

Mount Sinai, Egypt, 2006

Introduction

Globalization versus Islamization?

Olivier Roy once wrote that globalization does not necessarily imply moderation (Roy 39). In America, there is a persistent belief in the goodness of our way, a confidence that those against us, those who reject us, have simply not yet tasted the sweetness of secular, free-market democracy: either that, or they are not human beings like us, but some irrational sort of creature, possessed by dark passions we could scarcely hope to comprehend. Surely this is the characterization we have allotted to the 9/11 hijackers and other terrorists, while the slightly less frightening masses of the Muslim world are graciously allowed ignorance and humiliation. We expect the triumphal rise of the American way to continue its slow spread over the globe, bringing all benign communities into alignment; the few evil characters can be driven out. Essentially, our mindset is the opposite of Roy's: globalization does imply moderation.

The problem with this is that it optimistically assumes that globalization is a one-way street: propelling liberal, rational ideas into the savage regions of the world, which are passively received, accepted and implemented[1]. Unfortunately, this is not what is occurring in the real world – a reality epitomized by the powerful rise of decidedly anti-Western Islamic movements in the face of West-driven globalization. In the summer of 2006, the Lebanese Islamic movement Hezbollah captured two Israeli soldiers; in retaliation, pushed over the edge by years of provocations, Israel launched an all-out war on Lebanon, relying mainly on a brutal bombing campaign. While many in the international community condemned the Israeli response as excessive, the American

[1] Globalization is a complex phenomenon, but in this thesis, I am using the term in the sense of rapidly increasing global connectedness, dominated by Western ideologies: political, economic, and cultural.

administration quietly supported it. Condoleezza Rice called the crisis "the birth pangs of a new Middle East" (Rice). The heavy-handed Israeli response was supposed to humble Lebanon and crush Hezbollah, demonstrating the supremacy of the West to unruly Islamic movements everywhere – laying the groundwork, in blood, for a new Middle East, subdued and secular, eager to participate in globalization[2]. Instead, Hezbollah came out of the conflict in a Davidian blaze of glory, more popular than ever. In Egypt, where political liberalization is occurring at a glacial pace, citizens were rewarded with fairly free parliamentary elections in 2005. Legitimate opposition parties were largely ignored, winning only fourteen seats, while representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood – an Islamic group officially banned by the government – won 88 seats, twenty percent of the total, despite government-organized attempts to repress the group and intimidate voters. In Morocco in 2000, the government's announcement of plans to reform the Moudawana – the Moroccan family code that, in alignment with Islamic law, essentially rendered women "eternal minors" – spurred a march of support for the reforms, drawing perhaps three hundred thousand people. It also provoked a protest, led by the country's Islamic movements, that drew at least three times as many participants, close to a million people. Clearly, if a new era for the Middle East is emerging, it has its own ideas.

Over the past few decades, Islamic groups working in both the political and social realms have gained a strong foothold in the Middle East, notably in states considered moderate, such as Morocco and Egypt, the foci of this thesis. This "re-Islamization" of the region, crowned with the headline melodrama of Islamic terrorism and American response that has dominated current events over the past few years, has become its primary identity: more than any other marker, Islam – in a multiplicity of forms – has come to define the Middle East. This does not mean that we ought to anticipate an explosion of Islamic revolutions. Quite to the contrary, many of the states of the region are enjoying a level of political stability unprecedented in recent decades. For example, in 1993, a National Intelligence Estimate (a summary of the views of the American intelligence community) predicted that "Islamic fundamentalist terrorists will continue to make gains across Egypt, leading to the eventual collapse of the Mubarak government."

[2] For ease of discussion, I am using the term 'the Middle East' to signify its common, if somewhat inaccurate, definition as the region of Arab Muslim countries.

(Gerges 171) As we will see, no expert would consider this prediction valid or even relevant today. But that political stability is firmly entrenched does not imply that the situation in the Middle East is sustainable. In terms of societal tensions – social services provided and economic opportunities available – the Middle East is arguably in crisis. There is a chasm between the interests of the ruling governments, and the needs of the people. It is precisely this chasm that Islamic groups confront, and this is why they are massively popular.

That Islamization appears to be the future of the Middle East is problematic in that, in the wake of the Cold War, extremist Islam became America's number one enemy, the 'green menace'. In some sense, this was simply a role to be filled, as David Campbell has argued: "Ironically,…the inability of the state project of [ensuring] security to succeed is the guarantor of the state's continued success as a compelling identity. The constant articulation of danger through foreign policy is thus not a threat to the state's identity or existence; it is its condition of possibility." (Qtd. McAlister 6) But it was not a decision that was undeserved; the brutality with which certain radical Islamic groups are willing to act has been, to some extent, a validation. However, there are several problems with choosing to Islamize our nation's enemy. The Soviet Union was a state, an empire, and thus coherent. Extremist Islam, on the other hand, most often appears in decentralized, individualistic manifestations, which makes it much more difficult to attack, manipulate, or even comprehend. Moreover, the blurred plurality of Islamic activism renders the situation difficult. Islamization is seen not as a neutral phenomenon, but a threat; yet the idea that Islamization is necessarily extreme is dangerously false. Dangerously, because Islamization is proving to be a popular phenomenon that we cannot suffocate, no matter how much money we pump into the reigning autocracy. By streamlining the background of extremist Islam, in order to make it fit nicely into its new role, we have essentialized the whole of Islamic activity indiscriminately, condemning terrorists and moderate Islamic political parties alike. Too many policymakers in Washington view Islamic activity as simply a vague, threatening monolith, not taking the time to distinguish between the array of ideologies and possibilities within it. Thus we have set ourselves up in a war that at this point would be nearly impossible to win, a war that is eating us alive.

Despite the significance of Islamic activity today, there is a great deal of vagueness and confusion on our side, both about what all these terms – Islamization, fundamentalism, Islamism, etc. – actually mean, and what their existence implies. That the average American draws only a vague sense of negativity from a term like "Islamism" is hardly surprising. What is more disturbing is the lack of understanding within the American foreign policy community. In 2006, a New York Times reporter, Jeff Stein, asked various Washington counterterrorism officials if they could explain the difference between a Sunni and a Shiite (Stein). This is one of the most basic and relevant theological differences in Islam; however, as Stein explained to his subjects, he was not even concerned with a theological response, merely the political basics: who is on what side, and what does each want? The vast majority of Stein's subjects – intelligence and law enforcement officials, members of Congress – were utterly clueless. The chief of the FBI's national security branch, asked whether Iran and Hezbollah were Sunni or Shiite, answered "Sunni". Clearly, this is not a situation where the proverb "know your enemy" is being taken seriously. Even if policymakers can throw around the proper vocabulary, their viewpoints are often skewed by the narrowness of their scope: Islamic activity is analyzed through the impatient, immediate prism of American interests, breezing over history for highlighted points of relevance, instead of being examined in its own, full context. There is a surface of knowledge (sometimes), but no substance. Thus, reactions to various manifestations of Islamic activity are often passionately opinionated, proposed strategies polarized – but actual definitions, explanations of the historical context, the reasons for its appeal, are all embarrassingly vague.

To begin, then, to explore the issue of Islamization in Morocco and Egypt, it is necessary to first lay out some precise definitions, and then proceed into the argument. Two terms often thrown around in this sort of discussion are 'fundamentalism' and 'Islamism'. The word 'fundamentalism' was created to describe a 1920s American Protestant movement; however, it is used nowadays to describe a wide variety of religious movements who share outlined characteristics: particularly, reactivity to the marginalization of religion in society through secularization or modernization, combined with a desire and efforts to return to the 'true' version of the religion. In the West, we tend to blur Muslim conservatism with fundamentalism, designating anything that seems

very ‘religious’ (whether traditional, reformist, etc) as ‘fundamentalist’. Similarly, ‘Islamism’ has become a catch-all phrase for Islamic activity, but improperly so. Islamization does not necessarily bring Islamism. Islamism refers to a specifically political ideology; Islamists seek to build an Islamic state – whereas the Islamization (the process of making something Islamic) occurring today is largely focused on the individual and society, bypassing politics altogether. For something to be Islamic is not the same as for it to be Muslim. ‘Muslim’ is a passive cultural marker. To Islamize, or for something to be Islamic, implies a conscious intention, a tangible effort. Thus, in my view, ‘active Islam’ is a more precise term. Within the structure of active Islam exists a diverse range of ideologies – from Islamism to fundamentalism to liberal Islamic thought – but these programs are united by the common thread of their intentionality, their commitment to Islamization, whether of the self or of the world.

I would also like to clarify the aim of this thesis in alignment with Olivier Roy’s rejection of the culturalist approach to this type of discussion, which assumes that “Islam is the issue”, being “a discrete entity, a coherent and closed set of beliefs, values, and anthropological patterns embodied in a common society, history and territory, which allows us to use the term as an explanatory concept for almost anything involving Muslims.” (Roy 9) What we observe in reality is quite opposite; the issue is not Islam as a religion, but what Roy calls ‘Muslim culture’: “the discourses and practices of Muslims”. (10) Therefore, I will not be delving into questions of theology, addressing popular issues such as “what does the Qur’an say about suicide bombings?” simply because, in my view, it is not as relevant as one might expect to the issue of active Islam. The revered texts of Islam are important, yet like any ancient holy text, they are easily co-opted to serve an often clashing variety of ideologies. In Morocco, for example, the Islamic groups and women’s NGOs both use the Qur’an to support their own view: for the former, that women should not be given increased legal rights, for the latter, that they should. Thus what is most significant is not what certain texts say, but rather what people using these texts want and what they are doing – and how they interact with the actors and environment that surround them.

I argue that active Islam is succeeding because states are failing. Three key questions provoked my analysis of ‘the new Middle East’: Is active Islam inevitably the future of

the Middle East? Is it necessarily incompatible with and dangerous to global stability and American interests? What is the best way for the United States to deal with active Islam to our advantage? But these questions ultimately rest upon a much simpler question: what is active Islam? That is, what does it entail, specifically in the context of the recent Islamization occurring in Moroccan and Egyptian society? Despite its simplicity, this is not a short answer question; in fact the response forms the bulk of this thesis. But it has become terribly clear, in the past few years, that those who rush to the most interesting questions answer them wrong. Thus, the first chapter examines the American myth of active Islam: our perception of its character, and how this perception was formed. In some sense, the myth is as valuable a subject for study as the reality itself: it is the basis for quite a few fairly significant foreign policy decisions, thus directly affecting (one could argue shaping) active Islam itself. The second chapter attempts an objective portrait of the evolution of active Islam in its historical context. The third and fourth chapters examine active Islam 'on the ground', using Egypt and Morocco as case studies. While both case studies are significant to the discussion, Egypt, as both the traditional heart of the Arab world and, in many ways, a valid representative of 'the Arab state', can be thought of as the main or 'control' case study, whereas Morocco, in several ways notably distinct from other states in the Arab world, serves as more of a contrast, a way to look into the potential future of the region. Finally, armed with this foundation, the conclusion will address the more urgent questions of foreign policy and the future of the Middle East which gave rise to this thesis.

1

Active Islam: The American myth

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, everyone wanted to understand *why*. We wanted to make the incomprehensible intelligible, to not reduce the tragedy, but be able to see it as part of something larger and meaningful, the dark hour of the fairy tales from our childhood. But fairy tales do not lend themselves well, in terms of accuracy, to a complex world with little black or white, only complicated gray. It is less painful to culturalize the Muslim world, orientalize it: to go no further than the blur of women in black veils, children throwing stones, angry bearded men we see in the media, to say "Well, that's just their culture", as though they cannot help themselves. This idea of human pawns acting out the demands of the culture that rules them is very Huntingtonian or primordialist, treating identity as something deeply essential and immutable, and cultures – or more precisely, civilizations – as the primary source of these identities.

For the Muslim world in particular, this has been expanded into a sense of inherent extremism. No matter what the manifestation, all things 'Islamic' are seen as growing out of the same soil that has produced the sick, twisted plants of Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and so on. Warped plants do not just spring up on their own, thus the soil – the civilization – is to blame. Therefore even if something appears to be quite benign, such as a moderate Islamic political party, because it comes from that same soil, it possesses the potential for extremism. Moreover, to be Islamic is to be seen as not only latently extremist, but necessarily irrational. There is a pervasive tendency in the modern, secular West to see individuals devoted to religion as under a spell, rather than conscious beings

making rational choices. The spell of Islam is especially seductive and dangerous, for Arabs anyway. Popular books with titles like *Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions About the World's Fastest Growing Faith* make excitingly alarming declarations such as "If anything about the future is certain, it is that whatever the ultimate outcome of the war on terrorism may be, there will be more jihads as long as there are people who take the Qur'an as the word of Allah…the children of Osama and his ilk are not likely to be easily swayed." (Spencer 170) References to the ninety-nine black-eyed virgins supposedly awaiting martyrs in Paradise are a snidely routine explanation of the motivations of Islamic terrorists. The more educated an individual is, the more nuanced and sophisticated his version of the myth will likely be – yet it is still the myth, the same underlying assumptions and beliefs.

But how have we come to these conclusions? What has the myth arisen out of? Certainly it is undeniable that there are threads of truth woven in with fancy; this is characteristic of any good myth. But the rather obvious reality is that the American myth of active Islam is not based on a thorough and objective understanding of active Islam itself, but rather drawn from America's own encounters with active Islam: brief, intense, subjective, and highly specific. Without question, the most significant encounter, in terms of consequences deeply relevant to this day, was America's involvement in the mujahedeen of Afghanistan's resistance against the Soviet Union's 1979 invasion.

America's jihad

The evolution of American foreign policy during the Cold War set the stage for America's involvement in Afghanistan. The looming menace of the Soviet Union made controlling the world seem, to the administration, vital, yet the tolerance of the American public for constant war was wearing thin. The conflicts in Vietnam and Laos during the 1960s and seventies turned out to be a crossroads: Vietnam was, of course, a war fought by our own soldiers, and devolved into a complicated, bloody, dramatically unpopular disaster. In contrast, the conflict in Laos was fought through a secret army of Hmong mercenaries, with American air support: it was painless, invisible to public scrutiny, and relatively successful. Proxy war quickly became the choice strategy of the Cold War

(Mamdani 66). The ability to manipulate world events without worrying about the opinions of Congress or the public proved intoxicating; successive administrations were undeterred both by proxy debacles, such as the Angolan conflict, and the attempts of Congress, notably with the Clark Amendment, to restrain their power. Mahmood Mamdani writes, "…even [the Clark Amendment's] decade-long duration had failed to forestall the Cold Warriors…as they looked for ways to bypass legislative restrictions on the freedom of executive action, these ideologues embraced proxy war enthusiastically and terrorism gradually." (87) The rise of the Reagan Doctrine in the 1980s pushed proxy war from its Kissinger origins as a makeshift, pragmatic strategy for avoiding congressional oversight, into a full-blown ideological assault (98). The Reaganites asserted that ethical foreign policy necessitated *more* interference abroad, not less. The foundation of the program was the concept of "rollback": that is, to aggressively attack Communism in the Third World, rather than merely attempting to contain it, as had been done in the past. The idea of democratic foreign policy was remolded to entail the pursuit of "freedom" by any means necessary. This was the mood developing as the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and the United States decided to get involved.

American support of the Afghan mujahedeen turned into the largest covert operation in the history of the CIA (141). The clandestine aid given to the Afghans in 1987 alone – around $660 million – was more than the total amount of aid given to the famously CIA-backed contras in Nicaragua. The US administration's ultimate objective was to make Afghanistan the Soviet Union's Vietnam: to bleed the USSR white (124). Their strategy, therefore, was to harness extreme Islam, which already considered Communism 'the godless enemy', to raise up an army burning with hatred for the Soviet Union. Rather than simply give support to the already passionate Afghan resistance, the CIA wanted to "unite a billion Muslims worldwide in a holy war, a crusade, against the Soviet Union, on the soil of Afghanistan." (128) Essentially, the idea was to artificially create a jihad, and enjoy the results.

