ISLAMIC MOBILIZATION:
Social Movement Theory and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood

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This article examines the emergence and growth of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt from the 1930s through the 1950s. It begins by outlining and empirically evaluating possible explanations for the organization's growth based on (1) theories of political Islam and (2) the concept of political opportunity structure in social movement theory. An extension of these approaches is suggested based on data from organizational documents and declassified U.S. State Department files from the period. The successful mobilization of the Muslim Brotherhood was possible because of the way in which its Islamic message was tied to its organizational structure, activities, and strategies and the everyday lives of Egyptians. The analysis suggests that ideas are integrated into social movements in more ways than the concept of framing allows. It also expands our understanding of how organizations can arise in highly repressive environments.

Since its founding in Egypt in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood has spread to every state in the Islamic world and claimed the allegiance of millions from virtually every segment of society. At the height of its popularity, it had half a million active members in an Egyptian population of less than twenty million—proportionally more than twice as large as the AARP in the United States today. The Muslim Brotherhood also spawned many of the militant Islamic groups that exist today, including organizations such as Hamas, the Islamic Jihad, and Gamaat Islamiyah. Despite its importance, however, scholars still know very little about the remarkable rise of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

The following analysis attempts to understand how the organization was able to attract an unprecedented number of new members and public support in 1932–1954, the period of its greatest mobilization. I first provide an overview of the history and ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. I then present and empirically evaluate the two most plausible existing models for understanding the organization's rapid mobilization drawn from (1) the literature on political Islam, written primarily by political scientists and area specialists, and (2) the political opportunity structure arguments in the social movement literature. I then examine new data from declassified U.S. State Department files from Egypt during the period and suggest that social movement theory

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must expand its understanding of ideology in order to account for the rapid mobilization of the Muslim Brotherhood in the period under study. These documents include agent reports, internal memos, newspaper translations, and communiqués that the U.S. State Department initially classified as confidential, secret, or top secret but are now publicly available.

My analysis centers on two theoretically important arguments. The first focuses on the interaction between the ideational component of the Muslim Brotherhood, on the one hand, and the group's organizational activities on the other. This study suggests that our existing understanding of the role of ideas in social movements must be deepened to consider the ways in which mobilization depends on the *interactions* among ideas, organizations, and environments—not simply on one or the other of these three dimensions. Second, the case of the Muslim Brotherhood also suggests that our understanding of the relationship between mobilization and repression must expand its focus to include the processes within organizations that enable them to withstand repressive efforts of the state.

THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD: SOME BACKGROUND

Historical Sketch

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hasan al-Banna, a schoolteacher, with six Egyptian laborers in the Suez Canal city of Isma'iliya in March 1928. The Society was just one of many Islamic groups that al-Banna led, and its origins do not distinguish it from the many other similar groups that existed throughout Egypt at that time. The group remained small during its first three years, and the charismatic al-Banna concentrated largely on membership-building activities in and around Isma'iliya. By 1932, however, al-Banna decided that the group could no longer grow unless it moved its center of activity to Cairo. The organization accomplished the move by absorbing a Cairo-based Islamic society headed by al-Banna's brother. After a year in Cairo, the organization began publishing its first weekly newsletter and held its first general conference of members. Meanwhile, the organization's membership began to grow dramatically. It had five branch offices by 1930, fifteen by 1932, and three hundred by 1938. While exact membership figures are unknown, the three hundred branches probably represented between 50,000 and 150,000 members (Mitchell 1969).

The Muslim Brotherhood was an explicitly apolitical religious reform and mutual aid society during these early years. It devoted its energy to membership recruitment, private discussions of religion and moral reform, and building a social service organization. Its activities began to take a political tone in the late 1930s. The immediate catalyst for this change was the Arab general strike in Palestine. The Society provided extensive support for the strike, generating Egyptian sympathy and collecting funds in support of the strike effort. At the same time, its newsletters became highly critical of the existing political regime in Egypt, especially the quasi-colonial British control of the country. The group formally entered the political arena when it announced its own candidates for the 1941 parliamentary elections. It then began to hold increasingly large public rallies and demonstrations, calling for social reform and an immediate withdrawal of British troops from Egypt. British military authorities ordered al-Banna to leave Cairo in May 1941. In October, al-Banna and other Muslim Brotherhood leaders were impris-

oned. The Society's meetings were banned after a public rally denounced the British war effort.

These state measures did not last long; the government was preoccupied with World War II, not religious reform movements. The organization's meetings resumed; its leaders were released from prison; and membership continued to expand rapidly. The Society produced several new publications over the next two years and increased the frequency of its public rallies. It created what came to be known as the "secret apparatus", a covert paramilitary arm of the organization whose principal aims were to protect the leaders of the organization and to further the Society's goals through political violence. By 1949 the organization had over two thousand branches throughout Egypt and between 300,000 and 600,000 active members—the largest organized force in the country.

Popular unrest increased in Egypt after World War II, and the Muslim Brotherhood was central in much of the turmoil. In 1947 Egyptian police discovered a large arms cache belonging to the group in the outskirts of the capital, and a year later they confiscated a Muslim Brotherhood jeep filled with explosives. The Society was officially dissolved in 1948 as a result, and many of its members imprisoned. The organization retaliated by assassinating the Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi, the man responsible for ordering the Muslim Brotherhood's dissolution. Al-Banna, the founder and leader of the organization, was in turn murdered two months later by Egyptian police. His death closed a major chapter in the Muslim Brotherhood's history.

Al-Banna was succeeded by Hasan Isma'il al-Hudaybi, a former Egyptian High Court judge and well-respected member of the Egyptian elite. While not as charismatic as his predecessor, he was an accomplished leader and kept the organization unified and functioning despite struggles over internal leadership, the imprisonment of over four thousand of its members, and its formal dissolution by the state. The existing regime was disintegrating, however, and on July 23, 1952, a small cadre of military men known as the Free Officers overthrew the existing regime. The Free Officers had strong links to the Muslim Brotherhood, and for a short period of time the Society enjoyed a cordial relationship with the new Egyptian leaders. The regime released many of the organization's members from prison and allowed them to resume their public recruitment and propaganda activities. Tension between the organization and the new regime increased, however, as the regime solidified its control over the country. On October 27, 1954, a Muslim Brotherhood member tried to assassinate Egyptian President Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser at a public speech. Al-Nasser responded by ordering the redissolution of the Society and the arrest of thousands of members. Subsequent trials led to the execution of six Muslim Brotherhood leaders, while hundreds of others were tortured and jailed over the next decade.

