1

Explaining Islamist Dominion

Much of the current state of theorizing on the electoral successes of Islamist parties can be captured in two Egyptian newspaper items, written more than 55 years apart. The first is a cartoon that appeared in the Muslim Brotherhood's newspaper in 1945 (Figure 1.1).[1] In it, we see two candidates addressing the same constituency. In the first panel, the (presumably secular) candidate proclaims, "I'll dig irrigation canals and drainage ditches for you. I'll get you more rations. I'll get your sons government jobs. Etc. Etc." The voters, however, appear unmoved. Turning their backs on the candidate, they grumble, "We have had our fill of such promises." In the second panel, we see the Muslim Brotherhood candidate. "God is our destiny!" he declares, reciting the first item from the Muslim Brotherhood catechism. "The Prophet is our leader! The Qur'an is our constitution! And death in the path of God is our fondest wish!" The voters lean toward him intently, smiling in approval, exclaiming, "What is more beautiful than such talk?" Presumably the next panel, if there were one, would show the Brother contentedly counting votes.[2]

The second item is a December 22, 2012 story that appeared in the Cairo-based opposition newspaper *al-Dustūr* during the referendum on the 2012 Egyptian constitution. That constitution, now suspended, had been written by an Islamist-dominated constituent assembly, and was opposed by practically every non-Islamist political party in Egypt for, among other things, its insufficient attention to the rights of women and non-Muslims. Headlined, "Oil and sugar are distributed among the poor in exchange for voting 'yes' in al-Munūfiyya," the story alleged that a leader of a local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party was busily delivering basic foodstuffs to poor voters in his area and then busing those voters to polling stations to cast their ballots for what the story described as "the Brotherhood's constitution." It's impossible to know whether

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[1] This and all subsequent translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

[2] The irony, of course, is that the cartoon could just as easily be read as an indictment of the Brothers, painting them as cynical manipulators of the unsophisticated masses' religious sentiments.

14

Figure 1.1 A cartoon depiction of religion's political appeal. From *Jarīdat al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* (the Brotherhood's official newspaper), January 1945.

that story is true, but if it is true, it's clear that those vote-buying efforts did not work – al-Munūfiyya's citizens actually voted against the 2012 constitution by a slim majority.

Nonetheless, both of those newspaper items - the story of the Muslim Brotherhood lavishing oil and sugar upon voters, and the cartoon depicting Egyptians swooning to the Brotherhood's Islamic oratory - encapsulate much of our thinking about the sources of political Islam's success. The cartoon reflects the widely-shared view that the Brotherhood's *religious* nature gives it a powerful advantage at the ballot box. After all, if, as Ernest Gellner (1991, 2) declared, "the hold of Islam over its believers is as strong, and in some ways even stronger, now than it was 100 years ago" – it stands to reason that parties that don religion's mantle court victory. The story of the Brotherhood's disbursement of staples reflects an alternative view of Islamist success, one that understands it not as an emotional or ecstatic reaction to the provision of spiritual incentives, but as a logical response to the provision of material ones. This account may rob Islamists of their claims to purity, but it restores to voters their reason and rationality.

These two accounts – one stressing the power of Islamist ideas, the other stressing the power of material inducements – are by no means exhaustive, but they are illustrative of the twin poles in a longstanding debate about the nature of political

Islam's success. This chapter surveys the scholarly contributions to that debate. It argues that, while both types of account have enriched our understanding of the phenomenon of political Islam, each leaves important questions unanswered. Those that locate Islamist success in Islam itself are unable to explain, let alone anticipate, variation in support for Islamist parties. By telling us why Islamist victories had to happen, they blind us to the possibility that they may not always happen (despite the impressive record amassed by Islamists since the so-called Arab Spring). In contrast, if ideational accounts are unable to explain variation in the dependent variable, existing material accounts have so far left unexplored the causes of variation in the independent variable. If Islamists are better than other parties at providing material goods to voters (or more interested in doing so), what makes them so? What prevents those other parties from mimicking the strategies and tactics that made Islamists the principal elected opposition during authoritarian rule, and the inheritors of every democratic opening since the onset of the Arab Spring?

After surveying the state of theorizing, this chapter attempts to answer these questions. Building upon previous accounts of Islamist success, it outlines an explanation for Islamist victories that anticipates variation in the phenomenon over time and space, and that can account for some of the observed differences in the behavior and organizational prowess of Islamists and their rivals over more than 50 years of Egyptian political history.

1.1 Ideational Explanations

As we have seen, for many scholars, the victories of Islamist parties across the Muslim world are a testament to the ways in which political Islam is a natural outgrowth of Islam itself. For example, Huntington (1993, 307) has argued that Islam "rejects any distinction between the religious community and the political community," and "demands that in a Muslim country the political rulers should be practicing Muslims, *sharīʿa* should be the basic law, and *ulema* should have a decisive vote in articulating, or at least reviewing and ratifying, all governmental policy." In this telling, the source of the Islamist advantage is doctrinal: Muslims are taught that erecting Islamic law and Islamizing the polity are religious imperatives. "In Islam," writes Lewis (1996, 61), "there is from the beginning an interpenetration, almost an identification, of cult and power, or religion and the state: Mohammed was not only a prophet, but a ruler." Thus, whereas Muslims constantly seek to reenact the politics of seventh-century Arabia, installing in power those who promise to rule, as Muhammad did, by the Holy Book, Christians "have distinguished between throne and altar, church and state." This theory is echoed by the political scientist James Q. Wilson, who, in one of his few interventions on the politics of Islam, tells us, "Jesus asked Christians to distinguish between what belonged to God and what belonged to Caesar. Islam made no such distinction; to it, Allah prescribed the rules for all of life, encompassing what we

Underdevelopment ⟶ Irrational voters ⟶ Salience of religion ⟶ Dominance of religious parties

Figure 1.2 Relationship between economic development and religious politics, according to the secularization thesis.

now call the religious and secular spheres."[3] In this account, thus conditioned by their faith to demand theocracy, Muslims dutifully vote for parties that promise to impose God's will on Earth.

These kinds of arguments are often dismissed as essentializing (Said 1978), but they are also empirically problematic. Muslims can want the *sharīʿa*, or at least pay it an aggressive lip service, while voting for a variety of parties for a variety of purposes. For while it is true, for example, that 80 percent of Egyptians polled by the 2000 World Values Survey "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the proposition that the country's laws should be based on the *sharīʿa*, 37 percent of them actually signaled a preference for the then-ruling National Democratic Party of Hosni Mubarak, while only 11.2 percent chose "independent candidates" – a category that included members of the then-banned-but-tolerated Muslim Brotherhood. Similarly, in the May 2012 contest that brought Egypt's first democratically elected president to power, only a quarter of voters cast their ballots for the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate (and eventual winner) Mohamed Morsi. Islam may or may not demand that its followers seek implementation of the *sharīʿa*, but this does not easily or automatically translate into support for political parties purporting to pursue this goal.

For other scholars, popular support for Islamist parties is less a unique outgrowth of Islamic doctrine than it is a function of economic underdevelopment and the resulting cognitive habits it engenders. The so-called secularization thesis holds that the political salience of religion is inversely related to prosperity (Norris and Inglehart 2011). Weber (1946) argued that development – the term he used was *modernity* – was instrumental in changing the way individuals think, loosing them from the shackles of superstition: "The fate of our times," he wrote, "is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the disenchantment of the world." Similarly, Lipset and Rokkan (1967, 107) argued that citizens in industrialized societies "choose sides in terms of their economic interests, their shares in the increased wealth generated through the spread of the new technologies and the widening markets" rather than on the basis of faith, identity, or values. By these lights, Egypt's endemic poverty, high rate of illiteracy, and large agrarian sector mean that its citizens have not yet undergone these salutary rationalization processes and thus remain vulnerable to religion's siren song. The basic structure of this argument is outlined in Figure 1.2.

[3] James Q. Wilson, "The Reform Islam Needs," *Wall Street Journal,* November 13, 2002.

However, this narrative is at odds with much recent scholarship on Egyptian and Muslim politics. For example, ʿArafāt and Bin Nafīsa (2005), Blaydes (2006), and many others have documented the ways in which poor Egyptian voters during Mubarak-era elections sold their suffrages to the highest bidder, displaying not a lack of rationality but a surfeit of it. And, as we will see below, the cadres of the Muslim Brotherhood have long been drawn primarily from among well-educated Egyptians of the middle classes – precisely the kinds of people that Weber thought were most likely to have outgrown the type of enchanted thinking he associated with deep religious belief (see also Ibrahim 1980; al Sayyid 1993; Fahmy 1998b; Clark 2004a). We are thus unlikely to get much traction on the question of political Islam's appeal if we ascribe it solely, or even primarily, to alleged cognitive characteristics of Muslims.

