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Trapped and Untrapped: Mubarak's Opponents on the Eve of His Ouster

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Abstract
Why did Hosni Mubarak's rule in Egypt last thirty years, and why did it fall in a mere eighteen days? This dissertation uses Mubarak's Egypt as a case study for understanding how autocratic regimes can use formally democratic institutions, such as multiparty elections, to "trap" their opponents and thereby enhance their durability, and also investigates the extent to which this strategy may undermine regime durability. Through over 200 interviews conducted in the months preceding and following the 2011 Egyptian uprising, I find that autocratic regimes can manipulate legal opposition parties to coopt their opponents and thereby prevent them from revolting. But over time, the strict limits under which regimes permit their "trapped" parties to operate undermine these parties' credibility as regime opponents, and thus encourages newly emerging oppositionists to seek other - potentially more threatening - means of challenging their regimes. As a result, regimes that rely on "electoral authoritarian" institutions to enhance their longevity may be more vulnerable than the literature commonly suggests.

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TRAPPED AND UNTRAPPED:
MUBARAK’S OPPONENTS ON THE EVE OF HIS OUSTER

Eric Trager

A DISSERTATION

In

Political Science

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2013

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To my wife, my best friend Alyssa
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ABSTRACT

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MUBARAK’S OPPONENTS ON THE EVE OF HIS OUSTER

Eric Trager
Robert Vitalis

Why did Hosni Mubarak’s rule in Egypt last thirty years, and why did it fall in a mere eighteen days? This dissertation uses Mubarak’s Egypt as a case study for understanding how autocratic regimes can use formally democratic institutions, such as multiparty elections, to “trap” their opponents and thereby enhance their durability, and also investigates the extent to which this strategy may undermine regime durability. Through over 200 interviews conducted in the months preceding and following the 2011 Egyptian uprising, I find that autocratic regimes can manipulate legal opposition parties to coopt their opponents and thereby prevent them from revolting. But over time, the strict limits under which regimes permit their “trapped” parties to operate undermine these parties’ credibility as regime opponents, and thus encourages newly emerging oppositionists to seek other – potentially more threatening – means of challenging their regimes. As a result, regimes that rely on “electoral authoritarian” institutions to enhance their longevity may be more vulnerable than the literature commonly suggests.
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Introduction

On January 7, 2011, I interviewed former Egyptian State Security Court Judge Said Ashmawy at his apartment in Cairo’s posh Zamalek district. I had just started another round of fieldwork for my dissertation on Egypt’s “durable authoritarianism,” and given State Security’s central role in manipulating the Mubarak regime’s political opponents, Ashmawy promised to be a fascinating interviewee. But he was also astonishingly odd.

The oddness began from the moment I approached his building. A police officer was expecting me, and he escorted me to an elevator, locked us inside, unlocked us when we reached Ashmawy’s floor, and accompanied me to Ashmawy’s door, leaving only after he saw that I had safely entered Ashmawy’s apartment. The septuagenarian Ashmawy welcomed me tersely, guiding me along a narrow path through a bric-a-brac-crammed reception room, and into a living room that contained even more bric-a-brac: glass animals, antique furniture, porcelain figurines, brass lamps, wood carvings – the works. The room was dark, and Ashmawy sat at a distance from me, with an antique couch separating us, while an antique lampshade further obscuring his face. As we chatted, elevator muzak hummed in the background, with the occasionally recognizable show tune piping through.

Despite the odd setup, the interview went well enough. For about an hour, Ashmawy mostly confirmed much of what dozens of opposition party leaders had already told me: that Egypt’s opposition parties were tightly controlled by State Security; that State Security’s primary task was enforcing certain generally understood “red lines,” such as bans on criticizing the military and the Mubarak family; and that opposition parties
often received various benefits, including financial rewards, for agreeing to this arrangement. When we moved on to other topics, he explained that he had been granted 24-hour police protection after receiving threats from the Muslim Brotherhood, which objected to his criticisms of the group’s Islamist ideology. He also discussed his career, which included authorship of over thirty books and an honorary degree from Harvard University – too little time for a wife, he said.

Suddenly, our conversation halted. “When are you going to see Rob Satloff next?” Ashmawy asked me, referring to the executive director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, who had given me Ashmawy’s phone number

“I don’t know,” I replied. I was set to be in Egypt for the next three months, and had no plans to visit Washington thereafter. “Maybe in six months.”

“Well, take down a message for me,” said Ashmawy. “And don’t e-mail it to him.”

According to my notes, the message went as follows (emphasis mine):

**Stability is not with the regime. The regime here is fragile.** so it's better to work on both sides: with the regime and with the people. And in 2-3 years, we can [discredit] the slogans of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood is now gaining an advantage because people hate the regime, and find nothing in the Wafd party. And [opposition party] Tagamnu, [opposition leader] Ayman Nour, [and Ghad party leader] Moussa Mustafa Moussa are not popular, and are not working for principles. They just want [to achieve personal, i.e., corrupt] benefits. …

There should be a state president and a government with a real parliament that can make real decisions. There should be some people in charge of the legislature, and you need technocrats in agriculture, transportation, and education to lift the country. And the first thing that we must do is work against corruption, and we need to restore the rule of law to regain public trust. Currently there is no rule of law. It's the role of the president or the [ruling National Democratic] Party, so people are not convinced by anyone, and they view law as a tool for ruling them. And as you see in Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt, rulers are looking for money, and some of them are surrounded by corrupt people while the people [i.e., general public] cannot eat. **There were revolutions in Algeria and Tunisia, and it's coming to Egypt because the people see others [e.g., officials] making money and they cannot find food.**
The date, again, was January 7, 2011. The “revolutions” that he was observing in Algeria and Tunisia had not crossed my radar. And they were not, in any event, revolutions just yet.

Moreover, my research on Egyptian opposition parties up until that point, which included over 100 interviews with opposition party leaders since the summer of 2010, had led me to believe that Hosni Mubarak was a remarkably efficient authoritarian ruler. Only two months earlier, Egypt’s opposition parties had been demoralized in the most rigged elections in Egyptian history – without any perceptible response from either these parties or the Egyptian public more broadly. Indeed, Mubarak had seemingly frustrated his opponents to the point of exhaustion, and therefore his regime appeared remarkably stable. Even despite his reported health problems, it was widely expected that he would “run” for his sixth six-year term in September 2011 – and, of course, win.

So as I surveyed the bric-a-brac-crammed room, arched my neck to look past the antique lampshade that otherwise obscured Ashmawy’s face, and heard him predict an anti-Mubarak revolution while a lyrics-less version of “Don’t Cry for Me Argentina” played in the background, only one thought crossed my mind: this guy is nuts.

“Don’t e-mail it to Rob,” he repeated. “You have to tell him in person.”

After a brief tour of his figurines, which I had requested, Ashmawy dialed his 24-hour police guardian, who arrived and escorted me out of the building. As with most of my interviewees, I did not expect to hear from him again.

Yet the following day, Ashmawy gave me a call. “Did you tell Rob what I told you?” he asked.

“No, you told me to tell him in person.”
“I really think you need to e-mail it now,” he said. “E-mail it now.”

So later that evening, I e-mailed Satloff, transcribing Ashmawy’s message verbatim. I strongly considered including my own view that Ashmawy was crazy, but thought better of it. Ashmawy, after all, was a former State Security Court judge and, for all I knew, that meant he could monitor my e-mail. I thus kept my message to Satloff neutral. “I look forward to sharing my own views on this in the future,” I signed off.

Exactly one week later, mass demonstrations in Tunisia, to which I had barely paid attention, forced longtime dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali’s ouster. Ashmawy suddenly seemed like a sage, and he called me to gloat.

“See?” he said.

“Yeah,” I replied. “Nice job predicting that one. I’m impressed.”

It was the last time we spoke. But just over two weeks later, as I stood on a long line outside of Cairo International Airport waiting to be evacuated from Egypt amidst the revolt that would ultimately end Mubarak’s dictatorship, my meeting with Ashmawy was all I could think of. The notion of a popular uprising against Egypt’s notoriously stable regime had seemed so ridiculous, and the figurine-filled setting in which Ashmawy made his prediction had only affirmed for me its ridiculousness. But as it turned out, Ashmawy was extremely prescient, and it was my dissertation on “durable authoritarianism” that looked ridiculous. It had all happened so fast.

The intellectual whiplash that I was feeling at that moment, and which I still occasionally feel today, motivates the central puzzle of this dissertation. How was a seemingly stable ruler’s thirty-year dictatorship toppled after only eighteen days? Or, more broadly, how can authoritarian regimes that last so long fall so quickly?
The Argument

In this dissertation, I argue that formally democratic institutions can bolster autocratic regimes’ longevity. While previous studies of “durable authoritarianism” have examined the role of strong ruling parties in preventing intra-regime fissures\(^1\) and the use of tightly controlled parliamentary elections to distribute political patronage and accommodate pro-regime elites,\(^2\) this dissertation examines opposition parties under Mubarak to show how regimes can coopt legalized opposition parties, thereby “trapping” potential opponents within them and preventing insurrection.

By looking granularly at the ways in which Egypt’s regime dealt with three opposition parties – the Tagammu, Wafd, and Ghad parties – I argue that opposition parties are willing to accept profound limitations on their activities under autocratic conditions for a number of reasons, some of which echo the findings of previous works on opposition parties under authoritarianism. For example, some opposition party members receive political patronage in exchange for participating in the regime’s pseudo-democratic structures,\(^3\) and the parties are often “motivated by higher principles” – such as promoting their ideological programs – than merely attaining power.\(^4\) In addition to these explanations, however, I argue that opposition parties under autocratic regimes often serve as social clubs for like-minded people from similar personal backgrounds, which is why members stay attached to parties that have no shot of winning. Moreover, the members of these parties often take a long view of history, and believe that they can

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1 See Smith (2005), Brownlee (2007), and Reuter and Remington (2009).
3 See Kassem (1999).
preserve their party so that it will compete in a post-authoritarian future by playing according to the regime’s rules for the time being.

Yet, as I further argue, regimes that rely on electoral authoritarian institutions to enhance their longevity are more vulnerable than the literature commonly assumes. The fact that autocratic regimes’ formally democratic institutions are not, in fact, democratic at all damages their credibility over time, and may deter newly emerging oppositionists from participating in them. When this happens, the newly emerging oppositionists may refuse to participate in autocratic elections and/or heavily manipulated opposition parties, and may seek other – potentially more threatening – means for protesting their regimes, which could undermine these regimes’ durability.

To illustrate these dynamics, I examine the emergence of pro-democratic activists in Egypt during in the first decade of the twenty-first century, analyzing these activists’ refusal to participate in the Mubarak regime’s parliamentary elections or legalized opposition parties, which they viewed as fraudulent. Because the regime’s electoral authoritarian institutions lacked credibility, I argue, these activists sought other means of challenging the regime and, through trial and error, developed a set of protest strategies that ultimately sparked Egypt’s 2011 uprising and Mubarak’s ouster. This argument carries an implicit counterfactual: had the Mubarak regime made its formally democratic institutions appear more credible, it might have been able to trap these activists and thereby prevent the uprising from happening when it did. Still, this is easier said than done, since an autocratic regime’s elections cannot, by definition, be credible.

Outline for the Rest of This Dissertation
The political science literature on authoritarianism offers compelling explanations for how regimes can manipulate formally democratic institutions – such as ruling parties, parliamentary elections, and opposition parties – to bolster their longevity. My first chapter examines this literature, and argues that electoral authoritarian institutions can enhance regimes’ durability: ruling parties can manage intra-elite conflicts; parliamentary elections can be used to distribute spoils; and opposition parties can be coopted through political patronage or policy concessions. I further argue that oppositionists will stay committed to opposition parties that cannot win for reasons that the literature does not appreciate: these opposition parties serve as social clubs for like-minded individuals with similar backgrounds, and they can also protect their members from the regime’s more extreme forms of repression. By allowing oppositionists to join supine parties to which they feel personal attachment, regimes can prevent these individuals from pursuing other – potentially more threatening – means of opposing them.

Yet, as I also argue in Chapter 1, the literature on electoral authoritarianism looks too narrowly at elites for sources of potential regime breakdown, thereby overlooking the many other societal forces that can undermine regimes’ durability. Specifically, the literature ignores the extent to which electoral authoritarian institutions are inherently weak: the unwinnability of autocrats’ elections and subservience of the opposition parties that participate in them undermines these institutions’ credibility, and may lead newly emerging regime opponents to seek other outlets for protesting the regime. For this reason, I argue, the literature on durable authoritarianism must look beyond the elites who have been coopted by formally democratic institutions in assessing potential threats to durability.
To illustrate how autocratic regimes manipulate opposition parties to keep them “trapped” and thereby prevent their members from challenging the regime, Chapters 2 and 3 feature case studies of the Tagammu and Wafd parties, respectively. As I show, when these parties were founded, they contained prominent opposition leaders whom the regime feared: the founders of the Tagammu Party were major figures during the 1977 Bread Riots, during which President Anwar Sadat had to call in the military to restore order; and the founders of the New Wafd party were elite leaders from the original Wafd, which was Egypt’s ruling party before the 1952 Free Officers Revolution. But by the eve of the January 2011 uprising, the regime had subdued both parties through a variety of tactics, such as the use of political patronage to buy the parties’ leaders’ quiescence. Moreover, though many Wafd and Tagammu leaders recognized that their parties were not truly opposing the regime, they stayed committed to the parties anyway because these parties were effectively social clubs consisting of like-minded and similarly situated people. As a result, these parties offered only modest criticism of the regime and abstained from street demonstrations.

Still, opposition groups occasionally refuse to accept the implicit exchange of legalization and patronage for abiding by the regime’s “red lines.” In these cases, I argue, regimes abandon their efforts at coopting opposition parties and instead resort to outright repression, which aims to contain or, when possible, destroy these parties. To examine these dynamics, Chapters 4 and 5 provide case studies of the liberal Ghad party and Muslim Brotherhood, respectively. As I will show, the Mubarak regime responded to the Ghad party’s strong criticisms by jailing its leader and placing the party under a puppet leadership, and it prevented the Brotherhood from mobilizing its nationwide
support networks against the regime through a series of harsh crackdowns. While these tactics never “trapped” either the Brotherhood or the original leaders of the Ghad party – both remained strong critics of the regime – they rendered the Ghad party ineffective and successfully deterred the Brotherhood from participating in anti-regime protest activities.

While regimes’ use of formally democratic institutions to coopt some opposition parties can enhance their durability, these institutions contain an inherent weakness: they lack credibility, and may thereby deter newly emerging oppositionists from participating in them. I use a case study of Egypt’s revolutionary activists in Chapter 6 to illustrate these dynamics, observing these activists’ emergence during the final decade of Mubarak’s rule and their refusal to join either the “trapped” opposition parties, which the activists viewed as frauds because of the parties’ avoidance of anti-regime protest activities.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I argue that regimes’ use of electoral authoritarian institutions to trap opposition parties might be insufficient to enhancing their durability. Taking a granular look at Egypt’s opposition movements and parties on the eve of the 2011 anti-Mubarak revolt, I show that the “trapped” opposition parties’ refusal to participate in the January 25 protests could not ultimately prevent the uprising that followed. This is because the “untrapped” activists, who studiously avoided the regime’s electoral authoritarian institutions, developed a series of protest strategies through trial-and-error that succeeded in mobilizing the masses into the streets – precisely the outcome that Mubarak’s democratic façade intended to preempt.
Chapter 1

Durable Authoritarianism and Authoritarian Vulnerability

Hosni Mubarak’s three-decade rule and eighteen-day demise presents an interesting puzzle for political science: how can regimes last so long yet fall so rapidly? As I argue in this chapter, the academic literature on “durable authoritarianism” offers many valuable insights into the types of institutions that autocrats can use to bolster the longevity of their regimes. One subset of this literature, which focuses on electoral authoritarian regimes, examines the extent to which non-democratic regimes can use formally democratic institutions – such as ruling parties, parliamentary elections, and legalized opposition parties – to manage potential conflicts within the regimes, coopt potential opponents, and thereby prevent the regime from breaking down. Indeed, the Mubarak regime’s use of these tools explains, at least partially, its thirty-year durability.

Yet as I further argue, the literature on electoral authoritarianism focuses too narrowly on elites, and therefore misses the multitude of sources from which severe threats to regimes’ durability may emerge. This literature also fails to acknowledge a weakness inherent in electoral authoritarian regimes: namely, that their heavily manipulated elections and severely coopted opposition parties ultimately lack credibility with the public, and may thereby deter newly emerging activists from participating in them. These shortcomings in the electoral authoritarianism literature explain why few political scientists anticipated Egypt’s 2011 uprising: they were too focused on elites as the possible source for regime breakdown, and failed to appreciate how the lack of credibility regarding the Mubarak regime’s formally democratic structures might drive oppositionists to find new – and ultimately more potent – tools for protesting the regime.
I. Electoral Authoritarianism and Its Shortcomings

The literature on electoral authoritarianism provides some useful explanations for understanding how autocratic regimes can manipulate formally democratic institutions to bolster their durability. But its emphasis on ruling parties as key regime stabilizers overlooks threats to the regime that might emerge from the opposition. Meanwhile, even those studies that examine regimes’ manipulation of opposition parties to enhance their stability overstate the extent to which this strategy can keep regime opponents “trapped.” In this section, I trace the emergence of the electoral authoritarian literature; analyze its shortcomings; and explain the motivation for this dissertation.

a. The Theoretical Roots of Electoral Authoritarianism

The realization that formally democratic institutions could be manipulated to enhance the durability of non-democratic regimes emerged following the Cold War. The disparate political trajectories of post-Soviet states led scholars of political transitions to question the “third wave” transitions literature of the 1970s and 1980s, which viewed intra-regime fissures as catalyzing democratization, and examine whether different types of regimes yielded different transitional outcomes. The realization that some transitions from autocratic rule yielded outcomes that appeared to be somewhere between democracy and authoritarianism led scholars to question the very dichotomy between these two forms of government. Analysts were particularly confused by the emergence

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6 For example, Linz and Stepan (1996) argued that prior regime type affects prospects for democratization, especially in “sultanistic” and “post-totalitarian” countries. Geddes (1999) demonstrated this link between prior regime-type and prospects for democratization empirically, noting that single-party regimes are the least likely to break down, while military regimes are the most likely to do so. McFaul (2002) similarly acknowledged that political transitions might yield non-democratic regimes, arguing that the ideology of the most powerful party often determined the emerging regime type.
of regimes in which autocratic rule persisted despite the adoption of formally democratic institutions, such as elections and independent courts.\textsuperscript{7} Initially, political scientists responded to this puzzle by specifying an intermediate regime-type between democracy and authoritarianism, since, “every step toward political liberalization matters both for the prospect of a transition to democracy and for the quality of political life as it is daily experience by abused and aggrieved citizens.”\textsuperscript{8} Yet scholars struggled in naming this new regime-type, and initially questioned whether regimes were deliberately subverting formally democratic institutions,\textsuperscript{9} or whether the institutions were, themselves, simply too weak to promote political liberalization.\textsuperscript{10} Scholars also disagreed on whether this “gray zone,” in which formally democratic institutions coincided with autocratic tendencies, constituted a point on the path towards democracy,\textsuperscript{11} or whether it represented the entrenchment of autocratic rule through more sophisticated means.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{9} Diamond (2002) argued that the formally democratic institutions of “hybrid regimes” mask “the reality of authoritarian domination” (33). Levitsky and Way (2002) agreed: the formally democratic institutions of “competitive authoritarian regimes” are violated “so often and to such an extent … that the regime fails to meet conventional minimum standards for democracy” (52).
\textsuperscript{10} O’Donnell (1999) blamed the institutions, arguing that “delegative democracy” features elections that only hold incumbents “vertically accountable”; though incumbents can be voted out of office, they may otherwise govern as they wish without much pushback from other governmental figures. See 160, 164-166.
\textsuperscript{11} Brumberg (2002) argued that the partial openness of “liberalized autocracies” gives “oppositionists a voice in the parliament or even the cabinet” and might encourage autocratic rulers to liberalize when they can accommodate the opposition at a relatively low cost (57-58). Posusney (2005) also viewed “electoral authoritarian” regimes as a mere step behind democracy, arguing that even manipulated elections can provide a forum for diverse segments of society to debate their collective future, as well as new opportunities for political mobilization (92). Hadenius and Teorell (2007) backed this view statistically: examining a variety of regime-types, they found that “limited multiparty regimes” have short life spans (9.97 years) and democratize most frequently (143, 152).
\textsuperscript{12} Schedler (2002) argued that formally democratic institutions under otherwise autocratic regimes comprised “authoritarian window-dressing” to appease foreign and domestic critics (36-37). Ottaway (2003) agreed: in her study of “semi-authoritarian” regimes, she noted that formally democratic institutions
Increasingly, the “electoral authoritarianism” literature has accepted this latter view: elections under autocracy reinforce non-democratic rulers’ power. In this vein, autocratic elections are viewed as “competitive clientelism,” in which candidates vie to act as intermediaries in patron-client relationships, or partake in the system for their own enrichment. Autocratic elections also “institutionalize dominance through formal channels, provide important information for the regime regarding the performance of party leaders and rank-and-file cadre, offer focal point for the redistribution of wealth to state employees and the citizenry, provide a façade for high-level corruption, and enhance the international reputation of the autocrat while strengthening his political hold.”

**b. The Ruling Party Bolsters Durability – But Cannot Prevent Breakdown**

Much of the scholarly literature on electoral authoritarianism focuses on one formally democratic institution in particular: the ruling party. To some extent, this is a consequence of the literature’s emergence from studies of third-wave transitions, which emphasize intra-regime splits as the cause of regime breakdowns and which consequently led many scholars to view ruling parties as vital for preventing intra-regime splits that might catalyze political transitions.

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Specifically, scholars view ruling parties as “the aggregator and regulator of competing interests,” as well as vital to maintaining the regime’s internal solidarity by permitting “the play of factions and for recurrent reconciliation.” Ruling parties are especially conducive to a regime’s durability when its members have “predictable access to policy-making and political power and stood more to gain than to lose by standing by” the regime. Finally, strong ruling parties ensure the regime’s domination of the political sphere: they support grassroots party organizations that “maintain authoritarian stability ‘on the ground’”; “deter defectors by ensuring that defectors will fail”; “facilitate executive succession”; organize electoral victories; and “facilitate legislative control” by keeping the regime’s allies in line.

Studies of Egypt’s post-1952 regime echo many of these findings. While accounts of the Nasser years (1954-1970) view the ruling party as vital to channeling mass support during moments of crisis, the ruling party’s purpose later shifted towards managing conflicts within the regime once the regime stabilized. The National Democratic Party (NDP), which President Anwar Sadat founded in 1978, thus served as “a tool for controlling the legislature,” through which the party could more easily “obtain

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legal sanction for the regime’s policies.”

This party’s “inextricable ties to the state and the latter’s control of vast resources” encouraged NDP members to solve their disputes within the party rather than defecting, since defection would entail sacrificing access to these resources. The NDP further “curbed elites’ incentives to exit the regime or push for change from the outside” by “providing opportunities for long-term personal advancement and political influence.”

While the strength of Mubarak’s ruling party likely contributed to the longevity of his regime, it could not ultimately prevent the 2011 uprising. Oppositionists, after all, catalyzed the uprising, and it took the NDP nine days to respond to the revolt, by which point it responded weakly and was unable to save the regime. In turn, this dissertation emphasizes a second type of formally democratic institution under authoritarianism as a possible enhancer of regime durability: opposition parties.

c. Opposition Parties: Regime Enhancers, Political Sideshows, Or Both?

Political scientists also viewed regimes’ legalization of opposition parties as explaining autocratic durability. According to the scholarly literature on electoral authoritarianism, regimes permit opposition parties for a number of reasons. Opposition parties provide key information to the regime on the strength of the opposition; signal political competitiveness and thereby promote economic investment; and serve as a “safety valve” that renders “much opposition activity harmless while satisfying at least

some of the political expectations of the small but influential … intelligentsia and boosting the regime’s democratic credentials.” Moreover – and perhaps most importantly – regimes permit opposition parties because they have learned from history that excluding elites from political power often invites rebellion, and they therefore distribute political and economic spoils to buy off their would-be opponents.

Multiparty elections and legislatures are vital to this distribution process, serving as forums in which rulers and outside groups negotiate over the distribution of patronage. To ensure that the opposition can never gain too much strength, regimes structure the rules of the electoral game to their benefit. Moreover, the fact that opposition parties must participate in these elections in order to receive any benefits “traps” them in a set of unwinnable electoral institutions and forces them to accept the quiescence-for-spoils bargain. Previous political studies of Egypt echoed these findings, and portrayed opposition parties under Mubarak as hollow, spoils-seeking entities that made no real attempts at challenging the regime.

Yet as I began researching Egypt’s Mubarak-era opposition parties, these explanations seemed a bit too neat. For starters, very few opposition party members actually received political or economic patronage from the regime, so clientelism could not explain why thousands of Egyptians joined these parties. Moreover, there were

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28 Ayalon 206.
31 Lust-Okar 6.
33 According to Kassem (1999), multiparty elections constituted a form of “clientelist control,” ensuring “that representatives from opposition parties are regarded by the majority of voters as intermediaries between themselves and the central government, rather than as representatives of a party ideology” (25).
noteworthy examples of Egyptian opposition parties defecting from the quiescence-for-spoils bargain, meaning that the legalization of opposition parties to “trap” the opposition was an imperfect strategy for the regime at best. Finally, the fact that these opposition parties were widely viewed as “fake” – i.e., as not really opposing the regime in any meaningful way – made their existence seem more like a political sideshow than a serious autocratic strategy for preserving control.

These theoretical objections to the literature on electoral authoritarianism motivated me to research Egyptian opposition parties for my dissertation, and I set off to Cairo in June 2010 with a number of questions. Why did the Mubarak regime permit the existence of opposition parties that often included opposition-oriented “notables and activists”? How did it prevent these parties from defecting from the supposed quiescence-for-spoils bargain, and how did the regime respond in those instances when parties emerged unexpectedly as vocal opponents? And why did people participate in parties that were widely viewed as frauds, won very few seats, and thus secured political patronage for only a few of their members?

II. Research Methodology

Since answering these questions required taking a granular look at the workings of opposition parties and their relations with autocratic regimes, I opted for a single-country study in which I interviewed dozens of members within each of four different parties. I chose to study Egypt because it was a country with which I was intimately familiar, since I had lived in Egypt as a Fulbright grantee from 2006-2007 and speak decent Egyptian Arabic.

I used an interview-centric approach to collecting my data for two reasons. First, interviews were the best means of learning about the ways in which Egyptian opposition parties interacted with the Mubarak regime. As former State Security Judge Said Ashmawy told me when I asked about other forms of evidence for documenting the regime’s treatment of parties, “There are no papers.” Second, interviews were the most efficient way to gather the information necessary for understanding the question that initially piqued my interest: what kind of person would join a hopelessly “trapped” opposition party in an authoritarian regime? I thus began my dissertation research by surveying opposition party members on their family backgrounds, personal backgrounds, educational backgrounds, professional backgrounds, social affiliations, and relationships with other political parties, including the ruling NDP. It would have been nearly impossible to collect this kind of data through any other means.

To facilitate these research interviews and ensure their dependability, I hired two terrific translators: Mohamed Hemeda during the summer of 2010, and Ahmad Khader during the spring of 2011. The fact that neither of these individuals is an Egyptian Arab – Mohamed is an Egyptian Berber while Ahmad is a Palestinian-Jordanian – was, unexpectedly, to my benefit. Some of my interviewees admitted that they would have been unwilling to divulge details on their parties’ internal workings or their own political histories if an Egyptian Arab was translating for me, because they would have been worried that my translator was an agent for Egypt’s repressive State Security service.

By the same token, my interviewees expressed no inhibitions about speaking at length with an American researcher. If anything, they often seemed excited to speak with

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36 Interview with Said Ashmawy, 7 Jan. 2011.
37 A third translator, Sharaf al-Hourani, is Jordanian, and only assisted me with one interview.
me because of how rarely they were contacted by westerners for interviews. This is why, I think, most of the parties that I researched readily gave me their leaderships’ full telephone directories: they were eager to be heard.

In choosing the opposition parties whose leaders I would interview, I focused on the four opposition parties that had won seats in the most recent parliamentary elections, which had been held in 2005. Since I was trying to assess, in part, what role political patronage played in preventing opposition parties from defecting from their quiescence-for-spoils bargain with the regime, it was important to examine those parties who had direct access to those spoils through the parliamentary immunity that parliamentarians enjoyed. As a result, I focused on the Tagammu (2 seats), Wafd (6 seats), and Ghad (1 seat) parties, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood (88 seats). However, I also conducted interviews with leaders from other parties – including the Nasserist, Conservative, and Democratic Front parties – to check whether these parties’ motivations or relations with the regime were substantially different from those of the more successful opposition parties. They weren’t, which is why I only interviewed handful of members in each of these parties.

I focused on interviewing top party leaders, as opposed to lower-level leaders or rank-and-file members, for a number of reasons. First, leaders possessed the greatest amount of information of the workings of their parties, and how their parties dealt with the regime at the highest level. Second, party leaders were typically older and had been involved in Egyptian opposition politics for many years; they could therefore offer deeper historical contexts for explaining changes in their parties’ relations with the regime.
Third, they were accessible: not only were they willing to talk, but they understood that part of their responsibility as party leaders meant answering questions for researchers.

Still, interview-based research is imperfect. People misremember facts, exaggerate their significance, or flat-out lie. So to ensure the reliability of my data, I interviewed at least two-dozen members from each of the parties that I researched, and ultimately conducted 231 interviews with 205 unique individuals. This exhaustive process enabled me to check most of my data points multiple times for their veracity, and I further supplemented this data, when possible, with journalistic sources to confirm the information that I’d derived from interviews. Finally, when interviews yielded conflicting accounts of certain events, I explained in the footnotes why I chose to accept one version of events over others.

It is also worth emphasizing that imperfect and/or misleading information is hardly unique to interview-based research. Scholars who rely heavily on archives or journalistic accounts also must confront conflicting and competing accounts, and must therefore sort between truth and fiction. This is why archival research similarly depends on casting a wide net, in which many different accounts are considered so that the researcher can determine the most accurate one. My research methodology was based on an analogous process: by interviewing over 200 people, I was able to hear multiple accounts of the same series of events, and I double-checked my final rendering of the facts as frequently as possible.

Almost precisely halfway through my five months of fieldwork, however, Egypt’s 2011 uprising jolted my research plan. The fact that the Tagammu, Wafd, and Ghad parties, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, all sat on the sidelines as the uprising
commenced validated the notion that these parties were either thoroughly coopted or repressed into submission. But it also became clear that coopting legal opposition parties didn’t bolster the regime’s durability, since the fact that they had not participated in organizing the uprising had no apparent effect on those activists who did. So after a brief evacuation during the height of the uprising, I returned to Egypt following Mubarak’s ouster and added another chapter to my dissertation: the revolutionary activists. And thanks to a helpful journalist friend, I secured the complete phone directory of the Coalition of Revolutionary Youth, which contained the top activists who had organized the January 25, 2011 demonstrations that catalyzed the uprising, and I interviewed them.

The uprising allowed me to refine my research question: how did the Mubarak regime succeed in “trapping” the other parties that I had studied, yet fail to “trap” the opposition activists that ultimately catalyzed its breakdown? Does the legalization of opposition parties under autocratic conditions actually bolster regimes’ durability, as the literature on electoral authoritarianism suggests? Or are autocratic opposition parties’ significance to regime durability overstated?

**III. Trapping Parties Can Enhance Regime Durability, But Not Indefinitely**

The central argument of this dissertation is that autocratic regimes can use legalized opposition parties to trap potential opponents and thereby enhance their durability, but that this strategy cannot work indefinitely. Over time, the fact that these opposition parties are not genuinely opposing the regime damages their credibility with the public, and may deter newly emerging oppositionists from joining them. As a result, the multiparty system loses its ability to “trap” oppositionists, leading oppositionists to pursue new outlets that may undermine the regime’s durability.
In this section I provide an overview of how the Mubarak regime specifically trapped its opponents; explain why opposition party members ultimately agreed to persist in trapped opposition parties despite the few rewards for doing so; and also explain why the regime’s manipulation of opposition parties couldn’t protect it from an uprising indefinitely.

**a. How Did the Mubarak Regime Trap Its Opposition Parties?**

As previous studies have observed, autocratic regimes “trap” opposition parties by forcing them to accept certain political and sometimes financial benefits in exchange for agreeing not to oppose the regime too aggressively. Of course, the precise terms of this implicit agreement vary by regime and circumstances. But for the Mubarak regime, this bargain typically meant that opposition parties were permitted to win a small number of parliamentary seats in exchange for abiding by the regime’s “red lines” – a term that comes from the literature on negotiations, but was commonly used to imply the upper limits of oppositional activity that the regime would tolerate.

Mubarak’s “red lines” were neither explicit nor fixed: defining and enforcing the regime’s “red lines” was an ongoing process, in which opposition parties often learned what the “red lines” were only after they were punished for crossing them. Keeping the “red lines” vague was to the regime’s advantage, because it forced opposition parties

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39 Opposition party leaders typically inferred Mubarak’s “red lines” through trial and error, studying the regime’s patterns of repression against their own party and others. Part of this learning process occurred through not-so-veiled threats that the regime would regularly transmit to opposition leaders, which often deterred these individuals from criticizing the regime too stridently. At various times, opposition groups tested these limits – such as by printing negative reports about government ministers in their newspapers, holding seminars calling for constitutional changes, or demonstrating in the streets. The regime typically responded repressively to these “red line” breaches, through actions such as jailing party activists, removing the party’s newspaper from the streets, targeting party leaders’ livelihoods, threatening retaliation for repeat offenses, or dispatching thugs to physically intimidate its opponents.
to err on the side of caution when it came to speaking or acting out against the regime. However, based on my interviews with opposition party leaders, three types of political speech constituted clear breaches of the “red lines.” First, opposition parties could not criticize the military, whose officers staffed many of the state’s key political institutions, and also could not discuss the military’s budgets because of the military’s apparent fear that this would expose the vast economic resources that it controls.

Second, parties couldn’t criticize the presidential family – particularly First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, who was widely seen as pushing for her younger son, Gamal, to succeed his father as president of Egypt. Third, opposition leaders generally abstained from criticizing Mubarak himself directly, which included not discussing his corruption or rumors regarding his health.

Beyond these three areas of speech, opposition party leaders understood the “red lines” as including a list of proscribed activities. Legal opposition parties could not participate in demonstrations against the regime, though they were occasionally permitted to organize “walks,” which were tightly controlled events that emphasized narrow policy issues and avoided direct criticism of the regime. To further ensure that they did not participate in demonstrations, the regime forbade opposition parties from engaging anti-regime protest movements, such as Kefaya and the April 6th movement (discussed in

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44 Interview with Camilia Shokry, 1 Aug. 2010; interview with Mounir Fakhry Abdelnour, 10 Aug. 2010.
Chapter 6). Perhaps most importantly, opposition parties could not associate with the Muslim Brotherhood (discussed in Chapter 5), which the regime viewed as its foremost threat, given the Brotherhood’s nationwide mobilizing networks and the mass appeal of its Islamist ideology. This was particularly the case during the final decade of Mubarak’s reign.

In exchange for not crossing the regime’s “red lines,” legal opposition parties – that is, those parties that received licenses from the Shura Council’s Political Parties Committee (PPC) and could legally participate in elections – were permitted to do three things. First, they were permitted to maintain headquarters, which served as the parties’ nerve centers and housed offices for party leaders as well as the editorial board of their newspapers. The headquarters were also the sole space in which parties were permitted to organize large events with minimal risk of interference from the regime – a major benefit, since large events held outside the headquarters were frequently shut down by security services. Second, legal opposition parties were permitted to print a newspaper, which enabled the parties to maintain public profiles as well as send correspondents to various government ministries and institutions, thereby giving the parties firsthand access to insider information.


Third, and perhaps most importantly, the regime rewarded those parties that adhered to its “red lines” with parliamentary seats. This dissertation tells this type of story repeatedly, but it bears emphasizing that the key payoff for quiescent parties was parliamentary seats, not policy concessions within parliament itself, as scholars have observed in other electoral authoritarian regimes. In Mubarak’s Egypt, parliament served as a rubber stamp for policies that came from the office of the presidency, and the regime used parliament to legitimate its power – not to share that power with other parties through policy concessions. Yet winning parliamentary seats, even despite parliament’s practical powerlessness, was attractive to opposition parties for two reasons: parliamentary immunity allowed parliamentarians and their associates to pursue lucrative business deals extra-legally, and serving in parliament increased the parties’ public profiles.

To ensure that it could use the allure of parliamentary seats as leverage over opposition parties, the Mubarak regime used a wide variety of vote-rigging tactics so that it could grant or deny seats to opposition parties. These tactics included declining to approve potential candidates’ candidacy applications, arresting campaign activists, limiting access to polling places, stuffing ballot boxes, buying votes, and dispatching ruling party cadres to violently attack those whose votes it hoped to suppress.

Yet the regime rarely enjoyed total control in determining outcomes. For example, prior to the 2000 parliamentary elections, the relatively independent Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that elections required judicial monitoring, which complicated the regime’s ballot-stuffing efforts that year. Similarly, heightened international scrutiny during the 2005 elections forced the regime to allow a relatively clean voting process during the first round of voting, though the regime cracked down very aggressively during the second and third rounds following massive Muslim Brotherhood gains (see Chapter 5). Judicial action also compelled the regime to change its electoral formula in 1987 and 1990. Still, as Table 1 shows, the regime was always able to exert sufficient control over elections to retain a supermajority in parliament.

54 In 2005, the Mubarak regime held voting in three rounds, with different provinces voting in each round, to ensure that it had sufficient judicial monitors, as required by the aforementioned 2000 Supreme Constitutional Court ruling.
55 Mubarak called for new elections in 1987 to preempt a pending Supreme Constitutional Court case examining the legality of the 1984 elections, which used a party-list voting system and thereby excluded independents. An initial report suggested that the SCC was prepared to rule the 1984 elections invalid, so for the new format of the 1987 elections reserved 48 seats for independents (Post 1987). Then, in May 1990, the SCC ruled the 1987 elections unconstitutional for still not providing equal opportunities for independent candidates, which led the Mubarak regime to introduce a first-past-the-post, district-based voting system (Auda 1990, Posusney 1998).
Table 1. Egypt’s Multiparty Elections, 1976-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Size of Parliament</th>
<th>Electoral Formula</th>
<th>% ruling party</th>
<th>% non-MB independents</th>
<th>% opposition parties (incl. MB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>FPTP, 171 2-member districts</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>FPTP, 176 2-member districts + 30 seats reserved for women</td>
<td>90.8%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>PR, 48 districts of varying sizes with party-list voting and 8% threshold</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>Mixed system consisting of 48 districts: PR for 400 seats through party-list voting within each district and 8% threshold; FPTP for 48 seats (i.e., 1 per district) reserved for independents</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>FPTP, 222 2-member districts</td>
<td>88.1%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>FPTP, 222 2-member districts</td>
<td>93.9%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>FPTP, 222 2-member districts</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>FPTP, 222 2-member districts</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>FPTP, 222 2-member districts + 64 seats reserved for women</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meanwhile, to ensure that opposition parties adhered to its “red lines,” the regime relied on *Amn al-Dawla*, or State Security, which was a subdivision of the vast – and


57 This does not include the 10 MPs that the President appointed after the elections. Discrepancies in “size of parliament” due to unfilled vacancies: there were 6 vacancies in the 1990 parliament, 2 vacancies in the 2000 parliament, 12 vacancies in the 2005 parliament, and 4 races invalidated in the 2010 parliament.

58 Non-Muslim Brotherhood independents
notoriously repressive – Interior Ministry. State Security monitored a wide variety of groups and individuals that the regime viewed as potential security risks, and worked to foil any attempt at challenging the regime too directly. In turn, State Security officials communicated regularly with opposition party leaders, offering carrots to ensure their compliance with the “red lines,” such as wider media exposure and assistance in winning local parliamentary races. Meanwhile, when parties approached the “red lines,” such as by arranging public events without permission, State Security would use an array of sticks, which could include harassment, detention, and interference with party leaders’ finances or businesses, to stifle the parties’ activities.

Yet the most important way in which State Security prevented opposition parties from crossing the “red lines” was through its cultivation of agents within each party. State Security recruited agents by promising individual party members certain privileges, such as special access to government services or help in facilitating business transactions. In many cases, individuals with close, pre-existing relationships with the regime members were the most obvious targets for recruitment as agents, because they feared that these relationships would be jeopardized if their party crossed the “red lines,” and were thus wiling to cooperate with State Security. As I will show in my discussion

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59 Since the January 2011 anti-Mubarak revolt, State Security has been officially disbanded, but it is widely believed that a new entity – National Security – essentially performs the same functions. However, I speak of State Security in the past tense, because I am primarily concerned with how it operated under Mubarak.

60 This information comes from an anonymous source who previously worked as a State Security officer. He requested that his name be withheld because of the sensitivity of his prior work.

61 Interview with Ibrahim Muhammad el-Tobgui, 10 Jul. 2010; interview with Ayman al-Katib, 11 Jul. 2010; interview with Shadi Talaat, 1 Aug. 2010.


63 Interview with Amin Taha Morsi, 13 Jan. 2011.

of the Ghad party (Chapter 4), State Security often used its party-based agents to foment internal divisions within parties – particularly when parties crossed the “red lines.”

The ultimate consequence of these carrots and sticks was to make Egyptian opposition parties entirely dependent on the regime for their survival. By restricting opposition parties’ activities significantly, confining them to their headquarters, and forbidding them from tapping into popular criticisms of the regime or widespread Islamic sentiment, the Mubarak regime cut these opposition parties off from the public. As a result, opposition parties needed to abide by the regime’s “red lines” in order to win parliamentary seats and maintain regularly published newspapers, because these were the only means through which the parties could maintain their public profiles in Mubarak’s Egypt. This is the sense in which these parties were “trapped.”

b. Why Did People Join – and Stay in – Trapped Opposition Parties?

One of the primary puzzles that motivated this dissertation is, why do people join and stay in parties that are “trapped”? In other words, given the high risks and relatively low rewards that come with being a member of an opposition party under autocratic conditions, why do people bother? This question has important analytical consequences: if opposition party members were not willing to remain in these “trapped” parties, they might attempt other – potentially more threatening – types of oppositional activity and thereby undermine the regime’s durability.

While the academic literature on opposition parties under authoritarianism emphasizes the extent to which these parties are clientelist extensions of the regime and are thus seeking a share of the spoils,65 this can only explain the handful of opposition

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party members who actually get elected to parliament. Most, after all, do not. Nor do I find convincing the argument that people join unwinnable parties to gain popular sympathy when they lose rigged elections, or because losing elections allows them to demonstrate that they are “motivated by higher principles, that power was not their ultimate concern.”66 This applies somewhat to the Muslim Brotherhood, whose members demonstrated their willingness to suffer brutal repression in pursuit of their ideology and used this to rally support. But it does not capture the motivations of the legalized opposition parties of the Mubarak era, which took no apparent pride in losing.

Based on the research that I present in this dissertation, I argue that there are two more compelling reasons why people join and remain members of “trapped” opposition parties. First, opposition party leaders under autocratic regimes take a long-term view. Knowing that victory is not an option under the present regime, opposition party leaders focus instead on ensuring their party’s survival so that their party can play an influential role once the regime either reforms or falls. And to ensure their party’s survival, opposition party leaders accept the present limitations on party activities. “This is the best we can do in this environment,” Wafdist high committee member Sherif Taher told me during an August 2010 interview, six months before the revolt that would topple Mubarak. “But I’m not worried, because when the time comes, people who believe in the principles will prevail.”67

Second, even if legalized opposition parties have relatively little political impact under authoritarian regimes, they serve important social purposes within the lives of their members. These parties are ultimately organizations of like-minded individuals with

66 Mizrahi 6.
67 Interview with Sherif Taher, 2 Aug. 2010.
similar visions of what they’d like their country to be politically. Moreover, they are often unified through their shared experiences facing the regime’s repression. For example, the leaders of the Tagammu party, which I discuss in Chapter 2, had remarkably similar political backgrounds: most were members of secret communist organizations in the 1970s; were arrested at various points for their anti-regime activism; and joined Tagammu around its 1976 founding, and had therefore worked with each other for many decades. Similarly, many leaders of the Wafd party, which I discuss in Chapter 3, are descendants of prominent Wafdist from the pre-1952 era, who lost much of their power under the Nasser regime.

The fact that the people stayed in opposition parties for reasons other than winning elections or pursuing political patronage ultimately rendered these parties more effective traps. After all, would-be oppositionists effectively committed themselves to parties whose existence depended on their adherence to the regime’s “red lines.” If opposition party leaders were only after electoral victories and political patronage, they would have likely abandoned these parties quickly – either by joining the ruling party or by partaking in more strident oppositional activities, the latter of which might have undermined the regime’s durability.

c. Why Couldn’t It Work Forever?

By manipulating legal opposition parties and, just as importantly, keeping oppositionists committed to those parties, autocratic regimes can deter “opposition efforts from being exerted towards revolution.”68 This is especially true when autocrats’ opposition parties manage to “trap” influential and politically capable individuals who

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might otherwise be able to mobilize substantial opposition to the regime, as I will show in my examinations of the Tagammu and Wafd parties (Chapters 2 and 3 respectively).

Yet the literature on opposition parties under authoritarianism fails to recognize that this strategy is not sustainable indefinitely. Over time, newly emerging oppositionists will notice that legal opposition parties under authoritarianism are not actually opposing the regime. And given that many of these new oppositionists won’t have any personal attachments to these preexisting parties, they will be especially disinclined from being trapped in them. In some cases, these new oppositionists may seek other – and perhaps more threatening – means of opposing the regime. In this way, electoral authoritarian regimes may contain the seeds of their own destruction, because their durability depends, at least in part, on their opponents’ willingness to participate in opposition parties that cannot permanently retain their credibility as such.

The literature on electoral authoritarianism doesn’t appreciate this possibility because it is analytically biased. Given its emergence from the third-wave transitions literature, which views intra-regime fissures that the third-wave democratization literature views as the primary cause of transitions, the literature on durable authoritarianism focuses too centrally on elite actors – particularly ruling parties, which the literature views as essential to preventing intra-regime fissures, and opposition parties, which are seen as vital to trapping opposition-oriented “notables and activists.” The literature therefore asserts that formally democratic institutions can bolster regimes’ longevity without paying attention to the various societal factors that previous studies of

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69 O’Donnell and Schmitter 19, 24, 27; Przeworski 66-79; Haggard and Kaufman 263.
revolutions have highlighted. These include economic or political grievances; the perceived illegitimacy of the regime; and the emergence of revolutionary movements, often as a result of the previous two factors.

This analytical bias explains, in part, why many political scientists failed to anticipate the 2011 Egyptian uprising: they accepted the premise that intra-regime fissures, particularly on the question of who would succeed the aging Mubarak, would be the most likely cause of regime breakdown, but concluded – correctly – that the regime was managing these tensions very effectively. As Brownlee wrote, “The NDP leadership, divided to an extent between pro-Hosni and pro-Gamal factions, has come together in facilitating the regime’s continuity. Such solidarity does not preclude the opening of a debate at the moment of a change in presidency, but as long as Hosni Mubarak remains at his post, even Gamal’s adversaries within the ruling party seem content to bide their time and sustain their loyalty.”

Cook similarly wondered whether the rise of Gamal might create tension between the NDP and Egypt’s military, but concluded that, so long as Hosni Mubarak remained in power, the regime was “coup proof.”