What is ironic is that at this point, right-wing active Islam was not in any sense an important or even coherent movement. It was the left wing, with its program of nonviolence and social justice, that had built a base of popular support and was working for change. But anything vaguely leftish reeked of Communism to the United States, and

what was desired was not social programs but radical hatred that could be manifested in violence. Thus, fatefully, the US ignored the left and took the right under its wings, completely transforming it: arming it with "not only the organization, the numbers, the skills, the reach, and the confidence but also a coherent objective." (129) The American involvement entailed several strategies relevant to us today. First, in their effort to recruit Muslims worldwide, they constructed an effective network for active Islam, linking Islamic institutions, from mosques to banks to *madrassahs* (Islamic schools) to charities, across the globe. Second, in their effort to engender hatred, they helped to change many madrassahs, particularly in Pakistan, where the Afghan resistance was based, from their original incarnation as benign religious schools into their current notorious manifestation as schools of violent radicalism. Thousands of foreign Muslims were sent to these schools to be radicalized and given military training, a practice whose popularity did not diminish with the end of the Afghan War. [3] While those being seriously trained were obviously adult males, children, as potential future fighters, were not beyond the reach of American propaganda. The University of Nebraska designed textbooks for Afghan children with a $50 million USAID grant that ran until 1994. A fourth-grade mathematics textbook asks questions such as: "The speed of a Kalashnikov bullet is 800 meters per second. If a Russian is at a distance of 3200 meters from a mujahid, and that mujahid aims at the Russian's head, calculate how many seconds it will take for the bullet to strike the Russian in the forehead." (137) Pervez Hoodbhoy writes, "US-sponsored textbooks, which exhort Afghan children to pluck out the eyes of their enemies and cut off their legs, are still widely available in Afghanistan and Pakistan, some in their original form." (Qtd. 137) Finally, the American support is significant because it privatized information about how to produce and spread violence – ultimately, one could argue, how to be a good terrorist. John K. Cooley describes the military training process for the jihad as an inverted pyramid: the CIA personally trained some Pakistani officers and Afghan leaders, who in turn were required to train the thousands of fighters – who in turn, once the war was over, dispersed back to their own countries and continued the dissemination of this potent training (Cooley 81). In 1993, Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan's

[3] For example, several of the suicide bombers who attacked London's public transportation system on July 7, 2005, had recently spent several months in Pakistan at such schools.

former prime minister, remarked on the aftermath of the jihad: "They [the mujahideen] are all over the world." (88)

Letting loose worldwide a massive group of radicalized, network-supported fighters with American military training and nothing to do has had unsurprisingly damaging consequences. Afghanistan veterans have been involved in bloody movements throughout the Muslim world, from the Islamists who spurred Algeria's ghastly civil war to Egypt's Islamic militants. A team of *Los Angeles Times* reporters who carried out an investigation of the aftermath of the Afghan War found that "the key leaders of every major terrorist attack, from New York to France to Saudi Arabia, inevitably turned to have been veterans of the Afghan war." (Mamdani 139) And of course, the war's most famous veteran is Osama bin Laden, who progressed from leading the mujahedeen against the Russians, to creating his own terrorist organization and carrying out the one of the most devastating terrorist attacks in history, against the country that had trained and supported him. Out of a few scattered extremists who no one paid attention to, the United States managed to create an enemy it may not be able to defeat. Former CIA official Russell J. Bowern commented on the agency's approach to handling the Afghan proxy war: "The idea was you had a job to do, and you go out and do the job, and you clean up the problems later." (Cooley 83) In Afghanistan, this optimistic approach proved to be colossally damaging.

America essentially created a Frankenstein version of active Islam: the Afghan jihad, beyond the vastly outnumbered and poorly armed original mujahedeen, was to a large extent manipulated into life, constructed – yet just like the human monster of the novel, it came alive, and began to act on its own accord, defying its creator. This is not at all to say that America is responsible for the rise of Islamic extremism and terrorism; the Iranian hostage crisis, for example, broke out in 1979, the same year that the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. But it is significant that the Afghan jihad was our primary major encounter with active Islam, arguably our most determined – if wholly self-interested – effort to engage with it. America's jihad succeeded in its objective of routing the Soviet Union; for a time, the Afghan mujahedeen were portrayed as heroes in the West; President Reagan praised them as freedom fighters in the battle against

Communism. But through its empowerment of right-wing, violent active Islam, the jihad set the stage for our battle with Islamic extremism today.

The Foreign Policy Perspective

The American foreign policy community today is pervasively intolerant of active Islam, to varying extremes. Fawaz A. Gerges organizes the differing views into two general camps: confrontationalism and accomodationism (Gerges 21). Their essential point of disagreement is whether political Islam – and by extension, active Islam in general – is compatible with democracy. Both groups staunchly assert that democracy is the universal ideal system, breeding moderation, and discouraging violent conflict.

Confrontationalists argue that active Islam is inherently irreconcilable with both democracy and the West. In their view of history, we have progressed from the ideological clash of the Cold War to an era of civilizational clashes, à la Huntington. Unsurprisingly, the most dangerous and dramatic of these clashes is between the West and Islam. (Confrontationalists have a tendency to blend the religion of Islam and the programs of various Islamic groups into a single blurry threat.) *Both* sides view the conflict as a clash of civilizations, a battle with much deeper issues at stake than territory or commercial rights. That "Islam" is our enemy is not a temporary assignment of identity; its ideology is and has always been fundamentally antagonistic to our own values – it is only now that it has come to the forefront as our major enemy. But this is not a case of two great, dignified civilizations meeting in war. Active Islam is painted as the successor of not only Communism, but even Nazism and fascism – an evil movement that must be contained and eradicated at whatever cost necessary, that ought to be "stifled at birth", as one scholar writes (Qtd. 22). Confrontationalists view the diverse array of Islamic groups, programs, and thought as monolithic, a "surging international network", with all of its members working together to destroy the West and force the triumph of Islam (25). They see little point in making distinctions within this monolith of evil; the only real difference between extremists and moderates is "revolution versus evolution" – that is, the means considered appropriate for *achieving* an Islamic state; the results (that

is, how the state would be conducted) would be identical. Confrontationalists are fond of bringing up the concept in traditional Islamic thought of the world as divided into three spheres – the House of Islam, the House of Truce, and the House of War, which encompasses all non-Muslim lands – asserting that what this means is that if the Islamic world is not steadily and forcefully held in check by the West, it will unleash endless war upon the world, in its effort to take over the globe (e.g. Spencer 169). Really, Jonathon Paris muses, all that is needed is "a charismatic Sunni Arab fundamentalist, a Nasser with a beard", to raise up the conquering Muslim hordes, ready to die for their evil ideology (Qtd. Gerges 25).

Obviously, active Islam is not something that can be tolerated, just as we never should have appeased Hitler. The phenomenon of Islamization has put the Middle East into a state of emergency, and as such, at this point, bestowing democracy on the region would be practically as fatal as directly funding Islamic groups. As Judith Miller writes, "Free elections seem more likely than any other route to produce militant Islamist regimes that are, in fact, inherently antidemocractic." (Qtd. 34) The Islamist attitude towards elections, Bernard Lewis declares, is "one man, one vote, once." (Qtd. 21) Therefore, though it seems paradoxical, American support of the authoritarian regimes currently in place is actually – in the very long run – paving the way for democracy, by protecting the people of the Middle East from their own harmful desires. Jeanne Kirkpatrick has commented, "The Arab world is the only part of the world where I've been shaken in my conviction that if you let people decide, they will make fundamentally rational choices." (Qtd. 29) These authoritarian regimes are not ideal, but they act as a bulwark against the onslaught of Islamization; they therefore must be upheld and strengthened – for the good of the region, and of the world.

Accomodationists, on the other hand, argue that Islamization presents as many opportunities as it does challenges. Islamic civilization has been and remains as fluid as any other: its evolution over the past centuries encompasses an array of political systems and interpretations of Islam. That the Middle East is currently awash in anti-Westernism and political situations which give little hope for the success of democracy is obvious, but this does not necessarily indicate that the rupture between Islam and the West is inherent. Rather, it speaks to the drama, complexity, and violence of the relationship between the

Muslim world and the West in recent history, from colonialism to Iraq. Gerges writes, "[T]he threat of a monolith Islam has been a recurrent Western myth divorced from the reality of Muslim history." (29) Western interference has shaped the region as deeply as have internal factors. To see active Islam, or even extremist Islam, as an evil ideology springing out of nowhere, is to blatantly ignore the massive, smoldering sociopolitical frustrations impeding the wellbeing of millions: active Islam is an authentic response to a stagnant crisis, to which America is contributing. Moreover, particularly in confrontationalist circles, the extremist minorities of active Islam are often portrayed as representative of the entire spectrum. In reality, there exists a wide range of distinctive groups and schools of thought, with ample room for positive possibilities, for reform and representational government, under the banner of Islam.

Therefore, the accomodationists insist, denouncing active Islam without distinction, embarking upon an all-out war against Islamic civilization, is simply an off-the-mark solution. America's goal should not be to attack active Islam, but to attempt to shape it, to bring it into line with our own interests. American policymakers are nervous about the radical proclamations made by many Islamic groups, but it is arguable that this radicalism is enabled by the groups' lack of responsibility; it is a symptom of their distance from real power. If (cautiously) placed in a position of leadership over society, forced to confront the complex reality of today's world, a well-chosen, pragmatic group would inevitably normalize through compromise and self-moderation, in order to preserve their power. But their leadership would still placate the popular demand for 'Islamic' rule. Thus, careful engagement with active Islam could actually bring greater stability, whereas American support for secular but authoritarian regimes (in the interest of stability), by blatantly ignoring the voice of the people, intensifies both radicalism and anti-Americanism. From this perspective, the flawed nature of current US government polices for Middle East seems obvious – even if the right road to take instead is risky, and not yet entirely clear.

The problem with accomodationists is that to some extent they seem to share the intolerance of the confrontationalists. Yes, active Islam can be positive – if it plays by our rules. Engaging with 'active Islam', at least in the policymaking community, seems to mean seeking out rich or intellectual Arabs who are essentially Westernized, with

Islamic flavor: Ahmed Chalabi comes to mind. As these individuals typically have no popular support, the results have ranged from ineffective to embarrassing. The real challenge – and opportunity for real results – lies in engaging sectors of active Islam that both seem to have potential for positive action, and are supported by the masses. This would rule out nihilistic fundamentalist or terrorist groups, as well as the pets of the West. At the forefront are such controversial groups as Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood. These groups are not innocent, and yet have demonstrated incredibly effective leadership (the Muslim Brotherhood's programs will be explored in the next two chapters). They do not fit well into the Manichean worldview popular in America, yet they are too significant to leave out. Real engagement with active Islam may entail substantial compromises on American ideals – human rights, democracy – yet the alternative, propping up authoritarian regimes, has thus far required the *same* compromises, with unsatisfactory results. But to form conclusions about active Islam and the long-term wisdom of engaging with it, it is necessary to examine its true – or at least, historical – portrait: to go beyond the American myth.

2

Active Islam: A historical portrait

Looking back over the historical landscape, active Islam has developed in terms of ideology and activity through three primary evolutions or manifestations, with offshoots breaking away at various times. Each manifestation is a direct response to the dominant driver of society at that time – colonialism, secular nationalism, or globalization – specifically in terms of their failure to provide an adequate framework, structurally or ideologically, for society.

Back to basics: Salafism

By the nineteenth century, the Muslim world was firmly under European control, its former glory rendered impotent against the dominance of Western might and modernization. Islam had once been a source of pride, an indicator of a great civilization; by this point it had been degraded to the point where well-known European thinkers, such as the French philosopher Ernest Renan, consistently argued that Islam was what impeded the Muslim world from entering modernity – Reinhard Schulze writes, "Islam became the byword for the separation between Europe and the Orient." (Schulze 18) This mood was not merely European arrogance; Muslim thinkers were deeply frustrated by, even despairing of, their civilization's seeming inability to reinvigorate itself. In 1895, Moroccan historian Ahmad bin Khalid al-Nasiri al-Salawi wrote, "It is known that at this moment the Christians have reached the apogee of their strength and power, and that the Muslims on the other hand – may God lead them together again and put them on the right track – are as weak and disorderly as they could possibly be. We are, they [the European nations] and we, like two birds, one equipped with wings, who can go wherever he pleases, the other with clipped wings who keeps falling back on earth without being able to fly." (20) But Muslim recognition of their own failings, and of the supremacy of the West, did not engender blind admiration of their colonial rulers. Europe's achievements were impressive, but for many of its colonial subjects, its frequent recourse to brutality to accomplish these achievements nullified the validity of its ideology. One seminal example is the Indian Revolt of 1857, which was begun by Bengali soldiers protesting their British commanders' attempts to forcibly convert them to Christianity, but quickly escalated into a nationwide Hindu-Muslim rebellion, met with a British response of mass arrests, ravaging of most major cities, and slaughter of civilians and soldiers alike – a campaign of terror to regain full control of the country that lasted nearly two years. Reza Aslan, commenting on the aftermath, writes, "The violence with which colonial control was reasserted in India forever shattered any illusions of British moral superiority. For most Muslims, Europe's civilizing mission in the Middle East was revealed for what it truly was: an ideology of political and economic dominance achieved through brutal military might. The ideals of the Enlightenment, which the

British never tired of preaching, could no longer be separated from the repressive imperialist policies of the colonizing government." (Aslan 225) While Christians and Muslims had already been on-and-off enemies for centuries, the explicit *rejection* of the West arguably begins here. Mohammed Abdu, one of the canonical authors of active Islam, expressed this shift: "We Egyptians believed once in English liberalism and English sympathy; but we believe no longer, for facts are stronger than words. Your liberalness we see plainly is only for yourselves, and your sympathy with us is that of the wolf for the lamb he deigns to eat." (232)

Western modernity, it was concluded, did not hold the answers for the Muslim world: despite its success, it was not what they wanted to become. Yet Muslim intellectuals were equally frustrated by what they saw as the stagnancy of their own societies. This stagnancy, they argued, had arisen through the gradual abandonment of true Islam for a corrupted and legalistic imitation. There were two main sources of corruption. First, the influence of local cultural practices, forms of religiosity such as witchcraft and mysticism, had perverted the original ideals of Islam. (Schulze 18) Intellectuals argued that it was necessary to return to and universalize the "pure" Islam of the forefathers, *al-salaf*, an ideology that was accordingly given the name of *Salafiya* or Salafism. The ideology aimed to extricate Islam from cultural and temporal contexts, refining it into 'mere' religion: like a well-made sword, powerful in its very spareness. At the same time, the *ulama* or religious establishment, had perverted Islam to the other extreme: instead of flooding it with too much life, compromising its sacredness, they had drained it of life altogether in the name of protecting tradition. In the name of carrying out their self-appointed role as the guardians of Islam, the ulama suffocated independent thought, scientific progress, and intellectual discourse on the accepted interpretation of Islam, ultimately trapping Muslim civilization in the Middle Ages while Europe progressed to the Enlightenment, and rendering Islam an ossified religion unable to respond to the needs of modernizing society (Aslan 230). Thus Muslim intellectuals sought to forge a new conception of Islam that was authentic or pure (Salafi) but also reformist. Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, the "Awakener of the East", proclaimed to the Muslim world that Islam was more than law and theology: it was *civilization*. As such, Aslan writes, "Islam, detached from its purely religious associations, could be used as a sociopolitical ideology

to unite the whole of the Muslim world in solidarity against imperialism." (230) Like European socialists, these thinkers believed that to reinvigorate society, it was necessary to change the balance of power, from the current situation of a tiny elite, whether the colonial rulers or the ulama, controlling the masses, to a society of relative equality, free of both political and religious imperialism.

One of the primary routes through which this was to be accomplished was in making a universal right of *itjihad*, individual interpretation. What this would mean is that any person would be considered able to interpret the founding texts of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunna, for himself, without regard to the traditional, substantial weight of existing commentaries (mainly by religious scholars, which over the centuries had come to be seen as *part* of the sacred texts). While this may sound like a very indirect route to a more equal society, its shock value was in some ways comparable to Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation: it flew in the face of ten centuries of orthodoxy and the unquestioned religious authority of the ulama. Abdu argued that itjihad was the only path to Muslim empowerment (232). Moreover, while like most Muslim thinkers Abdu believed that religion and politics should not be separated, he considered the ulama completely unacceptable for the task of leading the Muslim community into the new century. In his writings, he made the somewhat controversial argument that Islamic civilization would be best served by an Islamic-style democracy – reformulating modern democratic principles in terms familiar to the average Muslim. Aslan writes, "Thus, Abdu redefined *shura*, or tribal consultation, as representative democracy; *ijma*, or consensus, as popular sovereignty; and *bay'ah*, or the oath of allegiance, as universal sufferage. According to this view, the *ummah* (Islamic community) was the nation, and its ruler the Caliph, whose sole function was to protect its members by serving the welfare of the community." (232)

This sounds perfect. But it was obviously not implemented. Why? First of all, while this movement and its key authors (al-Afghani, Abdu, and Rashid Rida) have served as the inspiration for and foundation of the vast majority of Islamic movements of the twentieth century and beyond, the movement itself was primarily intellectual; it made demands of the ulama and society, but did not have a pragmatic program to work for change; its reforms remained in the realm of the abstract. Second, its ideal of Pan-

Islamism, the reunited ummah, proved to be exceedingly difficult to implement in a political sense. This was both because the spiritual territory of Islam has always been populated by clashing sects, which makes religious solidarity difficult, and because of the rise of secular nationalists throughout the Middle East, who also sought to reinvigorate the Muslim world, but found the movement's religious ideals incompatible with what they considered to be most vital: political independence, economic prosperity, and military might. Ultimately, for those in power, despite the horrors of colonialism, the seduction of the West proved to be intoxicating. Faced with the choice between attempting to mimic the West, which they were being pushed to do anyway, and turning their back on the rulers of the world to attempt an untried, idealistic, Islamic state, the leaders of the Middle East chose the way of the West.