Discursive Advantages

Many sensitive students of the politics of Muslim lands, drawing on theoretical literature in the study of social movements (see in particular Snow and Benford (1988); Benford and Snow (2000)), have attempted to move us beyond such declarations about the nature of Islam and toward an appraisal of the ways in which religious rhetoric may help Islamic movements to communicate with potential followers and voters. For example, Singerman (2004, 151) argues that "the vague call 'Islam is the solution' resonates on so many levels in the Muslim world and as a result it influences multiple social and political fields and encourages a collective identity." Likewise, in her learned study of Islamic mobilization in Egypt, Wickham (2003, 157) tells us that Islamists were better able than other political groups to recruit followers in part because they "adapted a respected cultural repertoire to new purposes. By framing their outreach as engaging in the *daʿwa* [proselytizing], the Islamists endowed it with a cultural legitimacy it otherwise would have lacked."[4]

Underlying all of these arguments is the notion that appeals framed in Islamic terms will be more readily understood, processed, and accepted by Muslims than those that are not. Indeed, this was clearly the theory endorsed by the government of ousted dictator Hosni Mubarak, which shortly before parliamentary elections in 2005 passed a law explicitly banning the use of religious

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[4] The notion that Islam has special political properties has also figured in accounts of regime durability in the Middle East. Several scholars have argued that Arab regimes deploy Islamic rhetoric and symbols to maintain the acquiescence – and quiescence – of the masses. For example, according to Eickelman and Piscatori (1996, 12), "rulers such as Sadat in Egypt and Hasan II . . . in Morocco have legitimized the existing political hierarchy by referring to themselves as 'the President-Believer' (*al-raʾis al-muʾmin*) and the 'commander of the faithful' (*amir al-muʾminin*) respectively." And in the last article published on the subject of Islamic fundamentalism in *American Political Science Review*, G. Hossein Razi (1990, 75) argues that religion is a "primary source" of regime legitimacy because it "generate[s] the widest of bonds of commonly held values in the region."

slogans in campaigns.[5] When the Muslim Brotherhood's strong showing in those contests proved the new law insufficient, the regime went one step further and enshrined the prohibition on religious politicking in Article 5 of the constitution.[6]

Though arguments about the resonance of religious rhetoric have advanced our understanding of political Islam considerably, they can be faulted on two grounds. First, as Wedeen (2002, 713) has pointed out, they too risk essentialism, potentially reducing the Muslim to what the Syrian scholar Sadik J. al-Azm (1997) has called a "Homo-Islamicus," who "will always revert to type under all circumstances and regardless of the nature and depth of the historical changes he may suffer or undergo." Second, these arguments pay insufficient attention to the variation in receptivity to Islamically inflected political appeals. There is a variety of political preferences and allegiances that exist in the Muslim world. As we have seen, not all Muslims respond to the Islamist call, and even those who do now may not have in the past (and may not in the future). Moreover, in many of these countries, there are multiple "Islamic" parties, all of which deploy Islamic rhetoric and symbols, but not all of which are able to capture votes and seats. For example, in Jordan, in addition to the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Islamic Action Front (Jabhat al-ʿAmal al-Islāmī), we have the Islamic Centrist Party (Ḥizb al-Wasaṭ al-Islāmī) and the Arab Islamic Democratic Movement (al-Ḥarakah al-ʿArabiyah al-Islāmiyah al-Dīmuqrāṭiyah). In Egypt, in addition to the Muslim Brotherhood and a host of smaller Salafist parties, we have the Ummah Party, founded in 1983 on a pro-*sharīʿa* platform but which nonetheless has not managed to put any sort of stamp on Egyptian political life.[7] The poor fortunes of these Islamist also-rans demonstrates that however stirring Islamic rhetoric may be, it is unlikely to be the reason that some Islamist parties succeed.

Arguments about Islam's "resonance" and "cultural legitimacy" are actually specific forms of a broader class of explanations about the mobilizing power of religious appeals in general. Laitin (1986, 178) argues that political leaders "will find that their own cultural repertoires constitute a powerful mobilizing resource. The more they can demonstrate the sharing of culture with potential supporters, the more they can generate political trust." Likewise, Tarrow (1998, 112) tells us that religion is a potent tool for seducing the masses because it is "so reliable a

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[5] Article 11 of Law 175 of 2005 (amending Law 38 of 1972 on the People's Assembly).

[6] See Ministry of Information (Wizārat al-ʿIlām), *Jadwal muqārin lil-mawād alatī taḍamanhā ṭalab al-sayyid raʾīs al-jumhūriyya li-taʿdīl 34 māda min mawād al-dustūr muqārana bil-naṣ al-qāʾim fī al-dustūr wa al-naṣ kamā wāfaq alayhi majlis al-shūrā wa al-naṣ kamā wāfaqat alaihi lajnat al-shuʾūn al-dustūriyya wa al-tashrīʿiya bi majlis al-shaʿb wa al-naṣ al-nihāʾī kamā wāfaq alaihi majlis al-shaʿb* (Comparative table of the articles contained in the request of the President of the Republic for the amendment of 34 articles of the constitution compared to the current text of the constitution and the text agreed upon by the Consultative Council and the text agreed upon by the Constitutional Affairs Committee of the Peoples Assembly and the final text agreed to by the People's Assembly), 2007; available at: http://www.nilenews.tv/Files/AdminFTP/documents/1.pdf.

[7] Makram Ebeid (1989, 38) wrote of the party that it "is indeed a petty opposition ... with hardly any members."

source of emotion" and offers "ready-made symbols, rituals and solidarities that can be assessed and appropriated by movement leaders." According to Perry and Aminzade (2001, 161), "Religious leaders do not have to rely only on rational persuasion since their followers can be 'moved by the spirit' rather than persuaded by rational arguments." A somewhat different argument – though similar in its attribution of special qualities to religion and culture – is Chwe's (2001) contention that religious ritual can help to grease the wheels of collective action by creating "common knowledge," letting potential participants in group endeavors know that they will not be alone in risking their necks.

But such arguments only take us so far. If religion is such a potent mobilizing resource, why don't political leaders always and at all times rush to don its mantle? Testaments to the intrinsic mobilizing power of faith bring to mind Marx's line about religion being the opiate of the masses, except that here religion is more like an amphetamine, used to whip the masses into a reliable frenzy. As noted earlier, such theories have so far left us unable to explain the variation – among countries, over time, and within countries – in the success of religious political movements. After all, Islam is a constant; the outcome we want to explain – Islamist electoral success – is a variable.

Social Changes and Psychological Strains

Of course, not all "ideational" explanations rely on such static conceptions of "Islam" or "religion" as something that always endows Islamic parties with greater potency. Many scholars argue that the force of religious appeals depends on the social context in which they are made. For example, drawing on Emile Durkheim's (1951) explanation of suicide, one influential set of accounts of political Islam's success argues that it is a function of shifts in social, economic, and political conditions (see Munson 2001, 490–4). According to Durkheim, abrupt social changes – such as sudden economic booms or busts – disrupt traditional norms, generating psychological strains that lead some individuals to kill themselves. "Every disturbance of equilibrium," he writes, "even though it achieves greater comfort and a heightening of general vitality, is an impulse to voluntary death. Whenever serious readjustments take place in the social order, whether or not due to a sudden growth or to an unexpected catastrophe, men are more inclined to self destruction" (Durkheim 1951, 246).

Neo-Durkheimian scholars of political Islam argue that social change drives people not to suicide but into the arms of the Muslim Brotherhood and the comforting certainty of its religious message. It may appear odd that a theory originally generated to explain self-immolation would be adopted by those attempting to explain the political appeal of religion, but in fact, the adaptation of Durkheim to this particular purpose is a function of just how puzzling the political power of religion has proven to be to social scientists. After all, the secularization thesis led us to believe that modernization and economic growth would consign "the political and psychological impact of religion" to the history

books (Gellner 1991). So aberrant, perhaps, was the appearance of political Islam that its explanation required a theory designed for what many saw as the *ultimate* aberration: the taking of one's own life.[8]

There are multiple glosses on the Durkheimian narrative of Islamism, each identifying a different social phenomenon as the source of the strain – crushing poverty, modernization, urbanization, and authoritarianism, to name a few. For example, Monroe and Kreidie (1997, 41) tell us that "much of the attractiveness of Islamic fundamentalism lies in its ability to provide a basic identity for its adherents" at a time when such identities are in constant flux. Others argue that fundamentalism represents a backlash against modernization's assault on religious values. This is the view espoused by Appleby, Almond, and Sivan (2003, 121) who tell us that "the defining and distinctive structural cause of fundamentalist movements is secularization." As Barrington Moore (1967, 384) puts it, "In many parts of the world, when an established culture was beginning to erode, threatening some of the population, people have responded by reaffirming the traditional way of life with increasing and frantic vigor."

Others have argued that it is not necessarily modernization, but the failure of modernization, that has turned people toward religion. Berman (2003, 258) writes that Islamism thrives in societies in which "development has proceeded far enough to offer citizens a glimpse of what modernity has to offer, but not far enough to deliver it." Wickham (2003, 77–80) singles out authoritarianism, which, she says, gives rise to feelings of powerlessness and alienation. Lewis (1990) highlights Western ascendancy, telling us that Islamic fundamentalism represents "the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both." Barber (1995) has written of fundamentalism as a defensive response to the spread of American popular and consumer culture. Nobel laureate V. S. Naipaul (1998, 242) offers us the verdict rendered by his guide in Iran, a young man named Ali, who seems to implicate all the preceding factors in Islam's rise to political power in his country:

> This new wealth came to the cities, and the majority of the people lived in the rural areas. The younger generation of the farmers who had migrated to the cities realized that they were being cheated. More and more, from 1970 on, Islamic organizations started mushrooming. … And these Islamic groups also expressed the people's ideas about the Shah and his group, that they were not Islamic. The Shah and the Queen and her group started having artistic festivals. They invited musicians, poets, dancers, and all kinds of artists from abroad. There was one group that was completely nude, and they danced. There were many of those occasions. It was like putting gas on fire.