That is not to say that political scientists were unaware of Egyptians’ widely held economic and political grievances – in many cases, they were. But this discontent

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72 Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 14-15.
76 Cook (2007) 139.
77 For example, Blaydes (2011) noted that, “Acts of government neglect and corruption have the ability to mobilize Egyptians who are increasingly frustrated with their treatment at the hands of government” (242-243).
 lingered for many years before the uprising without any popular response, which only affirmed for many analysts – myself included\(^78\) – that the Mubarak regime was quite stable. Its opposition parties were trapped\(^79\); the primary protest movement, Kefaya (which I discuss in Chapter 6), had been repressed into submission\(^80\); and the Muslim Brotherhood indicated repeatedly that, despite its unparalleled mobilizing potential, it had little interest in leading a revolt because it feared a repressive crackdown. As Tarek Osman noted shortly before the revolt, “The Egyptian regime, with its (so far) effective containment and confrontation modus operandi (and highly efficient security apparatuses), is controlling the street and the various manifestations of popular anger.”\(^81\)

So while economic and political grievances were a necessary precondition of the 2011 Egyptian uprising, they were hardly sufficient. These grievances, after all, were prevalent for many years before the revolution, but had little political impact because there seemingly existed no political force that could translate them into sustained action. That changed on January 25, 2011, when a loose coalition of mostly young activists who refused to be trapped in Egypt’s multiparty system successfully coordinated a day of protest that catalyzed Mubarak’s ouster.

**IV. Conclusion**

Mubarak’s three-decade rule reinforces the extent to which autocrats can use formally democratic institutions to bolster their durability. Regimes can use an


assortment of carrots and sticks to prevent the opposition parties they legalize from crossing their “red lines,” and opposition party members may accept these conditions because of their personal attachments to their parties’ ideas and fellow members. But using formally democratic institutions to bolster a regime’s durability cannot work indefinitely. These institutions are, after all, not truly democratic, and their inherent lack of credibility will deter oppositionists from participating in them over time, and possibly compel them to embrace more confrontational tactics vis-à-vis the regime. This is precisely why the Mubarak regime fell so quickly: its strategy for trapping the opposition became untenable once new oppositionists emerged who refused to participate within its multiparty system.

The remainder of this dissertation uses case studies of Egyptian opposition parties and movements to illustrate these dynamics.
Chapter 2
Tagammu: Trapping Egypt’s Left Since 1976

The Mubarak regime’s multiparty system aimed to prevent opposition activists from crossing the regime’s red lines by trapping them in legalized opposition parties. These parties were often offered carrots, such as lucrative political patronage, when they complied with the regime’s red lines, and punished with sticks, such as arrests, when they crossed those red lines.

In this chapter, I use a case study of the National Progressive Unionist Party, better known by its abbreviated Arabic name Tagammu, to show how this system worked. I argue that the regime founded the Tagammu Party in 1976 to trap Egyptian communists and far leftists, many of whom were active opponents of the regime during the reigns of presidents Gamel Abdel Nasser (1954-1970) and Anwar Sadat (1970-1981). Although the Tagammu Party initially opposed the regime quite stridently, the regime’s use of carrots and sticks ultimately brought it to heel. A series of regime crackdowns during the late 1970s and early 1980s, including arrests and restrictions on the party’s newspaper, made the party’s anti-regime activism quite costly. Then, when top Tagammu leaders decided to tone down their criticisms of the regime, the regime rewarded them by granting the party parliamentary seats. As a result, from 1990 until the anti-Mubarak revolt of January 2011, the Tagammu Party was effectively trapped – it fastidiously abided by the regime’s red lines, accepted the limited political space that the regime afforded it, and, as a result, was mostly irrelevant.

I. The Tagammu Party’s Pre-History
Since the 1952 Free Officers Revolution, which toppled the Egyptian monarchy and replaced it with a military-backed dictatorship, leftists have comprised an important segment of Egypt’s political opposition. Egypt’s left includes socialists, communists, and pan-Arab nationalists, often referred to as Nasserists. Nasser and Sadat initially dealt with their leftist opponents by either repressing them or attempting to incorporate them into the ruling party. As I show in this section, both of these strategies failed to tone down leftists’ opposition to the regime.

**a. Nasser’s Ruling Parties and the Egyptian Far Left**

Communist parties have existed in Egypt since the early 20th century. Although politically weak under Egypt’s monarchy, they were visible players nonetheless, and maintained close relations with the Free Officers who orchestrated the July 1952 military coup that successfully ousted King Farouk. The Democratic Movement for National Liberation (DMNL), the foremost Marxist group of the era, supported the coup, and key communist leaders held important positions within the new regime. Two Free Officers had ties to the DMNL, and a third prominent Free Officer, Major Khalid Mohieddin, was a well-known Marxist who had previously been involved in underground communist politics as a member of the Iskra group.

Yet communists’ support for the Free Officers collapsed shortly after the coup, and major communist parties quickly emerged as vocal opponents of the new regime. Within weeks following King Farouk’s ouster, the Egyptian Communist Party declared the coup’s leaders fascists, and the DMNL turned against the new military junta when it

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outlawed political parties on January 17, 1953. In response, the junta purged communist sympathizers from within its own ranks and imprisoned 2000 communists. Meanwhile, the new regime sought to consolidate support for its agenda by establishing the Liberation Rally as its first ruling party in 1953, which required members to profess their loyalty to the new regime.

Once Gamel Abdel Nasser became Egypt’s president in 1954, the regime initially softened its stance towards communists in an apparent bid to appease them. It released many communists from prison and, in 1956, permitted the establishment of al-Masa, a communist newspaper edited by Marxist former Free Officer Khaled Mohieddin. Nasser’s tolerance of communists, however, was short-lived. In the late 1950s, Nasser pursued a pan-Arab nationalist policy, which included unifying with Syria and supporting an Iraqi revolt against President Karim Kassem in March 1959. When Soviet support for Kassem contributed to failure of the Iraqi revolt, Nasser responded by launching a new crackdown on the pro-Soviet Egyptian Communist Party, which had regrouped the previous year. At least one thousand communists were arrested, and thirteen editors of al-Masa, including former Free Officer Mohieddin, were removed from their positions and imprisoned.

Two years later, the regime’s policy towards communists reversed once again. Following the breakdown of Egypt’s short-lived union with Syria in 1961, the Nasser

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84 Botman 354.
88 Johnson (1972) 6.
began embracing a more pro-Soviet posture, and increasingly viewed the incorporation of communists and far leftists into the regime as politically useful. Thus, when Nasser founded the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) in 1962 as his new ruling party, he encouraged previously banned communist organizations to join by promising them “key positions in the propaganda machinery and the vanguard apparatus” of the ruling party. In April 1965, the Egyptian Communist Party and DMNL accepted this offer and officially dissolved themselves.\(^90\)

For many leftists, however, Egypt’s six-day defeat in the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War, which resulted in Israel’s occupation of the Sinai Peninsula, marked the turning point of their relationship with the Nasser regime. While the broader Egyptian public rallied around Nasser and poured into the streets to protest his resignation, which Nasser ultimately withdrew, younger political activists began agitating for change. In February 1968, when the regime handed down light sentences to Egyptian Air Force officers deemed responsible for the 1967 defeat, workers in the southern Cairo district of Helwan began striking, and various leftist student groups soon joined in.\(^91\) Another round of leftist student demonstrations broke out in October 1968, and student movements continued demonstrating against the regime through the early 1970s. Meanwhile, members of the defunct Egyptian Communist Party formed new communist organizations, which attacked the Nasser regime’s domestic and foreign policy failures.\(^92\)

These developments convinced the regime that the ASU, as well as its affiliated Socialist Youth Organization, had failed to create a reliably pro-Nasser “political force”

\(^{90}\) Ginat 28.


\(^{92}\) Interview with Sayyid Shaaban, 4 Mar. 2011.
among Egypt’s youth. By the end of 1968, the regime placed tight restrictions on student activists, and the Socialist Youth Organization was withdrawn from campuses.93

b. The Far Left During the Sadat’s Early Years

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Egypt’s political left was dominated by a variety of illegal communist parties, but two were particularly influential. Kutab al-Ghad (“Tomorrow’s Authors”) emerged from the student movements of this era, and later constituted themselves as the Egyptian Communist Workers Party (ECWP). Old guard communists with ties to the Soviet Union, by contrast, formed a tight, nameless circle until January 1975, when they officially declared themselves the Egyptian Communist Party (ECP).94

These communist movements became especially active following Nasser’s death in September 1970, when his successor, Anwar Sadat, embraced an “open door” policy that emphasized closer relations with the West and economic privatization. Communists feared that these policies “constituted the practical means of Egypt’s integration into the world capitalist order,” and that peace with Israel would isolate Egypt from the rest of the Arab world.95 The most noteworthy protest activity of the Sadat era occurred in January 1972, when students demonstrated nationwide after Sadat’s declaration that he would not attack Israel that year to regain the territory that it had lost in 1967. Although these protests were not led exclusively by communist organizations, Marxists and leftists were quite prominent and rallied support among university students.96

96 Abdalla 192-193.
Much of this campus activism ended following the October 1973 War, when Egypt launched a surprise attack on Israel’s occupation of the Sinai Peninsula that the Sadat regime hailed as a tactical victory. According to Abdalla:

The October war was followed by a period of calm in the universities. It also left the activists in a state of political perplexity. It took them some time to evaluate its impact, but in spite of some initial skepticism, this was not enough to provoke a large-scale debate at the universities in the period immediately after the war.  

While various communist organizations continued to demonstrate, Sadat used his newfound popularity after the war to pursue a set of liberalization policies that he termed *infitah*, or the “open door policy,” which he combined with a new strategy for managing his opponents.

**II. Tagammu Emerges**

While the *infitah* focused primarily on economic liberalization, Sadat believed that “the introduction of a multiparty system [was] essential to attract foreign investment to Egypt’s ailing economy,” since it would give investors confidence that Egypt was becoming a more reliable “state of institutions.” Yet this multiparty system was never intended to allow for actual political competition. Sadat feared that “open political struggle would threaten the regime’s stability,” and he sought to ensure that new opposition parties remained firmly under the ruling party’s control.

*a. Controlled Political Liberalization*

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97 Abdalla 211.
100 Mostaffa M. El Gammal and others, Political Parties and the Crisis of Pluralism in Egypt (Arabic) (Cairo: Arab and African Research Center, 2010) 22.
Sadat thus inaugurated limited multiparty competition by dividing the ruling ASU into three “manabir,” or “platforms,” which represented the “ideological orientations of the left, center, and right.”\textsuperscript{101} To enhance his credentials as a moderate, Sadat established the “center” platform – which later became the Misr Party – as his own. Meanwhile, to ensure that the other two platforms wouldn’t attack his regime too harshly, Sadat appointed two former Free Officers as their chairmen. Mustafa Kamel Murad thus headed the “right” platform, which later became the Ahrar Party, and Khaled Mohieddin chaired the “left” platform, which became the Tagammu Party.\textsuperscript{102}

Nearly all of the Tagammu Party’s leadership as of the January 2011 uprising joined at the time of the party’s founding in 1976. For many of these leaders, Mohieddin’s stewardship of the party attracted them, given his reputation as an outspoken socialist within the ASU.\textsuperscript{103} Moreover, since many of the founding members had previously been involved with the secret communist organizations of the 1960s and early 1970s,\textsuperscript{104} the opportunity to work openly in politics was appealing.\textsuperscript{105} To attract new members, the Tagammu published its mission statement and membership applications in the magazine \textit{Roz al-Yusuf}.\textsuperscript{106} Within the first two years, Tagammu had approximately 150,000 members.\textsuperscript{107}

\textit{b. An Attempt to Trap the Left}

\textsuperscript{101} Maye Kassem, \textit{Egyptian Politics: The Dynamics of Authoritarian Rule} (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004) 52.
\textsuperscript{102} Maye Kassem, \textit{In the Guise of Democracy: Governance in Contemporary Egypt} (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1999) 186-187.
\textsuperscript{103} Interview with Mohamed Said, 8 Aug. 2010; interview with Atef al-Maghrawi, 8 Jan. 2011.
\textsuperscript{104} Interview with Nabil Abdel-Ghani, 9 Jan. 2011.
\textsuperscript{106} Interview with Mohamed Said, 8 Aug. 2010; interview with Magdy Sharabiyah, 22 Jan. 2011.
\textsuperscript{107} Baker 151.
The regime established Tagammu with a clear aim in mind: to trap Egypt’s political left within a weak party that would abstain from challenging the regime too directly. The regime had two reasons for believing that this might work. First, Tagammu’s leadership was overwhelmingly comprised of leftist intellectuals “who had chosen during the Nasser era to work within the [ASU].” Moreover, Tagammu forced its members to resign from any illegal communist organizations in which they were members, thus bringing radicals under the auspices of a regime-sanctioned organization. This apparently led the regime to believe that Tagammu posed little risk of emerging as a major opponent.

Second, Sadat hoped that Mohieddin’s appointment to chair Tagammu would keep Egypt’s political left firmly divided between socialists and Nasserists. During their time together as Free Officers, Sadat had nicknamed Mohieddin the “red major,” and Sadat portrayed Tagammu as Marxist, hoping that Nasserists “would not accept subordination to a Marxist leadership and would instead join his own center party.” To be sure, Sadat’s characterization of Tagammu’s first leaders was hardly misleading. Aside from Mohieddin, they included Fouad Morsi, a Sorbonne-educated Marxist figure who had founded the Communist Party of Egypt in the 1950s and his co-founder, Ismail Sabry Abdullah; Lutfi al-Kholi, founder of the Nasser-era communist journal *al-Tali’a*;

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112 Beinin (1987) 571.
and Rifaat al-Said, a longtime communist activist and journalist, whom Nasser had imprisoned from 1953-1964, with only a brief hiatus in 1959.113

Yet Tagammu’s leaders outmaneuvered the regime. Determined to create a broad alliance of Egypt’s various left-wing political forces, they began negotiating with leading Nasserists to build a unified political party, and the two sides ultimately agreed on a leadership that included Nasserists. In its founding statement, Tagammu – which means “union” – thus projected itself as an “ideologically pluralistic party”:

The Tagammu Party is a republican organization in which there is enough room for the national, progressive, and unifying currents and forces (Nasserists, Marxists, nationalists, and informed religious currents) that struggle for realizing freedom, socialism, and unity, and accept working within the committed Tagammu framework with its basic agenda and political program, which is a unified program of cooperative struggle for all factions of the Egyptian left.114

Tagammu also signaled that it would not take orders from the regime. Within twenty-four hours of its founding, the regime commanded Tagammu to denounce a recent Soviet statement that criticized Egyptian policy, which the party refused to do. Tagammu also emerged as an early supporter of workers strikes, and criticized the regime’s stances on labor issues.115

In October 1976, Egypt held its first multi-party parliamentary elections. During the campaign season, the state-run media harshly attacked the Tagammu Party, accusing it of being anti-religious and agents of a Marxist conspiracy.116 Tagammu won only 3 of 342 contested seats, finishing behind its right-wing counterpart, the Ahrar Party, which won 10 seats. Meanwhile, the regime’s Misr party won 295 seats, signaling the success

113 Interview with Rifaat al-Said, 2 Aug. 2010; Baker 150.
115 Hassan 26.
of Sadat’s bid to institute limited multiparty rule without threatening his hold on power.117

c. A Failed Trap

In January 1977, however, the Sadat regime’s confidence was badly shaken. On January 17, at the urging of the International Monetary Fund118, parliament announced that it would halve the subsidies on many basic commodities, including flour, rice, sugar, cigarettes, and butane gas.119 The following day, tens of thousands of Egyptians – mostly hailing from the working and middle classes – took to the streets in protest, “attacking symbols of state power, conspicuous consumption, and Western influence.” For two days, security forces failed to contain the uprising: an estimated 160 people were killed and hundreds more wounded. Finally, after rescinding the subsidy cuts, Sadat sent in the military to restore order.120

The “Bread Riots,” as they became known, put Tagammu squarely in the regime’s crosshairs. Police reported that radical workers and students had been at the forefront of the demonstrations, and Sadat used this as a pretense for launching a sweeping crackdown against “leftist plotters,” whom he accused of inciting and organizing the protests. On January 29, Prime Minister Mamdouh Salem explicitly blamed Tagammu, accusing it of harboring “communist elements” that had tried to use the party to “overthrow the government and install a communist regime.”121

120 Baker 118
121 Baker 119-120.
To justify a crackdown, the regime advanced an eleven-point response to the “Bread Riots,” which included measures that criminalized demonstrations and strikes, and further limited electoral competition to government-approved parties. On February 10, these measures were approved via referendum. Over the next few months, hundreds of Tagammu members were arrested, including four members of the party’s secretariat. Tagammu responded by setting up the Committee for the Defense of Civil Rights to help their detained members and, by June, many had been released.

Yet following Sadat’s November 1977 diplomatic visit to Jerusalem, which jumpstarted Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations, Tagammu once again emerged as a vocal critic of the regime. The party feared that a peace treaty with Israel would create “a psychological barrier between Egypt and her Arab sisters,” and viewed a separate peace with Israel that did not resolve the Palestinian issue as undermining Egypt’s “national prestige.” Thus, in November and December, Tagammu members were arrested while publicizing meetings to protest of Sadat’s Jerusalem visit.

Shortly thereafter, Tagammu held an internal vote to determine its official stance towards the ensuing Egyptian-Israeli negotiations. When the party ultimately voted to oppose the peace process, the regime launched a new round of arrests. But Tagammu persisted. In the inaugural issue of its official newspaper Al-Ahaly, which hit newsstands

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123 Interview with Nabil Atrees, 6 Aug. 2010.
124 Abdel Raziq 21. Those members were Rifaat al-Said, Hussein Abdel Raziq, Gharib Nasser Eddin, and Abdel Sabour Abdel Moneim.
126 Abdel Raziq 22.
129 Interview with Al-Badri Farghali, 9 Jan. 2011.
in February 1978, the party emphasized its opposition to direct negotiations with Israel, and attacked the economic liberalization policies of the infitah as well. These oppositional stances reached a wide audience: by mid-April, Al-Ahaly was selling over 100,000 copies.\textsuperscript{130}

Apparently realizing that its attempt to trap Egypt’s left in the Tagammu Party had failed, the regime intensified its crackdown. On May 14, 1978, Sadat announced that the Tagammu Party “should dissolve itself because it has no place among us”\textsuperscript{131} and, one week later, another referendum that placed significant restrictions on parties’ activities passed with 98.29 percent of the vote.\textsuperscript{132} Then, on May 24, authorities raided Al-Ahaly and, though the paper was permitted to reopen two months later, security forces removed its new issues from newsstands.\textsuperscript{133} Under constant investigation and unable to find a press willing to print its publication, the Tagammu secretariat finally discontinued Al-Ahaly in October.\textsuperscript{134}

Two months later, the regime made a second attempt at creating a loyal leftist party when it founded the Socialist Labor Party (SLP), which it hoped would draw supporters away from Tagammu. Sadat appointed his former agriculture minister, Ibrahim Shukri, as the SLP’s first president, and ordered his brother-in-law to be one of the party’s first members.\textsuperscript{135} In turn, during the first year of its existence, the SLP

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{130} Abdel Raziq 35-36, 39.
\bibitem{131} Baker 123.
\bibitem{132} Brownlee (2011-2012) 654.
\bibitem{134} Abdel Raziq 78-81.
\end{thebibliography}
supported the Egyptian-Israeli peace process and kept it criticisms of the regime to a minimum.\textsuperscript{136}

Tagammu, however, continued agitating against Egyptian-Israeli peace. On March 23, 1979, three days before the peace treaty was signed in a White House lawn ceremony, Tagammu’s general secretariat unanimously adopted a statement demanding a halt to the peace process, which it viewed as facilitating “imperialist projects aimed at the destruction of the unity, liberation and social and economic progress of the Arab world.”\textsuperscript{137} In response, the regime continued squeezing the party. On the morning of April 7, after the Tagammu was caught printing anti-treaty material, State Security stormed its offices and seized its printing equipment.\textsuperscript{138} Then, when two Tagammu MPs – including chairman Mohieddin – joined with eleven other parliamentarians in voting against ratifying the treaty on April 11\textsuperscript{139}, State Security launched another raid on the party’s offices. During this period, forty-four Tagammu members were arrested, while hundreds more were imprisoned.\textsuperscript{140}

Given the sensitivity of its peace treaty with Israel, the Sadat regime quickly moved to shut the treaty’s opponents out of parliament. He thus called for early elections, which were held in June 1979. The elections were heavily rigged and, unsurprisingly, Tagammu’s candidates were “effectively purged,” as all 31 lost.\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{137} “Progressive Assembly of National Unionists ‘Not to the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty,’” *MERIP Reports* 80 (Sept. 1979) 15.
\textsuperscript{138} Baker 159.
\textsuperscript{139} Marie-Christine Aulas, “A Very Strange Peace,” *MERIP Reports* 82 (Nov. 1979) 19.
\textsuperscript{140} Merip Special Correspondent, “Sadat’s ‘New Democracy’: Fresh Rounds of Arrests and Detentions,” *Merip Reports* 80 (Sept. 1979) 14.
\textsuperscript{141} Brownlee (2011-2012) 661.
Meanwhile, the SLP won 29 of 372 seats, which made it the second largest parliamentary bloc. Sadat’s new ruling party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), won 320 seats.  

**d. Sadat’s Final Crackdown**

In the aftermath of the 1979 elections, Tagammu was effectively sidelined: without a single member in parliament or an active newspaper, it was “no longer an effective instrument of criticism of opposition.” Initially, its leaders attempted to work with more prominent organizations to continue their anti-regime activism. Thus, when Israel and Egypt exchanged ambassadors on February 26, 1980, top Tagammu members attempted to create a national opposition front that included former Free Officers, professional syndicate representatives, Muslim Brothers, and renegade SLP members. The diversity of this coalition, however, ultimately made it ineffective. The following year, on the one-year anniversary of the establishment of Egyptian-Israeli diplomatic relations, the Tagammu held a joint press conference with only the SLP to condemn the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. While these efforts failed to gain traction, they ensured that Tagammu leaders remained on the Sadat regime’s ever-growing list of domestic opponents that it targeted for arrest. Thus, on March 29, 1981, seventy people were arrested without any official accusation, including Tagammu central committee leaders Hussein Abdel Raziq and Farida al-Niqash, who are married to each other.

Sadat’s largest crackdown against his opponents came on September 3 and 4, 1981, when the regime arrested approximately 1600 Egyptians, while detaining hundreds

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142 Beattie 241.
144 Beattie 260.
more under house arrest. Although the crackdown primarily targeted Islamists, half of the Tagammu Party’s central committee was arrested, including chairman Mohieddin, and the party’s headquarters were shuttered. Sadat claimed that these arrests were in response to Muslim-Coptic violence that had erupted three months earlier, saying that the regime was targeting those who wanted to “settle old scores” by “kindling the flames of sectarian sedition.” The crackdown would prove costly: on October 6, during a parade commemorating the eighth anniversary of the 1973 War, Lieutenant Khalid al-Islambouli emerged from a military vehicle and assassinated Sadat.

III. Mubarak Traps Tagammu

Upon succeeding Sadat, President Hosni Mubarak sought to calm the tumultuous political atmosphere. During his first speech before parliament on November 8, 1981, Mubarak remarked that, “Opposition has a role to play in the national march by presenting studied views and honest criticism away from slander and unfounded accusations.” In other words, political opposition parties would be permitted to resume their activities – but only if they limited their criticisms of the regime to questions of policy and refrained from attacking the president himself.

Opposition parties seemingly accepted this arrangement two weeks later, when Mubarak brought 31 political prisoners, including Tagammu chairman Mohieddin, into

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148 Heikal 232.
his office for discussions and promptly released them. As two observers wrote at the time, “In return for the release of some prisoners and the partial lifting of press restrictions, the legal opposition refrained from vigorous criticism of the government until after Israel had turned back the Sinai.” This would mark the first of many instances in which Tagammu would abide by the regime’s red lines to ensure its survival.

**a. Mubarak’s Enforcement of the Red Lines**

During Mubarak’s first six months in office, which preceded Israel’s April 1982 withdrawal from Sinai Peninsula, Tagammu kept its bargain with the regime and cooperated with it. Thus, in February 1982, Mohieddin visited Algeria and Tunisia, where he encouraged both countries – which boycotted Egypt after signing its peace treaty with Israel – to restore ties with Cairo. He further defended Mubarak’s foreign policy as “balanced” and “positive,” and noted approvingly that Mubarak had clamped down on criticism of Arab governments in the state-run press. Meanwhile, the party focused internal matters, including electing a new editorial board for *al-Ahaly*.

When Israel completed its withdrawal from the Sinai on April 25, however, Tagammu signaled its desire to resume its strident opposition to the regimes policies. Sensing this, the regime dispatched one of Mubarak’s top advisers, Osama el-Baz, to gently warn *al-Ahaly* editor Hussein Abdel Raziq to restrain the paper’s criticisms of the regime. Abdel Raziq, however, rejected al-Baz’s warnings and, when *al-Ahaly* returned to newsstands on May 19, 1982, its top headline read: “The Tagammu Party Demands the

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156 Abdel Raziq 99-110.
Freeing of Political Prisoners and Revoking Politicized Judgments." It was an unmistakable attack on the regime and, during the next few months, *al-Ahaly* upped the ante by repeatedly criticizing the regime’s repressive emergency laws, reporting on instances of police torture, and demanding the revocation of restrictive laws on registering parties. Given the party’s socialist roots, it further became an important voice for workers’ advocacy, and a critic of crony capitalism. 

The party also resumed its attacks on the regime’s foreign policy. In this vein, Tagammu blasted the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, arguing the treaty’s limits on Egyptian troop deployments in the Sinai Peninsula undermined Egyptian sovereignty. Then, when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, Tagammu set up stations for blood donations, money, and volunteers, and attempted to organize demonstrations. This embarrassed the Mubarak regime, which desperately wanted to reassure the west of Egypt’s commitment to the peace treaty, and the regime responded by deploying police to end anti-Israel demonstrations in Cairo and Alexandria.

As *al-Ahaly*’s circulation surpassed Sadat-era levels, breaking 160,000 by the end of 1982, the regime began its three-pronged counterattack. First, the Interior Ministry, which controls State Security and the key domestic police forces, censored the *al-Ahaly*. It pressured the Tagammu Party’s leadership to end the newspaper’s campaign against police torture, and forced *al-Ahaly* to print its denial of previous reports regarding police torture.

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157 Abdel Raziq 110, 121.
158 Abdel Raziq 121-122, 133-135, 151-161.
159 Tucker and Stork 6.
160 Tucker and Stork 3.
161 Abdel Raziq 137-138, 171.
Second, the regime began a concentrated media effort to undermine Tagammu. In this vein, state-run newspapers declared the party unpatriotic and anti-religious, and accused it of incitement. Meanwhile, to emphasize the party’s political isolation, Mubarak gave interviews to all other major opposition parties’ official papers while denying one to al-Ahaly, and the Interior Minister later did the same.162

Third, the regime used the emergency laws, which were enacted following Sadat’s assassination, to prevent Tagammu from holding large events away from its Cairo headquarters. In this vein, Tagammu had to secure government approval for any public rally, and these rallies could only be held in expensive, enclosed tents at government-selected locations, which were often “inconspicuous side streets.” When Tagammu bucked the regime by holding rallies without permission, the response was swift. For example, when the party campaigned against lowering subsidies on basic food items in 1984 and joined textile workers’ mass demonstrations in Kafr Dawwar, the regime arrested 12 Tagammu members, including two top leaders.163

The regime’s assault against Tagammu worked. By 1983, Tagammu increasingly resembled “little more than [a] small [group] of intellectuals and journalists centered round a single newspaper rather than [a] proper political [organization] with a capacity to mobilize supporters and run campaigns.”164

b. The Mubarak Regime’s Elections: Carrot and Stick

Ultimately, the regime’s best tool for managing opposition parties was its total control over the parliamentary election process. For the regime, manipulating elections

162 Abdel Raziq 141-142.
served a dual purpose. On one hand, the regime could use electoral outcomes as carrots, rewarding parties that abided by its red lines with parliamentary seats. On the other hand, elections could be used as sticks, punishing those parties that crossed the regime’s red lines by shutting them out of parliament.

Tagammu learned this lesson over the course of the next few elections. Thus, after harshly criticizing Mubarak’s new elections law as a “conspiracy that threatens the entire nation,” Tagammu participated actively in the May 1984 elections. It organized hundreds of meetings nationwide; distributed over one million pamphlets; and recruited nearly 900 candidates. Yet it fared poorly at the polls, winning only 4.2 percent of the vote and failing to secure a single seat.

By comparison, the Wafd party – which reconstituted itself in 1983 and ran in a coalition with the Muslim Brotherhood – won 58 seats, while the NDP won 390 of 448 contested seats. The outcome reflected the regime’s manipulations, and constituted payback for Tagammu’s strident opposition to its policies. Indeed, on Election Day, local NDP officials interfered with Tagammu’s activities, such as by throwing the party’s poll watchers out of voting stations, burning pro-Tagammu ballot boxes, and stuffing ballot boxes in favor of the NDP. At one polling location, an NDP member reportedly stabbed twelve Tagammu activists.

Tagammu’s electoral defeat was extremely damaging. Its complete absence from the 1984-1987 parliament denied it one of the few outlets that opposition parties could

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165 Abdel Raziq 218-219.
166 Hendriks 14.
167 Hendriks 14-17, Abdel Raziq 237.
use for publicizing their ideas and, as its relevance plummeted, circulation of *al-Ahaly* dropped to 71,000. Outwardly, however, the party showed little interest in softening its anti-regime posture. Shortly after its defeat, it released a report highlighting the regime’s electoral manipulation. Then, when Mubarak appointed Tagammu member Milad Hanna to the parliament, the party responded by banishing him – a very defiant move.

Yet within the party, top leaders started questioning whether Tagammu’s vocally anti-regime outlook had been self-defeating. In this vein, party leader Lotfy Waked worried that *al-Ahaly*’s attacks on key political figures had damaged the party’s public image. Chairman Mohieddin agreed, saying that the Tagammu newspaper should focus on “the positive aspects and problems of the masses” and not cross the “political line” – meaning that it would obey the regime’s red lines. When some Tagammu leaders objected to watering down the party’s criticism of the regime, Mohieddin responded: “Supporters of the Wafd party are happy after the elections, [and] our supporters are not satisfied.”

These conversations catalyzed a slight strategic reorientation of the party, with Tagammu aiming to cultivate “a moderate and centrist outlook” so that it could better “convince and cooperate” with the regime. To accomplish this, it narrowed its agenda to issues that were less sensitive to the regime, such as by abandoning its criticisms of police brutality and the emergency laws. Thus, at the party’s second conference in June 1985, Tagammu resolved to focus on four vague policy categories: Palestinian and Arab

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169 Abdel Raziq 249-252.
170 Hendriks 17.
171 Abdel Raziq 252-259.
issues, the national issue, national unity, and advocacy work. For the most part, this meant emphasizing an Arab nationalist approach to foreign policy issues while continuing to push a socialist economic agenda domestically.

For the next three years, Tagammu operated within this narrower purview. In this vein, despite its close ties with labor unions, the party declined to lead the large labor strikes that broke out in January and July of 1986. Similarly, when a number of Tagammu activists were arrested while soliciting petition signatures against subsidy cuts, al-Ahaly declined to cover it. Moreover, even when al-Ahaly criticized the Mubarak regime, it avoided mentioning the president by name, as chairman Mohieddin insisted that this was a “red line.”

Meanwhile, it turned its attention to foreign policy matters, criticizing the Camp David Accords and Cairo’s close ties with Washington. It further agitated against foreign investment in Egypt, which it argued was exploitative.

Even within this limited sphere, however, Tagammu butted heads with the regime. One such incident came in October 1985, when Egyptian soldier Suleiman Khater shot and killed seven Israeli tourists in Sinai. When the Egyptian government moved to try Khater before a military court, Tagammu organized a campaign to defend his actions and, when Khater reportedly hung himself in prison a few months later, al-Ahaly insinuated a government conspiracy. In response, the government press undertook a new smear campaign against the opposition, accusing it of trying to foment chaos and “threatening democracy.” In another incident, in March 1986, Tagammu criticized plans to build a General Motors (GM) factory in Egypt; the party claimed that GM had

172 Abdel Raziq 252-259, 302-303.
175 Abdel Raziq 339-347.
cut a corrupt deal with the Egyptian military, and argued that GM would crush Egypt’s own Nasr car company. This rankled the Egyptian military, and the regime seized issues of *al-Ahaly* and issued threatened party leaders via State Security.\(^{176}\)

Indeed, Tagammu’s attempt to act as a moderate opposition party failed to assuage the regime, which once again ensured the party’s defeat in the April 1987 parliamentary elections. Tagammu activists were arrested two days before the election for campaigning for communist candidates\(^{177}\), and violations were widely reported on election day.\(^{178}\) Meanwhile, state-run media used Tagammu’s electoral coordination with independent communists and Nasserists to cast it as a party of “extremists bent on disrupting national unity.”\(^{179}\) So for the second straight election, Tagammu won no seats, leaving it shut off from the public once again.

The Tagammu Party remained largely inconsequential for the next three years. During this time, circulation of *al-Ahaly* dipped considerably, from an average of 68,961 in 1987 to 45,943 in 1990, and that party’s leadership underwent an administrative reorganization.\(^{180}\) Meanwhile, as the party searched for a way forward, it softened its approach vis-à-vis the regime, apparently hoping that the regime would respond by giving it more space for operating. As longtime party leader Abdel Ghafar Shokr told me:

> In 1987, Tagammu stopped being oppositional and became just oppositional in words, because there was a lot of pressure on party leaders and no hope because the regime controlled everything in the streets and community. Tagammu leaders are strugglers,

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\(^{176}\) Abdel Raziq 370-379.
\(^{177}\) “Unrest in Egypt; Mubarak Comments; Arrests Made,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* (6 Apr. 1987): ME/8535/i.
\(^{178}\) Post 21-22.
\(^{179}\) Post 21; Ismael and Sa’id 143.
\(^{180}\) Abdel Raziq 476-477, 687.
and they decided not to be too harsh with the regime, so that [the regime] would give [us] a chance to work.\textsuperscript{181}

As part of this process, the party began holding dialogues with the regime.\textsuperscript{182}

These conversations between the Tagammu Party and the regime would prove mutually advantageous in the next parliamentary elections, which were held in November 1990. One month before these elections, parliament was dissolved via referendum, and a new electoral law was passed under which Egypt was divided into 222 two-parliamentarian districts. But three major opposition parties – the Wafd, SLP, and al-Ahrar – objected to the new law, and jointly declared that they would boycott the election.\textsuperscript{183} This made Tagammu’s participation necessary for the regime, since an election without the participation of opposition parties would have lacked credibility.

Although there was strong support within the Tagammu Party for joining the other parties’ boycott, the party ultimately participated in the elections for three reasons. First, the campaigning period represented the rare opportunity for the party to engage the public with minimal regime interference, and Tagammu leaders were eager to return to the streets – even if only for a few weeks – after years of near invisibility.\textsuperscript{184} Second, chairman Mohieddin argued that the party could not follow a boycott that the Wafd party had initiated, because this would effectively make it a Wafdist branch.\textsuperscript{185}

Third – and most importantly – in exchange for not participating in the other parties’ electoral boycott, the Tagammu leadership had secured assurances from the regime that certain candidates would be permitted to win. “It was known inside the party

\textsuperscript{181} Interview with Abdel Ghafar Shokr, 11 Jan. 2011.
\textsuperscript{182} Interview with Abdullah Abouel-Fotouh 12 Jan. 2011.
\textsuperscript{184} Interview with Abdel Rashid Helal 19 Mar. 2011.
\textsuperscript{185} Kassem (1999) 104.
who was against the regime,” Abu el-Ezz el-Hariri, a member of the Tagammu politburo at the time, told me. “So when they faked the elections, they chose the weak people who would follow the regime.”

On election day, this NDP-Tagammu partnership was quite visible: in five districts, Tagammu candidates participated in vote exchanges with the local NDP candidates, under which they acted as *de facto* tickets.

Thus, for the first time since 1979, Tagammu returned to parliament, winning five of 444 contested seats.

### IV. Portrait of a Trapped Party

Tagammu’s relative success during the 1990 elections marked a permanent shift in the party’s modus operandi. For the next two decades of Mubarak’s rule, Tagammu toned down its opposition to the regime in exchange for constant parliamentary representation and other benefits – a trade that effectively made the party an appendage of the regime, rather than an opponent.

To protect this deal, the Tagammu leadership carefully abided by the regime’s red lines. Although these red lines shifted occasionally, this typically meant that Tagammu declined to cooperate with Islamist parties and protest movements; participated in demonstrations only with the regime’s prior approval; and offered only soft criticisms of the regime’s policies, while avoiding direct criticism of Mubarak, Mubarak’s family, and the military. In many instances, the party’s leadership ensured that Tagammu adhered to the regime’s red lines by obstructing party members who desired a more confrontational posture.

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186 Interview with Abu el-Ezz el-Hariri, 27 Feb. 2011.
In turn, the party’s members – many of whom had cut their political teeth as radical communist activists in the 1960s and 1970s – were trapped. They were unable to meaningfully oppose the regime within their co-opted party, and feared retribution if they tried to oppose the regime from outside of Tagammu’s framework. As many of the Tagammu Party’s leaders admitted, by the eve of the January 2011 revolt that toppled Mubarak, the Tagammu Party had become practically irrelevant: it had little popularity, took few positions against the regime, and was still dominated by its aging founders.

**a. Keeping Tagammu Trapped**

Yet the Mubarak regime never took Tagammu’s the eventual irrelevance for granted. The regime’s top leaders and security services presumably knew that Tagammu’s leadership was comprised of former communist dissidents, almost all of whom had spent time in prison for their anti-regime activism. It thus used an array of carrots and sticks to ensure that Tagammu abided by the regime’s red lines, which kept the party’s formerly strident opposition activists trapped.

Three carrots are worth emphasizing. First, in exchange for abiding by its red lines, the regime permitted Tagammu’s survival. This stood in stark contrast to the regime’s treatment of the two other parties that were during the late 1970s. The Ahrar Party, which the regime established in 1976 as the “right” platform of the ASU, was frozen in 1998, when founding chairman Mustafa Kamel Murad’s death sparked a violent succession crisis. Meanwhile, the SLP, which the regime established in 1978 as a leftist alternative to Tagammu, became an Islamist party and later renamed itself the Islamic Labor Party (ILP). In 2000, the regime used a leadership dispute within the ILP as a
pretext for freezing it, and later deployed security forces to prevent the party from re-opening when a court decision permitted the ILP to resume its activities.\(^\text{189}\)

Second, the Mubarak regime granted Tagammu’s top leaders substantial political patronage. It thus permitted founding Tagammu chairman Khaled Mohieddin to win three straight parliamentary elections and serve in parliament until 2005. The regime’s support for Tagammu’s second chairman, Rifaat al-Said, was more overt: in 1996, Mubarak appointed al-Said, who was then serving as Tagammu’s secretary-general, to the Shura Council, which is Egypt’s upper parliamentary body.\(^\text{190}\) This gave al-Said direct access to the regime’s top officials, and made him an attractive candidate to lead the party when Mohieddin retired in 2003. “He was the secretary-general, and had connections in the government,” politburo member Magdy Sharabiyah told me. “So nobody wanted to challenge him.”\(^\text{191}\) In this way, the regime’s early support for al-Said made him politically strong within the party, thus sparing Tagammu the messy succession fights that sunk the ILP and Ahrar Party, among others.

Once al-Said became Tagammu chairman, the regime continued feeding him carrots. For example, it allowed him to write a weekly column in the state-run daily *Al-Ahram*.\(^\text{192}\) The regime further gave business to a printing press that al-Said co-owns with other Tagammu founders, which printed educational, scientific, and political works for the government.\(^\text{193}\)

\(^{190}\) Interview with Amin Taha Morsi, 13 Jan. 2011.
\(^{191}\) Interview with Magdy Sharabiyah, 22 Jan. 2011.
\(^{192}\) Interview with Rifaat al-Said, 2 Aug. 2010.
Most importantly, the regime strengthened al-Said by establishing him as the ultimate distributor of political patronage within the party. For example, in 2004, al-Said used his influence to help secure a Shura Council seat for Tagammu leader Abdel Rahman Khayr\textsuperscript{194}, and he did the same in 2007 for Ahmed Shaaban\textsuperscript{195}. During the heavily forged 2010 parliamentary elections, al-Said negotiated with top regime officials to ensure Rafit Saif’s victory\textsuperscript{196}, and he additionally pushed the regime to permit Abdel Rashid Helal to run for a seat that Helal ultimately won. “[State Security] was delaying my fingerprints and getting my criminal record so that I could run,” Helal told me. “So I called Rifaat al-Said, and he called [State Security] for me. And sometimes if they don’t accept my papers, Rifaat al-Said calls them and it’s solved.”\textsuperscript{197} Al-Said’s distribution of political patronage to other party members also came in the form of lower level government jobs, which he secured for Tagammu leaders and their family members.\textsuperscript{198}

The third carrot that the Mubarak regime used to ensure Tagammu’s compliance with its red lines was granting Tagammu open access to NDP leaders. Indeed, a number of Tagammu leaders reported speaking to NDP officials “daily,”\textsuperscript{199} and these contacts helped Tagammu members secure government services that were politically useful to their local constituents.\textsuperscript{200} “We call the NDP about governance and people’s problems –

\textsuperscript{194} Interview with Nabil Abdel-Ghani, 9 Jan. 2011; interview with Sayyid Shaaban, 4 Mar. 2011. It should be noted that Abdel Rahman Khayr is chairman of the military industrial union, which some Tagammu members say played the biggest role in securing his Shura Council membership.

\textsuperscript{195} Interview with Sayyid Shaaban, 4 Mar. 2011; interview with Khaled Telema, 17 Mar. 2011.

\textsuperscript{196} Interview with Rafit Saif, 10 Jan. 2011. According to Saif, NDP leader Safwat Sherif called al-Said and told him to pressure Saif to run, and promised “not to interrupt” Saif’s campaign.

\textsuperscript{197} Interview with Abdel Rashid Helal, 19 Mar. 2011.

\textsuperscript{198} Interview with Sayyid Shaaban, 4 Mar. 2011. According to Shaaban, al-Said secured government jobs for the grandson of politburo member Atiya al-Sarafi and the son of Farouk Hussein, Tagammu’s secretary in Dakhaliya, among others.


\textsuperscript{200} Interview with Samir Farag, 3 Aug. 2010.
health services, roads, water, and electricity,” said Tagammu politburo member Atif al-Maghrawi, who served on the local council of Zaqaziq.201 The regime also afforded Tagammu easy access to State Security officials, which was vital for freeing members who got arrested.202 “State Security was an institution, and there was someone responsible for political parties,” chairman al-Said told me shortly after Mubarak’s resignation in February 2011. “When we needed anything, we called.”203

In addition to these three carrots, the regime had two major sticks at its disposal. First, State Security monitored the Tagammu Party very closely, frequently calling its leaders to check up on them.204 Given the broad powers that State Security enjoyed under the emergency laws, Tagammu leaders found these calls quite threatening. “Someone calls me and says that I’m rocking the boat,” Tagammu politburo member Gouda Abdel-Khalek told me. “So I say I’m trying to [push for] reform in a [friendly] way.”205 At times, State Security would harass Tagammu leaders by turning their colleagues against them. “They called me a lot,” said former Tagammu politburo member Sayyid Shaaban. “The officer responsible for parties would tell me what [Tagammu leader and MP] Rafit Saif was saying about me, and then tell Rafit Saif when I was saying [about him]. So he played a dirty role.”206

Beyond these types of calls to individual members, State Security regulated two types of party activities: party events and Al-Ahaly, the party’s official newspaper. In this vein, State Security had to approve all Tagammu events, including conferences, rallies,

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201 Interview with Atif al-Maghrawi, 8 Jan. 2011.
204 Interview with Amad Taha, 8 Jan. 2011.
205 Interview with Gouda Abdel-Khalek, 6 Jan. 2011.
206 Interview with Sayyid Shaaban, 4 Mar. 2011.
and even memorial services for deceased members.\textsuperscript{207} State Security was most concerned with events held outside the party’s headquarters, and it would call the party to warn its leaders against “doing activities in the street.”\textsuperscript{208} It also called Al-Ahaly’s editors frequently to make sure that criticism of the regime was kept to a minimum. “Every week I receive a message from the military that says, ‘do not publish anything about the army,’” Al-Ahaly editor Farida Niqash told me.\textsuperscript{209}

State Security harassed the Tagammu Party so regularly that many leaders believed that the party was infiltrated.\textsuperscript{210} “We’re a big party and accept anyone,” said Tagammu secretary-general Said Abdel-Ael. “And surely some have connections with State Security.”\textsuperscript{211} Interestingly, after Mubarak’s fall, these suspicions were confirmed: raids of State Security offices yielded documentary evidence that at least three Tagammu members were reporting on the party to State Security.\textsuperscript{212}

The regime’s second major stick that it wielded against the Tagammu Party was its thorough control of parliamentary elections. In this vein, when the Tagammu Party boycotted the September 2005 presidential election, the regime punished it in the parliamentary elections, which were held two months later. Tagammu’s parliamentary representation slipped from six seats to two, and the regime especially sought to punish

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{209} Interview with Farida al-Niqash, 11 Aug. 2011.
\bibitem{210} Interview with Al-Badri Farhali, 9 Jan. 2011; interview with Ahmed Shaaban, 18 Jan. 2011.
\bibitem{211} Interview with Said Abdel-Ael, 9 Jan. 2011.
\bibitem{212} Interview with Hussein Abdel Raziq, 24 Mar. 2011.
\end{thebibliography}
former Tagammu chairman Mohieddin, who refused to run for president despite the regime’s pleas and thus lost a seat that he had held for fifteen years.\textsuperscript{213}

Taken together, these carrots and sticks offered Tagammu members clear rewards for abiding by the regime’s red lines, and threatened worrisome consequences if members crossed them. So, if an opposition party isn’t allowed to oppose the regime, what exactly does it do?

\textbf{b. How a Trapped Party Acts}

Given the severely limited space in which the Mubarak regime permitted it to operate, the Tagammu Party served three key functions. First, because campaign seasons afforded Tagammu the rare opportunity to hold less-regulated public events, the party participated in every parliamentary election held under Mubarak’s rule. “If you’re a real man of struggle, don’t miss the opportunity to go to the streets and explain your program in the cafes,” Tagammu spokesman Nabil Zaki told me shortly before the January 2011 uprising. “If you don’t [campaign], you will die.”\textsuperscript{214} Tagammu leaders also viewed the relative openness of campaign periods as useful for assessing the party’s popularity and recruiting new members.\textsuperscript{215}

In turn, Tagammu’s top leaders consistently fought internal efforts to boycott elections. The closest that Tagammu came to boycotting a parliamentary election was in November 2010, when the first round of the elections was so severely rigged that all other opposition parties withdrew from the second round. To prevent his party from joining the rest of the opposition, chairman al-Said stacked the Tagammu politburo with

\textsuperscript{213} Interview with Abdel Rashid Helal, 19 Mar. 2011; interview with Hussein Abdel Raziq, 24 Mar. 2011.
\textsuperscript{214} Interview with Nabil Zaki, 13 Jan. 2011.
\textsuperscript{215} Interview with Muhammad Said, 12 Jan. 2011.
ineligible voters who opposed a boycott, and the motion to boycott the second round of the elections was voted down by a single vote.216

Tagammu’s second key function was serving as a gentle counterpoint to the regime, emphasizing that it merely disagreed with the regime on a handful of policy issues while avoiding personal attacks on regime figures.217 In this vein, Tagammu party leaders occasionally appeared on state-run television to debate their NDP counterparts on matters of economic and social policy.218 This enabled the regime to portray itself as somewhat open to alternate points of view, while Tagammu leaders enjoyed their moments in the spotlight.

