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# Authoritarian Politics In Unincorporated Society

The Case of Nasser's Egypt

Clement Henry Moore

Contemporary Egypt provides evidence against, and induces modifications of, a widely accepted proposition concerning modernization. This proposition suggests that modernization, in the sense of social mobilization, tends to undermine authoritarian government by engendering powerful groups that the system cannot absorb without changing to a pluralist or totalitarian form of rule. Before turning to the case of Egypt, let us discuss the proposition.

## Theory

Authoritarian regimes, by definition, have a concentration of power and therefore cannot tolerate contending centers of power, as do pluralist systems. Yet, unlike the more "totalitarian" systems that also concentrate power, the authoritarian type basically lacks the practical ideology and organization needed to atomize potentially rival groups and to create new ones under its control.<sup>1</sup> Thus it faces a virtually insurmountable dilemma if it tries to modernize society. It lacks the organizational weapon needed to mobilize society and make it conform to its modernizing design; it is bound to be inefficient; and it cannot expand its power much beyond that of its major instrument, a conventional bureaucracy. Therefore, it must either make com-

<sup>1</sup> For a descriptive model of an "authoritarian regime," see Juan Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," in Erik Allardt and Yrjo Littunen, eds. *Cleavages, Ideologies, and Party Systems* (Helsinki, 1964), and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Interest Conflict and Political Change in Brazil* (Stanford, 1971), pp. 377-86. See also Linz, "From Falange to Movimiento-Organización: The Spanish Single Party and the Franco Regime, 1936-1968," in Samuel P. Huntington and Clement H. Moore, eds. *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Societies* (New York, 1970), pp. 128-203. For a discussion of the interrelationships between ideology and organization in totalitarian and other sorts of single-party regimes, see Moore, "The Single Party as Source of Legitimacy," *ibid.*, pp. 48-72.

promises with existing social forces and organized groups which oppose the design or it must combat them and risk losing more support than its limited coercive capabilities can bear.

In theory, such a regime might escape the dilemma by building up new sources of support among groups that benefit from its modernizing design. In practice, however, its authoritarian character limits its ability to absorb new groups. Lacking the necessary political infrastructure, it cannot regiment them; but neither can it permit them autonomy without jeopardizing the authoritarian character of the regime. The outcome is usually some more or less organized form of corporatism whereby the authorities try to keep control of the groups. But corporatism is not really a solution to the dilemma. Too much official control of the groups can still alienate their constituencies and, ironically, may deprive the regime of the active support needed to pursue its design, while too little control can undermine the design and even the regime. Further modernization inevitably unbalances whatever tenuous equilibrium may exist between the regime and its quasi-official sources of support. In the long run the regime can adapt to the modernization it engenders only by diffusing power, permitting pluralism, or by tightening its control over groups and becoming totalitarian (i.e., in the right-wing or "fascist" sense). Otherwise, it becomes vulnerable to revolutionary overthrow.

The analysis above has been derived from Samuel P. Huntington's discussion of modernizing monarchy.<sup>2</sup> But it should apply equally to any autocracy, whether the autocrat wears a crown or a corporal's cap, so long as he is unable to develop the totalitarian instrument for assimilating groups—namely, the vanguard party. Since Lenin's time, history is of course filled with examples (beginning with Mussolini) of modernizing autocrats who tried but failed to build their vanguards. Their very efforts constitute indirect evidence in favor of our proposition.

The proposition rests on three underlying assumptions about organized groups: (1) unless new associations emerge to integrate people uprooted by modernization, various pathological phenomena of

<sup>2</sup> Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, 1968), p. 167, argues as follows: "Modernization creates new social groups and new social and political consciousness in old groups. A bureaucratic monarchy is quite capable of assimilating individuals; more than any other traditional political system it provides avenues of mobility for the intelligent and artful. Individual mobility, however, clashes with group participation. The hierarchy and centralization of power which makes it easier for the monarchy to absorb individuals also creates obstacles to the expansion of power necessary to assimilate groups." My extension of the argument merges with the analysis, from a different perspective, of Barrington Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston, 1966).

“mass society” may result;<sup>3</sup> (2) these groups become sufficiently powerful to demand autonomy as modernization proceeds; and (3) in modern society they are people’s primary channel of political activity. This article provides evidence from contemporary Egypt against each of these assumptions. More generally, the argument is that Egypt typifies the “unincorporated society,” that is, one in which organized groups are and have always been relatively weak and unimportant. There was neither church nor medieval corporation, the two sources of pluralism—and, dialectically, totalitarianism—in the West. Although Islam and subsequently nationalism acquired legitimacy in Egypt, they were never embodied in strong autonomous organizations.

The background of the “unincorporated” society explains, in turn, why the authoritarian syndrome is so durable in the face of modernization. No ideological vanguard is possible, yet none is needed to sustain a system of concentrated and expanded power. Our original proposition should be confined to societies that have a corporate tradition—Christian Europe and its offshoots in Latin America, for example. There seem to be basic differences between authoritarian political processes in corporate and in unincorporated societies which we shall attempt to sketch briefly in conclusion.

### **Egypt as Authoritarian and Modernizing Regime**

Egypt falls within the range of cases to which our original proposition is intended to apply, in that its regime is authoritarian and its society has reached a level of modernization at which organized groups might be expected to pose political problems. It is authoritarian in the sense that the late Gamal Abdul Nasser and a handful of close collaborators and followers have controlled the state bureaucracy since 1954, when they ousted General Mohammed Naguib. They insulated the country from any competing power center, either inside or outside.<sup>4</sup> Nasser’s agrarian reform, launched within weeks of the original coup of July 1952, appropriated the socioeconomic base of the old elite’s political power. The socialist decrees of 1961, which nationalized all major industry and extended the agrarian reform,

<sup>3</sup> See William Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society* (Princeton, 1959), and Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted* (New York, 1949).

<sup>4</sup> Technically, what most distinguishes an authoritarian from a pluralist or totalitarian regime is the relative autonomy of the state. In a totalitarian system the party controls the state, while in a pluralist system groups working through the political institutions are expected to control the bureaucracy. In the authoritarian system the state—in the sense of leader or junta plus bureaucracy—is relatively autonomous (though of course the bureaucracy *per se* is not).

destroyed most remaining private resources that might have been used to challenge the government.

Nasser took measures, moreover, to prevent any bureaucratic challenges to his personal control. Initial purges primarily affected the army and the Ministry of the Interior. Technical ministries, such as public works, managed to avoid any extensive changes in personnel. He made certain, however, that men personally loyal to him, usually officers or army engineers, occupied key posts within the ministries. Eventually the position of permanent undersecretary was abolished, so that top administrative posts tended to be awarded increasingly on political grounds. By reshuffling ministers periodically, Nasser ensured that no "center of power" within the bureaucracy might develop autonomy vis-à-vis the president. The one possible exception was the army, ruled somewhat independently by his close friend and vice-president, Marshal Abdal Hakim Amer.<sup>5</sup>

Egypt is also authoritarian in the negative sense of being unable to develop the ideology and organization needed to absorb and atomize social groupings. There is an official ideology, of course, embodied in the National Charter of 1962, designed to justify the nationalization of the bulk of Egyptian industry the previous year. But the doctrinal elements do not seem systematically related to any explicit set of social and political principles.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, "Arab Socialism" stresses harmony rather than conflict and hence offers no practical means of distinguishing saints from sinners, vanguard from reactionaries. Indeed, ideas do not seem to constitute a significant source of inspiration or of cleavage within the political elite. Ali Sabry and Zakariah Mohieddine, respectively, represented the ideologies of Moscow and Washington by circumstance, not conviction. Even on

<sup>5</sup> For the Amer saga, see footnote 28. To this extent the Nasser regime deviated from the pure authoritarian model. Again in 1972, Sadat may have temporarily lost control of the army; this would explain his abrupt dismissal of the Russian military advisers that July in order to preempt a possible anti-Russian coup against him. That such a coup was possible is suggested by the anti-Russian petition mentioned further on.

