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Introduction

FOLLOWING THE LARGE-SCALE POPULAR uprising that toppled President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011, Egypt witnessed a polarization between Islamist and secular nationalist forces. Ultimately, this contentious dynamic culminated in the military toppling of the country's first democratically elected post-revolution president, Mohamed Morsi of the Islamist movement al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, better known in English as the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan will be used throughout this book). As soon as it took power, the new military-dominated administration led by Abdel Fattah al-Sisi undertook a campaign of repression, violently breaking up Ikhwan protests, killing a few thousand and arresting tens of thousands more. Remarkably, it did so with considerable support from nationalist secularists and revolutionaries who had earlier protested in their millions against Morsi's tenure and who had initially taken to the streets to denounce the tradition of regime-led oppression in their country.

Even more striking was the extent to which the new military-dominated order and its supporters instantly sought to ground their legitimacy by invoking a historical precedent with great symbolic weight and situating themselves in relation to the legacy of Gamal

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Abdel Nasser, Egypt's second president and in many ways the country's founding political figure. Indeed, the then young, charismatic army officer did everything in his power to repress the Ikhwan during his presidency, which lasted from 1954 until his death in 1970. The Sisi administration, state media, and public commentators sought to reclaim Nasser as a powerful symbol who had prevailed against the Islamists in his own day by offering the alternative ideology of secular-leaning Arab nationalism.[1] With no well-defined ideology of their own, contemporary nationalists and secularists filled their ideological vacuum with Nasserist terms and slogans. They depicted the Ikhwan as untrustworthy and dangerous. The Islamist organization had a grand design to hijack and Islamize the identity of the Egyptian nationalist state, they insisted. Huge portraits of Nasser filled Tahrir Square, and anti-Islamist activists drew nostalgia-tinged parallels between the former president and Sisi, an irony conveyed by the *Guardian* correspondent in Cairo, who reported that although Nasser was the man the Ikhwan wanted to forget, he was very much part of the new Egyptian psyche.[2]

The Origins of the Nationalist-Islamist Fault Line

In so many ways, this recent wave of repression echoed earlier efforts by Egyptian regimes to crush the Ikhwan in 1948, 1954, and again in the second half of the 1960s. Although Egypt was initially the main battlefield, the nationalist-Islamist struggle spread to neighboring countries, undermining the development of the fragile postcolonial states in the Middle East. Today, the divide between nationalists, on the one hand, and Islamists, on the other, is a major cleavage not only in Egyptian politics but also across the Middle East and beyond. This division goes so deep that it has come to be invested with profound existential meaning. Writing in the Arabic-language newspaper *al-Hayat*, the Syrian poet Adonis, a prominent secularist and a vehement critic of the Islamists, has gone so far as to argue that the struggle between Islamists and secular-leaning nationalists is more cultural and civilizational than it is political or ideological; it

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is organically linked to nothing less than the struggle over the future of Arab identity.[3] In a similar vein, the Ikhwan portray the "fascist coup" that removed Morsi from power as an attack on the whole Islamist project, and even as an extension of the Westernized secular ruling elite ideology which targets Islam. For the Islamists, the battle against their secular-leaning opponents is a stark existential struggle between faith and *kufr*, or unbelief.[4] Although both secular and religious nationalists depict their confrontation as a clash of cultures, identities, and even civilizations, what such narratives leave out are the real objects of the struggle: the state, its power, and its position as custodian of the public sphere.

This book traces this profound fault line back in time through decades of contemporary Egyptian history. The rise of both the Islamist and nationalist political forces from the beginning of the twentieth century is located in their common struggle against British colonialism and a domestic political establishment accused of collaborating with the occupying power. In addition, the book places particular focus on the origins of the conflict between these two leading social movements in the aftermath of the July 1952 coup that ousted the monarchy. Far from being either straightforwardly binary or inevitable—as it is often represented by participants and outside observers alike—the struggle between the nationalists and the Islamists involved much ambiguity and complexity. It emerged and was consolidated through a series of contingent events, personality clashes, and workaday political rivalries. Power, not ideology, was the driver. If this is the case, what explains the escalation of the confrontation between the Islamists and the nationalists into an all-out war that has endured to this day? Why did both sides subsequently invest their rivalry with cultural and existential meaning? What does the use of culture as a weapon of choice by the nationalists and the Islamists reveal about the identity and imagination of leading postcolonial social forces? In what ways have they reproduced the structure of Western colonialism, which was filled with the rhetoric of domination and annihilation of the Other? Finally, what are the costs and consequences of this prolonged confrontation for state and society,

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and to what extent has it impacted the formation of national identity and institution building in Egypt and neighboring Arab states?

The Free Officers and the Ikhwan: A Bittersweet Connection

Before the 1952 Revolution, the Ikhwan and the Free Officers had initially joined ranks to overthrow the British-backed monarchy. Although their union might prove controversial now, contextualizing it allows us to see that early instantiations of these two leading social and political movements displayed much in common. Both dedicated themselves to anti-colonialism and reformation of Arab and Muslim society. At the heart of their programs was the struggle for national liberation and the empowerment of the nation to resist what were seen as alien influences and Westernization. In the first half of the twentieth century, nationalist and Islamist public intellectuals and activists viewed culture—including religion, language, and tradition—as having a pivotal role to play in fueling transformative change. Both deployed it as their weapon of choice, even as each stressed certain aspects and elements of this culture over others. Their goals were intertwined, since there was a consensus that national liberation and empowerment would require a cultural renaissance and an awakening of the masses. *Islah al-fard wa-l-mujtama'*, or reformation of the individual and society, was a prerequisite for the emancipation of the homeland from colonial domination. Sharing a common sociological lineage, both groups understood political deliverance and salvation with reference to questions of identity, social justice, and cultural renewal; they shared suspicions that Egypt faced a conspiracy mounted by international actors in cahoots with an indigenous fifth column. They believed there was an urgent need for strong state actors capable of cleansing the land of corrupt politicians and traitors, and to protect Egyptian society from enemies at home and abroad. Both anointed themselves as the guardian and vanguard of the people, promising the masses freedom and deliverance from hardship and inequity. According to the incisive Egyptian cultural critic Sherif

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Younis, the two groups clashed violently not because of radical differences between them but in fact precisely because they were too similar, with each seeing its mission as being to rescue the country from bondage and reset history on the right path. In the words of Younis, who is critical of both groups, "the struggle between the Ikhwan and the Free Officers was over power politics and authority because they shared a similar worldview."[5]