Islam is the solution: the birth of Islamism

Islamism can be defined as political Islam; Islamists seek to implement an Islamic state. The movement eclipses Salafism in that, while it is largely based on Salafist theology, it directly engages the state, politics, and society. Its origins lie in two early twentieth century movements: Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami, founded by Sayid Abul Ala Maududi, and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, founded by Hassan al-Banna. While Maududi's contribution to Islamism is valuable, it is the Muslim Brotherhood that is most relevant to the discussion at hand. [4]

Hassan al-Banna was an Egyptian intellectual who, at a young age, joined the Hasafiyyah Sufi Order to dedicate his life to preserving and renewing the traditions of Islam (235)[5]. As a university student in Cairo, he was deeply influenced by the writings of al-Afghani and Abdu. Like them, he saw the reasons for the stagnation of Muslim civilization as twofold: first, foreign influence, but also the community's departure from the original ideals of Islam. Egypt, at that point under the control of the British, had become "a virtual apartheid state": the British and an opportunistic Egyptian elite together ruling over millions of impoverished peasants and urban slum-dwellers (235).

[4] Egypt's reputation as the heart of the Arab world is valid in that its own Islamization serves as a fair prototype for the evolution of active Islam in the region in general.
[5] Sufism is a mystical form of Islam.

Traditional Islamic values of egalitarianism and social justice had been pushed aside by those in power for rampant greed, decadence, and secularism. Al-Banna believed that Islam was the remedy, but when he turned to the Al-Azhar ulama for guidance, he found them to be as ineffectual and out-of-touch as the Salafis had accused them of being decades earlier[6]. Still, a true Islamic state, he wrote, would be "more complete, more pure, more lofty, and more exalted than anything that can be found in the utterances of Westerners and the books of Europeans." (Qtd. Sullivan 43)

In 1928, al-Banna moved to the village of Ismailiyyah, near the Suez Canal, for his first teaching post. Like Cairo, the village epitomized the decay and cooptation of the Muslim community. Reza Aslan describes the village: "If the Canal was the crowning achievement of the colonialist system in Egypt, Ismailiyyah represented the depths to which Arabs had sunk under that system. This was a region teeming with foreign soldiers and civilian workers who lived in luxurious gated communities that towered over the squalid and miserable neighborhoods of the local residents. Street signs were in English, cafes and restaurants segregated, and public spaces peppered with markers warning 'no Arabs'." (Aslan 236) It was here that al-Banna began preaching his message of Islamization in coffee shops, parks, restaurants, and homes. His simple slogan, "Islam is the solution", appealed to those frustrated by the weakness of both the Egyptian government and the ulama. What began as an informal grassroots organization, committed to changing people's lives through social welfare, was gradually formalized into the world's first Islamic social movement. At the group's first official meeting, twenty-two-year-old al-Banna declared, "We are brothers in the service of Islam, hence we are *the Muslim Brothers*." (236) His organization grew quickly, by 1949 boasting over a million members in Egypt alone, with similar organizations being set up in Syria, Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia, Palestine, Sudan, Iran, and Yemen; today, it is a global powerhouse, though its Egyptian branch remains the most significant. Aslan writes, "Islamic socialism proved to be infinitely more successful than either Pan-Islamism or Pan-Arabism in giving voice to Muslim grievances." (236) It was the first modern attempt to not only portray but implement Islam as an all-encompassing religious,

[6] Al Azhar, a combined mosque and university in Cairo, is the center of Islamic scholarship in the Muslim world, and the stomping grounds of the Egyptian ulama.

political, social, economic, and cultural system. Instead of glossing over social problems with religious rhetoric, the organization tackled issues no one else wanted to take on: the decadent autocracy of Arab monarchies, the rise of Zionism in Palestine, the political inferiority of Muslims on the global stage. In 1947, al-Banna wrote a daring letter of advice to the Egyptian monarch, King Faruq, respectfully asking the king to reform his government in alignment with Islamic ideals, purging it of Western influence and instead implementing "Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic military spirit, Islamic health traditions and scientific studies, Islamic morality, and an Islamic economic system". (Sullivan 42) He concluded, "Finally, when the nation possesses all these reinforcements – hope, patriotism, science, power, health, and a sound economy – it will without a doubt, be the strongest of all nations." (Qtd. 42) However, al-Banna's boldness did not extend into forceful political action, such as attempting to actually take over the government: he envisioned the Muslim Brotherhood as primarily a socialist movement, rather than a political party, and therefore its major concern was the Islamization of *individuals*, not the government. True to his Sufi roots, al-Banna believed that reforming the state had to begin with reforming the self (Aslan 237).

Disillusion and revival

Islamism was an immediately popular movement. However, it was *ignited* in the 1970s, spreading to pervade every sector of Egyptian society. The catalyst of this Islamic revival was twofold: the Six-Day War, and the collapse of the social and economic programs implemented by President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

The Six-Day War was supposed to be a crushing Arab triumph, led by Egypt, over Israel. Instead, it swiftly deteriorated into humiliating disaster: Israel decisively defeated the Arabs and exponentially increased its territory, gaining the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights, which of course has had major consequences in the region and on the world stage leading up to today. Throughout the Muslim world, the debacle was widely perceived as divine punishment for Egypt's embrace of socialist nationalism, straying from the path of Islam (Sullivan 44). A soul-searching mood settled on the region, and Egypt in particular. Moreover, the failure of

Nasser's ideology was underscored by the gradual collapse of his grand domestic plans for bringing Egypt into a new age of glory. His most famous initiative was to make university education – up to that point the exclusive bastion of the elite – widely available, with the promise of a good government job for every graduate. The idea was that this would produce waves of skilled workers who would invigorate Egypt's economy. Instead, the quantitative emphasis on students profoundly undermined the quality of university education, producing waves of semi-skilled, poorly trained, but still job-hungry graduates. The flood of graduates overwhelmed Egypt's employment needs: in a country still only partially modernized, the economy could not absorb so many people looking for white-collar jobs. The government's promises proved to be largely hollow: Raymond William Baker writes, "The vast majority of the graduates received devalued certificates, and their optimism vanished when it became clear that no meaningful employment awaited them outside the university gates. The last decades of the twentieth century saw the emergence of an army of 'educated proletarians' who drove taxis and served tables, while they waited ten years or more for assignment to a low-paying public sector job." (Baker 27) Nasser had promised a meritocracy, but the stale, corrupt economy proved resistant to mediocre reform efforts. Even today, jobs are obtained mainly through connections and even bribes, rather than ability or training. While the government is obviously aware of its failures, successive administrations have done little to even give the appearance of attempting to solve what have become massive structural problems. For example, unemployment in 2004 was measured at 25 percent (Levinson). The employment situation is aggravated by Egypt's social norms. Like many more traditional societies, children remain with the family until they are married. However, in Egypt, marriage entails a host of prerequisites for the husband, often including buying or renting an apartment. This expense, in the context of available job opportunities, is enormous, rendering marriage – and moving on from the family house, starting one's own life – a distant dream for millions of young people.

Thus, by the 1970s, the combination of the angst over Egypt's military defeat and massive social frustrations, by sounding the death knell for ideologies of socialist Arab nationalism, created a fertile ground for an alternative ideology to flourish. Islamism, with the Muslim Brotherhood at the forefront, seized the opportunity, invading the

educational system, the professional sector, and the ulama, working in tandem with less ideological Islamic revivals in popular and traditional culture. This phenomenon will be explored in the next chapter.

A new society: the Islamist program

The heart of the Islamist program is Hassan al-Banna's original slogan, "Islam is the solution". This is taken quite literally: whether the problem is Egypt's defeat by Israel in 1967, or the lack of affordable housing in 1998, the solution can be found in Islam (Sullivan 45). As society is Islamized, an inherently just, stable, and effective state will necessarily arise. Essentially, Islamists seek to replace politics with virtue. Denis J. Sullivan and Sana Abed-Kotob claim that "The central objective of the contemporary [Muslim] Brotherhood continues to be the establishment of an Islamic state that is governed not by man-made laws, but by sharia." (46) On a superficial level, perhaps, this is true. But one of the major reasons that Islamism is distinct from other Islamic movements, such as fundamentalism, is that it is not interested in a legalistic, forceful imposition of sharia upon society, considering this to be false. Oliver Roy writes, "…for radical Islamists, institution of the sharia presupposes a transformation of society if it is not to be sheer hypocrisy." (Roy, *Failure*, 38) Thus, because the Islamic state will be formed by a harmonious, God-fearing community, there is little need for the normal trappings of government, such as institutions or elections. As in Marxism, the state itself is largely irrelevant and will wither away.

What is ironic about Islamism is that, despite its specific claim of authenticity, its structure and vocabulary borrow from conceptual matrices of both Marxism and general Western political science, Islamized with Qur'anic terms (39). As Roy explains, "From the Qur'an come the terms: *shura* (advisory council), *hizb* (party), *tawhid* (oneness), *mustadaf* (oppressed), *ummah* (community of believers), and *jahiliyya* (ignorance), which are interpreted in a modern political context (democracy, political parties, a classless society, social classes, and so on)." (39) However, while outside influences are plain, the religious nature of the Islamist conception of government deeply distinguishes its character. The foundational belief of the religion of Islam is *tawhid*: the divine oneness

of God, expressed in the *shahadah*, or profession of faith, the most important of the five pillars of Islam: "There is no god but God, and Muhammed is the messenger of God." Aslan writes, "Tawhid means that God is oneness. God is Unity: wholly indivisible, entirely unique, and utterly indefinable." (Aslan 150) Islamism takes this tenet of religion and applies it to the state: society ought to be a reflection of tawhid. A tawhidi society is utterly one, intolerant of any form of segmentation – social, ethnic, majority/minority opinions – or a political authority with power autonomous from the divine order, even in a contingent manner (Roy, *Failure* 41). *Hakimiyya*, God's absolute sovereignty, permeates the state, governing all aspects of the life of the individual as well as that of society. Within this unity, society is organized through three basic structures: the *murshid* or *emir*, the *shura*, and the *ummah*: roughly, the leader, the advisory council, and the community. They are tied together through Islam, specifically the foundation of sharia (one of the major Islamist slogans is "The Qur'an is our constitution") (32). As Islamists work towards implementing this ideology on a societal scale, their group or party serves as a micro-countersociety, in which the program can be immediately lived out.

The murshid is both the religious and political leader of the community. This combination of power effectively eliminates the secularization inherent in the current system, in which the state government controls politics, and the ulama oversees religious matters. Because sovereignty belongs to God alone, the roles of both the murshid and the shura are fairly simple, and limited. The murshid possesses the power to make decisions for the state, to act, but only in accordance with Islamic principles. The shura holds the power of advising or admonishing the murshid – in accordance with Islamic principles. Clearly, for this form of leadership to function properly, the choice of a leader and of the individuals who make up the shura is crucial. However, Islamism does not designate a concrete system for selection – such as elections or a hereditary monarchy – only vague suggestions and highly idealistic requirements (for example, that the leader must abstain from all sin, and incarnate sincerity, justice, and purity) (43). The deciding factor is not education, experience, or aptitude for leadership, but virtue. Ideally, the leader will be *index sui*, his own indicator – arising from the masses, recognizable by his holiness. Similarly, for the shura it is expected that "good men will appear" (45). Laying out an

official system of selection seems to taint the purity of Islamic society with the grimy bureaucracy of humanity. Finally, the ummah has no formal function of authority, yet it is by the will of the ummah that the murshid and the shura remain in power: the community is the ultimate judge of the state, a significant parallel to democracy.

In tandem with its emphasis on gradual change through sincere transformation, rather than forceful imposition of Islamic values, Islamism distinguishes itself from other Islamic movements in three major ways: its engagement with politics, its attitude towards modernity, and its treatment of women.

Nowadays, Islam and politics seem constantly tangled up with one another in the Muslim world. But while Islamic doctrine states that religion and the state are inseparable, the idea of a reformist, grassroots Islamic movement not only challenging the authority of the supposedly Islamic regime, but inserting itself into the political system, was shocking when first attempted by the Muslim Brotherhood. Puritan and fundamentalist Islamic groups were also agitating for a societal return to true Islam, but kept solely to the realm of religion: preaching in the mosques, publishing pamphlets, maintaining personal lives strictly aligned with sharia. In contrast, as Roy writes, "Islamists consider that the society will be Islamized only through social and political action: it is necessary to leave the mosque." (36) Kurshid Ahmed declares, "The reforms that Islam wants to bring about cannot be effected by sermons alone. Political power is also essential to achieve them." (Qtd. 61) Where many others are content to simply pontificate, the Islamists are ready to get their hands dirty, engaging with the real world in exchange for real change.

The Islamists enhance their real-world attitude via a thoughtful engagement of modernity. To them, the ulama has responded to modernity in precisely the wrong way: passively accepting what is evil – the separation of religious and politics, essentially, the secularization of society – in order to maintain their cushy position of power at the right hand of the government, while condemning what is good and useful: science and technology.

Similarly, where women are often ignored or condemned in more traditional or fundamentalist ideologies, Islamism sees women as not only validly human but essential – though still not equal to men. While their conception of the female role does not meet

Western expectations, their obsession is not that women should remain in the home, but simply that the sexes should be separated in public (59). This means that women can and should be educated and active in society, certainly an improvement over many Islamic conceptualizations of the role of women. As a result, Islamism has proved popular with women; they have been actively involved with the movement since its inception. [7] For example, in 1933, a time when few females were educated in Egypt, Hassan al-Banna opened a school for "the mothers of believers"; nowadays nearly all Islamist groups have active and powerful women's associations.

The failure of political Islam

Islamism is arguably the most coherent and effective of all Islamic movements, in that its approach is by nature worldly: that is, concerned with the everyday issues of social justice, rather than an exclusive focus on the spiritual realm. However, Islamism is today largely considered a failure, a movement in decline. This is for two major reasons: first, repression by states has wrung out Islamism, leaving it impotent; and second, even if it were able to be fully implemented, it is an impossibly idealistic ideology. Ironically, the characteristics that made Islamism so popular – its social programs, its blending of Islam and modernity – are also what have essentially condemned it to death through constant state repression. While Middle Eastern states typically claim that crackdowns on Islamists are necessary in the larger battle against Islamic extremism – painting moderates as wolves in sheep's clothing – the reality is somewhat more sinister: regimes understand that moderate Islamism is their most serious competition (Baker 38). The Muslim Brotherhood's rapid popularity caused it to quickly be deemed 'subversive' by the colonial Egyptian government; in 1948 King Farouk banned the organization. In response, the Brotherhood assassinated Prime Minister Mahmud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi. In return, the regime arranged for Hassan al-Banna to be assassinated by the secret police in

[7] This is an important but massive subject, and as such will not be explored in this thesis.

1949. The Brothers supported General Gamal Abdel Nasser's rise to power in the coup d'état of 1952, and at first they enjoyed a reciprocal, if fragile, relationship: as the dominant voice of opposition in Egypt, their support of his regime was a powerful source of legitimacy for Nasser; in turn, the president promised to implement their socialist program. However, their relations deteriorated rapidly. The Brothers were alienated by Nasser's increasing authoritarianism and secular nationalist agenda. Their massive, unstable popularity made him uneasy. In 1954, shots were fired as President Nasser was giving a speech in Alexandria; he seized the opportunity to dismantle the organization. Blaming the Muslim Brotherhood for the attempted assassination, Nasser outlawed the movement, executed its leaders, and threw over a thousand of its members into prison. Most were not released until Sadat's widespread pardons in the 1970s. Though it was meant to simply suffocate active Islam, this act proved to be the catalyst of a profound split within the Muslim Brotherhood, gradually extending to active Islam as a whole. While some emerged from imprisonment still faithful to al-Banna's vision of peaceful Islamic reform, many were disillusioned. For them, the dark years wasted in Egypt's hopeless, sadistic prisons were an aching revelation: to believe that peaceful efforts, up against the brutal strength of Nasser and other Middle Eastern autocrats, could bring about real change, was utter naïveté. Islamization could only be achieved by force. In the cruel light of this newly revealed world, a fresh visionary was needed to lead the way, and one of the Brothers languishing in prison emerged to claim this role: Sayyid Qutb, "the father of Islamic radicalism".