<sup>6</sup> For the distinction between doctrine and principles, see A. James Gregor, *Contemporary Radical Ideologies: Totalitarian Thought in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1968), p. 9. An enlightening example of Nasser discussing ideology may be found in Kemal Karpat, ed. *Political and Social Thought in the Contemporary Middle East* (New York, 1968), pp. 275-94. For the best general discussion of Nasserism, see Leonard Binder, *The Ideological Revolution in the Middle East* (New York, 1964). See also Fayeze Sayegh, "The Theoretical Structure of Nasser's Socialism," in Albert Hourani, ed. *Middle Eastern Affairs Number 4* (London, 1965), and R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Egypt under Nasser* (Albany, 1971), pp. 97-143. See also the official statement of Sayyid Marei, General Secretary of the Arab Socialist Union, criticizing his organization for its "ideological adolescence," in *Al-Tali'a*, May 1972, p. 14.

the extreme Left, with few exceptions, a man's degree of ideological conviction was negotiable.

In this ideological vacuum, obviously no vanguard party, much less *gleichschaltung* or totalitarian "breakthrough" was possible. The political organization, whether Liberation Rally, founded in 1953, National Union, founded in 1958, or Arab Socialist Union, founded in 1962, was never the principal source of political recruitment. R. Hrair Dekmejian's data on the 131 Egyptian ministers who held office between 1952 and 1968 provide spectacular documentation for this: only two had positions in the political organization before becoming minister, while at least 83 held a party position either during or after their terms as minister.<sup>7</sup> Hardly a vanguard for recruiting top political leadership, the party was more like a rearguard for retiring it.

Yet, on the face of it, Egypt would appear to have been socially mobilized to such an extent by the late 1950s as to require a vanguard in order for modernization "from above" to proceed. My assessment is admittedly tentative because I know of no work which specifies the thresholds in social mobilization indicators for which our propositions about groups are supposed to apply. But it is possible to compare Egypt with other countries which have experienced within the past two decades the dilemma of authoritarian regimes discussed above. Somewhat arbitrarily, I have selected a mixture of authoritarian systems that displayed varying degrees of success or failure in developing a vanguard party or stagnating. Table 1 compares these systems to Egypt with respect to the conventional social mobilization indicators of GNP per capita, urbanization, nonagricultural employment, university enrollment, and mass media exposure.

Even in 1959-60, Egypt was as socially mobilized as most of these countries (in the years for which data are available), except with respect to per capita income and mass media exposure. In the following decade radio and television made great leaps forward; indeed, Table 1 indicates that Egypt continued to modernize rapidly in the 1960s on most dimensions except newspaper circulation. The comparisons suggest that Egypt has at least reached sufficient levels of modernity to make our case study relevant, though diachronic data would be needed to compare regime performances over time.

A further comparison with Portugal, Brazil, and Spain is instructive. Each has exemplified authoritarianism in a Latin, Catholic context (i.e., corporate society). Table 2 shows that the Nasser government expanded power, as measured by the proportion of total

<sup>7</sup> Dekmejian, pp. 192-99.

**Table 1** Indicators of Social Mobilization Comparing Egypt with Other Semi-industrial Societies

Country	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
Egypt	142						
1947. . . . .		30.1	36				
1959-60. . . .		36.6	45.9	387	20	65.8	3.4
1969-70. . . .		42.0	51	589	27	150	16.5
Cuba . . . . .	431	36.5	58	258	129	187	72.1
		(1955)	(1953)	(1960)	(1956)	(1961)	(1961)
Rumania. . . . .	360	18.0	30	226	161	117	4.7
		(1950)	(1956)	(1960)	(1961)	(1961)	(1961)
Greece. . . . .	340	38.4	52	320	125	89.9	n.d.
		(1961)	(1951)	(1959)	(1959)	(1959)	
Spain. . . . .	293	39.8	50	258	70	90.0	13.1
		(1950)	(1958)	(1960)	(1960)	(1960)	(1961)
Brazil . . . . .	293	28.1	39	132	54	64.3	22.1
		(1960)	(1950)	(1960)	(1960)	(1961)	(1961)
Yugoslavia . . . .	265	18.6	33	524	66	98.6	3.3
		(1961)	(1953)	(1960)	(1961)	(1961)	(1961)
Mexico . . . . .	262	24.0	42	258	83	96.9	24.9
		(1950)	(1958)	(1960)	(1961)	(1961)	(1961)
Portugal . . . . .	224	16.5	52	272	81	98.1	7.6
		(1960)	(1950)	(1960)	(1961)	(1961)	(1961)
Turkey. . . . .	220	18.2	23	255	45	52.5	0.03
		(1955)	(1954)	(1961)	(1961)	(1961)	(1961)
Egypt's rank (1959-60). . .	10	3	5	2	10	8	7

SOURCES: Bruce M. Russett, et al., *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* (New Haven, 1964); Arab Republic of Egypt, Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, *Statistical Handbook* (Cairo, 1970 [English ed.], 1971 [French ed.]); Bent Hansen and Girgis A. Marzouk, *Development and Economic Policy in the UAR (Egypt)* (Amsterdam, 1965); Naila Touny, "Mass Communication and National Development in Egypt," (American University in Cairo, Department of Economics and Political Science, May 1972).

- (a) G.N.P. per capita, 1957, \$U.S.
- (b) Percentage of population in cities of over 20,000.
- (c) Percentage of labor force not employed in agriculture.
- (d) Students enrolled in higher education per 100,000 population.
- (e) Daily newspaper circulation per 1,000 population.
- (f) Radios per 1,000 population.
- (g) Television sets per 1,000 population.

public expenditure to GNP, more than any of the other regimes. Even in 1960, before the creation of a huge public sector, the government employed almost 900,000 people, or one-third of all Egyptians not working in agriculture. Between 1961 and 1965 the government payroll more than doubled.<sup>8</sup> That government can penetrate society to such an extent suggests that it faces fewer obstacles than authoritarian regimes in corporate societies.

### Mass Society?

Available data concerning organized groups in Egypt suggest that relatively few new associations are emerging to integrate people uprooted by modernization; yet none of the pathological phenomena associated with mass or atomized society are taking place. Anomie does not appear to have set in, even in Greater Cairo, whose six million inhabitants—having doubled in fifteen years—have presumably borne the brunt of social mobilization. Despite the city's appalling population density coupled with inadequate housing, overcrowded transport, and overloaded public utilities, the streets are safe

**Table 2** Expenditures of General Government, Social Security, and Public Enterprises, as a Percentage of GNP.

Country	Expenditure/GNP.	Year
	%	
Egypt . . . . .	17.6	1948-50
	18.3	1954-55
	29.7	1959-60
	37.3	1962-63
Portugal . . . . .	22.8	1959
Brazil . . . . .	18.9	1959
Spain. . . . .	15.2	1957

SOURCES: Bruce M. Russett et al, p. 63, and Bent Hansen and Girgis A. Marzouk, p. 250.

