Egypt’s Policy on Islamism and Islamic Extremism
The punctuated equilibrium theory perspective on Egyptian policy change

Björn Brenner

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Supervisor: Dr Magnus Ranstorp

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**Abbreviations**

- **BR** – Bounded Rationality Model
- **FO** – Free Officers
- **GC** – the Garbage Can Model
- **IM** – the Incrementalism Model
- **JI** – al-Jama’a al-Islamiyya
- **JJ** – Jama’at al-Jihad
- **LAS** – The League of Arab States
- **MB** – The Muslim Brotherhood
- **MS** – the Multiple Streams Theory
- **TH** – Takfir wal-Hijra
- **OIC** – Organisation of the Islamic Conference
- **PAC** – the Policy Advocacy Coalition Framework
- **PE** – the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory
- **RC** – the Rational Choice Model

**Vocabulary**

dar al-harb – term for the non-Islamic world, i.e. the house of war

duffaa – alumni network

fatwa – religious opinion

jama’at – radical Islamic societies

hadith – saying by the Prophet

hakimmiyya – Allah’s sovereignty over society

haraka – vanguard movement

ikhwan – brotherhood

imam – religious leader

infitah – open door policy (to the West)

jahili – irreligious

jahiliyya - religious ignorance

jihad – struggle in the name of Allah

jizyya – sort of tax

kafir – infidel, not recognising Allah

mahdi – divine deliverer sent in the end of times

mufti – religious and political leader

mujaddid – renewer of faith

mujahaddin – holy warrior

niqab – black garment covering the whole body except the eyes

shaikh – title for wise and respectable men

sharia – the holy law of Islam based on the writings in the Koran

shilla – peer group

shura – counselling

takfir – to declare someone kafir

tawahid – inherent sense of unity

ulama – the community of learned men, clergy

umma – communion, society
Note on Translation and Transcription

Arabic is spoken by approximately 250 million people around the world. The language has five major dialects, of which all originate and are spoken in North Africa and The Middle East. A uniform version of the language is utilised for writing though, especially in intellectual and official works. This uniform version is referred to as classical Arabic.

In this thesis, the words in Arabic are classical Arabic, though some are dialectal or colloquial. All non-translated Arabic words that occur in the text are translated in the brief word list on the previous page. All other, names e.g., are transcribed using the system practised by the Journal of Middle East Studies.

The following transcriptional rules and exceptions are relevant to this text:

- Double vowels inside words are transcribed by –’iyya or –’uwwa

- The letter ‘ayn is transcribed by ‘

- The letter hamza is transcribed by ‘ when it appears inside words

- Where appropriate, the English genitive construction is used, e.g. in names

- Diphthongs are transcribed by –aw and –ay

- The prefix al- is only included the first time an Arabic name is used.
1. Introduction

The chapter will present the topic of the thesis taking its starting point in the definition and common perceptions of Islamism. Developing this notion and linking it to information of the scientific discourse aims at clarifying the relevancy of the study. The research question and a more detailed motivation of the research problem will then follow. Further on, the purpose will be developed as well as the research’s delimitation and a brief go-through of previous research to elaborate on the thesis’ relevancy.

1.1 Topic and Relevancy

The term Islamism denotes political Islam, the view that politics should be based on Islam’s religious writings, hence a common ground of Islamic values. The origin of Islamism is the origin of Islam itself. When the son of an Arabian merchant, later known to Muslims as the Prophet Muhammad, settled in Medina in the seventh century, he took active part in the establishment of a community where religion was integrated in politics. From the very beginning, Muslim converters worked to win new Muslims-to-be not only spiritually but also on a practical level. It is important to point out that Islam does not differ extensively from e.g. Christianity in this aspect. The bond between the state and the mosque is not very different from that of the state and the church before the reformation in sixteenth century Europe.¹

During the past centuries the cradle of Islam, the Middle East, has seen the rule of several different authorities. The twentieth century became the time of the empires. Large parts of the Middle East were governed by colonial powers such as Britain and France. The early Ottomans and the later colonial rule influenced oriental society with new different occidental ideals. However, the identity of most inhabitants was strongly linked to the Islamic traditions and beliefs. When these had to give space to the ideas of separating state and religion, democracy and secularisation, it set off a deepening sense of identity weakening.² Muslim intellectuals were alarmed by this and a process of religious reactivation was initiated. As this reactivation turned against the opposing influences from the west, it was revolutionary already from the beginning.

Egypt was one of the places where this process of religious reactivation was the strongest. Unpopular colonial rule and widespread poverty acted as catalysts. Many Egyptians had caught a glimpse of modernity in their frequent encounters with westerners. Eventually, frustration mounted as it became clear they would never enjoy that prosperity themselves. In reference to the described situation, it was a natural reaction for people to turn back to the roots, the religion, in the search for

¹ Milton-Edwards, Beverley. 2006, p. 137
² Ibid., p. 139
their identity. One of the most influential Islamist networks that Muslims turned to, the Muslim Brotherhood, originated in Egypt. The network’s solution to the problems was the application of Islam to all areas of society.

It should be pointed out that Islamism does not necessarily include the ideas of violence, subversion and terrorism. However, it is difficult to neglect the fact that many of the Islamist movements and their members have eventually embarked on the path of radicalisation.\(^3\) When it comes to politics at a national level, the countries of the Middle East have chosen different paths, both secular and religious ones. For instance, the Shah of Iran was overthrown in 1979 and an Islamic Council instated as government. Another example of the presence of Islamic extremism is within the HAMAS which, together with the PLO, governs Palestine. In Egypt, although the overthrowing of King Farouk in 1952 was assisted by Islamists, the new government chose the path of secular nationalism. That choice has meant the constant need for an active policy on what line to take towards the constantly popular Islamism.

Since the 1950s the government’s attitude to this phenomenon has varied. The whole time, it has been a constant political challenge to balance the Islamist movements, control the Islamic extremists and simultaneously respect democratic principles.\(^4\) Depending on how we choose to measure the success of policies, the image of Egypt can appear differently. However it can be established that Egyptian political violence increased drastically in the 1970s and then almost disappeared from 1997 and onwards. In comparison with an almost opposite development in western countries, above all in the second part of this period, the Egyptian context appears interesting.

To western societies, Nine Eleven became the pivotal event that activated and altered their stance on the issues of Islamism and Islamic extremism. Although many contextual differences make the case of Egypt diverge from the ones of Europe and America, it is an important study to do. A study which includes the Egyptian state’s response to these phenomena adds further to the understanding of how different states have chosen to cope with the issue that made the top of all national political agendas after September 11th 2001. There is also another reason to turn the focus towards Egypt. As intelligence, media and researchers have gained more knowledge about the perpetrators of recent years’ terrorist attacks, several of the tracks lead back to Egypt. It has shown that Egyptians have had central positions in e.g. the World Trade Centre attacks of 1993 and 2001 as well as in the Madrid train bombings of 2004. Another example is Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of al-Jihad, who in 1998 proclaimed the international expansion of his struggle against *ka�irs*, infidels, and his organisation’s fusion with al-Qaeda.\(^5\) Henceforth, Egypt appears to be or have been one of the breeding grounds for terrorists-to-be.