In the West, it is easy to paint Sayyid Qutb as an exemplar of everything that is wrong with active Islam: his work comes off as irrationally passionate, unrealistic, extreme, and violent. He has been a primary inspiration for countless militant, extremist, and terrorist groups. Yet the further we go beneath the veneer of active Islam, the more powerful becomes our sense of empathy, the coherence of ideologies that may manifest themselves as superficially incomprehensible. Qutb lived in the United States during the 1940s, researching its educational system. The experience convinced him of the evils of Western civilization. He was repulsed by America's lack of community ethics: a nation "devoid of human sympathy and responsibility…except under the force of law." (Qtd. Aslan 238) Upon his return to Cairo in 1950, he joined the Muslim Brotherhood, whose

commitment to implementing an Islamic society matched his own convictions, and quickly rose to a position of leadership as head of the organization's propaganda department. In 1954, he was arrested under Nasser's crackdown. In prison, he and other Brothers were severely tortured. In June 1957, twenty-one of his prisonmates were massacred, an episode that profoundly marked Qutb: Hala Mustafa writes that Qutb was "horrified by the barbarism of the camp guards, by the inhumanity with which they let the wounded die. Various witnesses report that it was then that he lost his last remaining illusions as to the Muslim character of the Nasser regime." (Qtd. Sullivan 43) In 1964, Qutb was released from prison, and promptly published his most famous work, the revolutionary manifesto *Milestones*. His premise was that Egypt, despite its superficial appearance of being a Muslim society, was in truth in a state of *jahiliyyah* – the traditional "Time of Ignorance" which preceded the rise of Islam, defined by decadent and corrupt human beings hoarding God's rightful sovereignty for themselves (Aslan 239). Naturally, this was a shocking accusation. Qutb asserted the validity of al-Banna's prescription for society; total Islamization was what was needed. However, he believed that this could only be accomplished by force. In *Milestones*, he wrote, "Preaching alone is not enough. Those who have usurped the authority of Allah and are oppressing Allah's creatures are not going to give up their power merely through preaching…setting up the kingdom of God on earth, and eliminating the kingdom of man, means taking power from the hands of its human usurpers and restoring it to God alone." (Qtd. 239) Because the rulers of the Muslim world had replaced sharia with man-made laws, and usurped God's own sovereignty, Qutb called on Muslims to undertake *jihad* against them, defining the concept as "a complete armed rebellion….a declaration of the freedom of man from servitude to other men." (Qtd. Sullivan 42) Sullivan sums up the difference in approach compactly: "Whereas al-Banna had urged reform of the Egyptian political and legal systems by making recommendations to its leaders to implement Islamic law, Qutb declared religious war against the Egyptian state." (43) The next year, 1965, Qutb was rearrested, due to the publication of *Milestones*, and executed on charges of treason. But it was too late: his work had already irrevocably altered the landscape of Islamic thought. From Qutb has sprung a host of Islamic militant movements: within Egypt, the prison split of the Muslim Brotherhood gave birth to a burgeoning militant offshoot of active

Islam, with groups such as *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* staging attacks on government targets and foreign tourists, and generally destabilizing society. At their height in the early nineties, American analysts predicted that these groups would soon topple the Mubarak regime. However, while there are still a few incidents every year (notably bombings of tourist sites such as 2006's Dahab attacks), the forceful, American-armed response of the government, combined with the ideology's lack of popular support, has made the Egyptian militant movement largely irrelevant. On a global scale, the situation is similar: while new generations of angry youth are continually inspired by Qutb's writings, forming various violent groups, the vast majority of the Muslim world is not interested in carrying out jihad, but rather in improving their own lives and societies. Thus the violent branches of active Islam are relevant to discussions of terrorism and national security, but much less so to our examination of the future of mainstream Muslim societies.

What happened to the Muslim Brothers who were able to remain faithful to al-Banna's vision of gradual, peaceful reform? Again, the key factor was state repression, as well as the reality of the political system, which often clash with the ideals of theoretical Islamism. The Egyptian state, through the successive administrations of Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak, has sought to crush moderate Islamic movements nearly as relentlessly as the legitimately dangerous extremists. Those who did not turn to violence learned a painful lesson: a desire for survival necessitates some degree of banalization. That is, since only individuals and movements who are not considered a veritable threat to the regime will be allowed to operate freely, any movement that hopes to work over the long term for change, reforming the system rather than overthrowing it, must to some extent emasculate itself, compromise its values and limit its goals. Moreover, the reality for any movement attempting to gain power in a political system is that a sustained existence requires some normalization. Even in the most radical situations – Khomeini's Iran, for example – politics inevitably take precedence over the purity of ideology, whether Islam or democracy. Thus, the majority of political Islamic movements today, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood, have more or less accepted this reality, and are continuing their work within the system: campaigning for seats in the national assembly, fighting for "sharia-ization" of legislation. Al-Banna's vision of a radically transformed utopian society has long been relegated to a distant dream.

Olivier Roy explains the breakdown of the Islamist theoretical model as threefold: literature, concepts, and action (Roy, *Failure* 60). Since the foundational texts of the movement, all published before 1978, there has been nothing but "brochures, prayers, feeble glosses and citations of canonical authors." (60) Second, conceptually, Islamism is simply unrealistic. Its essential problem is that it puts all its eggs in the basket of virtue. It trusts that the leader, the advisory council, and the community will all selflessly commit themselves to Islamic principles, and live out those ideals every day, on the strength of their will alone. A system of checks and balances that recognizes the inevitable fallibility of human nature is an insult to the purity of the Islamic community. Institutions, after all, only exist to oblige individuals to be good Muslims, and in an Islamic state, everyone will already be a good Muslim. Moreover, Islamists seem to justify the lack of attention in their literature to the details of the workings of the state by making Islam a coverall: Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi wrote, "Islam does not prescribe any definite form for the formation of the consultative body or bodies for the simple reason that it is a universal religion meant for all times and climes." (Qtd. 61) Islamism is a flexible ideology, its principles compatible with a variety of constitutional formulas, including democracy – and at the same time, a magic dust that will beautify whatever it is sprinkled on . As Roy writes, "What counts is neither the form nor the strength of the institution, but rather the manner in which the institution effaces itself before the establishment of Islamic principles…" (61) This is an appealing philosophy, but unworkable. Islamism's "adaptability" simply renders it vulnerable to exploitation. This is seen in the third failure of Islamism, its real-world implementation. If governments or parties calling themselves Islamist demonstrated successful, effective governance, it would be possible to overlook the problems of their ideology. But so far, the declared sites of Islamist 'triumph' – Iran under Khomeini, the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, Afghanistan under the Taliban, Somalia's short-lived Islamist government – have proved to be not only ugly failures, but nothing like the true Islamist vision of society.

Islamism is still relevant in Muslim societies, particularly thanks to the pervasiveness of its social programs. But ideologically, most people who at one time believed in Islamism have, witnessing its failures, moved beyond it. To a great extent, Islamist groups' efforts to participate in the political system have resulted in their cooptation by

the state; no one believes that the Muslim Brotherhood's 88 seats in Parliament will enable them to transform society. The Muslim world's best and most popular attempt to reinvent itself through Islamic modernity has failed. In the wake of this failure, there has been a sea change: increasingly, the disillusioned masses, having given up on reforming the state, have opted to simply bypass it. This new phenomenon is encapsulated in what Olivier Roy terms neofundamentalism.

Neofundamentalism

The rise of neofundamentalism can be attributed to two major factors. First, the failure of active Islam as a political, statist, worldly movement has led to its transformation into a social, globalized, spiritual movement (Roy 1). Second, where Salafism was a response to colonialism, and Islamism to secular nationalism, neofundamentalism is primarily a response to globalization: that is, the growth of globalization is directly related to the growth of neofundamentalism.

Part of the American myth of active Islam is the persistent idea that radical or fundamentalist Islamic ideologies seek to shut out modernity, to return to an idealized premodern existence as during the life of the Prophet. Roy argues that this is false: rather, globalization is not only provoking but shaping these movements as much as is Islam or Muslim civilization (14). Modernity is accepted as inevitable; no one is trying to turn back the clock. But it is the *form* that modernity will take in the Muslim world that is still malleable. Confronted with the dominance of Western modernity, neofundamentalists are attempting to implement an alternative universality (23). In the case studies, I attempt to demonstrate that the creation of this alternative framework has become vital for the majority of the population in both Egypt and Morocco, because Western modernity, the 'standard universality', is visible, but, in fact, inaccessible. This alternative universality has necessarily taken the form of neofundamentalism in these societies because other frameworks have proved to be weak and ineffective.

Roy asserts that neofundamentalism is both a product and an agent of globalization (25). Its program contains aspects recognizable as belonging to a wider postmodern context: for example, an emphasis on individualism. However, globalization does not

necessarily bring moderation, and individualism does not always go hand-in-hand with liberalism.

Postmodern Islam: the neofundamentalist program

Neofundamentalism is characterized by three major factors: the predominance of religiosity over religion, its attempt to decontextualize Islam, and its focus on individuals within an abstract spiritual community, rather than local communities and their earthly day-to-day issues. Theologically, it blends Salafi ideas with traditional fundamentalism's emphasis on legalistic, ritualistic conservatism (hence the name "*neo*fundamentalism"). The idea that society has been corrupted, and that thus Muslims must return to the "true tenets" of Islam, is central to neofundamentalist thought. But where Salafism and Islamism were reformist, even rationalist, neofundamentalism is legalistic, focusing on the idea of "pure" Islam to an extreme. To the former ideologies, itjihad (individual interpretation) was a way to liberate Islam from the heavy, outdated theology built around it by scholars over the centuries, to reinvigorate and adapt theology to modern needs. For neofundamentalists, this innovation (*bid'a)* is heresy; the point of itjihad is thus simply *purification*, via bypassing the traditions of different religious schools, the possibly inauthentic commentary of scholars, etc – not reform (244). Basically, they seek to live as the Prophet did, not at all in a cultural or historical sense, but in terms of ideas, which translate into rituals. Roy writes, "[Neofundamentalists] are prone to imitate the Prophet on all matters, including the most mundane ones, thus all actions, attitudes and behavior should be referred to as a religious norm. Neofundamentalists see religion as a code and life as a kind of ritual." (244)

Religiosity can be defined as an individualistic approach to religion; it is the self-formulation and self-expression of a personal faith (in contrast to religion, "a coherent corpus of beliefs and dogmas collectively managed by a body of legitimate holders of knowledge") (6). Roy lays out a list of religiosity's characterizations: "The stress in religiosity is upon dogmas, the importance of self-achievement, attempts to reconstruct a religious community based on the individual commitment of the believer in a secular

environment, a personal quest for an immediately accessible knowledge in defiance of the established religious authority, the juxtaposition of a fundamentalist approach to the law (to obey God in every facet of one's daily life) with syncretism and spiritual nomadism, the success of gurus and self-appointed religious leaders, and so on." (6) [8] Roy portrays the need for this extreme, exhibitionist form of religion as arising directly from globalization and its accompanying confusion of truth and values: when meaning is no longer sustained by social authority, it becomes necessary for individuals to *explicitly* formulate their worldview (24). In a homogenous, closed society, Islam (or whatever belief system) could be taken lightly without a resulting loss of identity: it pervaded life, soaked every aspect, was simply assumed. Today, no society can fully keep out the larger world, and the profusion and mixing of worldviews means that identity requires choices and posturing that would have been redundant a century ago. Neofundamentalism is a reflection of this global uncertainty, of the need to create a firm foundation for oneself.

However, this formulation of identity has nothing to do with cultural background; in fact, neofundamentalism explicitly rejects culture as an impure influence on Islam. This expands beyond the Salafist condemnation of theological corruption through local influences: non-Islamic forms of identity and belonging interfere with the believer's primary Islamic identity. Neofundamentalism does not respect the pull of blood ties (adolescent recruits are often encouraged to defy their 'unbeliever' parents) or national pride. But the decontextualization of Islam is vital not only in terms of purity, but also feasibility: a spiritual, abstract, globalized ummah is not only possible, but powerful in a way that attempts at a tangible, statist ummah would not be. Migration and political reality have rendered dreams of a territorial ummah impossible – today, Muslim communities are scattered all over the world, and the international community would not look kindly on an attempt to recreate the Caliphate. Roy writes, "Fundamentalism is both a product and an agent of globalization, because it acknowledges without nostalgia the loss of pristine cultures, and sees as positive the opportunity to build a universal religious identity, delinked from any specific culture…" (25) Culture simply interferes with

[8] Interestingly, Roy argues that this phenomenon of religiosity is visible in both Islamic and Christian movements of our time.

building this religious community, and should thus be abandoned; Islam is the only relevant identity.

Finally, neofundamentalism focuses on the individual in a spiritual sense, rather than the state or society. In this it is deeply distinct from Islamism. Roy explains, "The Islamists, busy with building an Islamic state, have a more worldly mindset and are driven by optimism. They believe one could build a truly positive Islamic society through the actions and determinations of humankind." (246) In contrast, neofundamentalists are pessimistic: they reject the world as fallen, unsalvageable, a source of temptation and nothing more. Total reliance on God, faith, and salvation are what matters – not social justice or even an Islamic state. For the Islamists, Islam is all-encompassing in a statist sense: economics, law, culture, etc. For the neofundamentalists, Islam is all-encompassing mainly in the sense of the daily life of the individual. Everything outside of this scope is simply not that important.

In the public sphere, neofundamentalism both more tangible than other Islamic movements, and much more under the radar. Unlike most movements, neofundamentalists do not typically form official groups with names and formal membership, with which to engage the state or society – its members keep to themselves. Their activity is manifested in study groups, prayer circles, and religious lessons at mosques, and community networks. Yet the 'exhibitionist' religiousness of its members – particularly its emphasis on the more dramatic forms of Islamic dress, such as the *niqab* (a form of veiling for women which covers the entire face, except for a slit for the eyes) – makes neofundamentalism's presence in society visible.

However, the question that lingers is *why* neofundamentalism is taking over as the new form of popular Islam. Islamism was problematic, but at least attempted to address and solve social problems, to reform the state – neofundamentalism seems pointlessly extreme. However, Carrie Rosefsky Wickham argues that participants in neofundamentalism adhere to 'rational actor' models in that they are driven by compelling social, psychological, and emotional benefits conferred by participation (Wickham 232). She outlines the more typical benefits that the movement offers, such as a sense of belonging, acceptable social activities (particularly for women who are mostly confined to the home), and enhanced social status as a 'religious' (devout) person.

However, her major point is that where Islamism tries and largely fails to solve endemic social problems, neofundamentalism successfully obliterates frustrations simply by making them irrelevant. Salvation, along with personal spiritual cultivation and an outwardly perfect Islamic lifestyle, is the primary concern of the individual; materialistic, worldly concerns are not important. That is, the entire modern framework of society – its emphasis on good jobs, material wealth, a nice house, marriage – is irrelevant. Wickham writes, "As their [neofundamentalists'] expectations regarding higher education, career advancement, and material wealth diminished, graduates' feelings of disappointment and frustration abated as well. When graduates active in Islamic networks were asked what problems they faced as young adults, most responded that they did not have any problems. As one veiled woman explained, 'We don't consider ourselves to have any problems. You should talk to the ordinary youth if you want to know about problems.' Several young women nodded in agreement, but one expressed a different view. Acknowledging the difficulties of daily life, she noted, 'We struggle, but we regard it as a test of our faith.'" (242) Neofundamentalism rather brilliantly promotes detachment from material needs as an emblem of moral superiority. In this sense, as a framework both accessible and effective, Islam succeeds as "the solution".

What makes having an effective framework so vital? Erich Fromm, in his seminal work *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, argues that every human being needs a framework – for one's life, for the world – in order to soothe the universal existential crisis: "Man's existential conflict produces certain psychic needs common to all men. He is forced to overcome the horror of separateness, of powerlessness, and of lostness, and find new forms of relating himself to the world to enable him to feel at home." (Fromm 226) However, a positive, life-affirming framework is not always available, and yet the individual's existential conflict rages on. In these cases, individuals necessarily implement whatever *is* available, a negative framework. Fromm writes, "It needs to be repeated that life-thwarting passions [a negative framework] are as much an answer to man's existential needs as life-furthering passions: they are both profoundly human. The former necessarily develop when the realistic conditions for the realization of the latter are absent."(264) This process is arguably what is occurring in Egypt and Morocco today. As we will examine in the case studies, in a context where other visible

frameworks are either impotent or unattainable, neofundamentalism meets the very real and aching need for a competent structure.

3

Frozen rebellion: Islamization in Egypt

Cairo is home to 15 million and often described as the center of the Arab world, an incubator of culture and ideas. But it is also a collection of villages, a ruralized metropolis where people live by their wits and devices, cut off from the authorities, the law and often each other.

That social reality does not just speak to the quality and style of life for millions of Egyptians. It also plays a role in the nation's style of governance.

The fisherman on the Nile, the shepherd in the road and residents of so-called informal communities say their experiences navigating city life have taught them the same lessons: the government is not there to better their lives; advancement is based on connections and bribes; the central authority is at best a benign force to be avoided.

"Everything is from God," said Mr. Mezar, the fisherman, who was speaking practically, not theologically. "There is no such thing as government. The government is one thing, and we are something else. What am I going to get from the government?"

- Michael Slackman, "In Arab Hub, Poor Are Left to Their Fate." *New York Times.* 1 March 2007.