Brotherhood Ideology

The basic worldview of the Muslim Brotherhood was rooted in the Hanbali school of Islamic thought. It is one of four major traditions for understanding and interpreting Islamic law, and the most conservative in terms of its insistence on a literal reading of the Quran and other texts. The primary concerns of the Muslim Brotherhood centered on the domination of Egypt by foreign powers, the poverty of the Egyptian people, and the declining morality they identified in both the Egyptian state and the lives of individuals throughout Egypt. The solution to these and other problems was an embrace of

Islamic teachings and an understanding that all Muslims comprise a single cohesive community and must work together to resist the encroachment of corrupt Western influences. In this respect the ideology of the organization is a legacy of the famed Islamic scholar Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, who is credited with spawning modern pan-Islamic thought (Harris 1964).

The need to rid Egypt of immoral and imperial Western domination through the adoption of an Islamic path formed the basic mantra of the Muslim Brotherhood. The organization was often as vague as possible in applying this view to specific issues or translating it into concrete policy proposals. They called for an Islamic state and held that true Islam was essentially democratic and capable of solving the problems of the modern world. In publicized letters, the group called for only some specifics, such as the strengthening of the army, increasing Egyptian ties with other Arab countries, an expansion of hospitals and clinics, the banning of usury, improvement of the working conditions of both agricultural and industrial workers, a minimum wage, and government intervention to eliminate unemployment.

The ideas of the organization were not limited to identifying and rectifying large social and political problems, however. A strong current in the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology during the period was a tie between such larger problems and the way in which ordinary Muslims lived their daily lives. They argued that people had fallen away from Islam and that their increasingly secular lifestyles led to immorality, poverty, and domination. To turn the tide, the group advocated such state interventions as the moral censorship of television, radio, and print publishing, basic religious education in the schools, encouraging the study of Islamic history, use of the Arabic language, memorization of the Quran, increased supervision of government employees, and official encouragement of marriage. They also believed in strict standards for individual conduct, including rigorous exercise and abstention from all alcohol, gambling, dancing, attendance at theaters and films, styles of foreign dress, prostitution, and adultery. The ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood was thus rooted in Islamic religious ideas, and it linked large-scale problems of Egypt during the period with the process of secularization and the conduct of individual Egyptians.

EXISTING WORK ON THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Political Islam

There is no existing study of the Muslim Brotherhood that directly addresses the question underlying the present analysis: How was the Muslim Brotherhood able to mobilize so many Egyptians in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s? Political scientists and Middle East scholars, however, have been keenly aware of the more general growth of Islamic groups in Egypt and elsewhere in the region since at least the early 1970s. Some of this work provides explanations that are historically sensitive to particular groups and contexts (e.g., Eickelman and Piscatori 1996), yet such work does not offer more generalizable tools for understanding this particular case. Much of the literature devoted to understanding political Islam, however, offers a number of possible explanations for the rise of groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

One of the most widely accepted accounts is based directly on Emile Durkheim's analysis of social change and anomie. Groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood are seen

as offering a reaffirmation of traditional beliefs and an outlet for the frustrations of anomic social conditions brought on by rapid population expansion, urbanization, and industrialization (Gellner 1964; 1985; Arjomand 1984; Kepel 1993). Similar explanations focus on the variety of "strains" in society during the period, shifting explanatory focus from the anomie created by such change to the tension that emerges between the modern world and traditional beliefs (Smelser 1963). In the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, the argument is that the strains of modernization, and especially Westernization, led to problems that some believed could be solved by turning to Islamic ideals rather than to normal, institutional means (Dessouki 1982; Kazemi 1984). A Marxist variant sees traditional classes being pushed aside by the process of modernization as the source of Islamic groups (Sivan 1990), while still others see Western influence and power as the source of strain (Ayubi 1980; Waardenburg 1985). Finally, several scholars understand political Islam through the concept of relative deprivation (Gurr 1970). This model is the explicit starting point of Lucien Vandenbroucke (1983) in his explanation of extremist groups in Egypt, but more recent work has also continued to use the relative deprivation concept (Edgar 1987; Cassandra 1995).

There is, of course, some evidence for these kinds of explanations. Egyptian society witnessed rapid modernization and urbanization throughout the period under study. More importantly for the theories of anomie, the organization drew most of its strength from urban areas, especially the burgeoning population of Cairo and the cities of the Nile delta. The scattered information that exists on Muslim Brotherhood members also indicates that recent migrants and the sons of migrants formed the bulk of the Society's support (Ayubi 1980; Ibrahim 1982). Yet a closer examination of the body of empirical evidence ultimately contradicts such explanations.

Consider the rate of urbanization in Egypt during this period. If theories of anomie or strain are applicable to the study of the Muslim Brotherhood, we would expect the period of the organization's highest popularity to correspond with the period of most rapid urbanization in the country, as this is when the strains and social dislocations would be most acutely felt. Table 1 reveals that precisely the opposite was the case. The 1927–1947 period, in which the Muslim Brotherhood emerged and saw its greatest popularity, has a lower rate of urbanization than either of the twenty-year periods that precede and follow it.

The existing research on the urban social networks of Egypt during 1932–1954 paints much the same picture. With a theory of anomie, we would expect that groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood would draw their membership from those with few interpersonal and institutional relationships. While it is true that the organization drew on the

TABLE 1.   INCREASES IN THE LEVEL OF URBANIZATION IN EGYPT

1907–1927	9.7%
1927–1947	5.3%
1947–1966	6.5%
1966–1986	4.0%

Source: CAPMS 1991.

newly urbanized migrants, most of these urban newcomers were part of "urban villages" within the city that closely replicated the dense network of previous social relationships (Vandenbroucke 1983). Looking at Islamic groups specifically, Said Amir Arjomand (1984) has found that members are among the *most* socially well connected in society. Guilain Denoeux's (1993) analysis of urban social networks in Egypt also demonstrates that the process of modernization both transformed existing networks and created new ones throughout the region. Far from disappearing, social networks were a key component in the political unrest of the Middle East until at least the end of World War II.

An important implication of the strain model in particular is that the older, more traditional social classes should form the primary support of groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood. These classes experience the greatest strain of Westernization and face the greatest threat from modernization. Available evidence on the membership characteristics of the organization, however, shows exactly the opposite pattern. Table 2 outlines the distribution of occupations among Muslim Brotherhood members tried for crimes or wanted by the police in 1954, as I have reconstructed them from U.S. State Department reports. The bulk of the Society's supporters came from the most Westernized and modernized segments of the population—students, engineers, doctors, and government bureaucrats.

This pattern is corroborated by evidence of the makeup of the Muslim Brotherhood's Consultative Assembly. Of its 1,950 members in 1953, only twenty-two were *not* from the *efendiyya*, or modern European class (Ayubi 1980). While conclusive demographic data on the Society's membership does not exist, and we can justly raise questions about the representativeness of these numbers, the available evidence does not support the strain model.