Understanding the Egyptian context constitutes an important piece of the puzzle for several research areas concerned with the rise of Islamism and Islamic extremism in the Middle East. This thesis’ contribution to the unexplored ocean of these issues, is to increase the understanding of Egypt’s policy on Islamism. Thus, the thesis only

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 146  
\(^4\) Craig-Harris, Lillian. 1988, p. 61  
\(^5\) ICG: Middle East and North Africa Briefing. 2004, p. 5
takes a state-centric focus and does not attempt to investigate all the complicated and interesting links between Islamism, radicalisation and Islamic extremism, only to study policy and policy change in relation to Islamism. However, as the Islamist point of view naturally is a cornerstone of the Islamic extremist view, the efforts to counter extremism are here considered to be an integral part of the policy on Islamism and therefore treated in the thesis as well.

1.3 Purpose

The ambition of the study is mainly empirical. The study aims at describing and explaining Egypt’s position on Islamism and Islamic extremism. In order to relate to empirics, it must be put in reference to theory and/or other empirical data. By doing so one creates references that the observer can use in his process of understanding and analysing. Egypt’s contemporary policy on Islamism has gradually, during decades, evolved to President Mubarak’s position of today. Therefore the empirics will be systematised by a theoretical framework, the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, which considers a broader time perspective than several other theories on policy change. This theoretical frame of reference can hopefully contribute to the understanding of Egyptian policy and to the clarification of eventual policy alterations and their origins. Naturally the appreciation of the theory’s level of applicability to the case will result in a few theoretical conclusions as well. Although those remarks are not the primary objective of the study, they can perhaps be of some use for further research.

Hence, the purpose is to:

- map and describe the essential features of Egypt’s policy on Islamism and Islamic extremism

- explain alterations in pursued policy through frameworks of policy change

1.2 Research Question

There can be many different approaches to the study of governments and their policies. Each of them has its advantages and disadvantages. One of the approaches would be a comparative case study which would give a clear frame of reference in relation to other states. In such a study it is possible to identify similarities and differences and relate the findings of one case to the findings of another. Such a study is useful but, because of the quantity of material, it might limit the depth of each case study. Comparative case studies are important, especially when no clear frame of reference is in place. In the case of states’ contemporary policy on Islamism, this frame is however already in place.

Many of the theories of policy analysis emphasise extraordinary events as playing important roles in causing policy alterations. It is evident that for instance Nine Eleven led to changes in both western and eastern states’ stance towards Islamism. Knowing that, this thesis analyses whether any such events can be identified in the Egyptian context. Was Nine Eleven e.g. followed by a policy change in Egypt as
well? Apart from the effect of extraordinary events, other causal factors are also illuminated. International relations, policy inheritance and the domestic situation can be mentioned as potentially interesting in further explaining policy stasis or change.

The thesis aims at critically analysing the driving factors of the Egyptian state response to Islamism and Islamic extremism. In order to structure and systematise the data, the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PE) is applied as a tool of analysis. The reasons for choosing PE is accounted for in chapter six. The thesis attempts to understand and explain policy change in President Mubarak’s Egypt by adapting a state-centric perspective and mainly using PE as a tool of analysis.

In reference to the discussion above, the research question is:

To what extent can Egypt’s policy on Islamism under President Mubarak be explained in the perspective of policy change, particularly the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory?

1.4 Delimitation

The study concerns the policy pursued by the Egyptian government towards Islamism and Islamic extremism. Within the delimitation of the study are measures or reforms that have been introduced with the purpose of altering the strength of Islamist influence in Egyptian society. Any events or policy before the 1952 coup d’état are not considered in the study. The study is state-centric and does not aim to analyse driving role of the various Islamic movements in Egypt. The most prominent are briefly described in chapter three giving some insight in their backgrounds and activities. Concerning the time span, the study focus on the handful of policy alterations that can possibly be identified between Nasir’s seize of power in 1952 until the referendum on amendments to the constitution in March 2007. However the emphasis lies on President Mubarak’s rule.

1.5 Previous Research

The thesis is the product of an attempt to enrich the radicalisation and counterterrorism discourses with the more traditional perspective of policy analysis. In order to further advance the knowledge of Islamic extremism new perspectives are needed to illuminate the problem in new ways. The perceptual approach of this thesis can in some aspects be compared to that of the terrorism researcher David C. Rapoport. Rapoport argues that terrorism comes in waves of little more than a decade each. The similarities are related to the view that one can consider this phenomenon as a societal current. The waves-perspective represents a more distant point of observation seeing not only the events of today but trying to find a greater whole. In analysing policy, as done in this thesis, the time perspective is broadened in the same way. Single events or policy alterations together constitute an interesting context. Although no causal connections between government policy and

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6 Kegley Jr, Charles W. 2003, p. 42
Islamic terrorism are identified here, the study still opens up for a new perspective and further illuminates this possible link.

Unfortunately, terrorism research has suffered from the traditional division of disciplines within social science and the almost waterproof bulkheads in between them. According to terrorism expert Dr Magnus Ranstorp, further understanding of radicalisation and extremism is in need of cross fertilisation from other disciplines. Interdisciplinary connections of e.g. terrorism studies and traditional political science have shown fruitful in the past. One of these successes should be attributed to John Gray who used international relations theory to explain the presence of transnational actors. David Leheny then developed Gray’s work and connected it to terrorism studies through social movement theory.

The well renowned terrorism researcher Martha Crenshaw argues that the main problem for terrorism studies is the relatively young and unexplored research field. It is evidently difficult to build sustainable theory in such short time as it has meant, and still means, a shortage of data. Another problem highlighted by Crenshaw is the fact that terrorism research is driven by single events and does not consider the phenomenon in a more comprehensive time and event perspective. It is precisely that comprehensive perspective this thesis is attempting to take. Studying policy fluctuations towards Islamism under a fairly long time period gives a comprehensive state-centric perspective. This perspective can possibly enhance the understanding of the interaction of government policy versus extremism.

The theory chosen in the thesis to provide a framework for the comprehensive perspective has earlier been successfully applied to numerous case studies. In a study by Dudley and Richardson (1996) the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory was applied to the changes and stability in British trunk roads policy. The same year another study was published by Hardin applying the theory to congressional committee jurisdiction concentrations. Another prominent example is the study about interstate rivalries by Cioffi-Revilla (1997). The theory has hereto mostly been used for explaining US policy and only in a few studies policies of the OECD countries. As the theoretical framework has shown to be robust through several successful studies, the uncertainty in this case relates to the different politico-cultural environment in Egypt and also to the sometimes compromised Egyptian democracy.

1.6 Disposition

This thesis is an account for the study made in order to attempt to answer the research question concerning Egyptian policy on Islamism. The formal, theoretical, descriptive and analytical parts are presented consecutively in eight chapters. The two first introductory chapters include the formal parts of a scientific writing, the research question, purpose, delimitation, previous research and methodology. The theoretical framework is then illuminated in chapter three and the descriptive parts

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7 Ranstorp, Magnus. 2006, p. 12
8 Ibid., p. 3
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
are organised in chapters four through six. Chapter seven presents the analysis. The last chapter summarises the findings and proposes further research.
2. Methodology

The methodology chapter accounts for the direction of the research and what methodological choices that have been made in relation to it. It also clarifies the stand on how to consider the results from a generalisable point of view. The chapter consists of two sections Methodological Approach and Material and Criticism of Sources.

2.1 Methodological Approach

The account of what methodology used in the thesis takes as its point of departure the relationship between theory and empirics. The first choice to make in planning a study is the decision whether to apt an inductive or deductive approach. The inductive one constitutes the collecting of empirical information before theory selection. The deductive approach begins by studying a theory and then applying it to empirics. The theoretical knowledge will raise questions and by examining the empirical environment answers can be found. Deduction has been criticised for leading the researcher towards empirics that will affirm the theory in question. Induction, on the other hand, has raised criticism about the fact that it disallows theory testing by focusing on empirics. As the focus of this thesis is empirics, namely Egypt’s policy on Islamism, and a theoretical framework is consulted for systematisation and providing a possible explanation, the approach is inductive.

