HEEDING THE CALL:

A dissertation
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in History

By

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Washington, DC
April 15, 2011
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the means by which the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt was reconstituted during the years of Anwar al-Sadat’s presidency (1970-1981), following a lengthy period of dismantlement and suppression. By including analysis of structural, ideological, and social developments during this period in the history of the Islamic movement, a more accurate picture of the so-called “Islamic resurgence” develops, one that represents the rebirth of an old idea in a new setting.

The Muslim Brotherhood’s success in rebuilding its organization rested in large part on its ability to attract a new generation of Islamic activists that had come to transform Egypt’s colleges and universities into a hub for religious contention against the state. Led by groups such as al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah (The Islamic Society), the student movement exhibited a dynamic and vibrant culture of activism that found inspiration in a multitude of intellectual and organizational sources, of which the Muslim Brotherhood was only one. By the close of the 1970s, however, internal divisions over ideology and strategy led to the rise of factionalism within the student movement. A majority of student leaders opted to expand the scope of their activist mission by joining the Muslim Brotherhood, rejuvenating the struggling organization, and launching a new phase in its history.

Drawing upon Social Movement Theory, the methodological approach avoids the pitfalls of essentializing a religious movement, instead opting to treat it as a rational social actor that is conscious of its place in the ever-expanding marketplace of ideologies. The resulting analysis explores the Muslim Brotherhood’s da‘wa, its
mission, within the context of two parallel challenges: the organization’s attempt to secure its legitimacy in the face of rising opposition from fringe movements, and applying the lessons of its legacy of conflict with the state by treading a path that avoided confrontation. The study looks at wider questions that emerged within the Islamic movement, such as the adaptability of traditional religious thought to a contemporary social context, the development of a coherent political program, and the Muslim Brotherhood’s active competition with the regime for legitimacy in the eyes of the faithful.
To my family,
Without whose love, guidance, and support,
This work would not have been possible
Table of Contents

Introduction........................................................................................................1

Chapter One: The Islamic Movement on the Eve of Sadat...............................34

Chapter Two: The Return of Islamic Activism: The Case of Shabab al-Islam.........75

Chapter Three: Return of the Brothers.............................................................111

Chapter Four: Islam on Campus.....................................................................152

Chapter Five: The Young and the Old............................................................206

Chapter Six: Constructing the Call.................................................................246

Conclusion.......................................................................................................298

Bibliography.....................................................................................................305

Notes...............................................................................................................317
Introduction

In late 1981, the third General Guide of Gama‘at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin (the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood), an elderly lawyer named ‘Umar al-Tilmisani, languished in an Egyptian prison just outside of Cairo. On September 5, President Anwar al-Sadat ordered state security agents to conduct a massive sweep of the country, arresting hundreds of members of the political opposition in all of its ideological stripes, from Nasserists and Marxists, to the Islamic movement, represented chiefly by the Muslim Brotherhood. Feeling threatened by the rising tide of fervent political opposition, Sadat abandoned his rhetoric on democracy and openness, opting for a return to the repression that characterized the era of his predecessor, Gamal Abdel Nasser, by quashing all political dissent.

Tilmisani was intimately familiar with harsh prison life in Egypt, having spent nearly twenty years as a political prisoner in the prior regime. But in the decade since his release, he had attained the top leadership position in the Muslim Brotherhood, and helped restore it to its former status as the chief opposition movement in the country, largely through the successful recruitment of a vibrant student movement. Along with several colleagues from his inner circle, Tilmisani traveled across the nation speaking at conferences, attending summer youth camps, and meeting with students on their campuses, preaching the da‘wa, or call, of the Muslim Brotherhood to tens of thousands of young Egyptians in the process.

But from his cell in the fall of 1981, Tilmisani could do no more than pen his prison memoir, recounting his experiences under the Sadat regime, and commenting on the daily news items that trickled into the prison through smuggled newspapers. In one entry, he lamented a news story about Sadat’s meeting with the Higher Council of the Press. According to the article, on his way out of the meeting, Sadat stopped to
greet one of the council’s members, ’Ihsan ‘Abd al-Quddus, a notable newspaper editor, literary author, and liberal commentator. Sadat smiled at his old friend, shook his hand warmly, and spent a moment catching up with him. Though he tried to muster a smile in return, ‘Abd al-Quddus could not help but be reminded of the loss of his son, who at that very moment was in an undisclosed location along with the hundreds of activists arrested by Sadat.¹

Muhammad ‘Abd al-Quddus was a leader in al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah (the Islamic Society), the powerful organization that represented religious student activists in universities throughout the country. He had also recently joined the Muslim Brotherhood, and carrying on the family tradition, had taken up journalism as a career and a personal passion. But Muhammad did not report for one of the liberal, secular newspapers. He was a writer for al-Da‘wa (The Call), the Muslim Brotherhood’s monthly magazine. When security agents raided the offices of al-Da‘wa and arrested the editors and staff members, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Quddus was the youngest person apprehended.²

In commenting on this chance encounter between Egypt’s authoritarian ruler and a grieving father, Tilmisani wavered between unrestrained condemnation of Sadat’s behavior and sadness at the pain that ’Ihsan ‘Abd al-Quddus must have felt by coming face to face with the person responsible for his son’s dismal fate. Sadat “was flexing his muscles and demonstrating his power ...and reproaching [‘Abd al-Quddus] for allowing his son to go along the path of the call to God.” Or, he pondered, was it possible that Sadat was genuinely attempting to flatter his old friend? “His tenderness did not end with a smile to the father he had deprived of his son …no, not only did he smile at him, but he went out of his way to greet him. Have you ever seen humility more charming than this?” Tilmisani concluded sarcastically.³
This story serves a symbolic representation of a number of transformative developments of the Sadat era in modern Egyptian history. The anguished father unable to confront the president in defense of his son is a testament to the decline of liberalism in Egypt’s political culture, which witnessed the replacement of the traditional political forces, the “centers of power” as Sadat termed them, with a new political base made up of ideologies antagonistic toward the liberal, nationalist, and radical socialist forces of old. Tilmisani, who expressed his deep outrage at Sadat in no uncertain terms, signaled the arrival of the Muslim Brotherhood as the chief opposition movement leading the popular contention against the state. In fact, Tilmisani’s role extends to that of paternal caretaker to Muhammad ‘Abd al-Quddus, who along with thousands of young Egyptians, joined in this movement at the expense of their parents’ ideology. Finally, Sadat replicated the dualism for which his regime had become known, at once warmly greeting his friend while his policies caused ‘Abd al-Quddus and his family much harm.

As a leader who in the span of a decade pursued war and peace, populism and free enterprise, democracy and despotism, Sadat was said to have met his untimely demise at the hands of a movement he helped create. Following a turbulent history of social activism, political contention, and militant resistance, the Muslim Brotherhood experienced such a crushing blow early in the Nasser era that few in Egypt would have expected it to reappear. Yet two decades after its absence from society, the Muslim Brotherhood reemerged as a social movement organization spreading a religious and political message and expressing its opposition to the state. This study explores the underlying social developments, political conditions, and historical events that permitted the return of the Muslim Brotherhood to the fore of Egyptian society and politics. Additionally, it investigates the internal factors within the
organization’s disparate parts: its leaders, members, ideological mission and social program, to explain its stunning resilience in the face of severe repression and its ability to restore its position at the head of an increasingly diversified Islamic movement.

Beginning after Egypt’s defeat in the June War of 1967 and gathering momentum with Sadat’s assumption of the presidency following Nasser’s death in September 1970, religiously inspired social movements took on a renewed urgency in their activist missions. By the middle of the 1970s, the trajectory of Islamic activism reached its height, as a vibrant and dynamic student movement became dominated by religious youth who put forward a multifaceted program of social advocacy and anti-state contention, built on an intellectual project that incorporated a wide array of sources and influences. Finding strength in its youth and diversity, the religious student movement, led by al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, swept the Student Union elections at nearly every Egyptian university, providing its cause with more legitimacy and raising its ambitions. Meanwhile, following their gradual release from prison, the Muslim Brotherhood’s former leaders reached the determination to continue their mission by reorganizing their movement into something akin to the former organization.

By the end of the decade, the Muslim Brotherhood had been successfully reconstituted, due in large part to the ability of the senior leadership to assimilate the Islamic student movement into the ranks of a new hierarchical structure. Although the end of the Sadat era in 1981 occurred at a time of renewed political repression and the mass imprisonment of the leadership of the Islamic movement, young and old alike, the period itself would be remembered for ushering in the return of Islamic activism in the public sphere, a phenomenon many have termed, the “Islamic resurgence.”
Even Sadat’s assassination at the hands of a group of Islamic militants was not enough to subdue a movement that established a permanent presence in Egyptian society beginning in the critical decade of the 1970s.

In tackling the subject of this research, the introductory section of this study deals broadly with three major thematic areas. The first revolves around the manner in which Islamic movements are studied. This work engages and critiques the traditional method for the study of Islamic movements and attempts to adopt a methodological approach that most effectively captures the phenomenon under examination. Upon describing the trajectory of the study of Islamic movements, more recent developments in the field are discussed, including the applicability of Social Movement Theory (SMT), an approach utilized in the present study. In pondering the complex and multilayered developments within the Islamic movement in Egypt during the 1970s, SMT provides a particularly useful set of tools, and this study attempts to advance the applicability of this methodological approach.

The second general area delves into the questions surrounding the history of the Muslim Brotherhood and the means by which those questions have been examined by historians. How the organization and its accomplishments have been viewed, whether through the lens of the broader political history, or a specialized focus on its place in society, plays an important role in the widespread perception of the Muslim Brotherhood among scholars and observers alike. Identifying the prevalent historiography of the movement permits one to place this study within the voluminous literature that exists on the subject. But despite the extensive research that has been conducted on the Muslim Brotherhood, rarely has any study directly attempted to tackle the central issues raised by this work.
Finally, the third focal point addresses those issues head on. Specifically, it outlines the major findings of this study, highlighting the most significant contributions to the study of Islamic activism in Egypt, and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular, during the decade of the 1970s. It may be useful to envision these three areas as concentric circles that become gradually narrower and more precise as they address the larger methodological issues at work in the study of Islamic movements, the means by which these approaches were used in the study of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the particular contribution of this research project on the Islamic movement during the Sadat era in Egypt.

**Islamic Movements: Toward an Approach**

In attempting to explain the rise of Islamic movements in the twentieth century, traditional Orientalist studies often fell prey to an essentialist paradigm, problematizing Islamic activism due to the fact that it purportedly stood in opposition to longstanding modernization theory, which viewed the path to progress in traditional societies as one of increased secularization coinciding with economic, political, and social development. For much of the 1950s, as most Muslim-majority countries were run by conservative secular rulers or radical socialist and nationalist leaders, this view remained dominant. The fact that most early expressions of Islamic activism had largely retreated to the margins of society by the mid-1960s appeared to give more weight to this perspective.

By the mid-1980s, however, a number of events, from the revolution in Iran, to the assassination of Anwar al-Sadat, and the launch of religious resistance movements in Afghanistan, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories, analysts and scholars were at a loss to explain the recent rise of religious activism in large parts of
the Muslim world. They termed the new phenomenon the “Islamic resurgence” and set out to explain it as a temporary expression of frustration and disillusionment with nationalist projects; a product of the stagnation and underdevelopment afflicting many Muslim societies and an outgrowth of the uneasy tension between tradition and modernity. Ultimately, it was decided, there was some essential quality about Islam that prevented its societies from breaking free from the past and embracing the present. Considerable ink was spilled in attempting to uncover the aspects of Islamic history, culture, and thought that would contribute to the rise of an Islamic response to modernity. In any case, this phenomenon was still largely viewed as an aberration, a detour from the unrelenting march of modernization and progress.

But then, something strange happened. By the early 1990s, a new trend had emerged which saw Islamic movements transformed from voices of opposition on the margins to permanent fixtures of society. They became mainstream political trends, competing for elections and gaining power in legitimate fashion. They utilized modern political institutions and tactics. This could be seen in places like Algeria, Pakistan, Malaysia, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Sudan and Egypt. No longer were scholars talking about an “Islamic resurgence” but rather, “Political Islam” became the buzzword of this period, with writers attempting to temper their earlier assessments by exploring whether this unlikely union of Islam and democracy was simply a temporary marriage of convenience, or whether there could be a future in the Muslim world that embraced both modernity, with all that comes along with it, and traditional Islamic values and political principles.

By the beginning of the last decade, it appeared that many of these experiments had failed. As Islamist gains were turned back in a number of Muslim countries, scholars began to speak of an age of “post-Islamism.” Additionally,
Islamic activism had increasingly taken on a shape completely on the fringes of society, and through a hybrid with advanced technological means and an outlook that transcended the state, had begun to express itself on a global scale, and with increasing militancy. To some, it seemed that events had come full circle. With slight adjustments to the earlier thesis and a few methodological advancements, the original assessment of Islamic movements as a rejection of modernity and the established state system seemed appropriate in the wake of al-Qa‘ida’s rise to prominence.

This paradigm was problematic for a number of reasons. First, it failed to assess these movements on their own terms, and utilize the historical and political contexts to explain their origins, their aspirations, and their methods. It could not separate particular political grievances from this notion of a larger rejection of modernity. Furthermore, it did not take into account the world as seen through the eyes of those involved in these movements. Rather than looking at these phenomena as isolated aberrations, or interruptions within the broader march of modernity, perhaps it is more useful to observe them within the context of a larger process at work in much of the Muslim world since the late nineteenth century. This intellectual current sought to explain the decline of Islamic civilization, reconcile Islam and modernity, respond to European imperialism and Western hegemony, and ultimately, tend to the crisis of leadership in the Muslim world resulting from the collapse of the caliphate, the symbol of political and religious authority for thirteen centuries of Islamic history.

Thinkers, scholars, and intellectuals, like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida, contemplated these questions at the turn of the century and through the early period of independence. Activists like Hasan al-Banna and Mawlana Mawdudi founded popular organizations to promote a social and
political agenda within their respective contexts. In Banna’s case, the Muslim Brotherhood was an expression of the loss of the Islamic state, the advent of foreign encroachment, and the desire for an Islamic character to the developing Egyptian state.

In response to these problematic approaches, in the last decade, a number of scholars began to apply Social Movement Theory (SMT), a theoretical subfield employed in the study of Western movements, to the study of Islamic movements for the first time. This approach too has witnessed its fair share of growth. Traditionally, social movement research was dominated by an approach that placed them under the rubric of collective behavior theory. According to Kurzman, this approach was undermined by its inherent biases, assuming irrationality on the part of participants, and treating their activities and beliefs in a disparaging tone. Perhaps more importantly, it provided no useful analytical framework for understanding social movements, their genesis and decline. There was no method for determining why one movement would succeed where others would fail. Among its features, collective behavior theory underemphasized the mobilization aspect of movements, separated movements from politics, and highlighted their spontaneous nature.

Despite efforts at internal reform, this approach ultimately succumbed to the external pressures from the rising crop of academics in the 1960s. In sharp contrast to the previous era, in which theorists generally opposed the movements they studied, the new generation of academics emerged out of the dynamism of university and community activism, on issues ranging from opposition to war to gender equality and civil rights. Among the most significant changes this brought was the agency given to the subjects (no longer objects) of study. They ceased to be treated as “herds of animals” but took on an active role in their own definition.
For the first time, social movements were treated as rational actors utilizing cost-benefit analysis and utility maximization. The three subsets of SMT, examined below, emerged out of this newfound approach, seeking to create a space for movements in between structural functionalist theory and rational-choice theory. For a variety of reasons, however, not the least of which was the fact that SMT scholars tended to take on movements with which they could identify, if not sympathize, the study of Islamic movements remained absent from the field for decades.\textsuperscript{13} It was only in the past decade that a number of scholars began to approach Islamic movements in the same way.\textsuperscript{14}

In their seminal work on the subject, McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald defined three subsets of SMT. The examination of political opportunity structures seeks to explain “the emergence of a particular social movement on the basis of changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system.”\textsuperscript{15} By focusing on external factors, as opposed to isolating grievances, this approach helps explain why in some instances movements formed around a given issue, while in others they did not. Within the realm of the state, political opportunities are created in a number of ways, including the following:

1) Opening access to participation for new actors
2) Political realignment within the polity
3) The appearance of influential allies
4) Emerging splits within the elites
5) Decline in the state’s capacity or will to repress dissent\textsuperscript{16}

Taken alone, this subunit of SMT does not provide an explanatory function for the rise of social movements. By its very nature, the study of political opportunity structures focuses exclusively on the political realm, and so cannot be said to adequately represent cultural factors. This is particularly significant for Islamic movements, whose claims are rooted in religious principles, not political expediency.
The second subset of SMT, mobilizing structures, is defined as “those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action.” This approach draws heavily from two theoretical schools, resource mobilization theory and the political process model. It is observed through what Tilly and Tarrow referred to as repertoires of contention, “existing performances from an array chosen by the actors” in an attempt to explain and perhaps even predict collective behavior. The means by which mobilization is acted upon is dependent upon a “toolkit” that contains familiar modes of collective action. These repertoires can also be redefined and rearticulated, though their effectiveness depends heavily on their ability to resonate with the target audience.

Resource mobilization occurs on a couple of different levels. On the one hand, it takes place through formal organizations and institutions. Wiktorowicz explained this process:

Movements create crucibles of mobilization, communication mechanisms, and professional staffs through a process of bureaucratization and institutional differentiation designed to coordinate and organize contention. With a sturdy and enduring infrastructure, formal institutions, resources, organic community organizations, and a division of labor, movements can strategically direct activism to maximize impact and efficaciousness.

These institutions are often wide-ranging, and can include any of the following: religious institutions, nongovernmental organizations, professional or student associations, and political parties. In addition to these formal outlets, mobilization can also occur through the course of informal networks and social relationships. In fact, Wiktorowicz made the case that Islamic movements are best studied as informal networks, since they are rarely constituted as formal organizations recognized by their governments. This presents a challenge for researchers of Islamic movements, since the official record rarely offers a complete picture of the group in question. Even the Muslim Brotherhood, which maintains a formal
organizational structure, also relies heavily on informal networks to mobilize its followers.

The third subset of SMT is cultural framing processes, defined as “the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action.” By infusing the pre-existing theory with a discussion of culture and its central role, the literature on framing provides the logical bridge between political opportunities and mobilizing structures. It is also an essential tool for defining the role of religion within a social movement in a field that has not traditionally shown religious movements the same treatment as their secular, liberal counterparts.

This process is not an end in itself, but rather a necessary component of what Benford and Snow referred to as micromobilization. The use of cultural symbols, historical narratives, and shared experiences is intended to appeal to individuals outside the movement, motivating them to join its mission. Collective action frames are identified within three categories: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. Diagnostic frames identify grievances, usually directed toward the state or social elites. Prognostic frames articulate the solution in an accessible manner, aiming to attract a large following. Finally, motivational frames provide the “call to arms,” the rationale for taking corrective action.

Nonetheless, even the literature on framing is not free from criticism. Wiktorowicz stated that the frame is an important interpretive device, though its explanatory function is limited. Wickham concluded her study of the contemporary Muslim Brotherhood by challenging the rationalist assumptions of the theory, given its problematic nature in the case of religious frame creation in Egypt. “The promotion of a new ethic of civic obligation differs profoundly from a more narrow
appeal to the ‘rational’ self-interests of potential recruits. In fact, Islamists called on graduates to struggle against the natural human inclination to seek pleasure, wealth, and power.”

Within the context of this burgeoning field of methodological research, the Islamic movement in Egypt during the 1970s emerges as a ripe subject for investigation. The political climate of the period does not simply offer the backdrop before which the developments in society were occurring. Rather, the Sadat regime was a key actor in the rise of the Islamic movement, whether by consciously creating the political space to allow the growth of a religious trend, or by constricting its movements, thereby pushing many of its members to the margins of society, where they would wreak havoc in the form of violent contention against the regime.

Similarly, the rise of a distinct religious movement characterized by its youth and dynamism facilitated the development of innovative mobilization structures. Reflecting a new protest culture and an unprecedented ability to operate within important institutions such as the student unions, this movement also proved able to adapt to pressures from a “mother” movement in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood’s return and its subsequent efforts to co-opt the student movement. Finally, with the exceptional openness of the Sadat period, in comparison to that of his predecessor, the cultural framing activities that the Islamic movement engaged in were unlike anything the country had witnessed since before the revolution. The Muslim Brotherhood and religious student groups published books, periodicals, and wall magazines, and produced pamphlets, cassette tapes, and banners, all of which reflected the group’s mission and ideological outlook. Taken together, this era presents a particularly fascinating period of study, given the ways in which the movement’s decisions and actions interact with the all of the theoretical subsets.
History and Historiography

The Western historiography of the Muslim Brotherhood can be divided into two broad periods: Orientalist studies influenced primarily by modernization theory and the post-World War II perspective toward social movements, and studies influenced by the rise of area studies and the so-called “Islamic resurgence” of the 1970s. More recently, a third category has emerged. During the last decade, studies of Islamic movements, including those on the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, have incorporated elements of SMT in their methodological approach. Along with the utilization of new source material, these works have offered additional insights into the organization, building upon and at times challenging the existing literature.

As part of larger works on politics in Egypt, or the role of religion in modern societies, the earliest studies that touch upon the Muslim Brotherhood characterized the movement as either one or some combination of the following: a mahdist style movement, led by a charismatic leader with messianic aspirations; a totalitarian, fascist organization on the order of those in the recent European experience; a militant reactionary movement unwavering in its commitment to outmoded religious dogma; or a heroic movement acting as a bulwark against imperial domination and domestic corruption, spiritual and material. Although these scholarly works addressed in some fashion the growing influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egyptian society, they either did not devote the core of their research to the organization or handle it with the same care as Richard Mitchell in his seminal book, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (1969).

Mitchell traced the organization to its origins in the port town of Ismailia, where a schoolteacher named Hasan al-Banna established it in 1928. Banna founded
the Muslim Brotherhood as a means to infuse society with Islamic principles in response to the growing encroachment of a secular monarchy and a continuing British occupation. From its humble days in Ismailia, Mitchell followed its rise as a popular religious social movement attracting hundreds of thousands of followers throughout Egypt, to its engagement with the political centers of power: the monarchy, the British colonial authorities, and the Wafd Party, during the so-called “liberal experiment” in Egypt. Following the wave of political violence in the late 1940s that ultimately claimed the life of its founder, the Muslim Brotherhood experienced the first major crisis in its history, settling on a respected judge, Hasan al-Hudaybi, to succeed the first General Guide and lead the organization into a new era. Mitchell examined the succession struggle in detail, hinting that the organization may have been severely weakened as a result. The study then investigated the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1952 Free Officers Revolution, the group’s response to the rise of Arab nationalism, and ultimately, the dismantling of the organization and imprisonment of its members at the hands of the Nasser regime in 1954.

Mitchell’s approach marked an important departure from previous studies. Rather than characterize the movement through the lens of Western history or contemporary geopolitical concerns, Mitchell simply allowed the movement to define itself, identifying commonalities it had with recent trends in Islamic thought. Emerging from this analysis was the intellectual connection between Banna’s organization and the late nineteenth century Islamic modernist thinkers Afghani and Abduh. The latter strove to find a synthesis between the Islamic tradition and modernity, a project adopted in part by the Muslim Brotherhood’s program. In fact, Banna’s personal intellectual development was shown to have stemmed from the modernist school of thought, though it took on a more activist tone.
Another major methodological development in Mitchell’s study was his position (or perhaps more accurately, lack thereof) regarding the beliefs of the movement. Contrary to the prevailing tendency to treat religious movements as lacking in rationality and motivated by blind devotion to archaic principles, Mitchell cast that notion aside in favor of a more objective perspective. He wrote, “In so far as what men believe to be real, is real, our concern here will be not the validity of these beliefs, but only the fact of their existence.”

With respect to questions of goals and tactics, the book carefully addressed the concerns raised by previous authors. The Muslim Brotherhood of the 1940s and early 1950s was not bent on seizing power by force. It was not a revolutionary movement as such, but rather an internal reform movement aspiring to spread its message across the various levels of society, up to and including the holders of political power. Moreover, while he did not openly challenge modernization theory, Mitchell did indicate that the emerging Egyptian professional class formed the predominant segment of Muslim Brotherhood members during the 1940s. This important fact, demonstrated empirically, challenged the prevailing notion that the more a society modernized, the less influential religion (and its institutions) would become within that society.

The book was highly received as the first of its kind full-length study of a modern Islamic movement. Future studies of Islamic movements generally, and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular would use the template provided by Mitchell’s work as the basis for continuing scholarship in the field. But the period that followed was not treated with the same uniformity as the early era of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Though he wrote in the late 1960s, Mitchell nevertheless considered the Muslim Brotherhood a bygone movement, with no realistic chance for regaining its
prior position in society. The historical narrative ended with Nasser’s crackdown in 1954. In addition to the prevailing winds of secular Arab nationalism, his study cited the lack of a central charismatic leader and increased internal divisions for the final decline of the movement. The ideology itself could not gain any permanence because of the failure of the organization to fulfill its stated goal of forging a unity between acceptable portions of modern political thought and traditional Islamic principles. In this regard, Mitchell was not alone. Most commentators believed the age of the Muslim Brotherhood had long passed.34 In his 1972 review of Mitchell’s book, Brown wrote that students of the Middle East:

[H]ave virtually forgotten about the Ikhwan. Not only do they discount its prospects for revival, but they also doubt seriously if a similar religio-political movement can play an important role in the future. The patterns of political organization and ideology—including the politics of protest—reveal increasing secularism, linguistic nationalism, military rule, and socio-economic radicalism. There seems to be little prospect for a new round of religious fundamentalism as a political movement.35

If this assessment was to be proven false by the events of the 1970s, Brown’s critique of Mitchell was to provide an accurate prediction of future studies on the Muslim Brotherhood. He added:

Mitchell also—and here he is most likely to be challenged by others—tends to minimize the terrorist wing of the Ikhwan, arguing in effect that the organization was largely responding to the general climate of political assassination, intimidation, and abandonment of the ‘rules of the game’ that increasingly dominated Egypt from the late 1930s until Faruq was toppled in 1952. The latter point is well taken, but the proclivity of a disciplined, fervent society like the Ikhwan, with its conspiratorial view of history, to sustain a high level of terrorism, is perhaps not given its due.36

Even as the climate was radically changing on the ground in the 1970s the narrative put forth by Mitchell and others remained intact for nearly the duration of the decade. It was not until the late 1970s that the notion of an Islamic revival, typified in the Iranian Revolution, would remove from contention the paradigm of Islamic activism giving way to secular nationalism in the linear march of history.
Moreover, a new period of scholarship emerged that saw competing narratives of the Islamic revival. This consisted of writers who focused on the rise of Islamic militancy, especially as it related to the historical Muslim Brotherhood, and authors who were more critical of the prevailing view of an “Islamist threat” that rejected the West, offering a more nuanced view of the revival.\textsuperscript{37} In all, no new studies of the Muslim Brotherhood on the order of Mitchell’s emerged during this period. However, the new class of scholars tackled individual aspects of the Muslim Brotherhood’s recent history, including its organizational, ideological, and political components.

The Sadat era in the history of the Muslim Brotherhood has received the least amount of attention by Western scholars, though it proved to be a period of bustling activity. Briefly, various works mention that the organization reconstituted itself following its release from the prisons of Nasser; that it benefited from Sadat’s attempts to weaken the political left, remnants of Nasser’s failed socialist experiment; that, under Tilmisani’s leadership, the organization operated openly, publishing books and periodicals, engaging the government in public debate; and ultimately reclaimed its place as the most potent opposition to the secular regime. Yet beyond this basic skeleton, little study was done on the mainstream Muslim Brotherhood organization of the 1970s. Instead, the bulk of the research has focused on the other major development on the Islamic activist scene during this period: the rise of underground militant groups.

In a 1980 article, Ibrahim explored the political, ideological, and organizational factors giving rise to Islamic militancy.\textsuperscript{38} As the failure to predict this troubling phenomenon shook the academy, various reasons were put forward to explain the recent events. The major defeat in the Six Day War, the declining influence of the Soviet Union, and political and socioeconomic stagnation were all
advanced as explanations. Throughout the subsequent years, scholars addressed these questions, ranging from the broad systemic explanations such as those advanced by Lewis, to the more narrow studies focusing exclusively on the case of Islamic militancy in Egypt, such as the works by Kepel and Sivan. These studies took a different approach to the study of the Islamic movement in Egypt, placing the militant extremists at the center, while treating the mainstream organization as marginal.

Whereas Mitchell put forth the idea that the Muslim Brotherhood had sought to bridge the gap between Islam and modernity, a view emerged that argued that not only did this endeavor fail, but subsequent leaders of the movement, most notably the commentator Sayyid Qutb, had rejected such a project as contrary to the core values of their faith. Some of Qutb’s supporters, survivors of Nasser’s concentration camps, as Kepel termed them, saw such an effort as not only futile, but blasphemous as well. Sivan focused on the intellectual and ideological development of what he termed the “New Radicalism.”39 The concepts developed by Qutb in the mid-1960s laid the groundwork for the rise of extremist groups, such as al-Takfir wal-Higra, a decade later. The study lacked a wider discussion of Qutb’s concepts within the framework of mainstream Muslim Brotherhood thought, as articulated by Banna and promoted by his successors. In fact, Sivan appeared to revisit the historical record only to demonstrate the roots of Qutb’s “New Radicalism” as having existed for many decades:

Modernism had, of course, been rejected by the traditionalists ever since the turn of the century, even as they were influenced by it to some extent (for instance, in apologetics, and in a grudging acceptance of the ijtihad). The significance of the New Radicals’ stance stems both from its particular forcefulness and from the fact that these were people well immersed in the modern world who refused to accept modernist Islam. What one may call “reactionary modernism” was all the more powerful for their being able to say that they had seen the modernist future and that it does not work.40
This new narrative was offered primarily in light of recent events that saw the rise to prominence of the militant fringe of the Islamic movement. Sivan argued that, although a substantial number of Islamists were not necessarily radicals and sought to accomplish their goals only by non-violent means, their common aspiration of enforcing Islamic rule through the Shari’a led them to secretly sympathize with those militant factions. Under this model, the entire Islamic movement was understood to have been radicalized, though it had assumed several different facades.

Other writers were similarly inclined. By diminishing some of the major differences between the mainstream and the fringe, it becomes easier to understand how the bulk of the scholarship would focus on the group of only a few thousand radicals, as opposed to the hundreds of thousands of self-declared Muslim Brothers. Another way in which this was accomplished was by changing the external character of the organization itself. Though the Muslim Brotherhood of the 1970s remained intact as an organization, maintaining its name, organizational structure and hierarchy, Western scholars chose to refer to it by other titles.

Kepel’s historical study, published in 1984, was indicative of this tendency to offer a different narrative of the Islamic movement in Egypt. While freely acknowledging that a major split occurred between the traditional Muslim Brotherhood and the followers of Qutb’s teachings, primarily embodied in the tome *Milestones*, Kepel made the case that it was this radical fringe that was the direct heir to the Muslim Brotherhood of previous generations. His work focused almost exclusively on groups emerging out of Qutb’s intellectual movement, such as al-Takfir wal-Higra and al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah, while relegating the Muslim Brotherhood of Tilmisani to only one chapter that focused on its (largely failed) attempts to compete in what was becoming a crowded marketplace of Islamic trends.
Kepel summed up the prevailing view of the Muslim Brotherhood by scholars of this period, juxtaposing the organization’s strong rhetoric with its lack of an actionable program, in contrast to the fringe movement, which supposedly offered a more accessible platform. He wrote:

But by deliberately opting for moderation, the neo-Muslim Brethren failed to capture the spirit of the Society of Muslim Brethren of Hasan al-Banna’s time. Talmasani’s cavils are utterly devoid of the inspiration that breathed such life into the message of the Ismailia primary-school teacher ‘who held the hearts of the Muslims in his hand and moved them at will.’ In the ramshackle dwellings of the suburbs ringing the large Egyptian cities, people by-passed by progress and development turned toward other, more radical tendencies of the Islamicist movement.\(^\text{45}\)

This dominant narrative did not go unchallenged. A number of scholars issued their response to the resurgent Islam paradigm. Davis offered this analysis of the methodology employed in the works referenced above:

Efforts to gain a deeper understanding of Islamic political movements require a more systematic historical methodology and a more sophisticated understanding of social structure and ideology. The concept of revival or resurgence of Islam, and its attendant notions of fundamentalism and Islamic society, work against such an understanding due to their transhistorical nature. Likewise, mechanistic attempts to link ideology and social class in a one-to-one relationship fail to comprehend many of the subtleties involved in the social mobilization of supporters of Islamic movements and the manner in which the construction of ideologies can serve to promote either hegemony or conflict in society.\(^\text{46}\)

Similarly, Voll argued for the need to expand the scope of scholarship on Islamic movements beyond narrow political considerations to their historical causes. He wrote that, “The contemporary Islamic revival is a response to the particular conditions of the late twentieth century and must be seen in the context of the conflicts and challenges of the modern world. At the same time, it is also part of the historical experience of renewal within Muslim societies over the centuries.”\(^\text{47}\) Even Mitchell contributed to the growing critique, challenging the periodization of the Islamic resurgence prevalent in the literature. These studies, which placed the origins
of the Islamic resurgence in the aftermath of the Six Day War, were once again too narrowly defined. “Thus the events of 1967 and 1973 should be seen as moments intensifying a long-term ongoing historical process. It does not make analytical sense to regard the events in the Middle East commonly referred to as the Islamic resurgence as a response to crises so narrowly defined as the 1967 defeat or, paradoxically, the ‘victory’ of 1973.”

In fact, Mitchell’s own book documented the existence of a formidable Islamic movement in Egypt long before the events that supposedly precipitated the modern Islamic resurgence. Nonetheless, no major studies emerged during this period that examined the recent history of the Muslim Brotherhood following the events of 1954. Some scholars made mention of the development of the movement, citing the intellectual and organizational continuity following Banna’s assassination and the rise of new leaders. The successor to Banna, Hasan al-Hudaybi, confronted the challenges from within the organization and safeguarded its mission as a primarily da’wa oriented movement. “For Hudaybi and the other old-guard Brotherhood leaders, the problem was that Egyptians needed to be educated and called to the faith, not that Egyptians had ceased to be Muslims. Hudaybi rejected the practice of takfir, thereby rejecting the rationale for active revolution.”

Voll continued: The neo-Brotherhood has not created a new ideological framework for its efforts. It remains tied to the intellectual legacy of Hasan al-Banna and, with some reservations, of Sayyid Qutb. …The major shift represented by the neo-Brotherhood continued to be committed to the goal of establishing a truly Islamic socio-political order, it pursued that goal without recourse to violence, by influencing the Muslim masses and seeking a hearing among the ‘Muslim’ rulers.

As proponents of this narrative became increasingly vocal, a number of recent studies on the Muslim Brotherhood could be said to have ushered in a new period of scholarship over the last decade. These works have shifted from the paradigm of
resurgent Islam to examining the Islamic movement on its own terms, free of the ideological underpinnings that marked prior efforts. Moreover, an increasing number of studies in recent years have utilized the theoretical tools offered by SMT in the study of the Islamic movement in Egypt. Collectively, these works have advanced a different view of the Muslim Brotherhood as an organization that serves the needs of a modern, middle class polity in Egyptian society, within the framework of political opportunity structures. Clark’s study of Islamic medical clinics in Egypt provided one such example. Utilizing the growing literature on political opportunity structures, she described the success of Islamic medical clinics as a result of the state’s failures to provide for its citizens. In addition, the study examined the rise of a professional middle class and its growing participation in Islamic activism.

Wickham’s book pursued this notion as well. In her social movement history of the Muslim Brotherhood through the 1980s, Wickham developed the concept of *lumpen intelligentsia*, a class of ambitious, educated, urbanized, Egyptians who would come to make up the base of support for the Muslim Brotherhood. She maintained that the rise of Islamic activism was not a spontaneous occurrence, but rather a result of resource mobilization on the part of this elite sector and its ability to frame its grievances effectively. This study, along with several recent works by other scholars, signals the future of the study of the Muslim Brotherhood. Two important developments will inform the emerging literature on this movement. First, the abundance of newly available source material will allow for more thorough historical accounts of the Muslim Brotherhood, with a potential for revising the current narrative. Second, the increasing interaction between scholars of Islamic movements and proponents of SMT will provide valuable tools for analysis of this and other groups in the Muslim world.
An Old Call, A New Call

This historical study examines the rise of a religious social movement in Egypt during the period 1970-1981, which corresponds to the Sadat era in the modern political history of Egypt. While it utilizes the methodological tools provided by Social Movement Theory, it is ultimately rooted in the desire to uncover and explain the past. As elucidated in the previous section, historical studies of social movements can fall short without the theoretical construct to contextualize and explain events and developments. By that same token, as Tilly explained, the study of social movements is rendered deficient without identifying the historical underpinnings of these social phenomena:

History helps because it explains why social movements incorporated some crucial features (for example, the disciplined street march) that separated the social movement from other sorts of politics. History also helps because it identifies significant change in the operation of social movements (for example, the emergence of well-financed professional staffs and organizations specializing in the pursuit of social movement programs) and thus alerts us to the possibility of new changes in the future. History helps, finally, because it calls attention to the shifting political conditions that made social movements possible.56

As a social history, this study takes social movements as its basic unit of analysis. Using Tarrow’s definition, Social Movements are “collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities.”57 In the Egyptian context, two main social movements at work during the 1970s are examined in detail. The student movement comprised the generation of Egyptian youth who entered the universities from the late 1960s to the early 1980s and pursued social and political activism. The student movement had no distinct ideological orientation, though at various moments it was populated heavily by, and featured the leadership of leftists as well as Islamists. The Islamic movement, on the other hand, was not made up of a particular social segment, but was distinct in
its ideological orientation in that its activism featured “the mobilization of contention to support Muslim causes.”

Although they were by no means identical, for a brief historical moment, the student movement and the Islamic movement converged. With the absence of a significant presence of Islamic activists due to the period of repression instituted by the Nasser regime, and with the rise to power of the religiously motivated contingent within the student movement, the Islamic movement was, for all purposes, based out of the student movement, and for its part, the student movement experienced a homogenization under the self-assured Islamic leadership.

Narrowing the scope slightly, a Social Movement Organization (SMO) is simply the institutionalization of a social movement within an organized structure. During the course of this study, several SMOs are considered for analysis, not the least of which is the Muslim Brotherhood, the dominant organization within the Islamic movement which, during this period, found itself in the rare situation of having to contend with new groups that staked their claim for authority within the movement. Similarly, the student movement featured numerous SMOs, including some with a decidedly religious orientation, such as Shabab al-Islam and al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah. Historically, it was a rare occurrence when an organization could successfully take command over an entire movement, a lesson that the youth leaders of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah would learn during the course of their activism.

By exploring the recent historical experiences of the Islamic movement and the student movement, Chapter One sets the stage for the ensuing discussion of these movements during the 1970s. Picking up where Mitchell’s study leaves off, the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1952 Free Officers Revolution is examined from the perspective of key actors from the Muslim Brotherhood and the nascent
revolutionary regime. Following the total breakdown in relations and the subsequent era of political repression, the Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed and disbanded as an organization, but through informal networks that existed within the prison system, its intellectual program continued to evolve and progress.

It is noteworthy that Sayyid Qutb, one of the most prolific figures in the Islamic movement, wrote the bulk of his commentaries at a time when the Muslim Brotherhood did not exist in its traditional form. The collapse of its organizational structure and the effects of regime repression brought about a crisis in thought, during which a minority faction asserted a new interpretation of the Muslim Brotherhood mission, founded upon the language of resistance that Qutb employed. The internal debate that followed featured the reassertion of the original Muslim Brotherhood da’wa, redefined in opposition to the emerging militant discourse.

Translated as “mission” or “call,” the concept of da’wa is critical for a proper understanding of the Muslim Brotherhood’s ideological and organizational development. While it traditionally referred to the process of calling others to the Islamic faith, the term was redefined in the early period of the modern Islamic movement to denote calling others from within the faith, thought to have been negligent with regard to fulfilling basic religious obligations. With the spread of the Muslim Brotherhood’s organization under Banna’s leadership, the da’wa came to be regarded as the process of spreading the Muslim Brotherhood’s program and recruiting outsiders to join in its mission. Finally, following the intellectual schism brought about by Qutb’s supporters, who sought to legitimize violent contention against the state, Hudaybi attempted to put the matter to rest by reemphasizing the role of the Islamic activist as one of caller, not judge. The concept of da’wa continued to evolve throughout the 1970s, when it was employed to raise awareness of the
Muslim Brotherhood’s mission among a new generation, while also distinguishing the organization from other factions within the Islamic movement that had abandoned the call in favor of isolation and militancy.

Parallel to the developments within the Islamic movement, this chapter also addresses the rich legacy of student activism in the pre-revolutionary era, when Egyptian youth made up an important base of all political parties and factions, and helped shape the outcome of political crises through direct action campaigns. Although the student movement was subject to the same political repression that afflicted all independent social forces after the revolution, it ultimately proved to be the most resilient. Led primarily by leftist students, it was the first opposition force to emerge after the 1967 war, awakening the nation by leading the massive popular protests of 1968, and paving the way for its permanent return as a social movement actor.

Finally, this chapter charts the political landscape in Egypt on the eve of Sadat’s accession to the presidency. The failure of Nasser’s project, culminated by the 1967 defeat, ushered in a new era of politics in Egypt, a development with major implications for the resumption of Islamic activism on a large scale.

The impact of the state’s shift in policy could be observed very early in the Sadat period, through an examination of an oft-forgotten organization that signaled the return of Islamic activism in Egypt. Shabab al-Islam, the subject of Chapter Two, emerged out of the open space actively cultivated and promoted by the Sadat regime. It advanced a broadly Islamized social and political program, articulated generally in the Islamic modernist tradition. Based on the excitement and widespread support generated by this organization, it proved to be a breath of fresh air for the public.
expression of an Islamic political program and frame of reference after two decades in which such talk was taboo.

Through its debates, conferences, and publications, Shabab al-Islam infused the public discourse with discussions on the place of religion in the state and society. The group’s leaders were also determined to engage in contentious politics, joining in the student protests of 1972-73, and agitating for democratic reforms and a war to liberate occupied lands. While the organization was also notable for its strong opposition to the leftist trend dominant within the student movement, a position that won it favor with some regime officials, the manner in which it conducted its activism embodied the spirit of the radical politics associated with the Nasser era. The organization ultimately succumbed to internal structural weaknesses and external pressures, but proved to be a sign of things to come, as the rise of a potent Islamic movement, led by the return of the Muslim Brotherhood, was not far behind.

When Sadat decided in 1971 to free the Muslim Brotherhood leaders and members from Nasser’s prisons, he could not have envisioned the vigor with which the organization would return by the end of the decade. But based on the internal discussions of the group at the time, neither could its leaders. Chapter Three details the early attempts at reconstituting the Muslim Brotherhood following a change in regime and with it, a change in policy toward the political opposition. Indeed, external factors played a critical role in shaping the debate around the organization’s return. An increasingly crowded field of Islamic activism featured groups that offered alternative programs to the traditional Muslim Brotherhood mission, while Sadat attempted to throw his hat into the ring as well, by appropriating religious rhetoric and pledging to build a state based on “science and faith.”
Internally, the Muslim Brotherhood had just consolidated its intellectual position vis-à-vis the rising militant fringe. Senior figures in the group then reached a compromise decision to stake their claim for leadership of the Islamic movement, but also to disavow any aspirations for a clandestine unit within the organization. Before the Muslim Brotherhood could spread its traditional da’wa, however, the group’s leaders had to contend with more practical challenges of readapting to a changed society. Following Hudaybi’s death in 1973, Tilmisani emerged as his successor, pledging himself to transmit the message of the Muslim Brotherhood to a new generation that would make up the energetic base of the organization and the future of the da’wa.

Completely independent of the Muslim Brotherhood’s attempts to reconstitute its organization, a process that would only gain momentum after 1975, a vibrant Islamic student movement was already making waves within Egypt’s colleges and universities. Building on the failed attempts by Shabab al-Islam to establish a lasting presence of religiously-based activism on campuses, a new class of students, representing the fruits of Sadat’s push to expand education to the urban poor and rural areas in greater numbers, developed a fresh Islamic student organization. Chapter Four chronicles the rise of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah through the students who built it. It traces the process of their intellectual discovery and the development of the group’s religious mission.

Featuring a confluence of ideological trends from within the Islamic movement, and an organic process of building the organization, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah experienced considerable success, taking hold of student unions across the country, thereby institutionalizing its gains and securing access to resources essential for the perpetuation of the group’s beliefs and programs. The leaders of the youth
movement became notable, not only for the effective promotion of the da’wa as they understood it, but also for the development of a distinct culture of activism representative of the new Islamic student movement. Internally, what for long was the movement’s greatest strength, its ideological diversity and lack of a rigid dogma, became a liability as factionalism and radicalism took hold of some segments of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah.

Chapter Five details the process by which the internal divisions within al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah were resolved. Coinciding with the Muslim Brotherhood’s reconstitution, or perhaps because of it, the dividing ideological lines within the student movement were more clearly drawn, with a majority of its leadership, especially at the senior level, making the decision to join the Muslim Brotherhood as members. Espousing support for the Salafi and jihadi trends, the minorities within al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah were gradually marginalized, with some even branching off into independent organizations, or managing to wrest control of local chapters of the student organization from the hands of the Muslim Brotherhood’s supporters, especially in upper Egypt.

For their part, the Muslim Brotherhood’s leadership proved extremely adept at recruiting the next generation of Islamic activists to join its ranks. In promoting the concept of “tawrith al-da‘wa,” or bequeathing the call, Tilmisani and other senior figures relied on the Muslim Brotherhood’s rich history on the front lines of the struggle for the promotion of Islam, as well as its ability to convey a complete program, respond to competing trends, and demonstrate flexibility in its views. Once the intellectual congruity was reached, during the course of countless meetings, lectures, camps, and conferences, the parties moved closer to organizational coordination, when ultimately, the organizational structure of the Muslim
Brotherhood was rebuilt. The student leaders made up the base of the newly reestablished Muslim Brotherhood, which by the close of the decade, had proved to be a major thorn in the side of the Sadat regime. Based out of its safe haven within the universities, the Muslim Brotherhood’s student members and their elders from the organization pursued an active agenda of opposition to Sadat’s policies, from the peace treaty with Israel to the government’s refusal to institute provisions of Islamic law.

Examining the critical issues around which the Muslim Brotherhood organized its activism in the second half of the 1970s, Chapter Six isolates the organization’s chief publication, al-Da’wa magazine, for a discussion on cultural framing. The monthly periodical was a focal point of the group’s activities, bridging the generational divide by publishing commentaries by senior group leaders and articles by student reporters. It featured the active construction of the Muslim Brotherhood’s da’wa for the next generation, detailing not only the group’s grand vision for an Egypt that fulfilled the tenets of Islam, but also its reaction to current events and a thorough appraisal of government policies. The magazine proved doubly effective, in generating a mass audience of readers, as well as in earning the ire of Sadat, who railed on the magazine’s content in a speech before parliament, then resolved to shut down its operations permanently. Tensions were heightened during a series of confrontations, ultimately leading to Sadat taking authoritarian measures against the rising voices of dissent. But by the time Sadat decided to clamp down on all opposition in 1981, arresting figures from the Muslim Brotherhood, young and old alike, the successful reconstitution of the organization ensured that the da’wa would be preserved into the next era of Egyptian political history.
A Note on Sources

Social movement history, by its very nature as a phenomenon arising in opposition to the state, does not lend itself to the production of systematized and organized materials to be discovered years later in a central state archive. In the case of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, the sensitivity surrounding the persistence of an organization that has been officially outlawed since 1954 ensured that the process of collecting primary source documents of an official nature would be even more daunting, if not outright impossible. Whatever official records exist about the Islamic movement reside strictly in the domain of Egypt’s state security agency and are unavailable to the public.

Nonetheless, the story of the 1970s Islamic movement, especially the segments of it that have pursued their mission in public and engaged with the larger society, provides for a number of ripe sources for the investigation of popular religious activism. Newspaper archives, even as they frequently reflect the cynicism of an authoritarian regime, provide meticulous daily accounts of events as they were experienced by many Egyptians. This includes those responsible for creating headlines, whether as student activists marching through the gates of Cairo University or movement elders who recently won their release from prison. Other publications, including those of the Islamic movement itself, from monthly magazines like *al-Da'wa* to occasional booklets, pamphlets, student wall magazines, and even conference programs, offer particular insight into the vision and functions of groups like Shabab al-Islam and al-Gama'ah al-Islamiyyah.

The period also generated a considerable number of personal accounts, recorded in the form of memoirs, from central leaders making crucial to peripheral figures observing events from the margins of the Islamic movement. Other figures
have either published shorter pieces recounting their experiences from the era, or have been interviewed for various publications in the past. Additionally, for the purposes of this study, interviews were conducted with a number of individuals who played an important role in shaping events surrounding the Islamic movement of the 1970s. These oral histories enhance the understanding of events for which published accounts provide little context or explanation, while also granting insight into the internal dynamics and relationships at work in any social movement.

Another body of literature that delves into the experiences of Islamic activism in the 1970s emerged out of internal studies conducted by members of the group, who often meld their own personal experiences with those of comrades and even opponents, and incorporate public documents, such as university records, whenever possible. Taken together, these sources provide a narrative rich in detail, weaving together the events and experiences that precipitated the rise of popular Islamic activism in Egypt during this era.
Chapter One

THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT ON THE EVE OF SADAT

There are few events in contemporary Middle East history that can be said to have singlehandedly transformed the course of the region’s future as the Six Day War of June 1967. The naksa, or setback, as it came to be known, reinforced the initial defeat at the hands of Israel two decades earlier, and destroyed the mighty pillar of Nasserism that had captivated Arab audiences since 1952. The ideologies of Arab nationalism and socialism, upon which an entire regional project had been built, were thoroughly discredited once their prime objective of liberating Arab lands and defeating Zionism proved too tall an order. As for the man himself, Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser’s rhetorical power and mythic persona were no match for the glaring reality on the ground: Israel had occupied Arab lands in every direction, more than doubling in size, and delivered a fatal blow to the militaries of its most powerful adversaries. Millions of Egyptians would take to the streets in support of their president’s continued leadership, but as one Egyptian would later write of Nasser, “he may have been buried on September 28, 1970, but he died on June 5, 1967.”

Nasser’s demise exposed the deep-seated weaknesses of Egypt’s revolutionary regime. It lacked independent social movements and was devoid of free intellectual development. It possessed no civil society institutions offering competing political ideologies to fill the void left by the collapse of the Nasserist project. The vacuum that emerged in the ruptures of 1967 was to be filled by a number of underdeveloped political trends representing mostly recycled platforms, several of which predated the revolution. As a result, Nasser’s final years and the early period of Anwar al-Sadat’s
presidency, already notable for the absence of a distinct ideological orientation, featured no sufficient substitute for the failed policies of old.

Although it has been argued that regional and international pressures dominated Nasser’s decision-making process after the war, domestic considerations also played a significant role. However, it was not the liberal, Marxist, or Islamic political movements that exerted their influence over the suddenly weakened regime, for they had all been systematically repressed by Nasser early in his presidency. Rather, it was a revitalized student movement, having no particular political affiliation, which presented the most immediate challenge to the state. Throughout the course of the late 1960s and into the early 1970s, student activism represented the principal force of political opposition, while paving the way for the emergence of distinct ideological trends, most notably in the Islamic movement.

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the political trends that existed in the early period of the revolution, illustrating the ways in which the Free Officers dealt with them, with a particular emphasis on the fate of the Islamic movement as represented by the Muslim Brotherhood. With the ban on all independent political activity under Nasser, these forces disappeared from the scene. Different aspects of the young regime’s relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood are highlighted to demonstrate that the two powerful political forces were at once intimately familiar with one another through their early partnership, and yet deeply distrustful as a result of divergent visions and the mutual desire for political supremacy. The thread of regime involvement continues even as we explore the internal evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood’s program, as Nasser became both an unwitting accessory (through his repressive policies) to the shift away from ideological moderation and a
willing collaborator (through his promotion of religious officials) in the Muslim Brotherhood’s effort to reassert its missionary roots.

After describing the state of the Islamic movement during the twilight of the Nasser era, the next section examines the legacy of student activism, which dates back to the days before independence, when Egypt was still fighting for an end to British rule. In order to better understand the rise of student activism, it is essential to expound on the profile of the educational system, along with the goals and modes of mass mobilization. Despite its rich tradition, the student movement was also subjected to the severe repression of the Nasser regime, but it possessed a quality that no other movements could claim, the ability to operate from within an existing state institution: the Egyptian university system.

The final section explores how the movement reemerged onto the landscape of political activity after the Six Day War, witnessed in the 1968 student revolt, the first action of its kind in decades. Contrary to the prevailing notion that the national response to the war exposed ideological cleavages within Egypt, the student movement was notable for the unity that it demonstrated, along with the lack of a distinct ideological orientation—at least in its earliest stages. It would not be until several years later that the student movement would witness the rise of an Islamically oriented trend within the student movement, symbolized in the organization Shabab al-Islam (The Youth of Islam). What all of the discussions in this chapter aim to do is provide the historical context for the Sadat era in modern Egyptian political history, drawing attention to some of its most salient features. By elucidating the motivations and actions of the newly politicized population in the late 1960s, the stage is then set to explore the rise of a reenergized Islamic movement that came to define Egyptian oppositional politics throughout the decade that followed.
Free Officers and Repressive Politics

On July 23, 1952, a group whom Baker refers to as “fundamentally nonideological, elitist military conspirators” swept to power by overthrowing the Egyptian monarchy in a largely nonviolent coup d’état. While the Free Officers Revolution is known for its vehement rejection of a status quo characterized by a failing liberal political system, a discredited monarchy, and an unpopular foreign occupation, it is also notable for its opposition to the existing alternatives, whether from the left or the right. Inasmuch as the Free Officers aspired to overthrow a corrupt ruler backed by an oppressive colonial enterprise, they also sensed the revolutionary winds blowing from within the depths of society, representing political factions that had gradually become more radicalized with the near collapse of the liberal regime. So not only did the coup claim to be saving Egypt from foreign domination, but in essence, it was also saving Egyptians from themselves.

In spite of the fact that the clandestine military group maintained strong contacts with leaders of all political factions representing the spectrum of ideologies, including Young Egypt, the Wafd Party, the Marxists, and the Muslim Brotherhood, the core of the Free Officers were enormously distrustful of the political trends. It came as no surprise then, that less than six months after the revolution, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the makeshift body that had assumed control of government, ordered the dissolution of all political parties. It was Anwar al-Sadat who oversaw the tribunal that attempted to rid the country of the pre-revolutionary political forces permanently. In addition to dismantling all independent political parties, this move had the added effect of debilitating intellectual life in Egypt, a change that would have profound effects two decades later, as Sadat attempted to build his legitimacy as president. The only exemption to this political
clampdown was given to a small group that surrounded Nasser and helped cultivate his ideas and affirm his legitimacy. Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, a prominent journalist and intellectual, is most emblematic of this group.

Although he maintained a leftist and revolutionary character, Nasser demonstrated little tolerance for communists in Egypt and his relationship with the Soviet Union was a complicated one, full of suspicions of its intentions toward Egypt and dissatisfaction with its inadequate aid when compared to that of American support for Israel. Upon the exclusion of communists as well as liberals, who embodied the failures of the parliamentary regime and faced charges of elitism and cooperating with Egypt’s enemies, the state’s sights were set on the Muslim Brotherhood, the remaining freestanding social movement with the ability to pose significant opposition to the revolution.

From Potential Partners to Outlawed Opposition

The story of the Muslim Brotherhood’s brief honeymoon with and subsequent persecution at the hands of the RCC has been recounted in many places. In spite of the incomplete facts and at times contradictory accounts, there are several aspects of these events that are of direct relevance to the discussion of the Islamic movement’s resurgence in the 1970s. For one, the first three presidents of Egypt, Muhammad Naguib, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and Anwar al-Sadat, all had personal relationships and experiences with the Muslim Brotherhood, which directly impacted the decisions they made in dealing with the group. For its part, the Muslim Brotherhood’s leadership in the early 1950s exposed its inability to address basic questions such as its desired relationship with the state and the nature of its internal structure. The events of the
critical years of 1952-1954 turned what was initially a *fursa*, or opportunity, into a *mihna*, or ordeal, with consequences that reverberated long after Nasser’s death.

Upon ridding the new regime of the secular opposition, Nasser turned his attention to the Islamic movement and its chief representative, the Muslim Brotherhood. There is widespread disagreement among scholars as to whether Nasser deliberately devised a “divide and conquer” strategy to neutralize his political rivals, or whether circumstances eventually necessitated the clampdown on the Muslim Brotherhood. What is known is that the RCC was in need of the Muslim Brotherhood’s support in order to survive the uncertainty of the first two years, while the Muslim Brotherhood was keen to take advantage of the new political space to advance its own program.

In gauging the Muslim Brotherhood’s support for revolutionary action prior to the coup by the Free Officers, Mitchell emphasized that the picture was rather mixed. As with many social movements that encompass an array of classes, the views of the Muslim Brotherhood’s members on this issue generally reflected their social standing. Hasan al-Hudaybi, for instance, came from a respected lineage and enjoyed a successful career as a judge under the liberal regime, and as such was not receptive to the idea of overthrowing the existing system. Other figures, however, such as Salih al-‘Ashmawi and ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sanadi, already leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood’s Secret Apparatus, were far more open to working with the military conspirators. Actual contacts between the Free Officers and the Muslim Brotherhood date back to over a decade prior to the revolution. In 1940, prior to joining the group that was to become the Free Officers, Sadat met Hasan al-Banna. Soon thereafter, he became acquainted with ‘Abd al-Mun’im ‘Abd al-Ra’uf, a Muslim Brotherhood member and military officer who participated in subversive activities. ‘Abd al-Ra’uf
continued to work with both groups, eventually joining the Free Officers and becoming the strongest advocate for the Muslim Brotherhood within its ranks.\(^5\)

Another disaffected military officer and Muslim Brotherhood member, Mahmud Labib, met with Nasser in 1944, and addressed him passionately about the need for dramatic changes in Egypt. Mitchell contended that this meeting was responsible for orienting Nasser toward planning the coup.