Tagammu leaders believed that the party’s kid-gloved treatment of the regime gave it some influence in shaping the regime’s policies219, and the regime occasionally confirmed the party’s optimism. For example, according to Abdel-Khalek, who chaired the party’s economic committee, Tagammu once pushed to get a 10-percent raise for public employees when the regime was only offering a 5-percent raise. In another instance, it convinced the Minister of Investments to abandon legislation on managing public assets.220 While these meetings were rare221, they were sufficiently rewarding for an opposition party that was otherwise completely excluded from the policy process.

To preserve its limited access to the regime, the Tagammu Party kept a distance from the regime’s more outspoken opponents. While its leaders dealt occasionally with

218 Interview with Nabil Atrees, 6 Aug. 2010.
220 Interview with Gouda Abdel-Khalek, 6 Jan. 2011.
221 Interview with Ibrahim el-Issawy, 6 Jan. 2011.
other legal opposition parties – particularly the Waf and Nasserists\textsuperscript{222} -- it deliberately avoided anti-Mubarak protest movements such as the 2003-2006 Kefaya movement and the April 6\textsuperscript{th} Youth Movement, which was founded in 2008.\textsuperscript{223} “We do not join demonstrations that are organized by others, because they are not political parties, but groups of young people who don’t coordinate with us, and they prepare everything and only then ask us to join,” said politburo member Muhammad Said.\textsuperscript{224} Indeed, when Tagammu members did participate in demonstrations, they did so as individuals, rather than under Tagammu’s official banner.\textsuperscript{225}

Tagammu’s third key function was serving as a consistent anti-Islamist voice within the opposition. This anti-Islamist stance follows from Tagammu’s communist lineage, and chairman al-Said was particularly influential in steering the party in this direction. Al-Said has written a number of books attacking political Islam and coined the pejorative term “\textit{m}ut\textit{a'aslimin},” which is often interpreted as the cynical use of Islam to attain power.\textsuperscript{226} In turn, Tagammu has always opposed cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood, even when the two groups shared common goals, such as opposing Israel and Mubarak’s autocratic practices.\textsuperscript{227} “We’re against political Islam and think that the Islamist view is more dangerous to the community than dictatorship,” said politburo leader Nabil Abdel-Ghani.\textsuperscript{228} This made Tagammu a useful ally for the Mubarak regime,

\textsuperscript{224} Interview with Muhammad Said, 8 Aug. 2010.
\textsuperscript{225} Interview with Ekram Labib, 15 Jan. 2011.
\textsuperscript{227} Interview with Nabil Atrees, 6 Aug. 2010.
\textsuperscript{228} Interview with Nabil Abdel-Ghani, 9 Jan. 2011.
which viewed Islamists as its foremost political threat and, as I discuss in Chapter 5, repressed the Muslim Brotherhood very harshly.

Taken together, the Tagammu Party’s three primary activities meant that the party was mostly inactive. Other than its aggressive participation in elections for approximately three weeks out of every five years, it merely existed to offer light critiques of the regime while avoiding some of the key anti-regime activities that increasingly energized political activists during the latter years of Mubarak’s reign. Moreover, Tagammu’s parliamentary representation remained paltry and its newspaper *Al-Ahaly* was increasingly hard to find on newsstands. On an ordinary weekday, its headquarters were mostly quiet, with smoking retirees sitting around and reflecting on their previous lives as communist dissidents.

Indeed, by the eve of the January 2011 anti-Mubarak revolt, Tagammu’s leaders frequently admitted that their party was irrelevant. So why did they stay?

**c. Why Didn’t Tagammu Fold?**

Tagammu leaders offered three explanations for their continued involvement in an increasingly meaningless party. First, almost all Tagammu leaders joined the party when it was founded in 1976, and therefore felt tied to the institution and its cause. Some party leaders believed that many of the policies for which Tagammu originally advocated had been implemented. “We have changed many things since 1976,” Farida al-Niqash told me. “Now what we said thirty years ago, the government is applying. We criticized privatization policies, and now they’re reversing them.” Others had faith that the

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party’s ideas would be implemented in due time. “We see socialism in Egypt,” said Farag Farag. “Yes, we see that the government is broken. But the idea is not. It [will be achieved] in the long run.”

Second, recognizing the limits that the Mubarak regime imposed on political groups, Tagammu leaders viewed their party’s toned-down approach as the only way to survive for the time being. They had witnessed the regime’s closing of other parties that attacked it too harshly – such as the SLP and liberal Ghad party, which I discuss in Chapter 4 – and had no desire to follow in those parties’ footsteps. “Maybe [Tagammu] looks like decoration,” politburo member Ahmed Shaaban told me. “But I’m dealing wisely to serve the party because we don’t have power to face the regime because we’re weak. The regime reads me through State Security or by putting agents in the party, so I have to carry on until change comes.”

Finally, Tagammu leaders believed that by cooperating with the regime during the Mubarak era, they were preserving Tagammu for the post-Mubarak future, when it would re-emerge in full force. “We believe that change is coming with the support of the Egyptian people otherwise we would have closed the party,” said politburo member Muhammad Said. “In America, the Republicans sometimes lose, so the Democrats take over…. But I believe in this party and that change will come. And I believe that every step we take will help us in the future.”

235 Interview with Muhammad Said, 8 Aug. 2010.
Five and a half months after Said predicted that “change will come,” change did, in fact, come, as ordinary Egyptians took to the streets and toppled Mubarak in dramatic fashion. Yet when Egypt held its first post-Mubarak elections in late November 2011, Tagammu was still barely visible: far from emerging as the dominant leftist party, it joined a coalition of two newly formed – and better organized – secularist parties, winning just three of 498 seats. Indeed, after being trapped for the last twenty-one years of Mubarak’s reign, that party was in no condition to compete. If anything, it had fossilized.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented a case study of the Tagammu to show the various tactics that the Mubarak regime used to prevent its leftist opponents from challenging it too stridently. In this vein, the regime threatened the party with an array of sticks, such as State Security penetration, and provided some carrots, such as political patronage, to win the party’s acquiescence for the final 21 years of Mubarak’s reign. Tagammu’s ultimate irrelevance – a predicament that persists in the post-Mubarak era – suggests that the Mubarak regime neutered it quite effectively.

Chapter 3
The New Wafd Party: Trapped By Regime Dependency

The Mubarak regime’s success in trapping the Tagammu party was partly owed to the continuity of Tagammu’s leadership throughout its 35-year history. Indeed, only two men – Khalid Mohieddin and Rifaat al-Said – served as chairman, and neither faced serious challenges to their leadership. This made them reliable partners for the regime and, in exchange for carrots, they frequently enforced discipline within their party by forcing their colleagues to abide by the regime’s red lines.

Other parties, however, were less cohesive, and competing leaders within these parties provided ample pressure points for the regime to press in keeping these parties trapped. The New Wafd party, which is the subject of this chapter, is one such party. Following the death of its founding chairman, the regime exploited deep divisions within the Wafd, ensuring that the party was too focused on its own internal problems to emerge as a possible challenger to the regime. In turn, the Wafd party presents another useful case study of how the Mubarak regime interfered with its legal opposition parties to trap its would-be opponents.

I. The Wafd Party: An Overview

The Wafd was unique among Mubarak-era opposition parties: it was the only party that could trace its lineage to before the 1952 Free Officers Revolution. In fact, some of modern Egypt’s most renowned politicians emerged from the Wafd, and its reputation as Egypt’s first nationalist party made its reemergence under Mubarak threatening to the regime. To deal with this threat, the Mubarak regime initially treated the Wafd much as it treated Tagammu, using an array of carrots and sticks to force the
Wafd to abide by its red lines. By the mid-1990s, the Wafd was a trapped party much like Tagammu.

**a. Origins**

The Wafd was founded on November 13, 1918 – two days after the end of World War I – to represent Egyptian interests at the Paris Peace Conference. Led by legislative council member Saad Zaghloul and other prominent parliamentarians, the Wafd, which means “delegation,” ultimately emerged as the major Egyptian nationalist party of its era: it demanded the end of Britain’s protectorate in Egypt; led the struggle for Egyptian independence; and represented the foremost check on royal power during the 1920s and 1930s. But in the 1940s, its power began to wane: a 1937-1938 split drove local bourgeois Wafdist leaders towards the offshoot Saadist party, and the middle class increasingly supported other parties. Internal conflicts and corruption further eroded the Wafd’s credibility, and the final Wafdist government, which presided from 1950 to 1952, was viewed as too appeasing of the palace. Moreover, as landlords increasingly dominated its leadership, the Wafd lost popularity.

When the Free Officers, led by Colonel Gamel Abdel Nasser, ousted King Farouk in July 1952, the Wafd became a primary target for the new regime. Initially, the regime promised the Wafd that it could survive by shedding its corrupt leaders, but in January

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1953, the new regime officially dissolved all political parties. Many Wafdist leaders were tried for corruption and crimes against the state in public courts, typically receiving commuted sentences. For the next twenty-four years, the party ceased to exist, as the Nasser regime instituted one-party rule.242

When President Anwar Sadat divided his ruling party, the Arab Socialist Union into three “manabir” in 1976, thereby inaugurating limited multiparty competition, the Wafd’s former leaders considered resuscitating their party. Fouad Serageddin, the Wafd’s last secretary-general, went public with these efforts on August 23, 1977, when he called for the formation of a new Wafd party during a speech at the Lawyers Syndicate.243 While the speech stopped short of criticizing Sadat directly, it received widespread attention for its harsh criticisms of the Nasser regime. Immediately thereafter, Serageddin began holding meetings in his Cairo mansion to draw up a platform and recruit new members. The reconstituted party, which was officially named New Wafd to satisfy a law that forbade naming new parties after pre-revolutionary ones, was formally legalized in February 1978.244

Three months later, however, Sadat began rolling back his liberalizing policies. Viewing the Wafd and its increasing prominence as a political threat245, Sadat organized a referendum to ban individuals that had “corrupted political life” and belonged to parties before 1952, as well as those who had been convicted of “belonging to the ‘centers of

power’ after 1952 or of committing crimes against personal liberty.” The referendum passed with 98.29 percent of the vote and, though it did not name the Wafd explicitly, it would have effectively banned Serageddin and the Wafd’s two other top leaders from political participation. So on June 2, Serageddin convened the party’s leadership and announced that the Wafd would freeze itself.246 This prevented the party from being outlawed, and gave it the ability to reemerge at a later date, if conditions improved.247

Sure enough, conditions permitted the Wafd to reemerge five years later under President Hosni Mubarak. An October 1983 court order permitted the resumption of political activities and, in February 1984, the political rights of former Wafdist leaders were restored.248 Under Serageddin’s leadership, the party quickly organized, recruiting governorate leaders and drafting candidates for elections.249

b. The Trapping of the Wafd, 1984-1995

During its early years following its reemergence, the Wafd opposed the regime vigorously. Running in a coalition with the Muslim Brotherhood in the May 1984 elections, the Wafd’s platform demanded legal reform, freedom of association for parties, canceling Camp David Accords, and economic and political liberalization250 -- thereby attacking key Mubarak policies. In response, Mubarak enacted various changes to the elections laws, such as raising the electoral threshold to 8% and reducing the number of

246 Reid (1979) 410-413.
electoral constituencies, aiming to hurt the Wafd’s electoral chances. Ultimately, Wafd won 58 of 448 contested seats, thus emerging as Egypt’s top opposition party.251

When early elections were called three years later because of a pending Supreme Court case that threatened to invalidate the 1984 parliamentary elections, the Wafd broke with the Brotherhood and ran on its own, winning 10.9 percent of the vote and 35 seats. The fact that it was able to cross the 8 percent threshold without aligning with another affirmed its strength, and its performance was especially impressive considering widespread reports of forgery perpetrated by the regime.252

Increasingly, Mubarak’s National Democratic Party (NDP) viewed the Wafd as a threat. This was due, in part, to the connectedness of the Wafd’s leadership, which was largely comprised of “landed, professional and commercial bourgeoisie, especially those associated with the private sector.” Moreover, the Wafd’s strong stance in support of economic liberalization constituted a challenge to Mubarak’s early tilt towards Nasserism, through which Mubarak aimed “to cover his exposed flank to the left.” This led many business professionals to desert the NDP for the Wafd.253 Meanwhile, the Wafd opened its own weekly newspaper, al-Wafd, which became a daily in 1987. Its first editor, Mustafa Sherdy, was viewed as a “virulent” critic of the regime, which frequently harassed its editors.254

The 1990 parliamentary elections, however, marked the pinnacle of the Wafd’s relatively confrontational approach towards the Mubarak regime. Once again, elections

were called early, and the regime responded to litigation against the previous electoral law by inaugurating a district-based, first-past-the-post voting system. But the Wafd was unsatisfied with these changes and, in a bid to extract further democratizing reforms, it joined with Muslim Brotherhood and Ahrar party in boycotting the elections.

This represented a major breach of the regime’s red lines. After all, one of the regime’s key aims in holding multiparty elections was creating the impression of political competition, and electoral boycotts were thus extremely humiliating for the regime. Initially, Mubarak personally appealed to Serageddin to request the Wafd’s electoral participation, but Serageddin refused. Then, when the regime allowed fourteen Wafdists who had run as independents to win, Serageddin doubled down on the Wafd’s boycott by banishing these members for disobeying the party. Finally, when Mubarak appointed Mona Makram-Ebeid to the Shura Council, Serageddin tripled-down on the Wafd’s boycott by banishing her as well. (As Makram-Ebeid admits, Mubarak hoped to use her appointment to “punish the Wafd,” and she willingly played this role because she disagreed with Serageddin’s boycott decision.)

Bold though it was, Serageddin’s commitment to boycotting the 1990 elections exacted a tremendous toll on the party. As contemporary Wafdists emphasized in interviews, the Wafd’s absence from the parliament from 1990 to 1995 practically erased it from Egyptians’ political consciousness. “It created problems,” said High

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Committee member Mohamed Sherdy, “because we disappeared from the scene.”

Meanwhile, over the next five years, the Wafd’s membership declined substantially.

The Wafd’s sinking fortunes, it seems, forced Serageddin to negotiate more directly with the regime to ensure the party’s return to the parliament. Before the 1995 parliamentary elections, Serageddin made a deal with NDP leader Kamel el-Shezli, securing parliamentary for at least three predetermined Wafdist candidates, including his brother Yasin Serageddin; his grandson Fouad Badrawy; and youth leader Ayman Nour. Yet despite the Wafd’s more conciliatory approach, the regime rigged multiple elections against Wafd candidates, and offered parliamentary seats to Wafdist who defected to the NDP. Thus, only six out of the Wafd’s 184 candidates won.

II. The Tumultuous Chairmanship of Naaman Gomaa

The Wafd’s return to parliament in 1995 did little to inject life into the party. Fouad Serageddin, the iconic “pasha” who represented both the Wafd’s glorified past and contemporary resurrection, grew very ill, ceasing his day-to-day involvement in the party even while retaining the title of chairman, which created a significant leadership

259 Interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 7 Mar. 2011.
260 Interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 18 Jan. 2011; interview with Naaman Gomaa, 6 Mar. 2011. In his interview, Sherdy said that Serageddin “interfered on behalf of three to four seats, two of which were Ayman Nour and Fouad Badrawy.” Gomaa said that Serageddin helped three people succeed: Yasin Serageddin, Fouad Badrawy, and Ayman Nour. Essam Shiha, whom I interviewed on 23 Jan. 2011, and two other sources, who asked that their names be withheld, confirmed that Nour won through a deal with the regime, though they claim that Nour made these deals directly with el-Shezli.
261 Interview with Yasin Tag el-Din, 19 Jul. 2010; interview with Mohamed al-Maliki, 9 Aug. 2010; interview with Essam Shiha, 17 Jan. 2010. Tag el-Din’s story is worth sharing: Tag el-Din had been Wafd chairman in Qena, and NDP leader Fathi Sarour and Prime Minister urged him to run for parliament. Tag el-Din therefore expected to be a “shoe-in.” But three days before the election, the Qena police chief called and suggested that Tag el-Din join the NDP, implying that Tag el-Din would lose if he didn’t leave the Wafd. Tag el-Din refused, and lost the election. Shortly thereafter, at a wedding, he ran into NDP leader Kemal al-Shezli, who confirmed that the government had forced Tag el-Din to fail.
vacuum. When Serageddin died at the age of 89 in August 2000, the regime sensed an opportunity, and threatened to freeze its activities.\textsuperscript{264} But the chairmanship elections, held sixty days later, inspired some optimism about the party’s future: in a remarkably transparent process\textsuperscript{265}, vice-chair Naaman Gomaa trounced Serageddin’s grandson, MP Fouad Badrawy, thereby preventing a nepotistic succession.\textsuperscript{266}

a. Naaman Gomaa: A Co-opted – and Vindictive – Chairman

To understand why the regime backed off its threat to freeze the party and allowed the Wafd chairmanship to pass onto Gomaa, it is worth examining Gomaa’s background. Born to an elite landowning family in the Nile Delta’s Sharkiya governorate in 1934, Gomaa earned his law degree from Cairo University in 1956 and, after a stint as a government prosecutor, moved to France, where he obtained his Ph.D. in law from the University of Paris in 1966. In France, Gomaa became a wealthy lawyer, representing Shell Oil, billionaire Mohamed Al Fayed, and the prince of Qatar, among others. Upon returning to Egypt in 1971, he continued to practice law and taught at Cairo University’s Faculty of Law, and becoming dean of the law faculty in 1988.\textsuperscript{267} Since all university appointments need to be approved by State Security\textsuperscript{268}, Gomaa’s academic job and administrative position suggested that the regime knew him well – and therefore maintained important pressure points that it could use against Gomaa if he crossed its red lines.

\textsuperscript{264} Interview with an anonymous source, who asked that his name be withheld because he feared retribution for being interviewed. This interviewee was very personally close to the party leadership during the period in question.
\textsuperscript{265} Shehata 76.
\textsuperscript{266} Interview with Essam Shiha, 23 Jan. 2011; interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 24 Jan. 2011; interview with Fouad Badrawy, 21 Mar. 2011. Two lesser-known candidates also ran.
\textsuperscript{267} Interview with Naaman Gomaa, 6 Mar. 2011.
\textsuperscript{268} Interview with Muhammad al-Maliki, 9 Aug. 2010.
But these positions were just the tip of the iceberg. Gomaa’s daughter is married to Sami Abdul-Aziz, an advertising executive who served on the NDP Policy Committee, which was headed by Gamel Mubarak.\textsuperscript{269} Perhaps more importantly, Gomaa was also the personal lawyer for Agriculture Minister and former NDP Secretary-General Yusuf Wali\textsuperscript{270}, a position that was as politically beneficial under the Mubarak regime as it was personally lucrative, since Gomaa received large tracts of land from Wali at below-market rates.\textsuperscript{271} In exchange for these corrupt land purchases, Gomaa used his position within the Wafd to quash the party’s criticism of the regime: during Serageddin’s chairmanship, Gomaa ordered *al-Wafd* journalists not to criticize certain regime figures, particularly Wali, and not to attack certain regime policies, such as Egypt’s support for the U.S. invasion of Iraq during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.\textsuperscript{272} The regime thus considered Gomaa a perfectly palatable Wafd chairman, since he had demonstrated an acceptance of the red lines and could be easily reined in if he emerged, unexpectedly, as a strong critic of the regime. As Gomaa admitted to me in an interview, “I had a good relationship with everyone. There was mutual respect and I had freedom to criticize and kept my freedom in the opposition.”\textsuperscript{273}

\textsuperscript{269} Interview with Sami Abdul Aziz, 16 Jul. 2008.
\textsuperscript{270} “Controversial Wafd former head to run for Egypt President,” Ahram Online 31 Mar. 2011: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/9013/Egypt/Politics-/Controversial-Wafd-former-head-to-run-for-Egypt-pr.aspx>.
\textsuperscript{271} Interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 24 Jan. 2011; interview with Mohamed Salah el-Sheikh, 12 Mar. 2011; interview with an anonymous source, who asked that his name be withheld because he feared retribution for discussing this sensitive topic. Mr. Sherdy and the anonymous source disagree about how much land Gomaa received from Wali, as well as whether Gomaa received the land for free or paid below-market rates, while Mr. el-Sheikh only reported that Gomaa “was able to get land.” I have thus gone with Mr. Sherdy’s assertion that Gomaa paid for the land at below-market rates, since he was willing to attach his name to this claim, though the possibility that Gomaa received this land for free remains plausible, given the extensive corruption of the Mubarak regime’s ministers.
\textsuperscript{272} Interview with Mona Makram-Ebeid, 17 Mar. 2011.
\textsuperscript{273} Interview with Naaman Gomaa, 6 Mar. 2011.
Gomaa’s close relationship with the regime became apparent during the 2000 parliamentary elections. Gomaa refused to allow Mohamed Kamel, a former Shura Council member and the Wafd’s secretary-general in Menoufiya, to run against NDP leader Kamel el-Shezli, thereby forcing Kamel to compete as an independent.\(^\text{274}\) In return, the Wafd won seven seats, a one-seat improvement over the previous election.\(^\text{275}\)

The next sign of Gomaa’s cooptation occurred in March 2001, when the regime pressured him to expelled two Wafdist MPs, Ayman Nour and Farid Hassanein, both of whom had crossed the red lines. Nour’s emergence as an anti-Mubarak figure occurred shortly after the 2000 parliamentary elections, when he ran for deputy speaker and won a shocking 161 votes. This vote-total suggested that Nour had received support from many NDP parliamentarians and, in response, an alarmed Mubarak threatened to dissolve parliament if NDP parliamentarians permitted this to happen again.\(^\text{276}\) Three months later, Hassanein stoked the regime’s ire when he staged a sit-in outside of parliament, which Gomaa claimed harmed “the credibility and well being of the party.”\(^\text{277}\)

More banishments soon followed. In 2002, Gomaa fired a third Wafdist MP, Seif Mahmoud, accusing him of using his position for pursuing personal interests.\(^\text{278}\) Another incident occurred in December 2002, when Wafdist MP Mahmoud El-Shazli opposed an NDP-led effort to strip Muslim Brotherhood MP Gamal Heshmat’s parliamentary membership on the dubious grounds that Heshmat had won his seat because of a vote-


\(^{275}\) Gamal Essam El-Din, “Independents Rule the Poll.”

\(^{276}\) Interview with Gameela Ismail, 22 Jul. 2010.


counting error. By bucking the NDP and, more egregiously, supporting a Muslim Brother, El-Shazli had crossed a major red line, and Gomaa responded by firing him from both the party and *al-Wafd* newspaper, where El-Shazli had worked for fifteen years. Gomaa’s stance in support of the NDP against the Brotherhood was soon rewarded: when a new election for Heshmat’s seat was held in January 2003, Wafdist Khairi Kilig won by a landslide.

The firing of four of the Wafd’s seven parliamentarians raised suspicions that Gomaa was deliberately “weakening the position of the Wafd in the parliament in order to please the government.” But Gomaa’s personal insecurity might have also played a role in these firings. Indeed, Gomaa reportedly resented Ayman Nour’s popularity, and was particularly unnerved by a demonstration that Nour staged outside of the Wafd’s headquarters, in which Nour’s supporters called for him to become deputy editor of *al-Wafd*. Meanwhile, Gomaa ordered *al-Wafd* not to cover the activities of the Wafd’s remaining parliamentarians. This was another move borne of Gomaa’s insecurity, since it appeared to target MP Fouad Badrawy – Gomaa’s opponent in the Wafd’s 2000 chairmanship election, who commanded meaningful support within the party.

Yet of all the threats that Gomaa perceived within his own party, none seems to have frightened him more than Mahmoud Abaza. A descendant of one of Egypt’s largest political families, Abaza was remarkably well-connected within the regime: his uncle,
Maher Abaza, served as Minister of Electricity; his brother, Amin Abaza, served as Agriculture Minister; and his wife worked as an assistant to Osama el-Baz, one of Mubarak’s most influential advisers, before being appointed ambassador to the Vatican.\textsuperscript{285} But Abaza also possessed a stellar Wafdist lineage: his father, Ahmed Abaza, served two stints as a Wafdist MP and, having known Fouad Serageddin since his childhood, Mahmoud Abaza had been involved in the Wafd’s 1983 resurrection.\textsuperscript{286} And perhaps most threatening to the short and pasty Gomaa, Abaza was tall, charming, and fifteen years younger.

Like most Wafdist, Abaza had supported Gomaa during the 2000 chairmanship elections. But shortly after his election, Gomaa encouraged Mohamed Sherdy to replace Abaza as chairman of the Wafd Youth Committee, which Sherdy – who, like Abaza, came from an established Wafdist family – flatly refused to do.\textsuperscript{287} As displeasure with Gomaa’s management style rose within the party, Gomaa increasingly feared that Abaza would emerge as his replacement. But Abaza, a deputy chairman, simply had too many supporters in the party, particularly among the leadership, to be ousted. Gomaa may have also feared that an ill-timed move against Abaza would invite retribution from the regime, given Abaza’s connections.\textsuperscript{288} This brewing rivalry would prove pivotal.

\textit{b. The 2005 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections}

Under intense foreign and domestic pressure to institute democratizing reforms, the Mubarak regime announced in February 2005 that it would hold its first ever multi-

\textsuperscript{286} Interview with Mahmoud Abaza, 19 Jan. 2011.
\textsuperscript{287} Interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 24 Jan. 2011.
\textsuperscript{288} Interview with Naaman Gomaa, 6 Mar. 2011. Gomaa claims that Abaza had “good relations with State Security,” as well as relations with Gamel Mubarak and NDP leader Ahmed Ezz, and that these connections later helped Abaza “steal the party” from him.
candidate presidential elections, and it held a national referendum in May approving a constitutional change to this effect. In a bold move against the regime, the Wafd joined with other opposition parties in boycotting the referendum, and *al-Wafd* even ran a front-page spread highlighting incidents of electoral fraud. But when the referendum passed, the Wafd was left with a stark choice: would it boycott the election, thereby undermining Mubarak’s attempt to make Egyptian politics appear more democratic? Or would it run a candidate, participating in an election that it knew would be a complete sham?

Immediately after the referendum, the regime began pressuring the Wafd to participate in the election, with NDP strongman Kemal al-Shezli calling Gomaa and encouraging him to run for president. Initially, Gomaa resisted, and even voted against the Wafd’s participation in the presidential election when the party’s high committee met to decide on the issue. Gomaa, however, was in the minority: recalling the fallout from the party’s 1990 parliamentary boycott, most Wafdist leaders feared that boycotting the presidential elections would diminish the party’s image. Then, when Abaza threatened to run, Gomaa tossed his misgivings aside and threw his hat in the ring. “I would never give Mahmoud Abaza the honor of running for president,” he told his colleagues.

From the very beginning, Gomaa’s presidential campaign was an epic failure. Faced with hecklers during his first rally in Port Said, Gomaa abruptly walked off the stage and, still miked, ordered a campaign assistant to tell the crowd to “shut the fuck up.” His subsequent press conferences were similarly disastrous: ignoring the talking heads...

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points that his staff had prepared for him, Gomaa would speak for forty-five minutes without taking any questions. Before long, Gomaa’s campaign completely slipped from the news, while the presidential campaign of Ayman Nour – the charismatic young politician whom Gomaa had fired in 2001 – overtook the headlines. To those around Gomaa, it seemed as though finishing ahead of Nour was the only thing that kept him going, and Gomaa even begged the regime on Election Day to give him more votes than Nour. But Nour’s popularity apparently made it hard for the regime to justify this sort of outcome, and Gomaa thus finished a distant third, winning only 2.7% to Nour’s 7.6%, while Mubarak was handily reelected with 88% of the vote. Despite having spent 10 million Egyptian pounds (approximately $1.75 million), Gomaa’s campaign had hurt the Wafd’s image, and internal calls for Gomaa’s ouster started mounting.

But first the Wafd had to plan for the parliamentary elections, which began two months later. Working with ten other political parties, the Wafd formed the United National Front for Change (UNFC), an electoral alliance that aimed to coordinate candidacies so as to limit competition among the opposition parties, and the Wafd ran 114 candidates. Importantly, the UNFC excluded the two groups most worrisome to the regime: Ayman Nour’s Ghad party, which – as I discuss in Chapter 4 – had crossed the regime’s red lines by declaring the presidential elections rigged; and the Muslim Brotherhood, which – as I discuss in Chapter 5 – the regime viewed as it’s greatest political threat.295

293 Interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 24 Jan. 2011.
Once again, however, Gomaa’s personal jealousies undermined the party’s chances. In this vein, Gomaa ordered *al-Wafd* not to cover MP Mounir Fakhry Abdelnour’s re-election race. As a member of one of the Wafd’s founding families, Abdelnour was a popular figure within the Wafd’s leadership, and Gomaa’s action contributed to his surprising loss.

Gomaa similarly tried to sink Abaza’s parliamentary campaign by telling Wafdists not to support it. But Abaza was able to overcome Gomaa’s efforts thanks to his strong regime connections, which be used to beat Yehya Azmi, the brother of NDP leader Zakaria Azmi. Security forces initially shut down the polling places to ensure Azmi’s victory, but after complaining to a Mubarak deputy, Abaza secured a “no-forgery” pledge. Abaza’s supporters were ultimately permitted into the polls and, as a result, Abaza was one of only six Wafdists elected to parliament. Despite having participated actively in both the presidential and parliamentary elections, the Wafd’s parliamentary representation had decreased by one.

By this point, an intra-party crisis became unavoidable. The spark would come shortly after the elections, when Abdelnour accused Gomaa of undermining his campaign in a national television interview. Gomaa responded by banishing Abdelnour from the

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297 Interview with an NDP activist, who heard this from an Abaza family member and asked that his name be withheld for fear of retribution for divulging inside information. This information regarding Abaza’s contact with the regime was also confirmed by another off-the-record source with excellent political connections, who similarly feared retribution.
party and, shortly thereafter, Abaza called his allies within the party to seek Gomaa’s ouster.\textsuperscript{301}

c. The Wafd War of 2006

The Wafd’s by-laws had been drafted with its iconic leader, Fouad Serageddin, in mind, and the position of the chairman was therefore a lifetime appointment and endowed with substantial authority. Some Wafdistes viewed this as anti-democratic and, when Gomaa ran for the Wafd chairmanship following Serageddin’s death in 2000, he promised to amend the by-laws and institute a two-term limit. But after being elected, Gomaa reneged on this promise, viewing subsequent calls for amending the by-laws as an effort to steal the party from him.\textsuperscript{302} Yet the Wafd’s embarrassing performance in the 2005 elections made calls for reforming the chairmanship unavoidable. Over Gomaa’s objections, a majority of high committee, led by Abaza, decided to meet on January 18, 2006 to draft new by-laws.

When the Wafd high committee arrived to the party headquarters on that day, however, they found Gomaa sitting at the head of their conference table with unknown individuals occupying their seats.\textsuperscript{303} When these unknown individuals refused to leave, fights broke out, and thirty-three high committee members withdrew to an adjacent room, where they drafted a statement calling on Gomaa to be investigated and fired.\textsuperscript{304} In response, Gomaa froze the Wafd memberships of Abaza, Abdelnour, and wealthy

\textsuperscript{301} Interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 24 Jan. 2011.
businessman Mohamed Sarhan. Gomaa then staged a 24-hour sit-in, refusing to leave the party headquarters until Abaza’s supporters cut his water, electricity, and telephone line. Once Gomaa exited, the high committee’s insurgents called for new elections to be held on March 2, and named Abaza interim chairman. Meanwhile, in a bid for greater legitimacy, both Gomaa and the Abaza-led high committee informed the regime-run Political Parties Committee (PPC) of its decision, apparently hoping that the PPC would intervene to resolve the standoff.

The regime, however, had no interest in ending the in-fighting. The Wafd’s self-destruction would bolster Mubarak’s argument that his regime was on the path towards democracy, and that the weakness of the opposition wasn’t his fault. Moreover, the regime apparently feared that if it froze the party’s activities, as it had done to other parties during leadership disputes, it would face accusations of undemocratic behavior.

So when both Gomaa and the pro-Abaza faction appealed to the PPC, it declined to take a side, declaring the dispute an “internal matter.” Two days later, Gomaa filed a complaint with the public prosecutor, who authorized Gomaa to enter the party by “force” and resume his role as chairman. When Abaza appealed, the prosecutor noted that, under the Wafd’s by-laws, only the party’s 2000-person general assembly could remove a chairman – and not merely a majority of the Wafd high committee.

And so the standoff continued. In February, Gomaa shut down *al-Wafld* newspaper for the first time in its 21-year history, accusing editors Abbas al-Tarabily and Magdy Sarhan of colluding with the regime. It was another instance of Gomaa misreading the situation: Tarabily, the editor-in-chief, had actually supported Gomaa, but after a tense confrontation with an Abaza supporter that nearly ended in a shoot-out, he had agreed to keep *al-Wafld* neutral.\(^{311}\) In response to the shutdown, *al-Wafld* journalists organized an anti-Gomaa sit-in in front of the Press Syndicate Building and general prosecutor’s office in downtown Cairo, and the regime fanned these flames when the state-affiliated Higher Press Council declared that *al-Wafld* should return to newsstands as soon as possible.\(^{312}\) When the paper reappeared a week later under the condition that it would remain neutral, Gomaa announced that he would start another newspaper – called, simply, *Wafld* – and invited the staff of *al-Wafld* to join. They refused.\(^{313}\)

On March 2\(^{nd}\), the 2000-person Wafd general assembly finally convened to resolve the crisis. It elected elderly Mustafa al-Tawil, a member of the pro-Abaza camp, president until a new round of election would be held in June.\(^{314}\) By a 98-to-2-percent margin, it also approved amendments that empowered the high committee to question the party chairman, limited chairmanship terms to four years, and established a two-consecutive-term limit for party chairmen. But Gomaa still rejected the legitimacy of

\(^{311}\) Interview with Abdul Aziz al-Nahhas, 19 Jan. 2011. True story: as al-Nahhas told me of his near-shoot-out with Abbas al-Tarabily, he pulled out a pistol and aimed it at me to illustrate what had happened. It was, by far, the scariest and most memorable moment of my dissertation research.


these amendments, arguing that any changes made in his absence were null and void.\textsuperscript{315}

Meanwhile, ongoing court cases kept the status of the party’s leadership ambiguous: in one case, the prosecutor-general ruled that Gomaa must be permitted to re-enter the party headquarters and continue his job as chairman, while another court ruled on March 29\textsuperscript{th} that Mustafa al-Tawil had been legitimately elected by the Wafd’s general assembly.\textsuperscript{316} Meanwhile, the regime-run PPC remained neutral.

Then, on the morning of April 1, Interior Minister Habib al-Adly and Shura Council Speaker Safwat Sherif, a powerful NDP leader who chaired the PPC, called Gomaa and told him to go to the party.\textsuperscript{317} At approximately 8 am, Gomaa arrived at the Wafd headquarters accompanied by 30-40 armed men, and minibuses filled with pro-Gomaa reinforcements arrived shortly thereafter.\textsuperscript{318} Initially, the few Wafd employees and \textit{al-Wafd} journalists who had shown up for work attempted to resist, but Gomaa’s forces overpowered them, stormed the complex, and welded its gates shut. By midday, pro-Abaza activists managed to enter the complex through the back, and a violent standoff ensued, with the pro-Abaza forces reportedly throwing Molotov cocktails and

\textsuperscript{315} El-Nahhas, “Wafd at War.”


\textsuperscript{318} Interview with Mohamed Kamel, 23 Jan. 2011. Kamel asserts that these minibuses were organized by a member of State Security. While this seems plausible, I found no additional evidence of this claim, but future studies of this incident should investigate State Security’s role further.
setting fire to the main building.\textsuperscript{319} Gomaa’s supporters opened fire, and at least 28 people – most of them \textit{al-Wafd} journalists – were injured, including two critically.\textsuperscript{320}

For approximately eight hours, the Mubarak regime did nothing. Gomaa apparently believed that the police would assist him in reclaiming the party, viewing the calls from top regime officials as a promise to execute the court decisions that had gone in his favor.\textsuperscript{321} But this did not happen, and the police just stood to the side, apparently content to let the Wafd burn. Meanwhile, Egyptian television broadcast live images of the violence, which bolstered the regime’s bid to destroy the party’s image.\textsuperscript{322} Finally, at around 5:00 PM, truckloads of security forces arrived and arrested Gomaa, carting him away in an armored vehicle.\textsuperscript{323} Two days later, the PPC recognized Mustafa al-Tawil as the new party head.\textsuperscript{324}

In theory, Gomaa’s violent defeat at the Wafd headquarters should have been the final nail in the coffin of his political career. After all, Gomaa had lost virtually all of his supporters within the party, and the regime had also abandoned him. Yet apparently believing that “the post of chairman was like that of the pope,” meaning that he “could be removed from office only by death or resigning,”\textsuperscript{325} Gomaa would never concede defeat.

\textbf{III. A Severely Trapped Party}

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\textsuperscript{321} Interview with Hossam el-Kholy, 20 Mar. 2011.

\textsuperscript{322} Interview with Abdul Aziz al-Nahhas, 19 Jan. 2011.

\textsuperscript{323} Amer (2006).


\textsuperscript{325} Shehab, “A New Beginning?”
In early June 2006, the Wafd’s General Assembly reconvened and elected a new high committee. Abaza ran unopposed for party chairman, while Abdelnour was elected secretary-general. But only days before the election, in response to a case brought by Gomaa, an administrative court had ruled that the party’s March 2 election of al-Tawil as interim president had been illegitimate.326 Although the PPC declined to enforce the court decision, Gomaa pressed on. Over the next four years, Gomaa would win – by his count – thirteen cases against al-Tawil and Abaza327, though Abaza’s lawyers would also score some victories.328

a. Mahmoud Abaza and the Sword of Damocles

The ongoing litigation was more than just an annoyance. It represented an never-ending challenge to both Abaza’s chairmanship and the party’s viability, since it left the regime’s PPC with the option of declaring the chairmanship contested and freezing the party’s activities entirely. The regime further strengthened its hand against the Wafd by keeping two sets of criminal cases open: one involving Gomaa’s violent assault on the Wafd headquarters, and another involving three pro-Abaza activists who torched the Wafd headquarters with Molotov cocktails during the April 1 standoff.329

Thus, Abaza was completely trapped, and the possibility that the regime might either take away his chairmanship or indict his associates prevented him from building the Wafd into a meaningful opposition force. “Because of Naaman Gomaa’s claim to get back the leadership of the Wafd, Mahmoud Abaza had to be very understanding and

326 Shehab, “A New Beginning?”
obedient to the regime,” acknowledged high committee member Salah Diab. “He kept a very low key opposition, a very friendly attitude always.”

Practically speaking, this meant that chairman Abaza’s most confrontational acts towards the regime were, at best, half-measures. For example, the Wafd boycotted the 2007 Shura Council elections, and Abaza boldly declared that, “Egypt's political life had become a toy in the hands of the children of NDP leaders.” But when Mubarak later appointed Wafdist leader Mohamed Sarhan to the Shura Council, Abaza accepted it – he did not banish Sarhan from the party for breaking the boycott.

Abaza’s effort to build a coalition of opposition parties was similarly flaccid. The coalition was comprised entirely of regime-sanctioned parties with minimal public presence, including the liberal Democratic Front Party, leftist Tagammu party, and pan-Arab Nasserist party. Most importantly, the coalition stayed within the regime’s red lines by excluding the two forces that were most confrontational towards the regime during this period – the Muslim Brotherhood and popular left-wing Kefaya protest movement – and the coalition repeatedly acted in self-defeating ways. For example, the coalition participated in the severely rigged 2008 local council elections, fielding only 1,221 candidates combined versus 53,000 NDP candidates. The NDP won approximately 97

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330 Interview with Salah Diab, 24 Mar. 2011. This comment echoed sentiments that were expressed by many other Wafdist leaders, including Mona Makram-Ebeid and Abdel Salam Ragab.
percent of the seats, and the coalition’s tremendous losses fueled speculation that it had agreed to participate as part of a deal with the regime.\textsuperscript{336} The coalition also pursued purely symbolic exercises like attempting to draft a new constitution.\textsuperscript{337} But given the deep ideological divide between its liberal and leftist members, even this ended in failure, and the coalition could only agree on a watered down “document for political reform.”\textsuperscript{338}

Meanwhile, on virtually every issue that was politically sensitive for the regime, Abaza echoed the NDP’s positions. Thus, when the Mubarak regime proposed constitutional amendments in 2007 banning religious parties and restricting judicial monitoring of elections\textsuperscript{339}, Abaza broke with other opposition MPs – including some of his fellow Wafdist – and declared the amendments “generally positive.”\textsuperscript{340} Similarly, during the December 2008 Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, the Wafd backed the regime’s quiet support for Israel.\textsuperscript{341} And when various opposition figures, led by Ayman Nour, began a public campaign in October 2009 to prevent Gamal Mubarak from succeeding his father as president of Egypt, the Wafd kept its distance.\textsuperscript{342}

Indeed, the matter of Mubarak’s succession was, by this time, the most sensitive issue confronting the regime. Although various constitutional amendments had been passed to facilitate Gamal’s rise to the presidency, there was strong resistance to Gamal

\textsuperscript{336} Gamal Essam El-Din, “Proud to Win,” \textit{Al-Ahram Weekly On-line} 893 (17-23 Apr. 2008): \texttt{<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/893/eg3.htm>}.  
among the NDP’s old guard and within the military. The regime thus feared that external resistance to Gamal’s succession could catalyze an internal rift.

For this reason, Mohamed ElBaradei’s emergence as a possible presidential challenger to Mubarak in late 2009 shook the regime’s confidence. As the former secretary-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, ElBaradei possessed tremendous domestic and international credibility, making it hard for the regime to quash him. His arrival in Egypt in February 2010 energized youth activists, hundreds of whom flocked to greet him at Cairo International Airport, and ElBaradei quickly engaged a broad array of opposition organizations, including the Muslim Brotherhood, Kefaya, and various liberal political parties.

Within the Wafd, ElBaradei attracted significant attention – particularly from younger activists, but from some high committee members as well. They shared ElBaradei’s pro-democratic outlook and, perhaps just as importantly, appreciated ElBaradei’s strong Wafdist lineage: his father had been a Wafdist until the 1952 revolution and, as chairman of the Lawyers Syndicate in the 1970s, had invited Serageddien to deliver the 1977 speech that resuscitated the Wafd after 25 years of dormancy. Almost immediately after it became clear that ElBaradei would return to Egypt, the Wafd’s secretary-general in Tanta called on ElBaradei to be the party’s

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349 Interview with Mohamed Salah el-Sheikh, 12 Mar. 2011.
candidate in the 2011 presidential elections. But Abaza dashed these hopes immediately. “The Wafd is not interested in importing presidential candidates,” he said. Abaza further refused to invite ElBaradei to meetings of the opposition party coalition, and he refused calls within his own high committee for an informal meeting with ElBaradei.

It is fair to wonder whether Abaza’s stance on ElBaradei was motivated, in part, by his personal resentment of ElBaradei, whom Abaza seemingly viewed as a Johnny-come-lately who had captured liberals’ political imagination without ever working a day in Egyptian politics. “The credit for revitalizing political life and constitutional reform should not go to ElBaradei, who has lived outside Egypt for more than 30 years,” Abaza said at the time. “It is opposition parties, and the Wafd foremost among them, that have been the driving force behind the movement for reform.”

But even if Abaza had wanted to work with ElBaradei, the risk that the regime would finally enforce one of the cases in Gomaa’s favor and shut down the party would have made this cooperation unlikely. And that threat never dissipated. Indeed, as support for engaging ElBaradei rose within the party, Wafdist MP Ahmed Nasser – one of Gomaa’s few remaining allies – began calling for the implementation of a 2008 court

350 Gamal Essam El-Din, “‘Never Say Never.’”
353 Gamal Essam El-Din, “Opposition vs El-Baradei.”
ruling that had restored Gomaa’s chairmanship, and Wafdist members in Alexandria inaugurated a new party branch that would be run by Gomaa.

Ultimately, though, the Mubarak regime stuck with Abaza. He was a mostly obedient opposition leader, as well as politically well connected to the government through his extensive family ties. So in addition to allowing him to remain chairman, the regime occasionally threw him some bones. In this vein, during the 2008 local council races, Abaza called State Security to ensure that at least five of his supporters won municipal seats. But in the run-up to the 2010 parliamentary elections, Abaza may have landed an even bigger deal.

b. Abaza’s 2010 Electoral Deal With the Regime?

On March 14, 2010, al-Masry al-Youm reported that the Wafd had reached a deal with the NDP in which it would win at least 23 seats in the upcoming elections in exchange for agreeing not to support ElBaradei and his calls for changing the constitution. The Wafd had also agreed, according to the report, to participate in the 2011 presidential elections by nominating a member of its high committee, presumably to run as a show-candidate against either Hosni or Gamal Mubarak. The report named the 23 Wafdist who were going to be given parliamentary seats, and stated that these individuals would replace parliamentarians from the Muslim Brotherhood, which had won 88 seats in the 2005 elections and had been an “annoyance” to the ruling party. The

358 Interview with Sherif Taher, 2 Aug. 2010; interview with Essam Shiha, 23 Jan. 2011; interview with Hossam el-Kholy, 20 Mar. 2011. Taher is one of the beneficiary local councilman, and he admits that Abaza secured his victory by calling State Security on his behalf. Shiha put the number of local councilman that benefited from Abaza’s deal-making at “about five,” though the number could be much greater, since Shiha is one of Abaza’s most vocal supporters.
report further speculated that other officially recognized opposition parties might have reached similar deals with the regime.\(^{359}\)

Abaza immediately denied that such a deal existed, and the Wafd sued *al-Masry* for libel.\(^{360}\) The NDP similarly denied the report.\(^{361}\) Meanwhile, the Wafd summoned Salah Diab, *al-Masry’s* billionaire owner who also happened to be a member of the party’s high committee, and Diab apologized for the story, saying that he merely owned the newspaper and had no control over its editorial content.\(^{362}\) Four months later, the public prosecutor dismissed the case against *al-Masry*, ruling that its report constituted “permitted criticism.”\(^{363}\)

There are five reasons to doubt the veracity of *al-Masry’s* earth-shattering report. First, it was based on a single, unnamed source, who apparently called the author out-of-the-blue and, during a subsequent meeting, slipped him a document containing the details.\(^{364}\) Second, the author, Dr. Ammar Ali Hassan, was the head of research at the state-run Middle East News Agency, and therefore hardly an independent journalist.\(^{365}\)

Third, it seems implausible that such a specific deal – in which both the number and

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Yet there is ample circumstantial evidence that such a deal was, in fact, in the works. For starters, the kind of negotiations that the al-Masry report described – in which the Wafd’s leadership had agreed to abide by certain red lines in exchange for being guaranteed to win a certain number of seats – was very common in Egyptian politics under Mubarak. Abaza was hardly above this kind of deal making. After all, he’d negotiated with the regime to ensure that certain Wafdists won their local council elections in 2008.\footnote{Mohamed El-Sayed, “Wafd Wrangles.”}

Moreover, before the al-Masry story broke, there had been murmurings within the party regarding a deal. One Wafd leader reported that, at one high committee meeting, members later mentioned in the al-Masry article started congratulating each other – a
spectacle, he said, which confused him at the time. Abaza also approached Mona Makram-Ebeid, and told her, “I spoke to the [NDP] … and I think they’ll leave three to four seats for women in our party. And it will include you.”

Sure enough, Makram-Ebeid was named in the al-Masry report, along with a number of other Wafdist who were seen as being particularly close to Abaza.