<sup>8</sup> Donald C. Mead, *Growth and Structural Change in the Egyptian Economy* (Homewood, 1967), p. 134; United Arab Republic, Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, *Statistical Handbook* (Cairo, 1970), p. 236; Zakariah Mohieddine, *Aims of the Next Stage* [in Arabic] (Cairo, 1965), pp. 37-38, cited in Dekmejian, p. 230.



and crime rates low.<sup>9</sup> The last major public sign of anomie occurred on January 26, 1952, when mobs, for the most part disorganized, burned down some 700 buildings in the modern downtown section in protest against British reprisals for Egyptian commando raids on Suez Canal Zone bases.<sup>10</sup> After Nasser came to power, there were occasional student and worker demonstrations, notably in 1968 and, after his death, in 1972, but no mass rioting.<sup>11</sup> Leonard Binder has suggested that the thesis of social breakdown has the greatest relevance for the "upper-lower" classes—factory labor, semiskilled workers, and retail and service employees. Still, he concludes, "Egypt is not yet so modernized as to be able to suffer problems of a psycho-social nature to become matters of public concern."<sup>12</sup> Obviously by defining modernization in this way he is making the assumption I am questioning.

The available data on groups are scanty and not entirely conclusive. It is not possible for resident American, or even Egyptian, political scientists to study the official political organization in depth in order to measure the extent of real participation of its five to six million paper members. The Arab Socialist Union (ASU) groups virtually all adult males, while trade unions and agricultural cooperatives have substantially increased their membership under Nasser's encouragement. These official organizations do not seem to integrate many people, at least not in Cairo, however, to judge from the way they are parodied even in the mass media.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The Cairo police reported 669 felonies and 136,094 petty crimes for 1971. Even in absolute numbers, crimes of both types in Cairo had decreased by about 30 percent since 1967. (Only pickpocketing and car theft seemed on the increase as were the pickings.) For Egypt as a whole the number of felonies, roughly constant in the 6,000-8,000 range from 1930 to 1960, declined remarkably in the 1960s—from 6,603 in 1959 to 3,823 in 1970. Even so, cases of embezzlement increased roughly in proportion with the public sector—from 213 in 1959 to 737 in 1967—before declining to 399 in 1970. Murder or attempted murder has decreased by roughly half since the 1950s; Cairo reported only 89 cases in 1971. See Ministry of Interior, *Public Security Report, 1970*, pp. 2-3 and *Annual Public Security Report of the Cairo Security Directorates, 1971* [both in Arabic] (Cairo, n.d.).

<sup>10</sup> Jacques Berque, *L'Égypte: Impérialisme et Révolution* (Paris, 1967), p. 706.

<sup>11</sup> A possible exception was the demonstrations in favor of Nasser on June 9, 1967. While not altogether spontaneous, they clearly exceeded the mobilization capacities of the Arab Socialist Union. They are perhaps better interpreted as support for the nation Nasser symbolized, even in defeat, than for Nasser himself, the individual ultimately responsible for national disaster.

<sup>12</sup> Binder, "Egypt: The Integrative Revolution," in Lucien W. Pye and Sidney Verba, eds. *Political Culture and Political Development* (Princeton, 1966), pp. 405-6.

<sup>13</sup> For example, Naguib Mahfouz' novel, *Miramar*, which was adapted to the screen, became the most popular film in Cairo in late 1969; and the major villain was a corrupt ASU official. For the most recent critical discussions of the ASU, see *Al-Tali'a* (May, June, and July, 1972) for transcripts of the meetings of committees designated to reorganize the ASU.

If any secondary groups integrate people, they will be found among the ostensibly apolitical voluntary associations registered by the Ministry of Social Affairs—benevolent societies, religious or cultural associations, rural migrants, clubs in the cities, and the like. Some of these societies can also play political roles, as the following case studies illustrate.

**Case No. 1: The Islamic Benevolent Society** The oldest of the Muslim charity organizations, the Islamic Benevolent Society, was originally founded in Alexandria in 1879 by Abdallah Nadim, under the patronage of Prince Abbas Hilmi, the son of the khedive. Nadim also encouraged the founding of similar organizations, both Coptic and Muslim, in Cairo. Set up ostensibly for the purpose of encouraging modern private education, they were modelled on the voluntary associations that Europeans, especially missionaries, had already been creating in Egypt. Nadim himself was Egypt's first political orator and mass propagandist. He was the activist if not the brains behind Egypt's first nationalist uprising, the Arabi movement of 1881-82. When the British suppressed the movement and occupied Egypt, he managed to remain free, leading a clandestine existence for nine years until he was captured and exiled. After being permitted to return to Egypt in 1892, he edited a newspaper and may well have instigated the re-founding of the Islamic Benevolent Society during the same year. That such societies provided forums for members of the Egyptian elite to discuss politics is clear from one historian's account of a meeting in Cairo in 1882, at the height of the Arabi effervescence. At this meeting Nadim and Mohammed Abduh are said to have debated the virtues of universal versus limited suffrage, with Nadim of course taking the democratic position.<sup>14</sup>

Subsequently, the Islamic Benevolent Society became a sort of social, philanthropic, and political club for the Liberal Constitutionalist party. The list of its presidents from 1920 to the 1950s consists exclusively of Liberal premiers or ministers, and there were no officers from opposing parties.<sup>15</sup> There is no evidence that the society contributed to electoral campaigns or overtly intervened in other

<sup>14</sup> See Abd al-Rahman al-Rafi'i, *The Arabi Revolution and the British Occupation* [in Arabic] (Cairo, 1966), pp. 252-53, 573, 584; also Anouar Abdel-Malek, *Idéologie et renaissance nationale: L'Égypte moderne* (Paris 1969), pp. 449-83, 494; Abbas Mahmud-alAqqad, *Mohammed Abduh* [in Arabic] (Cairo, n.d.), pp. 2620-61; Ali al-Hadidi, *Abd Allah Al-Nadim* [in Arabic] (Cairo, n.d.), pp. 85-97.

<sup>15</sup> Now that the partisan conflicts of the *ancien régime* have subsided, however, an occasional former member of the National (Watani) party is permitted into the inner circle.

ways in the political process—indeed, political activity was and still is prohibited by the bylaws of such societies and even of professional associations and trade unions; but it constituted a respectable arena in which people could meet and develop their personal friendships and alliances. In any personalist political system such alliances are more important than formal groups. I suspect that alliance-building and alliance-testing (by means of elections within the societies) were and still are the major latent political functions of such groups.

**Case No. 2: A Philanthropist-Politician** A member of parliament, whose anonymity will be respected, enthusiastically entered social work in the early 1950s and acquired influential friends in the process. Eventually this involved him in the National Union and the Arab Socialist Union. His local reputation for philanthropy helped him to be elected, in one of Cairo's two-member constituencies, to the 1964 National Assembly, and reelected in 1968. As a deputy and, given his expertise, a member of the parliamentary social services committee, he had excellent access to the Ministry of Social Affairs. Noting that 80 of the 183 voluntary associations in his constituency were providing group insurance only for burying people, he persuaded the ministry either to dissolve or not to recognize 78 of the 80, in accordance with the 1964 law.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, other impoverished associations were (according to him) begging to be integrated into his comfortably subsidized society. Originally consisting of 80 members and designed as a day-care center for up to 400 children, the society had taken over other societies, acquired new functions, and eventually amassed, mostly through the Ministry of Social Affairs, \$140,000 annually to disburse to needy students, fathers of brides (to pay for the wedding), retired employees without government pensions, and the like. In early 1971 he was planning to set up branches in all fourteen quarters of his constituency by absorbing some of the remaining societies that were more or less immobilized by inadequate funding. But after President Sadat ousted the Sabry faction and called for new elections, our deputy did not present himself for reelection. His political machine—control over the societies—depended, of course, upon personal contacts and alliances with

<sup>16</sup> For details concerning government regulation of the voluntary associations and societies, see Morroe Berger, *Islam in Modern Egypt* (London, 1970), pp. 90 ff. The constituency in question had only thirty associations officially registered in 1955 and eighty-two in 1969, according to directories cited further on. From the huge discrepancies between these figures and those quoted by the deputy, it can be inferred that many societies never achieve legal recognition but enjoy an existence of sorts for a rather limited period of time.

higher authorities, some of whom had been eliminated by Sadat's purge.