Relative deprivation arguments are similarly inadequate. The relative deprivation explanation is popular because it taps into common beliefs about the problems of development in Third World societies. The evidence in the case of Egypt during this period, however, does not provide strong empirical support for the model. Table 3 shows that economic production was increasing faster than the rate of population growth throughout the period. Thus, there was no necessary gap between the expectations of the popu-

TABLE 2.   OCCUPATIONS OF KNOWN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD MEMBERS, 1954

Students	61
Civil servants	30
Teachers	18
Private managers	15
Small business owners	12
Professionals	10
Workers	9
Army/police officers	4
Merchants/craftsmen	3
Farmers	2
Religious functionaries	1
Other (mostly unemployed)	14

Source: Mitchell 1969; USDS 1959, #35 and #140.

TABLE 3.   POPULATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN EGYPT, 1929–1973

	1929–1939	1939–1955	1959–1964	1964–1973
Population Growth	1.2%	2.1%	2.6%	2.4%
Growth in GDP	1.5%	2.5%	6.1%	3.1%
Growth in National Income	1.0%	3.5%	6.7%	3.5%

Source: Hansen 1991.

lation and society or the state's ability to fulfill them. It is also difficult to discern a significant difference between the statistics for 1939–1955, the time of the Muslim Brotherhood's greatest popularity, and statistics for the periods that precede and follow it.

Table 4 reports the Kuznet K scores for Egypt at several different points in time. Kuznet K is a rough indicator of income distribution; a lower score represents a more equitable distribution of wealth. Using the relative deprivation thesis, we would expect the 1930–1950 period to have significantly higher scores than other periods. The data, however, shows that the disparity between richest and poorest segments of society did not change dramatically during this time. The data thus does not provide any basis for hypothesizing changes in feelings of relative deprivation. It is also a period in which engineers, doctors, and others who comprised the core constituency of the organization were in especially high demand in Egypt (the training of more doctors was in fact a goal of the Muslim Brotherhood), and thus it is unlikely they were feeling relatively deprived.

Beyond the empirical evidence, these different modes of explaining groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood are unsatisfactory because they suffer from two important theoretical weaknesses. First, they cannot explain the emergence of a *particular* social movement organization. While a theory of rapid social change or deprivation might account for an overall rise in collective action during a period of history, it gives us no leverage into why particular movements or ideologies became popular while others did not. Why, for example, was the Muslim Brotherhood so successful while the communists made almost no progress in attracting members or support? Why did a group with an Islamic message emerge rather than an organization with an Arab nationalist ideology? Why did the Muslim Brotherhood succeed rather than one of the dozens of alternative religious reform societies that existed in Egypt during the 1920s and 1930s?

The second theoretical weakness of these approaches is that they are not subject to serious test or verification. Because strain, anomie, and relative deprivation ultimately

TABLE 4.   INCOME DISTRIBUTION IN EGYPT (KUZNET K SCORES)

1927	n.a.
1935	2.37
1950	2.59
1960	3.07
1970	3.00

Source: Hansen 1991.

link social change to the internal psychological states of individuals, there is a virtually unlimited number of stories than can be spun to explain changes in those psychological states. In other words, these approaches are impossible to disprove entirely. While the evidence does not support the most obvious implications of the perspective, the number of possible alternative accounts severely limits the analytic utility of the models.

Political Opportunity Structure

While the work on political Islam has a difficult time answering the question of how the Muslim Brotherhood was able to mobilize beginning in the 1930s, the concept of political opportunity structure in social movement theory offers a possible alternative explanation. The literature has been the starting point for a wide variety of social movement studies over the last two decades. While the Durkheimian explanations of political Islam represent the conventional wisdom of area specialists on Islamic groups in the Middle East, political opportunity is a dominant concept for understanding social movements in current sociology. The basic political opportunity structure argument focuses on the relationship between a social movement and its environment, especially its political environment. The model suggests that mobilization can take place only under favorable political conditions (Jenkins and Perrow 1977; McAdam 1982) and focuses on the relationship between social movements and political institutions to understand movement mobilization.

Can the political opportunity structure model help to answer the question of this study? Theoretically, we have some reason to believe that it can. Hanspeter Kriesi and his colleagues (1995) argue that the basic concept is relevant to many different kinds of collective action, noting that all forms of social movement activity depend crucially on the political arena. Grzorgorz Ekiert (1996) demonstrates how it can be useful for understanding the democratizing movements in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, movements that emerged in conditions similar in some ways to those faced by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in 1932–1954. In order to evaluate empirically the perspective in the case of the organization, however, it is necessary to look a little more carefully at the political and social context in which the group mobilized.

Existing political opportunity structure arguments have concentrated on four central dimensions of the political opportunity structure: declining state repression, increasing political access, divisions among the elite, and influential allies (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Tarrow 1998). Yet in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, these dimensions can be quickly dismissed. State repression was actually increasing during the period of their greatest growth. They had no access to the political system during the period, except for a brief few months after the Free Officer coup. The Muslim Brotherhood was a popular movement that drew little tacit or overt support from any segment of the elite. Nor is there evidence that it drew any support from strong allies, either from abroad or within Egypt.

Because the context of the Muslim Brotherhood is so different from that considered by most social movement scholars, however, it is unfair to reject the political opportunity structure model solely on the basis of these previously identified concerns. Instead, I identify the core dimensions of the political opportunity structure relevant in this particular case. There are three important themes in Egyptian political history during the time period under question: (1) the role of the British in Egyptian political life, (2) the dele-

gitimation of the once-popular Wafd party, and (3) the ideological conflict over the creation of Israel.

First, consider the role of the British in Egyptian political life. The British first occupied Egypt in 1882 and stationed troops on Egyptian soil continuously from that time until the end of 1954. While it maintained its own nominally independent king, parliament, government bureaucracy, and army, Egypt was almost wholly controlled by the British through their Egyptian High Commissioner, advisors in key positions within the Egyptian government, and command of the Egyptian army. Conflict with the British was *the* focal point of Egyptian politics between the two world wars, and Egyptian resentment of the British presence ran high throughout the period (Yapp 1991). It was the central issue around which Egyptian political discussions, parliamentary debates, and political party platforms revolved throughout this period.

Second, consider the delegitimation of the Wafd. The Wafd party was a direct response to British control of Egypt and grew out of an attempt to send an Egyptian delegation to the post-WWI peace negotiations. The party was built mainly by members of the political elite who could mobilize rural power bases to support it. As the representative of the nationalist voice in Egypt, it quickly became the most popular political force in the country, capturing 90 percent of the parliamentary seats in the 1924 elections. Despite their mass support, repression and election fraud kept them largely out of power over the next two decades. During World War II, however, they formed a government at the behest of the British and cooperated with them until the end of the war. This collaboration ended the popular support for the Wafd party (Vatikiotis 1991) and left Egyptian politics devoid of a popularly legitimated leader or party.

