

United They Stand?

*Oppositional Cooperation and Democratization Strategies in
Egypt*

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I gained a special interest for Egyptian politics when I studied at the American University in Cairo in 2005. The stay made great impact on me both personally and scholarly, and gave me inspiration to write this thesis.

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Abstract

The *aim* of this thesis is to explain why the oppositional groups in Egypt have not been able to unite around a common strategy for democratization of the political system. This interest stems from the puzzle of why the opposition has not been able to create a national pact, compared to transitional experiences in Latin America and Eastern Europe, which could bridge oppositional differences and stimulate the emergence of a popular movement for reform. The *theoretical framework* is structured around three hypotheses, assuming that state management of the opposition, ideological differences, and personal political rule can explain the opposition's disunity. The *methodology* used is secondary analysis of research material, and informant interviews. The main *conclusion* is that the opposition is divided because of measures taken by the regime to constrain oppositional activity and prevent cooperation. However, distrust based on ideological differences between Islamists and non-Islamists have also played a significant role. Finally, personal political rule also to some extent explains the absence of a common strategy, but it is analytically difficult to separate this mechanism from the influence of the regime.

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1. Introduction

The fall of the Soviet Union and the breakdown of authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa led to increased attention towards simultaneous processes of transitions from authoritarian to more liberal or democratic rule (Carothers 2002: 1). All over the world, processes of democratization were interpreted as part of a global trend or a third wave, and transition studies became the dominating theoretical paradigm in comparative politics. The paradigm has later been criticized, since many of the third wave-countries thought to be in transition to democracy have not developed into more democratic political systems. Instead, many of the countries have been caught in a political grey zone (Carothers 2002: 5). The third wave of democratization has thus shown that transitions from authoritarian rule can lead anywhere. Several of the countries have developed some form of democratic rule, while others have developed into new types of authoritarian rule that do not fit the established categories of one-party, military or personal dictatorship (Schedler 2002: 36). In more recent transitions, authoritarian leaders often agree to liberalize the political system and state their adherence to future democratization, although this functions more as an expansion of their repertoire of survival strategies, rather than actual commitment to reform. Liberalization is thus used by regimes as a way to reduce external and internal pressure for democratization.

The Middle East and North Africa has not been part of this wave of democratizations (Albrecht and Schlumberger 2004: 372). Even though some countries have started a liberalization process, “overall the vast majority of countries have failed to catch the wave of democratization that has swept nearly every other part of the world” (Bellin 2004: 139). Liberalizing regimes in the Arab world are often referred to as liberalized autocracies. These are regimes that liberalize without strengthening popular sovereignty and political accountability, and therefore develop into “a form of hybrid regime that produces “elections without democracy””

(Brumberg and Diamond 2003: xiv). The leaders not only tolerate, but are in fact dependent on limited liberalization initiated by the state as a strategy of legitimation and survival. Hence, “Arab leaders look to liberalization as a way to divide the opposition even while letting it blow off steam” (Brumberg and Diamond 2003: xiv).

In this context, Egypt is an interesting case. The regime tolerates a certain degree of political openness in civil society, in the press, and through the holding of elections, and the country has seen the emergence of dissent within the elite, political opposition in the form of strong Islamist movements, and opposition parties (Albrecht 2005: 379). However, the regime does also not hesitate to use force against potential challengers. An interesting subject for analysis is therefore what function the opposition has in this kind of political system; whether the opposition is “the most important institutions of political mobilization in the context of mass politics”, or conversely, if it sustains and legitimises the authoritarian regime (Stacher 2004: 218). However, major divisions also exist within the opposition groups, a point that many scholars overlook when analysing the relationship between governments and oppositions (Lust-Okar 2005: 23). This can primarily be seen as a division between legal and excluded opposition groups. In Egypt, the legal opposition parties often view themselves as an integral part of the regime, and have more or less accepted a role in maintaining internal stability. Although they challenge the government, they are unlikely to challenge it too strongly (Lust-Okar 2005: 83). This co-optation into the governmental structure has also previously been seen in other countries like Mexico and the Philippines (Stacher 2004: 219). However, there are also important divisions and rivalries within the legal opposition. The illegal oppositional groups on the other hand, has not yet developed a close relationship with the regime and instead benefits from challenging the regime (Lust-Okar 2005: 83).

The interest in the Egyptian opposition also stems from the puzzle of why the opposition has not been able to unite in order to create a national pact, similar to those found in Latin America. A successful creation of a national oppositional pact could bridge secular and Islamist demands for reform, and stimulate the emergence of

a wide popular movement for political change. Although this kind of pact is not thought to be a necessary element in all transitions from authoritarian rule, pacts are desired where they are possible to achieve, because of their compromising and moderating effects on political interactions during the transition process (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 39).

In 2005 President Hosni Mubarak initiated several reforms and revised the constitution in order to permit multiple-candidate presidential elections. However, many have pointed out that this was a false start for reform initiated to neutralize especially external demands for change. The reforms also “confirmed the NDP’s [National Democratic Party’s] domination and determination to allow no serious opposition within the system” (ICG Report 2005: i). Held later the same year, the 2005 legislative elections made clear that the secular opposition was unable to compete with the Muslim Brotherhood organizationally. A “National Front” was created to coordinate choices and programs within a unified opposition, but without the participation of the Brotherhood the Front failed to mobilize voters (Dunne 2006: 7). The Brotherhood won 88 seats in contrast to eleven won by the secular opposition.¹ The elections therefore highlighted the relative strength of the Muslim Brotherhood versus the political parties (Dunne 2006: 7). The outcome of Mubarak’s reform initiative also underlined the weakness of reformist forces, unable to influence the government’s agenda and create a strategy for reform. These recent developments therefore represent a new possibility to focus on the ability of oppositional groups to create a common reform strategy, which will be the main focus of the thesis. However, in order to assess the political dynamics of opposition in Egypt, the whole period under Hosni Mubarak’s rule, from 1981 and onwards, has to be taken into consideration.

¹ The People’s Assembly has a total membership of 454 representatives: 444 elected and ten appointed by the president (ICG Report 2005: 4).

1.1 The Research Question

The research question in this thesis can be formulated as:

“Why have the oppositional groups in Egypt not been able to unite around a common strategy for democratization of the political system?”

The thesis thus seeks to investigate why the oppositional groups have not been able to unite in order to pose an effective and strong challenge to the incumbent regime. The “dependent variable” therefore becomes the opposition’s approach to political reform (united or divided).

Three categories will be the foundation for analysing the main mechanisms that explain the dynamics of oppositional cooperation in Egypt. An important aspect is how the incumbent rulers influence oppositional choices and strategies. This is emphasised by Lust-Okar (2005: 23) who argues that more attention should be paid to “how state elites use different strategies to manipulate the development and strength of various opposition groups...”. An interesting framework of analysis is thus how the opposition’s strategies are influenced by the incumbent regime through repression, liberalisation or co-optation. The effects of distrust based on ideological differences between Islamists and non-Islamist opposition is recognised as an important cleavage in Arab politics, which makes the political values and ideologies of the main oppositional groups a central part of the thesis (Kalyvas 2000). The recent experiences of Islamist movements making large electoral gains across the Arab world, also illustrate the importance of this analytical framework. Finally, the effect of personal political rule on oppositional unity may also be an important mechanism (Kassem 1999).

Possible “independent variables” that could explain why the opposition have not been able to unite around a common strategy can therefore be divided into: *Political institutions and state management* of the opposition, *differences in ideology*, and *personal political rule* as an internal characteristic of the opposition. The case study design has enabled an analytical selection of variables, based on existing

research and theoretical approaches. However, many other independent variables exist that could shed light on my subject of enquiry. Other factors that I have chosen not to cover are for example the role of external actors such as the international community and the United States in promoting regime stability, and socio-economic factors. This is not necessarily because they do not have an impact. It is rather that I consider them secondary to the factors outlined above, which are the political dynamics of the relationship between the regime and the opposition and the internal dynamics of the opposition itself.

1.2 Defining the Egyptian Opposition

Opposition can generally be defined as:

”a political institution with decisive organizational capacities whose interactions with the regime are of a competitive nature, yet based on a minimum degree of mutual acceptance” (Albrecht 2005: 379).

The focus is therefore on the interaction between incumbent rulers and their opponents. What separates this type of opposition from other types of resistance is that other forms are not based on mutual acceptance between incumbents and opponents. Oppositional groups in Egypt consist of the legalised opposition, which are political parties. There are about 21 legal opposition parties in Egypt, but only four (Wafd, Tagammu’, Nasserites and Ghad) have representatives in the People’s Assembly (ICG Report 2005: 9). Albrecht (2005: 380) also includes NGOs in this category, but I will not focus on these, since they are typically single issue groups with small local constituencies (Langohr 2004: 200). The existence of 16,000 registered associations on paper (although only around 1,000 of them are active) would also make the scope too extensive for this study. The opposition also includes anti-systemic movements who “play by the political rules and work within the political system but question the latter’s core principles” (Albrecht 2005: 385). The banned, but tolerated Muslim Brotherhood is an important movement in this category. It is one of the oldest political organisations in Egypt, and is the only organisation that “can claim to rival the NDP [National Democratic Party, the ruling

party] in social presence and influence” (ICG Report 2005: 9). However, the most radical criticism of the status quo has come from protest movements that are not political parties (ICG Report 2005: 9). One important actor in this category has been the Egyptian Movement for Change, mostly known by its slogan *Kifaya!* (Enough!). The group has broken many political barriers by arranging public demonstration against Mubarak’s rule. Another type of opposition is factionalism within the ruling party. Baaklini et al. (1999: 235) argue that “far from being a monolithic organization, the NDP is so fragmented that its various fractions compete actively against one another, especially in the parliamentary arena”.

It is also important to clarify that the democratic character of the oppositional actors has not been automatically taken for granted. The focus on unification around a common democratization strategy is however justified, because both the legal parties and the Brotherhood state their commitments to democracy and reform, although their visions do not necessarily entirely resemble the Western, liberal model. There are also differences in opinion among scholars about the true intentions of Islamists participating in formal political systems, and fears of a “one man, one vote, one time” situation. That discussion is not the main theme in this thesis, but will be touched upon when it is relevant, especially in relation to distrust between oppositional actors.

1.3 Research Design and Methodology

1.3.1 The Case Study

The study can be organized in two ways: as a single study of Egypt’s opposition without ambitions of generalization, or as a case study of the opposition as a possible representative for an opposition in an authoritarian regime. A case study would analyse Egypt’s opposition as a representative for a general phenomenon, and could therefore also enable implicit comparisons with other political systems (Gerring 2004: 342; Andersen 1997: 73). The case study design seems suited for my approach,

since it also highlights the importance of contextual conditions. It also opens up for an intensive study of a unit in order to shed light on a question that could be relevant for a broader group of units (Yin 2003: 13; Gerring 2004: 344). However, focusing on oppositional cooperation in Egypt can make it difficult to generalize to other political systems since the context, the different means and arenas that the opposition can make use of, varies between countries or regions. However, it may also be possible to identify universal or common causes behind fragmented and weak oppositions, and analyse Egypt's opposition as an example of the conditions and constraints that oppositions in authoritarian regimes work within. Nevertheless, an important question is whether the study should focus on the elements that are unique to Egypt, or if there are similarities with other authoritarian states in the Middle East, and even in other parts of the world. Many researchers have analysed the Middle East from an "exceptionality" perspective, and thus focused on the uniqueness of the region (Waterbury 2001: 25). Others have, however, argued that there are similarities with other regions, and that the same analytical tools are applicable for both the Middle East and the rest of the world (Brynen et al. 1995; Posusney 2004).

Based on the discussion of different strategies possible, the study will be designed as a single case study of the Egyptian opposition. Although the use of a single case does not enable explicit generalizations, it may be possible that it can contribute to increase the knowledge on the subject of oppositional cooperation in an authoritarian regime. Because of Egypt's important position in the Middle East, there may therefore be room for some degree of learning from the factors inhibiting cooperation here, compared to other countries. Posusney (2004: 127-128) argues that studies of the Middle East have been marginalized within the field of comparative politics and that it is time to "bring the Middle East back in". The inclusion of studies of the Middle East in the field of political reform and transitions is therefore thought to contribute to theoretical explanations of "both the factors that encourage democratization and the resiliency of many authoritarian regimes" (Posusney 2004: 128).

The research strategy of this study is to analyse oppositional politics in Egypt in light of theories of political dynamics under authoritarian rule. Oppositional cooperation in Egypt will be the case study, and theories about opposition under authoritarian rule will be applied to the case, in order to explain why the opposition has not been able to unite around a common democratization strategy. Furthermore, I have designed a theoretical framework, and based on this constructed hypotheses about my expectations for the study. The empirical basis of the study, namely the structure of the state's institutions, and the main oppositional and regime actors, is also accounted for. In the analysis chapters, the theoretical framework is applied on the case to discuss the reasons behind the opposition's disunity, as outlined in the hypotheses.

1.3.2 The Problem of Counterfactuals

The research question chosen for this thesis may seem unusual in character because the goal is to explain why a certain situation has *not* occurred. This therefore demands a methodological clarification that explains the justifications for choosing this type of research question, as well as the feasibility of the approach. According to Lebow (2000: 561), counterfactual arguments are considered fundamental to all theories and interpretations. Even though the role of these arguments is considered important, it is often unacknowledged and underdeveloped within political science (Fearon 1991: 194). Yet, in order to establish causal inference within qualitative analysis, it is generally necessary to make use of comparative analysis. In research designs using a single case, this could either be done by intra-case comparison or counterfactual analysis. The research method applied in this thesis in many ways resembles the use of counterfactuals. The subject of enquiry stems from the puzzle of why oppositional forces in Egypt has *not* been able to unite, and therefore prescribes an examination of the causes leading to a situation not taking place.

Although this research strategy is common in political science, its methodological status and viability is somewhat unclear (Fearon 1991: 169). Furthermore, it is also considered difficult to create a robust counterfactual; "one

whose antecedent we can assert with confidence could have led to the hypothesized consequent” (Lebow 2000: 574). Especially important is the fact that causes are interdependent and have significant interaction effects. The many problems have led scholars to limit the use according to certain principles and criterions. However, if the aim of the study is not to test a theory, counterfactuals are essential, especially if the scope of the study is to “broaden our intellectual horizons and to provide methods relevant to assessing the relative benefits and value of policy outcomes” (Lebow 2000: 581). In addition, counterfactual propositions and arguments are thought to play a central role in the area of causal hypotheses within political science (Fearon 1991: 170). The strategy is thought to be indirectly empirical, “since the confirmation it provides depends principally on other theories...supported by empirical evidence from actual case comparisons” (Fearon 1991: 177). What is important is thus the plausibility of the arguments concerning what would have happened. When using counterfactual analysis, special attention should therefore be paid to “whether their counterfactual suppositions are cotenable with the facts and theories used to draw the causal interferences they make” (Fearon 1991: 193). Because the aim of this thesis is to explain a certain outcome (the absence of oppositional cooperation), a counterfactual approach seems appropriate, because I am interested in giving a causal explanation or assertions about relative causal weight for a specific phenomenon. The selected approach can also be justified by Fearon (1991: 183), highlighting a good example of a counterfactual analysis that focused on the *non*-occurrence of an important phenomenon. Although one can never be certain about what would be different, if for example the role of the state in managing the opposition had changed, the arguments used can become more or less credible by using historical details and theories about human behaviour.

Causality is not only measurement of causal effects, but is also identification of causal mechanisms. This is done when general knowledge is connected to the empirical knowledge of how the variables in the study are related (Gerring 2004: 348). This thesis has, similarly to the research strategies used by Jon Elster, made use

of explanatory mechanisms in order to answer the research question. According to Elster (1998: 45) a *mechanism* is an

“intermediate between laws and descriptions. Roughly speaking, mechanisms are *frequently occurring and easily recognizable causal patterns that are triggered under generally unknown conditions or with indeterminate consequences*”.

The analysis is thus empirical and causal, but at the same time qualitative. By using literature studies and informant interviews, I have thus attempted to analyse and build arguments around the theme of oppositional cooperation in Egypt, with the aim of uncovering the important mechanisms behind the absence of a common democratization strategy. Furthermore, failure is often considered an unpopular subject by many scholars, and is therefore a neglected area theoretically, although it occurs frequently in the empirical world (Voss 1996: 227). The selected approach can also be justified by referring to established literature in the field of democratization. As mentioned before, following the breakdown of authoritarian regimes in Latin America and Eastern Europe, a large body of literature emerged that focused on pacted transitions to democracy. Here, as well as in literature focusing on democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa, emphasis was put on negotiations between oppositional forces and incumbent regimes into coalitions pushing for democratic change. In the Middle East, however, both these kinds of pacts as a phenomenon and scholarly attention within the discipline of political science have largely been absent.

1.3.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in the thesis consists of wide theoretical approaches, as well as more specific concepts and approaches related to the subject of enquiry. Since I did not find any explicit models in existing research that seemed suitable for my research question, I have constructed my own theoretical approach based on some important contributions within the field of Comparative Politics and Middle East Studies. I have therefore designed a theoretical framework to use in the analysis of oppositional cooperation by assembling and putting together a number of academic articles and books. When selecting literature for the theoretical framework, I

emphasised its relevance according to the mechanisms that I have chosen to focus on, as well also considering literature that offers alternative explanations. Another important criterion was that the theoretical framework should be based on literature from the discipline of Comparative Politics as well as more specific approaches related to the Middle East.

On a general level, the thesis is founded on the debate around democratization and transitions to democracy from authoritarian rule, as well as the resilience of authoritarian rule in the Arab world. I have also made use of theoretical perspectives that focus more specifically on the role of opposition in authoritarian regimes. This part of the chapter clarifies the concept of regime types in the Middle East, focusing on the liberalized autocracy. Furthermore, the role of opposition parties in authoritarian states is described, as well as conceptualising strategies of democratization. The book by Salamè (2001) discusses different approaches and frameworks for the study of democratizations, and focuses on the stability of authoritarian regimes and the relationship between Islam and democracy. Another example is Zartman (1988), who argues that oppositional groups in the Arab world might support authoritarian regimes and contribute to their resilience. This is supported by Albrecht (2005) who analyses how the opposition actually contributes to the stability of authoritarian regimes and analyses different strategies that can be used by regimes to secure political survival.

The main theoretical approach consists of research emphasising three factors: state management of oppositional movements and institutional influences on oppositional activity, the role of ideological differences between Islamists and seculars, and personal political rule. The first approach focuses on how oppositional strategies and choices are influenced by the policy of incumbent regimes and how formal institutions shape oppositional strategies in authoritarian states. The book by Lust-Okar (2005) has been important in this regard. The section on ideology is based on the debate about Islamism and secularism, elaborating on the whether ideological differences may give rise to distrust among actors that inhibits cooperation. It also

makes use of Robert Dahl (1971) when discussing politics in a polarized political environment, and the effect this has on the ability to cooperate. Regarding theory on personal rule and the dynamics of patron-client relationships, Jackson and Rosberg's book (1982) on personal rule has been helpful. The works by Maye Kassem (2004; 1999) has also provided valuable insights on personal political rule in general, and more specifically in the Egyptian context.

1.3.4 Empirical Sources

The study will be based on three main sources of empirical evidence: formal studies (books, articles, and reports), news paper articles, and personal interviews. The main methodological approach is secondary analysis of qualitative "data", meaning analyses of research literature and other scholarly work where the purpose is "to pursue interests distinct from those of the original work..." (Fielding and Fielding 2000: 677). Other analytical purposes for this approach are additional in-depth analysis of a subject and a new conceptual focus. This method is also suitable for analysis of sensitive subjects and populations that are difficult to reach, and building on existing research instead of repeating it (Fielding and Fielding 2000: 677-678). Besides being used in the theoretical framework, I have also applied this method of analysis throughout the study, so that existing analyses of Egyptian politics are used as evidence for my claims and as premises in my lines of reasoning. In this way I have collected and assembled "data" from existing studies and applied them in new ways on my own assumptions. The main objective when collecting evidence has been to obtain information about the incumbent regime, the oppositional groups and their cooperation strategies. When selecting sources I emphasised their relevance compared to the research question, but also those offering alternative explanations to the subject of analysis. I have therefore emphasised obtaining statements from the oppositional actors, information on the position of the regime, as well as observations from both Egyptian and foreign scholars. There are methodological problems attached to all these sources, and these will be discussed below.

One general problem related to the sources is language, since I do not speak or read Arabic well enough to use it academically. This excludes many important sources that could have increased the validity of the arguments made in this thesis. In order to compensate for this problem, and try to obtain a holistic and balanced source material, the study uses research based on Arabic sources, studies by renowned Arabic authors writing in English, as well as literature written by foreign researchers. Literature about political developments in Egypt in general, and about Mubarak's rule and oppositional actors have increased over the last few years. The empirical basis of this study is thus well documented in some areas, but more limited in others.

Kassem (1999; 2004) has written two books about the political dynamics of authoritarian rule in Egypt, which contain information about important actors and patterns in Egyptian politics. Another source is articles that are written more specifically about the opposition in Egypt. The regime's strategies toward the legal opposition are analysed by Stacher (2004), who shows how the regime has effectively stalled the development of a strong, secular opposition. Furthermore, Posusney (2005) analyses different strategies used by the opposition in legislative elections, and how the regime uses existing institutions to manipulate election results and secure regime survival. Noha El-Mikawy (1999) has written about Egyptian consensus politics, which has also been useful, although I will later criticize some of her conclusions. Furthermore, International Crisis Group (2005) discusses Husni Mubarak's reform initiative from 2005 and the reactions from important oppositional actors. It is however important to be aware of the possible agendas of these types of think-thanks, and the consequences this can have for the reports. Another issue is that ICG is more practical oriented than an academic institution, and is therefore perhaps more useful as a source of information on specific reform issues rather than analytical arguments. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has also published articles and reports concerning political reform in Egypt. These articles play an important role in my literature study, and are written by well-known scholars within the field of democratization and Middle East studies.

A newspaper that I have used as a source is the Middle East Times. It is an independent newspaper, but like all publishing it is subject to governmental censorship. However, censorship is not usually systematic if not related to specific subjects like the President's family and foreign policy. The newspaper also state on its website which articles that are censored, so I consider it to be a reliable source. Other newspapers that I have used are the independent Daily Star Egypt, and the semi-official Al-Ahram Weekly. These have been used to get information about specific events and political statements. Reading regional and local newspapers has also been useful in order to follow political developments, as well as giving empirical weight to my arguments. One challenge is the possible gap between what appears in the English version of the paper and how articles are portrayed in the Arabic version, which is again related to the language problem. Furthermore, textual analysis of party programs and political statements should have played a more important role, but again language problems limited the use of this kind of data.

The last source of empirical evidence is personal interviews. Conducting interviews offers advantages, but also potential methodological challenges. There is risk of an "interviewer effect" where the informant answers what the interviewer wants to hear, and also the problem of selection bias. If there are internal disagreements within the party is also important to be aware of what "wing" you are talking to. It is therefore important to view them as verbal reports only and contrast them with other sources (Yin 2003: 92). Interviews have however given the study a more realistic foundation and strengthened my understanding of the subject. Interviewing key informants also provides information that is difficult to obtain otherwise. Since I have previously studied at the American University in Cairo (AUC) for 6 months, I am familiar with the city and the culture. During the two week long re-visit to Cairo I interviewed Professor Bahgat Korany at AUC, Coptic intellectual Rafik Habib, human rights activist from the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) Gasser Abdel Razik, and the head of the Muslim Brotherhood's political bureau, Essam El-Erian. The interviews were conducted as open-ended conversations, but also as focused interviews focusing on a certain set of

questions. The interviews with researchers were conducted in order to get information and interpretations of recent developments that has not been analysed in existing literature. The interviews with oppositional activists were important because they have helped me to explain and understand the political environment the opposition operates within. They have also increased my knowledge of what prominent persons within the opposition consider to be important obstacles to cooperation. Although the activists' opinions may not be representative for the oppositional groups as a whole, they are important because they can give an impression of the motivation behind oppositional behaviour and ideology. This can later be contrasted with other sources and established knowledge on the field. The interviews were conducted in English, since the informants use English as their working language or are able to communicate in English. However, one apparent weakness with the interviews is the "unbalance of opinion", since I did not manage to get in contact with any representatives from the legal parties. However, the persons interviewed comes from different parts of the political landscape; secular, Coptic, Islamist and academic.

The interviews were conducted in the early phase of the writing process, which in some ways affected the formulation of the questions asked. Had they been conducted later in the process, I may have had a clearer view of what kind of information I needed. The visit to Cairo was also quite short, resulting in limited time to conduct interviews. Because I did not have any contacts in any of the secular parties, this resulted in some disparities in the material. Because of these problems, I mainly chose to use the interviews in the chapter on the empirical background, and as a supplement to the arguments based upon other sources, and not as the main source of evidence. Another problem was the tense political situation in Cairo around the time of my interviews, related to the conflict between pro-reform judges and the regime. This resulted in large demonstrations where many activists were arrested. A few days after I left Cairo, one of my informants, Essam el-Erian was arrested for taking part in a pro-democracy demonstration in support of the judges, and he has to this date not been released. Because of this I have also not been able to send him

follow-up questions or ask him about ambiguities in his answers. The Brotherhood's website has been of help in this regard, where many of their statements are available. This was also the only interview where I talked to a prominent politician, which also represents potential methodological problems. Was he, a politician from the Brotherhood, adjusting his answers according to his audience; a Western, female interviewer? I also previously mentioned the importance of keeping in mind which generation of politicians the informants belong to. This is highly relevant in this regard, because of the many differences between the younger and the older generations within the Brotherhood. El-Erian is by many considered to be part of the younger generation of activists that have a more pragmatic approach to politics and tries to approach the other oppositional groups. His views may therefore be somewhat different compared to the older generation of "hardliners".

To conclude, the sources used in this study are considered to be both a relevant and trustworthy foundation for answering my research question. This is because the studies are written by scholars with acknowledged familiarity with Egypt and the Middle East, and has also been used by scholars as sources in other studies. I have however pointed out some weaknesses, especially related to the language problem. Regarding the interviews, I discussed methodological challenges both related to when they were carried out in the writing process, and important contextual factors that influenced the quality of the data.

1.3.5 Validity and Reliability

Construct validity, or the establishment of correct operational measures, is first and foremost tied to whether the sources used in this study can be considered as trustworthy tools to analyse the research question. In the review of the sources used in this study, I discussed both their strengths and weaknesses. I therefore argue that the extensiveness of the sources used and their important position within contemporary analyses of Egyptian politics is well documented, which imply that they can be considered valid for the scope of this study. Furthermore, I also discussed

how the use of interviews contributed to increase the quality of the study, as well as some of the methodological problems tied to them. To secure high construct validity it is also important to make use of multiple sources of evidence (Yin 2003: 34). The use of secondary literature, newspaper articles and interviews as sources of evidence therefore contribute to strengthen the construct validity, although it is weakened by the language problem related to the use of Arabic sources. The validity of the interviews is also reduced, because of the unbalance in the forces represented and the timing of the interviews early in the writing process. However, this is somewhat outweighed by using research containing interviews with other oppositional forces.

When seeking to explain a phenomenon, assumptions are automatically made about causal links. Internal validity concerns the quality of the causal relationships analysed in the study (Yin 2003: 36). In order to secure that inferences are valid, it is important to address rival explanations as well as to use theoretical orientations to guide the analysis. In this study I consider the internal validity to be strengthened by using explanations based on theoretically significant propositions within comparative politics. One problem with this approach is however the danger of drifting away from the initial research question. I have attempted to avoid this problem by continuously referring to the research question and hypotheses, as well as trying to focus on alternative explanations.

External validity deals with whether my findings about oppositional cooperation in Egypt can be generalizable beyond my study, that is, whether it is applicable to oppositional cooperation in other countries. The external validity of this single case study is consequently weaker than in a study with two or more cases. Expanding with more cases would therefore have given more powerful conclusions. However, the use of Egypt as a single case was chosen because of its centrality in the Arab world, both geo-strategically, intellectually and as the “birthplace” of Islamist ideology as well as Arab nationalism. Since the country also has experienced some political reform through liberalization from above, there is an environment of political dynamics that could provide important insights on oppositional politics.

Because of the limits on generalisation set by the use of a single case, it is more fruitful to explore whether it is possible to learn something from this study that could contribute to increase the understanding of the topic of opposition in an authoritarian regime.