Egypt is the heart of the Arab world – a political, cultural, and economic leader. At the same time, the relatively moderate character of the state, particularly its intolerance for Islamic extremism, has enabled a mutually beneficial relationship with the United States for decades. Foreign tourism has proved a boon for the economy, and the frightening days when Islamic militants threatened the security of the country have subsided. From a superficial viewpoint, Egypt seems a well-functioning state. Beneath the veneer, however, it is a failed state: a country ruled by a government completely out of touch with its people, unable or unwilling to provide for their basic needs, propped up by extensive foreign support.[9] Egypt is not a failed state in the sense of Somalia; its

[9] Since 1975, Egypt has received over $50 billion in US aid, averaging $813 million per year in economic assistance, and $1.3 billion per year in military aid. While at least some of the aid is meant to encourage economic and political reform, this has been largely ineffective, though methods are sometimes dubious: for example, USAID gives the Egyptian government $200 million per year in cash handouts to do with as it pleases. Edward Walker, US ambassador to Egypt from 1994 to 1998, commented, "Aid offers an easy

government is stable and powerful, and protects society from anarchy. However, its unresponsiveness has caused the majority of the population to bypass the significance and structure of the state and utilize other frameworks and programs, with regards to both ideology and social services. Thus, I define Egypt as a 'shell state': superficially functional, but ultimately hollow.

Islamic revival

Active Islam is succeeding in Egypt because the state has failed. As discussed in the previous chapter, the defining moment of disillusionment for Egyptians was the debacle of the Six-Day War, surrounded by the environment of failed socialist programs. A humbled Nasser and his successor Anwar Sadat both turned to Islam to legitimize their regimes, easing the repression of active Islam in the process. Sadat, calling himself 'the believer president', pardoned the Muslim Brotherhood in the early 1970s, releasing its members from prison in exchange for promises of peaceful relations (Sullivan 44). While he refused to lift the official ban on the organization, for several years the government did not interfere with the group's attempts to rebuild and reintegrate itself into society. This brief grace period for active Islam proved to be powerful, coinciding with the public's desire for a return to Islam and its frustration and disillusionment with the secular government. Islamism took charge of the Islamic revival, invading every sector of society, reinvigorating people with a sense of possibility they had not felt since the heady days of Nasserism. Egypt's Islamization can be divided into five sources or areas: the typical intellectual, radical Islamization occurring mainly on university campuses; a pragmatic, business-focused Islamization of professional associations; the preservation of traditional village culture manifesting itself as Islamization; Islamized popular culture; and Islamization of the ulama (in the sense that it has become more radical and popular) through government attempts to placate society. As we will see, as soon as Sadat realized the extent of Islamism's influence on society, the brief period of

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way out for Egypt to avoid reform. They use the money to support antiquated programs and to resist reforms." (Levinson)

respite was quickly succeeded by redoubled state repression,. Thus, rather than moving forward with social or even political reforms, Egyptian society is stuck in what Geneive Abdo describes as "a frozen state of rebellion", with Islamism gradually morphing into neofundamentalism (Abdo 67).

Before moving into the discussion of Islamization, it is perhaps valuable to set the stage with a brief overview of the Egyptian political context. Despite hundreds of millions of dollars of yearly American aid to "encourage" it towards democratization, Egypt remains a solidly authoritarian state. Elections are marked by voter intimidation, arrests of popular opposition figures, outright fraud, and general public cynicism. Emergency law was imposed during the Six-Day War of 1967, and has been continuously extended ever since, with the exception of an eighteen month break in 1980 (quickly revoked following the assassination of President Sadat by Islamic militants in 1981). Under the law, constitutional rights are suspended, police powers extended, demonstrations and unapproved political organizations banned, and censorship legalized (Wikipedia). The Egyptian government claims that the continuation of the emergency law is a necessary tool of the ongoing battle against Islamic extremism. In March 2007, the government held a referendum on 34 amendments to the Constitution that would replace the emergency law with sweeping antiterrorism laws, essentially to the same effect, only permanent rather than temporary (Slackman, "Cynicism"). The president will have power to suspend all civil protections in connection with whatever the government deems terrorism, judicial oversight of elections will be weakened, and all religious political parties banned (Slackman, "Forgone"). The administration claims that the laws will protect Egypt from terrorism and make it more democratic; international human rights groups and the entire Egyptian political opposition have roundly condemned the laws, and the average Egyptian citizen remains frustrated, alienated, and pessimistic. "You talk about politics?" said one 'man on the street', Sharif Shenawi, "Who cares? Feed me.' Another man, Yehia Saad Hana, commented, "All I want to ask, very simply, is: As an average citizen, why should I make the effort to go vote? What will I get out of it?" (Ibid.). On the day of the referendum, the government announced that the voter turnout was 23 to 27 percent – conveniently, the exact figure that officials had declared a day earlier would mark success and legitimacy. Independent

organizations, in contrast, said that 5 to 7 percent would be a generous estimate. Unsurprisingly, the new laws were approved. Sarah Leah Whitson, the Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement, "No referendum can legitimize these constitutional amendments or bring them in compliance with Egypt's international obligations." (Ibid.) Essentially, political reform is not currently a viable option in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood's controversial successes in recent elections are largely symbolic: that they have gained seats in Parliament does not grant them actual power. Thus, attempts at reform have mostly taken place outside the realm of politics.

Islamists on campus

The rise of Islamic activity on university campuses is interesting in that, in its early days, it was actually encouraged by Sadat, who wanted to undermine the leftist groups on campus who opposed his rule. Ironically, when Sadat was assassinated by Islamic radicals a decade later, in 1981, the investigation concluded that forty-five of the 101 identified accomplices were university students (Abdo 133). If repression has proved itself historically to cause more harm than good, the same is arguable for accommodation. In 1971, the government released key leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood from prison, and the organization targeted universities as a stepping stone for reintegrating into Egyptian society. Insiders from Sadat's administration claim that the president held secret meetings with Brotherhood leaders in an attempt to forge a cooperative relationship and gain influence over their activities. However, regardless of these maneuverings, Islamic activism had already arisen indigenously on campuses, as masses of students who felt betrayed by Nasser sought a different value system. The Brotherhood helped structure the movement, but the mood was already ripe. Thus the Islamists began holding regular meetings in mosques that drew tens of thousands of students, organizing summer camps where students underwent intense training in how to lead a truly Islamic lifestyle, and creating Islamic groups on campuses, educating students about religion through social activities and prayer sessions (121). Things moved fast: by 1973, Islamist students at major universities had joined together to form the *Gama'a al-Islamiyya*, the first national Islamic student organization, with Sadat's

blessing. The organization aimed to gain power and influence on campuses by winning control of the student unions in the yearly elections, beginning in 1975. Up to this point, the unions had been run by leftist students, who focused mainly on social events, including parties where the sexes mingled and alcohol was served. The Islamists wanted to halt such events and instead promote religious and political life on campus (111). In the 1976 elections, the organization's candidates won control in eight of twelve student unions in universities across the country. By 1977, they firmly controlled all of them, and were using their unprecedented power to carry out sweeping changes. Some reforms were purely religious, such as banning evening dances and films, and demanding that classes halt for noon prayers. Special "Islamic weeks" were organized to educate students on the *Gama'a* position on hot issues such as women's rights and the Palestinian conflict; they coordinated massive prayer sessions with famous preachers held in downtown Cairo, attracting hundreds of thousands of worshippers (125).

But the Islamist students were equally concerned with and committed to solving more plebian problems. As mentioned earlier, because of limited resources, when the universities were opened up to welcome the masses, quality was traded for equality. The more dramatically enrollment increased, the more quality of both education and the infrastructure needed to support it deteriorated. The student-teacher ratio dramatically expanded. Students were crammed into lecture halls by the hundreds, with two or three students sharing a single desk (123). The dormitories were essentially hovels. Most students could not afford required textbooks, in most courses the sole source of instruction. Science students often lacked functioning laboratories. Female students endured daily sexual harassment during their commute to school on the notoriously overcrowded public transportation system. When the Islamists gained power of the unions, they established a private bus system for female students, at first renting busses, then raising enough money to buy them outright. They held book fairs, selling textbooks at heavily discounted prices. They also offered inexpensive tutorials, practically a necessity for passing many courses in which classroom instruction was poor. In contrast, the Egyptian government did nothing. Abdo writes, "The appeal of the Islamist message, in sharp contrast to the callous, uncaring state, was clear to all, even the sons and daughters of the Egyptian elite." (125) Sameeh Sarag el-Din, the son of a prominent

political family in Egyptian society, and a student at Cairo University in the 1970s, affirmed, "I remember the Islamists as serious people, who sincerely wanted to help students. I was not really that religious but I went to their meetings. They were the only ones doing anything on campus." (Qtd. 125)

At the same time, the Islamists' rapid rise to power emboldened them to embark upon less benign adventures, in particular openly criticizing and defying President Sadat. The wake left by Nasser would have been difficult for anyone to successfully resolve, but Sadat managed to make himself dramatically unpopular. Egyptians were deeply alienated by his provocative policies and actions, such as his 1977 visit to Jerusalem and subsequent peace treaty with Israel. That same year, under pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the United States, Sadat cut in half state subsidies for staple foods which millions of poor Egyptians depended upon, but which were also proving a huge drain on the national budget (130). The cuts set off two days of street riots, in which tens of thousands rampaged against symbols of the state and the elite – police stations attacked, casinos looted. When security forces moved in to quell the unrest, eighty people were killed and over eight hundred injured. This uncharacteristic defiance shook the Sadat administration. The government saw university students, made arrogant by their massive societal influence, as the source of Egypt's unrest. Thus in the student union elections of 1978, only two years after the Islamists' first significant electoral success on campuses, the government attempted to bar Islamist candidates from winning, forcing university administrators to strike the names of known *Gama'a* members from election rolls, in tandem with more subversive tactics (128). In 1979, Sadat banned religious groups and political organizations in schools, and froze state funding for student unions, which was their primary source of revenue. Students were outraged. Abdo writes, "By depriving students of political activity, the state was imposing collective punishment; there was no distinction made between the militants and the moderates." (132) Somewhat astoundingly, both Islamic activity on campuses, and state repression of this activity, has continued unabated to this day. To give one example of many, in December 2006, Islamist students at a university in Cairo staged a "military-style parade" as a protest (Agence). Forty-eight students were arrested and imprisoned until mid-February, when they were released "in order not to compromise their academic

future." (Ibid.) Every year leading up to and during student elections, hundreds of students are routinely thrown in jail until the elections are over, some tortured, with the objective of preventing Islamists from winning seats. Names are removed from election rolls one day before the vote, and students are subjected to campus-wide disinformation campaigns with messages such as "Those who call themselves Islamists are terrorists in disguise…They are united to destroy security in Egypt and tarnish its bright image in front of the world." (Qtd. Abdo 133)

The professional sector

Student activists tend to gradually lose their zeal and give up the fight in the years after they graduate, in order to concentrate on their lives, careers, and families. But while most of the student Islamists did seem to become somewhat more moderate, their ideals prevailed: upon graduation, many of the student leaders went on to Islamize the professional sector of society through their respective unions. Where student Islamic activism was heated and idealistic, the Islamization of professional associations was largely understated and pragmatic, focusing on effective leadership and providing social services, speaking volumes about Islamism's potential for state leadership.

In the optimistic days of Nasser and Sadat, Egypt's middle class was seen as the major source of the country's potential. The populist reforms to make university education widely available were meant to create a bedrock of technologically advanced professionals to invigorate Egypt's economy. Instead, after several decades of failed economic experimentation, the government has largely abandoned the middle class and its promises to them, leaving them to fend for themselves in a stagnant, corrupt economy. While university graduates struggle to find jobs, even those with supposedly excellent careers – doctors, lawyers, engineers – have found themselves unable to create a lifestyle in alignment with their education and goals, thanks to dismal salaries (82). Thus, by the 1970s, as in the universities, frustrations were high, and disillusionment pervasive. At that time, professional associations had already been in existence for decades. But while their membership was large – in some sectors, such as engineering, it was necessary to be a union member in order to practice one's profession – their significance was minimal,

more of a casual social network than anything else. However, the elections for their boards were at this point the most democratic in Egypt – likely *because* of their lack of significance. Because of the severe limits on political participation, and the repression of university activism, by the 1980s, the unions seemed to the Islamists to be the best vehicle available for social and political reform (79). Young Islamists working in these fields, many of whom had had leadership roles on their campuses, began participating in the elections and winning seats. Beginning with the engineering syndicate, they revolutionized the role of professional associations in Egyptian society by using the associations' resources to provide much-needed social services programs to members. Abdo writes, "In contrast to an indifferent state, the Islamists were able to give hope to the lost generation of professionals by taking into account both their temporal and spiritual needs. They parlayed their first foothold in the union movement into a sweeping range of services that sheltered the membership from the worst depredations of the government's failed social and economic policies. No aspect of daily life was too mundane for the unions' helping hands, from increased maternity benefits, to a marriage fund, better pensions, housing assistance, help with consumer purchases, and affordable holidays." (72) Other unions, impressed with the programs, quickly imitated the Islamists, resulting in widespread social assistance. Moreover, Islamists on the boards generally proved to be honest and effective managers, building up surpluses in the unions' budgets and respecting democratic traditions. Thus, despite the traditional secularism of many professional syndicates, by the 1990s, all of the major unions were Islamist-led.

Up until this point, Mubarak had largely ignored this sector of Islamization – perhaps caught up in the much more frightening battle with Islamic militants raging at the time. But as the violence began to subside, the fundamental changes taking place in mainstream society became clear. Abdo writes, "By the time officialdom noticed the religious awakening within the middle class, the bedrock of the society it had hoped to construct, the Islamic transformation was essentially irreversible." (74) To make matters worse, these Islamists were not the old guard of the Muslim Brotherhood – idealists still preaching about an Islamic utopia – or radicals, who would never win the support of mainstream society. They were democratic, pragmatic, effective, and in touch with the

people. The success of their social programs was undermining the legitimacy of the state. It was even said that the syndicates were a microcosm of what the Islamists could accomplish if given broader power over the state – and people liked what they were doing (79). Thus threatened, Mubarak concluded that it was necessary to purge the unions. In 1995, the government cracked down on the unions, specifically aiming to chop the heads off of two of the most significant, the engineers and the lawyers. The headquarters of both syndicates were raided by police; dozens of Islamist members arrested; bank accounts frozen; meetings among members banned; and control of both unions placed under *hirasa*, state guardianship. This and continuing repression effectively put an end to open Islamist leadership in the syndicates.

Egypt's repressive policies would not be so wrenching if the state could adequately provide for social needs. But the administration slams shut any channel that appears to offer potential for real reform, while steadfastly ignoring the massive social problems that are creating the unrest in the first place. The 1992 Cairo earthquake epitomizes the government's immature character. The earthquake was massive, killing more than 500 people and displacing thousands. The need for assistance was great, and obvious, but the Egyptian government responded sulkily. Both foreign and Egyptian opposition media criticized the government's apparent lack of concern for its own people (96). In contrast, several major Islamist-led syndicates decided to respond and hit the ground running. Doctors set up tents in the slums to provide shelter for people who had lost their homes, delivered food to thousands camped out on sidewalks and streets, treated the ill and injured, and donated generous subsidies to those affected by the quake. The engineers organized teams of inspectors to examine the homes of anyone who feared their living quarters were unstable and could collapse in the event of aftershocks or further earthquakes, and donated an enormous sum of money to repair homes of earthquake victims. *Newsweek* did an article on the earthquake relief assistance headlined "Islam Is the Solution", and the chief of the doctors' syndicate, Islamist Esam al-Eryan, became a regular championed feature on the BBC News (97). In response to the popularity of the Islamists, the government razed the relief tents, ordered the engineers to halt their housing inspections, and forced all private donations given to the syndicates for the relief effort to be diverted to the state-run Red Crescent Society.

Interestingly, a similar event occurred in March 2007, though the Islamist response, lacking the structure of the unions, was much more subdued. A fire started accidentally in Qalaat al-Kabash, a poor neighborhood in Cairo (Slackman, "Cynicism"). Hundreds of the neighborhood's small houses, all constructed individually by their owners, burned to the ground, leaving at least a thousand people homeless. Residents said it took three hours for the first fire trucks to arrive. The police arrived the next day: they claim they came to clear the rubble, but the residents interviewed said they came to clear them out, which resulted in a battle of rocks and tear gas. The residents ended up staying, and have been living amid ashes in the open air since (at time of writing, nearly a week). They said that the Islamists ("the men with the beards") came and passed out food and the equivalent of twenty dollars per person, a significant sum in Cairo. Residents are desperate for the government to provide some form of housing, but so far the only official response has been frozen chickens: government aides entered a school in the area, locked themselves behind a 10-foot-tall gate, and hurled the chickens one at a time into the crowd, causing chaos as people dove for them. Clearly, not much has changed.