Membership in voluntary associations is often helpful to political careers in Egypt, whether at the provincial, local, or national level—so much so that one aspiring parliamentary candidate joined some thirty-eight of them, hoping his dues could buy useful contacts. There is, however, another, more public function that societies sometimes perform. This is to articulate to the government their views on matters of general policy, in addition to requesting subsidies for their specialized activities. Most of the general policy statements are, of course, simply echoes of the official line intended to ingratiate the group with the authorities. Occasionally, however, general demands are genuinely voiced. In early 1971, for example, the Cairo Regional Union of Societies focused upon the theme of women's rights at its annual conference.<sup>17</sup> Its discussions and recommendations constituted a background of support for the efforts of the Minister of Social Affairs, a woman professor of law who came into office after the conference, to draft more progressive legislation concerning marriage and divorce—even though it was unlikely that she would succeed.<sup>18</sup>

As there is no distinct conceptual boundary between politics and charity, so there are no clear-cut institutional boundaries. Within the welfare-type category of societies supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs are to be found—in addition to social assistance, rural migrant, and benevolent societies—associations of graduates of various specialized schools, the Commerce Club, and other organizations that might more logically be classified with the professional unions tied to the Arab Socialist Union, as well as obviously governmental groups such as the Sino-Arab Friendship Society and the Egyptian Society of Entomology, both of which seem neither political nor charitable. To confuse matters more, between 1955 and 1960 the trade unions were encouraged to form social welfare associations; but the latter were reintegrated into or totally separated from the unions

<sup>17</sup> Women's rights are an especially appropriate cause, given the importance of women in the voluntary associations. In 1969 half the board members of the Cairo Regional Union were women. Women were members of one-third of Egypt's associations in 1960, and they constituted 9 percent of the total membership. Furthermore, the associations run by women seemed generally to be the most effective. Over half of those with substantial numbers of women produced more than \$1200 worth of social services annually, compared to only 27 percent for all voluntary associations. See Ministry of Social Affairs, *Survey of Societies and Social Organizations* [in Arabic] (Cairo, n.d.), p. 125.

<sup>18</sup> Sadat relied considerably on the symbols of orthodox Islam to develop legitimacy for himself and his government in the wake of Nasser's death. He could not afford to antagonize its principal spokesmen, the *ulama*, in the absence of a strongly organized counterconstituency.

after 1964.<sup>19</sup> The confusion is in a sense fortunate, however, for data are available concerning the associations supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The available data support my contention that relatively few new associations are emerging to integrate people uprooted by modernization. Table 3 indicates that, in Egypt's two major cities, Cairo and Alexandria, the numbers of voluntary associations have failed to keep up with increases in population. In proportion to population, associations declined by almost one-fifth in Cairo and one-third in Alexandria between 1960 and 1969. Increases in number more than kept up with population increases for the country as a whole, however, because of sharp increases in semiurban and rural areas.<sup>20</sup> In other words, except in the new industrial complex of Aswan, associations were not keeping up with the most highly socially mobilized populations.

Numbers of associations per se, however, are not an indication of whether these groups are integrating people. (Evidence about their functional specificity, which the government is strongly encouraging, seems equally irrelevant.<sup>21</sup>) The most important factor is their density—that is, actual membership and degree of participation. A survey conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1960 indicated that Cairo's network of associations covered proportionately more of its inhabitants than did that of any other governorate. Up to 10 percent of Cairo's population was affiliated, compared to 5.1 percent of Alexandria's and a national average of 2.7 percent.<sup>22</sup> Attendance records were also better in Cairo.<sup>23</sup> The latter's associations were, in

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs, *Survey*, p. 28; Law No. 32 on Associations and Private Foundations, February 12, 1964, Art. 13.

<sup>20</sup> In 1960 the numbers of associations per 10,000 inhabitants correlated quite well with the degree of urbanization of the different governorates, as Table 3 indicates. The only glaring exception was Menia, where the Ministry of Social Affairs had launched pilot community development associations included in the survey. By the mid-1960s Aswan was no longer predominantly rural. New industry and Nubian resettlement, the major local consequences of the High Dam, seem sufficient to explain the increase in Aswan's associations from 1960 to 1969. That rural Menia and Dakahlia would join it in outstripping Alexandria, Egypt's major port and second city only to Cairo, is strictly due to government initiative. In 1969, 347 and 408 of Egypt's 1546 community development associations were concentrated in the two provinces, respectively. See *Statistical Handbook*, 1970, pp. 165-66.

<sup>21</sup> Only 35.6 percent of the associations were specialized in one domain in 1960, compared to 84 percent—and numerically four times as many—in 1970.

<sup>22</sup> Cairo with an average of 310 members per society included just under half of the 699,980 memberships in Egyptian associations.

<sup>23</sup> Only 12 percent of Cairo's organizations failed to hold their annual general assembly, compared to 20 percent for the country as a whole. Twenty-eight percent held thirteen or more meetings during the year; only in Port Said was a higher proportion as active, while the national average was 23 percent.

addition, favored by more government subsidies and they managed to distribute social services worth \$1.20 per inhabitant—a record topped only by Alexandria's \$1.65.<sup>24</sup>

**Table 3** Numbers of Voluntary Associations and Numbers per 10,000 Inhabitants, Ranked by Governorate

Governorate	Years				
	1955	1960	No/0000 1960	1969	No/0000 1969
<b>Urban</b>					
Port Said . . . . .	—	98	4.0	118	3.9
Cairo . . . . .	1,167	1,117	3.3	1,299	2.7
Suez . . . . .	—	65	3.2	86	2.8
Alexandria . . . . .	—	365	2.6	319	1.6
<b>Semiurban*</b>					
Ismailia . . . . .	—	32	1.2	65	1.7
Giza . . . . .	—	138	1.0	231	1.2
Aswan . . . . .	—	30	0.8	147	2.4
<b>Predominantly rural</b>					
Menia . . . . .	—	184	1.2	509	2.8
Fayum . . . . .	—	80	1.0	98	1.0
Munufia . . . . .	—	123	0.9	184	1.2
Dakahlia . . . . .	—	144	0.7	528	2.2
Kafr-al-Sheik . . . . .	—	25	0.3	83	0.7
<b>Remaining 9 governorates (excluding Sinai)</b>					
	—	782	—	1,325	1.0
<hr/>					
Totals . . . . .	—	3,183	1.4**	4,922	1.6

SOURCES: Ministry of Social Affairs, *Survey of Societies and Social Organizations* [in Arabic] (Cairo, n.d.); Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, *Statistical Handbook* (Cairo, June 1970). The 1955 datum is drawn from Isis Istiphani, *Directory of Social Agencies in Cairo* (Cairo, 1956), p. x.

