Egypt from Monarchy to Republic

A Reassessment of Revolution and Change

Edited by

Shimon Shamir

Egypt from Monarchy to Republic

TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

The Kaplan Chair in the History of Egypt and Israel:
The Study of Egyptian History and Its Relationship with Israel

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 1995 by Westview Press, Inc.

Published 2021 by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Egypt from monarchy to republic : a reassessment of revolution and change / edited by Shimon Shamir.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.
ISBN 0-8133-8658-6
1. Egypt—History—1952– I. Shamir, Shimon.
DT107.825.E394 1995
962.05—dc20 **94-46620**
CIP

ISBN 13: 978-0-3670-1110-9 (hbk)
ISBN 13: 978-0-3671-6097-5 (pbk)

DOI: 10.4324/9780429040962

Contents

Preface

In the modern historiography of Egypt, the year 1952 usually appears as the watershed separating the ancien régime of King Faruq and his predecessors from the new polity led by Presidents Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak. It has been seen as the "great divide" between monarchical Egypt—dominated as it was by the palace, the landed Pashas, the British interests, and the foreign communities—and the populist republics run by a purely Egyptian military-bureaucratic elite. The logic of this periodization, which at first was so effectively projected by the spokesmen of the July revolution and so readily accepted by interpreters of contemporary Egypt, cannot be denied. Yet, as time passes and creates a greater perspective, the validity of this simplistic juxtaposition increasingly comes under question and the complexities of the problem emerge.

The case against the substantiality and finality of 1952 as a turning point is inspired and enhanced by a number of highly visible developments that emerged in the 1970s. It is argued that in the realities of present-day Egypt, many facets of pre-1952 life that were thought to have been eradicated or decisively diminished by the revolution can be observed once again. Capitalism is back. *Infitah* policies have considerably liberalized the Arab Socialist, state-controlled economic system, and an entrepreneurial class has resurfaced. Foreign companies and businesspeople again make their presence felt in the affluent quarters of Cairo. Party politics have reappeared on the ruins of the Nasserite "guided democracy" and one-party system, and even though not completely restored, some of their major components, such as the Wafd and the Muslim Brethren, are again playing important roles (with the Left once again being marginalized). The revolutionary ideological regimentation has been replaced by a lively public debate reminiscent of that which had prevailed before 1952. The radical Islamic forces, suppressed at the time by the essentially secular Nasserite regime, are again rallying forces to undermine the foundations of the nation-state. A pro-Western orientation dominates foreign policy and the revolution's heroic anti-imperialistic posture has been abandoned. Relations with the sister Arab states are now more congruent with Arab League–style politics as conducted by the monarchy than with the aggressive pan-Arab campaigns waged by the revolution, and the legitimacy of the particular Egyptian identity has been reinstituted. In short—this argument suggests—Egypt became once again *Misr al-Dawla* (state) rather than *Misr al-Thawra* (revolution).

Yet a strong case can be made for the conception of the revolution as a period of fundamental changes. It is undeniable that Egypt was undergoing a process of constant transformation that defies the notion of *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.* Surely what Heraclitus said of rivers applies to the Nile as well. None of the remarkable throwbacks listed above signify the full restoration of the pre-1952 situation. Nor do they amount to a total obliteration of what is called in Egyptian public discourse *makasib al-thawra,* the achievements of the revolution. Those are dutifully listed, every year in revolution anniversary season, in endless articles and essays, and even if the list gets shorter from year to year, it still includes a number of enduring developments. The post-1952 changes—this counterargument maintains—were both numerous and deep, and they affected such principal areas as the country's sociopolitical structure, its economic assets, its people's self-image, and Egypt's international stature.

The sharpening contrast between these two perceptions of the 1952 watershed calls for a reexamination of the levels of continuity and change following the revolution, in light of the return of so many institutions, practices, policies, and values that had always been associated with the monarchical period. A number of interesting questions can be addressed. Is it conceivable, for example, that the revolution was more deeply embedded in the attributes of the pre-1952 Egypt than has generally been assumed? Did the realities of the monarchical period continue to flow under the surface of the new regime far beyond what its spokespeople allowed us to believe? And if so, should the effectiveness of the revolution as an agent of change be redefined? Did major changes always materialize through deliberate government policies or were they, sometimes, the unintended and unforeseen consequences of government actions? Moreover, is it possible to identify processes of change that followed their own inner rhythms or evolved as the result of external influences and were hardly related to the chronologies of the political regimes? Finally, did these changes have any effect on Egypt's basic "structures" or have those manifested their renowned *longue durée* viability?

These are the questions dealt with by the authors of the chapters in this book; they focus on various aspects of the problem, chosen in keeping with the particular interest of each contributor. Accordingly, this collective endeavor does not try to cover systematically the whole range of relevant topics. Nor does it consist of uniform approaches to the problem: Some authors present the findings and conclusions of original research, others have chosen a more reflective style. Needless to say, views and evaluations varied considerably from one author to another, and the questions presented above are answered in many different ways.

Quite a few contributors chose a comparative approach, examining an institution or a policy in a three-phase framework: Fu'ad-Faruq, Nasser, and Sadat-Mubarak. Their paradigm, therefore, suggests a division of the twentieth century into three periods rather than two: monarchy, revolution, and postrevolution. This periodization not only well accommodates the considerable differences between the regimes of Nasser and his successors but also provides a sensible

method for an evaluation of the impact of the revolution by setting it between the situations that existed before and after it played its historical role. Nevertheless, in light of the essential affinity between all three regimes of the republican period, we have not adopted this framework for the present book. In the final analysis, as general interpretations of the Egyptian system elucidate, Egypt under all three presidents retained such attributes as a statist structure, reliance on military backing, soft bureaucratic authoritarianism, particular patronage and corporatist systems, social mobility, a basically technical and organizational perception of modernity, and dependence on a great power for development.

The case for the prevalence of patterns of continuity in Egyptian history is profoundly expounded in P. J. Vatikiotis's opening chapter. Examining Egypt's historical experience, he contrasts the Egyptian conception of the state as it evolved in ancient Egypt with the political culture of the Greeks, which influenced Western Europe. The Egyptians conceived of the state as a static form of political organization and life, based on a cosmological principle; the ruler was identified with deity, his bureaucracy interposing between him and the people, and no questions of political organization could arise. Analyzing developments of the Islamic period (on the basis of secular historical experiences rather than doctrine), Vatikiotis finds that in spite of the authority enjoyed by the *'ulama*, the major principle was the clear distinction between the non-Egyptian rulers and the powerless subjects and between the statically conceived state and society. In the nineteenth century, the power of the state expanded and innovative changes were induced by a ruling, essentially foreign, minority that controlled the two institutions of the power base of any ruler in Egypt: the bureaucracy and the army (now partly Egyptianized). There was no concern in this system over the political arrangements of the organization of authority.

After the short-lived liberal experiment of the monarchical period, the regime established by the Free Officers refrained from creating new institutions of a real political and independent nature and instead constructed its power on the military and bureaucracy. The flirtation of the previous regime with popular participation was abandoned, and the question of legitimacy was systematically evaded. The officers' regime did constitute a new experience in terms of the truly Egyptian identity of its rulers, but structurally it was an extended and reconstituted version of older ones. In his conclusions Vatikiotis argues that Nasser and his successors remained steeped in the autocratic tradition of rule in the Nile Valley and wonders whether the regime they established should not be depicted as one of "non-hereditary monarchies."