Furthermore, the method used for scientific studies can be of either a qualitative or quantitative approach. The method by which a study is conducted is chosen in reference to what kind of results the researcher wish. A qualitative method implies that figures and quantities are treated by text. This method is more suitable for in depth descriptions and less for achieving results that can be generalised. The quantitative method is different both in terms of data collection and analysis. The researcher transforms his observations to numbers and uses mathematic and statistical tools in his analysis. In the following study the material consists mainly of scientific literature. The analysis of the material will be done verbally, thus the study is qualitative. The advantages of the qualitative method are attributed to extra space for details and a possibility to phrase the result in a further nuanced way. The advantages of the qualitative method come at the cost of having to limit the amount of data used and by that getting a less clear result.

Concerning the relation to theory, empirical studies can be divided into three types, namely studies for testing, consuming or developing theory. The theory testing type focuses on a particular theory to verify or falsify the claims it makes. The theory developing study takes the theory testing one step further. It aims at building theory by finding explanatory factors and developing the knowledge about causal

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11 Brenner, Björn. 2007, p. 10
12 Ibid.
13 Wiedersheim-Paul, Finn and Eriksson, Lars T. 1994, p. 77
mechanisms. In the present case the thesis doesn’t relate to theory neither with an ambition to test, nor to develop. Instead this study centres on attempting to describe and explain Egypt’s policy on Islamic extremism. As opposed to theory testing studies, theory consuming ones focus on a solitary case. Such a study holds as its main objective to try to explain what happened in the particular case. One example of a classic theory consuming study is Graham Allison’s *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (1971). Allison used three different analytical lenses to enhance the understanding of political decision making during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Thus, a study of the consuming kind is not necessarily limited to one theoretical framework but can combine different ones.\textsuperscript{14}

Even though theory consuming studies’ primary objective is the explanation to why something developed as it did, the results of such a study are not solely important for examining that case. Although secondary, these studies also constitute a contribution to theory testing. If the theoretical framework only provides little or no guidance in explaining the findings, the confidence for the theory might weaken.\textsuperscript{15} In conclusion it is the generalisability of the result which separates the testing and consuming studies. In the testing studies it is significant that the study can tell us something about other cases as well. Thus, the notion of generalisability is of great importance.\textsuperscript{16} For theory consuming studies this notion is not as important. Whether or not the conclusions contain information that can be usable for other case studies is not of primary interest. Rather, it is vital for the researcher to sufficiently support his conclusion for the studied case.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{2.2 Material and Criticism of Sources}

Data collection of Egyptian politics and the government’s policy towards Islamic extremism has been made mainly through scientific material such as books and articles. All sources used for the study are accounted for under *References*. All information has been critically assessed using a model\textsuperscript{18} consisting of the following five points:

*Independence*: Dependency between sources is not unlikely and must be checked as far as possible.

*Tendency*: Sources might choose to highlight one part of the story, leaving the other parts unaccounted for. The reasons for misinformation can be deliberate but also due to e.g. existential perceptions.

*Centrality*: It must be established what role the source played in the studied event. The distance between the observer and the actual event is important knowledge as understanding and perception vary dependent on where one stands.

\textsuperscript{14} Esaiasson, Peter. et al. 2004, p. 40
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 41
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 98
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Hallenberg, Jan. et al. 2006, pp. 40-45
Contemporaneousness: As time passes memories change. Humans tend to rationalise and forget. The time elapsed until today is an important factor.

Authenticity: Sources must be checked for authenticity, i.e. that they really are who they say they are.

Worth noting here is the use of some scientific articles and newspaper material. The scientific articles mainly originate from Professor Barry Rubin’s and the Global Research in International Affairs Centre’s (GLORIA) publication, the Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA). According to Professor Rubin the journal aims at publishing research with cross-political and geographical origins. It focuses on Middle East Affairs. MERIA is a scientific journal and is widely well respected within the scientific collective.

MERIA is not to be interchanged with MEMRI, the Middle East Media Research Institute, which summarises news of the Arab world in English and writes analyses on society and politics in the Middle East. MEMRI has been subjected to criticism from parts of the scientific society arguing that it lacks objectivity and has taken a pro-Israeli stand in some of its analyses. Whether the criticism is well grounded or not, the material from MEMRI in this thesis does not include any of its analyses or reports but only a few translations of Arab written newspapers.
3. Theoretical Framework

The third chapter introduces the theoretical frames of reference. The chapter consists of a discussion of the basic theoretical approaches and different frameworks as well as a description and motivation of the theory chosen for the analysis.

3.1 Theory on Policy Analysis

The concept of policy studies is, according to the political scientist Rune Premfors, the applied research of society aimed at political policies and the processes in which they are formulated and followed through.\textsuperscript{19} According to Premfors policy analysis can be effectuated by examining possible changes in e.g. legislation, political processes and the political role play.\textsuperscript{20} The foundation of policy analysis rests on a handful of approaches. Those approaches have then constituted the basis for theory development within the field.

The traditional and most simplified model of policy analysis is the Rational Choice Model (RC). The characteristics of RC are:\textsuperscript{21}

- a dominating decision maker
- clear and stable goals or preferences
- an evident separation between goals and means
- complete information of decisional alternatives and their consequences
- decisions focused on optimising outcome

The other classic approaches relate to RC but differ in the extent they agree/disagree with it. The model of Bounded Rationality (BR) holds that individual decision makers have limitations in their rational acting. These limitations apply both to forming clear and stable goals or preferences, as well as identifying and judging all decisional alternatives and their consequences. The BR-decision maker does not strive to optimise outcome but to satisfy with an acceptable decision, one that reaches a minimal level of goal fulfilment.\textsuperscript{22} BR is frequently used by researchers but is limited in the sense that it only concentrates on individual decision makers. Therefore it is not suitable for examining collective decision making. Another weakness is the difficulty for researchers to recreate what all possible alternatives were in a given situation and how the decision maker perceived it.

The Incrementalism Model (IM) relate to RC more pessimistically. IM’s picture is that of a complex system. Several actors are active and usually in various degrees of

\textsuperscript{19} Premfors, Rune. 1989, p. 9
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 22
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 41
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
conflict with each other. These actors often lack clear political goals or preferences and also the ability to differentiate between goals and means. In addition they possess limited knowledge of potential policy alternatives. Their awareness reaches only to those alternatives that are close to the present praxis. Because of these preconditions, decision makers choose alternatives deviating only marginally from status quo, i.e. increments.\textsuperscript{23} Even though IM probably is positioned quite close to real politics, it could be rather problematic to apply. The difficulties lie in attempting to analyse a situation where lapses of knowledge and the absence of goals and means are the dominating features.

The Garbage Can Model (GC) constitutes an approach even further away from RC than IM. GC does not make the connection to praxis as in IM. Instead the model holds that 4 currents, reasons to decision, mix in a random manner and eventually lead to a decision. The currents are respectively the solution, the problem and the actors. GC is without structure in the sense that it is not always a problem which is in need of a solution. Sometimes the reverse situation can occur, a ready solution is looking for a suitable problem to which it can be applied and thus justified. This rather diffuse model is problematic for the researcher as random processes not easily can be analysed and even less, predicted. As a critique of GC, it appears questionable if a policy analyst, an expert in the analytical aspects of policy processes, does not favour the belief that at least some rationality is present in such processes.\textsuperscript{24} If so, it would be to accept the impossibility to analyse political processes. However the acceptance of rationality existence, though limited to a varying extent, must be brought together and balanced with an understanding of the complex nature of policy processes, the unique environment in which they take place and the restrictions that they imply.