\*By semiurban is meant any governorate having some, but less than two-thirds, rural population, according to the 1966 census.

\*\*Adjusted from 1.2 to include 520 associations excluded for technical reasons from the 1960 survey.

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs, *Survey*, p. 86. Cairo's share of total associations' income (over \$14 million) was almost 46 percent, while its share of the subsidies (totalling almost \$3 million) was 52.5 percent. *Ibid.*, table after p. 140.

While there are no comparable published surveys taken after 1960 to indicate changes in the density of Cairo's network, the shreds of available evidence point to a decrease. In 1966 the government abolished some 1,300 societies, on the ground that they did not conform to the law of associations as amended in 1964. Most of these were of the "private" type, distributing funds only among their members. Since the bulk of Egypt's "private" societies had been concentrated in Cairo, the city was presumably hardest hit by the 1966 decision.<sup>25</sup>

Sheer quantity may sometimes be an indicator of quality; low longevity of associations inevitably suggests low density. Not only were many societies dissolved in 1966, but there is good reason to believe that a substantial proportion of Cairo's societies registered after 1945 were dissolved or abandoned by 1960.<sup>26</sup> The implication is not that an overbearing government set out to atomize the society by destroying intermediary groups, but rather that such associations have a naturally high mortality rate and—since numbers are more or less constant over time—a correspondingly high birth rate. From the most recent Cairo data, it appears that the rate of turnover is as high or higher in the 1960s as in the 1950s.<sup>27</sup> Hence associational density is unlikely to be increasing.

<sup>25</sup> Most of them were rural migrants' associations, grouping those who had come from a particular village or region, often simply for the purpose of assuring one another a decent burial. In 1960, 55 percent of the city's societies were classified as "private" whereas only 24 percent of societies outside Cairo were given this classification. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>26</sup> Istiphan indicates that 1,158 had been registered by the Ministry of Social Affairs up to 1955. (See Table 3; I am excluding nine societies established in 1955.) In 1956 Egyptian legislation concerning clubs and societies was amalgamated and amended, and they were again required to register at the ministry. The 1960 survey, as Morroe Berger points out, pp. 97-98, lists only 636 Cairo associations founded before 1955; even adding to them a proportion of those that did not respond or were not included in the survey, there still seem to be more than 300 "missing" from Istiphan's collection. On the other hand, Istiphan's research team had only been able to track down and describe 643 of the 1,158. Of these, 616 (excluding sport organizations) would be comparable to the 636 listed in the survey. Disagreeing with Berger, I suggest there is little discrepancy between the two sources of information. More than 300 societies were "missing" in 1960 because the Ministry of Social Affairs had removed them from its rosters. They were already so moribund in 1955 that Istiphan's team could not locate them.

<sup>27</sup> Cairo Regional Union of Societies, *Directory of Societies and Social Foundations* [in Arabic] (Cairo, 1970) names all 1,230 associations officially in existence in Cairo as of April 15, 1969, and provides added evidence of their high mortality rate. Three hundred eighty-eight of those tracked down and described by Istiphan in 1955 had "died" by 1969. Yet 369 of those listed in 1970 had not been discovered by Istiphan, despite their claims to have been founded before 1955. Perhaps they were resuscitated in the 1960s out of moribund groups that had been dissolved earlier, or else they were enhancing their stature by manufacturing geneologies.

Obvious birth rates are also high, since the total number of registered associations in Cairo has been fairly constant over the 1950s and 1960s. Istiphan discovered that at least 270 were created between 1945 and 1954; the actual number must have been substantially higher since he

Indeed, most associations I have observed seem to be rather transient affairs, typically dependent upon small leadership groups that are apt to quarrel, provoke schisms, and found new societies. They seem to be unable to adapt to new circumstances and to recruit new generations of leaders. Many of those that have survived the longest are relics of the *ancien régime*, tolerated because they are innocuous and perform useful services, but ultimately condemned, given their aging leadership and straitened finances, to fade away. The available data suggest, in short, that modernization in the sense of social mobilization is not yet being accompanied by increases either in per capita number and density of associations or in any observable anomie.

### Group Autonomy?

However much modernization has proceeded in Egypt, no organized group or coalition has acquired sufficient power to demand autonomy, much less an independent voice in policy-making—with the exception, perhaps, of Marshal Amer's military clique, liquidated with assistance from Israel in 1967 after four or five years of relative independence from and disagreements with Nasser.<sup>28</sup> Workers, agrarian reform peasants, and key professional skill groups do not appear to have increased the density of their respective associations, much less their real power and influence on the authorities. Each sector pleads its special interests, as it always has, and registers occasional "successes," such as wage increases and pension benefits, so that "who gets what?" might be a way of measuring their respective degrees of influence as they vary over time. But this sort of piaster politics falls well within the range of activities an authoritarian regime can tolerate. The important question is whether any of the groups or sectors is acquiring an independent bargaining position. It appears instead that the "successes" are simply favors granted from

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included barely half of those registered. The 1960 survey indicates that at least 399 were founded between 1955 and 1959, while in 1969 a net total of 527 associations established between 1955 and 1969 were listed—of which only 187 were founded between 1955 and 1959.

<sup>28</sup> For the best, but still somewhat jumbled, account of the strained relationship between Nasser and Amer after 1961, see Robert Stephens, *Nasser: A Political Biography* (London, 1971), pp. 358-62. Nasser apparently tried but failed in 1963 to remove control over army appointments and promotions from Amer's clique and vest it in the Presidential Council, of which Amer was only one of twelve members. With Nasser cleverly managing to be absent, the Council, presided over by Baghdadi, voted six to five in favor of asserting its control over the army. But, fearing civil war, Nasser subsequently backed down, disbanded the Council, and appointed Amer first vice-president in March 1964. After being caught plotting with his officer friends in the wake of the 1967 defeat, Amer is alleged to have committed suicide.



above, accompanied as often as not by a decrease in the particular group's potential for achieving autonomy or an independent bargaining position.

Some groups are accorded special legitimacy, however. Mainly in response to Syria's secession from the United Arab Republic in October 1961, Nasser discarded a traditional geographic basis of representation in his political organization, which he alleged had harbored "reactionaries" responsible for the breakup, in favor of a corporate representation of "popular forces." Table 4 summarizes the new formula and presents the most definitive official indication of the organized groups most relevant to Egyptian political life, apart from the official mass political organization, the Arab Socialist Union, which was never organized on a permanent basis for more than a year or two at a time.<sup>29</sup>

The sector with the most promising prospects for autonomy appears to be the modern professions, by virtue of their skills, technical expertise, and the government's need of them.<sup>30</sup> More particularly,

<sup>29</sup> The corporatist basis of representation was in a sense reaffirmed by the requirement from 1964 on that at least half of the membership of parliament and other political bodies be workers and peasants; the status of peasant, originally defined to include anyone owning up to twenty-five feddans, was subsequently restricted to owners of up to five feddans.

<sup>30</sup> The students have occasionally developed autonomous organizations outside official channels and demonstrated actively against the regime, but by the transient nature of their constituency their unions are better understood as catalysts to other groups than as indicators of organizational development. The organizations of the other sectors seem to lack sufficient density to be even potentially capable of autonomous political roles. Some peasants and especially workers have influence in the context of piaster politics, but the influence does not seem to lead to stronger organization. The "victory" of the public sector workers in 1971, for instance, when they received certain benefits as the result of wildcat strikes in Helwan, did not enhance the standing of either the ASU or the official trade unions.