But what is significant about the Islamists' brief position of power in the syndicates is that it disproves the pervasive notion that to be Islamist is to seek a return to an insane medieval Arabian paradise where people get their hands chopped off. Quite the contrary: Abdo writes, "The new [Islamist] leadership raised living standards for union members, eased pervasive corruption and cronyism, and filled in for an incompetent state that could no longer address the concerns of the middle classes. The syndicates also demonstrated an admirable degree of democracy and pluralism, in stark contrast to the authoritarian Mubarak regime."(105) No ideology is monolithic in practice; here we see Islamism in one of its best incarnations, combining values with pragmatism, religion with modernity, and its own goals with the desires of the people.

From the village to the slums

Active Islam is difficult to typify because it not only appears in a range of manifestations, but unfurls from multiple sources: its roots are not necessarily confined to

an intellectual movement or a founding author. This is epitomized by certain cultural forms of Islamization in Egypt, in which traditional lifestyles blend with radicalism, or popular culture with conservatism.

Egyptian village life has been a strong, conservative mixture of Islam and local customs for centuries, only ignited by the religious revival of the 1970s. As one student leader from Assyut described his background, "In small communities in Upper Egypt, the society was the *Gamaat* [the Islamic groups] and the *Gamaat* was society. There was no distinction between the two." (Qtd. 122) The state is very little involved, if at all, meaning that villages have set up their own systems of governance, often under a sheikh.[10] However, the global trend of urban migration in search of a better life has brought millions of these villagers to Cairo, with their beliefs and way of life intact. Massive slum districts mostly populated by peasant migrants have sprung up all around the edges of Cairo's original layout. One such district, Imbaba, was the site of a major clash between Islamic activists and the government in 1992. Imbaba has a population of roughly one million, and until the late 1980s was completely ignored by the government – no running water, no sewage system, eighty-five percent of its residents either illiterate or barely educated (27). With no government presence, community leadership was necessary: Imbaba's population essentially recreated their village societies in an urban setting, even naming their neighborhoods after popular village sheikhs. This stayed under the radar until 1992, when an illiterate electrician who called himself Sheikh Gaber Mohammed Ali burst out of obscurity by claiming to be both the defacto ruler of Imbaba, and the ringleader of the *Gama'a al-Islamiyya*, Egypt's most powerful militant group. In interviews with foreign journalists, Gaber bragged that the group had turned Imbaba into a state within a state, guided by the Qur'an. Rumors spread about Gaber's vigilante squads, young men with beards, dressed in white, who patrolled the streets enforcing Islamic morality: burning video stores and hair salons, warning women not to leave the house without veiling themselves, crashing weddings to kick out the traditional belly dancers, beer and hashish (21). Rumors also spread about Sheikh Gaber's sexual adventures: he kept three wives, who lived together in the same house, and a mistress,

[10] The common Western definition of *sheikh* is a religious leader for Muslims, implying an individual learned in the faith. However, Egyptians use the word loosely: sometimes as a very respectful title, but often simply for a man who encourages people to become more religious. (Abdo 29)

whom he visited each day between two in the morning and dawn, disguised in drag – a long, flowing black veil – to evade detection. Gaber's followers conducted weekly meetings along al-Buhi street, one of the main thoroughfares, condemning the failures of the Egyptian government. In the evenings, television sets were lined up in rows along the street to replay videos of the 1981 assassination of Sadat. Gaber and his followers were centralized in a district of 300,000 people within Imbaba called Muneera al-Gharbiyya, described as "an impoverished neighborhood orphaned by the central government" (22). Here, Sheikh Gaber was truly king: he acted as judge for community disputes and essentially organized a community in which there was little structure beyond daily meals and the muzzein's call to prayer. The police could not even enter the neighborhood because Gaber's militants controlled the streets.

Gaber's claims of the *Gama'a* reigning supreme over the entire Imbaba district were somewhat exaggerated, but President Mubarak has never been the most tolerant of rulers. A month after the sheikh first gained widespread notoriety, on December 8, 1992, Mubarak officially declared war on the *Gama'a*, and promptly ordered the invasion of the district, in order to take back control. Troops descended on the slum: Abdo writes, "In a matter of minutes, thousands of soldiers were clubbing a path through the throngs of hysterical people running for cover in all directions. Officers used women and children as human shields against the surging mob, leaving behind wailing choruses of black-veiled mothers. Security forces raided homes and shattered shop windows, dragging residents from their houses and turning the streets into a sea of broken glass…For five weeks, Imbaba became an island of terror, completely cut off from greater Cairo." (20) It was the biggest security operation in Egypt's recent history. Hundreds of people, including not only potential *Gama'a* members, but wives, sisters, and children of suspected militants, were arrested, detained, and tortured (24).

The government expected that such a brutal response would effectively quell people's desire for Islamic governance. However, while the repression subdued Imbaba on a superficial level, causing the people to circle their wagons, the societal dominance of Islam has continued unabated. Ordinary people are devoted to a grassroots piety in which the mosque and the sheikh have replaced the state as their guidepost in life (24). The orthodox "Islamic-ness" of Imbaba's communities is questionable; in terms of

standard theology or intellectual ideologies, it is backwards and impure, superstitious beliefs and village customs inseparable from actual religion. Yet it is obviously no less compelling than a proper Islamic ideology such as Islamism.

Repentant sex symbols

On the other end of the spectrum, pop culture and its denizens are undergoing a rather fashionable form of Islamization whose effects are nonetheless profound, specifically with regard to the image of women. Cairo used to be the cosmopolitan Hollywood of the Middle East; the dominance of its film industry has rendered the Egyptian dialect of Arabic more or less a shared language across the Middle East. In the 1950s, the cultural Golden Age, Egyptian cinema was famously melodramatic, and films centered around scandalous themes – passion, betrayal, desire – were common. As in America, Egyptian actresses were portrayed as sex symbols, their sultry made-up faces (and cleavage) looming on billboards all over Cairo. Over the past few decades, the Islamic revival has engendered a dramatic public rejection of this style of cinema. Inas El Degheidy, one of Egypt's leading female directors, commented in an interview, "The pressures [to keep films "pure"] used to be from censorship. Today, the pressures are coming from the public." (Anderson) Films with content deemed inappropriate by the audience are now booed and hissed. One example is the 2001 film "Secrets of the Girls", which criticized Egyptian society's harsh treatment of unwed mothers.[11] Recently, "Bruce Almighty" was banned from theaters because it features a human actor (Morgan Freeman) playing the role of God. Multiple famous actresses, including some of the most notoriously naughty, have taken up the veil and announced not only their retirement from but their *repentance* of acting, which they now see as sinful. Shams al-Baroudi, who starred in a steamy 1960s film entitled "A Woman With A Bad Reputation", and was considered one of Egypt's most glamorous actresses, was one of the first to dedicate herself to Islam, in the early 1980s. Today, she wears *niqab* and confines her public appearances to religious satellite television. Many of Egypt's best-known actresses have since followed suit. For

[11] The article comments that, rather than reacting to the film's criticism of social norms, Egyptian audiences felt that unwed mothers were in themselves an inappropriate subject for discussion.

example, in 2004, 25-year-old Hala Shiha, known as the Aphrodite of Egyptian cinema, appeared on the cover of a popular magazine wearing a snow-white hijab and almost no makeup, having committed herself to Islam. She told the magazine, "This is something I've wanted for a long time. Being a star isn't a dream anymore. I'm only busy in my religion now. I know the veil will lessen the roles offered, but maybe this will make me look for another job besides acting." (Anderson) [12] Egyptian actresses now routinely refuse roles that involve not merely sexual content, but even donning swimsuits or kissing – increasing the demand for Syrian, Lebanese, Tunisian, and Moroccan actresses, who have not yet deemed such acts problematic.

All the clamor about Egyptian actresses taking up the veil is simply one of the most attention-grabbing facets of what has become a societal redefinition of the ideal image of women. For most of the past century, Egyptian women seemed to be nicely following the path of Western feminists before them: in 1923, feminist Hoda Sharawi famously ripped off her veil in a Cairo train station; by the 1960s, veils were an emblem of the past, replaced by miniskirts on the streets of Cairo. Today, however, the hijab is at the forefront of active Islam: its most recognizable, potent, and controversial symbol. Nowadays on the streets of Cairo, a common tableau is a veiled daughter walking with her "uncovered" mother – a phenomenon as frequent among the wealthy and educated as it is among the poor (Abdo 161). Going out in a miniskirt, on the other hand, has become out of the question; a sleeveless shirt garners enough harassment. The subject of women and Islam is massive and complicated, not to mention exhaustively discussed, and I will not venture beyond a preliminary sketch in this paper. However, voluntary female self-Islamization is a valuable subject of exploration, in that it seems to demonstrate the universality of active Islam's appeal, as opposed to the commonly held view of its being a loud discourse with specifically male beneficiaries. Perhaps what is most important to keep in mind is simply, as the Ayatollah Khomeini once said, "If women change, the society changes." (Qtd. 161) The Islamization of Egyptian society and beyond is arguably being deepened and accelerated by a profound reinvention of the modern Muslim woman.

[12] Interestingly, Hala reneged two months later. Most of the other actresses have not.

Uneasy bedfellows: the government and the ulama

Interestingly, Islamization has also come about as the result of government attempts to placate the people and legitimize its rule. This is most evident in the empowerment of the ulama. The ulama has always had a special relationship with the government, but the flood of popular, antigovernment Islamization reached even the inner corridors of Al Azhar. Nasser's attempts to "reform" (essentially, secularize, or delegitimize) Al-Azhar University alienated the ulama; with the failure of Arab nationalism and the rise of Islamism in the 1970s, some Azhar sheikhs began to defy the state and ally themselves with grassroots Islamist leaders – the Muslim Brotherhood and the "popular" (unorthodox) sheikhs of Imbaba and other neighborhoods. By the 1990s, this had evolved into an established group of 'independent' sheikhs within Al Azhar who were supported by the Muslim Brotherhood and the people. These sheikhs were generally more radically conservative than their more ossified, state-sanctioned counterpoints, posing an uncomfortable challenge to the government. However, the various Islamic challenges to the government, particularly the militant threat, pushed Mubarak to seek an Islamic ally that could be both pro-government and accepted by the people, in order to counter charges of being 'un-Islamic'. The only real choice available was the ulama, which gave Al Azhar a great deal of leverage. One of the roles of the ulama in Egypt is to operate the Islamic Research Academy, whose traditional role was to review books and films that pertained to religion, judging their appropriateness in terms of their respect for Islam. The state's need for an Islamic ally led to a deal: Al-Azhar would serve as the voice of reason and moderation on Islamic issues on behalf of the state, and the state would expand the reach of the Islamic Research Academy (66). Thus Al Azhar was essentially given the power of censorship and condemnation over "public order and morality in general" – films, music, secular literature, and the media. Over the past fifteen years, they have used this authority with relish to ban various films, books, and other materials deemed un-Islamic, condemn secular intellectuals, and generally Islamize the discourse of Egyptian culture. For example, at the American University in Cairo, ostensibly a center of Western learning in the Arab world, five books were pulled from

library shelves and banned in 1999 alone, including Giles Kepel's *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh*, for slander of Islam and indecency (Anderson). More disturbingly, in the early 1990s, the Academy of Islamic Research declared the writings of Egyptian secularist Farag Foda blasphemous. A leading member of the Academy, Sheikh al-Ghazali, declared that Foda was guilty of apostasy because he opposed the full implementation of sharia, and that therefore anyone who killed him was not liable for punishment under Islamic law (Abdo 68). In June 1992, Islamic radicals gunned down Foda on the street in Cairo. *Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya* announced, "Yes, we killed him. Al-Azhar issued the sentence and we carried out the execution." (Qtd. 68) The murder demonstrated a dramatic shift in the relationship between the ulama and unorthodox active Islam; less than twenty years earlier, in 1977, Islamic extremists who wanted to retaliate against the government chose as their target not a government official, but an Azhar sheikh (44).

Since Nasser's fall, the government has brutally repressed manifestations of active Islam that seek to address the local problems of Egypt's socioeconomic crisis, and repeatedly made concessions to proponents of Islam in the 'safe' sociocultural realm – all in the attempt to maintain political stability. It continues to utterly ignore the boiling frustrations – Egypt has passed beyond 'smoldering' – that are creating the political instability in the first place. By crushing attempts at positive, real-world responses to these social problems, preventing the country from moving forward, it has made the shift from Islamism to neofundamentalism almost inevitable, in that Islamism has been rendered largely impotent. Thus, in recent years, while Islamist activity has continued in the societal and political realms, many Egyptians have shifted into a twilight zone of sorts, where the government, the political system, and the state still exist, but have little or no connection to their own lives – yet *they no longer care*. Islamic activity is decisively shifting from overt, public, socially or politically engaged activities, to under-the-surface, private network activities disconnected from the larger society: from protests and elections, to prayer circles and religious lessons. Wickham describes Egyptian neofundamentalist communities as socially embedded "countersocieties" (Wickham 247). In the absence of a competent government, economic opportunity, and social justice, neofundamentalism provides a structure for an individual's life, clear and achievable

goals, a supportive social network, and a worldview that provides relief from the pain of earthly reality.

4

Societal schizophrenia: Islamization in Morocco

The crowds heading for Morocco's beaches this summer are not just going to flaunt their bodies, they are going to flaunt their souls too. The beach towels they will tuck under their arms will double as prayer mats. Their picnic hampers will hide banners. And when they reach the sands, they will not bother to change. They will wade into the waters fully clothed in scenes reminiscent of Victorian Britain. They are Morocco's Islamists and they are taking their struggle for an Islamic state to the beach. Preachers like prophets in gabardines prowl the coastline, calling on less modest Moroccans to put their clothes on. "Why debauch yourselves in nudity?" they cry, as if all the women were topless. "Repent and Return to Islam." The ice-cream boy peddles Koranic injunctions with his Cornettos. The fire and brimstone pulls the crowds. After years of suppression, leaders of Morocco's largest Islamist movement, Justice and Charity, claims the people are so happy to see them emerge from the underground, that on one beach they threw rose petals. Under the long, harsh reign of Hassan II, Justice and Charity was forced to advance its ambitions for power in secret. Under the more lax rule of his son, Mohammed, the movement feels free to challenge the ban and proselytise in public. At midday the beach turns into an open-air mosque, revealing just how numerous the ranks of Morocco's Islamists have grown. Lines of believers several rows deep stretch hundreds of yards along the beach. Women line up behind. It is a scene repeated up and down the kingdom from the Algerian border on the Mediterranean to the south where the Atlantic laps the Sahara.

There is resistance. Morocco's more provocative hedonists strut in front of the rows of prostrating worshippers. In a desperate attempt to resist, believers bury their heads deeper into the sands. At the sight of an approaching Islamist, Munir shouts: "We're not Iran, we'll stay modern Muslims." His girlfriend snaps at the ice-cream boy, she will well wear what she likes. Un-Islamic or not, young Moroccans are not about to let these spoilsports sacrifice just about the only leisure activity open to both rich and poor. Unlike elsewhere in the Arab world, Morocco's beach culture is homegrown, not just for tourists. But slowly, slowly, the beach boys are in retreat. You have to trek a fair distance down from the main beach before the beards grow thinner, and the lovers more courageous. …Moroccans call it a two-state solution.

- Nick Pelham, "Islamists Take to the Beaches." *BBC News* 7 August 2000.

Morocco is generally considered one of the most successful states in the Arab world. Its proximity to Europe, and relative isolation from other Arab states, have contributed to its becoming one of the most Westernized states in the region, in terms of economics, politics, and culture. Far from spurning the West, Morocco is a state earnestly seeking acceptance into and the approval of the powerhouse clique of the international

community. To this end, it has devoted itself to economic liberalization, opening up free trade agreements with Europe and developing a booming tourist industry. In addition, within the bounds of the monarchy, it is liberalizing politically: holding relatively free and fair parliamentary elections, not only allowing but encouraging the development of a strong civil society, and reforming its human rights standards, all under the direction of a young king apparently sincerely committed to improving his people's welfare. The government has announced aspirations of joining the European Union – a lofty goal, but notable in the Muslim world.

What works in tandem with the country's heavy Westernization is that Moroccans have long prided themselves on the moderateness of their version of Islam, *maraboutisme*, with its deep grounding in Sufism. To the Western eye, if some Moroccans are as equally religious as other Muslims, it is a devotion picturesque rather than extreme, abundant with saints, rituals, and superstitions, rather than strict doctrine. Islam is important, but often seems to take a backseat to the concerns and pleasures of life itself: thanks in part to the legacy of French colonialism, many in the urban upper classes in particular act as if they are living in an extension of Europe, speaking French, going to bars and clubbing all night, lounging in bikinis on the beach. Moroccans seem to see themselves as rational, worldly Muslims, compared to the rest of the region: the Islamist violence in Algeria in the early nineties was sombering, but Moroccans confidently declared that "Morocco will never be another Algeria" – unlike the Algerians, they would never get so carried away by religion. Thus to the casual eye, Morocco appears to be the Western ideal of a Muslim country: preserving and enjoying its vivid heritage (the better for the tourism industry), but firmly moving forward into the secular, modern future.