Gabriel Ben-Dor poses the question of whether the post-1952 events in Egypt can truly be called a revolution. Relying on a number of general theories of revolution, he reaches the conclusion that a real revolution did indeed take place in Egypt, albeit an incomplete one. It destroyed the old regime, shattering its economic foundations and social network, in a manner congruent with the model of "Western revolutions of the second order." The concept of class did not play a sig-

nificant role in the Egyptian revolution. Furthermore, the latter did not have an overwhelming effect on the state, which preserved its remarkable centrality and continuity. Ben-Dor sees no contradiction in this phenomenon, for "where there is no state there is no revolution," but he points out that this strong stateness absorbed the impact of the revolution, making its policies rather ambiguous. The new elite was not tied to identifiable social forces but to the state.

Michael Winter examines another aspect of the Egyptian state: its constant confrontation with Islam. Studying this relationship under the monarchy and under each of the three presidents of the republic, he reaches the conclusion that in spite of the differences in circumstances and goals, all sought to maintain the supremacy of the national state and resisted the pressure to apply the *shari'a* as the law of the state. Islamic laws and institutions were integrated into the state but were carefully kept under control. All the ruling elites avoided an explicit secular posture and paid lip service to Islamic tenets and institutions. On the whole, Islam held its own, and under Sadat and Mubarak, with the intensifications of domestic pressures and democratization of the polity, it even made certain gains.

Two authors evaluate the socioeconomic accomplishments of the revolution. John Waterbury compares Egypt with states that did not undergo a socialist revolution and finds that by such revealing indicators as industrialization, literacy, and female employment, Egypt did not fare better. But the revolution was responsible for a number of important structural changes: in addition to the concentration of political power, it restructured rural wealth, decreased income inequality, expanded the public sector, and transformed its foreign trade system. However, Waterbury doubts if these changes were necessarily revolutionary, inevitable, or irreversible. Gad Gilbar examines the same problem using three other indicators seen as crucial for the welfare of Egyptians: population control, domestic savings, and economic growth. He finds that in all three areas the revolution failed to check the decline in spite of the efforts it had invested. Gilbar explains this failure by the lack of programmatical guidance and social basis, which accounts for its halfhearted performance as a "soft revolution."

Using a similar concept of "soft state," James Mayfield examines the situation in rural society, focusing on the experimentations in cooperatives as indicative of its progress. He shows that important reforms had already started under the monarchy, but under the revolutionary regimes those were considerably extended. However, he finds that implementation was on the whole ineffective and those who benefited most from the regime's innovations were the large farmers. Thus, the unequal land distribution and the poverty of fellahs were perpetuated in the republic, continuing the long Egyptian historical tradition of peasant exploitation. Mayfield attributes this failure to the lack of a social and civic dimension to the government's reforms.

Robert Tignor challenges the view that the officers who seized power in 1952 were imbued with revolutionary notions of dispossessing the foreign and local business communities. On the contrary, he writes, because they lacked a clear

strategy of economic development they sought collaboration with these sectors and even encouraged the foreign presence. With the emergence of statist orientation in the mid-1950s some strain appeared in these relations and sequestration started, but cooperation was still seen favorably. The turning point came only with the Suez crisis and its political consequences. There was nothing inevitable, Tignor argues, in the exodus of minorities and foreigners or the dominance of the public sector that followed. Indeed, under Sadat and Mubarak private and foreign enterprise were allowed to resume activities, albeit without the restoration of the former foreign communities.

Relations with the minorities are discussed in the chapter by Thomas Philipp, in which he examines their position in this century in terms of citizenship, personal status, education, economic life, communal organization, and political participation. The author finds that developments in these fields advanced at a steady pace of their own, not entirely influenced by the sequences of political regimes and the events of the 1952 revolution. Following the early 1920s, and as the Egyptian state gradually increased its functions and expanded its control, the status of these communities was eroded. Emigration of the minorities, apart from the Copts, started in the 1930s and was completed in the late 1960s. The position of the Copts continued to depend on the vicissitudes of relations between state and religion. With the growing Islamic pressures after the mid-1970s, their estrangement increased, leading to some emigration from this indigenous community as well.

On a different level, Rivka Yadlin studies the social norms and patterns of social interaction in Egyptian society. In light of the revolution's declared aspiration to create a "new society" and a "new man," the author raises the question of how much value transformation was, in fact, effected under the revolution in such areas as attitude to authority or status of women. She finds considerable resistance to the absorption of new norms, resulting in an intricate pattern of dualities.

Scrutinizing the literature of Egyptian *'ulama* of the past fifty years, Hava Lazarus-Yafeh observes that the issues raised and the answers given reveal a remarkable consistency and that they remain basically similar to those of medieval writings as well. Throughout this literature little attention is given to problems arising from new political circumstances, and political regimes are supported regardless of their orientation. This posture contrasts sharply with the fundamentalist position, whose evolution is described by Olivier Carré. The author traces the gradual radicalization of their doctrine, from al-Banna's relatively moderate Islamic program of the 1930s and 1940s to the all-out *jihad* against the state proclaimed by Farag and the *jama'at* in the 1970s and 1980s. This process follows in a challenge-and-response mode the changing conditions under different regimes, but, not to a lesser degree, it also follows the inner logic of its own ideological growth and intellectual genealogy.

Shimon Shamir takes up the other end of Egypt's ideological spectrum: liberalism. This term in the Egyptian context does not denote all that it does in the West,

but it does represent a dominant and highly creative trend of the monarchical period. Having been weakened by the radical pressures at the end of that period, the revolution easily reduced this trend to insignificance. Yet, with the decline of Nasserism, its remnants resurfaced. Moreover, a new generation of liberals emerged who, relative to their predecessors, represented both continuity and change and may deserve to be depicted as neoliberals. They could hardly reach the stature and centrality enjoyed at the time by the old liberals, but their importance lay in the fact that they took upon themselves the responsibility for conducting the ideological struggle against fundamentalism, thereby producing a potential conceptual basis for the policies of the pragmatist postrevolutionary regimes.

The roots of the revolution in the intellectual world of yesterday are explored in two case studies: the chapter by Israel Gershoni on the writer Tawfiq al-Hakim and Jack Crabbs's study of the popular historian al-Rafi'i. In the monarchical period, both contributed ideas and visions to the reservoir from which the Free Officers drew their inspiration. After 1952 they were drawn into the orbit of the revolution and interacted with its leadership in a kind of uneasy symbiosis that eventually led to estrangement.

Ami Ayalon examines relations between government and press in a three-phased comparative framework: monarchy, revolution, and revision. For the press these were periods of, respectively, dynamism, emasculation, and partial revival. If this revival, the author speculates in his conclusions, is allowed to regain for the press its prerevolutionary status, future historians may well come to regard the two decades after 1952 as no more than a temporary setback.

In the field of foreign policy the Free Officers have been accredited with spectacular achievements. It is broadly maintained that because of their imaginative, courageous, and patriotic policies, Egypt managed within a few years to enhance its global and regional influence to a level that the servile and incompetent politicians of the pre-1952 period could never have achieved. Eran Lerman challenges this perception. In his well-documented chapter he argues that the enhancement of Egypt's position owed as much to the revolution as it did to the emergence of a new geopolitical environment at the end of World War II, which had increased Egypt's maneuvering space. The *bashawat* of the old regime did not overlook these opportunities; nor did they lack vision and vigor to pursue national aspirations. Thus the revolution, in a way, only consummated what had been begun under the monarchy. In the same vein, Gabriel Warburg shows in his chapter on Egypt's policy toward the Sudan that the inexperienced leaders of the revolution yielded, often as a result of miscalculation and sheer ignorance, where previous governments had consistently refused.