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[8] It's worth noting that Durkheim's framework has been enthusiastically adapted to explain everything from the appearance of snake-handling cults in Appalachia (Flint 1980), to witch hunts in fifteenth-century Europe (Stark 2003), to political instability in developing countries (Huntington 1968).

One can be forgiven for concluding that we have not managed to move beyond Ali's exhaustive (and exhausting) litany. In large part, the proliferation of Durkheimian narratives of social strain and religious fundamentalism is a function of the difficulty of adjudicating among them. As Munson (2001, 493–4) has pointed out, this is so because such theories deal primarily with psychological states that are difficult to observe directly or test empirically. Spatial and temporal variation in support of Islamists can give us some leverage on some of the most prominent Durkheimian accounts, such as those emphasizing urbanization or other easily measurable socioeconomic variables. But every society at any given point in time is undergoing some kind of social change and the potential number of Durkheimian narratives is endless. If change underlies the success of political Islam, then the hope of observing, let alone explaining, variation in the phenomenon is likely a forlorn one.

That said, the transformations of the so-called Arab Spring give the Durkheimian paradigm new relevance. The victories of Islamists after the Arab Spring could be attributed to anxieties generated by authoritarian collapse, in which the shape of future Egyptian institutions was thrown into doubt, potentially rendering voters more receptive to those proposing to use the laws of sharīʿah to mend the country's institutional rupture. This happens to be a testable proposition. And, as we shall see, there is limited support for it. Though *sharīʿa* figured in the discourse of political elites on both sides of the religious divide, survey research conducted by the author and by independent scholars demonstrates that voters throughout Egypt's transitional period were in the main motivated by more quotidian concerns.

1.2 Material Explanations

The difficulty faced by most ideational accounts of Islamism in explaining variation in the phenomenon or in lending themselves to empirical testing has sent scholars in search of other, more tangible factors behind Islamist political success. Scholars working in this vein have generated three sets of explanations for the rise and spread of political Islam. The first focuses on the actions of the authoritarian states of the Middle East and the ways in which their repressive strategies advantaged Islamists over their secular counterparts. The second set of explanations emphsizes the actions of Islamist parties themselves, investigating how they reach out to voters, engaging in grassroots mobilization and social-service provision – such as handing out bottles of cooking oil and bags of sugar, as alleged in the newspaper report with which we opened this chapter. Finally, the third set of explanations focuses on the internal characteristics of Islamist parties, contrasting their organizational cohesion and discipline with secular parties' ostensible lack of these things.

Suppression of Secular Avenues of Protest

The first school of thought views the emergence and success of Islamism as a function of authoritarian policies designed to suppress secular forms of

organization. The basic intuition behind this argument is articulated by Esposito (1999, 110), who tells us that in the Shah's Iran, "Mosques served as centers for dissent, political organization, agitation and sanctuary. The government could ban and limit political meetings and gatherings, but it could not close the mosques or ban prayer." This is echoed by Halliday (1995): "As in other societies where secular forms of protest are blocked off, religion in Iran became a symbol and an organizing center for protest that might otherwise have taken a more conventional secular form." In Egypt, Munson (2001, 502) tells us, "Mosques were the only forum in which the government would permit large congregations of people." And Kuran (1998, 122) has noted that the inability of Arab governments to "close down" mosques meant that "Islamism offer[ed] the safest forum for venting frustrations."[9]

There is much to commend this account, but, there are two ways in which it is incomplete. The first is that it neglects the ways in which regimes do suppress sacred spaces (Kurzman 1994). If mosques became focal points of dissent under authoritarianism, they did this *despite* the presence of heavy regulation by the regime. In many areas of Mubarak's Egypt (as well as Bin ʿAlī's Tunisia), mosques were locked up between prayer times. Campaigning in Egyptian mosques and churches was expressly prohibited by the electoral law, and local imams (who are employees of the Ministry of Religious Endowments) and other mosque employees actively enforced the statute.[10] During Egypt's 2005 parliamentary elections, I observed Muslim Brotherhood candidates berated on several occasions by mosque caretakers for trying to make political speeches either before or after prayers. Even sympathetic imams would urge candidates to keep their remarks brief or try to deny them the use of the microphone altogether. One imam, after failing to dissuade a Muslim Brotherhood candidate from speaking after prayer, took it on himself to rebut the man's arguments, exhorting his flock to "give our votes to him who has given us the most" – a thinly veiled reference to the candidate of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), who the week prior had just furnished the mosque with new carpets (the NDP candidate was a floor-coverings magnate). The totality of the regime's control of sacred space is captured in the testimony of Usāma Darra (2011, 30-1), a young Muslim Brotherhood member who broke away from the movement in 2011. The Brotherhood's antagonistic relationship with Mubarak had caused it to "lose the mosques," he lamented. Owing to the government's assiduous policing, "we [were forced to] practice our calling in the eye of a needle, and some of our youth would have killed to be able to give a brief sermon after ʿaṣr (late afternoon) prayers in a small prayer room in a remote village."

The second way in which such accounts are incomplete is that they fail to fully identify the link between mosques or religious institutions as protest spaces and

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[9] See also Bertus Hendriks on the political role of mosques in contemporary Iraq, "Iraq: The Complexities of an Artificial Nation," Radio Netherlands, January 27, 2005; available at: http://www.radionetherlands.nl/currentaffairs/region/middleeast/irq050127; accessed August 15, 2006

[10] Article 11, Law 38 of 1972 on the People's Assembly, Arab Republic of Egypt, July 2005.

the adoption of a religious ideology by the dissidents who gather there. Though Wiktorowicz (2004) declares that the Islamist use of mosques is "analogous to the use of churches by the civil rights movement in the United States," the analogy reveals a key lacuna in the theory: the mere employment of churches as organizing centers did not cause the leaders of the civil rights movement to pursue the application of Biblical punishments for violations of God's law. Why, then, is the use of mosques thought to have had this effect in the Arab world? What is thought to take place in the mosque to transform anti-regime dissent into *Islamic* dissent? After all, the 2011 protests that brought down Hosni Mubarak made significant use of mosques, such as Masjid ʿUmar Makram near the protests' epicenter in Taḥrīr Square, but this fact did not turn that uprising to some religious purpose. And after Mubarak's overthrow, mosques have even been used as staging points for protests *against* Islamists, as in February 2013, when protesters marched on the presidential palace – then occupied by the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi – from two mosques in the Cairo suburb of Heliopolis after the conclusion of Friday prayers.[11] What all of this demonstrates is that the link between religious forms of collective life and the dominance of Islamist political parties is more tenuous, contingent, and variable than previously thought. Greater theoretical precision about the precise role of these institutions, and the conditions under which they operate to generate Islamist victories, is necessary.

Provision of Social Services

The second materialist school of thought holds that it is the particular strategies of Islamic parties that render them more effective contestants for the suffrages of voters. Several authors have suggested that Islamists earn the loyalties of the masses through their provision of social services to those unable to afford them. An emblematic statement in this vein is Wedeen's (2003, 55): "As the state has retreated economically in the Middle East, Islamicist movements have tended to fill in the gaps, providing goods and services states do not proffer." This fundamentally clientelistic account of Islamism's appeal is echoed by Berman (2003, 260), who tells us that: "private, grass-roots, voluntary associations run by Islamists became important providers of social goods normally associated with the state." Sullivan and Abed-Kotob (1999, 23–4) suggest that "the willingness of Islamist groups, led by the Brotherhood, to step in and help local communities suffering from unemployment, poverty, inflation, and government neglect" is the major source of their "popularity" and "legitimacy." Likewise, Tessler and Nachtwey (1998, 624) attribute Islamist popularity to "the fact that many of these movements carry out an extensive array of welfare and development activities

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[11] Basil El-Dabh and Ahmed Aboul Enein, "'Morsy Is Mubarak' Protesters Chant," *Daily News Egypt*, February 11, 2013; available at: http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/02/11/morsy-is-mubarak-protesters-chant/.

at the grassroots level especially in poorer neighborhoods." According to Wiktorowicz (2004, 11) "Islamic NGOs [nongovernmental organizations], such as medical clinics, hospitals, charity societies, cultural centers, and schools, provide basic goods and services to demonstrate that 'Islam is the solution' to everyday problems in Muslim societies." Mahmood (2005), Rubin (2002), Kepel (1985), Ismail (1998), and Bayat (2002) all offer important contributions to this large and influential literature.