Third, consider the conflict over the establishment of the state of Israel. Zionist land purchases and immigration in Palestine throughout the period under study culminated in the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Many Arabs in Egypt and throughout the Middle East perceived Israel as a Western imposition on the region (Hopwood 1985). This interpretation was strengthened by the development of Arab nationalist ideology and the rise of Arab nationalist leaders throughout the period: Arab nationalism linked the plight of Palestinians to that of Arabs in Egypt and elsewhere in the region. Egyptians organized to support the Arab general strike in Palestine in 1936, and volunteer battalions accompanied Egyptian army troops to the region in the 1948 war. The Arab defeat in 1948 also served to galvanize opposition to Israel as well as to the Arab regimes that had failed to crush it. While it did not touch on the daily lives of most Egyptians until the 1967 war, the issue of Palestine was important throughout this time.

There are several ways in which these political developments support a political opportunity structure understanding of the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood. There is little question that the major political events of the period created a window of opportunity for the mobilization of the organization. Ideologically, continued British occupation of Egypt after World War I created a highly visible target on which to focus the brewing discontents of the population. When the organization became politicized in the late 1930s, most of the invective in its newsletters and speeches of its leaders was directed at the British (Wendell 1978; Kepel 1993), and it was ultimately the British who first tried to suppress the organization.

While the British provided an initial target, the failure of the Wafd and the intensified struggle in Palestine provided further openings in the political environment that helped the organization sustain its rapid mobilization. The delegitimation of the Wafd party cre-

ated an ideological vacuum into which the Muslim Brotherhood stepped. Politically, the fall of the Wafd left Egyptian politics in disarray and opened a door of opportunity for new challengers. Zionist land purchases, and then the state of Israel, provided a practical issue around which the group could mobilize tangible programs: raising money to help striking Palestinians, collecting food for the war effort, and recruiting volunteers to fight in Palestine. Such efforts helped to focus the group's activities and provided a degree of political legitimacy for their work.

These dimensions of the political opportunity structure in Egypt are thus an important part of the story of the mobilization of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is not clear that they can fully explain the organization's mobilization, however, as there were also important elements of the Egyptian political landscape working *against* the Muslim Brotherhood. For example, the Egyptian political system that had mobilized people in the past was based on a system of government patronage and landholding elites—at the end of World War I, half of all arable land in Egypt was held by just over twenty thousand landholders (Marsot 1985). The Muslim Brotherhood, however, was founded by a man with virtually no elite connections, along with a handful of uneducated laborers. The mobilization of the movement was primarily an urban phenomenon and was not as strong in the rural areas where the political opportunities for such growth were seemingly greater. As I explain in more detail later, it spread first through the Nile delta, the most populous region of Egypt, and then in Cairo and the few urban centers of Upper Egypt.

The Muslim Brotherhood also had few allies outside of Egypt, a significant barrier given the peripheral location of Egypt in the world economy. Arab nationalism, with its conscious deemphasis of religion, was the growing ideological and political force elsewhere in the Middle East, thus the centrally religious and explicitly Muslim organization found little help from its Arab neighbors. U.S. State Department dispatches show that the conservative regimes of the Arabian Gulf forged ties with the group only after 1954. Nor was the Society's focus an international one. While they certainly made opposition to Zionism an ideological priority, most of their organizing and mobilizing efforts were directed toward overcoming more local, practical problems in the individual cities of Egypt. The organization's resources were focused overwhelmingly on building mosques, schools, clinics, youth programs, and other types of social infrastructure—not on fighting the establishment of the state of Israel.

We need to add to the political opportunity structure approach, moreover, because, like the literature on political Islam, the concept is unable to explain why it was the Muslim Brotherhood in particular and not some other organization that mobilized so quickly during the period under study. Understanding the political environment in Egypt helps us see why the period might be particularly fertile for social movement activity. But why did a religious reform society rather than a communist party develop? In fact, the communists provide a useful contrast. In some ways, the position of the communist movement was similar to that of the Muslim Brotherhood: both went through phases of cooperation and conflict with the regime in power; both put forth an ideology that offered a new vision of Egyptian society and politics; and both attracted the bulk of their members from the same segments of the population (the urban petty bourgeoisie, professionals, intelligentsia, students, and government officials). Nonetheless, the two movements experienced very different levels of success. While the Muslim Brotherhood counted its members in the hundreds of thousands, communist groups seldom had more

than a few hundred members. Indeed, the communist movement in Egypt could never claim more than two or three thousand adherents, about the same number of branches offices operated by the Muslim Brotherhood in 1949. These different outcomes were in large part due to the relationship between ideas and the two different movements.

IDEAS AT WORK IN THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Understanding Muslim Brotherhood mobilization requires a focus on the unique political opportunities in Egypt in the period, but it requires something more as well. I suggest that the key to the mobilization of the group above and beyond the presence of some favorable political opportunities was the relationship between ideas and ideology, on the one hand, and the organization's structure, activities, and relationship to the regular lives of Egyptian people, on the other.

Organization Resources

Past historical studies coupled with U.S. State Department dispatches provide a relatively clear picture of the structure of the Muslim Brotherhood throughout this period. One of the basic organizational features of the Society was its federated structure of authority in which a network of branch offices throughout the cities and villages of Egypt was unified by a central headquarters in Cairo. The branch system formed the basic structure of the Muslim Brotherhood from its very founding. Members exhibited considerable loyalty to their branch in addition to the organization as a whole, and the branch leader played a critical role as liaison between the rank-and-file membership and the central leadership. The organization also shifted coordination and communication responsibilities of the entire Society from branch office to branch office during periods of state repression.

Superimposed upon this federated system of branches was a three-tier membership structure. Established after its third general conference in 1935, the tiers divided the organization by degrees of member commitment. First-level members were called "assistants" and were required only to sign a membership card and pay dues. At the second level were "related" members who were required to demonstrate a knowledge of the Society's principles, attend meetings regularly, and perform an oath of obedience. Third-level members were called "active" and were expected to entirely immerse their lives in the organization, including high achievement in Quranic learning, observance of all Islamic obligations, and regular physical training (Mitchell 1969).