Finally, Itamar Rabinovich analyzes Egypt's involvement in the conflict with Israel and the Palestine question over the past sixty years. He concludes that Egypt's position turned a full circle: from a low level of interest until the mid-1930s, to growing commitment and direct intervention in 1948, then to an intensification

of the conflict by the revolutionary regime (after a short period of limited interest), and finally to disengagement from the conflict through the peace concluded by Sadat. The two major determinants of Egypt's position under both monarchy and republic were the general tenor of its regional policy and the related issue of its self-image. The most important factor in this context was the ability of successive Egyptian governments to base their positions on considerations of national interest.

Thus the eighteen authors who express themselves in this book, in spite of certain differences of opinion, collectively highlight the limited value of conventional periodization of political regimes as an interpretative tool for reading Egypt's contemporary history. The common proposition that emerges from their studies is to pay greater attention to cultural undercurrents, to study further structural continuities, and to bear in mind that in the world of real politics things are never what they seem to be, at least initially. As noted, they do not ignore the enduring accomplishments of the revolution, but they do reflect the erosion of their importance as the historical perspective deepens. The authors pause here and refrain from raising the question that Egyptians have been repeatedly asking themselves over the past two decades: Does this mixed record justify the price—the harsh measures of mobilization and regimentation, the engagement in violent conflicts? Clearly, it will continue tormenting self-aware Egyptians for many years to come. It is also clear that the question is futile: "History," wrote Tolstoy, "is like a deaf man who goes on answering those questions that nobody asks."

I wish to thank the authors of this book for their contributions and for the patience and understanding in which they accepted the delay in publishing their chapters—caused by the leave I took from my academic work to assume the duties of ambassador to Egypt.

I am particularly grateful to the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, which collaborated with my Chair in organizing the original Tel Aviv University conference that inspired this book and in preparing the chapters of this volume for publication. The project enjoyed the effective cooperation of many members of the center, of whom I wish to mention particularly four: its director at the time and now Israel's ambassador to Washington, Professor Itamar Rabinovich; the center's Assistant for Research, Ms. Amira Margalith; the center's Assistant for Finance and Publications, Ms. Edna Liftman; and Ms. Lydia Gareh, whose skills and devotion made the preparation of this manuscript for publication possible.

Shimon Shamir


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A Note on the Transliteration

For transliterating terms and names from the Arabic we have used the conventional method (employed, for example, by the *International Journal for Middle Eastern Studies*) but have omitted the diacritical points under consonants and the marks for long vowels. For certain names we have followed their pronunciation, rendering them with an *e* instead of an *i* ('Abd al-Qader) or with an *o* instead of a *u* ('Othman).


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PART ONE

State and Revolution

DOI: 10.4324/9780429040962-1


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1

Egypt's Political Experience: The 1952 Revolution as an Expression of the Historical Heritage

P. J. Vatikiotis

To survey and analyze the Egyptian political experience it is necessary to raise several questions. These range from Egyptians' conception of the state and their perception of the political to such topics as the interaction of political forces in the country, how the latter induce change or sustain inertia, and the role of major power centers such as the bureaucracy and the military system in formulating and implementing societal goals to promote national cohesiveness.

The social and political reality experienced by a nation cannot be studied or depicted only by consideration of the political ideas and institutions prevailing in it, for this reality comprises a totality of experience far greater in breadth. It encompasses the continuity of a tradition with all its symbols, religions, and other customs and conventions (its culture) as well as a people's consciousness of belonging to that experience because they partake of it. For instance, regardless of how the ruler of a nation attains power, be it by selection, election, or force, a people or a nation must feel somehow that the ruler represents them or at least is committed to protecting them and providing them with the minimum conditions of life.

It is difficult to address these matters adequately; indeed, such a task is colossal. However, this chapter will consider them to a greater or lesser extent, some systematically and in greater detail than others.

The Ancient Egyptian and Greek Conceptions of the State

My approach to the first question, the conception of the state, may be somewhat unorthodox, but it is not original—it is not the first time it has been used.[1] This approach looks back at ancient Egypt to contrast an Egyptian "political culture"

DOI: 10.4324/9780429040962-2

that evolved from these antecedents with the rather original "political culture" that was devised by the Greeks (who themselves were influenced at different times by Egypt) and which influenced Western Europe. The contrast is not only interesting but also instructive and useful.

Egyptians did not share the Greek—and ultimately Western—conception of the state as a community of men living in a defined territory and governing itself by its own customs, conventions, and laws. Their ancient conception was much simpler: There was a king who was identified with the law and the state. In this position, he alone provided the central authority, order, security, power, and discipline necessary for the performance of public acts. What was more significant is that the king of Egypt, the Pharaoh, was God. He was not the delegate or representative of God, but God himself.

Most historians of Egypt are fond of asserting that Egypt has always been a homogeneous nation. This was so, on the surface at least, from the time that Menes united the Two Kingdoms in 3400 B.C. down to the Persian invasion. Such unity, however, was hardly one of conscious choice on the part of the Egyptians—as it was, let us say, for Athenians by the fifth century B.C. or the Hellenes in general, and in brief, in that century. It was imposed by nature—the Nile and the desert—and by authority from above. Public consent was not essential. Rather, necessity and compulsion were concomitants of the country's geography and sacrosanct rule of a God-King. Under these circumstances, "citizens" were not allowed to question the form and nature of the state. In practice, they could not, as the Greeks could, organize factions to discuss, argue, contest, and oppose, let alone hope to share in, government.

As God, the Pharaoh theoretically owned everything in Egypt; any ideas of individual rights were precluded. Because he was divine, his will was above any law and was the source of justice. All functions and obligations were religious, not civil. In short, the divinity of the ruler was the foundation of the state for a period of three to four thousand years. It remained practically intact and unchallenged for close to another thousand years, until the Muslim Arab conquest in 631 A.D. throughout the Persian, Greek, Ptolemaic-Roman, and Byzantine periods of hegemony in the country.

Except in Greece, political organization never became a serious issue of private and public discussion or interest. Rather, the formula for it remained simple and straightforward for millennia. Once the ruler had been identified with deity, the divine nature of the holder of power was recognized. Obeying him, or any so-called laws emanating from his will, was not a political act but an expression of religious faith. And so, for a very long time, Egypt as a society, as a polity, was held together by a common religion that demanded obedience to a divine royal will and power. This society and political community made one distinction among its members: that between believers and nonbelievers, not between citizens and noncitizens.

In a simple, perhaps sweeping, formulation, it can therefore be said that whereas the Greeks devised and developed a creative, dynamic conception of the state and the polity based on the "anthropological principle," the Egyptians conceived of the state as a static form of political organization and life based on the "cosmological principle." Yet this very formulation begs a fundamental question. How static was this conception? Did it preclude all change? Were there any attempts to change the political order of things?

Even the divine Pharaoh did not rule or govern absolutely alone: An aristocracy of priests and courtiers assisted him in that task. To this extent, they also limited his power and shared in the possession of land and property. After all, the structure of the Egyptian state had been mainly determined by the Nile. This is no mere capricious aphorism of Herodotus. The Nile not only irrigated Egypt's land but also united its inhabitants and forced them to remain united in order to survive. It was the common and sole source of their wealth, well-being, and survival. With Egypt united as a society, the Nile could continue to offer these requisites of life. Division and dissension could lead to their destruction.