It was not until the late 1950s, after the confrontation between the Free Officers and the Ikhwan, that ideological lines between Arab nationalists and Islamists truly hardened. Before that rupture, the distinction between them was blurred, as both mined Arab and Islamic heritage for ideas and moral capital. Both put a high premium on identity, *asala* (authenticity), and modernity, and diagnosed the challenges facing Egypt and the Arab neighborhood in similar terms. The problem, as they saw it, was how to respond to the domineering colonial West and to inspire and trigger political and economic empowerment and a cultural renaissance. Both viewed Egypt as a spearhead in the struggle to bring about Arab and Muslim renewal and emancipation from Western domination. For example, Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Ikhwan, embraced Egyptian nationalism as an extension of his Islamic faith. Farid Abdel Khaleq, a disciple and confidant of Banna, recalls the latter saying that there is no contradiction between Islam and love of one's country. "Al-Banna was a religious nationalist who often reminded us that the Prophet cried when he had to migrate from Mecca, and that he would not have left if he had not been forced to do so," said Abdel Khaleq. "For *al-shahid* [martyr] al-Banna, Arab nationalism is an integral part of Muslim culture and Islam encompasses both *al-wataniyya* [territorial or local nationalism] and *al-qawmiyya* [pan-Arab nationalism]."[6] Thus, up until the 1952 Free Officers' taking of power, both the nationalists and the Islamists had long defined themselves in contrast to the colonial "Other." It is this reconfiguration of the old dynamic of anti-colonial "Othering" that in turn contributed to consolidating their split.[7] The war within exceeded the war with the colonizer in brutality. Each side denied the humanity of the Other and portrayed its rival as a traitor or even a *kafir*, an infidel.

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Despite their initial union, the Free Officers and the Ikhwan had a complicated business-like relationship. In contrast with the Ikhwan, the Free Officers did not have a social base of their own, and they hoped to utilize the Islamist movement's organized networks to boost their profile. But the Ikhwan, led by the Supreme Guide Hassan Hudaybi following the death of Banna in 1949, endeavored to climb to power on the shoulders of the young army officers. Both groups hoped to inherit the spoils of the old regime and reconstruct state and society in their own image, though they had no preconceived master plan beyond that of seizing power. Soon after the coup, the Free Officers' and the Ikhwan's interests and lofty aspirations collided. The brief honeymoon between the soldiers of God—Hudaybi and the Ikhwan—and the soldiers of the nation—Nasser and the Free Officers—had been short-lived, their marriage of convenience eroded by their thirst for power. Both felt entitled to be at the helm of the new Egypt and to chart its destiny, with each hoping to bring about a coalition in which the other camp would be reduced to a junior partner. Both had felt that the high stakes justified the risks involved in a confrontation of this magnitude. Each had gambled that the other camp would blink and step back from the brink of abyss—but neither did.

It took less than two years for this power struggle to turn these two former allies into bitter enemies. After the Ikhwan threatened Nasser's authority in 1954, they faced the brunt of his fury. He brutally suppressed the movement in the course of the 1950s and 1960s, imprisoning thousands of its members, including top leaders like Hudaybi and Sayyid Qutb. As we will see, this violent confrontation became a defining moment in the political history of Egypt and the wider region. Ultimately, it is that clash, and the Ikhwan's humiliating experience of mass incarceration in prison camps, that triggered and consolidated a long war between the two foes. This extended showdown consumed the energies of the two leading political and social movements in the Arab world and had long-lasting consequences: it deformed the development of postcolonial Arab politics by polarizing and militarizing Arab societies and sowing the seeds for durable authoritarianism.

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The rupture between Nasser's Free Officers and Hudaybi's Ikhwan facilitated and expedited the construction of an expansive and intrusive security state apparatus, designed to protect the regime. The violent struggle shaped the identity of *al-dawla al-wataniyya*, or the national state, in two significant ways. First, the new military rulers prioritized securitization, particularly national (internal) security or regime survival, at the expense of formal institutionalization. In the end, internal security took precedence over individual liberty and free political association. The regime's emphasis on both freedom and state security represents one of the most dichotomous aspects of Nasserist politics. As Nasser built a multilayered security apparatus to carry out his ambitious social agenda and protect his "revolution," the security services took on a life of their own in their competition for resources and influence, ultimately emerging as rival power centers. The military itself became directly involved in this bureaucratic rivalry. It established a security branch of its own and focused more on internal rather than external threats. As the security services came to exercise intrusive control over Egyptians' everyday lives, the original military regime established by Nasser and the Free Officers mutated into something sinister and oppressive. Moreover, the securitization and politicization of the Egyptian armed forces, together with a lack of professionalism and transparent decision making, was partly responsible for the country's humiliating defeat in the Six-Day War with Israel in June 1967 and the previous military debacle during the Suez Crisis in 1956.

Second, the rupture between the Free Officers and the Ikhwan—or between Arab nationalists and Islamists, more generally—shaped the moral economy and grand narratives of both movements toward the Western powers and Zionism, but also their developmental road map. Both portrayed themselves as anti-hegemonic, anti-colonial forces with an abiding commitment to achieving social justice and lifting the nation out of abject poverty and cultural decline. Both painted their rivalry as an extension of a greater struggle against external powers and foreign domination, as well as a quest for liberation, authenticity, and dignity. Each camp accused the other of being a crony of outside forces bent on controlling Arab and Muslim

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destiny and thwarting Arab unity and Islamic solidarity. Although Arab nationalists and Islamists portrayed each other as bitter enemies, their grand narratives and conceptions of both the Self and the Other mirrored one another. A critical upcoming doctoral dissertation from the London School of Economics on the formation of national identity in Egypt notes that the struggle for power that entrapped both movements in social antagonism is a direct result of the contingency of both their identity and their desire to shape Egypt's future on its own terms, with minimal participation or interference from the other.

This reduction of national identity into two "pure" oppositional and exclusive poles was already at play in the colonial framework's Othering of Egyptians as non-modern and in its dissemination of a subjectivity split into two poles: a modern and more European-like elite that stood in opposition to non-modern ordinary Egyptians, who had yet to be *re-formed*.[8] While both the Free Officers and the Ikhwan prioritized action over theory, they had also developed a Gramscian-like understanding of ideology as a powerful tool that could be used to manufacture popular consent, ensure the mobilization of the masses, and also help foster obedience and loyalty among their respective members. In the final analysis, the Free Officers and the Ikhwan became prisoners of their own ideological constructs, which limited their policy options and incurred strategic costs.

Third, Nasser's brutal suppression of the Ikhwan radicalized and militarized an important segment of the Islamist movement. With its members imprisoned en masse in prison camp conditions in the 1950s and 1960s, and facing torture and humiliation, the Ikhwan underwent a metamorphosis and fragmentation which gave rise to a more radicalized type of Islamist activism. Egyptian prisons of this period nurtured a subversive, revolutionary brand of Islamism which justified the use of violence to effect a top-down transformation of state and society. This subversive Islamist current aimed not only at replacing the Nasserist "apostate" state with what was envisioned as a Qur'anic political order but also at transforming the mainstream Ikhwan in its own revolutionary vision. The birth of violent Islamism

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or jihadism, as it came to be known in subsequent decades, owes its origins and intellectual roots to this episode.