Some Egyptians perceive the national capitalists as a powerful and even insidious group. See, for instance, Rifa'at al-Sa'yid, "The Middle Class and its Role in Egyptian Society," *Al-Tali'a*, March 1972, pp. 61-72. But while stressing corruption and affluence in Egyptian public life, the author gives no data that might confirm the influence of the national capitalists, however defined, as an organized group. In terms of production, if not numbers of enterprises, the private industrial sector is small by al-Sa'yid's own figures, cited on p. 62. The Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI), their traditional spokesman, continues to have a preponderance of private sector officers, since the public sector enjoys more direct channels of access to the government. However, since its resuscitation in 1967 after collapsing from the nationalizations of 1961-63, the FEI appears to be primarily an instrument of the government for regulating what remains of the private sector. Occasionally it cautiously defends the interests of private entrepreneurs by expressing their full support to the government. In 1972, for instance, Prime Minister Aziz Sidky faced hostile demonstrations in Shubra-al-Khaima, an industrial suburb of Cairo which in October 1971 had elected him to parliament on the first ballot. Workers were demanding that new public sector legislation be immediately applied to private firms in the area. The "national capitalists" rushed immediately to Cairo to indicate their support of any legislation the government might favor—in order to forestall any possible attempts by the prime minister to blame them for the incident. Their declaration was issued through the FEI. See *Cairo Press Review*, 24 March 1972.

the professional syndicate of the engineers seems to be the likeliest candidate and hence the most interesting for a case study, for engineers constitute the top profession in terms of high positions in the government and public sector.<sup>31</sup> In these respects they have also risen the most rapidly, due to Nasser's emphasis on industrialization and also to their links through army engineers who had been their classmates in university to Nasser's Free Officers. Even in 1956, they seem to have occupied more top-paying jobs than members of any other scientific profession.<sup>32</sup> Together with the faculties of medicine and pharmacy, engineering has maintained the highest admission standards, and the engineers are more likely than doctors and pharmacists, who stick to their specialties, to become top managers or administrators. Anticipating their future political or economic roles, they have participated actively in all student demonstrations since the 1940s; in 1968 and 1972 their sense of constituting the nation's budding elite led them to initiate the demonstrations. By taking over the function traditionally exercised by law students, they were reflecting Nasser's displacement of lawyers by engineers within the top political and economic elite. But the newly established engineers do not appear to have transferred their administrative or technical skills into organizational resources for their syndicate.

The syndicate, founded in 1946, was a going concern, fully recognized and enjoying good access to cabinet ministers, by the late 1940s. Though half of the engineers worked outside Cairo, one-fifth of the membership attended annual congresses, and their commitment

<sup>31</sup> If "high positions" includes only ministers, then the military have predominated until recently. Out of 131 ministers from 1952 to 1968, Dekmejian (p. 200) counts 19 engineers, to which 7 army engineers should be added for a total of 26, compared to 37 straight army officers. Engineers, however, outranked all other professions. In 1972 nine of them, including two army engineers, were ministers, compared to only two regular officers.

Statistics concerning other important posts are to be found in *Public Mobilization and Statistics*, published in Arabic by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, July 1968, p. 11, and January 1969, p. 17. In top civil service posts engineers are third, coming after graduates of the faculties of commerce and agriculture. In top public sector posts they come second to those of commerce. However, the total sample, including 893 engineer civil servants and 1,599 engineer managers, is too large a group to be considered top elite. By my own count, engineers constitute just over half of the 1,000 managers in industry, housing and public utilities, and transport companies, though a very small number of these "muhandisin" (engineers) may be agronomists, who also claim the title of engineer, much to the latter's discomfort. Of the presidents of these 244 companies, 84 percent were engineers. See *United Arab Republic Organizations and Companies Directory* (Cairo, 1970).

<sup>32</sup> See National Planning Council, *The Analysis of Scientific Skills in the United Arab Republic* [in Arabic] (Cairo, 1958), pp. 192 (agronomists), 297 (scientists), 369 (physicians and pharmacists), and 485 (engineers). But data on private practices were not available. Successful doctors and pharmacists are reputed to have higher total incomes than comparable engineers.

Table 4 The Corporatist Formula of 1961

Types of Popular Forces	Number (In Millions)	Number Organized	Percentage Organized		Percent Share in National Income		Average A and B		Adjusted Percent Representa- tion
			(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	
Peasants (proprietors, tenants, hired hands)* . . . . .	3.2	1,154,332*	44.3*	26.6	35.4	25			
Workers (industry, commerce, services)* . . . . .	1.6	466,328	17.9	30.8	24.4	20			
National capitalists (employers in commerce, industry) . . . . .	0.6	276,824	10.6	8.7	9.7	10			
Members of professional syndicates . . . . .	—	172,958	6.6	22.0	14.3	15			
Nonsyndicated government employees . . . . .	0.7	194,000	7.5	10.9	9.2	9			
University faculty . . . . .	—	7,500	0.4	1.0	0.7	7			
Students . . . . .	0.3	305,000	11.7	—	—	7			
Women . . . . .	6.5	25,457	1.0	—	—	7			
Totals	12.9	2,602,398	100.0	100.0	100.0	100			

SOURCES: Preparatory Committee of the National Congress of Popular Forces, *The Way to Democracy* [in Arabic] (Cairo, n.d.), p. 592.  
\*Members came from the following organizations (see p. 596).

- 334 land reform cooperatives
- 149,000 members
- 3,566 cooperatives of other types
- 986,000 members
- Agricultural Workers' Union (5 branches)
- 2,550 members
- Union of Government Employees
- 18,600 members

Total 1,156,150 members

(Some 1,818 members may have belonged to two types of organizations.)

was demonstrated in other ways; for example, the syndicate's secondary leadership once organized a three-day strike of government engineers. Since the early 1950s, however, commitment has substantially declined, even as membership (which has always been compulsory), the prestige of the profession, and the influence of individual members have increased dramatically. Rarely before 1971 could the syndicate attract more than a few hundred of its 40,000 members to the annual meetings. Syndicate activities, other than administering a pension scheme, virtually ceased.

Indeed, the syndicate, like those of other professions, barely survived Nasser's consolidation of power. First it was purged of political figures left over from the *ancien régime*, then brought under the control of army engineers. It barely managed to parry a recommendation to disaffiliate all civil servants—which in 1953 meant more than two-thirds of the engineers (and today virtually all of them). By mid-1955 a columnist of the *Engineers' Magazine*, the official organ of the syndicate, was advising his readers unconditionally to support "the revolutionaries," because "they usually have a good reason for everything they do."<sup>33</sup>

After 1958 all board members of the syndicate were required to be members of the National Union (and subsequently the Arab Socialist Union). Even so, the syndicate's elections were postponed and its activity virtually frozen in the early 1960s, while Nasser considered converting the professional syndicates into learned societies under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Since 1965 pressure has been exerted on the engineers to admit certain categories of skilled workers into their syndicate lest it be abolished altogether.