Reliability in its traditional, quantitative meaning entails to demonstrate that the operations of a study, such as the data collection procedures, can be repeated by other scholars and obtain the same results. Based on a norm of replicability, other researchers should be able to duplicate my data, but also be able to trace the logic I have used to reach my conclusions (King et al. 1994: 26). One issue related to interviews in another country, is the challenge of not being able to check these statements relative to the informants' statements during oppositional interactions and political meetings. It is thus possible that informants will answer different in another setting, which may reduce the replicability of the interview. In this chapter I have specified the study's theoretical and empirical foundation, so that it is clear for the reader where I have found the material and how I intend to use it. The analytical approach contains lines of reasoning where I have used research to support my arguments and as part of the premises of my claims. By referring to published material, the reader can locate these sources and make their own evaluations of the inferences I have made based on these sources (King et al. 1994: 26).

1.3.6 Thesis Outline

The thesis is divided into 7 chapters. Chapter 2 specifies the study's theoretical framework, and contains three hypotheses formed on the background of the approaches to oppositional politics. Chapter 3 provides background information on the political system and the main oppositional actors. The analysis is divided into three chapters following the three hypotheses. Chapter 4 analyses the role of the state in managing the opposition, while Chapter 5 focuses on the influence of ideological differences as a source of distrust. Chapter 6 examines the influence of personal political rule on oppositional cooperation. Chapter 7 contains a summary of the

thesis' main findings, and explores possibilities of learning from this study when analysing opposition in other countries, and proposes an agenda for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Robert A. Dahl (1966: 391), following the thoughts of Johan Stuart Mill, argued that

“The citizens of any country...need dissenters and oppositions in order to act wisely, to explore alternatives, to understand the advantages and disadvantages of different alternatives, to know what they want and how to go about getting it”.

In this view, the expression of dissenting opinions becomes a necessary condition for “rational” political action. In democracies, different political alternatives are only thought to represent small, incremental changes. However, in authoritarian states, oppositional politics and the political issues raised could lead to regime change and even large-scale changes in the political system. This is especially evident in the Middle East where some parties are more or less in permanent opposition, secular and Islamic oppositions often have different goals, and the opposition faces challenges both from its relationship with the state and from internal fragmentation. Following the Islamist victory of Hamas in Palestine and the electoral success of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt’s legislative elections, both ideological considerations and state responses to Islamist movements are becoming increasingly important factors when explaining oppositional strategies and cooperation.

Researchers have often focused on opposition as an institution that has an inherent potential to contribute to systemic change (Hinnebusch 1988: 35). The Arab world has, however, offered difficult conditions for the development of functioning party systems, where no truly competitive party exists that fulfils the same functions as its Western counterparts. The party systems in the Arab world have in stead performed functions “more or less useful and sometimes central to the stability and effectiveness of Arab political systems” (Hinnebusch 1988: 35). Thus, an opposition developed in the context of authoritarian rule may contribute to explain this absence of systemic change. The underlying logic is therefore that opposition does not

necessarily exist only as an opponent of the regime, but also as a potential political ally (Albrecht 2005: 390). This means that the study of oppositional politics should not only be restricted to its “democratic potential” as representing social forces, being a forum for political participation and a contestant for power. Hence, political opposition may also be used as a tool to maintain the incumbent regime.

2.1.1 Main Content of the Chapter

The theoretical framework developed in this chapter focuses on approaches that seek to explain the weakness of cooperation and unity among oppositional forces in authoritarian countries. The chapter comprises both relevant theoretical perspectives related to the main questions in the study, and gives an overview of recent research and literature concerning opposition in authoritarian states. First, important characteristics of authoritarian regimes and the room they allow for opposition is described. Second, the functions of opposition in an authoritarian regime are discussed. Following this is an outline of the role of human agency and the various strategies available to actors in democratization processes. Subsequent, the main theoretical framework of the study is presented, focusing on different approaches to oppositional politics and ways to analyse opposition in authoritarian regimes. This section is divided into three parts following the research question, emphasizing how the state and institutions, ideology and distrust, and personalized politics can inhibit oppositional cooperation. The main hypothesis of the study is also outlined.

2.2 Authoritarianism in the Middle East

The persistence of various types of authoritarian regimes is an important area of research, as highlighted in Carothers’ critique of the transition paradigm. The “third wave” of democratization and the following transitions from authoritarian rule has led to new analytical dilemmas regarding regime classification. A grey zone of regime types has developed, where many of the states, especially in the Middle East, can neither be considered consolidated democracies nor fully authoritarian (Carothers

2002: 5). There is little consensus, however, on the types of regimes belonging in the grey zone category. However, in order to analyse oppositional politics in an authoritarian regime, it is important to understand the context in which these actors operate within. An authoritarian regime can be defined as;

“an arbitrary and usually a personal government that uses law and the coercive instruments of the state to expedite its own purposes of monopolizing power and denies the political rights and opportunities of all other groups to compete for that power” (Jackson and Rosberg 1982: 23).

The concepts of liberalization and democratization are sometimes used as synonyms for the same process, but Brynen et al. (1995: 3) argue that the concepts should be understood separately. Political liberalization can be defined as

”the expansion of public space through the recognition and protection of civil and political liberties, particularly those bearing upon the ability of citizens to engage in free political discourse and to freely organize in pursuit of common interests” (Brynen et al. 1995: 3).

Furthermore, democratization can be defined as an “expansion of political participation in such a way as to provide citizens with a degree of real and meaningful collective control over public policy” (Brynen et al. 1995: 3). This distinction is important because political liberalization does not necessarily include democratization. Furthermore, what is especially important for this study is the room offered by the regime for political opposition. One type of authoritarian regimes has by some been characterized as *semi-authoritarian* (Ottaway 2003: 3). This regime type does not allow much real competition for power, but has opened up enough political space for the establishment of political parties and civil society organizations. However, this opening is often a deliberate strategy used to maintain the appearance of democracy without taking the political risks involved in free competition (Ottaway 2003: 3). The term semi-authoritarian is therefore used to label hybrid regimes that are not failed democracies or democracies in transition, but “carefully constructed and maintained alternative systems” (Ottaway 2003: 7). Ottaway (2003: 31) characterizes Egypt as a clear example of this regime type. It has formal democratic institutions, some independent press, political parties and many civil society organizations. On the other hand, it also has institutionalized a non-

competitive system that protects the government from real competition, maintains stability and hinders the transfer of power through elections.

Another similar way to classify regimes is by the degree of liberalization. Brumberg (2003b) uses the degree of political pluralism to define regime types, and characterizes many Arab regimes as *liberal autocracies*. They are liberal in that some degree of political openness is tolerated and promoted, but also autocratic in that the rulers always retain the upper hand and dominate the media, control the security apparatus and deliver patronage to their clients (Brumberg 2003b: 3). An important characteristic is that the regimes are founded on the principle of partial inclusion, which may include alliances between forces that are part of the opposition. Brumberg (2003b: 5) argues that

“having given labour unions, professional syndicates...and civic associations a measure of freedom from state interference, the leaders of liberal autocracies are well placed to pursue a divide-and-rule strategy by which they play one group off against another”.

This strategy therefore provides a possibility for the opposition to “blow off steam”, while the regime prevents the loss of ultimate control over the political system. Furthermore, the liberal autocracy has developed into a highly “pragmatic” regime type, where the rulers widen or narrow the restrictions on participation and expression according to the social, economic, political, and geostrategic challenges facing their regimes (Brumberg 2002: 57). Although the liberalized autocracies can achieve a certain degree of stability, over time the costs of survival increase. This is especially because the regimes do not create a vibrant political society where different forces and groups can compete. Non-Islamist opposition is therefore not able to secure the same kind of organized popular support as the Islamists obtain, and the societies are thus often dominated by the authoritarian regime on the one hand and strong Islamist groups on the other (Brumberg 2002: 57).

2.3 The Role of Opposition Parties in an Authoritarian State

Zartman (1988: 61) analyses authoritarian strategies for regime survival “beyond coercion”, and uses the concept of opposition as an independent variable to explain the durability of the Arab state. He argues that governments can pursue several different strategies on how to approach oppositions, ranging from physically removing it, removing its causes, or co-opting its members. However, some forms of opposition will often re-emerge, because of the impossibility of satisfying a constant majority. Another notion he addresses is the concept of democratic alternance between incumbents and opposition. This alternance, however, is not found in Arab politics. Zartman argues that this cannot only be explained by opposition being deceived or merely puppets for the rulers, but traces it to the role of the opposition as complementary to the government. He argues that “both government and opposition have interests to pursue within the political system, and this complementarity of pursuit reinforces the state” (Zartman 1988: 62). The stability of Arab regimes is therefore explained by the opposition’s handling of itself and of the government, in addition to the government’s handling of the opposition. According to him, they do not use each other, but each serves the other’s interests when performing their own roles within the system (Zartman 1988: 77).

Albrecht (2005: 378), building on the arguments made by Zartman (1988), also investigates the apparent paradox of political oppositions in Arab states working as a support for authoritarian rule. He argues that the emergence of opposition in Egypt did not result from the weakness of the authoritarian regime, but that the regime has permitted, and even promoted the emergence of an opposition. The regime then used strategies of co-optation and clientelism to ensure control and stability. This opposition developed in the context of authoritarian rule may therefore contribute to explain the stability of authoritarian regimes, because opposition does not necessarily exist only as an opponent of the regime, but also as a potential political ally. Furthermore, Albrecht (2005: 390) argues that the more heterogeneous the

opposition, the more opportunities for the authoritarian regime to play different group up against each other, using one group as a part-time ally. The opposition is therefore “embedded as a player into the state’s juggling act to sustain the dynamic equilibrium of interests...” (Albrecht 2005: 391). Albrecht (2005: 391) distinguishes between different oppositional functions that all provide “positive incentives” for the regime. This means that the opposition increases the legitimacy of the regime since it provides a degree of political freedom, and opposition thus becomes a mechanism for societal control beyond coercion. Furthermore, the more accessible the state, even if it is an authoritarian state, the less likely for the opposition to unify behind a violent strategy (Albrecht 2005: 392). The opposition therefore also has a moderating function for the type and intensity of resistance to the regime.

2.4 Strategies of Democratization

Posusney (2005b) addresses the lack of research on opposition strategies in authoritarian regimes that are undergoing political liberalization. Political democratization strategies can be considered

“the way in which political forces are mobilized for the demands of democratization, the ways in which former ruling groups are accommodated to new political structures or excluded from them, and the ways in which the transfer of power is organised...”(Vanhanen 1992: 6).

Strategies of boycott and participation are the two main types of strategies available to oppositional groups in authoritarian regimes (Posusney 2005b: 109-111). The latter involves forming electoral coalitions and strategies for changing the rules of the game to increase their chances of influencing politics. The strategies used are similar to the ones outlined by Dahl (1966) for oppositions operating in a democratic environment, but Posusney also highlights the importance of context and the difference in challenges that oppositions in authoritarian states face.

The notion of human choice in processes of democratization has been highly debated. Two main approaches have developed, one highlighting the relative importance of social and other environmental constraints, the other emphasizing the

actors' conscious strategies of democratization. This difference is therefore a question of whether democratization is a

“more or less unintended consequence of change in social conditions and other environmental factors, or...rather a result of the conscious efforts of political actors to change a country's political system” (Vanhanen 1992: 1).

Vanhanen (1992: 10) outlines three main avenues for influencing democratization by conscious political action: 1) transforming social structures affecting the distribution of economic and intellectual power, 2) establishing political institutions that make it possible to share power democratically among competing groups, and 3) creating effective political strategies to overcome various obstacles to democratization. Another way to conceptualise cooperation on political strategies, is to look at the scope and degree of formalisation, separating between tactical, strategic, and ideational cooperation (Schwedler and Clark 2006: 10). The lowest level is entirely tactical on a short-term basis. While middle-level cooperation involves more issues, the actors do not commit themselves to a shared political vision. The highest level entails developing a collective vision for political and social reform, and also encompasses broader issues like identity and commitments to a common worldview (Schwedler and Clark 2006: 10).

The main focus of this study is on the ability of the Egyptian opposition to establish common democratization strategies. Thus, attention is concentrated on circumstances where human choice plays an important role, but also on the influence of institutional conditions. Oppositional cooperation could for example materialize into a grand oppositional pact where the members “unite to defeat the authoritarian regime and lay the foundation for a successor democratic regime in which power is open to most opposition forces” (Stepan 1986: 79). However, in order to establish pacts, the opposition needs leaders with organizational and ideological capacity to negotiate a coalition, and also the support of their political followers to the terms negotiated in the pact (Stepan 1986: 80). A pact therefore requires that the actors trust each other and the “system”, so that feelings of incomplete victory and relative defeat take precedence over feelings of total victory and absolute risk. In other words, “if one thinks that an incomplete victory is tantamount to a total defeat, and that a

relative defeat can always be transformed into an absolute defeat, distrust reigns and democracy does not work” (Leca 2001: 51). The actors therefore have to believe that it is in their best interest to show moderation (Leca 2001: 52).

Przeworski (1991a) analyses divisions among elites and oppositions, stressing the strategic choices made by political elites, which includes both incumbent rulers as well as oppositional activists (Posusney 2004: 133). Przeworski (1991a: 58) views liberalization as inherently unstable and compares it to a “thaw” where “the melting of the ice-berg of civil society...overflows the dams of the authoritarian regime”, even though the opening may initially be motivated by securing regime survival. His distinction between different forces and alliance possibilities, both within the ruling elite and in the opposition, may offer important insights for my study. Przeworski (1991a) highlights a dilemma of competition where the anti-authoritarian forces first must unite against the authoritarian regime, but later have to compete against each other in order to achieve a successful democratization process. The focus in this thesis is on the first part of the dilemma; the struggle against the authoritarian regime. The fruitfulness of this approach is also highlighted by Przeworski (1991a: 67), arguing that it is useful to focus separately on the two aspects of democratization.

Przeworski (1991a: 67) distinguishes between four political actors: Hardliners and Reformers within the authoritarian regime, and Moderates and Radicals within the opposition. Moderates and Radicals may, but need not represent different interests. They may be distinguished only by risk aversion. Moderates may therefore be those who fear Hardliners, not necessarily those who have less radical goals (Przeworski 1991a: 68). A disentanglement of the authoritarian regime only occurs after understandings between Reformers and Moderates. This includes agreement on establishing institutions where the constituencies they represent acquire political presence in the democratic system. It also entails Reformers neutralizing Hardliners or getting their consent, and Moderates achieving control over Radicals (Przeworski 1991a: 68). Brumberg (2002: 58) highlights a similar dilemma for liberalized autocracies in securing regime survival. Although both Hardliners and Reformers

within a regime may perceive the same threat, they often differ on how to deal with it. To survive, the regime must allow some opposition forces some social, political or ideological power, but this can never get to the point where the regime cannot result to repression if it finds it necessary. If the regime can sustain this balancing act, Reformers within the government may find it easier to convince Hardliners that the benefits of an accommodating strategy outweigh the costs. Conversely, rulers will prefer total autocracy if this act cannot be sustained (Brumberg 2002: 58). Splits between opposition elites into Moderate and Radical groups are important in order to understand when opposition and ruling elites can cooperate to achieve political reform. However, scholars have not always analysed the different mechanisms used by incumbent elites to shape the relationship among the oppositional groups (Lust-Okar 2005: 29). This would mean using an institutional framework to the problem of oppositional cooperation, which will be discussed below.

2.5 Approaches to Oppositional Politics

2.5.1 The Role of Political Institutions and State Management of the Opposition

One way to approach the question of oppositional cooperation is to focus on the role played by institutions in influencing actor behaviour (Posusney 2005a: 7). Rawls (in Jackson and Rosberg 1984: 424-425) defined a political institution as

“a public system of rules which defines offices and positions with their rights and duties, powers and immunities... These rules specify certain forms of action as permissible, others as forbidden...An institution may be thought of in two ways: first as an abstract...system of rules; and second, as the [realized] actions specified by these rules...”.

Some scholars, like Carothers (2002), have regarded certain institutions as a prerequisite for democratization, while others have treated institutions more as “the backdrop against which the crucial decisions of the actors in the transitions game are made” (Posusney 2005a: 8). Within the traditions of social movement theory, scholars have also stressed the importance the political setting that oppositional

movements operate within. As Wickham (2002: 93) explains, “whether, where, and how an opposition movement comes to life depends on the opportunities and constraints that face would-be movement organizers and supporters in the general political environment”. This political environment is often defined by four dimensions; the relative openness/closure of the political system, the stability/instability of elite alignments, the presence/absence of elite allies, and the state’s repressive capacity (Wickham 2002: 93-94).

An important issue is however whether rules and formal institutions generally matter in an authoritarian regime. Traditionally, formal institutions are thought to make little difference in authoritarian states. In Egypt, where vast powers are concentrated in the hands of the president, is it possible to consider effects of institutional arrangements and laws upon the opposition? As Lust-Okar points out, rulers often design specific institutional arrangements for managing the opposition, which heavily influences the opposition’s ability to operate. Incumbent rulers are thus thought to have the ability to use different institutional arrangements to shape the relationship between the state and the opposition, and between the oppositional groups (Lust-Okar 2005: 30-31). Hence, institutional arrangements are in some countries designed to include and exclude various opposition forces, with the intent of securing the regime’s survival and managing oppositional behaviour. Furthermore, laws and electoral systems may also serve as instruments of control. Elections thus become an avenue for reaffirming and expanding clientelist arrangements, incorporating oppositional actors into the regime structure (Kassem 1999).

Political activity rarely consists of only two players. Many opponents, motivated both by competition and the need for cooperation, strive with one another as well as with the state over power and resources. This game is often characterized by actors “keeping a careful eye on each other while simultaneously attempting to gain support and assistance through a combination of cajoling and compromise, threats and personal intrigue” (Lust-Okar 2005: 22). Scholarly literature within the framework of contentious politics has been criticized for not examining the abilities

of regimes to divide and rule, creating competition between different oppositional groups. However, the state is thought to play a central role in the management of opposition, having the ability to create institutions that shape relationships among the oppositional groups. The repertoire of tools available to incumbents contains both “carrots” and “sticks”, ranging from prospects of participation and promises of ministerial seats to threats of repression and loss of participation avenues (Lust-Okar 2005: 27). This kind of institutional framework also enables a focus on how institutions created by incumbents contribute to determine what opposition groups exist and how strong they are, but also on how these groups interact with one another.

Dahl (1966: 349) also highlights the influence of constitutional and electoral institutions on the characteristics of opposition. In his analysis he shows that different institutional arrangements influence the character of the opposition. This includes,

“the extent to which constitutional arrangements effectively allocate independent political resources to the chief executive, the legislature, and the courts and to geographical units...the system of elections, whether single-member district or some form of proportional representation” (Dahl 1966: 350).

Dahl (1966: 351) argues that in democratic systems, centralization, large powers concentrated with the chief executive relative to the powers of the legislature, and parliamentary elections using majority vote in single-member districts, will contribute to “concentrate the opposition into a single coalition which, by its unity, has a chance to win the election...”. These characteristics may also be present in authoritarian regimes, although it seems less likely that this will result in a unified opposition able to win elections. Conversely, if law-makers in democracies want to fragment the opposition, spread it to different settings in society, and encourage cooperative strategies for gaining entry into parliamentary coalitions, they should focus on proportional representation, a relatively weak executive and a decentralized political system (Dahl 1966: 351).

The importance of electoral systems is also highlighted by Posusney (1998), who argues that different systems produce very different legislatures, which also has serious implications for political outcomes. Electoral systems also influence the

number of political parties and what strategies they use in their campaigns. Manipulation of electoral systems therefore gives authoritarian elites a subtle mechanism for controlling electoral politics and the way parties operate (Posusney 1998: 12). Most countries in the Arab world have winner-takes-all systems (WTA), which favours large parties. Posusney argues that in non-democratic countries, proportional representation (PR) could increase the representation of oppositional groups. An oppositional focus on electoral systems could also unify the opposition, because it offers an arena where parties can cooperate in spite of ideological differences (Posusney 1998: 15). Since all parties could potentially gain more seats if the demands are achieved, this could therefore be a foundation for increased cooperation, contrary to Dahl's prescriptions for achieving unity in democracies.

It is therefore possible to argue that there is a difference between democratic and non-democratic states regarding which type of electoral system is most suitable. Even though PR could lead to more parties and potential fragmentation, it also may enable the opposition to unite and make cooperation easier under authoritarian rule. However, some scholars have cautioned against the use of PR in newly consolidated democracies, arguing that "the large, umbrella-type parties typically associated with WTA systems are held to be crucial for building national unity, whereas PR systems, by encouraging small parties, are said to promote ethnic or other fragmentation" (Posusney 2005b: 114). However, Arab states are not in the process of consolidating democracy. Instead, the opposition faces a strategic dilemma of participating in a political game while at the same time fulfilling goals of weakening the incumbents. In order for the opposition to unite and challenge the regimes, "supporters of democracy...must rather consider what type of voting system will best help to undermine the stability of incumbent authoritarians" rather than which systems that should be used to consolidate a new regime (Posusney 2005b: 114).

Another study highlighting the influence of the state and institutional arrangements is *Structuring Conflict in the Arab World* by Lust-Okar (2005), who analyses how the rules deciding which groups that are allowed to compete in political

contests influence both the behaviour of rulers and opposition. She argues that in contrast to studies of democracies, studies of authoritarian regimes often ignore the role played by formal institutions. Furthermore, Lust-Okar (2005:1) emphasizes “how authoritarian elites use institutional rules to create and maintain very different relationships between the state and political opponents and among various opposition groups themselves”. The latter element is especially important for the subject of this thesis, since it offers a perspective on how to understand the relationship between different oppositional groups. Lust-Okar argues that scholarly literature often do not fully consider how “state elites use different strategies to manipulate the development and strength of various opposition groups, thereby influencing their opponents’ willingness to mobilize the masses” (Lust-Okar 2005: 23). The tools that incumbent regimes use to shape the interactions between the oppositional groups are especially important in this context, encouraging some groups while repressing others.

Lust-Okar (2005: 1-2) separates between two *Structures of Contestation (SoC)*; one is divided and the other united. In the divided SoC, some groups are allowed to take part in the formal political system while others are excluded. In united SoC, all opposition groups are allowed to participate in the formal political system. The role of SoCs is analysed in the context of long-lasting economic crisis. Lust-Okar’s main argument is that in contrary to studies stating that economic decline leads to greater political unrest, opposition elites become increasingly unwilling to mobilize the masses, even though they may be more able to do so. She therefore addresses the question of under what conditions the opposition will make use of the increased dissatisfaction to make political demands. The results from her study also highlight the argument that political liberalization is not necessarily an inherently instable situation as a temporary stop towards democratic opening. Even though liberalization refers to a process, in many countries the changes are not occurring quickly. The end result may therefore be one in the grey zone of regime types or in a middle position, not one of the two poles of authoritarianism or democracy. As Brumberg argues,

“the trademark mixture of guided pluralism, controlled elections, and selective repression...is not just a “survival strategy” adopted by authoritarian regimes, but rather a type of political system whose institutions, rules, and logic defy any linear model of democratization” (Brumberg 2002: 56).

Similar to Zartman’s (1988) and Albrecht’s (2005) arguments, the inclusion of some oppositional groups may therefore help to preserve the regime, making the liberalized autocracy much more durable than once imagined. Lust-Okar therefore raises the question of why partial liberalization did not lead to political reform, despite prolonged economic crisis and popular discontent, and why the opposition did not use popular pressure to make demands (Lust-Okar 2005: 5). In unified SoCs, the opposition is often more willing to press for change and mobilizes during increased economic crisis. Conversely, in divided SoCs, the moderate opposition becomes less willing to mobilize, especially because of two oppositional concerns. First, the opposition fears that the privileges it has acquired may be lost if it presses the regime too much. Furthermore, in an oppositional environment characterized by ideological differences, the included opposition may fear that the excluded opposition will take advantage of the instability to increase their own influence. Hence, if there is a strong possibility that the excluded opposition will take part in social unrest, the included opposition is discouraged to mobilize against the incumbent regime. This situation is similar to the one described by Przeworski (1991a) on the strategic games taking place between the Moderates and the Radicals within the opposition. However, Lust-Okar, using an institutional framework, highlights the institutional mechanisms behind these games, influencing actor behaviour. She shows that the rulers in a divided SoCs will use a balancing strategy playing the excluded and included opposition up against each other. The rulers will also have fewer incentives to eliminate the excluded opposition, because “the existence of radical opposition groups, and the threat that they may take advantage of political unrest to demand their own policies, serves to repress the included opposition groups” (Lust-Okar 2005: 6). The insights offered from this study may therefore be further developed and used to analyse why the opposition in Egypt has not been able to unite around a common strategy of democratization.

The first *hypothesis* in this study therefore becomes:

The oppositional groups in Egypt have not been able to unite around a common strategy for democratization of the political system, because of institutional mechanisms and strategies used by the incumbent rulers to shape the interaction taking place between the oppositional groups to promote internal divisions.

2.5.2 An Environment of Distrust? Ideological Differences and Oppositional Cooperation

Differences among oppositional groups regarding ideology as well as short-term goals are central strategic dilemmas that influence the ability to cooperate (Posusney 2005b: 94). Dahl (1971: 115) argues that incentives toward cooperation are stronger when “each subculture cannot form a majority capable of governing except by entering into a coalition with representatives of other subcultures”. The possibility of cooperation is therefore weakened if a country is split into two subcultures, where one is a majority and the other a minority. In this situation the majority group has fewer incentives for being conciliatory towards the minority, since they have the strength to form a majority coalition among themselves. Furthermore, the minority also has few incentives to act conciliatory, because of fears of permanent political domination of the majority (Dahl 1971: 116).

The core of this dilemma in the Arab world is first and foremost the friction between Islamist movements and various secular trends. Constituencies for democracy exist in the Arab world today, and intellectuals are increasingly speaking up on behalf of the ideas of democracy and popular participation. However, the Arab world is marked by a lack of “broad-based political organizations pushing for democracy” (Ottaway 2004: 3). The strongest advocates of democracy are often isolated from their own societies and do not attempt to reach down to the people of their own countries. Conversely, the organizations that have a broad popular base remain ambivalent about democracy. These are often Islamist movements, some of which state a commitment to democracy, but “still struggle to reconcile the concept

of citizen's right to make individual choices and the idea that there are God-given truths that human choices must not contradict" (Ottaway 2004: 5). This uncertainty is related to Islamic law (Shari'a) being a collection of interpretations by different sects and schools over centuries. A radical interpretation of Shari'a fully consistent with democratic values is considered possible by many scholars, but the "historical Shari'a" clearly violates some of the main ideas of democratic governance (Wickham 2004: 205). Respect for Islamic law could therefore lead to democracy or dictatorship, depending on the interpretation chosen.

Islamist movements can be considered the mass movements of this century, and has therefore taken on the role once played by national liberation movements and leftist parties. The rise of these movements has caused secular Arabs great grievances, because they are suspicious of the movements' ultimate goals. On the other hand, mainstream Islamist groups have all renounced the use of violence, and many have become advocates of democracy. However,

"in some countries, their embrace of non-violence and democracy is a recent development; fears persist that the change is purely the result of expediency and that these movements would revert to their true, radical nature if they gained power" (Brown et al. 2006: 5).

So even though Islamists have adopted more moderate goals and a more pragmatic view of politics, there are still fundamental points of divergence between Islamists and non-Islamists that constrain cooperation. The relationship between these two trends have therefore been tense over the last years, as Islamist movements have risen to become the strongest and most popular challenge against incumbent rulers, leaving secular forces more or less on the sideline. Liberals have therefore been reluctant to fight for the legalisation of Islamist movements in countries like Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Kuwait, and because of this the opposition as whole "is greatly weakened in its fight to open up the political system" (Sivan 2003: 25). There is therefore an insecurity factor involved with the participation of strong, religious groups in the political system, related to the ongoing discussion about the goals and long-term intentions of these groups. Waterbury (2001: 45) argues that "the major challengers to the incumbents in the Middle East do not offer democracy as the

alternative to authoritarianism but rather an untarnished instrument to pursue the great cause". Others however, have highlighted the moderating element of participating in politics and "the possibility of Islamic groups' moderating their long-term platforms in a direction that embraces certain democratic values" (Posusney 2004: 129).