Whether or not the al-Masry report was accurate, it represented a tremendous embarrassment for Abaza, affirming for many Wafdist what they had come to believe about their chairman: that he was overly conciliatory towards the regime, and had done little to actually build the party into a relevant political force. Four years after Abaza’s triumph over Gomaa, the party remained dormant: the headquarters were typically empty; the governorate offices were in disarray; and the party seemed completely cut off from the Egyptian “street,” with new youth-led organizations supplanting the Wafd’s liberal voice within public discourse. So as the May 2010 Wafd elections approached, many Wafdist began looking for an alternative.

IV. A New Chairman Stays Trapped

Forty days before the chairmanship elections, A-Sayyid Al-Badawy, a billionaire media mogul and owner of Egypt’s largest pharmaceutical company, threw his hat into the ring. Al-Badawy had been the Wafd’s secretary-general under Naaman Gomaa and, after siding with Abaza during the 2006 intra-Wafd fight, was promised that he would remain secretary-general in the new high committee. But when Abaza reneged at

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372 Interview with Hassan Abdel Gowad, 24 Jul 2010.
373 Interview with Mona Makram-Ebeid, 17 Mar. 2011.
the last moment, thereby causing Al-Badawy to lose the election for secretary-general by a single vote to Abdelnour, the jilted Al-Badawy suspended his involvement in the party for most of the next four years. Al-Badawy thus entered the 2010 chairmanship race highly motivated, building a relatively large campaign staff and using his extensive media contacts to publicize his run.

a. A Competitive Chairmanship Race

For many Wafdist, the election was, first and foremost, a referendum on Abaza’s tenure, and Al-Badawy’s most salient feature was that he was not Abaza. But the competitiveness of the election also inspired hope. After all, neither Fouad Serageddin nor Abaza had ever faced a challenger, while Naaman Gomaa’s 2000 election had been a landslide victory. Al-Badawy’s run for the chairmanship thus indicated that, even after years of ineffectiveness, the Wafd might still become a model of Egyptian democracy.

Yet, as even some of his supporters realized, Al-Badawy was no more likely than Abaza to steer the party towards a more confrontational approach vis-à-vis the regime. In fact, Al-Badawy was completely reliant on the regime for his livelihood: he required government licenses to operate al-Hayat, one of Egypt’s biggest privately-owned satellite television channels, and additionally needed strong government relations to secure loans and keep the ever-intrusive security services at bay. And Al-Badawy’s regime connections ran deep: he frequently touted his close relations with State Security

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377 Interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 24 Jan. 2011; Shehab, “A New Beginning?”
chief Hassan Abdel Rahman and Shura Council speaker Safwat Sherif, both of whom were among the most powerful figures in the Mubarak regime. Moreover, in 2003, President Mubarak had attended the opening of one of Al-Badawy’s factories – a rare honor that signaled Al-Badawy’s strong relations with the government. The Mubarak regime thus viewed the Al-Badawy-Abaza match-up as a battle between two similarly unthreatening figures, which is why it permitted Dream TV, an Egyptian satellite network, to broadcast a debate between them. And when Al-Badawy won 57 percent of the vote to defeat Abaza, the state-run media celebrated it.

b. Another Trapped Chairman

In turn, although the Wafd elections marked the first time that power had changed hands within an Egyptian political party through competitive elections, Al-Badawy’s victory yielded few substantive changes in the party’s approach vis-à-vis the regime. Shortly after winning, Al-Badawy conceded that the Wafd “cannot be expected to compete with the NDP in such a short time,” and he set his sights on challenging the Muslim Brotherhood – the regime’s ultimate nemesis. Al-Badawy further pleased the regime by taking populist, anti-interventionist stances, including spurning calls for

381 Interview with Abdul Aziz al-Nahhas, 19 Jan. 2011; interview with Mahmoud Abaza, 1 Apr. 2011.
382 Interview with Mohamed Salah el-Sheikh, 12 Mar. 2011; interview with another source, who asked that this comment be quoted anonymously because he feared retribution for discussing Al-Badawy’s relations with the Mubarak regime.
383 Interview with Essam Shiha, 23 Jan. 2011.
385 Interview with Nagi el-Ghatrifi, 28 Jul. 2010.
386 Interview with Ahmed Ezzelarab, 10 Jul 2010; interview with Sherif Taher, 2 Aug. 2010.
international election monitors and lambasting attempts to “impose democracy from outside” in his first meeting with U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Margaret Scobey.

Moreover, much as Abaza had done, Al-Badawy used the Wafd’s membership in the coalition of opposition parties to keep the opposition squarely within the regime’s red lines. In this vein, when the Democratic Front Party announced in July that it would heed Mohamed ElBaradei’s call to boycott the upcoming parliamentary elections, Al-Badawy pulled the Wafd out of the coalition. A month later, after returning to the coalition, the Wafd hosted a 3000-person opposition party conference boldly titled “No Elections Without Guarantees” and, in his keynote address, Al-Badawy vowed to consider an elections boycott if a variety of voting reforms – such as judicial monitoring and amendments to the 1956 political rights law – weren’t implemented by September 17. But it was a bluff: on September 17, 56.7 percent of the Wafd’s General Assembly voted to participate in the elections – despite the fact that none of Al-Badawy’s demands had been met – and Al-Badawy hailed the outcome.

Yet Al-Badawy’s most audacious kowtow to the regime involved his August purchase of al-Dustour, an independent daily most famous for its vociferously anti-Mubarak editor-in-chief, Ibrahim Eissa. Eissa had long been in the regime’s crosshairs: the government had shut down al-Dustour for seven years in 1998; fined Eissa for libeling Mubarak in 2006; and imprisoned Eissa for libeling Mubarak in 2006; and imprisoned Eissa for two months in 2008, after al-Dustour

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ran articles speculating on Mubarak’s declining health. With Al-Badawy now in control of *al-Dustour*, the regime sensed opportunity to rid itself of the outspoken editor, and demanded that Al-Badawy fire Eissa. Initially, Al-Badawy resisted, and encouraged Eissa to tone down his criticisms of Mubarak. But Eissa refused and, after attempting to run an op-ed by ElBaradei – a major red line – Al-Badawy fired him.

The *al-Dustour* incident, as it came to be known, was a major scandal for Al-Badawy and a tremendous embarrassment for the Wafd party. The regime’s distaste for Eissa was well known and, by doing the regime’s dirty work, Al-Badawy had destroyed his reputation as an opposition leader. He had further tarnished the Wafd’s image, as it was widely assumed that Al-Badawy had fired Eissa to win more seats in the parliament. In response to the firing, *al-Dustour* journalists staged sit-ins outside the Press Syndicate in downtown Cairo and chanted slogans against Al-Badawy outside of the Wafd’s headquarters.

Al-Badawy tried to quell the uproar by selling his *al-Dustour* shares to a partner, and he later apologized to the Wafd high committee, saying that the *al-Dustour* incident

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394 Interview with Mona Makram-Ebeid, 17 Mar. 2011; interview with Salah Diab, 24 Mar. 2011. Makram-Ebeid said that the regime pushed Al-Badawy to buy *al-Dustour*, and then pushed him to fire Eissa. While this is plausible, I have gone with a more conservative telling of this incident to avoid publishing uncertainties as fact.

395 Interview with a source who asked that his name be withheld from this comment, because he feared retribution.


was the worst decision he’d ever made. But the damage had been done. Though Al-Badawy retained his chairmanship, three high-profile Wafdists quit the party in disgust, and calls for a more confrontational posture vis-à-vis the regime started growing.

If the *al-Dustour* incident was a major blunder for Al-Badawy, it was arguably a bigger blunder for the Mubarak regime, which had undermined the credibility of a mostly pliant opposition leader by demanding too much of him. As high committee member and *al-Masry* owner Salah Diab noted, “Vanity made the regime overlook the value of accommodating Al-Sayyid Al-Badawy.” This would come back to haunt the regime: Al-Badawy’s weakened state complicated his efforts to keep his fellow Wafdists within the regime’s red lines.


Even despite the *al-Dustour* incident, the Wafd entered the November 2010 parliamentary campaign season feeling optimistic. The Wafd leadership believed that it had a deal with the regime that would guarantee the party strong representation in the next parliament, which is why it strongly supported participating in the elections. “So many people were looking for jobs in the parliament,” high committee member Refat

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403 Interview with Salah Diab, 24 Mar. 2011.
Kamel, one of the few leaders calling for an electoral boycott, told me. “The impression was that the Wafd would take many seats and replace the Muslim Brotherhood.”

The Wafd was not alone in this assessment: Egyptian commentators overwhelmingly expected that the Wafd would replace the Muslim Brotherhood as the largest opposition bloc in the parliament and win 20-30 seats, thereby echoing the terms of the Abaza-NDP deal that *al-Masry* had reported back in March. Meanwhile, the regime did a great deal to bolster these expectations: in the state-run press, Wafdist candidacies were seemingly highlighted in every article on the elections. The regime also permitted the Wafd to register 205 candidates, and NDP leader Moufid Shehab noted that the large number of opposition party candidates “will make it difficult for the [Muslim] Brotherhood to win any seats.”

But on Election Day, the Wafd was stunned: only two of its candidates won their races outright, and only thirteen others achieved enough votes to force run-off elections, which would be held the following week. Rampant forgery, of course, had been expected – but the Wafd anticipated being a beneficiary of that forgery, not a victim. Yet even the Wafd’s most popular candidates, including former parliamentarians with strong ties to the regime, found their elections forged against them. “Mounir [Fakhry Abdelnour], Fouad [Badrawy], Mohamed Sherdy … were looked at as, you know, soft opponents – soft opposition members,” said high committee member Ali ElSalmi. “They were not fanatic, like, for instance, Ibrahim Eissa … or like some members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

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They were easy-going with the regime. ... So it was expected that the regime should tolerate these kinds of people.\footnote{408}

Sherdy’s experience is illustrative. He had represented Port Said in the parliament since 2005, but didn’t particularly enjoy the experience and considered not running in 2010. “But I was pushed [to run] by the [Wafd] party and the NDP,” he told me. “So I expected fair play.” Yet when he arrived at his polling place on November 28, he found few judicial monitors, and poll workers asked him for 10 Egyptian pounds (approximately $1.67) per vote to stuff the boxes in his favor. “I could have won for 500,000 Egyptian pounds,” he said.\footnote{409} But he declined, and was slated to lose in the first round before Al-Badawy contacted the regime on his behalf, at which point the regime cancelled enough ballot boxes so that Sherdy could advance to the second round.\footnote{410}

Meanwhile, even candidates who were initially declared winners – such as Abdelnour\footnote{411} and Makram-Ebeid\footnote{412} – lost because of belated forgery, and few of the Wafd’s top leaders advanced past the first round. With the leadership feeling dejected and pressure rising within the party to change course\footnote{413}, the Wafd began considering what had once been unthinkable: boycotting the run-off elections that were scheduled for December 5.

\footnote{408 Interview with Ali ElSalmi, 1 Mar. 2011.}
\footnote{409 Interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 18 Jan. 2011; interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 24 Jan. 2011.}
\footnote{410 Interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 18 Jan. 2011; interview with Essam Shiha, 23 Jan. 2011. Shiha was more explicit regarding Al-Badawy’s intervention with the regime, though Sherdy also conceded that “[The] But judges later cancelled sixteen boxes, some of which were forged. They cancelled enough so that I could make it to the second round.”}
\footnote{411 Interview with Sherif Taher, 19 Jan. 2011; interview with Essam Shiha, 23 Jan. 2011. Shiha says that Abdelnour should have won, but offers a somewhat different explanation for his loss: although the regime promised Abdelnour that he would win, Abdelnour’s lawyer advised him to demand that twenty elections boxes be cancelled. The lawyer, Shiha said, apparently believed that the boxes favored Abdelnour’s NDP opponent, but they ultimately favored Abdelnour, which is why he lost.}
\footnote{412 Interview with Mona Makram-Ebeid, 17 Mar. 2011.}
\footnote{413 Interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 18 Jan. 2011.}
Boycotting the elections was, of course, a major red line for the regime: opposition parties’ participation in its tightly held elections was critical for making those elections – and the ruling party’s electoral “successes” – appear legitimate. So the regime moved immediately to convince the Wafd to not to withdraw. NDP leader Moufid Shehab called Al-Badawy, telling him that the Wafd’s withdrawal would hurt Egypt’s image. “We know that you’re a good Egyptian, so don’t do it,” Shehab said.414 Regime officials and State Security also reached out to high committee members, guaranteeing victory to those candidates who participated in the December 5 run-off.415

While most of the Wafd’s high committee supported a pullout, there were some exceptions. Mohamed Sarhan, whom Mubarak had appointed to the Shura Council in 2007, was particularly insistent on staying in the race.416 But the dilemma was toughest for those Wafdist who had advanced to the run-off, and the regime intervened with them very aggressively. “Egypt needs you. What happened was a mistake,” Mohamed Sherdy was told. “So I said, ‘you should tell the people who put us in this place to stop.’ I was mocking him. ‘If you make me succeed, make sure it doesn’t look forged.’” [He replied,] ’No problem. Everything you want will be done. Just please go.’”417

In its bid to win the Wafd’s participation, the regime also used force. The Interior Ministry thus prodded Atef al-Ashmony, a former NDP parliamentary candidate who had run in this election as a Wafdist candidate and advanced to the second round, to bring hundreds of thugs to occupy the Wafd’s headquarters. So on December 2, just as the Wafd high committee was convening to discuss a pullout, al-Ashmony’s thugs barged

416 Interview with Mohamed Salah el-Sheikh, 12 Mar. 2011.
417 Interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 7 Mar. 2011.
through the doors, nearly sparking a bloody confrontation with Wafd youth activists, who had come to demand the Wafd’s withdrawal.\textsuperscript{418}

But it was too little, too late for the regime: by a 13-1 margin, the Wafd high committee voted for a pullout. In his announcement of the decision, Al-Badawy boldly declared the elections to be a fraud. “We will expose this parliament by all means till we prove it is null and void,” he reportedly said.\textsuperscript{419} A week later, the Wafd doubled down on its refusal to play ball with the regime, freezing the party memberships of those Wafdist candidates who had stayed in their respective races – and won – despite the party’s pullout.\textsuperscript{420}

\textit{d. Still Trapped}

The Wafd’s elections pullout was the boldest move it had taken since its 1990 elections boycott. But there was no afterglow, or any sense that the party was now “untrapped.” The Wafd had, after all, just suffered a tremendously dispiriting defeat, and the party showed little inclination towards developing a more confrontational approach vis-à-vis the regime. There were two reasons for this.

First, the Wafd is a legacy party: its leadership largely consists of individuals whose ancestors were active Wafdist, and many of its top leaders descend from foundational Wafdist leaders. In this vein, Mounir Fakhry Abdelnour, who served as the Wafd’s secretary-general until February 2011, is the grandson of Fikry Abdelnour, who


served as a Wafdist parliamentarian from 1924-1942, and both of his uncles were Wafdist leaders during the 1940s; spokesman Mohamed Sherdy’s grandfather was on the Port Said governorate’s Wafdist high committee, and his father was a Wafdist MP from 1984 until his death in 1989; honorary chairman Mustafa al-Tawil’s father was the Justice Minister in the 1950-1952 Wafdist government; vice-chair Yasin Tag el-Din’s grandfather was a Wafdist MP and served as Minister of Endowments in the 1950 Wafdist government; assistant secretary-general Hussein Mansour’s grandfather was an associate of Wafdist founder Saad Zaghloul, and served as MP from 1926-1927; and high committee member Mona Korashy’s father was Wafdist Senator Ahmed Pasha Korashy.

These legacy Wafdist thus saw themselves as torchbearers for Egypt’s authentic liberal heritage, and they believed that transmitting this heritage required – first and foremost – surviving the Mubarak regime. “The Wafd party has been around for 100 years in all of Egypt,” one legacy Wafdist told me. “We have a family in every state. Everyone has a grandfather or grandmother who was a Wafdist. Our key ideas are freedom, human rights, and centrism. … And [those ideas] will always continue. Our goal is survival because we have a military regime.” Participating in the regime’s tightly controlled electoral system was critical for survival, because it reassured the regime that the Wafd would work through the regime’s “political machinery,” and would not take

421 Interview with Mounir Fakhry Abdelnour, 10 Aug. 2010.
422 Interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 18 Jan. 2010.
424 Interview with Yasin Tag el-Din, 19 Jul. 2011.
425 Interview with Hussein Mansour, 4 Jul. 2010.
426 Interview with Mona Korashy, 5 Aug. 2010.
more radical action that would force the regime to destroy it. Participation also allowed the party to keep its ideas alive, since campaign periods provided vital space for criticizing the regime on liberal terms. Thus, even after the Wafd’s bold 2010 electoral pullout, the party was still inclined towards playing by the regime’s rules, because leaders recognized that further protests against the regime could invite destruction.

The second reason why the Wafd remained trapped despite its 2010 electoral pullout has to do with the party’s social character. It was a party of elites, with many of its members maintaining close relationships with the regime. This was particularly true of its chairmen: as previously mentioned, Gomaa and Al-Badawy were dependent on the regime’s good graces for their respective livelihoods, while Abaza was tied to the regime’s highest echelons through multiple family connections. But it was also true of its lower ranking leaders, whose lucrative careers similarly required strong government connections. In this vein, assistant secretary-general Ramzi Zaqalama owns a lucrative public relations company, which is wife operates, and his villa is located behind that of (now imprisoned) NDP leader Safwat Sherif; assistant chairman Baha Abu Shaqa is a wealthy legal consultant with clients who are close to the regime, and he was appointed by Mubarak to the Shura Council in 2010; High Committee member Ali ElSalmi, who served as vice-president of Cairo University until he retired in 1994, was previously the Minister of Economics under Sadat, and his political connections remained so strong

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428 Interview with Camilia Shokry, 1 Aug. 2010.
429 Interview with Ramzi Zaqalama, 4 Jul. 2010.
430 Interview with Yasin Tag el-Din, 19 Jul. 2010.
that Egypt’s ruling military junta appointed him vice-prime minister in July 2011, following Mubarak’s ouster.

In turn, many Wafdist leaders simply had too much to lose by continuing to confront the regime. Abu Shaqa’s own story is telling: in the immediate aftermath of the NDP’s massive electoral forgery, he bravely announced that he would resign from the Shura Council seat to which Mubarak had only recently appointed him. But he very quickly retracted from this promise, telling NDP leader and Shura Council speaker Safwat Sherif that he would never resign. There was, presumably, a great deal to be lost by taking such a strong stand against the regime.

In the aftermath of its elections pullout, the Wafd’s commitment to obeying the regime’s red lines was best demonstrated through its “shadow government.” The Wafd had founded the “shadow government” ten days before the parliamentary election, appointing experts from various policy fields as “ministers” to provide policy recommendations, much like a think tank. But in the aftermath of the Wafd’s electoral defeat, it took on a new significance: the Wafd was no longer a parliamentary party, and it therefore hoped that its “shadow government” would be a mechanism through which the party could remain visible.

Yet, in keeping with the Wafd’s supplicant ways, the “shadow government” very deliberately avoided criticizing the regime directly. As Wahid Fawzi, who served as “foreign minister,” told me only days before Egypt’s January 2011 anti-Mubarak began,

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433 Interview with Ahmed Hassan, 26 Jan. 2011. Hassan is Abu Shaqa’s colleague in the Shura Council, and he claims to have witnessed Abu Shaqa’s conversation with Sherif personally.
“The plan is not to be in conflict with the government. [The ‘shadow government’] just believes that Egypt can do better.”

The “shadow government” also became the Wafd’s way of avoiding participation in the “popular parliament,” a much more stridently anti-Mubarak government-in-waiting-type body that a coalition of former opposition MPs assembled immediately following the 2010 elections. Although the Wafd initially announced that it would participate in the “popular parliament,” the party quickly retreated. The Wafd thereby kept a distance from the Muslim Brothers and Kefaya activists who filled the “popular parliament’s” ranks, committing itself to its own “government” that it believed the regime would be more likely to tolerate.

As I will discuss in Chapter 7, the “popular parliament” ultimately participated in the January 25 protests that would catalyze Mubarak’s ouster. The Wafd, meanwhile, kept its distance – the final confirmation of the Mubarak regime’s success in trapping it.

V. Conclusion

For much of its Mubarak-era history, the Wafd party demonstrated little inclination to challenge the regime’s red lines. After the debacle of its 1990 parliamentary elections boycott, the party’s leadership was mostly content to tone down its anti-regime outlook in exchange for political patronage. Moreover, its four chairmen – as well as many of its top leaders – were well-heeled elites with multiple ties to the regime, and crossing the red lines would have come at tremendous personal costs. Yet

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these factors never stopped the Mubarak regime from interfering in the party to ensure its permanent dysfunction, such as by keeping competing Wafdist factions at odds with one another and nearly forcing the party’s demise during the 2006 intraparty leadership struggle.

Not all opposition parties, however, were so pliant. In the next chapter, I examine the liberal Ghad party – a Wafdist offshoot that tested the Mubarak regime’s red lines very aggressively and, ultimately, to its peril.
Chapter 4  
The Ghad Party: Displaced Renegades and Regime Puppets

As demonstrated in the previous two chapters, the Mubarak regime sought to trap its opponents in legal opposition parties that, because of the structure of incentives and disincentives, ultimately adhered to the regime’s red lines. The regime rewarded their cooperation with seats in parliament, further compelled their cooperation through the threat of the party’s destruction, and punished non-cooperation by denying them parliamentary seats and interfering with their internal activities. By the eve of Mubarak’s ouster, this pattern of carrots and sticks had ultimately rendered most opposition parties not particularly oppositional.

And yet there were exceptions. Opposition party leaders, after all, are opportunistic, and in some instances they tested the regime’s red lines, which they occasionally flaunted entirely. These episodes, however, never ended well for the red-line-breakers: the regime was impelled to punish them, since failing to do so risked the breakdown of its strategy for using a manipulated multiparty system to weaken its would-be opponents.

This chapter uses a case study of the Ghad party for examining these dynamics. During the 2005 presidential and parliamentary elections, Ghad party leader and presidential candidate Ayman Nour crossed four major “red lines”: he named a prominent regime opponent as the editor of his party’s newspaper; called for far-reaching constitutional change that would have undermined the power of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP); courted foreign leaders without governmental approval; and, after losing in the September elections, publicly
declared the electoral system a fraud. In response, the regime quietly worked to undermine Nour, deploying State Security agents to foment divisions within the Ghad party and encouraging a group of Ghad leaders with close connections to the regime to form their own offshoot under the exact same name. When Nour was later convicted on dubious charges, the regime granted this second, heavily co-opted “Ghad” party license to the “Ghad” name, thereby displacing Nour and his allies from electoral politics.

I. The Ghad Party Emerges

The Ghad party emerged on the Egyptian political scene in late 2004 as a liberal competitor to the Wafd party. As discussed in Chapter 3, Wafdist chairman Naaman Gomaa’s brittle style sowed significant internal dissent, and many Wafdist complained that he administered the party “like a dictator” and “was not a real liberal.” Meanwhile, among Egyptian liberals, the Wafd was viewed as a “pasha’s party” – too elite, too politically cautious, and too close to the regime to effect any real change.

a. Ayman Nour’s New Party

MP Ayman Nour was one of these disaffected Wafdist. Nour had been one of the party’s brightest young stars. Born in 1964, he had served as the president of his high school student union in Dakhaliya; president of the nationwide student union during his university years; and leader in the Wafd youth organization since the time of the party’s re-founding in 1984. Nour’s charisma won him many admirers, and his 1995 election to Parliament, when he was only 31 years old, demonstrated his knack for working within the strict confines of Egypt’s political system and his willingness to abide by the regime’s

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439 Interview with Iglal Rafit, 7 Jul. 2010; interview with Ahmed Ezzelarab, 10 Jul. 2010; interview with Medhat Khafaga, 13 Jul. 2010.
440 Interview with an anonymous source in the upper ranks of the Wafd Higher Committee, who asked that his name be withheld because he feared retribution.
“red lines.” Indeed, Nour won his first election by promising then-Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Kamal al-Shezli – a top NDP power broker – that he would “go on the line,” meaning that he would not criticize President Hosni Mubarak, and then-Wafdist chairman Fouad Serageddin also dealt with al-Shezli to secure Nour’s seat.

Once elected, Ayman Nour started building connections within the Parliament, hoping to gain enough support so that he could attain higher office. In addition, he developed excellent relations with high-ranking government ministers, and provided State Security with information on Wafd party activities to curry favor with the regime. This work quickly paid off. When Gamal Mubarak, the president’s son, began forming the Mustaqbal (“future”) party in 1999 as a vehicle for developing his political persona, First Lady Suzanne Mubarak sent messages to Nour asking him to assist Gamal. Ultimately, Wafdist chairman Serageddin persuaded Nour to pass on Mubarak’s offer.

But Nour’s political success soon became a source of concern for the regime. After winning re-election in 2000, Nour ran for deputy speaker of the parliament and received 161 votes in the 454-seat body – a vote total suggesting widespread support

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441 Interview with Essam Shiha, 23 Jan. 2011; interview with an anonymous source, who asked that his name be withheld because of his fear of retribution. The promise that Nour made to Kamal al-Shezli was also confirmed by a second anonymous source, who asked that his name be withheld because of his concern that an on-the-record statement of this nature would jeopardize his status within the Wafd party.

442 Interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 18 Jan. 2011; interview with Naaman Gomaa, 6 Mar. 2011. In his interview, Sherdy said that Serageddin “interfered on behalf of three to four seats, two of which were Ayman Nour and Fouad Badrawy.” Gomaa said that Serageddin helped three people succeed: Yasin Serageddin, Fouad Badrawy, and Ayman Nour.

443 Interview with Shadi Taha, 6 Jul. 2010.

444 Interview with Morsi Sheikh, 26 Jul. 2010. This information was also confirmed by an anonymous source, who asked that his name be withheld because of his political position.

445 Interview with an anonymous source who is close to Nour, but asked that his name be withheld because he feared retribution from the regime for disclosing private contacts between Mrs. Mubarak and Nour.

from NDP parliamentarians.447 Unnerved, Hosni Mubarak called a meeting with the NDP’s parliamentary block and threatened to dissolve the parliament if Nour’s high vote total was repeated.448 Shortly thereafter, Nour was dismissed from the Wafd party.

While the cause of Nour’s banishment is disputed – some claim that the regime pressured Gomaa to fire to Nour, while others claim that Gomaa and Nour simply had a personal conflict449 – his subsequent political difficulties indicate regime involvement in sidelining him. Following his ouster from the Wafd, Nour sought refuge in the Misr 2000 party, which had been defunct until that point, and was easily elected its chairman. But shortly thereafter, another Misr 2000 member emerged, claiming that he had held a meeting with 500 members of Misr 2000 at his home and had been elected party chairman. Despite the dubiousness of this claim – the individual’s home was too small to hold 500 people – this gave the Shura Council’s Political Parties Committee (PPC) a pretext for declaring the Misr 2000 party’s leadership “disputed” and freezing its activities. Since the PPC was comprised of NDP members and headed by powerful NDP leader Safwat el-Sherif, the regime’s role in blocking Nour from finding a new party was obvious.450

Still, Nour was determined. In mid-2003, he began forming the Ghad (“Tomorrow”) party, approaching former colleagues from the Parliament, as well as businessmen and journalists, to join.451 Yet the PPC refused to approve the party on three occasions, claiming that Ghad’s platform did not differ significantly from those of

448 Interview with Gameela Ismail, 22 Jul. 2010.
existing parties. In August 2004, Ghad attempted to circumvent the committee by joining the opposition alliance, but the PPC intervened to block this.

Finally, in October 2004, the Ghad party sued the PPC in administrative court, arguing that Ghad’s platform differed significantly from those of other parties and that the PPC had rejected it on false premises. After Ghad won its first of three lawsuits, PPC chairman Sherif sought to avert further embarrassment by offering Nour a deal: if the Ghad party stopped the judicial process, it would be awarded its party license. Nour accepted the deal on October 28, 2004, and Ghad received its license.

b. The Expectation that Ghad Would Abide By the “Red Lines”

By being granted a party license, Nour had implicitly agreed to abide by the Mubarak regime’s “red lines.” He was, after all, a longtime Egyptian political player, and thus knew the limits under which his party was supposed to operate quite well. Indeed, shortly after the Ghad party was legalized, Nour seemingly signaled his acceptance of the “red lines” by going on satellite television and voicing his support for Hosni Mubarak’s continued reign, saying, “If Mubarak was one of several nominees, I would vote for him.” And while the regime had worked to prevent Nour from founding his new party, it likely viewed the establishment of a new competitor to the

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453 Interview with Wael Nawara, 6 Jul. 2010.
455 Interview with Walid Riad, 7 Jul. 2010; interview with Shadi Taha, 6 Jul. 2010; interview with Morsi Sheikh, 26 Jul. 2010. Other interviewees contended that such a deal was merely plausible, given the fact that the Ghad party received its license shortly before the court’s decision, which was expected to be in its favor. Only one interviewee, Nour’s estranged wife Gameela Ismail, dismissed the possibility of such a deal.
456 Interview with Morsi Sheikh, 26 Jul. 2010.
Wafd as useful for dividing its opposition\(^{458}\), especially given the prevalence of former Wafdist leaders within Ghad’s leadership ranks\(^{459}\) and the fact that 25 percent of the Wafd’s membership joined Ghad at the time of its founding.\(^{460}\)

Yet the regime had an additional reason to believe that the newly approved party would abide by the “red lines”: many of Ghad’s founding leaders had very close ties to top regime figures and State Security, and could easily be used as pressure points against the Ghad party if it strayed.\(^{461}\) Of course, this included Nour himself who, throughout his tenure as a parliamentarian, had cultivated relationships with a number of the NDP leaders closest to Hosni Mubarak and, as previously mentioned, had acted as an informant for State Security.\(^{462}\) But beyond Nour, there was Ibrahim Saleh, a former member of the Gamal Mubarak-run NDP Policy Committee and deputy minister in the Ministry of Economic Development,\(^{463}\) whose brother is in the mukhabarat (intelligence police)\(^{464}\); Mohammed Sadiq Okasha, a wealthy hotel proprietor and former NDP parliamentarian\(^{465}\); Naguib Gabriel, a former Mubarak-appointed judge and lawyer for Coptic spiritual leader Pope Shenouda, who was viewed as close to the regime\(^{466}\); Fawzi

\(^{458}\) Interview with Rageb Helal Hemeda, 4 Aug. 2010.

\(^{459}\) This included former MP Mona Makram-Ebeid, a longtime Wafdist from a prominent Coptic family; Sami Serageddin, son of former Wafd leader Fouad Serageddin; Morsi Sheikh, a well-respected former judge and Wafdist, who had run previously – and unsuccessfully – for Parliament against Speaker Fathi Sarour of the NDP; and Ihab el-Kholy, a longtime activist in Wafd’s Youth Committee.


\(^{462}\) Interview with Rageb Helal Hemeda, 4 Aug. 2010; Interview with Morsi Sheikh, 26 Jul. 2010. This piece of information was also confirmed by an anonymous source, who asked that his name be withheld because of his political position.

\(^{463}\) Interview with Ibrahim Saleh, 8 Jul. 2010.

\(^{464}\) Interview with Morsi Sheikh, 26 Jul. 2010.

\(^{465}\) Interview with Mohamed Sadiq Okasha, 3 Jul. 2010.

\(^{466}\) Interview with Naguib Gabriel, 3 Jul. 2010; interview with Hala Mustafa, 1 Jul. 2010. Gabriel also directs the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR), which brings him in close contact with the
James, a wealthy businessman who grew up playing soccer with Hosni Mubarak’s sons; Adel Shorbash, a general in the police force; Ahmed Taha Abouleila, a police chief; and Walid Riad, a former NDP member and owner of a large printing shop, whose clients included the Egyptian Interior Ministry and a number of foreign governments.

In addition to these individuals, it is important to highlight two men who stood higher in the Ghad hierarchy, and possessed even deeper relationships to the regime. These relationships bolstered the expectation that Ghad would abide by the “red lines.”

The first of these individuals was Moussa Mustafa Moussa. Born to a wealthy family that traces its lineage back to Moorish Spain, where they lived in Granada’s Alhambra, Moussa’s father had been a prominent student leader, Wafdist politician, and parliamentarian from 1949 to 1951. When Nasser nationalized the family’s contracting company in 1962, Algerian leader Ahmed Ben Bella drafted the elder Moussa as an adviser and hired him to develop Algiers, where he remained until his death in 1975.

The family returned to Egypt permanently in the late 1970s, and quickly formed good relations with the regime. In this vein, Moussa’s sister married former NDP

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regime. In this vein, the EOHR held a conference on July 31, 2010, which Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Moufid Shehab – a top official close to Hosni Mubarak – headlined.

467 Interview with Fawzi James, 5 Jul. 2010.
469 Interview with an anonymous source within Moussa Mustafa Moussa’s faction of the “Ghad” party, who requested that his name be kept secret because he feared retribution.
470 Interview with Walid Riad, 7 Jul. 2010. Riad said that his work for the Interior Ministry accounted for 30% of his total income until approximately 2005, and he has also printed materials for the Israeli Tourism Ministry, the Iraqi government under Saddam Hussein, the Sudanese regime’s party Hizb al-Watani al-Islah al-Taqiyyah, and Hamas. Typically, this kind of international work requires the approval of State Security, and thereby forges a relationship between the business owner and the Egyptian security services.
471 The Moussa family remains close to the Algerian regime to this day. When Moussa Mustafa Moussa’s father died in 1975, flags in Algeria were flown at half-mast. Moreover, when Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika visits Cairo, he stays at the Moussa family mansion in Heliopolis. Interview with Moussa Mustafa Moussa, 29 Jul. 2010.
parliamentarian Hesham Mustafa Khalil and Moussa’s brother, Ali Moussa, served on the NDP Policy Committee and was close to Gamal Mubarak. Since the 1980s, Ali and Moussa Mustafa Moussa have partnered with Egyptian telecommunications magnate Naguib Sawiris in a variety of lucrative ventures; these include major Egyptian construction projects, SCIB Paints, and a dry-mix factory. As of mid-2010, the entire Moussa enterprise was worth approximately 1.4 billion L.E. ($246 million), and Moussa’s personal share was worth approximately 200 million L.E. ($35 million).472 Little of this would have been possible without close regime relations for securing necessary permits and approvals.

Yet despite his familial and business ties to the regime, Moussa embraced his Wafdist father’s relatively liberal outlook, and also developed close personal connections with important opposition figures. In this vein, he married into the Wafdist Badawy family, and his father-in-law is a direct nephew of Fouad Serageddin. Moussa also grew up with many of the Wafd party leaders of the 2000s, including Mahmoud Abaza, Yasin Tag el-Din, Mounir Fakhry Abdelnour, and Sameh Makram-Ebeid.473

Knowing only that Moussa’s father had been a prominent Wafd leader, the nascent Ghad party sent Moussa a text message in late 2003, inviting him to join.474 Moussa soon became one of the party’s top financiers, and was elected deputy chair in November 2004, shortly after the PPC granted Ghad its license. While Moussa’s Wafdist heritage encouraged him to join the opposition, his ties to the regime and lucrative

472 Interview with Moussa Mustafa Moussa, 29 Jul. 2010.
473 Interview with Moussa Mustafa Moussa, 29 Jul. 2010.
474 Interview with Ayman Nour, 30 Jun. 2010. Nour claims that he was unaware of Moussa’s connections to the regime until much later, and emphasizes his appreciation of Moussa’s father’s background as the primary reason that Moussa was contacted.
business enterprises provided ample pressure points for the regime if, and when, the Ghad party strayed too far from the “red lines.”

The second key leader just below Nour with substantial ties to the Egyptian regime was MP Rageb Helal Hemeda. Hailing from the heartland of Egyptian Islamist activism in the Nile Delta, Hemeda’s father was a government employee and a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. Hemeda first became involved in political activities as an elementary school student, where he served as a preacher in a daily student broadcast. In high school, he participated in seminars at the radical Islamist cleric Abdul Hamid Kishk’s Ain al-Hayat mosque, where he was recruited to join al-Takfir wa’al-Hijra – a violent fundamentalist group whose members withdrew to the countryside in preparation for future jihad against secular society. After the assassination of President Anwar Sadat on October 6th, 1981, Hemeda was arrested; he was released in late 1984, but arrested continually until 1987, when he was released for good.

Shortly thereafter, Hemeda’s fortunes changed dramatically. It is widely believed that this was because of the relationship he had forged during his imprisonment with State Security, which viewed his prior involvement in radical Islamist organizations as an asset. Although Hemeda initially returned to work selling ful (beans) sandwiches out of a pushcart in downtown Cairo, he took a mysterious trip to Tehran in 1990, where he met Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and then-Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. Upon returning, Hemeda met with State Security and, by his own admission during an August

477 Interview with Rageb Helal Hemeda, 4 Aug. 2010.}
2010 interview, provided State Security with information on the Iranian regime.\footnote{Hemeda claims to have met former Iranian President Mohammad Khatami and current President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He also claims to be very close with Iranian Culture Minister Atallah Muhagarani. Interview with Rageb Helal Hemeda, 9 Aug. 2010.} In 1995, this relationship helped the Hemeda win a seat in the Parliament as a member of the Ahrar party.\footnote{Hemeda, of course, does not admit to this. However, numerous interview sources confirmed that it is virtually impossible to win a seat without negotiating with State Security, and it is reasonable to conclude that Hemeda’s existing relationship with State Security facilitated his rapid rise from a sandwich-cart owner to a parliamentarian.} By 1998, he suddenly had enough money to open an electronics shop and invest in agriculture, and he later purchased a mini-mall in downtown Cairo.\footnote{Interview with Rageb Helal Hemeda, 4 Aug. 2010. Hemeda claims that he inherited 1.4 million L.E. when his mother passed away from the sale of her property, but the rapid change in his economic position – from a cart-pushing sandwich seller to real estate proprietor and agricultural investor – makes this explanation seem unlikely.}

But new struggles soon emerged. When Ahrar party leader Mustafa Kamel Murad died in August 1998, a violent leadership battle erupted between Hemeda and eight other competitors.\footnote{Nadia Abou Al-Magd, “Waiting for the Funeral,” Al-Ahram Weekly (Online) 402 (5-11 Nov. 1998) <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/1998/402/eg4.htm>.} Although the dispute was technically resolved in 2005\footnote{Mona El-Nahhas, “Liberal Decisions,” Al-Ahram Weekly (Online) 724 (6-12 Jan. 2005) <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/724/eg3.htm>.} the party ceased to function, as the regime used the internal power struggle to discredit it. In the interim, Hemeda lost his parliamentary seat: after a high-profile clash with Prime Minister Atef Ebeid over banking corruption in January 2003, a court invalidated the results of Hemeda’s 2000 electoral victory. The ruling party then rigged the subsequent special election in favor of Hemeda’s opponent.\footnote{“Secret Vote,” Al-Ahram Weekly (Online) 628 (6-12 Mar. 2003) <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/628/eg5.htm>.}

Hemeda was thus available when his former parliamentary colleague, Ayman Nour, started forming the Ghad party. Yet within Nour’s camp, there was considerable debate over bringing Hemeda on board. Ismail Ismail, Nour’s brother-in-law and a
founding leader in the Ghad party, supported the move, arguing that Hemeda’s good connections with State Security would be an asset to the party. But others opposed drafting Hemeda, viewing Hemeda’s involvement in the Ahrar party’s destructive squabbles as worrying. Despite his misgivings, Nour ultimately admitted Hemeda, believing that Ghad needed strong parliamentary candidates to raise its profile.

In short, the Egyptian regime had good reasons for believing that the newly approved Ghad party would abide by the “red lines.” First, Ghad chairman Ayman Nour had served in Parliament for nearly ten years, which had given him high-ranking connections in the regime and a deep awareness of the “red lines.” Second, the regime anticipated that Ghad’s primary goal would be establishing itself as Egypt’s preeminent liberal opposition party, and that its primary target would be the Wafd party, rather than the regime itself. Third, its leadership ranks were filled with individuals who were closely tied to the regime, and therefore understood the “red lines” – as well as the consequences for crossing them. Fourth, Ghad vice-chair Moussa Mustafa Moussa’s brother was a close ally of Gamal Mubarak, and he was also a multi-millionaire whose assets could be targeted with ease if he strayed from the “red lines.” Fifth, Ghad leader Rageb Helal Hemeda had long-standing relations with State Security, and his high-profile role in the Liberal party’s violent infighting demonstrated a divisive streak that could hamper Ghad’s activities – if the regime needed him to do so.

484 Interview with Ismail Ismail, 21 Jul. 2010.
486 Nour said that he was “putting a gun to [his] head” when he announced his decision to admit Hemeda. Interview with Walid Riad, 7 Jul. 2010.
487 Interview with Morsi Sheikh, 26 Jul. 2010.
Yet almost immediately after its founding, the Ghad party defied these expectations and broke the “red lines.”

**II. Renegade Party**

In early November 2004, the newly approved Ghad party held its inaugural convention at the Cairo International Conference Center, with over 2,000 people in attendance.\(^{488}\) Ayman Nour was elected chairman, trouncing one of his own supporters when his anticipated opponent, MP Mohammad Farid Hassanein, left the conference following a dispute with Nour.\(^{489}\) Meanwhile, Moussa Mustafa Moussa was elected vice-chair; Rageb Helal Hemeda was elected assistant chair; former Wafd parliamentarian Mona Makram-Ebeid was elected secretary-general; and Gameela Ismail, Nour’s wife and a *Newsweek* correspondent, was elected assistant secretary-general. All of these newly elected leaders – including Ismail, who needed State Security clearance in order to work for a foreign media company\(^{490}\) – were known quantities to the regime and, as previously emphasized, expected to abide by Egypt’s “red lines.”

Yet Ghad’s first convention came at a seemingly propitious – though ultimately misleading – moment in Middle Eastern affairs. Following the March 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and subsequent toppling of Saddam Hussein’s regime, the George W. Bush administration began pursuing the “freedom agenda,” arguing that democratization was essential to promoting political moderation and undermining Islamist terrorists. Though controversial within the Arab world, this effort seemingly scored a series of early victories: the Palestinian Authority and Iraq held relatively free and competitive elections

\(^{488}\) El-Nahhas, “Younger Politics.”


\(^{490}\) Interview with Gameela Ismail, 22 Jul. 2010.
in January 2005; Syria ended its twenty-nine-year occupation of Lebanon in April, following the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri; and Lebanon later held free elections in May.

Given its size and regional influence, Egypt was an important “freedom agenda” target. In his speech at the National Endowment for Democracy in November 2003, President Bush declared, “The great and proud nation of Egypt has shown the way toward peace in the Middle East, and now should show the way toward democracy in the Middle East.”

The following year, the U.S. increased its funding for democracy and governance programs in Egypt from approximately $12 million to $37 million, and it further restructured the way those funds were distributed to prevent the Egyptian government from administering them.

In response to these developments, the Egyptian regime attempted to signal its commitment to reform. In July 2004, President Mubarak reshuffled his cabinet, filling it with younger NDP leaders who promised to modernize Egypt’s bureaucracy and promote economic liberalization.

Yet many Egyptians viewed these moves skeptically, believing that they were facades for forestalling political change. Shortly thereafter, a new anti-regime movement began circulating a petition demanding real constitutional reforms. Named Kefaya, or “enough,” this movement quickly gained strength, and on December 12, 2004, hundreds of Kefaya activists gathered on the steps of the High Court.

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in Cairo for the first rally ever convened exclusively for the purpose of demanding Mubarak’s resignation.\textsuperscript{494}

Kefaya’s protests set Egypt’s political tone through the September 2005 presidential elections. Its relatively large rallies in public squares signaled that many Egyptians were hungry for political change and willing to confront the aging Mubarak regime in pursuit of it. Although Kefaya and Ghad never formally affiliated with each other, they shared many activists in common. More importantly, the political moment that it embodied encouraged Ghad to take a more aggressive approach vis-à-vis the regime. As Ghad strategist and current secretary-general Wael Nawara commented:

\begin{quote}
I think people at that time genuinely believed in two things. One, that it was about time for change. Two, that it was safe to join political parties. The regime had given those signals. I think part of it was also the strong American rhetoric, starting around [the] NED in November 2003. There was a very strong speech from George W. Bush, and he talked about Egypt, which led the way to peace, should now lead the way to democracy. … And everyone was, like, great!\textsuperscript{495}
\end{quote}

The Ghad party sought to capture the pro-democratic enthusiasm of this moment, and it used its first convention to signal its commitment to promoting far-reaching political reform. The choice of venue was, itself, part of this effort: the Cairo International Conference Center was the location of the NDP’s conferences, and the Ghad party thus meant to showcase itself as the ruling party’s direct competitor.\textsuperscript{496}

Yet beyond this important symbolic act, the Ghad party used the convention to begin implementing a confrontational strategy vis-à-vis the regime that Nawara had been developing for months. In this vein, Ghad announced the appointment of Ibrahim Eissa

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Interview with Wael Nawara, 6 Jul. 2010.}
\footnote{Interview with Gameela Ismail, 22 Jul. 2010.}
\end{footnotes}
as editor-in-chief of the party’s newspaper, *al-Ghad*, which was to begin printing in January 2005. Eissa had a long track record of anti-regime agitation, and was considered to be one of Mubarak’s harshest. He had previously been the editor of *al-Dustour*, which the regime shuttered in 1998 after the newspaper criticized top businessmen. By naming a banned figure as the editor-in-chief of the party newspaper, Ghad had crossed a major “red line.” In response, the regime announced that it would reissue *al-Dustour*’s license, hoping that it would lure Eissa away from the Ghad party; however, Eissa refused, declaring his intention to remain with Ghad.

At approximately the same time, Ghad began distributing orange booklets containing its own proposal for a 200-article constitution. In addition to calling for greater freedoms, as was common among Mubarak-era legal opposition parties and considered within the “red lines,” Ghad’s constitution proposed the establishment of a parliamentary democracy and abolishing the referendum system for electing the president. Most importantly, it called for undercutting the power of the presidency, and for granting Parliament the authority to approve the government’s annual plan and withdraw confidence in the government. Provocatively, Nour announced that he would collect one million signatures in support of Ghad’s constitution, which he would take to Parliament. When the Ghad party submitted its constitution to Parliament in mid-January 2005, Hosni Mubarak and Safwat el-Sherif declared the Ghad party “traitors.”

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498 El-Nahhas, “Younger Politics.”
499 Interview with Wael Nawara 6 Jul. 2010.
501 Interview with Wael Nawara, 6 Jul. 2010.
Then in late January, the Ghad party received an invitation to attend the “national dialogue,” an event that the regime had been planning on and off for nearly two years. The dialogue was to feature NDP leaders exchanging views with representatives of the legal opposition parties, and the regime party hoped that it would signal their openness to political reform to an American patron increasingly focused on Arab democratization. Before the start of the dialogue, the other opposition parties – Wafd, Tagammu, and the Nasserists – all issued statements completely compatible with Egypt’s “red lines.” The three parties announced jointly that they would not press the issue of broad constitutional reforms during the dialogue, and Tagammu leader Rifaat al-Said said that amending the constitution could wait until Mubarak was nominated for a new term.\(^\text{502}\)

Ghad, however, took an entirely different approach, responding to the “national dialogue” invitation by saying that it would attend if three demands were met. First, chairmanship of the sessions had to be rotated among the parties, meaning that NDP leaders could not administer every discussion. As Ghad chief strategist Nawara wrote at the time, this was supposed to be a “dialogue, not a monologue.” Second, the level of representation had to be equal: if the NDP sent its president, Ghad would send its chairman; if the NDP sent its secretary-general, Ghad would send the same; and so on. Third, the size of each party’s delegation had to be equal. Ghad did not want to send ten of its members if NDP was only sending one leader, because this would look desperate. In addition, Ghad requested that the agenda of each session be determined by the parties together, rather than dictated. Taken aback by these demands, the regime privately

promised Nour that there would be constitutional reform after Mubarak was elected. Yet Nour rejected this, insisting that reforms take place before the elections.  