A great deal of previous work on social movements provides the basic tools for thinking about how these organizational structures contributed to the Muslim Brotherhood's spectacular growth. John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (1977) discussed the advantages of a federated organizational structure in their original formulation of the resource mobilization perspective, focusing largely on American civil rights groups of the 1960s. More recently, Mark Lichbach (1994) included the federated organizational structure as one of several methods of overcoming free-rider problems in opposition movements. Also, Doug McAdam and his colleagues (1996) stress the importance of different "mobilizing structures" in social movement success.

In the case of Egypt, the role of the federated structure was even more important because of the way in which this structure was linked to the ideas of the organization.

The rapid sectoral transformations associated with modernization and incorporation into the world economy created vastly different conditions and interests among Egyptians in the first decades of the twentieth century. Industrial workers in the Shubra al-Khayma district of Cairo, for example, had little in common with the traditional Egyptian peasants or even the populations of the numerous mid-sized Nile delta towns. The Muslim Brotherhood's federated structure allowed it to appeal to the parochial orientations of different groups and different regions of Egypt. It used these appeals to maximum advantage, as evidenced in confidential reports by state department informants:

> The most interesting part of our conversation dealt with the manner in which the Ikhwan [Muslim Brotherhood] carries on its propaganda work in the rural areas. Either in a written document or by word of mouth the Ikhwan's line on current issues is sent to all rural centers where it is explained to four or five fairly literate leaders capable of explaining the issue to others and defending it if necessary. These leaders, in turn, each contact approximately one hundred fellow Ikhwanis and pass on the information. Subsequently it is spread in a less organized fashion among the people by both Ikhwanis and non-Ikhwanis. He claimed that this mechanism for spreading information is very effective because travelers can always be found who are going to the provinces. Therefore, the transmission of information presents no problem. (USDS 1954, #564)

The Muslim Brotherhood used what variety there was within its ideological perspective to attract people in different situations. In some ways, then, it was different things to different people—fighter for the poor in poverty-stricken rural areas, or voice for democracy within educated urban neighborhoods. This kind of ideological nimbleness was facilitated by its federated structure (along with its recruitment strategies, as I explain later). Even the various Cairo suburbs had their own separate branches so that the loyalties of the Society's members could be closely tied to their neighborhoods and the local concerns of the population. Traditional social networks were maintained and incorporated into the individual branches of the group, allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to gain access to lines of communication and commitment originally developed outside of the organization, as the state department report makes clear.

The organization also needed to negotiate a much different relationship with the state than organizations that form the typical focus of existing social movement literature. The system of branches helped the Muslim Brotherhood maintain its organizational strength during periods of state repression. The Society kept lines of communication and authority open to different branches in order to protect the larger organization from periodic government crackdowns, police raids, mass arrests, and infiltration by the state security apparatus—events that effectively eliminated many other opposition groups in the country. Another confidential state department report details one way this was accomplished through the branches:

> As a means of maintaining nationwide coordination. . . . the leader of one designated province is vested with the nationwide leadership of the entire Brotherhood organization. . . . In the event that the entire provincial organization in the leading province is uprooted [by the police], the national leadership is passed on to another province according to a planned random pattern. By this means the Brotherhood hopes to be able to maintain itself in spite of government suppression. (USDS 1959, #261)

This system allowed the organization to maintain its structure and activities even when it was formally dissolved by the state and subject to continuous police surveillance and efforts to destroy it.

While previous scholars have believed that much of the organization was destroyed by the raids and arrests of the period, my data contains considerable evidence that the Muslim Brotherhood was relatively successful in surviving repressive efforts by Egyptian authorities. The government dissolved the Society in 1948, but the U.S. State Department received reports of secret mass meetings, Society organizing in mosques, and pamphleteering throughout Egypt during this time. The group was still sufficiently organized after three years of formal dissolution to produce a demonstration of over three thousand members on less than a day's notice in early 1951, and to carry out well-organized rallies at every branch office in Egypt the day after the ban on the organization was lifted on May 1, 1951 (USDS 1954, #2439). In 1954, the Society was operating again within ten days of the major wave of arrests following al-Nasser's 1954 dissolution of it and imprisonment of its leadership and thousands of its members. By June, there were reports of a public resurgence of the Society's activities.

The Muslim Brotherhood was clearly not dismantled by government efforts. Its organizational structure was key to its ability to resist state attempts to eliminate it. This point is an important one, because by themselves political Islam and political opportunity structure explanations for the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood are based in part on the belief that the organization was considerably more ephemeral, rising and falling with the demographic or political winds of Egypt. The pressures of modernization or the change in political opportunities produce groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the stories go, but grievances and organizational structure become buried when the state exerts enough repressive force. In other words, the operative determining force in each case lies outside the group itself. My evidence suggests that the organization was considerably more enduring than previously believed; its organizational structure provided a means to survive attacks by the regime.

The structure of the Muslim Brotherhood not only provided advantages to the group in the traditional ways described by a basic resource mobilization model, but it also provided an important avenue through which the ideas and ideology of the organization could contribute to the group's success. We saw this previously with the tie between the group's message and its federated structure. The Muslim Brotherhood, like any social movement organization, also faced the task of mobilizing the support and resources of individuals with a variety of different beliefs and levels of motivation for collective action. Speaking in general terms, few people in any society will share exactly the same ideological system as professed by the ideology of a particular organization, and fewer still come to a voluntary association predisposed to alter dramatically their life circumstances for the good of the group. In terms of the specific case under study, the Muslim Brotherhood was uniquely structured to tap into a diversity of social beliefs and commitment and thereby overcome this problem.

One of the most important ways that the Muslim Brotherhood negotiated the difficult terrain of ideas was through its three-tiered membership structure. This system allowed the organization rapidly to incorporate new members with a variety of different beliefs and degrees of commitment. Potential recruits were not asked immediately to plunge their entire lives into the ideology and activities of the organization. At the first level, members had to commit no more than their name and a small amount of money to

the organization. This level created a membership pool that provided resources to the group and an audience predisposed to its ideas.

Each of the next two levels added further responsibilities—ideological as well as material—to membership. This graduated process bridged the space between a new member's regular life and the life of the organization. It also acted as a screening device; members who advanced to the higher levels were relatively insulated from those who lacked the same commitment to the Society and therefore were more willing to raise doubts about its ideology or its tactics. The tiers thus maintained a degree of homogeneity in beliefs among groups of members, strengthening their ties to each other and to the organization. They also allowed the organization to benefit from the support of members with a range of commitment to the group.