But the exploitation, use, and management of this life-giving natural resource required a force of competent servants beyond the Pharaoh's court of priests. This was provided by a bureaucracy that emerged as a large body of men interposed between God-Pharaoh and the people, whose acquired power and privileges resulted from their position as intermediaries. They also evolved their own hierarchy. Yet the source of their power, authority, and financial reward remained the divine ruler, and the theological doctrine of power, or the ruler's divinity, was never in question. Unlike the case of Athens in the fifth or sixth century, it was never clearly overthrown. Political questions remained the concern of theology.

Unlike the aristocrats, priests, bureaucrats, and rural peasants of Egypt, the Greek aristocracy of *basileis, árchontes,* and warriors, the *demoi* of farmers, the guilds of merchants, craftsmen, and artisans—even sailors—of the period from 700 to 500 B.C. managed to become genuine contending and competing political forces in a changing Hellenic world. They constituted vital economic groups, interests, or economic forces in society, influencing social and cultural life. They objected to a political system controlled exclusively by an aristocracy whose legitimacy rested upon a combination of blood (tribe and race) and the claim of a certain relationship to the gods. They demanded and extracted from their leaders creative political acts, that is, rational-secular legislation, as a recognition of the socioeconomic changes that had transformed their lives from a Greek antiquity to the emerging "modernity" of sixth- and fifth-century Greece and as an implement for arbitrating their disputes publicly and fairly. Lycurgus of Sparta, Periander of Corinth, and Draco, Solon, and Cleisthenes of Athens were not mere legislators. More significant, as political men they recognized the importance of institutionalizing change that had already occurred. And this was important if the conglomeration of Greek tribal units that had settled in villages were to be transformed from disparate communities to a political community, to a polity in a

city-state. Legislation was a creative act to the extent that it succeeded as a politically integrative device. Above all, it was a recognition that the law of God, or the laws of the gods, was no longer the basis of sovereignty; nor was the ruler himself a god.

The state as a community of citizens with a constitution to regulate relationships between individuals and groups on the basis of equality before the law whose end was justice and order triumphed over the political, though not conventional, particularism of the family and the tribe. The problem of breaking down the barriers of racial privilege and prejudice was overcome by the concept of a state based on law that defined and regulated the life of citizens in a polity. At the same time, this fundamental, epochal, social, and political transformation through legislation and other reforms gave a stake in the affairs of the state to one and all. A new concept of political leadership, based on the condition of the polity, replaced the older Greek notion of a racial, tribal kingship.

It is this kind of political experience that emphasizes the human measure that Egypt missed in its past. This is not to say that it has not known more than one ancient kind of experience—that of a state ruled by a god. But even the different, later political experience did not present the issues of authority and power as matters of public, citizen concern, as the Graeco-Western one did. Rather, this was the experience of a state where foreign "aristocracies" and castes of warriors settled among the Egyptians and governed them by right of conquest. So it was with the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Mamluks, Ottoman Turks, their satraps and successors, the French, and, in a way, the British.

These two fundamental political experiences—one ancient, covering several millennia, the other spanning almost 1,800 years of our era—superimposed a condition where political matters like the problems of rule, authority, and power remained the concern of a very small elite. The state (*al-dawla, al-hukm, al-wali,*) developed as an alien, remote institution, generally to be obeyed but preferably avoided. Identifying oneself with it was hardly a priority or value. Survival under its impact was always a more important consideration; in fact, it was a primary individual goal. That is, one survives the state by transcending and avoiding it; one does not change it. One minimizes its adverse effects and ensures that it has the minimum influence over one's personal and primordial community life. And because one has been Egyptian since time immemorial because one has lived in the Nile Valley, one dispenses with the identity-building and integrating functions and aspects of the state.

Here another sweeping formulation about the conception of the state in this attempted contrast between Egypt and classical Greece is in order. The Greeks, in their political evolution, were able to transcend deities. Their concept of legitimacy, which in the tenth and ninth centuries B.C. was derived from gods, by the sixth century was derived from man-made law. This new concept of legitimacy recognized political factions (often representing the interests of groups and classes) and therefore political competition and conflict in society. But it also in-

troduced a distinction central to all political thought ever since, that between legitimate and illegitimate power. The former existed when it was held according to prescribed law that was linked to morality, which, in turn, was based in part on religious custom or even a transcendent referent. The latter existed when power was derived from force. Legitimate power promoted justice as a public affair and thus institutionalized socioeconomic change and resolved group or class conflicts by legislation and arbitration; illegitimate power promoted injustice and oppression. The former safeguarded freedom under law; the latter sustained tyranny. And a tyrant was, by definition, a usurper: one who held power without legitimacy. All of this was a clear break with prevailing known notions of state and government as theocratic, and therefore despotic, institutions. Justice became a matter for the community and a reflection, a measure, of its political morality.

Beware, you barons, of such spirits,
Straighten your decisions, you eaters of bribes.
Banish from your minds the twisting of justice.

Tyrtaeus

Justice became the responsibility of man, not the gods.

If you suffer because of your own fault, do not blame the gods for it.

Solon

It also required the wider involvement of the people.

In short, there was in classical Greece a socioeconomic and a soon-to-become intellectual revolution (some would argue, rationalization) in political values in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. that rejected and eliminated older political attitudes. Even though only partially successful, the Greeks substituted a new "aristocracy of political excellence" based on the new myth of the rationality of man for the old racial-tribal, even deities-related one. The content of the revolution itself is significant. It included the idea of equality within the limits of the *polis,* the limitation of the powers of any ruling group, and a new vision of a human society that, though comprising elements or interest groups often in conflict with one another, was nonetheless capable of great achievement by virtue of reason. In an ultimate sense, the revolution really was about man, who, by virtue of reason, approached the divine. Thus an *arché* was introduced as the beginning in a sense of a new political principle placing state authority on a secular basis. Or, as Aeschylus dramatized the distinction between Greek and Asian in his *Persae,* the revolution pitted the justice of reason against the tyranny of Zeus. Or, as Sophocles expressed it in *Oedipus Rex,* the hubris of reason began when the Greeks rebelled against the oracles.

It was thus arrogant, though perhaps inevitable, that once in close contact with Asia, especially during and after the Persian wars, the Greeks distinguished between the Greek, as a free man, and the Barbarian, a man who was a slave because he was governed by divine, despotic rulers. They distinguished between the Greek citizen, who publicly participated in the conduct of the affairs of his state, and the Asian subject, who worshipped (*proskynesis*) a divine ruler of a theocratic state.

These two opposite conceptions of man's relation to the state are still important and relevant today. They are also relevant to the study of Egypt. One must ask, did the Egyptians then, and do they now, show a fierce attachment to their state?[2] And do they consider the state a crucial institution for the realization of what they consider the good life? Is there an Egyptian view of the good life, politically speaking?

It is only fair to point out that this contrived comparison between Athens and Egypt is based on an Athenian experience of very short duration: at most a century, but actually forty to fifty years, at best. Second, Athens was only a city-state, covering a very limited spatial area and made up of a small population. Egypt, in contrast, was a vaster realm even before the unification of the Delta and Upper Egypt. Third, Egypt was an agrarian society with an overwhelmingly agricultural economy, and most of its inhabitants were tied to the land. Athens carved out an empire based on its maritime, trading, and commercial power.