There is much to commend these explanations, which have deepened our understanding of how Islamist parties operate. However, much theoretical and empirical work remains to be done, both to measure the extent of Islamic social-service provision and to understand how it generates the electoral outcomes that are the focus of this study. The literature has generally avoided micro-level examination of the actual service-provision activities of Islamist parties. In part, this has been due to the difficulty of conducting political research in the authoritarian Middle East. As a result, the presence of Islamic – not Islamist – clinics, schools, and hospitals is simply assumed to lead directly and inexorably to popular support for Islamist parties.[12] However, without a detailed account of the link between Islamist services and Islamist electoral victories, endogenizing support for political Islam to the presence of Islamic services might be akin to attributing support for the Republican Party to the presence of the Salvation Army.[13] In fact, the pathbreaking contribution by Clark (2004b) actually found that Islamic social services in Jordan, Egypt, and Yemen were far more modest than previously believed, geared not to the poor but toward affluent individuals who could afford to pay higher prices, and, most notably, divorced from the activities of political parties.

Moreover, as noted earlier, another shortcoming of existing narratives of Islamist exchange of services for votes is that they have been insufficiently attentive to the nondemocratic, highly repressive, and extremely intrusive contexts in which Islamists have operated for much of their history. Authoritarian regulation of civil society would, at the very least, complicate any attempt by Islamists to employ the clientelistic strategy ascribed to them. Finally, and most important, we have yet to explain why competitors to Islamists are unable to provide the social services that are thought to have proven so useful to the partisans of religion. Inasmuch as social-service provision is a strategy open to all parties, why is it thought to be exclusively the province of Islamists? Is there anything to prevent nonreligious parties from distributing bottles of oil and bags of sugar?

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[12] See Cammett (2013) and Cammett and Issar (2010) for important exceptions.

[13] This despite the fact that the Salvation Army (founded 1865) espouses conservative social positions. The organization's International Moral and Social Issues Council has issued positional statements on such issues as gambling, Sabbath observance, and abortion that align it with the most conservative elements of the American political landscape. See Salvation Army, International Social Justice Commission, http://www1.salvationarmy.org/IHQ/www_ihq_isjc.nsf/vw-dynamic-index/0DE8368F450505098025761B00653CEB?openDocument.

Party Organization

In recent years, scholars seeking to identify nonideological factors behind Islamist success have increasingly turned to the internal, organizational characteristics of Islamist parties. Scholars of the Muslim Brotherhood in particular have highlighted the movement's emphasis on obedience and discipline, its highly selective recruitment procedures, and a cellular structure that enabled it variously to elude the depredations of the authoritarian state, monitor and discipline its members, and generate ties of loyalty and affection among its cadres.[14] And though this literature has generally focused on the Egyptian case, similar testimonials to the superior organization of Islamists can be found in Jordan (Taraki 1995; Kamrava 1998; Wiktorowicz 2000), Tunisia (Waltz 1986; Alexander 2000), Saudi Arabia (Byman 2005), and Indonesia (Liddle and Mujani 2005), to name a few.

Such accounts raise several questions, however. First, to the extent that formal organizational structures such as clandestine-cell systems and restrictive recruitment practices are thought to have any effect on a party's electoral fortunes, the literature on parties outside the Middle Eastern context has generally suggested that this effect is negative. For example, in his study of opposition-party politics in Mexico, Greene (2007) has argued that one of the reasons opposition parties in hegemonic party systems *lose* elections is that they transform into niche parties with highly restrictive recruitment procedures designed to attract only the most committed activists, whose emphasis on ideological purity forces the party to pursue programs of limited popular appeal. In other words, precisely those characteristics that are thought to be a source of Muslim Brotherhood electoral success are identified by scholars of other regions as sources of party failure.

Second, if differences in parties' internal structures have electoral consequences, why do Middle Eastern parties not converge on the most successful model? For example, Michels (1915) famously argued that the necessities of political competition would cause all political parties to tend toward bureaucratic oligarchy. Likewise, Downs (1957) argued that parties eventually converge in their programmatic orientations on some median voter, becoming ideological ciphers like Kirchheimer's (1966) "catch-all" parties (although he recognized that the extent to which this happened depended in some part on the electoral rule). As Scarrow (1996, 13) explains, scholars have long argued that "the characteristics of parties' extra-parliamentary organizations would converge as party organizers recognized the vote-winning effectiveness of their competitors' organizational

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[14] See, for example, Shadi Hamid, "How Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Will Win," Foreignpolicy.com, November 3, 2011; available at: http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/03/how_the_muslim_brotherhood_will_win); Eric Trager, "The Unbreakable Muslim Brotherhood," *Foreign Affairs*, July 2011; Mohamad Adam, "Brotherhood youth say tight structure is the key to its success," *Egypt Independent*, January 27, 2013; Tarek Masoud, "Why Islam Wins: Electoral Ecologies and Economies of Political Islam in Contemporary Egypt," Ph.D. thesis Yale University, Department of Political Science, December 2008, 204–14.

innovations." If this convergence has failed to occur after forty years of political competition between Islamists and their rivals, we need a theory that can account for it.

One might argue that it is the *religious* nature of Islamist parties that makes them so disciplined. This would explain both the absence of organizational isomorphism among religious and nonreligious parties in Egypt, and also why Islamist parties such as the Nūr Party are electorally potent despite not sharing the Brotherhood's formal organizational features (such as its cellular structure or restrictive recruitment practices). For example, Springborg (1989, 185) has suggested that secular parties are "vulnerable to … fissuring because they lack the abstract appeal of membership in the community of the faithful and the organizational backbone provided by the religious structure" that, presumably, Islamists enjoy. As DiMaggio (1998) has argued, religion can provide groups with a strong "organizational culture" that allows them to remain cohesive in a fluid environment. Even policy makers have endorsed this view. In recent remarks directed at Egyptian opposition parties during the administration of Mohamed Morsi, former U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton noted that "all too often people who are in the moderate, liberal world don't have the same commitment to organization and follow through" possessed by "those whose beliefs are so certain that they know exactly what they are going to try to achieve."[15] After all, the Brotherhood is not just a political organization, it is also a group of believers. As al-Bannā wrote, "We are, oh people, without boasting, the friends of God's Prophet, peace be upon him, carriers of his standard … and God's mercy to all mankind."[16]

It is impossible to spend time with the Brothers and not observe some evidence for the proposition that religion provides a powerful resource for maintaining cohesion within groups. Those who hold positions of authority within the Brotherhood (and, by extrapolation, Salafi parties) may do so because they are seen to be effective activists or good managers, but invariably they are also thought to have reached some enhanced level of piety and understanding of the faith. Thus, vertical ties between elites and subordinates are freighted with religious and spiritual authority in a way that may not exist in other organizations. This was demonstrated to me most vividly almost seven years ago, during the parliamentary campaign of the man who from June 30, 2012, to July 3, 2013, was president of Egypt, Mohamed Morsi. I had spent an evening during the month of Ramadan making the rounds of the district's mosques with Morsi, his eldest son, and several other Brothers. In each mosque we would join the prayers – every evening during Ramadan there are long nightly prayers (*ṣalāt al-tarāwīḥ*) – and during a lull in the prayers, the candidate would get up to make a speech. We ended the

[15] Speech by Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton, "International Religious Freedom," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 30, 2012; available at: http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/307322-1.

[16] Ḥasan al-Bannā, *Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn taḥt rāyat al-Qurʾān*, Dār al-Tawzīʿ wa al-Nashr al-Islāmiyya, n.d., 33

evening – by this time it was near dawn – in a mosque near Morsi's home in a part of al-Zaqāzīq called Filal al-Jāmiʿa (or University Villas).

The area was populated, as the name implies, by university faculty, and the mosque – Masjid al-Madīna al-Munawwara – was largely attended by Brotherhood members affiliated with the university and its teaching staff. The mosque had an upper floor where women and small children could attend prayers, and on this night, the mosque was nearly filled to capacity. The *fajr* (dawn) prayer was approaching, and we could hear the children upstairs running and playing and the women conversing with each other. Morsi took the microphone and began to give a version of the speech he had been giving all night – explaining how Muslim countries were in decline because they had strayed from Islam, how the West was betting on Muslims to remain neglectful of their faith, and how Muslims must confound their bet. The – admittedly mild – noise from the women's gallery continued, and I watched as Morsi's annoyance seemed to grow. Finally, he could contain himself no longer. Interrupting his speech, he thundered, "Fear God! We are not here to whoop it up, to have a nice outing with the kids! We are here to worship Allah!" It became clear that he was directing his comments squarely at the women upstairs: "Many brothers no longer come to the mosque for *laylat al-qadr* because the sisters and their children have ruined the atmosphere," he complained. The mosque grew quiet. Morsi concluded his harangue by instructing everyone to beg for forgiveness, asking them to repeat after him: "Oh Lord, you are forgiving, you love forgiveness, so forgive us." Everyone dutifully murmured their supplications.

The incident was unlike any interaction I had ever seen between a political candidate and his potential constituents. Morsi was not afraid of losing the votes of these women or their husbands or even of alienating them or hurting their feelings. Morsi's command was uncontested by that crowd. I remember thinking that Morsi's authority over his fellow Brothers and their families must clearly be religious in nature because, unlike at the other mosques, where he prayed behind the imām like the rest of us, when the time for the dawn prayer came in Masjid al-Madīna, Morsi led it. One could be forgiven for concluding, as I did then, that the Brotherhood's religiously inflected "organizational weapon" (Nasr 1994) was the source of its success. It is little wonder that one author went so far as to call the movement "unbreakable" (Trager 2011).