Sivan (2003: 22) highlights the suspicion that exists among different oppositional groups, especially among liberals. This suspicion is based on events from the 1970's and onwards, first and foremost in the relationship with radical Islamists. However, more moderate movements have also taken ambiguous positions on sensitive issues, and often found it difficult to criticize fellow Islamists on issues like book censorship, blasphemy and the status of non-Muslims in an Islamic state. Extremist movements have also accused the moderate Islamists of opportunism and inconsistency, which has also strengthened the suspicion of government officials and anxious liberals towards the moderate Islamists. This has led to a perception among Arab liberals of Islamists being, "at best, proponents of "illiberal democracy", if not totalitarians in disguise" (Sivan 2003: 25). Conversely, Hamzawy (2005c) argues that moderate Islamists are the key to the accomplishment of Arab reform. Mainstream or moderate Islamists are often defined as "those that have eschewed or formally renounced violence and are pursuing their goals thorough peaceful political activity" (Brown et al. 2006: 3). Furthermore,

"instead of clinging to fantasies of theocratic states, Islamist movements ...see the wisdom of competing peacefully for shares of political power and working within existing institutions to promote gradual democratic openings" (Hamzawy 2005c: 1).

In order to achieve this, Islamists have tried to position themselves within an emerging reform consensus and made attempts to bridge the Islamist-secular divide. Hamzawy argues that linking Islamists and seculars to reduce the ideological gap is a "prerequisite for forging broad alliances for democracy" (Hamzawy 2005c: 5). However, in order to facilitate cooperation and mutual trust, how the political actors themselves perceive each other is essential. Dahl (1971: 124) highlights the importance of activists' beliefs in that "the beliefs of the political activists are a key

stage in the complex processes by which historical sequences or subcultural cleavages...are converted into support for one kind of regime or another". Furthermore, individuals' beliefs influence collective actions, and therefore also the structure and operation of institutions and systems. One element of belief is "the extent to which members of a political system has trust and confidence in their fellow political actors" (Dahl 1971: 150). Dahl argues that mutual trust favours polyarchy and public contestation, while extreme distrust favours hegemony. A certain level of trust is also necessary for people to unite to promote their goals together. Finally, conflicts often become more threatening among people who do not trust each other. Both during public contestation and governmental rule trust is important, because it reassures that the actors will contest each other without becoming enemies and not take advantage of each others weaknesses (Dahl 1971: 152).

Thus, old grievances, the weakness of secular ideas and the popular following of Islamist ideology may contribute to the persistence of an ideological gulf and distrust among the actors. Islamist movements may believe that their religious views are so right and their popular support is so strong that nothing can threaten their cultural legitimacy. However, the movements and their constituencies may also feel politically and socially vulnerable (Leca 2001: 52). Islamist movements have also been reluctant to cooperate with secular trends because of the past alliances between incumbent regimes and secular opposition against Islamists. Conversely, secular democrats or liberals may feel secure as civil servant or workers, but equally vulnerable as part of an "alien", "western" culture. These vulnerabilities can strengthen one another, and thus contribute to inhibit any attempt to bargain with the "enemy" (Leca 2001: 52). According to Hamzawi (2005c), differences between liberals and Islamists still remain relevant, but the degree of convergence over national priorities is increasing. This is also because liberals have recognized the importance of reaching out to moderate Islamists in order to increase the chances for achieving political reform.

The second *hypothesis* in this study therefore becomes:

The oppositional groups in Egypt have not been able to unite around a common strategy for democratization of the political system, because of mutual feelings of distrust based on ideological differences between secular and Islamist beliefs.

2.5.3 Personal Political Rule and Internal Divisions

Personal rule is characterized by being “an elitist political system of the privileged and powerful few in which many are usually unmobilized, unorganized, and therefore relatively powerless to command the attention and action of the government” (Jackson and Rosberg 1984: 424). Furthermore, political interactions among leaders and factions mostly take place within the political elite only, and not among the broader segments of the population, thus contributing to a disconnection between political elites and the people. Personalized politics is perhaps most often used to analyze the regime and the ruler in power, but the same dynamics should also be applicable to analyses of the behaviour of other political elites. Personal rule can thus be considered as a distinctive kind of political system with basic characteristics and processes, where politics is viewed as a “game in which individuals and factions struggle for power and place rather than an arena in which groups and parties compete for policies and the constitutional right to command the ship of state” (Jackson and Rosberg 1982: 19).

The term clientelism has often been used to describe an arrangement used by personal rulers to secure regime stability, based on resources of patronage and loyalty. This entails a system of patron-client relationships that ties leaders and followers in relationships of mutual support, as well as acceptance of inequality between “big” and “small” men. The process of reciprocity especially distinguishes patron-client ties from other types of relationships. A patron-client structure therefore exists when “patrons exist at different levels of the society (national, regional, local) and the lower-level patrons are the clients of higher-level patrons who have access to greater amounts and types of resources” (Kassem 1999: 12). Researchers have especially highlighted the close association of ruling parties with the state, which

opens up possibilities for patronage. This “party directed patronage” can be used to explain how political parties use clientelism as a means to limit electoral competition and protect their dominant position in the power structure (Kassem 1999: 13).

Although opposition parties also participate in this political context, this does not necessarily reduce the ruling party’s dominant position in state and society. On the contrary, the ruling party’s control over the state’s resources enables it to further strengthen its position if some of the resources are used to co-opt members of the opposition into the regime structure (Kassem 1999: 16). As seen in Mexico during the 1970s, liberalization strategies were used to incorporate important opposition groups into the existing party system, without increasing their real political power (Kassem 1999: 17). In this context, elections can be considered as an important mechanism of clientelist co-option and control. Hence, opposition can be allowed to participate in elections, but this also often entails incorporation into a clientelist system of control.

Under personal political rule it is the ruler that gives the dominant party access to state resources, and this is done without coercion only if political institutions and groupings are weak. It is therefore also important that no party, whether ruling party or opposition party, emerge as a strong political actor that could potentially challenge the ruler’s power. Opposition parties in this type of system facilitate

“the extension of political activity to include the participation of “opposition” elements in political life as efforts to recruit them into the government’s clientelist apparatus so as to inhibit and constrain their development and prevent them from becoming potential threats to the regime” (Stacher 2004: 219).

Oppositional groups participating in clientelist regimes are therefore often recruited into the clientelist apparatus of the government, and by doing the regime prevents the development of alternative centres of power. This approach sees the role of elections as “a mechanism of co-option and clientelist control...understood along more traditional and thus more personal lines” (Kassem 1999: 18). A clear example is Philippine politics where parties were more as conglomerates of personalities with its

own network of supporters, rather than independent political actors (Kassem 1999: 18). Especially in winner-takes-all electoral systems and where individual candidacy is common, politics are more personalistic with less emphasis on policy and ideology. The result is weak political parties that are disorganized and disunited, which prevents the formation of well-defined alternatives to the incumbent regime (Kassem 1999: 18; Langohr 2005: 204). In this system, politics are more about the channelling of state resources than ideological convictions. As Kassem (1999: 25) argues,

“the government’s clientelist control of the vote ensures that representatives from opposition parties are regarded by the majority of voters as intermediaries between themselves and central government, rather than as representatives of party ideology”.

These clientelist mechanisms thus lead to personal political rule, and therefore reinforce already existing tendencies. She also highlights the personalistic character of Egyptian politics, both in individualistic election campaigns and the way in which parties are led. This in turn weakens political parties as group entities, and strengthens the clientelist dependency on the regime (Kassem 1999: 162). This poses a potential analytical problem, since it becomes difficult to isolate the effect of institutional mechanisms (clientelism) from other reasons behind personal political rule.

Factionalism, considered as “jockeying and maneuvering to influence a ruler and to increase one’s political advantage or security in a regime”, may be a useful approach when analysing dynamics of opposition in Egypt, and explaining the high occurrence of internal divisions (Jackson and Rosberg 1984: 432). Furthermore, factionalism tends to be an internal competition for power and positions within a group, rather than an open contest among groups (Jackson and Rosberg 1984: 433). Factionalism also involves a conscious awareness among the actors that there is a division within the group, and entails individuals or groups engaged in verbal and physical aggression against each other (Siegel and Beals 1960: 108). Opposition parties in these systems are thought to be weak and ineffectual actors, with the outcome often being personal rule. In addition, in a system based on an individual or a small circle of elites, the president’s ruling party also has a strong interest in

maintaining his party in power. In order to secure this, oppositional groups are not allowed to become competent organizations, because they could challenge the status quo. Despite being internally weak and often led by autocratic leadership themselves, the parties have no incentives to unite with other opposition parties. Often, “the parties propose different ideological platforms and assume it is more beneficial to stress those differences as they compete for the government’s attention” (Stacher 2004: 219). Government attention could mean possible support and influence, and it is therefore not in their perceived interest to compromise their ideologies, if opposition unity could be considered a threat to the regime. This approach thus provides a framework for analysing the character of political affairs within a group.

This framework enables an analysis of the effects of internal disputes and the individualistic character of political interactions, on the opposition’s ability to cooperate. One difficulty is however analysing the internal dynamics of the opposition, influenced by personal rule and factionalism, separate from institutional mechanisms and the impact of regime-directed clientelism. However, I will argue that the internal divisions may not be entirely a result of state management alone, which justifies the construction of a separate hypothesis focusing on internal divisions as a result of personal rule.

The last *hypothesis* in this study therefore becomes:

The oppositional groups in Egypt have not been able to unite around a common strategy for democratization of the political system, because of internal divisions caused by personal political rule.

2.6 Conclusion

The theoretical framework discussed in this chapter highlights important perspectives on how to analyse oppositional politics in authoritarian states, and is thus well placed within the research area of comparative politics. Furthermore, it enables a focus on the influences of the *state* and *institutions*, of *ideology*, and of the *internal*

characteristics of the oppositional groups, on the opposition's ability to cooperate. The use of this extensive framework enables an analysis on more than one level, focusing both on an authoritarian regime's ability to create divisions between oppositional groups, and on the importance of individual actors and their preferences. Hence, there is an underlying assumption that institutional structures and the rules of the game matter, but that the individual actors also have room for manoeuvre and some capabilities to pursue their goals. Furthermore, it enables research on opposition strategies in authoritarian regimes that are undergoing political liberalization, which many scholars have called for due to the knowledge gap within this area of research. The chosen framework also facilitates an analysis of the consequences of cooperation in an environment where major divisions exist within the opposition groups, a point that many scholars overlook when analysing the relationship between governments and oppositions.

3. The Political System and Oppositional Actors in Egypt

3.1 Introduction

Compared to many of the other Arab countries, Egypt has a relative long history of political participation. As far back as in the 19th century, Egypt's rulers established assemblies for consultation where the members were appointed or elected indirectly. However, this degree of openness for participation and opposition has been cyclic with periods of expansion and contraction in liberties. Electoral rules and the role of political institutions are some of the contested issues, and have often been shaped by the government to guarantee a certain outcome (Hamzawy and Brown 2005: 1). Hinnebusch (1988: 57) argues that there also has existed a tacit understanding between the government and the opposition, where "the latter knows that if it goes too far in challenging the regime, it invites repression, while the former knows that if it is too unresponsive it may invite mobilisation against the system". This is especially evident with the legal parties, many of them being creatures of the regime itself.

The 2005 legislative elections resulted in a distinctively bipolar political system in Egypt, with the Muslim Brotherhood winning 88 seats as independent candidates and the NDP obtaining a total 311 of the 444 seats in the People's Assembly (Hamzawy and Brown 2005: 1). The legal parties and the Kifaya movement tried to unite in the National Front for Change, but were unable to mobilize voters and only obtained twelve seats. Thus, with the poor performance of the legal parties, the political landscape contains an authoritarian regime on the one hand that still "has an overwhelming ability to dominate and structure public life", and the popular Muslim Brotherhood on the other hand. The Brotherhood has consolidated its position as the main oppositional force, accentuating the weakness of the legal parties (Hamzawy and Brown 2005: 1, 6).

3.1.1 Main Content of the Chapter

This chapter contains an account of the context in which the oppositional actors in Egypt operate within, as well as an outline of the major oppositional actors. First is an outline of the powers of the President and the ruling party, the National Democratic Party, with emphasis on recent internal developments. Second, the most important institutional arrangements and laws governing political activity are outlined, with emphasis on oppositional dynamics. Third, follows a section outlining the main oppositional actors: the major legal parties, the Muslim Brotherhood and the protest movement Kifaya. The section also discusses recent developments within the judiciary, and whether these can be viewed as a force of opposition. The main focus of this chapter will be on the period after 1981, when President Mubarak took over power, but previous developments will also have to be taken into consideration in order to understand the operation and dynamics of the oppositional actors. Since the Muslim Brotherhood is the most powerful oppositional force, the space devoted to this group will be larger than the space devoted to the individual political parties.

3.2 The Political Context

3.2.1 The Powers of the President

The dominant position of the president is one of the most important aspects of Egypt's political system. The president has a near monopoly over decision-making and holds large legal-constitutional powers, making him the centre of the country's political life (Shukor 2005: 44). In addition to being chairman of the NDP, the President also has the prerogative to appoint and dismiss the cabinet, the authority to overrule the parliament, and rule by presidential decree (Kassem 1999: 47). The result is that "since 1952 all political activity, including the policy-making process, remains under the exclusive control of the President" (Kassem 1999: 23). Certain characteristics have also led to the belief that the underlying structure of Egypt's political system is continuous: "while the Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak regimes have

had their own distinct characteristics, the nature of personal authoritarian rule in the presidency has remained unchanged during all three eras” (Kassem 2004: 1). Hence, although the formal structures of the political system may have changed considerably after the introduction of multi-party politics, “personal authoritarian rule in Egypt survives and has been maintained for more than five decades” (Kassem 2004: 1). This is especially evident with the persistent domination of the executive over the legislative branch and the weakness of alternative centres of power.

One example of this power is Article 147 in the Constitution of 1971, which stipulates that the President, “in the Assembly’s absence, and in situations that “cannot suffer delay”, has the right to issue decisions which have the force of law” (Kassem 1999: 31). Article 108, also called “The Delegation Act” gives the President legislative powers, even when the Assembly is in session. This gives him the power to rule by decree, thus upsetting the traditional balance of power in favour of the executive. Officially, approval from the Assembly is necessary in order to give the president such powers (Kassem 1999: 31). However, since the legislative has a weak position and the NDP has a majority of seats in the Assembly, it is questionable whether this is an actual check on the executive power. Furthermore, Article 148 of the Constitution gives the President the right to implement a state of emergency² (Goldschmidt 2004: 185). With the current emergency law (162) of 1958, the president can do this

“whenever security of public order are jeopardized within the Republic or in any of its regions, whether due to war or circumstances threatening war, national unrest, general disasters or the outbreak of an epidemic” (Kassem 1999: 36).

The vague formulation of the law offers large rooms for interpretation and makes it easy to use the law to fit situations perceived as a threat to the regime. In practice this therefore gives the President the right to restrict freedom of movement, assembly and residence of the country’s citizens. It also allows for the establishment of special

² The state of emergency was first declared in 1958, lifted in 1980, but reinstated after the assassination of Sadat in 1981.

security courts that work outside the usual civil protections that the judiciary gives its citizens (Singerman 2002: 29). Officially the use of emergency law is restricted by the supervisory role of the Assembly and cannot be extended beyond a “limited” period without the approval of the Assembly. However, all three Presidents have enforced a formal state of emergency for long periods of time. The fact that the Assembly has not challenged the President on this matter can also be explained by his authority to bypass the parliament (Kassem 1999: 37). The relationship between the executive and the legislative branch is thus marked by unbalance in favour of the executive. This has made it difficult to create a vibrant opposition and weakens the representative functions of parties and parliament. This weakness has also contributed to popular indifference towards parliament activity and electoral participation (ICG 2005: 18). This is also illustrated by the low electoral turnout; in the 2005 legislative elections the turnout was about 25 percent (Abaza 2006: 14).

In 2005 Mubarak initiated changes in existing laws governing political activity. One of the most important changes was the decision to revise article 76 of the constitution, which stipulates the procedures for electing the President. This was welcomed by many as a step towards increased democratization, because for the first time people could choose between multiple candidates. However, the optimism soon faded, because even though the amendment confirmed to the principles initially outlined by Mubarak, it also put strict conditions on their operation (ICG Report 2005: 4). One such constraint was that all candidates must obtain support from at least 250 members of the country’s representative bodies³, with the intended effect of preventing the Brotherhood from fielding a candidate as an independent. Furthermore, in presidential elections after 2005, only parties that are active and at least five years old can field a candidate. The candidate must also have held a senior position in the party’s leadership for at least one year. Furthermore, the party fielding a candidate also has to have won at least five percent of the seats in both the People’s

³ That includes 65 members of the People’s Assembly, 25 members of the Shura Council, and ten members of local councils in fourteen governorates, the remaining twenty to be drawn from any of the above (ICG 2005: 4).

Assembly and the Shura Council (ICG Report 2005: 5). This last constraint means that it will be difficult for the opposition parties to nominate candidates in future elections. None of the legal parties have the required seats needed in the current parliament, and it is highly unlikely that this is going to change in the near future.

Furthermore, there were also modifications in the composition of the Political Parties Committee (PPC), which is responsible for giving licenses to new parties and supervising the activities of existing ones. The PPC has been described as “an agency of the regime”, and is composed of nine members: six of them are from positions appointed by the President and three are “independent public figures” (Stacher 2004: 220; ICG Report 2005: 7). The changes strengthened the PPC’s power, giving it the right to freeze a party’s activities if “the party, or one of its leading members, begins to espouse principles differing from the original party line, or if freezing the party in question is in the “national interest”” (ICG Report 2005: 7). An official agency dominated by the regime is thus given the authority to supervise party activities, evaluating the “democratic” character or whether it behaves “in the national interest”. The broad concepts used make it easy for the regime to apply the law according to its own interests, making it difficult to establish an active and challenging opposition.

3.2.2 The National Democratic Party

The National Democratic Party (NDP) was established by Anwar Sadat in 1978, and has since then occupied no less than three quarters of the seats in the People’s Assembly. The party is headed by the President and one or more secretary generals, and remains largely an extension of the state apparatus (Hinnebusch 1988: 53). The close relationship to the state therefore enables the party to provide social services and patronage. Kassem (1999: 77) argues that the NDP does not seem to have a clear ideological profile, and that this may be intentional, making it able to “accommodate a fairly heterogeneous spectrum of political attitudes”. This enables the President to make a variety of policy decisions, without appearing to contradict the party’s official views. The ruling elite are composed of upper-class business elites, members of the

bourgeoisie, technocrats and rural notables, and “far from being a monolithic organization, the NDP is so fragmented that its various fractions compete actively against one another...” (Lust-Okar 2005: 70; Baaklini et al. 1999: 235).

The NDP has however not managed to develop into a mass party. The weakness especially lies in the party’s relative lack of appeal in urban and industrialized areas, which has resulted in widespread fraud and gerrymandering to secure a majority of the seats in the People’s Assembly (Baaklini et al. 1999: 231). In the 2000 elections, the NDP initially only gained 38 percent of the seats, but finally secured an 87 percent majority after many independent candidates rejoined the party. The candidate-centred system has resulted in a “floating” membership of the Assembly, where the candidates often declare themselves as independents and announce their party affiliation once they are elected. Thus, party dissidents or candidates rejected from party lists can participate on their own responsibility, “if they lost, the party would wash its hands of them; if they won it could accept them” (Rabi 2005: 80). The candidates are tied to the ruling party or rejoin it, because their personal base of support depends on resources obtained through party membership. The consequence is candidates that “are less likely to be concerned with party programmes and policies, not only during electoral campaigns but also once elected to office” (Kassem 1999: 92).

The NDP’s poor electoral performance set the stage for the president’s son, Gamal Mubarak, to engage in an attempt to change the party’s appearance. The plan was to make it into a more modern party, rather than “an engine for recruiting support for the regime in exchange for governmental patronage” (Dunne 2006: 5). The reforms were particularly aimed at re-establishing the party’s ties with the grassroots by revising the membership database and rationalising internal electoral mechanisms. Previously, local NDP parliamentary candidates were chosen by party notables, but now a 600-member electoral college in every district was introduced to choose candidates by absolute majority (ICG 2003: 11). In 2002 the party also introduced new faces and ideas under the slogan “An Enlightened Vision and New Thought”,

and a document containing 28 “Basic Principles” for governing the country. It identified the NDP as a party of “active centrism”, and highlighted democracy, human rights and woman participation as key commitments (ICG 2003: 11).

There has also been a discussion about a generational change within the party and a split between a so-called new guard and an old guard (Dunne 2005). When Gamal took over the Policies Committee, it soon became a centre of power within the party. This led some observers to argue that “he [Gamal Mubarak] is part of a broad-based, new generation that has the know-how and skills to lead Egypt into the future” (ICG 2003: 12). The political power of the party’s old guard centred around Safwat Sherif and Kamal al-Shazli has, according to some observers, been seriously challenged by this younger generation. Critics, however, consider these changes as “no more than a facelift and a cover for the younger Mubarak’s grooming for the presidency” (ICG 2003: 12). The reformist potential is also denied by major figures within the opposition and among scholars, claiming that Gamal offers “the same dictatorship methodology, but by different faces” (Habib 2006 [interview]). The attempt to change the party’s image and the “reformist” discourse did not seem to improve the results in the 2005 legislative election. The party initially only secured 34 percent of the seats, but like in 2000, it reintegrated large numbers of independents, and thus secured a two-third parliamentary majority. This enables the NDP to pass new laws (assuming party discipline), approval of constitutional amendments and the lifting of parliamentary immunity of individual MPs (El-Amrani 2005: 6).

3.2.3 Electoral Laws and Oppositional Dynamics

During the 1980s, the political environment in Egypt was relatively open. Following the death of Sadat, banned political parties were reopened and the opposition’s newspapers were back on the newsstands (Razik 2006 [interview]). The banned Muslim Brotherhood was also relatively tolerated. Furthermore, some of the oppositional groups entered electoral alliances in 1984 and 1987 and obtained seats in the People’s

Assembly. The alliances consisted of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wafd in 1984, and the Islamic Alliance between the Brotherhood, the Labour Party and the Liberal Party under the banner of “Islam is the solution” in 1987 (Lust-Okar 2005: 141-142).

In 1983, Law 114 was issued, which prescribed changes in the electoral system from individual candidacy or “first past the post” to a party list system of proportional representation (PR). In addition, parties had to gain at least 8 percent of the votes on a national basis to obtain seats in any constituency. If not, the votes would be transferred to the largest party, meaning the NDP (Kassem 2004: 49-50). The implementation of proportional representation thus excluded independents from participating in the elections, and the high threshold also cancelled the advantages of PR for the opposition (Posusney 2005b: 94). The law was therefore challenged in the Supreme Constitutional Court by two oppositional lawyers. They argued that the law prevented individuals from nominating themselves in elections, which contradicted “public right, equality, and opportunity as enshrined in Articles 8, 40, and 62 of the constitution” (Kassem 2004: 60). In 1986 the regime pre-empted the court ruling and issued a new electoral law, reserving one seat in every constituency for independent candidates. Parties, however, could also nominate candidates for those seats. The electoral system for the independent seats was plurality vote, with a requirement that the top candidate had to gain at least 20 percent of the vote. Apart from this change, the previous PR system remained intact (Posusney 2005b: 102).

Table 1: Electoral Results under Mubarak, 1984-2005.

	1984	1987	1990	1995	2000	2005
NDP	390	309	360	417	388	311
Wafd	49	35	-	6	7	6
Ghad ^{c)}	-	-	-	-	-	2 ^{c)}
Liberal	0	3	-	1	1	-
Labour	0	18	-	0	-	-
NPUP	0	0	5	5	6	2
Nasserites	-	-	3	1	2	2 ^{d)}
MB	9	35	-	1	17	88
Independents	-	48 ^{b)}	76	13	23	22
Total^{a)}	448	448	444	444	444	433^{e)}

Sources: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2005; Makram-Ebeid 2001: 38; El-Mikawy 1999: 91; Post 1987: 17; Hendriks 1985: 11; Kassem 2004: 62.

- a) In addition, from 1990, ten seats are appointed by the President.
b) 44 of the 48 seats set aside for independents went to NDP-affiliated candidates.
c) One seat won by Ayman Nour's fraction and one seat for the dissident wing.
d) Won by a breakaway fraction called the Karama Party (has not gained party license).
e) 12 seats have not yet been decided because of postponed races.

The 1987 elections resulted in more oppositional representation than in 1984 (see table 1). The representation of the NDP dropped to 79 percent, while the opposition's representation was record high. Furthermore, the growth in the number of NGO's and the tacit allowance for protest and discussion in the professional syndicates "suggested that the government was genuinely ceding political space" (Brownlee 2003: 49). In 1990, the constitutional court ruled that the 1986 election law discriminated against independents and therefore considered the parliament "null and void" (Posusney 2005b: 103). The court therefore reinstated the majority runoff system used in the 1970s. This system, also known as the "Two-Round System", requires that if no candidate wins over 50 percent of the vote, a second election is held between the two candidates with the most votes (Posusney 2005b: 99). The size and number of constituencies also increased from 48 to 222, in which two representatives were to be elected from each constituency, one worker/peasant and one professional (Kassem 2004: 61). In the following elections the NDP was still able to secure over two thirds of the seats in the People's Assembly, but many of these

were pro-NDP candidates running as independents. The current electoral system of individual candidacy has also reduced the ability of the party leaders to control which members who will run for candidacy (Posusney 2005b: 104).

As seen in Table 1, the opposition parties experienced a reduction in the number of seats after the re-introduction of individual candidacy, while the Brotherhood was able to secure representation as independents. In contrast to the political opening during Mubarak's first years, the 1990s was characterized by increased deliberalization and deteriorating possibilities for reform. The country experienced insurgency from militant Islamic groups, which also provided an opportunity to clash down on non-violent opposition. According to Brownlee (2003: 49) the strategy of the regime became one of

“indulging in executive decrees, the extensive use of military courts, and the broad deployment of security forces, Mubarak reversed Egypt's course and began to “deliberalize” – renewing controls on opposition parties, elections, Islamist activity, civil society organizations and the press”.

The political system in Egypt was thus marked by instability. This also gave the state justifications for violating human rights and restricting political and civil liberties, often failing to differentiate between democratic opposition and anti-democratic insurgency (Cassandra 1995: 17-19). The secular opposition then turned towards the regime, against the Brotherhood, ironically improving its relationship with the government following the rise of radical Islamist movements (Razik 2006 [interview]). The government's attitude towards the Muslim Brotherhood also changed, “shifting from tenuous toleration to further legal and then physical repression” after 1992 (El-Ghobashy 2005: 381). This resulted in a more polarized system and increased oppositional co-optation into the regime. The participation of Tagammu' in the 1990 legislative elections also put an end to a united boycott effort. Kassem (1999: 103) argues that “this divided an opposition that had previously been united primarily on the basis of its unanimous stance against President Mubarak's form of democracy” (Kassem 1999: 104). Hence, the Tagammu' became the first party to enter into the regime's clientelist structure.

The 1995 elections saw the return of the opposition in what is characterized as the bloodiest elections in Egypt's history. 87 people died, at least 1500 were injured and the opposition became further marginalized. They only gained 13 seats in the legislature, while independent candidates also won 13 seats (Stacher 2004: 222). The government especially cracked down on the Muslim Brotherhood, arresting 83 prominent members on allegations of initiating "illegal activities" (Kassem 1999: 117). This election was characterized by

"rigging the electoral register, stuffing the ballot boxes and bribing the voters – and also ensuring that the state-controlled television and radio in effect concealed the fact that any other party was running. Nobody cared too much. Lack of democracy has bred apathy." (Ehteshami 1999: 211).