The three different models presented above are representative for the major approaches that constitute the basis of policy analysis. Two developed theories of policy analysis will briefly be accounted for below. The second one has been further elaborated on and therefore given a section of its own, 6.2 Punctuated Equilibrium Theory.

The Policy Advocacy Coalition framework (PAC) describes long term policy processes as being under the influence of various forces, some of which promote change more often than others. These forces affect policymaking both from the outside as e.g. NGOs, and from within, through tensions in the government apparatus. Inside the political subsystems the forces are guided by actor conviction and values. The policy affecting forces are referred to as advocacy coalitions, made up of actors from various institutions and organisations pushing towards common policy goals.\textsuperscript{25} Furthermore, PAC is based on five premises: First, theories in this genre must take into consideration the importance of technical information concerning the magnitude of a problem. Second, to acknowledge that understanding policy processes requires a least a ten-year-time perspective. Third, the most suitable units for policy analysis are political subsystems. Fourth, additional categories of actors should be added in policy analysis e.g. journalists, researchers

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 41
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 43
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 103
and servicemen at various levels in the bureaucracy. Fifth, all policies carry theories of goal fulfilment.  

According to PAC, the idea of a policy originates in beliefs that we all carry. Some of these beliefs are fundamental in our perception of the world we live in, others are more shallow. Dependent on how deeply rooted the beliefs are, they are more or less changeable. For a political decision to be decided upon, advocacy coalitions, i.e. people sharing the same beliefs, must first come together and push for that certain issue. Various political mediators catalyse the grouping process and make actors approach each other. Perhaps the perspective of PAC makes one first think of US politics. It is correct that the framework/theory has been developed and largely applied to American politics. However in recent years it has also been successfully used for studies of the OECD-countries. Critically assessing PAC, there are several points to discuss. Among others, PAC holds that policy change will occur only as a result of advocacy coalitions. Many other theories keep the door open to learning as a reason for change. Furthermore, PAC ranks beliefs as influential but foresees interests from a strategic point of view as important factors.

### 3.2 The Punctuated Equilibrium Theory

One of the cornerstones of PE is the view that policymaking and the development of policies are linked to how well policy makers can preserve their privilege of interpreting new issues. Then, according to PE, political institutions usually keep the power over these issues. There are certain situations though in which this policy monopoly can weaken. Two concepts, images and venues, constitute the possible channels from where a policy alteration can originate. Policy images are equivalent to how the public perceives a given policy problem. The image they create is the mixture of issue simplification and symbolisation and emotional involvement. The creation of the image is naturally dependent on what information the public is fed. Depending on how the image of a policy problem is pictured, the opinion of how the response shall be formed can alter. The struggle between different stakeholders of maintaining or altering a response to a certain policy problem is the subject of a constant process.

Policy venues denote the decision making institutions. The way in which a policy problem is dealt with much depends on where among the institutions, policy venues, it is assigned. The policy images of different problems vary from one venue to another. For instance, if a problem is defined to be a domestic regional issue it will be coped with differently from would it have been a local or national one. The assignment of an issue to a certain venue is also important for possible policy change. The level of cementation of the policy venue affects the likeliness of

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26 Sabatier, Paul A. 1999, p. 118
27 Ibid., p. 148
28 Ibid., p. 150
29 Hansén, Dan. 2007, p. 108
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., p. 109
change. Well cemented venues such as constitutionally codified ones, do not often push for change.³²

Suitable combinations of images and venues constitute the preoccupations for policy change.³³ There is however a main catalyst for change: feedback. Negative feedback on a policy will lead to only incremental change. If an issue doesn’t get any public attention, it will not make the top of the political agenda. On the other hand, if an issue wins the focus of the public, political points are at stake and an attention shift may take place. Such positive feedback can also be enhanced by the reactions of other relevant actors.³⁴ Extreme positive feedback is created when the attention of an issue is caught by media actors, the public and politicians, all at the same time. The events of Nine Eleven and the redirection of policy focus in the US towards national security is an example of this.

PE stresses the phenomena of politisation and mediatisation during extraordinary events as largely contributing factors to changes in policy. Although, they argue that the so called “triggering events” only are potential policy changers.³⁵ The level of medial and political attention a particular event will get is dependent on other focus attracting events. Therefore, it is not certain that the magnitude/seriousness of an event will determine how much it affects policymaking in the end. It is rather a question of relative attention. Timing is paramount. In addition, policy change often has to be preceded by an overemphasised need for it. It is argued that the structure of political systems holds a general resistance for change. An underlying pattern of over-resistance to policy change has been observed. When the buffer of resistance is passed though, an overreaction of change occurs instead.³⁶ The resistance originates from e.g. ideological convictions and deeply rooted beliefs.

PE of policy change can be summarised by the following: Usually policy only changes incrementally. If a change still occurs it tends to be substantial. The incremental change is caused by a number of factors. One factor is the bounded rationality that characterises decision making at the top level. At this level the decision making is individual and therefore partly rational, partly emotive.³⁷ Another factor is the absence of institutional change among the governmental institutions. Absence of such change leads to stagnation and passivity and thus, the maintaining of the equilibrium. Examples of punctuation of the equilibrium can be a new cabinet with a new party majority or changes in society and public opinion. The creation of strong policy images is pivotal in breaking the “policy monopolies” of specialists and special interests and putting issues on top of the political agenda.³⁸

Apting a critical perspective, there are however some weaknesses of the framework. When e.g. trying to predict future policy development, PE can only be used to say something about the periods of equilibria. According to PE, punctuation periods are characterised by nonlinearity and abnormality which in turn will limit the

³² Ibid.
³³ Sabatier, Paul A. 1999, p. 101
³⁴ Hansén, Dan. 2007, p. 109
³⁵ Ibid., p. 110
³⁶ Ibid.
³⁷ Sabatier, Paul A. 1999, p. 100
³⁸ Dahlmark, Tomas. 2002, p. 15
possibilities of policy prediction. As it is naturally difficult to foresee the length of the equilibria as well, it limits the possibility to identify clear casual chains even at these times. PE does not give guidance as to either the timing or outcome of a future punctuation. Nor does it say anything about what the next punctuation might be. Furthermore PE does not identify any phase in between equilibrium and punctuation. A focusing event either causes substantial change or no change at all. In that sense PE can be seen as quite rough-hewn.

In spite of disadvantages accounted for in the previous paragraph, PE has been chosen as an analytical tool for the study of this thesis. A go-through of several theories/frameworks of policy change, presented in 6.1 Theory on Policy Analysis, has eventually concluded in that choice. The go-through took place after studying Egyptian politics, thus the choice of theory was guided by knowledge of the case. PAC presents a clear framework with well defined variables. Another advantage of PAC is the strong emphasis of beliefs that could fit the Islamist context. The final choice really stood between PAC and EP. However the notion of beliefs described in PAC does not seem to be intended to represent the kind of religious persuasion that it would have to stand for applying the framework to the Egyptian context. PAC was developed for and has been largely applied to American politics. Evidently, it would be interesting to test PAC on Egypt in a thesis with a theory testing or developing approach. As this however is not that kind of study this idea is left for someone else to pick up in the future. Instead, this thesis keeps a full focus on the case study and uses theory as a tool to organise, systemise and as an attempt to explain Egyptian policy on Islamism.