Even if religion constitutes a powerful resource for groups such as the Brotherhood, the question for us is whether it is somehow superior to other ideologies in generating the discipline, cohesion, and capacity for concerted action that is so often attributed to the Muslim Brotherhood. Though the results of recent Egyptian elections would seem to support this proposition, widening our empirical aperture undermines it. In order to ascertain whether religion endows religious parties with unique organizational advantages, I conducted a survey of the English-language scholarly and journalistic literature (using the Google Scholar and Google News databases) to identify all works that identify political parties with reference to their organizational qualities. My aim was to determine whether

religious parties are disproportionately represented among the ranks of the most organized. Specifically, I collected all works that identified a particular political party as the "best" or "most" "organized," "discplined," "cohesive," or "unified" party in its country. I emerged with 228 news articles and 96 scholarly articles. The earliest reference is a *New York Times* report on the victory of the Social Democratic Party in Germany, which quotes a local analyst's assessment that "the Socialists have to-day the best organized party in Germany."[17]

In all, the 324 news and scholarly articles collected refer to 108 political parties, which were then coded with respect to their ideological orientation. For example, thirteen were communist parties (as identified by their names), twenty-five were socialist (determined by whether they had the word *socialist* in their names or were listed in the member database of the Socialist International), and twelve were religious (including such parties as India's Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party, the Social Christian Party of Ecuador, the Lebanese Shīʿī party Hezbollah, and perhaps unsurprisingly, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood). The majority of parties defied straightforward categorization, and I assigned them to a residual category of "other." This includes parties that might reasonably be identified as leftist, such as the Iraqi Baʿth, the Action Group of 1950s and 1960s Nigeria, and the Scotch Nationalists. I justify this on the grounds that their most salient ideological characteristic was something other than their position on economic and distributional issues. The breakdown of party types is presented in Figure 1.3. What these data suggest is that, when we look at parties around the world and across different time periods, there is little reason to think religious parties have an inborn organizational advantage.

Indeed, from among the parties we were able to identify, the modal party in the list of most organized, disciplined, unified, and cohesive parties was leftist. This should not surprise us: There is no a priori reason to expect leftist ideologies such as Marxism or Communism to be less capable than religious ones of generating the deep commitment necessary to cement and empower political parties. Both are organized systems of belief, with their own comprehensive conceptions of the good, and equally encompassing metaphysical assumptions. Indeed, according to Zeldin (1969, 100) scholars have long argued that "Communism is itself a religion," that Marxism "is 'like a religion,' 'a spiritual phenomenon,' [and] 'a new faith.'" As Bertrand Russell (1954, 209) put it, "Christians have faith in the Resurrection, communists have faith in Marx's Theory of Value." This is evident in the way people often talk about ideologies – as things they believe in. For example, Lee (2006, 62) recounts a conversation with a Soviet citizen in the 1970s, in which her interlocutor declared, "I *believe* in Marx and Lenin. … You Americans are more decadent and spiritually bankrupt than we are, and that's going to destroy you in the end, mark

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[17] "The Royalists Rejoice: A Great Party Gain and also a Protest against Militarism," *New York Times,* June 17, 1893; available at: http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F50715F83F5 515738DDDAE0994DE405B8385F0D3.

Figure 1.3 Types of parties labeled best/most "organized," "disciplined," "unified," or "cohesive" in English-language scholarly and journalistic literature, 1893–2011 ($N = 108$).

my words." Similarly, Kerr (1962, 132) describes the (no doubt opportunistic) reaction of an Egyptian journalist to Nasser's nationalization of the press, "I shouted with joy into the telephone, 'Wonderful! Wonderful!' … I had known that this law would be issued some day, not because anyone in the government had told me, but because I *believe* in socialism." (Italics are mine.) Thus, if left parties have deficits when compared with Islamist ones, a lack of "religion" is not one of them.[18]

1.3 Social and Political Institutions and Islamist Success

All the preceding accounts no doubt shed light on important aspects of Islamism, and adjudicating among them may be a mug's game. After all, as Shapiro (2002) has noted, a particular social phenomenon may admit of multiple explanations. A voter casting a ballot for the Muslim Brotherhood may be defending the *sharīʿa*, expressing gratitude for social services, choosing a trustworthy steward of the

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[18] One might respond that the familiarity of Islam to Muslims renders it more capable of generating commitment than the unfamiliar ideologies of the left, which Muslims are unlikely to have grown up with in the way that they have with Islam. This is almost certainly true, and yet it is irrelevant to the hypothesis tested here – which is that Islamist parties are organizationally advantaged as a result of their ideology. Given that the number of active members of any party is small (and, as we saw in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, deliberately kept so by restrictive recruitment practices), the question is whether members of the Brotherhood are, as a result of that group's religious ideology, more committed to their cause than members of leftist movements are to their own. There is little reason to believe this is the case.

economy, responding to a particularly well-run parliamentary campaign, or – if he or she was voting before February 11, 2011 – striking a blow against an authoritarian regime. Or he or she may be doing some subset of these things simultaneously. What this study aims to do, then, is not so much clear the decks of alternative explanations as to subject them to careful empirical testing, explore the conditions under which they apply, determine how much of the observed variation each explains, and ultimately to enrich our understanding of the phenomenon of political Islam.

However, to put it plainly, in the debate between ideational and material explanations of Islamist electoral success, this book comes down primarily on the side of the materialists. As we shall see, explanations that emphasize the emotional power and attractiveness of Islamic ideology are simply insufficient to explain the variation we observe in the support for Islamists over time and space. Instead, we are more likely to gain purchase on the question of Islamist success by attending to the Islamists and their rivals primarily as political parties (El-Ghobashy 2005), whose primary business is the courting of votes. Thus, this book stands with Przeworski and Sprague (1988, 9), who declare that "the voting behavior of individuals is an effect of the activities of political parties." What it attempts to do, then, is to identify the factors that determine what activities different parties can pursue, to whom they can appeal, and their likelihood of reaping votes in return.

I argue that the key to understanding Islamist victories lies not in ideas or party tactics, but in the different political opportunities facing Islamists and their rivals. Key in this account are the social networks that voters inhabit and the ability of political parties in new, underdeveloped party systems to access these networks and communicate with voters. In an agrarian society such as Egypt, where 32 percent of the workforce is employed in agriculture, traditional patriarchal networks, dominated by landed elites, clan leaders, and local "notables," are enduring features of the rural social order (ʿArafāt and Bin Nafīsa 2005).[19] Citizens in more urban, industrialized quarters inhabit different sets of networks, including labor unions, workers' cooperatives, and civic associations based on occupation, but also including clientelistic networks dominated by employers, businessmen, and "powerful, honored" leaders (zuʿamāʾ) of poor "popular" (shaʿbī) communities (Singerman 1995, 170). And throughout the country, people participate in everyday networks of religious activity, such as mosques and Islamic charities. The relative density of these types of networks, the relative number of voters encompassed by them, and the relative embeddedness of party elites and militants within them, are important determinants of party success – especially as the disruption of authoritarianism creates moments of genuine electoral competition.

The account offered here builds on and validates much of the materialist perspective, and in particular the "resource mobilization" school, that points to Islamist parties' superior command of "societal and institutional" resources

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[19] Source: *CIA World Factbook, 2012*; available at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html.

(Wiktorowicz 2004, 34). But this study differs from those earlier contributions in three important respects. First, it attempts to explain the source of political Islam's hypothesized resource advantage. As noted earlier, the scholarly literature has either assumed that Islamists' enjoy greater resources because they work harder to establish grassroots ties to citizens, or because the authoritarian state is less able (or less willing) to repress them than their secular counterparts. This study tests those explanations and offers an alternative argument, rooted in the role of development processes in shaping the social institutions in which voters and parties are embedded. Second, it explores how Islamists use their resource advantage. Scholars have assumed that Islamists are able to employ mosques and religious institutions to mold the preferences and values of voters, transforming vague grievances into a belief in the necessity of the religious reformation of society. This study offers a much more limited view of the role of religious institutions in generating Islamist political victories. Specifically, it argues that these institutions provide opportunities for Islamists to communicate with voters and convince them of their ability to meet preexisting, exogenous, and largely nonreligious policy demands. And finally, this study interrogates the limits of the Islamist resource advantage, showing how its effect is mediated by political institutions, and how Islamists' real world policy performance can mitigate the advantages conferred on them by their superior embeddedness in mosques and other forms of religious collective life.

In the following section I describe the broad social landscape of Egypt before outlining how it contributed – both during authoritarianism and after – to the electoral strength of Islamists and the corresponding weakness of nonreligious parties, especially those that advocate on behalf of workers and the poor.