In 2000 the Supreme Constitutional Court ordered the implementation of a law that stipulated full judicial supervision of the elections (Kassem 2004: 74). However, the Ministry of Interior still retained its control over registered voters' lists. The number of casualties was also considerably lower (8 deaths) (EOHR 2005). However, as Kassem observed, there was a change in the type of violence. Instead of being local feuds between competing candidates as before, state-directed violence and the use of security forces against voters increased (Kassem 2004: 76). The Brotherhood made substantial gains, but there was no significant oppositional cooperation. Before the 2003 Iraqi war however, Egypt witnessed some attempts at unification following the anti-war demonstrations which turned into anti-Mubarak demonstrations and demands for reform. There was therefore a more united approach, but no common oppositional strategy for reform. To a certain degree the opposition had a common agenda, but no common strategy or organized movement that united all actors. In 2005 Egypt saw the formation of the National Front for Change, which brought together most of the major opposition movements around in demands for political reform, and sought to coordinate political activity in the legislative election. The Brotherhood, however, stayed out of the front (Schwedler and Clark 2006: 11). Personal rivalries between Ayman Nour and the Wafd's leader also prevented the Ghad Party from taking part (Abaza 2006: 13). According to Korany (2006 [interview]), the Front did not have much impact on the electoral result. The opposition was also seriously challenged by several internal disputes. Starting with

the clampdown in the final rounds of the 2005 elections and the imprisonment of Ghad-leader Ayman Nour, the opposition is now facing increased repression. The period of relative openness in 2004-2005 has therefore most likely been replaced by a period of deliberalization, which is also indicated by the detainment of leadership figures and supporters of the Brotherhood and secular activists alike in recent demonstrations.

3.3 Oppositional Actors

3.3.1 Opposition Parties in Egypt

Traditionally, political parties are considered to be important organisations because “their establishment helps, among other things, to structure “the participation of new groups into politics”” (Kassem 2004: 49). Furthermore, parties also play a significant role in determining the rate of this expansion and also in the integration of different social forces in society. Thus, political parties “can be viewed as instrumental tools with which to achieve political development and stability” (Kassem 2004: 49). In addition, political parties also participate in electoral contests with the ultimate objective of obtaining positions in the government. This is however only possible in a political system with competitive multiparty elections, which makes authoritarian systems sensitive to the development of strong political parties. Furthermore, as in many countries in the Third World, the development of political parties in Egypt has been described as “a system of party formation from the top [which] has resulted in a party framework that is more indicative of authoritarian bureaucracy than the diverse political desires of the Egyptian people” (Lust-Okar 2005: 87). Law 40 of 1977 also puts serious constraints on the creation of political parties in Egypt; parties that are based on religion, social class or a platform advocated by an existing party are banned (Stacher 2004: 221).

According to Hinnebusch, opposition parties in Egypt are not meant to take power, but serves as “parties of pressure”, articulating the interests and values of societal

sectors that are overlooked by the ruling party. This is supported by Albrecht (2005: 378), who argues that the opposition has been co-opted into the regime, and contributes to sustain the legitimacy of the state. The link between the parties and the masses are thus very weak. The party elites are more dependent upon the regime than the people, and therefore do little to adjust their platforms and ideology to make them relevant for the concerns of the ordinary people (Lust-Okar 2005: 87).

The present party system in Egypt was established in 1976 when Sadat dismantled the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) into three parties, playing a game of divide and rule on the right and left wings of the regime. The goal was “to encourage overt division in elite opinion, refrain from taking sides, and so acquire the role of arbiter thereby warding off any attack on his rule” (Kassem 1999: 41). The President controlled the grouping in the centre, which became the National Democratic Party. The leftwing group became the Tagammu’Party⁴, while the rightwing fragment of the ASU became the Liberal Party.⁵ In 1977, a second leftwing party was licensed, the Socialist Labour Party⁶, and in 1978 the Wafd Party re-emerged⁷. The Wafd was however forbidden the same year by a law that banned all parties that “did not espouse the principles of the July [1952] Revolution” (Baaklini et al. 1999: 228). The Wafd did not reappear in political life until 1983 when the Supreme Constitutional Court made a decision to legalize it. Many of the ideological trends did therefore not develop through independent movements representing social forces, but were created by the president and headed by his old acquaintances. Egypt’s parties can be further divided into main and smaller parties. Seven of the parties can be considered main parties⁸, which involve having specific political and intellectual orientations, some degree of popular base, and abilities promote the interests of certain social groups (Shukor 2005: 51).

⁴ Short for the National Rally for Unity and Progress (*Al-Tagammu’ Al-Watani Al-Wahdawi Al-Taquadumi*) led by former Free Officer Khaled Mohy al-Din.

⁵ *Hizb al-Ahrar*, led by former Free Officer Mustafa Murad

⁶ *Hizb al-Amal al-Ishtiraki*

⁷ The names Wafd and New Wafd will be used to denote the same party.

⁸ See Table 2.

Table 2: Major Political Forces in Egypt under Mubarak

	Established	First leader	Current leader	Main principles	Membership	Origin
NDP	1978	Anwar Sadat	Hosni Mubarak	Infitah economic policy, centrist, secularist pro-government	Technocrats, rural notables, government officials, business men	Grew out of the center platform of ASU
Wafd, Neo-Wafd after 1978.	1919	Fu'ad Serag al-Din	Mahmoud Abaza	Center-right opposition party	Upper middle-class professionals	Re-emerged in 1983 after made illegal in 1952 and 1978
Ghad Party	2004	Ayman Nour	Ayman Nour	Liberal party. Emphasis on secularism and democracy	Upper middle class, business men, young people	PPC approval
Liberal Party	1976	Mustafa Kamel Murad	Helmi Salem	Rightist conservative party	Business class	Grew out of the right-wing platform of the ASU, frozen in 1998
Labour Party	1977	Ibrahim Shukri and Adil Hussein	Magdy Hussein	Leftist nationalist party. Adopted an Islamist outlook in late 1980s	Socialists, nationalists and liberals.	Encouraged by Sadat to counter the Tagammu', frozen in 2000
Tagammu' Party	1977	Khaled Mohy al-Din	Rif'at al-Sa'id	Leftist, Nasserite social and economical reform, anti-Islamist and anti-Zionist	Intellectuals, self-educated workers and trade unionists	Grew out of the leftist platform of the ASU
Nasserites	1990	Dhiya al-Din Dawud	Dhiya al-Din Dawud	Leftist party, Arab unity, state-led economic policy	Officials from the Nasser-era, middle class	Established after a court ruling
Muslim Brotherhood	1928	Hassan al-Banna	Muhammed Mahdi Akef	Islamist movement	Urban classes, professionals	Illegal, but tolerated

Sources: Lust-Okar 2005; Kassem 1999

The Wafd Party

The origins of the Wafd can be traced back to the early 20th century when the party had a dominant position in Egyptian politics. The party is therefore an exception in Egyptian politics; it was not artificially introduced by the president. Using the left-right scale, the Wafd can be placed on the right, focusing on economic and political liberalization, with the main constituencies being old, traditional notables and the private bourgeoisie. The party has been described as “a champion of free enterprise and political liberalisation, [and] has systematically attracted upper- and upper-middle-class Egyptians into its ranks” (Kassem 1999: 94). The party’s economic program resembles that of the NDP, but differs on the issue of democratic reform where the Wafd supports “the removal of restrictions on political participation; greater civil liberties and a strict separation of power in the presidential, legislative and judicial branches of government” (Kassem 1999: 188). During the 1980s the Wafd “was designated to lead the legalised opposition camp from which Islamist movements were excluded” (Albrecht 2005: 383). The party is thought to be anti-Nasserist and anti-Islamist, despite the 1984 alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood.

Of the legal parties the Wafd is considered to be the one with the most comprehensive organizational capabilities. The party was headed by Fouad Serag Eddin until his death in 2000. Since then however, the party has been marked by internal disputes. Eddin’s successor, Noaman Gomaa, expelled Ayman Nour from the party and was increasingly criticized for ruling “the party like a dictator” (Shukor 2005: 57). This culminated in the violent leadership struggle at the party’s headquarters in 2006, when Gomaa refused to step down despite the party’s disappointing performance in the 2005 elections. Mahmoud Abaza took over the leadership after an internal election in June 2006. According to the new leader “our era is going to be different from others...there will be greater democracy inside the party and we will listen to other opinions” (The Daily Star Egypt 2006c).

The Liberal Party

The Liberal Party can also be placed on the liberal right, the main difference compared to the Wafd being “not in goals and composition but in its strategy of quiet advocacy rather than confrontation” (Hinnebusch 1988: 55). However, the ideological profile seems unclear since it also refers to socialism and Islam as well as liberal, capitalist thought. The party participated in the Islamic Alliance together with the Muslim Brotherhood and the Labour Party in the 1987 election, reversing its liberal profile. However, after the 1987 election, the party increasingly tried to distance itself from the Brotherhood (Kassem 1999: 111).

According to Kassem (1999: 186), the party has little grassroots’ support. Its main constituency is the national bourgeoisie, but the party’s shifting views and the support of the 1979 peace treaty with Israel have alienated many potential supporters. The party has also been marked by internal leadership struggles, and its activities are therefore currently frozen by the government (Shukor 2005: 59). The party’s newspaper, *Afaq Arabiya*, continues to be published, but there has been disagreement over a supposed deal with the Brotherhood, giving the group influence over writing and editing in return for Brotherhood support of the paper and increased sales (Daily Star Egypt 2006d).

The Labour Party

Slightly to the left of the NDP is the Labour Party (formerly the Socialist Labour Party), with a distinctive radical nationalist political history. The members were traditionally part of the *Misr al-Fatat*, middle class reformists, who emerged during Nasser’s rule and opposed Sadat’s *infitah* policy and peace with Israel. The party leadership also has had elements of family dynasty (Utvik 2006: 66). When the party’s founder and leader, Ahmad Husayn, died in 1970, his younger brother Adil Husayn became the party’s leader. Other important positions within the party were also held by members of this family. These kinds of dynasties have also been common within other parties (Utvik 2006: 66).

Initially, the Labour Party was a radical nationalist party, with a socialist platform emphasising government planning and Arab unity. However, in 1984-1987 the party adopted an Islamist platform, which also concurred with an electoral alliance with the Brotherhood (Kassem 1999: 187; Utvik 2006: 57). This ideological shift caused a major split within the party, and many leading members withdrew. The leader Adil Husayn “spoke of his ideas as “enlightened Islamism”, and favoured applying the Shari’a. He also emphasised that it must be a Shari’a of the 21st century”, which placed Husayn close to the approach of early reformers like Jamal al-Din Afghani and Muhammad Abduh (Utvik 2006: 67). The party’s ties with the Brotherhood have persisted, and the party has especially emphasised the amendment of the constitution to stress the Islamic identity of Egypt. The party was able to operate as a legally until it was frozen in 2000, after an internal leadership struggle between Hamdi Ahmad and Ahmad Idris. The PPC announced that none of the two proposed leaders of the party were recognized, and also suspended the activities of the party paper *al-Sha’b* (Shukor 2005: 58). The freezing of the party also can also be explained by the party’s close ties to the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Tagammu’ Party

The party is placed on the left on the political scale, made up by “a mix of middle class Nasserites and Marxists and working class trade unionists espousing a radical and nationalist-socialist ideology” (Hinnebusch 1988: 55). In accordance with its name, meaning rally, it is considered a rally of different factions with similar political goals. Although the members have different ideological orientations, they have agreed on some common guidelines, namely “social democracy, Egypt’s Arab identity, independent development, and anti-imperialism” (El-Mikawy 1999: 46). According to the party’s program, it also calls for “the establishment of a socialist society free of exploitation” (Shukor 2005: 53).

As previously mentioned, the party was first established as one of the three platforms created by Sadat. The leftist position “continues to date with its advocacy of workers’ rights; the preservation and expansion of Nasser’s social and economic

reform; the expansion of the public sector; social justice and the protection of the rights of the poor” (Kassem 1999: 187). The party has also agitated strongly against Islamist movements. The main membership base is intellectuals and self-educated workers. The former leader, Mohy al-Din had a centrist position, mediating between the different fractions in the party, and also expressed willingness to work with Mubarak. Thus, contrary to other socialist forces in Egypt, the Tagammu’ did not reject participation in the current political system. Instead of rejecting the regime based on its anti-democratic character, “the democratic potential of the current regime was to be supported, not ignored” (El-Mikawy 1999: 50).

The Arab Democratic Nasserist Party (the Nasserites)

The Nasserist Party was established in 1992 by figures active in the Nasser period, and has a pan-Arab ideology based on the 1952 Revolution and the thoughts of Nasser. According to the party’s program, it is committed to “freedom, socialism and unity” (Shukor 2005: 54). It is also anti-imperialist and advocates an economic policy of self-reliance and the centrality of the state. The party’s membership mostly consists of state officials from the Nasser period who became disfavoured when Sadat took over leadership in 1971. Another base is former students advocating Nasserism during the rule of Sadat and university students (Kassem 1999: 189). Dhiya’ al-Din Dawud is both the party’s founder and leader, and is also a senior politician from the Nasser era.

In 1996, Hamdeen Sabahi broke out of the party to found the Nasserist-leaning Karama Party, which has not yet gained a legal party license (Al-Ahram Weekly 2006a). This happened after a generational struggle within the Nasserist Party sparked by Dawud holding on to the leading position, despite strong challenges from the younger generation. According to Sabahi, the slogans of the Karama Party are total independence, effective Arab nationalism, justice, science, technology and democracy. Furthermore, he argues that the party’s programme

“reflects a contemporary outlook: the state, the Arab nation, and religion are interconnected but not rigidly interdependent spheres of allegiance...” (Al-Ahram Weekly 1999).

The Ghad Party

The Ghad Party (Tomorrow Party) was licensed in 2004, whose leader Ayman Nour came second to Mubarak in the 2005 presidential election. The Ghad Party shares the same liberal outlook as the Wafd, and has almost become synonymous with the leader Ayman Nour. According to researcher Dia Rashwan,

“Al-Ghad is founded on the margin of the liberal attitude in Egypt. It has no history or real liberal figures. Rather, it gathers underneath a big tent people from different attitudes. They unite around Ayman Nour’s personality, not a central idea” (Cairo Magazine: 2005a).

The members of the Ghad Party embrace pro-US, pro-free market policies, but also have proposed “abolition of the emergency laws..., limits on the nearly dictatorial powers of the president, and a limit on the number of presidential terms in office” (Beinin 2005). The latter demands are similar with those of other opposition parties and influential individuals. Ghad emphasises democratic reform, with an emphasis on secularism and promoting the empowerment of women, who constituted 37 per cent of the party’s founders. Ghad is also the only Egyptian political party where a woman, Mona Makram Ebeid, has held a post as party secretary- general. The party has also stated that its main concern is to reduce poverty and solve the problems of ordinary citizens (Al-Ahram Weekly 2004).

In 2005 the party was troubled by internal disputes. The main issues of the conflict revolved around the party’s acceptance of foreign support, and its attitude towards the government. One fraction of the party rejected all foreign interference, while the opposing fraction stated that there was no conflict of interest between accepting foreign support and maintaining Egyptian patriotism. Debates on the party’s future strategy have also split the party. Some breakaway members are “advocating a less confrontational approach in hopes of soothing the government’s fears about the party”, while Nour wants the party to maintain pressure on the government (Cairo Magazine 2005b).

3.3.2 The Muslim Brotherhood

The Islamist movements of the Arab world all seek to establish a close link between Islam and politics, but the movements differ “in the extent of the changes they seek, in their use of violence against the regime, and in their willingness to make concessions” (Lust-Okar 2005: 71). *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslamin* or the Muslim Brotherhood can be characterised as a social movement, combining “religious, charitable, educational and publishing activities with a substantial political presence” (ICG 2004: 1). The movement was established in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna with the aim of “reform of hearts and minds, to guide Muslims back to the true religion, and away from the corrupt aspirations and conduct created by European dominance” (Kassem 2004: 132). These ideas were inspired by Islamic thinkers such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Mohammed Abduh and Rashid Rida, but also have to be understood within the context of colonial domination and British occupation.

After Gamal Abdel Nasser took over power, the Brotherhood was heavily repressed (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999: 41). This repression may also have contributed to the rise of a more extreme ideology that became the foundation of the radical Islamist groups that emerged in the 1960s (Kassem 2004: 138). As Kassem argues,

“the brutal tactics of the Nasser regime not only paved the way for the emergence of a more radical Islamic ideology, but also crippled the Brotherhood’s relatively moderate movement, creating a void that contemporary Islamic groups were more than willing to fill” (Kassem 2004: 140).

This period also saw the transformation of one of the Brotherhood’s main ideologues, Sayyid Qutb, after spending years in Nasser’s concentration camps, into a supporter of *jihād* against what he perceived as a *jahiliya* regime. This expression originally referred to the state of ignorance in pre-Islamic society, and was now used to describe a society ruled by “an iniquitous prince who made himself an object of worship in God’s place and who governed...according to his own caprice”, instead of in accordance with Islamic principles (Kassem 2004: 140). The Brotherhood has however rejected Qutb’s radical visions, and adopted a non-violent and gradualist

strategy (ICG 2004: 2). There are however, differences in opinion regarding the sincerity of these intentions. Although not the main topic of this paper, this will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The period under Sadat was characterized by increased support for Islamist movements, especially as a governmental strategy to counter leftists and Nasserites. Initially this also resulted in a more conciliatory attitude towards the Brotherhood, allowing it to start rebuilding the organization after Nasser's repression (Kassem 2004: 140). However, the Brotherhood's opposition to the 1979 Camp David Accord made it a target of repression, and in 1981 the conflict between the regime and the Islamists culminated in the arrest of over 1,500 intellectuals and activists, where the majority was Islamists. Later in the 1980s, the Ikhwan emerged as the main opposition force within the parliament (Kassem 2004: 148). After Mubarak's succession to the Presidency, he released many of the political prisoners, and has since then allowed the Brothers a varying degree of political and social space. The Brotherhood also gained increased influence within the professional syndicates. This success within the formal political system reinforced "the organization's mainstream appeal on the grassroots level, while allowing it to continue its own established socio-political activities" (Kassem 2004: 149). Since the movement combines many activities, it is however difficult to classify it. This is also related to the lack of a legal definition of the movement (ICG 2004: 9). The state has refused to give the movement legal status, both as a political party and as an association, so officially the movement is illegal. Even though the state frequently cracks down on it, the movement is at the same time tolerated by the state. According to ICG (2004: 10), "the society [of Muslim Brothers] exists in a legal limbo, a sitting duck for repression, its wings regularly clipped, but never fully disabled".

The main demands being raised from the Brotherhood are "free and fair elections, the amendment of the laws on political parties and on professional syndicates, the right to demonstrate, hold meetings and publish newspapers; and, above all, lifting the Emergency Law in force since 1981" (ICG 2004: 13;

Ikhwanweb.com 2006a). Statements from the Brotherhood highlight that “the people is the source of all authorities. No individual, party, group or body is entitled to claim the right to be in power or to continue practicing power unless through sound, free public will” (Ikhwanweb.com 2006b). Furthermore, the Brotherhood envisions the transfer of power taking place through free general elections and also highlight the importance of freedom of opinion, freedom of establishing political parties, freedom of assembly and the right to hold peaceful demonstrations. Political representation is thought to take place by a freely elected parliament, elected for a certain period at a time (Ikhwanweb.com 2006b). These demands would of course be of major benefit to the group itself, but are at the same time similar to those raised by other oppositional groups. However, “the group still has a social and cultural agenda that can come into conflict with its liberal political priorities” (Hamzawy and Brown 2005: 6).

In 1996 many Brotherhood members left the group and established a new political party, Hizb al-Wasat, which has not yet gained legal status. The leader, Abu ‘l-‘Ala Madi, explained that he left the Brotherhood because of the lack of development of its political ideas, and because of the internal structure of the Brotherhood, which offered little room for differences in opinion. However, it is possible to distinguish between two distinct age groups within the Brotherhood that are caught in an internal ideological struggle (Altman 2005: 2). The old guard, represented by General Guide Muhammad Mahdi ‘Akef, are considered to be more conservative, committed to religious missionary work, and preserving the group’s unity. This generation experienced harsh repression during Nasser’s rule and many of them have spent several years in prison. Conversely, the younger generation consists of former student leaders in the 1970s and is more open for change. They emphasise the movement’s political role, and are more conciliatory towards other political trends. The old guard, however, remains suspicious of other groups. One of the activists from the middle generation is Abu al-Futouh. He and his allies are considered to advocate political pluralism, alternation of power, and equal citizenship for all regardless of religion. He also wants the Brotherhood to become a political party (Altman 2005: 3). Akef, however, claims that “the MB’s guiding purpose is to

liberate the Islamic homeland and to establish a free Islamic state” (Altman 2005: 3). Furthermore, he argues that it is impossible to separate religion from politics, or religion from state. However, the old guard has attempted to accommodate the group’s ideology to democratic principles. In a statement on political reform, the Brotherhood stresses its “commitment to the regime as a democratic, constitutional, parliamentary, presidential one, in the framework of Islamic principles”, affirming that the people are the source of all powers (Ikhwanweb.com 2006a). The movement has also stated that it does not seek to establish a religious state or a religious government, but wants to “establish a civil government and a civil state in which Islam is the source of authority” (Altman 2005: 4).

There is thus a tension between the traditional goals of an Islamic state and the latter statement on Islam as the source of authority. This is especially evident in the division between the old generation and the younger generation. Partly to overcome the constitutional prohibition against religious parties, the older generation has accepted the idea that the Brotherhood should be presented as a civil party with an Islamic source of authority. But unlike many of the younger generation, the old guard has however only accepted this stance in addition to the group remaining an Islamic movement, where missionary, educational and social tasks would still be important. Hamzawy and Brown (2005: 6) similarly argue that the Brotherhood’s use of broad, but pragmatic terms like “civil state founded on Shari’a”, give rise to some genuine doubts. Furthermore, Altman (2005: 10) argues that although the younger generation can be considered to be more pragmatic, one cannot automatically assume that the Brotherhood will be more liberal-democratic once the younger generations take over. The prominent members of the younger generations still adhere to the group’s main tenets, and have not joined the centrist Wasat Party. However, “the movement embraces the concept [democracy], not as Western, but as a set of ideals that is compatible with Islamic constructs” (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999: 50).

3.3.3 Kifaya and the Emergence of “Street Politics”

Over the last two years, the Kifaya movement has contributed to increased dynamism on Egypt’s political scene. The group’s main tactic has been holding public demonstrations in central Cairo in defiance of emergency law, addressing popular discontents with the ruling party, and has broken taboos by criticising the President and his family. Its membership consists of liberals, leftists, Nasserites, Islamists and independent intellectuals, but it has not been able to build a large constituency and reach out to the popular masses, especially outside urban centres (Hamzawy 2005b: 4; Korany 2006 [interview]). The movement can however be said to have had a short-term impact on the political environment, giving rise to other protest movements for university teachers, journalists, and workers. However, the content of the movement’s protests has been negative; “rather than press for a specific reform, it has agitated against specific, if prominent, aspects of the status quo” (ICG Report 2005: 10). Instead their mobilisation could have focused on positive demands, such as empowering the parliament and ways to reform the distribution of political power as an alternative to the anti-Mubarak line. Nevertheless, in an interview with Professor Bahgat Korany (2006 [interview]) he states that:

“The serious thing in Mubarak’s Egypt in the last year or year and a half is what I call the return of street politics. It is groups that are not official opposition; they are not official political parties. These are groups that go on the street and demonstrate against the government, like Kifaya...and that may only be the beginning”.

Although many of the members are committed to democratic reform, this should, according to ICG (2005: 11), not be taken for granted. As Diah Rashwan states, “the initiative to found Kifaya came from the generation which fought Sadat at the end of the 1970s” (ICG Report 2005: 11). The core leadership can thus be said to consist of Nasserites and Communists, which have criticised Mubarak for his foreign and domestic policies, as distinct from the regime’s undemocratic character. This has resulted in problems of finding a clear strategy for reform, which has weakened the movement’s potential effect. Bahey El-Din Hassan, director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, agrees with Kifaya’s criticism of the President, but

emphasises that the group has not proposed a replacement. He states that “...my focus is to change the political environment, not to replace Mubarak or Gamal Mubarak with someone else” (ICG Report 2005: 12). At the same time, the movement has broken important political barriers and continues to put pressure on the regime. It also brings together activists from different ideological orientations, which could increase the coordination of opposition forces.

3.3.4 A New Force for Reform? Egypt’s Judges and Opposition from Within

Prior to the 2005 presidential elections, Egyptian judges lobbied the government for the right to practice their constitutional power of monitoring the election independently (Hamzawy 2005b: 4). In 2006, pressure from the judges increased after two prominent judges, Mahmoud Mekki and Hisham al-Bastawisy, drew attention to electoral fraud in the 2005 elections. They were summoned by the Minister of Justice to appear before a disciplinary board, charged of slandering another judge by falsely accusing him of taking part in rigging of electoral results. This sparked a number of solidarity demonstrations in support for the judges, which resulted in the deployment of security forces, detaining hundreds of demonstrators from all political trends (Brown 2006). According to Brown (2006),

“by accepting the public limelight, subtly endorsing public demonstrations on their behalf, and even courting international attention, the rebel leaders suddenly found themselves at the vanguard of the drive for political reform...”

It is however unlikely that this was the result of an intended political strategy that can live up to the expectations of the opposition. The main demands that set off the confrontation mainly involved issues of strengthening the judiciary’s independence, and are better seen as mild reforms rather than revolutionary change (Brown 2006). However, judges are highly respected by the people, and could act as unifying symbols. It should also be noted that only a minority of the judges can be said to openly sympathise with opposition, the majority wanting to safe-guard their non-

partisan reputation (Brown and Nasr 2005: 4). Still, the long-term effects of their actions could be to open some political space for the opposition to operate within.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that Egypt's political environment is dominated by a president and a ruling party closely connected to the state apparatus, which has control over the major centres of power and decision-making. Laws and institutions are also used to ensure this dominant political position. On the other side of the political spectrum are the various oppositional groups, whereas the Muslim Brotherhood has the largest representation in the People's Assembly and the strongest ties to the grass roots. The legal parties have been marked by internal conflicts and have been increasingly marginalized in the political arena. The outline of the main oppositional actors also showed that most groups have experienced generational conflicts or internal power struggles. The Brotherhood has perhaps been less affected by this because of the hierarchical organization and the unifying religious ideology.

The chapter has also shown that the relative openness of the political system during the first years of Mubarak's rule soon gave way for increased repression of Islamists in particular, but also more generally of political opposition. The opposition also became more divided, as seen by the failed boycott of the 1990 election. However, opposition to the 2003 Iraqi war led to large demonstrations that acquired an anti-Mubarak character. The political environment increasingly seemed more open for oppositional participation, but this did not lead to any large-scale unification into one political block. After the first round of the 2005 legislative elections, the regime started using coercive means against the opposition, continuing with the crackdown on pro-democratic demonstrations in support of the judiciary in 2006.

4. The Creation of a Divided Opposition: The Role of State Management and Political Institutions

4.1 Introduction

According to Brumberg, rulers of liberalized autocracies “strive to pit one group against another in way that maximize the rulers’ room for maneuver and restrict the opposition’s capacity to work together” (Brumberg 2002: 61). The tools available to keep the opposition from creating vibrant parties range from patronage to laws governing parties and elections. The emergence of oppositional parties in Egypt is often analysed within this context as a controlled development from above, with the intent of benefiting the incumbent regime, rather than facilitating alternance of power. The regime has thus allowed for opposition parties to emerge and be represented in the People’s Assembly, but has shaped electoral rules and restricted the parties’ activities so that they do not “embarrass the government or significantly affect policy” (Hamzawy and Brown 2005: 2). These legal and institutional measures have thus been applied to hamper challenges to the political status quo (Kassem 1999: 76).

The system of liberalized autocracy in Egypt provides the regime with several tools to secure regime survival. In addition to the more specific tools mentioned above, the regime applies a system of partial inclusion as a mechanism to shape oppositional behaviour. By structuring the institutional and legal framework to its advantage, the regime thus applies a “divide-and-rule strategy by which they play one group off against another” (Brumberg 2005-06: 18). The incumbent rulers have thus designed a system of regime-opposition interactions that does not only use violence to suppress dissent. In this system of rule, opposition groups are partially included as a way to “blow off steam”, but are at the same time prevented from undermining the ultimate control of the regime. It is also important to note that the regime does not only retain the final control, but further divide the opposition (Brumberg 2005-06:

21). Some of the oppositional groups in Egypt have however managed to enter tactical alliances. The conditions facilitating these alliances will be analysed in this chapter and in the following ones. However, although there have been some recent attempts at oppositional unification, a large-scale and unified “wall-to-wall” alliance containing all actors has however not yet coalesced.