Gamal Abdel Nasser versus Sayyid Qutb

Retracing this contentious episode of Egyptian history naturally entails an examination of two towering figures of Arab politics: Nasser and the man he had executed in 1966, Sayyid Qutb. The story of these two leaders testifies to the rise and formation of a new post-independence elite that went from being united against colonialism to tearing itself apart. In the aftermath of the Ikhwan-Nasserist split, two different camps from within this elite turned to battling one another as fiercely as they had previously battled against the foreign occupiers. While their struggles came to be invested with cultural and existential overtones, the biographies of Nasser and Qutb offered in this book highlight the fundamentally contingent nature of two individuals who could, in principle, have traded places with one another. The political careers of both men were marked by ideational fluidity, including dramatic shifts between different ideological poles. In their younger years, each stood on the side of the aisle that the other would later come to embrace. While Nasser moved in the underground networks of the Ikhwan in the early 1940s, the young Qutb vociferously opposed in the 1920s and 1930s what he understood to be regressive religious, social, and historical conventions prevalent in Egyptian society.

Both men were very much part of the same anti-colonial generation, preoccupied with shared concerns for cultural regeneration and national renaissance. As Nasser and Qutb grew up, the role of culture and civilization as drivers of progress was still being debated in Egypt and beyond. Outside of the Arab world, intellectuals had for a long time emphasized the role of the Enlightenment in bringing about a series of revolutions that led to national renaissance and economic and technological development across Europe. In Egypt, the process of acculturation instigated by the Napoleonic expedition in 1798 had meant that from the nineteenth century onwards the role of culture and religion in modernity was also debated in the country.

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This conversation included both Islamic writers such as Jamal-al-Din al-Afghani and Mohammed Abduh and secular Arab thinkers who had found refuge in Cairo and who had called for the separation of state and religion. By the 1940s, however, decades of colonialism and ideological vacuum had triggered a return to religion in literary and political circles and religious activism. Arabo-Islamic culture provided an ideational framework within which post-independence national identity could be projected and reworked in order to foster popular mobilization against the occupation. Anti-colonial nationalists viewed culture as both a tool of domination—a foundation of Western domination—and a means for liberation. On the one hand, the colonial European powers had used culture to assert Western superiority over Arabs and Muslims. On the other hand, anti-colonial nationalists made a conscious choice to utilize their own indigenous national culture as a way to regain agency, self-esteem, and dignity.

In their search for the most effective ways to lift the Egyptian masses out of abject poverty and move beyond the sociocultural decline that, in their opinion, characterized the aftermath of the 1919–1922 revolution, both Nasser and Qutb experimented with different programs and ideas for achieving these ends. Right up until the moment when they parted ways in 1953–1954, they were both in the same ideological trenches, battling the old regime and struggling to replace it with an indigenous-led order. Both were consumed with the question of how to wrest independence from colonial control and protect Egyptian sovereignty. The freedom that they sought implied social and economic development that would rid Egypt of parasitical capitalism, which they both saw as an extension of colonial control.

Nasser's place in history and postcolonial Egypt was assured by his role at the head of the Free Officers movement, which toppled the Egyptian monarchy in a putsch in 1952. The military junta formed a heterogeneous group, but as a co-founder of the movement, Nasser had always been influential. At the beginning, preferring to work from behind the scenes, Nasser had asked Mohammed Naguib, an experienced general with a high profile, to become the official figurehead of the Free Officers. Nonetheless, a fierce rivalry emerged soon between

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the two ambitious military men. Naguib was beloved by the masses, a development which directly threatened Nasser's control over the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the executive decision-making body, and the two officers shared different visions of post-independence Egypt. As the Ikhwan attempted a rapprochement with Naguib, Nasser moved to oust his friend-turned-foe. As chapter 2 shows, after much political wrangling and skirmishing, Nasser eventually succeeded in ousting Naguib as president of Egypt. If at first Nasser had struggled to win over the hearts and minds of the masses, his anti-colonial calls to resistance against imperialism and his promises to overturn the socio-economic inequalities created by colonial capitalism made him popular. Perhaps what endeared Nasser most to the Egyptian public was his recurrent use of dialectal Arabic in his speeches, especially in addressing ordinary Egyptians. Unlike the political establishment in the old regime, including the Palace, Nasser paid particular attention to his audience and tailored his addresses accordingly, giving the impression that every Egyptian had a place in his thoughts. In a way, he used his vision of society, which included social justice, dignity, and economic development, to cement an organic bond with Egyptians. Nasser's special relationship with the people gave him more control over the state and the reshaping of national identity.

In the second half of the 1950s Nasser articulated an Arab nationalist ideology and a socialist political program, with the goal of consolidating his hegemony inside Egypt and in the Arab neighborhood. His instrumentalization of Arab nationalism was designed to shape the identity of the Egyptian state, an identity embedded in anti-colonial, anti-hegemonic rhetoric, and embodied in authenticity, dignity, and liberation. As Aziz al-Azmeh, an academic critic, notes, far from being mutually contradictory, Egyptianism and Arab nationalism in fact complemented one another: Egyptianism was framed in general nationalist terms rather than specifically in contrast to Arabism, a definition that "rendered it possible for Egyptianism to join up with Arabism and for the two to shade off into one another."[9] Most accounts of Nasser's Arab nationalism focus on the geostrategic advantage accrued by his pursuit of such a politics and

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its anti-imperialistic dimension. However, his instrumentalization of Arab nationalism also did a great deal to augment his legitimacy at home. In fact, these domestic and geostrategic aspects were mutually reinforcing.[10]

Despite his apparent openness to the masses, Nasser did not tolerate dissent and political pluralism because, in his opinion, they were a luxury that postcolonial Egypt could not afford at that stage. He prioritized the unity of the Egyptian nation and its people, and considered liberal democracy and political parties a threat to social harmony and national unity. During his youth, he had been bitterly disappointed by the political establishment's apathy and subservience to the occupying power. Nasser saw political parties as the root of corruption and the huge economic disparities between the pro-capitalist upper classes and the impoverished masses. He also accused the old political elite of being responsible for the growing fragmentation and de-politicization of the majority of ordinary Egyptians. He sought to cleanse the new system of mainstream political parties as the last remnants of the old regime, fearing that opening up the political sphere immediately after independence would allow the old guard to make its way back into power. Nasser ended up replacing the old elite with a new one. Indeed, the Free Officers monopolized political life and also extended state control over the religious establishment in an effort to radically reconstruct the country's society and economy. Nasser and his comrades, like the Ikhwan, conceived of their role as a vanguard. Once in power, they acted like one, seizing the state and using it as a vehicle to implement their ambitious agenda. Both the pan-Arab nationalists and the pan-Islamists were in this sense fundamentally statist movements, differing only in their ideological orientation. Neither had the vision or the foresight to build new institutions or to restructure the postcolonial state which they had inherited and reform its institutions. Both were more concerned with exercising power than they were with institution building, citizen empowerment, and participation.