Before considering these very broad questions, one may at this point query this lengthy discussion of ancient origins and patterns of the Egyptian conception of the state as contrasted with that of the Greeks. What bearing could any of this possibly have had upon the conceptions held by contemporary Egyptians? Yet the political experience of millennia cannot be simply ignored. Nor is their cumulative effect easily overcome. But one may argue that Western European premodern political experience, of which many are ashamed, was not eroded in an original, conclusive manner until the late eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, with the extreme rationalization of history and politics into ideology. The question, therefore, is: Have the Egyptians, in recent times, experienced a parallel erosion of their traditional conception (i.e., mixed ancient Pharaonic-Muslim-Mamluk-Ottoman) of the state?

The Experience of the Islamic Period

In my book *The Modern History of Egypt from Muhammad 'Ali to Sadat*,[3] I suggest that in assessing the evolution of modern Egypt one must consider three major influences: the Arab Islamic conquest in the seventh century; the non-Arab conquests, namely, Kurdish, Turkish, and Ottoman from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries; and the European encroachments, beginning with the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt in 1798. All these influences contributed to the strengthening of the second kind of political experience I discussed earlier, in which the native Egyptians came to be governed essentially by foreign rulers. The newly intro-

duced Islamic basis of caliphal legitimacy aside, these foreign rulers governed Egypt by right of conquest.

Whatever local political forces, that is, loci of influence and power and economic structures, there may have been in the country were eventually made dependent upon a progressively centralized administration. This was particularly true after the beginning of the nineteenth century, although centralized administration had a long tradition in the country, dating back to the middle of the fourth millennium B.C.

Arab Muslim rule was relatively brief, spanning barely two hundred years. By A.D. 860, Turks and other non-Arabs assumed the governor's office. Thus, by the time a large number of Egyptians had embraced Islam, their rulers were once again not simply aliens but leaders of castes of warriors, usurpers, satraps, and members of slave dynasties.

There was, however, a difference in social and political experience between the Arab Islamic and Mamluk Ottoman experience and what preceded them. Under Muslim rule, whatever the ruler's ethnic origin or political disposition, several important areas of life were hardly regulated or affected. Thus, several units and levels of social-religious life in towns and villages were permitted to develop independently of the ruler's interests and preoccupations. These became relatively self-sufficient, self-contained, and independent and sometimes possessed a measure of bargaining power with the ruler. Thus, under both Mamluk and Ottoman Muslim rule, religious teachers, *'ulama,* and jurisconsults—the whole hierarchy of the so-called religious institution—were respected by the ruler. Even when they wielded no power, the authority emanating from their interpretation and implementation of the religious law, the *shari'a,* gave them a marked status not only with the people but also with the ruler, even though they were never able to influence his rule seriously. The lower religious functionaries, namely, the leaders of prayer and religious teachers in the countryside, led the masses of the faithful in a traditional social order that provided a feeling of communal solidarity and unity as well as comfort and consolation in adversity. In short, a traditional society lived on the basis of its religious teaching, conventions, and customs, separate and remote from the state.

Moreover, Muslim rulers were primarily interested in revenue, order, and the defense of the realm. As long as the people provided most of the revenue, they were not particularly concerned how this was done or how the people deported themselves otherwise. Defense, however, was strictly the responsibility of the ruler's military establishment, which until the nineteenth century was rarely Egyptian. As for order, it was provided by and large by the various traditional and community structures, such as religious brotherhoods, mosques, and their schools, occupational guilds, and town quarter and village organizations.

Throughout this period of nearly a millennium, the major political experience of Egyptians was one of clear distinction between rulers and subjects, between those who had power (usually non-Egyptians) and those who did not (the native

Egyptians). Unlike its earlier version, however, this experience was now tempered by a more structured, though informal, institutional, social, and communal life that was predicated upon Islam and its way of life.[4]

Once the Egyptians had embraced Islam they were not as alienated from the ruling authority, despite the latter's non-Egyptianness, even if they continued to be remote from power. The theoretical Islamic basis of legitimacy was not in question as long as the Muslim ruler, whoever he was, refrained from tampering with the existing traditional structures and units of society.

> Militarized ruling oligarchies, provincial governors, and landowning feudatories constituted the ruling establishment in Egypt for thirteen centuries. While Islam and Arabic took root in Egyptian society, at no time did the foreign rulers of Egypt, largely Turks, superimpose their language or customs upon Egyptian society. Secure in their city courts, citadels and garrisons, their contact with the native population was at a minimum. The latter, on the other hand, maintained a highly ordered and independent existence in their villages, crafts and merchant guilds, religious orders and institutions. The former were mainly soldiers and officials; and the latter were merchants, craftsmen, artisans and farmers. Contacts between the two groups were formal and minimal so long as revenue was forthcoming to the Central State Treasury.[5]

A new economic factor affecting the political evolution of Egypt that was introduced under Muslim rulers was the relationship of landed wealth to influence and local power. In an intensely agricultural country such as Egypt, where the rural-urban dichotomy has been and remains sharp, this was a crucial development. Interested as they were in extracting maximum revenue, the rulers in the city soon began to grant land fiefs to their lieutenants. This practice gave rise to new political forces and a kind of feudalism: that of fief-holding soldiers and administrators, tax-farmers, local rural or village leaders (*'umda*s and *mashayikh*).[6] Then the institution of pious endowments and charitable trusts (*waqf*) under Islam added economic power to the social influence and status of religious teachers and leaders.

Until the clear establishment of private, individual property rights over the land in the mid-nineteenth century, the rural population of peasant farmers were allocated lands by the local chief, often according to the interests of the ruler or his appointed tax-farmer. Villages held or used the land in common and were collectively responsible for the payment of taxes, the maintenance of irrigation facilities, and the provision of labor for public works, mainly related to agriculture. To this extent they may have possessed (this is largely an assumption) some corporate identity and shared certain community interests. Equally, guilds in towns, under their *naqib*s and *mashayikh*, were responsible for taxes, the maintenance of order among their members, and the adjudication of their disputes. As long as the only directly felt function of central government was that of tax collection and the recruitment of labor for public works, its impact on the population remained

limited. The people, in turn, remained distant from it. Instead, they dealt with intermediate and lower levels of authority, usually local, native ones. That is, there was no political integration at a national level.[7]

Traditional Muslim despots ruled over Egypt, uninterested in the so-called welfare of their subjects (a modern notion, anyway). They governed a statically conceived state and presided over a fixed order. Their functions reached only few areas of life and affected few aspects of the organization of native society. Since most of them became legally, though not legitimately, rulers of Egypt by force or usurpation, extracting the official consent and recognition of a caliph (if one were about) or a sultan in Istanbul by extralegal means, the added condition of authority based on force became a sustained Egyptian political experience during these 750 years.

One can assume, if not assert, that until the nineteenth century, Egyptians identified with Islam on the wider, universal level and with their locality and existential socioeconomic experience on the personal, community, or social levels. The family was the basic unit of identity and social intercourse, supplemented by the village in the countryside, the quarter in the city, the religious brotherhood (order), and the guild. No feelings of unity or sense of solidarity existed between the Egyptians and the government of the state. There was an understanding, of course, that officially, on the surface, the ruler was the appointed deputy or representative in Cairo of the sultan-caliph in Istanbul.

Yet, until 1800 the Muslim era was not a period of political and administrative centralism. Rather, in this respect it represented a break with the past. Centralism, with its expanded administrative control over the economic (agriculture, commerce, manufacturing) life of the population, and eventually over the religious, educational, and other areas of life, was introduced not so much by the French conquerors but by Muslim rulers who borrowed European techniques and ideas. After all, the French ruled Egypt for only about three years.