The hypothesis in this chapter is that oppositional groups in Egypt have not been able to unite around a common strategy for democratization of the political system, because of institutional mechanisms and strategies used by the incumbent rulers to shape the interaction taking place between the oppositional groups to promote internal divisions. State management is not only applied to repress and weaken the opposition, but also to keep them from uniting. The first chapter of analysis thus seeks to explain the opposition’s disunity by focusing on the state’s ability to shape oppositional interaction and contribute to its disunity. The approach thus enables an examination of the mechanisms, both formal and informal, used by the state to deal with political opposition.

4.1.1 Main Content of the Chapter

The mechanisms examined in this chapter range from use of exclusionary measures keep some actors out of the political system, the use of electoral rules to divide the opposition and the application of a restrictive legal framework to govern political activity. The first section concentrates on the regime’s relationship with the opposition, and its efforts to co-opt some actors and keep the opposition divided. The focus is on to what extent and how the regime has created a divided opposition to serve the regime’s interest of survival. Second, the ability of the regime to divide the opposition through the use of a restrictive legal framework and emergency law is analysed.

4.2 State Management of the Opposition

4.2.1 The Creation of a Divided Political Environment

Generally, the likelihood that a government will tolerate an opposition increases as the expected costs of toleration decrease. However, regimes must also consider how costly it would be to repress an opposition. Hence, if the costs of repression increase, the regime will be more likely to tolerate the emergence of opposition. The more the perceived costs of repression exceed the costs of toleration, the greater the chance for developing a competitive regime (Dahl 1971: 15). These axioms are highly relevant when analysing the development of liberalized autocracies, and contribute to shed light on the “juggling act” taking place within these regimes to secure regime survival. The institutional and state-oriented approach is also fruitful because oppositional groups do not operate in a political vacuum, but are influenced by both the surrounding social and cultural environment and the context of political opportunities and constraints, in their interaction with the regime (Wiktorowicz 2004: 13).

According to Lust-Okar (2005: 126), legal oppositional groups in divided political systems commit themselves to maintaining the stability of the regime in power. As discussed in Chapter 2, in some authoritarian states there is the paradox of an opposition functioning as an ally of the regime, thereby contributing to its stability. In this kind of political system, the potential costs for the included oppositional groups of challenging the regime are high, because of fears of losing their privileges if they pressure the regime too much. This could also lead to a joint conflict together with excluded groups, who could increase their own influence compared to the included groups. Furthermore, according to Wickham (2002: 9), “authoritarian regimes directly and routinely intervene to block opposition’s groups’ outreach to the mass public”. Thus when leaders of authoritarian states feel threatened by oppositional groups, they have administrative, legislative, and coercive means available to curtail rebellious activity. Given the high potential costs for the

included opposition, such an environment is not conducive for facilitating large-scale cooperation. This is also emphasised by Lust-Okar (2005: 29), who argues that many scholars overlook the ability of incumbent rulers to use different institutional arrangement to shape the relationship between the opposition.

In 1977 Egypt experienced popular uprisings in the so-called “food riots”, but also general political criticism of Sadat’s economic and foreign policy. The newly licensed Tagammu’ party played a central role in this mobilization, but “there were many groups – on both the left and the right – that were willing to act” (Lust-Okar 2005: 121). Although Sadat had opened up for the establishment of political parties, the political system was still highly exclusive and the opposition was not formally included in the regime. As Wickham (2002: 65) explains,

“Sadat not only confined participation to a small and rather artificial set of parties but also restricted their right to political expression... When they crossed these boundaries...both the leftist National Progressive Unionist Party [Tagammu’] and the liberal-right New Wafd were effectively banned from open political activity”.

The political environment was thus unified, although in a highly exclusive manner. According to Lust-Okar (2005: 121) this contributed to the unified character of oppositional actors, where “the absence of any significant integration into the regime, they were willing to mobilize in concert”. The political parties had at this stage not been fully included in the political system, so this reduced the potential costs of mobilizing together with other forces outside the formal parties. Because all forces were repressed, it was easier for all oppositional groups to unite in pressuring the government. According to Hamied Ansari, “...Sadat made the fatal mistake of treating all the opposition as one monolithic entity bent upon destroying the regime. ...treating the secular and religious opposition to his regime on [an] equal footing” (Lust-Okar 2005: 125).

Sadat’s successor designed a totally different regime regarding inclusion and exclusion of opponents, which seriously altered the country’s oppositional dynamics, creating a more inclusive, albeit still authoritarian system (Albrecht 2005: 389). Mubarak allowed more oppositional groups to participate in the formal political

system, while at the same time excluding others. One noticeable effect was that the opposition shifted its focus towards disputes over rules governing participation, which also contributed to increase the costs of destabilizing the regime they now had increasingly become a part of. The creation of a divided Structure of Contestation (SoC) in Egypt under Mubarak also influenced the legal opposition to realize that they enjoyed certain benefits of inclusion that could be lost if they cooperated too strongly with forces operating outside the formal political system. The result was the emergence of a divided opposition, compared to the development in Jordan, a unified SoC, where the opposition formed a broad coalition in opposition to the policies of king Husayn (Lust-Okar 2005: 108).

During the 1980s the political system was marked by relative stability and dialogue between the regime and the opposition. The opposition still challenged the regime, but the demands were mostly about reform of electoral laws (changes in electoral systems from single candidacy to proportional representation and back again) and the holding of free and fair elections. Although the opposition participated in elections in 1984 and 1987, most oppositional groups, except the Tagammu' Party was still ready to challenge the regime, as seen by the attempted boycott of the 1990 election. However, developments during the 1990s strongly indicate a change in oppositional behaviour compared to the 1970s and the first years under Mubarak. The coordination of protests and electoral alliances as seen previously, did not take place, as the opposition was more fragmented. The fact that the opposition was partly able to unite through the electoral alliances during the first years of Mubarak's rule, can however not be fully explained by the concept of SoCs. The 1984 and 1987 alliances took place in an environment of more dialogue between regime and opposition than during the last years of Sadat, and although the Brotherhood was seriously weakened and still considered illegal, it managed to enter alliances with some of the included, legal opposition parties. This cooperation diverged from the pattern of disunity expected by the divided SoC created by Mubarak, which divided the political environment into included and excluded oppositional groups. A possible explanation

could be that the changes in electoral system from individual candidacy to a system of party lists, was conducive for cooperation, as will be discussed later.

In the 1990s, the increase in violent attacks from militant groups put the government on the defensive. In 1990 the number of casualties from confrontations between militants and the state was 51; in 1992 the number had risen to 322 and in 1992 it reached the high number of 1106. In 1994 the number of Islamists and other political detainees in Egyptian jails was estimated to be over 20,000 (Kienle 2001: 93). In addition, the state also tightened its control over the space allowed for non-violent Islamist opposition. This included attempts to reduce the dominance of Islamists in Egypt's professional associations, as well as promoting *al-Azhar* clerics that advocated social demands without mobilizing people politically (Lust-Okar 2005: 144). The unstable situation also led the government to accentuate "the institutional division between those who were legally admitted into the system and those standing in the shadows" (Lust-Okar 2005: 146). By doing this, the government signalled that the legal opposition "had much to lose and little to gain if they sought to destabilize the regime", and that cooperation with excluded forces would not be tolerated (Lust-Okar 2005: 146). The regime's readiness to act when the legal opposition crossed the red line became clear in 1994, when the leader of the Labour Party, Adil Husayn, was arrested and held for one month on alleged charges of cooperating with armed Islamist groups (Kienle 2001: 137). In this kind of political environment, cooperation between the legal parties and the Muslim Brotherhood in a coalition could have had political leverage to pressure a regime that was weakened by the ongoing militant insurgency and economic problems. The growing popular frustration and the ongoing violent conflict could in fact have provided good arguments for demanding reform, and also increase the opposition's popular legitimacy. Instead, the legal opposition increasingly sided with the regime, rather than unite with the excluded opposition.

During the 1990s, the regime also became more vocal in questioning the Brotherhood's goals, arguing that they had close ties to the armed militants and that

they could not be trusted. The Brotherhood however, argued that they wanted to be part of the formal political system and that their goal was “to be ruled by Islam, not that we, the Muslim Brotherhood, rule by Islam” (Lust-Okar 2005: 146). The legal opposition, knowing that cooperation with the Brotherhood would lead to punishment, worked together with the regime, rather than cooperating with the Brotherhood. The government thus applied an institutional arrangement of inclusion and exclusion of oppositional forces, in order to facilitate divisions and shape the legal opposition’s perception of accepted behaviour. According to the first hypothesis, the disunity of the opposition can be understood as a result of the state shaping oppositional behaviour. As shown by the shift in regime strategy from a unified to a divided SoC, oppositional dynamics changed from a more or less coherent approach to a fragmented and divided one. The framework of SoC thus explains difference in mobilization patterns: Sadat applied a unified, but exclusive SoC that had an unintended effect of facilitating a higher degree of oppositional unity than Mubarak’s divided SoC.

However, it is also possible that the secular opposition’s political weakness relative to the Islamists could explain why these parties sided with the regime instead of the Islamists, and thus not only being a direct result of regime manipulation. However, although they were weaker, it would still be possible to challenge the regime. According to Lust-Okar (2005: 151), instead of reducing the pressure for political reform, “that relative weakness could have convinced them to unite with the Islamist trend to demand change, as they had done before or continue to do in Jordan”. Furthermore, the perceived Islamist threat in the 1970 may not necessarily have been smaller than under Mubarak’s Egypt. During the 1970s, the Islamist magazine *al-Da’wa* published articles describing the enemies of Islam, separating between “Jewry, the Crusade, communism, and secularism”, which hardly contributed to building trust and understanding between different political trends (Kepel 2003: 111). Moreover, in 1980 violent clashes broke out between Christian and Muslim communities in Middle Egypt, killing several people (Kepel 2003: 159). In June 1981 sectarian violence broke out again, this time in the Cairo district of

Zawiyya al-Hamra. According to Kepel (2003: 166), “atrocious crimes were committed by people who had earlier lived together peacefully... [and] leaflets were distributed... urging each community to take up arms”.

In addition, Islamist student associations (*jama'at Islamiyya*) had a dominant position in Egyptian universities during this period, partly encouraged by the regime to counter leftist organisations. In 1976 and 1977 “they were in complete control of the universities and had driven the left organizations underground” (Kepel 2003: 128). These associations played an important political role during Sadat’s presidency and had a political impact outside the campus areas, even though they were student organizations. Outside the universities, the *jama'at* organised public prayers at the *'id al-fitr*, the end of the Ramadan month of fasting, and also during the *'id al-adha*, known as “the festival of sacrifice” which is celebrated to commemorate Abraham’s sacrifice (Kepel 2003: 145). Given the character of the political environment, together with the Iranian Revolution in 1979, “secularists... had as much reason to fear Islamists as they did to fear them when reflecting on the Algerian crisis of the 1990s” (Lust-Okar 2005: 124). This indicates that differences in state management of the opposition resulted in two distinct patterns of oppositional politics, hence strengthening the hypothesis of the role of the state in shaping oppositional behaviour and contributing to its disunity.

4.2.2 The Relationship between the Legal Opposition and the Regime

State management of the opposition resulted in a split between legal and illegal opposition in Egypt. According to Kassem (1999: 109), “general allegiance to the regime did appear to become a prominent theme among several of the leading opposition parties” in the 1990s. There was thus a shift in attitude among several of the legal parties, which started to express identification with “certain goals and values of the regime” (Kassem 1999: 109). Although genuine ideological differences may

have caused the division between secularists and Islamists⁹, it can also be understood from a perspective of state management. After the state increased its warnings on the consequences of cooperating with illegal groups, several of the legal parties adopted similar positions, even though they had previously cooperated with the Brotherhood. As lawyer and senior Wafd-member Abd al-Aziz Muhammad explained, “It is not in our interest to co-operate [in the 1995 elections] with an organisation [the Brotherhood] that is targeted by the authorities” (Kassem 1999: 110). The statement indicates that fears of provoking the regime and being excluded from regime circles, not necessarily ideological differences, played an important part in explaining the absence of oppositional unity. Although the politician could have had other reasons for making this statement, this interpretation seems probable. If he had wanted to calm down the government, blaming ideological differences would have been a legitimate excuse for not dealing with the Brotherhood, and would also have moved the party even closer to the regime. By declaring that state repression was the main cause, the party signalled that it was following the rules set by the regime.

The Liberal Party also tried to disassociate itself from the Brotherhood by not allying with Islamist candidates during the 1995 election, even though they had previously been partners in the Islamic Alliance. Although Liberal candidate Mustafa Bakri could have benefited from an alliance with a well-established Islamist partner in his electoral constituency, he chose to cooperate with a newcomer and independent candidate.¹⁰ Instead of allying himself with the Islamist candidate, who was backed by organisational skills of the Brotherhood, he thus affirmed his loyalty to the system (Kassem 1999: 112-114). Furthermore, the Tagammu’ used the slogan “*al-din lillah wa al-watan lil jami*” in the 1995 elections, which means “religion is for God and the nation is for all” (Kassem 1999: 109). This can be seen a clear critique of those mixing politics and religion, thus confirming the party’s support for the regime’s

⁹ See Chapter 5.

¹⁰ Each voter casts two votes: one in the *fe’at* category and one for the *’omal* category. According to the constitution, 50 percent of the seats in the People’s Assembly must consist of workers or peasants (*’omal*), the rest consisting of university graduates (*fe’at*) (Kassem 1999: 105).

position against the Brotherhood. Another example of oppositional appeasement towards the regime took during the presidential nomination in 1999:

“In 1999 Tagammu’ abstained from voting on the nomination of president Mubarak to the referendum to become the next president, yet the president of the [Tagammu’] party, Mohieddine, went to the presidential palace to congratulate the president for his nomination” (Razik 2006 [interview]).

Nevertheless, the opposition’s approach is more nuanced than unanimous support for the regime. This is especially seen in the activities of the Labour Party, maintaining its close ties to the Brotherhood, and the Nasserite Party who disagreed with the exclusion of the Brotherhood from participating in the political system (Kassem 2004: 63). These parties, not seeing themselves as part of the loyal opposition, continued to challenge the regime. Furthermore, the Labour Party continued its informal electoral alliance with the Brotherhood. Prior the 1995 elections, this cooperation contributed to the arrest of 83 prominent Brotherhood members, and a warning for the Labour Party of the consequences of such an alliance (Kassem 1999: 118). When the warning was ignored, the government also tried to detain several senior members of the Labour Party. The freezing of the Labour Party’s activities in 2000, however, clearly illustrates the strategies used on the more outspoken oppositional parties (Stacher 2004: 229). The PPC initially ruled that the party could reopen when it had solved an ongoing leadership dispute, but the regime decided that the ban would remain until it expelled anti-regime “elements and abandons its Islamic rhetoric” (Stacher 2004: 229).

The regime’s willingness to act when the opposition breaks the established rules of the game has become even clearer over the last few years. Examples of regime clampdowns include both non-partisan activists as Saad Eddin Ibrahim, politician Ayman Nour, political activists and bloggers, and leading members of the Brotherhood. Hence,

“the more opposition steps over the red lines... or constitute an autonomous political force (like the Muslim Brotherhood), the more they are subject to coercion, irrespective of whether they formulate anti-systemic views or not” (Albrecht 2005: 389).

The incumbent regime has also managed to co-opt large parts of the legal opposition into the regime structure, thus making them abide by the rules of the game made to inhibit challenges to the status quo. It can also be argued that on some level, the Brotherhood has been “co-opted” into the existing system. During the last few years, the Brotherhood has been less willing to directly challenge the regime’s legitimacy and continues to take measures to prevent upsetting the regime. This unwillingness to cross the red line is seen in the 2005 elections, where the Brotherhood only fielded about 150 candidates in order not to provoke the regime, and signalize that they were not out to take over power (Washington Post 2005). Furthermore, although the Brotherhood has declared its opposition to Gamal Mubarak inheriting the Presidency, the movement has also stated that they will not be able to stop it without the support of a popular movement. According to the movement’s deputy leader, Muhammed Habib,

“We will reject [inheritance of power], but this rejection will have limits at which it will stop as long as there is not this popular movement and support. We are eager not to provoke anyone and to defuse crises as much as possible because tension cannot get anybody what they want – neither the state, the government nor the Brotherhood” (The Daily Star Egypt 2006a).

Both the Brotherhood and the legal parties have thus been careful not to provoke the regime (Albrecht 2005: 386). This has led to a situation where both the legal parties and the Brotherhood attempt to “play all sides by maintaining cooperative relations with the regime while also reaching out to opposition groups...at other moments” (Schwedler and Clark 2006: 11).

The legislative elections have also not affected the character of the government or led to an alternation of power. Instead, it can be argued that elections are held as part of the regime’s strategy to “reaffirm and expand the clientelist structure which links central authorities to those on the periphery” (Kassem 1999: 168). Political clientelism can be defined as “the distribution of resources (or promise of) by political office holders or political candidates in exchange for political support... “ (Auyero 1999: 297). Furthermore, clientelism also results in atomization and fragmentation of the electorate as part of a strategy to contain collective organization

and effective political participation (Auyero 1999: 298). The institutional and legal constraints put on the Egyptian parties have made it easier for the regime to co-opt them into the regimes clientelist structure. This ensures that the parties remain weak and dependent on the government, which prevents them from unifying out of fears of losing their position as the included opposition. Within this system of political clientelism, the ability of politicians to fulfil demands from their constituencies by channelling resources from the state becomes an important part of the role as a politician. This is also upheld by the application of an electoral law that promotes an individualistic approach to political participation. A member of the Tagammu' Party described the dynamics of political participation in this clientelist system as a situation where his party connection do not matter at all when building ties to the electorate: "I am proud of being a member of the Tagammu' and everyone knows I am a member of that party. But in reality, they vote for me because I am able to help them with their every day problems" (Kassem 1999: 162). The political parties are thus perfectly aware of their own position within the political system, and have in many ways accepted co-optation into this clientelist regime structure. As long as they agree not to pose an effective challenge to the political power of the regime, the opposition manages to receive "carrots" in the form of inclusion and patronage, and avoid the "stick" of physical repression (Albrecht 2005: 389).

4.2.3 Restricting the Activities of the Legal Opposition Parties

Hosni Mubarak, describing political parties in Egypt, stated in a speech at Alexandria University in 1992 that "We are suffering from irresponsible political party activity... The party that does not act for the good of the citizens and to improve their living standards – to tell you the truth – does not deserve to live" (Wickham 2002: 67). The regime has used several strategies to regulate the activities of the legal political parties to prevent them from developing into "effective vehicles of political representation" (Wickham 2002: 64). According to Rif'at Sa'id, senior member of the Tagammu' party:

“All the political parties are isolated from the people. We are like boats floating on the river. Some of us trail longer anchors than others, but we are all floating on the surface, even the Islamic associations. The overwhelming majority of the citizens are simply not politicized” (Wickham 2002: 69).

The parties have thus become weak, isolated, and cut off from the popular masses, which can at least partly be explained by examining the strategies used by the state. As previously mentioned no party can be created based on religion, social class or based on a platform similar to an already existing party. By applying this law, the government prevents “the establishment of any [party] that could possibly appeal to a widespread regional, religious or working-class constituency” (Stacher 2004: 220). The Political Parties Committee (PPC) is an important body both for controlling the establishment of new parties and the activities of existing ones (Kienle 2001: 28). The PPC also has the power to freeze party activities, which is used as a tool to punish parties that represent a potential threat or break the boundaries set by the regime. In twenty-five years, the committee has only granted one party licence, but some parties have managed to get license by appealing the decisions. The Wasat Party is one example, having applied for a party licence since 1996, but continues to be turned down. One reason for the repeated rejections has by many observers been interpreted as governmental fears of a centrist party able to build bridges between different trends, and thus threaten the position of the regime. As Brumberg argues (2003b: 42),

“Egypt’s rulers are not interested in promoting a liberal Islamic party, either because they fear that radicals might capture it or because they do not want a successful liberal Islamist party to ally with secular parties in a way that might undermine the regime’s strategy of survival through a delicate balancing act”.

The government has a variety of strategies it can use in order to fragment and isolate the legal parties. One strategy is non-intervention in party conflicts, which means that the government stands by and observes the internal destruction of an opposition party. This happened in 1998 when the Liberal Party experienced an internal leadership struggle that culminated in an armed battle at the party’s headquarters (Middle East Times 1998). The leader of one of the factions had previously pleaded that the government should intervene, but nothing happened. Furthermore, the riot

police that arrived outside the headquarters stated that they could not enter the premises until they were given permission by a public prosecutor. Therefore, the battle went on for nine hours before the police finally intervened (Stacher 2004: 225). After the violent struggle took place, the PPC froze the party's activities.

Financial pressure is also a strategy that can be used to pressure the parties. Firstly, parties are not allowed to accept foreign funds or maintain bank accounts or offices outside Egypt (Kienle 2001: 29). Secondly, the government also applies financial pressure more directly if a party breaks the accepted code of behaviour. This happened to the Nasserite Party's newspaper *Al-Arabi* in 1999, after the party refused to support Mubarak's referendum nomination for the presidency (Stacher 2004: 226). All papers are required to be published by the government's publishing house, al-Ahram, and are forced to maintain debts so that they do not become completely independent of the government. After the Nasserite Party rejected Mubarak's nomination, the state suddenly decided to collect the paper's publishing debts of about three million Egyptian pounds. In addition, the Nasserites also lost substantial funds, because a majority of the state's companies withdrew their advertisements from the paper (Stacher 2004: 226). These advertisements are probably the most important source of income for the oppositional newspapers, and thus make them vulnerable to governmental pressure. This pressure forced the paper to go from being a daily to becoming a weekly newspaper, and illustrates the government's use of financial pressure to deter the opposition from challenge the regime too strongly. The opposition is dependent on using governmental resources and therefore has to comply with the political terms set by the government.

Interference and sabotage also takes place by placing pro-government agents inside the parties. According to Stacher (2004: 224), "when a pro-government agent infiltrates an opposition party he vies for party leadership, which fragments the party's ranks and gives the PPC justification to freeze the party activities". During the leadership struggle inside the Labour Party in 1999, the leader Adil Husayn stated that "governmental influences are working on creating a dissident movement in

Labour...” (Middle East Times 1999). This was denied by his opponents within the party, but observers of Egyptian politics stated that the government could be supporting the leadership struggle because of Husayn’s close relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood (Middle East Times 1999). In 2000 the party was frozen by the PPC on the pretext of a leadership struggle. The real cause behind the freezing can probably be found in the actions of the party’s newspaper, *al-Sha’b*. A few weeks before the freezing, the paper published an article criticizing the government for allowing the reprinting of Haydr Haydr’s controversial book, *A Banquet for Seaweed*. The article caused a riot at Al-Azhar University, described as “one of the fiercest riots Cairo has seen for years”, which signalled that the party was able to mobilize people against the state’s policies (Stacher 2004: 228; Middle East Times 2000). The government demanded that the party had to expel anti-regime members and abandon the Islamist rhetoric in order to have the ban removed, and ordered Al-Ahram not to print the party’s newspaper.

Because the ultimate goal of authoritarian regimes is to secure regime survival, the government does not want strong parties. The regime has therefore used its control over the body that legalizes parties to promote oppositional fragmentation. This happened in the 1970s when the Labour Party was licensed, as part of a strategy to counter the influence of the Tagammu’ Party. In 2004, political analysts also interpreted the granting of a licence to the Ghad Party as an attempt to weaken the Wafd Party. Comparing the regime’s relationship with the liberal and the leftist parties, the regime has especially attempted to politically isolate the liberal parties. The liberal ideology is especially threatening, because it reflects the views of the pre-1952 elite and appeals to outside actors (Mustafa 2006: 6). As Cairo University Professor Hassan Nafaa stated,

“The Wafd will be preoccupied by its new competitor, who will attempt to attract a large number of Wafdists into its ranks. As a logical result, the two parties’ attention will be distracted from serious political issues into infantile struggles. And the government will emerge as the winner” (Al-Ahram Weekly 2004).

These strategies, by themselves or in combination, promote internal divisions and autocratic rule within the parties. Governmental restrictions also have an impact on the parties' strategies and political programmes, which are developed in such a way that they do not break the limits set by the regime (Kienle 2001: 31). The restrictive political environment also cuts the parties off from the masses and reduces their ability to mobilize the people. Limited access to state-run media, and financial pressure by governmental institutions on the independent media, also inhibits the development of ties between the opposition and the public (Lust-Okar 2005: 87). The parties thus have become more like debating clubs than political organizations, and do not get organizational and political experience so that they can become vibrant organizations. As explained by Kienle (2001: 31),

“With their freedom of action being far more limited outside than inside their headquarters or branches, the parties in some ways resembled the nightclubs on Pyramids Road in Giza or the discotheques of Sharm al-Shaykh and Taba, where everything was possible that was impossible outdoors”.

The laws applied to restrict the activities of political actors have also disproportionately hampered the secular opposition. Conversely, Islamic movements have been able to reach out to the people through legal loopholes, having an advantage by their access to mosques and their engagement in grass-roots work (Makram-Ebeid 2001: 41).

The discussion above illustrates the ways in which the state restricts the legal parties to stop them from developing into vibrant organizations. Keeping them weak could be useful in order to secure regime stability; it is easier to persuade a weak, but secular opposition of the dangers of Islamism and thus prevent cooperation than if the legal parties are strong. According to Stacher (2004: 219),

“The president's ruling party has an interest in maintaining that his party remains in power. To secure this, opposition parties are not allowed to become competent organisations, because they could challenge the ruling group's power and disrupt the status quo”.

Much effort is therefore put into securing that these organizations remains weak and marginalised within the political system. The legal opposition's dependence on the state also gives few incentives for the legal parties to adjust their platforms to the

needs of the people or address the concerns of their constituencies, which are instead often done by Islamist organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood (Lust-Okar 2005: 87; Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999: 125). This could possibly also be interpreted as the legal parties having few reasons to adjust their platforms to improve the relationship with other oppositional parties in order to facilitate cooperation. The regime is the most important political actor for the legal parties, both in controlling their activity and being the centre for influence and resources. In this way the included opposition has thus become “invested in the maintenance of the regime” (Lust-Okar 2005: 79).

4.3 The Legal Framework and Oppositional Divisions

4.3.1 Emergency Law and the Criminalization of Politics

Egypt’s Emergency Law authorises the transfer of power to the executive authority and opens up for the establishment of special security courts operating outside the civil legal system. It allows for the government to ““public safety”..., and to detain without trial or charge anyone suspected of being a “threat to national security and public order”” (Singerman 2002: 30). Furthermore, emergency law enables the regime to arrest anybody for up to 90 days and extend the detainment indefinitely (Kienle 2001: 92). As it is also in effect during the legislative elections, campaigning can not take place without permission from the Ministry of Interior. Candidates from the NDP are never refused this permission, and are provided with good locations, such as state-owned youth clubs and sport clubs. The applications from independent and opposition candidates are mostly turned down, and the few that are allowed to hold campaigns are given a very short notice to prepare and publicize their meeting (Kassem 2004: 56). It is also up to the Ministry of Interior to select the location, so many opposition candidates “find themselves located in small alleyways at distant and relatively inaccessible areas of their respective constituencies” (Kassem 2004: 56).

Emergency law also puts serious constraints on what the candidates can say during electoral campaigns. If a candidate criticizes the government, he may have the meeting dissolved by the police, and also risks arrest under articles 98b, 102, 102b and 174 of the penal code (Kassem 2004: 57). The articles open up for imprisonment for “anyone in Egypt who advocates in any way, the changing of basic principles of the constitution”, but also for “anyone who shouts or sings in public with the purpose of inciting dissent”. The penal code also subscribes imprisonment for “anyone inciting the overthrow of the ruling regime in Egypt, or expressing hatred or contempt” (Kassem 2004: 57). Technically, emergency law also makes meetings of six or more individuals “for political purposes” illegal (Wickham 2002: 72).