Despite Nasser's assertion that he envisioned a popular participatory democracy in Egypt, he mainly focused on monopolizing

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power. From the outset, Nasser and his supporters among the Free Officers dominated the Revolutionary Command Council and greatly restricted dissenting voices.[11] Moreover, the RCC's marginalization of other political players, including the Ikhwan, set the stage for the Nasserist state to develop along authoritarian lines. Similarly, the Ikhwan's record during and after the coup displayed little evidence that the group would have acted democratically or would have been less authoritarian than the Free Officers. In fact, the next chapters will show that the Ikhwan supported Nasser's anti-democratic measures as long as they received their share of power in the nascent order. In a similar vein, in 2012 the Ikhwan's unwillingness to enter into a dialogue with the country's secular forces and its determination to change the constitution, despite widespread protests, allowed the military to seize power and oust Morsi. Moreover, since recapturing power, the Sisi administration has been decisive in trying to silence the opposition. Thus, in both cases and across different timeframes, nationalists and Islamists alike have reduced the role of the state to a coercive and functionalist tool.

Indeed, from the outset, Nasser systematically eliminated the opposition and moved against all political currents perceived to represent a threat to his rule. He banned all the political parties that had participated in political life under the old regime. He also brutally suppressed independent leftist and progressive voices in the late 1950s, after they had started to organize themselves and to call for popular political participation and more radical reforms of the economy and foreign policy. Nasser's Arab socialism did not include space for independent socialists, many of whom were forced to join the ruling party after spending years in prison. The same can be said of Nasser's relationship with Egyptian communists, who were never included in decision making despite their role in the theoretical outlining of Nasser's Arab socialism. Moreover, under Nasser, and despite his rapprochement with the USSR, the communist movement, which had been greatly repressed during British occupation, was further decimated and most members were imprisoned and sent to forced labor camps.

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While the Free Officers thus severely repressed an array of political forces, including communists and independent socialists, Nasser and the secular nationalism that he espoused are too commonly seen as one side of a binary and oppositional pairing with Islamism. This is an established and misleading dichotomy of two monolithic ideas that have dominated conventional thinking on Middle Eastern politics. A major conclusion of this study is that neither nationalism nor Islamism were or are monolithic or ideologically unified movements, but rather that they involve diverse perspectives and distinctive individuals and factions. Nevertheless, despite the wide spectrum of political opponents targeted by the Nasserist state, its repeated persecution of Ikhwan members and the emphasis of the regime on its all-out war against the Islamist organization stand out as a defining feature of postcolonial Arab politics. The year 1954 marked a key turning point. An attempt on Nasser's life by a member of the Ikhwan's underground wing provided the Free Officers with an immediate reason to crack down on the Islamist movement and offered a cover for its effort to neutralize a key player in Egyptian politics. At that time, the Ikhwan were the only oppositional force powerful enough to contest Nasser's rule and challenge his hegemony. The removal of the Ikhwan from the political scene would therefore free his hand in domestic and foreign policy, and allow him to implement his social agenda without outside hindrance. The die was cast for a test of wills between the Free Officers and the Ikhwan.

The Ikhwan's framing of the struggle between the nationalists and the Islamists as an existential, zero-sum conflict gave Nasser further rationale for his brutal repression of the organization. It also allowed him to use the state as a way to monopolize the religious space with the goal of consolidating his dominance. Thus, from 1954 the Ikhwan faced the brunt of a state security apparatus determined to dismantle it and delegitimize it as a credible political alternative. The Nasserist state deployed all of its powers to neutralize the Ikhwan and consolidate its own control of society. This involved physical repression, including the incarceration of thousands of the movement's rank and file. It also involved efforts to accumulate religious capital for

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the regime itself, by integrating religious institutions into the state framework and mobilizing the religious establishment as a counterweight to the Islamist opposition.

Beyond the human and material costs, the long war that broke out between the pan-Arab nationalists and the pan-Islamists immediately after the end of the colonial moment has derailed the normalization of state-society relations and the articulation of a cohesive national identity. By monopolizing social space, dominating discourse, and militarizing the political, pan-Arab nationalists and pan-Islamists put society on a war footing. The result is that decolonization did not usher in fundamental change either institutionally or sociologically. No rupture occurred in the organization of the state, the restructuring of the military-security apparatus, the aspirations of the elite, and the relationship between the ruler and the ruled.

It was in the context of this long war that, in the Ikhwan, Sayyid Qutb emerged as a figure who would match the strength of Nasser's ideological influence and legacy. Already a prominent writer by the time Nasser came to power, Qutb continued to produce increasingly radical Islamist works of enormous influence even after his imprisonment by Nasser. In addition, from his jail cell Qutb also took over the leadership of an underground paramilitary faction with ties to the Ikhwan, representing an immediate and a clear danger from within to the Islamist movement. In these ways, he competed with the mainstream leadership of the Ikhwan to advance and implement a revolutionary Islamist ideology the reverberations of which are still felt in Egypt and around the world today. Qutb's execution by the Nasserist state in 1966 only served to further cement his legacy.

Ever since, Qutb's memory and manifestos have nourished and inspired most subsequent waves of militant Islamists, although many of the radical religious activists who have modeled themselves on him have misunderstood his call. As a leading former militant, Kamal Habib, who was inspired by the Qutbian call for arms, noted, "We read into Qutb what we wanted to read without understanding the differences in context, social, and political circumstances and the severe prison conditions under which Qutb lived and penned

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his manifestos." In a way, in the Egyptian and the Arab imagination in general both Nasser and Qutb have become mythical figures or rhetorical devices, but their invoked images often serve political and ideological projects.[12] In contrast to Nasser, whose image allows plural interpretations, Qutb's is more ideologically fixed and divisive. Habib stresses that the endurance of Qutb's legacy lies in establishing once and for all "the charisma of shari'a as a superior way of life, an inspiration for action." It is no longer important to read and interpret Qutb's words because his foundational concept—the charisma of *al-shari'a* (Islamic laws)—opens the way for multiple interpretations by radical religious activists, adds Habib. "Qutb could not be held accountable for the use and abuse of his ideas by young men like me who are dissatisfied with the secular status quo. Each generation invented its own Sayyid Qutb."[13]

The works that Qutb produced during his prison years would eventually come to have an impact far beyond Egypt. After September 11, 2001, his books were dusted off in Western, particularly U.S., libraries, and thumbed by scholars searching for clues to the inspiration and motivations of jihadist groups like Al Qaeda. In addition to Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, Qutb has become a household name in America as a supposed "philosopher of terror." In this context, too, he has been terribly misunderstood, presented as a caricatured image. What this reflects is the extent to which, far from being confined to the home front, the struggle between Nasser's pan-Arab nationalism and Qutb's pan-Islamism came to be enmeshed in the Cold War rivalry between the superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. The two dominant social movements exported their ideas externally and projected their values and worldviews assertively. Nasser's attempt to construct a coalition of Arab states to maximize Egypt's influence regionally and globally pitted him against the United States and, to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union. Viewing Nasser's Arab nationalism as a threat to its vital interests in the region and its local allies, Washington clashed repeatedly with the Egyptian leader and tried to cut him down to size. Ironically, throughout the Cold War, the United States aligned itself with Islamist-based states

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and movements to counterbalance Nasser's radical secular Arab nationalism, as well as socialism and communism. For Arab nationalists, America's hostility and conspiracy against "the Arab nation" is taken as an article of faith, culminating in Nasser's crushing defeat in the Six-Day War in June 1967, which marked the beginning of the decline of secular Arab nationalism and the rise of Islamism.