A few days following this incident, Mubarak accused foreign powers of allocating $70 million to fund campaigns demanding constitutional reforms. Given Ghad’s prominence in the campaign for constitutional reform, many interpreted this accusation as a charge against the party. Then, on January 26, 2005, Nour met with former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who was heading a Council of Foreign Relations taskforce on promoting reform in the Arab world. Nour does not speak English and, according to most accounts, he and Albright merely exchanged pleasantries. Nevertheless, the regime used it as a pretext for casting Nour as an American agent, and rumors quickly circulated suggesting that he had made a deal with Albright.

### III. The Ghad Party’s Punishment

Barely three months after granting Nour the Ghad party license, the regime had concluded that he had no intention of abiding by the “red lines.” The Ghad party had hired a prominent, outspoken, and banned critic of the regime to edit its newspaper; called for far-reaching constitutional reform; refused to delay this demand until after Mubarak’s re-election; refused to participate in the “national dialogue” on the regime’s terms; and had seemingly courted a respected former American diplomat at the very moment that the U.S. was putting unprecedented pressure on the regime to change. The

503 Interview with Wael Nawara, 6 Jul. 2010.
505 Interview with Moussa Mustafa Moussa, 31 Jul. 2010.
domestic and regional context – Kefaya’s anti-regime demonstrations at home, and relatively free elections being held in Iraq and the Palestinian Authority – caused the regime to view Nour’s dissidence as especially threatening.

a. Nour’s arrest

So the regime moved quickly to punish Nour. Two days after Nour’s meeting with Albright, parliamentary chairman and NDP leader Fathi Sarour signed orders for State Security, the attorney general, and the Justice Ministry to investigate Nour for forging signatures on the Ghad party’s authorization papers. Then, on January 29, Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif stripped Nour of his parliamentary immunity, and Nour was arrested on forgery charges.508

From my perspective, it is impossible to ascertain whether these forgery charges had any merit. The essential issue is this: to apply for a political party license under Mubarak, a prospective party was required to submit fifty signatures on its authorization forms to the Shura Council’s PPC. Nour, however, wanted to gain wide media exposure for his new party, and insisted that Ghad collect 2005 signatures as a salute to the upcoming 2005 elections.509 His allies within the party contend that, since Ghad submitted its application four times before the regime finally granted the party its license, all of the signatures on those four applications combined added up to 2005. They maintain that, with each subsequent application, Nour re-submitted copies of signatures from previous applications, along with new sets of original signatures. The regime, they say, declared the submission of photocopied signatures from previous applications as

508 Interview with Wael Nawara, 6 Jul. 2010.
forgeries, because it was looking for an excuse to punish Nour for breaking the “red lines.”

Alternatively, Nour’s detractors maintain that he was so insistent on gaining 2005 signatures that he, or one of his associates, forged all the signatures that were necessary to make up the difference. Rueb Helal Hemeda argues that, by submitting forged authorization papers, Nour had insulted the various government ministers who had helped him attain the Ghad party’s license in the first place. This, Hemeda argues, is the most significant “red line” that Nour breached, and he therefore “deserved” his ultimate punishment. Moussa agrees, and emphasizes that Ayman Nour “isn’t a martyr.”

Either way, it is worth making two points. First, nobody disputes that Nour submitted fifty clean signatures to the PPC, which is all that is needed to apply for a party license. Even one of Nour’s most fervent detractors estimated that Ghad had collected 1464 legitimate ones. Second, and more importantly, it is worth remembering that Mubarak’s Egypt was hardly a country of perfect legal rationalism. Crimes were prosecuted inconsistently, and criminal charges against politicians were notoriously selective. Therefore, whether or not Nour was actually guilty of forging signatures, the regime still chose to arrest him – and only him – because he had challenged the “red lines” in a variety of significant ways.

b. State Security Sows Divisions Within the Ghad Party

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511 Interview with Walid Riad, 7 Jul. 2010.
512 Interview with Rageb Helal Hemeda, 4 Aug. 2010.
513 Interview with Moussa Mustafa Moussa, 29 Jul. 2010.
514 Interview with Walid Riad, 7 Jul. 2010.
515 Interview with an anonymous source who previously worked for State Security, but currently works in opposition politics. A second anonymous source made a similar point.
Given international pressure on the Egyptian government to institute political reforms, it was perhaps unsurprising when news of Nour’s arrest made international headlines. Within days, the U.S. State Department denounced the regime’s action, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice cancelled a planned trip to Egypt a month later in protest. The regime was thus faced with a challenge: how could it restore the credibility of its “red lines” without risking further international alienation for its authoritarian ways?

Evidently, the regime had anticipated this quandary. On January 27, 2005, two days before Nour’s arrest, Ghad vice-chair Moussa Mustafa Moussa suddenly left Egypt and flew to Dubai on business. Given Moussa’s high-ranking position within the Ghad party, his name was also on the allegedly forged authorization forms, and he was therefore as responsible for the alleged forgery as Nour. So when he told Ghad officials that he would return to Egypt immediately, they advised him to stay in Dubai rather than risk arrest by returning to Egypt.

Moussa was in regular contact with Ghad officials as he monitored Nour’s situation, and he finally returned to Egypt on February 8.

Upon arriving at Cairo International Airport, Moussa was promptly seized by State Security, which held him at the airport for three days of interrogations in an investigations court. The precise content of these interrogations are unknown. Moussa contends that State Security informed him that, “Ayman Nour was trying to do dirty

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tricks,” such as telling State Security that Moussa had forged the Ghad party’s authorization papers.\(^{521}\) Alternatively, Nour supporter Abdel Rahman al-Ghamrawy contends that State Security ordered Moussa to rid the party of Nour and his allies, and to make himself chairman.\(^{522}\)

Either way, it is clear that State Security sought to set Moussa against Ayman Nour, and it probably used a variety of tactics to gain Moussa’s cooperation with this goal. One of these tactics might have involved passing on negative information regarding Nour to Moussa, as Moussa’s account suggests. But it is also worth recalling who Moussa is: a multi-millionaire businessman; a member of Egypt’s elite class; the brother-in-law of a then-NDP parliamentarian; and the brother, as well as business partner, of Ali Moussa, who was on the NDP Policy Committee and a close confidante of Gamal Mubarak. Moreover, since Moussa’s name was also on the allegedly forged Ghad party authorization documents, State Security had an obvious pretext for subjecting him to the same fate as Nour if it chose to do so. In short, State Security possessed ample pressure points for gaining Moussa’s cooperation in undermining Nour, and – whether or not these pressure points were actually used – Moussa likely realized that he was cornered. Indeed, when Moussa finally left State Security’s custody after three days, he was determined to seek Nour’s ouster.

Moussa did not have any difficulty in finding other Ghad leaders who were eager to turn on Nour. In interviews, many of these leaders asserted that they viewed Nour as dictatorial, and were put off by his unwillingness to solicit their input on major party

\(^{521}\) Interview with Moussa Mustafa Moussa, 31 Jul. 2010.
\(^{522}\) Interview with Abdel Rahman al-Ghamrawy, 17 Jul. 2010. This point has been echoed by many Ghad members who have remained loyal to Ayman Nour.
decisions. Moussa’s more modest disposition and preference for soliciting their input also pulled them in the vice-chair’s direction.

State Security contributed to Moussa’s efforts in drawing supporters away from Nour. One Nour supporter said that a State Security general came to his apartment and offered him a 30,000 L.E.-per-month salary in a state-owned company – plus a two-year advance – if he declared that Ayman Nour was a CIA agent and bolted from the party. Another Ghad member, who was previously denied hotel building permits, was suddenly promised that if he joined the NDP, “everything will be okay.” Meanwhile, Muhammad Abu el-Ezm, the Ghad member who had run against Nour for the party chairmanship, was promised the party chairmanship if he wrote a police report claiming that the November 2004 intra-party elections had been fraudulent. Moussa similarly tried to peel certain individuals away from Nour, offering Nour supporter Faryal Gomaa a car. Moussa further promised el-Ezm a share of the advertising revenues from al-Ghad newspaper, which Moussa was administering during Nour’s imprisonment.

525 All of the anecdotes in this paragraph, except the one from Hassan Abu el-Enein come from people who ultimately remained with Ayman Nour. For this reason, these anecdotes would ordinarily have little merit individually, as it is clearly in the interest of Nour’s supporters to say that they turned down lucrative offers to join Moussa because they refused to abandon their principles. However, I have included these anecdotes for two reasons. First, their consistency with one another suggests their reliability. Second, as discussed in the second part of this paper, State Security is known to use a wide variety of tactics for dissolving parties that cross the “red lines,” including incentives to encourage party members’ defection.
527 Interview with Hassan Abu el-Enein, 27 Jul. 2010.
528 Interview with Muhammad Abu el-Ezm, 22 Jul. 2010.
529 Interview with Muhammad Abu el-Ezm, 22 Jul. 2010; interview with Faryal Gomaa, 26 Jul. 2010.
In his bid to draw Ghad members away from Ayman Nour, Moussa had an eager partner in Rageb Helal Hemeda. As previously mentioned, Hemeda had a long-running relationship with State Security, and he communicated with State Security regarding the Ghad party’s activities for nearly a year. Indeed, in May 2004, Hemeda faxed a Ghad memo to State Security Captain Amer Mohsen⁵³⁰, and he later provided information regarding Nour’s psychological condition and financial issues.⁵³¹ While Nour was in prison, Hemeda passed around negative information to other members, including proof of Nour’s alleged forgery and claims of Nour’s financial malfeasance.⁵³²

Meanwhile, Moussa took concrete steps to bring Ghad back within the “red lines.” In late February, he informed the PPC that he was removing Ibrahim Eissa as editor of al-Ghad⁵³³, and he later replaced Eissa with Muhammad el-Baz, a journalist allegedly tied to – and almost certainly vetted by – State Security.⁵³⁴ When this upset Nour’s supporters within the party, Moussa went to meet Nour in prison, where he reportedly told the jailed party chairman that Eissa could not serve as chief editor because he was “not in the state’s good graces.”⁵³⁵ Moussa further tried to smooth over Ghad’s previously confrontational stance on participating in the “national dialogue”: in mid-

⁵³⁰ Copy of faxed memo available upon request.
⁵³¹ Interview with Wael Nawara, 12 Jul. 2010.
⁵³² Interview with an anonymous source, who asked that his name be withheld because he feared retribution. A second source, Hassan Kemal, said that he recalled someone passing around information demonstrating Nour’s forgery of the authorization forms, but could not remember who it was.
⁵³³ El-Nahhas, “Making a Hero.”
⁵³⁴ Interview with Wael Nawara, 12 Jul. 2010; interview with Ihab el-Kholy, 18 Jul. 2010. Since both of these men are allies of Nour, their contention that Muhammad al-Baz is a State Security agent is not necessarily reliable. However, given that State Security clearly objected to Ibrahim Eissa’s prior appointment as the Ghad newspaper’s editor-in-chief, as well as Security’s well-known involvement in picking editorial staffs of Egyptian newspapers, it is extremely likely that al-Baz was confirmed with State Security.
February, he appeared at the dialogue as Ghad’s acting chairman and, when asked whether Ghad wanted constitutional amendments, Moussa said no.\textsuperscript{536}

In response to mounting international pressure, President Mubarak announced on February 26 that he would amend Article 76 of the Egyptian constitution to permit the first multi-candidate elections in Egyptian history. Two weeks later, shortly before being released from prison, Nour declared his intention to run for president in September. This exacerbated tensions within the party leadership: many Ghad leaders hoped that the party would focus on its parliamentary races so that it could develop deeper grassroots support, and thought it was too soon to mount a nationwide presidential campaign. For a number of party members, Nour’s announcement confirmed their belief that he was simply using the Ghad party as a vehicle for his own self-aggrandizement, and that he had no real interest in developing a competitive liberal party.\textsuperscript{537} Paradoxically, however, Nour’s announcement may have been an attempt to signal to the regime that, by participating in its elections, he would now abide by the “red lines.”\textsuperscript{538}

When Nour was finally released from prison on March 12, his allies urged him to fire Moussa and Hemeda, arguing that they had been co-opted by State Security and would undermine his campaign.\textsuperscript{539} These accusations were validated in May, when Hemeda suspended the production of \textit{al-Ghad} indefinitely.\textsuperscript{540} Nour, however, believed that keeping Moussa and Hemeda in the party would cause him fewer problems. Yet it

\textsuperscript{536} Interview with Wael Nawara, 12 Jul. 2010.

\textsuperscript{537} Interview with Mohammed Sadiq Okasha, 3 Jul. 2010; interview with Mustafa Shorbagy, 5 Jul. 2010; interview with Aref el-Desouki, 6 Jul. 2010; interview with Walid Riad, 7 Jul. 2010; interview with Reda Fanoos, 12 Jul. 2010; interview with Ibrahim Nasser el-Din, 17 Jul. 2010.

\textsuperscript{538} Interview with Ahmed Ashour, 27 Jul. 2010.

\textsuperscript{539} Interview with Ihab el-Kholy, 18 Jul. 2010; interview with Wael Nawara, 12 Jul. 2010.

became increasingly clear that a severe rift had developed within the party: when the Ghad high committee held its elections for nominating a presidential candidate in the summer of 2005, Hemeda and Moussa nominated Ibrahim Saleh – a former NDP Policy Committee member and deputy minister of economic development. Though Nour beat Saleh 21-12, the twelve votes that Saleh received were telling. After all, given Nour’s prominence and already-stated intention of running for president, the nomination process was supposed to be a formality.541

After Nour officially filed his candidacy in July, Moussa and Hemeda’s allies overwhelmingly stopped participating in Ghad activities.542 Hemeda occasionally appeared at events. However, for his parliamentary campaign, he handed out palm cards featuring his photo underneath that of Hosni Mubarak’s, with the slogan: “We’re all behind you, oh leader!”543 Meanwhile, Nour started holding campaign events across the country, drawing large crowds and inspiring new, young members – many of whom were affiliated with the pro-democratic protest movement Kefaya – to join.544 This cemented the divide within the Ghad party, as the activist wing of the party practically came to idolize Nour, while many in the original leadership – which included individuals who had long played according to the regime’s “red lines” – came to resent him.

541 Interview with Wael Nawara, 12 Jul. 2010.
542 Interview with Wael Nawara, 12 Jul. 2010. Interview with Moussa Mustafa Moussa, 31 Jul. 2010. Moussa says that he stopped attending because he simply stopped trusting Ayman Nour, and felt that Nour’s allies were trying to keep him the two party leaders apart. Most of the Moussa allies that I interviewed, who were Ghad party leaders during the 2005 campaign season, admitted that they stayed away from Nour and did not help him campaign.
543 Copies of Hemeda’s campaign literature featuring Mubarak are available upon request.
544 These include Talaat Khalil, Hussam Al-Din Ali, Mohamed Farouk, Mona al-Deeb, and Abdel Raziq al-Kilani.
On September 7th, 2005, Nour finished a distant second to Hosni Mubarak, receiving 7.6% of the vote to Mubarak’s 88.6%. According to Wael Nawara, Nour was pleased with this outcome, and viewed it as a first step towards pushing liberalization in Egypt. But publicly, Nour used the occasion to declare the illegitimacy of the elections, telling a post-elections press conference:

What elections are they talking about? What happened today has nothing to do with elections. It's a repetition of the same old scenario of rigged referendums and elections. … They are leading the state to a very dangerous route. It would have been wiser for Hosni Mubarak to win by a small margin or even lose, than win in a fabricated or forged way.

This would be the final “red line” that Nour would be permitted to cross – and, arguably, it was the most consequential. After all, the multi-candidate elections had been the regime’s attempt to free itself from increasing foreign pressure to liberalize, and Nour’s brazen declaration of its fraudulence undermined that strategy. Moreover, by participating in the regime’s elections, Nour had implicitly agreed to abide by their rules and accept their outcome quietly. He had now defected from that agreement.

Over the next three months, the regime would punish Nour and the Ghad party severely. Meanwhile, it would hand over the “Ghad” name to Moussa – who, not coincidentally, went on Egyptian television following the elections and declared that they had been “fair.”

e. Ghad’s Internal Divisions Deepen

546 Interview with Wael Nawara, 12 Jul. 2010.
548 Interview with Ayman Nour, 30 Jun. 2010.
On September 18\textsuperscript{th}, 2005 – eleven days after the presidential elections – Nour convened a meeting of the Ghad general assembly with two goals in mind. First, he hoped to gain a vote of confidence from Ghad’s membership, so that he could continue serving as chairman despite his loss in the elections. Second, he wanted to hold a higher committee meeting on firing Moussa Mustafa Moussa, Rageb Helal Hemeda, Ibrahim Saleh, and Morsi Sheikh from the party; this happened two days later.\textsuperscript{549}

The fired leaders were outraged, and they encouraged their allies to join them in splitting from Nour. The anti-Nour bloc overwhelmingly consisted of those original Ghad members who had close ties with the regime and State Security, and they were both resentful of Nour’s management style and fearful that his confrontational approach vis-à-vis the regime spelled trouble.\textsuperscript{550} Thus, on October 1, the anti-Nour faction held its own “Ghad” conference. According to Morsi Sheikh, who was elected “Ghad” vice-chair at this conference, Moussa filled the conference room by bringing workers from his brother’s factory; two of these workers later filed police reports, saying that they had been misled to believe that they were attending a rally to support Hosni Mubarak.\textsuperscript{551} Hemeda, who was elected secretary-general at this conference, also admits that most of the attendees had no prior relationship with Nour’s original Ghad party:

I gathered 3000 citizens and we held a big conference and took a decision to fire him and chose Moussa Mustafa Moussa as leader of the party. From this moment, the fight grew bigger. … Yes, the 3000 people were not members of Ghad, but 500 were. And the other 2500 joined after. This is how politics works in Egypt.\textsuperscript{552}

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\textsuperscript{549} Interview with Wael Nawara, 12 Jul. 2010; interview with Ihab el-Kholy, 18 Jul. 2010. \\
\textsuperscript{550} This includes many of the regime-tied Ghad members that have already been mentioned: Walid Riad, Mohammed Sadiq Okasha, Aref el-Desouki, Adel Shorbash, Naguib Gabriel, and Ahmed Taha Abouleila. \\
\textsuperscript{551} Interview with Morsi Sheikh, 26 Jul. 2010. \\
\textsuperscript{552} Interview with Rageb Helal Hemeda, 4 Aug. 2010. In the same interview segment, Hemeda claims that Ayman Nour used the same tactic for Ghad’s first convention in November 2004, and that the attendees of that conference were, similarly, not real Ghad members. However, when it was pointed out to him that the party was new at that time – but that the party had since been populated by actual, registered members – he backed off this claim. Also, according to \textit{Al-Ahram Weekly}, the number of attendees at the anti-Nour
\end{flushright}
It is important to note that this kind of mass gathering couldn’t have happened without the regime’s tacit support: this faction was not entitled to the protections – however minimal – of a legal party. In turn, it could not have held a conference for thousands of people – especially under the name of a legally recognized party – without State Security’s knowledge and permission. Following their conference, the anti-Nour faction applied for official recognition from the PPC.

To enhance its standing with the regime, Moussa’s “Ghad” faction continued working to sideline Nour. In mid-October 2005, Moussa issued a newspaper under the “Ghad” name, and the front-page headline of its inaugural edition called for Gamal Mubarak to be the next president of Egypt and touted Hosni Mubarak’s “commitment to democracy.” When Nour’s faction filed a police report claiming that its newspaper had been “stolen,” the regime refused to act.

The Ghad party’s divisions deepened during the subsequent November 2005 parliamentary elections, in which both Ghad factions ran candidates. Nour’s Ghad faction ran candidates in 200 of Egypt’s 222 electoral districts, while Moussa’s anti-Nour bloc ran 65 candidates. In some districts, candidates from each Ghad faction ran against each other. Hemeda, now secretary-general of Moussa’s Ghad faction, ran hardest

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554 Interview with Ayman Nour, 30 Jun. 2010.

against Nour, accusing him of forgery and of being an American agent. Ultimately, only one of Ghad’s combined 265 candidates prevailed: Hemeda regained the parliamentary seat from which the regime had ousted him in 2003, which signaled his return to the regime’s good graces. Meanwhile, despite his convincing victories in the previous two parliamentary elections, Ayman Nour lost his parliamentary seat to NDP candidate Yahya Wahdan, a former State Security colonel.

Nour’s most severe punishment for his breaking of the “red lines,” however, came on December 24, 2005, when an Egyptian court convicted him of forgery and sentenced him to five years of hard labor. In the aftermath, many Ghad members who had remained loyal to Nour fled his party, fearing the wrath of the regime. Others gravitated towards Moussa’s faction, assuming that he would soon be recognized as Ghad party chairman given Nour’s imprisonment.

c. Moussa’s “Ghad” Replaces Nour’s

With Nour imprisoned and therefore out of his way, Moussa pursued a three-pronged strategy for establishing his “Ghad” faction’s political and legal legitimacy. First, he built its membership ranks, including by paying individuals to join the party. Moussa and his deputies further recruited new members through various professional connections.

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560 Interview with Hassan Abu el-Enein, 27 Jul. 2010.
561 Interview with Rageb Helal Hemeda, 9 Aug. 2010. Hemeda says that he opposes this practice.
Second, he pursued a complicated set of legal cases in multiple courts. In the regular courts, Moussa sued the PPC for refusing to recognize him as Ghad party chairman. When this failed, he sued one of his deputies, Ahmed Abaza, claiming that Abaza – who chaired the anti-Nour “Ghad” faction’s October 2005 electoral process – had failed to inform the PPC that Moussa had been elected chairman. Finally, in June 2007, the regular court ruled in Moussa’s favor, and the PPC recognized him as chairman of the Ghad party.

This, however, didn’t entirely settle the matter, thanks in large part to the Nour faction’s continued litigation, which often produced competing rulings. For example, a February 2009 ruling declared that Ihab el-Kholy, of the pro-Nour faction, was the rightful party chairman, though this ruling was overturned on Moussa’s appeal in July 2010, effectively leaving the party with no chairman at all.\(^\text{562}\) In short, the ultimate effect of these cases was to grant the party leadership to Moussa, but not definitively. As Moussa’s colleagues admitted, this ambiguity forced Moussa to remain politically cautious and embrace the regime’s “red lines,”\(^\text{563}\) because Moussa feared that not doing so would allow the regime to simply declare Ghad’s chairmanship “disputed” and rid itself of the party entirely.

Third, Moussa sought to purge Nour’s Ghad party from existence. This proved challenging: despite Nour’s imprisonment, his original Ghad party maintained its headquarters in downtown Cairo’s well-trafficked Talaat Harb Square, and established a

\(^{563}\) Interview with many anonymous sources in the upper echelon of Moussa’s “Ghad” faction, who asked to remain anonymous because they feared retribution.
visible presence within various pro-democratic opposition movements. With Nour’s wife Gameela Ismail as its public face, the Ghad party participated in various anti-regime demonstrations; helped orchestrate workers protests outside of Cairo; undertook a public outreach campaign in various governorates; and garnered substantial international attention and sympathy for Nour’s plight.\(^{564}\) Naturally, one of the pro-Nour faction’s biggest issues was demanding Nour’s release from prison, and the prominence of this campaign undercut Moussa’s credibility as “Ghad” leader, his court victories and PPC-granted license notwithstanding. Initially, Moussa sought to sue the pro-Nour Ghad party for using the “Ghad” name without a party license.\(^{565}\) But when this failed, he took matters into his own hands.

On November 6, 2008, Nour’s Ghad party was set to hold elections for a new higher committee. For days, Ghad leaders had received threats that Moussa’s faction would attack the meeting, and Gameela Ismail contacted the authorities to request protection. But on that morning, even the police officers normally stationed outside of Nour’s Ghad headquarters to monitor its activities failed to show up.\(^{566}\) As Hemeda admits, Moussa and his higher committee had decided to put an end to pro-Nour faction’s elections by occupying Nour’s headquarters, and Hemeda summoned his gangs – which he maintained for “protection” – to execute this plan. However, when Moussa’s “Ghad” contingent arrived outside of Nour’s headquarters, they found that the doors had been


\(^{566}\) Interview with Gameela Ismail, 22 Jul. 2010.
chained shut, and Nour’s supporters began pelting Moussa’s group with glass bottles from the third floor. Hemeda was surprised:

We intended to occupy the headquarters and stop the meeting. We did not know that they would throw bottles or lock the door. Otherwise, I would have occupied it earlier – at two in the morning! And I have the ability to do it – I have my men, and they could have snuck in before it was locked in chains and blended in among the members and then helped us get in.567

But this was no longer an option, so Hemeda’s gangs tried to pry the front door of Nour’s headquarters open using bug-spray aerosols and cigarette lighters as improvised blowtorches.

The entire affair ended with Nour’s third-floor headquarters being burned, though it is not clear who is responsible for this. One member of Nour’s faction claims that the fire started accidentally within Nour’s headquarters, when a Ghad activist “got excited” and set his shirt on fire to intimidate Moussa’s supporters down below; his ignited shirt inadvertently set the window curtains on ablaze, and the fire spread from there.568 This is the version that Moussa’s supporters typically confirm. But others within Nour’s faction claim that Moussa’s gangs threw Molotov cocktails into Nour’s headquarters, and that these caused the fire. After having reviewed photos that were printed in al-Badil newspaper and video footage of the attack that members of the neighboring Tagammu party filmed, I am unable to state definitively which account is accurate.

The more important point, however, is that the authorities – whom Nour’s Ghad faction had been contacted days before – did not intervene until after the damage was done. It is worth emphasizing that this incident occurred in downtown Cairo’s Talaat

568 Interview with an anonymous source inside the pro-Nour Ghad party, who asked that his name be withheld because he feared that telling an account of the November 6th, 2008 fire that is at odds with the party’s standard account would invite retribution.
Harb Square, where security officers are stationed on every street corner and, before the January 2011 revolt, typically intervened to prevent even the most minor confrontations between frustrated drivers. In other words, given the tight control that the regime otherwise exerted in downtown Cairo and the watchful eye it maintained over Egyptian opposition activities, the regime ultimately permitted Moussa’s “Ghad” party to violently confront Nour’s faction with the aim of destroying it.

In the years that followed the attack on Nour’s headquarters, up until the January 2011 uprising, the Mubarak regime continued bolstering Moussa’s public legitimacy as Ghad party chairman. In this vein, on June 4, 2010, Moussa was elected to the Shura Council, the upper house of Egypt’s bi-cameral parliament, by capturing nearly 120,000 votes – a virtually impossible figure given the notoriously low turnout in these elections, which suggests the regime’s direct forgery. During the Shura Council campaign, the regime backed Moussa by flooding the street with his banners, while opponents were attacked by the regime and prevented from holding rallies. At the time, Moussa’s victory was viewed as paving the way for him to run for president in September 2011 as the Ghad party candidate, perhaps against Mubarak. This would have raised Moussa’s profile while cementing Nour’s displacement from Egypt’s electoral arena.

It was, of course, not to be. The January 2011 uprising shattered Moussa’s hopes of having any political currency, and he has been practically invisible ever since. Meanwhile, Ayman Nour, who was released from prison in February 2009 as a goodwill gesture from Mubarak to the newly inaugurated Obama administration, played a

571 Interview with Mohammed Sadiq Okasha, 3 Jul. 2010; interview with Hala Mustafa, 1 Jul. 2010.
prominent role in publicizing and organizing the January 25, 2011 demonstrations that catalyzed Mubarak’s ouster. Nour remains politically active, though his actual political influence remains dubious given the rise of Islamists since the revolt.

**IV. Inside a “Puppet” Party**

Moussa’s quick political rise during Mubarak’s final years and instant fall after Mubarak’s ouster demonstrates the extent to which his “Ghad” party was almost entirely propped up by the regime. While Moussa’s “Ghad” party wasn’t necessarily more co-opted than either the Wafd or Tagammu, it differed insofar as it had no real base of support or history of actual opposition activity whatsoever. And yet it had members – real people who affiliated with it, attended its meetings, and presented themselves as the leaders of an Egyptian opposition party. Who were these individuals who signed up for this vacuous political enterprise, and how did they justify their enterprise to themselves?

For starters, the leaders of Moussa’s “Ghad” party did not view themselves as opposing the regime, but rather as working *within* the system to propose policy changes. In approximately two-dozen interviews I conducted with Moussa and his colleagues, they rarely expressed outright disagreements with the regime, but argued that the regime’s policies could be improved – if only the regime would accept their advice. Moreover, they viewed a confrontational approach with the regime as not only counterproductive, but impolite. Vice-chair Fawzi James’ statement on this matter was illustrative:

> I am not in politics to challenge someone, because I believe that anyone who will take over – whether it’s us, others, whoever has a gun – no one can do a fully waterproof, air-proof job. I believe that all parties should assist in filling the gaps that need to be filled. So being a liberal party, I personally believe that our party should assist the government in filling the holes. Wherever they have troubles, the party should come in and assist. Yes, you want to take over. Yes, you want to challenge. Yes, you want to
show that you can do better. But I believe that anybody who will take over – they might do better in certain fields, but they might have some setbacks.  

Here, James exhibited one of the ticks of “Ghad” party discourse: using the word “liberal” to mean “working with others,” and contrasting it with “wanting to take over.” This framing allowed “Ghad” members to cast their cooperation with the Mubarak regime as “liberal,” thus making Ayman Nour’s challenge to the regime “illiberal.”

One corollary of pro-Moussa “Ghad” party’s non-oppositional approach was that its leaders frequently declared their respect for Mubarak. For example, in an interview, Moussa emphasized, “We respect [Mubarak]. He is the President of Egyptians. We are not against him. Going in elections does not mean that you disrespect someone.”

Vice-chair Mohammed Sadiq Okasha similarly stated, “Mubarak stayed thirty years, but did lots of good things. Mubarak keeps things steady and this is good. I like Mubarak.” As members admitted, this approach helps the party avoid State Security’s interference; according to party administrator Moussa Salah al-Din Moussa:

> We’re not targeted by security because we are well known and our policies are known. We think of opposition as not about problems with the government or Mubarak. We respect them, but have a different vision.

Yet this “different vision” rarely came through in speaking with “Ghad” leaders. When asked what their chief criticisms of the regime are, “Ghad” leaders typically complained that the regime didn’t “listen to other opinions.”

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572 Interview with Fawzi James, 5 Jul. 2010.
574 Interview with Mohammed Sadiq Okasha, 3 Jul. 2010. Okasha goes onto say that Mubarak also “did many bad things,” but ultimately blames the people around Mubarak – deflecting blame from the dictator himself.
575 Interview with Moussa Salah al-Din Moussa, 1 Jul. 2010.
Another corollary of the “Ghad” party’s non-oppositional approach is that it didn’t participate in demonstrations against the regime.\textsuperscript{577} In this respect, it was much like other regime-recognized opposition parties, which were prevented from taking to the streets as part of the regime’s strategy for keeping parties separate from mass movements. However, the “Ghad” party’s refusal to participate in anti-regime demonstrations put it in stark contrast with Nour’s faction of the Ghad party, which participated in demonstrations regularly from the time of its 2004 founding through the January 2011 uprising.

So if the “Ghad” party avoided criticizing the regime, never demonstrated against it, only participated in elections twice in its five-year existence, and had few members beyond its Cairo headquarters, what exactly did it do the rest of the time? The answer, it turns out, is nothing. Indeed, most of the leaders on its 53-member high committee were, essentially, just names on a list. In this vein, Fawzi James told me that he spent one hour a month – maximum – on party activities, but mostly did nothing\textsuperscript{578}; Samir al-Atifi claimed during a July 2010 interview that he hadn’t been active in over a year\textsuperscript{579}; Ibrahim el-Tobgui similarly hadn’t been involved in over a year\textsuperscript{580}; Reda Fanoos stopped attending meetings in 2007, because “we have nothing to do in politics”\textsuperscript{581}; Ali Abu-Nega froze his membership years before I interviewed him in 2010, because of the party’s inactivity\textsuperscript{582}; Ibrahim Nasser el-Din claimed that he went to the party only twice a year\textsuperscript{583};

\textsuperscript{577} Interview with Fatima el-Sheib, 14 Jul. 2010.
\textsuperscript{578} Interview with Fawzi James, 5 Jul. 2010.
\textsuperscript{579} Interview with Samir el-Atifi, 7 Jul. 2010.
\textsuperscript{580} Interview with Ibrahim el-Tobgui, 10 Jul. 2010.
\textsuperscript{581} Interview with Reda Fanoos, 12 Jul. 2010.
\textsuperscript{582} Interview with Ahmed Ashour, 27 Jul. 2010.
\textsuperscript{583} Interview with Ibrahim Nasser el-Din, 17 Jul. 2010.
Hassan Abu el-Enein claimed that he had never gone to any meetings at all\textsuperscript{584}; Hamdi Layali similarly confessed his near-total absence\textsuperscript{585}; and Ahmad Ashour said he has mostly “boycotted” the meetings for over a year\textsuperscript{586}.

Despite their inactivity, many of these party leaders kept their names on the party’s high committee list because they were doing a costless favor for Moussa, whose wealth and political connections made him a valuable ally. As one inactive member, who preferred to remain anonymous explained:

I tried to leave the party. Moussa Mustafa Moussa called and asked me to stay, and promised that the party would improve and do various things. I tried to say that I’m too busy, but I don’t want to upset Moussa.\textsuperscript{587}

Others claimed that they remained on the party’s leadership rolls because this prevented the regime from bothering them. For example, Ibrahim Nasser el-Din said that his work as a political scientist led the government to view him, incorrectly, as either a Marxist or an Islamist; his membership in the “Ghad” party, therefore, reassured the regime that he is neither.\textsuperscript{588} Another leader-in-name-only claimed that he remained affiliated with the “Ghad” party because it allowed him to avoid the fate of his father – an Islamist cleric whom the regime targeted for decades.\textsuperscript{589}

Yet the “Ghad” party tried to hide the inactivity of these leaders by giving them absurdly specific titles. In this vein, Fawzi James was the “vice-chair for international organizations and civilian affairs”; Reda Fanoos was the “vice-Chair for industry and

\textsuperscript{584} Interview with Hassan Abu el-Enein, 27 Jul. 2010.
\textsuperscript{585} Interview with Hamdi Layali, 9 Aug. 2010.
\textsuperscript{586} Interview with Ahmed Ashour, 27 Jul. 2010.
\textsuperscript{587} Interview with an anonymous source, who asked that his name be withheld because he feared retribution for speaking about private conversations between himself and Moussa. Hamdi Layali and Magdy Fikry Labib expressed similar views.
\textsuperscript{588} Interview with Ibrahim Nasser el-Din, 17 Jul. 2010.
\textsuperscript{589} Interview with an anonymous source who feared that using his name would invite the regime to start targeting him, much as it once targeted his father.
energy”; and Ali Abu-Nega was the “administrator for general security in eastern Cairo.” Even those members who frequented Moussa’s “Ghad” headquarters had severely embellished titles. For example, Fatima el-Sheib was the “secretary for women,” and claimed to chair a nationwide “‘Ghad’ women’s committee,” with members in each governorate. Yet Sheib was unable to name her subordinate in Matrouh governorate, and secretary-general Hemeda later admitted that her “women’s committee,” in fact, had no members at all.590 In short, the Moussa’s “Ghad” party used misleading titles to hide its inactivity, while projecting itself as a party that was serious about narrow policy matters.

Finally, the handful of “Ghad” leaders that was truly active retained very close ties with the regime, as has been previously noted. Yet despite these close connections to the regime, State Security maintained a watchful eye over Moussa’s “Ghad” party. In this vein, “Ghad” leaders said that their meetings were previously transmitted to State Security via a colleague’s open cell phone, after which “Ghad” leaders were required to leave their cell phones outside of the party’s conference room during meetings.591 Other members reported that the party received specific instructions from State Security regarding whom to nominate for Shura Council and parliamentary elections.592 Meanwhile, Rageb Helal Hemeda – whose connections to State Security have been previously discussed – maintained detailed files on each “Ghad” leader, including personal information that can be easily used to threaten them, as necessary.593 Another

592 Interview with Ibrahim el-Tobgui, 10 Jul. 2010.
593 During my interview with Rageb Helal Hemeda on August 9, 2010, he showed me this files and let me peek into one of them. Hemeda hinted that these files were one way through which he would protect himself from people within the party who might seek his ouster.
leader admitted speaking frequently with State Security, and said that State Security officials threatened to close the party if it “pushed too hard.”

Beyond these communications between Moussa’s “Ghad” leadership and State Security, the regime used other tools for ensuring the party’s adherence to its “red lines.” For example, it informed Ibrahim Saleh that, if he wanted to keep his leadership post in the Ministry of Economic Development, he could not write for the party’s newspaper. It further forced Moussa to negotiate with Shura Council Speaker Safwat el-Sherif to win seats in the 2010 parliamentary elections, which bolstered Moussa’s political docility. Meanwhile, the regime kept the investigation into the 2008 attack on Ayman Nour’s Ghad headquarters open, using the threat of prosecution as means of ensuring the “Ghad” party’s continued compliance. This is, of course, similar to the regime’s use of an open investigation into the 2006 fighting at the Wafd headquarters to prevent Mahmoud Abaza from challenging the “red lines.”

IV. Conclusion

While the Mubarak regime’s co-optation of Egyptian opposition parties mostly served to trap opposition activists and constrain their anti-regime behavior, there were exceptions. Ayman Nour’s Ghad party was, perhaps, the most visible and vocal exception, in that it crossed the regime’s “red lines” repeatedly from the moment it was legalized in 2004 and challenging the regime’s legitimacy in a very public way. Yet the regime dealt with Nour effectively: it used trumped up charges against Nour to imprison

594 Interview with an anonymous within Moussa’s “Ghad” party, who asked that his name be withheld because he feared retribution for speaking publicly on the nature of his conversations with State Security.
595 Interview with Ibrahim Saleh, 8 Jul. 2010.
596 Interview with Magdy Fikry Labib, 9 Aug. 2010.
597 Interview with Ibrahim el-Tobgui, 10 Jul. 2010.
him, as well as to threaten Nour’s then-vice-chair, Moussa Mustafa Moussa, who ultimately fomented divisions within the Ghad party to save himself. The result was two Ghad parties – one with a well-known leader in prison without legal recognition from the PPC, and a legalized one with a completely unknown leader who was entirely dependent on the regime for any political success. The Mubarak regime had thus succeeded, for a while, to displace Ayman Nour – its most outspoken and politically visible opponent at the time – from politics, and replace him with an uncharismatic political novice.

Still, despite the regime’s successes in cornering and/or outmaneuvering many of its opponents, there were some opponents who were simply too politically strong for the regime to trap in opposition parties or manipulate out of its electoral system. In these instances, the regime used the only tool it had left – repression, which ultimately had the same effect in preventing these “untrappable” opponents from challenging the regime too aggressively.
Chapter 5
The Muslim Brotherhood: Cornered By Repression

The Muslim Brotherhood stands apart from the other parties discussed in this dissertation in three important respects. First, the Brotherhood isn’t a party whose primary purpose is participating in elections and winning parliamentary seats, but, according to its own self-description, a *gama’a* – a society – whose foremost aim is to “to Islamize life” as a grassroots strategy for establishing an Islamic state in Egypt. 598 This made it different from the legalized opposition parties that existed during Mubarak’s reign. Whereas those parties merely objected to various regime policies and the manner of Mubarak’s rule, the Brotherhood thoroughly rejected the regime itself and sought to replace it with an Islamic state. 599

Second, the Muslim Brotherhood differed from the legalized Mubarak-era opposition parties in that it had actual grassroots support. This was partially because it had strong appeal among Egypt’s religiously conservative, predominately Muslim population. But it was also because it was not a co-opted party, and operated under a different set of constraints. Whereas the Wafd, Tagammu, and Ghad parties, among any others, were confined to their headquarters and typically prevented from reaching out beyond their small number of members, the Muslim Brotherhood built an extensive social services network through which it directly engaged Egypt’s under-serviced communities. This made it especially threatening to the Mubarak regime, given the

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regime’s mounting failures in providing adequate services to an increasingly poor and
desperate country.

Third, given that the Brotherhood’s primary purpose was effecting societal
transformation rather than winning parliamentary seats, the regime was unable to use
parliamentary elections to co-opt the Brotherhood. This is not to say that the
Brotherhood was uninterested in winning parliamentary seats – that it participated in
almost every Mubarak-era election indicates otherwise. But given its strong grassroots
support, the Brotherhood was far less dependent on electoral victories for preserving its
public profile than any of the previously discussed opposition parties.

Since it couldn’t effectively co-opt the Brotherhood with lucrative political
patronage, the regime ultimately resorted to repression, launching mass arrests of its
members and leaders during various periods, and often trying them before military courts.
These crackdowns probably would have destroyed ordinary political parties – as occurred
with the original Ghad party after Ayman Nour was imprisoned. Yet the Brotherhood
survived by relying on an intricate system for promoting its members, which vetted them
for their commitment to the cause and ensured their willingness to withstand intense
regime pressure.

Still, the regime’s crackdowns on the Brotherhood had an effect. Though the
organization survived, its leaders responded to decades of repression by acting with
tremendous caution toward the Mubarak regime. Indeed, by the last decade of
Mubarak’s rule, the Muslim Brotherhood had significantly toned down its anti-regime
rhetoric and, much like the other parties discussed in this dissertation, negotiated directly
with State Security to coordinate its electoral participation. Though the Brotherhood
never dropped its ambition of replacing the Mubarak regime with an Islamic state, it accepted the reality of the regime’s strength and ultimately abided by many of the same “red lines” under which the legal opposition parties operated. [it seems to have been better at avoiding penetration & cooption]

I. Background

To understand why successive Egyptian rulers considered the Muslim Brotherhood politically threatening, the organization’s emergence on Egypt’s political scene needs analysis. The Brotherhood’s appeal to Egyptians’ religious sensibilities undermined the legitimacy of non-Islamist leaders, while its effective provision of social services – often to underprivileged communities – cemented its popularity. Since it had not governed it also offered the promise of not being corrupt. Successive Egyptian leaders recognized the Muslim Brotherhood as the only force capable of challenging them for power, and by the mid-1940s began repressing the organization quite severely.

a. The Establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood

Hassan al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood in the Suez Canal town of Ismailia in 1928. Although he was only twenty-two years old at the time, al-Banna was already an Islamist entrepreneur. Since the age of twelve, he had led a variety of fundamentalist organizations that aimed to preserve Islamic morality, resist Christian missionaries, and threaten Muslims whom al-Banna regarded as “living in violation of the teachings of Islam.” Al-Banna’s activism intensified after he moved to Cairo for his secondary education at the age of sixteen. Put off by the capital’s increasingly secular political scene, he established the Islamic Society for Nobility of Character, which organized university students to preach in public meeting places, such as coffee shops.
Upon graduating, some of these students were sent to the Egyptian countryside, where they carried “the call to the message of Islam.” After moving to Ismailia to become a schoolteacher in 1927, al-Banna continued his activism, preaching in local coffee shops and touring Egyptian villages to spread “the Islamic call.”

Al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood in March 1928, when – according to Brotherhood lore – six members of the British-occupied Suez Canal labor force came to see him and, expressing their weariness “of this life of humiliation and restriction,” called for forming a group that “contracts with God sincerely that it live for His religion and die in His service.” Al-Banna responded by taking an oath to God to be “troops for the message of Islam,” and calling the organization the Muslim Brotherhood because “we are brothers in the service of Islam.”

b. Ideology and Aims

The Brotherhood emerged in response to the concern, widely shared by prominent Islamic thinkers of its era, that the Muslim world had fallen behind the west politically and technologically. Al-Banna was particularly concerned about the proliferation of secularism within Egyptian society, as well as European political domination of Muslim lands. In his 1935 article “Our Mission,” al-Banna lists the “symptoms” of the “disease” affecting the Muslim world as follows:

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602 Mitchell 8.
[Muslims] have been assailed on the political side by imperialist aggression on the part of their enemies, and by factionalism, rivalry, division, and disunity on the part of their sons. They have been assailed on the economic side by the propagation of usurious practices throughout all their social classes, and the exploitation of their resources and natural treasures by foreign companies. They have been afflicted on the intellectual side by anarchy, defection, and heresy which destroy their religious beliefs and overthrow the ideals within their sons’ breasts. They have been assailed on the sociological side by licentiousness of manners and mores …

Al-Banna added to this list non-Islamic educational systems and legal systems governed by “positive law,” as opposed to the *sharia* – Islamic law.606

The cure for Islamic decline, al-Banna argued, was the return to Islam, which he viewed as “an all-embracing concept which regulates every aspect of life, adjudicating on every one its concerns and prescribing for it a solid and rigorous order.”607 The institution of Islam as society’s organizing principle, al-Banna believed, would unify Muslims and replace their man-made legal systems with Islamic ones, in which God is sovereign.608 It should be emphasized that this agenda was not – and is not – unique to the Brotherhood, since the basic aim of establishing an Islamic social and political order is what defines Islamists, though there is wide variation in how individual Islamist organizations pursue these aims.609

The Brotherhood’s strategy for establishing an Islamic social and political order emphasized grassroots social transformation, in which an increasingly pious society would pressure the government to implement Islamic law more completely.610 This strategy was largely the product of pragmatic considerations: the Brotherhood realized

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606 Wendell 61.
607 Wendell 46.
608 Abed-Kotob 324.
610 El-Ghobashy 376.
that it could not Islamize the Egyptian state overnight, so it aimed to “create a milieu conducive to the ‘truly Islamic life’” by encouraging Egyptian piety.  

The Brotherhood pushed various social “reforms,” including the Islamization of Egyptian education, encouraging social modesty, banning prostitution, and outlawing bars. It used its provision of social services to “demonstrate the viability of Islam as a coherent program of social organization.” In this vein, the Brotherhood offered Islamic education “to raise a new generation of Muslims who will understand Islam correctly,” and additionally focused on rehabilitating and building mosques.