The vague language used, offers room for interpretation and constrains oppositional participation in the political system. This increases the costs of political activity, both internally for the individual oppositional groups, and for oppositional cooperation, making it difficult and even illegal to hold meetings, organise conferences and demonstrations. According to politician Essam el-Erian (2006 [Interview]), “emergency law is very important for the regime to control the country and to divide and interfere in the internal affairs of the opposition”, creating and reinforcing divisions. Another effect is that it produces a gulf between those that operate within the boundaries of the emergency law and those operating underground. Even though working within the limits of emergency law seriously constrains the parties’ ability to reach out to people, it protects the activists from state coercion (Wickham 2002: 73). However, this division raises the costs of engaging with other political forces that could provide a stronger popular base, although these may be breaking emergency law. According to Kienle (2001: 96) emergency law has been used to arrest members of the Muslim Brotherhood who were not engaging in political violence, “their crime was often nothing worse than discussing or preparing strategies for parliamentary or syndicate elections”.

Enforced since World War II, one effect of these laws has been to “normalize the “emergency” while criminalizing collective life...” (Singerman 2002: 34). The

result is a society in which politics is criminalized and public discourse is viewed with suspicion. Politics has thus lost its legitimacy, unless conducted “within the extremely narrow and dependent loyalist world of the regime” (Singerman 2002: 34-35). The restrictive character of the political atmosphere has thus created a political environment where mobilization is illegal and politics associated with suspicion and fear. This makes it difficult to engage with the grassroots, who have become highly depoliticised and suffers from political alienation, as well as to engage with political leaders and elites from other opposition parties. This alienation, especially among younger people, is examined by Wickham (2002), who observes a general pattern of alienation from formal political institutions and elites among young university graduates. Furthermore, “a majority of the respondents said they felt no connection with political parties, had little information about party platforms and candidates, and doubted the utility of political participation” (Wickham 2002: 78). This scepticism was also seen in the attitude towards the Brotherhood. As Wickham (2002: 83) explains, “...the Islamists faced the same structural constraints as did other opposition groups, and thus, like them, could achieve only limited results”.

This alienation is highly relevant for explaining the absence of oppositional unification. In order for political forces to unite and pose an effective challenge to the status quo, they need to capitalize on popular support and be able to mobilize people, or else they will probably not be able to put pressure on the government or have any bargaining power. A similar logic can be deduced from Przeworski (1991a) in the analysis of the strategic games taking place during transitions between reformers and moderates, and negotiations between moderates and radicals within the opposition. In order for potential reformers to abandon hardliners within the regime and facilitate alignments within the opposition, the oppositional actors have to be able to offer an alternative. As O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986: 38) explains, negotiating pacts

“...is a situation in which conflicting or competing interests are interdependent, in that they can neither do without each other nor unilaterally impose their preferred solution on each other if they are to satisfy their respective divergent interests”.

The agreement on a common strategy for democratization of the political system would thus be of little use, if not supported by the people or if people are not convinced that the opposition can implement the strategies. Even if the opposition parties could come to an agreement, without popular support, the common platform would easily be reduced to empty slogans rather than being a force for change. The impact of state strategies to make political participation ineffectual and criminal, therefore seriously inhibits cooperation among the opposition, both by constraining the activities of the parties and disconnecting them from the people.

4.3.2 The Impact of Electoral Laws on Oppositional Cooperation

Posusney (2005b: 94) highlights the importance of focusing on electoral structures in political systems of controlled contestation by arguing that, “even under controlled contestation, electoral systems will affect the number of political parties that operate in a country, their internal dynamics, and the strategies they adopt”. In these types of regimes however, electoral laws are most commonly structured to favour the governing parties. In general, bureaucracies and notables are often more successful in mobilizing voters in rural areas, and these are therefore often overrepresented relative to urban areas, where opposition parties are stronger. In liberalizing countries, voting processes also come under great pressure, as seen in the widespread fraud during the 2005 Egyptian elections, “where public-sector employees were bussed in en masse, as well as confusion about and manipulation of registered voters lists, and open vote buying” (Brown 2002: 121-123; El-Amrani 2005: 4). Egypt’s elections also continue to be disrupted by security forces, the closing of polling stations and violence caused by hired thugs or voters responding to attacks from Security Forces (El-Amrani 2005: 5).

As previously mentioned, President Mubarak initiated a new electoral law in 1984, adopting a party-list proportional system (PR) with a *nationwide* threshold of 8 percent, thus eliminating many of the PR’s advantages for the opposition. The system used a high threshold, intended to favour the ruling party, and also eliminated the

potential threat from independent candidates, especially from the Brotherhood (Posusney 2005b: 95). Furthermore, the law did not allow for coalition lists, so coalitions had to take place under the banner of one of the legal parties (Hendriks 1985: 12). However, the implication of this law was closer cooperation between the oppositional groups. The Muslim Brotherhood was illegal and could therefore not field candidates in their own party list. The legal parties also faced constraints, especially the minimal chances of overcoming threshold of 8 percent individually (El-Mikawy 1999: 81). The electoral system therefore provided incentives for building alliances across ideological barriers.

Initially, the 1984 alliance was meant to consist of all political parties on the right and left side of the spectrum against the ruling party, but because of disagreements over whether to boycott or participate, the alliance fell apart before the elections (El-Mikawy 1999: 81). It is also possible that the ambitions of some of the parties also played a role in breaking up the alliance. The Wafd had its own ambitions of becoming the country's largest oppositional actor, and it is therefore probable that the party had an interest in dissolving the alliance, because it was too complex to dominate (El-Mikawy 1999: 82). Analysing the dynamics of the 1984 elections, Kassem (1999: 98) argues that "the new law weakened the already fragile smaller opponents, but served to unite and strengthened the regime's two main adversaries [the Wafd Party and the Muslim Brotherhood]". Nevertheless, the alliance was one of "convenience, not conviction", and thus fell apart after the election, not managing to secure its long-term potential (El-Mikawy 1999: 83). Conducive legal conditions thus seem to explain why a (partial) alliance coalesced, but it does not explain its short durability. The reasons for the short-lived Wafd-Brotherhood alliance and the repeated failure of a broad alliance before the 1987 elections can at least partly be found in the failure to accommodate each other ideologically¹¹.

¹¹ Ideological differences will be analysed in Chapter 5.

In 1990, the opposition parties also probably miscalculated the potential gains by supporting the return to single-winner member districts, instead of striving to maintain PR, but with a lower threshold (Posusney 2005b: 113). According to Kassem (2004: 61),

“The president’s decision to abolish the party-list system [in 1990] was very much a political tactic...The opposition’s apparent unity under the party list law, as reflected in electoral alliances...indicates that Mubarak realized that the party-list system was not as conducive to containing political opponents as originally intended”.

The new system favoured independent candidates, and contributed to divide and weaken the political parties:

“the opposition parties could even suffer from it, given that their limited resources and the restriction on their activities made it harder for them to win seats allocated by majority vote...rather than seats allocated to lists on the basis of proportional representation” (Kienle 2001: 53).

The new system also reduced the parties’ power over their own candidates who no longer needed the approval of the party leadership to be on a list. Instead they could stand for election on their own, independent of the leaderships’ approval (Kienle 2001: 53). By reducing the importance of party affiliation, the law promoted an individualised view on political participation, and thus weakened the opposition parties. According to Kienle (2001: 142),

“because of the many and deep internal divisions of the Egyptian parties, candidates who were officially endorsed by their party were challenged not only by the officially endorsed candidates of other parties, but also by the malcontents in their own party who, failing official investiture, stood as independents”.

The possibility for party cooperation was also reduced, since the role of political parties as vehicles of mobilization was becoming irrelevant. The return to a “winner-takes-all” electoral system thus contributed to a more fragmented opposition. The result was therefore fewer incentives for cooperation among the opposition and the weakening oppositional groups as organised entities (Kassem 1999: 101). This effect of the “winner-takes-all” system on the political environment is especially related to the fact that the electoral rules did not difference between independent and party candidates, so technically party candidates were independents supported by a party

(Kienle 2001: 142). Many candidates also declare their candidacy as independents, and then announce their party affiliation once they get elected (Rabi 2005: 80). While winner-takes-all systems in democratic political systems commonly results in two- or three-party systems, in an authoritarian context like Egypt ,the effect is sustaining the domination by a single-party (Posusney 2005b: 98). The emphasis on individual candidates also prevents the parties from developing party programs that could represent a clear alternative to ruling parties and win voters away from them (Langohr 2005: 202). This is also seen in the way candidates recruit voters during the election. The candidates most commonly highlight their connection to the village or city district, emphasising their connection the local community instead of party affiliation, and are financed and organized by the candidates themselves. The campaigns also often highlight the channelling of resources into the community and the candidates' connections to the state, rather than ideological issues and party programs.

In the 2005 election, however, some of the legal parties managed to cooperate in the National Front for Change. The parties agreed to coordinate so that the members of the front did not compete against each other in the elections. The Brotherhood did not participate, probably because of tactical reasons, since the legal parties are weak and have little grassroots support (Hamzawy and Brown 2005: 4). The Front also had organizational problems and difficulties of building good teamwork, and some of the actors accused other members of having side-transactions and deals with the government (Korany 2006 [interview]). Ideological reasons for the disunity will be discussed in Chapter 5.

4.4 Conclusion

Not being a fully closed authoriatarian state, Egypt's rulers have "experimented with political reform, permitting the resurgence of independent political activity in some arenas while continuing to suppress it in others" (Wickham 2002: 64). The Egyptian regime has made use of a variety of strategies in order to shape oppositional activities

and contain the development of a united oppositional front. The focus on state management of the opposition has therefore been a fruitful analytical tool, as seen by the effects of the various strategies and laws employed to prevent the development of a united alternative to the status quo. Another factor strengthening the hypothesis is the effect of state management of the opposition, leading to a kind of self-censorship in their behaviour. By creating a political environment based on fears of repression and the use of non-violent tactics like removing a group's privileged position, the opposition becomes wary of crossing the boundaries of accepted political behaviour set by the regime.

There are however some issues that this approach does not fully explain. First, the theoretical framework seems to put too much responsibility on the ability of the state to manipulate the opposition, not placing enough responsibility with the oppositional actors themselves. Although the state has created genuine divisions among the opposition by including some and excluding others and weakening them as political entities, this can also be analysed by using other analytical tools, such as the underlying distrust between Islamist and secular ideologies and the personalistic character of party politics. An important reason for the absence of a united strategy may thus be that the disagreement on important matters is so big that the actors do not consider cooperation to be an alternative. Second, applying a more actor-oriented approach, focusing on the actions and the attitudes of the oppositional groups, may be useful at least to complement the insights from this chapter, and possibly also contribute to increase the understanding of the mechanisms that hamper cooperation. Opening up for the possibility of state management being a more effective tool because of other favourable conditions being present, such as distrust, also may provide new insights. The next chapter will analyse the absence of a common oppositional strategy by focusing on mutual distrust between the oppositional actors.

5. Ideological Differences as a Source of Distrust

5.1 Introduction

The issue of political reform has, over the last years, become the focus of debates in both civil society groups and political parties, as well as within the Muslim Brotherhood, and has even led Arab governments to acknowledge the need for (at least limited) reform. This growing reform interest has also led to increased optimism among many observers for the possibilities of democratization taking place in the region. As American journalist Fareed Zakaria stated, “everywhere in the Arab world, people are talking about reform...the wind is behind those who advocate free-market, modern, Western-style reforms” (Hawthorne 2005: 58). However, others have argued that reform talk has by far exceeded actual implementation, and that most of the implementations do not affect the authoritarian characters of the regimes.

Furthermore, looking at the political balance of power between actors in the political system gives another perspective of who “the wind is behind”. Electoral politics in the Arab world has shown that secular and liberal parties are increasingly being played out on the sideline, as popular and organizationally strong Islamist organizations either win the majority of the votes (as with Hamas in Palestine) or in non-competitive elections, at least a majority of the oppositional seats that the government “sets aside” for the opposition (the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt). In Egypt, more than ten liberal and leftist parties participated in the 2005 elections, but only managed to win 4 percent of the votes (Hamzawy 2006a: 1). Although the potential democratic credentials of Islamist movements are not necessarily weak, the demands for Western-style reforms seem less likely with the growth of these organizations (Fuller 2005: 37; 49; Wickham 2004: 206-207; Walsh 2003: 35). The electoral successes of Islamist movements in 2005 therefore

“put an end to the dangerous illusion that political openings in the region will ultimately replace authoritarian regimes with secular forces committed to the ideals of liberal democracy as practised in the West” (Hamzawy 2006b).

As Hawthorne (2005: 58) explains, “there is no popular movement for democratic change in the Arab world, only a growing willingness among some members of the elite to question existing systems and deliberate future options”. Hence, compared to Eastern Europe and Latin America, there has been no similar development of opposition movements with broad constituencies that challenge the autocratic rule of incumbent regimes and demand democratic change.

For years, political observers have expressed distress over the ineffectiveness of the Egyptian opposition and its inability to unite. As analysed in this chapter, there are considerable ideological differences between the various actors that inhibit the creation of a unified front. My hypothesis is that the oppositional groups in Egypt have not been able to unite around a common strategy for democratization of the political system, because of mutual feelings of distrust, based on ideological differences between secular and Islamist beliefs. Following the arguments of Hawthorne (2005: 66), “although consensus is forming within the region’s political elite that political reform is necessary, there is no corresponding agreement on what political reform means. Instead, reform has become a widely used mantra covering very different perspectives”, I argue that the distrust between the oppositional actors stemming from ideological differences is so great that it prevents them from cooperating.

5.1.1 Main Content of the Chapter

This chapter seeks to analyse the impact that distrust, based on ideological differences, has on oppositional cooperation in Egypt. First, ideological differences between Islamists and non-Islamist ideologies that result in lack of unity are analysed. The behaviour of the Brotherhood within the arena of parliamentary politics as a factor that could lead to increased cooperation is also examined. Second, I analyse specific attempts at oppositional cooperation in the past and point to reasons

for the weaknesses of these initiatives. The final section discusses whether the difficulties of creating a cooperative relationship between the actors lies not in ideological differences only, but in differences in popular support and organizational strength of the actors.

5.2 Ideological Limits to Cooperation: The Islamist – Secularist Divide

The main issue of contention between the Muslim Brotherhood and most of the legal parties in Egypt is related to the role of religion in the political system and public life, and its role in governing the social and cultural sphere. Moreover, “the issue of Islam, if seen not so much as a set of moral values, principles and aspirations, but as a system of legal, social and political organization, tends to act as a divisive rather than a unifying force” (Krämer 2001: 206). The sharpest divide in the Arab world, is thus not so much a religious as an ideological and existential one. Furthermore, it places those Muslims who want to align politics with religion against those who want to keep these spheres separated (Brumberg 2005-06: 104). Dahl (1971: 106) argued that “any difference in a society that is likely to polarize people into severely antagonistic camps is a cleavage of exceptional importance”, and may have significant consequences for the political life in that country. The reason is that these kinds of conflicts are more easily seen as threats to “one’s fundamental self”, thus pitting groups against each other and dividing between “us” and “them”. Furthermore, the prospects for cooperation is according to Dahl, smaller for a country split into two subcultures than for a country divided into more than two (Dahl 1971: 115).

Moreover, the growing popularity of Islamist movements in the Arab world in general, has posed a dual challenge for democratization of the political systems. First and in relation to the hypothesis of this chapter, it has contributed to create fears among liberals and non-Islamists that a transition to democracy may result in Islamists coming to power. On the other hand, authoritarian rulers have used the Islamist threat as a tactic to dismiss democratization pressures, often with the support

of outside powers or local liberals (El-Affendi 2003: 255). An important source of distrust is thus doubts about the long-term objectives of the Islamists, especially

“whether their commitment to the democratic approach is a “strategic option” or merely the tactical choice of a less costly means than armed struggle to come to power, and then to establish an undemocratic Islamic system with the Quran as its constitution and the Shari’a as its source of law” (Krämer 2001: 209).

The creation of a cooperative relationship between the various oppositional actors may thus have been impeded by a several factors related to difference in ideology. Tarik Al-Bishry, an Islamic liberal intellectual of the Wasatiyya-trend, described the problem of creating consensus in the Egyptian political system by pointing to disagreements over the end goal of reform:

“We all agree that we have been living in an abnormal history or a transitory phase. But we differ about what normality is and about what the transition should bring us. We differ just as much about how to evaluate our history and how to understand our present” (El-Mikawy 1999: 128).

The statement clearly illustrates the problems reconciling different existential and political points of view, both regarding what the essential character of society and history should be, as well as on the more specific goals of reform.

The Brotherhood’s vision for reform is in some ways similar to that of other opposition groups, in framing the steps of political reform as a comprehensive set of constitutional amendments to provide for democratic alternation of power. The Brotherhood also demands the protection of public freedoms, including freedom belief, opinion, and expression (Brown et al. 2006: 13). Furthermore, emphasis on protecting human rights, guaranties of political participation and governmental accountability provides a common platform for all oppositional groups “irrespective of their views on socio-economic organization and foreign policy, uniting them against government intervention and repression” (Krämer 2001: 206). But the commonality between political reform elements stressed by the Brotherhood and the secular¹² opposition should not obscure some essential ideological differences

¹² The term secular is in this chapter understood as non-Islamist opposition, but may not necessarily only mean Western-oriented seculars. The use of the word refers to those who want to keep religion and state apart.

between their platforms (Hamzawy and Brown 2005: 7). Furthermore, the Brotherhood's gradual embrace of political reform has not led it to abandon issues that disturb liberals. This is especially related to the movement's social and cultural agenda, which is in potential conflict with its liberal political visions. Although adopting a reform framework similar to other oppositional actors, ambiguous elements remain in the Brotherhood's ideology.

The ambiguous ideological aspects are especially related to Egypt's Coptic Christian community and the relationship between democracy and the application of *Shari'a*. Moreover, the movement has been criticised for a being reluctant in specifying who that is to define the Islamic legal framework, in addition to specifying the relationship between divine and popular sovereignty (Krämer 2001: 208). Statements from the group say that Copts are welcome to join the movement, but there are significant differences between the statements from the movement's leaders. Muhammad Habib has stated that Copts should have all rights of citizenship, except the opportunity to become head of state, while al-Futuh claimed that the Ikhwan had no objection to a Copt becoming president. The issue of the role of women in society and politics has also been an area of conflict (Krämer 2001: 206). It should however be noted that the authoritarian character of the political system may discourage all oppositional actors to make clear-cut positions on policy issues, because it could result in governmental repression (Brown et al. 2006: 6). Yet, Brown and Hamzawy (2005:1) argue that there are legitimate reasons to doubt whether the Brotherhood is truly committed to the modern principle of citizenship that it advocates. One impression is that the Brotherhood may still be committed to a more exclusivist conception where Copts are merely a tolerated minority.

An important factor in the debate about the relationship between Islamism and secularism has been secular fears of the consequences of democratization, since many of them strongly question the democratic credentials of Islamists. Sceptics thus believe that Islamists participation in a democratic election would lead to the end of the electoral process itself. After gaining power, it is therefore assumed that the

Islamist group would change the democratic constitution and end all opposition to their rule (Al-Sayyid 2003: 6). Some scholars have also argued that the need for unity is such an important part of Islamism that it prevents the forming of pluralistic power-sharing pacts (Brumberg 2003a: 269). Comparing the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria with the Solidarity movement in Poland, Waterbury (2001: 39) states that the FIS, unlike the Polish movement opposed or wanted to replace the incumbent regime because their lack of religious mission, not because of its undemocratic character. As Brumberg argues (2003a: 269), this quest

“to ensure that the state’s primary mission is to guarantee one overarching ideology has invariably alarmed women’s organizations, ethnic minorities..., secular intellectuals and professionals, and of course military officers, who have gladly invoked such fears to justify autocracy”.

Because of these fears, alliances have often taken place between potential democrats and the incumbent regimes, compared to alliances in Eastern Europe and the Third World. In the latter countries, oppositional actors, although not necessarily democrats, found that democratic institutions and procedures were useful in solving conflicts between the opposition and the regime. This led to a situation of “democracy without democrats” (Brumberg 2003a: 270). In the Middle East, the ideological conflict between secular and Islamist opposition has instead produced “autocracy with democrats”, making groups that might choose democracy in the absence of a perceived Islamist threat, support or at least tolerate autocratic rule. That said, it should also be noted that the incumbent regimes have also contributed to this oppositional support by managing oppositional behaviour and creating divisions. This oppositional-regime cooperation, as seen in the 1990s when the opposition sided with the regime against the Brotherhood, has led to Islamist distrust of the legal opposition, which has made cooperation difficult (Abdelrahman 2004: 27). Since the 1950s, secular ideologies have also been used by a majority of Arab regimes to legitimate authoritarian rule. The failure of these states to improve the living conditions of the people has led to popular dissatisfaction with secular beliefs, which Islamists have capitalized on by using religious slogans (Hamzawy 2006a: 1).

However, choosing a rejectionist approach dismissing Islam as inherently illiberal or conversely relativising concepts of “Islamic democracy”, does not contribute to solving the puzzle of creating mutual trust between secular and Islamist opposition. As other ideologies, Islamism is shaped and created within a framework of ideal social, political and cultural identities and interests that both contradict and complement one another. It is also important to note that some of the critique of Islamist movements regarding respect for democratic principles and the absence of internal democracy are not necessarily restricted to Islamist groups, but are also a feature of nationalist and leftist parties. They are, however, not exposed to the same degree of criticism and doubts (Krämer 2001: 209). It should be noted that the legal opposition parties also disagree on a wide range of issues, including the degree of state control of the economy, foreign policy, the role of private ownership in the public sphere and the political role of religious movements. These differences are however minor and may be more easy to reconcile compared to the “opposition of principle” between the Brotherhood and most of the legal parties (Albrecht 2005: 385). As Brumberg explains (2003a: 271):

“...the challenge is not to figure out whether Islamism is “essentially” democratic versus autocratic, or liberal versus illiberal. Instead, it is to see whether this or that Islamist group is acting within a hegemonic political arena where the game is to shut out alternative approaches, or else within a competitive – let’s call it dissonant – arena where Islamists, like other players, find themselves pushed to accommodate the logic of power-sharing”.

In some Middle Eastern countries there has been a development in the direction of combining liberal and Islamic principles, such as the Justice and Development in Turkey or Al-Nahda in Tunisia (El-Affendi 2003: 256). In Egypt this trend has resulted in the attempted creation of the Wasat Party, which was mentioned in chapter 4 as being thwarted by the regime. One aspect of this Islamic-liberal development is that it could help to create oppositional coalitions, because they put less emphasis on some of the most controversial theological-political issues, at least in the short term. As seen in Iran during the presidency of Khatami, “the new liberalism has managed to generate broad coalitions that encompass critical Islamic liberalism, traditional liberalism, and even plain secular liberalism” (El-Affendi 2003: 256). However, in

Egypt this emergence has not had any immediate practical political consequences in relation to building alliances across ideological boundaries. The main divide continues to be one between the secular parties and the Brotherhood. Yet, as mentioned in chapter 3, the Brotherhood is a diverse movement, and the younger generation is thought to be more pragmatic and conciliatory than the older generation. Although it is impossible to prove with absolute certainty that the Brotherhood would not be undemocratic and violent if they were to gain power, their strategy and actions during Mubarak incumbency have not strengthened these fears (Walsh 2003: 35).

The discussion of the potential consequences of Islamist coming to power is however not the main focus of this thesis. What is important is how the actors perceive each other and whether the ideological differences are perceived to be so large that they lead to distrust and fragmentation. In Egypt, this has traditionally been a situation of conflicting ideological positions, where “in spite of extended co-existence and occasional co-operation, relations between Islamic and secular currents remain marked by suspicion and haunted by the spectre of violence” (Krämer 2001: 209). The situation of a large Islamist oppositional bloc within many Arab legislatures offers possibilities for inclusion into the formal political system, but also represents new challenges for the movements themselves. Although many of the Islamist movements have endorsed principles of pluralism and moderation, they remain dependent on “ideological sloganeering and moral claims”, which help sustain secular fears of an Islamist Trojan horse (Hamzawy 2006b: 1). Pressure upon the movements to move beyond ideology may create frictions within the movements, and eventually lead to more pragmatic policy preferences that are less tied to religious sentiments.

5.3 The Parliament as a Potential Site for Cooperation

According to a senior member of the Brotherhood, their success should not frighten anybody, pointing to statements from the group about respect for the rights of all religious and political groups (The Guardian 2005). Yet, there are several ambiguities

in the Brotherhood's ideology that help sustain the secular opposition's distrust. However, the Brotherhood has made attempts to clarify their position on some contentious issues, which in turn could be interpreted as an attempt to approach the other oppositional actors. In an article commenting on a Carnegie paper discussing the grey zones of Islamism, prominent member of the Brotherhood, Abul Futouh, affirmed the Brotherhood's support for democracy. He stated that "reformist Islamist movements understand democracy as coexistence among all elements of society, peaceful and constitutional alternation of power, the rule of law, and the protection of individual rights and freedoms" (Futouh 2006: 2). In the paper he also makes the distinction between religion and political life, in which the "affairs of the latter should be administrated in a modern fashion" (Futouh 2006: 1).

The publishing of policy positions like this can play an important role as part of building trust between the oppositional actors, because they clarify political positions and can increase the awareness of commonalities between rivalling groups. It should however be noted that the Brotherhood is a movement containing activists of different generations, where the younger ones like Futouh are "far more eager to play politics..." and cooperate with other ideological trends (Brown et al. 2006: 7). By the end of the 1990s, a shift in the attitude of mainstream Islamists in Egypt can be observed, partly based on the apparent failure of the movements to inflict change on the political environment. The discussions, which especially gained momentum after September 11, 2001, resulted in changes in the movements' priorities and strategies (Hamzawy 2005d: 2). The outcome was a shift toward more political pragmatism and an approach based on promoting gradual democratic reforms as the only possible strategy in confronting the authoritarian regime. The continued use of slogans such as "Islam is the solution" and "The Quran is our constitution", however, contribute to widen the ideological gulf between Islamist and other oppositional forces. Although the Brotherhood's parliamentary bloc has previously concentrated on the compatibility of some laws with Shari'a and cultural and social issues in addition to political reform, after the 2005 elections the focus of the Brotherhood MPs have shifted to give priority to issues of political reform (Hamzawy and Brown

2005: 6-7). According to a recent study of the Brotherhood in parliament (Shehata and Stacher 2006), the group is also behaving in a way that strengthens the view of the group as a responsible oppositional actor, which in turn could help to improve the relationship with the legal opposition. According to the authors (2006: 33):

“...the Brotherhood parliamentary bloc is being noticed in Egypt for its work across ideological lines to serve constituents and increase its collective knowledge of local, national, and international affairs. Moreover, the delegation has not pursued an agenda focused on banning books and legislating the length of skirts. It has pursued an agenda of political reform”.

Although the MPs can not pass or block legislation, even the semi-official newspaper Al-Ahram has emphasised “that the “Islamic trend” is playing a “noticeable and distinguished role that cannot be denied” in legislative sessions” (Shehata and Stacher 2006: 33). In April 2006 the Brotherhood MPs established a “network of parliamentarians” in opposition to emergency law and encouraged legislators from other political trends to join in. The group consisted of 113 legislators whereas 88 were from the Brotherhood and three were from the NDP, the rest being independents or from other oppositional parties. Apart from signing a petition against the continuance of emergency law, “the group declared its intention to work with all trends in Egyptian society opposed to emergency law” (Shehata and Stacher 2006: 37). This could have a positive effect on the prospect for future oppositional cooperation, since it signals to the other oppositional groups that the Brotherhood takes political activities within the formal political system seriously.

The behaviour of the Brotherhood’s bloc within parliament may thus have a significant impact on the possibilities for establishing trustful relations between the Brotherhood and the legal opposition. However, as Hamzawy and Brown (2005: 9) argue “if the Brotherhood pursues this path in a confrontational way – mobilizing its supporters and attempting to intimidate rather than negotiate with the regime – it would likely increase the current polarization of the political scene”. This could make the gulf between the Brotherhood and the other oppositional groups wider, and thus drive them back into supporting the regime. In order to achieve political reform based on a unified movement, a political process that reduces both citizens’ and

oppositional actors' fears of elections leading to the strongest group repressing the others, have to be established (Brumberg 2005-06: 105-106). Brumberg thus highlights an important point regarding democratization in states with Islamist and non-Islamist oppositions. In his view, it is not necessarily an important issue to bridge the identity gap between these two groups, but to

“include all voices that accept the rules of the game and reject violence, the price for a seat at the table of government must include accepting the premise that the government will not impose any one group's cultural or religious agenda on the rest of society” (Brumberg 2005-06: 106).