In Qutb's own lifetime and throughout the Cold War, despite their own harsh anti-Western rhetoric, his disciples were more actively opposed to Russian communism than to American liberal capitalism. The Islamists and the United States found themselves in the same trenches battling both Nasser's secular Arab nationalism and the expansion of socialism and communism in Muslim lands in general. Although Qutb warned that the confrontation with America was inevitable because of the latter's crusading spirit and imperial design, he prioritized the fight against the enemy within. From the mid-1950s until the end of the Cold War in 1989, with only minor exceptions, Qutb's followers battled radical secular nationalism and socialism of the Nasserist variety. They allied themselves with the United States by default, a realpolitik position culminating in a holy alliance against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Built on shifting sands, the informal association between militant Islamists and U.S. foreign policy crumbled once the Soviet army retreated from Afghanistan in disarray in 1989. It was only with the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the United States as the unrivaled superpower that the dynamics of the relationship between American foreign policy and Islamists underwent a dramatic transformation, with accommodation and coexistence giving way to a new and deadly zero-sum struggle.

Besieged and under attack at home, a small but critical segment among Islamists—many of them influenced by Qutb's thinking—decided not only to attack U.S. interests worldwide but also to bring war to the American homeland. This was a radical departure from the ways in which anti-colonial Islamist movements had waged their struggles in the past. The fateful decision by militant Islamists to target the U.S. metropolis had major repercussions on global politics,

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triggering a series of reactions and counter-reactions—a U.S. global war on terror—that has yet to run its course. Ever since, the United States has waged multiple wars against militant Islamists, and the latter have expanded their attacks worldwide against Western interests and pro-U.S. Muslim rulers.

None of this is intended to suggest a straightforward causal link between the confrontation between Nasser and Qutb, on the one hand, and the 9/11 wars, on the other. There is no continuum between Sayyid Qutb and Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden, even though both internalized his worldview. But the 9/11 story shows the bitter and enduring inheritance of the prolonged confrontation between Arab nationalism and Islamism, and how Qutb's ideas and life story have found fertile and receptive soil among young radicalized Muslims who impose their own interpretation on his life and works. Although the radical Islamist wing has mutated and changed focus, targets, and tactics, it has been nourished on the Qutbian diet, its sense of victimhood and injustice and its binary division of the world. This explains why the Qutbian legacy was an important variable in the recent rupture in relations between the Islamists and the United States.

The Qutbian and Nasserist Voices

The prolonged conflict between the nationalists represented in the figure of Nasser and the Islamists represented in the figure of Qutb deserves serious historical attention. Rather than being diametrically opposite, the movements that Nasser and Qutb represent have mirrored each other in three ways: (1) the shaping of their idealized aspirations by postcolonial disappointments; (2) the failure in achieving their strategic goals; and finally (3) the authoritarianism of their movements. The book thus seeks to overcome the simple either-or approaches that have come to dominate the analysis of Arab political and social order and to give concrete and personal form to an Arab nationalist–Islamist dialectic.

The book thus offers an original take on Nasser and Qutb and the movements they represent. The nationalist-Islamist struggle

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was more about power and the role of the state than it was about competing visions and ideologies. The different personalities engaged in the historical struggle were important elements in shaping the tensions and conflicts, and even the cooperation, between the two movements.

Contrasting sharply with the dominant narrative about Nasser, in this book the portrait drawn by his fellow travelers shows that his politics remained quite fluid and uncertain until after the 1952 coup, and that they only crystallized once he was in power. Nasser's journey was uncharted, and on the way he made discoveries and his views evolved and matured. In interviews with Nasser's contemporaries and confidants, I pressed them on the reasons behind Nasser's change of heart toward the Ikhwan and his subsequent decision to brutally suppress the group. According to Nasser's comrades who were privy to internal debates within the RCC, the executive decision-making body of the nascent military regime, Nasser and the Free Officers were willing to include the Ikhwan as a junior partner but refused to grant them veto power over pivotal decisions. A picture emerges of the young Colonel Nasser, ambitious and determined, who methodically purged potential rivals and gradually consolidated his power. In the first two years after the coup, Nasser might not have had a road map or a blueprint for the future, confidants say, but he never lost sight of his ultimate destination: to solely rule Egypt. "My father was not interested in power for its own sake but to transform Egypt from a colonized and backward nation to a free, modernized, and powerful one," said Nasser's daughter, Huda. "He knew the inhumane conditions under which most Egyptians lived, especially the *fellahin* [peasants], and desired to lift up people out of misery. Yes, he was in a hurry to alleviate the plight of poor Egyptians and end the country's dependency on the West."[14] Nevertheless, there is relative consensus among Nasser's friends and foes that he aimed at building a top-down centralized authoritarian order in which he, together with a small inner circle, was the ultimate arbitrator. From the beginning Nasser was instrumental in launching a systematic campaign to dismantle the formal and representative institutions of the old regime,

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including the judiciary and the political parties, and to consolidate military rule.

Although Nasser's acquaintances acknowledge that initially the conflict with the Ikhwan was contingent and revolved around power, they insist it morphed into something more ideological and visceral. In this, they take a similar stance to that of Qutb's supporters, who depict the split in similar terms. It is worth mentioning that the relationship between power and ideology, consistent with the larger theme of this book, is fluid. Both variables are relevant and will be highlighted throughout the analysis. For more clarity, the thrust of the argument is that the ideology-power nexus is interactive or mutually constituted but not equal, meaning that ideology matters but is of secondary importance to power. In summary, the confrontation between Arab nationalists and Islamists was more a struggle between two camps vying for influence and political supremacy than one about ideology per se, though as the conflict escalated in the late 1950s and 1960s it took on ideological overtones.