More theoretically, the lesson here is that the organizational structure and the ideology of a movement are intertwined in important ways. The role of ideas in social movements has recently received a great deal of attention through the concept of framing (Snow et al. 1986; Gamson 1992; Tarrow 1992; McAdam et al. 1996). In practice, the concept refers to the interpretations of events provided by social movement organizations that are intended to resonate with the beliefs of supporters (Benford 1993). While the attempt to take ideas more seriously in the study of social movements is valuable, the framing approach is limited by the conceptualization of ideology as sets of strategically chosen ideas (Benford 1997). It is an overly instrumental view that masks the interactive dimension of ideas and the range of ways in which they are embedded in the organization of the group itself. Framing arguments incorrectly suggest that the task of social movement organizations is to find the ideology or set of beliefs that best tap into a larger sympathetic population. Such an approach ignores the diversity of ideas and beliefs in society.

By contrast, the case of the Muslim Brotherhood demonstrates the importance of the relationship between ideas and the structure of the group as key to overcoming the universal problem of varying degrees of commitment and beliefs. It is not simply that the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood were popular or that its structure allowed it to take advantage of available political opportunities, although both of these factors played a role. Even more crucial, however, is the fact that the three-tiered, federated structure of the group brought individuals into partial and incremental contact with the ideology of the organization. Thus ideas and organizational structure are intertwined: the latter provides a basis for an introduction to and education about the former in a way that is consonant with the everyday experiences and needs of Egyptian people.

It is also telling to compare the Muslim Brotherhood to the Egyptian communists in this regard. Communist groups were organized in a strictly hierarchical fashion, without independent branch or federated offices. This structure led to constant factionalism and limited the national presence of the communists. Several studies of Egyptian communism suggest that the movement was also decimated by government crackdowns on several occasions (Goldberg 1986; Botman 1988; Ismael and El-Sa'id 1990). Communist organizations were concentrated and one-dimensional. Once infiltrated, they had little defense against the security agencies of the state. Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, the communist presence in Egypt was virtually eliminated in the 1920s and 1930s as a result of state repression (Beinin and Lockman 1987).

In contrast to the Muslim Brotherhood's three-tiered membership, communist organizations seldom made institutionalized distinctions between members and their levels

of commitment. Tasht, one of the most influential communist groups in Egypt during the 1940s, had a "nomination" process for new recruits that could last as long as two years, during which time the individual was continually investigated and tested. A communist leader critical of this system equated the process to entering the priesthood (Ismael and El-Sa'id 1990, p. 45). There were thus severe ideological barriers to entry into the communist membership, and the structure made no place for members with varying levels of commitment; the movement accepted only the most dedicated and committed individuals. In contrast to the graduated way in which the Muslim Brotherhood's structure brought its ideas to members, the beliefs of potential communist recruits had to be entirely transformed before they were given any access to the movement. Thus, the communist groups made it extremely difficult for potential recruits to move from their ordinary lives to active participation in the movement.

Organizational Activities

The activities of the Muslim Brotherhood are among the best-documented aspects of the organization, as they were easily observed by those both within and outside the group. Until now, however, these activities have been acknowledged by scholars seeking to understand the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic groups but seldom incorporated into theoretical models. It is thus important to outline the main features of the Muslim Brotherhood's recruitment activities, how these activities related to their beliefs, and how this relationship contributed to the Society's rise to power.

Probably the most important single feature of the society's expansion was its method of establishing new branches. After its founding in Isma'liya, the Muslim Brotherhood began construction of a mosque, using funds from membership dues and grants from local businesses. A boy's school, girl's school, and social club were subsequently added to the complex as the organization grew. Each new branch of the Society followed a similar pattern of growth. The organization would establish a branch headquarters and then immediately begin a public service project—the construction of a mosque, school, or clinic, the support of a local handicraft industry, or the organization of a sports program. This private social service infrastructure grew quickly and became an important part of the Egyptian social, political, and economic landscape. State department records indicate, in fact, that the system was so large that the government was forced to fund and continue staffing the Society's extensive network of services after the organization was dissolved by al-Nasser in 1954 for fear that their collapse would lead to widespread unrest (USDS 1954, #1129).

These activities played an important role in rapidly attracting new members. Muslim Brotherhood public works brought millions of Egyptians into contact with the organization and its ideology. They helped overcome potential free-rider problems within the organization, as resources such as schools and clinics served as selective incentives for Muslim Brotherhood members and potential recruits. Perhaps most importantly, they created an institutional infrastructure in which the Society could demonstrate its ability to deliver on promises of social and economic change to the Egyptian population. They gave material legitimacy to the Society's message that Islam is the true path to development. The ideology was therefore not just a set of abstract ideas debated by intellectuals and group leaders; the Islamic message was linked to the real, practical activities of the Society. The activities of the organization and its ideology were thus two sides of the

same coin. People came to see the two hand in hand, each reinforcing the legitimacy and effectiveness of the other.

This is what I mean when I talk about the importance of the interrelationship between ideas, on the one hand, and other aspects of the movement, on the other. It is not enough simply to have a message that resonates with potential recruits. As noted previously, there were many such organizations operating in Egypt during this time, but none of them achieved the prominence of the Muslim Brotherhood. Key to the organization's success is the way in which its ideas were meaningfully related to its practices. Ideas were tied directly to action in concrete, identifiable ways (e.g., "Islam is the answer, so we build mosques," or "the poor must be supported, so we provide widow pensions").

While the organization spread physically by continually expanding its social service infrastructure, it proselytized and spread its message through the use of the mosque. The mosque was the primary venue in which explicit recruitment to the organization took place. Other than sporting events, mosques were the only forum in which the government would permit large congregations of people during much of this period. Mosques were also relatively safe from police raids or even obvious government intervention in the conduct of the services. Even the state had to play by the rules in the mosques, as a state department memo makes clear in describing government efforts to combat the organization:

> The Army has launched a comprehensive counter-propaganda campaign and is sending carefully selected Army officers into the mosques throughout Egypt. The officer, attired in civilian clothes, first sits and listens to the Sheikh and if he attacks the Regime and the new Constitution, the officer rises, questions his statements (per mosque traditions) and then gradually refutes his charges, especially by pointing up the Regime's projects for the good of the people. (USDS 1954, #2291)

Despite formal government control over both mosques and their preachers, mosques greatly protected the ability of the Muslim Brotherhood to recruit new members and publicize their views even while technically banned by government authorities.

Mosques had many other advantages as well. They gave the society's preachers an aura of respectability and morality they might not have otherwise possessed if their rallies were simply held in the street or a branch office; they tied the organization to Islam, thus legitimizing the group's oppositional message (Billings and Scott 1994). Moreover, mosques protected speakers from sharp criticism and physical attack from audience members. They also served as a self-selection mechanism for potential recruits; those in attendance were already predisposed in some way to the religious message of the Society. Mosques were thus critical to the successful rise of the Muslim Brotherhood—they created and maintained a public space for the organization not only in a material sense (they offered protection from the police and a focal point for large audiences) but also in the ideological sense (they gave the Society a borrowed religious virtuousness while also insulating discussion from alternative beliefs). While its leaders used street demonstrations and marches as displays of power, the mosque remained the primary site for new recruitment throughout 1932–1954. Only with a specifically Islamic message was the organization able to gain such effective advantages from mosques. At the same time, only through the use of mosques was the organization

able to propagate an ideology that was critical of the existing regime and social relations in Egypt.