In fact, Mitchell rightly pointed out that reports of such high level contacts were later buried in order to create a historical record that minimized the Muslim Brotherhood’s role in the coup. Early records of the meetings between Nasser and the Muslim Brotherhood, such as the one detailing the critical 1944 encounter, were created prior to the falling out between Hudaybi and the Nasser regime.\(^6\) By contrast, Sadat’s memoirs, published several years after the purge of the Muslim Brotherhood, diminished the role played by its leadership in the revolution. Sadat was appointed by the revolutionary committee as the liaison with the Muslim Brotherhood and met regularly with Banna, whom he lauded as “a theologian with a sense of reality, a man of religion who recognized the existence of facts.”\(^7\) In spite of his personal admiration for the Muslim Brotherhood’s charismatic leader, Sadat stressed the group’s failure to live up to its promise of joining the military collaborators in their plot to overthrow the corrupt and subservient Wafdist government during a critical juncture at the height of the Second World War. Moreover, he characterized the Muslim Brotherhood in the aftermath of the revolution as “an organization of unbounded fanaticism, and a menace to public order.”\(^8\)

Regardless of whether these historical interactions were framed with political considerations in mind, their significance lies in demonstrating the extent of the relationship between two important forces in Egypt in the critical time before and
after the revolution. Sadat wrote that the Free Officers believed that “the Brotherhood was a powerful group, and the only one with which we could safely cooperate in the difficult years which lay ahead. It was vital that we should strengthen our position by such alliances.” In laying out the events that preceded the coup, Sadat emphasized that the military officers were cautious in their relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, describing the cooperation between the two as “at best a makeshift affair; soon there were frequent clashes and misunderstandings.” He continued in this vein, laying down the gauntlet with his description of the events that resulted in the final break between the two groups in the aftermath of the revolution:

The Revolutionary Council’s first action after the coup d’état was to pardon the Brotherhood, believing that its members had sufficiently expiated their crimes. This generosity was ill-rewarded, for the Brothers whom we had rehabilitated and given a fresh chance in life, turned against us savagely.

Before moving on, it is necessary to investigate the drastic transformation of the relationship between the Free Officers and the Muslim Brotherhood. In spite of Sadat’s simplistic characterization of the tenuous partnership as one of benevolence repaid with betrayal, the relationship was far more complex. It involved common causes, from the nationalist struggle against foreign hegemony and political corruption to the regional war for Palestine. It included powerful personalities, from Naguib and Nasser, to Banna and Hudaybi. Ultimately, however, it succumbed to conflicting interests between the two parties, whether it was over the targets for recruitment, which frequently overlapped due to the Muslim Brotherhood’s interest in spreading within the military, the negotiations with the British for their withdrawal from Egypt, which both sides pursued separately, or the right to determine the nation’s future, which exposed deeply diverging visions for Egypt.

Hasan al-Banna’s sudden death in early 1949 was a watershed event in the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the emerging opposition within the
military. In addition to the previously recounted high-level meetings between leaders in both camps, the two fought side by side in the Palestine war in 1948, where the Muslim Brotherhood’s volunteer corps performed admirably to such an extent that its heroics were recounted by members of the Free Officers. As late as 1949, Nasser himself spoke openly in defense of the Muslim Brotherhood during an interrogation by the prime minister regarding Nasser’s political affiliations.12 Earlier that same year, however, Banna was killed in a wave of political violence that swept Egypt. His organization was held responsible for several of those attacks and an era of mistrust of the Muslim Brotherhood by the Free Officers, the presumptive keepers of order, began. While the organization’s fallen leader was largely exempted from the accusations of supporting violence, his successor was viewed with suspicion by Nasser and his comrades.

As a longstanding member of the Egyptian elite, Hudaybi was already unpopular among the revolutionary officers and their sympathizers within the Muslim Brotherhood. However, several incidents accelerated the demise in the relationship. The first involved the Muslim Brotherhood’s role in the revolution of July 23, 1952. Mitchell recounted that, with the exception of a few members, the Muslim Brotherhood was largely in the dark about the specifics of the coup. Even ‘Abd al-Ra’uf, to this point a central figure in both movements, was excluded from the Executive Committee of the Free Officers in the months prior to the coup. In fact, the Free Officers kept the entire Muslim Brotherhood organization at bay, reserving its role primarily for contingency plans in the event of the coup’s failure or the breakdown of civil order.13 Hudaybi was not known to have had any personal knowledge of the coup in the days leading up to it. Whereas the overwhelming majority of Egyptians immediately welcomed the revolution, Hudaybi’s offense was
in waiting a full three days to officially recognize the new regime. Conveniently for many of his critics, Hudaybi’s July 26 statement followed the king’s abdication of his throne, signaling the official end of the old regime and the beginning of revolutionary politics in Egypt.

The Muslim Brotherhood’s perceived lukewarm reception of the revolution was an early sign of the mistrust that would continue to build over the next few years, culminating in the dramatic events of the Manchiyya incident in 1954. Despite the Muslim Brotherhood’s characterization of the new regime as “our revolution,” the contending visions for the future of Egypt would become apparent just days after the RCC dismissed the parliament and attempted to form its own cabinet. The Muslim Brotherhood’s desire for a government based on Islamic principles was quietly sidelined by the RCC, whose sole gesture toward the group was to offer three cabinet posts, upon Nasser’s approval of the candidates. This story (with its many versions) has been recounted in several scholarly sources. Resulting from this tense encounter was the expulsion of Ahmed Hasan al-Baquiri from the Muslim Brotherhood following his acceptance of a cabinet post with the RCC. This power struggle between the two groups played out in this episode, as the Free Officers, achieving firm control over the new government, blocked Hudaybi’s cabinet choices and effectively limited the role of the Muslim Brotherhood, which claimed to be the sole remaining voice representing the Egyptian people.

These events also exposed the internal challenges to Hudaybi from within the Muslim Brotherhood, as he was accused of frequently acting without the approval of the Guidance Council and alienating his organization from the new government at the expense of those elements within the group’s leadership that desired a more meaningful partnership with the RCC. Although the damage done by this incident was
not irreparable, Mitchell argued that it nonetheless changed the nature of the relationship, as the two forces grew further apart. He wrote that, “the feelings of the regime towards the Society remained positive but their basis shifted from friendship to need.”

The next major incident that affected the standing of the Muslim Brotherhood with the new regime concerned the question of the continuing British occupation. Hudaybi’s meetings with the British Embassy in early 1953, ostensibly to negotiate the terms of a treaty ending Britain’s presence in Egypt, roused the anger of the RCC, which felt betrayed by the Muslim Brotherhood’s leader and undermined in its efforts to negotiate a treaty on its own terms. Hudaybi claimed that he had entered the discussions with Nasser’s blessing and only to bolster the impression of a united front among Egypt’s various political forces. However, his voice was drowned out by the strident agitation against the Muslim Brotherhood taking place in the Egyptian press, along with Nasser’s exploitation of this sensitive situation to begin the process of ridding his government of the Muslim Brotherhood, once and for all.

This process was completed the following year in dramatic fashion. On October 26, 1954, an assassination attempt against Nasser while he was giving a speech in Alexandria, served as the final blow to the Muslim Brotherhood’s relationship with the regime. The perpetrator was a member of the organization and accused of having received his orders from the highest levels. Following a reluctant attempt earlier in the year to ban the Muslim Brotherhood, this time the action was decisive and the retribution swift. Hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood members, especially those in the organization’s leadership hierarchy, were arrested and charged with various crimes, ranging from specific knowledge of the plot against Nasser, to more broadly supporting sedition and counter-revolutionary activities. The attempted
assassin and five others, including the most recent head of the Secret Apparatus, were executed shortly after their trial. Hudaybi’s death sentence was reduced to life imprisonment. The Muslim Brotherhood’s headquarters was ransacked and burned by angry mobs, who only days earlier, had exhibited misgivings about the RCC.

The Ordeal and its Consequences

By early 1955, the Muslim Brotherhood had entered a new phase in its existence. With its organization outlawed, its institutions dismantled, its rank and file members imprisoned and its leader under house arrest, the group founded by Hasan al-Banna less than three decades earlier ceased to exist. It is no wonder that in the decade that followed, scholars wrote of the Muslim Brotherhood in the past tense. Even in his seminal study of the organization, Mitchell structured his chronology with a defined beginning and end to the group.¹⁶ This was not without good reason. An independent social organization with a broad political platform was part of a bygone era of liberal parliamentary politics in Egypt and largely out of step with the development of authoritarian rule in the tightly held political program of the revolutionary regime. Few would have predicted a future for the Muslim Brotherhood in this context, and whatever remained of the organization itself had to come to terms with the radically altered picture.

Even at the height of Nasser’s repression, however, the remaining leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to forge a new body out of the ashes of the old organization. More recent scholarship has explored the evolution (or regression, as the case may be) of the Islamic movement during the revolutionary period, highlighting its enduring quality even as it faced the rising tide of secular nationalist ideologies that swept Egypt and the Arab world at large. The Muslim Brotherhood’s experience
culminated with the development of Organization 1965 and the state’s response the following year, which once again sought to extinguish the flames of Islamic activism that threatened the Nasser regime. In addition to its continuing feud with the state, however, this period was also marked by the gradual materialization of distinct ideological fault lines within the Islamic movement. As the self-proclaimed mother organization of the movement, the Muslim Brotherhood was forced to bear the burden of this growing divide and oversee the transition to a phase of competitive trends that fought eagerly for followers and the right to determine the future course of Islamic activism in Egypt.

By the late 1950s, the Nasser regime was at its zenith and the ideology of Arab nationalism had galvanized populations throughout the region to lend their support to Egypt’s project for the Arab world. This period also marked the first wave of the state’s relaxation of security measures and resulted in the release of some Muslim Brotherhood members from prison. Almost immediately, former high-ranking members of the organization’s leadership hierarchy set about to revive the Muslim Brotherhood, albeit in a modest, simplified form. Members met in small groups to chart the future of the organization, eventually seeking (and by most accounts, receiving) the blessing of their still leader, at least nominally, General Guide Hasan al-Hudaybi. Zollner pointed out that the reorganization efforts conducted by these groups, which included such figures as ‘Abd al-Fattah Isma‘il, Shaykh Muhammad Fathi Rifa‘i, Ahmad ‘Abd al-Majid and ‘Ali al-‘Ashmawi, run counter to the prevailing narrative that the Muslim Brotherhood revival occurred within Nasser’s prisons. Although there was a significant amount of communication and coordination between those inside and outside of prison, especially through the family support network led by Zeinab al-Ghazali and the Muslim Sisterhood, the bulk
of the activities took place outside of prison and was concentrated in the urban centers of Cairo and Alexandria. There, small groups met in secret to conduct study sessions that continued to propagate Banna’s message, while also discussing political matters and their experiences under the Nasser regime.

In its renewed existence, the Muslim Brotherhood was only a shadow of its former self. While it traditionally relied on its public character to spread its message and generate good will within the society at large, the new organization maintained secrecy as its most valued quality and limited its engagement to those with a pre-existing relationship with the group. Furthermore, it no longer sustained itself financially, but rather relied increasingly on outside support, especially from the Gulf countries. Finally, the traditional structural hierarchy was replaced by an ad hoc leadership that maintained far less transparency than it had previously, and even bypassed the General Guide on many important matters. In fact, it is during this period that Sayyid Qutb became the Muslim Brotherhood’s most influential figure, not only on matters of ideology, but in directing the organization’s movements as well. Although he remained in prison until 1964, Qutb’s continued presence in the hospital wing of Liman al-Turra ensured that he would interact with the many Muslim Brotherhood members who passed through the hospital for treatment.18

There can be no doubt that the extreme conditions brought about by Nasser’s pervasive security apparatus and the oppressive nature of the prison camps stunted the growth of the Islamic movement, engendering competing claims for authenticity based on conflicting responses to the challenges posed by the state’s policies. When Qutb was released from prison in 1964, he found himself the spiritual head of a burgeoning movement for confrontation with the Nasser regime. The following year, before the group could act, state security agents once again pounced on what they
perceived as a revolt in the making, and conducted a new wave of arrests across the country. Hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood members, even with the most tangential connection to the alleged coup plotters, were imprisoned after a series of military trials that produced little or no evidence. For his part in providing ideological guidance through his written works, Qutb was sentenced to execution. The order was carried out in August 1966.

Once again, the Muslim Brotherhood found itself in a state of complete disarray. Its leadership had either been killed or imprisoned and its members scattered within society, hoping to suppress any ties that would identify them with the outlawed organization. For the moment, the Nasser regime had thwarted every attempt to rebuild the Islamic opposition. It would take an entire year and a cataclysmic defeat on the level of the Six Day War to once again open the door for the Islamic movement.

**Internal Debates and the Evolution of Ideas**

Nasser’s policy of total repression unwittingly contributed to the continuing development of Islamic political thought, as it became an extension of the revolutionary zeal with which he imbued Egyptian society as well as the severity of the measures inflicted upon the Islamic movement. The trajectory of Sayyid Qutb’s career is perhaps most emblematic of this point. Trained as an educator and writer, he specialized in literary criticism, writing a number of commentaries on pre-revolutionary Egyptian literature and culture early in his career. Published in 1947, his *al-‘Adalah al-Ijtima‘iyyah fil Islam* (Social Justice in Islam) was in its time the fullest expression of Qutb’s attempt to reconcile traditional Islamic values with the challenges of modern society. Though it appeared prior to the coup by the Free
Officers, the work in many ways embodied the promise of the revolution and helped chart out a course in which the Islamic movement could lend its credibility to the socialist policies of the Nasser regime. In fact, it was during this period that Qutb became editor of the Muslim Brotherhood’s official magazine, propagated a message that departed from some of the traditional rhetoric associated with the liberal era in Egyptian politics and evoked the views of some of Qutb’s associates from among the coup plotters in the military.19

By late 1954, however, Qutb had suffered the same fate as other senior leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood. For the next decade, he was to make his home in the notorious Liman al-Turra. It was within this prison’s walls that Qutb completed his magnum opus, the multivolume Fi Dhilal al-Qur’an (In the Shade of the Qur’an). Through its sobering portrait of modern society, it offered a reinterpretation of scripture for a different age in which believers suffered from alienation in the expanding gulf between their faith and the world around them. Departing from the traditional methodology for Qur’anic exegesis, Qutb’s approach attempted to historicize the Qur’an’s chapters, looking at the Causes of Revelation (Asbab al-Nuzul) as a means of distinguishing the earliest community of Muslims from later generations, while at the same time drawing upon that model to provide a “clear legal framework” to govern the lives of Muslims in contemporary society.20 It was his holistic approach to Qur’anic interpretation that allowed Qutb to adapt traditional concepts such as jihad and jahiliyyah for the modern age.

In the trajectory of Qutb’s intellectual development, the final phase was marked by the short-lived publication of his most heavily referenced work, Ma‘alim fil Tariq (Milestones Along the Path). Appearing for the first time in 1964, this work earned the ire of the Nasser regime and ultimately cost Qutb his life, as the only
connection between him and the accused plotters of Organization 1965 was that illegal copies of *Milestones* were discovered in their homes. Qutb was soon after arrested and later executed as the alleged inspirational leader behind the coup attempt. The book has been compared with Lenin’s *What Is to Be Done*, as a tract that went beyond Qutb’s previous works that identified the problems plaguing Muslim society or outlined the solutions, by putting forth an outright call for action. In examining the motivational message of *Milestones*, Kepel considers it as “both an instrument for the analysis of contemporary society and a guide for a vanguard whose task is to inaugurate the resurrection of the *Ummah*. In short, it is a manifesto.”

Qutb’s final book was at once the culmination of his previous works and a dramatic departure from them. It built on many of the concepts developed in *Social Justice in Islam* and *In the Shade of the Qur’an* while also signaling the final break, not only with Egypt’s revolution, but society as a whole. Though written several years prior to the 1967 defeat, *Milestones* foreshadowed the utter failures of Nasser’s program and, had he been alive to witness it, Qutb would probably have expressed no surprise at the naksa. There has been some debate over whether *Milestones* was the direct product of the harsh conditions in Nasser’s prisons or whether it reflected the natural progression of thought during the so-called Islamic resurgence of the 1960s and 1970s. Kepel wrote that, “Islamicist thought was reconstructed after 1954 primarily in the concentration camps, which were felt by Qutb and his disciples to symbolize the relationship of the state to society. The camp experience must therefore be assessed, before considering Qutb’s major writings.” On the other hand, Zollner argued that:

[T]his rather psychological explanation for the radicalization somehow hides the fact that key ideas of his arguments, as given in his later work, were already present in earlier stages. Additionally, by singling out Qutb’s experiences and giving them a psychological explanation, one can easily
overlook that his radical interpretation was also embedded in a debate among Muslim Brothers, a network of relations to other detainees and to supporters outside the prison.\textsuperscript{24}

Scholars have also pointed to the influence on Qutb by Abul ‘Ala al-Maududi and Abul Hasan ‘Ali al-Nadawi, two thinkers from the Indian subcontinent who developed key concepts that became central to the call to believers in \textit{Milestones}.\textsuperscript{25}

Another argument that further undermines the notion of prison radicalization involves the fate of other Muslim Brotherhood prisoners. Leading figures such as Mahmoud ‘Abd al-Halim, Mustafa Mashhour, ‘Umar al-Tilmisani, and of course Hudaybi were undoubtedly subjected to many of the same conditions as Qutb but, as discussed below, continued to espouse the original Muslim Brotherhood message, with only slight modifications.

Qutb’s departure from the traditional thought of the Muslim Brotherhood centered on the fundamental belief in a bottom-up versus top-down strategy for reform. That is, the Muslim Brotherhood of Banna and Hudaybi dedicated the bulk of its efforts on grassroots social activism, even as it engaged the centers of power. Qutb, on the other hand, shifted the emphasis from \textit{da‘wa}, the most essential part of the Muslim Brotherhood’s program, to the pursuit of political empowerment and the implementation of the Shari‘ah. This was both a strategic and ideological change, informed in large part by a transformed worldview. By Qutb’s account, the purity that marked the early generation of Islam was shortly thereafter consumed by a reemergence of the various aspects of \textit{jahiliyyah} society, to such an extent that it persisted throughout the march of history. According to Qutb’s analysis of the contemporary situation:

\begin{quote}
Today too we are surrounded by \textit{jahiliyyah}. Its nature is the same as in the first period of Islam, and it is perhaps a little more deeply entrenched. Our whole environment, people’s beliefs and ideas, habit and art, rules and laws—\textit{is} \textit{jahiliyyah}, even to the extent that what we consider to be Islamic culture,
\end{quote}
Islamic sources, Islamic philosophy, and Islamic thought are also constructs of *jahiliyyah*. This is why the true Islamic values never enter our hearts, why our minds are never illuminated by Islamic concepts, and why no group of people arises among us equal to the caliber of the first generation of Islam.26

By this reasoning, existing structures, whether it was the nation-state system as a whole, a recent introduction to the Muslim world, or the Nasser regime ruling Egypt in particular, were beyond the pale of Islam, and therefore subject to being overturned through an intellectual project as well as through active struggle. Haddad described the revolutionary nature of Qutb’s Islamic activist agenda:

The task of Muslims today…is to reappropriate the understanding of true Islam so as to be able to apply it to the contemporary circumstances, for which task a rewriting of Islamic history is crucial, and to reappropriate the political power which was historically theirs so that the true *din al-wasat* can be actualized as God’s divinely ordained and guided community on earth.27

It is in the final section of *Milestones*, in Qutb’s call to arms, that he displayed most vividly his split from the Muslim Brotherhood’s traditional intellectual framework. In defining the mission as being the replacement of “this *jahiliyyah* with Islamic ideals and traditions,” Qutb proceeded to note that “this cannot be brought about by agreeing with *jahiliyyah* and going along a few steps with it, as some of us think we ought to do, for this would simply mean that from the beginning we have accepted defeat.”28 The critique of *du`a*, or callers—a central facet of the Muslim Brotherhood’s program—signaled Qutb’s final break with his intellectual tradition. In one of the final sections of *Milestones*, he noted that, “the history of the Call to Allah has witnessed various endings in this world in its struggle with other movements.”29 These various endings, however, were merely different methods of “annihilation,” violent ends that beset past civilizations. In other words, according to Qutb, da’wa is largely a failed endeavor. However, as is discussed below, it would be left to others to reach the conclusion that the label of *kafir* could be justifiably employed in reference to self-professed Muslims.30
While Qutb did not make any specific calls for the violent overthrow of the state, and even as he did not explicitly disavow the da‘wa paradigm, it occurred to Muslim Brotherhood leaders to refute the arguments offered in *Milestones*, especially as it became apparent that some contingents within the rank-and-file membership, and some groups within the rising generation of youth activists were adopting Qutb’s words as the basis for their anti-state actions. Even after its ban, *Milestones* spread across the country, as students huddled together to make copies by hand for distribution. The state’s policy of banishing Qutb and his memory from public life had seemingly backfired:

[B]anning Qutb’s works drew attention to the importance of his appeal. Forcing intellectuals to keep silent and not to discuss Qutb’s works left the field completely open for the younger individuals and groups to interpret Qutb’s thought as they wished. Consequently, waves of violence in the decades after Qutb’s death, were inescapably the result of ignorance and stupidity.31

A generation had found in *Milestones* a call for action against the state. The practice of *takfir*, or declaring Muslims to be unbelieving, was utilized by a number of groups that sought isolation from society in the form of *hijra*, or migration, as the Prophet had done fourteen centuries earlier in leaving Mecca for Medina. This movement embarked on a new path, transforming modern Islamic political thought into a revolutionary force, willing to confront the regime head-on, and halt the march of secular nationalism in the pursuit of power.32

The most prominent response to the emerging oppositional front from within the Islamic movement came from none less than the General Guide himself, in the form of Hudaybi’s famous book, *Du‘ah la Qudah* (Preachers Not Judges).33 In her study of this period, Zollner offered important insights into the composition of this work. For one, she made a strong case that called Hudaybi’s sole authorship of the book into doubt.34 This is important for a number of reasons. The considerable
number of contributors to the refutation demonstrates that the issues raised in Qutb’s work were widely read and discussed within the Islamic movement. Moreover, the possibility that senior figures from al-Azhar were involved in the authorship of Preachers suggests that these issues were taken seriously by the regime, which undertook a proactive policy to combat the spread of subversive ideas among Qutb’s followers. The latter point also exposes the fact that state officials closely monitored the internal debate within the Islamic movement, and possibly even contributed to it, undermining the notion of the debate being “internal” at all. As Zollner further elucidated, this process was facilitated by the limited modes of communication among Muslim Brotherhood leaders, who relied heavily on prison networks and the support of family members to remain in touch with one another.\textsuperscript{35}

The work was notable for both its simplicity and its reliance on established Islamic legal and theological norms. In his opening chapter, Hudaybi listed a set of guiding principles that set the tone of his rebuttal. First, judgment of individual faith was for God alone, and not intended to be in the realm of human beings. Second, it was incumbent upon those who make claims to particular religious decrees to bring proof from the main sources of Islam, the Qur’an or the Sunnah. It was not up to those who deny the authenticity of religious claims to provide the evidence. Finally, the human intellect was not permitted to devise matters of legal prohibition or permissibility without corroboration from a divine source of Shari’a.\textsuperscript{36} By laying out these criteria, Hudaybi calibrated the terms of the debate, placing the onus on the opposing side to respond with proof of its claims.

The first section defined the true believer, an indirect response to Qutb’s assertion that society was in a state of total ignorance. Hudaybi quickly dispatched such an absolutist judgment in favor of the traditional Islamic definition of a Muslim
as one who declared belief in the basic tenets of the faith. Even those who erred in their deeds were not to be cast out from the tent of the faithful, as sin was a natural part of every believing society. Moreover, he argued that the concept of passing judgment on an entire population without any distinction reflected poor acumen and was profoundly un-Islamic. In the event that individuals in society demonstrated “ignorance” (jahl, as opposed to the loaded term jahiliyyah), it was not the place of the preacher to pass judgment against them.

The issue of divine sovereignty was another central theme in Preachers, prompted by the need to respond to Qutb’s excoriating of man-made governments and his argument that rule was for God alone. Hudaybi countered that an Islamic state cannot exist without some degree of agency given to the people themselves who, rightly guided by divine decree, were apt to rule over the temporal world. This analysis also alluded to the visible contradiction in Milestones that granted Qutb’s followers the right to condemn society as unbelieving while reserving sovereignty to God alone.

In many ways, Hudaybi’s text hinged on the Muslim Brotherhood’s claim to authority. It frequently faulted the group’s rivals for failing to properly interpret Islamic sources, and even offered a miniature guide to evaluating religious texts. One chapter, titled “Obedience and Assent” stressed the need to conform to established norms, accepted interpretations, and recognized authority. To some extent, and in the face of an extraneous threat, the movement led by Hudaybi supported a declared orthodoxy and warned against any deviation from it. The recurring theme of Preachers defined the role of the movement’s rank-and-file membership as simply callers to the faith. The figure of the da’i, a humble community servant, appeared in sharp contrast to the scathing judgment passed on society by Qutb.37
The period surrounding Hudaybi’s publication of *Preachers* marked an important turning point in the history of the Muslim Brotherhood. Whereas in the previous era of the group’s existence, it was possible to talk about the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic movement in Egypt as nearly interchangeable entities, the ideological (and the ensuing strategic) split within the movement’s ranks were such that the Muslim Brotherhood would now have to contend with an emerging fringe opposition within the movement that vied for the hearts and minds of the nation’s youth.

As the next section demonstrates, this was a young old man’s game. The discourse initiated by Qutb and elaborated upon by Hudaybi would only pick up steam after both figures had left the scene. It would be left to the new generation of Islamic activists, coming primarily from the ranks of Egypt’s growing population of students, to determine the future of the movement. As its leaders continued to languish in prison even as Nasser took his last breath in late September 1970, the Muslim Brotherhood’s existence depended on its ability to overcome its logistical and organizational limitations and spread its message to the youth. This was the key to maintaining its supremacy in the field of Islamic activism. Before proceeding to the next phase in the Islamic movement’s history, however, it is essential to provide a historical overview of student political activism in Egypt, highlighting its relationship (both harmonious and contentious) with the Islamic movement along the way.

**Student Activism in the Liberal Period**

The modern system of education in Egypt is the product of developments stemming from several periods of recent history, beginning with the Napoleonic invasion of the late eighteenth century. The abrupt exposure to European imperialism,
followed by a half century of rapid modernization at the hands of Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha, signaled a break from traditional modes of learning and ushered in an era of modern, standardized education in Egypt. This process continued into the late nineteenth century, until it was hindered by the advancement of the British colonial regime in Egypt in 1882. Lord Cromer set British educational policy in Egypt in an attempt to preserve a status quo favorable to British interests. Educational reform was perceived to enable political instability by expanding upward social mobility and resulting in the rise of a widespread nationalist movement.38 As a result of Cromer’s policy, 73 percent of Egyptian students were paying for their education in 1892, a rise from 30 percent only a decade earlier.39 The cultivation of an elite educated class separate from the rest of society was an integral part of maintaining British supremacy in colonial Egypt.

Following the Egyptian nationalist movement’s achievement of nominal independence in 1922, efforts were made to standardize the system of education, with particular emphasis placed on primary education, provided to all Egyptians for free.40 Despite numerous efforts throughout the liberal period, Egypt was still unable to shake off the dualism in its system of education, one that maintained two types of institutions, one for the dominant, landowning elite and future government leaders, and another for the rest of the population, a minimalist system targeting basic literacy for the rural majority.41 In the area of higher education, Egypt’s first modern university was established in 1925 by combining previously existing colleges and attempting to standardize the curriculum. As a remnant of British colonial rule, however, Egypt’s university system was largely used to feed employees into government ranks, a phenomenon that became unsustainable as the number of university graduates exceeded the demand for government bureaucrats. These
developments increased the strain on the Wafdist government, resulting in political instability in Egypt during the 1930s and 1940s:

As the university students’ perceptions of the future that awaited them became increasingly dismal, they turned to political activism. …Strengthening such feelings were the many physical, psychological, social, and economic problems which students, particularly those from more traditional backgrounds, encountered in attempting to adjust to the demands of university life.42

The achievements of these politically conscientious students can best be measured by examining periodic moments of crisis that beset Egypt during the era of liberal parliamentary politics. The first major political crisis surfaced in the aftermath of the 1930 revisions to the constitution that granted Britain increased rights in Egypt and marginalized the parliament, Egypt’s only representative body. After Ismail Sidqi Pasha’s government collapsed in 1933, the Wafd-led government of Tawfiq Nasim Pasha was tasked with the responsibility of reforming the constitution following widespread outrage at the changes. The student movement was instrumental in this effort. When, in November 1935 nationalist hero Sa’ad Zaghlul gave an impassioned speech calling for non-cooperation with the British, the students at Fuad University (later Cairo University) responded by taking to the streets. Nearly two thousand students marched from Giza to Cairo on the first day of the strike, and that number doubled on the second day, when students were met with a violent response by state security officers.43 Although workers and professional unions sympathized with the protests and frequently joined in them, it was the university students who took the lead in this unprecedented action.

On the political front, the students pressed for unity from their party leaders, an effort that yielded the United Front, the political coalition that forced the palace to restore the 1923 Constitution and set the stage for the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936. Made up of independents as well as representatives from all major
political factions, from the Wafd to Young Egypt, and the communists to the Muslim Brotherhood, the student movement was free of domination by one political group, and actually asserted its own power on the elders within these factions. So significant was the rise of the student movement as a force in its own right on the political stage that this period became known as the “years of youth.”

The political situation in Egypt remained relatively pacified during the years of World War II, but as the war drew to a close, the country’s popular factions began to agitate for full independence, and once again the student movement played a pivotal role in these events. Student protests in late 1945 in solidarity with Palestine as it battled increased Jewish migration and British rule gave way to the establishment of the Mixed Committee of Students (MCS) in early 1946. As one of its first acts, the MCS issued a National Charter, calling for the evacuation of the British from all of Egypt, the inclusion of the United Nations in determining the country’s future, and the pursuit of just economic policies. These lofty demands came on the heels of a significant event that provided the momentum for the student movement to strengthen its resolve and widen its appeal in the months to come. On February 9, thousands of students assembled within the university’s walls to listen to passionate speeches calling for Egypt’s full independence. When many of them set off to march through Cairo, they were once again met with the brute force of Egypt’s police, which proceeded to raise the Abbas Bridge as hundreds of students were crossing over it. Scores were injured as a result of this incident, and confrontations continued to escalate in the ensuing weeks, resulting in the deaths of more than twenty students in clashes with police on February 21 alone.

The instability caused by these student protests and the subsequent workers strikes generated some important results, as the palace offered to dismiss the current
government in favor of more popular political leadership, while the British authorities made the decision on March 8 to withdraw from all parts of Egypt with the exception of the Suez Canal Zone. In an effort to restore order, however, the government began pre-emptive raids on the student leadership, arresting two hundred of them in July, banning their publications, and later that year temporarily closed the universities in Cairo and Alexandria. In fact, the closure of universities was a frequent occurrence throughout the late 1940s, as the government attempted to assert its control over the students as they, in turn, demonstrated their power as a force for political change in the face of a liberal regime in rapid decline. In late December 1947, the military surrounded the gates of Cairo University but following a weeklong student sit-in, the soldiers were withdrawn.46

As the situation in Egypt deteriorated further in 1951, the Wafdist government of Nahhas Pasha abrogated the unpopular Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936. But rather than appease the protestors, this move emboldened the student movement, which escalated the number of general strikes, and issued a new National Charter through the student government that called for armed struggle against the continuing British occupation. University grounds became a center for military training for ten thousand students and the first student battalion was deployed to the Suez Canal Zone in November. Under pressure from solidarity protests across the country, the government was forced to quickly reverse its ban on military training on university grounds in support of the guerilla movement. The student movement’s dominance in the nation’s political affairs continued into the turbulent year of 1952 and well after the Free Officers Revolution, until it was repressed along with all other independent political forces, as is described below.
Even as it remained fiercely independent and loosely affiliated with every political faction in Egypt during this two-decade period, the student movement was nonetheless strongly tied into the fate of the Islamic movement, especially as the Muslim Brotherhood gained in power and prominence. Since its inception, the Muslim Brotherhood preserved a special place for students within its program. Hasan al-Banna had only recently graduated from Dar al-‘Ulum when he founded the organization in 1928. When he established the first chapter in Ismailia, Banna was spending his days as a government appointed teacher at a secondary school. Many of the first individuals to join the organization were his former colleagues and students. During his many travels throughout Egypt in the 1930s, Banna made it a point to meet with groups of students and many of them were organized into families within the hierarchy of the Muslim Brotherhood. Soon after the headquarters was set up in Cairo, a special office devoted to student affairs was put in place.

The Rover Scouts, frequently the subject of controversy but also the means by which the Muslim Brotherhood defended its interests within an increasingly crowded and confrontational field of political activism, relied heavily on student recruits. Estimates of the Rover Scouts in the mid-1940s placed their number from 20,000 to 45,000, with most coming from the ranks of students, and once the Muslim Brotherhood was banned by government decree in 1948, one thousand of its members were dismissed from universities and secondary schools. As stated previously, a feature of the independent student movement was the fierce competition between the political factions, as no one party effectively dominated the scene. Consequently, the university grounds were often the site of violent confrontations between student militias representing the various factions. Previously popular among only a minority of students, the Muslim Brotherhood made great gains in the mid-1940s, especially as
it exploited the deterioration of the Wafd Party and the increasing disillusionment toward it from within the student population. In 1946, a British embassy official observed that, “The rise of the Moslem Brethren has weakened the Wafd, particularly in the University and Schools, where they have recently become stronger than the Wafd as an element of disorder.”

The Muslim Brotherhood’s influence within the student movement reached its apex on the eve of the revolution. In 1951, students affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood swept the student union elections throughout Cairo University, winning all the available seats in the colleges of agriculture and science, and a majority of seats in the colleges of engineering, arts, law, and commerce. Though frequent, the clashes between the Muslim Brotherhood and the other factions, especially the Wafdist and the communists, were occasionally interrupted by moments of coordination and cooperation, especially during times of national political crisis. The Muslim Brotherhood’s growing power and influence also made it an appealing partner for these groups, and eventually became a focal point for the coup plotters in the military as well. The nexus between the student movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Free Officers was a natural extension of the military action in Palestine and the Suez Canal Zone. The Muslim Brotherhood relied on student recruits to fill the ranks of its battalions, provided them with arms, and coordinated the volunteers’ participation with officers in the Egyptian military. This relationship was to inform the future dealings between these groups in the aftermath of the Free Officers Revolution.
Student Activism after the Revolution

Despite the numerous advancements made to Egypt’s system of education during the liberal era, including the increased availability of primary education and the standardization of the curriculum, the fundamental problem of elitism in the system remained:

Thus by 1952 Egypt was rift by numerous social, political and cultural cleavages, a state of affairs to which the educational system had contributed greatly. Its elitist, fragmented structure ensured that divisions between elite and mass, town and country, graduates of the religious system and of the secular schools, would become ever deeper; its ethos ensured that even the graduates of the modern schools would be ignorant automatons possessing… negative attributes.50

As such, one of the top priorities of the Revolutionary Command Council was to pursue reforms in the system of education, just as it advanced new programs in other areas of Egypt’s political, economic, and social infrastructure. Szyliowicz categorized the development of Egyptian education under the revolutionary regime according to three phases, which largely coincided with the major political transformations that marked the Nasser regime.51

The first phase lasted until 1956, falling under the period of Nasser’s consolidation of power. During these years the state aggressively pushed a national plan toward universal primary education and the diversification of post-primary education, seen through its emphasis on technical and vocational training. The second phase lasted until 1961 and was marked by the central role that the state’s emerging political ideology played in determining the course of the educational system. School and university instruction was heavily politicized as students were expected to internalize the Nasser regime’s nationalist rhetoric and lead the way in meeting its ambitious development goals. The third phase lasted through most of the 1960s and reflected Egypt’s growing dependence on foreign support, as it advanced radical
socialist policies at all levels of domestic policy, including education. The regime also attempted to address some of the failures of the previous period, including the inability to meet development targets and the strains placed on its educational system due to overcrowding and aging facilities.

The government’s reforms brought about some welcomed changes to Egypt’s system of education. Though it did not attain its goal of universal education, the Nasser regime abolished school fees and saw the number of students in higher education increase by more than fifty percent in the first six years after the revolution. Additionally, public expenditure on education rose from 2.5 million Egyptian pounds under the last Wafd government, to 33.3 million Egyptian pounds under the RCC. Nasser also attempted to do away with the dualism in education by providing a standardized curriculum and opening the doors of Egypt’s universities to greater numbers of students from the middle and underprivileged classes. These changes saw a dramatic qualitative shift in the profile of students who attended Egypt’s colleges and universities. Nasser later set his sights on the historically independent al-Azhar University, revamping its curriculum and diminishing its capacity to influence matters of policy and law in Egypt, another major change that was to have a profound impact on the future relationship between the student movement and the state.

In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, secondary and university students supported the RCC in large numbers. Students welcomed the promise of greater reforms to a system that had only catered to the elites in society. They continued to lend their support, even when “the new regime offered to do away with the parliamentary system in return for providing a number of social achievements which that system had notably failed to produce.” Nasser proceeded to dismiss
hundreds of teachers, seen as representatives of the old regime, replacing them with those loyal to the revolution.

The breakdown in relations between the students and the government did not occur, however, until the RCC itself faced an internal split. Much like the Muslim Brotherhood’s leadership, a large number of students supported Naguib, who ultimately lost out to Nasser in the ensuing power struggle. Sensing an immediate threat from within the ranks of the students, many of whom shared loyalties with the recently banned Muslim Brotherhood, Nasser established a student wing of the Liberation Rally, the first official political party after the revolution. On Egyptian campuses, this group’s sole purpose was to undermine the efforts of pre-existing student groups, eventually hoping to overwhelm them and establish its presence as the sole representative of the student population. Following a turbulent period of violent confrontation between a state-supported organization and the remaining independent factions, the student movement was effectively suppressed by the end of 1954.

The absence of student activism, which would last until 1967, “was engineered through the combination of coercion and socialization.” Nasser’s clampdown on political freedom and his development of a robust security apparatus extended to the university campuses, where surveillance of students and professors was standard and armed guards patrolled the grounds and its surroundings. Moreover, administrators developed policies to keep students busy with day-to-day distractions, both welcomed and unwelcomed, such as the addition of intensive mid-term examinations and various athletic clubs. It was also understood that students who affiliated themselves with the regime’s various student organizations, from the Liberation Rally in the early years after the revolution, to the Arab Socialist Union’s
Socialist Youth Organization (SYO) in the mid-1960s, stood a far better chance of attaining employment opportunities after graduation.

The degree to which student activities were closely monitored and controlled can be observed most closely through the experience of the Student Union at Cairo University. After 1953, school officials suspended elections and began appointing the leadership. Even after elections were restored in 1959, they were closely controlled and resulted in much the same type of pliant leadership. For the first time in the organization’s history, students did not enjoy full authority within their union, but instead deferred to faculty leaders who had to approve all final decisions.

Furthermore, the mandate of the Student Union did not extend beyond academic, social, and cultural functions. Politics were strictly off limits to students, except insofar as they served to echo the message of the regime. Faculty control over union membership dues ensured that resources were not allocated to independent student activities.

By the early 1960s, a combination of widespread student disinterest and frustration, along with Nasser’s perception that he had solidified his regime’s control over civil society, led to a slight relaxation of the state’s grip on the Student Union, with reforms to its constitution passed in 1963 to allow greater student control. As the events of 1968 would demonstrate, however, students had long ago given up on the Student Union as a vehicle for their activism, and instead sought new alternatives.

The June War of 1967 was a watershed event that drastically changed the nature of the Egyptian regime’s relationship with its citizens. This was especially true of the students. An entire generation that was raised knowing no other form of government but that which came out of the revolution, and no other leader but Gamal Abdel Nasser, was suddenly left to question everything it had ever been taught. As one
student leader later recalled, “only after the massive defeat of 1967, and the slowing down of the regime’s social program due to the burden of military expenditure, did an eventual split between the regime and its student body become a real possibility.”

The Student Movement Returns

The last three years of Nasser’s rule were notable for the shifts in the political order brought about by two incidents of civil unrest, both of which featured a prominent role by a student movement determined to reclaim its role in Egyptian political life. Both protests brought to a head larger concerns about the future direction of the nation in light of the unsuccessful war, along with localized grievances about the nature of the university environment. The defeat acted as a catalyst that:

[S]hattered the remaining sense of dynamism and momentum among the youth and created a climate wherein their frustrations concerning the university environment, the kinds of positions to which they could aspire, and the repressive political context became as explosive as in the past.

The verdicts by the military courts in February 1968 sparked the first wave of protests. Although it was factory workers in Helwan who initiated the street demonstrations, students quickly joined in the efforts, infusing the growing opposition movement with momentum that would see the uprising last for one week. Following a flurry of discussions and debates in campuses in Cairo and Alexandria on February 21, students would take to the streets of those cities the following day, resulting in clashes with police and subsequent mass arrests. According to the recollections of one student leader at the Engineering College at Cairo University, it was the Law College students who initiated the protests, but their colleagues in engineering quickly took the lead and played a central role in the events that followed, as indicated by the
selection of several students from the college to represent their peers in a meeting with the Speaker of Parliament, Anwar al-Sadat, on February 24.\textsuperscript{58}

When the march reached the gates of parliament, a student delegation was admitted to the chamber and delivered a passionate address to the body. Addressing student concerns, Sadat assured them that state security agents would not retaliate against the students for their public display. In fact, he even gave them his personal telephone numbers in case they were harassed following the meeting.\textsuperscript{59} Sure enough, that night security agents conducted raids that netted all the student leaders. The following morning, a student assembly to discuss the next course of action turned into a second street demonstration once news of the arrests spread. This time, however, the police forces were ready to confront the students. The demonstration was violently repressed through the use of clubs and tear gas, and the students eventually retreated to their campus where hundreds of them staged a sit-in. It took three days for faculty members and parents to convince the students to end their protest, and only after government officials agreed to another meeting to hear student demands.\textsuperscript{60}

The meeting and its outcome was a major point of contention as student leaders recalled that their key grievances were obfuscated by the media and government officials. For his part, Sadat attempted to narrow student demands to the issues of the perceived leniency of the military sentences and the abuses committed by the university guard. Complicit in the effort to trivialize student concerns and discredit their leaders, the press portrayed the students as spoiled children of the old elite who called for the execution of Egyptian military generals following the defeat. So careful was the regime in attempting to isolate the students and their message from reaching the wider public that Cairo police rerouted city traffic from passing the
university gates in order to prevent people from reading the banners and signs hanging from the walls.

In separate accounts of this period, Ahmed Abdalla Ruzza, president of the Higher National Committee of Cairo University Students, and Wa’il ‘Uthman, an Islamic activist and co-founder of Shabab al-Islam, stressed that the student movement united around a comprehensive program that called for liberalization of the political system and the restoration of rights and freedoms. A statement released by student leaders on the eve of their meeting with Sadat called on all students to come together for the sake of demanding their freedom which, according to them, had to be taken, and would never be given. The statement concluded with a list of eight demands:

1) The release of the detained students
2) Freedom of opinion and of the press
3) A free assembly practicing normal parliamentary life
4) Removing the intelligence and security agents from the universities
5) Issuing and enforcing laws to restore rights and freedoms
6) A serious investigation into the incident of the Helwan workers
7) Clarification of the truth of the air force trial matter
8) An investigation into the conduct of the university guard

Of these demands, only half dealt with immediate problems arising out of the protests. The rest drew attention to larger political issues and called for fundamental changes to the system. The issue of the air force trial, with which the parliament and the media had been obsessed, was listed as the seventh demand and was not greatly emphasized by the students. Despite concerted efforts to minimize the scope of the student movement’s demands, the protests did have a lasting impact on Egypt’s political scene, signaling a point of no return for the Nasser regime. In the aftermath of the February protest:

Nationally, it forced Nasser to order the retrial of the officers charged with negligence and to form a new cabinet with a civilian majority, mostly of university professors, for the first time in his rule. More significantly, it made
him seek a renewed legitimacy for his regime through the promulgation of the Program of 30 March, with its promised liberal reforms of the political system.⁶²

Within the university, students were satisfied to see that some of their demands were met, such as the lifting of censorship restrictions and the limitations on the University Guard’s ability to intervene in political activities. A new constitution for the Student Union brought an end to faculty control and offered new welfare benefits for students. As Abdalla recalled, “the most important legacy of the uprising, however, was the spirit of self-confidence which spread through the student body in its aftermath.”⁶³

That spirit carried over into another protest later in the year. In November 1968, students united in their opposition to a new education law that raised testing and graduation standards in order to ease pressures on Egyptian schools. The protests began with secondary school students marching through the streets of Mansoura but spread to other cities in Egypt, beginning with al-Azhar students in Cairo and moving on to Alexandria, whose university students kept the city’s governor on their campus until he agreed to release their arrested colleagues. The situation escalated as the street protests in Alexandria and the subsequent response by police resulted in the deaths of sixteen people, scores of injuries, and widespread destruction of property. Meanwhile in Cairo, students attempting to organize a response were preempted by an aggressive effort by government and university officials to prevent the spread of the protest. Class meeting times were changed and ultimately canceled as officials closed the university’s gates to prevent students from convening.

For the time being, the regime’s aggressive response had proved effective in quelling the spread of another protest. In what Abdalla referred to in hindsight as a “step backwards for the student movement,” some of the credibility it had built up in
February was lost in November. Without much popular outrage, students were arrested but never tried, and ultimately released after some months. The government went on an all-out offensive, with Nasser giving several speeches condemning the rash behavior of the youth and its effect on Egypt’s image abroad. The media did its part to trumpet this position, while some regime officials hoped that the failure of the movement to achieve popular support could be used as a pretext to roll back some of the liberalization measures of the March 30 Program. For their part, the students recognized that the immediate cause around which they rallied during this protest was not likely to resonate with their compatriots. Regardless of how unfair they may seem to some students, the tougher educational measures were meant to improve standards, a goal with which many Egyptians would agree, at least in theory.

Movements Converge on the Eve of Sadat

In the long-term, however, the November 1968 protest did much to continue to awaken the spirit of political activism within the nation’s student body. By the end of the year, it became clear to the regime’s highest officials that the status quo of the pre-1967 period was no more, and Nasser would have to rethink his methods of maintaining his authority. His sudden death in 1970 would mean that this task would fall to someone else, as Sadat succeeded the strong and charismatic leader. With a new ruler whose Nasserist credentials were frequently questioned and a reinvigorated student movement, the stage was set for some important developments in Egyptian political life.

When examining these critical years of transition in Egypt’s modern history, a degree of nuance is essential. Understanding the behavior of social movement actors can often become obfuscated by relying too heavily on rigid dates and landmark
events. Though only a few years apart, the student protests of 1968 and those of 1972 fall on either side of the divide in Egypt’s political timeline, and are accordingly treated as having occurred under vastly different state systems. In reality, however, the latter protests were an extension of the earlier ones and part of the same movement, evolving within a political climate that had been undergoing gradual change for a number of years.

Thus, the Sadat period can actually be said to have begun prior to his assumption of the presidency in late 1970. In contrast to his essentially marginal role during the early years after the revolution, Sadat enjoyed a sudden rise in the ranks of the Egyptian regime throughout the late 1960s, serving as prime minister and then becoming Nasser’s vice-president during the critical final years of the Nasser period.

Additionally, many of the political transformations that would mark Sadat’s term as president were actually set in motion prior to his assumption of power, in the immediate aftermath of the 1967 War. Egypt’s increasing detachment from the Soviet Union, its warming up to the West, efforts toward greater political and economic openness, and even the possibility of a peace settlement with Israel were all pursued by Nasser during his final days in office. Finally, and perhaps most directly related to the subject at hand, the student movement’s interaction with the regime during its post-1967 activism usually entailed filing grievances with Sadat in the dramatic scenes in parliament. The buck stopped with him as far as many of the students were concerned. They met with him repeatedly and depended on his promises as representative of the regime’s commitment to their demands. This is not to diminish from the importance of Sadat’s corrective revolution and consolidation of power that took place in May 1971 (and was further cemented in the October 1973 War) but
rather to emphasize that many of these developments were set in motion prior to his assumption of the presidency.

It is in this context of political uncertainty and ideological fluidity that the student movement took form. In the late 1960s, the strength of the student activist movement lay in its unity. Scholars who have examined the responses to the June War list at least three ideological factions to emerge from the defeat: secular liberal, radical socialist, and Islamic fundamentalist. But if one examines the response at the level of the student body, the most vocal and active segment of society during these critical years, a different picture emerges. This was a period of dynamism and fluidity of thought and action. Though representing different intellectual trends, the student movement united in many of its activities and shared largely the same feelings with regard to the issue of the defeat. It was not until several years later, in the early 1970s, that one begins to witness the student movement divided according to rigid ideological lines. This feeling was shared by a number of student leaders who later wrote on their experiences during the protests of 1968. Abdalla and ‘Uthman, who represented the leftist and Islamist trends respectively, would later assert that the consolidation of ideological trends and inter-student competition did not develop until the protests of 1972-1973. Until then, students united around the universal issue common to all them: the call for freedom.

But it is to that process of diffusion of political activist trends to which we now turn. In the early 1970s, the Islamic movement developed a voice of its own, independently of any pre-existing organization and purely as a force within the student movement. It became dedicated primarily to ending nearly two decades of leftist dominance and reinserting Islam into the field of student political activism. Though it is frequently excluded from the standard history of the Muslim
Brotherhood and its presence within Egyptian society in general and universities in particular, Shabab al-Islam, the short-lived organization founded by students at Cairo University’s College of Engineering, emerged as the first true heir to the Muslim Brotherhood’s student chapters. Its experience during the critical years of political transition served as an important stepping-stone in the resumption of organized Islamic activism in Egypt. The students who founded and led Shabab al-Islam signified the evolving nature of the Islamic movement, at once demonstrating that the moderate Islamic movement had evolved beyond the monopoly established by the Muslim Brotherhood, while also displaying the durability of Banna’s mission in a debilitating political climate.
Chapter Two

THE RETURN OF ISLAMIC ACTIVISM:

The Case of Shabab al-Islam

In the history of Islamic activism in the 1970s, the sheer volume of organizations, whether public advocacy groups or secret underground movements, mainstream or militant, some groups will inevitably be lost in the chaotic shuffle of history. Such has been the case with Shabab al-Islam, a movement that emerged from the shadow of the unified student movement in the late 1960s to become a key actor in the protests of 1972-73. Despite its initial success, and its enduring status as the first public expression of religious activism in Egypt in the late Nasser era, Shabab al-Islam’s term was short-lived, and its legacy often forgotten.

Upon providing the political and social context that gave rise to this group, this chapter traces the history of Shabab al-Islam, detailing its intellectual and organizational roots, along with its experiences confronting internal and external challenges. The successes and failures of the organization are closely examined through the experience of its leaders. Finally, this chapter concludes with a social movement analysis that considers repertoires of contention, political opportunity structures, and framing mechanisms to explain why Shabab al-Islam did not survive its first generation of leaders or develop into a sustainable movement. Though the two groups never encountered one another, Shabab al-Islam’s infusion of Islamic politics into Cairo University paved the way for the Muslim Brotherhood to resume its status as the leading Islamic movement organization, built in large part on the success of the student movement. While Shabab al-Islam ultimately proved to be a mere forerunner toward the widespread Islamization of Egyptian youth that took hold in the mid-
1970s, it was notable for being years ahead of its time, melding Islam and politics at a moment in modern history when the risks were prohibitive for most other groups.

**Student Political Awareness: Sustained or Contained?**

Along with its rich legacy of political activism, a primary reason that the student movement was the first independent force to resume its place on the national stage was due to its presence within an existing state institution, but one whose members could not be as tightly controlled. While Gamal Abdel Nasser could easily clamp down on the communists and the Muslim Brotherhood, he could not simply shut down the universities. And while he could placate the endless ranks of bureaucrats and soldiers by controlling their livelihoods, students were less dependent on the state for their survival, and thus had less to lose. Finally, there is something to be said about the idealism, zeal, and enthusiasm that is often associated with youth, and that should not be discounted as a factor in mobilizing the student movement after years of its effective dormancy.

In the aftermath of the 1967 defeat, students were at the forefront of the political discussions and debates taking place in Egypt. Many of them explored the spectrum of ideological and intellectual trends available within a closed and controlled political system. Because Nasser had built his regime around an Arab nationalist and radical socialist program, the majority of students had moved toward leftist political ideologies ranging from outright communism (though it was technically banned by the state) to moderate socialism. The state promoted groups that it hoped could channel the activist tendencies of the student movement within acceptable boundaries. The Socialist Youth Organization (SYO) fulfilled this purpose for several years, until it was withdrawn following the events of 1968.
The protests demonstrated that students naturally gravitated toward forces of opposition, and not the “mindless exhibitionism” of pro-regime groups. The government took a different approach with the Socialist Vanguard (SV), an underground organization meant to take on the appearance of an independent student voice for political activism, though it continued to reflect the will of the regime. The group’s leaders recruited many student activists into its ranks, and politicized the student unions of several colleges after years in which the regime had kept politics out of the university. This reflected Nasser’s new understanding, in the aftermath of the 1967 defeat, that politicization of students was inevitable, and as such it was best for the regime to offer a formidable alternative to the independent voices sprouting out of the postwar climate. The Socialist Vanguard, along with the reforms to the Student Union’s constitution that included provisions for political action, ensured that the government would preserve at least some degree of control over this process.

An Islamic “Idea” Takes Shape

Along with the leftist forces that dominated campus politics during the late 1960s by virtue of their being the only acceptable outlet, Islam-based activism was posed to make yet another comeback. Much as Nasser tried to erase its presence, the specter of his old foe, the Muslim Brotherhood, continued to maintain a presence in the intellectual life of Egypt. Following the events of 1965 and the subsequent execution of Sayyid Qutb, the organization was once again relegated to Nasser’s concentration camps and had no official presence in Egyptian society in the late 1960s. Yet it was the intellectual tradition that inspired the organization that could not be eradicated from the scene. The Muslim Brotherhood “idea” continued to live on,
even when it appeared to most observers that the organization would not. This was accomplished in a number of ways.

First, the legacy of Hasan al-Banna was such that even a leader as charismatic and domineering as Nasser could not erase him from the Egyptian collective memory. Though difficult to find in bookshops, his writings continued to be a source of inspiration for many Egyptians who exchanged them quietly. The amount of goodwill generated by the Muslim Brotherhood during its early period was too deeply rooted to do away with, even after the events of 1954 and the group’s supposed betrayal of the revolution.²

Second, there existed in Egypt a number of prominent individuals, many of them former Muslim Brotherhood officials or at least sympathetic to its mission, who continued to thrive even during the period of repression. At a time when the organization’s name could not even be spoken in public, these men ensured that the spirit of its Islamic modernist mission would persist. Individuals such as Salih al-‘Ashmawi and Sheikh Muhammad al-Ghazali, both of whom left the Muslim Brotherhood after their disagreements with Hudaybi, were spared Nasser’s prisons. While they could not openly propagate for the organization, they kept its tradition alive. Sheikh Yousuf al-Qaradawi, who had since relocated to the Gulf, also ensured that the Islamic trend made popular during the 1930s and 1940s would continue to spread well into the 1960s, and achieve the status of most prominent Islamic intellectual school in the Arab region. This was a significant transition from the early years of the Muslim Brotherhood, when its ideology and its organization were virtually inseparable. Consequently, a generation emerged that was exposed to the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood, even if it had never heard the name.
Third, the Qutb experience, along with that of Organization 1965, sent shockwaves across Egyptian society, which had not witnessed such ruthlessness by the Nasser regime toward its political opponents in over a decade. Even those who may have strongly opposed Qutb’s message were sympathetic to his plight and horrified at the possibility that someone who was at one time a personal colleague of Nasser could be sent to the gallows. Less than a year after Qutb’s execution, the naksa sent many youth in search of answers, and some of them found solace in his writings, which had presciently condemned the nation to misery and defeat until it turned toward God. The defeat, which shattered Nasser’s image, had the opposite effect on his opponents. Within some circles, Qutb’s message seemed more in tune with the experience of the 1960s, and thus superseded the traditional Muslim Brotherhood ideology. Stories of young people huddling together to read hand-written copies of Milestones were as widespread as the government’s efforts to crackdown on them.

Rise of the Religious Youth

This revived interest in religious texts appeared despite the government’s success in limiting any institutional avenue for Islam-based activism. At the universities, the only club available for religious expression was al-Gama‘ah al-Diniyyah, the Religious Group, whose functions were severely restricted to those of basic rituals such as prayers and fasting. Its members were few in number, and most expressed no interest in engaging in the protests of 1968. Instead, they preferred to engage in religious learning on matters of belief and practice, all of which was devoid of any political content.³

It is thus remarkable that, in a climate so devoid of opportunities for religiously based political expression, a group such as Shabab al-Islam could emerge.
The organization, which dated its official launch to the fall of 1972, was the product of several unique circumstances. It was founded in Cairo University’s College of Engineering, a college that featured the best and brightest that Egyptian schools had to offer during a period of increased mechanization and industrialization. Colleges of law, religion, and the humanities had suffered as a result of the push that the Nasser regime had made in the fields of science, medicine, and engineering. In the case of engineering in particular, many of the top students spent their summers in Europe for job training, and were therefore exposed to a more open environment that allowed them to contemplate and explore issues facing their countrymen at home.