According to the dominant Nasserist narrative, the Ikhwan conspired with "Arab reaction," meaning Saudi Arabia and its allies, to destroy the leader of the Arab nationalist movement—Nasser; they were the spearhead of a reactionary counterrevolution, hatched particularly by the United States and Britain, to replace the defiant Arab nationalist government with a puppet regime. The Nasser camp viewed the confrontation with the Islamists as an extension of a broader and more dangerous struggle with America and its regional allies. Nasser was convinced, said his aides, that the United States was waging a war by proxy against him and deploying political Islamists in Egypt and neighboring Arab states as agents and conspirators. According to Sami Sharaf, Nasser's chief of staff and keeper of his secrets, the Egyptian president sent Qutb to the gallows in 1966 because he said that would deal a fatal blow to the Islamists inside and outside Egypt. Nasser also believed, Sharaf added, that executing Qutb would deliver a hard blow to his foreign enemies: Saudi Arabia and its superpower patron, the United States.[15]

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The irony is that Qutb and his followers believed that Nasser was an agent of the unholy Zionist-American alliance tasked with weakening Islam from within and diluting its influence in state and society. I did not meet a single Qutbian who did not subscribe to a variant of this conspiracy theory: Nasser was an agent, a tool of the Americans, and of Soviet communists to a lesser extent. Similarly, the Ikhwan leadership also believed that both the United States and the Soviet Union incited Nasser against the Islamist movement, which, in their calculus, threatened their strategic interests in the Middle East.

Moreover, Arab nationalists note that political authoritarianism undermined the Nasserist state and made it vulnerable to internal and external challenges, culminating, in their opinion, in Israel's crushing defeat of "the most powerful army in the Middle East," in the Six-Day War in June 1967. "Everything revolved around Nasser, who turned into a cult of personality at the cost of building durable institutions," lamented Khaled Mohieddin, a friend of Nasser and a leading Free Officer who participated in the 1952 coup.[16] Nasser "prioritized bread and butter over personal freedom, though the two are not mutually exclusive," acknowledged Mohamed Fayek, one of Nasser's leading aides from the beginning of the revolution until his arrest and imprisonment by President Anwar Sadat in 1971. "A one-party rule and lack of checks and balances and transparency brought ruin to our institutions, particularly the military. Nasser unwittingly ended up presiding over a police state"—strong words uttered by a trusted and loyal member of Nasser's inner circle.[17]

Others contended that Nasser never shed his clandestine sensibility, having spent many years plotting to overthrow the old regime, and ruled Egypt with a bunker mentality. According to Abdel Ghafar Shukr, in charge of ideological indoctrination of the youth, in 1961 Nasser adamantly proposed the establishment of a paramilitary organization to confront reactionary forces in Egypt and neighboring Arab states, a fact that throws further light, in Shukr's opinion, on Nasser's belief in revolutionary action as opposed to formal institutions.[18] Shukr, privy to the internal dynamics of the Nasserist state,

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said that institutions existed but were systematically degraded by Nasser and his men and that power was concentrated in *al-za'im*'s (the sole leader's) hands. "So when Nasser died from a heart attack in 1970, the Nasserist project fell like a ripened fruit."[19]

Contrary to the dominant narrative that portrays Nasser's defeat in the 1967 Six-Day War as the single most significant variable in allowing Islamists to subsequently consolidate their hegemony in Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East, my interviews with participants, activists, politicians, and public intellectuals of all ideological colors point to Sadat's coming to power and control of the Egyptian state. Sadat launched a frontal assault against his predecessor's inheritance and legacy. The "pious president," as Sadat insisted on being called, built his own legitimacy on an informal alliance with Islamists and the "petrodollar" in the Arab Gulf and put the power of the state in the service of a drive to bring about a sea change in Egypt's economy, politics, and society. The revolt against Nasser's Arab socialism came from *within* the regime's power structure. Neither the Islamists nor the nationalists were as unified as they would have us believe. The two movements suffered internal dissension and faced rebellion from within. Activists, including Islamists and nationalists, chronicle the steps taken by the Sadat administration, from 1971 onwards, which empowered religiously based groups and fragmented and weakened secular nationalist and socialist forces.

Montasser al-Zayat, a former member of the militant Islamic Group who was a college student in the 1970s and is now a leading Islamist attorney, said that the coming to power of Sadat marked a significant shift in the fortune of religious activists. "Sadat's rule was a golden moment for the Islamist movement. He permitted us to organize and recruit followers on campus and outside and released the Ikhwan from Nasser's prisons and contributed to the religious revival that swept the *umma* in the 1970s," he said.[20] Zayat confessed that his generation had made a strategic error by rising up against Sadat. "If we had patience and forbearance, we could have gradually transformed Egypt into a truly Islamic society." Echoing the same point, Ibrahim Za'farani, an Islamist student in the 1970s and now

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an Ikhwan leader in Alexandria, said: "Our generation was normal and did not live in fear and underground. We had opportunities that previously our elders never dreamed of because of Sadat's positive approach to the Islamists."[21] Nevertheless, these same religious activists and university students of the 1970s say they never trusted Sadat and they judged him by his deeds. "We knew that Sadat was using religion for political ends," said Seif Abdel Fattah, now an engaged Islamic academic and a politician. "He could not fool us because we were conscious and politicized."[22] Wahid Abdel Majid, a liberal public intellectual, also stressed the pivotal role played by oil, money, power, and globalization in bringing about social and political transformation of Muslim countries during the 1970s. "Sadat played on people's hopes, fears, and greed to bury Nasserism and portray himself as the leader who would bring about salvation," said Abdel Majid, who does not hide his disdain for Sadat. "The name of his game was religion and the manipulation of religious symbols to restructure social and political space."[23]

Nevertheless, evidence shows that Sadat was an enabler who systematically paved the way for the new religious politics and revival to dominate the public space from the 1970s onwards. Not unlike Nasser, who privileged Arab nationalism and empowered it, Sadat cultivated the religious trend. In both cases, the postcolonial, postindependence state propped up ideologies that allowed it to construct a durable hegemony and secure its control.

According to Ikhwan members, the Islamist ascendency in the 1980s, the 1990s, and the first decade of the twenty-first century did not usher in either transformation or reformation of the movement; instead, it continued to feed the civil war between the Islamists and the Arab nationalists. Participants and activists say the Islamist group has been riven by a profound division between an ultraconservative old guard loyal to the memory of Qutb and an energetic group of younger, reform-minded figures. These two internal segments have clashed over substantive political, social, and strategic questions, as well as over the internal practices of the Ikhwan as an organization. The reformers have called for a fundamental restructuring

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to overcome what they see as the autocracy, patriarchy, and lack of transparency of the old guard.