Here again the interaction between the organization's activities and its ideology is important. The use of the mosque, coupled with the Islamic message, combined to produce particular advantages for the group's mobilization. This finding parallels similar conclusions about the importance of mosques in studies of the Iranian revolution (Parsa 1989; Rasler 1996). It also again suggests the need to move beyond the more simplistic formulations of ideology suggested by frame analysis. Framing approaches focus almost entirely on ideas themselves, looking for ways in which they might be aligned, extended, amplified, and so on (Snow et al. 1986). What is also needed is a focus on the relationship between ideas and organizational activities. Ideas can't be analyzed in isolation, as a separate "variable" in a laundry list of mobilization causes. It is a well-fitted interface between characteristics of an organization and characteristics of its ideology that leads to successful mobilization.

While its construction of public works and extensive use of mosques were the most visible activities of the organization, Muslim Brotherhood recruitment and leadership training also forged important links with the beliefs of its members and of Egyptian society. When the movement began to train its own preachers in 1938, it gave strong preference to those who had connections to the peripheral provinces of Egypt. Al-Banna consciously fostered this policy in order to build a cadre of preachers who were "sympathetic to the needs, feelings, idiosyncrasies, dialectical peculiarities, and local circumstances of the great masses of workers" (Mitchell 1969, p. 190). The organization also staged a continual series of lectures, meetings, and discussions aimed at incorporating each member's larger biography into the Society. By 1939, the organization was holding mass meetings in their headquarters in addition to the regular meetings inside the mosques. These were further supplemented by additional lectures aimed at the secondary group affiliations of the membership. Thus, the society held special meetings for workers, students, professionals, and so on.

This strategy of recruitment and propagandizing was important to the organization, because it tied individuals' secondary affiliations to the Muslim Brotherhood itself and thus served to bring members more fully into the fold of the organization. Members identified and interacted with the group not only in terms of a desire for political or moral reform but also in terms of religion, occupation, and social status. The sharp distinction between general social life and active support for the organization was thereby further blurred, easing the transition into the group and allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to take advantages of group affiliations, resources, and connections that ostensibly lay outside of the organization.

McAdam (1982; 1983) and others have already noted the importance of tactics to the ability of social movement organizations to generate resources. While the Muslim Brotherhood's strategies of recruitment led to important material resources, many of their most important effects lay not in their ability to attract direct material advantages but in the connection they created between the organization and individual beliefs. Access to secondary group affiliations, regional identities, and so forth helped the Muslim Brotherhood cement the loyalty of its members by linking itself to existing belief systems and structures of loyalty in society. The point is thus not that the Muslim Brotherhood found an effective way to frame its message in order to tap into existing public opinion. It

helped formulate that opinion through strategies that eased the divide between membership and nonmembership, the requirements of the organization, and the regular lives of its members. It was therefore able to mobilize a wide variety of different segments of Egyptian society.

Communist activities did not enjoy the same link to belief structures. While Henri Curiel, considered by many to be the founder of Egyptian communism, consciously devoted time and resources to recruitment, communist activities did not bring his message to the Egyptian people. Rather than seeking out different populations within Egypt through different strategies, Curiel established the al-Maydan Bookshop in order to "disseminate political literature and create awareness among Egyptian intellectuals" (Ismael and El-Sa'id 1990, p. 52). Group activities and beliefs were thus entirely divorced from one another within the communist movement, even as they had a message that was perhaps well "framed" to the plight of the people.

The Content of Ideas

There is a conventional wisdom supported by a sizable academic literature that speaks of the radical, undemocratic character of contemporary Islamic ideology, as well as its insistence on a return to a past, more pristine version of Islamic society (e.g., Kedourie 1992; Kramer 1993; Huntington 1996; Tibi 1998). Ideology has played an important role in the success of the Muslim Brotherhood, but not for the reasons commonly associated with Islamic "fundamentalism" (Marty and Appleby 1993). I have already outlined some of the many ways that ideology interacted with both the organizational structure and the strategies of the group. In terms of the ideological message itself, the beliefs of the Muslim Brotherhood were important because of the way in which they were expressed in familiar Islamic idioms and widespread views in Egypt. Islam—like any major religious tradition—provides an ideological framework with a rich and comprehensive message with relevance to every aspect of an individual's life. Islam thus provided a structure for the Society's message, which was important to its acceptance by broad segments of the Egyptian population.

It comes as a surprise to many that the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood were not fanatical or extremist by any definition of these terms. The chief feature of the organization's ideology, in fact, was its *lack* of distinctiveness or highly contested ideas. This fact is often overlooked by scholars interested in political Islam. Unlike many of the militant Islamic groups today, the Muslim Brotherhood did not hold a particularly radical ideology; it did not advocate a return to the glorious age of Islam or an insistence on a literal reading of holy texts (Zubaida 1993); it did not profess ideas that were antimodern or even anti-Western (Dessouki 1982). On the whole, the organization's message conformed to the popular understanding of religion and the prescriptions of established religious scholars who worked under the authority of the state (Jansen 1981). One U.S. State Department confidential memo reports:

> The views expressed by [Muslim Brotherhood leader] Hudaibi on the issues now confronting Egypt are those that were generally put forward by the Muslim Brotherhood prior to its dissolution in January 1954. Briefly these are that the Brotherhood will not become a political party, it will oppose those political groups that indulge in

corruption and it will never accept negotiations as a means of settling the Canal dispute. (USDS 1954, #2305)

All of these positions were consistent with the aims of many individuals and groups in Egypt at the time. Islam is never mentioned. The Muslim Brotherhood was ultimately a popular, political threat, not an ideological one. In many respects, then, the Society offered not a shining new vision of Islamic society or a radical return to ancient beliefs but a "moral economy" such as that analyzed by E. P. Thompson (1972) in his study of the English working class. This point demonstrates the way in which Muslim Brotherhood mobilization was not simultaneously a full ideological conversion, a characteristic that substantially lowered the barriers to individual participation.

The characteristics of the communist message did not share the same relationship to Egyptian Muslim life. Marxism was a relatively new mode of thought in Egypt; its earliest presentation to Egyptians in Arabic was in 1890. It brought with it a new vocabulary and language for understanding and talking about the world. New recruits to communist organizations had to internalize new ideas and new values in addition to the other responsibilities and burdens of the organization. It is telling that while adherence to the Muslim Brotherhood was considered a political crime by the state in the late 1940s, membership in a communist organization was considered a social one. In contrast to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Marxist message of the communist organizations—even in workshops of the textile and sugar mills—actually raised the obstacles to full participation in the new groups.