Additionally, the activists of the 1970s increasingly reflected yet another demographic shift within Egyptian society. Whereas historically, educational opportunities were far greater to members of the old elite, the Nasser regime paved the way for the inclusion of the urban poor in greater numbers. However, the late 1960s saw the rise of a new middle class in Egyptian society that had greater resources at its disposal. In the case of Wa’il ‘Uthman, one of the founders of Shabab al-Islam, his family had temporarily relocated to Kuwait, where he spent his high school years, and as a result plugged into the intellectual currents there which were more openly Islamic in nature.4 Perhaps the most important development during this critical period, however, was the transition of power at the highest levels of Egyptian politics, with Sadat’s accession to the presidency. Although Islamic activists from this era generally refuted the assertion that Sadat actively aided the rise of Islamic movements, many of them readily acknowledged that his desire for a corrective revolution to combat leftist forces and Nasserist remnants provided them with the space to operate.5 This was especially true of Shabab al-Islam, the first such expression of popular religious advocacy.
‘Uthman, in his memoir recounting his college experience, recalled that the 1968 protests, even as they were led by leftist students, had a profound impact on the students of his generation who would pursue the resumption of Islamic activism. For the few students such as ‘Uthman who were not part of the leftist wave, they remained uneasy by many of the inconsistencies in the burgeoning student movement. Some student leaders were quietly members of the Socialist Vanguard, even as they purported to reject the state’s intrusion into the universities. Still others would later come to the defense of Sha‘rawi Gom‘a, Nasser’s interior minister who directed the crackdown against the protests of 1968, but was later removed from his post and arrested during Sadat’s corrective revolution of May 1971.

What made students such as ‘Uthman wary of the dominant student leadership was its propensity to change stripes depending on the political winds, while hiding its true nature. They would operate “with two faces: unabashed communism, as they were not shy to declare their atheism in our personal discussions, and a revolutionary nationalist façade that appealed to the students to join the struggle of world socialism against American imperialism.” They moved frequently from one organization to another, taking on such names as Ansar al-Thawrah al-Falastiniyyah (Supporters of the Palestinian Revolution) and Gama‘at Gawwad Hosni (Gawwad Hosni Group). By invoking causes with widespread appeal, these groups succeeded in broadening their base of support, albeit from students who may not have otherwise supported an overtly communist organization.

For students who claimed to see through the veneer of leftist activists (in fact, ‘Uthman and others routinely referred to them only as “communists”), the period that followed the 1968 protests was a critical juncture in which each side rallied its troops for the ensuing battle. While the leftist students had the luxury of nearly two decades
of dominance, along with some important friends and considerable resources, the
Islamist students could not even count on the support of the sole religious
organization on campus, and were forced to commence their mission at a severe
disadvantage.

At the beginning of the 1968-69 academic year, ‘Uthman appealed to leaders
of al-Gama’ah al-Diniyyah to publish a political wall magazine. These bulletins,
which covered the walls of the university, were the most unambiguous measure of
student activism, which ‘Uthman boasted were “the freest press in Egypt.” At
Leftist students had honed their skills by publishing dozens of regular wall magazines around
which hundreds of students had crowded every morning, and continued to discuss
throughout the day. Independent wall magazines were few in number and ran
infrequently. Al-Gama’ah al-Diniyyah declined ‘Uthman’s offer and continued its
habitual reposting of a Qur’anic verse or a Hadith, which attracted few readers.

‘Uthman then took it upon himself to found a new bulletin, entitled Ara’ Hurra (Free
Opinions), which he proceeded to edit until 1975. Initial articles focused on the
general issues of corruption in Egypt and the reaction to the defeat. While most leftist
students asserted the need for a renewed alliance with the Eastern Bloc, ‘Uthman
argued for a “return to God and the rebuilding of the Egyptian citizen on the basis of
Islamic values and principles.”

The dominant discourse within the university was challenged for the first time
in years, and the leftist student groups were alarmed at this sudden arrival of a new
opponent. Nonetheless, the subsequent months would witness the rise of a spirited
discussion among students that would be unique to Cairo University’s College of
Engineering. Students debated the merits of the political trends available to them,
while the leftists hoped to solidify their place in the leadership of the student
movement. The two academic years from late 1969 through the spring of 1971 featured no major outbreaks from the student movement. It was notably quiet for at least two major reasons. For one, there were no significant events or incidents to provoke the students into action.\(^\text{11}\) Moreover, these years witnessed the final decline of the Nasser regime, culminating with his death in September 1970. Many students preferred to approach the rise of his successor with cautious observation before determining their next course of action. Not long thereafter, however, this period proved to be, as ‘Uthman later recalled, the calm before the storm.

The Diverging Path of Student Protests

The process of lifting Egypt out of the Soviet camp, which was initiated by Nasser, was accelerated by his successor. Moreover, Sadat’s consolidation of power depended highly on his ability to remove longstanding figures from the so-called “centers of power” and cultivate a new ideological program that centered on his power. It was thus no surprise that leftist student activists felt threatened after the events of May 1971, while students such as ‘Uthman and his colleagues discerned a real sea change that would pave the way for the resumption of Islamic activism for the first time in a generation. These young men believed the first step in that direction was to exploit the developing rift between Sadat and the Soviet Union, revealing that it was not in Egypt’s interest to forge ahead with that relationship, and thereby discrediting the leftists who had staked their reputations on the ascendancy of the communist east in the face of the imperialist west.

‘Uthman spent the summer of 1972 working in an engineering training program in Holland, an opportunity provided to a select number of Egyptian students. While there, he came upon an article in \textit{Newsweek} that detailed Sadat’s growing
differences with the Soviets, especially on the issue of whether Egypt could go to war to reclaim the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. Such a topic was considered taboo to discuss in Egypt, and as such, no one had reported on these developments. Few Egyptians were aware of the seriousness of the differences in the Egyptian-Soviet relationship, especially the fact that Moscow was obstructing Egyptian preparations for war. When the academic year began that fall, the newest issue of *Free Opinions* carried a full translation of the *Newsweek* piece, along with a commentary by ‘Uthman. So explosive was the article that angry leftist students and security agents repeatedly tore down the bulletin, only for more copies to pop up on walls around the university grounds. The article was the first in a series of events that was to dent the credibility of the leftist student leadership, which had reached its zenith earlier in the year.

In January, the first phase of protests threatened to undo Sadat’s gradual consolidation of power. After 1971 was to be “the year of decision” vis-à-vis Israel’s continued occupation of Egypt, months passed without any resolution to the untenable situation of “no war, no peace.” Students began to pressure the government into action by publicizing the issue of Israel’s military presence and highlighting the plight of Palestinians during a “Palestine Week” held in December at the College of Engineering. Sadat responded with a speech on January 13, 1972, in which he cited the instability caused by the war fought between India and Pakistan, along with an analogy of “the fog” in previous attempts to take on Israel as the reasons for the lack of action. The infamous fog speech, intended to justify the regime’s inaction and allay growing restiveness had the opposite effect of riling the anger of many Egyptians, especially among the student population. Under the banner of the Supporters of the
Palestinian Revolution, leftist university students led a series of protests and sit-ins in mid-January.

In order to bypass the weak and ineffective Student Union, student leaders combined the movements across the multiple faculties to establish the Higher National Committee of Cairo University Students (HNCCUS). After a heated assembly dominated by leftist students, the committee issued a list of demands for the government and staged a sit-in to demonstrate their commitment to the issues. Although the Islamist students joined in the effort, ‘Uthman noted that he became critical of the leadership once they continued their protest even after most of their demands had been met.  

In fact, ‘Uthman was selected as part of a student delegation that met with Arab Socialist Union (ASU) officials, including Sayyid Mar‘i, the minister of agriculture and a regime insider. The following day, the national press announced the government’s plans to take serious steps to prepare for the war, including suspending classes to allow students to commence military training. Rather than end the protests, however, the Supporters of the Palestinian Revolution staged a new round of sit-ins and agitated a large number of students to resume their anti-government positions.

‘Uthman recalled:

I asked myself, what do they want? What is the point of another protest? …I replayed the events of the previous three days in my mind and concluded that the matter was a communist attempt to sow chaos and seize control of the student community. Their reneging on the training agreement confirmed it.

As the sit-ins spread beyond Cairo University’s campus into other parts of the city, the regime took more decisive action against the students and their supporters. Following a series of police raids on January 24-25, the protests were broken up and hundreds of people were arrested. The government also withdrew its support for the statement in which it had pledged to include the students in war preparations.
Though it had failed to achieve its primary objectives, the January 1972 protest allowed the student movement to consolidate its power under a mostly leftist leadership, saw the convergence of a burgeoning anti-communist bloc, and the decline of the Student Union, which became one of the weakest in its history. The long-term effects would also be felt by the regime, as “this was the first occasion on which President Sadat had had to face street riots, and it set a precedent which he never forgave or forgot.”

It is in this context that the student movement entered the fall 1972 semester, full of hope, energy, and dynamism. Though the momentum was clearly in favor of the leftist students, who had helped establish the Higher Committee only to take full control of it, ‘Uthman and his colleagues believed the supremacy of the leftist movement was ripe for confrontation. Both sides acknowledged that the weeks that followed featured fierce attacks against the views of the other, both in print, as ‘Uthman had done with his wall magazine’s opening issue of the term, and in person, as supporters of both camps exchanged strong words and, on occasion, blows over their political ideology of choice.

For its part, the regime attempted to use this situation to its advantage. On the one hand, the fact that neither side supported the government was of concern to Sadat, who considered the wall magazines and their highly critical viewpoints “obscene” expressions on the part of the students. Both the leftists and the Islamists opposed the delays in the war of liberation and pushed an agenda of expanded freedoms and the restoration of democracy in Egypt. On the other hand, Sadat stood to benefit from the exploitation of the fundamental differences between the emerging factions. He took specific measures that created the political space to allow for the resumption of Islamic activism. Among these was the appointment of Ahmed Kamal Abul Magd as
general secretary of the ASU Youth Organization in August 1971. Abul Magd was a prominent attorney with close ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, though he himself was not a member. As Beattie noted, “His directorship augured well for some degree of Islamization of that organization’s curriculum and activities. This heightened the likelihood of Egyptian youth receiving a new type of political socialization—one with a much heavier religious coloration.”19 During the student protests nearly six months later, it was Abul Magd on whom the regime relied to quell the protesters, sending him to Cairo University’s auditorium to hear their concerns and provide reassurances, only for him to be taunted and ridiculed by the students.20 When Sadat met with students only days before Abul Magd’s appointment, he “told them that the state would no longer interfere in student activities.”21 However, these signals were precisely the impetus needed to encourage the rise of new groups within the student movement.

**The New Face of Islamic Activism**

On November 16, 1972, ‘Uthman and several of his friends in the College of Engineering, including ‘Esam al-Ghazali an elder student who had become well known for his political poetry, and ‘Adli Mustafa, a popular student who had served as vice-president of the Student Union and captain of the national volleyball team, came together at the college’s auditorium to announce the establishment of Gama‘at Shabab al-Islam (The Society of the Youth of Islam). They were joined by Sheikh Muhammad al-Ghazali, the prominent scholar and thinker. As ‘Uthman reminisced, the event was a smashing success. “In the history of student meetings held at the college, never was the auditorium so full. My eyes welled with tears as I witnessed the widespread popular affirmation of our Islamic movement.”22 That evening, the
British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) radio news service reported on the event, announcing it as a takeover of Cairo University’s Engineering College by the Muslim Brotherhood, although the organization had not been mentioned at all during the event.\footnote{Perhaps this was a sign of the magnitude of the establishment of Shabab al-Islam, as it was difficult to envision an active Islamic movement organization in Egypt that was not affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood.}

In the weeks leading up to the announcement, several developments paved the way for the establishment of the first political Islamic organization in nearly two decades. Mustafa, who spent his summer working in Germany, returned to Egypt with the determination to launch a student group with an Islamic orientation to face off against an increasingly polarizing leftist movement. ‘Esam al-Ghazali had been at the university for many years and was on the verge of graduating, but believed in the importance of this project and became a figure around whom many students rallied. Known for his incisive poetry, Ghazali was viewed by many of his peers as the visionary behind the movement and the heart and soul of Shabab al-Islam. Together, Mustafa, Ghazali, and another student, ‘Abd al-Hamid Bahgat, traveled to the three-day conference of Cairo University’s Student Union that was held in Mansoura beginning on October 9, 1972. The delegation proposed the formation of a new group, and despite fierce opposition from leftist student leaders, the Student Union’s Committee on Religion and Society decreed the establishment of Shabab al-Islam at the different faculties within Cairo University, with a mission “to create an Islamic environment at the university and to inform students of Islamic principles.”\footnote{Shabab al-Islam’s account of this meeting, reported by ‘Uthman and confirmed by Mustafa and Ghazali, differs from the Student Union’s official conference report, which makes no mention of the organization’s establishment.}
‘Uthman maintained that this report was later amended to remove any mention of Shabab al-Islam, a likely explanation considering that the organization could not have been announced and functioned as openly as it did without some degree of official sanction. According to the group’s recollection, Shabab al-Islam was a designated organization by the Student Union, but was to operate with its own independent budget. Its president was to have a seat on the council of the Student Union, while the group itself could select a faculty advisor and maintain its own membership list. The Cairo University Student Union officially established Shabab al-Islam at the Engineering College on October 21. In early November, the organization held a closed camp to determine its internal structure. Mustafa was elected president. Additionally, five committees were created: 1) Thought and Callers; 2) Publication and Outreach; 3) Communication; 4) Preparation; 5) Follow-up. Finally, a larger coordination committee combined the heads of the five committees with the group’s president, faculty advisor, and the college dean to determine the organization’s agenda.25

Almost immediately, the group began to hold events, inviting guest speakers, hosting student-led political discussions, as well as posting articles in ‘Uthman’s wall magazine. It also used a series of press releases to set the stage for Shabab al-Islam’s arrival on the scene of student activism. One of the first statements called attention to the threat of external forces to Egypt’s Islamic identity. While the obvious fear was the military danger brought about by Israel’s occupation, a far greater danger lay in the ideological campaign waged to discredit Islam and replace it with foreign systems of social organization. Once the threat was sufficiently described, Shabab al-Islam issued its call to action:

Patience has run out, for there is no path but that of serious, hard work. We need to be sprung out of this false world that has brought us nothing but
backwardness and defeat. We need to spring forth this faith through honor and victory, to use its glimmering light to launch us toward redemption. Our brothers, this is the path of redemption. Get out of the path of the weak slaves to the path of God, the almighty and powerful.26

The group’s leaders identified weakness, fear, and disunity as the major obstacles to its success and called on students to face these three dangers head-on through embracing their faith.27 However, another impediment to the young organization’s progress came in the form of state efforts to undermine its success. Shabab al-Islam’s first brush with authorities occurred on November 14, when ASU officials sabotaged a scheduled lecture by al-Bahi al-Khouli, a well-known Islamic thinker. According to Ghazali, security agents came to him at 3AM the previous night and told him that they feared retaliation by leftist students at the event. Concern over Khouli’s personal safety was a pretext, Shabab al-Islam would contend, since the method and manner in which the message was delivered was meant to intimidate the guest speaker, as well as send a message to the new organization that it would not survive for long without the active support of the regime. At the scheduled event, Ghazali revealed the entire incident to the audience and vowed that Shabab al-Islam would not be deterred from its mission.

Two days later, its official launch event was held to great fanfare. Six hundred people joined Shabab al-Islam that night alone, with hundreds more joining in the days that followed. Its membership numbers swelled to became far and away the largest student organization. Students from other faculties came to sign up for membership, as did young professionals and workers from outside the university. ‘Uthman recalls that it made his group “resemble a political party at a time when such a venture was unheard of.”28
Organizational Challenges

The group’s activities continued with great success in the weeks that followed, but a set of new challenges was not far behind, whether from the government or fellow students. Shortly after the initial announcement, Shabab al-Islam’s leadership was contacted by Muhammad Osman Ismail, an ASU official and future governor of Assiut who had joined Sadat’s inner circle and was intent on restraining leftist elements. At a meeting in his office, Ismail offered Mustafa and ‘Uthman the regime’s full support for their activities. He hoped to expand the organization’s efforts within the university and pledged a sum of 10,000 Egyptian Pounds (a hefty amount in that period) to that end. He promised the two students freedom to hold an annual summer camp for activists from all Egyptian universities: in effect, the regime was determined to orchestrate Shabab al-Islam’s control over the entire student movement. ‘Uthman recalled that they were not being asked to spy on other students or take orders from any higher power, but simply “to continue doing what we were doing.”

Tempting though the offer was, both Mustafa and ‘Uthman politely declined and promptly returned to their normal course of action, trying to reach out to the student body. On December 21, Shabab al-Islam hosted a meeting of student leaders from other faculties at the student cafeteria in the College of Engineering. What brought all the groups together was their common interest in combating the leftist forces dominating student activism. With the regime now supporting the repression of communists, Marxists, and Nasserists within the student movement, the Student Unions were tasked with carrying out this mission, but had little credibility or legitimate following within the student population. Thus, they hoped to ride the coattails of the newly established Islamic organization and sought to utilize their growth to the regime’s advantage.
‘Uthman later wrote that the discussion reflected a fundamental misunderstanding between the students. Shabab al-Islam members had to continuously repel suggestions of violent confrontation with the leftist students, for which the Student Union leaders were agitating. They insisted that violence was not to be used, even in the face of violence on the part of the leftists and regardless of how abhorrent they found their views. Mustafa also consistently had to push back suggestions to form an anti-leftist student militia, and was ready to call off the summit when Ghazali intervened. He thought the groups could still find some common ground and suggested that they release a joint statement announcing their platform. It began by requesting the Egyptian president to fulfill his motto of “science and faith” by allowing Islamic thought to flourish alongside capitalist and socialist ideologies.

Shabab al-Islam’s leaders were stunned when one student stepped forward offering to print ten thousand copies of the release, not an easy sum of paper to come by for most student groups, suggesting that he enjoyed the support of far more powerful forces. The following day, the release was issued in the name of the various student groups, but with a number of notable omissions, such as the call for the republication of works by Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb. According to ‘Uthman, “the overall statement was nothing more than an attack on communism phrased in Islamic terms.” Shabab al-Islam immediately issued a statement denouncing the original press release and producing the unedited version.

This was not the first incident in which the organization was mischaracterized by outside forces, affiliated with the regime, who wished to exploit its credibility with the student body. Shortly after the November announcement, a group within the College of Law calling itself Shabab al-Islam disrupted a meeting of leftist students, using knives to attack the other students. As ‘Uthman wrote, “we immediately
disavowed and exposed them …and later discovered that the orders to this group came from the office of the Arab Socialist Union’s general secretary.”

Indeed, by early 1973, and especially under the cover of the new round of student protests, Shabab al-Islam’s leaders struggled to control the name of their organization. It was consistently cited in violent confrontations with leftist students and security forces. Mustafa repeatedly heard of new chapters of the group sprouting up in various colleges, without the approval, or even knowledge, of Shabab al-Islam’s founders at the College of Engineering. The leaders took measures to limit the damage foreign elements could carry out on the organization. Mustafa issued a statement announcing that the only official chapter of Shabab al-Islam was the one at Cairo University’s College of Engineering and even announced a list of just five students who were authorized to speak on behalf of the organization. As Ghazali had already graduated, the list included Mustafa, ‘Uthman, Bahgat, Sayyid ‘Azzazi, and Mustafa al-Simari.

Additionally, Mustafa proceeded to expunge the membership list of students who previously acted as provocateurs or those known to have ties with leftist groups or the regime. “All were still welcome to attend our events,” he said, “but only we could speak on behalf of the organization.” These efforts did not stop others from attempting to represent or associate themselves with Shabab al-Islam. ‘Uthman reported that, “State security tried to spread the rumor that we were their creation. Known informants would try and defend us publicly knowing it would ruin our reputation.” So severe was the problem that the sides occasionally came to blows over the attempts by some to usurp the voice of Shabab al-Islam. Mustafa acted as the enforcer in these instances, at one point beating a student who continued to claim to
speak for the organization, and in other instance, even calling on the assistance of his volleyball teammates in a showdown with other students.\textsuperscript{38}

Direct efforts by the government to co-opt Shabab al-Islam continued through a variety of tactics that included inducements as well as threats. Following the rejection of Ismail’s offer and then the renunciation of the united student press release (which ostensibly had the backing of the regime), state security agents conducted overnight raids of the student movement on December 30, 1972. Approximately seventy students were arrested, the overwhelming majority of them leaders of the various leftist groups. One of those arrested, however, was ‘Esam al-Ghazali, the unifying force within Shabab al-Islam. The arrest delivered a devastating blow to Shabab al-Islam. Without its charismatic elder, internal divisions became more acute. The group’s leaders were divided as to whether or not to combine their efforts with those of the leftist students to free their abducted comrades.

The government raids were conducted in the shadow of renewed efforts by the student movement to lobby for more freedoms and political space. Only days earlier, a summit by a student organization called the National Democrat Group issued demands for new Student Union elections, or in the event that they did not take place, the establishment of an independent union that genuinely represented student interests. While some students saw this move as the legitimate expression of student aspirations for freedom and democracy, Shabab al-Islam was highly critical of the proposal, believing it to be a new tactic to legitimize leftist leadership of the student movement.\textsuperscript{39} Mere hours before the mass arrests, Sadat gave an angry speech calling for “‘the practice of democracy without fear’ and stated that ‘as of this night’ he would not allow the country’s youth to be misled by ‘the fanatical right or the
adventurist left.” These events were the spark that officially brought about the student protests of 1973. As ‘Abdalla described it:

A wave of protest broke out in five Egyptian universities and in a number of higher institutes. This took the form of mass meetings, sit-ins in various faculties, leaflets and wall-magazines and confrontations with security forces around the university campuses, which resulted in serious disruption of studies. 

Efforts by Shabab al-Islam to unite with other groups were often ineffective and disjointed. Mustafa and ‘Uthman refused to adopt a broad platform of political demands because of the major differences they had with the leftists, agreeing only to call for the release of the arrested students. On issues of tactics, the groups also voiced major disagreements. Leftist students proposed to lead a march outside the university walls, which Shabab al-Islam’s leaders refused to participate in, because they believed it would serve as a pretext for the government to shut down the university and lock its gates, as they had done a year earlier, forcing the students to disperse and effectively ending the protests. ‘Uthman worried that, as a new group, the university’s closure would be the worst possible outcome for Shabab al-Islam because it would slow the movement’s momentum and possibly destroy the organization.

Instead, his colleagues determined to take a different course of action: on January 2, 1973, they staged a sit-in at the office of Dr. Fu’ad ‘Asal, the dean of the College of Engineering. With only a handful of students joining Shabab al-Islam’s chosen method of protest, the sit-in quickly turned into a hunger strike, the first of its kind in several decades. Although the hunger strike made waves within the university, prompting professors and administrators to plead with the students to end their demonstration, the move failed to gain traction with the public at large, and went unnoticed by the media. It ended a day later as ‘Asal successfully convinced the students to leave his office, and they eventually dropped their protest altogether.
‘Uthman later expressed his regret that Shabab al-Islam had not taken a stronger stand from the outset, and capitalized on the large number of students willing to participate in a protest within the university walls rather than joining the leftists in their march through the streets of Cairo.⁴²

Not wanting to take any more chances, the government shut down the university. Protests continued for weeks across the country, with Assuit University students engaging in historic marches never before seen in upper Egypt. On occasion, Shabab al-Islam came together with the leftist groups to issue joint statements demanding the release of the detained students, the withdrawal of university police, and the lifting of restrictions on student activism. In several speeches, Sadat responded with a hard line position that was highly critical of the student movement and implied that a larger conspiracy was at work. A parliamentary investigation concluded that outside forces—from the left and the right—were responsible for corrupting the students and using them in their bid to destabilize the government. Despite accusations that the student movement stood against democracy, it was actually the regime that continued to restrict the activities of Egyptian students, banning wall magazines and placing universities under the control of security agents, in addition to expelling hundreds of ASU members, as Muhammad Osman Ismail had done.

While participating in the protests, Shabab al-Islam also began to engage members of the regime to pursue the release of their arrested leader. An attempt to visit Ghazali in prison failed after a verbal altercation with a prison guard. Subsequently, however, ‘Uthman recalled that in meetings with ASU officials, some of them at the senior levels of leadership, he and Mustafa were consistently surprised at how friendly and gracious the officials were, with many of them hoping to impress
their young visitors with their Islamic credentials, visibly praying as they came in to the office, or placing Qur’ans prominently on their desks. Most of them stressed how supportive they were of Shabab al-Islam’s mission, and some even offered to lend their support, including Ismail, who continuously offered financial incentives and the full backing of the ASU. ‘Uthman noted the irony in that, while his organization was constantly lavished with praise, one of its leaders continued to languish in prison without any officials working toward his release.43

In fact, it was only after Shabab al-Islam retained the pro bono services of a prominent attorney, Muhammad Shawkat al-Tuni, that Ghazali was eventually released from prison without charges, on March 24, nearly three months after his arrest. The 1973 protests ended as most students were released, though some still had to face trials on charges related to their political activities. On the eve of the October War, however, the regime dropped the charges and ended the trials in an effort to galvanize the nation in support of the war effort.

**Multi-Dimensional Activism**

Shabab al-Islam resumed its activities that fall, taking on a number of important issues, not the least of which was the impending war to reclaim the occupied territories. Sadat successfully galvanized the nation in support of the war effort, including the leaders of the student movement, who established defense committees in the various universities across Egypt. In its activities, Shabab al-Islam also led the way in educating students about the plight of Muslims in other parts of the world. Speakers, from Eritrea to the Philippines, were invited to give presentations on the oppressive conditions facing Muslims in these countries. As Mustafa later recalled, for most Egyptians, it was the first time they were even made aware that
these places were home to Muslims.\textsuperscript{44} An occasional lecture on the situation of Muslim communities in the various Soviet republics was sure to raise the ire of leftist students, already under attack for their support of the Soviet Union at a time when the political winds in Egypt were steadily shifting from East to West.

In regular study circles, Shabab al-Islam members read and discussed works by many of the most influential modern Islamic thinkers, from Banna to Qutb, and Mawdudi to ‘Ali ‘Abd al-‘Adhim. The students were also frequently joined by prominent figures such as Muhammad al-Ghazali, ‘Isa ‘Abdo, and Sayyid Sabiq.

Although dominated entirely by male students, Shabab al-Islam also sponsored occasional activities for female students. Segregated meetings and conferences were organized and led by women, focusing on many of the same issues as events organized by their male counterparts. These events also tackled the larger political questions facing the country, as well as matters of ritual and practice, some of which were tailored specifically to their female audience. In contrast to the year he began university when virtually no women wore the headscarf, Mustafa observed that the practice had spread considerably by the time he graduated in 1975. Indeed, though Islamic student activism was largely a male domain, its success was partially measured by the visibility of female religious observance.

In addition to the wall magazines, by 1974, Shabab al-Islam had also launched an official publication, \textit{Wa Islamah}. The sixty-page magazine produced six issues over the course of a year and covered topics ranging from religious instruction and student mobilization to national politics and international causes. In a typical issue for example, Mustafa’s opening editorial lamented the aggressive posturing on the part of some students as they attempted to coerce their colleagues into joining the Islamic movement. This was followed with a critical book review by ‘Uthman of a recent
work on da’wa by a popular Islamic writer. Another article made an impassioned plea to unify the Islamic movement in the university, asking the rhetorical question, “If we as students cannot realistically impact the state of despair and disunity afflicting Muslims throughout the world, then can we not at least change our own state of affairs?”

The remaining pieces included an article challenging the Minister of Information over censorship policies, reports about the plight of Muslims in Eritrea and Somalia, and a political poem entitled, “A Window onto Hell.” The magazine demonstrated an evolution of Shabab al-Islam, as a more sophisticated method of transmitting its message and providing more depth to the issues it advocated. But it was to be short-lived, as the organization itself was nearing its end.

An End and a Beginning

In spite of its successful infusion of an Islamic component to the student movement, Shabab al-Islam ultimately succumbed to both external as well as internal pressures and ceased to function after 1975. Efforts to co-opt the organization for the regime’s purposes continued to take their toll on the student leaders. ‘Uthman and Mustafa had yet another meeting with a top government official in 1973. This time it was Ahmed Kamal Abul Magd who offered the young men incentives to coordinate their group with the regime. Additionally, Abul Magd hoped to instill some degree of fear into the student leaders should they proceed independently. He told them that Sadat was extremely upset with them and that it was only through his own intervention that they were spared a fate worse than ‘Esam al-Ghazali’s brief imprisonment. Mustafa became angered at the suggestion that Abul Magd had saved Shabab al-Islam from the wrath of Sadat, and abruptly left the meeting. He later
recalled that he “could not sit down with someone who did not treat us as equals, someone who believed they had us by the neck and held something over us.”46

Shabab al-Islam’s relationship with al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah also played an important part in the decline of the former, as the latter reached its ascendancy in the mid-1970s. As early as November 1972, Shabab al-Islam hoped to include the religiously observant contingent of students at Cairo University in charting out its organization. While links were forged between the leaderships of both groups, al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah repeatedly withdrew its support for the overtly political activist organization. On the eve of Shabab al-Islam’s announcement, a meeting between the core members of both groups at al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah’s modest prayer hall, led by Mustafa of Shabab al-Islam and ‘Esam al-Sheikh of al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah, ended in agreement to jointly announce the launch of the new group, only for Sheikh to withdraw his organization’s support at the eleventh hour. Another attempt to unify the groups a month later ended in failure when, according to Mustafa, al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah insisted that ‘Uthman and al-Ghazali be removed from Shabab al-Islam as a condition for its members joining. Elections scheduled for that day were hampered by al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah’s change of heart, as it held its meeting at a different location from the agreed upon site of the elections.47

The disagreements between the two groups stemmed from their different visions of Islamic activism. Shabab al-Islam’s model grew out of the student movement of the 1960s. Though it staunchly disagreed with its leftist counterpart, in many ways it captured the essence of its activist trend. As is detailed in Chapter Four, al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah (subsequently, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah) relied on a different model, one that emphasized strong hierarchical leadership and an Islamic basis for the organizational structure, complete with a position of “amir.” Their camps
and activities also maintained a far more rigid religious tone, one that was influenced by the steady infusion of Salafi thought—a mark of the 1970s shift in Egyptian religious culture. One of Shabab al-Islam’s main critiques of al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah was the unwillingness of its rank-and-file members to be allowed the freedom to think and decide for themselves. Without Sheikh’s approval, no member was allowed to join Shabab al-Islam, forcing Mustafa to rely on the general student population, whose religious credentials were less assured, to make up the bulk of Shabab al-Islam’s base.48

Indeed, the tension between the two groups was palpable as one organization’s downfall meant the ascendancy of the other. Opinions varied within Shabab al-Islam, as to whether al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah actively aided the government’s tactics against it, or if it simply offered an alternative for the regime to co-opt once Shabab al-Islam refused overtures by state officials. Mustafa believed that not only did its leaders help propagate rumors that Shabab al-Islam was secretly an organ of the state, but that it was in fact al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah that actually accepted the government’s offer of support for its activities, evidenced by the lavish camps organized in the years following Shabab al-Islam’s departure.49 While ‘Uthman did not go so far as to suggest collusion on the part of al-Sheikh, he believed that al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah stood to gain the most from the organizational failure of Shabab al-Islam, explaining its overly cautious political strategy that allowed it to survive efforts to subdue the most vocal wing of the student movement while Shabab al-Islam was on the front lines of that struggle.

On the other side, depictions of Shabab al-Islam by members of al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah (and later, the Muslim Brotherhood) were often quite derogatory. It was frequently portrayed as a creation of the state, not only to combat the leftist student
movement, but also to undermine the legitimate Islamic movement as led by al-Gama‘ah al-Diniyyah. Its failure in that effort, according to some accounts, was because the students of Shabab al-Islam failed to embody Islamic ideals in their daily lives, by openly smoking and engaging female students. They also could not build their credibility because the events they held and their guest speakers were regime officials.\textsuperscript{50} According to this narrative, Shabab al-Islam was a government tool that failed in its mission to bring all Islamic activism under its control. A more recent academic study on the Islamic movement during this period relates the same picture: that Shabab al-Islam was the brainchild of Muhammad Osman Ismail, which failed to attract “genuinely Islamic” activist students to it.\textsuperscript{51}

In any case, 1974 was the pivotal year during which Shabab al-Islam was succeeded by al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, whose leaders held their first major camp that summer. The principal figures of Shabab al-Islam had either already graduated, or were on the verge of completing their studies. When its founder graduated a year later, he told the remaining members to join al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah to avoid any divisions in the Islamic movement. According to Mustafa, most did not mind, as the younger members had only recently joined Shabab al-Islam and were not party to the divisions that defined the 1972-1973 period. Those who did not join generally quit activism altogether, but no one tried to form a competing group out of the ashes of Shabab al-Islam.\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{Islamic Activism for a New Age: The Legacy of Shabab al-Islam}

In the broad narrative of Islamic activism since the late 1960s, Shabab al-Islam is almost universally excluded from the standard timeline. Whatever brief mention it receives is usually dismissive and accusatory in tone. This is partly a
product of the reality that contemporary Islamic activism in Egypt is dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood, to which Shabab al-Islam had no direct connection. In contrast, al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah is frequently portrayed as the predecessor to the resumption of Islamic activism on a large scale, due primarily to the fact that most of its members eventually joined the Muslim Brotherhood. It is therefore instructive to reflect on the legacy of Shabab al-Islam and its contribution to Egyptian society. In a critical period of transition, Shabab al-Islam acted as the bridge between the radical politics that defined the student movement of the late 1960s and the emergence of a rejuvenated Islamic movement in the mid-1970s.

The founders of Shabab al-Islam, young men like ‘Adli Mustafa, Wa‘il ‘Uthman, and ‘Esam al-Ghazali, traced their intellectual upbringing to the Islamic trends that dominated that era: the ritualism of Ansar al-Sunna, the legalism of al-Gam‘iyyah al-Shar‘iyyah, and the social consciousness of al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun. Despite these influences, this generation of youth did not join any of these groups and lacked the organizational structure to guide its activities. ‘Uthman recalled that they “did not have elders to look up to, there was no generation of mentors in our group. We were on our own.” The message that was distilled from the many intellectual currents was a simplified version of Islamically conscious politics, as Mustafa summed up in his statement, “We are an organization to announce the word of God. We believe that no one should determine the fate of Muslims but Muslims, and that the student leadership should be Islamic, not communist, socialist, Nasserist, Western, or secularist.” Following years of frustration due to individual efforts, the Islamically conscious students came together to form an organization that united their beliefs and their mission under one banner.
Although it was religious in character, and as its leaders maintained, the first political Islamic organization of that period, Shabab al-Islam did not hark back to a bygone era of Islamic politics or adopt the model established by organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1940s. Rather, it operated within the same vein as its ideological foes and appropriated their system of organization. Thus, while it blanketed its message in an Islamic hue, Shabab al-Islam relied on much the same modes of pursuing its mission as its leftist adversaries. In the language of Social Movement Theory, the repertoires of contention were vastly similar, even as they advocated for entirely different goals. For one, Shabab al-Islam adopted the vanguardist model that saw the newly urbanized and privileged middle class youth as part of a unique generation destined to become the future leaders of society. ‘Uthman stated that much of Shabab al-Islam’s activities were only possible because of the commitment of its leaders who spent their own allowances to fund them. These students also believed it was their role to lead the laborers and bureaucrats who were energized by the group’s mission but were too afraid to become involved in its daily activities.

In the course of its activism, Shabab al-Islam’s repertoire consisted of many of the same traits that defined the broader student movement: wall magazines, banners and slogans, sit-ins and marches, heated wars of words and the occasional violent brawl. It also released formal statements, ratified resolutions, and joined in larger institutional efforts, whether by endorsing ad hoc unity organizations or imploring the Student Union to take official action. In short, the students of this period were the children of the revolution and embodied its spirit in their actions, even when the focus of their advocacy was contrary to the prevailing political ideology of the time. Their model was the protest movement of 1968, not only in Egypt’s universities, but also in
the educational halls of France, where student fervor was at its height and the collective action of the youth reverberated among Egyptian students, some of whom were directly exposed to European political culture during their summers abroad.

In addition to its own methods and motivations, Shabab al-Islam succeeded in galvanizing support for religious activism in part due to the timing of its emergence and the external factors that paved the way for its arrival. These political opportunity structures include a range of possible variables, including “the level of formal and informal access to political institutions and decision-making, the degree of political system receptivity to challenger groups, the prevalence of allies and opponents, the stability of the ruling elite coalition, the nature of state repression, and state institutional capacity.”

By all accounts, the period that witnessed the decline of the Nasser regime and Sadat’s consolidation of power was strategically significant, if not imperative for the rise of new opposition movements in Egypt. Nasser’s decade and a half era of repression successfully excluded opposing political forces and silenced all dissent, but the shock of the 1967 defeat provided just the opportunity for the opposition to coalesce. As Nasser attempted to correct the course of his regime, Tocqueville’s words from two centuries earlier rang true when he observed that “the most perilous moment for a bad government is when it seeks to mend its ways.”

Egyptians, led by the students, guessed correctly that the regime was in no position to repress the new opposition with the same ferocity that it had previously enforced its internal security measures. Consequently, the slightly opened political space provided just the opportunity for students to express their frustrations. In the university environment this manifested in the relaxation of censorship laws, resulting in the highly politicized wall magazines and the gradual withdrawal of the university guard, creating the space for mass demonstrations and marches. Moreover, students
found a moderate degree of success when their pleas to the state were heard at the highest levels. The dramatic scenes of student delegations confronting the prime minister in a public forum established a new precedent for social movement interactions with the state, one that was to be repeated throughout the 1970s. Students were given more room to operate because their protests were not viewed as a threat in the same light as movements with fuller political objectives, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. As the frustrations of Sadat, Ismail, and Abul Magd demonstrate, at its worst, the student movement was still only perceived as the product of youthful indiscretions or the plotting of some foreign political forces. As Mustafa recalled, the burning question that he and his colleagues faced constantly during interrogations was “Who is behind you?”

While Shabab al-Islam generally experienced the same political opportunity structures as the broader student movement, its position as an Islamic movement gave it an occasional slight edge over its leftist counterparts. During his consolidation of power, Sadat repeatedly threatened political agitators from “the fanatical right” to “the adventurist left” and even made good on those threats with the 1972 wave of arrests that afflicted students from both camps. However, in its recalibration of the country’s political identity, the regime also specifically reached out to leaders of the Islamic movement, thus providing Shabab al-Islam with opportunities to pursue its agenda in a variety of other ways. The multiple meetings between regime officials and leaders of Shabab al-Islam added another dimension to the group’s activities and granted the students a greater understanding of the inner workings of the political machine. However, this too came with a cost. Whatever Shabab al-Islam gained from its ability to hold direct talks with the state it lost in credibility with the student population, at times giving the appearance that the organization was yet another
government arm. In fact, the organization suffered a double blow, as its dealings with the state often served only to prove the organization’s limitations. Shabab al-Islam’s members continued to suffer intimidation, repression, and arrests, and ultimately found it impossible to free their imprisoned comrade through these back channels. Mustafa later conceded that, “When they arrested ‘Esam, they almost killed the movement because he was our senior. …We looked up to him and rallied around him.”

Thus while Shabab al-Islam enjoyed a wider array of political opportunities than its adversaries, it also experienced firsthand the constraints imposed by a closed system.

As a smaller movement that did not have the benefit of years of widespread political indoctrination, the burgeoning Islamic movement was frequently working against the odds established by Nasser’s ideological project and promoted by leftist students. Shabab al-Islam had the benefit of the rich legacy of Islamic activism, symbolized in the Muslim Brotherhood, but the organization could not rely solely on past successes. It needed to present a vision of Islam in sync with contemporary times and in the language of its generation of youth. The framing processes of Shabab al-Islam signaled the first active construction of an Islamic paradigm in the post-1967 era. Just as Qutb’s *Milestones* epitomized the state of Islam during the darkest years of the Nasser period, Shabab al-Islam attempted to find a glimmer of hope in the receding of Nasser’s regime. The concept of the Islamic system was developed and articulated in direct opposition to the prevailing ideological trends of the time: communism and capitalism.

From ‘Uthman’s first wall magazine and Shabab al-Islam’s earliest press releases to its later publication, a concerted effort was undertaken to establish the threat of external political ideologies and position Islam as the natural alternative to
these foreign systems by contrasting their failures with Islam’s rich legacy of success. In the face of immense challenges ranging from Israeli occupation to economic stagnation and underdevelopment, Islamic concepts were utilized to provide a solution, a source of empowerment, and a means to achieve what had eluded the nation for far too long. Additionally, Shabab al-Islam engaged in a process of internationalization of the Islamic movement, aiming to impress upon Egyptian youth that their struggle was a universal one, part of a broader movement to overcome adversity throughout the Islamic world. It used its platform to raise awareness of the plight of Muslims the world over, with the hopes that deeper bonds of religious solidarity would overcome the nationalist sentiments on which Nasser had built his entire enterprise.

Along the timeline of Islamic activism in Egypt, Shabab al-Islam stands alone as the unique expression of a generation that came of age during a critical period of transition in Egypt’s modern political history. It marked the return of the Islamic movement and paved the way for the re-emergence of some of its most significant actors, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Through its interactions with the state, Shabab al-Islam also revealed the intentions of the nascent Sadat regime to cultivate its religious credentials, possibly sooner than it otherwise would have done. On the popular level, it contributed to the reassertion of Islamic identity within Egyptian society, demonstrated by the massive reception to its programs and activities. This process gathered more steam and continued long after Shabab al-Islam had left the scene. It also helped usher in a new era of a globalized Islamic consciousness that would come to epitomize the Islamic movement during the latter decades of the twentieth century.
Despite its many contributions, however, Shabab al-Islam also suffered from a number of shortcomings that spelled its failure to persist beyond the generation of its founders. As occurs with many social movements, especially those that are defined by the age group of its members, the ability to sustain the movement beyond the initial phase is highly dependent on a strong organizational structure. In the case of Shabab al-Islam, the idea for which it stood was far stronger than the organization’s ability to control its direction. Internally, the group’s founders acknowledged that they lacked the knowledge and experience to maintain a rigid organizational structure, and were too often concerned mainly with Shabab al-Islam’s message rather than its structure. External forces, in the form of rival student groups and meddling state officials contributed to Shabab al-Islam’s inability to maintain control over its public image as the actions of others were often attributed to the organization. As Mustafa lamented, “we allowed too many people to enter, which gave us less control. …We were hit organizationally.”

This was to have direct implications for the future of the Islamic movement. A primary reason why al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah eventually succeeded where Shabab al-Islam failed, is that it focused an immense amount of its energies on building a strong centralized organizational structure. Not only did it adopt the Muslim Brotherhood “idea,” as Shabab al-Islam had done, but it also embraced the Muslim Brotherhood’s organizational model. In its failure to endure, Shabab al-Islam would unwittingly demonstrate that, although the Muslim Brotherhood was more than an organization, the organization was vital to sustain the movement’s efforts in the long term. ‘Uthman recalled that during the interrogation of Shabab al-Islam leaders by state security officials they were told, “you were the spark that became the flame. If we had let you continue, your flame would have engulfed the entire country.” While
Shabab al-Islam’s flame may have been extinguished prematurely, these officials could not comprehend that the dying embers would give life to a new flame, one that saw the Islamic movement established as a permanent fixture in Egyptian political life, and through a familiar name that was destined to return.
Chapter Three

RETURN OF THE BROTHERS

In February 1971, as Anwar al-Sadat released the first wave of Muslim Brotherhood leaders from the prisons of Gamal Abdel Nasser, an elder in the group, a lawyer named ‘Umar al-Tilmisani, immediately set out for the ‘Abdin Presidential Palace. Upon entering the lobby of one of Egypt’s most impressive modern structures, a relic of the monarchy that was seamlessly transitioned into a symbol of the revolution, Tilmisani walked to the guest registry and wrote down a message of gratitude to Sadat for the compassion he showed in freeing him and his long-imprisoned colleagues.¹ With that gesture, the Muslim Brotherhood appeared ready to turn the page—quite literally—on its relationship with the regime that had been in power since the Free Officers revolted in 1952. Less than three years later, as Egyptians celebrated their nation’s impressive showing in the October 1973 war with Israel, Tilmisani was in the process of becoming the newest General Guide of the organization, a development that was to foreshadow the Muslim Brotherhood’s reemergence as Egypt’s chief Islamic movement organization and leading force of political opposition in the decade that followed.

The Muslim Brotherhood’s path to reclaiming its place in Egyptian society was by no means decorated with flowers. Rather, it was long, arduous, and fraught with new challenges, the likes of which the organization had not experienced in its four-decade history. Following an intricate yet at times inexact process of reappraisal and adaptation, this period resulted in a Muslim Brotherhood that was well suited to operate within a new set of constraints and tackle the pressing issues of the day. This chapter chronicles the experiences of the Muslim Brotherhood’s leaders in the critical years after attaining their newfound freedom. Because the organization was in such a
state of disarray following a nearly twenty year absence, it is no surprise that most historical studies of the organization during the 1970s do not begin until the middle part of the decade, with some even dating the Muslim Brotherhood’s reemergence to the 1976 inaugural publication of its monthly magazine, *al- Da‘wa*. In order to grasp the progression in the group’s makeup, however, it is vital to examine the tenuous period that preceded it, taking into account both the internal and external forces that would shape the future course of the Muslim Brotherhood.

In contrast to earlier periods, the intellectual project around which the Muslim Brotherhood was established no longer held sway as the only activist-oriented ideology within the Islamic movement. To the surprise of many of the organization’s leaders, other Islamic intellectual trends had begun to compete for followers in the Muslim Brotherhood’s absence. *Du‘a la Quda*, the tract penned by Hasan al-Hudaybi, turned out to be just the opening salvo in a drawn out battle between the Muslim Brotherhood’s leadership and its ideological competitors, a rivalry that would come to define the entire decade. In addition to Sayyid Qutb’s eager followers, however, a number of other intellectual currents began to permeate Egypt from across the Islamic world. The first section of this chapter will address the increasing diversity within the field of Islamic activism, with the aim of disambiguating the various trends and identifying what relationship, if any, they had to the Muslim Brotherhood and its intellectual school.

Dovetailing with the exploration of competing ideological trends is a section on the consequences this had in the form of new organizations to house them. If the traditional strength of the Muslim Brotherhood lay in its ability to bring people within its organizational fold, the rise of competing groups who claimed to represent more fully the needs and aspirations of everyday Egyptians could (and often did) pose an
unwanted challenge to its authority. In fact, as will be demonstrated in greater detail, the existence of a range of Islamic organizations played an important role in the Muslim Brotherhood’s determination to reconstitute its structure at a time when such a decision was by no means inevitable. Moreover, the diversity of groups, some of which operated completely in secret, provided the Muslim Brotherhood with an opportunity to distinguish itself from the rise of fringe elements pursuing a militant path and possibly attain for itself a better standing with the state.

However, the posture of the regime was not a constant in this equation. The next section addresses the role that Sadat played in bringing Islamic politics in Egypt once again to the fore and the benefits as well as barriers that this placed before the Muslim Brotherhood. Despite the outwardly welcoming attitude to the space created for the discussion of Islam in the public sphere, the Muslim Brotherhood’s leaders would find themselves facing yet another challenge in the form of the regime’s appropriation of religion for its own purposes. Reaching its zenith with the October War, which featured “Allahu Akbar!” as the Egyptian military’s battle cry, this process forced the field of Islamic activists to rethink their strategy and tailor their mission to the changing political and social surroundings.

Upon identifying the range of external pressures that guided the trajectory of the Muslim Brotherhood following the prison exodus, it is essential to also take stock of the internal factors that would determine the future of the organization. All indicators point to the fact that, even in the aftermath of Nasser’s second wave of repression in 1965, the Muslim Brotherhood still aspired to return to the scene. This effort was stepped up following the 1967 defeat and picked up even more steam with Sadat’s accession to power. It was not a question of “if” the Muslim Brotherhood would return, but “how” it would reappear and in what capacity it would pursue its
mission. Divisions appeared within the ranks of the senior leadership and the debate over the nature of the organization’s renewed structure ultimately yielded a solution built on compromise.

But efforts to implement the agreed upon strategy to restore the Muslim Brotherhood were interrupted by the more practical need for many of the leaders and members to reclaim their place, as individuals, in a society that had witnessed tremendous change in the two decades that many of them were away. In most cases, this meant reconnecting with one’s family, finding steady employment, and adjusting to the cultural changes in Egyptian society. As this process wore on, it became clear that the prison years took a terrible personal toll on the Muslim Brotherhood members and this, in turn, complicated the process of regrouping the members under an organizational umbrella.

It is no surprise then, that in attempting to reach out to the group, Sadat set his sights on the exiled former members of the Muslim Brotherhood living abroad in other Arab countries. With those initial contacts, the stage was set for the resumption of da‘wa activities on a limited basis, as the leadership of Hudaybi proceeded with trademark policy of extreme caution. The events of late 1973 were of particular consequence for the Islamic movement, which had to contend with Sadat’s strong showing in the war, followed by Hudaybi’s death. The immediate decisions that followed, whether on the structure of the organization or the essence of its message, would shape the future of the Muslim Brotherhood.
A Marketplace of Ideas

In his investigation into the reappearance of medieval texts in 1970s Egypt, Emmanuel Sivan notes that as he came upon fresh editions of works by Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathir in many a Cairo bookshop, he “was struck by the degree to which the basic message of these writings had been driven home.” Describing the motivations of their audience, he continues, “it is a response to contemporary problems they sought in these exegeses of five-to-seven-hundred-year-old texts, trying to weave them into the texture of their own, quite modern, life.” Chronicling the phenomenon that he terms “the New Radicalism,” Sivan proceeds to declare it a “reaction to Nasserism and Ba‘thism,” tracing its origins to Qutb’s Milestones and viewing its core idea as “the total rejection of modernity …since modernity represents the negation of God’s sovereignty (hakimiyya) in all fields of life and relegation of religion to the dustbin of history.”

Taken in isolation from the larger context, Sivan’s argument certainly holds considerable merit. Indeed, the examples he provides, from the militant activism of Shukri Mustafa and ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj, lend credence to the notion that, aided by the restoration of medieval texts (complete with new commentaries), a radical intellectual current had taken hold of a small segment of Islamic activists, resulting in a rejection of mainstream society and violent contention against the state. However, Sivan’s analysis does little to explain how texts representing such a seemingly isolated trend could have made such waves across Egypt that they “were quickly snatched off the bookstalls by people in all walks of life, but especially by youngsters in modern garb.” A wider look at the burgeoning marketplace of religious ideas in Egypt during the late 1960s and early 1970s reveals a more vibrant and diverse field,
one in which young and old alike could easily wade into intellectual waters of varying consistencies and depths.

In the mid-1930s, Hasan al-Banna described the Muslim Brotherhood, his blossoming new organization, as “a Salafiyya message, a Sunni way, a Sufi truth, a political organization, an athletic group, a cultural-educational union, an economic company, and a social idea.” The first of those qualities refers to the intellectual school from which Banna’s idea for the organization originated. The movement of Islamic modernism was given life by such figures as Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, and his Egyptian disciple, Muhammad ʿAbduh, who went on to become the rector of al-Azhar at the dawn of the twentieth century. But just as these early thinkers contemplated the challenge of bringing Islam into accord with a rapidly changing modern world, later thinkers such as ʿAbduh’s disciple, Muhammad Rashid Rida, had to contend with the reality of Western encroachment on Islamic societies, and saw the challenge as one of bringing the external influences of modernity in line with basic Islamic precepts.

The abolishment of the caliphate in 1924 heightened the crisis facing the Islamic nation in the minds of many Muslim thinkers, some of whom began to refocus their energies on more innovative methods to rejuvenate the Ummah. The modernist Salafi school advanced a program centered on the return to the classical age of Islamic history, following in the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad and the first generation of believers, or al-Salaf al-Salih. This movement also featured a renewed emphasis on the textual authenticity offered by the Qur’an and the Hadith as the primary sources governing society. It is in the spirit of this intellectual movement that Banna founded his organization in 1928, with the blessing of Rida, from whom he inherited the seminal reformist periodical, al-Manar.
However, the turn-of-the-century modernists were not the only thinkers to invoke the memory of the golden age of Islamic history. In fact, the medieval scholar Taqi ad-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya, also writing at a time of crisis in the Muslim world, called for a return to the original sources of Islam, seeking to purify the existing body of religious knowledge from centuries of innovation and foreign influences. This conservative Salafiyya, as it were, resonated with a later movement, that of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, an eighteenth century reformer in the Arabian peninsula. ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s efforts to purge his society of all un-Islamic elements entailed a literalist interpretation of classical texts and eventually took on a state-building function to enforce a rigid application of the law. This vision was realized with the establishment of the Saudi kingdom, which adopted the Wahhabi school of thought as the state’s official ideology.

Thus, by the mid-twentieth century, two varying strands of Salafi thought had come to dominate different parts of the Muslim world. But the combination of Nasser’s policy of repression in Egypt and the rise of Saudi wealth and regional influence saw the trajectories of modernist and traditionalist Salafi trends heading in vastly different directions. As the Muslim Brotherhood’s leaders, the self-proclaimed heirs to modernist Salafi thought, disappeared into Nasser’s prisons, the intellectual vacuum they left behind was filled by the rise of popular preachers spreading a conservative interpretation of Islamic texts. Through the sermons of ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk and the writings of Muhammad Nasiruldin al-Albani, Egyptians were exposed to a more rigid, if decidedly apolitical, Islamic current that influenced their understanding and practice of Islam. Men were seen growing their beards and wearing traditional Islamic dress, while women donned the headscarf in greater numbers than at any time in the previous half-century.
In the absence of modernist lay thinkers without proper religious training, such as Banna, Qutb, and their intellectual heirs, these scholars set out to reaffirm the historic authority of traditional Islamic institutions, led by al-Azhar. This was a two-step process: the first involved dissociating the leading institution of Islamic learning from the secular state by disavowing Nasser’s modernization efforts in al-Azhar; the second was to push for populist reforms that would distance al-Azhar from the instruments of the state and bring its scholars closer to their constituency. In the battle for the hearts, minds, and souls of ordinary Egyptians, scholars such as Kishk, Sayyid Sabiq, and Muhammad Mitwalli al-Sha‘rawi hoped their classical training in the Islamic sciences and popular modes of communication to a wider audience would see them surpass the popularity of Qutb’s cadre of youth followers, the “pubescent thinkers” and their shallow education, limited to “three pages of Ibn Taymiyya.”

In addition to mosques teeming with congregants, these preachers relied on a new technological advancement to spread their message, the growing use of the cassette tape. Recordings of Kishk’s sermons were as pervasive as they were fiery, and Egyptians were affected by his message in far greater numbers than ever before. By the mid-1970s, he had also emerged as a leading critic of the Sadat regime, further signaling the break between the religious establishment and the state. In response, the state attempted to promote Sha‘rawi as a more acceptable alternative, since his message was limited to issues of beliefs and ritual practice.

Further east, ‘Abd al-Aziz ibn Baaz was appointed president of the Islamic University of Medina in the mid-1960s. The future grand mufti of Saudi Arabia took a great interest in the up-and-coming generation of Muslims. Boxes of Saudi religious texts appeared in Egyptian universities with greater regularity in the last years of the decade and were distributed among students for free. Moreover, Egyptians who had
migrated to the Gulf for work in the 1950s and 1960s returned to their country in the 1970s having been influenced by the religious climate of their host nations. Many student leaders who later joined the Muslim Brotherhood readily admit that they were strongly affected by the intellectual current characterized by conservative Salafi scholarship that permeated Egypt during this period.⁹

As the domestic religious activists continued to be absent from the scene, another external influence that appeared at around the same time was the missionary movement represented by the Jama'at al-Tabligh. Based out of the Indian subcontinent, this revivalist group spread through much of the Muslim world seeking to bring non-practicing believers back into the fold of Islam. Stressing individual piety and teaching orthodox ritual practice, the Tabligh leaders were known for their unyielding commitment to their mission and their aggressive outreach. The movement did not gain the same footing in Egypt as it did in other Muslim countries, but its followers were highly visible contributors to the landscape of religious activism. Ibrahim ‘Ezzat, a popular Islamic preacher associated with the Tabligh, ensured that even those who did not join the organization were keenly aware of its presence and mission, especially among the youth. Also led by Sheikh Farid al-'Iraqi, a former Muslim Brotherhood member, the Tabligh became a safe alternative for Muslim Brothers who wished to continue their activism but without the risk of state repression.¹⁰

In the realm of popular religion, figures emerged who capitalized on the growing pervasiveness of Islamic thought in mainstream culture. Though they often did not pertain to a particular ideological current, or perhaps because of it, these individuals were successful in amassing a large following and became celebrities in their own right. Mustafa Mahmoud serves as an illustrative example. Trained as a
doctor and closely allied with leftist politics in his youth, Mahmoud underwent a personal journey of spiritual renewal in the early 1960s, eventually coming to disavow Marxism in a number of written works. Moreover, he quit his medical practice to devote his life to writing and speaking on matters of Islam, spirituality, and philosophy, along with developing a number of charitable institutions.

In addition to his dozens of books, Mahmoud gained his fame through the popular television program, “Faith and Science,” in which he sought to demonstrate the divine presence through nature and scientific discovery. Contrasting his earlier alienation by Nasser, coupled with lawsuits against his teachings by the religious establishment of al-Azhar, Mahmoud became a proponent of Sadat’s religious policies. In turn, he was offered a ministerial position, which he declined to focus on his many projects. His charity association provided free medical care to poor Egyptians and built a mosque that was named after him in the Mohandesin neighborhood of Cairo. Through his writings, television programs, and social services, Mahmoud offered Egyptians an accessible and positive spiritual path, balancing against the more austere and rigid trends in the broader field of Islamic thought.