Firstly, the Brotherhood's behaviour in political life in Egypt, playing by the rules of the game, could thus be important in convincing other oppositional actors of its (at least stated) intentions. Secondly, Brumberg's point also can be interpreted to emphasise the importance of trust, which I have highlighted both in this chapter and in chapter 2. What is most essential is thus not necessarily to make all actors agree on all matters, but building trust between them so that they can cooperate on the most important ones. However, although the Egyptian Islamists have adopted a pro-reform position, they are probably not likely to abandon their distinct religious identity and become “the new liberals of Egypt” (Hamzawy 2005d: 2). The concept of negotiation therefore becomes central in order to overcome the cooperation problems stemming from irreconcilable ideological and existential differences. Therefore, attempts to discover some overlap in opinion thus seems necessary before the opposition will be able to settle on a common position (Zartman 2001a: 240). The People's Assembly is important in this regard, as it provides an arena for oppositional actors to interact and obtain information on each others points of view.

5.4 Crossing Ideological Borders

5.4.1 The Electoral Alliances of 1984 and 1987

In 1984 the Wafd Party and the Muslim Brotherhood formed an electoral alliance, which can be understood as a tactical alliance, not based on shared ideological

objectives. To recapitulate, the elections took place under a law banning religious parties and independent candidates to participate. There was also a national threshold of 8 percent. These factors thus provided incentives for oppositional cooperation, which resulted in the alliance between the Wafd and the Brotherhood, running under the party banner of the Wafd (Post 1987: 19).

One consequence of the alliance was a weakening of the Egyptian political left, both in the avenue of economic politics and ideologically: “the alliance appeased the religious sentiments of the population, thus marginalising the Tagammu Party on the basis of its atheist Marxist doctrine” (El-Mikawy 1999: 83). This characteristic has been typical for many alliances both in Egypt, Syria and elsewhere, that Islamists have been able cooperate with political actors that adhere to religion or Islam at least in the short term, but unable to establish a relationship with those advocating an “atheist” leftist ideology, such as Marxists or communists (Krämer 2001: 209). The 1984 alliance also quickly fell apart after the election. The Wafd and the Brotherhood especially found it difficult to cooperate because both groups thought it represented the consciousness of the nation. They also did not manage to overcome their irrevocable differences concerning Islam (Hendriks 1987: 26).

In 1987 the Tagammu’ party initially proposed a strategy of forming a unified oppositional front in the elections. The idea was that the seats won would be divided among the parties based on a prearranged formula reflecting the supposed strength of each party, thus giving all opposition forces some voice in the People’s Assembly. As in 1984, the opposition did not manage to keep the front unified, the most important reasons being “differences over how to distribute the political spoils as much as it failed because of differences of ideology” (El-Mikawy 1999: 88). The Wafd Party, however, refused to take part in the alliance, “its withdrawal confirmed a rupture between the Wafd and the Muslim Brotherhood, the seeds of which were apparently planted right after their 1984 success at the polls (Post 1987: 19)”. The discontent between the previous partners was also clearly mutual; the Wafd’s support in the

Coptic Christian community had declined because of the alliance, and the Ikhwan disliked the Wafd's domination within the alliance (Post 1987: 19).

The Wafd's withdrawal was a considerable setback for the Tagammu', because without the Wafd "party officials felt that the alliance lost its quality as a united front of different political forces to challenge the hegemony the electoral law gave to the NDP" (Post 1987: 21). Furthermore, the party feared that its supporters would consider the alliance as only a tactical maneuver to gain seats, and by doing this abandoning its basic principles. The result was therefore the withdrawal of the Tagammu'. The Brotherhood approached the Labour Party, which traditionally had close ties to the Brothers. The Labour was therefore "an ally with which they are in tune" and was easier to dominate (Hendriks 1987: 27). However, within the Labour Party "the socialist, pan-Arabist faction accused the other faction of selling out to the Muslim Brotherhood and of betraying the spirit of the party's identity by giving it an Islamic label" (El-Mikawy 1999: 59).

As seen in Chapter 4, as a result of the alliance, both the Tagammu and the Wafd increasingly distanced themselves from the Brothers by adopting secular slogans and reversing the 1984 demands of the implementation of Shari'a in one form or another. Since the participants in the Islamic Alliance shared a similar ideological outlook, it did not contribute to a more unified approach across the ideological spectrum. The alliance also reduced the possibility of a more united political left. Since the Labour Party had allied itself with the Ikhwan, the only possible coalition partner for the Tagammu Party on the left side of the spectrum was gone. The social base of the alliance was also similar to that of the Tagammu, which further reduced the electoral potential of the left (El-Mikawy 1999: 92).

El-Mikawy (1999: 130) argues that "of all the pacts that were theoretically possible, the opposition ended up building two that fragmented the left and moderated the stances on the right, so that the entire political system was saved from polarized confrontations". The effect of the limited alliances can however be interpreted differently, especially related to the effects of large and unifying pacts on

the possibilities for democratization. By arguing that the political system was saved by these alliances, El-Mikawy implicitly recognizes the status quo as the most preferable situation. In contrast, a large-scale pact, although increasing the potential for confrontations, enhances the political leverage of oppositions by “deflecting the divide-and-rule strategies that autocrats have long used to sustain their power” (Brumberg 2005-06: 108). Furthermore, “by providing a set of mutual guarantees that protect the basic political interests of all groups, pacts can enhance the political leverage of regime reformers and opposition forces” (Brumberg 2005-06: 108). It can thus be argued that contrary to El-Mikawy’s explanation, it was the limited alliances that contributed to a more polarized system. As I have shown, some of the legal parties increasingly tried to distance themselves from the Islamic Alliance and changed their rhetoric from an accommodating one to a more critical one. This in turn moved them closer to the regime, and ultimately contributed to the strengthening of the divided political system designed by the incumbent regime.

5.4.2 Grass Root Level Cooperation

Fragmented oppositional groups may sometimes be able to unite in opposition to certain controversial policies, for example peace with Israel or privatization of state-run industries. However, saying no to certain policies is not the same as saying yes to a common position. In most parts of the Middle East, both rulers and opposition lack the means or incentive to negotiate a “political “pact” that would ease their exit from a deeply rooted legacy of autocratic rule” (Brumberg and Diamond 2003: xi). This characteristic is also appropriate when analysing oppositional cooperation in Egypt. When the Palestinian Intifada broke out in 2000, both Islamists and leftists started to participate together in fundraising campaigns, demonstrations and support committees as individuals or union representatives. This increased cooperation also took place during the outbreak of the 2003 Iraqi War, where

“it became a common sight to see banners from the banned Communist Party next to, for example, Muslim Brotherhood controlled unions and syndicates, side by side with copies of the Quran and Nasser’s photographs, all condemning the war on Iraq” (Adbelrahman 2004: 26).

An interesting development is that over the past two years there has been a different level of cooperation and coordination between the radical left and the Brotherhood that is completely outside all legal political institutions or parties. Groups that have never previously worked together, now cooperate on a variety of political issues (Schwedler and Clark 2006: 10). Furthermore, the arrests made during the demonstrations in 2006 were mainly of radical leftists and the Brotherhood, and they have been working well together over the last two years with the new Change movements (Razik 2006 [interview]).

Over the recent years there has therefore been a return of “street politics”; the development of increased cooperation in more loosely-established horizontal networks, with more floating and overlapping memberships. Characteristic of these networks are that they are more often organized by individuals from different political camps, “though mostly from the left, and not by organizations or political parties” (Abdelrahman 2004: 26). An important principle has also been that the actors are able to retain their independent political programs, thus attempting to overcome the traditional rivalries. There have thus been efforts to develop rules of engagement that could govern joint actions between the two camps. One important principle has been consensus regarding the slogans used in the demonstrations. As Abdelrahman (2004: 26) describes “...organizers emphasise the need to avoid sectarian slogans and adopt only those which do not offend the sensibilities and ideas of participants”. This is, however, a time-consuming task, and many controversial issues are simply dropped because of participants not wanting to compromise their positions. The result is therefore “not programmatic cooperation” or achieving a “third way”, but tactical cooperation or establishing coordinated efforts for specific short-term goals. The emergence of Kifaya can also be interpreted within this framework of grass root politics, although it is mainly considered to be a left-leaning movement. The focus of Kifaya’s politics has also mostly been concentrated on Mubarak and the possible succession of his son, thus limiting its potential programmatic impact. However, the group could have a longer-term impact in that it could reconcile various actors around common issues and thus contribute to increased coordination between oppositional

actors. Kifaya could therefore represent an attempt at strategic cooperation, since it has proved to be durable and focuses on some political issues, while more controversial issues are avoided (Schwedler and Clark 2006: 10).

Yet, as argued above, saying no to the war in Iraq or to the rule of Hosni Mubarak is not the same as having the ability to reconcile their views and work together on issues of long-term political reform. As Abdelrahman explains (2004: 27) “even the simplest logistical steps can become battleground”, as issues of “who gets to talk first in a conference or rally, choosing slogans acceptable to everybody, and male/female separation in demonstrations have been some of the most contentious issues”. Although not yet resulting in an alliance on the level of political parties, the increased contacts between Islamists and leftists could have a future impact on the ability to cooperate in a more formal manner. However, the cooperation efforts above have been slow and mostly taken place as individual initiatives rather than from organized actors (Abdelrahman 2004: 27).

5.4.3 The National Front for Change

According to Amr Hashem Rabei, an expert on political party affairs, “the opposition failed in the past to agree about the amendment of the constitution because of rival ideologies...they may succeed if they work on general lines of reform and keep away from the details” (Samaan 2005). The National Front clearly shows the difficulties of building co-operational ties between Egypt’s oppositional actors. As previously discussed, scholars have highlighted the importance of creating national consensus for change among oppositional forces, which establishes the desired direction of political reform and the basic rules of the political process. However, reaching this state of agreement requires more than “their members’ eagerness to increase pressures on the autocratic ruling elite”, or else the front will risk becoming shallow political bodies where ideological orientations take centre stage (Hamzawy 2005a: 1).

The Front was originally meant to include only three traditional opposition parties, the Wafd, the Tagammu and the Nasserists, but in the end also included Kifaya, the Muslim Brotherhood and six additional political parties. The Ghad Party, whose leader came second in the presidential elections, was however not allowed to participate. The Brotherhood, however, indicated that it was not fully committed to the Front and persisted on running under the banner “Islam is the solution”, which irritated Egypt’s secular opposition (Morsi 2005). The Tagammu leader Rifaat al-Said, known for his public disputes with other opposition leaders and his distrust of Islamists, disliked the Brotherhood’s involvement, and stated that:

“If the Brotherhood wants to join they will have to adhere to the conditions we have set, namely that of planning for a democratic and secular state based on equality between man and woman and Muslim and Christian...So this means that to join they will have to stop using slogans like “Islam is the solution”” (Morsi 2005).

The Brotherhood, however, ultimately decided to stay out of the Front. Although the Brotherhood’s absence can to some extent be explained by tactical considerations and the fact that the Front was established right before the elections, “the Brotherhood’s absence can partly be explained by the attitude of other opposition parties” (Hamzawy and Brown 2005:4). The leader of the Tagammu had especially expressed deep distrust of the Muslim Brotherhood, and many liberals and leftists are wary of cooperating with the Islamist because of fears of what could happen if they were to take over power. This has resulted in a number of seculars preferring an authoritarian regime over what they perceive as potential Islamist rule. As Tagammu’ member Abdel Gafar Shouker stated,

“It will be difficult to undermine [the NDP’s] position without forming a unified opposition front...but the problem is that the main political parties aren’t serious about this. The leaders of these parties are eager not to be forced to agree with other political powers, to have more freedom to maneuver and gain personal profit. And supporting this attitude is the Muslims Brotherhood position, which is not trustworthy” (Samaan 2005).

Rifaat al-Said was also wary of an alliance: “We won’t participate in this kind of blind front, because it’s a horrible political mistake. The issue isn’t us all unifying against one enemy. We must unify around goals. If we lose the common goals, it will be difficult for the opposition to work together” (Samaan 2005). He was also critical

of cooperating with certain liberals, describing them as “agents of America” or the Brotherhood, calling them “against the principle of democracy”. In addition, the leaders of the legal opposition were also cautious because of the strong organizational structure and experience of the Brotherhood compared to the legal parties. Furthermore, the Brotherhood also viewed the legal opposition with distrust. Firstly, “the Brotherhood leaders made clear their estimation that potential alliance partners had little to offer since the opposition parties had no national organization or proven record that could match the Brotherhood” (Hamzawy and Brown 2005: 4). As Berman (2003: 261) argues

“grassroots involvement in practically every nook and cranny of Egyptian life has allowed Islamists to gain insights into the needs and demands of a wide range of citizens (including members of the middle class and the elite) and craft their appeals and programs appropriately”.

Secondly, another source of distrust was the lack of denouncement of the authoritarian measures taken against the Brotherhood in the past. However, according to Samaan (2005), “despite the fact that its conservative ideology is at odds with the largely socialist opposition, the Muslim Brotherhood has stated that it is ready to join an opposition alliance”. This was however further specified by Muhammed Mahdi Akef, stating that the Brotherhood was not willing to form a front, but could be involved in a kind of alliance between opposition groups on common political demands. In the end, the Brotherhood’s suspicions about the legal opposition’s performance materialized, and the National Front was not able to mobilize effectively and only won twelve seats (Hamzawy and Brown 2005: 4). Although the Front did not manage to mobilise many voters, the initiative can still be considered important because it facilitated increased contact between secular and Islamist forces, which in turn may lead to increased cooperation in the future.

5.5 Ideological Differences or Differences in Popular Support?

According to prominent member of the Brotherhood, Essam el-Erian, the imbalance between the legal parties and the Brotherhood prevents cooperation, “because the Islamic power is very, very strong and the others are very, very weak” (2006 [interview]). Although competitive politics can exist in a country with a high degree of subcultural pluralism, a number of factors are thought to be essential if this is to be maintained with low levels of conflict (Dahl 1971: 114). Especially important is the “recognition on the part of each subculture that it cannot form a majority capable of governing except by entering into a coalition with representatives of other subcultures” (Dahl 1971: 115). When a country is divided into two subcultures, one a majority and the other a minority, members of the majority subculture have fewer incentives to be conciliatory towards the minority, since they can form a majority coalition among themselves. Furthermore, members of the minority subculture see little prospect of ever being free from the potential political domination of the majority and hence they also have few incentives to act conciliatory.

Building on the arguments made by Dahl (1971), it is therefore possible to argue that the relative strength of Islamist compared to the secular, legal parties increase the effect of ideological differences. Mutual security guarantees is one solution to overcome cooperation problems, “provided by specific constitutional provisions, pacts, or understanding that impose limits on the constitutional authority of any parliamentary coalition to regulate certain matters important to one or more subcultures” (Dahl 1971: 119). However, in an authoritarian context, the focus is on establishing oppositional cooperation that in turn can lead to these kinds of pacts. The focus is thus on intra-oppositional cooperation rather than opposition-government relations. What is important in this context is that the division into majority and minority subcultures within the opposition itself inhibits cooperation, because of distrust over the potential consequences of the majority group taking over power.

Although it cannot be definitely proved that the Muslim Brotherhood would win the majority of the seats in a free election, the electoral successes of Islamist movements in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Indonesia, Yemen and Pakistan indicate that the Brotherhood could be a serious contender for governmental power (Al-Sayyid 2003: 5-6). Lacking viable alternatives, people are becoming increasingly willing to cast votes in favour of Islamist organizations. Although the large following is not only protest votes against the incumbent regime, it can be considered “affirmations of support for an effective and non-corrupt alternative” (Brown and Hamzawy 2005: 1). This has led to a situation in most of the countries in the Arab world where “secular opposition parties are not yet real players in the political confrontation still dominated by the state party and the Islamist pretender to the same exclusive role” (Zartman 2001b: 109).

In Chapter 4, I argued that the secular opposition had as much reason to fear Islamists in the past as they do now, but that they managed to cooperate then despite these differences. This was then explained by the structure of the political system, changing from a unified to a divided SoC. However, this argument can perhaps be modified in light of insights from this chapter. Even though all political groups were heavily repressed during Sadat’s rule, the secular parties had a stronger political presence and popular following. In the 1980s the legal parties also had a larger share of the oppositional seats in the People’s Assembly, and was optimistic that the election could mean a move towards democratisation. The present situation is however one of increasing marginalisation. The legal parties are perceived as outdated and have lost their public appeal. In contrast, the Brotherhood has been able to maintain networks of support in society by offering social and economic services (Brown and Hamzawy 2005: 1). The weakness of the legal parties because of governmental restrictions and internal struggles, have also led to a situation where the mosque is the only available arena for expressing opposition to the regime (Mustafa 2006: 3). There is thus a strong disparity in electoral strength and popular support between the Brotherhood and the legal parties. The Hamas victory in Palestine also contributed to underline the relative weakness of secularists and may make the

secular opposition less willing to cooperate. Islamic movements also often target social constituents that have traditionally been sympathetic to leftists and nationalists, and therefore represent a strong competitor to these parties. The increased success of Islamist movements have also led to debates over which political alignment strategy that should be applied, because of differences in opinion over what constitutes the largest political threat: Islamism or the regime (Karawan 2001: 183).

In addition to ideological differences, differences in power thus help to explain the difficulties of establishing lasting cooperation between Islamists and non-Islamists. Previously, I highlighted the role of negotiations in building a common position among the opposition parties. In this regard, the relative strength of the various oppositional groups is important, because the position of each side in the joint outcome depends on the power of each side before and during the negotiations. In order to establish a common strategy, each side must give up something, and “what and how much is to be given up will be determined by the power of the two sides in the conflict...” (Zartman 2001: 244). As long as one side is weaker than the other, trade-offs are more likely to be viewed in zero-sum terms rather than positive sum, which inhibits effective cooperation.

5.6 Conclusion

Cooperating on strategies of democratization may open up for strengthening those who are potentially opposed to them. There is thus an amount of uncertainty; cooperation may lead to successful democratization, or it may fail (Kalyvas 2000: 379). The hypothesis in this chapter seems to be strengthened, because as this chapter has shown, ideological differences and distrust about others' intentions have made cooperation difficult. Distrust stemming from ideological differences is therefore perceived to be so large that long-term cooperation around a shared world-view has not been possible. However, over the recent years, Islamists and leftists have found common ground on some specific issues, and managed to cooperate tactically together. However, cooperation has not reached a higher level and is vulnerable to

controversial issues. A factor weakening the strength of the hypothesis is that the ideological differences gain importance because of the differences in strength between Islamists and secular parties. However, this should not underrate the underlying importance of ideological differences, even though these differences may be enhanced by weaknesses in popular support.

6. The Impact of Personal Political Rule on Oppositional Cooperation

6.1 Introduction

Political parties have been assumed to play a key role in democratic consolidations. According to Olukoshi (in Randall and Svåsand 2002: 30),

“The political party is the most effective vehicle for mobilising voter support in the competition for electoral office. The institutionalisation of a multiparty system is, therefore, indispensable to the principle and practise of democracy”.

However, in many countries undergoing liberalization or transition to democracy, the performance of political parties often fall short of what is expected within scholarly literature. Furthermore,

“political parties are regularly perceived to be a weak link in the chain of elements that together make for a democratic state, or even to have helped undermine democracy through the irresponsible and self-interested actions of their leaders” (Randall and Svåsand 2002: 32).

Thus many political parties are reduced to being small and short-lived entities behind aspiring individual politicians. This analysis also seems to fit the experience with political parties in Egypt. Drawing parallels from African experiences with democratization, party activity “are dominated by personality issues and claims and counter-claims as to the merits of individual candidates, rather than being a struggle between various policy positions” (Randall and Svåsand 2002: 33). The prevalence of factional politics and personal rule may thus inhibit the development of strong and effective alternatives to the incumbent regime, as well as it makes cooperation difficult because of the personal disputes within and between parties.

Przeworski (1991b: 52) argues that “a regime does not collapse unless and until some alternative is organized in such a way as to present a real choice for isolated individuals”. As shown in chapter 4, the weakness of the political parties and its effect on opposition cooperation can to large extent be explained by regime measures

to weaken the opposition parties as organizational entities. However, as will be argued in this chapter, the fact that the political parties accept or at least come to terms with this type of system cannot be solely reduced to the role of constraints imposed by the government. The hypothesis examined in this chapter is that the oppositional groups in Egypt have not been able to unite around a common strategy for democratization of the political system, because of internal divisions caused by personal political rule.

6.1.1 Main Content of the Chapter

The first section in this chapter analyses the effects of personal political rule on oppositional cooperation in Egypt. Emphasis is on the importance of the individual in political interactions, the reasons behind the adoption of personalistic electoral campaigns, and the effects this has on cooperation. The first part is closely related to themes discussed in chapter 4 about cooptation of the opposition, but the focus in this chapter is on the consequences on the actor-level, promoting an individualistic and personalized political dynamic. The second section of the chapter analyses the impact of internal party struggles based on absence of party democracy and factional politics.

6.2 The Importance of the Individual in Political Interactions

Since the rule of Muhammad Ali, Egypt's political system has to a large degree been based on individuals rather than institutions. Despite the fact that the People's Assembly was established in 1866 and ministries were set up around the same period, these institutions did not take root to become the main centre of power in political processes (Arif 2005). On the contrary, these institutions revolved around the ruler and were thus shaped to serve his political interests. As previously mentioned, concentration of powers in the hands of the president has been an underlying characteristic of the Egyptian political system since the rule of Nasser. Thus, the lack of strong parties as organizations should be analyzed in the context of the nature of the institutions operating within Egypt's political system and their power to face

rulers (Arif 2005). However, this practise is also apparent within the political parties who have been weakened by internal disputes, lack of internal democracy and authoritarian leadership. This occurrence of personal disputes both within and between oppositional actors hinders effective cooperation, because it creates a conflictual environment with zero-sum perceptions of politics.

One of the major characteristics of Egypt's experience with elections is the tendency of candidates to adopt campaign strategies that are personalistic in nature (Kassem 1999: 127). During the campaign period before the elections take place, the application of emergency law is somewhat relaxed, thus offering the political parties an avenue to strengthen their ties with the masses. Instead, however, party nominated candidates use this period to cultivate their own personal networks of electoral alliances. Furthermore, one could also envision that party nominated candidates would be in a more advantageous position than independent candidates, because they could rely on material and organizational support from the parties. However, the Brotherhood is probably the only organization who suits this description (Kassem 1999: 143). This is also a main reason for why the movement is perceived as a threat to the regime. Their election campaigns, in contrast to the legal parties, are not related to obligations or support for the candidate because of personal capabilities and connections, but for the Brotherhood as a group actor. The legal parties do not appear to have the same group cohesiveness as the Brotherhood, often not offering enough assistance and organizational support for its candidates, which forces candidates to personally finance parts of their campaigns (Kassem 1999: 146).

One reason for this lack of support lies in scarcity of resources, which may prevent them from maintaining local bases in constituencies where they have nominated candidates. It is however difficult to determine whether this lack of local bases is only the result of governmental constraints and a restrictive legal framework, or if lack of enthusiasm from party leaders also contribute to this situation (Kassem (1999: 146). Furthermore, all parties have access to an annual £E 100,000 in funding from the state, party membership fees and incomes from the sale of newspapers,

whereas some of these resources could have been used to finance electoral campaigns (Kassem 1999: 147). Often, party contributions only extend to providing the candidates with party posters, which makes them more dependent on their personal resources and networks than on their parties. This in turn contributes to explain why the candidates adopt individualistic campaign strategies that are more or less independent from their parties, relative to the candidates from the Brotherhood. However, this money also promotes adherence to the status quo. If a legal party starts to challenge the regime too strongly, for example by initiating cooperation, this could lead to the freezing of the party and therefore also the loss of the annual LE 100,000. This can therefore be seen as a mechanism to secure dependence on the regime.

This person-oriented dynamic highlights the importance of individual politicians and therefore marginalizes the role of parties as organizational actors, “leaving them to resemble little more than conglomerates of personalities possessing their personal networks of supporters” (Kassem 2004: 80). A consequence of the use of these personal oriented strategies is therefore the weakening of party development and group cohesion. Furthermore, personalistic strategies also reduce the parties’ abilities to recruit party supporters at the grass roots level. This in turn, makes the system of multi-party participation less challenging to the incumbent regime. Within the framework of personal political rule, analyses of elections show the absence of candidates advocating broad national programs or debates on more general ideological considerations. Instead, focus is on promising benefits for local constituencies. Ideology and public policy therefore only becomes important when they “affect their political situation and that of their associates, clients, and supporters” (Jackson and Rosberg 1984: 426).

The domination of individual campaigns also reduces the possibilities for learning how to cooperate and work together. In an interview (2006) with Bahgat Korany, he explained that the talent of working organizationally together and coordinating activities often is taken for granted in other countries, but in Egypt activists are either not accustomed to it or they are not fully convinced of its benefits.

According to him, these difficulties can partly be explained by government intervention to blow up the teamwork, but lack of experience in teamwork also seems to play an important role (2006 [Interview]). Some have also noted the negative connotation attached to the Arabic word for party, *Hizb*, promoting a view of party politics as disruptive and culturally alien (Leca 2001: 63). The former Prime Minister Ahmed Sidqi played a central role in the formation of the National Front for Change. He explained that “more often than not it was personal feuds that were standing in the way of opposition groups uniting to press for change rather than unbridgeable ideological differences” (Al-Ahram Weekly 2005). According to him, the Egyptian political culture personalises issues, which influences the relationship between political parties and contributes to the country’s political deadlock.

In a system of personal political rule, political parties are more commonly considered to be extensions of individual politicians, rather than as impersonal electoral machines whose identities are tied to distinct political programmes (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 151). The presence of parties in society and the procedures of voting for them, most commonly depend on the weight of tribes and families that the candidates belong to, rather than on party programs and objectives (Arif 2005). Because of the restrictions imposed on the parties by the regime, it is also common to refer to them as “parties of pressure” (Kassem 2004: 76). With the exception of the NDP, the parties’ main ambition is to play an influential role within the political system as pressure groups, because it is not possible to reach power through elections. Thus, the Egyptian parties’ main political aim becomes attempting to influence the government and to direct its policies in a particular direction or to convince the government to drop an issue previously pursued. However, parties of pressure are weak entities and are thus not able to challenge the incumbent rulers in an effective manner (Arif 2005). Because of the dominant political position of the regime, it is also difficult to isolate the cause and effect of the personalistic orientations of both electoral campaigns and political interactions in general. According to Langhor (2005: 205), in the Arab world, “independent candidacy is both a cause and a result of opposition party weakness”. The restrictive character of

Egypt's political system leads many political activists to stand as individual candidates rather than fight a long battle for party recognition. Furthermore, some independents are wealthy and popular figures that want a parliamentary seat, but are uninterested in opposition politics. Finally, others are opposed to the authoritarian regime, but are at the same time also uninspired by the current oppositional parties (Langohr 2005: 205). Regarding the party nominated candidates, both the state and the oppositional parties contribute to the personalistic election campaigns; the state by restrictive laws and clientelism, and the parties by showing too little interest in engaging in political activities at the local level. However, regardless of the cause of this personalistic orientation, the end result is weak organizations and fewer incentives for oppositional groups to unite. Since elections are the only occasion where emergency law is somewhat relaxed, offering opportunities for the parties to interact and present themselves as serious alternatives to the incumbent rule. Instead, focus is on individual candidates and their personal connections, thus inhibiting the establishment of cooperative relations among the parties and the accumulation of organizational experience. However, over the last few years there has been an awakened interest in democracy and increased focus on reform among political elites within the opposition. In order to establish effective cooperation, the current ideological disagreements and the personalistic character of political dynamics have to be resolved. The question is therefore,

“whether this presumed convergence toward democracy will create a structural coalition among the three reform movements [Islamists, Arab nationalists and leftists] and whether such a coalition will determine the current debate and struggle in favour of democracy” (Harik 2001: 134).

6.3 Internal Party Struggles as a Cause of Disunity

6.3.1 Absence of Internal Party Democracy

The absence of sound democratic practices within the political parties has been a cause of internal power struggles, and has made inter-party cooperation difficult. Often, decision making is monopolised by the party leader and a limited number of

elite party members. Furthermore, “like their statist and Islamist opponents, the leftist parties tend to be controlled from the top: hence, they lack adequate internal democracy” (Karawan 2001: 183). Furthermore, criticism of party leaders or debating replacement is often seen as a violation of party norms. Decision-making within parties often follows the tribal method, “involving respect for the relative weight of persons, respect for the elders and for those with senior positions in the party, regardless of their effectiveness and ability to benefit the party” (Arif 2005).