Though publicized as a "socialist beehive" and "the technical committee of the Arab Socialist Union" during the late 1960s, when it was controlled by Ali Sabry's organization, the syndicate does not appear to have been able to marshal the necessary time or expertise from its members to provide any technical advice. Most technical discussions occurred next door at the Engineers' Society, run by a somewhat different, more academic group of engineers. The society's quarterly journal, in addition, tended to be of a higher technical standard than the syndicate's magazine. It is true that engineers connected with the syndicate did not hesitate in some of the columns of the *Engineers' Magazine* to lash out at government policies, criticizing many relatively important political rather than technical decisions, as well as the functioning of particular government depart-

<sup>33</sup> *Magallat al-Muhandisin (Engineers' Magazine, hereafter referred to as MM)*, July 1955, p. 13.

ments such as the Cairo municipality. But the most articulate critic was protected not by the syndicate but by his personal neighbor, Marshal Abdul Hakim Amer. The syndicate was not consulted, nor did it emit any opinion except to support the decision made by others, on really important political decisions, even when technical engineering issues were involved. The High Dam at Aswan, for instance, was discussed in the *Engineers' Magazine* only after Nasser and his close advisers had decided to build it rather than carry out Nile control projects approved by the previous regime.<sup>34</sup>

The syndicate awakened in 1971, however, when Sadat ordered free elections after purging Sabry's clan. At that time Abdul Khalek Shinawi, a former minister of irrigation, defeated a candidate backed by Prime Minister Aziz Sidky for the presidency. Determined to develop an autonomous syndicate, and beholden neither to the government nor to the Arab Socialist Union, Shinawi proceeded to attack such major public projects as rural electrification and the Suez-Alexandria pipeline as well as to express solidarity with students demonstrating against the government. He also joined nine other retired top officials, including Abdul-Lati Baghdadi and Kamal addin Hussein, in April 1972 in petitioning Sadat against the Russian military presence.<sup>35</sup> Though publicly attacked by Sadat, he was surviving, his syndicate considerably strengthened in terms of its members' activity and commitment, when this article went to press. His actions, unprecedented in the conformist world of professional syndicates and other official organizations, highlight the significance of engineers in national politics. But in 1973 Shinawi toned down his activities to avoid being purged. Government projects were no longer discussed critically by the syndicate.

It is certainly possible to conclude from this case history that the syndicate remained weak under Nasser primarily because the regime kept it so; obviously the power and influence of any group is largely a product of its environment, and especially of the political decision-making structure. But such a conclusion begs the question of why

<sup>34</sup> In *MM*, December 1953, the High Dam project is briefly mentioned in the annual report of the syndicate, p. 13. At this time an undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Works recalls giving a lecture on Nile Control at the Engineers' Society in which he was instructed to mention the High Dam in addition to alternative projects. In *MM*, April 1954, pp. 14-18, the High Dam is mentioned only in connection with the visits of foreign experts. Then, indeed, a debate about the project was organized, according to *MM*, August-September 1954, p. 11, but by the official newspaper, *al-Gumhuriya*, not by the syndicate. The president of the Engineers' Society is alleged, on Nasser's orders, to have discouraged debate on the subject in the late 1950s, when the Russians were modifying the original project.

<sup>35</sup> Their letter was published in Fuad Matar, *What Became of Nasser in Sadat's Republic*, vol. 2 [in Arabic] (Beirut, 1972), pp. 189-91.

Nasser was able to control the engineers and other groups so easily. It is claimed that he controlled the Arab Socialist Union, and through it the various syndicates, by means of a “secret apparatus” of perhaps 1,000 loyal individuals who served as a sort of political police reporting directly to one of his security advisers. The apparatus itself seems to have had little cohesion or ideological consistency, however. Within months of taking office, President Sadat locked up its leaders, and the apparatus simply disintegrated. Erstwhile apparatchiks scrambled as quickly as possible to join the new leadership, in order not to lose their jobs.<sup>36</sup>

Such behavior is of course endemic to authoritarian systems in that by definition they lack strong vanguard parties. However, the case of the engineers further suggests that the regime had no need of an organizational juggernaut to keep various groups under control. Organized groupings in Egypt were readily amenable to manipulation from above. They lacked the resources—especially the commitment of their members—that might have encouraged them to seek autonomy. Thus, the totalitarian model was never applicable. The regime did not need to atomize social groupings because it did not confront groups with a strong corporate tradition of their own.

### People's Channels

Egyptian political action is not carried out primarily through organized groups; rather, Egyptians constantly seek to consolidate and maintain their personal alliance systems—very much in the manner of the Moroccan political elites described by John M. Waterbury.<sup>37</sup> Organized groups are only one vehicle for alliance-building, and certainly a less important one than family, personal friendships, and the variety of face-to-face groupings of an informal yet somewhat structured nature that seem to abound in Egyptian society. An example of the latter is the “Sunday Club” of young engineer professors, trained for the most part in the United States, who used to meet once a week for recreation. Within any more organized group, moreover, various subgroups are usually competing for members' loyalties, thereby attenuating loyalties to the wider group if not altogether paralyzing it. Any abstract classification can make a group, but there

<sup>36</sup> Officers of the Engineers' Syndicate seem to have been purged more than those of most syndicates. Twenty-two of the thirty-one-man council were casualties of the May 13 coup, compared to four of seventeen lawyers and eighteen of thirty-eight agronomists. The extent of the purge is probably proportional to the influence of the syndicate.

<sup>37</sup> John Waterbury, *The Commander of the Faithful: The Moroccan Elite—A Study in Segmented Politics* (New York, 1970).

are so many from which to choose that only rarely will the individual consider himself a member of any particular one, at least to the point of really dedicating himself to its organization.

At no level of community, however, do organizations acquire a high degree of institutionalization. The weakness of the engineers, or indeed of any categoric group in Egyptian society, in a sense reflects that of the political infrastructure. The Liberation Rally, the National Union, and the Arab Socialist Union never became institutions, for Nasser was constantly restructuring his political organization and reshuffling its leadership. The ASU, for instance, underwent a major reorganization in 1968, only three years after the original, lengthy process of establishing it. Until 1968 all its leadership seems to have been appointed rather than elected—the Supreme Executive Committee (itself altered in 1964 and again in 1966), the “Provisional” Secretariat, and even the executive bureaus at the governorate, district, city, and village levels—while the Central Committee, which was supposed to elect the Supreme Executive, never came into being.<sup>38</sup> In 1970 the ASU, equipped by then with an elected Central Committee and Supreme Executive, performed the vital function of appointing Nasser’s successor, but within months he, in turn, had purged and reorganized it. In Egypt, however, low levels of institutionalization are apparently not associated with other indicators of “political decay,” such as frequent military coups, assassinations, and other forms of violence. Instead, the low level of institutionalization is simply a reflection, at the national as well as at other levels of community, of a prevailing political style. The very congruence of organizational behavior at different levels of community may even suggest a certain political stability buttressed by relatively fixed cultural values.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See Dekmejian, pp. 148-53, and Henry Chedid, *Political Organizations in the United Arab Republic since 1952: The Arab Socialist Union* (Lebanon, 1969), pp. 77, 106. In 1966 Nasser had complained about the efficacy of previous local elections for building up political organization: “If we choose a number of these (local) elements and leave the rest, that means that we are forming the opposition before having the political organization.” From “Nasser’s Speech to the Supreme Executive Committee about the Method of Work in the Arab Socialist Union,” *Al-Tali’a*, November 1966.