Similarly, Sufi orders gained prominence during the 1970s. Though it was nowhere near the role they played in the early modern period more than a century earlier, tariqas such as the Burhaniyya Disuqiyya Shadhiliyya found new life in Sadat’s Egypt. Under the visionary leadership of the Sudanese Sheikh Muhammad ‘Uthman ‘Abduh al-Burhani, the thirteenth century order was renewed throughout the Middle East in the mid-twentieth century, amassing a following of three million people in Egypt alone, during the 1970s. The reemergence of Sufi tariqas such as the Burhaniyya represented a spiritual revival that succeeded the Nasser era and its
relegation of faith to the realm of private affairs. Just as the Islamic resurgence led by political and militant groups is often explained as the product of countervailing forces in Nasser’s Egypt, so too must the rise of Sufi orders seeking spiritual revival be viewed in that light.

The trend that would have the most direct impact on political events in the 1970s, and especially the ways in which the decade has been portrayed since, is the jihadist current. The development of militancy within the Islamic movement was the result of a number of factors: the legacy of religiously inspired resistance in the earlier period of the Islamic movement, the political, cultural, and socioeconomic changes that came with the revolution, the evolution of religious thought, and the breakdown of leadership hierarchy within the Islamic movement. This current had considerable impact within the Islamic movement, though it was not as momentous or dominant as some commentators have suggested.

The development of jihadist discourse was in part an unintended consequence of Nasser’s policy toward the Islamic movement in the late 1960s. Not only did his repressive measures in the concentration camps result in the radicalization of a segment of young prisoners, as Kepel and Ibrahim have demonstrated, but the clamping down on the public debate of Qutb’s ideas also had the negative byproduct of relegating the discussion to the fringes of Egyptian society. In the aftermath of Qutb’s execution, the Nasser regime burned his books, ordered writers not to mention him by name, and even removed references to his writings in later editions of works by prominent authors. As Khatab argues:

This policy, however, led to a harmful result, as banning Qutb’s works drew attention to the importance of his appeal. Forcing intellectuals to keep silent and not to discuss Qutb’s works left the field completely open for the younger individuals and groups to interpret Qutb’s thought as they wished. Consequently, waves of violence in the decades after Qutb’s death, were inescapably the result of ignorance and stupidity.
Without the necessary space to combat the spread of militant views, the Muslim Brotherhood found itself on the defensive. In the aftermath of the events of 1965, Hudaybi demanded young followers to clarify their interpretation of the *takfir* concept. In response, he issued seven prison letters with the goal of reorienting the youth cadres back toward the mainstream Muslim Brotherhood school of thought.¹⁴ These modest efforts appeared to have little effect, however. By 1967, on the eve of the June War, the Islamic activist prisoners were divided into three ideological camps, whose views on the impending struggle against Israel varied widely. The self-proclaimed Qutbists viewed the Egyptian regime as illegitimate and refused to support Nasser, even as the threat of a foreign enemy loomed large. Hudaybi’s camp, meanwhile, believed in uniting all Egyptians, regardless of political allegiances, in the face of an external threat. Even those critical of Hudaybi’s leadership, and referring to themselves as supporters of Banna’s original mission, agreed that supporting the state’s war efforts took precedence over internal political differences.¹⁵

The prevalent historiography has shown that Nasser’s defeat at the hands of Israel emboldened the Qutbists, who continued to develop their ideology, adopting the concept of *hijra*, in addition to takfir. Their belief in separation from the larger community for the sake of spiritual purity led to their segregation from fellow prisoners in Liman al-Turra and Abu Za’bal camps, years before they would continue the practice outside the prison walls.¹⁶ In fact, though they had yet to take a concrete position on the use of violence to accomplish their goals, the major ideological differences they had with the mainstream Islamic movement ensured that not only would these groups engage in a heated war of words, but that they would occasionally resort to force to defend their views. Prison gang fights were not uncommon, and
served as a warning sign for the patterns of violence that marked many of the important events of the decade.

Because these budding fringe groups could not openly preach their calls of excommunication of fellow Muslims and publicly assert their belief that society was in a state of *jahiliyyah*, they relied heavily on the establishment of a strong, underground network. They eschewed the traditional Muslim Brotherhood model of a popular, grassroots organization that operated from a prominent position in society, instead forming secret groups whose sole purpose was to evade the state security forces while pursuing their strategic goals, often militant in nature. The Islamic Liberation Organization, known popularly as *al-Fanniya al-‘Askariya* because it launched its coup attempt from the Technical Military Academy, was the first of these groups to emerge onto the scene. Led by a Palestinian named Salih Sirriya, this group believed in the Islamization of society from above, with its chief goal to displace the nation’s ruler and seize political power. Sirriya recruited dozens of Egyptians, mostly young military academy students, and in April 1974, set out to stage a coup from behind the walls of the Technical Military Academy. Following a violent confrontation with the Egyptian military, the plan quickly fell apart. After a swift trial, Sirriya was executed and most of his supporters were imprisoned.

Similarly, a group that called itself *Gama‘at al-Muslimin*, or the Society of Muslims, was at the center of events in mid-1977, culminating in the assassination of Azhari Sheikh and former Awqaf Minister Husayn ad-Dhahabi. A subsequent police raid led to the apprehension of the group’s leader, Shukri Mustafa, and his cadre of followers. Known in the Egyptian press as *al-Takfir wal-Higra* (Excommunication and Flight), this underground organization became notable for the erratic behavior of its followers, who shunned mainstream society as corrupt and relocated to communal
homes, whether in out-of-the-way suburban furnished flats or the caves of the upper Egyptian countryside. Among other things, the group believed it was not permissible to hold government jobs or pray in public mosques. Al-Takfir wal-Higra more fully realized the reformulated theory of jahiliyya than any prior group.

Its gestation occurred in Nasser’s prisons a decade earlier. Mustafa, having been recruited into the latest attempt at the reorganization of the Muslim Brotherhood, was imprisoned along with Qutb’s other followers in 1965. Holding tightly to his takfiri views, Mustafa found himself alone after Hudaybi’s followers succeeded in dissuading the emerging Qutbist fringe, including one of its leaders, Sheikh ‘Ali ‘Abduh Isma‘il, from following a path of isolation and militancy. Starting from a position of weakness, Mustafa recruited several close friends to begin the effort anew, with an eye toward establishing a separate organization upon their release from prison, which occurred in mid-1971.17

While al-Takfir wal-Higra represented the most forceful and abrupt break from the Muslim Brotherhood’s traditional school of thought, it was by no means the only expression of the growing ideological divisions within the Islamic movement. By the late 1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood was successfully rejuvenated due in large part to its effective cooptation of the student movement. In some corners of the youth activist community, however, especially that based in upper Egypt’s universities, the Muslim Brotherhood was met with staunch resistance by the local campus chapters of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah. The dispute was as much ideological—with the minority advocating a militant outlook—as it was about appearances. Competing factions fought over the use of the name al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, with the only thing distinguishing them from one another being the logo: one group adopted the classic Muslim Brotherhood logo, featuring two swords crossed over the Qur’an, while the
opposing side’s logo featured only one sword raised in the air. Eventually, as the Muslim Brotherhood’s sympathizers formally merged with it, the latter group monopolized the name al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, by the early 1980s becoming an independent organization unaffiliated with the universities. At its prime, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah proved to be the most formidable opponent to the Muslim Brotherhood from within the Islamic movement, and was responsible for a number of violent incidents across Egypt.

In addition to the jihadist organizations that grabbed the most headlines, several smaller underground groups espousing similar views sprung up in the mid-1970s. Groups such as Tahrir Islami, Jund Allah, and Jama‘at al-Amr bi-l-Ma‘ruf wa-l-Nahy ‘an al-Munkar became a thorn in the side of the Sadat regime at a time when it was attempting to develop its own Islamic credentials. Meanwhile, by October 1981, Jama‘at al-Jihad went from being an obscure militant organization with fewer followers than any other group, to gaining international notoriety for its role in the assassination of the Egyptian president.

Taken together, the various intellectual currents within the Islamic movement presented a formidable challenge, as well as an opportunity for the Muslim Brotherhood. As it faced little external competition throughout its early history, the organization could not refer to the Banna years for guidance on how to assert itself as the veritable head of the Islamic movement. Instead, its leaders emerged from prison to discover a dynamic and multifarious scene of Islamic intellectualism and activism. Though many of these figures would express genuine delight at finding Islamic identity so firmly established across the country, they faced an uphill struggle to impress upon the up-and-coming generation the need to restore the Muslim Brotherhood to its rightful place as the leader of the Islamic movement. This process
entailed responding to all of the prevalent ideologies, from conservative Salafism to popular Sufism and especially the dangers posed by groups promoting jihad against the state. Adding to the complexity of the Muslim Brotherhood’s enormous task was the appearance of the state as a puissant actor within the realm of Islamic politics.

The Believer President

In the process of reorienting his regime away from the failed policies of Nasser and toward a new vision for Egypt, Sadat attempted to infuse his government with an Islamic persona. All indicators point to the fact that Sadat perceived this to be a crucial element in his mission to shift the country away from a socialist system in the Soviet camp to a liberal economic system allied with the West. Mining Islam’s rich legacy as a defining facet of Egyptian culture, the new regime utilized religion as a legitimating force for its policy realignment.

This transformation began with Sadat himself. Taking on the title of “The Believer President,” he embodied the characteristics of piety and devotion in his daily life. In sharp contrast to his predecessor who relied exclusively on secular nationalist rhetoric, Sadat frequently intoned Islamic expressions and Qur’anic verses in the course of his public speeches. Moreover, he restored his given name of Muhammad and was only referred by it in official settings. The state media was enlisted to transmit this persona to the Egyptian public. Scenes of Sadat listening intently to the Friday sermon and praying in many of Egypt’s mosques became commonplace on television screens across the country. Close associates of Sadat had no reason to doubt the genuine nature of his spiritual awakening, but the political utility of a state-sanctioned Islamic platform to combat leftist members of the old guard could not be denied.
Soon thereafter, Sadat’s policies began to reflect this increased religiosity. A new constitution passed in September 1971 established Islam as a major source of legislation, while later that month, Sadat announced that his state was to be built on the principles of “science and faith.” Continuing to rely on this slogan several years later, Sadat expounded upon his vision for the interplay between the two, careful to distinguish the official vision of faith from those of competing forces in society:

The faith we defend and abide to is a faith devoid of hatred and fanaticism which encourages work, research, and knowledge. …It is also the faith expounded by Islam and which fixed the human spiritual values and established the Islamic state on the basis of political and social legislations based on justice, amity and equity.\(^1\)

Sadat then proceeded to illustrate how together with faith, science played a vital role in pursuing national goals and meeting development targets:

Faced with an increasing population and the increasing demands of modern life upon natural resources, we have no alternative but to push towards the desert, reclaim its land, to look for its riches and to encourage settlement therein, so that our society might be secure, prosperous, generous with its resources and invincible by its people. …Science is our ideal mean to achieve these targets and Faith is the decisive weapon to face the challenges of the march.\(^2\)

This outlook was pursued through a number of new initiatives to place Islam at the center of public life in Egypt. In Cairo, “the city of a thousand minarets,” Sadat ordered the construction of one thousand new mosques, in addition to the forty thousand already in place.\(^3\) By 1973, he had returned to the Ministry of Awqaf the lands confiscated by Nasser and invested the ministry with greater autonomy in regulating Islamic endowments. Institutions such as al-Azhar and recognized Sufi orders were permitted to operate with greater freedom than at any point since the revolution. Religious programming on television increased substantially, and the call to prayer interrupted even live presidential speeches, an unthinkable act under the prior regime. Sadat succeeded in creating the impression that Egypt had become one
nation under God, deriving his legitimacy from his image as a righteous leader serving the interests of his people as determined by Islam.

There is perhaps no better scenario to illustrate the sharp contrast between Nasser and Sadat than the October War of 1973:

Whereas Nasser had employed the secular motto “Earth, Sea, and Sky” in the 1967 war, Sadat used “Allahu Akbar!” the opening words of the call to prayer and the traditional Islamic battle cry. Allahu Akbar! was on the lips of Egyptian troops as they stormed across the Suez Canal. …The war itself was in every sense portrayed as a jihad; religious language and symbolism were freely employed. As a result, Egypt’s success in penetrating Israeli positions was seen as an Islamic victory. Sadat emerged as a Muslim hero.21

The war itself occurred during the holy month of Ramadan and in his secret preparations, Sadat gave it the codename Operation Badr, in reference to the Prophet Muhammad’s famous inaugural victory over the Meccan army. In the aftermath of the war, Sadat appeared to have reached the height of his popularity, successfully combining his strong Islamic credentials with his resolute command of the Egyptian forces in its most successful campaign against Israel to date. In an ironic twist, the reversal of fortunes under Sadat’s divinely inspired war effort served to affirm the common Islamist critique that Egypt’s continued defeat at the hands of the Israeli military was due to the state’s failure to uphold Islamic values.

Indeed, even as Sadat emerged triumphant from his early challenges, be it the Corrective Revolution of May 1971 or the October War in 1973, not all segments of Egyptian society were convinced of the country’s new direction. The student protests of 1972 reflected the backlash from a generation raised in Nasserist rhetoric that saw their world rapidly collapsing around them. For the staunchly secularist leftists, a return to religion was perceived as a cheap tactic to shore up a new political base on which Sadat could forge his revised policy agenda, and was sure to fail because of Islam’s incompatibility with the challenges of the modern world. Furthermore, in the
hands of “rightist” forces, Islam could only amount to capitalist economic policies and exploitation of the nation’s workers and resources.

On the other side, Islamic activists responded to the state’s newfound religiosity with a combination of bemusement and skepticism. Whereas Tilmisani was grateful for Sadat’s apparent change of heart regarding the Muslim Brotherhood, other groups were weary of the state’s legacy of repression of independent political voices, especially those inspired by Islam. The fact that the violent confrontation at the Technical Military Academy occurred only a few months after the October War, at a time when Sadat was seemingly at the height of his popularity, was a telling sign that not all Egyptians believed in the Believer President.  

**Stemming the Opposition**

Early on, Sadat’s Islamization policy appeared to be aimed at shifting the country’s political capital away from traditional “centers of power,” institutions and individuals with strong leftist leanings, to an as yet undefined alternative that relied on Islamic principles for its legitimacy. Therefore, in Sadat’s estimation, the formidable opposition from the prior regime was the only factor worth consideration, at least in the initial stages of this policy. Long repressed and much defeated, the Islamic movement’s response did enter into the state’s calculations, and therefore no reasoned strategy was ever devised to address it. Instead, Sadat’s policy toward Islamic forces in society was an incoherent patchwork that faced much opposition and displayed frequent contradictions.

On the one hand, Sadat offered some gestures to the Islamic movement through the appointment of Kamal Abu al-Magd and ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Kamel, both former Muslim Brotherhood members, to strategic posts within his government.
respected scholar who had credibility in the eyes of many Muslim Brotherhood leaders, ‘Abd al-Halim Mahmud was appointed Sheikh of al-Azhar and given considerable independence to resurrect the institution’s place in society following its marginalization by Nasser.

In addition to these public moves to appoint figures with perceived Islamist sympathies to influential positions in the new government, the regime also utilized covert measures to spread its influence within an Islamic movement undergoing a pronounced resurrection. The previous chapter detailed the ways in which Shabab al-Islam, one of the earliest public expressions of Islamic activism in the Sadat era, was subjected to cooptation efforts by government officials. The group was frequently forced to push back against external elements utilizing its name, mission, and momentum in pursuit of their own agendas. Muhammad ‘Uthman Isma’il and ‘Uthman Ahmed ‘Uthman, two figures close to Sadat who promoted the policy of creating an Islamic youth movement to combat leftist activists, utilized their considerable influence with the president and access to the sizeable resources of the Arab Socialist Union to sponsor student groups to advance the regime’s interests. Just as Nasser had created the Socialist Vanguard for this purpose, Sadat had lent his support to the parallel Shabab al-Islam chapters and later the Gama’at al-Islamiyyah.

Through these wide ranging policies targeting the rise of an Islamic alternative, the Egyptian state itself became an important actor in the emergence of a reconstituted Islamic movement. Even in later years, as the danger of fringe elements within the movement made itself apparent, the security apparatus took special care to monitor these groups closely and infiltrate them when it felt it necessary. The ideological and organizational diversity of the Islamic movement ultimately served to bolster the regime’s position in confronting the growth of a new threat to its political
agenda. As Kepel contends, “It was this climate of fragmentation of the movement into rival sects and of incidents between them that gave the police the opportunity to intervene in the internal affairs of the Islamicist movement.”

By late 1972 then, at the same time that Shabab al-Islam held its initial launch event, Sadat had formally severed his special relationship with the Soviet Union, leaving Egypt to pursue a course independent of communist influence for the first time in nearly two decades. Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood’s leadership emerged from prison to discover a vibrant field of religious activism made up of veteran former members, an independent student movement, and an unproven president seeking to bolster his Islamic credentials in society. Echoing the scene on the eve of the revolution in 1952, both the Muslim Brotherhood and the new regime quickly came to realize that they were in need of one another, even if their political visions did not often converge. The real question would be what lessons had each side learned from previous encounters that ended in violent confrontation and years of repression.

Old Wounds and New Beginnings

Only four months into his presidency, Sadat launched the first wave of prison releases that freed several high-ranking Muslim Brotherhood leaders, including Hudaybi and Tilmisani, in February 1971. By August, Sadat’s new interior minister, Mamduh Salem, announced the release of an additional 134 political prisoners and proclaimed an end to the “political isolation” of 13,000 Egyptians by the following year. Though it fell short of full legalization of the group for the first time since its ban in the early years of the revolution, the policy revision that coincided with Sadat’s accession to power ushered in a new era for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Three
main issues occupied the leadership during this early phase of the group’s reappearance.

The first and most immediate area of concern involved the adaptation of Muslim Brotherhood leaders and members to the changes in Egyptian society. For many of them, the prison experience had come to define the majority of their adult lives. The psychological effects of years of torture and isolation took their toll on the rank-and-file members to such an extent that the thought of resuming political activism could not be further from their minds. Instead, they faced the complex task of reconnecting with their families and resuming normal life within their communities.

Secondly, any attempt to reconstitute the organization had to take into account Sadat’s policy toward Islam in general and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular, taking great care to avoid another wave of repression. The regime’s new posture toward the Muslim Brotherhood was reflected in Sadat’s efforts to reach out to exiled members and reach an understanding on the future of their activities within the limited political space created for them by the state.

For those who wanted to reignite the mission of the Muslim Brotherhood, especially among the senior leadership, a third challenge emerged in the form of internal conflicts regarding the future course of the organization. Upon taking stock of the current political situation in the early 1970s, several competing viewpoints developed, each representing a different outlook for the future of the Muslim Brotherhood. Before confronting the obstacles from the society at large or the challenges posed by the regime’s stance toward Islamic activism, these leaders had to face an internal struggle to determine the course of the Muslim Brotherhood and its revised mission. Ultimately, this was a period marked by widespread confusion and a
high degree of uncertainty, even by the standards of a social movement that was historically subject to the whims of the ruling power.

**Picking Up the Pieces**

In his memoir recounting the devastating conditions in Egypt’s prison camps, Ahmed Ra’if describes in vivid detail the scenes of physical and psychological abuse. In one instance, he and four other Muslim Brotherhood members were tortured for three continuous days, resulting in two of their deaths, while others sustained permanent impairments. The punishment meted out by Nasser’s security forces built such a wall around each of the prisoners that Ra’if concluded by asking: “what would an individual subjected to all of this do once they leave this place, if they ever could leave this place?”

Indeed, the transition from an outlawed movement subjected to unspeakable atrocities to individual activists seeking a return to mainstream society was the foremost obstacle to the Muslim Brotherhood’s reemergence. Describing this process, ‘Esam al-‘Erian, a young student activist later commented that the group’s elders “faced enormous difficulties in preparing for the reentry into society. This was the most difficult challenge.” This process was laden with sociocultural, psychological, and economic implications.

The cultural landscape of Egypt in the early 1970s was markedly different than that of the mid-1950s. The disappearance of the old landed elite in favor of a developing middle class, more educated and technically able than any previous generation, meant that a small segment of the population isolated from these developments had to determine how it fit into the new social categories. Moreover, they had to come to terms with the fact that, while they had seen the ugly side of the
Nasser regime over the course of two decades, other Egyptians had only recently come to understand the failures of the prior government. Regardless of how openly critical Sadat and other state officials were of Nasser, the former Muslim Brotherhood prisoners were too far ahead in their denunciation for most people to catch up, leading to continued feelings of alienation among them.

The prison camp experience took an enormous psychological toll on the Muslim Brotherhood members. Many of them had to endure years of isolation and hard labor. Reports of torture were common and became immortalized in the Muslim Brotherhood’s historiography throughout the memoirs and publications that appeared in the years that followed. Even outside observers noted the severity of Nasser’s treatment of his political foes, citing the constant fear of outright extermination, actual massacres within the prison walls, and show trials followed by public executions, as in the case of Organization 1965.

In his methodological note regarding research conducted on prisoners in the late 1970s, Saad Eddin Ibrahim notes that the activists he approached expressed hostility and suspicion toward the independent researchers. Their initial refusal to cooperate stemmed from a determination by some to avoid contact with members of a “corrupt society,” while the majority simply believed that the researchers were government agents. The culture of fear and paranoia was a lingering effect of the Nasser era that extended throughout the Sadat period. It perpetuated a siege mentality that existed within the community of Islamic activists long after their release from the prison camps, and helps to explain why the Muslim Brotherhood found such a dearth of numbers compared with the organization that boasted over a million members two decades earlier.
As al-‘Erian recalled, the prison environment continued for some time after the release of the Muslim Brotherhood leaders.\textsuperscript{32} Feelings of isolation continued, as some members found it difficult to reconnect with family members and struggled to find employment. Others found support from pre-existing Muslim Brotherhood networks, as those from the organization who had found economic security working in the Gulf countries, provided employment opportunities to their newly freed comrades, often after having assisted their families in the preceding years. Most former prisoners dreamed of starting a new life in the Gulf, while some even learned German in prison for a new life in Europe, which they claimed was even more tolerant of Islam than most of the Arab countries.\textsuperscript{33} For those who were determined to remain in Egypt or had no alternative, their struggle for reintegration required them to track down old community ties or establish new ones. These early encounters with Egyptian society in the pursuit of employment entailed the former prisoners to adapt to the changes around them and temper their expectations for reintegration.

However, as another student leader recalled, many Muslim Brotherhood leaders were stunned to discover a new religiosity in society that had not been a product of the Muslim Brotherhood da‘wa.\textsuperscript{34} While this was a welcomed surprise to many Islamic movement elders, it ran contrary to their belief, developed over the course of the prison experience, that society had abandoned all claims to its Islamic identity through its embrace of Nasserism, complete with its hostility to the Muslim Brotherhood. Within an emergent cultural context that was both alien and strangely familiar, discussions among the movement’s leaders centered on what role, if any, the Muslim Brotherhood stood to play in a society eager to fashion a new national project out of the ashes of the failed policies of old.
Sadat Extends a Hand

While the former prisoners were still adjusting to a life of new challenges, Sadat marched on with his policy of de-Nasserization and its accompanying attempts to infuse his regime with Islamic values. Some of his early appointments, including Abu al-Magd and ‘Isma‘il, were instrumental in this process. Not only were they the public face of this campaign, but they also provided the necessary links between the state and prominent Islamic figures in society. Beattie points to other influences, such as Sadat’s first vice-president, Hussein al-Shafi‘i, and his budding relationship with Saudi Arabia’s leaders, who had looked favorably upon the Muslim Brotherhood in their regional rivalry against Nasser.35

In the course of these contacts, Sadat shifted his attention to the Muslim Brotherhood figures abroad. Given that those living in exile fared far better than their comrades who endured Nasser’s prison camps, this seemed like a more prudent step on the part of the Egyptian president. It would be far easier to turn the page on that dark moment in history with individuals who were more likely to reciprocate the conciliatory gestures. Moreover, the social standing of the local Muslim Brotherhood leaders as recently released prisoners complicated the ability of the regime’s top authority from granting them any formal recognition. In February 1971, an exiled Muslim Brotherhood member living in Qatar was allowed to make a trip to Egypt. During the course of his short visit, Kamal Nagi delivered a letter to Sadat on behalf of other exiled figures that signaled their desire for a fresh start. Their grievances were with Nasser’s enforcers, they argued, not with Sadat.36

Repaying this visit with a gesture of his own, Sadat enlisted the help of one of his confidants, a doctor affiliated with the Islamic movement. In his memoirs, Mahmoud Gami’ recalled that Sadat pondered asking the Muslim Brotherhood to join
in his efforts against the Nasserist remnants in Egypt, but preferred to call upon those who had fled, since they would be more likely to cooperate with him. To that end, Gami’ traveled to a number of Gulf countries on behalf of Sadat, meeting with the likes of Yousuf al-Qaradawi, Ahmed al-’Asal, ‘Abd al-Ra’uf Mashhur, and Salim Nigm.37

With these meetings, Sadat meant to accomplish a number of things. First, he hoped to enlist the help of individuals who had long been responsible for making considerable financial and moral contributions within Egyptian society. Rather than as a force of subversion, their efforts would now be treated as an asset to the regime. Second, Sadat also believed that the exiled Muslim Brotherhood figures were instrumental to enhancing Egypt’s relationship with the host countries. As he attempted to rectify the mistakes of the past, Sadat believed in cultivating strong ties with the Gulf states, and was determined to take advantage of the community of Egyptian exiles who had already made significant inroads with the rulers of several Arab countries.

Third, by circumventing the recognized leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood in favor of fringe figures of questionable influence in the command structure, Sadat was also employing a strategy of divide-and-conquer. Sadat made no secret of his distaste for Hudaybi, whom he once described as “a singularly dull-witted and colorless ex-magistrate.”38 For his part, Hudaybi and others within his inner circle had refused to pledge their allegiance to Sadat following their release from prison, further complicating the early encounters between the Muslim Brotherhood and the state.39 Internally, the group’s leaders were faced with a new challenge, that of coordinating between factions that were separated by both geography and historical experience. As al-‘Erian later acknowledged, reorganization efforts in Egypt were actually hindered
by the challenge of dealing with *al-Aqtar al-‘Arabiyya*, or those exiled figures who would command some authority by virtue of their reputable social standing and access to the Egyptian regime.\(^{40}\)

**Charting a New Course**

While the majority of Muslim Brotherhood members spent the initial months following their release from prison focusing on personal matters, the surviving core group within the leadership contemplated the future of their organization. The years of repression had decimated the organizational structure of the Muslim Brotherhood that had been carefully developed by Hasan al-Banna, and inherited by his successor, Hasan al-Hudaybi. The Consultative Assembly, which elected the leadership, was no more. The Field Apparatus, which oversaw individual localized cells known as “families” had ceased to exist, as the families themselves disbanded. Even the Guidance Bureau was a shell of its former self, with many of its original members having died or fled in the intervening years, leaving a handful of figures, such as ‘Umar al-Tilmisani, Ahmed al-Malt, and Farid ‘Abd al-Khaliq, as the only contemporaries of Banna, along with Hudaybi.

It had been nearly two decades since the last round of internal elections, and with no membership or institutional structure to speak of, the Muslim Brotherhood could not be reconstituted through a simple resumption of its internal mechanisms for the selection of leadership and secretarial positions. In fact, a decision to resume activism under the banner of the Muslim Brotherhood had yet to even be taken. What followed was a spirited internal debate among leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood, continuing the discussions that marked the prison years, but with the
added insight that came with assessing the political and social situation that was
developing in a post-Nasser Egypt.

Several factors helped drive the discussion on the future of the Muslim
Brotherhood’s mission. For one, the Islamic movement had appeared to outgrow the
need for a centralized organizational structure such as that offered by the Muslim
Brotherhood in its early years. Reputable thinkers from the Muslim Brotherhood’s
school of thought, such as Muhammad al-Ghazali, Yousuf al-Qaradawi, and Sayyid
Sabiq, had enjoyed a high degree of success despite the lack of organizational backing
for their activities.

Moreover, a new generation of youth activists had clung to Islam as their
primary frame of reference and motivational force, without having come up in the
traditional Muslim Brotherhood da‘wa. Some wondered if it could be that the future
of Islamic activism was in safe hands due to the unexpected rise of this vibrant
movement. On the other hand, the ideological divisions that marked the prison years
had already begun to permeate among ordinary Egyptians. Though the existence of
underground militant groups such as that which stormed the Technical Military
Academy in 1974 was not known to the recently released Muslim Brotherhood
leaders, they were certainly aware of the subculture that would cultivate such
expressions among zealous youth and disaffected veteran activists. Combating
militant views would require strong organizational backing and a reassertion of the
Muslim Brotherhood’s core message.

In addition to the existing social conditions, consideration also had to be given
to the political situation. The Muslim Brotherhood had become an outlawed
organization by official decree in 1954. Though Sadat had seemingly extended an
olive branch to its leaders, he had not sanctioned the organization’s return. The ban
would remain in effect throughout the Sadat presidency. Any decision on the part of the group to resume its activism under the Muslim Brotherhood banner was sure to set off a new round of confrontation with the state. The dreadful memories of Nasser’s prisons were ever present, casting a dark shadow over these deliberations.

Additionally, Sadat’s expressions of personal piety, along with the appointment of reputable Islamic leaders to key posts in the new regime, raised the question of whether the Islamic movement should abandon its traditional mode of operating through a nonstate organization. Instead, it would join in national efforts to instill society with Islamic values and govern on the basis of the Shari’a. After all, if Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood in part as a response to the fall of the caliphate, then Sadat’s apparent willingness to revive the Islamic basis of the state was cause enough to alter the nature of the group’s mission, if not abandon it altogether.

These and other questions weighed heavily on the minds of the leading Muslim Brotherhood figures. By 1973, three camps emerged reflecting the multiple viewpoints expressed in the course of these discussions. The first camp believed that the Muslim Brotherhood’s moment in the sun had passed. They argued that the body of the organization should not be revived, but rather its spirit should live on in the form of public advocacy on the part of its veteran leaders. Acknowledging that this was “a completely new idea,” its main proponent, Mahmoud ‘Abd al-Halim argued that the Islamic movement should set aside its traditional proclivity for working under a particular banner. He suggested instead that “its activism should take on a cultural and intellectual character.”

A former close associate of Banna, ‘Abd al-Halim believed there was much in the Muslim Brotherhood’s past experiences that would dissuade its members from
wanting to build the organization anew. Most obviously, the years of repression at the hands of the Nasser regime, which he witnessed first hand in the torture chambers of Liman al-Tura prison, were cause enough to force a recalculation on the part of the Muslim Brotherhood. It would be tragic, ‘Abd al-Halim argued, if the lessons of this painful experience were lost on old and young alike, only for it to be repeated with a new regime and a revived Muslim Brotherhood. Additionally, he was critical of the exclusivity and secrecy with which closed organizations by their very nature operate. It is this type of partisanship that would preclude the group from working closely with some of the period’s intellectual luminaries who may not have joined the Muslim Brotherhood, or in the case of Sheikh al-Ghazali, were dismissed from its ranks under specious circumstances many years earlier.

As an alternative, proponents of this view advocated for the continuation of an open and fluid Islamic movement, one that would continue to spread the message articulated by Banna, but also possess the flexibility to adapt to its changing surroundings and incorporate the positive contributions of leading thinkers and popular social forces. It would focus its efforts on indoctrinating the youth, especially the rising generation of student activists, without interfering in their organizational structures or imposing on them membership in a new group. Instead, the veteran leaders would channel their energies through public initiatives, such as the convening of lectures and dissemination of literature. In essence, the traditionally rigid organizational structure of the Muslim Brotherhood would transform into something akin to a publishing house with its own speakers bureau.

Indeed, proponents of ‘Abd al-Halim’s vision, who included ‘Abbas al-Sisi and ‘Abd al-Halim Khafaga, would pursue this strategy independently of the outcome of the Muslim Brotherhood’s internal debate. Based in Alexandria, al-Sisi founded
Dar al-Sawtiyyat wal-Mar’iyyat, a media company that produced Islamic audiovisual materials for distribution across Egypt. Following his emigration to Germany, Khafaga founded Bavaria Publications, an Islamic publishing house that served Muslim communities in Europe. ‘Abd al-Halim himself, would take his vision to heart, writing a three-volume history of the early Muslim Brotherhood—the first such work of its kind by an insider—and committed himself to other intellectual endeavors.⁴³

On the opposing side of this discussion was another group, led primarily by Mustafa Mashhur, along with Ahmed Hassanain and Kamal al-Sananiri, who argued for the return of the Muslim Brotherhood as the preeminent Islamic activist organization, complete with a strong internal structure and the rigid hierarchy that distinguished the group’s Secret Apparatus. As former members of the Secret Apparatus themselves, Mashhur, Hassanain, and al-Sananiri strongly believed in the importance of a well-disciplined organization as the basis for spreading the da’wa. As such, rather than general social advocacy work, under this model the Muslim Brotherhood’s main focus would be to recruit a strong membership base and devote its energies to religious training of members with the organization’s official curriculum, a process known as tarbiya. This would ensure a disciplined and uniform organization capable of combating negative forces in society and, should the opportunity arise, be well positioned to exert political influence as well.

This vision could only be realized, Mashhur argued, by reconstituting the Secret Apparatus, an internal subunit within the Muslim Brotherhood’s organizational structure that existed separately from the group’s public face, thus avoiding the constraints placed upon it by the regime. The lesson of the Nasser period, according to this view, was that a strong internal organization was absolutely critical as an
anchor for the endurance of Islamic activism. A mission that was purely outward and public could be easily washed away by the recurring tide of state repression. Thus, it was no surprise that, along with many of the surviving members of the original Secret Apparatus, proponents of this position also included most of the members of Organization 1965, the group that most recently witnessed the regime’s obstruction of the Islamic movement to devastating effect.

In his memoir recounting the prison experience, Ahmed Ra’if describes the reorganization efforts by imprisoned Muslim Brotherhood members in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which ultimately resulted in the 1965 crackdown and the execution of Qutb and two of the accused plotters. But barely two years later, in the aftermath of the 1967 defeat, the prisons were again buzzing with discussions of reorganization in the event that Nasser released the political prisoners. Given the deepening divisions among the Muslim Brotherhood members, it is quite likely that the proponents of the Secret Apparatus had already launched preparations for the group’s return, while leaving their opponents in the dark.

Another young activist recalled that Mashhur later discouraged students from interacting with a number of senior Muslim Brotherhood figures, including Farid ‘Abd al-Khaliq, Salah Shadi, and Salih Abu Ruqayyiq. In many instances, these divisions reflected ideological as well as personal differences. Mashhur’s faction stressed the resolve they demonstrated in prison, highlighting their suffering in comparison with those who had either recanted their beliefs in the hopes of attenuating the authorities, or those who had avoided the prison camps altogether, like al-Ghazali and Salih al-‘Ashmawi. The publication of graphic prison memoirs like Ra’if’s were intended to reintroduce Muslim Brotherhood veterans to society, while
also distinguishing between those who had paid the heaviest toll and sacrificed the most from those who wavered during the ordeal, or mihna.

Also unlike the members of the other faction, Mashhur and his supporters did not treat the recent surge in Islamic activism among Egyptians with cautious optimism. Rather, they were highly critical of the limited knowledge displayed by the student movement, and its penchant for focusing on narrow issues and outward matters of ritual practice.45 This concern for the wayward youth further underscored the need for a centralized organization with a strong leadership that could instill its members with discipline and command their obedience.

In spite of the seemingly polarizing attitudes on the part of the veteran Muslim Brotherhood leaders, the anticipated impasse never materialized. This was partly a consequence of the fact that both factions independently pursued their own course, with ‘Abd al-Halim’s turn to publication and Mashhur’s efforts to reorganize the internal structure quietly. The apparent lack of confrontation was also the product of the emergence of a third faction, proposing to combine elements of the two visions for the future of the Muslim Brotherhood. Coalescing around the figure of ‘Umar al-Tilmisani, the centrist position saw the merits in both outlooks and attempted to incorporate them into a single project for the continuation of the Muslim Brotherhood’s mission. Along with Tilmisani, who had begun to take on a more active role in leadership as Hudaybi retreated into the background, this group included Jaber Rizq, Muhammad Salim, Husni ‘Abd al-Baqi, and Farid ‘Abd al-Khaliq.

They discerned a real need for a public presence for the Muslim Brotherhood, especially in the midst of a vibrant Islamic movement that lacked strong leadership. These figures took ‘Abd al-Halim’s proposal for an Islamic press to heart, vowing to introduce Egyptian society to the legacy of the Muslim Brotherhood and lend its voice
to the political and social issues of the day. Several years later, *al-Da‘wa* magazine, and indeed, the associated publishing company with its vast library of Muslim Brotherhood literature, emerged out of this commitment. Contrary to the beliefs of the Mashhur faction, the accommodationists perceived the Muslim Brotherhood’s prominent presence in society as an asset, not a liability. The more deeply entrenched it was in social institutions, from schools and mosques, to factories and hospitals, the more difficult it would be for the regime to take action against it. The more visible it was in the hearts and minds of Egyptians, the more impossible it would be for Sadat to erase its presence.

Continuing to operate under the Muslim Brotherhood banner meant that some level of organization was essential. Witnessing the burgeoning field of Islamic activism, and perhaps even the state’s foray into the religious student movement, the accommodationists tended to agree with Mashhur’s supporters that a diffuse public da‘wa campaign alone was not enough to sustain the Muslim Brotherhood’s mission. Tilmisani envisioned the reconstitution of the Guidance Bureau and its affiliated branch sections, simply as a mechanism to organize the existing Muslim Brotherhood members who wished to remain active in the group, but needed to be part of a coordinated effort. There was to be no active recruitment of new members, and more importantly, no establishment of any secret entities within the Muslim Brotherhood. The Secret Apparatus and its alleged plots against the state, whether real or imagined, had been the justification used by Nasser to dismantle and suppress the Muslim Brotherhood. The reconstituted group could not afford to provide Sadat with the same pretext upon which to act against it.

In this way, Tilmisani managed to combine elements of the conflicting perspectives to form a cohesive vision for the future of the Muslim Brotherhood. He
envisioned a mission of public advocacy that focused its efforts on society at large, but utilized its organizational mechanisms to execute this mission. He reasoned that the organization’s name was an asset that distinguished its followers from the competing Islamic trends, but that the next generation of activists should be encouraged to work within their existing institutions rather than recruited to join the Muslim Brotherhood. The tension between the spirit of the message and the reality of the messengers was one that Tilmisani believed could be eased through such compromises and an ability to adapt to new surroundings. He was supported in this effort by most of the remaining Muslim Brotherhood members, and even succeeded in bringing figures from the opposing factions on board. Early on in the discussions, al-Sisi joined Tilmisani’s middle position, and eventually even ‘Abd al-Halim reluctantly agreed to join in the reconstitution efforts, taking on a position in the new organization.

**The Brothers Return**

By early 1973, the decision to resume activism under the banner of the Muslim Brotherhood had been taken by most of its surviving leadership. Due to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding its return, however, the group was in no position to adhere to the organizational protocol, and this period became notable for signaling a true break from the past. As the Guidance Bureau was reestablished, only a handful of its original members had survived the prison years. In order to fill the open positions, the leadership relied on appointments rather than elections, which it lacked the ability to hold. For the first time in the Muslim Brotherhood’s history, the Guidance Bureau became populated with figures who were not contemporaries of Hasan al-Banna, and had not witnessed the first two decades of activism under his
leadership. Moreover, the entire remaining membership comprised only about 100-200 individuals, a far cry from the days of Banna, when the Muslim Brotherhood boasted hundreds of thousands of members.46

Within the organization, a reshuffling saw the rise of a new leadership. Though in a position of seniority, ‘Abd al-Halim refused an appointment to the Guidance Bureau, instead agreeing to serve under one of his former pupils, al-Sisi, who was placed in charge of the Muslim Brotherhood’s chapter in Alexandria.47 Though he would have appreciated a greater degree of authority within the organization, ‘Abd al-Halim resolved himself to documenting the group’s history so that its legacy may be preserved. Elsewhere, Mashhur, Hassanain, and al-Sananiri exerted greater influence within the organization than ever before, even showing early signs that they intended to institute part of their proposed vision for a clandestine unit.

Already in disarray following a tenuous organizational arrangement, the Muslim Brotherhood faced a number of challenges during the course of the year. Having largely taken a back seat during the student protests in the first months of 1973, the leadership struggled with its position vis-à-vis the broader Islamic movement, especially within the universities. It recognized the need to tread carefully, especially in light of Sadat’s decision to bypass the domestic leadership in favor of exiled Muslim Brotherhood figures as the only recognized channel with whom he communicated. Adding insult to injury, Hudaybi’s refusal to pledge his unconditional allegiance to Sadat ensured that the reconstituted group would remain under intense scrutiny by the regime.

When the October War broke out later that year, the Muslim Brotherhood’s leadership knew that it would be expected to take a stand. In echoes of the heated prison debates that surrounded the 1967 war, the Islamic movement featured both
conservatives who refused to lend their support to the regime’s war effort, and conciliatory gestures on the part of some activists who placed the national goal of liberation above domestic political considerations. Owing largely to the fact that it had yet to be sufficiently organized, the Muslim Brotherhood sidestepped this debate, though some figures took individual positions on the issue, lauding the gains made by Egyptian forces on the battlefield, but also criticizing the political leadership for its decision to cease hostilities prematurely.

Less than a month later, the Muslim Brotherhood was dealt another blow with the loss of its second General Guide. Hasan al-Hudaybi died on November 11, at the age of 82, sparking another crisis of leadership in an organization that was in enough of a precarious position prior to the loss of its figurehead. Just as with the ad hoc reconstitution of the Guidance Bureau, the Muslim Brotherhood was not in any position to pursue its standard operating procedures with regard to selecting a new General Guide. Moreover, given the organization’s nebulous legal standing, what figure would willingly step forward and be declared its leader? As thousands of supporters, that included former members and public officials, gathered to mourn Hudaybi’s death, the Guidance Bureau quietly met to determine its course of action.

When no clear candidate or for that matter, protocol for their selection, emerged from this discussion, the members turned to Sheikh Marzouk, a respected veteran of the Muslim Brotherhood who in the previous year had served as Hudaybi’s stand-in at Bureau meetings when the General Guide was unable to attend. The Bureau asked Marzouk to fill in as General Guide while they determined the future of the position, a process that was expected to take some time, given the organizational deficiencies faced by the Muslim Brotherhood. Marzouk initially refused, but after
prodding by the other members, he reluctantly agreed to take on the responsibilities of the General Guide.

While it was a short-term solution, this posed a problem for the Muslim Brotherhood. The Guidance Bureau refused to reveal the identity of the new General Guide publicly, keeping its decision to install Marzouk a secret from its own members, as well as the society at large. Instead, members were requested to pledge their allegiance, the traditional bay’a given to all new leaders, to the position of General Guide generically, without any knowledge of who had actually come to occupy the post. According to the recollection of ‘Abd al-Mon’eim Abul Futuh, a student activist who later became one of the youngest members of the Guidance Bureau, the move sent shockwaves through the rank-and-file members, some of whom refused to give their bay’a to a “Secret Murshid.” This was especially true among the community of exiled Muslim Brotherhood members, whose distance from the events made them all the more suspicious. But even within Egypt, figures like Mahdi ‘Akef, a future General Guide himself, reportedly spurned a delegation of Guidance Bureau members who attempted to obtain his bay’a to the General Guide without disclosing his identity.49

The “Secret Murshid” period is an oft-forgotten episode in the modern history of the Muslim Brotherhood. It signaled one of the lowest points in the organization’s existence, and became emblematic of the disarray characteristic of the group during its reconstitution phase. The idea that the organization founded by the visionary Hasan al-Banna and relied so heavily on his charismatic authority would one day have a nameless General Guide was unconscionable. This moment represented its internal divisions and its external apprehensions. With no strong leadership or unifying vision for the Muslim Brotherhood’s future, members of the makeshift Guidance Bureau
could not come to a concrete decision on the way forward for their organization, necessitating a temporary solution that all agreed was unworkable. Moreover, continuing concerns over the state’s posture toward a reconstituted Muslim Brotherhood contributed to the need for confidentiality during this early stage. As with earlier periods in its history, the organization discerned a real need to protect its legacy and conceal whatever internal divisions and structural weaknesses it possessed.

In that sense, the Muslim Brotherhood succeeded, even with the “Secret Murshid” debacle. Few outsiders were privy to the internal situation in the Guidance Bureau. Just over a year later, Tilmisani emerged as the agreed upon choice for the position of General Guide. As the most senior remaining Muslim Brotherhood figure and the only member of the last Guidance Bureau prior to its dissolution in 1954, he was an obvious choice and received the support of the majority of the organization’s members. The only reservations were those of the Mashhur faction, which held philosophical disagreements with Tilmisani’s vision for the organization, in spite of its declared support for the compromise position that emerged from the internal debate. These tensions would become a recurring theme during the remainder of the decade, as the accommodationist outlook for the future of the organization was under constant pressure by forces wishing to pursue their own vision. Nonetheless, with its legacy largely intact, in that same period, the Muslim Brotherhood reemerged as the most prominent social movement organization in Egypt, resuming its place at the head of the Islamic movement. This development, by no means a certainty as Tilmisani assumed the reins of leadership from an anonymous General Guide in 1974, was due in large part to the infusion of new lifeblood for the Muslim Brotherhood. Across the nation’s colleges and universities, Islamic youth groups had been busy
developing a new spirit of religious activism unlike anything that had been seen in Egypt since the revolution.
Chapter Four

ISLAM ON CAMPUS

In February 1977, Anwar al-Sadat convened a meeting at his vacation home in al-Qanatir, the site of many defining moments of his presidency. In addition to his vice-president, Hosni Mubarak, and several members of his cabinet, Sadat also invited ordinary Egyptians representing various segments of society: workers, professionals, and students. The town hall meeting format was a favorite of Sadat’s, and one he tended to rely on in the face of an impending political crisis. Only weeks earlier, protests had erupted across Egypt in response to the regime’s lifting of subsidies on basic staples such as flour and oil. These “bread riots” singlehandedly threatened to undo Sadat’s liberalizing economic strategy, known as the infitah (opening) policy, and instantly became the most perilous moment of his presidency.

The gathering, carried live on state television networks, was intended to mollify the seething populace and provide reassurances of Sadat’s leadership at a time of political and social turmoil.

Following Sadat’s opening remarks, the floor was opened for the audience to express their views and ask questions of their president. In the small crowd sat ‘Abd al-Moneim Abul Futuh, a young medical student who was currently serving as the president of Cairo University’s Student Union and the treasurer of the National Student Union’s Media Committee. As a founding member of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, the most prominent religious organization within the university system, Abul Futuh’s rise to the leadership of the student union was a sign of the times. Islamic-oriented student activists had finally reached a position of influence after a long and bitter struggle against their leftist rivals. And just as they had succeeded in silencing Sadat’s most threatening political opponents, it appeared that the Islamic
movement’s usefulness to the regime was wearing thin. As Abul Futuh recalled, “I was the only bearded one in the entire meeting. …I rose my hand to speak several times but [Sadat] ignored me. When he did not permit me to speak, I rose to the microphone anyway, without permission, and my words were harsh.”¹

Abul Futuh spoke on the state’s responsibility toward the youth and the apparent contradictions between Sadat’s flowery rhetoric of a nation built on “science and faith” and the actual practices of his regime. As an example, he cited the case of Sheikh Muhammad al-Ghazali, one of the foremost Islamic figures in Egypt, who had been reassigned from his position as a teacher and scholar to an administrative post that did not afford students the opportunity to interact with him in a formal setting. Adding insult to injury, the state sent internal security forces to disperse students peacefully protesting this move.² Abul Futuh continued his point by asking, “Mr. President, why do you surround yourself with hypocrites who do not work for Egypt’s interest? Why do you keep all the good people away, and where is this country going?”³

Before Abul Futuh could complete his remarks, Sadat interrupted him angrily. Seeing the entire purpose of the meeting undone by this brash student activist, the red-faced president yelled at him to “stop right there!” and proceeded to berate him with a lecture on respecting his elders. The meeting was abruptly adjourned and in the months that followed, Abul Futuh’s family worried over his personal safety after this very public spat with the Egyptian president. Though no harm came to him personally, the incident signified a new period of confrontation between the Islamic movement and the state. Following the defeat of leftist elements in the universities and society at large, the only remaining potent force of political opposition was
represented by al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, the precursor for the return of the Muslim Brotherhood to Egyptian society.

Prior to Abul Futuh’s brush with fame at the expense of Sadat, Islamic activism in Egypt had not made any significant waves. Only a few years earlier, in 1973, Shabab al-Islam had reached the limits of its influence, and al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah, the predecessor of Abul Futuh’s organization, restricted its efforts to modest activities such as providing a prayer space for students, conducting occasional Qur’an study circles, and hosting communal breakfasts during the month of Ramadan. In fact, with the exception of the underground organization behind the events at the Technical Military Academy in 1974, Islamic activism barely registered on the radar of most Egyptians in the early 1970s, while the state believed it would have a strong hand in nurturing the growth of an Islamic trend to combat remnants of the old regime. Following their release from Nasser’s prisons, the Muslim Brotherhood leadership endured several years of external pressures and internal disarray, all of which made it unlikely that the organization would make an immediate impact on society. It was not until 1976, with the launch of its monthly magazine, al-Da‘wa, that the Muslim Brotherhood announced its official reemergence onto the national stage.

In the meantime, it would be left to young Egyptians at the university level, building upon the legacy of political activism by the student movement, to infuse society with a rejuvenated Islamic mission. The students who launched al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah into the orbit of political activism represented the next stage in an ongoing process that began in the twilight of the Nasser period. As regime sponsored platforms of Arab nationalism and socialism gave way to a potent wave of leftist opposition after 1967, the leftist movement was soon met with a nascent Islamic movement given tacit support by the new regime. By the mid-1970s, a burgeoning
movement, more deeply rooted in the new social and cultural milieu, gradually positioned itself in deep opposition to Sadat, even as it continued to enjoy the opened political space provided by the regime.

This bloc of student activists expanded in several directions, its public mission culminating with its capture of the Student Unions of nearly every university, while tacitly its leaders forged links with the Muslim Brotherhood. These twin developments would come to characterize the rise of Islamic activism and the restoration of the Muslim Brotherhood’s role at the head of Egypt’s political opposition. This chapter begins with an examination of the characteristics that distinguish this generation of students. Separated only by a few years from their counterparts in Shabab al-Islam, the students who developed al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah into an outright political movement typified a number of new trends unique to the Sadat era. This transition is also of particular importance due to the fact that the thousands of rank-and-file activists in al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah would come to make up the base of the reconstituted Muslim Brotherhood, giving the organization a different character in the latter quarter of the twentieth century than it featured in the era of Hasan al-Banna or his successor, Hasan al-Hudaybi.

In addition to its social profile, the Islamic student movement was also distinguished by its intellectual roots. The influences of particular religious and political texts, along with frequent interactions with leading scholars and intellectuals, played an important role in forming the ideological basis upon which the student movement would pursue its activist mission. These foundational influences and early activities form the second key facet in the examination of al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah. Considering that this movement was led primarily by students in the colleges of medicine, engineering, and the hard sciences, external intellectual forces played a
critical role in cultivating a generation of Islamic activists that did not otherwise produce its own scholars and thinkers.

Once the small and isolated religious groups on Egypt’s campuses began to expand the scope of their mission and their ranks swelled with greater numbers of eager students, the organizational structure of the groups had to adapt accordingly, evolving to meet the growing needs of student activists and the lofty ambitions of the leadership. These institutional developments went hand in hand with the decision by many leaders to participate in student union elections. The newfound access to considerable resources and institutional support saw to it that not only would the Islamic movement leave its imprint upon the wider student movement, but the organizational mechanisms it utilized would also help shape the future of Islamic activism. Participation in student union elections by leaders of al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah would eventually give way to young Muslim Brotherhood members to run for the leadership of professional syndicates, and beyond that, the Egyptian People’s Assembly.

Though it was emblematic of the fragile relationship between the state and the Islamic movement, Abul Futuh’s confrontation with Sadat was not the only occasion on which the two forces collided. The role of the Egyptian regime in forging the political and social space in which a revitalized Islamic movement could operate was an overarching theme of this period. Nevertheless, Sadat was also determined to place hurdles in the path of student activists to contain the growth of an Islamic current from overwhelming his own political agenda. These external pressures ultimately helped shape the development of Islamic groups, at times limiting their strategic choices, and in other instances offering them an outlet that would not have existed without the regime’s consent, however indeterminate it may have been.
Finally, it is worth taking stock of the Islamic movement’s achievements during the height of its public activism campaign. In universities across the country, students were exposed to similar campaigns of religious education and given new avenues for public religious expression, most notably in the form of Islamic summer camps that attracted thousands of Egyptian youth. Additionally, the movement rallied around individual issues, ranging from social ills and public morality to the president’s overtures to Israel and the deposed Shah of Iran. On the level of organization building, the student leaders of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah proved to be particularly adept, constructing a disciplined and structured group that was more resilient to external forces. In fact, it was only after the group’s leadership made the conscious decision to subsume its mission under the larger umbrella of the Muslim Brotherhood that the student movement became subject to outside influences that successfully channeled its energies toward a larger purpose. But the dynamic and vibrant nature of the student movement was such that the influence was mutual, as the Muslim Brotherhood would find itself transformed by its new partnership with the youth of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah.

“Religious from Birth”

Historically, Egypt’s system of higher education was the exclusive domain of the privileged classes of society. Though students played a significant role in national politics throughout the liberal era, the student population was relatively homogenous, reflecting the socioeconomic imbalance that favored urbanized elites who could afford to continue their post-secondary education. Even after the revolution, as Gamal Abdel Nasser sought to expand social services to include free higher education, the process was slow and its effects on the majority of Egyptians remained limited. The
student activists of the 1960s and early 1970s continued to reflect a common socioeconomic base, one that viewed itself as a vanguard for the leftist or Islamic transformation of society.

By the mid-1970s, however, Sadat’s aggressive changes to state education policy had altered the landscape of higher education in Egypt. Upon rising to power, Sadat pursued a populist agenda designed to build a new base of support. He declared it a national goal that all secondary school graduates be admitted to university. Following the creation of an “admissions authority” in 1971, new standards were drafted, creating a hierarchy that would eventually allow all secondary graduates to pursue higher education, ranging from medicine, as the most selective, to vocational training institutes, whose requirements were not as stringent.4

Only four years later, the number of secondary graduates admitted to higher learning programs surpassed 400,000 students, more than doubling the 1971 figure of 199,074.5 As would be expected, the sudden boom in the number of students put additional burdens on academic facilities, leading to a visible decline in the quality of education, and putting additional pressure on the state to respond. Hoping to ease the strain on Cairo and Alexandria, Sadat saw to the establishment of new universities in many provincial centers, including Tanta, Hilwan, Zaqaziq and al-Minya.6 For the first time in history, these institutions offered an outlet of higher education for rural Egyptians, thereby reversing the decades old trend that saw urban middle class Egyptians make up over 85 percent of the university student population.7

In altering the social makeup of the student population, Sadat aspired to build a new political base, one that was not beholden to the elitist socialist politics advanced by Nasser. Instead, Sadat bet that by infusing the university environment with rural and working class students in greater numbers, the ensuing political movement within
the universities would reflect more conservative and traditional cultural trends.\textsuperscript{8} Various tactics also ensured that university faculty, suspected by Sadat of harboring Nasserist sympathies, would exercise minimal influence over the nascent student movement. A ballooning faculty to student ratio that would reach 666:1 by 1977 placed enormous teaching burdens on the faculty, leaving them with little time to connect with students outside of the classroom.\textsuperscript{9} Moreover, Sadat’s 1971 decision to remove mandatory faculty advisors from student groups was indicative of his desire to cultivate a new student political culture free from the shackles of prior eras.

From the perspective of the regime, this development was a cautious and calculated strategy to secure its legitimacy and consolidate its power. In reality, however, the rise of an Islamic movement within the new crop of students was due to forces largely outside of Sadat’s control, “partly rooted in an accumulation of rapid, unbalanced, social change.”\textsuperscript{10} In his analysis of socioeconomic developments during the early Sadat years, Hinnebusch described a society in flux, still reeling from the effects of Nasserization, and now being forced to contend with yet another transformation:

Massive urbanization was uprooting a growing number of persons from the land and village community who could not be absorbed by the modern urban sector of the economy. Set adrift from the security of family and village, searching for a wider identity and solidarity, yet barely removed from traditional life and values, their heightened aspirations frustrated in a system dominated by a Westernized bourgeoisie, urban migrants were especially susceptible to recruitment by a nativist social protest movement.\textsuperscript{11}

Though this assessment is limited by its consideration of socioeconomic factors as being at the root of the rise of a religious opposition, it nonetheless provides an added dimension to the explanation of why the Islamic movement took the form that it did by the late 1970s. In contrast to Shabab al-Islam, which was made up of cosmopolitan middle class youth who had come of age during the height of Nasser’s
popularity only to see their hopes dashed by economic stagnation and the 1967 defeat, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah harbored no illusions about the regimes of Nasser and his unproven successor.

Indeed, many of the youth of this period asserted that they emerged with a strong sense of religiosity. Islam played a formative part in their upbringing and the development of their identity. In describing his generation, which he defined as “those of us born in the 1950s,” Abul Futuh argued that even during the staunchly secular and nationalist Nasser era, Islam was everywhere to be found in his community. It is true, he said, “The regime was against any Islamic movement, but it was not against Islam itself. The Islamic da‘wa was present, represented by al-Azhar, and various associations and institutions.”