These reformist voices whom I interviewed at length include senior members like Mohamed Abdel Sattar, a reformist leader of the 1970s generation and a scientist by profession, who knew the Ikhwan intimately from the inside and spent three years in Mubarak's prisons in the second half of the 1990s; Ahmed Ra'if, who belongs to the Ikhwan school of thought but no longer has any formal affiliation with the organization, and who spent years in prison as part of Qutb's Tanzim but who prides himself on thinking outside the Islamist box; and Farid Abdel Khaleq, a former top leader who could not himself be accused of taking sides in the internal power struggle.[24]

There exists a relative consensus among internal critics, such as Abdel Moneim Abu al-Futuh and Farid Abdel Khaleq, that the Ikhwan have not made a clean break with the past and that no rupture has occurred within the Islamist movement either epistemologically or psychologically. According to such prominent figures, the top leadership is still wedded to a worldview nourished on victimhood, fear, and suspicion of the Other.[25]

However, the challenge of leadership is only half the story, reformists say, because the ideological structure of the movement itself also functions as an inhibiting factor. "The structure constantly clones itself through a limited process of selection of recruits and indoctrination," stated Abu al-Futuh. In separate interviews, reformists such as Abu al-Futuh, Abu El-Ela Madi, and Abdel Sattar each argued that the interests of the Mubarak regime and the old guard effectively converged on the issue of keeping the Ikhwan insular and fossilized. On the one hand, Mubarak used the Ikhwan as a *faza'a*, or a threat to internal and external stability, portraying his own political authoritarianism as a necessary evil in order to deter the Islamists. On the other hand, the Ikhwan old guard countered the reformists' demands to open up the workings of the movement by repeatedly claiming that it faced imminent danger due to being targeted and repressed by the authorities. Thus internal critics blame the authoritarianism of the Mubarak regime for reinforcing the culture of secrecy and paranoia

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within the Ikhwan. At the same time, these dissidents point out that ultraconservative leaders instrumentalized the political repression exercised by the Mubarak regime as a justification for tightening their own grip on the organization.[26]

When confronted with the kinds of charges leveled by the younger reformists, the Ikhwan old guard tend to mount two kinds of defense: on the one hand, denying that some aspects of the picture painted by their critics were in fact accurate; and on the other hand, defending their prerogative to behave in some of the ways described by the reformists. In 1999, during his own tenure in the position, Ma'mun Hudaybi—the son of Hassan Hudaybi, who succeeded the founder Banna as supreme guide (*murshid*)—bluntly told me that members must show obedience to the senior leadership.[27] His successor, Mohamed Akef, was also unapologetic about charges by reformist members regarding the reluctance of the Ikhwan to engage more proactively in opposition to the Mubarak regime in the first decade of the twenty-first century. "I will not risk the future of *al-jama'a* [the group] by defying the Mubarak regime and triggering all-out confrontation."

"Critics who call on us to protest in the streets do not think about the grave consequences. Unlike other small groups, we, as the biggest organization, act responsibly and measure our actions carefully. We will not give the security forces justification to clamp down harder on us. I have to protect the movement."[28] Akef also belittled questions related to the dominance of the old guard and the sidelining of the reformists. "My door is open to all members who are disciplined and who regularly communicate with me. Those who do not have themselves to blame," he said angrily.[29]

Mahmoud Izzat, whose powerful position is akin to chief of staff of the Ikhwan, at the movement's headquarters in the al-Rawda neighborhood in Cairo in late 2006, similarly dismissed reformers as "sore losers," claiming that they "do not speak for the base and have no constituency of their own." In response to the charges of autocracy and lack of transparency, he replied, "The Ikhwan holds regular elections, practices *shura* [consultation], and is transparent. We have our

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own mechanisms of selection of morally fit candidates, as opposed to those politically ambitious [individuals]."[30] He also disputed the idea that hard-liners of the Qutbian worldview have taken control of the Ikhwan since the 1970s, and that they have retarded the development and evolution of the movement. As an example, he pointed to the presence of a plurality of viewpoints in the Guidance Office, while simultaneously stressing that they were united within the Ikhwan family. He also cited the movement's pacts with non-Islamist parties to run candidates in parliamentary elections in the 1990s. Against charges of stagnation and fossilization, he replied, "You can't stop change because it is *sunnat al-hayat* [life's law] and we have endeavored to embrace good changes; but [we] reject foreign influences that corrupt our faith and culture," Izzat lectured me. "We do not pay attention to detractors who wish *al-jama'a* harm and are envious and full of hate."[31]

Responding to defiant denials by the old leadership, Hesham El-Hamamy, a young centrist and a close ally of reformist leader Abu al-Futuh, acknowledged that the 1980s and the 1990s were two decades of lost opportunity: the Ikhwan did not produce a program or a road map that spelled out their philosophical vision about the identity of the state that they desire or relations between government and society. Instead, the powers that be in the Ikhwan, Hamamy pointed out, resisted efforts and pleas by reformists like Abu al-Futuh, Abdel Sattar, Madi, Mohamed Ali Beshr, and others to translate and codify their scattered pronouncements on various issues into concrete policy proposals.[32] Hamamy suggested that it would take an internal revolution to transform the Ikhwan's power structure. "It is a struggle that has to be fought and won by reformists, even though the odds are against us. For the foreseeable future, the elders will continue to have the upper hand at the cost of stagnation and paralysis for the Islamist movement."[33] The struggle within will determine not only the future of the Ikhwan but also that of Egypt and the Arab region, said Hamamy emphatically. Hamamy's words have proved prophetic in light of what has transpired in Egypt since the ouster of Mubarak,

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the coming to power of the Ikhwan, and the subsequent violent confrontation with the nationalists led by the military.

The Book Design

The body of this book follows a broadly historical-thematic structure, utilizing historical sociology to illuminate the struggle between the two leading social movements in the Arab world. The study concentrates on the ideas and actions of individual personalities, with the core analysis being a double biography of Gamal Abdel Nasser and Sayyid Qutb, based on interviews with their contemporaries as well as textual sources. The personality-based approach and the extensive utilization of information from interviews with people involved in the nationalist-Islamist struggle present a strong conclusion that neither nationalism nor Islamism was or is a monolithic or ideologically unified movement; rather, they involved complex diversities of perspective and involvement by distinctive individuals and factions. By focusing on collective action, hidden internal struggles, and personality clashes, the book also allows a better understanding of the patterns of contentious politics that have characterized relations between the nationalists and the Islamists since independence. In a way, the book borrows a page from Eric Hobsbawm in treating history as an act of continuance, producing patterns and cycles which can be traced and compared.[34] Unlike the mass corpus of recent literature which is mostly interested in *explaining* or *predicting* events classified under the rubric of ongoing "revolutions," the book is rather a critical attempt to *understand* the modern history of the Arab world. Taken together, the chapters that make up this book move beyond a clear-cut, frozen-in-time binary division of the rift between secular nationalist and Islamist. Rather, what emerges is a picture of flux and complexity; marked by intersections and interactions between the two camps, on the one hand, and internal divisions within each camp, on the other. The violent nationalist-Islamist clash is fundamental to understanding critical aspects of contemporary Arab and

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Muslim politics, including the crisis of mistrust and suspicion and the psychology of vendetta that have taken a grip on the Islamist imagination.