This Muslim epoch also indicates the continued separation between rulers and subjects, between state and society, which fostered a new kind of heterogeneity in Egypt. Whereas the geographic, economic, and political aspects of the country demanded a certain necessary homogeneity, and whereas the newly acquired faith of Islam decreed by God's revealed message of brotherhood to the faithful, on the one hand, existing conditions produced a political division, a heterogeneity, and superimposed a separating element on what many have assumed to be a natural homogeneity, on the other.

All this has been discussed in such detail simply to suggest that trying to explain certain features of, or underlying factors in, Egypt's political system solely by abstract intellectual and ideological extrapolation from Islam is mistaken. Behavior and behavioral constraints arose from these major political experiences. For example, the political submissiveness, passivity, or fatalism often associated with Egyptians can be academically (and some would say, therefore, unrealistically) documented on the basis of Islamic doctrine (encompassing both the

Qur'an and tradition). So can any and all positions. It can be equally refuted on the basis of that doctrine. For this reason I prefer to attribute these apparent behavior patterns and norms of conduct to the secular historical experiences of the Egyptians.

The Nineteenth-Century Innovative Centralism

But if major change did occur with the introduction of modernizing, innovating centralism along Egyptian lines under Muhammad 'Ali, to what extent did the dislocation and dissolution of traditional structures and social units generate conflict? The question is in itself most interesting and important, but to deal with it adequately would require another lengthy essay. Instead, we shall deal with an equally important question more relevant to our present concern: Has innovating centralism provided a substitute basis and impetus for unity and solidarity in the Egyptian system, let alone a stronger integration than that provided by the traditional structures that were replaced? To put the question differently, did the innovating, enlightened despots under the influence of European ideas of administration and technology provide the basis for a more integrated political community? Did they bridge the gap between rulers and subjects? Did they appreciably or fundamentally change the Egyptian conception of the state?

Undoubtedly, there was discontent in Egypt toward the end of the eighteenth century. Several native and European sources permit this view. The economic groups of merchants, craftsmen, and artisans that flourished until the fifteenth century were relentlessly undermined by the wars of their Mamluk and Turkish rulers, a succession of plagues and pestilences, and the loss of transit trade via the Mediterranean and Arabian seas as a result of the expansion of European maritime transport and trade over the oceans. Neither a landed gentry (aristocracy) nor a mercantile, trading, and manufacturing bourgeoisie had a chance of emerging until this century, and then only under economic, technological, and political conditions imposed from the outside. Because of the deficiencies in the economic and social structure already referred to, discontent did not promote political thought (unlike what occurred in the West). This was partly because foreign forces, the French, invaded the country, but mainly because the period from 1800 to 1880 was characterized by revolution through state or governmental action. It was the state that impelled the transition, superficial as it may have been, from Islamic community and society, from a very old nation—perhaps the oldest in recorded history—and state to the nation-state. It was the state that imposed the change from a traditional subsistence to a market-oriented, intensive cash-crop agricultural economy. It was the state that imposed a foreign-inspired secular educational system as a superstructure over a popular traditional-religious one. This new system eventually came to supersede the old, but it never quite rendered it totally irrelevant, let alone eradicated it. Equally, it was the state that first undermined the very principles regulating personal, social, economic, civil, and

other relationships by introducing non-Muslim precepts of legislation and adjudication.

What were the main features of this nineteenth-century state revolution, and how useful or instructive is its consideration for our assessment of the continuity of the Egyptian political experience?

The social hierarchy, or stratification, at the beginning of the nineteenth century was straightforward. Basically, its horizontal division was between an essentially foreign, privileged ruling minority or elite of Turks and Mamluks and native elements, classes, or groups. The former constituted the pasha's court and corps of high officials who assisted him in governing the country. They also led his army. In other words, they dominated the two essential institutions of the power base of any ruler in Egypt. Economic activity was virtually monopolized by the ruler himself, reducing everyone else to being a wage earner in the employ of the state.

The native society was further stratified vertically. At its apex were the *'ulama,* many of whom also became landowners. Next came the landowners, both in the countryside and the city. Then came the merchants, who by 1860 comprised not only natives but also foreigners resident in the country under the advantageous extraterritorial privileges afforded by the Capitulations. In the city were the artisans and craftsmen who had been organized in guilds for quite some time. By 1880, however, guilds declined, and many of them found themselves alongside the labor force that grew out of the state and foreign-controlled enterprises. Finally, there was the vast mass of Egyptians comprising the peasants, farmers, and—with perennial intensive irrigation and public works—the wage-earning, often seasonal, agricultural laborers.

In deliberately setting about to found an autonomous modern state in Egypt, Muhammad 'Ali and his successors established an elaborate power base. Its major features were centralized control of the economy and the preemption of political power by the ruler and his chosen elite. In practical terms, this meant the neutralization of all other existing loci of local power in the country—hence, the bureaucratization of the *'ulama* by the gradual erosion of their educational preeminence. The economic independence that derived from their unfettered control over religious endowments (*waqf*) was also whittled down. Ultimately, the *'ulama* became almost totally dependent on the state; they were rendered salaried functionaries or state officials.

The native "middle classes" of craftsmen, artisans, and merchants soon disintegrated and were absorbed into the rising, essentially monopolistic, state economy. Whatever autonomous regulatory functions they may have had were ultimately lost to the state—the power beneficiary of modernization. The autonomy of social and political units in the countryside was undermined by the expanding functions and control exercised by the modern centralized state. Even though informal influence and real power continued to be enjoyed by rural forces (i.e., the

'umdas and the village *shaykhs*), a great deal of that was derived from their relationship with the central government.

The military policy of the nineteenth-century despots was innovative in that it superimposed a foreign caste of soldier-courtiers in the country. Its members also became large landowners and, in several cases, administrators. Inasmuch as modern innovation relied heavily upon European ideas, methods, and techniques, an even more alien (in the religious sense) elite was introduced into the country. It comprised the various European technical advisers and servants of the ruler. Together with the Turkish military elite they constituted an indispensable element in the ruler's power base. Both were relatively new groups or political forces. At first they interacted with the ruler, to the exclusion of most indigenous groups. The Turkish element on the whole was not interested in change and was eventually replaced by natives possessing a modern European education and new technical skills. The Europeans were the implementers of change and were responsible only to the ruler, not to the Egyptian nation. There was no question of their integration into the Egyptian nation: They were mercenaries of the state.

The older political forces that were destroyed by innovation were not really crucial or determinant power groups. *'Ulama* and guild members or leaders were perhaps influential, and although they possessed a measure of autonomy in regulating the affairs of their institutions, they were hardly holders of power. Nor could they really influence power. The real power group that was destroyed was the Mamluk warrior caste of rulers.

The needs of a modern, agricultural, industrial, and commercial state economy called for the recruitment and introduction of native Egyptians into the state administration. This began first in the bureaucracy, to satisfy the expanding needs of a modern administration. Soon it was also introduced into the military establishment. With two foreign elites already entrenched in the country by the will of the ruler, it was inevitable that as the numbers and influence of the newly recruited, modern, administrative cadre of trained Egyptians grew, they would seek to displace the foreigners. It was equally inevitable that, after sustained exposure (80 to 100 years) to the influence of European political ideas and institutions, they should seek to curtail the absolute power of the ruler in order to share in it and preferably to exercise it themselves.