The Associational Landscape

The civic terrain in which Egyptian political parties operate is a mixture of formal and informal institutions and networks. Among the most prominent are those based on family and locality, particularly in rural areas (al-Munūfī 1980; ʿAbd al-Majīd and Musʿad 1992; Bin-Nafīsa and ʿArafāt 2005; Lust-Okar 2006). As Brown (1990, 112) writes in his pathbreaking study of peasant collective action in early twentieth century Egypt: "The family, very broadly defined, often formed the community involved in an action. From most accounts of incidents, it is clear that individuals often received the support not only of household members and close relatives but also scores, even hundreds of relatives (close and remote), friends, and associates (generally referred to as *ansar* in the newspaper accounts)." Though many of these informal networks of kith and kin were disrupted by agrarian reforms in the 1950s that broke up large landholdings and with them much of the power of the old landed families (Ansari 1986) and by steady migration to the cities, local loyalties appear to have remained strong. Watts (1993) notes that "the importance of the lineage, the family and clientage is felt at all levels of society. … At the provincial and local levels, local notables,

as reformed in the years after the 1952 revolution, have been able to act as inter-mediaries between ordinary people and the state." Singerman (2000, 49) has argued that the family "is an important avenue of participation that complements or parallels the formal political sphere."

If family and clan loom large in Egypt's informal associational terrain, the formal space has long been dominated by religious institutions.[20] For example, Western chroniclers of Egypt have for centuries noted the ubiquity of mosques in that land.[21] The great Orientalist Edward William Lane wrote in his 1836 *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* that "the mosques of Cairo are so numerous, that none of them is inconveniently crowded on the Friday."[22] Though Lane's observation about the capaciousness of Cairo's mosques no longer holds true – Friday prayers in most urban mosques are routinely crowded, and worshippers often spill out onto a mosque's surrounding streets – his description of their great number remains accurate. Figure 1.4 displays the number of mosques in Egypt as of 2006, broken down by governorate and type of mosque – "Friday mosques" (*jawāmiʿ*, singular *jāmiʿ*) are those large enough to conduct congregational prayers on Friday and are administered by the Ministry of Religious Endowments; "small mosques" (*zawāyā*, singular *zawya*) are prayer rooms usually established by locals. As of 2006, there were 71,931 Friday mosques and 21,118 small mosques in Egypt, for an average of one mosque for every thousand inhabitants.

As we have seen, scholars have long hypothesized that mosques served an important political role in the authoritarian Middle East, although they have generally ignored the extent to which regime-imposed restrictions on mosque-based organizing likely limited the extent to which mosques could serve as organizing centers for Islamist electoral campaigns. With the collapse of the Mubarak regime, however, and the subsequent – if temporary – advent of gen-uinely competitive elections, restrictions on the political use of mosques loosened considerably. For example, press accounts of the campaigns of Muslim Brother-hood and Salafist parliamentary candidates often noted that they involved visits to local mosques, where the candidates frequently delivered formal sermons. A typical example is the Freedom and Justice Party's report of the activities of two of its newly elected parliamentarians from al-Fayyūm – Ḥamdī Ṭaha and

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[20] This is in contrast to predominantly tribal societies such as Jordan, where formal tribal or family associations (*jamʿiyyāt ʿāʾiliyya*), registered as private voluntary organizations, exist in significant number. See Baylouny (2010).

[21] See, for example, James Menzies, *History of the Late Expedition to Egypt, under the Command of Lieutenant General Sir Ralph Abercrombie*, E. Miller, Glasgow, 1803, 85; Josiah Conder, *The Modern Traveller: A Popular Description, Geographical, Historical, and Topographical, of the various countries of the Globe*, Vol. 1: *Egypt, Nubia, and Abyssinia*, James Duncan, London, 1827, 271–2; Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Art of the Saracens in Egypt*, Librairie Byblos, Beirut, 1886, 7.

[22] Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians: Written in Egypt during the Years 1833, 34, and 35 Partly from Notes Made during a Former Visit to that Country in the Years 1825, 26, 27, and 28*, Vol. 1, John Murray, London, 1871, 100.
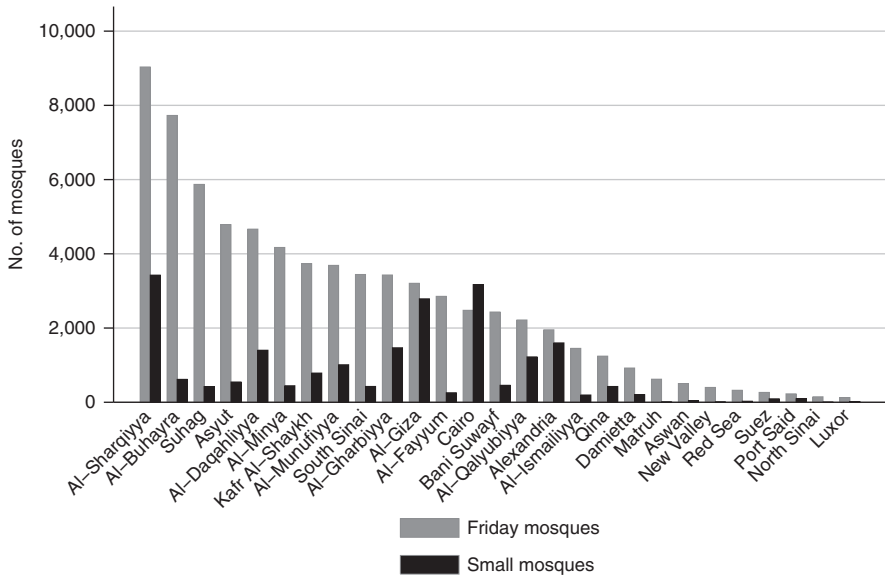
Figure 1.4 Mosques by governorate.

Aḥmad Ibrāhīm ʿUḍwī: "The tour of the two deputies began with Friday prayers, in which Aḥmad Ibrāhīm gave the sermon in the mosque of *Masākin Birnis* while Ḥamdī Ṭaha spoke in the mosque of the village of ʿAnk.[23]" Though it is likely that non-Islamist candidates also visited mosques, it was difficult for me to find reports of this. A search of the Wafd Party's newspaper revealed one story on the use of mosques in campaigning, and this was a 2010 account that criticized a Brotherhood candidate in North Sinai in 2010 for "contenting himself with offering each prayer in a different mosque and meeting the voters after each prayer."[24]

Egypt's mosques may seem like timeless features of the natural environment, but a large proportion are the product of efforts of private donors, volunteers, and Islamic charitable associations (*jamʿiyyāt khayriyya islāmiyya*).[25] The latter

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[23] Manṣūr Saʿdawī and Maḥmūd Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, "*Nuwwāb al-Ḥuriyya wa al-ʿAdālah bil-Fayyūm yuʾakkadūn* (The Deputies of the Freedom and Justice Party in al-Fayyum Affirm Their Responsibility toward the Voters)," www.hurryh.com (Freedom and Justice Party official website), December 17, 2011; available at: http://www.hurryh.com/Provinces/PartyActive_Details.aspx?News_ID=6771&ID=26.

[24] Khālid al-Sharif, "*Iḥbāṭ wa ʿuzūf an al-intikhābāt fī al-ʿArīsh* (Depression and Abstention from Elections in al-Arish)," al-Wafd (Cairo), November 25, 2010.

[25] Mosques are regulated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which places strict conditions on the building of new ones. See Aḥmad ʿAbd Allāh, "*Wazir al-ʿAwqaf al-Misri: Dawabit binaʾ al-masajid al-jadida hadafuha waqf iqamat al-zawāyā wa binaʾ masajid hadariyya* (Egyptian Minister of Religious Endowments: The Goal of the Guidelines for Building New Mosques Is to Halt the Establishment of Zawāyās and Promote Building Modern Mosques),"

make up the lion's share of private voluntary associations in Egypt, constituting what Wickham (2002) has referred to as a "parallel Islamic sector." According to Qandīl (2004), these associations have a long history in Egypt and are a natural outgrowth of Islamic traditions of almsgiving through *zakāt* (an obligatory 2.5 percent tax on savings) and *ṣadaqa* (voluntary acts of charity). The first such association, appropriately named al-Jamʿiyya al-Khayriyya al-Islāmiyya (The Islamic Charitable Society), was established in 1878 and, in addition to maintaining branches throughout the country, continues to operate a large hospital in the al-ʿAgūza section of greater Cairo. Perhaps the most well-known Islamic charity is al-Jamʿiyya al-sharʿiyya li-taʿāwun al-ʿāmilīn bil-kitāb wa al-sunna al-Muḥammadiyya (The Legitimate Society for the Cooperation of Those Who Work by the Book and Muḥammadan Traditions, henceforth abbreviated JS). This association was established in 1912, currently has almost 5,000 local units ranging from clinics to Qurʾanic study centers to preacher training institutes to day-care centers, and provides yearly support for almost half a million orphans.