The focus on inspiring religious awareness among the Egyptian public through the provision of social services remains a key component of the Brotherhood’s activities. “They key to the Muslim Brotherhood is its social part,” youth activist Amr al-Beltagi told me in March 2011. “We are a social movement. We have a lot of community and dawa [outreach] services, and most [Muslim Brothers] are more active in society – in hospitals, schools, civil society run by Muslim Brotherhood – not in politics. … We want people to be more religious.” It is through these services that the Brotherhood maintained a constant presence within Egyptian society, even during long periods of brutal repression under various rulers.

c. Growth, Politicization, and Repression

The Brotherhood’s various social activities required it to fundraise, and it used its surplus to develop organizational branches beyond Ismailia. It opened its first Cairo
headquarters in 1931, and al-Banna moved to the capital the following year to build the Brotherhood into a national organization.616

Thereafter, the Brotherhood expanded significantly, expanding its social service networks to include the provision of education, cheap medical care, financial aid, and vocational training, as well as preaching.617 It grew from having fifteen branch offices in 1932 to 300 in 1938,618 developing support among Egypt’s civil servants, students, urban laborers, and peasants, and establishing itself as “one of the most important political contestants on the Egyptian scene.”619

Though the Brotherhood initially limited its political activities to lobbying the government on various issues – such as protesting Christian missionary activities – its rapid growth and increasing interest in the Arab-Jewish struggle for Palestine catalyzed its politicization. At its fifth conference in 1938, al-Banna called for the “execution” of the Brotherhood’s aims through direct political participation.620 This unnerved the ruling Wafd party, which began repressing it. Thus, in 1942, Prime Minister Mustafa el-Nahhas closed down all Brotherhood branches, except the headquarters. Then, when the Brotherhood participated in the 1945 parliamentary elections, the Wafd forged the results against it.621

While the Brotherhood continued to strengthen politically despite these setbacks, the emergence of its violent “secret apparatus” made it a target of British and

616 Lia 37, 40-41, 43
620 Zahid 72-73, Mitchell 14-16.
621 Mitchell 15, 27, 33.
governmental authorities. In January 1948, authorities discovered 165 bombs and cases of arms belonging to the Brotherhood just outside of Cairo, and in March, two members of the Brotherhood’s “secret apparatus” assassinated a judge. A new cache of Brotherhood arms were discovered in October 1948 and, on December 8, 1948, after the Brotherhood was blamed for inciting campus rioting, the Interior Ministry dissolved the organization. Later that month, a young Brother assassinated Prime Minister Mahmud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi and, after negotiations to calm the situation between the Brotherhood and the government fizzled, al-Banna was assassinated on the orders of the Egyptian government in February 1949.\textsuperscript{622}

After two years under martial law, the Brotherhood reemerged in May 1951 and opened dialogue with the Free Officers, who were planning to overthrow the Egyptian monarchy. As the coup approached, the Brotherhood assisted the Free Officers by agreeing to protect foreigners and foreign establishments; monitor the movements of “potentially treasonous” Egyptians; set off mass protests if “immediate popular enthusiasm for the army movement [appeared to] be lacking”; help restore order; and, if the revolt failed, assist in the Free Officers’ escape from Egypt.\textsuperscript{623} The extent of the Free Officers’ cooperation with the Brotherhood – far surpassing their engagement with the communists, discussed in Chapter 2 – was a testament to the Brotherhood’s political strength and popularity.

But shortly after the Free Officers ousted the Egyptian monarchy and took power in July 1952, their relations with the Brotherhood deteriorated. The ruling Revolutionary Command Council denied the Brotherhood’s demands for four portfolios in the new

\textsuperscript{622} Mitchell 37, 43, 61-71.
\textsuperscript{623} Mitchell 83, 103.
cabinet in October and, in January 1953, the military and police cracked down on Brotherhood protests against the junta’s ban on political parties. The crackdown on the Brotherhood intensified the following year: the Brotherhood backed President Mohamed Naguib in his power struggle with Nasser, which Naguib ultimately lost and, on October 26, 1954, a young Brother attempted to assassinate Nasser while he was delivering a speech. The Nasser regime responded with a sweeping assault on the organization: thousands of Brothers were arrested and tortured, eight members were sentenced to death, and the organization was again dissolved.\textsuperscript{624}

For the remainder of Nasser’s presidency, which ended with his death in 1970, the Brotherhood was subjected to extremely harsh treatment, which is why many Brothers left Egypt during this time and established Brotherhood organizations abroad. Meanwhile, within Egypt, many of its top leaders remained imprisoned, and the regime used deadly force to quell instances of prison unrest. It was during this period that Brotherhood chief ideologue Sayyid Qutb emerged and, from his prison cell in 1965, wrote \textit{Milestones}, which lambasted the Nasser regime as un-Islamic; Qutb was subsequently executed.\textsuperscript{625}

\textbf{c. Reemergence, Then Repression, Under Sadat}

Upon becoming president in 1970, Sadat reversed Nasser’s anti-Brotherhood policies. Viewing the Brotherhood as a counter-weight to leftists and Nasserists, whom he considered his greatest domestic challengers,\textsuperscript{626} Sadat began releasing Muslim

\textsuperscript{625} Aburish 238-241.
\textsuperscript{626} Maye Kassem, \textit{Egyptian Politics: The Dynamics of Authoritarian Rule} (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004) 140-141.
Brothers from prison in 1971. Four years later, the Brotherhood was granted amnesty and all imprisoned Brothers were freed. Yet the official ban on the organization was never lifted, preventing it from being recognized as either a social organization or political party. So in its “half-official” status, the Brotherhood spent much of the 1970s reorganizing, building its influence through student unions, professional organizations, and civil society institutions. It additionally founded a newspaper, *al-Dawa*, which operated under unofficial sanction and ultimately reached a circulation of 100,000, making it one of the most widely distributed non-state papers.

For much of the 1970s, Sadat and the Brotherhood shared certain mutual interests. In this vein, both increasingly feared the emergence of smaller, more radical Islamist organizations: Sadat feared these groups’ embrace of violence, while the Brotherhood feared being outflanked politically. For this reason, in 1977, the regime approved the publication of *Preachers Not Judges*, which had been written by former Brotherhood Supreme Guide Hassan al-Hudaybi in 1969 and refuted Qutb’s theological arguments against the regime. The Brotherhood further embraced Sadat’s *infitah* privatization policies, at least initially, because they believed it would open “economic space for individual initiative and reward.”

The relationship between Sadat and the Brotherhood, however, soon soured. The Brotherhood increasingly criticized the corruption and inequalities that accompanied

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privatization\textsuperscript{632}, and it opposed Sadat’s pro-western tilt, advocating instead for greater cooperation with other Islamic countries.\textsuperscript{633} These tensions intensified after Sadat began his peace overture to Israel: the Brotherhood publications attacked the regime harshly\textsuperscript{634} and, after the peace treaty with Israel was signed in 1979, Sadat shut down \textit{al-Dawa}\.\textsuperscript{635}

While popular sentiment against the treaty was not limited to the Brotherhood, the Brotherhood offered the most strident criticism, calling for war against Israel to liberate what, in its view, is Islamic territory. It thus became a primary target of Sadat’s September 3-5, 1981 crackdown: the Brotherhood’s top leadership, including Supreme Guide Omar al-Telmissany, was arrested, and approximately 1,000 of the 1,500 activists that Sadat’s regime detained were from Islamist groups.\textsuperscript{636} Non-Brotherhood Islamic militants assassinated Sadat a month later.

\textbf{II. Mubarak Struggles to Trap the Brotherhood}

To some extent, the Brotherhood’s experience under various Egyptian rulers from its 1928 founding until Sadat’s 1981 assassination shares many similarities with that of other parties that have been previously discussed. Like the Wafd, it emerged under the monarchy; like the Wafd and various communist groups, it was repressed, albeit far more brutally, under Nasser; and like the Tagammu party, Sadat tried to co-opt it, but its criticism of Sadat’s policies soon made it a target of Sadat’s final crackdown. After succeeding Sadat as Egypt’s president, Hosni Mubarak similarly treated the Brotherhood like most other previously repressed parties, e.g. by permitting its political participation.

\textsuperscript{632} Bradley 55.
\textsuperscript{633} Merip staff, “Open Door in the Middle East,” \textit{Merip Reports} 31 (Oct. 1974) 22.
\textsuperscript{635} Aulas 19.
a. The Brotherhood in Mubarak’s First Elections

Upon taking power in October 1981, President Hosni Mubarak dealt permissively with the Muslim Brotherhood, offering them “de facto toleration,” but not legalization.\(^{637}\) To some extent, Mubarak viewed the Muslim Brotherhood, which had renounced violence\(^ {638}\), as preferable to more radical Islamist organizations, such as those involved in Sadat’s assassination. Mubarak thus released Supreme Guide Telmissany and other Brotherhood leaders whom Sadat had imprisoned\(^ {639}\), and invited the Brothers to criticize the views of more extreme Islamists in public forums, which were occasionally broadcast on television.\(^ {640}\) Though the Brotherhood was not permitted to form a political party, Mubarak eventually allowed its members to participate in elections as independents. He apparently hoped that allowing the Brotherhood’s members to participate in the regime’s manipulated elections would “diminish the strength of the Islamic opposition that denied the regime’s legitimacy.”\(^ {641}\)

For the Brotherhood, electoral participation represented an opportunity to advance their long-term pursuit of establishing an Islamic state. Brotherhood founder al-Banna had argued that gaining entry into official governmental bodies, such as the parliament, provided one mechanism for promoting Islamization of Egyptian society, which is why the Brotherhood had participated in parliamentary elections during the 1940s.\(^ {642}\) Electoral participation also allowed the Brotherhood to reassure the regime that it had no designs on launching a revolution. Given the organization’s “long time horizon with

\(^{637}\) El-Ghobashy 377.
\(^{638}\) Abdel-Kotob 333.
\(^{642}\) Tal 49.
respect to its political role in Egyptian society,” it would pursue political influence through legitimate means, even if those means presented no realistic opportunity for displacing Mubarak.643

In the 1984 elections, the Brotherhood circumvented Mubarak’s ban on religious parties by forming an electoral coalition with the Wafd party. The Wafd, however, controlled the candidacy selection process: of the 70 candidates that the Brotherhood proposed, the Wafd accepted only eighteen, and only eight of the 58 seats that the coalition won belonged to Brothers.644 Despite the small number of Brothers in parliament, the coalition’s success was largely attributed to the Brotherhood’s mobilization.645 Three years later, the Brotherhood demonstrated its political clout once again: after its attempt646 at forming its own party was rejected, the Brotherhood formed the Islamic Coalition with the Socialist Labor Party and Ahrar Party, which won 60 of 448 elected seats, 38 of which went to Muslim Brothers. Without the Brotherhood’s support, the Wafd’s representation slipped to 35 seats, and the Brotherhood-led Islamic Coalition thus became the dominant opposition bloc in parliament.647

Shortly thereafter, the regime soured on its experiment of using parliamentary elections to weaken the Brotherhood, partly because of the Brotherhood’s strong criticism of the regime from the parliamentary floor. The Brotherhood pushed to have sharia as the exclusive source of all legislation, and its parliamentarians submitted numerous

complaints to the Interior Minister regarding various abuses, including torture and unlawful imprisonment,\textsuperscript{648} to which Interior Minister Zaki Badri responded by accusing the Brotherhood of terrorist connections.\textsuperscript{649} But perhaps more importantly, the Brotherhood’s growth in popularity, reflected in its improved electoral performance between the 1984 and 1987 parliamentary elections, unnerved the regime, which recognized it as the strongest challenge to its authority.

The regime used a court decision that invalidated the 1987 parliamentary elections, based on party-list voting, to implement a new electoral format, consisting of 222 two-member constituencies. When new elections were held in November 1990, the Brotherhood joined the Wafd party, among others, in boycotting, protesting both the new format of the elections as well as the regime’s repressive policies, such as the emergency laws.\textsuperscript{650} As discussed in Chapter 3, this electoral boycott backfired terribly on the Wafd party: the regime did not respond with any meaningful concessions, and the Wafd’s absence from parliament over the next five years kept it from popular view. Its support thus diminished rapidly, and it never truly regained its previous stature.

\textbf{b. The Brotherhood Prospers Anyway}

The Brotherhood, however, did not share the Wafd’s fate. Over the next five years, its social influence grew tremendously despite its lack of parliamentary representation for two reasons.

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\textsuperscript{648} Tal 50-53.
\textsuperscript{649} “Egyptian Interior Minister Reviews Opposition Tendencies,” BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (2 Feb. 1989) ME/0374/A/1.
\textsuperscript{650} Maye Kassem, In the Guise of Democracy: Governance in Contemporary Egypt (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1999) 101-102.
\end{flushright}
First, while shut off from the parliament, the Brotherhood bolstered its political influence through Egypt’s 22 professional syndicates. As of 1995, these syndicates had approximately 3.5 million members, and the Brotherhood’s involvement in the syndicates enhanced its support among “the educated middle class.” The Brotherhood’s ascendancy in the most politically active syndicates began in 1984, when Brothers won 7 of 25 seats in the Doctors Syndicate and, three years later, won 54 of 61 seats in the Engineers Syndicate. By 1995, it controlled a majority of the seats on the councils of five of the six most politically active syndicates: Doctors (87 percent of the council seats), Engineers (74 percent), Lawyers (72 percent), Pharmacists (68 percent), and Scientists (68 percent). It was also gaining a foothold in the influential Journalists Syndicate, with two prominent Brotherhood-affiliated journalists sitting on its council.651

Second, the Brotherhood continued developing its social services networks, contributing what Wickham has termed a “parallel Islamic sector.” This sector first emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, when an unprecedented wave of private mosque construction provided spaces in which Brothers organized a wide range of religious and community services. These included religious lessons, after-school programs, Qur’an recitation contests, and charity distribution centers, among other functions. Islamists also established thousands of voluntary associations, which similarly served a variety of religious and social functions, such as health clinics, Islamic banks, and publishing

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houses. For the Brotherhood, these institutions were conduits for vital financial support, as well as mechanisms for ideological outreach.\footnote{Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) 99-109.}

The extent of the Brotherhood’s rising societal influence became clear in the aftermath of the October 1992 Cairo earthquake, in which over 12,000 people were injured and 50,000 buildings were damaged. Within hours, the Brotherhood’s representatives in the Doctors Syndicate and Engineers Syndicate directed activists to set up first-aid centers and distribute food, medicine, and money. The Islamists’ efficiency contrasted sharply with the regime’s response, which was slow and inefficient, and the Brotherhood used its intervention in grief-stricken areas to promote its political agenda, such as by displaying banners with its slogan, “Islam is the Solution.”\footnote{Hesham Al-Awadi, “Mubarak and the Islamists: Why Did the ‘Honeymoon’ End?” Middle East Journal 59.1 (Winter 2005) 69, 73.}

Unnerved by the Brotherhood’s strong response to the earthquake, the regime responded by ordering that only state-licensed charitable organizations could distribute aid.\footnote{Rutherford 86.} But once the crisis subsided, the regime began taking a variety of measures to substantially curtail the Brotherhood’s activities.

c. Renewed Repression

The Mubarak regime began its assault on the Brotherhood’s rising influence shortly after the 1992 Cairo earthquake. In February 1993, the NDP-dominated parliament passed a law that substantially changed the rules through which syndicates’ governing councils were elected. The new rules mandated that at least fifty percent of a syndicate’s members had to cast ballots for the elections to be valid without requiring a
rerun; this was intended to disadvantage the Brotherhood, whose syndicate members had often won elections with very low turnouts. These efforts, however, failed to thwart the Brotherhood’s influence, as its members continued winning syndicate board elections. In response, the regime closed the Engineers Syndicate in 1995 and the Lawyers Syndicate in 1996, freezing their assets and ultimately placing them under state-appointed officials who curtailed the syndicates’ activities.

The regime also began cracking down on the Brotherhood’s societal outreach. On university campuses, the regime directed State Security to monitor Brotherhood-affiliated students, prohibit political activities, and interfere in student union elections to prevent Muslim Brothers from winning. New laws were also introduced to undermine the Brotherhood’s influence in university teachers’ clubs, and the regime’s increasing intervention in the syndicates against the Brotherhood decimated revenues that were needed to support various social services.

Meanwhile, the regime began enacting laws that provided stiffer punishments for belonging to radical organizations. These efforts began in July 1992, when the regime issued a new anti-terrorism law under which those found guilty of “assisting or expressing sympathy for terrorists” could be punished with forced labor, life sentences, or the death penalty. Then, in 1993, the regime began referring suspected terrorists to military courts, which allowed for quicker verdicts thanks to the laxer evidentiary

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657 Al-Awadi 74-75.
658 Kienle (1998) 221; Rutherford 87.
standards. It should be emphasized that these new laws comprised part of the
government’s response to a rising wave of Islamist terrorism, which targeted foreign
tourists, Egyptian Christians, and state officials, including Mubarak himself. For this
reason, the Brotherhood was initially unaffected by these laws, because it repeatedly
declared its commitment to nonviolence and distanced itself from the terrorists’ attacks.

But before the November 1995 elections, the Mubarak regime began using its
new anti-terrorism laws to repress the Brotherhood. The assault began in January 1995,
when 82 of the Brotherhood’s leading middle-aged activists were rounded up, charged
with plotting to overthrow the regime, and referred to military tribunals. Then, on
November 23, one week before the elections, the military tribunal sentenced 54 of these
individuals, including some of the Brotherhood’s best-known leaders, to three-to-five-
year prison terms. Finally, days before the elections, the Interior Ministry detained
hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood poll watchers, and the regime ultimately used brute
force to ensure that only one of the Brotherhood’s approximately 150 candidates was
elected. The 1995 elections were the most violent in Egypt’s history: 61 people died,
1313 were injured, and 2400 were detained.

While the regime’s crackdown on the Brotherhood – and, in particular, its
imprisonment of some of the Brotherhood’s most important leaders – took a serious toll
on the organization’s internal administration, the Brotherhood remained popular. Five
years later, when a court order forced the regime to permit judicial monitoring of
parliamentary elections, the Brotherhood won 17 seats in the 2000 parliamentary

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659 Rutherford 87.
660 Barry Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism in Egyptian Politics, Updated Edition* (New York, Palgrave
elections. This was more than what all of the other opposition parties won combined, and it reinforced the notion that the Mubarak regime’s various attempts to trap the Brotherhood – including accommodation during the 1980s to repression in the 1990s – had failed.

III. Untrappable

There are three reasons why the Mubarak regime was unable to trap the Brotherhood or repress it into irrelevance.

a. The Benefits of Not Being a Political Party

First, the Brotherhood’s ability to prosper despite having minimal parliamentary representation from 1990-2000 was a testament to the advantages of not being a recognized political party. As discussed previously, Mubarak-era political parties received recognition from the Shura Council’s Political Parties Committee (PPC) and, in many cases, lucrative political patronage in exchange for a variety of limitations on their activities. One of the most important limitations was that parties confined their activities to their headquarters, which effectively kept them out of public view and made them even more dependent on the regime’s manipulations for “winning” seats in elections. Indeed, the Tagammu and Wafd parties both became trapped in the regime’s clientelist system in the early 1990s, and both parties remained largely irrelevant for the remainder of Mubarak’s reign.

The Brotherhood, however, did not suffer this fate because, from the 1990s onward, it studiously avoided becoming an official political party. When a group of prominent Brotherhood members began establishing a party in 1996, the Brotherhood’s

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662 El-Ghobashy 385-387.
A number of reasons have been given to explain the Guidance Office’s decision-making during this episode. The leadership seemingly feared that regime would respond to the establishment of a Brotherhood party by intensifying its anti-Brotherhood crackdown, and the Guidance Office also viewed the establishment of a semi-autonomous party as a undermining its control of the organization. There is also some evidence that the party’s reform-minded platform unnerved the Brotherhood’s more conservative leadership, which viewed the party as an ideological threat.

By remaining a “society,” as opposed to a political party, the Brotherhood was able to evade the government’s restrictive regulations on political activities and continue its public outreach through social work. Moreover, through this social work, the Brotherhood was able to create new spaces – including mosques and health clinics – for advancing its political agenda, which was an advantage denied to headquarter-confined political parties. Finally, because it was not a formal political party, the Brotherhood’s aspirations were not limited to winning regime-manipulated elections. As a result, its success did not depend entirely on its willingness to respect the regime’s red lines.

Of course, not being a formal political party also had a tremendous downside for the Brotherhood. Since it could not be trapped in the Mubarak regime’s clientelist

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666 Wickham (2004) 208-211.
667 I do not mean to suggest that the Brotherhood had a choice. Given the regime’s refusal to register the Brotherhood offshoot Wasat party, it is highly unlikely, to say the least, that a party backed by the Brotherhood would have ever received governmental approval. Indeed, shortly after the Wasat party
system, the regime was left with only one option for curtailing its influence: repression, including constant harassment of Brotherhood activists by State Security, significant restrictions on Brotherhood activities, and the periodic imprisonment of top leaders. Yet while repressed political parties, such as the Ghad party, crumbled under this pressure, the Brotherhood remained strong thanks to an internal structure that kept its members committed to its cause, and further prevented the regime from infiltrating it with agents.

b. A Committed – and Vetted – Membership

The second reason why the Mubarak regime was unable to trap the Muslim Brotherhood, as it did with the Tagammu and Wafd parties, or infiltrate it so as to destroy it from within, as it did with Ayman Nour’s Ghad party, has to do with the Brotherhood’s intricate system of internal promotion. Whereas political parties are relatively open organizations that members join by filling out written applications, joining the Muslim Brotherhood is a five-to-eight year process, “during which aspiring members are closely watched for their loyalty to the cause and are indoctrinated in the Brotherhood’s curriculum.”668 This makes the Brotherhood nearly impossible for the government to infiltrate, since those who become full-fledged members have been thoroughly vetted by their superiors for their commitment to the organization.

The process of becoming a Muslim Brother begins at recruitment. On university campuses and in mosques throughout Egypt, specially designated local Brotherhood members scout for pious individuals, e.g. by examining whether prospective recruits pray five times a day or have memorized parts of the Qur’an. Initially, Brotherhood recruiters

attempted to register legally, its members were sent to military courts because the regime incorrectly suspected the Wasat party of being a Brotherhood front.

engage their recruits in non-Islamist social activities, such as football or tutoring, and they formally ask the recruits to join the Brotherhood only after the recruits’ religiosity has been confirmed, which could take as long as one year.669 The Brotherhood also has a division for children aged 9-13 years old, which mostly caters to the children of Muslim Brothers and integrates them into the organization at a younger age.670

Once a recruit agrees to join the organization, he becomes a muhib, or a “lover.” During this first stage in the five-stage promotional process, the recruiter continues monitoring the muhib’s personal piety, including whether he prays regularly and fasts on Ramadan, as well as whether he gets along with other Muslim Brothers.671 The muhib also begins participating in the Brotherhood’s social activities, which include recreational activities with other Muslim Brothers as well as community work, and begins a rigorous study of the Qur’an, Sunna, and religious exegeses.672 Muslim Brothers typically remain muhibs for six months to one year, and their superiors test their religious knowledge and practice before they advance to the next stage.673

At the second stage, the rising Muslim Brother becomes a muayyad, or “supporter.” At this stage, which lasts for one-and-a-half to three years, the muayyad becomes more involved in the Brotherhood’s political and social activities, such as preaching and teaching in mosques, as well as recruiting new Muslim Brothers. The

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670 Interview with Mosab Ragab, 7 Mar. 2011.
muuyayad is also introduced to a more rigorous curriculum, which emphasizes memorization of the Qur’an and the teachings of Hassan al-Banna. Before moving to the next stage, the muuyayad is once again tested, and his superiors assess his progress in the Muslim Brotherhood’s curriculum, as well as his willingness to follow the decisions of the Brotherhood’s central leadership.674

Next, the Muslim Brother becomes a muntasib, or “affiliated.” This stage lasts approximately one year, and it constitutes the first step towards full Brotherhood membership. (“He’s a member, but his name is written in pencil,” Islam Lotfy, a former Brotherhood youth leader, told me.) As a muntasib, the Muslim Brother begins working in the Muslim Brotherhood’s official divisions, such as those dedicated to serving workers, students, or youths, and he also begins paying membership dues that range from 5-8 percent of his earnings. To advance to the next level, the muntasib is tested on both his knowledge of religious texts and political views to ensure his compatibility with the organization’s ideology.675

At the fourth level, the Muslim Brother is called a muntazim, or “organizer.” At this stage, which often lasts two years, the Muslim Brother is expected to play an active role within the organization, and can form his own local Brotherhood usra, or “family,” which consists of five-to-eight individuals and forms the most basic unit of the Brotherhood’s national hierarchy. He is also expected to memorize the Qur’an and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad,676 and his superiors may test his loyalty to the organization by “acting like State Security and giving [him] wrong information, to see if

676 Interview with Khaled Hamza, 10 Jan. 2011.
Finally, at the fifth stage of internal promotion, the candidate becomes an *ach amal*, or “working Brother,” at which point he is considered a full-fledged member with voting rights. Hassan al-Banna inaugurated the first version of this multi-stage promotional process at the Muslim Brotherhood’s Third General Conference in 1935, it has evolved slightly over time. But its purpose has remained the same: promoting the Brotherhood’s organizational strength by ensuring that its members are completely dedicated to its cause and activities. This made the organization nearly impossible to infiltrate with State Security agents. “Agents can become a *muhib*, but they won’t move up,” Alexandria Brotherhood leader Ali Abdelfattah told me. “You have to be patient to become a *muayyad*. And if you’re an agent, you won’t be patient enough.”

**c. An Impenetrable Hierarchy**

The third reason why the regime was unable to trap the Muslim Brotherhood is the Brotherhood’s strong nationwide hierarchy, through which Brotherhood leaders command the rank and file members as foot soldiers. This structure enabled the Brotherhood to mobilize its members in practically every neighborhood nationwide during elections, which meant that it was less dependent on the regime for winning seats than the legalized political parties that were largely shut off from the broader society.

The Brotherhood’s hierarchy first emerged in the early 1930s and was reconfigured in the mid-1940s, aiming to ensure that the Brotherhood could act as a

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677 Interview with Mosab Ragab, 7 Mar. 2011.
679 Mitchell 183. The initial process of internal promotion contained three stages (*musaid*, *muntasib*, and *amal*), with an additional stage (*mogahed*, or combatant) for those who demonstrated the highest commitment to the organization, such as by fighting the British or participating in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.
“highly disciplined instrument” for executing the leadership’s policies and initiatives.\textsuperscript{681}

At the lowest level is the five-to-eight-person \textit{usra}, or “family,” which is headed by a \textit{naqib}, or chief. The \textit{usra}’s members generally live within the same neighborhood, and all Muslim Brothers meet in their \textit{usras} weekly to study the Brotherhood’s religious curriculum, discuss political and cultural issues, organize the \textit{usra}’s local social activities, and discuss their private lives.\textsuperscript{682} The \textit{usra} thus serves two key purposes: it provides a mechanism through which the Brotherhood can continue verifying that its members are adhering to the organization’s principles, and it reinforces the social bonds among Brotherhood members, thus making defections relatively rare.\textsuperscript{683}

Four layers of leadership stand above the \textit{usra}. Approximately six to twelve \textit{usras} comprise a \textit{shoaba}, or populace; three-to-five \textit{shoabas} comprise a \textit{muntaqa}, or area; a number of \textit{muntaqas} fall under leadership of their respective \textit{muhafazas}, or governorates; and a number of \textit{muhafazas} are grouped under a \textit{qita}, or sector.\textsuperscript{684} At the very top of the Brotherhood’s hierarchy sits the 20-member executive \textit{Maktab al-Irshad}, or Guidance Office, which is headed by a Supreme Guide and advised on doctrinal matters by a 120-member Shura Council, which is the Brotherhood’s legislative body.\textsuperscript{685} When the Guidance Office wants to execute a decision – such as organizing for elections or social services – it communicates through this hierarchical chain to the administrative

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{681} Mitchell 175-177.
  \item \textsuperscript{683} Interview with Magdy Amr, 17 Jan. 2011; interview with Ibrahim Houdaiby, 1 Mar. 2011; interview with Anas al-Qassas, 9 Mar. 2011.
  \item \textsuperscript{684} Interview with Mosab Ragab, 7 Mar. 2011.
  \item \textsuperscript{685} Interview with Khaled Hamza, 10 Jan. 2011; interview with Abdel Monem Abouel Fotouh, 2 Mar. 2011; interview with Mohamed Habib, 8 Mar. 2011.
\end{itemize}
offices that sit at each subsidiary level. The top officials in these administrative offices, as well as in the Guidance Office, are all at the *ach amal* level of membership.\(^{686}\)

This structure, especially when coupled with a process of internal promotion that ensures a deeply committed membership, made the Brotherhood a uniquely strong organization. As a result, it won more seats than any other opposition party in the 2000 parliamentary elections – even despite the heavily rigged nature of those elections, and despite regime’s imprisonment of many of its top leaders and thousands of its activists. So as the 2005 elections approached, the Mubarak regime sought a new strategy for addressing the challenge that the Brotherhood posed to it.

**IV. Mubarak’s Containment of the Brotherhood**

As discussed in Chapter 4, the Mubarak regime faced unprecedented international pressure to liberalize in the run-up to the 2005 parliamentary elections. These elections coincided with the height of the Bush administration’s “Freedom Agenda.” Successfully conducted elections in the Palestinian Authority and Iraq, as well as the February 2005 “Cedar Revolution” that ousted Syrian troops from Lebanon, reinforced international demands for the Mubarak regime to hold fair and free elections. In response, the regime passed a constitutional amendment that allowed for Egypt’s first-ever multi-candidate presidential elections, and it agreed to allow judicial monitoring of the subsequent parliamentary elections.

These developments provided an unprecedented political opportunity for the Brotherhood. The top – and relatively young – leaders who had been arrested during the 1995 crackdown had been released in 2000, and the organization was thus operating once

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\(^{686}\) Interview with Khaled Hamza, 10 Jan. 2011; interview with Mosab Ragab, 7 Mar. 2011.
again at nearly full capacity. Meanwhile, in the September 2005 presidential elections, the Brotherhood demonstrated its willingness to challenge the regime when it ordered its members to vote for Ghad party candidate Ayman Nour as a protest vote against Hosni Mubarak.687 Fearing that the Brotherhood might exploit the relatively free November parliamentary elections to win an unprecedented share of seats, the regime thus reached out to the Brotherhood’s leadership and, for the first time, offered it a deal.688

a. The Regime’s 2005 Electoral Deal With the Brotherhood

In the years before the 2005 parliamentary elections, communication between the Brotherhood and the Mubarak regime improved considerably. The regime’s ongoing repression of the organization and mass arrests of its leaders and activists, which began in 1995 and persisted into the early 2000s689, had made the Brotherhood much more cautious, and it increasingly sought the regime’s approval for its political activities. Thus, in the run-up to the March 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the Brotherhood received the regime’s approval to hold a massive anti-war rally at Cairo Stadium, which was reportedly attended by over 100,000 people, and the Brotherhood abided by Mubarak’s red lines insofar as the rally focused its ire on the U.S., while avoiding criticism of the regime.690 Similarly, when the Kefaya movement emerged in late 2004 to

687 Interview with Mohamed Abdelbaky, 29 Jun. 2010; interview with Mohamed Habib, 8 Mar. 2011.
689 The Brotherhood involvement in anti-Israel protests during the Second Palestinian Intifada, which began in September 2000, unnerved the regime, and it undertook new waves of arrests against Brotherhood leaders and activists for belonging to, or trying to revive, a “banned group.”
demand political reform, the Brotherhood coordinated with State Security to hold thousands-strong protests in at least eleven governorates.\textsuperscript{691}

To be sure, this communication did not end the regime’s repression of the Brotherhood. Indeed, after initially tolerating the Brotherhood’s 2003 anti-Iraq war protests, the regime undertook a new wave of arrests to end the demonstrations,\textsuperscript{692} and during the first few months of 2005, it arrested approximately 900 Muslim Brothers, including top leaders Mahmoud Ezzat and Essam el-Erian.\textsuperscript{693} (Many believed that el-Erian was arrested because of comments he made suggesting that he would run for the presidency – which, coming from a Brotherhood leader, would have been interpreted by the regime as especially threatening.\textsuperscript{694}) But Brotherhood-regime communication seemingly afforded the Brotherhood greater operating space than at any point since the 1995 crackdown and, by 2005, a formal channel was established between State Security and three top Brotherhood officials: deputy supreme guides Mohamed Habib and Khayrat al-Shater, and Brotherhood parliamentary bloc head Mohamed Morsi.\textsuperscript{695}

As the November 2005 parliamentary elections approached, the regime used this channel to offer the Brotherhood a deal. The offer began with State Security chief Hassan Abdel Rahman contacting Brotherhood Supreme Guide Mehdi Akef, and expressing his concern that the Brotherhood might run for – and win – a large share of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{691} Omaya Abdel-Latif, “Fighting for Turf,” \textit{Al-Ahram Weekly On-line} 742 (12-18 May 2005): \texttt{<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/742/eg5.htm>}.\
\item \textsuperscript{692} Jailan Halawi, “Carrots and Sticks,” \textit{Al-Ahram Weekly On-line} 636 (1-7 May 2003): \texttt{<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/636/eg9.htm>}.\
\item \textsuperscript{693} Jailan Halawi, “A New Dynamic,” \textit{Al-Ahram Weekly On-line} 744 (26 May – 1 Jun. 2005): \texttt{<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/744/eg4.htm>}.\
\item \textsuperscript{694} Amira Howeidy, “‘Prison Is Like Death,’” \textit{Al-Ahram Weekly On-line} 765 (20-26 Oct. 2005): \texttt{<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/765/eg5.htm>}.\
\item \textsuperscript{695} Interview with Mohamed Habib, 8 Mar. 2011; interview with Khayrat al-Shater, 13 Mar 2011; interview with Mohamed al-Beltagi, 26 Mar. 2011.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
parliamentary seats, given the international pressure that the regime was facing to hold relatively open elections. Akef responded by indicating that he was willing to run for fewer seats so long as the regime didn’t arrest Muslim Brothers en masse, as it had done during previous parliamentary elections, and he authorized deputy supreme guides al-Shater and Habib to handle subsequent communications.696

Over the course of a few meetings with State Security that occurred in the weeks before the election, al-Shater and Habib agreed to reduce the number of Brotherhood parliamentary candidacies from approximately 200 to 120, with the aim of winning 50-55 seats.697 In deference to the regime the Brotherhood further withdrew candidates from districts in which major NDP candidates were running.698 In exchange, the regime agreed to let some Brothers win, and to run the elections relatively fairly.699 The regime additionally afforded the Brotherhood unprecedented media access, including hosting Guidance Office member Abdel Monem Abouel Fotouh on public radio, and it permitted Brotherhood candidates to use the slogan “Islam is the Solution” – a religious rallying cry that, in previous elections, would have been considered a clear breach of the red lines and

696 Interview with Mehdi Akef, 24 Jan. 2011.
697 Interview with Abouleila Madi, 26 Jan. 2011; interview with Islam Lotfy, 2 Mar. 2011; interview with Magdy Ashour, 7 Mar. 2011; interview with Mohamed Habib, 8 Mar. 2011. It should be emphasized that these figures are impossible to verify, and have been disputed by other interviewees. But the basic structure of the deal – that the Brotherhood reduced its number of seats in exchange for a relaxed security environment during the elections – has been widely confirmed, and the numbers that I use in the text represent the most commonly given figures.
invited immediate repression. The regime, however, refused the Brotherhood’s request for legal recognition.

While the first of Egypt’s three rounds of parliamentary elections was hardly pristine and reports of vote-buying abounded, the regime mostly kept its promise and prevented the police from interfering in polling stations. But the Brotherhood did not keep the promise it had made to the regime: it ultimately ran 161 candidates, and in the first round, 34 of its 50 candidates won parliamentary seats – a shocking victory, considering that the Brotherhood’s 17 seats in the previous parliament had already made it the largest opposition bloc.

In response, the regime tightened the noose on the Brotherhood in the second round, and arrested 731 Brotherhood members. But it was to no avail: the Brotherhood won an additional 42 seats, bringing its total to 76 and feeding expectations that it could emerge with nearly a quarter of the parliament. Finally, in the third round, the regime deployed Central Security Forces to cordon off polling stations, only allowing NDP supporters to pass through in many cases while continuing the crackdown on Brotherhood activists, which held the Brotherhood to winning only twelve additional seats.

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703 Interview with Ibrahim Houdaiby, 1 Mar. 2011; interview with Mohamed Habib, 8 Mar. 2011; interview with Khairat al-Shater, 13 Mar. 2011; interview with Mohamed al-Beltagi, 26 Mar. 2011. Shater and Habib say that the Brotherhood ran 161 candidates, while Houdaiby and al-Beltagi report that the Brotherhood ran 160. I have gone with 161 because al-Shater and Habib were directly involved in running the Brotherhood’s 2005 parliamentary campaign, along with Mohamed Morsi. It should be noted, however, that al-Ahram reported that the Brotherhood ran 137 candidates. No matter which of these figures is correct, the point that the Brotherhood did not adequately reduce its number of candidacies still stands.
704 Gamal Essam El-Din, “Reality Hits Hard.”
seats. By the end of the 2005 parliamentary elections, the Brotherhood-regime deal was in tatters: the Brotherhood had won an astounding 88 of 454 seats – 20 percent of the parliament – while the regime had detained 1200 Brotherhood activists.707

**b. Intensified Repression**

The Brotherhood’s strong performance in the 2005 parliamentary elections unnerved the regime. To halt the Brotherhood’s ascent, the NDP-dominated parliament voted in February 2006 to postpone that year’s local council elections until 2008.708 Then, for the next five years, the regime subjected the Brotherhood to an unrelenting crackdown, arresting thousands of Brotherhood members and many of its top leaders.

This crackdown began in March 2006, when twenty Muslim Brothers, including university professors and Guidance Office members, were arrested, and hundreds more were arrested over the next two months.709 In May, after the Brotherhood participated in demonstrations to support two judges who had been arrested for exposing vote rigging during the parliamentary elections, the regime arrested 500 Brotherhood members and six top leaders.710 In July, seventeen activists and two top leaders were detained when Supreme Guide Akef expressed his willingness to send Brotherhood volunteers to

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709 Arafat 174.

The crackdown intensified further in December 2006, when dozens of masked Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated students staged a martial arts demonstration at Al-Azhar University in Cairo in front of approximately 2000 students, which aimed to mimic demonstrations held by Hamas and Hezbollah. The demonstration’s bold appeal to militancy shocked the regime, which responded by arresting several hundred more Brotherhood members, including seventeen senior officials. Among those arrested was deputy supreme guide Khairat al-Shater, a millionaire businessman widely considered the Brotherhood’s most capable administrator, as well as one of the organization’s chief financiers.\footnote{Al-Shater and Brotherhood business colleague Hassan Malek were referred to a military tribunal and sentenced to seven years imprisonment, while the regime seized their assets.\footnote{Thereafter, the regime’s brutality against the Brotherhood intensified with each new election. Ahead of the 2007 Shura Council elections, thirty Brotherhood members were arrested.\footnote{When nominations opened for the 2008 local council elections, 700 Muslim Brothers were arrested within the first two weeks.\footnote{In the run-up to the November 2010 parliamentary elections, widely considered the most forged in Egypt’s}}}}
history, the regime arrested sixteen top leaders\textsuperscript{716} and, in the weeks before the election, over 1000 Muslim Brothers were arrested, including eight candidates.\textsuperscript{717} Throughout this crackdown, the regime targeted top leaders, apparently aiming to throw the organization into disarray. Political section chief Essam el-Erian was arrested in 2006, 2007 and 2010\textsuperscript{718}; Brotherhood parliamentarians Sabri Amer and Ragab Abu Zeid were detained in 2007, despite holding parliamentary immunity\textsuperscript{719}; Guidance Office member Ali Beshr was sentenced in 2008 to three years in prison\textsuperscript{720}; and Guidance Office member Abdel Monem Abouel Fotouh was arrested in 2009 on charges of money laundering.\textsuperscript{721}

c. Contained, And Increasingly Cautious

The crackdown forced the Guidance Office to handle conflicting impulses: the Office increasingly embraced caution, fearing that bold action against the regime would catalyze an intensified crackdown and, worst of all, decapitation, but prompted by its younger members and others who raised questions regarding whether the organization had a “deal” with the regime it needed to be active. These competing pressures often led the Brotherhood to respond to emerging anti-regime movements ineffectually, which ultimately rendered it a somewhat peripheral player during the final years of Mubarak’s dictatorship, despite its tremendous political potential.


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The Brotherhood’s response to the April 6, 2008 workers strikes illustrates its ineffectiveness. At the time, the Brotherhood was awaiting a verdict in the trial of al-Shater and other Brotherhood members, so it announced on April 5 that it would not participate. Yet when the April 6 protests proved somewhat successful in galvanizing young people against the regime, the Brotherhood quickly embraced a follow-up protest that was scheduled for Mubarak’s birthday on May 4. These plans, however, ultimately fizzled when the regime announced a 30 percent increase in public wages a few days before the protest was scheduled, and the protest thus crumbled.

One year later, when a nationwide day of protest was called to mark the first anniversary of the April 6, 2008 protests, the Brotherhood endorsed it. Fearing that the regime would accuse it of trying to seize power, the Brotherhood ultimately backtracked and only encouraged its university students to participate. As a result, the protests failed – and the Brotherhood’s partial involvement enabled the regime to declare in state-run media that the Brotherhood had lost popularity.

The Brotherhood similarly sent mixed messages regarding its stance on presidential succession – specifically, whether Gamal Mubarak should succeed his father as Egypt’s president. By late 2009, this issue dominated Egyptian politics: Hosni Mubarak’s reportedly declining health raised questions about whether he could stand for

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elections in September 2011, and the emergence of Nobel laureate Mohamed ElBaradei as a possible presidential candidate added urgency to this issue. Initially, the Brotherhood took a bold move against the regime and joined Ayman Nour’s “Against Succession” campaign in October 2009.\(^{728}\) Two months later, however, when the Brotherhood held Guidance Office elections, newly elected Supreme Guide Mohamed Badie reversed course: in his first interview with satellite television station Al-Jazeera, Badie declared that he had no problem with Gamal Mubarak becoming the next president of Egypt through fair and free elections.\(^ {729}\) Though the Brotherhood attempted to walk this statement back,\(^ {730}\) it was widely interpreted as a concession to the regime,\(^ {731}\) and the “Against Succession” campaign was ultimately overtaken by ElBaradei’s newly founded National Association for Change.

Once again, however, the Brotherhood demonstrated tremendous ambivalence. Brotherhood parliamentary leader and Guidance Office member Saad al-Katatny met with ElBaradei in March 2010 and supported ElBaradei’s call for constitutional change, but declined to endorse his presidential candidacy.\(^ {732}\) Then, following the regime’s massive forgeries during the June Shura Council elections, in which all twelve Brotherhood candidates lost, the Brotherhood welcomed ElBaradei to its headquarters and vowed to participate in collecting one million signatures on behalf of ElBaradei’s

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constitutional reform initiative\textsuperscript{733} -- a gesture that led ElBaradei to declare his “political partnership” with the Brotherhood.\textsuperscript{734} But when ElBaradei called on political forces to boycott the November 2010 parliamentary elections as a strategy for isolating the regime,\textsuperscript{735} the Brotherhood refused.

To be sure, the Brotherhood knew that the November 2010 elections would be forged.\textsuperscript{736} By that point, the anti-Brotherhood crackdown was in its fifth year, and it was widely expected that the regime would shut the Brotherhood out of parliament to facilitate Gamal Mubarak’s succession.\textsuperscript{737} But like other opposition parties, the Brotherhood saw a number of benefits to participating, including the opportunity to connect with ordinary voters, as well as the belief that participation would enable the Brotherhood to expose the regime’s forgery, which is why 72 percent of the Brotherhood’s internal Shura Committee voted in favor of electoral participation.\textsuperscript{738} Initially, the regime tried to deter the Brotherhood from running so many candidates, and though 22 of the Brotherhood’s 88 parliamentarians withdrew, approximately 150-170 candidates remained in the race.\textsuperscript{739} The regime responded by arresting over 1000 Muslim Brothers, tearing down the organization’s “Islam is the Solution” posters, and running the most fraudulent elections in Egyptian history. Only 27 of the Brotherhood’s candidates

\textsuperscript{736}Interview with Mohamed Morsi, 3 Aug. 2010; interview with Essam El-Erian, 14 Mar. 2011.
qualified for the second round and, to protest the widespread forgery, the Brotherhood’s Shura Committee voted overwhelmingly to withdraw from the second round of voting.\textsuperscript{740}

As noted in Chapter 3, the Wafd similarly withdrew.

For the Mubarak regime, the Wafd and Brotherhood’s withdrawals from the second round of the 2010 parliamentary elections were a tremendous embarrassment. It depended on opposition groups’ participation in elections for bolstering its competitive façade, and it therefore appealed to the Brotherhood’s remaining candidates to stay in the race by promising them victory.\textsuperscript{741} But when the candidates refused this offer, the regime turned its attention to the one Brotherhood candidate who preferred to continue running: Magdy Ashour.\textsuperscript{742}

Ashour, it seems, intended to abide by the Brotherhood’s boycott decision despite his personal misgivings. But shortly after the first round of the election, he says he faced tremendous pressure within his district to continue running, and attempted to resist this pressure by fleeing to Alexandria. The regime, however, had something else in mind: State Security officers instructed Ashour’s brother to file a police report claiming that Muslim Brothers had kidnapped him, which prompted police to retrieve Ashour from Alexandria and arrest the Brothers who were with him. State Security then ordered Ashour to go on national television and confirm that Muslim Brothers had kidnapped him, but Ashour refused, instead agreeing to continue his campaign to ensure his

\textsuperscript{741} Interview with Gamal Hanafi, 13 Jan. 2011; interview with Magdy Ashour, 7 Mar. 2011.
\textsuperscript{742} Interview with Gamal Hanafi, 13 Jan. 2011.
colleagues’ safe release. When Ashour subsequently won his parliamentary race, the Brotherhood banished him, viewing him as weak for having caved to pressure.\footnote{Interview with Magdy Ashour, 7 Mar. 2011; interview with Mosab Ragab 7 Mar. 2011; interview with Ali Abdelfattah, 22 Mar. 2011.}

V. A Cornered, Cautious Group

In December 2010 – five years after winning one-fifth of the parliament – the Brotherhood was cornered. Thousands of its members were detained. Some of its top leaders, including key financiers, were serving long prison sentences. And it now had no representation in parliament. Though it was still Egypt’s best-organized political force, the Brotherhood believed that the regime was simply too strong to challenge,\footnote{Interview with Sobhi Saleh, 29 Mar. 2011.} and that any attempt to protest its excesses would invite an even more massive crackdown.

The regime’s threats reinforced these fears. As youth activists began organizing the January 25, 2011 demonstrations that would catalyze Mubarak’s ouster, the regime threatened the Brotherhood that, if it participated, “there would be no red lines.” This meant that even the Supreme Guide could be arrested, and the Brotherhood’s leaders in every governorate were also threatened with imprisonment and, in some cases, torture.\footnote{Interview with Amr al-Beltagi, 9 Mar. 2011; interview with Essam el-Erian, 14 Mar. 2011; interview with Mohamed al-Beltagi, 26 March 2011; interview with Sobhi Saleh, 29 Mar. 2011; interview with Saad el-Katatny, 29 Mar. 2011.} Like the trapped Tagammu and Wafd parties, the Brotherhood thus distanced itself from the protests, disappointing many of its younger members, who increasingly viewed the Brotherhood as yet another supine Mubarak-era opposition movement. Turning their backs on the Brotherhood’s leadership, these youths began working with their colleagues in other political groups to find new channels for opposing the regime, given that the old
channels – including even the highly capable Muslim Brotherhood – had apparently failed.
Chapter 6
The Emergence of Egypt’s Untrappable Activists

In January 2011, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak appeared to be laying the groundwork for either running for a sixth term that September, or ensuring his son Gamal’s succession. The November 2010 parliamentary elections seemed to be a key component of that strategy. The ruling National Democratic Party’s campaign was managed by steel tycoon Ahmed Ezz, a close confidante of Gamal Mubarak, and yielded the most heavily forged outcome in Egypt’s history, with the NDP and independent candidates associated with it winning over 90 percent of the seats, leaving the opposition with only 31 of 518 seats. This practically ensured that the NDP would retain the presidency unchallenged: under the 1971 constitutions, presidential candidates required the support of at least 65 members of the People’s Assembly to be nominated.

Egypt’s organized opposition appeared incapable of changing this apparently foreordained outcome. The legalized opposition parties were not, in fact, opposing the regime in any meaningful way. Tagammu’s parliamentary representation rose considerably from winning just two seats in 2005 to five in 2010, and it declined to get involved in any anti-regime activities. Meanwhile, although Wafd stood up to the regime by withdrawing from the second round of the 2010 parliamentary elections, its leaders refused to take any additional aggressive action, which is why the party even avoided joining the “popular parliament” that other opposition groups formed to protest the electoral forgery. And the Ghad party was practically non-existent: the legalized “Ghad” entity under Moussa Mustafa Moussa’s control deliberately avoided confronting the regime and was barely visible, while Ayman Nour’s felony conviction legally preventing
him from running for the presidency and had driven away many of his earlier supporters. Even the Muslim Brotherhood – widely regarded as the only opposition group with true grassroots support and mobilizing capabilities – was playing it safe, fearing that any move against the regime might catalyze an unyielding crackdown.