Chapters 1 and 2 establish the backstory to the rise of Islamist and nationalist political currents that emerged in Egypt in the 1940s, locating their birth in the collapse of semi-liberal politics that had been, until then, the dominant form of activism. It starts by retracing the impact of the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt and its link to the cultural renaissance of the late nineteenth century, in which religious and secular writers engaged with European political thought, this as they actively became involved in the anti-colonial struggle. These chapters also outline how the consolidation of a liberal political establishment within a colonial framework hampered both its popular legitimacy and its spectrum for action. The main argument of these two chapters is that obstructionism on the part of the British imperialists and the monarchy, along with the failures of the semi-liberal politicians themselves to deliver on their promises, gave rise to a period of frustration, reconfiguration, collective action, and contentious politics. It is against this background that the twin communitarian forces of nationalism and Islamism emerged as critiques of the quasi-liberal order, setting the stage for the political earthquake of 1952.

Chapter 3 focuses on the period which followed the Free Officers coup in 1952 and examines the relationships between the Free Officers and the Ikhwan as well as the internal dynamics of the two groups. Indeed, the two movements were internally divided along a variety of lines and centers of power. Particular attention will be given to the Nasser-Naguib rift and Hassan Hudaybi's struggle for legitimacy and authority over the Ikhwan, as well as to the increasing enmity between the leader of the Ikhwan and the leader of the Free Officers. The personality clash between Nasser and Hudaybi played a crucial role in sowing the seeds of mistrust and resentment that eventually led the two movements to a violent confrontation. Far from predestined, the rupture between the Free Officers and the Ikhwan was the result of the former's unwillingness to share power and the

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latter's desire to have a significant say in decision making in the aftermath of the revolution. Although their collision could have been avoided, it launched the two movements on a bloody and bitter path.

As chapter 4 shows, following the overthrow of the monarchy, the Nasser-led military regime worked hard at asserting its grip on power, both ideologically and through the development of the state's security apparatus. Moreover, Nasser moved quickly to rid Egypt of all organized political opponents, including the political parties that operated during the old regime, Marxists, and finally the Ikhwan. If the state repression targeted a wide spectrum of political tendencies, Nasser's particularly brutal suppression of the Ikhwan, the most powerful social movement at that time, laid the groundwork for decades of bitter struggle. By the same token, this clash helped to catalyze the emergence of a revolutionary brand of Islamism represented in the figure of Sayyid Qutb. This bloody struggle ultimately created a rift that has shaped the modern Middle East and is still playing out to this day, intermittently plunging the Arab world into a vicious spiral of hatred whose expression is only becoming more and more savage.

Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 focus on the two men who are at the heart of the story: Nasser and Qutb. These chapters emphasize that these two individuals in fact each moved through many stages in their respective lifetimes, sympathizing more or less with Islamism or secular nationalism at different points in time. Far from being destined inevitably for the historical roles they would eventually fulfill, each arrived at his eventual destination through a convoluted pathway, shaped in large part by personal ambition and struggle for power amid diverse influences and shifting historical circumstances. In a way, it is not difficult to imagine each of the two men ending up in the other's place.

Chapter 9 explores the relationship between Qutb and the Ikhwan, which he only joined as late as March 1953, and his decision to take over the leadership of a faction of the movement whose members engaged in underground paramilitary activity in the wake of Nasser's 1954 crackdown. This chapter further complicates the standard picture of the nationalists and the Islamists standing at loggerheads

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over a binary divide, each represented as a homogeneous bloc. In fact, Qutb's relations with the Ikhwan were complex and often fraught. His decision to head the armed wing known as al-Tanzim al-Sirri amounted to a kind of internal coup against the Ikhwan's traditional establishment, spurred by his ambition and determination to move from the realm of ideas to the realm of radical political praxis.

Chapters 10 and 11 examine the period after Qutb's execution in 1966, the overwhelming defeat of Egyptian forces by the Israeli military the following year, and the subsequent transformation of Egyptian and Arab politics. Many scholars in retrospect saw the Six-Day War in June 1967 as marking the death knell of Arab nationalism and providing the space for a wave of Islamist activism which would gather pace in Egypt and the Arab neighborhood in the following decade. In fact, as chapters 10 and 11 argue, the flourishing of politicized Islamist activism in this period—much of it in radical forms inspired by Qutb—was in large part driven by the simple fact of state sponsorship afforded to the Islamists under Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, in an effort to shore up his own power base. This shift in momentum within Egypt was bolstered by the newly muscular influence exerted by conservative, oil-rich Gulf monarchies, after the jump in petroleum prices brought about by the 1973 oil embargo.

Meanwhile, chapter 12 explores how the split between Nasser and the Ikhwan in the 1950s and 1960s—particularly insofar as it catalyzed the emergence of the radical current led by Qutb—impacted the Islamist movement itself over subsequent decades. From the 1970s until the present day, an ultraconservative old guard strongly influenced by the memory of Qutb has remained an extremely powerful presence within the Ikhwan, quashing the reformist hopes held by some younger members. In this chapter, centrist and reformist members relate how the old guard that has dominated decision making put the Ikhwan in the freezer for the last three decades and blocked efforts to open up the movement and make it more transparent, agile, and democratic. According to these activists, the movement was intellectually and sociologically impoverished and unequipped to translate its numerical majority into social capital and governance.

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This chapter fleshes out the struggle within the Islamist currents and the deepening of the generational, social, and ideological divides among members. It documents the Ikhwan's systemic crisis, which was laid bare after the group gained power in Egypt in 2012. This systemic crisis partially explains the blunders and mistakes committed by the Ikhwan during and after the January 25 Revolution of 2011, which further undermined its standing in the public eye.

Finally, the conclusion situates the recent clash between the nationalists and the Islamists in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution within the broader historical struggle. It shows how both movements remain captives and prisoners of the past, of their own narratives and conceptions of the Self and the Other. It thus opens with an investigation of the drivers behind the derailing of Egypt's political transition and the 2013 ouster of President Mohamed Morsi, a member of the Ikhwan. Particular focus will be given to the resistance of the deep and wide state dominated by the security services and the military to the new Islamist hegemony. However, as the chapter highlights, the internal divisions that threatened the cohesion of the Ikhwan and hampered its chances of survival in power had surfaced long before it won the elections in Egypt. Firsthand accounts by its leading members expose a rigid and insular movement dominated by a small ultraconservative inner circle that has resisted change and monopolized power. According to these participants, the old guard has never forgotten and forgiven the *muha'n*, or calamities, of the 1950s and 1960s and has harbored hopes of exacting vengeance on their nationalist tormentors. Thus, far from healing the old scars and overcoming the divide, the nationalist-Islamist fault line has deepened and hardened, becoming bloodier and costlier than it was in the 1950s and 1960s. As we will see, battle lines have increasingly expanded from Egypt to neighboring Arab states, including Tunisia, Libya, and Syria, with the struggle getting entangled in a new regional cold war.

In summary, this book examines two major themes and dynamic developments shaping Arab history in the past century and a half: the development of relatively secular nationalism and the evolution

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of sociopolitical Islam-identified activism. These two movements formed a duality defining sociopolitical life, and the study argues that their interaction—both as a fierce competition and a symbiotic cooperation—has been so profound that neither can be properly understood if they are viewed as separate historical agents.

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