There are also a large number of smaller, local associations such as al-Jamʿiyya al-Islāmiyya lil-khadamāt al-shāmila wa al-saʿāda wa al-taʿāwun (The Islamic Association for Complete Services, Happiness, and Cooperation) located in the town of Shubrā al-Khayma just north of Cairo, which offers a medical clinic, kindergarten, support for orphans, Qurʾanic lessons, and a mosque. Another such association is the Islamic Beneficence Society (Jamʿiyyat al-Khayr al-Islāmiyya) in the Nile Delta governorate of al-Sharqiyya, which specializes in offering funereal services to indigent families. Figure 1.5 shows the share of private voluntary organizations, as of 2007, that are Islamic, broken down by governorate. The data are drawn from a comprehensive database of more than 17,000 private voluntary organizations maintained by the Ministry of Social Affairs in twenty-four governorates.[26] I code an association as "Islamic" if it has the words *Islām*, *Sunna*, *Qurʾān*, *Muḥammad*, *Allāh*, *Muslim*, or *Masjid* in its name; or if its official description on file with the Ministry indicates that it is Islamic, involved in teaching the Qurʾan, or in building mosques; or if its postal address indicates that it is housed at a mosque. In more rural governorates, such as al-Munufiyya and al-Sharqiyya in the Nile Delta, the percentage of private voluntary organizations with Islamic characteristics approaches 50 percent. Overall, Islamic organizations account for 20 percent of the nationwide total.

Islamic charitable associations are often thought of as constituent parts of an Islamist clientelistic machine. For example, Berman (2003) has argued that the Muslim Brotherhood responded to state repression during the authoritarian period by establishing private voluntary organizations that would enable it to

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al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 9, 2002; available at: http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?article =92180&issueno=8502#.UT1AJtF4grg.

[26] I was not able to obtain the data for the governorate of al-Fayyūm (population 2.7 million).
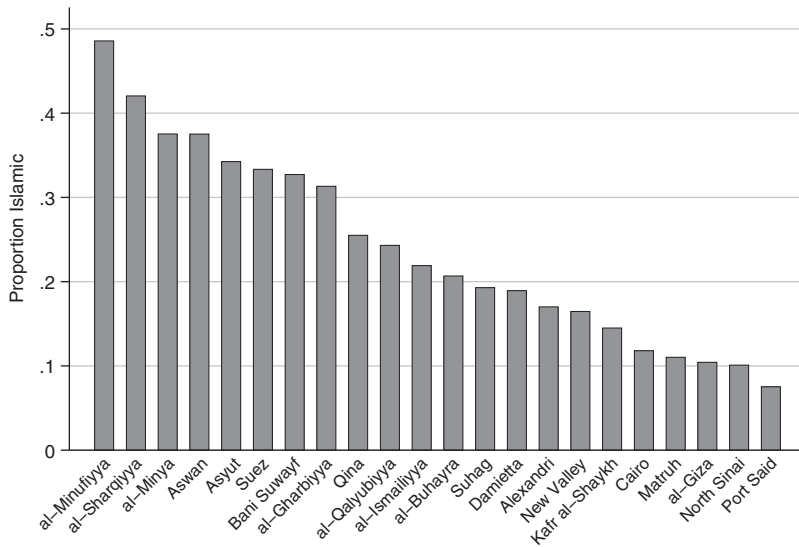
Figure 1.5 Proportion of private voluntary organizations that are Islamic, by governorate, 2007.

incubate Islamic revolution, much as Germany's National Socialists did in the early twentieth century. However, as we will see in Chapter 3, there is limited empirical support for this account. We can no more endogenize the Islamic charitable sector to the Muslim Brotherhood than we can attribute Christian charities in the West to conservative political parties. It is instead more accurate to think of religious associations as preexisting forms of social life that political parties attempt to tap into but whose existence is largely independent of those parties.

If Islamic associations only make up approximately 20 percent of the formal associational landscape in Egypt, the vast majority of associations are not religious in nature. For example, approximately 18 percent of the total number of private voluntary organizations registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs in the 2007 database are community development associations (*Jamʿiyyāt Tanmiyat al-Mujtamaʿ al-Maḥalī*). These associations (henceforth abbreviated CDAs) exist in nearly every village and community in Egypt and offer a variety of services from literacy classes to micro-credit loans to aid for the poor.

However, Egypt's CDAs are far less vital than their impressive numbers would suggest, and encompass few voters. As one writer put it, "In every village and town in Egypt there are associations bearing the name 'Community Development Association,' but they are completely divorced from what we understand as development, as corruption has nestled within them throughout the years of the old regime." Though these associations were ostensibly responsible for "encouraging small projects, developing trade and craft skills among youth and

girls, innovating creative social activities," instead they functioned as "family concerns whose members were limited to relatives" of CDA chairmen.[27] The feeble nature of CDAs is in part attributable to the fact that they were more auxiliaries of the state bureaucracy than genuinely independent organizations. ʿAlī al-Muṣaylḥī, former Minister of Social Affairs, in 2010 declared that CDAs "come under the scope of the general policy of the state and the strategy of the ministry to develop local communities and increase popular participation, alongside govermental efforts to determine the needs of local communities and provide the necessary resources for the implementation of development projects."[28]

The parastatal nature of CDAs is unsurprising when one considers that they actually emerged out of a government program initiated in the late 1940s to establish rural social centers to combat illiteracy and disease and "raise the standard of living in the Egyptian village in general."[29] According to Sullivan (1994, 36), the government's role in the genesis of the CDAs has given them a decidedly semiofficial character – they are often administered by public officials, receive funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs, and are generally perceived as "more of a public institution" than their religious counterparts. CDAs are often staffed by government employees paid directly by the Ministry of Social Affairs (whom they have petitioned in recent years for higher wages and permanent contracts).[30]

Other forms of nonreligious-association life are agricultural cooperatives and labor unions. Though there are more than 7,000 agricultural cooperatives in Egypt, like the CDAs, these were integrated into the state bureaucracy following the 1952 "free officers" coup (Pripstein-Posusney 1997; Bianchi 1986). Thus they are little more than "government controlled entities whose main function was to transmit government instructions about planting, marketing, and credit" (Brinkerhoff et al. 2002, 30). The same can be said of the country's formal labor unions, which are similarly quasi-state institutions. Though the Ministry of Manpower in 2009 and 2010 took the unprecedented step of recognizing independent unions for real estate tax workers, teachers, and healthcare technicians (Beinin 2012, 5), these unions remain in violation of law 35 of 1976, which stipulates that all unions must be part of the General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions (al-Ittiḥād al-ʿām li niqābāt ʿummāl Miṣr, abbreviated GFETU). Figure 1.6 shows membership in the trade union federation, broken down by governorate, toward

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[27] Saʿīd al-Shaḥḥāt, "*Jamʿiyyāt tanmiya al-mujtamaʿ al-maḥalī fi ʿaṣr al-thawra* (Community Development Associations in the Age of Revolution)," al-Yawm al-Sabiʿ, April 4, 2011.

[28] "*Al-Muṣaylḥī: 6898 jamʿiyya li-tanmiyat al-mujtamaʿ al-maḥali fī miṣr* (Al-Musailhy: [There Are] 6898 Community Development Associations in Egypt)," al-Misri al-Yawm (Cairo), November 15, 2010.

[29] *Social Welfare in Egypt*, Ministry of Social Affairs, Royal Government of Egypt, 1950, 11.

[30] Ashraf Kamāl, "*Ihtijaj muwazafi tanmiyat al-mujtamaʿ lil-mutalaba bil-tathbit Iḥtijāj muwwaẓafī tanmiyat al-mujtamaʿ lil-muṭalaba bil-tathbīt* (Protest of Community Development Employees Asking for Permanent Contracts)," al-Wafd (Cairo), July 22, 2012.
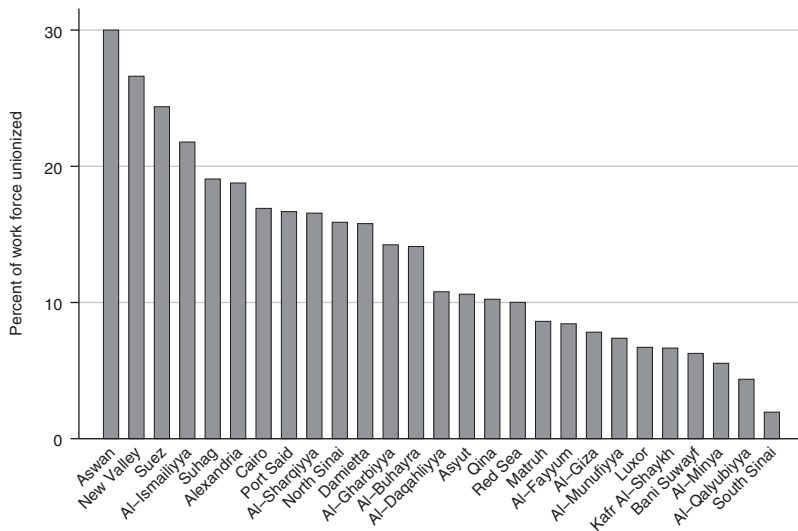
Figure 1.6 Labor union density, by governorate, 2006.

the end of the Mubarak era. Though membership in the union is mandatory, only around 12 percent of the Egyptian labor force was unionized, reflecting not only the effects of regime control but also the country's relatively small industrial base and the large informal sector, variously pegged between 40 and 60 percent of the labor force (Beinin 2012; El-Fattah 2012).