In large part, this problem can be traced to the foreign origins of the Egyptian communist leadership. Most of the important figures in Egyptian communist history—Henri Curiel, Marcel Israel, and Hillel Schwartz—were foreign-born. The first communist organizations and cells in Egypt were also restricted largely to foreign communities of Greeks and Armenians. The issue of foreign leadership proved catastrophic to the communist movement (Beinin 1990). In many cases, the orientation, values, and cultural idiom of the movement's leaders was very different from that of the rank-and-file membership. No issue demonstrates this more clearly than the communist position on Palestine. Despite the centrality of the Palestinian issue in Egyptian politics, communist groups followed the position of the Comintern on the issue and endorsed the creation of Israel throughout the 1940s and 1950s. The inability of the communist groups to adapt to the political culture of the country on one of the most salient and emotionally charged issues of the day is strong evidence that the message of Egyptian communism was distant and foreign. Put another way, the operation and ideology of communist organizations never created a strong relationship between group beliefs and the beliefs of individuals in Egyptian society.

Communist groups lacked more than a familiar idiom with which to connect to the Egyptian people; it also lacked the depth and comprehensiveness of the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamic message. Communism provided a theoretical framework for interpreting the world and the legitimate goals for which to strive. It had little to say, however, about the day-to-day conduct of its adherents outside of regular attendance at designated meetings, rallies, and strikes. Rather than offering insight into all aspects of a potential member's life, it connected to him on only one basic—political—level. That is, rather than incorporating the members' day-to-day activities, the communist message

kept an esoteric distance from the lives of its adherents. Marcel Israel, an important organizer and leader of several Egyptian communist organizations, recognized this problem when he noted, "[Our] studies revolved around complicated ideological issues which had no direct connection with the struggle's requirements. The workers start their Marxist studies by studying the principles of materialistic arguments" (quoted in Ismael and El-Sa'id 1990, p. 32).

In contrast, the comprehensive nature of the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamic ideology made it easier to connect potential new members to the goals of the movement. Individuals could be introduced into the organization with everyday issues of Islamic living. There was a concrete relationship between Muslim Brotherhood ideas and the everyday lives of Egyptians. The organization provided new members with a message that they could apply *immediately* to their daily lives, by abstaining from alcohol, withdrawing money from interest-bearing accounts, and so on. The ideology connected these small details with the larger ideal of building a better society and better life. The richness of the Islamic message connected to many facets of an individual's life, providing each with a stronger identification with and commitment to the organization.

The Islamic message of the Muslim Brotherhood is thus important because of the resonance it creates with traditional Egyptian beliefs, just as frame analysis suggests. But the actual content of its ideas matters, too. It was not simply Islamic imagery that animated people but also the content of Muslim Brotherhood ideas, tying politics to seemingly mundane Islamic prescriptions for everyday life. The Society thus offered simultaneously a grand social program and a detailed plan for daily living. That was the power of the ideological content of the message. Frames—like political opportunity structures—tell part of the story but not all of it. The role of ideas and beliefs in social movements is not easily compartmentalized into a single concept. Instead, they are an integral part of a social movement's enterprise at many different levels, a fact that frame analysis and other existing approaches do not capture. In the specific case of the Muslim Brotherhood, the way in which its Islamic message was tied to its organization, to its practical social service infrastructure, to its recruitment in the mosques, and to its demands on individual participants is the most important factor in understanding their success. As Smith (1996) and others have suggested, religion brings a whole range of different assets to social movement activism.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that the specific relationships that tied the Muslim Brotherhood's ideas to its organizational structure, group activities, and the beliefs and practices of ordinary Egyptians offer the key to understanding its tremendous popular support in Egypt in 1932–1954. The relationships ultimately allowed the group simultaneously to appeal to a broad segment of the Egyptian population and to negotiate the difficult political landscape dominated by an authoritarian state.

The U.S. State Department files have confirmed many of the observations made by others of the Muslim Brotherhood, but they also reveal important new information. First, they show clearly that the Muslim Brotherhood was never truly dismantled in the state repressions of October 1941, December 1948, and January 1954. The Society maintained its organizational structure throughout these episodes and continued its organiz-

ing activities, distributing information, and even providing social welfare to the needy. Recent research on the relationship between repression and mobilization has focused largely on the behavior of the state (Opp 1994; Rasler 1996; Salehi 1996; Andrews 1997). My findings complement this work by highlighting the importance of the organizational structure of the Society and the tactics it employed to avoid the state measures to suppress it. We need to examine not just the quantity of repression, but also its effectiveness, given the structure and message of a particular social movement.

The new data also demonstrate that the Muslim Brotherhood was not a fanatical terrorist group or radical opposition movement during this period. Translations of organizational tracts and publications reveal an ideology concerned with regular political issues of the day, such as government corruption and the need for more medical clinics. State department interviews with Muslim Brotherhood members reveal average individuals with common perspectives on Egyptian politics and demands for unremarkable social and political reforms. State department analyses of speeches and party programs found a similar lack of distinction in the ideology of the organization and their concrete proposals for change. This finding is an important corrective to the view that Society members are those either alienated or discontented with society, who believe it can be transformed by a return to a mythical past.

The mobilization of the Muslim Brotherhood was possible because (1) its internal structure was adapted specifically for avoiding repressive efforts of the state and making it practically and ideologically easy for individuals to join; (2) its activities were intertwined with beliefs in such a way that each was strengthened and made more resilient to state repression and more attractive to potential supporters; and (3) the structure of the group's message, rooted in rich Islamic ideas and symbols, was tied to everyday Egyptian life and thus accessible to potential recruits. The analysis I have presented is rooted in existing explanations of the organization and models of social movements more generally, but it also goes beyond these explanations. First, unlike political Islam and political opportunity structure models, this analysis addresses the question of why the Muslim Brotherhood in particular became so powerful rather than one of the many other Islamic groups that existed during the same period. Second, its conceptualization of ideology and the link between organization and beliefs offers a way to think about ideas and ideology systematically without resorting to the reductionism of framing models. Ideology must be considered more systematically. Its effects and relationship to social movements are more pervasive than current models allow. Third, the focus on the ways in which the organizational, tactical, and ideological qualities of the Society allowed it to overcome significant state repression offers insight into extending the political process model to non-liberal-democratic regimes. Future research on the Muslim Brotherhood and other social movements outside the Western fold can continue to extend and refine these insights through more comparative analysis that moves beyond the limitations imposed by a single case study.

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