<sup>39</sup> See Harry Eckstein, *Division and Cohesion in Democracy* (Princeton, 1966), pp. 225-88. His theory of political stability is an interesting counterpoint to the view of political development propounded by Samuel P. Huntington. See the latter’s *Political Order*, pp. 1-92, and “The Change to Change: Modernization, Development, and Politics,” *Comparative Politics, III* (April 1971), 283-322. Though his views have changed somewhat, he has not approached political culture as an intervening variable affecting the meaning of development. Egyptian cultural values are by no means totally fixed or rigid, but it may be possible to speak of a modal personality type encouraged by social and political circumstances. For a fascinating portrait of the “*fahlawi*” (clever, adaptable) type, see Hamed ‘Ammar, *On Building Human Beings:*

Political culture is better seen as an historical tradition, at least in countries that have a history, than as a set of mutually correlated responses to survey questionnaires. In a previous article I tried to point out aspects of the Arab-Islamic tradition that impeded the emergence of practical ideology, the necessary concomitant of organizational weapons, in the contemporary Arab world.<sup>40</sup> Crucial to the analysis was the fact that the Islamic world did not organize a formal church and hence did not offer either ideological or organizational conditions for a Western-type reformation. Islam presented no target against which a militant revolutionary group might organize while assimilating its organizational skills, as did Puritans, Jacobins, and eventually Bolsheviks, in the Christian world. The only target came much later in the form of the Western colonial presence. In Egypt, as in most of the Arab East, the target was more veiled, ambiguous, and of shorter duration as a political-administrative presence than in French North Africa. No dialectical transformation of the political culture was possible as in at least one of the French possessions. Existing structures, notably the state bureaucracy, were patched up in Egypt, not displaced or even substantially reformed by the British.

Indeed, the striking continuity and size of the Egyptian state also differentiates it from that of most authoritarian systems. Unlike its Arab neighbors, Egypt has always been a peasant society offering a rich tax base for a strong state which in turn, by controlling the Nile, made a continuous peasant society possible. The modernization of agriculture was undertaken some half century before Britain occupied Egypt in 1882. The British presence may have accelerated, but it did not fundamentally change, the course of transformations already underway.<sup>41</sup> The most significant were the improvement of public works, especially irrigation and drainage, the consolidation of public finances, and the emergence of large autonomous landed interests. Only the latter, eventually cut down by Nasser, threatened to undermine the traditional autonomy of the Egyptian state. Under the British the development of administrative infrastructure outran that of political infrastructure. In this sense Nasser merely continued—or

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*Studies in Cultural Change and Educational Thought* [in Arabic] (Cairo, 1968), esp. pp. 89-99. Though he confuses the country of publication and even the name of the author, Nissim Rejwan accurately summarizes these pages in English in *New Middle East*, February 1972, pp. 16-18.

<sup>40</sup> "On Theory and Practice Among Arabs," *World Politics*, XXIV (October 1971), 106-26.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonialism in Egypt, 1882-1914* (Princeton, 1966). For the best study of the sterility of the colonial encounter, see Afaf Lutfi al-Sayid, *Egypt and Cromer: A Study in Anglo-Egyptian Relations* (New York, 1968). For the pre-1882 period, the most interesting recent interpretation is by Anouar Abdel-Malek, *Idéologie*.



resumed, after the interregnum of a quasi-parliamentary regime (1923-52)—the work of Lord Cromer and, before him, the khedives Ismail and Mohammed Ali.

Without an autonomous church, at least not within Egypt's central tradition of orthodox Islam, the society rarely sustained autonomous groups, even during periods of relatively weak government. Though much has been written about the rich corporate life of medieval Islam, the most recent research suggests that corporations or guilds never existed, in Egypt at least.<sup>42</sup> In his classic study, *Egyptian Guilds in Modern Times*, Gabriel Baer merely translates as "guild" words which in Arabic mean either profession or trade or group; none of them carries the connotation of a corporate group, partly because Islamic law does not for the most part recognize corporate entities standing between the individual and the community of the faithful. Baer produces no evidence that his "guilds" are other than abstract categories of people, defined as such for certain regulatory purposes by the authorities, who appointed sheikhs to help carry out the regulations.

In short, Egypt lacks a tradition of corporate intermediaries just as it lacks a church. This is hardly surprising since guilds, like militant parties, developed along corporate lines in the West by imitating the self-regulating techniques of the church, in the absence of a strong central bureaucracy. Egypt had no model of a self-regulating corporate entity upon which to draw, but only a strong patrimonial state (most of the time) to do the regulating. The first voluntary and professional associations were established by its small European communities. They provided models which Egyptians copied but apparently did not fully assimilate, since they lacked the sort of legitimacy accorded, either directly or dialectically, by the church in the West. Nationalism and Islam, of course, had the requisite legitimacy, but failed, so to speak, to incorporate it. Hence the authoritarian syndrome seems more "natural" to Egypt, in that it accords with prevailing political style and culture, than either the pluralist or totalitarian alternatives, each of which presupposes a tradition of corporate groups to be either assimilated or combatted.

Many Egyptians would argue nevertheless that such a system is incapable of modernizing the country. As early as 1913, Rashid Rida implied as much when he declared:

This is the age of groupings. All that this age has of civilization—progress of

<sup>42</sup> See A. H. Hourani and S. M. Stern, eds. *The Islamic City* (Philadelphia, 1970), esp. articles by Hourani, Stern, and C. Cahen. Cf. Gabriel Baer, *Egyptian Guilds in Modern Times* (Jerusalem, 1964).

science, business, administration, and politics—is the outcome of the effect of the interaction and discussions among the members of these groupings. The progress of nations is dependent upon the progress of these groupings and on their shared social activities. Those that have not the fortune to create groups, meaning societies, political parties, conferences, cooperatives, and trade unions, have no share in the civilization of this age. No matter how large their number may be and no matter how strong the social ties that bind them, they are not to be considered as belonging to the nations or peoples of this era. On the contrary, they are no more than serfs and slaves to the social nations.<sup>43</sup>

In answer to Rida, however, Egypt has many active groupings—societies, conferences, cooperatives, and trade unions, if not political parties. Their advice is often taken into account, but without accountability, on specific matters, at least. Meanwhile, modernization may depend less on the nature of the regime than on the availability of foreign exchange—hence relations with the “social nations.” There is no participation crisis for the huge majority, even among the middle and upper educated classes, but only the personal frustration, relieved by sardonic humor and occasional fits of institution-building, that has always accompanied the prevailing style. The regime displays a tremendous elasticity in its ability to absorb new groups in plastic structures, control them, and satisfy an occasional demand without sacrificing resources needed to satisfy other groups and proceed with ambitious investment programs.

## Conclusion

Egypt’s fund of political experience is older and perhaps no less profound than pluralist theory; certainly even contemporary Egypt sheds serious doubt on the assumed need of modernizing societies for either strong autonomous groups or an organizational juggernaut. As a modally significant case, Nasser’s Egypt also sheds more general light on authoritarian politics in modernizing societies by suggesting basic differences between those of corporate and unincorporated societies. This raises some hypotheses worthy of future comparative research.

Occasional breaks in the regimes of unincorporated societies are to be expected, since they do not rest on the strongly organized support of either pluralist or totalitarian regimes. Support is even less reliable than in the authoritarian regimes of corporate societies because the latter, out of weakness, must bargain with legitimate corporate

<sup>43</sup> Markaziya Party of Egypt, *The First Arab Conference* (Cairo, 1913), p. A. I am indebted to my former student, Jehane Hamza, for discovering and translating the quotation.

groups rather than simply withdraw their legitimacy. On the other hand, the experience of Nasser's Egypt suggests that power, once conquered, is more easily consolidated and expanded in the unincorporated kind of society.

Such systems remain prone to coups, in other words, even as modernization proceeds, but they seem less vulnerable to revolution than do authoritarian regimes in corporate societies. As a concluding irony, however, the cultural syndrome that supports unincorporated society is unlikely to change without revolution.