The role of Egypt's underdevelopment in limiting the size of its union sector is not well explored, as scholars have instead preferred to highlight authoritarian regulations and restrictions. However, even in the absence of such regime interventions, there would be little reason for us to expect organized labor to encompass large numbers of citizens or constitute a major component of Egyptian civic life. The mechanisms by which labor unions emerge – mass migrations to distant cities, the rending of the "institutional safety nets that had sustained [workers] in the countryside," and the development of mutual-benefit associations to pick up the slack (Hechter 2004, 422–4) – are relatively attenuated in Egypt. Thus Marx and Engels' (2012 (1848), 78) arguments about the "idiocy of rural life" aside, in the absence of massive industrialization and the attendant politics of the shop floor, class-based collective action is subordinated to traditional forms of social organization.

In order to generate a picture of the broad contours of Egyptian associational life, Figure 1.7 compares the share of private voluntary organizations made up of mutual-aid societies based on employment or occupation (such as retiree's associations or mutual-benefit societies for tradesmen) with both religious associations and CDAs. As we can see, employment-based forms of collective action are dwarfed by those based on religion and by the state-affiliated CDAs. The picture
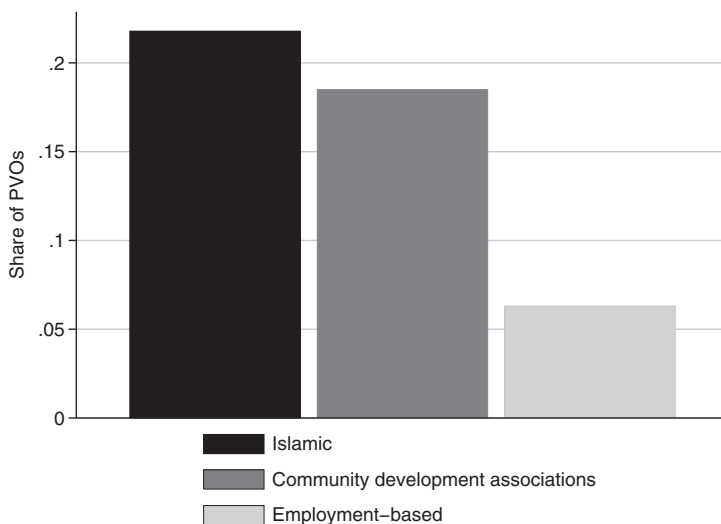
Figure 1.7 Religious versus nonreligious associations in Egypt.

we emerge with is of a formal civic landscape dominated by faith on the one hand and the state on the other, with little in the way of organizations bringing people together on the basis of class or occupation. And though one might argue that the formal sphere is deformed by the state, there is reason to believe that the informal sphere is broadly similar. Though workers and government employees have self-organized in ways that are genuinely independent of the state (Rutherford. 2008, 227–9), these primarily firm-level activities are largely concentrated in the country's industrial and urban centers (Beinin and el Hamalawy 2007).

Parties, Elections, and Communities

We now turn to the question of how the relative density of social networks of clientelism, class, and creed impact political outcomes. During the Mubarak era, in which legislative institutions were not meaningful producers of broad, national policy, electoral politics were instead about who could promise to deliver particularistic benefits to voters ('Arafāt and Bin Nafīsa 2005; Blaydes 2010; Masoud and Lust-Okar 2010). Since the ruling party controlled the distribution of state patronage, and co-opted most clientelistic networks based on local notability, opposition party success rested on the ability to build strong programmatic linkages to their core supporters. Parties of the left, whose main constituents were precisely those poor and rural dwellers most likely to be swayed by the regime's promises of patronage or by the demands of local clientelistic relationships, were thus at a particular disavdantage. In contrast, parties that could appeal to middle class and more affluent voters – who did not need to trade their suffrages for

benefits and who could instead vote based on ideological factors (such as opposition to corruption and dictatorship) – were most likely to be successful. Though the regime prevented Islamist political activists from putting their involvement in Islamic charitable and social service projects to political purposes, Brotherhood activists' embeddedness in religious institutions helped them to market their party to middle class voters who were most receptive to opponents of the ruling party.

To the extent that the advent of greater political competition after the fall of the Mubarak regime changed these dynamics, it did not do much to change the fortunes of pro-poor parties. Though the dissolution of the ruling party, and the disruption of its co-opted networks of patronage and clientelism meant that poor and rural constituencies were more available for mobilization by parties of the left, these parties – both due to decades of authoritarian control, and to patterns of underdevelopment that undermine class- and occupation-based collective action – found themselves without organic links to these constituencies. Thus, although Egyptians emerged from the Mubarak era with a strong distaste for the regime's neoliberal economic policies and an equally strong desire for redistribution and the strengthening of the welfare state, they were unable to attach these policy preferences to leftists. Instead, voters attributed these policies primarily to Islamists, who were now finally able to put their superior embeddedness in religious institutions to full political use, communicating with voters through a combination of programmatic and clientelistic appeals that few other parties could match. Thus, it was Islamists who were able to convince voters that they would correct the inegalitarian policies of the Mubarak era (even as they told other constituencies that they would continue them).

The general logic of the argument is laid out in figure 1.8. As noted earlier, in contrast to accounts that locate the superior political opportunities of Islamists, and the inferior ones of leftists, in the repressive policies of the authoritarian state, I locate them in developmental processes that limit the widespread emergence of nonkin and nonreligious social organizations. Thus, the theory presented here anticipates the same relationship between the level of development and the performance of religious parties that is posited by the secularization thesis – except where the secularization thesis holds that development's effect on the salience of religion is mediated through cognitive changes, I argue that it is mediated through social structures that affect parties' opportunities to make their case to voters. As we shall see in the following chapter, Islamists did not win – and leftists did not lose – because hordes of irrational poor people went to the polls to vote for the faith. On the contrary. The dominance of political Islam, and the tragedy of the left, is marked not by an absence of rationality, but an abudance of it.

Readers may conclude at this point that this is a book about religious parties that has precious little to say about religion. This is a charge to which I must plead guilty. By way of explanation, I offer an account of an exchange that took place almost forty years ago, between Muḥammad Ḥassanayn Haykal, former editor of
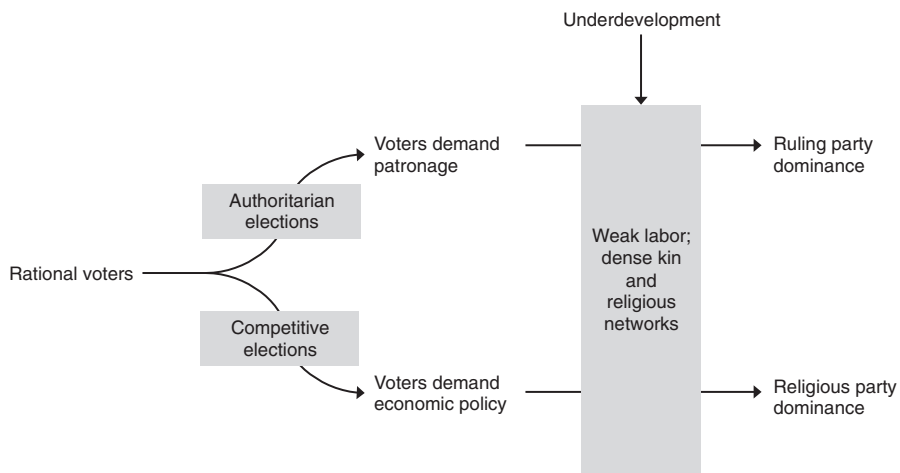
Figure 1.8 Relationship between development, political opportunity structures, and religious party dominance.

the Egyptian daily *al-Ahrām* and a top adviser to Egyptian Presidents Nasser and Sadat, and American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger amid the latter's famous "shuttle diplomacy." Haykal took it on himself to educate Kissinger as to the exact nature of the entity with which he was dealing. Egypt, he said, was far more than simply a country:

> I said to him: "You are dealing here with a force that transcends the frontiers of one country; you are dealing with an idea, a tide, a historical movement."

> Kissinger replied: "I don't hold with that way of thinking. I want to deal with visible forces, not with latent forces. I want to deal with states whose negotiating positions I can appraise accurately. Tell me how I am to negotiate with an idea, a tide, a historical movement?"[31]

Although Haykal probably saw Kissinger's retort as evidence of the materialistic, scheming nature of the latter's mind, this author can sympathize (if only in this) with the American Secretary of State. This book aims to treat Islamist parties not as "ideas or tides" or as elements of a diffuse social movement seen only obliquely in patterns of headscarf wearing, beard growing, or mosque attendance but as *political organizations* with strategies and resources that can be observed directly and measured with precision. Undoubtedly, something will be lost through this single-minded focus on the "visible" through this relative neglect of the power

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[31] From an April 15, 1978, essay by Haykal in *al-Anwar*, a Lebanese newspaper, quoted in "Reason is Not the Key," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4, (Summer 1978), pp. 156–157. The story is also recounted in Ajami (1978, 356).

of ideas and the motive force of faith. Of course, religion, faith, ideas, ideology, emotions, and passions matter, and we ignore them at our peril. Nonetheless, it is my hope that the approach outlined here will gain us more purchase on the phenomenon of interest than has hitherto been the case. In disenchanting political Islam, this study hopes to demystify it, to expose its internal clockwork, and to render it less awesome to its opponents and adherents alike.