39 Sabatier, Paul A. 1999, p. 111
40 Ibid., p. 112
41 Hansén, Dan. 2007, p. 112
4. The Egyptian Context

This chapter takes the reader to the core of the study, plunging deeper into the Egyptian context. It provides an understanding of the role of Islamism prior to contemporary Egypt and of recent Islamisation.

4.1 Development of Egyptian Islamism

Throughout history it has shown that Islamism regains strength in fairly regular and repetitive cycles.42 New religious leaders arise continuously with renewed promises of reinstating the Muslim identity and further purifying Islamic faith. The most recent return of Islamism in Egypt came with the birth of The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in the beginning of the nineteenth century. MB arose out of a difficult societal situation where, in spite of certain political stability and improvements, the people of Egypt continued to lead a life in poverty without experiencing any change for the better.

After the World War, Egypt was given the status as an independent state. Indirectly though, the country was still governed by the United Kingdom as King Faroud remained monarch. Egypt experienced an end to colonialism but a beginning of several post-war effects. A vast population increase together with other phenomena such as industrialisation, urbanisation and economic dependence resulted in an identity crisis among the people. MB called for a return back to the basic principles of Islam. In the mid-forties the brotherhood movement had approximately more than 5000 active members.43

When Nasir’s free officers’ revolution eventually overthrew the king and a republic was instated in 1952, nationalism was emphasised in favour of Islam as the identity marker. In spite of the revolutionary support from MB, Nasir chose another path and illegalised the organisation in 1954. Leading members of MB were imprisoned and tortured. The development of the other fundamentalist movements in Egypt, and their active political role, is considered to originate in the early fate of MB.44 Nasir’s politics were founded on the ideas of Arab nationalism and socialism. There was simply no room for Islam.

The ideas of MB first head ideologue, Sayyid Qutb, are argued to have played a significant role in creating the programmes of the extremist groups that emerged. Qutb’s ideas were based on the legitimisation of violence as a political tool and the need to overthrow the secular government. He argued that righteous Muslims were called upon to put in place hakimmiyya, Allah’s sovereignty over politics. As the regime was secular, it logically led to the call for jihad. Even though the radicalisation process of Islamist groups has given rise to a whole research genre of

42 Zeidan, David. 1999, p. 1
43 Laanatza, Marianne. et al. 1986, p. 28
44 Zeidan, David. 1999, p. 27
its own, one of several important reasons is mentioned here to better contextualise the growth of fundamentalist groups. In the mid-fifties, when modernisation really started to penetrate into Egyptian society, it created a sense of confusion among Egyptian Muslims. The impact of post-war modern world led common people not to recognise their country any longer, which in turn led to insecurity. Together with the government’s unsuccessful rule in e.g. the economic field, an identity crisis became a fact.\textsuperscript{45} The back-to-basics ideology of the fundamentalist groups became an attractive message to many Egyptians in the search of their lost identity.

The growth of fundamentalist groups can also, to a significant extent, be explained by their embrace by the Sadat Administration. These groups constituted a necessary platform to counter political opposition at the time. Several of the fundamentalist groups provided social services, e.g. transportation, which became essential to the society during the economic crises, as national transportation and other such services ceased to work properly. Naturally though, the state appeared even less competent when it had to rely on civil society.\textsuperscript{46} Simultaneously as these religious groups were allowed, Egypt saw an increase in independent private mosques. Both the mosques and the fundamentalist societal groups became a protected breeding ground for militant fundamentalists and their recruits.\textsuperscript{47}

4.2 Jama’at al-Jihad

One of these fundamentalist groups was Jama’at al-Jihad (JJ). It was founded in 1979 by Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj who originally had been a member of MB. Disappointed by the lack of activist approach of MB, Faraj created his own society, explaining his ideology in a writing called Al-Jihad: al-Farida al-Ghaiba, Jihad: The Neglected Obligation.\textsuperscript{48} Faraj’s views of how to achieve hakimmiyya were even more extreme and violent than the ones of Qutb. If rulers were only suspected of not fully being guided by Allah, they should be considered as kafir, infidels, and be opposed. This doctrine was the lead logics when JJ assassinated President Sadat on October 6 1981. Simultaneously with the assassination, JJ organised disturbances in several Egyptian cities trying to spark a revolution, but failed.

In the years after the assassination, JJ’s high level of organisation and efficiency sank. The group split up into several different fractions without any central coordination. During the beginning of the 1990s more assassination attempts on politicians followed, even on President Mubarak in 1995. All of them were failures though. Instead, JJ started to alter its focus from national to international activities. The shift of focus was led by a group member, Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was a returnee from the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{49} These mujahaddins who had voluntarily come to Afghani assistance during the war created new transnational connections for the fundamentalist groups. In addition to social connections, the mujahaddins brought back terrorist know-how f. in. bomb-

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p. 2
\textsuperscript{46} Håkansson, Kersti. 2001, p. 23
\textsuperscript{47} Zeidan, David. 1999, p. 2
\textsuperscript{48} ICG: Middle East and North Africa Briefing. 2004, p. 4
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., p. 5
Another important outcome was Zawahiri’s new acquaintance with the Talibans, the al-Qaeda network and its main character Osama Bin Laden.

After a three year imprisonment following the murder of Sadat, Zawahiri became the leading figure of JJ and the international course of the organisation was strengthened. The close relations with al-Qaeda formalised in 1998 through a document which stated the creation of a “World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders”. The international choice of path is significant for JJ organisation. JJ has chosen a worldwide struggle against kafirs in favour of the original goal to overthrow the Egyptian government.

4.3 al-Jama’a al-Islamiyya

Contrary to JJ, the al-Jama’a al-Islamiyya (JI) has used other complementary strategies in achieving its main goal, the overthrowing of the secular government and the instating of sharia laws. While JJ has focused on rather narrow operations such as assassinations of politicians, JI has had a broader strategy. Instead the group has worked on Islamising society in more general terms, e.g. through religious and moral propaganda preaching at universities and in private mosques. As President Sadat needed the Islamist movements to counterbalance his leftist and Nasirist political opposition, JI’s activities were welcomed at the time. One part of the population which was especially receptive to the preaching of JI was the Egyptian university students. In the end of the seventies the group had taken control over the majority of the country’s student unions.

Sadat’s support of these groups continued for several years but ceased when they began to criticise the Camp David Peace Accords with Israel in 1979. At that time, Sadat started to attack these groups publicly in articles and in speeches. Eventually these Islamist groups were illegalised. Attacks on Sadat’s foreign policy could not be accepted. The radicalisation of JI should be seen in the light of that policy change in combination with the vastly increasing popularity among young university students. Young people’s daily needs had seemed neglected by the government for a long time. JI gained popular support by practical solutions to complex problems. A good example is how transport shuttles were arranged for female students between university and their homes. To be allowed on the buses though, the traditional veil had to be worn.