Ibrahim al-Za‘farani attended the Medical College at Alexandria University, where he became active in the Islamic movement in the early 1970s. However, he maintained that his strong religious identity was not acquired during his college years. Rather, growing up in a village in the Kafr al-Sheikh region, Za‘farani found Islam to be deeply rooted in the identity of Egyptian villagers. Describing his family and other villagers as “religious from birth,” Za‘farani added that many villagers were also resentful of the state’s land reform policies, which had dispossessed many families of their land plots. In his study of Nasser and Sadat’s domestic economic policies, Hamied Ansari not only confirmed the contention that land policies were utilized by both regimes as a means of empowering supporters and disempowering political opponents, but that opposition was also frequently expressed in religious terms.
From the Ordinary to the Exceptional

While the changing socioeconomic landscape helped lay the groundwork for the transformation of political activism within Egyptian universities and society at large, it was only one of several developments critical for the rise of a renewed Islamic movement. Leaders within the Islamic student movement stressed that while their religious consciousness played an important part in developing their identities as youth, they experienced an “ordinary” or “general” Islam that was no different than that which was pervasive within Egyptian society as a whole. This tended to include an emphasis on core Islamic beliefs and rituals, and the elementary study of Islamic history and Qur’anic exegesis. Abul Futuh recalled that the only religious societies allowed to operate during the Nasser era were ones that were avowedly nonpolitical, such as al-Gam‘iyyah al-Shar‘iyyah, Gama‘at Ansar al-Sunnah, and the Sufi tariqas. For much of his childhood, there seemed to be no contradiction between supporting Nasser’s decidedly secular agenda, and adhering to a general religiosity in one’s personal and family life.

As noted previously, it was only after the shock of the 1967 defeat that cracks appeared in this arrangement. The sentiment expressed by the youth of this era reflected a stark realization that they could no longer abide by the Nasserist program and continue to live as Muslims. At a time when the pillars that had stood strong for nearly two decades were crashing down around them, Egyptians turned to their religious roots for answers. Abul Futuh recalled that, after the 1967 war, his neighborhood mosque became full of congregants eager to dig beneath the surface of basic Islamic teachings for more fulfilling answers to the core problems facing their society.
Likening the fall of the “Nasserist revolution” to an “earthquake” that befell Egypt, and the whole Arab world for that matter, Abul Futuh maintained that out of the rubble emerged a class of notable Islamic scholars who sought to push the boundaries of acceptable topics of exploration and discussion. Led by Sheikh Muhammad al-Ghazali, who preached at the historic mosque of ‘Amr ibn al-‘As in Cairo, these scholars infused the public discourse with a critique of the old order within an Islamic framework. Sheikh Sayyid Sabiq also emerged from the margins to educate the public on the role that Islam had to play in the future of the nation.

Moreover, the Muslim Brotherhood, the maligned group that had for so long played the role of enemy of the revolution (and accordingly, the nation) was for the first time publicly mentioned in sympathetic terms. For the many Egyptians who became completely disillusioned with Nasser’s leadership, his longtime critics began to be seen in a new light. Abul Futuh credited his local imam, Sheikh al-Bihairi with helping launch the process of reintegrating the Muslim Brotherhood into the public consciousness. “He would defend the Brothers and say that they were good men who only wanted to build Egypt and wanted the best for its people, but they collided with Gamal Abdel Nasser.” During this period, and especially following Nasser’s death in September 1970, the image of the Muslim Brotherhood was radically altered in the minds of many Egyptians, becoming “models of sacrifice and redemption for the sake of the nation.”

By that same token, however, “the perception of the Muslim Brotherhood as the possessor of a program for revival” was still several years away. This was simply the earliest form of a process that continued throughout the decade, gaining more steam with the release of the Muslim Brotherhood’s leaders from prison, and accelerated further by the air of tolerance toward religious expression promoted in the
early part of Sadat’s rule. Contacts between the student movement and the Muslim Brotherhood were extremely rare during this period. Instead, the youth relied on intermediary, public figures, such as Muhammad al-Ghazali, or local imams like al-Bihairi, to learn about the banned organization.

The nascent forces of opposition were by no means limited to the religious sphere. Though they ultimately launched what would become a decidedly Islamic movement, young students such as Abul Futuh and ‘Esam al-’Erian also found inspiration in the emergence of other cultural trends. The voice of the frustrated and disenfranchised masses of Egypt found expression in the songs and poems of folk performers like poet Ahmed Fu’ad Negm and singer/composer al-Sheikh Imam ‘Isa. Both came from humble origins in the Egyptian countryside, and following a brief traditional education, began long careers representing the poor and working class of Egypt in their popular folksongs. They spoke out against the political order at a time when it was far from safe to do so. Negm was imprisoned by Nasser following his scathing critique of the regime in the aftermath of the 1967 defeat, which he mourned with the words:

The state of Egypt is submerged under lies  
And the people are confused  
But everything is O.K. as long as our damned masters are happy  
Because of the poets who fill their stomach with poems  
Poems that glorify and appease even traitors  
With God's will, they will destroy the country

Indeed, Negm later echoed the sentiments of many Egyptians toward the political awakening brought about by the naksa. “The ‘67 defeat,” he said, “made me into a poet.” Moreover, by virtue of their subversive art, Negm and Imam led a wave of Egyptians who began to question their leaders. According to Negm, until the June War “we used to believe what the state media would tell us.” Up until this historical moment, “people were afraid to speak out, for fear of imprisonment. But
this collective fear is what led to the defeat, so I promised myself not to be fearful after that day, regardless of the consequences.”

The process of self-empowerment and social consciousness proceeded out of this pivotal historical moment. As Negm and Imam sang folk songs about poverty, political corruption, and national pride in the face of Western imperialism, a rising generation of Egyptians developed self-awareness, a certain cynicism and disbelief toward political elites, and a strong desire to seek alternative sources of information and acculturation. The duo spared no one in their sardonic reflections on powerful figures, from Nasser and Sadat, to Sha‘rawi Gom’a, the notorious Interior Minister, and Richard Nixon, the American president. Even Umm Kulthum, the iconic songstress revered across the Arab world, was disparaged for her perceived elitism and propensity to act on behalf of the regime. With each public performance to which hundreds of Egyptians flocked, it became increasingly clear that a new era of popular culture and political consciousness was at hand.

Recounting his early days of student activism, ‘Esam al-‘Erian credited the emergence of an oppositional culture led by figures such as Negm and Imam, with creating the fertile ground necessary for the rise of a new movement. Akin to Bob Dylan and Pablo Neruda in the West, these artists delivered their message in plain and accessible language, connecting directly with the people they represented, and giving voice to a population that for decades had been silenced. For their troubles, Negm and Imam were frequently imprisoned, late in the Nasser era, and several times by Sadat, who was doubtlessly irked that his attempts at populism were constantly undermined by those truly in tune with the hopes and aspirations of the Egyptian populace.

The emergence of this cultural trend played a pivotal role in the rise of student activism in the 1970s. It aided in the formation of a distinct identity to define the up
and coming generation, featuring a unique and poignant message articulated by cultural icons in the buoyant vernacular of youth. The ability to challenge the status quo, a quality at the heart of any popular social movement, was developed as a result of the confidence imbued in the student population in the wake of one of the lowest moments in modern Egyptian history. This was no easy feat, one that required the coalescence of a variety of social forces and cultural symbols. Building upon this effort, the young men entering university in the early 1970s became determined to transform their surrounding environment and empower themselves through the use of existing institutions.

In the fall of 1970, Abul Futuh entered Cairo University’s College of Medicine. Having received the highest marks in his secondary school’s graduating class, he was admitted to the most prestigious college program in Egypt. During the one-year pre-medical preparatory education program at the College of Science, Abul Futuh recalled that there was no semblance of religious activity on campus. The modest prayer space was not put to use by students. Abul Futuh and only one other student, ‘Abd al-Shafi Sawi who arrived to Cairo from al-Minya in upper Egypt, would convene regularly for prayers in between their classes. The few religious students on campus had even more reason to feel isolated. Coming out of sheltered, conservative backgrounds, the younger students were stunned to discover their older colleagues publicly denigrating Islamic teachings and promoting a cultural and national identity devoid of any religious attachments. In Alexandria, Za’farani had witnessed a similar environment. His first day of class at the Medical College coincided with Nasser’s death, and classes were promptly canceled to allow the longstanding leader to be mourned by the university community, an event that set the tone for the remainder of the year.
In the summer of 1971, the first efforts to organize the activities of the religiously oriented students were underway. Though they had returned to their hometowns across the country for the summer holidays, the students were determined to return to Cairo and discuss the future of their campus-wide activities. The meeting took place at the Medical Center for Cardiac and Rheumatoid Care, under the supervision of ‘Abd al-Mon‘eim Abul Fadl, an accomplished physician, scientist, and educator who served as a mentor to the religious students. At the gathering, the students resolved to take a more active role in the propagation of their faith, and expand the scope of their activities to take on a slightly more politicized bent. On one level, this last point was a reflection of the increasingly politically charged atmosphere in Egypt during the early months of the Sadat regime. More specifically, it was also a direct consequence of the difficulties the students had faced in their confrontations with leftist activists.

The following year, as the students began their medical studies at the Qasr al-‘Aini Medical School, they were astonished to find that in the span of a year, the student population had changed substantially, with the campus mosque filling with congregants during prayer time. Encouraged by this sudden rise of religious consciousness, several students attempted to expand the offerings of religious services beyond prayers to include Qur’anic study circles, and communal breakfasts during the month of Ramadan. Soon, a group of students also determined to initiate campus-wide outreach, reacting to the longstanding anti-Islamic sentiments expressed by the contingent of leftist student activists.

Responding to this general air of hostility to their faith, Abul Futuh and other students posted wall magazines providing basic religious lessons and exploring issues of halal and haram (lawful and impermissible) in Islam. They also proceeded to
escalate their awareness campaign, printing and distributing pamphlets, leaving short religious messages on the chalkboards of classrooms, and ultimately engaging the leftist students in heated debates on questions such as the compatibility of Islam with modern systems of governance. But the leftist students had honed their debating skills for years, while the younger and more inexperienced students wishing to defend their faith found it difficult to counter many of the complex arguments being tossed their way. Abul Futuh and his colleagues turned inward, embarking on a journey of self-reflection and more sophisticated religious education.

Joined by future student leaders such as Muhammad Yousuf, Hasan ‘Abd al-Fattah, Sanaa’ Abu Zeid, and ‘Abd al-Rahman Hasan, Abul Futuh approached Sheikh al-Ghazali for answers to the complex questions that many of them had never contemplated. The elder scholar patiently offered his expertise in regular talks at the ‘Amr ibn al-‘As mosque, while also referring them to a number of texts that delved into such matters in greater detail. “During this period,” Abul Futuh recalled, “we discovered the routes to all the major Islamic bookshops.” The youth eagerly read seminal religious texts such as al-Ghazali’s ‘Aqeedat al-Muslim (The Doctrine of the Muslim) and Khuluq al-Muslim (The Behavior of the Muslim). They were taken by Sheikh Sayyid Sabiq’s humorous and personable style, and found his Fiqh al-Sunnah (Jurisprudence of the Tradition) to be a definitive work of Islamic jurisprudence. Bahi al-Khouli’s regular articles series left a strong impression on Abul Futuh and his classmates, while ‘Isa ‘Abduh’s lectures on Islamic economics were the first that any of them had ever heard on the topic.

On the whole, this exposure to an elder intellectual class was instrumental in cultivating the activist mindset of the 1970s era student movement. In essence, this didactic enterprise marshaled the transformation from an “ordinary” religiosity to the
“exceptional” vision of Islam put forth by scholars in the modernist tradition. This Islamic educational movement initiated the development of “the idea of a civilizational project for the Ummah” within a new generation. “Though I was religious from a young age,” Abul Futuh stated, “I had never heard of this before.”

**Structural Evolution: Rise of the Islamic Society**

With the growing political awareness of the students and the steady development of a more comprehensive vision of Islam’s role in public life, came an evolution in the content produced in wall magazines, booklets, and pamphlets. Some of this early political content focused on general critiques of the country’s political and cultural elites, while pointing to exemplary models of just leadership from classical Islamic figures such as ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph. These elementary writings also took on a broad nationalist tone, expressing strong opposition to the Zionist project and calling for the liberation of Arab lands.

During the course of these events, student activists faced frequent obstruction by the leadership of the Student Union, “which rejected even this simple religious activity and wished to control all student activism.” Wishing to operate through legitimate and authorized channels, the students organized their activities through the Committee for Religious Awareness (al-Taw‘iyah al-Diniyyah), an extension of the Student Union’s Cultural Committee that was set up by Abul Fadl several years earlier. Even with this official recognition of the religious committee’s work, the Student Union repeatedly refused to provide the resources required by the students to conduct their activities, such as a meeting space and printing supplies. For students like Abul Futuh, this served as an early lesson in the importance of achieving political clout for the pursuit of his group’s activities.
Following a frustrating second year that saw their activities hampered by the authority of the Student Union, the Islamic activists at Qasr al-ʿAini Medical School went about reorganizing their mission under the banner of al-Gamʿiyah al-Diniyyah (the Religious Association). This move effectively replaced the previous Committee for Religious Awareness with a new, independent organization that was not subject to the oversight of the hostile Student Union. Since the group had enjoyed few of the benefits associated with being affiliated with the Student Union, members viewed the break as a positive step forward.

Freed from administrative restraints following this internal restructuring, the movement’s program underwent considerable expansion, especially in the printing and distribution of reading materials, and the frequency of religious lectures and study circles. The structure featured a simple hierarchy: at the top was the amir, or leader chosen through informal consensus by a consultative council, majlis al-shura, made up of a core group of the most active members. Finally, there was the general membership, or those students whose level of activity was limited to engaging in occasional public forums and other open programs. As most leaders stressed, the Islamic student movement, in its various incarnations, never had an official process for membership, did not provide identification cards, and did not maintain records or rolls featuring all who joined in its activities. Nor were there any dues or other monetary requirements, though all students were encouraged to donate for the support of the group’s programs.39

Looking outwardly, the student leadership of al-Gamʿiyah al-Diniyyah also resolved to take on the Student Union directly by standing in elections beginning in 1973. Even as its activities flourished within a hostile environment, the Islamic movement believed that its mission of spreading the daʿwa, or calling on their fellow
students to reassert the place of Islam in their lives, could not be accomplished without the institutional support provided by the Student Union.\(^{40}\) As Abul Futuh noted, taking control of the Student Union was not an end in itself for al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah. Rather, it was part of a strategy to marginalize the leftist forces that had domination of campus activities and carve out a permanent place for the Islamic movement.\(^{41}\)

Deciding to run candidates in all six Student Union committees in the Medical College, al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah aspired to make its presence felt and test its growing strength among the student population. By the leadership’s own account, the group even ran a candidate for the Arts Committee who not only had no qualifications for the post, but actually expressed hostility toward the arts.\(^{42}\) Though they had mobilized a wide network of supporters, the religious students were not considered to be a credible threat to the leftist hold on the Student Union. It was only after leaders from al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah won four out of six committee chairs that the longstanding leftist leadership realized that the Islamic student movement was slowly taking the mantle of authority over student activism.

In the wake of al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah’s victory, the campus witnessed a sudden surge in Islamic activism. This was due in part to the emergence of strong leaders within the movement’s ranks. Having just started at the university earlier that year, younger students, like ‘Esam al-‘Erian and Muhammad ‘Abd al-Latif energized the movement and began to focus their energies on organizing their peers. More directly however, in his newfound position as president of the Student Union, Abul Futuh ensured that al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah received the requisite funds and access to resources to see its activities flourish. Sanaa’ Abu Zeid was chosen to serve as amir by an inner circle of active members of al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah. Together, the two
close friends and leaders saw to it that their respective positions allowed for a well-coordinated strategy for the student movement.

In the contest for influence over the student body, however, Abul Futuh leaves no doubt that it was not the Student Union president, but rather the amir of al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah who held the most sway over the rank-and-file of the student movement. “The real power,” he said, “was in the hands of the amir.” As a result of the close relationship between Abul Futuh and Abu Zeid, and the conscious process of dividing the functions of their positions, the two leaders saw their roles as complimentary to one another rather than adversarial in nature. While the position of union president was viewed as one of a necessary functionary capable of delivering the means for the Islamic movement to progress, the amir was the spiritual head of the movement and entrusted with cultivating its overarching vision and managing its daily affairs.

The term itself was chosen because of its classical Islamic connotation, harkening back to an idealized historical era in which religious and political leadership were wedded in the position of the caliph, also known as “amir al-mu’minin” (commander of the faithful). This choice also reflected the central role that classical Islamic texts played in the formative period of the student movement. In stark contrast to the recent failures of secular leadership in Egypt, the model of just rulers during the golden era of Islam left a strong impression on the youth. The students referred to a particular Prophetic tradition that states, “If you are three, make one of you an amir.” This hadith provided the inspirational framework for a simple organizational structure with one figure at its head, whose legitimacy stemmed directly from the initial consent of the group.

The traditional concept of “al-sam‘ wal-ta‘a” (to listen and obey) was adopted
to strengthen the authority of the amir, and set the leader apart from the general membership. Though there was the potential for abuse of power by demanding blind loyalty to the leader, students repeatedly stressed that no amir was ever interested in power for the sake of power. Indeed, Sayyid ‘Abd al-Sattar al-Meligi, a student leader at ‘Ain Shams University, believed that observing this concept was critical to the success of the movement during this stage.⁴⁶ Moreover, the selection of leaders generally occurred organically, with some activists demonstrating their qualities and developing a large following. The internal dynamic was marked by strong feelings of camaraderie and brotherhood, especially in light of the multitude of external adversaries facing the nascent Islamic movement.

Hand in hand with this vision of leadership, al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah developed its structural hierarchy. This process took off following the spontaneous reevaluation of the group’s name. Abul Futuh recalled that one day in 1973, as he and ‘Abd al-Rahman Hasan were leaving their customary short Islamic lesson on the chalkboard, Abul Futuh questioned whether they should sign it “al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah” in their usual manner. “Why do we not sign it ‘al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah’?” he wondered.⁴⁷ The description was more expressive of the group’s true character. It also evoked the name of a popular social movement organization founded in Pakistan by Mawlana Mawdudi who, incidentally, also served as the group’s amir. At a time when the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt was still in disarray, the Jamaat-i-Islami provided the exemplary model of a modern Islamic movement that held to its religious tradition while also operating within a contemporary political context. From that moment, as Abul Futuh and Hasan decided to sign off their daily moral with “al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah,” (the Islamic Society) the organization was officially renamed for the last time.
Unlike the transition from al-Taw‘iyyah al-Diniyyah to al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah, the move from the latter to al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah featured no change to the group whatsoever, whether in its ideology or organizational structure. Rather, this simple alteration in name reflected the Islamic movement’s growing confidence with its mission, a settling on a distinct identity, and increased comfort with the political and sociocultural space in which it operated. It demonstrated maturity on the part of a vibrant youth movement that had entered its fourth year at Cairo University’s Medical College, and had begun to spread widely to other colleges and thereafter, other universities throughout the country. Although prior groups had defined themselves as explicitly Islamic (most notably, Shabab al-Islam), what distinguished al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah was the introspective nature of its decision to redefine its organization. It was not depicting itself in opposition to the dominant secular, leftist political youth culture. Nor was it distinguishing its religious identity from those of non-Muslim activists. Rather, it represented the culmination of the struggle to achieve organizational cohesion and the process of intellectual contemplation of the nature of Islamic activism itself. The “association” had become a “society.” The “religious” had become “Islamic.” The movement had become self-aware.

The Amir of Amirs

Within a year, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah had spread to every other college at Cairo University and indeed, to nearly every university within Egypt. The growth experienced by the group after 1973 came as a result of a combination of factors: the appearance of a new class of energetic youth at other colleges and universities eager to extend the da‘wa on their campuses; and the presence of a strong, centralized
leadership at the Medical College willing to play the role of mentor to branch groups around the country. Following the initial stage of launching the movement and establishing its central organization, the period of 1974 to 1977 featured al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah’s consolidation of the national Islamic student movement under its leadership.

The evolution of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah’s organizational structure granted the central leadership the institutional capacity with which to nurture the growth of corresponding groups. During the 1974-75 academic year, the leaders at the Medical College created a council of amirs from every chapter of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah at Cairo University. When the council convened for the first time, it elected ‘Esam al-‘Erian, the recently chosen amir of the Medical College chapter, as the head of this council. In his capacity as the amir of Cairo University, al-‘Erian effectively managed the mission and activities of the entire organization. During biweekly meetings, leaders at other colleges looked to his leadership on a number of fronts, from what texts and scholars to consult and how to confront challenges from leftist students, to how to attract a wide following, compete in union elections, and maximize the utility of resources available to them. This disciplined and coordinated strategy was critical in establishing al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah as the preeminent student organization for the remainder of the decade.

In 1977, the organization decided to expand even further, calling for a meeting of all amirs from every university in Egypt. At the summit, student leaders selected Helmi al-Gazzar, the young activist from the Cairo University Medical College, as the amir of the council. This latest development saw the organization reach the fruition of its structural evolution. In the preceding years, it had succeeded in establishing a strong presence at every Egyptian university and now it had seen to it that all of these
chapters were linked directly through a communications and strategy network, and brought under the umbrella of a powerful, centralized leadership. In his capacity as amir of the body that oversaw every chapter of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, al-Gazzar became one of the most influential leaders in the history of Egyptian student activism. His command over a sizeable contingent of the student body put him directly at odds with the president of the republic himself, who was becoming increasingly ineffective at reaching the restive youth. When al-Gazzar was among the many activists arrested in the expansive security sweeps in late 1981, Sadat mockingly referred to him as “amir-ul-umara’” (amir of amirs).

Al-Gazzar’s selection as the head of a national council of amirs signaled the consolidation of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah’s authority over the national Islamic movement. Chapter groups at other colleges and universities looked to the movement that started it all, at the Cairo University Medical College, for wisdom and guidance on how to proceed in developing their own mission. This consultation required a high degree of coordination and as such, leaders in Cairo engaged in frequent written correspondence and even took occasional trips to campuses throughout Egypt, “from Alexandria to Aswan.” The Cairo leadership would also take advantage of annual summer camps to spend time with leaders from other chapters.

A primary purpose of these meetings was to evaluate the most active figures at other universities and designate an amir in the event that one was needed to fill an opening. Among the criteria Abul Futuh, al-`Erian, and al-Gazzar used to select a chapter leader was their personal religious observance and general behavior, in addition to their record of student activism. In practice, however, this usually entailed simple affirmation of leaders already in place as the heads of their respective groups, rather than handpicking individuals who were otherwise unknown.
organizational responsibilities added to the growing list of demands on the time and resources of the core group at the Cairo University Medical College, so much that the leaders would have to finance the long distance trips out of their own pockets and in some instances delegate the task to their colleagues.  

In this fashion, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah established a vast network that allowed for the growth of a vibrant movement with a strong structural hierarchy. Leaders in Cairo welcomed the opportunity to work with amirs across the country, such as veteran activist Za‘farani in Alexandria, Anwar Shahata in Tanta, and Muh‘iddin ‘Isa in Assiut. Before long, the amir in Cairo became looked upon as a murshid (guide) to groups everywhere, according to Abul Futuh. It is not clear whether this was a conscious determination to emulate the model instituted by the Muslim Brotherhood and its role of al-murshid al-'am (General Guide), but the fact remained that as it solidified its structural hierarchy, placing an authoritative head with symbolic as well as actual powers at the top, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah was becoming increasingly akin to the banned organization. Due to his vast following and the respect he commanded, the student murshid’s authority trumped even that of the union president, though as long as the unions remained in the hands of the Islamic movement, the amir rarely had cause to exert his authority over a body that followed his lead on matters of activism.

Parallel with these developments was the continuing success of the Islamic movement within Student Union elections. Though it had enjoyed early victories at Cairo University, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah’s hold on the Student Unions remained tenuous for several years. When prominent leftist activist Ziyad ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Odeh ran against Abul Futuh in the 1976 union elections, Abul Futuh emerged victorious by only two votes, 86-84.
Elsewhere, electoral advances were far more gradual. In Alexandria, the first elections contested by the Islamic movement came in 1973, when its leaders won fifty percent of the votes across the various positions. Za‘farani recalled that, at the time, few students knew much about al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, but the group benefited from the rampant corruption and nepotism for which the established union leadership had become known.\textsuperscript{58} Framing themselves in contrast to their opponents, the Islamic movement’s leaders became known for their strong moral character, having worked for charitable causes and denounced the corrupt practices and lack of transparency within the union. By 1975, their victory was far more sweeping, and only a year later, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah had come to control virtually the whole Student Union at Alexandria University. Though he served as amir of the Medical College’s group, Za‘farani also served on political and cultural committees of the union, and later became treasurer.\textsuperscript{59}

Participation occurred even more slowly in upper Egypt. Abul ‘Ela Madi, a student leader at al-Minya University recalled that al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah was highly resistant to the idea of engaging the Student Union, because of the endemic corruption within it, and its connection to the Sadat regime.\textsuperscript{60} On a fundamental level though, there appeared to be an aversion among more traditional students in upper Egypt to participation in Western-inspired democratic models that did not preface their institutional structures with the supremacy of divine commandments. It was only after a series of intense discussions among student leaders on a national level that the last of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah’s leaders came around to the idea of institutional engagement.

Madi credited Abul Futuh in particular, whom he first encountered at the 1976 Islamic camp in Cairo, with convincing hesitant student leaders to participate in union
elections. The following year, after Abul Futuh’s confrontation with Sadat, Madi and several other student leaders visited him to demonstrate their solidarity in the aftermath of the affair. During the ensuing discussions, “he convinced us all to join the elections in November. Though many of us thought the Student Union was a corrupt institution, he told us it could be used for harm as well as good, and it contained many resources to help us expand our work.”61

Sure enough, by late 1977, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah had contested union elections at every major university in Egypt, sweeping the leadership in all of them. Madi himself was elected to the national union, becoming vice-president of the powerful body. For the student activists of upper Egypt, however, this experiment with institutional engagement would prove to be short-lived, as the Sadat regime clamped down on all participation in 1979, reversing all electoral gains made and handpicking future union leaders.62 Nonetheless, the experience proved invaluable. According to its leading participants, success in student union elections proved that al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah represented a true vision of Islam with which many Egyptian youth identified, and that its leadership was capable of running state institutions and could be entrusted with the future of the nation more so than any of its rivals.63 Student leaders would carry this confidence forward with the expansion of its activist mission.

The Freedom Factor

Early in the process of making significant gains in its program, the Islamic student movement became well aware that its behavior would be subject to the scrutiny of its peers and the regime. Long aided by the Nasser regime in his pursuit of a broad national consensus over major policies, leftist student groups found themselves in the unfamiliar position of being the most vocal opposition to the
government beginning in 1968. Their conflict with the state escalated with the rise of Sadat, who had no socialist credentials to speak of, and was rapidly transforming the regime by expelling prominent leftist figures and initiating economic liberalization measures. With the rise of a new political force, diametrically opposed to the leftist political culture and vision that dominated the universities, the Islamic movement understood that it would face accusations of acting at the behest of the young regime.

Activists from the era acknowledged that they were frequently charged with being a tool of Sadat to quash the leftist movement. Abul Futuh responded simply that:

[A]s someone who lived this period, and was among those who founded the Islamic activism within it, I would have been in a position in which no details of an agreement between Sadat and the Islamic movement would have passed me by. In fact, I can say with certainty that any such agreement with Sadat would have been done with me personally, in my capacity as leader of the Islamic student movement, and God is our witness that we did not make an agreement with the regime, or with anyone.64

Badr Muhammad Badr, the amir at Cairo University’s College of Communication in the late 1970s, echoes those sentiments, declaring that while Sadat was advised to capitalize on the rise of Islamic movements to suppress his leftist opponents, “these offers by the regime did not succeed in convincing the principled ones to work for its benefit.”65 Rather, most leaders from al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah maintained that the regime’s efforts to co-opt Islamic activism came in the form of its support for (or according to some, creation of) Shabab al-Islam, the short-lived group that featured in the early 1970s. In support of this claim, they cite the observed behavior of this competing group’s members, as well as the testimony of its leaders.66

Most leaders from al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah readily admitted that they judged the suitability and indeed, the commitment of their fellow students to Islamic activism based on outward appearances: demonstrations of personal piety, observing regular
prayers, maintaining beards and traditional dress, self-segregating from members of the opposite sex and non-religious students, and general avoidance of popular cultural practices like listening to music and going to the cinema. By these standards, some of the students who publicly proclaimed to be members of Shabab al-Islam fell short of expectations. Abul Futuh recalled hearing from ‘Esam al-Sheikh, the amir of al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah at the Engineering College of Cairo University, that “‘we did not know who these students were who made up Shabab al-Islam, for they did not join us in any prior activity, but now they speak openly to students about Islam, even standing with female students and talking to them about Islam.’ We came to the conclusion then that these students from Shabab al-Islam were not observant and therefore did not align with us.”

This was a widespread sentiment among Islamic activists, some of whom went further in condemning Shabab al-Islam’s members for not adhering to “Islamic manners and behavior, for they would smoke cigarettes openly and engage female students in the colleges. This was unacceptable from the perspective of a Muslim youth fulfilling Islamic manners.” Moreover, critics added that Shabab al-Islam attempted to usurp the activism of al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah (and its forerunners) by holding its own lectures and seminars in which it would only invite state religious figures promoted by the regime.

In support of their suspicions of Shabab al-Islam, these critics also noted that leaders such as Wa’il ‘Uthman and ‘Adli Mustafa readily admitted being approached by regime figures to promote the interests of Sadat. Though this was in fact true, ‘Uthman and Mustafa categorically denied making any agreement or accepting any offers of support, a point neglected by their detractors from al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah. As described in greater detail in Chapter Two, the distrust between the
groups was mutual, and was owed in part to the cultural differences between them, but also to actual evidence of regime intervention in the form of copycat groups, unauthorized chapters of Shabab al-Islam that emerged in other colleges.

By characterizing the regime’s attempts to incorporate the Islamic movement into its own program as having occurred solely through the efforts with Shabab al-Islam, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah effectively removed any doubts about the genuine nature of its own mission. Abul Futuh repeatedly stated that his movement was “natural” and “spontaneous,” without any guidance from the authorities. Though they frequently leveled charges of collaboration, even leftist critics of the Islamic movement have generally pointed only to indirect contacts, usually conducted through university officials, something al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah has also not denied.

An important figure whose name occurs frequently in discussions of the rise of Islamic activism within Egyptian universities is Sufi Abu Talib. Trained as a lawyer, Abu Talib was an accomplished scholar who rose to become the vice-president of Cairo University in 1973. His sympathies toward the Islamic movement were widely known, especially in the face of a leftist resurgence during the early Sadat years. Abu Talib eventually went on to become the speaker of the Egyptian parliament in 1978, remaining in that post through the end of the Sadat regime.

During his tenure as a high-ranking university official, however, he was in frequent contact with student leaders, providing moral and logistical support for their activities. Abul Futuh recalled that in one instance during his time as Student Union president, he and Muhammad ‘Abd al-Latif, vice-president of the Medical College Student Union, were approached by Abu Talib, who was angry about a demonstration scheduled by leftist activists. According to Abul Futuh, Abu Talib asked the two student leaders, “how can you allow them to hold a protest?” so I said to him, ‘they
are free to do that.’ He replied, provocatively, ‘How? You are unable to stop them?’ so ‘Abd al-Latif responded to him, ‘we are not clubs to be used in the hands of others.’ 71

Though the student movement frequently challenged his authority to control its activities, youth leaders generally enjoyed a good relationship with Abu Talib. He helped the students organize the elaborate annual summer camps, and even felt comfortable enough with some of them to tell Abul Futuh, for instance, when he thought his beard had grown too long and needed to be trimmed. 72 Abu Talib’s support for the Islamic movement could be (and often was) construed as official sanction of al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah by the regime. 73 Given the severe restrictions on independent student activism strictly enforced by the Nasser regime, the relative freedom provided by Sadat could easily be viewed through the lens of his narrow political objectives. But if that were the case, many student leaders argued, the regime would have placed barriers before other political movements and created a space in which only the Islamic movement would be allowed to operate. In reality, Sadat granted equal freedom to all ideological trends. This was founded upon an assumption by the president that, if left to their own devices, Egyptians would gravitate toward their Islamic identity and away from the leftist ideologies cultivated by Nasser. 74

During the early years of the Sadat regime, this indeed appeared to be the case. Egyptians enjoyed political freedoms that had been unknown since the revolution two decades earlier. Abul Futuh emphasized that at no time during its rise did the student movement feel threatened by the regime. They met in the open, held meetings that brought thousands of students from across the country, marched through the streets of different cities in protest, distributed books of varying political viewpoints, and invited Islamic scholars of all ideological stripes. 75
Abul Futuh, at no time did the regime attempt to block these activities. In fact, there was not even a sense among the students that the state security apparatus was monitoring these events with concern. The university guard was withdrawn early on, a move that sent a clear message to the student movement that it was free to organize and speak openly within the bounds of the campus.

In hindsight this illustration may appear to have been exaggerated, given some of the periodic excesses of Sadat and the swift security clampdown that occurred after 1977, but in the promising early years, the students genuinely felt no fear of retribution and believed “the world was opened before us.”76 By 1975, as it appeared that even the Muslim Brotherhood, the banned organization regarded as chief public enemy of the Nasser regime was no longer subject to the same restrictions, the student movement believed strongly in the freedom to act without restraint. Viewed more critically, however, these policies were not part of a broad program of political liberalization, but rather a short-term effort to solidify Sadat’s legitimacy that began with the Corrective Revolution of May 1971 and was extended after the October War of 1973 that saw Sadat’s popularity reach unprecedented heights.

Additionally, the opened social space for political expression went hand-in-hand with the infitah policy for economic liberalization that sought to engage a greater segment of the Egyptian population—particularly young professionals and entrepreneurs—in the expanding national economy. The annual growth witnessed by the Egyptian economy, reaching 8 percent at its height, provided Sadat with a new political base of support that allowed him “to adapt the authoritarian state to the growing social and ideological pluralization of the political arena.”77 In essence, the freedom experienced by the student movement was a transitory means to an end: achieving full de-Nasserization and consolidating Sadat’s authority. However, this did
not make it any less meaningful for the students of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah. And its effects were demonstrable.

**Building the Complete Muslim**

Rarely has a youth movement exhibited such ambition as the Islamic student movement of the 1970s, and for it to have singlehandedly transformed the social and political scene in Egypt is even more extraordinary. The accomplishments of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah stem from its pursuit of a simple objective: spreading its da‘wa. In a typical early document entitled, “Our Da‘wa,” al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah declared to the student body that:

The da‘wa of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah is simple and clear. It is neither complicated nor ambiguous. Nonetheless, rarely do we find anyone in the university who understands it correctly. Our call is the call of Islam, the call to establish society on an Islamic foundation. Our thought is unwaveringly Islamic. And we understand Islam, good brother, within the bounds of these twenty principles.⁷⁸

The statement proceeded to list the famous Twenty Principles, first articulated by Hasan al-Banna, that detail the central beliefs of the pious Muslim. They begin with a general statement on the comprehensive nature of Islam as a system to govern all aspects of life, and move on to describe particular ideals, such as following the exemplary model of Prophetic leadership, emphasizing the centrality of holy scripture, implementing divine law, and remaining vigilant against forces that threaten the faith.

This public pronouncement captures the first stage of the activist mission of the Islamic student movement, the practice known as tarbiya, or religious instruction.⁷⁹ Programs for Islamic education accounted for the vast majority of student activities, especially during the early period of campus organizing. In fact, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah developed a strict curriculum that it promoted among its
members. In another document it published, entitled “Why al-Gama'ah al-Islamiyyah?” the group declared, “al-Gama'ah al-Islamiyyah fulfills its role in cultivating a generation of youth able to face the plans of its enemies, the enemies of God, and calls on all of you to join it in its educational program for the coming year.” In the long list of instructions, students were told to memorize the thirtieth chapter of the Qur’an, the first fifteen hadiths out of a popular published collection of forty, and study Qur’anic exegesis and the elementary procedures of Islamic jurisprudence, or fiqh. Alongside each instruction, specific book recommendations were listed, with Sabiq’s Fiqh al-Sunna featuring prominently.

The program laid out by the tarbiya list was expected to be accomplished within an academic year. Additional lists supplemented the original program, suggesting more advanced texts to build upon one’s knowledge and collectively expand the intellectual horizons of the student movement. Though these were individual targets that all committed members were expected to meet, the didactic process was in most instances a collective effort. Students shared books, many of which were loaned out from al-Gama'ah al-Islamiyyah’s library collection. Weekly study circles were meant to enhance the knowledge achieved from texts, and at times, even afforded students the opportunity to meet the authors of some of the seminal works in contemporary Islamic thought.

Perhaps the activity most critical to the process of tarbiya was the annual summer camps organized by al-Gama'ah al-Islamiyyah in conjunction with the Student Union. These camps featured intensive programs designed not only to instruct the students in matter of Islamic belief, but also to provide them with an avenue to practice an idealized interpretation of Islamic precepts during their daily interactions. Held at Cairo University in the summer of 1973, the first of these camps
featured an appearance by Ahmed Kamal Abul Magd, Sadat’s Minister of Youth. Also in Cairo, ‘Ain Shams University held a parallel camp that included forty students from al-Azhar University. Shorter camps held at individual colleges during the winter holiday also became a regular occurrence. The following year, the Cairo University camp was greatly expanded, and welcomed the involvement of two Islamic luminaries, Sheikh Muhammad al-Ghazali and Sheikh Yousuf al-Qaradawi. The camp format spread across Egypt in subsequent years until, by 1977, every major university in Egypt was holding its own Islamic summer camp. Though they were some of the latest to join in these programs, universities in Al-Minya, Assiut, and Mansoura quickly became some of the most active in the country, while the impact of Alexandria University was second only to the developments in Cairo.

A look at a typical program from an Islamic summer camp is indicative of its rigorous nature, and illustrates how it was effective in accomplishing much in a relatively short time:

3:00: Wakeup for overnight prayer
4:00: Call to prayer
4:20: Dawn prayer
4:50: Morning religious remembrance
5:20: Lessons in Qur’anic recitation
6:10: Prepare for morning exercise line
6:30: Morning exercise line
7:30: Prepare breakfast
8:00: Breakfast
9:00: Free reading period
10:00: Morning lecture
12:00: Noon prayer
12:45: Afternoon rest
15:00: Lunch
15:30: Afternoon prayer
16:30: Evening lecture
18:00: Evening religious remembrance
19:00: Sunset prayer
19:30: Dinner
20:00: Night prayer
20:30: Committee meetings
21:30: Sleep
In the midst of this intensive combination of spiritual observance and instruction, intellectual discussion, and physical activity, the youth developed and matured in all aspects of their lives and established strong bonds and feelings of camaraderie with one another. Moreover, the emphasis on discipline, that was at the heart of these activities translated into a solid organizational foundation for the remainder of the year. In fact, Badr recalled that students living on the university campuses enforced a similar program in their dormitories year-round, observing regular communal prayers, sharing meals, and joining together in athletic events when they were not busy studying or pursuing their other intellectual activities.86

For many students, their first real exposure to the Islamic movement came in the form of attending these camps. Such was the case with Gamal ‘Abd al-Salam, who would become active in al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah at the Medical College of Cairo University. But although he entered the university in 1975, it was not until he attended the summer camp of 1976 that he became dedicated to the Islamic movement.87 There, he witnessed firsthand the da’wa of the elder generation of accomplished scholars tailored and delivered directly to the youth by figures like Qaradawi, Ghazali, ‘Abd al-Mut‘ali Gabr, and Mustafa Mashhur.

The process of indoctrination was reinforced throughout the year by similar events held within the university walls. Public lectures, closed seminars, and daylong conferences, all building on Islamic themes, became permanent fixtures on the academic calendar. Access to Student Union resources also provided al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah the ability to publish Islamic booklets, many of which simply rehashed older texts, though they became available to a new generation for the first time. Abul Futuh edited a periodical entitled Sawt al-Haqq (Voice of Truth), one of the first to reintroduce the writings of Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, which had been banned
by Nasser, and only permitted to resume publication in 1974. Mahmoud Ghozlan, a professor at the Cairo University College of Agriculture, selected most of the excerpts, which included traditional as well as modern scholars, and covered a wide array of issues.88

At Al-Minya University, students even took liberties with these texts, refashioning them to suit their current political, social, and ideological climate. Madi, for instance, recalled that of the Twenty Principles of Hasan al-Banna, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah only published eighteen, out of concern that two of Banna’s points about the nature of spirituality and its practices would offend the sensibilities of the more conservative, Salafi students who had adopted an outlook that was highly critical of Sufism.89

The Student Union also allocated a portion of its budget to subsidize student trips to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, whether for smaller ‘Umrah visits, or as part of the annual Hajj pilgrimage. Costing students a mere 35 Egyptian pounds, these trips were immensely successful, allowing up to 100,000 students, male and female, to visit Saudi Arabia during the mid-to-late 1970s, according to one estimate.90 At a time when Saudi Arabia was expanding its regional influence, politically and economically, the cultural component that resulted from the interaction between impressionable Egyptian youth and established scholars trained in the Wahhabi tradition, the effects were rather considerable. Egyptian university students were attracted to the pure and uncompromised interpretation of their faith that they encountered in the holy cities, and attempted to incorporate some of these teachings in their own practices. This yielded the suspicious view of Sufism as a deviation from Islam, and the hostility toward music, film, and other cultural landmarks for which Egypt had been known.
Along with these brief but momentous trips, students were also influenced by the boom in book production coming from the Gulf. Upon returning home from the pilgrimage, students often discovered crates of books that had been shipped to them, free of charge, by their hosts in Saudi Arabia. Often focusing on matters of ritual practices and the interpretation of law, these texts, from groups like Ansar al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyyah and al-Dar al-Salafiyyah, made their way into the hands of many students, through the library of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, as well as the weekly book fairs. These were typically held out in the open on the university grounds, and quickly became one of the most successful programs sponsored by the Islamic movement. Student leaders acquired Islamic books from publishers across Cairo and Alexandria, and offered them to their peers at discounted rates. This spurred an intellectualized campus culture that revolved around religious topics and provided a common frame of reference for the discourse of the student movement. As an added service to their fellow students, leaders also provided academic textbooks for a variety of courses at heavily subsidized prices. They even obtained permission from professors to photocopy their most important works to provide to the student body, a large percentage of whom could not otherwise afford to purchase textbooks.

At a time when retail markets had not kept up with changing fashion trends among the youth, student vendors took pride in their ability to offer modest dress to female students. The Islamic headscarf and modern forms of traditional dress became widespread among the female student population. This initiative was consistent with the emphasis on outward appearances among the leadership of the Islamic movement. Female students also maintained regular study circles held in parallel with those of male students, and hosted female guest lecturers, like Zainab al-Ghazali. Another major project lauded by the Student Union was the establishment of segregated public
transportation for female students. While this was occasionally billed as an issue of safety—providing female students with a secure means of traveling through the city without risk of harassment or attack—it was also part of the growing effort to enforce public morality by decreasing interaction between male and female students. Badr described the program as “highly successful,” noting that it was particularly important at the Medical College at Cairo University, whose students often had to study long hours.  

In all, the religious and cultural activities made up the bulk of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah’s program. From the humble beginnings convening for obligatory prayers in the tiny college prayer room, it demonstrated great maturation as its lectures and camps witnessed thousands of eager youth clamoring to interact with their peers and learn from the established scholars of the day. Its activities soon spread beyond the university, epitomized in the biannual celebration of Islamic holiday by holding religious services out in the open, as per Islamic custom. By 1981, the last of these ‘eid prayers permitted by Sadat brought over half a million congregants, young and old alike, to the ‘Abidin Square in Cairo, and the Alexandria Stadium. Additionally, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah succeeded in generating goodwill among students and society at large by engaging in social services, such as providing volunteer medical care, handing out toys to children during the holidays, and organizing athletic clubs and tournaments. But while the expanding religious and cultural offerings of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah reflected a group that had matured over the course of several years, its entry into political activism provides a more precise measure of its evolution.
Taking a Stand

During the formative years of the Islamic student movement, religiously oriented students rarely took an interest in politics. In this sense, the students who formed Shabab al-Islam were exceptional. They took an immediate interest in the political issues of the day and framed them from an Islamic perspective. On the whole, however, outright political activism remained the domain of the leftist movement. The relationship between the leftists and the nascent Islamic movement was tenuous at best. In the contentious political discourse between the students of al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah and their leftist peers who dominated the Student Union in the early 1970s, the religious students were quickly shown to have been out of their depth, even when the conversation touched upon the subject of Islam’s role in public life. In the face of complex political arguments that made use of modern historical experiences and recent intellectual trends, the young Islamic activists could do little more than recite simple religious morals.

In other instances, the Islamic groups followed the lead of the dominant political forces within the student movement, and even joined in their activities, such as the protest movement of 1972-1973 for instance, that were led by Ahmed Abdalla. On broad issues with a national popular consensus, such as accountability for the 1967 defeat, readiness for a new confrontation with Israel, and the expansion of political freedoms, all students joined in solidarity with the leaders of the leftist opposition. In practical terms, however, the Islamic groups, according to Abul Futuh, “were still taking baby steps in the realm of student activism.” Instead, the formative period of the Islamic movement focused purely on the mission of tarbiya, and left political discussions aside.

In addition to the external pressures that came from the rivalry with leftist
student activists, three factors can be singled out as drivers for the politicization of the Islamic student movement. They can be categorized, roughly, as intellectual, institutional, and social. As reading lists and symposiums became more varied and sophisticated, student leaders began to take on a more politicized outlook toward the issues of concern to them. Rather than engaging with the old guard on matters of belief and ritual practice, students probed them for their experiences in Islamic activism during the pre-revolutionary era, a time when all ideological trends were making competing claims for political authority. Moreover, the success in Student Union elections was an inherently politicized moment in the history of the young Islamic movement. As Za'farani recalled, this experience put the students in the unfamiliar position of having to take on immediate obligations within a state institution, compelling them “to learn responsibilities and attain leadership skills,” and perhaps most importantly, “know how the country works.”  

Finally, the politicizing effect of the October War on a new generation of Egyptian youth was particularly significant within the budding Islamic trend. As a war that was framed in Islamic terms, fought under the banner of jihad with “Allahu Akbar” as its battle cry, the debate surrounding the role of religion in politics witnessed an immediate rejuvenation in the aftermath of the conflict. As Egypt emerged from the war in a stronger position, and Sadat became known as the “Hero of the Crossing,” political Islam’s popular image was changed, virtually overnight, from a public menace that posed a threat to the regime, to offering a foundation for a new social contract. The only remaining question was who would impose their vision of Islam’s role in the state: the regime to society, or vice versa. Answering that call, many student leaders underscored the empowerment they felt after 1973, which spurred a “sahwa diniyya” (religious awakening) across all segments of Egyptian
society, but particularly within the student movement.\textsuperscript{99}

As al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah settled into its political identity, the organization displayed a strong ability to tackle issues that were local, regional, and global in scope. It responded to events as they occurred, even as it also set its own agenda. In the initial stages of political activism, the student movement focused on issues that were at the forefront of the public discourse in Egypt. Despite the strong showing by the military in 1973, the October War ended without the liberation of the occupied territories. The subsequent years would witness a tense national discussion on the strategy to capitalize on the gains of the war. By 1977, however, it had emerged that the regime’s policy choices were diverging widely from the preferences of the Egyptian people, especially the increasingly vocal Islamic movement.

On the domestic front, zealous youth had taken to heart the message conveyed in the course of their religious education. They believed in the need to promote Islamic principles in public life, ranging from enforcing tenets of public morality, to rooting out corruption, promoting social justice, and enacting political reforms. According to this view, all of these goals could be accomplished through adherence to Islamic judicial codes. At a time when Sadat was pressing for reforms to the constitution, the Islamic movement advocated a revival of the Shari‘a as the basis for governing the Egyptian state. These two issues, the liberation of lands occupied by Israel and the implementation of the Shari‘a, became the cornerstones of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah’s foreign and domestic policy agendas, as well as at the roots of the group’s conflict with the state.

The activist strategy on political mobilization generally followed a common formula. As they became more politically aware, students closely monitored the issues of the day, reading newspapers and magazines, listening to radio reports, and
discussing the content with their peers and elders. Upon further deliberations among themselves, the student leadership would frequently articulate its position on a given issue in the form of a public statement or a wall magazine. These were intended to raise public awareness on a given issue, as much as they aimed to advance a particular position or response. In many instances, this initial consideration of the issue would be followed by an open lecture or conference featuring respected guest speakers or experts in a given area.

On some issues that took on added significance within a broader political context, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah would devote an entire week to events and activities covering a specific theme. These “awareness weeks” created a wide array of channels through which to communicate the critical nature of a given issue, including posters, photos, public statements, lectures and townhall meetings, and book fairs.100 Student leaders chose the theme on the basis of its timeliness, such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, but were also known to have impressed upon their classmates a number of issues that they thought were pertinent to the emerging public discourse, such as the status of women in Islam. Other topics included the Islamic position on Palestine, the status of Muslim minorities around the world, and secularism and Islam.

Finally, with regard to certain issues that took on a sense of urgency, the student movement would on occasion expand its mission beyond education and raising awareness to include anti-state contention. Leaders wrote letters and held meetings with regime officials and organized demonstrations and sit-ins within the university. In some cases, as in the 1977 Bread Riots, students even made a concerted decision to join in nationwide protests against the regime, taking to the streets of major cities and confronting security forces. On the whole, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah
shaped a unique political culture within Egyptian universities. Gone were the radical leftist politics of the 1960s and early 1970s. Catchy slogans, satirical articles, and political cartoons soon became obsolete. They were replaced by long-winded and serious-minded explanations of religious principles and lofty calls for refashioning the Egyptian state on the basis of Islam.

Following Sadat’s 1976 announcement of political liberalization measures, complete with the establishment of a multiparty system, the student movement expressed its opposition to what it perceived as an attempt by the regime to consolidate all independent political movements under its control. In a released statement entitled, “To God is the Power, and to His Prophet and the Believers,” al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah expresses its opposition to Sadat’s policy and to the political system in general. “Islam cannot be established without politics, just as there cannot be politics without religion,” it began. The parties established maintain that they cannot be built on an Islamic basis, based on the Law of the Parties, and even those that mention the Shari’a among their programs, it is listed as a low priority, and to shield the people from reality.”

The emerging hard line position against the state’s political initiatives was due, in part, to Sadat’s own hostile expressions toward the aspirations of the Islamic movement. Following his comment that “there is no politics in religion, or religion in politics,” student leaders issued lengthy responses attempting to disprove the premise of Sadat’s statement. The reaction among the student population was “full of anger, rejection, and denial.” Group leaders held a conference at Cairo University, attended by more than ten thousand students, and presided over by leading scholars, that engaged with the president’s statement, and paid particular attention to the legal justifications provided by high-ranking officials at al-Azhar. The conference issued a
statement in the form of a letter addressed to the president, which was also sent to
every major newspaper, though none of them chose to run it. The unpublished letter,
dated February 28, 1979, stated in part:

We begin with a specific question: is Egypt an Islamic state or a secular state? The answer must be based on the constitution, which states that Egypt is an Islamic state. So what does it mean for Egypt to be an Islamic state? Is Islam only worship and slogans, fulfilled solely in the mosques, without any relationship to organizing the affairs of life?

The call to separate religion from politics has no basis in Islam. It is a concept that is imported from the West. As such, the accusation that the callers to Islam in its totality and perfection are hiding behind religion to achieve power is mistaken. It does not matter much to us who rules …what matters to us is what does he rule by, and how does he rule?\textsuperscript{104}

The students carried the spirit of this message with them as they contested the regime’s policies on the host of issues, such as the Personal Status Law passed in 1979. Known popularly as “Jehan’s Law,” because it was heavily promoted by Sadat’s wife, the law challenged dominant social norms by granting increased marital rights to women, while restricting practices like polygamy. Chief among the opposition to the law was al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, which characterized it as an affront to longstanding cultural practices that were sanctioned by Islam. How could Sadat (and his wife) outlaw what God has ordained? They wondered.\textsuperscript{105} The vocal protest movement was ultimately successful in repealing several aspects of the law, especially those constricting the rights of men to marry only one wife.\textsuperscript{106}

At a time when the Islamic world was experiencing considerable turmoil, international issues were also at the forefront of student activism in the late 1970s. Mobilization on the question of Palestine had been a permanent fixture of the student movement since before the revolution. However, by the time al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah became the dominant actor within the university, the discourse was altered to reflect the student movement’s growing religious orientation. “The position on the
Zionist entity,” as it was called, in many ways represented the classical Muslim Brotherhood point of view, though it also took into account the changes in the regional situation that occurred in the late 1960s and 1970s.

For instance, in formulating their response to Sadat’s peace overtures, student activists emphasized Israel’s expansionist tendencies in the wake of its occupation of several neighboring countries in the wake of the June 1967 War. It was also Sadat’s highly unpopular policy that spurred al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah from qualifying its traditional position on the issue, which viewed that “there is no means to reclaim Palestine …except by returning to God and establishing His rule in the land, and (then) declaring jihad as the only solution for recouping the country and reclaiming dignity.”

However, by the time Sadat initiated his 1977 visit to Jerusalem and the subsequent Camp David negotiations, a sense of urgency replaced the traditional grand but abstract scheme for liberation for which the Islamic movement had become known. After providing the textual basis against normalization of relations with Israel, a statement by al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah condemned the president, stating in part:

If our position was based on nothing more than his contravention of Qur’anic injunctions, that would be enough. But what of his endangering of our lands, our freedom, our lives, our wealth, and our future generations? He ignores the lessons of history and the truths of reality.

The students relied heavily on a 1956 ruling by al-Azhar’s Fatwa Committee which forbade making peace with Israel, calling on Sadat to recognize the decision of this state institution, and further calling on the people of Egypt to:

- Denounce the recognition of Israel, the peace agreement and the normalization of relations.
- Boycott Israel completely: politically, economically, culturally, and in the media.
- Boycott any Egyptian who does not adhere to the previous decrees.
- Study the Qur’anic texts and the Prophetic traditions about the Jewish people
- Uphold the rights of Muslims, not only in the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan
Heights, and Sinai, but in all of Palestine.¹⁰⁹

Student activists successfully mobilized a large segment of the university population on the basis of such calls to action, which were accompanied by large scale activities that included campaigns in the independent media, educational events to raise awareness, and public protests. Similarly, as events in Iran led to a popular revolution that overthrew the dictatorial rule of Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi in February 1979, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah felt compelled to comment on the situation. In a statement entitled “Lessons from Iran,” student leaders highlighted a number of important observations from the revolution in Iran that were applicable to Islamic activists in Egypt. They lauded the impact of basic Islamic precepts on the mobilization of Iranian masses against one of the most powerful rulers in the region. These events proved, the document argued, that Islamic identity could not be suppressed by any force, and perhaps most importantly, that “the nature of this religion is that … it is comprehensive, for this world and the hereafter. It organizes all aspects of life, providing for just rule, just as it provides for the maintenance of prayers.”¹¹⁰ Moreover, the Iranian Revolution was described as “the first dent in the wall of secularism” and an unequivocal denunciation of “those rulers who would sell their countries and hasten in the service of the east and the west, and repress their people for the benefit of their patrons.”¹¹¹

Statements such as these were intended to send a message to governments around the region—particularly the regime in Egypt—that the Islamic movement represented a significant force in society that should be ignored only at the peril of the ruling regimes. Sadat’s position toward the revolution in Iran was diametrically opposed to that of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, deepening the divisions between the state and the student movement. Tensions became particularly heightened over
Sadat’s decision to take in the exiled Shah. Unlike the issue of the revolution generally, which was only used to educate students and inspire hope and confidence, the specific issue of the Shah’s arrival to Egypt was to mobilize thousands of students in opposition to Sadat.

On their university grounds, students held mass protests that numbered in the thousands. On March 26, 1980, noon prayers were followed by a student conference that condemned Sadat’s admission of the Shah into Egypt. The conference issued a statement under the heading, “The Bloodthirsty Shah is Unwelcome,” in which it denounced a decision by Egypt that many other countries, including the United States, refused to make. Challenging Sadat’s rationale, the students posed the rhetorical question “Did the rest of the world forego humanitarianism and leave it for Egypt?”

The statement continues:

Or can we say that Egypt has become an outpost for the American intelligence agencies to plot their schemes while the Egyptians become a people without principles, or morals, or feelings, in the eyes of the Egyptian government? The government is mistaken if this is what it thinks. The whole world will know that Muslims reject injustice and oppression in Egypt too, and that they refuse to host the bloodthirsty Shah, the enemy of Islam, in their country.112

A third international issue of major importance to the student movement was in the form of the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. As Abul Futuh later explained, the reaction to this event was a natural extension of the Islamic movement’s feelings of “a strong allegiance to the Islamic ummah.”113 He elucidated further, that “any Muslim country was, by necessity, our country, causing us to feel solidarity with all the peoples of the Muslim world, beyond our central issue of Palestine.”114 In fact, in articulating its position on Afghanistan, al-Gama ’ah al-Islamiyyah drew parallels to the occupation of Palestinian lands, and advocated its unconditional belief in the liberation of Muslim lands from foreign occupation.

Guided by the experience of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine in 1948, the youth
believed that a similar effort would be required to liberate Afghanistan.

Although they advocated a united jihad across the Muslim world, student leaders stopped short of suggesting popular participation from the ranks of students. Instead, they continued to hold conferences and seminars on the issue, inviting the usual cadre of respected scholars, including ‘Umar al-Tilmisani, Mustafa Mashhur, Hafez Salama, and Ahmed al-Mahallawi, and issued a call to the governments of the Muslim world to take action in defense of a Muslim country that had fallen victim to a powerful and ruthless superpower. While it had reached the height of its power, the student movement only managed to offer “symbolic and moral support” on the issue of Afghanistan, but its awareness campaign in the early 1980s paved the way for the wave of volunteer fighters that were sanctioned to travel to Afghanistan by the Egyptian government beginning in 1984.115

**Toward Confrontation**

By 1977, the Islamic movement had solidified its control of the student movement and succeeded in marginalizing leftist trends within the university. While this development was probably met with Sadat’s approval, he also appeared to understand that a popular movement united under one ideological banner was sure to pose a challenge to his attempt to chart a pro-Western path with policies of peace with Israel and economic liberalization. Moreover, the Islamic credentials he meticulously built for himself during the early years of his presidency were being swiftly eroded by his refusal to follow up symbolic gestures with meaningful policies that reflected his supposed desire to rule as “the Believer President.” Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood had reorganized internally, reemerged onto the scene, and began to exert its influence over the student movement, positioning itself as the alternative to a
regime that was becoming increasingly unpopular.