This illusion, held by the West and many Moroccans alike, was shattered on May 16, 2003, a day Marvine Howe describes as "one of those defining dates that rearrange a country's landscape." (Howe 323) That evening, Casablanca, Morocco's largest city, exploded with a devastating series of nearly simultaneous suicide bombings, killing forty-five and injuring over a hundred. While the bombers targeted Western and Jewish establishments – Spanish and Italian restaurants, a Jewish cemetery, a Jewish club, and a luxury hotel – only seven of those killed were foreigners; the rest were Moroccan Muslims. The attacks were masterminded by an offshoot of the Moroccan Islamic

Combatant Group (GICM), one of the major groups within Salafia Jihadia, a loose network of Moroccan fundamentalist movements. Salafia Jihadia's leaders are international and sophisticated: they are supported by Al-Qaeda, and are thought to have been involved in the 2004 Madrid attacks that killed 191 people. However, all of the bombers in the Morocco attacks were Casablanca's own: uneducated young men from one of the city's most notorious slums, Sidi Moumen.

In the days following the attacks, the predominant emotion was disbelief. Terrorism perpetrated by outsiders was at least a comprehensible threat, but no one could believe that fellow Moroccans had participated in extremist violence against their own countrymen. The attacks illuminated what had been too easily concealed for decades: the split reality of Moroccan society. If Morocco is marked by its globalization, it is equally characterized by its polarization. On the surface, yes: it is a Westernized, moderate, progress-minded nation. But beneath this primary identity, 'the Arab masses' live in an entirely different framework, wrought with massive social frustrations comparable to Egypt's, alienated by the government.

Who decides? Reforming the Moudawana

This polarization is epitomized by the recent nationwide clash between Islamic and women's rights groups over the reform of the Moudawana, Morocco's family code. Drafted in 1956, it is the only post-independence code in Morocco's legal system that draws on Islamic, rather than secular law. As such, it grants power almost solely to men in vital issues such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance, essentially relegating women to the role of "eternal minors", as one women's rights groups put it (Cohen 87). The controversial nature of the code caused it to undergo some reform in 1992, but the pressure of both women's rights groups and the international community led Mohammed VI to announce plans for another, more significant reform of the code in 2000. Women's rights groups organized themselves under an umbrella lobbying association, which led a march of support with several hundred thousand participants. The king appeared to be firmly on their side; his first royal speech in 1999 emphasized the need for women's rights: "How can we hope to assure progress and prosperity to a society when its women,

who make up half the population, see their rights ridiculed and suffer injustice, violence, and marginalization with disregard to dignity and to equity, and yet equity is what our sainted religion confers upon them?" (Qtd. 89)

However, Islamic groups condemned the proposed reforms, declaring them unnecessary and artificial, imposed by the West. Islam, they asserted, has its own legal tenets regarding the rights of women; what was needed was not legal reform, but improved Islamic education. Their countermarch of protest drew three times as many participants, nearly a million. Despite Mohammed VI's commitment to reform, the government was very aware of the danger of proceeding boldly on an issue that "so deeply, so emotionally, divided the country." (Howe 168) Thus for several years the reforms stalled in the hands of a royal commission set up to decide how the code ought to be revised, in attempt to placate both the Islamic and women's groups. The 2003 attacks ended up being the catalyst for change: in their wake, the mainstream Islamic groups, attempting to disassociate themselves from extremism, retreated from the public stage. The king seized the opportunity and pushed through the reforms to little protest in 2004. However, despite the temporary ceasefire, the split society persists. Moreover, the Moudawana reforms were perhaps a typical victory in Moroccan politics in that their success only pervaded so far into the real world: while the changes are theoretically significant, the reality of Moroccan society means that their implementation will be problematic. As one journalist put it, "And someone needs to remember to inform the 61 percent of Moroccan women who are illiterate and the Berber women cloistered in the Rif and Atlas mountains that they have become equal to men." (Qtd. Cohen 91)

Whitewashed nation

Indeed, Morocco's popularity in the international community is belied by its startling backwardness. Classified as a 'lower middle income country', Morocco ranks below other states with comparable national incomes, even within the Arab world, in major social indicators such as primary school completion rates and female literacy (x). The

average rate of female illiteracy in this group of countries is 19.4 percent; in Morocco, it is 63.9 percent, with general illiteracy at over fifty percent. The poverty rate is currently hovering around eighteen percent in urban areas, fifteen percent in rural; the BBC describes a full third of the population as "extremely poor" (BBC). Unemployment among educated young Moroccans is 30 percent. Rural communities, particularly Berber villages in the mountains, are more or less cut off from mainstream Moroccan society and ignored by the government. Morocco's cities are ringed with massive shantytowns called *bidonvilles*, largely devoid of social services and economic opportunity, that have become breeding grounds for Islamic extremism. Despite hundreds of deaths every year, the vacuum of economic opportunity in Morocco drives thousands yearly to attempt illegal passage to the coast of Spain – tantalizingly visible from the Moroccan coast on a clear day – where the average income is thirteen times higher than Morocco's. Despite the Moroccan government's declared goal, since independence half a century ago, to reform Morocco into a modern and powerful state, these pervasive, crippling social and economic problems have scarcely been addressed.

Like Egypt, Morocco is essentially a shell state: superficially successful, but internally dysfunctional. Like Egyptians, large swathes of the Moroccan population have more or less given up on the state, turning to alternative frameworks to meet their needs, both social and ideological. However, with King Mohammed VI's ascent to power in 1999, the state has changed: it is no longer an *unapologetic* shell state, but a shell state that is attempting self-transformation into a responsible, functioning state. But while the state's ineffectiveness persists, so do the accompanying social problems, as well as the need for alternative frameworks. It is notable that, throughout the Moudawana debate, it was women's groups and Islamic groups who were the main actors, driving the debates and provoking action: the state played a largely secondary role. But despite Morocco's history as a shell state, its process of Islamization is distinct from that of Egypt, skipping over Egypt's era of Islamism. I argue that the combination of the explicitly religious role of the Moroccan monarchy, and Moroccan Islam's traditional rejection of overly fundamentalist ideas, precluded the Islamic revival that swept much of the rest of the Muslim world in the seventies and beyond. However, Morocco's pervasive globalization, through its confusion of traditional society and identity, has prepared a

fertile ground for neofundamentalism. Thus Morocco's Islamization is a product of this globalized and yet inadequate state. To better comprehend Moroccan Islamization, however, it is necessary to first lay out a political overview, as the current mood of Moroccan society is directly related to the political evolution of the past fifty years.

A brief history of the Moroccan monarchy

In contrast to Egypt, Morocco managed to avoid colonization until the nineteenth century, eluding the Ottomans, despite their control of the rest of North Africa, and holding out against France for decades after Algeria had been thoroughly humbled. This was largely thanks to a strong societal structure, characterized by tribes, maraboutisme, and the sultanate, today referred to as a monarchy – an institution that has survived thirteen centuries in Morocco. The current dynasty of the Alaouites came to power in 1666, making them one of the longest ruling families in world history. The role of the Moroccan king is not only political but religious: he claims the title of 'Commander of the Faithful'. This dimension of leadership, bolstered by the Alaouites' claim of direct descent from the Prophet Mohammed, is arguably what has enabled such dramatic regime stability, in a region where political turmoil is common.

Mohammed V, the grandfather of current ruler Mohammed VI, defined his rule by his struggle for independence against the French, ultimately wresting back control in 1956. However, at this point, Morocco's political future was uncertain: the monarchy had been weakened by French rule, and thus the king was competing against Nasseresque nationalist political parties for control of the country. For several years, the political situation was chaotic, with successive coalition governments who failed to implement meaningful policy. When Mohammed V died in 1961, his son Hassan II came to the throne and put an end to the circus. He immediately implemented an authoritarian style of monarchy, aided by the support of the business and traditional elites who had been alienated by the leftists' programs (Cohen 55). Hassan took up the national goal of modernizing and empowering Morocco, but in a way that preserved and strengthened his power as monarch. To create the appearance of a democratic society, he created a parliament with elected deputies, but the reality was that the institution had no real

decision-making power; its main purpose was to contain and neutralize the opposition parties. Hassan set himself up as *above* the political system, the true representative of the people, all-powerful and beyond criticism. This massive centralization of power provoked revolts, especially by youth, which Hassan met with brutal repression – and used as a further excuse to increase his authoritarian control. These dark years, from the 1960s to the late eighties, were called *les années de plomb*, literally, the years of lead. In tandem with this political lockdown, Hassan put off the need for building a modern economy, instead relying upon the system of corrupt patrimony already in place. Both the public and private spheres were co-opted as profit schemes by cliques of elites, instead of being used for the good of the country. The emphasis on personal connections, instead of merit, in leadership positions meant that keeping one's job necessitated intense loyalty to Hassan. Essentially, having thrown off the shackles of colonialism, Morocco plunged right back into a stagnant and unjust system. While Hassan and a small circle of elites enjoyed their power and wealth, the majority of the population was struggling to eke out a living in a half-modernized state, acquainted with the freedom and luxuries of its European neighbors, but essentially devoid of economic opportunity or possibilities for political reform. To those who sought change or simply a better life, it was made clear that the state was not the answer. This had a profound impact on the development of Moroccan society, leading up to today. Shana Cohen writes, "Faced with such pervasive networks of loyalty and patronage, by the mid-1970s the opposition had accepted the legitimacy and sacredness of the monarchy." (59) That is, they gave up on changing the government, or even using the government as a conduit for change, and instead began to mobilize outside of the political system. This move proved to be both effective and legitimating for activists: effective in that, free of the heavy constraints of the corrupt system, groups could actually carry out and accomplish projects; legitimating in that, to a population deeply disillusioned with politics, anyone working within the system belonged to the system, and was thus tainted. As in Egypt, the state was marginalized through its own failures.

By 1996, the old system was crashing: though the administration, wooed by the West, had begun to carry out significant market reforms, economic growth was weak (58). The patronage that had sustained the economy and the satisfaction of elites in the past had

become inadequate – there were simply not enough resources to distribute. The population was increasing dramatically, straining the social structure even further. Violent protests broke out during the 1980s and nineties. Hassan's government was poised to finalize free trade agreements with Europe, but even he realized that the level of frustration in the country was rapidly becoming unsustainable; concessions to democracy were necessary in order to ward off further unrest. The idea was to make a few attractive but insignificant openings in the political system, easing the repressiveness of the system just enough to calm people down. Instead, given the inch, opposition groups seized the mile, blasting the system wide open. In 1997, the coalition of official opposition gained power over the parliament, which ostensibly meant they were in charge of governing the country.[13] The growing middle class, empowered by the expansion of education and public sector jobs, took advantage of the lift on repression to become politically critical of the government.

But at the same time, the positive changes were still fairly superficial. Although the opposition had won power, a number of daunting factors – economic obstacles, divisions within the coalition, and most of all the overriding authority of the monarchy – greatly limited their ability to actually accomplish meaningful projects. The gradual decline of the patrimonial system, and the implementation of liberal economic reforms, has yet to redistribute Morocco's wealth, or even produce much economic growth: the annual growth rate in GDP per capita was one percent from 1990-2003; the World Bank estimates that Morocco needs growth of at least five percent per year to significantly reduce poverty (39).

It is Mohammed VI's ascent to power in 1999 that has made both Moroccans and the international community the most hopeful for Morocco's future. The dynamic young king has made clear his desire to reform the country, with an emphasis on the empowerment of the population. In a 2005 speech, he painted the passage of time from his grandfather's rule to his own as a story of three distinct but vital eras, which will culminate in a healthy, modern, democratic Morocco. His grandfather, he asserted, was the "supreme guide of the revolution", a key figure in the subsequent modernization of

[13] This has proved to be somewhat of a boon for the monarchy, as both Hassan II and Mohammed VI have blamed the opposition government for failed policies and problems, while remaining in a position of supreme authority.

the country (2). In his efforts to build a modern nation-state, Hassan II laid the foundation for a new form of monarchy, democratic and constitutional, open to political and economic liberalization. And his own role in Moroccan history, he declared, is to "breathe a new dynamic and to set down the bases for a qualitative transition…we have worked without relent on reaffirming a state of law and of institutions, promoting the values of a responsible citizenship, the modernization of the economy, and the concretization of the spirit of solidarity, all for assuring the practice of a democracy with all of its social and human benefit." (Ibid.)

The young king is clearly on the right track, but the extent of reform he is able to accomplish remains to be seen. Closing in on the first decade of his reign, the pace has been somewhat slow. Morocco's constitution still grants the monarch unlimited power and divine sanction as the Commander of the Faithful (60). While there is an official social pact between elected representatives and the people, the king – who ultimately controls these representatives – is not bound by any official responsibility. Even the ulama, in the Muslim world traditionally independent of the political ruler, is subject to his power. While Mohammed VI's use of this power has been thus far considerably restrained, real democracy cannot be created with such an archaic and antidemocratic political ordering. On the other hand, the King has sincerely embraced a gradual process of democratization. Notably, he has reinvigorated institutions that were created by his father to give the appearance of liberalization, giving them actual autonomy – as well as carrying out needed and meaningful reform in areas from family law to public liberties. In fact, despite the repression and false promises of Hassan II's long rule, and the slow and uncertain pace of Mohammed VI's, political and thus societal liberalization has and is demonstrably occurring, albeit slowly. The Morocco of today is strikingly distinct from that of even a decade or two ago: the media has exploded, political parties and NGOs are widespread and active, and both human and women's rights are issues of dominance in the government and in society. International groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have noted the dramatic improvement in the country's human rights situation; their concerns are now largely limited to the ongoing conflict in the Western Sahara. While the economy has yet to catch up to Morocco's needs, both the

booming tourist industry and ongoing free trade with Europe are helping to develop new opportunities for Moroccans.

Not enough: political disillusionment

However, as we have seen, the overwhelming frustrations that characterize daily life for the majority of the population mean that a few steps in the right direction are not enough to re-legitimize the government in the eyes of the people, or even cause them to see the state and the political system as a potential channel for reform. Moroccan society is characterized by pervasive political alienation, cutting across class, age, and gender divisions. During the most oppressive years of Hassan II's rule, youth confronted security forces by the thousands. Today, the general view of politics is "I couldn't care less…" – the government is "theatre, a game". (Qtd. 67) Mohammed VI has made grand attempts to engage his citizens, particularly youth, in the political system. The voting age has been lowered to eighteen, announced with massive ad campaigns, and the government has directly targeted frustrated youth with social and economic programs to help them start businesses, play sports, receive professional training, and so on. However, the effect thus far has been minimal. Most analyses argue that this is because the campaign, while large-scale, comprehensive, sexy in appearance, is essentially a band-aid for massive problems far too grave to fix with friendly solutions. While some of the initiatives, such as a new emphasis on getting girls into primary school, have been successful, many others have failed. Moreover, as Cohen writes, the initiatives "are not full-scale interventions commensurate with the scale of the problem. They do not resolve the principal issue of improving the quality of education so that government schools would promote and not hinder job prospects. Nor do they acknowledge the number of new jobs needed over the next ten to fifteen years. They also miss the other aspects of education and social stability, namely, transport, housing, and other expenses." (70) Essentially, the government's change of heart is not enough if it continues to focus its reforms on the simpler, appealing edges of problems, avoiding their difficult epicenters, concealing its embarrassing realities to look better in the eyes of the international community. So the dearth of options persists.

In 1990, a young Algerian explained his support for the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) as follows: "In this country, if you are a young man…you have only four choices: you can remain unemployed and celibate because there are no jobs and no apartments to live in; you can work in the black market and risk being arrested; you can try to emigrate to France to sweep the streets of Paris or Marseilles; or you can join the FIS and vote for Islam." (Qtd. Munson 174) This has become an accurate description of Morocco today. The situation is perhaps even more poignant because of the extent of its globalization: in Egypt, great disparities of wealth exist, but Europe is right in the face of Moroccans, two million sunbathers on their beaches every year. Morocco's openness to globalization, through tourism and trade and its French legacy, has rendered it a society inundated with all the drama of globalization and postmodernism, yet without a stable foundation of effective social, political, and economic structures. And so active Islam enters the picture.

Islamization in Morocco

Active Islam came late in the game to Morocco. The combination of the religious nature of the monarchy, and the traditional more easygoing approach to Islam, precluded an environment ripe for religious revival: despite deep societal frustrations, people did not inherently turn to Islam as "the solution". The monarchy avoided the Arab world's embrace of secular, leftist nationalism in the 1950s and sixties, knowing it would undermine the power of the king. In fact, Morocco turned to Saudi Arabia for help in combating challenges from the left in the early 1960s. In exchange for their support, the Saudis were given free rein to introduce Wahhabism to Morocco, proselytizing Moroccans through preachers, publications, media, and donations (Howe 126). This strategic influence had a major impact on active Islam in Morocco, arguably inspiring the development of social, reformist movements, beginning in the late 1960s.