Although there clearly is a link between the fragility of democracy within the political system as a whole and the collapse of democracy within political parties, the opposition’s own internal weaknesses have also contributed to its problematic situation (EOHR 2003; Hamzawy 2005b: 2). Major opposition parties lack internal democracy and in most cases also a dynamic leadership. Furthermore, their ability to reach out to the grass roots, in both rural and urban areas, is limited. During the last two years of state-led political reform, opposition parties have also failed to develop clear answers to the main challenges facing the country. Consequently, without well-defined platforms, the opposition will lose credibility and remain unable to mobilize broad constituencies for political reform (Hamzawy 2005b: 2). The continuing dominance of aging leadership, combined with the lack of democratic practices within the parties, has to a large extent deprived them of credibility and legitimacy.

The absence of internal democracy is not just related to the manner in which leaders are replaced, but highlights an autocratic manner in any sort of decision-making (Arif 2005). The parties are generally ruled by individualism, tribalism, and small groups, which is an old phenomenon within Egypt’s political parties (Arif 2005). Furthermore, in decision-making processes, party decisions are often not made in a way that reflected the opinions of the majority of the members. In many ways, the party is thus almost like the private property of its leader or founder, who has difficulties of accepting a separation between himself and his role (Arif 2005). As previously discussed, voting for some parties are not always based on their programs and objectives, but based on the relative weight of the party’s leader, members and

candidates. Furthermore, the death of a leader is often the only force of change that leads to circulation of power in political parties. Among 17 of the Egyptian parties, 13 are headed by their initial founders, while the remaining four leaders were changed due to the death of the previous leader. None of the party chairmen or heads of political movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, were changed by elections or in any other democratic way (Arif 2005).

In the absence of the “founder” of the party, the political parties often have difficulties of remaining unified (Kassem 2004: 78). When leader of the Liberal party, Mustapha Kamel Murad died in 1998, “the succession process...proved to be a battle of personalities threatening the existence of the party rather than a formal and orderly routine procedure” (Kassem 2004: 78). The conflict between aspiring contenders for leadership resulted in physical confrontations, and gave the Political Parties Committee a golden opportunity to freeze the party. The number of members that applied for the leadership position reached a total number of 79. Furthermore, after the crackdown on the Ghad Party in 2005 that ended with the imprisonment of its leader, Ayman Nour, the party became increasingly marginalised because of internal leadership disputes. As in many of the other parties, Ghad was also centred on its leader, and did not manage to overcome the disagreements in his absence. Because of the strong emphasis within the opposition parties on leadership, parties therefore often collapse from internal rivalries when a powerful leader disappears. This is also a feature of personal politics rule, characterized by “the struggle of rulers to maintain their positions or to pass it on to a designated successor, and the efforts of other leaders to become the ruler or to prevent their rivals from attaining rulership” (Jackson and Rosberg 1984: 435).

Furthermore, because of the internal weaknesses and autocratic leadership within the parties, they have no incentives to unite. Often, “the parties propose different ideological platforms and assume it is more beneficial to stress those differences as they compete for the government’s attention” (Stacher 2004: 219). Government attention could mean possible support and influence, and it is therefore

not in their perceived interest to compromise their ideologies if opposition unity could be considered a threat. According to Abd al-Majid (in Shukor 2005: 36), two factors contribute to explain the weakness of political parties in Egypt, which is important because of the effect on the opposition's ability to cooperate. First, the opposition is weak because of the authoritarian political environment in which the opposition operates within. However, oppositional weakness is also a result of the parties' weak internal structures and the absence of internal democracy. In previous attempts at cooperation, the parties often did not live up to their commitments and failed to achieve tangible results. Reform activity was also mostly organised in an elite-based coordination committee, whose work was temporary with no role for the people (Shukor 2005: 38).

6.3.2 Factional Politics

Factional politics, or the prevalence of internal competition for power within groups, can lead to a perception of politics as a zero-sum game, which provides few incentives for establishing cooperation. In this kind of environment, oppositional actors are occupied with personal and power conflicts that draw attention away from political platforms and efforts to create viable reform initiatives. In Egypt, the opposition parties remain structurally weak within the political system and are further weakened by aging leadership, a history of infighting, and petty personal politics. The little influence they do possess comes primarily from the limited-circulation newspapers they publish (Shehata 2004). The high degree of factionalism inhibits the development of strong and effective alternatives to the status quo, and also constrains cooperation because of personal disputes within and between parties. Almost all of the legal parties in Egypt have had some form of internal dispute that has either led to the freezing of party activity or to violent clashes between competing groups.

Factional conflicts also functions as a mechanism of punishing and eliminating other members of the group, in a manner that reconstructs the group "along the "proper" lines" (Siegel and Beals 1960: 109). Illustrative of this process is the

common practise of expulsion that is found within Egyptian parties. This happened in 2001 when Ayman Nour was expelled from the Wafd Party, because the party's president Noman Gomaa claimed that Nour was supporting rival Farid Hasanayn's attempted coup of the party (Kassem 2004: 78). The disagreement stemmed from an assassination attempt on Hasanayn. Husanayn felt that the government took the assassination and its investigation too lightly, and wanted the Wafd to hold a press conference on the issue. This would have resulted in criticism of the government, which in turn could have affected Gomaa's relationship with the government (Kassem 2004: 79). Many observers also argued that Gomaa was using the conflict to structure the party according to his preferences in order to block emerging personalities that could challenge his authority within the party (Stacher 2004: 231). Nour is considered to be one of Egypt's youngest and vivid politicians, which in addition to posing a threat against the regime also made him appear as a threat to the leadership in his own party. Having a politician among its ranks with the potential of increasing the party's popularity, and perhaps also build relations with the other groups was paradoxically not perceived as an asset, but as a threat against the leader's position. As stated by a young party member "it appears that Gu'ma doesn't only create positions in the party and newspaper to guarantee the largest number of supporters. But that he also spends party funds to get rid of those he does not want" (Stacher 2004: 231).

However, it is also important to keep in mind the role of the government in exaggerating and even initiating these disputes. In order to secure regime survival, opposition parties are not allowed to become competent organizations because they could challenge the status quo. State management thus plays an important role in sustaining this type of political dynamic, but that is not necessarily the same as portraying oppositional actors as merely puppets in the regimes juggling act. In the case of Ayman Nour's expulsion from the Wafd, Nour cited governmental interference as the main reason, arguing that "it was the government who spoke to Guma' and made him feel threatened which, in turn, led to my dismissal from the party" (Stacher 2004: 231). It should however also be noted that Gomaa was known

as an autocratic leader who was not eager to give up his personal control over the party, which can be seen in the violent clash at the party's headquarter in April 2006. The struggle between the two Wafd factions initially unfolded when Mahmoud Abaza and Mounir Abdel-Nour removed Gomaa from the leadership position after a vote in the party's secretariat in January 2006. Many of the party's younger generation, calling themselves "the reformists," took control over the party's headquarters, claiming Gomaa was a "dictator who endorsed his absolute control over party policies" (The Daily Star Egypt 2006b). The main complaint against Gomaa was that he was running the party like his own personal fiefdom. According to Abaza,

"We are all sad that things took this ugly turn, when all we wanted was for the leadership of the party to be collective again. We are saying that the Wafd is a historic party, and that one day we will rule the country. But we can't do this when we are in fact ruled by one man" (Al-Ahram Weekly 2006b).

On the other hand, Gomaa insisted that he was "the one and only chairman", and dozens of Gomaa-supporters stormed the headquarter leading to a violent clash in April. In 1996 a similar incident happened with the Nasserite Party, which was caught in a leadership struggle between younger and older generations after the leader banned several young members from running in the party's internal elections (Al-Ahram Weekly 2002). Furthermore, when the party did not obtain any seats in the 2005 elections, member of the party's politburo, Amin Yussri stated that:

"although 25 years of a state of emergency, and a highly restrictive law regulating party activities, are largely to blame, the lack of democracy in secular, and especially leftist, parties, also played a major role" (Al-Ahram Weekly 2006a).

The lack of internal democratic procedures and divisions stemming from factionalism within the parties themselves thus contribute to the fragmentation of the legal parties. The internal divisions are partly organised along generational lines, but is also a result of regular power struggles over control over the leadership position. In addition, the personal disputes also directly affect the ability of the parties to work together, because of poor relations between party leaders stemming from previous conflicts. This was the case before the 2005 election and the formation of the National Front for Change, where the old dispute between Gomaa and Nour

prevented Ghad from participating, even though it could have been beneficial to the Front as a whole. Nour came second after Mubarak in the presidential election and could thus have contributed to increasing the legitimacy of the Front. However, because of personal disputes and factionalism the opposition thus remained divided.

The legal parties are not the only ones being affected by factionalism. From the end of the 1990s, a division between a younger and an older generation became apparent within the Brotherhood, leading to accusations from younger leaders of the old guard being “autocratic, ideologically rigid, and obsesses with internal unity and discipline at the cost of suppressing constructive debate” (Wickham 2002: 217). The old guard was also criticised for being detached and hostile to other political trends, “isolating the Brotherhood from potential allies and rendering it more vulnerable to repression” (Wickham 2001: 217). As previously mentioned, this culminated in the establishment of the Wasat Party. The Brotherhood’s official reaction to it was negative, and the Guidance Bureau ordered all members that had joined the party to withdraw or face expulsion. This conflict, however, did not have the same disruptive effect on the movement as for the legal parties.

Moreover, since factionalism is thought to refer to a phenomenon which occurs within groups, it should also possible to envision factionalist politics within the legal opposition parties as a group entity. The term group is thus understood as “people assembled together for the purpose of achieving co-operation towards a common set of goals” (Siegel and Beals 1960: 107). This could in the Egyptian context be interpreted as the opposition cooperating towards a common goal of accomplishing political reform. The prevalence of factionalism however, “does not maintain, but disrupts the co-operative enterprise”, and therefore intensifies and interferes with the group’s ability to achieve its goals (Siegel and Beals 1960: 108). Furthermore, the conflict underlying factionalism is often “disagreement over the means to be employed, not over the goals to be achieved” (Siegel and Beals 1960: 109). This also provides an accurate description of the situation within the legal opposition parties and in the cooperation efforts between them. Personal disputes and

competition between the different opposition parties, especially among the party leaders, have to a large degree prevented them from forming alliances (Albrecht 2005: 384). In the relations between parties, tribal and personalistic principles are often adopted, which means that personal relationships among leaders are given priority over the strategic relations between the parties. The implication is therefore that personal agreement on objectives and policies are given priority over strategic planning. A look at the previous attempts of building alliances demonstrates that they have not been able to overcome this way of thinking (Arif 2005). An example of the personal nature of inter-party rivalry is the Tagammu party's decision to break the unified oppositional boycott of the 1990 legislative elections. The official explanation for breaking the unified boycott was that it would only further isolate the parties from the electorate. However, according to Kassem (2004: 77), "underneath this formal argument was a more trivial motivation for Tagammu's actions, namely that Neo-Wafd leader Fouad Sarag al-Din had assumed the role of opposition spokesman". Moreover, discontent also stemmed from Sarag al-Din's decision to notify the regime of the final decision of boycotting the elections without informing the rest of the opposition leaders in advance (Kassem 2004: 77). This resulted in that the leader of the Tagammu' assembled a meeting and informed his party seniors that they would break the boycott and participate in the elections. Some party members argued that this would only highlight the party's weakness in confronting the government and saw it as a betrayal of the other parties. Instead, Mohyi al-Din argued that the party was an independent actor and "not a branch of the Neo-Wafd, and that Sarag al-Din has no right to inform the authorities of a final decision which involved other parties than his own without their prior knowledge and consent" (Kassem 2004: 78).

This incident clearly illustrates how a personal rivalry between two leaders contributed to the division of a potentially effective and unified oppositional protest. Furthermore, the event also highlighted the weakness of political parties as functioning organizations, since party leaders are able to make decisions of such an important nature based on personal preferences, rather than on political and strategic arguments. Because of the fragmented nature of Egypt's political parties, it has

therefore been difficult to create consensus on policies and priorities. The major divisions both within and between parties also creates opportunities for governmental manipulation (Karawan 2001: 183). However, the regime has also directly contributed to the high occurrence of internal disputes by applying strict restrictions on forming new parties. Because it is so difficult to form parties, the supporters of two sides in a conflict continue their struggle inside the same party (Shukor 2005: 61). As Gasser Abdel Razik explains (2006 [interview]):

“Here, if you have problems with the policies of your own political party and you leave, that’s it; you are on the street. So in a lot of ways...that legal framework has created parties that are in a lot of ways not...homogenous. There are a lot...lot of very different views within one political party. You read the writings of one of the leaders [and]... you think that they are on opposite sides, yet they are all within the same party because there are no opportunities... And this explains all the infighting within the parties”.

To uphold party unity, one of the sides in the dispute is often expelled, leading to conflicts over who represents the legitimate leadership, and the creation of competing fractions claiming to be the true representative of the party. The disputes therefore damage the legitimacy of the parties and their vitality as political organizations. This is also related to the weakness of effective avenues for solving conflicts within the parties, which leads to an exaggeration of conflicts as a threat to party unity, and discontent between political elites that reduce their ability to work together. However, it is also possible to raise question about whether factionalism is a cause or a symptom of collapse. When cooperation efforts fall apart, this often tends to lead to factionalism, but this does not necessarily mean that factionalism alone contributes to the disunity (Voss 1996: 237). The problem of establishing the mechanisms that lead to internal disagreements is also evident in Egypt. The impact of state management and clientelism on cooperation should not be underestimated, but many of the conflicts within and between the oppositional groups can also be explained by internal causes of factionalism from power struggles and lack of internal democracy.

6.4 Conclusion

The analysis has shown that personal political rule is not only a feature of the regime, but also a general characteristic of the political system and more specifically of the opposition. It also showed that this has had serious impact on both relations within and between the oppositional groups, leading to disputes that constrain cooperation. One of the most important findings is that personal relations among party leaders often take precedence over strategic and politically important relations between the parties. This has led to situations where it has been in the opposition's interest to unite, but because of personal disputes and fears of losing their position as the "leader of the opposition", the cooperation falls short of becoming a reality.

The hypothesis analysed therefore seems to be somewhat strengthened, since the analysis clearly shows that personal politics has impeded oppositional unification. A problem is, however, the difficulty of isolating the cause and effect of personal rule, since it is also a characteristic of the regime. The personal disputes could also be a result of state management and the application of a restrictive legal framework. Furthermore, the importance of the individual in political interactions can also partly be explained by an intended regime strategy of promoting personal rule with clientelism. However, leaving the responsibility only with the state is too deterministic. Although the state plays an important role in promoting internal disputes, the opposition is also accountable for its own actions, and can not only be reduced to playing the role as puppets in the regime's juggling act.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Summary of the Study's Main Findings

The aim of this study has been to analyse why the oppositional groups in Egypt have not been able to unite around a common strategy for democratization of the political system. The study has both focused on the impact of institutions and the state in influencing the opposition's ability to cooperate, and on the role played by oppositional actors themselves and their preferences. Hence, I have analysed constraints on oppositional cooperation in Egypt based on a framework assuming that institutional structures and the rules of the game matter, but also taken into consideration that individual actors have room for manoeuvre and some capabilities to pursue their interests and goals. The analysis has shown that there have been some attempts at cooperation both in the 1980s and before the 2005 elections. However, these initiatives were more of a tactical and strategic character than high-level cooperation around a common political and social reform plan. Below I will summarize the main conclusions of the study and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each mechanism (see also Figure 1).

The first hypothesis specified that state management of the opposition has resulted in the absence of a common oppositional strategy. In the discussion I argued that the regime weakened the oppositional actors and kept them divided by applying legal measures to constrain oppositional activity, emergency law that criminalizes political life, and by interfering in political activities. The analysis also showed that the regime has used both "carrot" and "stick": rewards if one follows the rules of the game, repression if one crosses the red lines. The result has been weak parties that are disconnected from the people, and a strong Brotherhood that has managed to make use of mosques and social services to mobilize and remain an effective organization despite state repression. The regime's juggling act to create a divided political environment, promoting some actors and weakening others, to a large degree explains

the absence of a unified opposition. However, although the hypothesis can to a large degree explain the absence of a common oppositional strategy, to only emphasise the role of the regime would be overly simplistic. I therefore opened up for the possibility of other mechanisms also contributing to the disunity.

The second hypothesis stated that the opposition has not managed to cooperate because of distrust based on ideological differences. The core of this hypothesis revolves around the problems of reconciling different existential and political points of view, both regarding what the essential character of society and history should be, as well as on then more specific goals of reform. The distrust has thus sustained disagreements on the most foundational aspects of political life, which has turned Islamists and non-Islamists against each other, instead of unifying against the incumbent regime. However, an important objection to this argument is that it is the disparity of power between secular and Islamist forces that is the underlying mechanism, not necessarily the ideological differences. The ideological differences might thus have become less significant, if the oppositional groups were more equal in popular support and organizational strength. Again, the role of the state also weakens the robustness of the hypothesis in that it has been active in promoting this kind of distrust to secure its own survival. However, as the evidence from the analysis illustrates, the effect of ideology is substantial in its own right. The character of the conflict is an underlying, existential divide, touching on principles like identity and the essence of society. This has created distrust that would be hard to reconcile even in the absence of other constraints.

The third hypothesis emphasised the effect of personal political rule on cooperation. The main argument was that factionalism and an individualistic approach to political activity have led to internal divisions and disputes between the parties, where personal preferences are given priority over strategic and political interests. It is however difficult to separate the independent influence of this “variable” from the influence of the regime in promoting personal rule. There seems to be a cycle of reinforcing mechanisms, where both the regime and the opposition

itself have contributed to the personalistic character of political behaviour. The Brotherhood has not been affected to the same degree by personal rule and the high frequency of internal disputes. One reason for this may be that the impact of the state in promoting this behaviour is stronger in less ideologically coherent organizations. Although there are clear examples of how factionalism and personal rule has impeded cooperation, this hypothesis seems to be the least robust, since it is difficult to separate the mechanism analytically from the role of the state (see figure 1).

The main mechanisms are also summarized in Figure 1. The black arrows indicate mechanisms outlined in the hypotheses, while the dotted ones illustrate additional influences not specified in the hypotheses, where the regime has an underlying effect. As outlined above and in the hypotheses, the direction of the mechanisms is “positive”: for example, “ideological differences” led to increased “distrust”, which led to “no common strategy”.

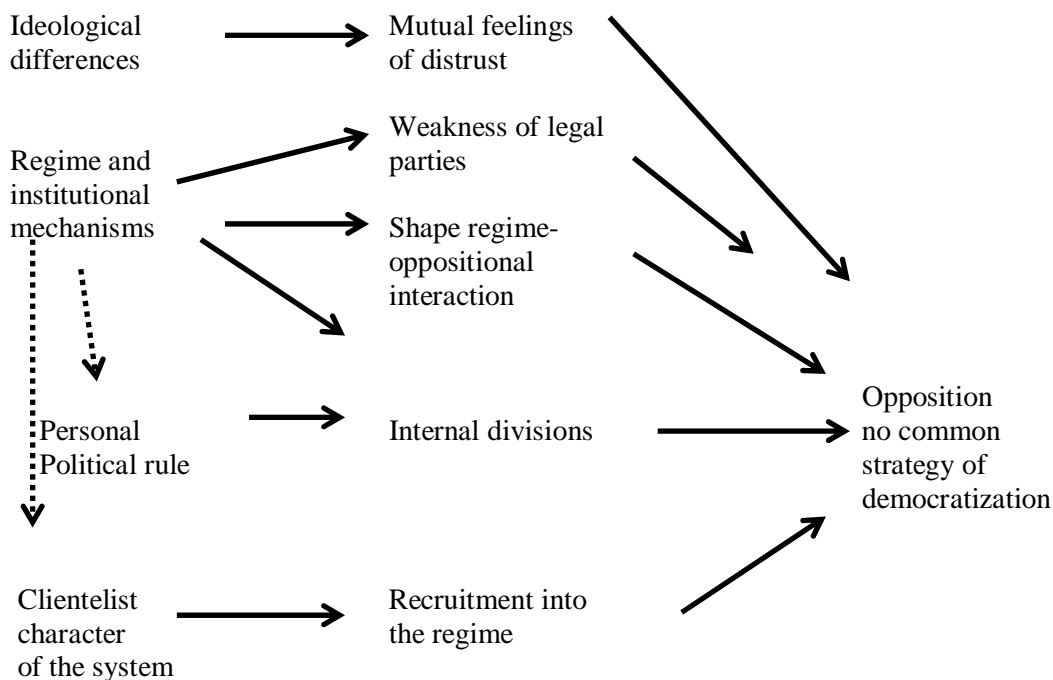


Figure 1: Outline of main mechanisms

7.2 Methodological Challenges

The methodology used in the study has first and foremost been secondary analysis of documents, research material, and interviews with selected informants. In the theoretical framework I brought together different perspectives on oppositional politics, and created a theoretical approach to guide the analysis. The analysis was based on secondary analysis in another manner: using existing research as a foundation for examining my hypotheses, applying existing studies of Egyptian politics as evidence for my claims, and as premises in my lines of reasoning. In this way I collected and assembled “data” from existing research, and applied them in new ways related to my research question. A more comprehensive fieldwork could have reduced the reliance on secondary research, but with the limitation set by time and finances, this was not possible. However, secondary analysis has been a constructive approach for my study, because I have had access to numerous analyses of Egyptian politics that has provided me with considerable knowledge.

The conclusion on the impact of the state in managing the opposition is the most robust conclusion, since it can be supported by reference to a concrete legal framework and state actions applied to divide the opposition. The conclusion regarding ideological differences can be substantiated by theoretical debates by classical scholars like Robert Dahl as well as contemporary debates on Islamism. Ideological differences are also central in the rhetoric of the oppositional actors themselves. The conclusion about personal rule is probably the least robust, because of lack of research on the subject, and the difficulties of separating the influence of the state in promoting this system of rule. However, evidence from the analysis indicates that cooperation has been impeded by personal rivalries and factionalism, and that this is not only the result of state manipulation.

An important point regarding the counterfactual design is whether minor changes in the mechanisms analysed would lead to completely different conclusions. An interesting comparison can be drawn from political systems that are unified rather than divided. This could point to some possible changes if for example the

Brotherhood was to be legalized as a political party. Jordan and Morocco have included political systems, and here the opposition is more unified. But this has not however, resulted in democratic transitions or a formal national pact. Hence, even though there would be changes in the political system, ideology and rivalry would still be factors inhibiting effective cooperation. I have also previously discussed the possibility of ideology having less impact, if the balance of power between Islamists and seculars had been more equal. In addition, in a freer political environment, it would be easier to facilitate negotiations between actors that could lead to a more unified opposition. Personal rule may seem like a more entrenched system of rule that would require large-scale changes. However, personalistic leadership styles are not constant and unchangeable characteristics. Changes in these through increased organizational experience and internal democracy could thus result in a more cooperative environment. However, this is a process that will take time. On the background of the generational conflict seen in both the legal parties and the Muslim Brotherhood, the potential for democratization may also increase as new leaders of younger generations emerge and achieve increased influence (Hinnebusch 2006: 387).

7.3 Learning From One Experience in the Study of Oppositional Cooperation

The use of a single case has reduced the ability to draw powerful generalizations. However, it is possible to imagine that insights from this study could be useful in analyses of opposition in other countries. Generally, if a study revolves around causes and mechanisms that are general, one could possibly recognize them in other countries with a similar political environment. There are differences in the political systems in the Arab world regarding inclusion of oppositional actors. Some have unified Structures of Contestation (SoC), while other regimes, like Egypt's rulers, have created a divided SoC. There is also a partly overlapping difference between presidential and monarchical systems, which have consequences for the type of

opposition and its cohesiveness. For example, Morocco is both a monarchy and has a unified SoC with formal inclusion of Islamists. This is possible, because in a monarchy the position of the ruler is not contested, and is therefore not threatened in the same way as in a presidential system (Albrecht and Wegner 2006: 130). However, in both presidential systems and monarchies there have been changes in the SoCs, which means that regime type and SoC is not necessarily synonymous. The insights from state management in Egypt could therefore also be used to analyse the consequences of opposition management in other countries in the region. The constraint on cooperation because of ideological differences is also a mechanism that can be found in other regional states, such as Palestine, Jordan and Morocco. The regional states differ in the degree of openness of the political systems, and the possibilities for learning in the study of other countries seem largest for other liberalized autocracies like Morocco and Jordan, rather than the more closed systems in Syria, Libya and Saudi-Arabia. Opening up for the possibility of learning also brings in the question of whether the Gulf States should be kept out because of their size and specific dynamics from rentier economies.

It would also be interesting to expand the study by using several regional countries or from other parts of the world. This would increase the possibilities for generalization, and thus make it easier to draw conclusions on whether the patterns seen in Egypt are applicable to other countries. The mechanisms could also be strengthened by more extensive fieldwork and interviews of all the major oppositional forces to gain further knowledge about both the role of the regime in managing the opposition, and about the major cleavages within the opposition itself. Another way of further strengthening and expanding the study would be to include more independent variables, as for example the impact of socio-economic factor and the role of the United States in promoting regime stability.

7.4 An Agenda for Future Research

The opening chapter started with an interest in why the Middle East has not been part of the third wave of democratization, and that the region also has been left out of studies within Political Science. An important agenda for future research on democratization in the Middle East is bringing the region back into comparative politics. The Middle East has largely been absent from cross-regional studies of democratization, based on perceptions of the region's exceptionalism and lack of the necessary prerequisites for democratization (Posusney 2004: 127). But as Bellin (2004) argues, the region is not necessarily exceptional in the lack of the essential prerequisites for democracy, but in the conditions that sustain strong authoritarian regimes. Future studies should therefore not only emphasise why the certain prerequisites are absent, but also why these authoritarian regimes are so enduring.

Bellin (2004: 143) also suggests that insights from studies of revolutions can be a useful approach to analyse the difficulties of establishing democratic transitions in the region. Similar to the importance of state capacity in dealing with revolutions, democratic transitions commonly occur when the state's coercive apparatus does not have the will or capacity to crush it. Transitions to democracy will thus not occur in states where the coercive apparatus is cohesive and opposed to democratic reforms (Bellin 2004: 143). The next piece in the puzzle of establishing democratization in the Middle East is therefore unlikely to fall in place as long as incumbent regimes maintain a strong hold on society and political life, through robust coercive apparatuses. As in the literature focusing on splits between reformers and hardliners within the regime to facilitate transitions, the next piece in the puzzle would thus be to analyse under what conditions this may take place. At the same time, another necessary condition is that the opposition unifies. This implies that the opposition gives out signals of moderation and willingness to negotiate, and able to present themselves as a viable alternative to the incumbent rulers. As seen in this study, there are many mechanisms contributing to the absence of oppositional unity in Egypt, which also may be apparent in other countries in the region.

The reformers in the Middle East today do not have an easy task ahead of them. As the thesis has shown, even though state repression would decrease, the opposition still faces many barriers before being able to create a unified oppositional coalition. It is also most likely that the ones carrying the reform banner are not going to be the secular parties, worrying both Western policy makers and regional liberals and intellectuals. Over the recent years, the crisis within these parties has widened and they remain elitist based and disconnected from the people, unlike the Brotherhood who has been able to mobilize grass roots and present themselves as the only viable alternative to the current regime (El-Amrani 2006: 2). However, although not necessarily considering the Brotherhood as liberal democrats in a Western way, as seen in the previous discussion about ambiguous elements in their ideology, the group has shown commitment to reform by seeking participation in the system and has challenged the regime within the existing rules through parliamentary activities. Yet, participation in a political system does not inevitably lead to ideological moderation, and may be only strategic to gain benefits from the inclusion (Wickham 2004: 224; El-Ghobashy 2005: 391). However, another effect may be “democratic habituation”, where “strategic moderation triggers changes in the public rhetoric and behaviour of political actors that, when reiterated and defended over time, can produce change in their ultimate goals” (Wickham 2004: 225). This may in turn open up for democracy without democrats and in the long term acceptance for the “spirit”, not just the logic of the rules of the game (Piscatori 2000: 45-47).

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