All of these factors combined to create a situation in which the Islamic movement became the chief opposition force in Egypt in the late 1970s. Abul Futuh’s confrontation of Sadat in early 1977 marked a major shift in the relations between the regime and the Islamic movement. Later in the year, as Sadat traveled to Jerusalem, the hostility between the two sides became more palatable. Public statements issued by al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah condemned Sadat in no uncertain terms, while within the university walls, student leaders discerned a changed demeanor on the part of administrators who had long supported and facilitated their activities. Sufi Abu Talib in particular, had changed his tone. “He never refused me a request, as head of the Student Union,” recalled Abul Futuh. “But his dealings with us changed thereafter, as he began to obstruct our work and place obstacles before our activities in the university.”

These obstructions took the form of new restrictions on student activism, from limiting al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah’s ability to hold conferences and camps, to issuing new regulations and election lists for Student Union elections. Administrators withheld resources from Islamic camps, and even spread rumors that state security agents were going to raid the camps and arrest the student leadership. In 1978, student leaders at ‘Ain Shams University became the first to experience disqualification from that year’s Student Union elections. The following year, the situation escalated, as ten students from al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah in Al-Minya University, including Muhieddin ‘Isa and Abul ‘Ela Madi, were arrested by government agents and expelled from the university. Madi was serving as the vice-president of the national Student Union, so his detention sent major shockwaves across the country.

The government soon made its position toward al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah
official. In late 1979, Sadat issued Law 265, which disqualified the existing Student Unions from reelection, froze the assets and locked the offices of all unions, and prohibited them from meeting.\(^{118}\) In at least one instance, conditions escalated into violent confrontation between students and security agents.\(^{119}\) At Alexandria, Za‘farani recalled that he saw state security agents entering the university for the first time in a decade.\(^{120}\) Once again, they became a permanent fixture on the university grounds, restricting student activity through coercion and intimidation. The same scene was repeated in Cairo, Al-Minya, and all over the country.\(^{121}\) In 1980, the last Islamic camps were held in Assiut during the winter holiday and Alexandria in the summer. Sadat ordered all student camps canceled thereafter. Student leaders tried in vain to soften the president’s stance toward their movement. They wrote open letters and issued public statements to various state officials, responding to charges by security agents, and imploring officials to reconsider their cancelation of student elections.\(^{122}\)

While the student movement, led by al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, bore the brunt of the regime’s repressive measures, these developments occurred within the larger context of confrontation between the state and an increasingly diverse Islamic movement. The violence that marked the activities of underground groups like Shukri Mustafa’s Gama‘at al-Muslimin (better known as Takfir wal-Higra) left a deep impression on Sadat. The group’s 1977 abduction and murder of former Awqaf Minister Muhammad al-Dhahabi coincided with the beginning of Sadat’s clampdown on student activism. Moreover, Tilmisani’s famous 1979 confrontation of Sadat on national television shined a light on the Muslim Brotherhood’s deep frustrations with the regime, while also exposing Sadat as an unsettled and increasingly paranoid ruler. International considerations also played a role. Attempting to balance his alliance
with the West, which had become rooted in the tenuous peace with Israel, Sadat became concerned with the growing tide of Islamic activism as a threat to established regimes, especially in light of the revolution in Iran. Students in Egypt were accused of being “Khomeiniites” who wanted to overthrow the government.123

In an April 1979 speech, Sadat alleged that, “We are building Egypt with our own hands, and with our freedom. No one has power over us. …This is nonsense. For two years, they entered the elections and everyone is talking about what they are doing. The situation is dangerous. …The youth, unfortunately, are being pushed from the outside.”124 Later that same year, in what was to be the last stand of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah within the Student Union, Ahmed ‘Umar ran a spirited campaign in the election for president of the Cairo University Student Union. His opponent was handpicked by the regime. ‘Umar had already served as the vice-president of the Medical College Student Union and had considerable support from across the student population. However, when the votes were tallied, the election resulted in a tie, with 113 votes apiece. According to ‘Umar, the election was decided by drawing lots, leading to the victory of the government candidate.125

Though it may have ended by chance, all indications pointed to the loss of the Islamic movement’s status within the official avenues that had been afforded it for the better part of the decade. According to Badr’s account, interference by state security agents ensured ‘Umar’s defeat and solidified the exclusion of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah from any further participation in the Student Union.126 In fact, the transition of the Islamic movement occurred as a result of both external as well as internal factors. On the one hand, the regime’s determination to reverse the gains made by the Islamic youth movement forced student leaders to seek alternative modes of activism, often by disengaging from their longstanding interaction with state
figures and institutions. On the other hand, the movement had already forged extensive links with the Muslim Brotherhood and began to merge many of its activities with those of the elder opposition group.

While these two developments appeared to go hand in hand, they were also furthered by the appearance of divisions within the ranks of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah. In what could be described as a geographic fault line, groups within the universities of upper Egypt, especially those in Assiut and Al-Minya, exhibited a more conservative outlook, one that expressed misgivings about the Islamic modernist mission of the Muslim Brotherhood, and sought to chart a more independent path. Leaders of these groups, including Karam Zuhdi in Al-Minya and Nagih Ibrahim in Assiut, were successful in retaining sole use of the name “al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah” in the early 1980s, and distinguished it from its previous incarnation by taking it underground and infusing its activist program with a militant component, a phenomenon that has been examined elsewhere. 127

Ultimately, however, the student movement of the 1970s was successful in cultivating an outlook that would prove critical for the continuation of Islamic activism in a new era. Its leaders fashioned a distinct ideological orientation that was shaped by a combination of a preexisting program delivered by classical texts and the teachings of an elder class of scholars, as well as their own cultural, socioeconomic, and political upbringing and experiences. The tarbiya phase of the youth movement proved immensely successful, impacting the lives of tens of thousands of Egyptian youth, and providing them with a religious grounding that would anchor a common frame of reference for years.

While the movement’s endeavors into political activism may not have yielded tangible results from a policy perspective, they nonetheless conditioned an entire
generation in working through existing institutions, making precise claims, and doing so while framing them in an Islamic tone. Za‘farani’s statement that the Student Union experience taught the Islamic movement “how the country works” is of immense significance as one examines the youth movement’s graduation from the university level and entry into the professional world. Madi claimed that Sadat’s decision to combat the Islamic movement within the universities had the unintended consequence of transforming a student-led movement into a popular movement that quickly spread throughout society. However, the argument could just as easily be made that, upon reaching maturity, and with most of its leaders having entered a new phase in their lives, the student movement had no other logical direction to take but to evolve beyond the realm of the university. Building upon its past successes, it would seek out other institutions, whether professional syndicates or the people’s assembly, with which to engage. It would also seek to combine its efforts with those of another force, whose spirit had long hovered over the education and activism of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah; a force whose name had been at one point in time synonymous with the Islamic movement.
Chapter Five

THE YOUNG AND THE OLD

In August 1979, ‘Umar al-Tilmisani, the General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, was called into the office of Mansour Hasan, the Minister of Culture and Information. Hasan beseeched Tilmisani to attend an upcoming event hosted by Anwar al-Sadat in the port town of Ismailia in commemoration of the establishment of the National Democratic Party. Upon Hasan’s insistence, Tilmisani agreed to attend, though the Muslim Brotherhood and the Sadat regime had been at odds over recent state policies and Sadat’s increasingly authoritarian behavior. The rift deepened earlier that year with the conclusion of Egypt’s peace treaty with Israel, a move strongly condemned by the Muslim Brotherhood and opposed by the majority of Egyptians.

Tilmisani arrived to the meeting hall, where he promptly took a seat in the back row. However, event organizers ushered him to a seat in the front row, directly opposite the podium where Sadat would be delivering his remarks. Tilmisani thanked the officials for that honor, and became optimistic that the gesture augured well for a new understanding between the Muslim Brotherhood and the regime.\(^1\) The event, which would be televised nationally and featured an audience of prominent political and business leaders, provided an ideal backdrop for a clean slate in the strained relations between Sadat and the most vocal opposition movement in Egypt.

Instead, it was soon revealed that the entire scene was orchestrated as a full frontal propaganda assault on the Muslim Brotherhood. During his impassioned speech, Sadat recited a litany of charges against the Muslim Brotherhood generally and Tilmisani in particular. They were accused of sabotaging government policies, collaborating with Egypt’s enemies, inciting Egyptian youth, and enflaming sectarian
tensions. The elderly Tilmisani was seated front and center to be scolded like a schoolboy before the headmaster while the whole nation watched. “These words require a response,” Tilmisani solemnly told the president. “When I finish what I have to say, respond as you wish,” Sadat retorted, before re-launching into his tirade without missing a beat. He concluded each point emphatically, rhetorically asking, “isn’t that right, ‘Umar?” addressing Tilmisani without any regard for his age or standing.

When the president finally concluded his remarks, Tilmisani rose to his feet. Perhaps thinking he was about to offer his sincere apologies to Sadat, the organizers rushed a microphone into his hands. To their surprise, Tilmisani took the opportunity to show the world “that there is one among those in Egypt who would tell the tyrant, ‘you have committed outrages and transgressed.’”

Tilmisani took his time in responding to the accusations leveled against the Muslim Brotherhood, concluding with the following words:

If anyone but you had made these accusations, I would have lodged my complaint to you. But when it is you, Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat, who is behind them, then I lodge my complaint with the wisest and fairest of judges. You have injured me so greatly.

Sadat was stunned by this response by Tilmisani. He appeared particularly disturbed by the challenge to his personal piety. As his lips trembled, Sadat backtracked, “I did not intend to offend al-Ustadh ‘Umar or the Muslim Brotherhood. Now withdraw your complaint!” Tilmisani responded, matter-of-factly that “it has gone to the hands of one from whom I cannot retrieve it.” With those words, the meeting was adjourned and Sadat once again came away from a carefully staged attempt to rehabilitate his image by only doing further damage to it.

Indeed, as early as 1977, tensions between Sadat and the Islamic movement had become increasingly heightened. As his policy agenda became more apparent,
from the economic liberalization measures to the pursuit of a separate peace with Israel, Sadat engendered a strong force of popular opposition. His handling of three major incidents that year only more deeply entrenched national sentiments against him. Sadat dismissed the bread riots—the large scale protests against his economic policies—as the “uprising of the thieves.” The fierce response by the state security apparatus to the wave of attacks and kidnappings by al-Takfir wal-Higra was deemed excessive and disproportionate by the mainstream Islamic movement, even as its leaders denounced the actions of the outlaw group. Finally, Sadat’s trip to Jerusalem later that year broke a decades long taboo by implicitly recognizing Zionist claims to the holy land. As he had not adequately prepared Egyptians for this dramatic break from longstanding policy, the move earned near universal condemnation, especially from the Muslim Brotherhood.

By the middle of 1979, when the widely publicized confrontation between Sadat and Tilmisani occurred, several other events had contributed to the growing mistrust between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition to the peace treaty with Israel, the response to the Iranian Revolution generated deep-seated hostility. The Muslim Brotherhood’s perceived endorsement of the developments in Iran were viewed by Sadat as an ominous message that his own power would be threatened by a similar revolutionary force driven by religious fervor. Meanwhile, as Sadat invited Mohammad Reza Shah to take refuge in Egypt, the unilateral decision was considered an affront to the nation and denounced in popular protests. Furthermore, the spread of civil unrest motivated by sectarian divisions, in Cairo and upper Egypt, was also a source of consternation for Sadat, who accused the Islamic movement of deliberately attempting to destabilize his regime.
All of these major historical events stood at the foreground of developments in Egypt during the late 1970s, resulting in a more deeply entrenched authoritarian regime, and a more vocal and obstinate opposition movement. However, on a more fundamental level, it was a societal transformation, at work since the early part of the decade, which yielded the political stalemate that marked the abrupt end to the Sadat era in late 1981. Specifically, the successful reconstitution of the Muslim Brotherhood, a process that could not have been achieved without the active incorporation of the Islamic student movement, would come to define a new era of popular religious activism in Egypt.

This chapter charts the convergence of two major social forces: the Muslim Brotherhood, the traditional head of the Islamic movement, recently reestablished by the surviving group elders and brought under the leadership of Tilmisani; and the vibrant youth movement whose leadership was comprised of the religious contingent of students representing al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah within Egypt’s colleges and universities. As they coalesced into a unified force for Islamic activism, these groups successfully preserved the legacy of the Muslim Brotherhood while also charting a course for the movement’s future role in Egyptian society. Given the immediate and long-term implications of this development, the examination of its multiple components is essential to any understanding of the evolution of the Islamic movement.

Just as in the early 1970s, the return of the Muslim Brotherhood was far from assured, by the middle of the decade, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah’s decision to bring its activist mission within the fold of a mother movement was by no means inevitable. It evolved out of a convergence of ideological visions, organizational mechanisms, and experiences with the state and society at large. The first of these factors was the most
significant, in that it involved an intricate process of intellectual growth and discovery years in the making. Early on in their studies, youth leaders deferred their religious education to a class of elder scholars who guided the Islamic student movement toward the Muslim Brotherhood’s ideological outlook. In fact, the student leaders who later refused to merge their groups with the Muslim Brotherhood were generally those most resistant to these intellectual influences during the initial years of the movement.

In the same vain, as the organizational structure of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah expanded and took on a more complex shape, it gradually came to resemble the rigid hierarchical model for which the Muslim Brotherhood’s organization was known. This uniformity laid the necessary groundwork, so that once the student leadership (and indeed, the decision was made at the highest levels of the student movement) became committed to the notion of joining the Muslim Brotherhood, the transition was as seamless as possible. From the point of view of key figures within the Muslim Brotherhood, the presence of a well-defined and centralized leadership within the student movement facilitated the recruitment of members and appropriation of their programs.

The third element in the establishment of a unified Islamic movement under the Muslim Brotherhood banner encompassed the confluence of an activist program that appealed to a common base: the wider Egyptian society. As the mission of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah looked to expand beyond the university setting and focused more on political issues, it became ripe for the contribution of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was considering means through which to reintroduce its program to society after a decades long absence. This mutually beneficial arrangement saw to it that the activism of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah did not necessarily have to end with
the graduation of its leaders from the university, while the Muslim Brotherhood found a solution for the deficiency of active members by shoring up a bright and energetic new base.

Moreover, as Sadat’s policies became more polarizing, both groups gradually became identified as the most formidable political opposition to the regime. By the late 1970s, there was no longer any discussion of whether the Islamic youth movement was operating on behalf of the Sadat regime, or whether the regime had any control over it. Instead, its fiercely independent and confrontational tone was reminiscent of the Muslim Brotherhood of past eras. For its part, as the Muslim Brotherhood was coming into its own, it discovered a venue through which to express its frustrations with the regime, in the form of student camps and conferences, while student leaders made particularly effective use of *al-Da’wa* magazine, the Muslim Brotherhood’s own medium for the promotion of its mission.

In contrast to prior eras in the history of the Islamic movement, the 1970s was marked by fluidity in thought and action. As a result, the beginning of the next decade witnessed the consolidation of the respective gains made by the student movement and the reconstituted Muslim Brotherhood, at the expense of a regime that had sought to cultivate these seemingly disparate forces for its own purposes. Therefore, it was no surprise when, during what would be his final speech before parliament in September 1981, as Sadat announced a wave of mass incarcerations, he lamented that “the Muslim Brotherhood is al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah and al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah is the Muslim Brotherhood.”5 To the dismay of the regime, it appeared that through the combined efforts of an elder generation of Islamic figures and a new generation of student activists, the Muslim Brotherhood was set to resume its place as the leading opposition movement in Egypt.
Judging by the intellectual production of the Islamic movement, the 1970s was not a particularly fruitful period. The two decades of political repression that preceded it ensured that the scholarly class of Islamic activists experienced severe restrictions on their activity, while a new generation of Egyptian youth possessed no adequate frame of reference, given their upbringing in the culture of Nasserism. Additionally, one of Nasser’s main legacies was the transformation of Egypt’s educational system, channeling the best and brightest of the nation’s youth into the fields of medicine, engineering, and the natural sciences at the expense of law, the social sciences, the humanities, and Islamic studies.

Nevertheless, out of this backdrop emerged a buoyant climate of spiritual discovery and the pursuit of Islamic knowledge for which this period became known, defying all expectations. The Sadat regime got more than it bargained for when it cultivated an air of free expression that allowed for the growth of an Islamic trend within the universities. And for their part, the Muslim Brotherhood elders were astonished to discover that the spirit of Islamic activism was alive and well, in spite of the group’s absence from the scene. ‘Abd al-Mon‘eim Abul Futuh, one of the original founders of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah at the Cairo University College of Medicine, recalled that “when we began Islamic activism in the university, we were a group united only by the drive and genuine desire to work toward the advancement of Islam, without any common intellectual or legal authority uniting us.”

Indeed, while it may not have produced a new class of scholars and thinkers, this era is distinguished by the fluidity with which the student movement interacted with a variety of distinct trends. This produced a moment of reassessment of the broad intellectual currents within the Islamic movement, and the cultivation of a new culture.
of activism suited to the needs of the Islamic da‘wa in a new era of Egyptian history. As it engaged with a wide array of personalities, texts, and groups representing various trends within the Islamic movement, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, which by 1973 had become the face of Islamic activism in Egypt, secured for itself a central role in the cultivation of a new discourse.

In the early years of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah’s existence, student leaders took pride in their organizational as well as intellectual independence. They guarded that autonomy vigilantly. Students within the organization were free to pursue their Islamic education as they pleased. They studied classical texts and explored commentaries from a variety of viewpoints. Abul Futuh discovered an advantage for the youth in the absence of a dominant organization capable of bringing the youth under its control. Simple missionary groups and charity associations, such as al-Gam‘iyyah al-Shar‘iyyah and Ansar al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah lacked a defined structure and a stringent membership policy, limiting their ability to impact the student movement, while still allowing the new generation to gain an added perspective and learn from the experiences of these groups. Similarly, the Muslim Brotherhood’s absence created a free and open environment that did not impose an organizational structure, but still afforded students access to its intellectual school, albeit through indirect channels.

The lack of a pre-existing force to guide the student movement resulted in an organic intellectual environment in which choices were made naturally and the youth were free to adopt several approaches in the shaping of their Islamic outlook. Among the most popular trends were the Salafi, Jihadi, and naturally, the Muslim Brotherhood’s intellectual tradition, better known as Ikhwanī. Smaller trends, though influential nonetheless, included the Tablighi, Tahriri, Sufi, and those of the
aforementioned charitable associations. During the formative period, it was not uncommon for a student to wade into the intellectual waters of a variety of competing trends, however contradictory it would later seem. In fact, most students would have been hard pressed to describe themselves as ultimately falling into one camp, having been inspired by different elements from some or all of the intellectual schools.

The Salafi trend of the 1970s did not have strong historical roots within Egyptian society. Its rise was owed in large part to Muhammad Hamid al-Faqi of Ansar al-Sunnah. An Azhari Sheikh who had lived and worked in Saudi Arabia during the early twentieth century, he published a number of influential Islamic texts that shaped the outlook of the youth on religious practices. Abul Futuh contended that Wahhabi thought emanating from the Saudi Salafi tradition “forced its way” into Egypt by the aggressive posturing of a newly enriched regional power. Hundreds of crates full of Wahhabi literature arrived free of charge to offices of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah throughout Egypt. These books were widely distributed without much examination of their content. They impacted a considerable number of students, despite at times being too out of step with mainstream Islamic thought in Egypt, as in their prohibition of the celebration of religious milestones such as the Prophet’s birthday.

The popular ‘umrah trips to the holy cities were another source of indoctrination for many young Egyptians. So enamored with the thought of learning about Islam from its source, some elected to stay behind and pursue a course of study with prominent Saudi scholars. They often returned to their universities in Egypt months later, eager to spread their newly acquired knowledge and correct the errors of their peers. They focused on issues of outward appearances, such as the growing of beards for men, which they argued was a requirement, and proper dress for both men
and women. Salafi students also placed a heavier emphasis on segregation of the sexes, calling on officials to institute the practice throughout the country, at all levels of education.

Similarly, the early 1970s witnessed the rise of an Islamic trend that placed armed struggle at the forefront of its program. Inspired by the works of Sayyid Qutb, Mawdudi and their followers, a significant contingent of youth activists were filled with “a revolutionary and rebellious spirit” that propelled them toward seeking radical changes to the system. For some, just seeing the photograph of Qutb as he clutched the bars of his cage prior to his execution brought on feelings of anger, frustration, and a desire to act. In the culture of mass protest that was cultivated after the 1967 defeat, the youth did not expressly reject the use of violence to accomplish its aims. Once again, the boundless and amorphous nature of the student movement lent itself to what may otherwise have appeared to be a contradiction in terms. The movement’s program could at once contain elements of self-contained spiritual development, popular social activism, and support for some form of violent contention against the state.

The jihadi trend, as it came to be termed, influenced a growing percentage of students who expressed solidarity with the spirit of Organization 1965’s mission, without being properly informed of the ensuing debate within the ranks of the Islamic movement on the permissibility of rising up against the state. “Violence, for us, was religiously justified. The only disagreement was over the timing,” recalled Abul Futuh. While some students believed that rising up against the system was a long-term objective that required careful planning and preparation, others argued that it was an imperative and a top priority to be pursued in the immediate term. This opinion grew out of a highly simplistic view of the world. All existing institutions
were corrupted and needed to be removed and replaced with Islamic ones, on the basis of the all-encompassing system of Shari‘a. The restoration of the lost caliphate was central to this view, albeit in the abstract.

By their own admission, the youth lacked any sense of history or understanding of the modern world. “As a Gama‘ah Islamiyyah that emerged without inheriting a tradition or a political model, we were shortsighted on the question of the state, its logic, and its philosophy,” said Abul Futuh. This line of thought provided the rationale for the incident at the Technical Military Academy in 1974. Although the leadership of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah played no role in the coup attempt, the plotters had relied heavily on student recruits, including some who had also participated in Islamic programs at Cairo University. Movement leaders at the Medical College were stunned to discover that two of their colleagues, Mustafa Yusri and ‘Usama Khalifa, were among those charged by the government for participating in the attack on the Technical Military Academy. As head of the Student Union, Abul Futuh was compelled to defend them and even provided legal representation for their trial.12

However, this event caused the leadership of the Islamic student movement to reevaluate its approach to a number of questions on which it had never had to take a defined stance. But despite all subsequent attempts to delineate clear boundaries for the activist mission, the jihadi strain remained a consistent presence within the broader Islamic movement, especially outside of major urban centers of the country, like in Assiut, where Karam Zuhdi and Nagih Ibrahim had established an autonomous chapter of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah by the early 1980s. In addition, other activists were impacted by the practice of takfir and sought isolation from a corrupted society,
creating a fundamental divide between them and the mainstream Islamic movement on the core functions of da‘wa.\textsuperscript{13}

The intellectual trend that captivated the hearts and minds of the student movement and came to dominate al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah was that of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Ikhwani tradition had a number of advantages over the other trends. Firstly, it proposed a comprehensive vision for the Islamic movement, and did not simply focus on a narrow set of issues, as with several of the competing approaches. Secondly, it had a longstanding tradition within society, one whose presence had seeped into a new generation despite all efforts by the previous regime to erase it from the Egyptian collective memory. Finally, the Muslim Brotherhood had always placed youth at the center of its message, a quality that was to prove critical during the merger of two disparate generations in the 1970s. From the days of Banna, the organization valued the recruitment and participation of Egypt’s young Muslims and relied on them as the engine that drove the mission toward its goals. As a result, much of the Ikhwani curriculum was composed in the language of youth and fashioned in their image.

In spite of these apparent advantages, the Muslim Brotherhood faced several obstacles in advancing its program among the new generation. The long imprisonment of its leaders meant that there was a glaring absence of its key figures within society. For an organization that prided itself on charismatic leadership and recruitment through top-down interactions at the micro level, this placed it at a severe disadvantage. Even once the Muslim Brotherhood’s leaders were freed, they lacked the communications networks and organizational infrastructure, essential tools for resuming their mission. Also, they had to overcome a sustained propaganda campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood by the state press. All of these factors had the effect
of taking an intellectual project that once stood above all others and bringing it down to the level of an increasingly crowded marketplace of ideologies.

In their periodization of the Islamic student movement, youth leaders stressed that, in the years dating until roughly 1976, “it was all one movement,” and that there had yet to be any true distinction between those who associated with one trend or another.\textsuperscript{14} This may have been true in the organizational sense, as students continued to work together under the common umbrella of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, whose dynamism provided the opportunity for a multiplicity of viewpoints, even within the same activity. It was not uncommon therefore, to have a student conference that represented the viewpoints of scholars ranging from Ibrahim ‘Ezzat of Jama‘at al-Tabligh, Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani, a Salafi scholar, and Muhammad al-Ghazali, whose body of work had come to represent the Ikhwani modernist school. Even official state scholars representing al-Azhar, the preeminent center of Islamic learning in the Arab world, such as ‘Abd al-Halim Mahmoud, would be invited to occasional campus events.

However, just as this “period of maturity” was celebrated for its diversity, it was also notable for the growing distinction between contending intellectual viewpoints.\textsuperscript{15} The divisions appeared on the ideological plane, as al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah’s leaders found themselves on the defensive, having to take positions on a number of issues that for years had been left to individual members to determine for themselves. In the aftermath of the events at the Technical Military Academy, for instance, student leaders were forced to contend with the prospect of armed insurrection against the state developing from within their ranks, and risking the destabilization, or worse, total dismantlement, of their movement. As a result, an
article by Yousuf al-Qaradawi on “al-Ghulu fil Takfir” (The Excesses of Takfir) became requisite reading for members and widely discussed within the movement.

Though he was no longer a member of the organization, Qaradawi represented the Muslim Brotherhood school of thought, and along with Ghazali, played a pivotal role in disseminating its worldview among the youth. While a large proportion of youth leaders were captivated by the Ikhwani outlook, some were more hesitant, moving steadily toward their Salafi or jihadi inclinations. Coinciding with the deepening rifts within the Islamic movement, the return of Muslim Brotherhood figures onto the activist scene and their interactions with a number of important youth leaders provided the intellectual markers with which to distinguish the factions from one another.

**Early Encounters**

The first meeting between the new generation of Islamic activists and the elder cadre from the Muslim Brotherhood occurred in an unceremonious manner. As part of their professional training, the students at Cairo University’s College of Medicine were permitted to see patients in a wing of Qasr al-‘Aini Hospital that housed prisoners seeking medical treatment. Traditionally, this dispensation was granted to political prisoners representing all ideological trends except the Muslim Brotherhood, many of whom died in Nasser’s prisons due to lack of adequate medical care. But as part of his bid to reintegrate the Muslim Brotherhood leaders into society, Sadat lifted this restriction upon his accession to power. As a result, for the first time, medical personnel (including young doctors in training) found themselves in close quarters with members of the banned organization, about whom much had been said publicly, all of it derogatory. For Abul Futuh and his peers, the experience was a dramatic eye-
opener, dispelling “all the myths of terror and fear” that had been constructed by the Nasser regime, and instead confirming the narrative put forward by his local imam of a group “who fought and sacrificed their lives for the sake of their da’wa, and refused to compromise on it, even if it meant prison, torture, and even death.”

The students took advantage of these chance encounters, quietly discussing their activism with elders from the organization, including Fathi Rifa’i and Tilmisani, who spent some weeks in the medical wing before their release. Rifa’i in particular used the opportunity to introduce his young physicians to the curriculum of the Muslim Brotherhood. During one of their meetings, he managed to smuggle a hand-written copy of “Wajibat al-Akh al-Muslim” (The Duties of the Muslim Brother), one of Hasan al-Banna’s famous letters. The version the students received was notable in that its content was edited for a new audience. It focused wholly on the message of the Muslim Brotherhood, removing any references to its organizational structure and objectives. As students proceeded to copy and distribute the letter among each other, Abul Futuh recalled that, for many of them, this was the first real exposure to the writings of Banna.

Similarly, in Alexandria, some student leaders met lower level Muslim Brotherhood members who had managed to avoid imprisonment during the Nasser years, and became encouraged by the shift in Sadat’s policy to engage with young activists in their communities. Muhammad Hussein ‘Isa was particularly influential among the youth in Alexandria. In this way, the fear barrier was broken on both sides. Though its leaders proceeded with extreme caution given the state’s legacy of repression, the Muslim Brotherhood discerned a real opening in the political environment that would allow its reintegration into society and engagement with the
youth. From the perspective of student activists, these brief encounters were enough to dispel the myth depicting the Muslim Brotherhood as a dangerous band of outlaws.

Instead, eager young minds became awed by personal stories of struggle and hardship, pain and sacrifice. A new narrative was taking shape, one that placed the Muslim Brotherhood at the heart of the Islamic movement. Though it had been absent from the scene for a generation and had yet to resume its mission in any meaningful way, its legacy was strong enough to propel it to a position of prominence in the minds of many student activists. Seizing upon this opportunity, Muslim Brotherhood leaders continued to reconstruct the group’s image and shore up credibility by recounting the early years of its mission, the successes enjoyed under Banna’s leadership. They countered the dominant account of their associations with the Free Officers and the deterioration of the Muslim Brotherhood’s relationship with Nasser. The stories of heroism and sacrifice, and the gross injustices to which the Muslim Brotherhood had been subjected left a deep mark on impressionable young minds.

Following the release of Tilmisani and other group elders from prison, contacts remained intermittent and quite often indirect. As internal discussions on the future of the organization had yet to yield a final decision, Muslim Brotherhood officials hesitated to resume their public advocacy. The lack of an organizational foundation, coupled with the basic needs of salvaging their personal lives, and continuing fears of renewed state repression should the elders be suspected of infiltrating the student movement, kept most of them at arm’s length from the youth. In the course of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah’s many public demonstrations, Abul Futuh recalled seeing a Muslim Brotherhood figure, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Mu‘ti al-Gazzar, standing at some distance from the protests and marveling at the religiously-themed
banners hoisted by student leaders. During that period, he never once approached the students or attempted to contact them, but later told Abul Futuh that “he was amazed at what he witnessed because he and his imprisoned colleagues imagined that once they were released, they would not discover any religiosity or Islam, or the youth to be this passionate.”21

**Our Da‘wa**

Indeed, just as the youth experienced these fleeting interactions with former principal figures of the Islamic movement, they were also keenly aware that their actions were being monitored from afar. This development stimulated an open discussion within the upper echelons of leadership of the student movement on the future of their mission. By 1974, as the Muslim Brotherhood was slowly reconstituted under the leadership of Tilmisani, Abul Futuh and his peers discussed the possibility of merging their movement with that of a more established group. They explored one of three possibilities: the student movement would place itself in the hands of the Muslim Brotherhood; the Muslim Brotherhood would fall into the ranks of the broader Islamic movement led by the cadre of youth who founded al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah; or the two would remain completely separate from one another.22 Elsewhere, the options were phrased slightly differently: in addition to their work within the university, would al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah contribute to the establishment of a new group with a wider mandate within Egyptian society, or would it join one of the many existing groups that had created a crowded field within the Islamic movement?23

In the course of these discussions, it appeared that there existed within the leadership of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, especially in Cairo and Alexandria, a critical
mass that believed in combining their mission with that of the Muslim Brotherhood in some fashion. At this early juncture, the discussion revolved primarily around building a common intellectual project, with little discussion of organizational coordination. The appearance of ideological divisions within the ranks of the students, combined by the growth of frustrations by the impetuous youth necessitated a process of learning from those more experienced than they were. The Muslim Brotherhood possessed a holistic view of their activist mission, while the students bickered over small, inconsequential matters of religious interpretation. Recognizing their “youthful, zealous, and impatient” nature, the student leaders resolved to forsake their desire for immediate change in exchange for “the cautious, slow approach favored by the Muslim Brotherhood toward the realization of an Islamic state.”

The process that followed featured the steady and methodical indoctrination of large segments of the student population in the curriculum of the Muslim Brotherhood. Although other external influences continued to play an active role, the da’wa that had come to be defined by Banna and carried forward by Hudaybi and Tilmisani took center stage in the discussions and events of the students. Ever the cautious bunch, student leaders, often on the advice of their contacts within the Muslim Brotherhood, ensured that no direct mention of the organization was ever actually made. Any self-references within Ikhwani literature were removed, so that Banna’s letters and speeches read like general advice for an Islamic activist of any era, and not a member of an organization with a particular structure and mission. This development ushered in a steady process of the refinement of views. Overly simplistic plans for the implementation of Islamic law were replaced by a complex vision for the Islamization of society. Contradictions inherent in the support for a variety of competing trends were slowly exposed and reconciled with a more nuanced outlook.
that privileged peaceful interactions over violent confrontation and defined jihad in the context of da’wa.

Concerns over personal religious observances were given less importance in a new prioritization that favored one’s commitment to the larger struggle at hand than to the length of his beard or the shortness of his pants. To be sure, the process was by no means a smooth one. Students occasionally expressed their frustrations with some of the practices of elder Muslim Brotherhood figures. Some whispered about the lack of strict observance of salafi prayer traditions. Others confronted them about their outward appearance. At times, some Muslim Brotherhood elders tried to calmly relate their perspective to the students. But in other instances, they avoided confrontation altogether. Abul Futuh recalled that, “When they learned that the matter of beards and outward piety would alleviate our concerns, they grew their beards. Few of them actually opposed us on these peripheral issues.”

This symbiotic process allowed each side to discover the other and adapt to its needs and expectations accordingly, though one side certainly had the upper hand. The knowledge, experience, and seniority of the Muslim Brotherhood ensured that they would remain the teachers and the students would stay true to their role. Often accused of being shortsighted, many student leaders were convinced of the long view put forward by the elders and began to see their mission as part of a broader project that would expand far beyond the university, even while that provided the base of its support and a safe haven for its activities. It was in this spirit that the first high-level meeting between a founder of the Islamic student movement and a key figure within the Muslim Brotherhood took place.

In 1974, following his release from prison, Kamal al-Sananiri requested a meeting with ‘Abd al-Mon‘eim Abul Futuh. As a high-ranking member of the Muslim...
Brotherhood, having learned at the hands of Hasan al-Banna and been a key figure in the Secret Apparatus, Sananiri’s legend had traveled far within the student movement. The youth had also heard the tale of how Amina Qutb, the sister of Sayyid Qutb, pledged to marry Sananiri after his own wife sought a divorce when she could not bare the many years of being apart during his imprisonment. At fifty-five years old, he had survived some of the darkest days of the Muslim Brotherhood, but had never wavered in his commitment to its mission. And now, so soon after he had won his freedom, Sananiri was already seeking to pick up where he left off, spreading the da’wa among the youth.

Abul Futuh was therefore flattered when he received the message to meet Sananiri at a shoe store on Qasr al-‘Aini Street in Cairo. Owing to his extreme caution, Sananiri wanted to hold the meeting away from both of their homes and maintain some level of secrecy around it. Sananiri was convinced that his movements were being tracked by state security agents and was not one to take chances. The shop was owned by a Muslim Brotherhood member who proceeded to bring his two special patrons pairs of shoes to try on as they discussed the future of the Islamic movement. Abul Futuh later stated that it was a highly sentimental meeting that he would never forget. “His words, his spirit, and everything about him were so new to me. …He would erupt with emotion as he described his ideas and insisted on continuing and completing what the group (Muslim Brotherhood) had started.”

From the perspective of a Muslim Brotherhood elder, the objective of the meeting was to send a feeler to the head of the Islamic student movement on the possibility of coordinating their efforts. The organization had just resolved the internal questions about the nature of its reconstitution, and had placed authority in the hands of Tilmisani. The new general guide oversaw the reestablishment of the
long defunct Guidance Bureau and allowed a certain degree of autonomy to figures who believed in the importance of reorganizing the group around the young generation of activists. As a result, Sananiri, along with Mustafa Mashhur, another elder that emerged out of the disbanded Secret Apparatus, took the lead in the recruitment of the youth, a process that became known as “tawrith al-da‘wa” (bequeathing the call).²⁸

For his part, Abul Futuh believed this meeting was a testament to the early successes enjoyed by al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, especially as its mission had obtained a quasi-official status by virtue of its participation in the Student Union and its cordial relations with some regime officials. A second meeting was held, this time at Sananiri’s home. This was followed with more frequent encounters, and the inclusion of additional Muslim Brotherhood figures, including Mashhur, Ahmed Hasanain, Ahmed al-Malt, and ‘Abbas al-Sisi, who Abul Futuh and local student leaders met in Alexandria.²⁹

During these meetings, Sananiri, Mashhur, and the others hoped to gain a commitment by student leaders to orient themselves with the Muslim Brotherhood curriculum, and incorporate it more fully into their programs, even at the expense of the other intellectual trends. As one youth leader observed, with increasing divisions within the student movement, many leaders began to rely more heavily on the Muslim Brotherhood’s ideological positions to issue responses and suppress competing visions. The ’usul, or foundations of their arguments were generally rooted in the works of Banna and the speeches and articles of Tilmisani.³⁰

The curriculum, which slowly trickled down from the leaders to the rank-and-file members of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, consisted of the essential writings of Banna, as can be seen in the 1977 publication of three of his most famous letters.
under the title of *Da’watuna* (Our Da’wa).\(^3^1\) As a schoolteacher by training, Banna had always oriented his message to young Egyptians. The fact that his writings were aimed at a youth audience made them easily accessible to a new generation of student activists nearly half a century later. Stemming from these inspirational works, Mashhur attempted a more systematic process of inculcating the Muslim Brotherhood mission to the youth. Known for his strong and at times overbearing personality, Mashhur made a strong impression on student leaders. He preached to them in close quarters, spending long hours on lessons from his own experiences and observations about student activism in a new era. He was never short of motivational words:

> Those who travel along the path must trust in that path and rest assured that it is the means to reach their goal, so that they are not misled and lost, and so that they are not overcome with doubt and mistrust as they proceed…The path of da’wa is worthy of that trust, for it is the foremost path that bonds the Muslim to all aspects of his life and bestows him all that he owns, from life, wealth, effort, thought, and time. His fate and future depend on it.\(^3^2\)

Not only did Mashhur instill his eager listeners with the spiritual strength to succeed in an increasingly adversarial environment, he also offered practical advice to spread the da’wa in as coherent and efficient a way as possible.\(^3^3\) His lessons were soon serialized in a segment in *al-Da’wa* magazine entitled “*min fiqh al-da’wa*” (understanding the call). Mashhur demonstrated particular effectiveness at charting a historical course for the transmission of the Muslim Brotherhood program through the ages, ultimately becoming “a trust” in the hands of the new generation. In laying out Banna’s legacy, Mashhur wrote on the importance of maintaining purity in missionary activities going forward:

> [al-Banna] stressed the importance of maintaining the educational program and the readiness of the individual Muslim to assume the doctrine, and the avoidance of the discourse of political parties; to focus on action and avoid argumentation and discussions that waste time and energy and stir up anger and frustration. He always concentrated on brotherhood and strengthening the bonds of love for the sake of God.\(^3^4\)
With these lessons, young leaders gained a sense of belonging within the Muslim Brotherhood’s intellectual school. As one student recalled, from this point forward, the foundations of the da‘wa that his peers depended on were those of the Muslim Brotherhood, as found in Banna’s writings and the lessons of Tilmisani and Mashhur.35 Acknowledging that ideological conflicts could persist between the two generations, Abul Futuh stated, “as for the differences between us on tangential issues of legal interpretation, we gradually became convinced that the rift of disagreement would become narrower over time.”36

**Becoming a Brother**

By 1975, a substantial portion of the leadership of the student movement had committed to pursuing an activist program within the framework put forward by Muslim Brotherhood thinkers and organizers. With only minor misgivings, a new generation had accepted the leadership of the elders and initiated the process of bringing its movement under their command. When one of the young men announced his impending marriage to his colleagues, Mashhur reminded him, “Tell your wife that you have another wife. …it is the da‘wa.”37 Nothing short of total devotion to the mission would be acceptable.

In order to gain the dedication of the student movement, the educational period in which the da‘wa was “bequeathed” proved critical. Badr recalled that the youth “were reared in the intellectual side of the Muslim Brotherhood before the organizational structure came.”38 By the students’ own account, the progression from converging toward a common ideological outlook to uniting under a defined organizational hierarchy occurred rather naturally. As they moved forward in their curriculum and entered into advanced internal discussions on collectively joining the
reconstituted Muslim Brotherhood, it was no longer a question of “if” they would become official members, but “how” the process would be carried out.39

For all involved, the situation was unique. Never before had the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to absorb an entire preexisting movement within its ranks. Student leaders believed that a strength of their movement was that it was self-contained. Throughout its existence, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah had a limited mandate, but one that provided it a degree of freedom that few other groups could claim. It was restricted to operating within the university community, but it enjoyed a wide array of privileges within it.40 By 1975, however, many of the foundational figures of the student movement had either already completed their studies or were nearing graduation. There emerged a widespread realization that they would soon be leaving their campuses and accordingly, they sought a new organizational model to sustain their movement. The challenges awaiting them on the outside were perceived to be far greater than anything they had experienced within the safe confines of the scholastic world. Only an organization with a rich history of activism, deep roots within Egyptian society, and the demonstrated courage to face the strenuous obstacles along the way, would suffice.

Through its celebrated legacy and the inroads it made with the student movement in the mid-1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood became the ideal home for many students who looked to devote their lives to promoting the Islamization of their society. In the course of internalizing the Muslim Brotherhood’s curriculum, student leaders also developed deep emotional bonds with the figures they encountered.41 The students were especially struck by the humility demonstrated by leading Muslim Brotherhood figures, especially in contrast to other guests who were less cordial and more demanding. Mashhur in particular was known to have spent long hours with the
students. “He ate what we ate. He slept where we slept,” recalled one student leader. In his capacity as the head of the Youth and Universities Committee within the Guidance Bureau, Mashhur bore the responsibility of connecting with the student movement and ensuring that they found common ground with the Muslim Brotherhood leadership, in spite of the vast differences in age and experience. Abul Futuh recalled that during the summer camps, Muslim Brotherhood leaders would insist on staying overnight with the students and even joined them in the dawn exercises, despite their advanced age.

Moreover, the bond that developed became one of trust and dependability, as the youth could often count on the elders for help and advice with their professional careers and the challenges of daily life, such as balancing their studies and activism. Even Tilmisani was no stranger to the students, making himself available to them at all hours of the day, whether for public lectures or for private consultations with youth leaders. They lauded him for his honest and plainspoken style, gentle nature, and ability to deal with those who disagreed with him. Though he was in a vaunted position as head of the most prominent Islamic organization in Egyptian society, students did not hesitate to challenge him on matters of religious belief and practice. Nor did he back down from the challenge. During a debate on the permissibility of music in Islamic law, Tilmisani stunned a crowded auditorium when he maintained that not only was there no objection to music in Islam, as the Salafis had ruled, but that he had taken up playing the ‘oud (Arabic guitar) in his younger days.

During the course of internal deliberations among the leaders of al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah, the costs and benefits of formalizing their group’s relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood were weighed and discussed. The concerns included the loss of the student movement’s independence in thought and action, having to defer to the
leadership of the elder generation, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood’s official positions on the issues. But the movement also stood to gain from the legacy and experience of an organization that had stood the test of time for over a half century. While potentially stifling of some of the intellectual diversity that existed among the students, the uniformity in thought was also an asset that would allow the student movement to evolve into an organized, coherent force in society. Moreover, the Muslim Brotherhood could offer the structural capacity to handle a movement that was reaching the limits of its infrastructural development with chapters at the college and university levels, and councils at the university and national levels. In spite of the success enjoyed by al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah within Egyptian universities, the rest of society, with its multiplicity of institutions, industries, and modes of life, remained largely untapped. While necessitating an internal reorganization, joining the Muslim Brotherhood would provide an instant avenue to propagate the call within the broader society.

Upon weighing the intellectual, emotional, and organizational factors that had come to shape the psyche of the student leadership over the course of the previous year, it was ultimately decided by leaders across the various universities that the time had come to enlist in the cause of the Muslim Brotherhood’s da‘wa. Abul Futuh had maintained contact with Sananiri, who by this point had become the officially designated recruiter of the Muslim Brotherhood. Abul Futuh informed Sananiri of the decision by the students. The Muslim Brotherhood was pleased to accept its first class of new members in many years, but placed certain restrictions on the process. First, Sananiri stressed secrecy as a virtue. Given the highly sensitive nature of this development, which would be viewed with suspicion by the state as well as dissident students not keen on joining, student leaders were instructed not to disclose their
membership to their colleagues within the universities. The Muslim Brotherhood did not want to jeopardize the success that al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah enjoyed by either provoking a clampdown by the regime or a schism in the ranks of the student movement.

Secondly, the student leadership was told it could not join as a bloc. The Muslim Brotherhood had never absorbed an entire organized group, and was weary of such a possibility due to the risk of diluting its own organization. At a time when its organizational structure was in tatters and its membership numbers paled in comparison to those it was about to take on, the Muslim Brotherhood was especially vulnerable to a Trojan horse scenario, essentially allowing a foreign entity to reshape the organization as it saw fit, from the inside. Consequently, when ‘Esam al-‘Erian met with six close friends at his home, they unanimously decided to join the Muslim Brotherhood, but were surprised at the response they received. Sananiri told them “We do not accept groups. This is a door that only one can enter at a time.”

Once again, the Muslim Brotherhood’s leaders chose caution over immediate gains. Sananiri wanted to ensure that every new member had come to the choice of his own volition, not as a result of peer pressure or out of allegiance to one of the student leaders. Any hesitation or divided loyalties would lead to factionalism and the rise of blocs within the new cadre of Muslim Brotherhood members, something the elder leaders desperately wanted to avoid, especially given that the organization derived much of its strength from its strict hierarchical structure. Abul Futuh encountered a similar reaction, as he and his close friend and associate Sanaa’ Abu Zeid were not allowed to join together. This practice was widespread, although al-‘Erian discovered that conditions in Alexandria were slightly more relaxed. Those who wanted to join could do so without added restrictions, but would face a
probationary period before their membership would be made official. Ibrahim al-Za‘farani and other Alexandria leaders benefited from this policy, and some students from Cairo even reportedly traveled to Alexandria, where joining the Muslim Brotherhood required less stringent conditions.  

The third major requirement involved the time-honored tradition of administering the bay‘ah, or oath of allegiance, to the General Guide of the movement. Banna established the practice soon after the Muslim Brotherhood’s establishment, as a nod to the oath that presaged the rise of a new caliph to power throughout the ages of Islamic history. With the abolition of the caliphate in the early twentieth century, Banna ensured that Muslims would not be completely without the focal point of moral, social, and spiritual authority that had sustained Islamic civilizations for thirteen centuries. All Muslim Brotherhood members had gone through this rite of passage, with many of the elders having given their bay‘ah to Banna himself. Following the settlement of the succession question within the Muslim Brotherhood, student leaders were among the first to offer their bay‘ah to Tilmisani.  

While it could be interpreted as a symbolic display, the bay‘ah in effect formalized the entry of an individual into the Muslim Brotherhood, and in the case of the student leaders, instantly transformed the relationship dynamics between them and the elders. The reciprocal exchange of ideas was replaced with a top-down command structure in which no one dared question their superiors, let alone the General Guide. The concept of sam‘ wa ta‘a which al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah had instituted within its own ranks was adopted by the newest members of the Muslim Brotherhood, to great effect. Except now it was the young amirs who would listen and obey.
Part and parcel of this pronouncement of faithfulness to the Muslim Brotherhood’s leader was an acknowledgment of the group’s authority to reorganize new recruits as it saw fit. Staying true to the traditional structure of the organization, students were placed into ‘usar (sing. ‘usra), or families, the basic unit of the Muslim Brotherhood, providing all members with a point of contact with group elders for instructional purposes. Once again, however, due to the circumstances surrounding the Muslim Brotherhood’s reconstitution and recruitment of a large movement, this required a complex process of fusing the organizational visions of the young and the old. Abul Futuh recalled:

The truth is that when we gave our bay’ah to the Ikhwan, we did not give bay’ah to an organization that existed in reality. Rather, we gave bay’ah to an idea, a project, a legacy, for there was nothing that could be called an Ikhwani ‘organization’ in the true sense of the word. There was only a group of individuals and historic leaders that took the reins of the true organization that existed, and that was al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah.  

In other words, the Muslim Brotherhood was “an empty house that was populated by the youth of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah.” Using the traditional mode of establishing networks and forging linkages between leaders and members, the Muslim Brotherhood reoriented its new recruits to submit to the command of a regional official, usually from a student’s hometown, village, or governorate. While helping to bring al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah under the hierarchy of the Muslim Brotherhood, this policy also addressed the problem of what to do with university graduates who were no longer active in the student movement. By 1976, graduates who had joined the Muslim Brotherhood were instructed to contact an elder in the organization in their hometown and coordinate their activities through that leader. A graduate returning home to Alexandria, for instance, would make contact with ‘Abbas al-Sisi, who in turn would place him in a “family” populated with other members from a particular district or neighborhood.
In the case of Abul Futuh and Abu Zeid, they were placed in a family along with a university professor, ‘Abd al-Mu’ti al-Gazzar. Mubarak ‘Abd al-‘Adheem, a science teacher who was part of an intermediary generation of Muslim Brotherhood members that joined during the Nasser era, was appointed as the head of the family. The group met in regular study circles for about a year, until Abul Futuh and Abu Zeid were relocated to another family, made up of more senior Muslim Brotherhood figures, including Mahmoud Abu Rayyah, who had served as Hasan al-Banna’s secretary and was placed in charge of the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo. Given his lofty status within the student movement, it was natural that Abul Futuh would climb the ladder more quickly than many of his peers, and become close to the center of decision-making within the Muslim Brotherhood.

Just as the shape of student activism was altered by the adoption of the Muslim Brotherhood’s school of thought and organizational discipline, the Muslim Brotherhood also had to adapt to a changing social and political environment. As part of his effort to create greater outreach efforts, Tilmisani arranged for the establishment of al-Maktab al-Siyassi (Political Bureau) within the Guidance Bureau. The decision aimed at counterbalancing the influence of the conservative faction of former Secret Apparatus members like Sananiri and Mashhur. While they focused more on internal matters of teaching new members the program of the Muslim Brotherhood and administering its central command structure, the Political Bureau appealed to the widespread sentiments among many youth that their mission should take on a public face, engaging with the state and society at large. Tilmisani appointed several figures the bureau who represented the public activist wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, including Salah Shadi, Farid ‘Abd al-Khaliq, ‘Abd al-Mu’iz ‘Abd al-Sattar, Ahmed Ra’if, and ‘Abdullah Rashwan.
Meanwhile, Salih al-‘Ashmawi, a former member of the Muslim Brotherhood whom Hudaybi had expelled in the early 1950s, reconnected with Tilmisani, offering to bring his magazine, *al-Da‘wa*, under the control of the Muslim Brotherhood once again. The publication became a focal point of the organization’s activities, beginning with the first issue of the new edition in June 1976. In fact, the offices of *al-Da‘wa* on Tawfiqiyah Street in downtown Cairo served as a makeshift headquarters for the Muslim Brotherhood’s Guidance Bureau. Edited by Tilmisani, the magazine also served as a bridge between generations, as it featured reports and commentaries by important figures like Mashhur and Gaber Rizq, as well as student leaders like Badr Muhammad Badr and Muhammad ‘Abd al-Quddus.

**Facing the Fallout**

By the late 1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood had successfully absorbed the great majority of the leadership of the student movement. In its brief time on the scene, al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah established itself as one of the most effective student activist organizations in Egypt’s modern history, but the strategic decision was made that the future of the Islamic movement depended on its ability to transcend the student movement. While the two appeared synonymous for a brief historical moment, in reality one was gradually overtaking the other. As a result, student leaders like Abul Futuh, al-‘Erian, and Za‘farani pledged themselves to the mission of the Muslim Brotherhood, and conducted their affairs within the student movement in accordance with the agenda of the mother organization. Moreover, the program offerings to the general student body increasingly represented the Muslim Brotherhood perspective, with many of its leading figures featuring prominently at
camps and conferences, in the hopes of widening the recruitment pool beyond the upper echelons of the student movement, to include the Islamic activist base.

The transformation was largely successful. Student leaders maintained that, “the Muslim Brotherhood rescued al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah from many problems, intellectual and organizational.”55 The rigidity of Salafi thought, influential among the students, was narrowing the scope of acceptable positions on a number of doctrinal issues. Meanwhile, the jihadi tendency was also pervasive among some segments of youth frustrated and disenchanted with the growing engagement with the political system. For those who chose to adopt it, the Muslim Brotherhood’s program addressed all of these competing trends and offered a more promising and comprehensive outlook for the future. Badr characterized the difference in the student movement after many of its leaders joined the Muslim Brotherhood as one of accountability. Leaders could no longer simply take any position they wanted, a considerable development since the passions of youth were often ignited over hot button issues like the conflict between Muslims and Copts. The requirement to adhere to an official position developed by the senior leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood often restrained the radical response that would otherwise have emerged from al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah.56

However, the fact that the organizational structure and independence of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah remained fully intact, even after a number of its leaders joined the Muslim Brotherhood, meant that internal conflicts were inevitable. Abul Futuh and most of his peers had resolved to maintain an air of total secrecy about their membership in the Muslim Brotherhood. Those who did not join were largely unassuming, considering only that their colleagues were sympathetic to the Ikhwani trend, while they themselves were promoting an alternative outlook. Toward the end
of the decade, as al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah served to funnel increasingly large numbers of students into the Muslim Brotherhood, one group was steadily expanding and rising in prominence, while the other remained stagnant, at least in terms of its leadership on the national stage of political activism.

This development was not lost on the dissenting minority within the leadership of the student movement. By 1979, quarrels and confrontations became a frequent occurrence across many universities. In Alexandria, for instance, during a meeting of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah’s leadership, Za‘farani inadvertently let it slip that several leaders had taken the oath of membership in the Muslim Brotherhood. Usama ‘Abd al-‘Adheem, a student leader associated with the Salafi trend, was stunned by the revelation, and proceeded to publicize it widely.\textsuperscript{57} Accusations followed, with many outsiders charging that the secret Muslim Brotherhood members had staged a coup to take over the student movement from within. “The best defense,” the student leaders decided, “was to go on the offensive.”\textsuperscript{58} Unapologetically, they acknowledged their affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood and claimed that it was their right to join any group or organization as they saw fit.

Other factions had similarly started to become more organized, with blocs of Salafi students rallying around ‘Abd al-‘Adheem, Muhammad Isma‘il, and Ahmed Farid in Cairo and Alexandria. Elsewhere, the jihadi tendency was gaining momentum, especially in upper Egypt, under the leadership of Karam Zuhdi, Usama Hafidh, Nagih Ibrahim, ‘Asim ‘Abd al-Majid, and ‘Esam Darbalah. As these groups consolidated their movements with likeminded colleagues, their opposition to the mainstream leadership became more focused and provocative. The Salafi students accused the Ikhwani student leaders of taking liberties with Islamic practices and deviating from core doctrinal issues. The jihadi groups, meanwhile, asserted that the
student movement had abandoned the call for struggle against a corrupt and unjust regime by focusing on tangential matters and reaching accommodation with the state.\footnote{59}

In this fashion, the fissures that had existed within the ranks of the student movement during much of the late 1970s erupted into deep chasms by the close of the decade. In some cases, as with the Salafi movement, the Muslim Brotherhood continued to pursue dialogue, though it was frequently unsuccessful and resulted only in heightening tensions. In other instances, as with the jihadi groups, communications broke down and many of those who favored a militant path disappeared from the scene entirely, emerging only during the wave of violence that swept Egypt periodically. The Muslim Brotherhood maintained a key advantage in that its main recruits made up the uppermost level of leadership of the student movement, a prized asset for an organization that was looking to begin its mission anew by building on an existing movement. Meanwhile, most of the opposition figures from within the student movement made up the secondary tier of leadership: some were involved in the local councils at various chapters of al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, but none of them were amirs. In a rare instance, that of the Assiut University chapter, did an opposition movement prove capable of taking the reins of leadership. A group led by jihadi figures was successful in ousting an Ikhwan-affiliated amir, Usama Sayyid Ahmed, and replacing him with one of their own.\footnote{60}

As the dividing lines became completely apparent, the Muslim Brotherhood student leaders no longer had reason to suppress their affiliation. By 1980, the dynamic within al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah had changed considerably. The Muslim Brotherhood leader was no longer introduced at official student events as “al-da‘iyah al-ustadh ‘Umar al-Tilmisani” (the caller and teacher). Instead, he was introduced as
“ustadhana, murshidana, sheikhana” (our teacher, our guide, our sheikh).⁶¹ Official releases and publications issued by al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah included the Muslim Brotherhood’s name on their letterheads and titles.⁶² University campuses became a primary hub for the distribution of al-Da‘wa, the Muslim Brotherhood’s official magazine. The public prayer services organized by student leaders that attracted tens of thousands of Egyptians during Islamic holidays featured Muslim Brotherhood banners and slogans. In short, the process of consolidation was complete. The Muslim Brotherhood successfully assimilated the Islamic student movement intellectually, organizationally, and even on the level of day-to-day activities. Though there were two competing groups still claiming authority over the name al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah, by 1983, the group affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood abandoned the name altogether, to dissociate itself from the militant actions of the group based in upper Egypt.