By 1880, European-influenced Egyptians had achieved numerical preponderance in the two major institutions of the power base, namely, the army and the state administration. In the meantime they had also acquired landed wealth, or the economic base from which to enjoy relatively autonomous, extragovernmental political activity. Among the consequences of nineteenth-century state economic policies, agricultural development—and prosperity—was a restratification of Egyptian rural and urban society.

Agricultural development encouraged natives, particularly those in the new administrative class or hierarchy, to acquire land as the best form of wealth. By 1860, private commercial enterprise, as distinct from that of the state, was passing into

the hands of foreigners settled in Egypt. Thus, the major consequence of state modernization for Egyptians was the creation of a modern class of state officials, many of whom also became rich landowners. Expanding governmental functions and services reduced the local rural potentates to representatives of central government. But though these too sought landed wealth, they usually moved to the city and thus lost their earlier close relationship with the rural population. They remained "notables" but in a new context: that of increased wealth and a closer association with the state administration.

In short, increased state power restricted and overtook most native local social and political forces. Leaders of the latter who became assimilated into the new state structure as provincial and district officials were further separated and alienated from the masses. In effect, the state, with its vastly expanded functions and powers of control, became ever more distant from its subjects. Although the traditional local social and political leaders lost much of their power and authority under Muhammad 'Ali's dynasty and the British after 1882, they nevertheless acquired wealth. Those who did not move to the city also assumed the roles of intermediaries for the central government—a role they continued to play under the short-lived experiment in constitutional, parliamentary government in the twentieth century. In addition to implementing central government regulations, they also delivered the vote when national elections became a feature of the political system.

In the effort to reinforce their own autocracy, nineteenth-century Egyptian rulers encouraged the development of a new administrative class of Egyptians that became one of the bases of their power (in the sense of implementing policy and ensuring control) and that grew continuously, especially under the British. It did not have a creative role in devising and legislating change. That was the responsibility of the ruler, who usually was not limited by strict legislation or circumscribed by constitutional considerations. The administrative "monster" only ensured its widest national implementation—or its obstruction. At the same time, this new class came to view the modern state as the source of its well-being and prosperity, not unlike other social and political groups before it. Adolphus Slade was neither imprecise nor nasty when in the 1860s he described the new administrators in reformist Turkey as the new elite whose "estate was the State."[8]

It was also not surprising that this rising administrative elite of Egypt should some day seek to curb the power of the innovating despots and share in it. Thus, the 'Orabi episode was an instance of Egyptian officers, allied with a newly enriched Egyptian notability from town and country (including administrators), trying to oust the Turkish foreign minority from military leadership and to oust foreigners in general from the administration.

Throughout these developments of the nineteenth century, however, the amassing of great power by the state resulted in greater control over all Egyptians and provided experience with modern institutions and methods of administration, legislation, and adjudication. One of its consequences—greater and rapid

urbanization—generated new and difficult problems that could not be met adequately by the central state administration. A crucial weakness remained: an almost total lack of experience in local government, or provincial home rule.

Nevertheless, between 1880 and 1882 there was a first, perhaps unsuccessful, attempt at the transfer of power from one group to another: from the Turks and foreigners to the Egyptians. Under the British occupation, most change was again induced from the top. From 1882 to 1919, the new Egyptian elite, comprising new landlords, European-educated state officials, and a few professionals, sought to share power with the foreign occupying authority under the best possible terms, a policy consonant with the protection and perpetuation of their newly acquired gainful economic occupations and interests. But they could do so again only as an administrative (and partly military) elite, not as a rising industrial and commercial entrepreneurial community. Conditions of privileged foreign competition and the emphasis of the British (as well as of rich, landowning Egyptians) on agricultural development made that difficult. Thus the greater urbanization of Egypt in the period from 1882 to 1919, as Egyptians moved to the cities and towns to work in government-run services and enterprises as well as in foreign-owned and directed commercial enterprises, was in itself rather chaotic and not conducive to any organic city or town development.

There was a fantastic mixing of social groups that had once been relatively distinct from each other. Village notables and administrators, professionals, and merchants became independent landowners who also dabbled in quick-return commercial enterprises. Alongside these there grew in the city an amorphous mass of seasonally employed and unemployed dislocated peasants, impoverished members of the lower civil service ranks, and the nucleus of an industrial labor force that today would be referred to as a lumpen proletariat. All of these were lumped together without any clear affinity between them as city dwellers, even less as city burghers.

What did remain intact was the family and the religious community or order. The lower classes, rural and urban, considered their popular religious organizations the basis of their identity and vehicles of their social intercourse. Their consciousness and experience of belonging to the Egyptian nation and the wider Islamic community of the faithful—the *umma*—derived from and was based on these basic institutions. Physical mobility was perhaps greater than it had been, yet meaningful social mobility remained confined to richer, European-trained or -educated Egyptians of the administrative and military institutions. Except for the family and religious order, no other local autonomous institutions seemed to emerge as effective forces of a new solidarity, cohesiveness, autonomous vehicle of change, or basis of community. The crucial weakness of the Egyptian's political experience—the lack of experience in local government—persisted.

Societal goals in the period from 1800 to 1880 were indistinguishable from state goals. They were formulated by state governmental action. Their articulation by emerging native leaders and elites from 1882 to 1923—and even beyond—was

confused, ambivalent, fissiparous in its sociopolitical consequences, and often ineffectual. Politically, however, before 1919 they were dominated by the primary objective of sharing power with the British. After 1919, the objective became the exercise of completely independent power. By 1923, there had indeed been a partial transfer of power from foreign elites to a new Egyptian elite, though under the same reigning dynasty and under foreign occupation, tutelage, and control. The last transfer of power, from the Mamluks to Muhammad 'Ali, had occurred a hundred years earlier. A total transfer of power exclusively to Egyptians occurred thirty years later, in 1952.[9]

There is a common strand in the political experiences described so far. It is that of forceful state innovation, government-induced change without particular concern over political arrangements—that is, over the arrangements for the organization of authority. Or, to phrase it differently, they were experiences at one level of politics: that concerning the way a state is run, the manner in which command is established, and how national and provincial arrangements are made to respond to that command. They barely related to another, perhaps more important, level of politics: that concerning the political order of a whole community. More specifically, they did not relate to the method by which authority is organized and exercised, not to speak of the choice of those who govern.

The difficulty with the short-lived liberal experiment in Egypt (1932–1952) has been analyzed and documented by several Western scholars in addition to myself: Nadav Safran, Anouar Abdel Malek, Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid, and others.[10] Had it succeeded and survived, there would have been no need for what follows. Now that more records are open to us, it seems a mistake for anyone to assume that its leaders were any less nationalistic or patriotic than those who came after 1952. Seen in proper perspective, they perceived their interests and those of their country differently and under the conditions and disabilities of their time. The societal goal, if one was articulated then, was not an unfamiliar one: greater modernity, attempted uniformity through state-induced socioeconomic change, and political independence. Political parties sought power within an imported constitutional framework or political organization, superimposed on a politically unintegrated (i.e., uncorporate) society. Reliance on a burgeoning bureaucracy (not an uncommon feature of the Egyptian system before or since that period) and on a growing army was easy and natural. So was continued dependence on a client relationship with a foreign power. When the latter was dissolved, the former became precarious and insecure and eventually collapsed.