The Mubarak regime’s firm control over its organized opponents, and these opponents’ apparent unwillingness or incapacity to do oppose it, was a big part of the reason that this dissertation was originally titled “Durable Authoritarianism.” This is not to say that there weren’t plenty of signs of popular discontent within Egypt, including frequent labor strikes, scattered protests, and vociferous criticism of the Mubarak regime in emerging social media outlets. Indeed, during my pre-dissertation trip in 2008, Egyptians frequently spoke of a looming “infigar” – explosion – on account if mounting economic and political distress. Yet there appeared to be no group or party that could translate this very apparent, widespread discontent into any kind of movement that might challenge Mubarak.

It turns out that I was looking in all the wrong places. My observation that the organized opposition was trapped – either co-opted by the regime or contained by its repression – was correct, but a newly emerging generation of opposition activists also recognized this fact, and were about to side-step it. In turn, these activists deliberately avoided the legalized opposition parties and the regime’s autocratic electoral system, which they viewed as political dead ends. Instead, they formed a variety of loosely connected opposition movements and developed a series of protest strategies that made them less trappable for the regime. It was these activists who organized the January 25,

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2011 protests that kicked off Egypt’s anti-Mubarak uprising and catalyzed Mubarak’s ouster – all while the legal opposition parties and the Muslim Brotherhood predictably sat on the sidelines.

I. The Genealogy of Egypt’s Revolutionary Activists

The loose coalition of young activists who collaborated to organize the pivotal January 25, 2011 protests came from a number of different organizations, and subscribed to a diverse set of ideologies. They were united exclusively by the shared cause of bringing down Mubarak, and became acquainted with one another while participating in various protest movements that came and went during the final decade of Mubarak’s rule.

a. Early 2000s Protests on Foreign Policy

Many of activists who helped organize the 2011 anti-Mubarak uprising cut their political teeth during the second Palestinian intifada, which began in September 2000. The intifada coincided with the expansion of pan-Arab satellite television networks, which broadcast images of “the Israeli military machine – soldiers, guns, tanks and helicopters – giving chase to unarmed Palestinian men, women and children” and glorified Palestinian suicide bombers as “resistance” martyrs.747 This depiction of the conflict engendered mass sympathy for the Palestinian cause within Egypt, and university activists held semi-regular protests against Israel.748 “I worked on the Palestinian cause since 2000,” Hossam Moones, a self-described “democratic Nasserist” activist, told me.

“We had community groups, raising money for Palestine all over Egypt. Not just money – we collected seeds and food as well.”\textsuperscript{749}

These demonstrations represented the first sustained protest movement of the Mubarak era, beginning with the first mass demonstrations at universities nationwide in early October 2000 as the intifada commenced, then picking up steam following Israel’s March 2002 Operation Defensive Shield, and returning during practically every episode of Arab-Israeli violence thereafter. The regularity of these protests was permitted: they unified a large segment of politically interested Egyptians, ranging from Nasserists on the far left to Muslim Brothers on the far right.\textsuperscript{750} However, though these protests focused overwhelmingly on the Palestinian cause, they often contained implicit criticisms of the Mubarak regime, which was viewed as ineffective in alleviating Palestinian suffering. Demonstrators called on the regime to end its relationship with Israel and close the Israeli Embassy in Giza.\textsuperscript{751} Moreover, the mere existence of the demonstrations – as well as the fact that they were occurring all over Egypt, as opposed to just in Cairo\textsuperscript{752} – challenged the Mubarak regime, which forbade demonstrations under the 1981 emergency laws.

So after initially tolerating pro-Palestinian activity, the regime began cracking down. Central Security Forces (CSF) police, who operate under the Interior Ministry, would surround the protests and often clash with demonstrators, leaving many injured

\textsuperscript{749} Interview with Hossam Moones, 15 Mar. 2011.
while detaining dozens of activists.\textsuperscript{753} “During this period the police were so strong and going to the street was risky,” said Moaz Abdel Karim, a former Muslim Brotherhood youth leader who participated in these demonstrations. “You could die. They could arrest you and sentence you under the Emergency Law.”\textsuperscript{754} Of course, this heavy-handed response validated the activists’ still-implicit criticism of the regime: that it was more interested in upholding its relationship with Israel than in responding to Egyptian demands for a more pro-Palestinian posture.

The United States’ March 2003 invasion of Iraq intensified this line of attack against the regime. While the Mubarak regime publicly criticized the invasion and declined to join an international coalition as it had done during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, it nevertheless permitted U.S. warships to pass through the Suez Canal and, given its close diplomatic relations with Washington, was increasingly viewed as a “tool of imperialism.”\textsuperscript{755} Perhaps hoping to contain mounting popular outrage in the run-up to the war, the regime permitted the Muslim Brotherhood to hold a major anti-war protest at Cairo Stadium on February 27, which over 100,000 reportedly attended.\textsuperscript{756} But it was to no avail. On March 20, the day after the U.S. invasion began, tens of thousands of protesters marched towards Tahrir Square, which was occupied for the first time since the 1972 student demonstrations, before CSF police finally beat them back. The massive outpouring included strong denunciations of the Mubarak regime’s foreign policy, with


\textsuperscript{754} Interview with Moaz Abdel Karim, 10 Mar. 2011.

\textsuperscript{755} Khalil 39-40.

protesters chanting, “Why are the Arab leaders silent?” and tearing down a Mubarak poster hanging outside the ruling party’s downtown Cairo headquarters.757

The regime responded erratically to these protests. At first, Interior Minister Habib Al-Adly affirmed that demonstrations were illegal, and the regime arrested dozens of participants.758 But as anti-Iraq war demonstrations persisted nonetheless, the regime relented, permitting the Muslim Brotherhood, along with other parties, to hold orderly anti-war protests at Cairo’s historic Al-Azhar mosque, which were broadcast on state television. Many opposition groups and activists, however, rejected the regime’s attempt at cooption, and organized their own unsanctioned anti-war activities at the Journalists Syndicate in downtown Cairo.759 The Journalists Syndicate became a center of anti-regime activity for the remainder of Mubarak’s rule.

b. Kefaya

The ultimate effect of the pro-Palestinian and anti-Iraq war protests of the early 2000s was to bring together a loose coalition of ideologically diverse opposition activists, whose focus gradually transitioned away from foreign policy concerns and towards the lack of democracy at home. By late 2003, this loose coalition became more formalized, and leading opposition figures from across the political spectrum met to establish a unified movement. Initially calling itself the Popular Campaign for Change, its leaders included former Muslim Brotherhood member Abouleila Madi, liberal Coptic activist

George Ishak, Arab nationalist Mohamed Said Idrees, Nasserist Amin Iskander, Muslim Brother Said Abdel Sittar, and Communist Ahmed Baha Shaaban. The diversity of this coalition complicated efforts at drafting a declaration, which ultimately took about ten months to complete.\(^\text{760}\)

Finally on September 9, 2004, the Popular Campaign issued its “statement to the Egyptian people.” The statement pulled no punches: it declared the Mubarak regime an “obstacle to opportunities for change and development that our country,” and squarely blamed the regime for “rampant corruption, the deterioration of facilities and services, the explosion of prices, and the deterioration of citizens’ standards of living,” as well as for “the continuation of the aggressive policies of the Zionist state and the U.S. occupation of Iraq.” The statement closed with three demands: amending the constitution to allow for competitive presidential elections, a two-term limit, and a reduction of presidential powers; abolishing the state of emergency; and ensuring full judicial supervision for all stages of elections.\(^\text{761}\) Over 100 prominent intellectuals signed the statement, as well as a number of opposition organizations and parties, none of which – of course – were legally recognized by the Shura Council’s Political Parties Committee (PPC).\(^\text{762}\) After security forces surrounded the movement’s first meeting, an exasperated attendee recommended

\(^{760}\) Interview with Hany Enan, 1 Mar. 2011; interview with George Ishak, 5 Mar. 2011.


\(^{762}\) The Muslim Brotherhood signed onto this declaration, and participated in Kefaya’s initial protests. However, by the third protest on February 21, 2005, the Brotherhood had ceased participating in Kefaya, and it later held its own domestically oriented street protests apart from Kefaya. Still, some prominent Muslim Brothers continued participating in Kefaya’s activities, albeit independently of their parent organization.
that the Popular Campaign change its name to “Kefaya” – meaning “enough” in Arabic.  

Kefaya held its first demonstration in front of the High Court in downtown Cairo on December 12, 2004, and drew approximately 500 people. While this turnout paled in comparison with the anti-war protests of the previous year, its key achievement was being the first protest that explicitly denounced Mubarak’s rule, including chants of “Enough for Mubarak” and “No to hereditary rule,” which protested emerging concerns that Mubarak was grooming his son Gamal as his successor. When Kefaya announced a second demonstration to coincide with the annual International Cairo Book Fair on February 4, the regime preempted it, arresting three activists one week beforehand and accusing them of handing out leaflets that “incite hatred of the regime.”  

But on February 21, Kefaya held its third demonstration at Cairo University, once again drawing approximately 500 protesters.

Five days later, Kefaya achieved its first victory when the Mubarak regime partially fulfilled one of its demands, announcing that it would amend Article 76 of the Constitution to allow for multi-candidate presidential elections, and put this amendment to a May 25 referendum. To be sure, U.S. pressure played an important role in this concession. Under the “Freedom Agenda,” the George W. Bush administration had been pressuring Mubarak to liberalize his regime since late 2003, and the successful January

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763 Interview with George Ishak, 5 Mar. 2011.
2005 elections in Iraq followed by the “Cedar Revolution” in Lebanon had amplified these international demands. But after only a few protests, Kefaya could still claim to have pushed the regime successfully – an achievement that the legalized political parties, despite having formed a typically supine “National Front” two years before, could not claim.  

Kefaya continued holding protests throughout the spring of 2005. On April 27, Kefaya held coordinated protests in fourteen Egyptian cities and 2000 activists, including 100 professors, attended a May rally at the Cairo Faculty Club. But as Kefaya’s rise to prominence inspired other groups, including workers and the Muslim Brotherhood, to similarly demonstrate against Mubarak, the regime began cracking down. Thus, at a rally before the May 25 referendum on amending the constitution to allow for multi-candidate presidential elections, police attacked the demonstrators and, according to one participant, stripped its female participants. The regime additionally began tapping Kefaya leaders’ phones, and interfering with the business interests of its financiers, such as wealthy Kefaya founder Hany Enan. Meanwhile, the regime increasingly infiltrated Kefaya rallies with State Security agents, who would beat protesters and detain them without charges or trials.

773 Oweidat 28-29.
If the Mubarak regime’s increasingly aggressive handling of Kefaya doomed it to failure, Kefaya’s own political incompetence didn’t help matters. In this vein, its call for a boycott of the May 25 constitutional referendum on multi-candidate presidential elections, which it criticized for lacking judicial oversight, backfired when the referendum passed overwhelmingly, albeit with substantial evidence of regime tampering.\textsuperscript{774} Then, as the September 2005 presidential elections approached, Kefaya declined to field a challenger to Mubarak and, surprisingly, declined to endorse Ayman Nour despite the fact the Nour’s criticisms of the Mubarak regime echoed Kefaya’s. The parliamentary elections that winter represented the final blow: Kefaya played no perceptible role, though its leadership claimed that twelve of 454 elected parliamentarians were part of its alliance.\textsuperscript{775} Although Kefaya never entirely faded away, it was never again politically prominent.

As other analysts have noted,\textsuperscript{776} the cause of Kefaya’s quick emergence was, ironically, also the cause of its quick downfall. The diversity of its leadership had enabled it to draw sufficient support for launching sizable protests against Mubarak. But this diversity ultimately inhibited it from making the necessary transition from anti-regime protest movement to a coherent political entity that could mobilize for supporting candidates in elections. Indeed, Kefaya’s Islamist and non-Islamist members disagreed on the extent to which Kefaya should emphasize foreign policy, as well as on ideological matters, such as whether ritual veiling (\textit{hijab}) should be encouraged for women.\textsuperscript{777}


\textsuperscript{775} Shaden Shehab, “That’s Enough.”

\textsuperscript{776} Oweidat x.

\textsuperscript{777} Oweidat 32-35.
These divisions, and Kefaya’s inability to act as an electoral vehicle, led many young non-Islamist activists to distance themselves from Kefaya’s activities during the 2005 elections and dedicate their energies to the Ghad party’s campaign for Ayman Nour. “It was either Kefaya or Ghad,” said Amr Ezz, a leading youth activist behind the January 2011 anti-Mubarak protests. “And Ghad was closer to me. Ghad represented a liberal way of thinking in a social way, and it was very close to the Egyptian people.”778

Indeed, whereas Ayman Nour’s nationwide presidential campaign forced the Ghad party to engage the Egyptian public, Kefaya increasingly became viewed as an elitist organization that focused on theoretical issues like democratization while giving more common complaints, such as the country’s mounting economic woes, short shrift. “Kefaya was weakened because it wasn’t flexible,” said Ahmed Maher, another leading January 2011 activist who first experienced political activism as a Kefaya protester before joining the Ghad party. “Kefaya would hold a conference and strikes, but they did not have a technique for connecting with the people.”779 Though Kefaya faded almost as quickly as it had emerged, it inspired many of its younger participants to continue working outside the framework of political parties for promoting change.

II. The Revolutionaries’ Untrappable Movements

In the years following Kefaya’s downfall and the regime’s crackdown on Ayman Nour’s Ghad party, numerous youth-dominated activist groups sprung into existence. University students, many of whom had participated in Kefaya’s “Youth for Change” offshoot, founded chapters of “Haqqi” – meaning “my right” – at campuses nation wide and, in 2007, a coalition of students from various different background founded “Gamaatna” –

778 Interview with Amr Ezz, 8 Mar. 2011.
“our university” – which held a number of opposition events. Leftist and socialist youth organizations became more engaged as well, staging protests for reduced university tuition and helping laborers organize strikes. Indeed, between 2004 and 2006, there were approximately 1900 separate labor actions that involved 1.7 million workers, and youth organizers often joined these strikes and helped publicize them. Meanwhile, technological innovations fueled new outlets for opposition activity: a vibrant online community of mostly pseudonymous anti-Mubarak bloggers emerged in 2005, and activists often used their blogs to post photos of State Security agents who infiltrated their demonstrations.

**a. The April 6th Youth Movement**

The most consequential outgrowth of the opposition activity that Kefaya spawned was the April 6th Youth Movement. The organization took its name from a 2008 labor strike at Egypt’s largest textile factory in Mahalla al-Kobra, which featured two days of violent confrontations between workers and riot police, in which three people were killed and many arrested. Two weeks before, on March 23, activists Ahmed Maher and Esraa Abdel Fattah created a page on Facebook to express their solidarity. Maher and Abdel Fattah met each other as members of the Ghad party during Ayman Nour’s 2005 campaign – Abdel Fattah had remained active with Nour’s fledgling wing of the party while Maher had become more active in Kefaya – and they anticipated that their Facebook group would draw roughly 1000 members. Within days, however, it attracted

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782 Khalil 51-52.
784 Khalil 51.
over 76,000 members, and the Facebook group became an important forum for young Egyptians – including some who identified themselves as police officers – to vent their frustrations with the Mubarak regime. This attracted the attention of the regime, which warned against participating in the workers’ strike as the April 6 date approached.\textsuperscript{785}

Abdel Fattah and Maher’s Facebook group never developed a unified plan of action for supporting the Mahalla workers strike. Abdel Fattah urged its members to stay home in solidarity with the workers, though other members of the group independently handed out leaflets to publicize the strike and some even went to Mahalla to support it directly.\textsuperscript{786} But as the day approached, Abdel Fattah announced that she would meet people in front of a café in downtown Cairo, while activists whom she and Maher had met through the Ghad party and Kefaya planned associated protests in governorates nationwide.\textsuperscript{787}

Ultimately, the April 6\textsuperscript{th} movement’s inaugural protests to support the labor strike in Mahalla failed to generate any kind of sizable street activity. But they were viewed as a success because they had demonstrated the extent to which social networking tools could aid communication among opposition activists. The activists further succeeded in getting the regime’s attention, albeit with very negative effects.

Indeed, many activists were arrested on April 6, 2008 – including Abdel Fattah, who was nabbed as she approached downtown Cairo’s al-Shabab Cafe, which was surrounded by security officers. She was held for eighteen days, during which State Security officers blindfolded her for many hours at a time and twice interrogated her,

\textsuperscript{786} Interview with Amr Ezz, 8 Mar. 2011; Shapiro, “Revolution, Facebook-Style.”
\textsuperscript{787} Interview with Esraa Abdel Fattah, 6 Mar. 2011; Shapiro, “Revolution, Facebook-Style.”
demanding that she hand over the password to the April 6th group’s Facebook account. When she was finally released, state television broadcast images of a crying Abdel Fattah running towards her mother, whom she reassured that, “They treated me well! … They let me remain a girl. I missed you, Mom. I prayed to God every day.” While Abdel Fattah says that she was trying to calm her mother, who was understandably shaken by her daughter’s imprisonment, the regime used these images to depict Abdel Fattah as remorseful for her opposition activity. As a result, Abdel Fattah’s colleagues distanced themselves from her, accusing her of giving the regime an easy propaganda victory.788

One of these colleagues was Maher. After learning that the regime had arrested Abdel Fattah and other activists on April 6, Maher went into hiding, even shutting off his cell phone because he had seen State Security vehicles parked outside his parents’ home and feared that he was being tracked. During this period, he also changed the April 6th Facebook group’s password as a safety precaution, which he refused to divulge to Abdel Fattah once she was released because he feared that she had been co-opted by the regime during her imprisonment.789

But shortly after Abdel Fattah’s release, Maher believed that he was safe and, on May 7, he switched his cell phone back on. Police arrived at his home that day and arrested him, subjecting him to two days of torture during which he was blindfolded, tied, and beaten with sticks and electric cables while being thrown repeatedly to the floor. When they asked about specific details regarding the April 6th Facebook group, Maher claimed to not remember, which led to more intense beatings.790

788 Interview with Abdel Fattah, 6 Mar. 2011; Shapiro, “Revolution, Facebook-Style.”
On the final morning of his detention, a State Security officer walked into Maher’s cell and, acting surprised that he had been arrested, apologized to Maher. “We’ll never do it again,” the State Security officer told Maher. “But you’ll have to cooperate with us.” The officer proceeded to make Maher an offer: “You will be the youngest party leader in Egypt and you’ll be in media everyday,” said the officer. “And you’ll be in the opposition by using your mind.” The regime, in other words, was trying to trap Maher in a political party, in which he could build his profile so long as he “used his mind” – i.e., wisely adhered to the regime’s well known “red lines.”

Maher’s first response was to debate the State Security officer, whom he accused of faking the parliamentary elections and “serving corrupt people.” But after being released, Maher says he considered the offer and discussed it with a close friend. “If you listen to State Security and accept his phone calls, he won’t save you,” the friend advised Maher. “You’ll be as cartoonish as any party leader. But if you refuse to take his calls, he’ll never call you again.” Ultimately, Maher declined the offer to establish his own political party and held a press conference at which he showed the scars that police had inflicted on him during his imprisonment.

State Security made a similar, though less specific, offer to Abdel Fattah during the April 6th Movement’s formative stage. “They would say, ‘you are our kids and we need you to continue your work,’” recalled Abdel Fattah. “‘You can join a party – why work as an independent? … Why can’t April 6th work in any party?’” Abdel Fattah,

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791 Interview with Ahmed Maher, 9 Mar. 2011; interview with Bassem Fathi, 10 Mar. 2011. The account comes from Maher’s telling, but Fathi – a colleague of Maher’s in both the Ghad Party and the April 6th Youth Movement – confirmed that Maher was offered to head either a party or an NGO that the regime would legalize.

however, viewed a movement as harder to infiltrate than the legalize parties of the Mubarak era – a conclusion that was likely formed, in part, by her experience in the Ghad party. “It’s easier to recruit agents in a party, because someone can enter and join more easily,” she said. “But April 6th … is harder to join: you need to attend two or three workshops – welcome and training meeting, so [we] get a better idea of who joins.”

Indeed, April 6th’s founders were deeply worried that their organization would suffer the same fate as the Mubarak-era legal opposition parties. So they developed an internal structure that would complicate the regime’s efforts to infiltrate their organization and co-opt individual leaders. Maher, whom the April 6th leaders viewed as highly trustworthy, was placed at the top of this structure and named general coordinator.

Just below April 6th’s general coordinator is the 25-person central committee, which consists of the heads of five subsidiary groups – media, students, organization and communication, education, and legal – as well as the April 6th secretaries from each governorate in which the movement operates. The central committee meets weekly, and its members transmit directives down to the members of their respective groups. Just below the central committee is the main committee, which meets monthly and consists of 50-70 members, all of whom are founding members of the organization. To ensure this structure’s security from the Mubarak regime’s predation, only founding April 6th members on the main committee can join the central committee and become group heads. Meanwhile, new members can join the main committee only after they have been April 6th members for at least a year. To further ensure the group’s security, certain types of information are shared only with certain levels of leadership. Moreover, this information

793 Interview with Esraa Abdel Fattah, 6 Mar. 2011.
– for example, the sites for planned protests – was typically transmitted through face-to-face communication, since State Security monitored April 6th leaders’ cell phone and online communications.794

April 6th leaders knew, however, that their organization was not entirely immune from the regime’s infiltration, because its general membership was not thoroughly vetted, even if group leaders were. So when leaders became suspicious that lower level April 6th activists were relaying information to State Security, they would test them by giving them fake information about a supposed demonstration location. If police forces surrounded that location, April 6th would know that it had a rat on its hands.795

Yet despite April 6th’s efforts to minimize its susceptibility to the regime, it remained a relatively small organization. To some extent, this was the consequence of the group’s focus on maintaining a secure structure, which made it hard for lower level members to be promoted and fueled resentment for top leaders – especially Maher, whose appointment of April 6th leaders and refusal to hold more open elections led even some of his co-founders to view him as a dictator.796

But more importantly, the regime used a mix of devious maneuvering and repression to frustrate April 6th’s efforts to engage Egyptian society more broadly. The maneuvering began almost immediately after the inaugural April 6, 2008 action, when April 6th activists planned a follow-up protest for May 4, to coincide with President Mubarak’s 80th birthday, during which they aimed to raise economic demands. To preempt this protest, however, the regime announced a 30 percent raise for state workers’

wages on May 1. Then, once the May 4 demonstration fizzled and passed, the regime complemented the wage increases with massive price hikes for gasoline (46 percent!), cigarettes, and other goods on May 6.\textsuperscript{797}

Moreover, despite April 6\textsuperscript{th}’s best efforts, the regime largely succeeded in controlling its demonstrations. During the next three years, the regime arrested many of April 6\textsuperscript{th}’s leaders and top activists multiple times, and typically overwhelmed April 6\textsuperscript{th}’s protests with more CSF officers than there were protesters. The regime also improved its ability to monitor April 6\textsuperscript{th}’s online communications – particularly on Facebook, which remained an important mechanism through which the group communicated with its supporters nationwide.\textsuperscript{798}

Still, April 6\textsuperscript{th} kept struggling: the regime never trapped it in its formally democratic – but thoroughly manipulated – political structures, nor did the repression against April 6\textsuperscript{th} deter it from protesting again. It thus maintained a small but committed pool of activists, who seemingly attached themselves to every protest movement that emerged during the final three years of Mubarak’s reign.

\textit{b. The ElBaradei Campaign}

In late 2009, just as he was leaving his post as head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Nobel laureate Mohamed ElBaradei signaled that he might run for president of Egypt if the constitution were amended to allow all Egyptians to compete. In subsequent interviews, ElBaradei criticized Mubarak’s autocratic rule, and said that his new purpose would be to “nudge Egypt towards democracy,” since “democracy here is a

\textsuperscript{797} Trager, “The Cairo Files: Pre-Revolutionary Egypt?”
\textsuperscript{798} Interview with Amr Ezz, 8 Mar. 2011; interview with Bassem Fathi, 10 Mar. 2011.
Given ElBaradei’s tremendous international stature, and the broad respect he enjoyed in his native country, his political emergence unnerved the Mubarak regime, and Egypt’s state-run media attacked him almost immediately. For Egypt’s opposition activists, however, ElBaradei represented the possibility of unifying the disparate anti-Mubarak movements of the previous decade around a single leader untainted by any previous involvement in Egyptian politics. So starting in late 2009, a small group of activists who had gotten to know each other through Kefaya and subsequent protest activities, such as April 6th and Ayman Nour’s Ghad party, started an online campaign to support ElBaradei’s presidential candidacy. They held their first major event on February 19, 2010, when they mobilized approximately 1000 people to Cairo International Airport, as ElBaradei returned home after decades of living as an international diplomat in Vienna.

In the weeks and months that followed, activism focused on the possibility of ElBaradei’s presidential candidacy intensified. On February 24, activists founded the National Association for Change (NAC) and invited ElBaradei to be its chairman. Shortly thereafter, ElBaradei released a manifesto calling for seven democratizing constitutional reforms. The manifesto was soon transformed into a petition, and the

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NAC began a campaign to collect one million signatures, which included an ElBaradei public appearance in Mansoura in April and a handful of media events.\textsuperscript{804} Meanwhile, a pro-ElBaradei Facebook page, which attracted over 70,000 members by April, became an important forum for disseminating information to activists nationwide.\textsuperscript{805}

ElBaradei’s emergence also drew the attention of Egypt’s legalized opposition parties. Within these parties’ leaderships, some were frustrated with their parties’ unwillingness to forcefully confront the Mubarak regime, and they appreciated that ElBaradei’s political stature didn’t prevent him from engaging with Egypt’s pro-democratic protest movements. “If you organize anything against the regime, like Kefaya, [you’ll] get arrested. So the Wafd party until now did not participate in street movements,” Iglal Rafit, a member of the Wafd’s high committee, told me during a July 2010 interview. “But I am sympathetic to them, and I support ElBaradei’s movement. And I think ElBaradei movement may unify the street movement and the youth movement, and I joined it already.”\textsuperscript{806} Indeed, ElBaradei drew considerable support among the Wafd’s younger members\textsuperscript{807}, as well as within the Tagamumu Party, whose politburo urged chairman Rifaat al-Said to engage him.\textsuperscript{808}

Predictably, however, these legal opposition parties ultimately refused to unify with ElBaradei’s cause. Then-Wafd chairman Mahmoud Abaza rejected calls to put ElBaradei on the high committee, which would have given ElBaradei an avenue through

\textsuperscript{805} Hammer, “The Contenders.”  
\textsuperscript{806} Interview with Iglal Rafit, 7 Jul. 2010.  
\textsuperscript{807} Interview with Mohamed Salah el-Sheikh, 12 Mar. 2011; interview with Mona Makram-Ebeid, 17 Mar. 2012.  
\textsuperscript{808} Interview with Sherif Mansour, 10 Jun. 2010; interview with Nabil Zaki, 13 Jan. 2011.
which he could run for the presidency, and Tagammu’s al-Said also kept his distance, issuing a party decree that forbade his members from supporting ElBaradei.\footnote{Interview with Sherif Mansour, 10 Jun. 2010; interview with Mohamed Salah el-Sheikh, 12 Mar. 2011; Gamal Essam El-Din, “Opposition vs El-Baradei,” Al-Ahram Weekly On-line 988 (4-10 Mar. 2010): \text{<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2010/988/eg9.htm>}.}

The parties’ rejection of ElBaradei was partly because of their tendency to look skeptically on the suddenly exciting trend of the day. As previously noted in Chapter 3, these opposition party leaders resented ElBaradei’s sudden emergence as Egypt’s knight in shining armor, especially given the many years that – in their views – they had dedicated to working for (barely perceptible) change within Mubarak’s regime. “We believe that we can open a breach in this atmosphere and give people hope that one day it will change through democratic elections if they mobilize around an alternative, which is the essence of democracy,” Wafd vice-chair Yasin Tag el-Din told me during a July 2010 interview. “We succeeded partially. All of these protest movements would not exist without us as an alternative. This is how we have ElBaradei and Kefaya.”\footnote{Interview with Yasin Tag el-Din, 19 Jul. 2010.}

But for the activists who joined ElBaradei’s cause, these parties’ refusal to engage ElBaradei confirmed what they had concluded long ago: the legalized opposition parties were trapped in a fundamentally autocratic system, adhering to “red lines” that made them incapable of promoting democratic change. The parties’ distancing from ElBaradei seemed calculated to appease the Mubarak regime, which throughout the spring and summer of 2010 continued tarring ElBaradei through the state-run media, as well as through a vicious Internet smear campaign.\footnote{Saif Nasrawi, “ElBaradei Denounces Family Photo Smear Campaign,” \textit{Egypt Independent} (4 Sept. 2010): \text{<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/elbaradei-denounces-family-photo-smear-campaign>}.} And as the November 2010 parliamentary elections approached, top opposition party leaders seemingly believed that maintaining
distance from ElBaradei would help them win seats in what they knew would be a heavily manipulated election. “My sense is that the government wants Wafd to be a substitute for ElBaradei and the Muslim Brotherhood,” said Wafd high committee member Ahmed Ezzelarab in July 2010. “It fears ElBaradei, and nothing shook them more than ElBaradei’s appearance. So they’re being nice to Wafd.”

Yet by the autumn of 2010, the ElBaradei phenomenon had faded. The regime’s smear campaign against him, combined with the absence of any political route through which ElBaradei could legally run for president, undoubtedly contributed to his downfall in public opinion. ElBaradei had made tactical mistakes: despite his promise to work for democratic change in his native country, he had continued to spend roughly fifty percent of his time abroad, and when in Egypt he typically retreated to his gated suburban villa, where he gave interviews to foreign media, seemingly uneasy with large crowds during his few public appearances. He maintained a hands-off approach regarding the NAC, signaling to his followers that he was not interested in “doing the dirty work” of mobilizing people. Without his leadership, internal squabbles hampered the NAC’s campaign of getting one million signatures for ElBaradei’s seven-point petition.

Nonetheless ElBaradei gave Egypt’s largely unorganized, pro-democratic activists another focal point around which they could coalesce and cooperate. Like Kefaya, Ayman Nour’s Ghad party, and the April 6th Youth Movement, the NAC was essentially

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812 Interview with Ahmed Ezzelarab, 10 Jul. 2010. Ezzelarab ends this remark by saying, “But it does not mean that we’re playing back.” However, I have omitted this from the text because it is my judgment – based on the distance that the Wafd maintained from ElBaradei throughout the remainder of Mubarak’s tenure – that the party was “playing back.”
814 Interview with Sherif Mansour, 10 Jun. 2010.
another mechanism through which mostly young activists learned about political organizing – all while avoiding the legal parties that the Mubarak regime had permitted for the exclusive purpose of trapping this kind of opposition activity.

c. Summer Before the Storm

On June 6, 2010, police officers grabbed twenty-eight-year-old Khaled Said from inside an Alexandria Internet café, and beat him to death as horrified pedestrians looked on. Images of Said’s severely mangled face, with its torn lip and dislocated jaw, went viral two days later, when Ayman Nour posted them to his Facebook account.\footnote{Wael Ghonim, Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People Is Greater Than the People in Power, A Memoir (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012) 58-59.} In the days that followed, activists soon constructed a YouTube video that contrasted the image of Said’s bloodied corpse with the now iconic passport of photo him, with his hear gelled and wearing a hoodie, which circulated rapidly as well.\footnote{Khalil 75-76.}

Police violence was hardly new to Egypt, and activists had circulated photos and videos of officers assaulting political prisoners before. But the killing of Khaled Said was different in one important respect: whereas the victims of police violence were typically from the lower income classes and Islamist, Khaled Said was middle class and, by all accounts, not religious.\footnote{Amro Ali, “Seeds of Revolution: De-Mythologizing Khaled Saeed,” Jadaliyya (5 Jun. 2012): <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/5845/saeeds-of-revolution_de-mythologizing-khaled-saeed>.} In turn, many middle and upper class Egyptians viewed Said as someone who, but for the grace of god, could have been “their son.”\footnote{Khalil 77.}

In the immediate aftermath of Said’s killing, Google employee Wael Ghonim, who had previously operated a pro-ElBaradei Facebook group, created a Facebook group titled, “We Are All Khaled Said,” and he asked pro-ElBaradei blogger and former
Muslim Brother\textsuperscript{820} AbdelRahman Mansour to join him as co-administrator. Within days, over 100,000 people had joined the group. “We Are All Khaled Said” quickly surpassed ElBaradei’s Facebook page as the foremost clearinghouse for information on opposition activities, and it additionally became a forum for organizing protests that focused squarely on combatting police brutality in Egypt.\textsuperscript{821} Activists from April 6\textsuperscript{th} and other, smaller movements contributed to these efforts: they communicated regularly with the two “We Are All Khaled Said” administrators, who remained anonymous until after the January 2011 revolt, and mobilized their respective colleagues to Said-related protests.\textsuperscript{822}

The first of these protests occurred approximately one week after the images of Said spread. Activists gathered along the Nile Corniche in Cairo and the Mediterranean Corniche in Alexandria, where they wore black, stood in a long line with each activist at a short distance from the next, and remained silent.\textsuperscript{823} This protest strategy aimed to circumvent the emergency laws and remove any rationale for police intervention, since “there was no actual ‘protest’ for the police to break up – just people standing at least five meters apart looking at the water, some of them reading the Qur’an or Bible.”\textsuperscript{824} Then, on June 25, “We Are All Khaled Said” called a rally in Alexandria that over 4000 activists attended, including ElBaradei, who briefly addressed the crowd after visiting Said’s mother.\textsuperscript{825}

While the Said-related protests were the most prominent opposition activity in the final summer of Hosni Mubarak’s regime, there were other signs of rising activist

\textsuperscript{820} Interview with Amr al-Beltagi, 9 Mar. 2011. \\
\textsuperscript{821} Ghonim 59-61. \\
\textsuperscript{822} Interview with Esraa Abdel Fattah, 6 Mar. 2011; interview with Abdel Rahman Faris, 9 Mar. 2011. \\
\textsuperscript{823} Ghonim 73-81. \\
\textsuperscript{824} Khalil 79. \\
mobilization. In July, after three months of preparation, a group of socialist youths established the Justice and Freedom Youth Movement (JFYM), which worked to organize laborers and farmers against the regime while campaigning for a number of economic demands, including higher salaries and educational improvement. Many of its leaders had previously participated in April 6th and the ElBaradei campaign, but disagreed with the former’s policy of receiving political training from foreign NGOs, and also wanted to place economic concerns front and center. To protect itself from State Security infiltration, JFYM developed a leadership structure in which the leaders of its twenty subsidiary groups would be directly involved in planning protest activities, and would not disclose these plans to their subordinate group members until two hours before a protest commenced.

At approximately the same time, other leftist groups – such as the unlicensed Karama Party, led by Nasserist Party breakaway Hamdeen Sabahi, and Socialist Renewal – became more politically active. Throughout the summer and autumn, they held scattered protests and refused State Security’s attempts to co-opt or contain them. Meanwhile, the Democratic Front Party (DFP), a small PPC-licensed party founded in 2006 by former NDP Shura Council member Osama al-Ghazali Harb, broke with other legal opposition parties in declaring its support for ElBaradei and boycotting the 2010 parliamentary elections.

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827 Interview with Khaled Sayed, 28 Feb. 2011.
As previously noted, the 2010 parliamentary elections were considered the biggest forgery in contemporary Egyptian history: the NDP won over 90 percent of the seats, while the Muslim Brotherhood’s representation shrank from 88 to 1. In response, youth activists in April 6th, JFYM, the NAC, and Ayman Nour’s Ghad party organized a “popular parliament,” which ultimately included over 100 former MPs and prominent opposition figures from across Egypt’s political aisle. Predictably, the legal opposition parties such as Wafd and Tagammu, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, kept their distance, though individual Muslim Brothers participated without their parent organization’s approval.

III. On the Brink Without Knowing It

Given the revolution that would unseat him only a few months later, Mubarak’s response to the “popular parliament” now lives in infamy: “Let them entertain themselves,” he told the newly seated People’s Assembly on December 19, 2010. Yet despite the noticeable upsurge in opposition activity throughout the previous decade, and particularly during that year, Mubarak’s confidence was hardly surprising. In fact, those who studied Egyptian politics and had spent much time in the country broadly shared Mubarak’s view of his durability, myself included.

As I saw matters on the eve of Egypt’s anti-Mubarak uprising, the formal opposition parties were trapped within an unwinnable system and infiltrated by State Security, while all untrapped parties – such as Ayman Nour’s Ghad party, or the newly

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formed DFP – had been excluded from power. Meanwhile, the regime’s brutal crackdown against the Muslim Brotherhood had forced it to act cautiously, effectively making it as supine as the Wafd and Tagammu parties. The plethora of youth-oriented protest movements remained mostly small and ideologically divided, with only a handful of their demonstrations ever attracting more than a few hundred people. Hundreds of thousands of people might “join” the Khaled Said Facebook group from the comfort of their homes, I reasoned, but that was substantively different from risking one’s personal safety in street protests. And as of January 24, 2011, there was little evidence that Egyptians – no matter how politically frustrated they claimed to be – were willing to make that leap.
Chapter 7
A Revolutionary Coalition versus Non-Revolutionary Parties

On January 14, 2011, Tunisian dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia after four weeks of mass protests, thereby ending his twenty-four-year autocratic rule. For the mostly young Egyptian activists who had been demonstrating against the Mubarak regime for nearly a decade, Ben Ali’s ouster signified that the same outcome could be repeated at home. “What happened in Tunisia is a model,” Amir Salah, an activist affiliated with the Democratic Front Party (DFP) told me during an interview the following day. “It shows that can we can do it.”

In the eleven days that followed Tunisia’s toppling of Ben Ali, a loose coalition of mostly young Egyptian activists planned a series of protests that – they hoped – would bring the masses into the streets to challenge Mubarak. Their protest strategy built on experiences that they had accrued over the course of the previous decade in a variety of opposition movements, and at the heart of this strategy was a series of tactics designed to circumvent State Security and the Interior Ministry’s notoriously violent Central Security Forces (CSF). This desire to avoid being trapped or contained by the regime contrasted sharply with Egypt’s legal opposition parties and the Muslim Brotherhood, which resisted internal calls to participate in the protests and stood on the sidelines as Egypt’s uprising commenced.

I. Planning the Uprising

In 2009, President Mubarak declared January 25 National Police Day. Though the holiday ostensibly commemorated the deaths of 41 Egyptian police who died during a

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1952 battle with British forces in Ismailia, Egypt’s pro-democratic activists viewed Police Day as a propaganda effort to distract attention from the Interior Ministry’s brutality. For this reason, the April 6\textsuperscript{th} Youth Movement, among other activist groups, staged annual protests on Police Day against police brutality, though – like most of their protests – these demonstrations rarely attracted more than a few dozen participants.

\textit{a. A Loose Coalition Coalesces}

The spike in protest activity during the second half of 2010, however, brought Egypt’s pro-democratic activists in more regular contact with each other than ever before. The activists mingled at demonstrations, debated each other in cafes, and continued their conversations on the Internet, particularly via the “We Are All Khaled Said” Facebook page, which posed open questions as a way to stimulate dialogue. As Police Day 2011 approached, April 6\textsuperscript{th} thus found itself with a broader activist community on which it could rely for boosting turnout at its annual anti-police protest. These plans began on December 30, 2010, when the anonymous administrator of the “Khaled Said” Facebook page e-mailed April 6\textsuperscript{th} leader Ahmed Maher about holding a massive demonstration on January 25, promising that the page could be used to “energize people to participate.”

Other developments, however, kept Egypt’s activists energized in the interim. On January 1, 2011, the Two Saints Church in Alexandria was bombed in an attack that

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\textsuperscript{834} Interview with Moaz Abdel Karim, 10 Mar. 2011; interview with Tarek El-Kholy, 13 Mar. 2011.  
\textsuperscript{835} Interview with Dalia Moussa, 3 Mar. 2011; interview with Tarek El-Kholy, 13 Mar. 2011.  
killed 23 people and injured 97 others. While the Mubarak regime blamed foreign Islamic terrorists for the attack, activists responded by blaming Egypt’s police for failing to protect the country, and organized human chains to guard churches on Coptic Christmas, which fell the following week. Then, on January 4, Alexandria police tortured 31-year-old Salafist Sayed Bilal to death while investigating the church bombing, and a loose coalition of Muslim Brotherhood, Salafist, liberal, and leftist youth activists responded with a series of small protests, including a mini-mock funeral in downtown Cairo.

It was within this context that activists from April 6th, the socialist Justice and Freedom Youth Movement (JFYM), ElBaradei’s National Association for Change (NAC), and the liberal Democratic Front Party (DFP) began planning for larger-than-usual Police Day demonstrations, holding meetings at the Social Renewal Trend’s headquarters in downtown Cairo. The discussions, however, remained general: the attending groups agreed to mobilize their followers on January 25, but they were conveying their respective plans to the “Khaled Said” Facebook administrators separately rather than coordinating with each other. This changed on January 15, the day following Ben Ali’s abdication, when four groups – April 6th, JFYM, the NAC, and the


840 Interview with Mustafa Shawqi, 5 Mar. 2011.
DFP – decided to unify their plans. Two days later, on January 17, these groups held their first meeting to coordinate activities for the January 25 protests.841

From January 17-19, these activists communicated with each other regularly, and starting on January 20 they held daily meetings in downtown Cairo to plan a unified strategy for the protests. Throughout this period, the activists shared their plans with the still-anonymous administrators of the “Khaled Said” Facebook page, who played a critical role in publicizing protest locations as the date approached.842 Activists also liaised with Egypt’s pro-democratic NGO community, including the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights and the Hisham Mubarak Law Center. In the days leading up to the January 25 protests, these institutions held trainings on how to protest peacefully, as well as how to deal with the police if protesters were arrested.843

While the Muslim Brotherhood did not officially participate in planning the protests – as I will discuss shortly, the Brotherhood’s senior leadership kept a studious distance – Muslim Brotherhood youths became involved independently. These youth activists had gotten to know their non-Islamist counterparts through the various protest activities of the previous decade, and they shared the non-Islamists’ goal of protesting police brutality and calling for Mubarak’s ouster. Prominent Brotherhood youth Mohamed Abbas thus joined the emerging activist coalition as it was taking shape in the days immediately following Ben Ali’s ouster in Tunisia. To drum up support among his Brotherhood colleagues, Abbas founded a Facebook group called “Kalimat Haq,” meaning “right words” in Arabic, which became an online forum for Brotherhood youths

842 Interview with Mustafa Shawqi, 5 Mar. 2011.
who would ultimately participate in the January 25 demonstrations.\footnote{Interview with Mohamed Abbas, 28 Feb. 2011; interview with Islam Lotfy, 2 Mar. 2011.} By January 22, more Muslim Brotherhood youths had joined the activist coalition, and they gathered their local Brotherhood youth colleagues to participate in the demonstrations.\footnote{Interview with Amr Ezz, 8 Mar. 2011; interview with Mohamed al-Qassas, 21 Mar. 2011.}

While the core organizers of the January 25 protests came from five groups – April 6th, ElBaradei’s NAC, the DFP, JFYM, and the Muslim Brotherhood’s youth wing – it should be emphasized that other organizations also participated in the January 25 demonstrations apart from this coalition. In this vein, though Ayman Nour’s faction of the Ghad party sent a representative to the coalition’s first meeting on January 17, it ultimately planned its own protest activities, much of which seemingly aimed to position Nour as a post-Mubarak leader.\footnote{Interview with Bassem Fathi, 10 Mar. 2011.} Thus, on Saturday night January 22, Ayman Nour held a press conference at the Ghad party’s downtown headquarters, which had been reconfigured to look like a parliament so as to make Nour’s podium look like that of a president. During his speech, Nour bluntly called on Mubarak to step down, and the speech was widely circulated on YouTube during the next three days.\footnote{Interview with Wael Nawara, 29 Mar. 2011; “Word from Ayman Nour to Mubarak Before the January 25th Revolution (Go),” (Arabic) YouTube (10 Jun. 2011): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmnjhrIdgLY>. This is a condensed version of a longer video; I am unable to locate the original online.} Then on January 25, Nour led his own protest from Bab al-Shaariya, the Cairo neighborhood that he had represented in parliament from 1995-2005.\footnote{Interview with Bassem Fathi, 10 Mar. 2011.}

The Nasserist Karama Party, which – like Nour’s Ghad party – had been denied a party license by the PPC, similarly held its own activities. Karama Chairman Hamdeen Sabahi, an outspoken former Nasserist Party MP who had been arrested during the 2003
protests against the Iraq war, tweeted on January 19 that his supporters should join the nationwide protests on January 25. Sabahi ultimately went to his hometown in the rural Kafr Sheikh governorate to participate in the demonstrations, and Karama also organized regular demonstrations in front of the Tunisian Embassy in Cairo in the week leading up to the January 25 protests. 

Youth activists from the Wafd party also made their own arrangements for participating in the demonstrations as the date approached – doing so independently from the larger coalition and, as I will discuss shortly, without the Wafd party’s approval.

While these groups’ contributions to the January 25 demonstrations are noteworthy, they are not sufficient to explaining the success of those demonstrations in jump-starting Egypt’s popular uprising and Mubarak’s ouster. Indeed, the key to the demonstrations’ success lies in the brilliant strategy that the coalition of activists devised for bringing the masses into the street and overwhelming the security forces that had kept opposition activity so trapped for so long.

b. The Strategy

The coalition’s strategy for the January 25 demonstrations focused on two components. The first component, which received far more attention in international media accounts of Egypt’s uprising, involved the heavy use of Internet-based social networking services, such as Facebook and Twitter, for “inviting” people to the demonstrations, announcing major protest sites, and gathering e-mail addresses to keep potential supporters more directly informed. The primary vehicle for this was the

“Khaled Said” Facebook page, whose administrators communicated anonymously with the coalition until their identities were revealed during the latter stages of the uprising. Moreover, individual protesters used their personal Facebook pages to inform their “friends” of the protests, and in many cases replaced their Facebook profile photos with icons that advertised the forthcoming protests.

Yet given their years of experience, the activists knew that Facebook and Twitter posts were hardly sufficient to launching mass protests. For starters, the activists’ social networking presence made them vulnerable to State Security, which monitored their accounts and often arrested activists as announced demonstrations approached. But more importantly, they knew that any central protest sites that they announced on Facebook and Twitter would be preemptively surrounded by CSF and inundated with undercover State Security agents, which often included hired thugs who were paid by the regime to beat protesters. The activists tried to hamper the regime’s response by not announcing the sites of their protests on social media networks until the evening of January 24, but they knew that CSF and State Security would be on high alert, and therefore ready to mobilize as soon as the locations were publicized.