The signing of the Camp David Peace Accords and, later, Sadat’s decision to grant the Shah of Iran political asylum, brought an already high level of frustration to erupt. According to the former Islamist activist Montasser al-Zayat, both JJ and JI were behind killing Sadat in 1981. However, the grip of the government did not

50 Graham, Edward. 2000, p. 4  
51 ICG: Middle East and North Africa Briefing. 2004, p. 5  
52 Ibid.  
53 Kepel, Gilles. 1986, p. 129  
54 ICG: Middle East and North Africa Briefing. 2004, p. 7  
55 Kepel, Gilles. 1986, p. 142  
56 Poljarevic, Emin. 2006, p. 32  
57 Kepel, Gilles. 1986, p. 142
weaken at this moment. Vice President Hosni Mubarak took over and further intensified the repression of the Islamist groups.\textsuperscript{58} The murder of the President though, became a first public piece of evidence that the Egyptian fundamentalist groups really had gained both the strength and means to constitute a threat to national security.\textsuperscript{59}

\subsection*{4.4 The Muslim Brotherhood}

While JJ and JI can be categorised as Qutbist movements, MB chose a different ideological path. As early as from the mid-fifties and onwards, MB has renounced the use of violence as means to societal change. The will of MB has been to be more of missionaries than judges, thus disagreeing with the radical views of Qutb.\textsuperscript{60} The goal of MB has been, and still is, the eventual implementation of Islamic political order in Egypt. The ideas of another respected ideologue though, Hassan al-Banna, have won the support of MB. Banna’s ideology differs from that of Qutb in the aspect of how this commonly recognised end state should be achieved. Banna and MB advocate a completely peaceful and slow, gradual transformation.\textsuperscript{61}

After Nasir’s seize of power in 1952, MB were offered to participate with three representatives in the fifty men large assembly. A few years later they were banned as a political party and have stayed so until today. In 2004 the Mubarak Administration announced in an official statement that it intends to keep to this policy: “…while the state would tolerate the existence of Islamic-oriented groups that are social or charitable in nature, it would not accommodate any political group with a religious platform.”\textsuperscript{62} This statement though, also shows the government’s rather neutral view on MB’s work in less politicised parts of society, as in sports clubs and common education. Policy-wise, other platforms of power than just the People’s Assembly and regional councils are available in Egyptian society. MB has increased its active participation in e.g. the Engineers’ Association, the Medical Doctors’ Association and the Commercial Graduates Association.\textsuperscript{63}

The possibilities to act within the political framework are minimal. However, members of MB have to run either as party-independent candidates, or try to engage in another legal party. There are examples of successes using both paths leading to varying numbers of MB representatives in parliament. In the late eighties, MB-supporting representatives became the largest opposition group in the People’s Assembly. Shortly afterwards though, this condition changed with the passing of Electoral Law No. 2006. The writings of the law altered the organisation of the voting districts. This benefited Mubarak’s party NDP, National Democratic Party.\textsuperscript{64} In the elections of 2005, individual MB-supporting representatives gained about 20 percent of the seats in the national assembly.\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{58} Poljarevic, Emin. 2006, p. 32
\textsuperscript{59} Brenner, Björn. 2006, p. 26
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p. 10
\textsuperscript{61} Poljarevic, Emin. 2006, p. 26
\textsuperscript{62} ICG: Middle East and North Africa Briefing. 2004, p. 14
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., p. 12
\textsuperscript{64} Poljarevic, Emin. 2006, p. 29
\textsuperscript{65} Khalil, Magdi. 2006, p. 1
The policy program of MB today calls for several reforms which are common among the opposition concerning improvements of the fundamental freedoms. The MB also calls for the lifting of the emergency rule. The function of it has meant extraconstitutional rights for the government to act against suspected terrorists. Furthermore, the Brotherhood calls for a constitutional change into a parliamentary republic, a new and rather bold aim at the agenda. Another characteristic position of MB is that it does not mainly strive for power but aims at increasing Islam’s further integration in politics and effect on the presidential administration.66

4.2 Recent Islamisation

In recent years Egyptian society has experienced a gradual Islamisation. Under the Sadat presidency, a positive approach was adopted toward the practise of Islam in politics. In his Constitution, new in 1971, Islamic jurisprudence was “a main source” of Egyptian legislation.67 Ten years later the first chapter’s second article was rephrased into its present wording: “Islam is the Religion of the State. Arabic is its official language, and the principal source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Sharia).” As a clear signal, the wording has been sharpened from “a” to “the” main source of legislation. From a judicial point of view this change affects interpretations of all the other articles. They shall all be interpreted in the light of sharia law.68

To make apparent the particularity of the Egyptian phrasing, article 1 of the French Constitution gives an example of a rather different wording: “France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion. It shall respect all beliefs. It shall be organised on a decentralised basis.” In the corresponding article of the French Constitution equality before the law no matter origin, race or religion is stated. This simple comparison illustrates the obviousness that contemporary Egypt no longer is a secular state according to its Constitution.

The sharia principle of the Constitution affects all of society. On the political scene e.g., a political party must be examined by a certain commission before it is legalised by the government. The Party Law forbids political organisations not recognising sharia, or calling for reforms contradicting sharia, in their programs.71 The examining commission is traditionally led by a prominent politician within the ruling NDP. In civil society, organisations, associations and professional syndicates have all seen increases in the number of Islamic representatives. In addition to the current affairs of these decisional groups, the Islamic representatives use them as outposts for Islamic propagation.72

66 ICG: Middle East and North Africa Briefing. 2004, p. 15
67 Guindy, Adel. 2006, p.2
69 Craig-Harris, Lillian. 2006, p. 62
70 Guindy, Adel. 2006, p. 11
71 Guindy, Adel. 2006, p. 3
72 Ibid., p. 2
Within the academic society, approximately half a million students are currently studying at the country’s largest university, al-Azhar. A broad variety of subjects are represented here, from medicine to engineering. However, teaching at Azhar University is always complemented with some religious studies. According to political scientist Adel Guindy, those students studying at Azhar to become imams learn that *kafirs* are inferior and should not be shown any respect. The above mentioned article 2 of the Constitution constitutes legality for discrimination of other religious groups. The second largest religion in Egypt is the Coptic Church whose members constitute about 10 million, 20 percent of the population. Even so very few Copts have public employments in the governmental sector. The government has established a quota of 2 percent to limit the Copts’ access to these jobs.

Although it can be established that a gradual Islamisation has taken place in Egyptian society recently, it is not certain that this development also, simultaneously, has led to further radicalisation among religious groups. However, there are some worrying signs. After the armistice between the government and JJ and JI in 1997, a period of calmness followed. Seven years later this long period of no fundamentalist terrorism ended. In 2004 Egypt experienced severe bomb attacks in the Sinai region, killing 34 people in the city of Taba. The following year another set of attacks were carried out in the tourist resort of Sharm al-Sheikh resulting in 64 casualties. In 2006 a third series of bombings occurred in Dahab, also a popular tourist resort on the Sinai Peninsula. The present wave of terrorist attacks on the Sinai together with a number of recent attacks in Cairo, e.g. the bombing of a tourist coach in the centre in 2005, present a cause of concern.

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73 Ibid., p. 5
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., p. 8
76 Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT), Terrorism Knowledge Base, Egypt 2005, p. 1
77 Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), Egypt Country Report 2006, p. 10
5. Policies of Previous Administrations

Chapter five adds complementary information to the picture drawn in the previous chapter. While chapter three gave the account of the development of Islamism, the following chapter will provide important knowledge of the earlier tradition of state relations to Islamism. The structure is chronological, thus, the first section is about the governing of Jamal abd al-Nasir and the second about Anwar al-Sadat.

5.1 Jamal abd al-Nasir

The first half of the twentieth century saw an increase of westernisation in Egypt. The veil was no longer considered as natural as it had used to be, polygamy was questioned and the existence of religious courts were frequently criticised. This secular trend worried many fundamentalists. The foundation of the earlier mentioned MB in 1928 can be seen as a reaction to this. Consequently, two parallel trends were developing in the post-colonial North African region. On one hand the emphasis of modernity and nationalism, on the other hand a revival of Islamic values. MB went for grass-root support through building schools and hospitals, and became vastly successful. The Brotherhood participated in the war against Israel in 1948 with a dedication greater than that of other participating Arab states. By the beginning of the 1950s, MB had been engaged in both domestic and foreign threat prevention and had by all its engagements gained broad popular support.