The Post-1952 Oligarchy

I have already discussed elsewhere tentative and partial answers to the questions of what type of regime Egypt has had since July 1952, the major restraints on that type of regime, and how one defines politics in post-1952 Egypt. At this juncture there is still no pressing reason to reject all or any major part of what I said in *Po-*

litical and Social Change in Modern Egypt, in *The Modern History of Egypt from Muhammad 'Ali to Sadat,* or in *Nasser and His Generation.*[11] There is therefore no need to go over the same ground here. Maxime Rodinson, in his essay "The Political System," provided essentially a similar characterization of the regime. As a good Marxist, however, he clothed much of his analysis with that particular doctrine or brand of theology.[12] The same may be said of the impressive *Egypt, Military Society* (1968) by Anouar Abdel Malek. Perhaps what I can do profitably here is to develop certain aspects of the post-1952 period to determine whether the Egyptians were introduced to a new and different political experience.

To assert the primacy of politics in post-1952 Egypt is to state the obvious. More than at any other period in the country's long history, the structures and functions of Egyptian society have been subordinated to political considerations. With all due respect to economists, politics has been paramount. Thus, Egypt's so-called Arab Socialism, in the period from 1961 to 1971, was one that stood Marx on his head. To this extent, attempts to explain the post-1952 political regime by an independent investigation of economic conditions are still premature and unprofitable ventures. The economic impulsion then, more than ever before, came from the state, the government. Until 1974, there was hardly any alternative economic interaction outside the state structures.

There was, too, an apparent paramountcy of the mystique of revolutionary ideology that set complete political and economic independence and modernization as the highest national priorities. The latter encompassed rapid socioeconomic change through industrialization, political integration, and national uniformity. That is, the regime formulated and articulated a national commitment to radical change and development. This alone cannot tell us, however, what kind of regime it was because it does not tell us what specific, or peculiar, order had been formed by that very small sector of the community, the Free Officers, and their wider military constituency that came to power in 1952 and ruled the country at least until 1971 and beyond. They did not accede to power by the consent of any large section of the Egyptian public, prior or even concurrent. They were not chosen. They took power forcibly; the public simply acquiesced.

Yet, on the surface at least, the Free Officers seemed to express and reflect the desires and aspirations of the educated, change-oriented minority in the country—the nascent bourgeoisie, petty or otherwise. They subsumed the frustrations of the masses on the heels of a world war that was economically burdensome (especially for the lower classes) and the humiliating defeat in the Palestine War of 1948. They capitalized on the exhaustion and bankruptcy of a ruling group unable to cope with the problems of a rapidly changing postwar world. Moreover, they surfaced at a propitious time, when the patron foreign power was no longer willing to shoulder or able to afford the responsibilities and commitments of world power, which, in any case, they no longer disposed. Nor did this power, at the time, command the active sympathy of its giant wartime ally in the West, the

United States. In short, it was apparent that they represented the Egyptian nation, its consciousness, and its experience.

By 1954, having easily destroyed the superstructure of institutions (parties, Parliament, the monarchy and its court) that permitted the political forces of the ancien régime to exercise power, the military regime, contrary to popular assumption, deliberately refrained from and actually avoided creating new ones. Instead, it constructed its power base on the country's two most impressive and massive, though manageable and controllable, institutions: the army and the bureaucracy. The regime set itself on a course of depoliticizing the public altogether. The brief flirtation with "popular participation" in the political process of the period from 1923 to 1952 was abandoned. Instead of participation, however limited or inadequate, there was now "popular acclamation."

Despite the mass orientation of the regime in its early days (1952–1956), it was never serious about any schemes of *popular* political organization. Thus, the political objective of agrarian reform was not the creation of some mass agrarian populist movement in the country. Rather, the intention was to destroy the economic base of the political power of the ancien régime's elite, actually its upper crust, both in the city and in the countryside. Nor were any of its political mobilization schemes (e.g., the Liberation Rally, the National Union, and the Arab Socialist Union) aimed at eliciting and organizing massive popular participation in the formulation of policy or the making of national and local decisions. On the contrary, these schemes were expressly intended to facilitate the implementation of policies and decisions determined exclusively by the new military ruling power group or elite. That is, Nasser and his lieutenants formulated national policy unhindered by legislation (some would argue legalism) or by constitutional considerations. The decisions and formulation of a policy of radical change, the vision of what kind of society and policy is to be attained, was not really a public consideration open to the participation of and debate by the people or their representatives, organizations, and institutions: The people's political involvement in and experience of this process were limited to their approval of it and implementation of its provisions.

One can therefore assume that an oligarchy (which I have described elsewhere at some length as a *stratiotocracy*[13]) formulated societal goals. Alternatively, the *rayyis* (chief), who embodied what Raymond Aron labeled in connection with de Gaulle the "consular republic of one man" (though this is not to suggest that the cases of de Gaulle and Nasser are similar), formulated these goals. Without having resolved the legitimacy variable of political order, he claimed it for his rule by virtue of this central, initiating, innovative role. He continued to maintain it because he had been able to retain his control over the two institutions of command that constituted the essential structure of his power base: the military (with its access to the means of violence and to the ultimate sanction of force) and the bureaucracy, which transmitted his command to the public and extracted obedience from them. This bureaucracy also included the elaborate institution (or institu-

tions) of the secret and security services of the state. Since the government had the consensus of the governed at large as expressed in institutional and procedural structures or mechanisms, the ideological concurrence of the public was therefore not of essence. But the orderly involvement of the military and the bureaucracy in these policies was crucial and satisfactory to both these powerful institutions.

The military and the bureaucracy, then, in varying degrees, remained the power centers of the regime, although fundamentally these two major institutions of the state were not *political* forces except for a small group in the military (whose composition or membership changed at the will of the chief or as a result of the pressure of internal conspiracies and, occasionally, considerations of external policy). This small group, by virtue of its functions, had penetrated the expanded civil bureaucracy, the "governmental organizations" or corporations (*mu'assasat*) created to deal with nationalized enterprises, new governmental services, and the *hay'at* (authorities, e.g., the Suez Canal Authority), thereby creating a vast network of interchangeable interests. The alternative political forces, such as the remnants of the old Wafd, the Muslim Brethren, and the various small groups of the Communist party, were decimated and neutralized.

Nor were these two institutions by nature, or function, independent of change. Vastly expanded after 1952 to include new categories of technicians, managers, communicators (the purveyors of propaganda services, among whom were many "intellectuals"), they became the implementers of change. If one argues that change presumes and requires some form of political activity, these institutions were in a strict sense precluded from it. In fact, many will argue that as the edifice of the state apparatus (*al-jihaz*), they were expanded and courted with great care to preempt any activity on the part of the proscribed (and not-so-proscribed) political forces in the country. Thus the civil bureaucracy, including *mu'assasat* and *hay'at,* numbered over 1 million in 1970. Constituting as they did the power base of the regime (i.e., Nasser's own rule), they were not allowed to evolve into political institutions. There was also a military establishment of just under 200,000, which had grown to over 300,000 by 1973. Because of their expanded role and functions in the implementation of a state policy of industrialization and modernization, these two institutions tended to recruit—and absorb for good—more and more of the formally educated Egyptians. To this extent, the school and university graduates who depended on them for employment were, so to speak, their constituents.

The expanded services, functions, and power of government under a revolutionary ideology of radical change also provided the conditions of economic, and therefore social, mobility for the members of this constituency. To this extent they were in favor of strictly state-initiated, state-formulated, and state-implemented change. With a stake in the political regime as constituted, they would hardly have been in favor of independent, let alone alternative, nongovernment-sponsored *political* change. As some of their economic insecurities were alleviated by state action (i.e., mainly by their own employment in the vast state administrative and