As in Egypt, a variety of manifestations of active Islam have arisen, from liberal intellectual groups to young militants. But there are two major mainstream Islamic groups. The first is the Party of Justice and Development (PJD), a legal Islamist party which participates in the political system. In the most recent parliamentary elections in

2002, in which the government limited its participation, it won 42 out of 325 seats, winning most of the districts where it was allowed to compete. While its success is notable in terms of popular demand, its lack of real power emphasizes for us again the failure of political Islam: ultimately, the king is doling out recognition to the PJD, while the status quo remains – a far cry from the reborn Islamic community to which political Islam aspires.

The more significant group is Al-Adl wal Ihsan, alternatively Justice and Benevolence or Justice and Charity, depending on the translator, but often referred to in the media as the Party of Justice and Charity or PJC. This group is arguably the Moroccan equivalent of the Muslim Brotherhood in terms of influence. However, it is a primarily neofundamentalist group. The PJC views the political system as corrupt and thus refuses to participate; it theoretically desires a new Islamic government, but is not actively working towards this goal. It offers some social services, but is better known for its dramatics – the beach mosques, the Moudawana protest, its veiled members sharing sidewalks with Morocco's fashionable elite. The movement was not officially established until 1985, sixty years after the Muslim Brotherhood began, and has only recently actually become significant. In 1993, Henry Munson commented in his work *Religion and Power in Morocco* that the movement "could eventually pose a real threat to the regime…" – in tandem emphasizing its lack of popular support compared to Algeria or Iran, or even Egypt (Munson 173). In 1997, Emad Eldin Shanin's book on contemporary Islamic movements in North Africa noted that "it appears that [Justice and Charity] has succeeded in establishing presence in the different parts of the country", and compares it to the Muslim Brotherhood, but concludes that "Morocco will not turn into another Algeria." (Shahin 195) By 2003, Marvine Howe described the PJC as Morocco's principal mobilizing force: "…Sheikh Yassine's association has become the most influential Islamist organization in the country. It has taken over the high schools and college campuses (sometimes by force), and its militants bring food, health care, and literacy classes to the urban poor." (Howe 130) Clearly, the movement's organization, reach, and popularity are expanding. In my view, its growth has increased as globalization has increased.

Justice and Charity is the creation of Sheikh Abdesalam Yassine, a onetime member of a Sufi brotherhood who, at age thirty-eight, had what he describes as a 'spiritual crisis' (which, he comments, some could not distinguish from a nervous breakdown), left the brotherhood, began reading Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, revolutionizing his view of Islam, and in 1974, decided to write a one hundred fourteen page letter of advice to King Hassan II, in the style of the righteous man of God who criticizes the sultan. (Munson 163)[14] After giving the letter to the king, he is said to have prepared his burial shroud. The letter begins, "My epistle to you is not like all epistles for it demands an answer." (Qtd. 163) His criticism of the monarchy centers around social justice; he chastises the king for his decadent lifestyle and inattention to the country's massive poverty. "…Your palaces, your properties, and the opulent class in the land all explain the presence of beggary and misery". (Qtd. 164) Like al-Banna and Qutb, he accuses the king of being a false Muslim, a particularly shocking accusation against the 'Commander of the Faithful'. The monarchy, he argues, ought not to be an absolute power, but a contractual, reciprocal agreement between the ruler and the people. He summarizes his message by laying out five conditions through which the king can still save himself. The conditions illuminate a rough portrait of what Yassine envisions as an ideal society:

"1. Announce publicly and clearly your repentance and your intention to renovate Islam.

2. Reform what you have corrupted and all that has corrupted you, especially the wealth and honor you have unjustly taken… Bring your fortune back to Morocco. Sell your palaces.
3. Swear allegiance to a council elected in an Islamic manner that will be guided by men of the call to God after you have banned the political parties.
4. Gradually discard both liberalism and the illusory socialism that enriches [those] around it and create an Islamic economy based on these three principles: the [equitable] distribution of rights and duties…government use of wealth with freedom and courage for the sake of general prosperity…and the elimination of social injustice and the poverty of the ummah.
5. A general repentance…Islamic kindness is the only alternative to the class violence and civil war that threatens us…and general repentance can only occur under a repentant ruler and under a renovated form of reciprocal allegiance." (166-7)

In what most analysts see as an attempt not to allow Yassine to become a martyr, Hassan refrained from putting the sheikh to death, instead putting him in an insane asylum for three and a half years, on the grounds that anyone who could write such a letter must be

[14] There are 114 chapters in the Qur'an.

crazy. Upon his release, Yassine no longer directly criticized the king, but promptly resumed his campaign for the Islamization of Morocco, writing books, publishing newspapers, and developing first a following, and then an actual movement with an organizational structure comparable to the Muslim Brotherhood. Throughout Hassan II's reign, both the movement and Yassine personally were constantly repressed: Yassine was placed under house arrest in 1989 and remained confined for a decade, only released upon Mohammed VI's ascent to the throne. The PJC has taken advantage of the liberal atmosphere of Mohammed VI's rule, greatly expanding its activities and general visibility in society. Munson, among others, argued in 1993 that the PJC is too extreme to be considered a real threat to Moroccan society, although, thanks to Yassine's Sufi background, it is less alien to traditional Moroccan Islam than most fundamentalist movements. At the same time, he notes that the movement manages to articulate widespread grievances in a discourse both familiar and appealing. As globalization pervades Morocco more deeply every year, this appeal seems to have grown in tandem.

The sharp societal influence of the group is epitomized in the recent scandal that arose out of the antimonarchy remarks of Nadia Yassine, the Sheikh's daughter, whose charisma and intelligence (she has written an influential book on women and Islam) have brought her substantial popularity in Morocco and a degree of fame in the international community. In 2005, she was indicted by the government for remarks she had made on several occasions, including a magazine interview and in a speech at UC Berkeley, questioning the validity of the monarchy, and belittling the recent efforts towards political liberalization as a sham that failed to address the needs of the masses. In the Berkeley speech, she said, "Nothing hinders democracy but the reality – if I speak particularly about the people of Morocco – [is that in Morocco] after independence has been a great theater, a great cinema that we call democratization by the powers in place. We know what Hassenien [after Hassan II] is worth, it is a transplant of democracy that has nothing to do with democracy…" (Cohen 63) She went on to express skepticism about the appropriateness of a monarchial system for Morocco, and predicted that it would fall in the near future.

Compared to the invective spewed by some Islamic groups, this seems fairly mild. However, the King reacted her statements very quickly; calling for her and the two

journalists involved to appear before the courts. The players of the political system, even the opposition, staunchly supported him. The Party of Justice and Development, rather than siding with its fellow Islamic activist, issued a statement that read, "Any defamation or denigration of the monarchy regime – that Moroccans chose thousands of years ago – is an unacceptable and irresponsible overstatement." (64) Abeljabber Shimi, writing in the Istiqlal party's newspaper, scolded Yassine, asserting that "the Moroccan people have chosen monarchy because it unites, because it fights against anarchy and feudalism." (65) Even members of civil society, such as Driss Benali, the president of the political forum *Alternative*, attacked her comments. Benali wrote, "Not only are her arguments not useful, they also put in danger the progress that has been made in the country and the institution that guarantees national unity…" (65) To the established elite in Morocco, Nadia Yassine had clearly crossed a line. But to the international community, as well as arguably many Moroccan individuals, Yassine's comments were simply free speech, and thus valid, even if one did not agree. The US State Department issued a statement criticizing the regime for its lack of respect for freedom of expression; liberal Moroccan media supported Yassine as well – the editor of the magazine *Tel Quel* wrote, "The Moroccan monarchy has no set course. It is therefore at the mercy of the first iceberg that comes along. If an insignificant interview with Nadia Yassine makes it capsize, imagine what a real shock would do." (Ibid.) The uproar demonstrated the contradictory nature of Morocco: it is both a society with lively civil discourse, and a country where a woman can ostensibly be imprisoned for criticizing the government – a diverse and globalized society, and yet a country who fears its dark underbelly enough that this 'insignificant interview' became an national crisis.

Egypt is the prototype of Islamization, evolving properly through each phase – colonialism, secular nationalism, globalization; Salafism, Islamism, neofundamentalism – but Morocco is more complicated. In my view, Morocco is a fairly accurate crystal ball for the future of Muslim states like Egypt, who have not yet reached this point of confusion, a society rife with cognitive openings. Globalization has brought the West into the heart of Moroccan society, creating a societal framework built on aspirations that most Moroccans have no recourse to achieving. It has undermined traditional Moroccan identity, rendering society essentially schizophrenic and chaotic, no longer the bulwark of

the individual's conception of the self. It has modernized Moroccan society to an extent from which there is no turning back, and yet this modernization has left as many cold as it has satisfied. In America, we are always talking about the clash between the Muslim world and the West, but Morocco seems to indicate that the real conflict will occur *within* the Muslim world, within single societies, as people battle over the form of modernity that will dominate.

Conclusion

Beyond modernity

"People do not come to Islam as an alternative for their social misfortunes. People come to Islam in response to a call, a call which goes very far and deep in the human soul. I do not know by which accident of history or by what misfortune "Homo Occidentalus", as you say, has lost this organ which permits the perception of things that are spiritual…All that he has left are elements of economic, political and social analysis… things that are earthbound in some way."

- Sheikh Abdesalam Yassine (Qtd. Euben 20)

"Fundamentalism…cannot be explained away as the inability of certain personalities, groups, or cultures to 'cope' with the imperatives of modernity. Rather it reflects an increasingly vocal and transcultural preoccupation with limits of modern rationalism and the concomitant conviction that we 'may still need to see ourselves as part of a larger order that can make claims on us.'"

- Roxanne L. Euben (Euben 167)

At this point, we can return to the three questions that have provoked this analysis: Is Islamization inevitably the future of the Middle East? Is active Islam necessarily incompatible with and dangerous to global stability and American interests? And finally, what is the best way for the United States to deal with it to our advantage?

These questions are valuable. But ultimately, Islamization eclipses issues of politics, economics, and society. Active Islam is succeeding because states are failing, in terms of providing both social services, and an adequate ideological framework. But in the end, the failure of states is simply one facet of a larger failure: that of Western modernity itself.

Therefore, we can answer the three questions on one level – through the narrow scope of foreign policy – thoroughly, and yet to really get at the meat of the matter, it is necessary to go deeper. Is Islamization inevitably the future of the Middle East? To a certain extent, I argue that this depends upon potentiality: that is, the availability of potent frameworks other than active Islam in a particular society. This viewpoint highlights the diverging situations of Egypt and Morocco. Both are states in crisis. But in Egypt, the crisis is negative: the state's dysfunction is pervasive and stagnant, with little hope for change. Active Islam is succeeding, and will most likely expand and solidify its power, dominating society, even if excluded from the political sphere – unless the status quo dramatically changes. However, to provoke the collapse of the status quo is difficult, in that Egypt and many other Muslim countries are caught up in a vicious cycle. I envision

the situation as a fatal triangle, with the United States, the government, and Islamic groups forming its three points. America, with economic, political, and national security interests on the line, pours billions of dollars into strengthening the Mubarak regime, which enables Mubarak to maintain control of the country, repressing Islamic activity. However, this very strength is what enables him to avoid political and economic reform. In turn, the Mubarak administration's main goal is maintaining its grip on power, so it focuses its attention and resources on crushing potential rivals (which, when Islamic, pleases America), rather than taking on messy and complicated social problems. Finally, the Islamic groups gain much of their popularity via people's frustration with the antagonistic actions (or inaction) of the Egyptian government and the US; a well-functioning state would marginalize their societal power. There is no catalyst to break the triangle: the presence and interests of each actor reinforce the others.

In contrast, in Morocco, the crisis is arguably positive: while the combination of an inadequate state and intense globalization has engendered popular neofundamentalism, Moroccan society's dynamism likely precludes dominant Islamization. At present, the society's schizophrenic nature is problematic, but it is this split (as opposed to one supreme discourse) that will continue to invigorate Morocco. As the state becomes more responsible and globalization continues to soak the country, active Islam will certainly not disappear, but it will be one voice among many, competing with a range of interests, goals, programs, and frameworks. Thus potentiality, even if still imperfect or not fully formed, is key. Active Islam thrives in a vacuum: when all other options seem to be closed off, it blooms.

This 'rational actor' form of analysis is useful in combating the American myth of the Muslim world as under the spell of Islam, irrational and incomprehensible. But at the same time, it is an inadequate explanation of active Islam, because it implies that if these states were not 'failing', in a Western conceptualization of the term – if Egypt was transformed into America overnight – active Islam would not exist. This is exactly the false idea introduced at the beginning of this work, that those against us have simply not yet fully tasted the sweetness of secular, free-market democracy. It is superficial to conclude that economic prosperity and political liberalization would eradicate active Islam: as Bruce B. Lawrence writes, this ignores "the autonomous nature of the religious

impulse." (Qtd. Euben 24) Societal frustrations, and attempts to resolve them, play a major role in Islamization, but they are simply the most visible, tangible, comprehensible symptom of a larger, deeper crisis – the limitations of Western modernity. Each of the three major manifestations of active Islam developed, to some extent, in response to the ultimate *emptiness* of the Western framework set before them: the brutal hypocrisy of the colonialists, the hollow glory of secular nationalism, the hyper superficiality of West-driven globalization. These revelations are not limited to the Muslim world: the various and ubiquitous manifestations of postmodernism across the world demonstrate that this is a conclusion being globally reached. Therefore, on a more fundamental level, active Islam will persist because Western modernity itself is an inadequate ideology. Ultimately, active Islam is not about social programs, politics, or even religion: it is the attempt to build an alternative universality (Roy 23).

Is active Islam, then, to be understood as one more manifestation of postmodern identity seeking, and thus both irrepressible, and fairly benign? Or, returning to a more blunted analysis, is active Islam necessarily incompatible with and dangerous to global stability and American interests? Yes and no. Active Islam's current manifestation as neofundamentalism is arguably dangerous, for three reasons. First, neofundamentalism is dangerous because it is not useful in a real-world context: its effectiveness depends on bypassing reality, which means that the structural problems which gave rise to the *need* for neofundamentalism will not be confronted and solved, but rather exacerbated by neglect. In societies with more competent governments, individuals can more freely obsess over their identities, as we see in the West. But the crisis situation of the Muslim world renders this a luxury the region can ill afford: if both the government and, increasingly, the people blithely ignore the dysfunction of the state, continued and worsening poverty, instability, and conflict will be the inevitable result.

It is also arguable that active Islam is dangerous because in its attempt to build meaningful communities, imbued with values, it generally upholds the rights of the collective over those of the individual, in the form of morality. If in theory, the community emphasizes justice, compassion, and respect, real-world examples have shown the ease with which any idealistic community can degenerate into an abusive perversion of itself. At the same time, to condemn strong communities, and triumph the

individual, is to ignore the fundamental and intricate benefits of such communities for the well-being of the individual.

Finally, the pervasiveness and tenacity of the religion of Islam in the Muslim world, which has enabled active Islam to survive state repression, can at the same time render active Islam a loud discourse, drowning out other options that might ultimately be more effective. In Egypt and many other states in the region, active Islam is the *only* viable alternative to a corrupt and ineffective state. The large middle, who perhaps hates the state but also fears a radical Islamic alternative, is paralyzed. Active Islam seems overwhelmingly popular in Egypt, but perhaps this is in part because it is the only strong, visible form of protest. At the same time, that active Islam continually resurges, despite brutal repression, implies that it is arising out of something real, genuine, fundamental: this is not simply a 'lesser of two evils' scenario.

These concerns cannot be taken lightly, but at the same time, they do not merit a wholesale rejection of active Islam, even in its current problematic manifestation, and certainly do not legitimate active Islam's assignation as 'the green menace', the successor to Communism as America's number one enemy. Akbar Ahmed writes that "fundamentalism is the attempt to resolve how to live in a world of radical doubt." (Qtd. Euben 164) If neofundamentalism is more explicit and zealous than most forms of postmodern identity seeking, it is nonetheless a product of this existential crisis of the failure of modernity we are all facing, of the ubiquitous sense that we "may still need to see ourselves as part of a larger order that can make claims on us." (Qtd. 167)

Therefore, our final question – what is the best way for the United States to deal with active Islam to our advantage? – is perhaps superseded by the larger question of, where do we – all of us, the global community – go from here? Hassan al-Banna told the Muslim Brothers that reforming the state had to begin with reforming the self (Aslan 237). Likewise, in the project of building a strong and peaceful global community, it is necessary to first confront our own limitations and failures – to ask ourselves what we can *learn* from the phenomenon of Islamization, rather than vilifying it. In the beginning of this thesis, I pointed out that those who rush to the most interesting questions tend to answer them wrong. What we can conclude from this exploration of active Islam is

that these interesting questions, superficially urgent, may not be the right questions to ask at all.

THE END.

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