**A Familiar Face**

By the close of the decade, the Muslim Brotherhood had reclaimed the mantle of leadership over mainstream Islamic activism in Egypt. Battling tremendous odds, a movement that was once considered defunct, with its key figures executed, imprisoned, or exiled, suddenly experienced an unlikely resurgence. Within a few short years, the Muslim Brotherhood had settled the question of its return, resolved its crisis of leadership, forged links with the vibrant student movement, and recruited its leaders into its ranks. By combining its traditional structural hierarchy with its knack for channeling the desires and aspirations of the new generation, the Muslim Brotherhood successfully cultivated a fresh organizational culture that promoted continuity when it could, but proved able to change when necessary.
For the student movement, the developments of this period led to mixed results. On the one hand, the early years of the movement were marked by the spontaneous and organic nature of youth activism, genuine intellectual curiosity that lent itself to the exploration of a multiplicity of viewpoints, and a fiery spirit that sustained a mass movement of political opposition. However, even the youth figures who lived this period acknowledged that the student movement faced greater challenges, ideological and structural, by not coming out of an intellectual home within the elder generation, or building upon a proven organizational model. The reappearance of the Muslim Brotherhood gradually came to fill this void, a welcome advance in the minds of some, and an unauthorized intrusion for others. To some extent, the Muslim Brotherhood divided an otherwise unified movement that had found strength and harmony in its diversity. However, it could also be argued that the elder leaders simply exposed deep-seated conflicts within a young and inexperienced movement that would have eventually come to the fore in dangerous ways.

What the student leaders gave up in independence and spontaneity was made up for them with the stability and coherence found in the Muslim Brotherhood curriculum and structure. Though it could not abate it entirely, the Muslim Brotherhood’s aggressive response to the rise of militancy among some youth drastically minimized the spread of a potentially destructive force that undermined the essence of the group’s mission to spread its message gradually within society. The Muslim Brotherhood had spent the better part of the previous decade articulating its response to the rise of a strain within Islamic thought that painted all of society with the brush of disbelief, and legitimated the use of force to oppose it. While the student movement of the 1970s was not privy to the debate between Hudaybi and the Qutbists as it unfolded during the latter prison years, they benefited greatly from the resolution
of this question and the Muslim Brotherhood’s ability to define its mission in relation to the external challenges that it faced.

The Muslim Brotherhood’s successful consolidation of the Islamic movement was also not lost on the regime. In the span of ten years, Sadat had gone from releasing the Muslim Brotherhood members from Nasser’s prisons, to ordering their arrests on politically motivated charges. In between, the regime’s policy toward the Islamic movement was never clearly laid out, and appeared to waver between cooptation and containment. As the organization formalized its reentry into society and began making significant inroads among the student movement, Sadat took the opportunity during a meeting with Tilimsani in al-Qanatir to offer the Muslim Brotherhood a path to legalization. The group would merely have to agree to register as a social association with the Ministry of Social Affairs. Then it would be granted full legal status to operate within the bounds provided for social and charitable groups. Tilimsani promptly rejected the offer. As a trained attorney, he understood the legal ramifications of Sadat’s proposal. “I opposed it,” he explained, “because under the law of social associations, the Ministry of Social Affairs has the right to dissolve any association at any time, as well as to appoint its officials and subject it to managerial and budgetary scrutiny.”

Not cowed by this initial rejection, Sadat continued to apply pressure on the Muslim Brotherhood to bring its mission in line with the agenda of his regime. By 1979, it became increasingly apparent to the regime that the organization had gained considerable ground, as an aide to Sadat noted that, “[the Muslim Brotherhood] renewed its focus on teaching the young Muslim and instilling the doctrine. They did not count on clashing with any powerful political forces. They went in search of groups in civil society and universities until they controlled most of them.”
In light of these gains, Sadat once again arranged to meet with the General Guide privately. This time, he offered to appoint Tilmisani to the Shura Council, the upper chamber in the Egyptian parliament.65 Once again, Tilmisani refused the president’s offer, explaining later that, “when I am appointed and not elected, I am accountable to whoever has appointed me.”66 After the meeting, Tilmisani sent a message to Sadat stating that were he to be appointed against his will, he would resign the post immediately, so it would be better for the president to back down and avoid the embarrassing scene this would create.67

Even after the heated confrontation that occurred in August of that year, Sadat hoped to rely on the Muslim Brotherhood for assistance in diffusing an international crisis. Though the two sides had taken diametrically opposed positions on the Islamic revolution in Iran, the hostage crisis that developed there provided an opportunity for them to work hand in hand on a humanitarian issue. After early attempts to free all of the American hostages failed, United States officials reportedly appealed to Sadat to enlist Tilmisani in the effort.68 He was asked to meet directly with Ayatollah Khomeini and plead for the release of the hostages from a humanitarian and religious perspective. Sadat agreed to the mission and an official from the U.S. embassy met with Mashhur at the offices of al-Da’wa to iron out the details. Sadat issued diplomatic passports for Tilmisani and his personal secretary, Ibrahim Sharaf, and requested that his trusted advisor, Mahmoud Gami‘ accompany them on the trip. Sadat also personally called Tilmisani and pressed him to do his utmost to free the hostages.

At the eleventh hour, Sadat called off the mission. He heard a speech by Khomeini in which the Iranian leader expressed his admiration for the Muslim Brotherhood and claimed that he considered himself a student of Hasan al-Banna. In
his increasingly paranoid state, Sadat came to fear that a conspiracy was at work to
topple his regime with an Iranian-style Islamic revolution led by the Muslim
Brotherhood. He simply could not afford to allow any contact or coordination
between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Iranian revolutionaries, even if it meant
backing out of a commitment to aid the United States.

Hoping to place further limits on the Muslim Brotherhood, Sadat recognized
that its power to mobilize derived from its effective communications strategy. Before
it compelled students to rise up in protest against the perceived political and social
inequities of the time, the da‘wa was first and foremost a simple educational mission,
informing listeners about the world around them, and the Islamic vision for self-
empowerment and the betterment of society. To stem the growing tide of opposition
to his policies, Sadat introduced Qanun al-‘Ayb (Law of Shame) in April 1980. It
established a court system to try individuals for “antisocial behavior” that included
“inciting opposition to the state’s economic, political, and social system, and
disseminating false or extremist statements that damage national unity or social
peace.”

This attempt by Sadat to silence all dissent aimed at his regime stemmed from
his heightened sensitivity to sharp critiques that appeared within the independent
press, especially in Islamic publications. Perhaps symbolizing the consolidation of its
command over the entire Islamic movement, the Muslim Brotherhood maintained the
publication most notorious for its verbal assault on Sadat’s policies. In what would be
his final address to parliament prior to his assassination, Sadat devoted the bulk of his
lengthy speech to dissecting the content of the August 1981 issue of al-Da‘wa. Like a
prosecutor laying out his meticulous case, Sadat isolated long passages from the
magazine’s pages and offered a point by point refutation of its arguments, though at times he was content simply condemning the tone and language of the articles.

Unsurprisingly, that would be the last issue of *al-Da‘wa* that the Muslim Brotherhood would ever produce. Perhaps more ominously, Sadat used the opportunity to inform a stunned nation that earlier that morning, the Interior Ministry had conducted security raids across the country. Agents arrested hundreds of opposition figures from across the political spectrum, but placed the bulk of their energies on capturing the senior leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood and their counterparts from al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah. The members of these two groups, who had come together over a common ideological vision and a unified organization, were now reduced to a shared jail cell.
Chapter Six

CONSTRUCTING THE CALL

Throughout the course of the 1970s, there was no stronger sign of the reemergence of the Muslim Brotherhood as a leading social movement organization than the publication of its periodical, al-Da‘wa. Beginning with its inaugural issue in May 1976, not only did the monthly magazine present the new face of the organization, it offered the leadership an alternative base of operations, as the traditional Guidance Office had been defunct since the early years of the Nasser period.

It will be recalled that following their release from Nasser’s prisons, veteran leaders were split on the future of the Muslim Brotherhood. Three camps advocated competing visions of the organization’s future structure, ranging from a publishing house loosely affiliated with the Brotherhood of old to a group directly descended from its most hierarchically rigid unit, the Secret Apparatus.¹ Though the middle position represented by ‘Umar al-Tilmisani eventually prevailed, both ends of the spectrum achieved valuable gains during this process. For the group advancing the former view, chief among these was the publication of a magazine that became the Muslim Brotherhood’s most direct line to Egyptian society. In fact, al-Da‘wa would develop into the main activism arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in the public sphere.²

In addition to his position as General Guide, Tilmisani would also take on the titles of President and Managing Editor of al-Da‘wa. A more telling indication of the magazine’s centrality to the reconstituted Muslim Brotherhood is the fact that the group’s leaders did not maintain an official headquarters for the organization, but instead congregated at al-Da‘wa’s offices.
Though the revival of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1970s could be examined in different ways, the study of *al-Da‘wa* provides the most illuminating view into the group’s reconstitution, as an organization and a holder of ideas. The magazine reflects the Muslim Brotherhood’s meticulous efforts to develop a more coherent, broad-based message better than occasional speeches, brochures, posters, or slogans could. Even books authored by leaders within the organization, referenced throughout this study, provide only a glimpse of the internal debates that congealed on the pages of the magazine. While *al-Da‘wa* was by no means the only publication broadcasting the views of the Muslim Brotherhood during this period, it was the most important, featuring regular contributions by the top brass of the organization and amassing a readership that reached 100,000. Few independent publications could claim such a following in Sadat’s Egypt.

**Cultural Framing**

This chapter builds on the Social Movement Theory (SMT) literature on cultural framing, which is particularly instructive in determining how the Muslim Brotherhood constructed its image in popular culture and, perhaps more importantly, how its message was communicated to and received by ordinary Egyptians. Cultural framing is defined as the process by which a movement packages its agenda, articulating issues of concern, their remedies, and calls to action. The entire framing process is marked by a fluidity in which “movement leaders and members continuously revise and modify frames, attempting to find new ways to connect with potential supporters and to reach new audiences.” In the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, the frames developed in the latter half of the 1970s took on a character markedly different from those of the early period of the movement.
The behavior of al-Da‘wa’s editors is best understood as a function of the desire to rebuild the group’s legitimacy and mobilize the maximum level of popular support. In its bid to accomplish this goal, the Muslim Brotherhood utilized preexisting reference points recognized by the majority of the nation’s citizens. In the Egyptian context, this entailed a shared cultural heritage, common historical memory, and most of all, religious identity.

A thorough examination of the Muslim Brotherhood’s chief publication reveals the conscious decisions undertaken by the leadership to present its message to a mass audience. Contrary to assertions made frequently by commentators on Islamic social movements, the content of mass-circulated media was not simply a reflection of group dogma or long-held religious doctrine. Rather, as the following discussion of the magazine’s content demonstrates, decisions were made to fashion a specific discourse in light of contemporary social and political considerations. In this way, the Muslim Brotherhood was no exception to the general rule of social movements, recognizing the need to appeal to as broad an audience as possible while evading threats to its being in the form of state repression.

The Written Word

Publication as the means by which to develop ideas and disseminate messages was a constant feature during this turbulent period in the history of the Islamic movement. Its importance as the primary method of communication was a relatively recent phenomenon in Islamic history, the product of a number of factors stemming from the Muslim world’s interaction with modernity. The decentralization of Islamic learning and knowledge allowed for the emergence of competing modes of thought, often outside of traditional institutions. The role of the ‘ulema became greatly
diminished, allowing for a surge in lay Islamic activism with the emergence of groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

Technological innovations allowing for mass communication, increased movement of peoples, and efficient methods of printing information for distribution figured significantly, not only in the Islamic movement’s means of spreading its message, but even in its conception of itself and the world around it. The global body of Muslims, or ummah, took on a new meaning in the mid-twentieth century, as Muslim populations were at once divided into separate nation-states and united through their ability to communicate their shared experience and common outlook for the future. In a culture that had become dominated by print media, the regular publication of books, pamphlets, newspapers, and periodicals became the most effective tool of dispensing the organization’s platform to the widest audience possible. Some scholars have even argued that the development of entirely new communities was spawned through print culture.  

The period of the 1970s in particular has been singled out as a point of departure from traditional means in disseminating information to the adoption of new technologies, a development that coincided with the Islamic resurgence. This transformation resulted from a convergence of two primary factors. On the one hand, cultural changes necessitated that Islamic groups find new methods to reach ordinary citizens, while on the other hand, the state’s aggressive economic opening altered the nature of the publication industry:

In a shift that began in the Sadat era to a more market-driven production of books and pamphlets, the most significant growth has been in ‘Islamic books’—inexpensive, attractively printed texts written in a style accessible to readers who lack the literary skills of the educated cadres of an earlier time. Often disregarding the vocabulary and grammar of formal Arabic in favor of colloquial diction, these books are available to a mass-educated public. They command press runs in the hundreds of thousands, while a book by Egypt’s
Nobel laureate is considered successful if it sells 5000-10,000 copies annually.\textsuperscript{9}

So significant was this shift that even well established “secularist and leftist” writers who preceded the Islamic resurgence adapted to the new trend, attempting to reach these segments of the Egyptian population.\textsuperscript{10}

For its part, the Muslim Brotherhood had always relied on the publication of materials as a primary method of spreading its message. In addition to reviving Rashid Rida’s \textit{al-Manar} publication in the name of his organization, Hasan al-Banna’s many speeches were repeatedly printed in collections for audiences that never saw him speak. In the years following the Free Officers Revolution, Hasan al-Hudaybi relied on secretly distributed pamphlets to counteract the state’s onslaught against the Muslim Brotherhood in the realm of popular opinion.\textsuperscript{11} One Western scholar made note of the use of medieval texts by Islamic jurists and thinkers, such as Ibn Taymiyya, resurrected in the late twentieth century by the Muslim Brotherhood. The reprinted editions came complete with new introductions by Muslim Brotherhood leaders relating old ideas to modern times.\textsuperscript{12}

By the mid-1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood was faced with the prospect of reintroducing its message within a more competitive field that featured a variety of intellectual trends. In addition to \textit{al-Da’wa}, two other Islamic periodicals made their mark during this period. The first was \textit{al-I’tisam}, a magazine published by \textit{al-Gam’iyyah al-Shar’iyyah}, the religious association established by Sheikh Mahmoud Khattab al-Sobki during Egypt’s nationalist struggle following World War I. Founded by Ahmad ‘Isa Ashur in the late 1930s, the magazine expressed the group’s Salafi orientation, often finding common cause with Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood.\textsuperscript{13} In 1977, Hasan ‘Ashur continued his father’s legacy, developing \textit{al-I’tisam} into a monthly publication that focused primarily on religious life, though it paid some
attention to current political events, in particular its opposition to the Camp David Accords, which helped it amass a large following.

In 1979, Hussein ‘Ashur, Hasan’s younger brother, founded al-Mukhtar al-Islami, a journal characterized by its long scholarly pieces, an Islamic Reader’s Digest, as one study suggested. This magazine took its inspiration from the Islamic Revolution in Iran, which distinguished it from the other Islamic monthlies, whose views on the events in Iran were more complex. Appealing to a narrower segment of the educated public, al-Mukhtar al-Islami often set the agenda of important political issues covered by the other periodicals, though its editors also credited the larger magazines with paving the way for its readership to expand.

Because they covered similar subject matter and often expressed solidarity with al-Da’wa’s positions on the issues of the day, al-I’tisam, and al-Mukhtar al-Islami have all been mistakenly identified as Muslim Brotherhood publications in various places. In reality, only al-Da’wa represented the official Muslim Brotherhood position, though others may have shared its view on some matters, going so far as to republish al-Da’wa pieces on occasion.

Although these three magazines have been closely linked together in what Kepel referred to as the “Islamicist trinity,” they were by no means the only religious publications circulating in Egypt during the latter half of the 1970s. In addition to the well-established Azharite publications such as Minbar al-Islami and al-Azhar, magazines such as al-Muslim al-Mu’asir and al-Tasawwuf al-Islami also generated substantial followings within the Islamic movement. Sadat himself ordered the reprinting of the renowned Islamic modernist publication, Afghani and Abduh’s al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa. By September 1981, when the state banned all independent press,
there were over a dozen regularly appearing Islamic publications throughout Egypt, an industry that had not even existed only a decade earlier.

**Originating the Call**

It is within the legacy of modern Islamic literature that the Muslim Brotherhood established *al-Da’wa* as its official mouthpiece in 1976. Though its editors claimed that the publication was simply a continuation of a previous run of a periodical of the same name, the latter edition of *al-Da’wa* was hardly the same as the original. The conditions experienced by the organization in the previous era were not conducive to the printing of a regular communiqué to be mass-produced and sold publicly on the market. Previous iterations of the magazine were much shorter in length, printed in small quantities, and did not appear regularly, especially at the height of Nasser’s repression.

The first head of the Secret Apparatus and the former deputy of the Muslim Brotherhood, Salih al-‘Ashmawi, founded *al-Da’wa* following Banna’s death, as an attempt to strengthen an organization reeling from the sudden loss of its founder and charismatic leader. The magazine played an important part in presenting the Muslim Brotherhood’s viewpoint at a time when its very existence was under threat of a government ban and a number of court cases against its members. It also fulfilled a secondary role, that of opposition to the leadership of Banna’s successor, Hudaybi. 19 ‘Ashmawi led a faction of prominent Muslim Brotherhood members who desired a change in the group’s position on a host of issues, most significantly its relationship with the country’s new political leaders, the Revolutionary Command Council. But in the end it was Hudaybi who emerged victorious from this threat to his leadership,
ousting ‘Ashmawi, along with other important figures such as Sayyid Sabiq and Muhammad al-Ghazali, in December 1953.

‘Ashmawi continued to publish al-Da‘wa even after losing his affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood. It covered general Islamic themes and avoided the confrontational path with the state to which Hudaybi’s organization appeared to be heading. In fact, ‘Ashmawi’s newfound independence spared him entry into Nasser’s prisons once the regime outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood and cast a wide net to apprehend most of its leaders and high-ranking members.

As staffers in the latter version of al-Da‘wa would recount, ‘Ashmawi published his magazine, even as Nasser dismantled any semblance of an independent press in Egypt. The magazine was not distributed, however. As obtaining an official publishing license was a difficult ordeal, ‘Ashmawi’s sole objective at the height of Nasser’s repression was to maintain the license to publish, the minimum requirement of which was the printing of five regular issues of any monthly publication.20 By 1956, ‘Ashmawi had ceased to produce new issues of al-Da‘wa, and this process consisted entirely of reprinting five copies of past issues every month. Remarkably, this practice continued for two decades, throughout the Nasser period, and into the Sadat years.21

With his precious publishing license in hand, and the appearance of a fresh start for the Islamic movement, ‘Ashmawi approached Tilmisani following the latter’s emergence as de facto leader of the reconstituted Muslim Brotherhood. Putting his decades-old differences with Hudaybi behind him, ‘Ashmawi placed his magazine at the service of the Muslim Brotherhood, which Tilmisani happily accepted. In June 1976, the first issue of the revived al-Da‘wa was published, with nearly 60,000 copies distributed across Egypt.22 The event was deemed so monumental that the BBC’s
news service announced the reemergence of the Muslim Brotherhood on the basis of the printing of its magazine.23

Muslim Brotherhood leaders were quick to stress that neither ‘Ashmawi nor Tilmisani, who had been appointed president of the magazine, sought permission from the Sadat government to publish the magazine. Instead, they relied on the preexisting license as the legal basis for publishing al-Da’wa.24 Though it may have been true that Muslim Brotherhood leaders did not request official permission, the group’s mouthpiece could never have appeared without at least tacit approval by Sadat. The events of 1981—only five years after the appearance of al-Da’wa’s first issue—would serve as a painful reminder that the state always maintained final control over the public activities of the Islamic movement.25

While ‘Ashmawi and Tilmisani oversaw the general direction of the magazine, it was ‘Abd al-Mon‘im Salim Jabbarah, and later Gaber Rizq, who supervised the daily functions of al-Da’wa, from updating the layout and choosing the topics to be covered, to enforcing deadlines and soliciting advertisers. The magazine’s offices were initially based in a small apartment in the Sayyida Zainab neighborhood of Cairo, and in 1978 moved to a more prominent location in Souq al-Tawfiqiyya, which later served as the Muslim Brotherhood’s headquarters. According to Badr Muhammad Badr, a young staff writer for al-Da’wa, there were barely half a dozen reporters at the magazine, in addition to the editors. At a weekly meeting of the senior editors, the important topics of the day were discussed, usually yielding assignments for the staff reporters to pursue.26 This was the formula generally followed in the latter years of the magazine’s run, when current events took on more of a central focus than they had in earlier editions. Staff reporters were not restricted to covering particular issue areas, though any strengths they had were taken into account when
issuing assignments. For instance, as one of the youngest members of the staff, Badr was placed in charge of the regular “Youth and University News” section of the magazine, in addition to a number of other topics on which he wrote.

The magazine’s distribution quickly rose from the 60,000 copies of its first issue, to 78,000 only seven months later. That figure appeared in the January 1977 issue’s accounting statement. Badr added that some later issues even reached 100,000 copies, with several selling out completely. The bulk of the distribution took place in Egypt, where *al-Da’wa* cost 12 piasters (written as 120 mallims in earlier issues). The rest of the Arab world did have access to *al-Da’wa*, however, with more than 10,000 issues distributed outside of Egypt, according to the January 1977 audit.

In addition to revenue generated by the magazine’s sale, *al-Da’wa* also relied on advertising from both the public and private sector to sustain its publication. As one study of *al-Da’wa*’s advertising strategy showed, the editors relied heavily on former Muslim Brotherhood members who had become financially successful in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. In fact, “three single advertisers represented half of all advertisements by private companies—al-Sharif plastics, al-Massara real estate company, and a foreign car dealer specializing in Japanese imports.” Perhaps representing the state’s acknowledgement of *al-Da’wa* as an important publication, the national bank even took out full-page advertisements, highlighting its Shari’a friendly financial services. As a consequence of its easier access to advertising revenue, *al-Da’wa* had a more attractive look and feel than any other Islamic publication in its time. The revived *al-Da’wa*, which began in June 1976, continued with almost perfect regularity, until it was closed down by government decree in September 1981. Each issue ran roughly seventy pages and contained a variety of articles addressing current events, domestic and international politics, social and
economic affairs, and religious thought and practice. To be sure, the Muslim Brotherhood had never before had an avenue to reach as wide an audience as its *al-Da’wa* readership would allow. As such, the organization’s leaders would take great care to construct its message in as lucid and accessible a way as possible.

According to the magazine’s young staffers, the Muslim Brotherhood’s goal with *al-Da’wa* was to correct its image among Egyptians, in light of the “pressures” to which they had been subjected in years past. Put simply, it announced, “who they were, their ideas, their da’wa.” In its opening issue, an editors’ note laid out the magazine’s mission as “renewing *al-Da’wa*’s pact to remain the organ of an idea appealing for truth, believing in power, and calling for justice and freedom.”

Years later, in his memoir of the Sadat era, Tilmisani extolled the virtues of a professional, independent outlet capable of providing genuine information to its readers, a not-so-thinly veiled critique of the state-run media, which had been highly derisive of the Muslim Brotherhood’s publication. At one point, the mainstream press accused Tilmisani of exploiting “his *Da’wa* magazine” to inflame imams of mosques across the country in order to threaten national unity. While Tilmisani responded sarcastically that he was grateful for being credited with awakening the nation’s religious establishment, he resented the description of *al-Da’wa* as his personal mouthpiece, depicting it as a collective effort by a movement that took its cues from the needs and attitudes of society. If Tilmisani needed any more proof of *al-Da’wa*’s effectiveness, he would have it in the years following Sadat’s assassination, when virtually all independent press outlets were allowed to resume publication with the notable exception of *al-Da’wa*. In fact, in 1984, the Egyptian government would pass a law stating that a publishing license expired with the death of its owner and could not be passed down to family members or associates. The law
was obviously aimed at permanently ending *al-Da‘wa*’s run, whose owner, Salih al-‘Ashmawi, passed away in late 1983.34

**Interpreting the Call**

Traditional studies of the Muslim Brotherhood have generally treated the publication of *al-Da‘wa* in markedly similar fashion. It was often portrayed as the rallying point for the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1970s. During a critical time of reassessment within the Islamic movement, a prominent periodical was the ideal vehicle to refine the organization’s message and rebuild its intellectual base. Furthermore, because of the limited rights enjoyed by social movements under Sadat, the Muslim Brotherhood seized the opportunity to publish a widely circulated magazine with a relatively high degree of freedom in an effort to reclaim its once large following.

Nonetheless, when discussing *al-Da‘wa*, scholars have tended to take a narrow approach, analyzing it through the lens of traditional Western thinking about fundamentalist movements. In a number of studies, the only mention of *al-Da‘wa*’s content were references to its heavy-handed rhetoric against Israel and the United States, especially during the period of the Camp David negotiations. As a result of this limited focus, many observers were left with the impression that *al-Da‘wa*’s sole subject area (or at best, primary subject area) was rehashing traditional Islamic perspectives on foreign relations, particularly with respect to Jews.35 A number of these analyses ascribed a particular form of radicalism to the Muslim Brotherhood’s writings on the issue, labeling their positions anti-Semitic diatribes capable of radicalizing the Muslim masses through strong emotional rhetoric.36

Kepel’s study of *al-Da‘wa* was replete with such examples. The chapter’s
structure centered on the Muslim Brotherhood’s identification of “the enemies of Islam” in the course of the publication of its periodical. Likening them to the Evangelical Christian concept of the “Four Horseman of the Apocalypse,” Kepel listed a quartet of foes named in the magazine over the course of its run. Though they appeared in many forms, he narrowed them down to: Jews, the Crusaders, communism, and secularism. As in many contemporary critiques of Islamic movements, these terms were not placed within their historical context. Nor was there a timeframe within which the use of particular terminology occurred more frequently as part of a broader discourse. The impression one was left with upon reading such a one-dimensional analysis was that the central preoccupation of the Muslim Brotherhood was with the external enemies of Islam, existing from time immemorial, bent on the destruction of the faithful, and for which only a strong response would suffice. Kepel wrote:

> By making Jewry, the Crusade, secularism, and communism the four horsemen of the apocalypse, al-Da‘wa demonstrates that, in the eyes of its readers, the lands of Islam now face an apocalyptic situation. Although all tendencies of the Islamicist movement fully agree on this observation, they differ when it comes to identifying the four horsemen. It is significant that the neo-Muslim Brethren have settled on four archetypes that are generally foreign to Egyptian society. This relieves them of the task of analyzing the internal causes of the difficulties of Islam, particularly as regards the relations between the state and civil society.37

Absent from this discussion was any possibility that in writing on such matters, al-Da‘wa journalists and editors were engaged in a rational process of articulating their positions on a variety of issues of concern to their audience. There was an underlying assumption of uniformity in the course of five years of commentary on Egypt’s foreign relations. A closer look at these articles would reveal developments over time and discernible differences among the various commentators expressing their outlook on these issues. In the final analysis, these articles did not exist in a
vacuum. They were part of a larger context of the Muslim Brotherhood’s framing mechanism, which tackled all of the pertinent issue areas affecting Egyptians. In fact, when compared to those articles dealing with domestic policy and social concerns, the commentaries on foreign policy were given far less attention and space by the editors of *al-Da‘wa*. The quasi-monthly series entitled “Israel: The Present and the Future,” emphasized heavily in Kepel’s analysis, appeared in the final pages of *al-Da‘wa*’s issues, not nearly as prominent a position as articles covering other topics of more pressing concern.

In the few instances in which the scholarly community did not focus solely on the anti-Western rhetoric of *al-Da‘wa*, it generally directed its attention toward single-issue concerns such as the magazine’s outlook on women as discussed in a regular section entitled, “Toward a Muslim Home.” Once again, the bulk of these discussions tended to adhere to the typical critique of modern Islamic movements, exhibiting little concern for the context of the particular problem. In the eyes of Western critics, the magazine’s outlook on women was no more than a reflection of “Islam’s treatment of women” throughout history. Though at least one author noted the role played by Zaynab al-Ghazali, a longstanding figure in the Islamic movement and editor of “Toward a Muslim Home,” in *al-Da‘wa*, the conclusion drawn was that the Muslim Brotherhood’s position on women remained largely underdeveloped and redundant. Other studies very briefly engaged *al-Da‘wa*’s position on other issues, such as its position on the Egyptian economy, which Ajami called “escapist polemics,” or Telhami’s aforementioned examination of the magazine’s advertisements, which she described as “the most reliable indicator of organized Islamist economic power.”

To date, no study of the Muslim Brotherhood during this period adequately
addressed the issues of *al-Daʿwa* in a comprehensive fashion. Rather than approach single issues from a narrow perspective, the following section breaks down the framing processes within the magazine by contextualizing all the major issues covered by the editors. The underlying intellectual structure of *al-Daʿwa*, along with pragmatic considerations of political limitations, audience, and opposition, often influenced its scope and content. All of the major issue areas covered by the periodical occurred within the framework of daʿwa, a traditional Islamic concept that was refined and updated within the pages of its namesake. The various thematic issues fit the profile of the three core framing tasks as defined by Benford and Snow. In fact, as is shown below, the concept of daʿwa was itself a textbook example of a motivational frame articulated by the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1970s. It was carefully constructed to incorporate the issue areas addressed throughout the magazine’s pages and provided an all-inclusive program for its followers.

**Constructing the Call**

Egypt’s turbulent political climate during the mid-1970s had a visible impact on the direction of the mainstream Muslim Brotherhood and its reformist agenda. Seeking to develop its activist program within a rapidly changing society, the organization attempted to set forth its ideological beliefs in a flexible and easily accessible manner. All of its successive activities flowed from the articulation of the group’s positions that took place primarily in the pages of *al-Daʿwa*. As was previously discussed, a feature of late twentieth century Islamic activism was the shift in focus of the callers to the faith, the duʿa, away from non-Muslims to non-practicing Muslims, thought to be in danger of leaving the faith and contributing to the general decline of religious life in society.
The da’wa work for this period revolved around what it meant to practice Islam in the modern age. In this regard, the initiatives undertaken by al-Azhar and other grand institutions across the Muslim world, intended to maintain Islamic life in society, were perceived by many Islamic movements as insufficient. Following the reconstitution of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, da’wa took on an innovative approach, one that was to guide its entire program in the coming years. At the outset of its revival, it was clear that al-Da’wa aimed to offer readers a new interpretation of an old concept.

The initial step in this organic process involved defining the Muslim Brotherhood’s da’wa in opposition to the alternative paths offered by the militant fringe of the Islamic movement and the state-supported religious establishment. In echoes of Hudaybi, the very first article directed towards the future du’a declared, “the principles of da’wa are united in the Qur’anic language of peace: ‘and when the ignorant address them, they say: Peace.’” The author’s deliberate use of the verse citing “the ignorant” or al-jahilun, was a reference to the Qutbi discourse that dominated some segments of Egyptian society during the 1970s. While acknowledging the term’s popular usage, the article offered a conciliatory approach to addressing the prevalent ignorance of Islam, using Hudaybi’s call for “preachers, not judges,” as a guide. Continuing along the same lines, in his inaugural editorial, Tilmisani alluded to the Prophetic da’wa as the means by which the pagan tribes of Mecca ultimately accepted Islam—a feat they never would have thought possible at the outset of his mission.

Another writer in the pages of al-Da’wa, Ahmed Gad, offered a scathing critique of the traditional conception of the term as practiced by religious elites functioning under the state. By placing the blame for Islam’s continued subordination
in society squarely on the shoulders of the state’s religious establishment, the Muslim Brotherhood sought to position its own platform as a viable alternative to the norm. Gad wrote that, “Islam’s ordeal in this era arises from its du‘a and their adherents more than those standing against its progress. By ‘du‘a,’ I mean those employed in the name of religious knowledge and given formal appointments of the official da‘wa, and they are very many.”

In Gad’s view, the state of da‘wa in contemporary Egypt was at a historical low, consisting of preachers so ineffective that even ostensibly religious individuals were unaffected by their sermonizing. The traditional vehicles for da‘wa maintained a narrow focus on the ritualistic aspects of the faith, leaving the needs of modern Egyptian society unfulfilled:

They discuss the steps of ablution, or they describe how to conduct the Hajj, or even the rearing of a Muslim child, but on usury, political oppression, and other violations of the limits of God, they are silent; it is as though these problems disappeared from their society or that Islam had made a pact of peaceful coexistence with them.

Clearly, the aim of the Muslim Brotherhood’s leaders was the construction of a new form of da‘wa, one that offered a more comprehensive vision of an Islamic society and transcended the limits set by the state. As stated in other articles, the organization firmly held that its activities should remain within the bounds of peaceful dialogue, preaching only to those who would listen. In essence, change would only come if people desired it and pursued it willingly. There was no room in the Muslim Brotherhood’s da‘wa for compulsion, coercion, or the use of force to achieve their ends. This was an obvious allusion to the rising tide of extremism within the Islamic movement, especially among the younger generation of zealous activists who aspired for immediate change. To them, Mustafa Mashhur urged prudence. The only way toward successfully accomplishing the goals of the Islamic movement was
to maintain a wider perspective. In his sobering account of the arduous nature of this long-term strategy, he contended:

The path of da'wa is not furnished with flowers. It is long and arduous, not simple and short. It is a struggle between truth and falsehood. It requires patience, perseverance, effort, dedication, and sacrifice. There should be no illusions about speedy results and one should not despair, for what is required is action. It is God who chooses the time and place for results. You may not even see them in your lifetime, but no matter, for we are judged according to our actions, not results.45

As a means of offsetting the obstacles with which the organization’s mission was continuously confronted, Mashhur introduced an element of time to the discourse, which acted as a motivational frame. He identified this time period as being a critical historical moment in the legacy of da'wa activity. Upon listing a number of parallels with the formative period of Islam, he wrote, “This phase is important and fundamental because it is the first step on the path and any mistake or deviation in understanding or knowledge will lead to negative results that will lead the da'wa off its path.”46 He emphasized the importance of a pure understanding of the Islamic sources, as well as the examples of the Prophet’s companions and the latter day Muslim leader in the figure of the Muslim Brotherhood’s fallen founder. “This is what our Imam, the martyr Hassan al-Banna, stressed.”

In the second stage of developing the da'wa concept, Mashhur authored a regularly appearing series entitled “The Path of Da'wa.” After it was determined what da'wa was not, Mashhur set out to explain what it was. In laying the foundation for the revived concept, it was clear that he made a conscious effort to integrate his new conception of da'wa into the legacy of Islamic history:

The path of da’wa is one. It was marched by the Prophet of God and his Companions before and it has been marched by the du'a since, through faith, action, love, and brotherhood. Their call is to faith and action followed by a unity of the hearts through love and fraternity. The strength of conviction was met with the strength of unity and their group became the standard bearers,
whose message and call will undoubtedly spread and emerge victorious throughout the land.47

The importance of maintaining historical continuity lies in the desire for legitimacy that is often at the root of framing a social movement’s discourse. By tracing the legacy of da’wa activity to the formative period of Islam, Mashhur effectively made the claim that the Muslim Brotherhood offered the most authentic form of Islamic activism. Nonetheless, he also cleared the path for innovation by highlighting the significant changes over time. The concept of da’wa was linked to the issue of civilizational decline. By reinstating religious consciousness and reasserting Islamic identity throughout society, Mashhur argued that Islam could once again emerge as a strong civilization at the forefront of human leadership.48

The tension between continuity and change continued as Mashhur outlined the steps of da’wa. According to him, “the general means of da’wa do not change. They have not been replaced and do not exceed these three basic principles: Deep faith; Precise orientation; Continuous action.”49 Despite the timeless nature of these principles, Mashhur explained in no uncertain terms the reformist goals of his platform. “Through these means,” he wrote, “progress is made. Each step leads to a higher measure of success: there will be the Muslim individual, the Muslim home, the Muslim society, so that the extensive Islamic groundwork is set for the establishment of an Islamic government, which combines with others like it to form an Islamic caliphate across the Muslim world.”50 This brief description encapsulated the grand ambitions of the Muslim Brotherhood’s da’wa project.

At first glance, it may appear as though Mashhur harkened back to the golden age of the Islamic empire. A more thorough look at this proposal, however, reveals that it was far from an anachronistic appeal to the romantic sentiments of some modern day Muslims. Rather, this was a particularly significant statement because it
signaled the first time in modern Islamic history that grassroots da‘wa activity was utilized as part of a strategy for eventual political reform. The history of Islamic societies featured a pronounced gap between political authority and social movements, a gap that the Muslim Brotherhood sought to bridge through its reformulation of the da‘wa concept.

As the series of articles on da‘wa continued into the magazine’s later issues, the discourse became more technical and often responsive to the needs of the community of callers to the faith. This rigorous process of codifying the Muslim Brotherhood’s da‘wa project coincided with Mashhur’s desire to rebuild a strong institutional structure on the order of the historic Secret Apparatus. In a three-part series of articles, Mashhur outlined what he identified as the primary phases of da‘wa: proclamation, formation, and implementation.\(^{51}\) He also gave considerable attention to what he labeled the “manners of da‘wa,” that is, the individual characteristics that make an effective da‘i. Many articles addressed the legion of callers directly, describing in detail the ideal candidate for the crucial task of spreading the message.

Among other things, he wrote that the individual must be:

- [A] positive role model for the type of Islam that he preaches for in his daily life; to have sincerity of faith in his chosen struggle so that his message may reach the hearts of others; to think, speak, and act in accordance with the message of da‘wa. To be versatile, dynamic, aware of all the different traditional schools of thought and current intellectual trends, to have a wide perspective.\(^{52}\)

Beyond painting a portrait of the ideal type needed to carry out the mission, Mashhur also attempted to defuse the problems that arose during the course of the movement’s development and expansion. An important aim of these articles was to ease the mounting frustrations of the youth regarding the popular perception within Sadat’s Egypt of the widening contradiction between Islam’s ideal vision of society and the corrupt reality surrounding Egyptians. Indirectly responding to incidents of
violence, Mashhur wrote that these frustrations may lead to errors in judgment, but
that the mission of da‘wa nonetheless maintained that people had to be helped and
their intentions should not be questioned. He then offered counsel to those struggling
in their daily lives while attempting to fulfill their charge. “Have patience,
demonstrate resolve, and continue to inform people,” he wrote. “Do not retaliate
against the aggressors,” Mashhur cautioned, even pointing to the example of early
Islamic history, where passive assertion of faith was the only mode of resistance
recommended by Muhammad. Jihad, Mashhur reminded his readers, exists in many
forms, not only giving up one’s life in battle.\textsuperscript{53}

Picking up where Mashhur left off, famed Islamic scholar and former Muslim
Brotherhood member Yousuf al-Qaradawi articulated the third stage of da‘wa
development. Whereas Mashhur emphasized strength and discipline in the ranks of
the callers, Qaradawi worked toward the refinement of their sensibilities. In an early
article, he commented on the similarities between da‘wa and jihad, calling on young
followers to go beyond jihad’s most commonly understood meaning of liberation by
force, instead urging them to liberate their minds through a better understanding of
their faith.\textsuperscript{54} Qaradawi later initiated a regular series entitled, “The Culture of the
Da‘iya,” in which he described the intricacies involved in the promotion of an Islamic
way of life. Knowledge alone was not sufficient, he argued, but a successful caller
needed to know how to synthesize knowledge and implement it in every day
situations. In fact, beyond simply relying on religious knowledge, Qaradawi stressed
to his readers the importance of the learning culture across vast areas, including
history, language, literature, and the sciences.\textsuperscript{55} Through these articles, Qaradawi
attempted to cultivate a da‘wa culture steeped in traditional religious knowledge but
also conversant with the contemporary language of Egyptian society.
The concept of da‘wa as it developed within the pages of the magazine set the tone for the Muslim Brotherhood’s activist program for the coming generation. Beyond the direct impact it had on the organizational structure, providing younger members with a sense of identity and mission, da‘wa also informed the quality of issues addressed by the group. Even a cursory reading of al-Da‘wa’s run reveals that its editors sought a comprehensive approach to the organization’s platform, covering a vast array of issue areas through a unitary lens of da‘wa as the starting point. In order to better analyze the core framing tasks occurring within the Muslim Brotherhood’s chief publication, the plethora of issues can be organized into four major categories.

The first includes the relatively large number of historical pieces offering an official perspective of the Muslim Brotherhood’s formative years and subsequent suppression. For a monthly periodical, al-Da‘wa devoted a considerable amount of space to dated materials, reflecting a strong desire to set the historical record straight and frame the organization’s contemporary activities in light of its rich experience.56 These pieces quite often entailed a commemoration of the suffering witnessed by the Muslim Brotherhood’s earlier generations at the hands of the state and in other instances, recounting tales of heroism displayed by the movement in the face of external enemies. In both cases, the goal was to establish an abiding legitimacy among Egyptians.

A second important point of interest reflected in the magazine was the organization’s newfound engagement of the political process, albeit within certain limitations. For example, the question of Islamizing the Egyptian constitution at the time of its revision under Sadat was of vital concern to Tilmisani and others. In addition to the constitutional concerns, writers in al-Da‘wa routinely addressed the
policy issues of the day, such as the influx of Western cultural products that resulted from Sadat’s infitah, or the revisions to Egypt’s personal status law, the so-called “Jehan’s Law.” In publicizing its positions on matters of governance, the Muslim Brotherhood cemented its position as the foremost opposition to the state.

The third focus of al-Da‘wa includes all issues outside of the domestic arena. Through its developed critique of the West, the Muslim Brotherhood provided commentary on the plight of Muslim nations at the hands of imperialism, colonialism, and internal strife. A central feature of these articles, however, was the continuing state of war between Israel and the Arab states. Though Egypt had led the struggle against Zionism, Sadat’s peace initiative saw the nation’s standing plummet among neighboring countries and earned the ire of the Islamic movement. Using Islamic principles, Tilmisani sought credibility among the Egyptian masses in his strident attacks on the state’s entry into the peace process.

The final category of issues is the broad category of religious life and culture. Though this covered everything from basic religious practices to more technical questions of applying Islamic principles within public institutions, the significance of these pieces lay in their emphasis on the prominent role Islam should play in society. As the critics of traditional da‘wa noted, the discourse on Islam was decidedly individualistic in tone, ignoring the prevalent social problems for which religion offered an effective remedy. The majority of these types of articles addressed Islam’s beneficial qualities to various aspects of public life. Together, these issues make up the four broad categories in which nearly all of the articles in al-Da‘wa can be placed.
Commemoration of Suffering

Perhaps the most atypical aspect of the Muslim Brotherhood’s publication was its strong devotion to historically oriented pieces. Unlike most periodicals that tend to focus on current events, al-Da’wa gave considerable space to articles detailing the organization’s history, documenting past experiences and reprinting the words of its fallen leaders. This is partially explained by political circumstances. Following a complete suppression that lasted almost two decades, the Muslim Brotherhood was eager to pounce on the first opportunity to explain its own account of the events leading up to Nasser’s crackdown. The official version of the state had dominated the public discourse so that a generation of Egyptians was raised knowing no other narrative.

In the very first issue of al-Da’wa, an article entitled “Abdel Nasser and the Massacre of the Ikhwan,” established the tone for the ensuing historical revisionism. While introducing a recently published book entitled The Silent Speak Out, the editors laid the foundation for their historical frame:

During the past twenty-two years, the people of Egypt have not heard or read about the Muslim Brothers except from a single, solitary source, in one tone of voice, filling their ears with the crimes of this group, its thirst for blood, desire for power, and collusion with the British. The propaganda apparatus, with its vast resources that turned the 1967 defeat into victory, succeeded in deceiving this hapless population into dancing to these tunes and inflaming it with anger.  

From the outset, it was apparent that the Muslim Brotherhood believed that correcting the popular perception of the past was one of its most important missions in reaching out to contemporary Egyptian society. The article revealed the organization’s relationship with Nasser, even asserting that he joined the Islamic movement during his days in the military, just prior to the coup. Following the first clash between the two, Nasser released the Brothers from prison and personally
visited with their leaders and welcomed them back into society. This action, overlooked by historians according to the author, confirmed that all of the early accusations of subversion and plotting were politically motivated fabrications.

Later articles pieced together the entire history of the Islamic movement, often focusing on particular time periods or highlighting important incidents. The group’s early relationship with the monarch, touted by some of its opponents as a sign of the Muslim Brotherhood’s elitism, was explained as a necessary tactic toward fulfilling the larger mission of the organization. The government’s longstanding allegation of a 1954 coup attempt by the Secret Apparatus was addressed in detail. One article offered “the full truth,” in its headline, before outlining the chain of events that led to the ban of the Muslim Brotherhood by Nasser. At the time, much was made of the weapons cache discovered by authorities, which the group easily dismissed as a manipulation of the facts by Nasser’s enforcers. In fact, they maintained, it was the Egyptian president who personally provided the Muslim Brothers with weapons in their struggle against the British in the Suez Canal Zone. There was never any plot (nor was one ever shown to have existed by the authorities) to turn those weapons against the state.

As for the infamous assassination attempt against Nasser in Alexandria by a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, the writers in al-Da’wa presented a meticulous point-by-point refutation of the government’s accusation. In some instances, they offered physical evidence contradicting the official account of the incident, namely that the bullets pulled from the podium did not match the gun supposedly seized from the young would-be assassin. Other arguments were framed from a strategic perspective, that the Muslim Brotherhood, as a strong supporter of the coup that brought the Free Officers to power, stood to gain nothing by undermining the
presidency in its early years. Resistance against foreign occupation, be it the Zionist project or British colonialism, did not translate as the strategy of choice in its tense relationship with the new government.

So important was this mission of setting the record straight for al-Da‘wa’s editors that a new regular section addressing the particulars of the past relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the state began to appear prominently. In many ways, “The Muslim Brothers From the Pages of Yesterday,” as it was called, sought to embarrass and expose the Egyptian regime by revealing the extent of the interaction at all levels of power. For the first time, Egyptians were given a firsthand account of the development of the Islamic movement in relation to the state. Critical anti-state pamphlets and private letters from Hudaybi to Nasser were published in full. These typically addressed specific events or points of disagreement between the two, but at times also served as a platform for a general critique of the regime and a restatement of the Muslim Brotherhood’s program.

The documentation of the organization’s history served a number of purposes related to the core framing tasks. It allowed the group an opportunity to meticulously outline its grievances against the regime, defining the diagnostic frame through historical experience and documented facts. The Muslim Brotherhood’s remedy for the perceived ills of Egyptian society, or the prognostic frame, was shown to have been effective at times in the country’s recent past. Hindsight, as it were, demonstrated the magnitude of the Muslim Brotherhood’s message through the directives of its founder and the experiences of his early followers. And finally, the publication of poignant accounts of the abuses suffered by members of the Muslim Brotherhood in the past served to motivate a new generation to act on the basis of the
severe injustices of the regime and the historic sacrifices of the organization in particular.

Commemorating the suffering of Muslim Brotherhood members was an essential part of the magazine’s mission. Throughout al-Da’wa’s run, anecdotes of numerous incidents documented the campaign of repression against the organization’s members. Headlines such as “Tales of Tortures” appeared regularly in al-Da’wa, promising “minute-by-minute” accounts of the traumatic abuses “from the tongues of the victims.” Ordinarily, these were anonymously written articles recalling the events leading up to arrests, interrogations, torture, and at times execution of Muslim Brotherhood activists. The editors of al-Da’wa engaged in an active construction of the martyrology of the organization. In some cases, friends, associates, and family members recalled the memory of the fallen victims, frequently surrounding them with an aura of purity, validity, and sacrifice.

In the story of one victim, Gamal Fawzi was described as being innocent of any wrongdoing and having no faults. His only crime, according to his supporters, was his conviction in the precepts of the Islamic movement as it struggled peacefully against the regime. In a rare instance in which the victim’s own words were printed, Fawzi described in his prison writings prior to his execution, suffering at the hands of the security services. Beginning with the raid of his home, Fawzi gave a vivid description of the soldiers entering “as though they had crossed the border and just defeated the Israelis.” With guns pointed at him, his wife and children, they ransacked the house and took him to the intelligence agency’s headquarters to be tortured. He recalled walking past rooms with pools of blood in them, before reaching the cell where his own blood would be spilled. He described in great detail the cruelty of the
Egyptian interrogators as they sought information they were fully aware he did not possess, only to continue punishing him for crimes he did not commit.⁶¹

Similar stories appeared throughout the magazine’s run. The formula was relatively consistent: sing the praises of the individual, noting his many virtuous qualities and accomplishments; chronicle the suffering endured at the hands of the security services, leading him to the path of martyrdom; and finally, castigate the regime for its violent abuses against the organization’s members, while calling for accountability of those involved at the highest levels of power. In one typical commemorative article, this one chronicling the life of Yousuf Tal’at, the headlines running across the two-page spread captured his turbulent life and tragic death:

Farouk tried to assassinate him; the British placed a bounty on his head; He fought in Palestine and the Canal; On the gallows, he said, “now I meet my Lord, while He is accepting of me; Oh Lord, please forgive me and forgive he who has oppressed me; Oh Lord, guide my people, for they do not know.”⁶²

That the Muslim Brotherhood constructed its martyrology with a specific purpose in mind is evident through its own explanation of this literature. Guarding against the potential accusations of inflaming popular sentiments or seeking the organization’s own fame, the editors declared that their motivations were far more pure. “For if al-Da’wa fills a few of its pages with the story of one of the victims of this tyranny, this is not to elicit people’s emotions, harden their hearts against any particular person, or to declare that the Muslim Brothers have single-handedly carried the load of sacrifices.”⁶³ However, the motivational framing of the Muslim Brotherhood relies precisely on those two results of its commemoration of suffering. By emphasizing the personal sacrifices of the Muslim Brotherhood in particular, the group hoped to swell its ranks with recruits, especially as it competed with the emerging fringe of the Islamic movement. Furthermore, by singling out the regime as
being solely responsible for the state of terror and insecurity engulfing Egyptian society, it hoped to direct popular frustrations toward the state.

Throughout its chronicle of the Muslim Brotherhood’s historical experience, *al-Da’wa* aimed to deflect criticisms against the organization arising from the fiery rhetoric of younger generations of Egypt’s Islamic activists. It chose to highlight particular events in its history, such as the group’s armed struggle against the Zionist project in Palestine and the continued British occupation of the Suez Canal Zone, in order to demonstrate the Muslim Brotherhood’s commitment to justice in the face of oppression. In this sense, the Muslim Brotherhood represented all Egyptians by leading the national struggle. This notion was developed further as the group’s leaders portrayed the government’s assault on its members as an attack against all Egyptians. They wrote, “all people feel the lashes of the whip the day that the group of believers were lashed by the whip.”64

Furthermore, the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to curtail the split within its ranks by commemorating the legacy of Sayyid Qutb as the quintessential victim of the government’s anti-Islamist onslaught. In the many instances in which he appeared, including one feature article on the trials of his life, *al-Da’wa*’s writers cemented Qutb’s place in the history of the Muslim Brotherhood. Chronicling his life and the abuses he suffered, the editors established him as the single most prominent victim of the Nasser era. Qutb suffered not for his actions, they wrote, but for his words. He was innocent of any wrongdoing, the victim of a terrible crime and target of a vicious campaign that sought to stifle the voice of Islam in Egyptian society. In the most obvious sign that the Muslim Brotherhood had not abandoned Qutb nor his contribution to the larger movement, the editors of *al-Da’wa* supplemented their claims that Qutb was killed only because of his writings by regularly reprinting
excerpts from his books, especially his exegesis of Islamic scripture, *In the Shade of the Qur’an*. This particular decision was the definitive signal that the “new-look” Muslim Brotherhood continued to claim Qutb, a fallen martyr, as one of its own. In the face of rising opposition from hard line elements within the Islamic movement, such a strong demonstration of resistance and sacrifice aimed to maintain the Muslim Brotherhood’s credibility and solidify its reputation as the foremost opposition movement to the oppressive Egyptian regime.

A second type of commemoration literature addressed the possibility of seeking justice for the martyrs in the current political climate. Though the Muslim Brotherhood rarely saw the benefit in pursuing legal action through the Egyptian courts, *al-Da’wa* published a number of articles advocating the prosecution of regime officials involved in the torture of Muslim Brotherhood members during the Nasser era. The appearance of official confirmation of the Muslim Brotherhood’s claims lent more legitimacy to the group’s commemorative efforts and ultimate struggle against the government. In most instances, these articles simply reiterated the facts made public by investigators, including the use of widespread administrative detentions, instances of torture, and sham trials. Lawyers conducting inquiries on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood released their findings, which chronicled these systematic abuses, as in the Shams al-Shinnawi civil rights case. In these articles, as much attention was given to the alleged perpetrators as their victims. In one case in which a lawsuit was filed for the death of three individuals, the editors seamlessly honored their memory and castigated those responsible for their deaths:

> The court considered the case of the martyr Muhammad Ali Abdullah, the martyr Ismail al-Fayyumi, and the martyr Muhammad Awad, victims fallen to the various forms of torture while in the military prison. ...[Men] with hardened hearts offering up blood to their false idols. Following these severe injustices, a compelling case was presented, with calls for the execution of those responsible for torturing and killing the victims.\(^66\)
Though it is not clear from these articles whether any of these cases ended in legal victories for the victims (other sources seem to suggest they did not), the moral victory attained from the exposure of past abuses and the embarrassment suffered by many former and current regime officials were powerful enough to cement the Muslim Brotherhood’s legacy and grant it the political and social capital to proceed with its agenda.

For his part, Sadat allowed the publication to divulge its allegations against the authorities, even as it named individuals and singled out particular officials for prosecution. In the view of the Egyptian president, revealing the dark history of Nasser’s era indirectly paved the way for his own cultivation of a democratic persona. Tilmisani clarified this point further, writing, “when the Muslim Brotherhood critiques the previous regime, it is not intended simply to embarrass and condemn certain individuals, but to learn the lessons of the past so as not to repeat them in the future.” Thus, the commemoration of suffering experienced by the previous generation of Islamic activists served as an important cornerstone of the Muslim Brotherhood’s frame in the 1970s. It was an essential tool of self-definition, both within the organization, and in relation to the rising tide of opposition.

**Constitutional Calls**

If the articles commemorating the Muslim Brotherhood’s legacy were directed toward the younger generation affected by the growth of new movements, then the editorials and exposés devoted to the constitution and government policy represented the organization’s tenuous relationship with the state. In the atmosphere of openness and pluralism that Sadat promoted upon his assumption of the presidency, and especially ratcheted up following the October War, the Muslim Brotherhood found an
opportunity to demand its legitimate place in the political order. In the midst of this campaign, Tilmisani took the president at his word, even when the state’s policies contradicted the freedom called for by Sadat. “The president declares his desire for reform,” Tilmisani wrote, “while the great majority of the heads of governing institutions work to deliberately undermine his call.”

Across the pages of *al-Da‘wa*, the Muslim Brotherhood’s leadership frequently called for institutional reform beginning with the constitution, at a time when it was undergoing a considerable facelift at the hands of Sadat.

Having been severely restricted in previous periods, the Muslim Brotherhood’s engagement with the state occurred on a number of levels in the 1970s. Primarily, it focused on efforts to implement structural changes to governing institutions. In cases where it was not actively pursuing these reforms by heeding Sadat’s calls for democracy, Tilmisani and other leaders issued a sharp critique of the president’s actual governing style. Moreover, various writers occasionally focused on particular issues concerning the functioning of the state’s various apparatuses, be it the parliament, the ministries, or the president’s office. These policy grievances consisted of an identification of a particular problem, placing blame on a single official or group of officials, and proposing a counter-measure for the resolution of the policy crisis.

The earliest issues of the magazine proceeded to place the Muslim Brotherhood’s calls for Islamic governance within the broader context of Sadat’s claims to democracy and the rule of law. Rather than reiterate the standard position on the role of Islamic law in governance, *al-Da‘wa* framed the discussion in relation to the government’s discourse of reform. This allowed the Muslim Brotherhood’s message to resonate with its audience, becoming a current feature of the public debate.
on the future of Egypt. In one of the earliest articles on the matter, a writer declared, “to realize true democratic rule, the constitution must be reformed.”69 This editorial responded to recent restructuring moves in the parliament by Sadat, which were not codified into law, and therefore subject to reversal at any moment. The author made no mention of the Muslim Brotherhood’s goal to maintain a religious character to the reforms, but sought only to reflect the interests of all Egyptians in codifying their rights.

In later issues, however, the Muslim Brotherhood expressed in no uncertain terms its frustrations with the failure of the government to meet its stated goals. As Sadat’s democratization efforts reached a standstill in the late 1970s, al-Da’wa published reports of the ever-widening gap between the state’s lofty rhetoric and the unfortunate realities of Egyptian society. “[The government] issues many laws from time to time intended to organize society and provide peace and serenity. In spite of this fact, the people live under severe harassment, preventing them from basic security.”70 Editorials such as this claimed to expose the abuses committed by the state in defiance of its own calls for order and the rule of law. The writer posed the ultimate question: “If the officials in charge do not perform their duty in upholding the laws, then how can they request the people to help them in observing the law and calling for reform when they do not even follow their own laws?”71

By focusing on the perceived ills of Sadat’s agenda for reform, the Muslim Brotherhood effectively juxtaposed the state’s failures with its own alternative platform, claiming to hold the remedy for the diseases untreated by the establishment:

If those officials believed in awakening the popular consciousness by upholding their laws before they ask others to do so, every citizen would feel as though they had some responsibility to themselves and their society rather than simply out of fear of punishment. This religion is what causes the Muslim to be in private who he is in public. This religion is what teaches the Muslim to hold himself accountable before holding others accountable, and how to
avoid in private what he would decry in public. This is all derived from one thing, the conscience of the believer, the certainty in his heart that God alone is all-knowing, holding all to account, with the power to do what no other ruler can do.\footnote{72}

Subsequent writings laid out the Muslim Brotherhood’s position on the structure and substance of the Egyptian constitution, whose role was deemed central to the development of an Islamic society. The Egyptian constitution underwent numerous revisions in the modern period, especially during moments of political transition and turmoil. All of these versions, the Muslim Brotherhood leaders maintained, were short-sighted documents aimed at political expediency, in effect laying the groundwork for whoever happened to be aspiring toward power at the moment. What was actually needed, they argued, was a broader framework, one that recognized a source of universal values upon which to govern a society. “Therefore, the inspiration for our constitution must come from one who knows human nature and the condition of humanity, what harms it, and what benefits it. That is, the one God, the creator and facilitator.”\footnote{73} As the religion of the majority of Egyptians, it was only logical, according to this line of argument, that Islam should inspire the system governing the nation.