The second component of the activists’ strategy thus aimed to overcome the pitfalls associated with relying too heavily on social media networks. Knowing that the regime’s police would surround all publicly announced locations, the activists developed an intricate ground mobilization plan through which they hoped to gather hundreds of

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demonstrators before arriving at the known protests sites, so that they could overwhelm the police at those points and push forward towards Tahrir Square, converging from multiple directions if possible. April 6th leaders Amr Ezz and Mahmoud Sami began working on this plan one month before the January 25 protests, and they dubbed it the “snowball” operation, because of the way in which it was designed to ensure that the crowds swelled as they reached the protest sites that were announced on the Internet.854

The “snowball” strategy built on two key lessons that the activists had learned during years of failed attempts at assembling mass protests. First, while the police were typically well prepared for quelling protests that took place in major public squares, they were rarely prepared for demonstrations emanating from “shaaby” – implying working class – neighborhoods. “When Israel attacked Lebanon [in 2006], they stopped us from protesting in public places,” said Karama activist Hossam Moones. “So people went to shaaby places.”855 Demonstrations in shaaby areas were not only less expected – they were also harder for the police to contain even after they were discovered, because rather than converging on central locations, activists would zigzag through narrow streets, forcing the police to give chase and therefore making a bigger spectacle.856

The second lesson that the activists incorporated into their January 25 strategy was the value of emphasizing economic grievances rather than political ones. They had learned this from their experiences in shaaby neighborhoods: the activists attracted more interest from onlookers when they marched for lower prices than when they chanted for regime change. Moreover, by emphasizing economic grievances rather political ones, the

856 Interview with Bilal Diab, 20 Mar. 2011.
activists found that they were less likely to be imprisoned, since the regime could not accuse them of trying to launch a coup. In turn, April 6th began spreading leaflets advocating minimum wage raises approximately one month before the January 25 demonstrations, and this work intensified in the week leading up to the protests.857

The final plan was thus as follows. On the morning of January 25, top coalition members would begin marching with about fifty of their colleagues from secret locations near the outskirts of Cairo.858 To ensure that these starting points were kept secret, only three top activists participated in picking the locations, which were finalized on January 23, and they did not share them with the other coalition leaders until the evening of January 24 – and only through face-to-face communication.859 Meanwhile, lower level activists weren’t informed of the starting points until the morning of January 25, though they had been told in advance to be prepared for receiving marching orders.

From these initial starting points, the processions would zigzag through nearby shaaby neighborhoods, chanting economic slogans and calling ordinary, working class Egyptians into the streets. Their destinations were the various protest sites that had been announced online. As they approached these protest sites, the leading activists would text message subordinate members of their respective organizations to meet their processions at specific locations along the way, thereby ensuring that the processions snowballed as they approached the main protest locations, which they knew would be surrounded by police.860 If all went according to plan, the activists hoped to overwhelm

858 Interview with Abdel Rahman Samir, 26 Feb. 2011; interview with Amr Ezz, 8 Mar. 2011.
860 Interview with Shadi al-Ghazali Harb, 8 Mar. 2011.
the police at these locations and push on towards Tahrir Square, which they hoped to occupy.  

On the evening before the protests, the various members of the activist coalition divided up the routes that a smaller committee had cased and finalized during the previous few days. One route began in Shobra, a neighborhood just north of downtown Cairo, and was set to converge with a protest at the central square of Dawaran, which was listed on the “Khaled Said” Facebook page; its participants included April 6th, Hamdeen Sabahi’s Karama Party, and the Revolutionary Socialists, as well as various Christian activists and former MP Rami Lekah. A second route began on Nahia Street in Giza, the governorate just west of Cairo, and was set to converge with a protest that the “Khaled Said” page had announced at Gamaat al-Dowal al-Arabia Square; its participants included the DFP, JFYM, and ElBaradei’s NAC, as well as local members from the April 6th Movement and Muslim Brotherhood Youth. A third protest march began in Imbaba, a lower income community in northern Giza along the Nile, and included local April 6th activists, members of ElBaradei’s NAC, revolutionary socialists, and independent activists. A fourth protest, which JFYM led, began in northern Cairo’s Matariya neighborhood, and a fifth demonstration, led by Ayman Nour’s Ghad Party,
emanated from Bab al-Shaariya, a neighborhood just northeast of downtown Cairo.\textsuperscript{866} Finally, the “popular parliament,” which was comprised of former opposition parliamentarians and well-known anti-Mubarak intellectuals, planned to meet at 1 PM on the steps of the Court of Appeals.\textsuperscript{867} All of these demonstrations had one aim: gaining enough strength to overwhelm the police at the points that had been declared on the “Khaled Said” Facebook page, and then proceed towards Tahrir Square.\textsuperscript{868}

Despite their intensive planning, the coalition of activists kept their expectations low. “Nobody expected [a revolution],” said April 6\textsuperscript{th} leader Ahmed Maher. “Each year [on Police Day] we had 1000 people. A ‘big’ demonstration would have been 3000 people – 5000 maximum.”\textsuperscript{869} The activists thus made only modest plans for occupying Tahrir Square. As JFYM leader Mustafa Shawqi told a counterpart who was trying to move tents and blankets to locations around Tahrir Square in anticipation of a prolonged sit-in, “Don’t worry about this. We won’t sit in unless we get 5000 – and we won’t.”\textsuperscript{870}

II. The Trapped Stay Trapped, The Cornered Stay Cautious

Despite the activists’ modest expectations, revolutionary chatter intensified on Egypt’s social networks and streets alike as the January 25 demonstrations approached. Though few predicted that a revolution was afoot, there was the widespread belief that the forthcoming demonstrations would be large, and even the younger members of Egypt’s trapped opposition parties and the cornered Muslim Brotherhood urged their

\textsuperscript{866} Interview with Ahmed Maher, 9 Mar. 2011; interview with Bassem Fathi, 10 Mar. 2011.
\textsuperscript{869} Interview with Ahmed Maher, 9 Mar. 2011.
\textsuperscript{870} Interview with Bassem Fathi, 10 Mar. 2011.
parent organizations to participate. These organizations were thus confronted with a major dilemma – and their responses provide the firmest evidence that, on the eve of Mubarak’s demise, they were still too co-opted or afraid to cross Mubarak’s “red lines.”

a. Inside the Tagammu Party

On January 22, I visited the Tagammu Party headquarters in downtown Cairo to interview politburo leader Magdy Sharabiyah. The mass demonstrations that would catalyze Mubarak’s ouster were only three days away, but you would have never known it from within the offices of Egypt’s oldest left-wing opposition party. In fact, the hand-drawn posters on the walls commemorated the 34th anniversary of a very different “revolution” – the January 1977 Bread Riots, in which Tagammu had played a leading role. Indeed, Tagammu’s days as an outspoken regime opponent were a thing of the past. “We won’t participate in the [upcoming January 25] demonstrations,” Sharabiyah told me, “because this date is when the police stood in 1952 against the British occupation.”

That same day, the Tagammu Party debated its approach towards the January 25 demonstrations more fully during its regular Central Secretariat meeting. Youth activists invited the party to join the protests, but Tagammu chairman Rifaat al-Said objected, telling the party leadership, “It’s silly to participate on this day.” While the other leaders objected to his use of the word “silly,” they agreed that it was too insulting to the regime to protest against it on Police Day. “It was a long discussion about the fact that Police Day is not police day for the police of [Mubarak’s Interior Minister] Habib al-Adly, but police day for the police who stood against the British occupation,” recalled Tagammu

871 Interview with Magdy Sharabiyah, 22 Jan. 2011.
youth leader Khaled Telema. “So it was not fair to pick this day.”

As a result, the Central Secretariat voted not to participate, though the party permitted its members to participate as individuals – in other words, “not under the party’s name.”

In a press statement, chairman al-Said emphasized his view that January 25 was an inappropriate day to protest the regime. He argued that Police Day was meant to “honor the police and celebrate the important role of the police forces that spared no effort in the defense of the homeland and its citizens, to ensure a secure life for all Egyptians.” Coming on the heels of mounting popular outrage regarding police brutality, as well as the Interior Ministry’s failure to prevent the bombing of the Two Saints Church in Alexandria only three weeks prior, al-Said’s compliment to the police was remarkable – and a firm indication that he had long ceased behaving as a critic, let alone an opponent, of the Mubarak regime.

b. Inside the Wafd Party

Whereas the Tagammu Party’s leaders still viewed themselves as opposition activists on account of their involvement in the 1977 Bread Riots, the Wafd’s leaders told themselves a very different story. They viewed themselves as members of an historic opposition party whose soft approach toward the regime was a short-term survival mechanism that would enable the Wafd to fully reemerge once the Mubarak regime liberalized or fell. The Wafd therefore viewed participating in protests as too risky for a party with its long-term aspirations. “They’re like forest fires,” said Wafdist high

committee member Sherif Taher on January 19. “You don’t know where they start and you don’t know where they end. And politicians can’t get involved in that.”

Still, in the aftermath of the November 2010 parliamentary elections, in which the Wafd’s hope for massive gains fell to pieces, there was considerable displeasure within the party – particularly among the younger members, who wanted the party to oppose the regime more aggressively. During the previous decade, Wafdist youths frequently bucked the party’s conservative leadership to participate in protests, through which they had become acquainted with the opposition activists who were organizing the January 25 demonstrations, and many Wafdist youths also supported ElBaradei’s NAC. Thus, on January 21, the Wafd’s youth committee formally called on their party to join the forthcoming anti-Mubarak protests, and the youth committee met with the Wafd’s high committee two days later to lobby for the party’s approval.

The January 23 meeting was extremely tense. The Wafd’s older leaders opposed endorsing the demonstrations, viewing them as a fool’s errand that had no chance of success. The youths responded by attacking the high committee, arguing that the party of the 1919 revolution had completely lost its way. “[Opposition] youth [activists] won’t come to the Wafd because the Wafd never has any actions against tyranny,” youth representative Mohamed Salah el-Sheikh remembers saying. But the Wafd leadership still refused: honorary chair Mustafa al-Tawil and vice-chairs Mohamed Sarhan, Yasin Tag el-Din, and Fouad Badrawy all opposed, with Badrawy insisting that the Wafd

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878 Interview with Mohamed Fouad, 16 Mar. 2011.
880 Interview with Mohamed Fouad, 16 Mar. 2011.
881 Interview with Mohamed Salah el-Sheikh, 12 Mar. 2011.
“doesn’t have the people who can start a revolution.” Meanwhile, Wafd chairman al-Sayyid al-Badawy was nonresponsive: he was receiving constant calls from the regime to deter him from supporting the demonstrations, and presumably felt boxed in.882 This outraged the youth committee members in attendance, who responded by demanding that the high committee be dissolved.883

To break through this impasse, Wafdist secretary-general Mounir Fakhry Abdelnour proposed a compromise: the youths could participate under the banner of the Wafd Youth, but the greater Wafd party would not participate. Abdelnour further insisted that chairman al-Badawy steer clear of the demonstrations entirely.884 Al-Badawy accepted this idea, permitting the Wafd’s youth members to march under their own “Wafd Youth” banner while establishing a committee to help Wafdistis who might be arrested during the protests.885 In his subsequent statement to the press, al-Badawy thus declared that his members were free to participate in the protests but that they did not represent the party.886

While the Wafd’s position on the January 25 protests was somewhat more supportive than Tagammu’s, its top leaders were ultimately no less committed to toeing the regime’s “red lines.” Indeed, were it not for the aggressive lobbying of the Wafd’s youth members, who desperately wanted their party to participate in the protests, it is

882 Interview with Ali ElSalmi, 1 Mar. 2011. ElSalmi said that Al-Badawy was under regime pressure, but I am inferring the part about Al-Badawy being torn between regime pressure not to endorse the January 25th demonstrations and his growing sympathy with the Wafd Youth’s call for a more confrontational posture. In my interviews on this meeting, Al-Badawy’s stance is always described as ambiguous, but I might be wrong in this inference.
883 Interview with Mohamed Fouad, 16 Mar. 2011.
884 Interview with Mohamed Fouad, 16 Mar. 2011; interview with
highly unlikely that any banners bearing the word “Wafd” would have made their way to Tahrir Square. Moreover, the generational nature of the struggle within the Wafd party over the January 25 protests affirms the central argument of this dissertation: that Mubarak’s manipulation of Egypt’s opposition parties had successfully trapped his earlier (and now older) opponents, but that a new generation of opposition activists who saw these parties as “decorative” increasingly circumvented the parties and pursued alternative avenues for protesting the regime.

c. Inside Moussa Mustafa Moussa’s Ghad Party

Ayman Nour’s faction of the Ghad party participated very actively in the January 25 protests: Nour called on Mubarak to step down during a January 22 speech that was posted to YouTube, and he personally led a demonstration from Bab al-Shaariya on January 25, all of which was consistent with his “untrapped” political track record since his 2005 presidential run. But by this point Nour’s faction was an extra-legal entity, since the PPC had recognized Moussa Mustafa Moussa’s faction as the official Ghad party nearly four years before. And since Moussa’s faction was overwhelmingly comprised of people with close ties to the regime, and was mostly inactive in any event, it was hardly surprising that Moussa used the January 25 demonstrations as an opportunity to praise the Mubarak regime. “That the regime allows these protesters to demonstrate in front of the Interior Ministry is the greatest indication that there is freedom and democracy in Egypt,” he said in a public statement on January 22.887

d. Inside the Muslim Brotherhood

While some leading Muslim Brothers learned of the preparations for the January 25 protests in early January, the Brotherhood didn’t consider participating until approximately one week beforehand. By that point, Muslim Brotherhood youth member Mohamed Abbas was working informally with the coalition of activists that was organizing the demonstrations and, on January 22, he formally joined the coalition’s leadership along with three other prominent Brotherhood youths. These youths’ direct involvement in planning the protests happened without the Guidance Office’s approval, though the youths maintained regular communication with top Guidance Office leaders, particularly Mohamed Morsi, who oversaw the Brotherhood’s political portfolio; Mahmoud Abu-Zeid, who oversaw the Brotherhood’s youth portfolio; and Essam el-Erian, who was one of the Brotherhood’s media mouthpieces. But as January 25 approached and Muslim Brotherhood youths began receiving constant Facebook invitations publicizing the protests, leading Brotherhood youths started lobbying the Guidance Office to win the Brotherhood’s formal endorsement.

Thus, on January 22, Brotherhood youth activist Mohamed al-Qassas, who was working with the broader activist coalition to plan the forthcoming demonstrations, met with Guidance Office leader Abu-Zeid to inquire about the Brotherhood’s position on the January 25 protests. Abu-Zeid told al-Qassas that the Brotherhood would never participate because the Guidance Office did not know the activists behind the forthcoming protests, and added that the Brotherhood was hesitant to participate in an

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888 Interview with Sobhi Saleh, 29 Mar. 2011.
890 Interview with Mohamed Abbas, 28 Feb. 2011.
event that it had not directly organized. Abu-Zeid further expressed his fear that, if Muslim Brothers hoisted Brotherhood banners during the demonstrations, the regime’s response would be brutal.\footnote{Interview with Mohamed al-Qassas, 21 Mar. 2011.}

Abu-Zeid’s concerns about how the regime might respond to the Brotherhood’s involvement in the January 25 protests were well founded. On January 20, two days before Abu-Zeid’s meeting with al-Qassas, State Security chief Hassan Abdel Rahman called the Guidance Office and issued a blunt warning: “Don’t participate in the [January] 25th demonstrations,” he said. “It’s a red line. We’re going to arrest you all.”\footnote{Interview with Essam El-Erian, 14 Mar. 2011; interview with Mohamed al-Beltagi, 26 Mar. 2011; interview with Sobhi Saleh, 29 Mar. 2011; interview with Saad al-Katatny, 29 Mar. 2011; interview with Mohamed Abdel Qadoos, 31 Mar. 2011.}

In the days that followed, local State Security officials phoned the Brotherhood’s secretary-generals and administrative staff in each governorate, warning that participation in the protests would invite mass arrests.\footnote{Interview with Amr al-Beltagi, 9 Mar. 2011; interview with Ali Abdelfattah, 22 Mar. 2011; interview with Saad al-Katatny, 29 Mar. 2011.}

Al-Qassas’ meeting with Abu-Zeid ultimately yielded one concession: the Guidance Office announced that Muslim Brothers were permitted to protest on January 25, so long as they didn’t use Brotherhood signage and didn’t curse the regime.\footnote{Interview with Mohamed Abbas, 28 Feb. 2011; interview with Saad al-Husseini, 2 Mar. 2011; interview with Islam Lotfy 2 Mar. 2011; interview with Amr al-Beltagi, 9 Mar. 2011; interview with Mahmoud Ezzat, 14 Mar. 2011.} But this essentially mirrored the Wafd and Tagammu parties’ tactical approaches – members could participate as individuals only.

Yet unlike the Tagammu Party, the Brotherhood did not issue a principled rejection of the January 25 protests. Indeed, whereas Tagammu chairman Rifaat al-Said argued that protesting on Police Day was inappropriate and praised the police for...
safeguarding Egypt, Brotherhood Supreme Guide Mohamed Badie’s January 23 media statement harshly criticized the regime’s security services. Badie explicitly noted that the regime “called Brotherhood officials in the governorates and threatened them with assault, imprisonment, and violent – and possibly bloody – confrontations,” and urged the regime to respond to popular demands for ending corruption “rather than referring all important files … to security agencies that only deal through threats, intimidation, arrest, torture, imprisonment, and even murder.” Yet rather than embrace a strategy of protest, which he knew would invite a massive crackdown, Badie called for “comprehensive national dialogue” for addressing the protesters’ grievances.896

The fact that security concerns primarily drove the Brotherhood’s position on the January 25 protests is further illustrated by how the Guidance Office dealt with some of its more outspoken former parliamentarians. Some of these parliamentarians, most notably Mohamed al-Beltagi, joined the “popular parliament” despite the Guidance Office’s misgivings one month before, and they were now pressuring the Guidance Office to endorse the demonstrations. Squeezed between the organization’s internal divisions and the regime’s external pressure, the Guidance Office ultimately decided to allow a limited number of former Brotherhood parliamentarians to participate in the “popular parliament” protest that would be held on the steps of the Court of Appeals on January 25. To ensure that the Brotherhood’s participation was minimal, and thereby avoid a major regime crackdown, Guidance Office leader Saad al-Katatny personally chose fifteen former parliamentarians who were authorized to join the demonstration.

“The popular parliament had 100 people, and we had 88 [former parliamentarians],”
explained al-Katatny in a subsequent interview. “So if we participated [in full], we
would have dominated.”

Indeed, on the eve of the anti-Mubarak revolt, the Muslim Brotherhood wasn’t
trapped like the legal opposition parties. It maintained a much more active presence
nationwide than the parties were permitted, and its criticisms of the regime – including its
security services – were significantly more aggressive. But the specter of a brutal
crackdown kept it contained, and the distance it ultimately kept from the January 25
protests made it barely distinguishable from the thoroughly coopted parties.

III. The Eve of Upheaval

On the evening before the January 25 protests, I met up with Council on Foreign
Relations scholar Steven Cook, who was in Egypt leading a policy trip. Over drinks at
downtown Cairo’s notoriously libertine Horeya Café, Cook and I agreed that a revolution
was probably not in the offing. There were, after all, no signs of internal divisions within
the Mubarak regime, and therefore little chance of protests fomenting an internal power
struggle that would threaten Mubarak’s reign. Not that we expected large protests
anyway: the various activists behind the protests had never mobilized more than a few
hundred demonstrators, and the likely security crackdown, we believed, would make
many Egyptians too afraid to even consider participating. The fact that the Muslim
Brotherhood was staying out of it, and the fact that Egypt’s co-opted opposition parties
were still toeing the regime’s “red lines,” added to our belief that the following day’s
protests would not become the following month’s coup.

We were wrong.
Chapter 8
Conclusion: Uprising of the Untrapped

The January 25, 2011 protests were larger than perhaps anyone – the activists included – expected. After many years of failed attempts at mobilizing the masses, a small coalition of relatively young activists succeeded in bringing people into the streets by the tens of thousands. The people who converged on Tahrir Square were not, for the most part, members of April 6th or the NAC, nor Muslim Brothers who had bucked the Guidance Office’s orders. They were overwhelmingly ordinary Cairenes – people who might not have been willing to risk their personal safety to join a hundreds-strong demonstration, but were certainly willing to protest the regime once they saw thousands of their countrymen in the streets.

Indeed, this is precisely what I witnessed. At around noon on January 25, I was standing in front of the Court of Appeals in downtown Cairo, awaiting the start of the demonstrations. Not much was happening: there was a small demonstration on the steps of the Journalists Syndicate around the corner, and perhaps a few hundred people gathered in the courtyard of the Lawyers Syndicate just down the street. But both of these demonstrations were surrounded by hundreds of Central Security Forces policemen, who prevented the activists from spilling onto the streets. At about 1 PM, the “popular parliament” assembled on the stairs of the Court of Appeals and began chanting anti-regime slogans, but CSF police soon surrounded this demonstration as well.

The situation seemed contained for about thirty minutes. But at approximately 1:30 PM, the protest that had started in Shobra suddenly poured into the area, and activists began calling on pedestrians to join them in the streets, screaming “enzal!” –
“come down!” It worked: ordinary people entered the procession and it grew rapidly, quickly overwhelming the CSF police in the area and liberating the three protests that had been trapped at the Court of Appeals, Lawyers Syndicate, and Journalists Syndicate. The still-snowballing procession then pushed swiftly one mile southward towards Tahrir Square, easily breaking through police cordons as the suddenly understaffed CSF stood down. Perhaps recognizing that Egypt was witnessing a historical moment, a CSF officer stationed in the Square whipped out his cell phone and snapped a photo. Within hours, Tahrir Square was packed with people, many of whom were first-time protesters.898

This was precisely what the Mubarak regime had long worked to prevent. The legal opposition parties that it co-opted through political patronage were forbidden from holding street protests, and the regime had further cut them off from the public by confining their activities to their gated headquarters and making them dependent on the regime for winning parliamentary seats. Those opposition parties that rejected this bargain were destroyed from within by State Security’s manipulations, as in the case of Ayman Nour’s Ghad party. Those opposition groups that could not be coopted through political patronage, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, were deterred from popular mobilization through heavy-handed crackdowns.

This strategy had served the Mubarak regime well for approximately three decades, which is why the Mubarak regime was frequently given a starring role in the political science literature on “durable authoritarianism.”899 But as the January 25, 2011 demonstrations revealed, the use of formally democratic institutions to trap some

899 See, for example, Brownlee (2007), Masoud (2011), and Blaydes (2011).
opponents, and repression to contain others, could not work forever. How did studies of “durable authoritarianism” fail to foresee the Mubarak regime’s apparent vulnerability?

Scholars failed to anticipate Mubarak’s fall in Egypt for two reasons. First, they were looking for the possible sources of regime breakdown in the wrong places. The literature on third-wave political transitions emphasizes intra-regime splits as the cause of regime breakdowns, and studies of durable authoritarianism thus viewed the cohesiveness ruling parties as vital to explaining regimes’ durability. Meanwhile, other studies emphasized the role of periodic parliamentary elections in distributing political patronage, particularly to well-connected elites and lower-level ruling party members. As Tarek Masoud acknowledged shortly after Egypt’s 2011 uprising with respect to these two factors:

> Both of these institutions were supposed to forestall elite conflict – the former by providing a forum for dispute resolution among the regime’s core supporters, the latter by offering a means for the regime to distribute the fruit of corruption among those supporters without having to pick winners and losers itself.

Opinionists, however, sparked Egypt’s uprising. And contrary to third-wave transitions studies in which regime “moderates” ultimately join the opposition once a regime weakens, no NDP leaders or prominent Mubarak regime officials embraced the opposition, let alone joined the revolt.

Yet even those studies of “durable authoritarianism” that examined oppositionists failed to anticipate regime breakdown. While these works cogently explained how formally democratic institutions, such as parliamentary elections and opposition parties,

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901 See Smith (2005), Brownlee (2007), and Reuter and Remington (2009).
902 See Gandhi and Przeworski (2007), Koeher (2008), and Blaydes (2011).
could be manipulated to “trap” opponents in the regimes’ autocratic structures and thereby enhance regime durability; they often overlooked those opposition actors that had not been trapped or, as in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, brutally repressed into submission. My initial research design for his dissertation contained this same oversight: by only interviewing leaders from the Tagammu, Wafd, and Ghad parties, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, I ignored the key drivers of political change in Egypt – the revolutionary youth activists – until after Mubarak’s ouster.

The fact that studies of “durable authoritarianism” looked for catalysts of regime breakdown in all the wrong places suggests that these studies examined autocratically ruled countries far too narrowly. By focusing on the regimes’ ability to coopt elites, including both those within the regime itself and legalized opposition parties, these studies ignored the broader societal factors that have historically given rise to revolts. These include the prevalence of economic or political grievances; the perceived illegitimacy of the regime; and the emergence of revolutionary movements, often as a result of the previous two factors. By contrast, empirically-focused accounts of Egypt in the years preceding Mubarak’s ouster were often more attentive to rising societal discontent and the emergence of new protest movements, and acknowledged these as a possible catalyst for regime instability.

907 Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 14-15.
910 Masoud (2011) acknowledges this in his explanation of how political scientists failed to anticipate the Egyptian uprising. For examples of journalistic accounts of Egypt that observed looming instability due to societal factors, see Bradley (2008) and Osman (2011).
Second, scholars failed to anticipate Mubarak’s ouster because they ignored the fact that electoral authoritarian institutions need credibility in order to keep potential oppositionists within them. While many studies of “durable authoritarianism” correctly viewed the formally democratic institutions that persisted under autocratic conditions as facades, few recognized the extent to which this might deter oppositionists from participating in these institutions, especially in the long run.

Yet that is exactly what happened in Egypt. By the eve of Mubarak’s ouster, Egypt’s parliamentary elections and the severely coopted parties that participated in them were widely viewed as frauds, which is why a new generation of oppositionists deliberately avoided these institutions and sought new – and ultimately more effective – means for confronting the regime. The electoral authoritarian institutions, in a certain sense, contained the seeds of their own destruction: because these institutions are by definition unwinnable for the opposition and therefore fraudulent, they are unlikely to keep the regimes’ opponents within them indefinitely.

That is not to say that all electoral authoritarian regimes are destined for Mubarak’s fate. Much depends on the extent to which these regimes make policy concessions to their opposition parties, distribute spoils, and demonstrate their willingness to compromise with opponents. Regimes can also enhance their durability through constant “electoral engineering” that favors the autocratic incumbents. But the unresolvable tension between regimes’ need to manipulate formally democratic institutions to coopt their opponents on one hand, and regimes’ need to make these

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911 See Kassem (1999), Ottaway (2003), and Schedler (2006).
institutions appear relatively credible so that oppositionists participate in them on the other, means that electoral authoritarian regimes are more vulnerable to sudden breakdown than the academic literature recognizes.

Yet despite the vulnerability of electoral authoritarian regimes, the severely coopted parties that participate in these regimes’ institutions are, indeed, quite durable. After all, the Tagammu and Wafd parties survived Mubarak’s ouster and continue to run parliamentary candidates, publish newspapers, and participate in public debates on key political developments – despite still not having any realistic chance of achieving power. Previous studies of opposition parties under authoritarianism, which view these parties as patronage-seeking,\(^{914}\) did not anticipate that these parties would continue to exist and compete electorally even when there is no patronage to be gained. Nor do I find convincing notion that these parties continue participating in unwinnable elections because they want “to show that they [are] motivated by higher principles, that power [is] not their ultimate concern.”\(^{915}\) While looking like a martyr might increase an opposition party’s popular appeal under autocratic rule, losing relatively free elections after an autocrat’s ouster has the opposite effect: it affirms for many that the party is a loser, which will not be the motivation for a party’s continued existence.

This dissertation has thus proposed another explanation for why people stay in opposition parties under authoritarianism: because these parties are effectively social clubs of similar people. As I have demonstrated, the Tagammu Party’s leadership is overwhelmingly comprised of former communist activists from the 1960s and 1970s,

\(^{914}\) Kassem (1999).
who have worked together continuously, albeit unsuccessfully, for nearly four decades to promote socialist political ideas in Egypt. The Wafd Party’s leadership is overwhelmingly comprised of descendants from the original, elite Wafd leadership of the pre-1952 era, who sometimes even refer to themselves as coming from the Wafd’s major “families.” This explanation, of course, is not mutually exclusive with those that examine these party members’ interest in political patronage or desire to demonstrate their commitment to “higher principles” than winning in the context of authoritarian rule. But it does explain why these parties might continue to function even after autocratic rule ends, when these previous explanations are no longer valid.

In the aftermath of Mubarak’s ouster, only those parties that were entirely regime creations, such as Moussa Mustafa Moussa’s Ghad party, faded away. Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood emerged as Egypt’s new ruling party – and for reasons that this dissertation research anticipated: despite the Mubarak regime’s brutal repression against it, the Muslim Brotherhood remained the only party, other than the NDP, with a truly national organization that could effectively mobilize voters to win elections. The NDP’s illegalization following the 2011 uprising, and subsequent changes to the electoral system that widened electoral districts and thus diluted the support of former NDP parliamentarians, granted the Brotherhood an unprecedented opportunity to seize the political momentum. And it did, winning a 47-percent-seat plurality in the first post-Mubarak parliamentary elections and, in June 2012, the presidential elections.

916 Interview with Mohamed Sherdy, 24 Jan. 2011.
917 See Trager, “The Unbreakable Muslim Brotherhood” (2011), which was based on this dissertation research.
Yet despite the Brotherhood’s tremendous political strength, its priority on organizational integrity – and the Mubarak regime’s credible threat to arrest its leaders if it participated in the January 25, 2011 demonstrations – prevented it from starting the very uprising from which it is now benefitting. That task fell to a new generation of opposition activists, who developed new strategies for organizing protests during the final decade of Mubarak’s rule. These activists refused to be trapped in the Mubarak regime’s electoral authoritarian institutions, which they viewed as fake. They were also far more willing than the Muslim Brotherhood to accept the risks of organizing revolutionary protests because the looseness of their coalitions made them less concerned about organizational integrity. While various economic and political grievances contributed to Egypt’s 2011 uprising, these grievances were relatively constant for many years, and might have still been simmering were it not for the work of the revolutionary activists in sparking the revolt.

Much as few predicted the January 2011 uprising, few can predict what will happen next in Egypt, where the revolution is still percolating at the time of this writing. Impending economic calamity threatens the Brotherhood’s electoral gains, and revolutionary activists are now battling Brotherhood cadres in the streets, while non-Islamist political parties battle the Brotherhood through both the press and ballot boxes. Meanwhile, the Egyptian military – which ruled the country for the first sixteen months following Mubarak’s ouster – retains an ambiguous position, and further chaos may encourage it to reassert itself politically. Finally, Salafists have emerged as an entirely new political player, and the jihadists within their ranks may ignite further instability in a state that appears to be deteriorating.
For political scientists, the only way to make sense of these events is to follow them as granularly as possible. An approach that looks too narrowly at the new regime, or that only examines the sphere of formal politics, is bound to overlook the key factors that will drive Egypt’s trajectory moving forward.
Appendix
List of Interviews

N.B. This list, and the affiliations and titles for each interviewee, reflect the time at which the interviews were conducted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tagammu Party</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date(s) Interviewed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Anees al-Baya</td>
<td>Vice-Chair</td>
<td>7 Aug. 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Amina al-Niqash</td>
<td>Vice-Chair</td>
<td>10 Jan. 2011</td>
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<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Samir Fayyad</td>
<td>Vice-Chair</td>
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<td>Sayyid Abdel Ael</td>
<td>Secretary-General</td>
<td>9 Jan. 2011</td>
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<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Farida al-Niqash</td>
<td>Politburo Member and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Ahaly</td>
<td>11 Aug. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Abdel Rahman Khayr</td>
<td>Politburo Member and Member of the Shura Council (2004-2011)</td>
<td>5 Jan. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Nabil Zaki</td>
<td>Politburo Member, Spokesman</td>
<td>13 Jan. 2011</td>
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<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Nabil Abdel-Ghani</td>
<td>Politburo Member</td>
<td>9 Jan. 2011</td>
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<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Gouda Abdel Khalek</td>
<td>Politburo Member</td>
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<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Atef al-Maghrawi</td>
<td>Politburo Member</td>
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<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Mohamed Farag</td>
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<td>Magdy Sharabiyah</td>
<td>Politburo Member</td>
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<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Abdel Rashid Helal</td>
<td>Central Secretariat Member, former MP (2010-2011)</td>
<td>19 Mar. 2011</td>
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<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Abdullah Abouel-Fotouh</td>
<td>Central Secretariat Member</td>
<td>12 Jan. 2011</td>
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<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Akram Labib</td>
<td>Central Secretariat Member</td>
<td>15 Jan. 2011</td>
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<td>Amad Taha</td>
<td>Central Secretariat Member</td>
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<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Rafit Saif</td>
<td>Presidential Committee, Member, MP (2010-2011)</td>
<td>10 Jan. 2011</td>
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<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Hussein Abdel Raziq</td>
<td>Presidential Committee, Member, former Al-Ahaly editor-in-chief</td>
<td>24 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tagammu Party</td>
<td>Farag Farag</td>
<td>Member, Cairo University</td>
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</table>
Professor
Abu el-Ezz el-Hariri  Former Politburo Member  27 Feb. 2011
Sayyid Shaaban  Former Politburo Member  4 Mar. 2011
Abdel Ghafer Shokr  Former member  11 Jan. 2011
Khaled Telema  Youth leader  17 Mar. 2011
Ahmed Bilal  Youth member  24 Mar. 2011

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yasin Tag el-Din</td>
<td>Vice-Chair</td>
<td>Jul. 19, 2010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fouad Badrawy</td>
<td>Vice Chair (2006-2011), Secretary-General (2011-present)</td>
<td>Mar. 21, 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mounir Fakhry Abdelnour</td>
<td>Secretary-General (2006-2011), former MP (2000-2005), current Minister of Tourism</td>
<td>Aug. 10, 2010</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ahmed Owda</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary-General</td>
<td>Jul. 6, 2010</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Iglal Rafit</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary-General (2006-2010)</td>
<td>Jul. 7, 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hussein Mansour</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary-General</td>
<td>Jul. 4, 2010</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ramzi Zaqalama</td>
<td>Assistant Chair</td>
<td>Jul. 4, 2010</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Awatif Wali</td>
<td>Assistant Chair</td>
<td>Jul. 18, 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hassan Abdel-Gowad</td>
<td>High Committee Member</td>
<td>Jul. 24, 2010</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said Abdel-Khaliq</td>
<td>High Committee Member, Editor of al-Wafd (1998-approx 2000, 2009-2010); died in Dec. 2010</td>
<td>Jul. 17, 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ahmed Abu-Ismail</td>
<td>High Committee Member, former MP, former Minister of Finance under Sadat</td>
<td>Jul. 15, 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mohamed al-Maliki</td>
<td>High Committee Member and former MP (2010-2011)</td>
<td>Aug. 9, 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abdel Aziz al-Nahhas</td>
<td>High Committee Member, al-Wafd journalist</td>
<td>Jan. 19, 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salah al-Sabbagh</td>
<td>High Committee Member, MP (2005-2010)</td>
<td>Aug. 1, 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbas al-Tarabily</td>
<td>High Committee Member, Editor of al-Wafd (1987-2006)</td>
<td>Aug. 8, 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Margret Azer</td>
<td>High Committee Member (2010-present); former Secretary-General of the Democratic Front Party</td>
<td>Jan. 5, 2010</td>
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</table>
Salah Diab High Committee Member, billionaire owner of *al-Masry al-Youm* Mar. 24, 2011

Hossam el-Kholi High Committee Member, Wafd Youth Chair Mar. 20, 2011

Ali ElSalmi High Committee Member, Prime Minister of “Shadow Government,” current vice-Prime Minister of Egypt (since Jul. 2011) Mar. 1, 2011

Ahmed Ezzelarab High Committee Member Jul. 10, 2010

Mohamed Kamel High Committee Member, former Shura Council Member Jan. 23, 2011

Refat Kamel High Committee Member Mar. 21, 2011

Mona Korashy High Committee Member Aug. 5, 2010

Abdel Salam Ragab High Committee Member Jan. 20, 2011

Tarek Rushdi High Committee Member Jul. 26, 2010


Essam Shiha High Committee Member Jan. 17, 2011, Jan. 23, 2011

Camilia Shokry High Committee Member and director of Wafd think tank Aug. 1, 2011


Mona Makram-Ebeid Former High Committee member, former member of the Shura Council, former Secretary-General of the Ghad party Mar. 17, 2011

Iglal Salam al-Maligi Member, Wafd youth Jul. 9, 2010

Wahid Fawzi Foreign Minister of the “Shadow Government,” former Ambassador of Egypt to Portugal Jan. 22, 2011

Mohamed Fouad Wafd Youth Committee Assistant Chair Mar. 16, 2011

Mohamed Salah el-Sheikh Giza Vice-Chair, Wafd Youth member, ElBaradei campaign member Jun. 27, 2010, Mar. 12, 2011

### Ayman Nour’s Ghad Party

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Mona al-Deeb (since resigned) Deputy chair 2 Aug. 2010
Mohamed Abu el-Ezm Vice-chair 22 Jul. 2010
Madhat Khafaga Vice-chair 13 Jul. 2010
Abd el-Rahim Omar Vice-chair 13 Jul. 2010
Morsi Sheikh (since resigned) Vice-chair 26 Jul. 2010
Hussam al-Din Ali Ahmed Vice-secretary 15 Jul. 2010
Hassan Sharbini Assistant Chair 14 Jul. 2010
Yasir Mohammed Assistant Chair 22 Jul. 2010
Ahmed Yesri Said Ahmed Assistant Secretary 18 Jul. 2010
Walid Aboulkhayar Assistant Secretary 18 Jul. 2010
Mohammed Farouk Assistant Secretary 22 Jul. 2010
Samiya Hassan Assistant Treasurer 23 Jul. 2010
Muhammad Gowda Deputy of the Party 13 Jul. 2010
Faryal Gomaa Deputy of the Party 26 Jul. 2010
Abdel Rahman al-Ghamrawy High Committee Member 17 Jul. 2010
Fatiha Abu-Zeid High Committee Member 5 Aug. 2010
Ruuf Abdel Monem High Committee Member 29 Jul. 2010
Talaat Khalil High Committee Member 12 Jul. 2010
Abdel Fattah Ghalib High Committee Member 1 Aug. 2010
Shadi Taha High Committee Member 6 Jul. 2010
Shadi Talaat High Committee Member 1 Aug. 2010
Salah Kitkut High Committee Member 11 Jul. 2010
Abdel Raziq al-Kilani High Committee Member 16 Jul. 2010
Ihab el-Kholy Former chairman (2007-2010) 18 Jul. 2010
Nagi al-Ghatrifi Former chairman (2006-2007); member of the Elders’ Committee 28 Jul. 2010
Gameela Ismail Former secretary-general (2006-2008); Ayman Nour’s estranged wife 22 Jul. 2010
Moshira Mohasseb Member of Youth Committee 6 Aug. 2010

Moussa Mustafa Moussa’s “Ghad” Party

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rageb Helal Hemeda</td>
<td>Secretary-general and member of parliament</td>
<td>28 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed Sadiq Okasha</td>
<td>Vice-chair for parliamentary affairs</td>
<td>4 Aug. 2010; 9 Aug. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aref el-Desouki</td>
<td>Vice-chair for developmental affairs</td>
<td>3 Jul. 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibrahim Saleh</td>
<td>Vice-chair for policy and deputy in Ministry of Economic Development</td>
<td>6 Jul. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fawzi James</td>
<td>Vice-chair for international organizations and civilian affairs</td>
<td>8 Jul. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naguib Gabriel</td>
<td>Vice-chair for foreign affairs</td>
<td>5 Jul. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hassan Kemal</td>
<td>Vice-chair for economic development</td>
<td>3 Jul. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reda Fanoos</td>
<td>Vice-chair for industry and energy</td>
<td>6 Jul. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hesham Ali</td>
<td>Vice-chair for commerce</td>
<td>12 Jul. 2010</td>
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<td>Ismail Ismail</td>
<td>Vice-chair for media</td>
<td>1 Jul. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walid Riad</td>
<td>Assistant chair for public relations and information</td>
<td>7 Jul. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moussa Salah al-Din Moussa</td>
<td>Party administrator</td>
<td>1 Jul. 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahmoud Abdel Monem Moussa</td>
<td>Party secretary for Menoufiya and Secretary-General</td>
<td>7 Jul. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mustafa al-Shorbagy</td>
<td>Assistant secretary-general and party secretary for Sharkiya</td>
<td>5 Jul. 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatima Sheib</td>
<td>Secretary for women and member of the executive committee</td>
<td>14 Jul. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ahmed Fikry Abdel-Ghani Rizk</td>
<td>Party secretary for Giza and member of the executive committee</td>
<td>5 Jul. 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdel Fattah Fakhr el-Din</td>
<td>High Committee Member</td>
<td>8 Aug. 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamdi Layali</td>
<td>High Committee Member</td>
<td>9 Aug. 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed Ashour</td>
<td>High Committee Member</td>
<td>27 Jul. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magdy Fakhry Labib</td>
<td>High Committee Member</td>
<td>9 Aug. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hassan Abu el-Enein</td>
<td>High Committee Member</td>
<td>27 Jul. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samir al-Atifi</td>
<td>High Committee Member</td>
<td>7 Jul. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ibrahim el-Tobgui</td>
<td>High Committee Member</td>
<td>10 Jul. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ayman al-Katib</td>
<td>High Committee Member</td>
<td>11 Jul. 2010</td>
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</table>

* I interviewed one additional member of Moussa Mustafa Moussa’s “Ghad” party, but this individual has asked to remain anonymous because he feared retribution from the regime for meeting and speaking with an American researcher.
### The Muslim Brotherhood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date(s) Interviewed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mehdi Akef</td>
<td>Former Supreme Guide</td>
<td>24 Jan. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohamed Habib</td>
<td>Former Deputy Supreme Guide</td>
<td>8 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahmoud Ezzat</td>
<td>Deputy Supreme Guide</td>
<td>14 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saad Esmat al-Husseini</td>
<td>Guidance Office Member</td>
<td>2 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essam El-Erian</td>
<td>Guidance Office Member</td>
<td>14 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mohamed Morsi</td>
<td>Guidance Office Member</td>
<td>3 Aug. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali Abdelfattah</td>
<td>Alexandria leader</td>
<td>22 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohamed Abdel Qadoos</td>
<td>MB Journalists Syndicate leader, Kefaya member</td>
<td>31 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anas al-Qassas</td>
<td>MB Youth</td>
<td>9 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amr al-Beltagi</td>
<td>MB Youth</td>
<td>9 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ahmed Abdel Fattah</td>
<td>Former MB blogger</td>
<td>26 Jun. 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdel Monem al-Mahmoud</td>
<td>Former MB blogger</td>
<td>30 Jun. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magdy Amer</td>
<td>Former MB</td>
<td>17 Jan. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibrahim Houdaiby</td>
<td>Former MB</td>
<td>1 Mar. 2011</td>
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### Activists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Date(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Esraa Abdel Fattah</td>
<td>April 6th Youth Movement, Egyptian Democratic Academy</td>
<td>6 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarek El-Kholy</td>
<td>April 6th Youth Movement</td>
<td>13 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amr Ezz</td>
<td>April 6th Youth Movement</td>
<td>8 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ahmed Maher</td>
<td>April 6th Youth Movement</td>
<td>9 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed Naguib</td>
<td>Board of Trustees of the Revolution</td>
<td>20 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasser Abdel Hamid</td>
<td>Democratic Front Party</td>
<td>15 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadi El-Ghazali Harb</td>
<td>Democratic Front Party</td>
<td>8 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdel Rahman Samir</td>
<td>ElBaradei Campaign</td>
<td>26 Feb. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilal Diab</td>
<td>Ghad Party</td>
<td>20 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bassem Fathi</td>
<td>Ghad Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abdel Rahman Faris</td>
<td>Independent activist</td>
<td>9 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally Moore</td>
<td>Independent activist</td>
<td>13 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustafa Abbas</td>
<td>Justice and Freedom Youth</td>
<td>27 Feb. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed Said</td>
<td>Justice and Freedom Youth</td>
<td>27 Feb. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haitham Salah</td>
<td>Justice and Freedom Youth</td>
<td>3 Mar. 2011</td>
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<td>Khaled Sayed</td>
<td>Justice and Freedom Youth</td>
<td>28 Feb. 2011</td>
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<td>Mustafa Shawqi</td>
<td>Justice and Freedom Youth</td>
<td>5 Mar. 2011</td>
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<td>Hany Enan</td>
<td>Kefaya</td>
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<td>George Ishak</td>
<td>Kefaya</td>
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<td>Mohamed Abbas</td>
<td>Muslim Brotherhood Youth</td>
<td>28 Feb. 2011</td>
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<td>Moaz Abdel Karim</td>
<td>Muslim Brotherhood Youth</td>
<td>10 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mohamed al-Qassas</td>
<td>Muslim Brotherhood Youth</td>
<td>21 Mar. 2011</td>
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<td>Islam Lotfy</td>
<td>Muslim Brotherhood Youth</td>
<td>2 Mar. 2011</td>
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<td>Mosab Ragab</td>
<td>Muslim Brotherhood Youth</td>
<td>7 Mar. 2011</td>
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<td>Hebah Ibrahim</td>
<td>Nasserist Party</td>
<td>30 Mar. 2011</td>
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<td>Dalia Moussa</td>
<td>Socialist Renewal</td>
<td>3 Mar. 2011</td>
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<td>Abdel Razek Eid</td>
<td>Union of Revolutionary Youth</td>
<td>23 Mar. 2011</td>
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<td>Abdullah Helmi</td>
<td>Union of Revolutionary Youth</td>
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<td><strong>The Democratic Front Party</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Osama el-Ghazali Harb</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>28 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rizk al-Mala</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary-General</td>
<td>13 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mohamed Mansour Hassan</td>
<td>Executive Office Member</td>
<td>22 Mar. 2011</td>
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<td>Ibrahim Nawwar</td>
<td>Executive Office Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Silwa Suleiman</td>
<td>Executive Office Member</td>
<td>30 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sameh Antoun</td>
<td>Executive Office Member (former)</td>
<td>14 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaled Sarour</td>
<td>Secretary of Organization and Membership</td>
<td>10 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shehab Wagih</td>
<td>Secretary of Youth</td>
<td>12 Mar. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salah Fadel</td>
<td>High Committee Member</td>
<td>8 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mohamed Nosseir</td>
<td>High Committee Member</td>
<td>3 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other Party Leaders Interviewed</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mustafa Abdel-Aziz</td>
<td>Conservatives Party</td>
<td>4 Jul. 2010</td>
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<td>Magdy Qorqor</td>
<td>Islamic Labor Party, leader</td>
<td>20 Jan. 2011</td>
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<td>Hamdeen Sabahi</td>
<td>Karama Party, chairman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ahmed Hassan</td>
<td>Nasserist Party, Secretary-General</td>
<td>19 Jan. 2011,</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Mohamed Sayyid Ahmed
Nasserist Party, Secretary of Political Affairs (2010-2011)
26 Jan. 2011

### Ali Mohamed
Nasserist Party, Secretary of Youth
16 Mar. 2011

### Ghareb al-Damati
Nasserist Party, Deputy Secretary of Youth
23 Mar. 2011

### Mohamed Anwar Sadat
Reform and Development Party, Chairman
16 Mar. 2011

### Abouleila Madi
Wasat Party, Chairman
26 Jan. 2011

### Experts and Journalists Consulted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation/Title</th>
<th>Date(s) Interviewed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hala Mustafa</td>
<td>Al-Ahram Center for Political Studies, <em>Al-Dimuqratiya</em> Journal, Editor-in-Chief</td>
<td>1 Jul. 2010, 21 Jul. 2010</td>
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<td>Dina Shehata</td>
<td>Al-Ahram Center for Political Studies, Senior Researcher</td>
<td>2 Aug. 2010</td>
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<td>Ahmed Samih</td>
<td>The Andalus Center for Tolerance and Non-Violence Studies</td>
<td>8 Jul. 2010, 13 Jul. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ziad Aly</td>
<td>Alzwad, associate of Wael Ghonim</td>
<td>24 Mar. 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mustapha Kamal al-Sayyid</td>
<td>Cairo University, Political Scientist</td>
<td>5 Aug. 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mahmoud Salem</td>
<td>“Sandmonkey,” blogger</td>
<td>29 Jun. 2010</td>
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Court, former judge


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