Another group critical to the societal development and King Farouk was the Free Officers (FO). This clandestine group shared many of its goals with MB but had a different base of members. Both groups principally wanted a stronger government and social reforms. In addition, several of the FO-members also belonged to MB. The frustration of the masses over the government’s inability to act on social misery and excluding them from the political process, eventually led to civil unrest. In 1948 the King’s Prime Minister Mahmoud Fahmi Nuqrashi was assassinated by a MB member and the government retaliated by killing Hassan al-Banna, the founder of MB. The revolution which eventually followed did not come as a complete surprise. The revolution, or more correctly coup d’état, was planned and executed by FO but was given the full support of MB. MB saw a possibility to get access to political decision making. However after the abdication of Farouk and the seizing of power it became clear that only FO controlled the political power.

The leader behind the coup d’état had been Colonel Abd al-Nasir, an army officer with his roots in the Egyptian countryside. At the time of the coup d’état, Nasir and FO had a rather limited program of reforms. Neither did they have a common

78 Hourani, Albert. 1991, p. 316
79 Long, David E. and Reich, Bernard. 2002, p. 343
80 Rubin, Barry. 1990, p. 11
81 Ibid.
ideology, except wanting to act in the interest of the nation. In the first year of his rule Nasir was fully occupied with the struggle of consolidating his own group. In a broader time perspective though, a clash with MB was inevitable. Nasir was a secular nationalist and was not convinced that sharia politics was the solution that would advance Egypt to modernity and prosperity. After experiencing a challenge of his leadership, Nasir dissolved MB in 1954. The actions by MB culminated in an assassination attempt on Nasir. These incidents cemented his view of the fundamentalist movements. After the assassination attempt, severe repression of leading MB figures followed.

Nasir’s policy towards religious fundamentalism was harsh. Measures were taken to put the religious institutions under pressure. An early land reform of the new regime shattered the finances of many religious institutions. In a second reform step, all religious institutions were brought under full regime control. When a third reform also inhibited these institutions to accept private religious endowments, they were really put in a stranglehold. The repressive reforms of the government toward fundamentalist societies continued. In 1955 the judiciary system was altered and the traditional sharia courts were put under supervision of the secular part of the system. Apart from losing their organisational autonomy, the incorporation into the secular judicial system also included restrictions about what kinds of legal cases that should be ruled on sharia principles.

An important power factor of the Egyptian society was the clergy, ulama. The ulama were expressing political criticism in their prayer meetings and thus giving thousands of students a reason to oppose Nasir’s infidel governing. The regime put an end to this criticism in 1961 by taking control over the main religious university, al-Azhar. With a secular university administration the curriculum changed. Instead of having troubles with criticism from the ulama, they now had to speak well of the sitting government. Eventually the grip over MB was loosened in the mid-sixties. It was a tactical decision by Nasir to counter the recent upswing of Marxism. However it did not take long until Nasir held MB once again responsible for an attempted terrorist attack. Mass arrests followed. Approximately 25 000 people were imprisoned and several tortured. This repression turned MB once again into a clandestine movement.

Although MB was driven underground, the end of the sixties saw an upswing of religious fundamentalism. The failure in the Six-Day War of 1967 was one of the contributing reasons for this. Another was the dissolution of the union with Syria a few years earlier. Nasirism claims and demands seemed to rise above its ability and the alternative to religion, nationalism and pan-Arabism, appeared all the more uncertain. After almost 30 years in power religious fundamentalism was once again advancing, more radicalised than before. When Nasir suddenly died in 1970 he left a severe legitimacy problem for his successor.

82 Hourani, Albert. 1996, p. 319
83 Kepel, Gilles. 1986, p. 27
84 Poljarevic, Emin. 2005, p. 22
85 Rubin, Barry. 1990, p. 15
86 Hourani, Albert. 1996, p. 323
87 Ibid., p. 324
5.2 Anwar al-Sadat

Initially, the Sadat Administration continued to keep religion separated from the state but gradually altered the government’s position on socialism. Soviet advisors were sent back and the cabinet was purged of members who did not support the idea of leaving socialism.\(^{88}\) Naturally, leftist opposition grew stronger and Sadat was forced to look for additional political support. It eventually became clear that the Islamists were the only possible groups to align with against the Nasirists and Marxists.\(^{89}\) Although few alternatives were left, it has later been argued that the change of direction wasn’t solely an act of opportunism. It was also the result of connections that originated in Sadat’s close MB ties from before the revolution in 1952.\(^{90}\)

The first of many consecutive steps in the rapprochement was to release several imprisoned members of MB. When doing this Sadat was not aware that MB had changed. The brotherhood was vastly different from what it had been in pre-revolutionary times. During the years in prison several of the members had been radicalised and formed new groups. The militant ideas of Qutb had become the leading ideology of these new groups. Sadat however believed that MB could assist in mobilising the university students and industrial workers. During the first years of his rule his belief was proven right. To underline the change of direction Egyptian radio and newspapers were e.g. ordered to cover Sadat’s daily prayers and focus more on Islam in general.

In addition to domestic policy change, Sadat also acted to improve Egypt’s international relations with Arab states in which Islam and the state were fused. As a result of that the bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia and Syria improved. In 1973 Egypt and Syria staged a two front war on Israel during the holiday of Yom Kippur. In the initial phase it was successful but Israel fought back and, once again, forced the Syrian and Egyptian armies to retreat. However the war ended and eventually led to the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt in 1979. The peace treaty and the general pro-West sentiment of the Sadat Administration led to strong criticism from Islamic groups. The Camp David Peace Accords were seen as a capitulation to the Western governments.\(^{91}\) Even though Sadat had amended the constitution in 1971 and now made sharia the main reference of legislation, let the Islamic movements publish their own newspapers and let them influence student life, their feeling of being neglected by the state remained.

Islamic fundamentalism grew in the seventies. Sadat’s flirt with the West, The Open Door Policy, was meant to bring aid and investments into the country. To Islamic fundamentalists it constituted a clear threat to the values of Islam.\(^{92}\) Nor were they satisfied with the political system. According to Islam, religion and state are supposed to form a unified system. As a way to channel their frustration, the fundamentalists let it out over the Copts, the Christian minority. Clashes between fundamentalists and Copts led to restrictions on both by Sadat. At the same time

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\(^{88}\) Hourani, Albert. 1996, p. 328  
\(^{89}\) Rubin, Barry. 1990, p. 16  
\(^{90}\) Ibid.  
\(^{91}\) Ibid., p. 330  
\(^{92}\) Long, David E. and Reich, Bernard. 2002, p. 355
Egypt had been expelled from the Arab League for making peace with Israel. That expulsion and the worsening living standards of common people in general, boosted frustration and negativity toward the President. Disappointment and poverty led to further radicalisation.

The radicalisation of parts of society was recognised by the government in the late seventies and acted upon. In 1980 mass arrests of fundamentalists and political opponents followed. Several religious groups were illegalised, their leaders arrested and their newspapers confiscated. The liberalisation of religious influence at university was halted and journalists and diplomats who had criticised the government were declared persona non grata. The suppression of these forces was too late. President Sadat was assassinated in 1981 and the successor, Hosni Mubarak, declared a state of emergency in the country.

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93 Hourani, Albert. 1996, p. 330
6. Islamism, Extremism and the Mubarak Presidency

The chapter highlights the political structure and reforms under Mubarak. In recent years Sinai has come to stand out as one of the most problematic regions of Egypt. A brief description of the problems of Sinai will give the reader a display of the nature of domestic problems that have faced the government in recent years. Eventually the focus turns towards Egypt’s relations to the Arab League, the US and Israel.