In this way, the editors of \textit{al-Da‘wa}, led by Tilmisani in his opening editorials, made impassioned pleas to the state’s lawmakers for a central place for Islam in the Egyptian constitution. To be sure, the Muslim Brotherhood frequently lauded statements by Sadat and other officials pledging to designate the Shari‘a as the primary source of legislation in Egypt. Such remarks were frequently displayed on the pages of \textit{al-Da‘wa} as proof that the Muslim Brotherhood was gaining ground in Egypt and fulfilling its mission of infusing an Islamic ethic into the country’s legal system. Nonetheless, the demands of effectively implementing the Shari‘a went far beyond the symbolic gestures that Sadat was willing to make. The ensuing conflict
between the Muslim Brotherhood and the regime usually centered on the exact role that the Shari‘a should play in public life.

By late 1979, al-Da’wa was reflecting the mood among Islamic activists who felt betrayed by Sadat’s revision of the constitution, defining Egypt in democratic socialist terms. His infamous comment that “there is no politics in religion or religion in politics” was viewed as an affront to the increased Islamization of Egyptian society meticulously documented in the magazine, as well as a departure from Sadat’s previous comments. In the September 1979 issue, both Tilmisani and ‘Akhmawi addressed the crisis over the constitution. The latter’s commentary denounced the government’s dismissive attitude toward the notion of an “Islamic constitution” and called for the formation of a committee to amend the constitution following the failures of Sadat’s reforms. Tilmisani gave a more sobering assessment, one that seemed resigned to the endless string of revisions:

The secret behind the revisions and reforms of the constitutions from time to time has one root cause, though it may appear to have several. The Egyptian constitution relied on foreign sources for its content; they have their own manners, traditions, and principles, completely conflicting with our manners, traditions, and principles. The text of the constitution has demonstrated that it has inadequately protected freedoms, rights, and individual and collective security in Egypt. Had it been established on God’s path, the religion of this Ummah …it would never have needed to be revised or amended from its establishment through today.

The Muslim Brotherhood’s leaders framed the discussion about the implementation of Islamic law through the prism of public interest. As chief competitor to the state’s program, the Muslim Brotherhood put forward an alternative system to the one Egyptians had suffered through under the current government. In an edition of his semi-regular column excoriating state officials for their “conspiracy against the Shari‘a,” ‘Akhmawi proclaimed, “In Egypt’s constitution, Islam is stated as the official state religion and the Shari‘a as its chief source of legislation. …Yet we
hear constantly of women abducted and assaulted, passengers on trains and buses
attacked and robbed by armed gangs.” Clearly, the issues of public safety and the
rule of law were linked directly to the implementation of the Shari’a, which,
according to its advocates, provided the necessary remedy to such issues of concern.

By the middle of 1980, ‘Ashmawi wondered aloud why the discussion about
legislating Islamic laws had ceased completely to be a part of the public discourse. He
contrasted that dilemma with the claim that most Egyptians had expressed their desire
for just such a change, especially in light of the social problems affecting their daily
life. Instead of fulfilling these wishes, lawmakers failed to act upon their earlier
commitments, relegating Islamic law to a symbolic place in Egyptian society. The
situation did not improve in successive months. In one of the most confrontational
pieces to appear in al-Da’wa, Tilmisani authored an editorial calling on the entire
government, from the president to the ministers and members of parliament, to resign
their positions as a result of their failure to uphold the tenets of the constitution. The
Muslim Brotherhood’s leader began by declaring:

In all the constitutional countries of the world, parties compete by various
means available to them in order to accomplish the goal of implementing an
agenda believed to be in the best interest of the nation. …It is of no
importance who governs, but how they govern, in accordance with the one and
only source. In that regard, what they all have in common is a respect for the
constitution and the preservation of its principles.

Tilmisani continued by arguing passionately that Egypt’s government, led by
its president, had abandoned its claim to legitimacy by repeatedly violating the
constitution they reformed. To be sure, the Muslim Brotherhood acknowledged that
its provocative call was sure to increase tensions with the state. At a time when
hostilities between the regime and the Islamic movement’s fringe elements were
already reaching a boiling point, the Muslim Brotherhood took special care to
distinguish its sharp rebuke of the government with that of other groups. Its criticism
was well intentioned, according to Tilmisani, and done in the spirit of brotherhood, from one Muslim to another:

Do not look at what we have suggested in anger, for there is nothing between us and you except for the compassion of Muslims who desire for their country’s leaders to be under the protection of God’s law. …You are ministers of a state whose president has professed to be a Muslim and to govern an Islamic nation. What have you fulfilled from that mission?78

This statement represented a clear attempt by the Muslim Brotherhood’s leader to balance his organization’s need to express its position in strong terms, with recognition of the weight that such remarks might have in Egypt’s tense political environment. As if to admit the potential backlash that may arise from expressing something as severe as a call for government officials to resign their offices, Tilmisani assured them that “we do not possess more than the word.” That is, this plea was part of the larger discourse on the importance of Islamic law to society and not a public call to action.

As with its commemoration of suffering, the Muslim Brotherhood’s framing of its constitutional concerns positioned the organization as the rightful defender of Egypt against the designs of those who would deny the will of the people to live as devout Muslims, free from foreign or domestic domination. Following the same model also meant that the writers in al-Da’wa would frame the discussion to allow for the maximum degree of popular support for their position and minimal government backlash. Regarding its relationship with the state’s reforms, the Muslim Brotherhood would contend that the majority of Egyptians sided with the effort to Islamize the constitution. Such claims were difficult to prove, however, as there was no adequate measure of support because of a noticeable lack of any call to action on the part of the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition to its calls for constitutional reforms, another indicator of the Muslim Brotherhood’s relationship to the state was its perspective on
the Muslim world at large, especially through the lens of Egyptian foreign policy. As the following section demonstrates, this discourse also helped connect the organization to a far broader audience, that of the global community of Muslims.

**War, Peace and the Ummah**

In the early part of the 1970s, as Sadat was solidifying his authority and the Muslim Brotherhood began a phase of reorganization, the foreign policy orientation of the two political forces were largely in line with one another. From the President’s standpoint, the ideology of Arab Nationalism that directed Egypt’s foreign policy during the previous two decades was in need of complete dismantlement due to its failure to meet its primary objectives. From the perspective of the Islamic movement, the collapse of secular nationalism as the driving force behind the Arab world’s international relations gave a boost to its assertion that a foreign policy rooted in the collective interest of the Muslim Ummah should guide the nation’s leaders. Moreover, both parties were in agreement that the Israeli occupation of Arab lands since the devastating defeat in the Six Day War was the most pressing foreign policy issue facing Egypt.

Within only three years of his assumption of power, Sadat had already withdrawn from the orbit of the Soviet Union, redefined Egypt’s role in the Arab world, and mounted a military campaign to force Israel’s withdrawal from occupied lands. Contrary to the desires of many Egyptians, however, all of these actions held various deleterious consequences. The patronage of the Soviet Union was replaced by Sadat’s courtship of American leaders. A realignment of regional power saw Egypt embrace former rivals at the expense of its allies, diminishing its influence across the
Arab world. Finally, the 1973 war demonstrated the collective will of Arab forces, but failed to produce a military solution to Israeli occupation.

As the Muslim Brotherhood’s leaders witnessed these events, a new message developed in accordance with the rapidly changing geopolitical climate around them. Though the essence of the group’s longstanding mission—the need for an Islamic foreign policy—remained intact, the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames experienced significant changes from earlier periods. Colonialism, for decades a major focus of brotherhood critiques, was of less importance in an independent Egypt. Concerns over British rule gave way to scathing attacks on Soviet and American hegemony. Calls for unity under the banner of Islam outlasted the allure of Arab nationalism, which met its fate in the defeat of 1967. In urging the confrontation with Israel, the Muslim Brotherhood frequently recalled the sacrifices made by past generations and stressed the universal principles that would lead not only Arabs, but the entire Muslim world, to victory. The failure to produce a decisive victory in 1973 signaled the beginning of major tensions between Sadat and the Muslim Brotherhood. The president used the political capital gained from Egypt’s strong showing to solidify his authority and pursue a diplomatic solution to Israeli occupation, while the Muslim Brotherhood cemented its position as the government’s chief opposition movement in demanding continued hostilities with Israel.

As the Muslim Brotherhood’s chief media outlet, *al-Da’wa* factored heavily in promoting the organization’s views of Egyptian foreign policy, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the state of the Muslim world. This outlook was reflected in a number of regular sections, feature news articles, and editorials. Every issue included a segment entitled “Our Islamic Nation,” which compiled reports of developments in various corners of the Muslim world. Articles on Egyptian foreign relations usually focused
on current events such as the rounds of diplomacy with the United States and the changing status of Egypt in the Arab world. As the source of the continuous conflict in the region, Israel maintained a special place in the magazine. Guest contributors specializing in the field presented a history of the Zionist movement and the Jewish state in a number of articles. In addition, a regular feature by Abdel Mon‘im Salim entitled “Israel: The Present and the Future” provided a full analysis of the contemporary geo-political situation and the domestic scene in Israel, prognosticating an imminent demise for the Zionist project. Finally, Tilmisani personally devoted a large amount of his opening commentaries to the Arab and Muslim world’s conduct in relation to Israeli occupation, superpower hegemony, and regional politics. Together, these contributions represented the Muslim Brotherhood’s worldview as put forward to the group’s audience in an accessible fashion.

The emergence of a bi-polar global order in the latter half of the twentieth century presented a central problem for the Islamic movement. In the midst of Soviet and American competition for influence in all corners of the globe, the Muslim Brotherhood faced increasing challenges to carve a role for Islam in a region dominated by external forces. The aim of the new discourse was to empower Egyptians with a sense of their Islamic identity, while diminishing the seemingly omnipresent stature of the superpowers. A Brotherhood leader wrote in 1979 that the seventies signaled a shift away from the two orbits in much of the world. The American withdrawal from Vietnam shattered the myth of its military invincibility, and the Soviet Union’s image of a benevolent power proved spurious following its actions in Angola and Mozambique. The control over large masses of land and peoples was shrinking and the time was ripe for Islam to assert itself as the path for
nations to follow. The Iranian Revolution, though Shi’ite in character, proved that it could be done.

Nonetheless, a debate in the pages of *al-Da’wa* contemplated the Iranian model and the unification of the Islamic movement worldwide as possible courses to follow.⁸⁰ In spite of the symbolic support given to such a project, the conclusion seemed to endorse a non-revolutionary, exclusively Egyptian track. Monthly pieces in “Our Islamic Nation” informed readers of the plight of Muslims from Morocco to Indonesia and beyond, but fell short of calling Egyptians—or their leaders—to action. The news and analysis provided in these articles served to keep readers informed of the larger Islamic world while properly contextualizing their place within it. The image of Muslims across the globe suffering under oppressive political and socioeconomic conditions was articulated in a deliberate way to give Egyptians a sense that they were part of a larger struggle for justice, to which all Muslims aspired. All that was required of the Muslim Brotherhood’s following, at least in the immediate term, was the fulfillment of their duty toward their nation through the liberation of their land from foreign occupation and imperialism. By embracing the conflict against Israel as central to the broader struggle of Muslims against colonialism, imperialism, and Zionism, the people of Egypt could commit to making the necessary sacrifices to achieve victory.

The language of sacrifice was particularly important in the Muslim Brotherhood’s discourse. In his pursuit of a separate peace with Israel, Sadat rationalized his independent track—widely perceived as abandonment of the Arab cause—by claiming that Egyptians had long shouldered the costs of war. An American-sponsored accord would lift the burden from the long-suffering Egyptian nation and restore its lost territory. Though this rhetoric was effective in generating
significant Egyptian support for the negotiations at Camp David, the Muslim
Brotherhood fought back in the form of numerous editorials decrying the desertion of
the greater cause of the Ummah.

Moreover, according to a number of *al-Da‘wa* articles, the defeat in 1967
signaled the end of the “fraudulent rhetoric of the past” in the program pursued by
Nasser, and ushered in “a revelation of truth that the only path to victory is attachment
to Allah as God, Islam as religion, and Muhammad as prophet and messenger.”81 The
early 1970s brought “a new dawn” in which Egyptians, young and old alike, were
affected by the heavenly message and worked toward a more complete victory. In the
estimation of the Muslim Brotherhood, the war in October 1973 was a near-
fulfillment of God’s promise of victory, thwarted only by American interference with
its military and technological sophistication, which it provided to Israel.

In crafting their analysis of the events leading to the present negotiations, the
editors of *al-Da‘wa* were careful to avoid the scathing personal critiques against Sadat
that were common at the time by other Islamic groups and Arab nationalists. One
regular contributor, Salah Shadi, wrote:

> We will not say what others have said, that Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem is in
> itself a horrendous crime or political ingenuity, for this distracts from
discussion of the issue at hand and leads to arguments over pictures and
symbols. And we do not say that Sadat is the one who accepted the offer for
peace, for Nasser beat him to it after the defeat of 1967.82

This is a clear example of the great lengths that the moderate mainstream of
the Islamic movement went to in order to avoid a direct confrontation with the
regime. Such prudent remarks also served to distinguish the Muslim Brotherhood’s
critique of the ongoing peace process from that of the emerging extremist fringe,
whose rhetoric began to focus solely on the figure of Sadat, especially following his
1977 trip to Jerusalem. As the stakes became higher, with the rise in anti-state
violence (ultimately culminating in Sadat’s assassination), the Muslim Brotherhood took great pains to avoid undermining the legitimacy of the regime, especially on matters of foreign policy. Rather, Tilimsani preached national unity and advocated the empowerment of the Arabs in the face of a common threat. In what was a fresh, Islamically oriented take on Nasser’s pan-Arabism, the General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood envisioned victory through strong leadership and spiritual unity:

There is a wide gulf between the Arab Muslim countries. The solution to Israel’s occupation is with you, not America or Russia. There is no victory except from God and from the people and no worth to these people until they return to their religion and make their peace with God. They cannot do that while you are leaving them in a state of stagnation, weakness, and collapse. … You are able to achieve victory, if you wanted, and no one could stand in your way. Nothing stands between you and the implementation of God’s law in your lands.83

This impassioned plea by Tilimsani reflected the organization’s stance with regard to issues of international relations, up to and including the continuous state of war with Israel. Such challenges are viewed as moments of self-definition for the global community of Muslims. In the eyes of the Muslim Brotherhood, the emphasis on colonial power, Zionism, and later, the twin evils of communism and free market capitalism, played important roles in determining Muslim identity in the modern world. Only by addressing these threats head on through embodying traditional religious values, could the Ummah ever hope to secure its own existence and determine its own destiny.

The introspective nature of the discussion of foreign affairs was a common theme throughout the run of the magazine, and especially in its final issues, when the future of the Egyptian state was to be forever altered by the course Sadat had taken. For every article on the illegality of Israel’s occupation and the immoral enterprise of Zionism, there was a critical commentary on the state of the Arab and Muslim world in the face of these challenges. Indeed, as with every other topic area covered in al-
Da’wa, the aim was to develop readers into conscientious, productive citizens by reawakening their absent sense of Islamic identity, revitalizing their weakened spiritual life, and prompting them to action. Because the level of international conflict was beyond their basic abilities as individuals, however, the quest for justice for Muslims across the region was a long-term goal that would only be achieved following the Islamization of society at home. This is why, contrary to a number of analyses of the magazine, the causes of Muslims worldwide, including the liberation of Egyptian land, took a backseat to issues of domestic concern in the course of al-Da’wa’s run.

Islam and Society

As the Muslim Brotherhood’s work in the previous areas helped define it as an opposition movement at odds with the state’s program, those critical of the organization’s efforts saw fit to paint it with the brush of extremism. The course of al-Da’wa’s run clearly demonstrates, however, that the emphasis on engagement of society and development of religious life sharply distinguished the Muslim Brotherhood from other trends of the Islamic movement. In fact, the overwhelming bulk of topics covered by the group’s chief publication fell under the category of “Islam and society.” This content also derived its importance from the fact that it represented the Muslim Brotherhood’s relationship to Egyptian society at large, as opposed to its followers or the state.

In hoping to build a popular, grassroots movement that instituted Islamic culture and values in the everyday lives of Egyptians, Tilmisani set his group apart from those, such as al-Takfir wal-Higra, who chose to follow a divergent path toward isolation and militancy. Moreover, focusing on the needs of society allowed the
Muslim Brotherhood more freedom to operate, as such a mission did not directly threaten the political establishment. In fact, while some of the articles did contain implications for social policy, most of the content related to Islam in society presented no opposition to the government. On one level, Sadat tolerated the effort to Islamize Egyptian society as an effective means to achieve his goal of de-Nasserization. These articles covered everything from Islamic practice, cultural interactions, and family life, to urban development, education, professional careers, and rural life; in other words, all the features of Egyptian society. The Muslim Brotherhood writers infused an Islamic ethic in their discussion of all of these topics in an attempt to spread the organization’s mission and lay the groundwork for the ideal Islamic society to which they aspired.

Some of these articles were topical in nature, coinciding with the arrival of a particular occasion such as the holy month of Ramadan or the Hajj season. These features served as reminders of the significance of religious rituals and to encourage a collective awareness of the faith’s many tenets. One such piece, for instance, commemorated the anniversary of Muhammad’s Night Journey and discussed the lessons for contemporary Egyptians from an event in the early history of Islam.84

Another category of articles reflected the Muslim Brotherhood’s attempts to become deeply involved in the daily affairs of its audience. These included occasional feature segments such as “With the Farmer,” and regular installments of “Youth and Universities News,” and “Toward a Muslim Home” among others. These pieces allowed the authors to tailor their message to distinctive audiences on the basis of their social standing.

Most of these articles followed the same general layout. They outlined a central theme or issue of concern for that particular month and addressed it in general
terms from the body of thought developed by the movement over the course of its existence, and more directly from more current sources that tackled previously unforeseen questions. An article on the problems with university textbooks, for instance, included a page-long excerpt from a speech by Banna to students in which he espoused the virtues of *iman* (faith), *ikhlas* (sincerity), *hamasa* (zeal), and *‘amal* (action) in pursuing higher education. By embarking on their mission in this spirit, Banna argued that the students would not only serve themselves, but their entire nation. Coupled with this page from the Muslim Brotherhood’s past, the editors of *al-Da’wa* also included an unsigned statement decrying the Ministry of Education’s policy on university textbooks and calling for the government to meet the needs of students by developing a more up-to-date curriculum that met their needs.

In this manner, the Muslim Brotherhood managed to appeal to a broad audience, offering a message that encompassed the goals of the Islamic movement intertwined with practical advice and support to the various elements of its constituency. Rural Egyptians and farmers were told that they provided a vital service to the rest of their countrymen and were entitled to more rights and benefits than what was provided by the government. In an article entitled, “How will you sell your cotton this year?” the Muslim Brotherhood’s writer offered the cotton farmers three options: exporting to foreign markets, storing and selling wholesale to local companies, or joining the local cooperative to sell the produce in small amounts. The article weighed the costs and benefits of each option, allowing the readers to decide for themselves what plan best suited them. Other pieces announced new technologies to ease the strains on farm workers, such as the development of a new industrial refrigerator to store potatoes. If those efforts did not make clear that the Muslim Brotherhood appreciated the plight of the Egyptian farmer, more provocative entries...
demonstrated the group’s understanding of the history of worker exploitation and a commitment to fight for their rights:

After it was proven that the majority of farmers were the victims of the deviation into cooperatives, from one side, and the corruption of the supervising agency, from another side...for nearly fifty years, spent by the millions of farmers, toiling in the mills and grinders of “cooperative” corruption, whether under the era of feudal estates and parties or the era of the “socialist revolution” which filled the world with slogans of a war against corruption...when all that remained was the never-ending tragedy lived by millions of toiling farmers.⁸⁸

Articles such as these concluded with fiery words addressed to the authorities responsible for the fate of farm laborers. During a crisis over a shortage of fertilizer, for instance, al-Da’wa confronted the Minister of Agriculture directly, questioning his handling of the situation and offering simple suggestions to ease the difficulties faced by many farmers.⁸⁹

Reflecting a long-standing feature of modern Egyptian society, the Muslim Brotherhood regarded medical doctors as the highest trained professionals and the cornerstones of an advanced society. The articles addressing those in the field stressed the importance of developing an Islamic medical ethic.⁹⁰ The measure of progress could be seen in al-Da’wa’s later content, which no longer discussed a theoretical approach to Islamic medicine, but rather displayed the fruits of several years of activism within the Egyptian medical community. An October 1978 piece listed the many accomplishments of the Islamic Medical Union, an organization led by Muslim Brotherhood members. In addition to advancing an Islamic perspective on medical practice, the union offered numerous services to medical students and doctors alike, including: helping medical students with preparations for exams; building a library of medical reference materials, courtesy of a contribution from the Awqaf Minister of Kuwait; offering access to educational equipment and supplies; facilitating free
medical services for impoverished communities; and initiating the building stage of an Islamic hospital.  

Another area of deep concern for the Muslim Brotherhood was the changes in the structure of Egyptian families brought about by modernity. The monthly section entitled “Toward a Muslim Home” addressed this issue directly, paying particular attention to the status of women in an Islamic society. Though the first few installments in this series were compiled by the editors, the section was eventually adopted by Zainab al-Ghazali, the only prominent female contributor in al-Da’wa. As a veteran of the Islamic movement in Egypt and leader of the Muslim Sisterhood, Ghazali was well positioned to articulate the magazine’s discourse on gender.  

Though the topic varied from issue to issue, the basic format remained similar to the previously discussion sections. Ghazali chose a topic of concern to Muslim families, addressed it through her knowledge of Egyptian society, including cultural and religious norms, as well as modern innovations. The second part of the piece usually featured an Islamic lesson relating to gender and the importance of the family. Based on traditional sources, such as the model of the early Islamic community, these lectures generally aimed to strike a cord with readers who failed to connect between the experiences of the past and the challenges of the present.  

One of Ghazali’s contributions captured the essence of the magazine’s social mission. An article entitled “The Muslim family in the face of challenges” defined the problem as perceived by the Muslim Brotherhood’s school of thought. Ghazali used the image of a hurricane engulfing Egyptians, bringing “the winds of modernity” to a society with deep cultural and religious roots. Identifying a pervasive campaign to undermine the Islamic character of society, she cautioned citizens against joining in that effort, however unwittingly. As with the general theme of much of the Muslim
Brotherhood literature, this piece drew a picture of Islam under attack from near and afar. Social forces combined to form a rejectionist attitude that depicted Islam as regressive, misogynist, extremist, and anachronistic. Instead, these elements chose to promote excessive individualism and materialism, allowing for the spread of promiscuity, while modesty was equated with submission and the Muslim woman’s headscarf was deemed an impediment to progress. Children were made to disobey their parents in the name of freedom and independence. The very basis of the family faced the danger of complete dismantlement, she wrote.

According to Ghazali’s analysis, these developments were not in any doubt. The attack on Islamic values resonated with Egyptians and new trends took hold, all in the name of modernity. One of the consequences of this cultural transformation was the Personal Status Law promoted by Jehan al-Sadat, which provided women with, among other things, the right to unconditional divorce. Its proponents argued that the law “would provide happiness for the family,” but Ghazali countered that it only led to more threats to the family unit’s very being. The editors and contributors of al-Da‘wa opposed this law as a dangerous plot targeting the family. The mainstream Egyptian media was depicted as a prime culprit in executing the plot by smoothing the way for the transition to the new society. With seemingly no other opposition, the Muslim Brotherhood presented itself as the country’s last line of defense against these developments. Ghazali and others stood in defense of the family, “the basic building block of society… the only frame of reference for the children.”

Upon identifying the essence of the problem as defined by the Muslim Brotherhood for decades, Ghazali concluded with the promise to monitor the issue closely and explore it in more depth in future issues. The second half of her two-page
spread, though seemingly unrelated to the previous section, focused on the solution. This article profiled the historical figure of Khadijah, the first wife of Muhammad, as an exemplar of courage, devotion, and good moral character for modern Muslim women. Following the traditional Qur’anic representation of the Prophet as a role model for all people, Ghazali prescribed a model specifically for women to follow. The life of Khadijah contained many examples, she argued, that can be applied in the modern world. The focus was not on the differences in time and place, but on universal values that were to be observed in the lives of early Muslims such as the Prophet’s wives, and applied in a contemporary setting.

The virtues of faith, patience, steadfastness, and compassion were described in vivid detail. The struggle facing Muslims was not limited to the early period, Ghazali wrote, but existed in the form of new challenges in the modern world. In this way, the author was able to seamlessly combine elements of the first part of her contribution, a critique of modernity, with the second piece on modern lessons from the example of a prominent woman in the early history of Islam.

In other articles, Ghazali was even more explicit about her position on gender roles. She viewed the notion of a woman working outside the home as a “disgraceful betrayal of the trust for which she was created.” Perhaps in an allusion to her own position as a prominent writer and activist, Ghazali does allow for the employment of women in certain circumstances, provided it does not adversely affect their domestic responsibilities. The Muslim Brotherhood’s discourse on gender was indicative of the organization’s larger aim in framing its social agenda, in this case attempting to stem the tide of foreign-inspired innovations and restore traditional values.

As the area in which Tilmisani focused the bulk of his group’s efforts, social advocacy consisted in large part of defining roles that every social segment was meant
to play in the nation’s development. In addressing various professions separately, the
writers in *al-Da‘wa* sought to create a sense of individual responsibility. Doctors,
lawyers, engineers, and farmers were approached in a personal manner in an attempt
to appeal to each segment on its own terms. As detailed in prior chapters, students
were given special attention because of the potential they held. If reached at a young
age, they were expected to carry the mission of the Muslim Brotherhood and work
toward its fulfillment wherever they went. The gender roles delineated by Ghazali
were a central part of this overarching agenda.

The Islamic movement founded by Hasan al-Banna aimed to establish a social
base capable of carrying out the group’s mission. According to this vision, the
Islamization of Egyptian society began by arming individuals with the knowledge and
the tools they needed to pursue an Islamic way of life in the course of their daily
affairs. Perhaps more so than in any previous period, the content in *al-Da‘wa* in the
late 1970s addressed Egyptians in a clear and concise manner, motivating them to
transform their way of life in accordance with the teachings of their religion as
interpreted and packaged by the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The articles in the magazine focusing on Islam and social life were the essence
of Tilmisani’s Muslim Brotherhood. They acted as the driving force behind the
movement and chief among all the topics covered in the pages of *al-Da‘wa*. The
remaining subject areas were ancillary to the overarching goal of embedding Islamic
ideals in the social sphere. The Egyptian audience of *al-Da‘wa* could not be expected
to carry out the task of lobbying for an Islamic form of governance if it had not
internalized the teachings of their religion in its daily life. Nor could the legacy of the
Muslim Brotherhood’s historical experience have had the desired impact upon the
new generation without their appreciation for the norms and values upon which previous generations based their actions.
Conclusion

Looking back on the achievements of the Islamic movement in the 1970s, it is easy to lose sight of the disorderly and indeterminate nature of the movement, instead constructing a narrative that views the decade as the staging ground for the Muslim Brotherhood’s triumphant return from the dustbin of history to the fore of Egyptian society and politics. But the reconstituted Muslim Brotherhood was shaped in large part by external factors that led to the emergence of a transformed and reconfigured organization. It reflected the established realities within Egyptian society, whether the state of political discourse or the dynamics of popular contention, as much as it demonstrated the fulfillment of the vision of its senior leaders. These figures, however, made it their central mission to preserve the legacy of the traditional organization that defined their lifelong experience with Islamic activism.

Therefore, the principal conflict of this era was one between the forces of continuity, fighting for the preservation of an existing order within the Islamic movement, and the forces of change, both internal and external, which sought to redesign the political, social, and cultural landscape upon which this Islamic activist mission was pursued. Examined through a conceptual framework, the dividing lines in this struggle become readily apparent.

The Muslim Brotherhood’s senior leadership advanced an organizational model replicating the group’s historical experience. Given the rise of many new groups contending for the leadership of the Islamic movement, ‘Umar al-Tilmisani asserted the authority of the Muslim Brotherhood over all pretenders. Its mobilizing power was one that had to be safeguarded, beginning with the organization’s name. Responding to critics who suggested that the Muslim Brotherhood should not resume its mission until it has abandoned its name, Tilmisani put forward a list of ten reasons
why such a proposal should be rejected in the strongest of terms.¹ He began by stating that, “the Muslim Brotherhood has become a school. All of the callers learn through its institutions.” Continuing on, Tilmisani stressed the name’s positive influence on the youth and commemorated the sacrifices on its behalf by countless activists of the years, including its founder: “What would we say to our martyr imam, Hasan al-Banna, who sacrificed his life in the cause of God, holding firm to this noble principle?” He concluded forcefully, posing the rhetorical question of who would lead the way, should the Muslim Brotherhood fold its tent:

> Who do we have as an inspirational guide, as a master to the generations, after the martyr imam and his successor, al-Hudaybi, to establish, raise, teach, lead, formulate, and implement? What guide can set the foundations, deliver the message, show the path, and gather the people around the book and the tradition with the same persistence, commitment, and loyalty?²

Beyond the name, senior figures argued for the continuation of the Muslim Brotherhood’s historic organizational makeup. From the point of view of Kamal al-Sananiri and Mustafa Mashhur, the group’s most effective mobilizing structure was its traditional hierarchy. Beginning at the top with the General Guide and the Guidance Bureau, the organization had a power to mobilize its members down to the lowest rank-and-file follower. This was a feature of the Muslim Brotherhood that these figures were not keen on forfeiting. In fact, they took important measures to strengthen the organizational structure. Learning from the failures of Hasan al-Hudaybi to exert the same level of authority over the organization as his charismatic predecessor, Mashhur emphasized strict discipline and obedience to the leader immediately above one’s station in the chain of command. The result was an organizational structure that depended less on the charisma or leadership qualities of the General Guide, and more on the ability of regional and local heads to enforce subservience.
From an intellectual standpoint, throughout the 1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood continued to frame its program as one of continuity with the positions established during the early days of the organization. For instance, ‘Abd al-Mone‘im Abul Futuh recalled that Tilmisani publicly endorsed the organization’s traditional view against the concept of political parties, while privately, his view had shifted to one of support for them in certain instances. Indeed, the cultural framing challenge for the Muslim Brotherhood was one of maintaining the vision articulated by its founder while also responding to the challenges of the day and demonstrating enough of an ability to adapt to shifting priorities within the intellectual currents of the Islamic movement. The disparity in content within the pages of *al-Da‘wa*, from the republished pre-revolution tracts by Banna and Hudaybi’s letters to Gamal Abdel Nasser, to articles on Anwar al-Sadat’s peace initiative and the state of education in Egypt, are an indication that, try as it might, the Muslim Brotherhood could not afford to rely simply on its past to dictate its future.

External challenges set certain limits on the Muslim Brotherhood’s reconstitution efforts. Though it never formulated a clear policy vis-à-vis the Islamic movement, the Sadat regime influenced its direction during every phase of its development. In fact, it is precisely the ad hoc nature of state policy toward Islamic activism that reverberated in the form of divisions within the movement. Sadat at once attempted to claim a stake for the regime in the Islamization of society, while also setting strict limitations on the application of this goal. He declared Islam as the source of all legislation in Egypt’s revised constitution, but categorically rejected the call to implement traditional Islamic legal statutes. He removed the barriers to university activism, thus allowing the Islamic student movement to flourish, while
refusing to lift the ban on the Muslim Brotherhood to operate freely within society and advocate for Islamic government from within the halls of power.

Furthermore, the regime signaled an abrupt reversal from the religious rhetoric that defined the early part of the decade. A state that was to be built on the pillars of “science and faith” gave way to the proclamation that “there is no religion in politics and there is no politics in religion.” Whereas Sadat framed the October War in religious language, the Camp David Accords were sold as a matter of national interest. The man once known as “the believer president,” was garnering comparisons to Pharaoh by the end of his life.

Within this turbulent political atmosphere, the Muslim Brotherhood was forced to contend with the state’s claims to religious authority. In a break from its past, when it did not have to challenge religious claims on the part of the ruling power, the organization expended tremendous energies refuting the state’s assertions and pointing out its glaring inconsistencies. But by engaging the Sadat regime on this question so vigorously, the Muslim Brotherhood implicitly recognized it as a significant actor within the field of Islamic politics, thereby expanding the field for yet another competitor.

Not that this development was purely negative from the standpoint of the Muslim Brotherhood. By paving the way for the regime’s entry into the discourse on Islam and politics, the Muslim Brotherhood created an avenue by which it could, in turn, directly engage the state on a number of policy areas that previous iterations of the Muslim Brotherhood, whether under the liberal/colonial regime, or in the early revolutionary era, could not. Debates ranging from the sources of legislation in the constitution to specific policy proposals dealing with war and peace, public morality, health and education, were all discussed in the fiery and contentious atmosphere of
the mid-1970s. On occasion, the conflict left the realm of public discourse and
emerged in the form of popular protest, as in the 1977 bread riots.

In measuring the political opportunity structures in place during various parts
of the Sadat era, the Muslim Brotherhood at times struggled to strike the balance
between maintaining its traditional outlook and adapting to a fluid political and social
environment. At least twice, Tilmisani was offered the opportunity to join the
government in some capacity, and both times he flatly refused, for fear of diluting the
essence of his organization. Yet in other instances, the Muslim Brotherhood supported
the engagement of its youth members with the regime by participating in student
union elections. In fact, the organization built on this experience by expanding the
scope its participation so widely, that by the early 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood had
come to control a number of professional syndicates and even forged political
alliances with established parties and contested parliamentary elections.

It is this development, the engagement with the student movement, which
most directly impacted the evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood’s mission during the
1970s. The organizational dynamism and intellectual fluidity for which the Islamic
student movement became known forced a recalculation on the part of elder leaders of
the Muslim Brotherhood. In the course of their recruitment of the youth, they adopted
many elements of their discourse, even as they attempted to challenge some aspects of
the youth’s beliefs and practices that they considered misguided. Even after the
ideological questions were resolved, largely in favor of the Muslim Brotherhood’s
traditional program, Tilmisani and other leaders had to contend with the desire on the
part of student leaders to maintain the outward focus of their activist mission. Upon
the entry of the bulk of al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah’s leaders into the Muslim
Brotherhood in the mid-1970s, group elders struck a delicate balance between
inculcating the students with the principles of an enclosed, self-contained organization and the demands of public activism.

This was a long-running debate within the upper ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood, some of whom wanted to abandon the notion of an internal organizational hierarchy unrelated to the group’s public mission. Other figures, however, discerned a real need for such a structure, akin to the controversial Secret Apparatus, and it was those figures, including Mashhur and Sananiri, who gradually instituted this policy within the structure of the group. Whereas traditionally, the Secret Apparatus existed as a separate, self-contained entity from the rest of the Muslim Brotherhood’s organization, these leaders gradually infused their philosophy across all levels of the group’s ranks, so that by the mid-1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood’s organizational structure was virtually inseparable from the strict internal hierarchy unrelated to its public mission.

Once again, the insular nature of this strategy stemmed from the concern over the loss of the Muslim Brotherhood’s traditional vision in the face of increasing contestation, not only from the Sadat regime, but also from within some corners of the Islamic movement as well. While the Muslim Brotherhood successfully incorporated a large contingent of student activists into its ranks, not only did it have to address the intellectual and organizational dilemmas they posed, but it also had to contend with the vocal minority of Islamic activists who rejected the da’wa of the Muslim Brotherhood and put forward an alternative mission of their own.

Ultimately, this period proved to be as much about charting a new course for the organization by way of cultivating a fresh base of support, as it was about preserving the legacy of the traditional Muslim Brotherhood of eras past. In due course, the youth members of the organization, who had successfully held the banner
of popular activism during their college years, would take the reins of leadership and determine the Muslim Brotherhood’s program for the coming decades. As Abul Futuh later observed, the ensuing period:

[W]as decisive in the construction of the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood and the development of its intellectual program and strategy for activism, the cultivation of its public image and its guiding principles as well. This period also saw the resolution of a number of issues that previously lacked clarity, such as the position on violence and underground activity. It also established the foundations of the Muslim Brotherhood’s organizational structure, the rules governing its internal management, and the educational curriculum. …It is what allowed the Society to press forward strongly, filling the void of popular activism in Egypt.6

Tilmisani’s notion of tawrith al-da’wa was indicative of only one-half of the equation. Not only was the call bequeathed to the next generation of Islamic activists, it was also re-imagined for a new era.
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Interview with Ahmed ‘Umar.
Interview with Badr Muhammad Badr.
Interview with ‘Esam al-‘Erian.
Interview with Gamal ‘Abd al-Salam.
Interview with Gamal al-Banna.
Interview with Hamid al-Difarwi.
Interview with Ibrahim al-Za‘farani.
Interview with Kamal Habib.
Interview with Mamduh al-Ridi.
Interview with Muhammad ‘Abd al-Quddus.
Interview with Muhammad Moro.
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Notes

Introduction

2 Interview with Muhammad ‘Abd al-Quddus.
3 Tilmisani, p. 102.
5 An example of this is the classical study by Daniel Lerner. *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*. Illinois: Free Press, 1958.
6 Particularly emblematic of this trend was the 1990 article by Bernard Lewis in the *Atlantic*, entitled “The Roots of Muslim Rage.”
12 Kurzman. p. 291.
13 Some scholars point to a “core democracy bias” that failed to apply aspects of SMT, such as political opportunity structures, to non-democratic regimes, prevalent in the Muslim world. The lack of familiarity with Islam and Muslim societies (let alone the specifics of Islamic movements) tended to emphasize the differences between movements in the West and in the Muslim world rather than their basic commonalities. Ibid. And Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, eds. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. xii.
15 McAdam, et al. p. 3.
17 McAdam, et al. p. 3.
19 Zald. In McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald. p. 266.
20 Wiktorowicz, p. 10.
21 Ibid. pp. 10-12.
26  Wicktorowicz. p. 19.
29  The term was first introduced by Afaf Lutfi Sayyid-Marsot in his seminal study, Egypt’s Liberal Experiment (1922-1936). Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.
32  Ibid. p. 209.
34  Harris contended that the movement failed because it did not appeal to Western-educated Egyptians with its traditional rhetoric.
36  Ibid. p. 345.
40  Ibid. p. 81.
41  Shepard included both the militant organizations and the mainstream moderates under the category of “radical Islamism.” Though their methods may differ, he contended that they ultimately aspire toward the same goal: “More than others, the radical Islamists emphasize the urgency of putting the Shari’a into practice. It is not only an ideal to be known and revered, but a law to be put into effect and obeyed.” Shepard articulated a typology of intellectual currents in Egypt that include secularism, Islamic modernism, radical Islamism, traditionalism, and neo-traditionalism. In William E. Shepard. “Islam and Ideology: Toward a Typology,” International Journal of Middle East Studies. Vol. 19, 1987. pp. 307-315.
42  Ibrahim cites the figure 3000 to 5000 arrested by Sadat’s sweeps of radical groups. p. 425.
43  A number of studies endorse the view of a “different” Muslim Brotherhood through their use of other names to refer to the organization under Tilmisani’s leadership. Kepel labels it the “neo-Muslim Brethren.” Hiinnebusch refers to it as the “Da’wa Group,” while Abed-Kotob uses the term “Accomodationists.”
50  Ibid. p. 380.
Chapter One

5 Ibid. p. 97.
6 Ibid.
8 Ibid. p. 30.
9 Ibid. p. 92.
10 Ibid. p. 111
11 Ibid.
12 Mitchell, p. 100
13 Ibid. pp. 101-104.
15 Mitchell, p. 111.
16 Mitchell, p. ??
18 Ibid. p. 42
19 Qutb was personally associated with many of the Free Officers and was one of the only civilians to attend their meetings during the planning stages. Olivier Carre. Mysticism and Politics: A Critical Reading of Fi Zilal al-Qur’an by Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966). Boston: Brill, 2003, p. 7.
22 Ibid. p. 46.
24 Zollner, p. 52.
25 Specifically, the concepts of Hakimiyya and Jahiliyya as used in a contemporary context in Maududi’s work, informed by his experience in the Indian subcontinent, was adapted by Qutb in his later works. Zollner, p. 53.
28 Qutb. p. 120.
29 Ibid. p. 134.
This practice became known as *takfir* and was the trademark of a small Islamic movement organization in the 1970s.


Though not officially published until 1977, the book was completed and first appeared in 1969.


Among the names that are mentioned as contributors are: Ma‘mum al-Hudaybi, Mustafa Mashhur, ‘Umar al-Tilmisani (all future General Guides), and Shaykh Hasan Ma‘mun, Shaykh Ahmad Muhammad ‘Abd al-‘Al Haridi, and Shaykh Mahmud ‘Abd al-Majid (all senior scholars at al-Azhar).

Zollner, pp. 66-69.

Ibid. pp. 40-42.


According to Voll, “For Hudaybi and the other old-guard Brotherhood leaders, the problem was that Egyptians needed to be educated and called to the faith, not that Egyptians had ceased to be Muslims. Hudaybi rejected the practice of *takfir*, thereby rejecting the rationale for active revolution.” John O. Voll. In *Marty and Appleby*, p. 373.


Ibid. pp. 122-123.

Ibid. p. 182.


Szylowicz, p. 189.

Abdalla, p. 40.

Ibid. p. 42.

Ibid. p. 65.

Ibid. pp. 75-77.

Ibid. p. 48.

Ibid. p. 47. From FO 141, 1077 (1946)

Ibid. p. 48.

Szylowicz, p. 196.


Ibid. p. 120.

Ibid. p. 124.


Ibid. p. 137.


Abdalla, pp. 150-151.

‘Uthman, pp. 29-31

Abdalla, p. 158.

Ibid. p. 159.

Ibid. p. 174.


Abdalla, pp. 174-175. ‘Uthman, pp. 32-33.

Chapter Two

1 Abdalla, p. 129.
2 Interview with ‘Adli Mustafa. And Interview with Wa’il ‘Uthman.
3 ‘Uthman, p. 41.
Interview with ‘Uthman.

Ibid. And Interview with Mustafa.


Ibid. p. 56.

Ibid. p. 41.


‘Uthman. p. 43.

In the wake of the 1969 fire at al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, an attempt by student leaders to organize a student militia was swiftly and quietly squelched by the government.


‘Uthman, p. 63.

Whether this happened before or after the leftist students rejected the agreement is a matter of some dispute. Another factor was the involvement of Student Union representatives, who met separately with officials and probably played an important part in nixing the agreement. ‘Uthman, p. 63. Abdalla, pp. 180-183. Beattie, p. 100.

Abdalla, p. 183.


Abdalla, p. 198.

Beattie, p. 81.

Abdalla, p. 179.


‘Uthman, p. 115.

Ibid. And Interview with Mustafa.

‘Uthman, p. 112.

Ibid. p. 114.


Interview with ‘Uthman.

Both Mustafa and ‘Uthman stated that they gave no consideration to the regime’s offer. Subsequent events seem to corroborate that account.

‘Uthman, pp. 117-118.

Ibid. p. 119.


‘Uthman, p. 90.

Mustafa recalled that the fifth individual was likely to have been al-Simari, but could also have been Muhammad Khalil. Interview with ‘Adli Mustafa.

Ibid.

Interview with Wa’il ‘Uthman.

Ibid. And Interview with ‘Adli Mustafa.


Abdalla, p. 200.

Ibid. p. 201.

‘Uthman, p. 94.

Interview with Wa’il ‘Uthman.

Interview with ‘Adli Mustafa.


Interview with ‘Adli Mustafa.

Ibid.

Ibid. And Interview with Wa’il ‘Uthman. Additionally, ‘Abd al-Mone‘im Abul Futuh confirms the notion of blind allegiance to the leader by the members of al-Gam‘iyyah al-Diniyyah. In Tammam, p. 47.

Interview with ‘Adli Mustafa.
Chapter Three

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid. p. 21, p. 27.
6. Ibid. p. ix.
11. www.burhaniya.info
13. Ibid.
15. Ibid. pp. 46-47.
17. Kepel, pp. 75-76.
19. Ibid.
23. Kepel, p. 94.
26. Ra’if, p. 561.
27. Ibid.
28. Interview with ‘Esam al-‘Erian.

30 *Kepel*, p. 28.
31 Ibrahim, p. 6.
32 Interview with ‘Erian.
33 Ra’if, pp. 590-591.
34 Interview with ‘Abd al-Mone’im Abul Futuh.
35 Beattie, pp. 81-82.
36 Ibid. p. 82.
39 *Kepel*, p. 105.
40 Interview with ‘Erian.
41 Interview with Sayyid ‘Abd al-Sattar al-Miligi.
45 Ibid.
46 Interview with Miligi.
47 In Tammam.
50 Abul Futuh in Tammam, p. 88.

**Chapter Four**

2 Ibid. p. 61.
6 Ibid. p. 204.
8 Abul Futuh recalls the culture shock that he and his friends experienced upon entering Cairo University. In contrast to many of the students already there who represented the middle and upper classes, he and his friends came from far more modest backgrounds and could seldom afford to acquire books. In some instances, they would have to combine their meager allowances in order to obtain reading materials. In Tammam, p. 29.
9 Erlich. p. 203.
11 Ibid.
12 Interview with ‘Abd al-Mone’im Abul Futuh.
13 Ibid.
14 Interview with Ibrahim al-Za’farani.
15 Ibid. In contrast, Abul Futuh stated that his family benefited from Nasser’s land reforms, with his father and uncles receiving plots of land from the state “when they previously did not own anything.” In Tammam, p. 21.
Interview with Abul Futuh. Interview with Za'farani. Interview with Gamal ‘Abd al-Salam. Abul Futuh also recalled that in the early stages of the student movement, “none of us had a particular outlook or a distinct religious vision. Most of us were religious as a result of our birth and upbringing in a broadly religious society.” In Tamam, p. 33.

Tamam, p. 23.

Ibid. pp. 22-23.

Ibid.


Tamam, p. 25.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Tamam, p. 28.

Ibid. pp. 36-38.

Ibid. p. 36.

Ibid. p. 33.

Badr, p. 23.

At ‘Ain Shams University, Sayyid ‘Abd al-Sattar al-Meligi recalled that the Student Union budget for religious activities was limited to 75 Egyptian pounds annually. As amir of al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah at ‘Ain Shams, Meligi would later participate in union elections, motivated in part by the desire to expand his group’s access to union funds. In Meligi, p. 42. And Interview with Sayyid ‘Abd al-Sattar al-Meligi.

Tamam, p. 40.

According to Abul Futuh, Hasan ‘Abid Rabbo had no knowledge of the arts, and had never left his small village before coming to Cairo University. This reflected a widespread view among the youth in the Islamic movement that the arts had been a tool for spreading immorality and the denigration of the faith. In Tamam, p. 41.

Tamam, p. 40.

Interview with ‘Esam al-‘Erian.

Tamam, p. 28.


Interview with Za’farani.

Tamam, p. 30. Badr described this meeting as the first official summer camp of the Islamic student movement, though given the simplicity and disorganized nature of the meeting, in contrast to later camps, this was probably an overstatement. In Badr Muhammad Badr. Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya fi Gami’at Misr: Haqaiq wa Wathiq. np, 1989, p. 11.

Tamam, p.29.

Ibid.

Ibid. pp. 36-38.

Ibid. p. 36.

Ibid. p. 33.

Badr, p. 23.

Although there was a slight variation in names, the movement at Alexandria University followed a parallel trajectory. According to Za’farani, the first religious organization was titled “Gam’iyat al-Dirasa al-Diniyya” (Association of Religious Studies) then it was changed to “al-Gama’ah al-Diniyyah” before settling upon “al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah” after the decision was made at Cairo University. Interview with Za’farani.

This development occurred during the same time period of the October War, which was painted in Islamic terms by the political establishment and the state media. The youth leaders were deeply affected by the cultural swelling of an Islamically-oriented battle for liberation. Interview with al-‘Erian. Interview with Mamduh al-Ridi.

Meligi recalled that within months, the name was in use at every university, and that there had been no objections to its adoption. On the contrary, he wrote, “It was as though we had been awaiting it.” In Meligi, p. 44.
Meligi asserted that the regime attempted to overturn the gains of al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah as early as 1977, intimidating its candidates and promoting ones more favorable to the regime, such as Mahmoud Tal’at Jalal, who became president of the National Student Union, though he was also sympathetic to the aims of al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah. Regime intrusion obstructed the activities of the union, until it was nullified outright in 1979. In Meligi, pp. 53-56.

Some even leave open the possibility that Shabab al-Islam was the complete brainchild of Muhammad ‘Uthman Isma’il. Abul Futuh in particular, believes this active creation of a new group occurred only after it became clear that al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah would not be co-opted by the regime, due to the principled stance of its leaders and its adversarial political positions vis-à-vis the Sadat regime. Tammam, pp. 55-56. And Badr, p. 14. Abul Futuh acknowledged that Isma’il also attempted to coordinate regime efforts with leaders of al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah, but they declined. Interview with Abul Futuh.

Interview with ‘Abd al-Salam. And Tammam, p. 55.

Meligi said as much in his recollection that Abu Talib, Ahmed Kemal Abul Magd, and Rif’at al-Mahjoub “reached out secretly to the religious minority of students.” In Meligi, p. 41.

Tammam, p. 56.

Interview with ‘Abd al-Salam. And Tammam, p. 55.

Meligi said as much in his recollection that Abu Talib, Ahmed Kemal Abul Magd, and Rif’at al-Mahjoub “reached out secretly to the religious minority of students.” In Meligi, p. 41.

Tammam, p. 56.

Interview with ‘Abd al-Salam. And Tammam, p. 55.

Meligi said as much in his recollection that Abu Talib, Ahmed Kemal Abul Magd, and Rif’at al-Mahjoub “reached out secretly to the religious minority of students.” In Meligi, p. 41.
Interview with Madi.

Badr, p. 27.

Ibid.

Ibid. p. 33. Abul Futuh stated that when the tradition began in 1976, 40,000 Egyptians attended the service in Alexandria, led by Sheikh Mahmoud ‘Eid and 50,000 attended the service in Cairo, led by Sheikh Youusuf al-Qaradawi. In Tamam, p. 50.

Ibid. p. 29.

Ibid. p. 45.

Ibid.

Interview with Za’farani.

Interview with Ridi. Also, Interview with Badr.

Badr, p. 29.

Ibid. p. 34.

Ibid. p. 49.

Ibid. p. 53.

Ibid. pp. 55-57.

Interview with Badr.


Badr, p. 59.

Ibid. p. 65.


Ibid. pp. 75-76.

Ibid. pp. 76-77.

Ibid. p. 80.

Tamam, p. 106.

Ibid.

Ibid. p. 107.

Ibid. p. 110.

Ibid. p. 111. Additionally, Badr recalled that as early as 1978, students at other universities were intimidated into withdrawing from elections, usually through pressure placed on their parents. There were also reports of election fraud. In Badr, pp. 87-88.

Tamam, pp. 111-112. Interview with Badr.

Meligi, pp. 55-56.

Interview with Za’farani.

Interview with Abul Futuh. Interview with Madi. In Badr, p. 88.

A conference was also held at al-Azhar, which included the participation of over ten thousand students, in condemnation of the new law governing the Student Union. In Meligi, pp. 57-62.

Badr, p. 73.

Ibid. pp. 92-93.

Interview with Ahmed ‘Umar.

Badr, pp. 87-88. Meligi provided a similar account of regime obstruction of the national union. In Meligi, pp. 54-56.


Interview with Madi.

Chapter Five


2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. p. 35.

4 This story is also recounted by Mahmoud Gami’, a Sadat confidant who sat in the second row of the event. He recalled that he was “shocked” by the “vicious attack” against Tilmisani. After the meeting, he reports that Sadat apologized to Tilmisani and embraced him. In Mahmoud Gami’. ‘Arift al-Sadat. Cairo: Maktabat al-Masri al-Jadid, 1998, p. 274.
Sadat was contesting the claim made by Muslim Brotherhood leaders that they were not affiliated with some branches of al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah suspected of militant activities. But that distinction was not made during the speech, which depicted al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah as a monolithic group, though it had ceased to be at the time. Anwar al-Sadat. Speech before Egyptian parliament. September 5, 1981.


Ibid. p. 63.

Ibid. p. 67.

Ibid.

Interview with Gamal ‘ Abd al-Salam.

Tammam, p. 69.

Ibid. p. 65.

Interview with ‘Esam al-‘Erian. And Interview with Hamid al-Difrawi.

Interview with Sayyid ‘Abd al-Sattar al-Meligi. The same sentiment was expressed by Hamid al-Difrawi, Badr Muhammad Badr, and ‘Abd al-Mon’eim Abul Futuh. Interview with al-Difrawi.

Interview with Badr Muhammad Badr. Interview with Abul Futuh.

Interview with Difrawi.

Tammam, p. 39.

Interview with Badr. Interview with Ibrahim al-Za’farani.

Abul Futuh claimed that ‘Isa did not explicitly represent himself as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, though he stood for their views. In Tammam, p. 74.

Meligi maintained that the early success enjoyed by the Muslim Brotherhood was due to the youth’s “emotional attachment” to the experiences of the elders. Interview with Meligi.

Tammam, p. 74.

Ibid. p. 73.

Interview with Badr.

Interview with Kamal Habib.

Interview with Badr.

Tammam, p. 79.

Ibid. p. 75.


Tammam, p. 78.

Interview with Badr.


Interview with Badr.

Tammam, p. 82.

Ibid. p. 80.

Interview with Badr.

Ibid.

For example, Islamic conferences with independent religious scholars were only allowed within the university walls, and Islamic camps would never have been approved for religious associations outside of al-Gama’ah al-Islamiyyah. The public Eid prayers were only held under the auspices of the student movement.

Interview with al-‘Erian.

Interview with Abul ‘Ala Madi. Abul Futuh recalled that, in spite of Mashhur’s age, he insisted on riding behind a student on his motorcycle rather than burden the students by having them hire him a cab. In Tammam, p. 80.

Tammam, p. 82.

Ibid. pp. 83.

Whereas Mashhur’s role as head of the Youth and Universities Committee in the Guidance Bureau was more official, it revolved around education and raising awareness, while Sananiri worked through the logistics of organizational membership, such as administering the bay’a (oath) to new members, and placing them within their respective groups in the new hierarchy.
Interview with al-'Erian.

Interview with Abul Futuh.

Interview with al-'Erian. Interview with Za'farani.

Tammam, p. 91.

Ibid.

Interview with Abul Futuh. Interview with Meligi. And Interview with Badr.

The practice was widespread and covered urban centers as well as the countryside. Abul Futuh provided other examples. Ahmed al-Bas was the contact in al-Gharbiyyah governorate; Muhammad al-Adwi in al-Mansurah; ‘Ali Ruxza in Ismailiya; al-Dissouqi Buqayna in al-Buhaira; ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Azzazi in Suez; ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Hammoudeh in Port Said; In Tammam, pp. 91-92.

Ibid. p. 95.

Interview with Meligi. And in Tammam, p. 85.

Interview with Ahmed ‘Umar.

Interview with Badr.

Interview with Abul Futuh. And in Tammam, pp. 89-90.

Ibid. p. 90.

This line of argument was given prominence later by al-Jihad leader ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj in his book, al-Farida al-Gha’ibah (The Neglected Duty). Faraj was executed in 1982 for his role in Sadat’s assassination.

Tammam, p. 92.

Interview with Abul Futuh.

Tammam, p. 90. To distinguish themselves from the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated student group in Cairo and elsewhere, the opposition student movement based in al-Gama‘ah al-Islamiyyah at Assiut University used the religious slogan “la ilaha illa Allah” (There is no God but God) in their publications, contrasting with the other group’s use of the Muslim Brotherhood slogan “Allah akbar wa lillahi al-Hand” (God is greatest and to Him all praise is due); Additionally, the Assiut group devised its own logo, featuring one sword hovering above its slogan, to distinguish it from the Muslim Brotherhood’s traditional logo of two swords crossed over a Qur’an. Interview with Abul Futuh. And Interview with Habib.


Admission to the Shura Council is accomplished through direct elections (for two-thirds of the seats) and presidential appointments (roughly one-third of the seats).

Yahya.

During the speech in which Sadat confronted Tilmisani, he alleged that he “considered” appointing Tilmisani to the Shura Council, implying that no offer had ever been made, a claim Tilmisani obviously disputed.


Chapter Six

1 Interview with Sayyid ‘Abd al-Sattar al-Melig. February 27, 2009. The first view was represented by ‘Abbas al-Sisi (early on), Mahmoud ‘Abd al-Halim, and ‘Abd al-Halim Khafaga. The second view was represented by Mustafa Mashhur, Ahmed Hassanain, and Kamal al-Sananiri.

2 It should be noted that the second camp also benefited from the publication of al-Da’wa. Mashhur used it as a regular platform for the articulation of his ideological views.


4 Benford and Snow list three core framing tasks: the diagnostic frame, which identifies particular problems and issues of concern for a movement; the prognostic frame, which articulates the solution; and the motivational frame, which “provides the ‘call to arms’ or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive.” Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow. “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” Annual Review of Sociology. Vol. 26, 2000, p. 617.


Ibid., p. 48.


Ibid., p. 48.


Ibid., p. 48.

Ibid. Jaber Rizq. “Does the model of the Iranian Revolution fit all Islamic movements in the world?”


Ibid., p. 6.

Abdel Munim Salim Jabbarah. “Until When Will We Remain in the Crusader or Communist Orbit?” Da’wa, No. 38, July 1979, pp. 8-9.


Ibid.
Conclusion

2 Ibid. p. 50.
4 The regime also attempted to justify the peace treaty with Israel in religious terms, even soliciting an Islamic legal ruling in support of it, but these explanations were secondary to overtly political considerations. Moreover, the rulings had little popular resonance as the treaty was widely viewed within the Islamic movement as an affront to God’s will.
5 While Banna certainly proposed Islamic legislation to the government and Hudaybi explored the possibility of participating in the revolutionary regime, the intricate nature of Tīlmisānī’s engagement of the policies of the Sadat regime make this period unique in the organization’s history.
6 Tammam, p. 130.