6.1 Political Structure

Egypt has been under the influence of several currents of political ideologies. As the most prominent ones can be mentioned Arabism, Socialism, Nationalism and Islamism. During the last century the government and oppositional groups have based their politics on the use of these currents. They have been practised in different combinations and at various levels, in old times pan-Arabism and during Sadat and Nasir Arab socialism and Arab nationalism respectively. Even though the contents of politics have changed vastly, the political structure of Egypt has stayed the same the latter half of the past century. This structure can be described by the image of four cornerstones, namely the leadership, the political class, the informal and the formal corporatist groups.

The first of these cornerstones, the Egyptian leadership, is patrimonial in its character. Patrimonial leaders are characterised not only by enjoying legitimacy by their formal role as head of state but by indirectly receiving a special status of broad acceptance from the citizens of the state. It is characteristic for a patrimonial leader to address citizens with the language of a father to his family. In fact the Arabic word for presidency, *riyasah*, contains both the notions of power and affection. In the case of Egypt, all of Sadat, Nasir and Mubarak can be described as patrimonial in their leadership styles. The psychological phenomenon in citizens automatically granting the head of the state legitimacy is advanced by the Egyptian President using already legitimised ideologies as the motive for his agenda.

In the presidential state of Egypt the formal powers of the President are substantial. The Constitution lays down that all executive powers originate from the President. For instance, the Cabinet is appointed by him and there are no constitutional obligations to consider parliamentary majority when choosing his ministers. As well as appointing the Cabinet, the President is the Commander in Chief and the sole decision maker in questions of foreign policy and the economy. In addition, he is

95 Ibid.
96 Craig-Harris, Lillian. 2006, p. 54
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
the leader of the ruling party as this role automatically becomes that of the presidential candidate.

The second cornerstone, the political class, is a traditional element in political systems with strong heads of states and has existed in Egypt for several hundreds of years. The political class supports the leader in exchange for privileges such as economic benefits. Because of this support the authority of the presidency remains strong. However, the short-term strength given by the political class hinders efficiency, reform and development, potentially resulting in negative long-term effects.99 One of the results is an economically strong ruling class which in turn affects the third and fourth of the cornerstones, the informal and formal corporatist groups. The informal corporatist group denotes the family and the surrounding network while the formal are different professional associations related to work. To be legitimate the professional associations have to agree not to pursue a political agenda and support the sitting government. In return they get monopoly on their area of interest. The only groups within society which haven’t received such approval are the Islamist groups. The moderate Islamist groups such as MB strive for acceptance by, and becoming a part of, the system. Those attempts have so far been fruitless, resulting in the interchange of moderate forces with militant ones.100 The lack of differentiation between Islamism and Islamic extremism creates frustration among the groups and misunderstandings of the agendas of certain groups. These conditions constitute a potential origin to further civil unrest.

### 6.2 Domestic Reform

The emergency rule has meant extended rights for authorities on behalf of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the citizens. After his inauguration, Mubarak commenced taking measures to counter Islamic extremism. A few months after the assassination of Sadat five persons, including top level members of both JJ and JI, were arrested, convicted and sentenced to life long prison terms. The hunt for extremist groups was intensified in the 1990s.101 There are different accounts of how many people were arrested. The numbers vary between 30000 and 50000 people.

Apart from using the extended powers of the emergency rule, Mubarak altered the judicial system so the trials concerned with extremism were to be held only by military courts instead of civil ones. The practical effect of the new law was a quicker court procedure. The judicial implication was longer sentences. The alteration of the court responsibilities meant in terms of law that militant extremists were to be considered as hostile combatants and not maladjusted citizens. The Mubarak administration also worked with the citizens’ perception of Islamic extremists. Both in state controlled media and in the political language all forms of extremism were referred to as terrorism. Gradually this label was implemented in society and eventually accepted. This psychological grip on Islamic extremism was an initial attempt to decrease the massive popular support that these groups nevertheless enjoyed.

100 Ibid.
101 Persson, Eva. 2005, p. 26
The Mubarak regime has also undertaken reforms of the party system. By only allowing parties with secular programmes, the government shuts Islamic groups out of political participation. The objective is to force the activist groups to adapt a moderate stance and create a secular agenda in spite of their religious base. Whether the reform has given that result or not is unclear. Either way all religious groups are cut off from parliamentary politics. Once again the government doesn’t differ between moderates and extremists, even though MB has expressed the explicit will to work within the existing political framework.\textsuperscript{102}

Evidently the religious society is strong among people in Egypt. Therefore the mosques are one of the most important sources of information. In fact much larger than newspapers as the illiterate part of the citizens mostly turn to the prayers for updates on what is new. That channel of information was in some cases used for propaganda and agitation by extremists. In the 1990s the government effectuated a reorganisation of the mosques. All of them were put under state control in this reorganisation which in turn has given Mubarak a greater insight and the possibility to steer what messages they deliver. Similar to controlling the message of the mosques, a go-through of school curricula was ordered. All references to political Islam which could be perceived as positive were cleansed. In addition to these measures the media was affected as well. Jurisdiction that prescribed what was to be showed and discussed in newspapers, journals and television was amended to the Constitution. At the same time information offices were set up around the country to get out the message of how dangerous extremist groups were. In connection to the large information campaign, many politicians and moderate muftis were told to further the warning of extremism. In 1993 all parties of parliament signed a statement condemning extremism.

Furthermore, the government has introduced several social and economic reforms to diminish the preconditions for radicalisation. Mubarak has targeted unemployment, the low educational level and the lack of housing as reasons leading to extremism. It has earlier been mentioned that in the shanty-towns was prosperous recruiting ground for extremists. Through one of the reforms, these poor housing communities were either demolished or renovated not leaving their inhabitants without shelter. Mubarak drew the conclusion that the origin of the bad living conditions, and eventually extremism, had its root in the strained economy. The government negotiated with the International Monetary Fund to lower its debts. In return the economic system in Egypt was liberalised by e.g. privatisation reforms and reducing the budget deficit. However it is not clear if these reforms really have improved the situation of unprivileged people, the potential extremist recruits.

\textbf{6.3 Recent Domestic Development}

After the truce between the government and Islamic extremists in 1997, Egypt was spared from further attacks on society. The absence of terrorism lasted for seven years until 2004 when it ended abruptly with a series of bombings in southern Sinai. The attacks in 2004 were the starting point for a new wave of bombings in Egypt.

\textsuperscript{102} Khalil, Magdi. 2006, p. 2
Apart from the 2004 bombings, killing 34 people, 2005 saw the killing of tourists both in Cairo and in Sharm al-Shaykh. Even the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) which guard the eastern sector of the Sinai, were attacked by bombs near Rafah in the north. In 2006 tourists were targeted again. This time the bombings took place in the southern Sinai resort Dahab killing and injuring over 100 people. This year as well, MFO was the target of roadside bombs.\textsuperscript{103}

The opinions about who or what extremist groups that are behind the renewed presence of terrorism differ. According to the International Crisis Group’s (ICG) \textit{Egypt’s Sinai Question} report of January 30\textsuperscript{th} 2007, thousands of arrests followed the last attacks. The Mubarak regime point to a diffuse group called \textit{Tawahid Wa Jihad}. Egypt media, on the other hand, points in another direction blaming Israel and the Israeli intelligence service Mossad.\textsuperscript{104} Some Arab media even blamed the US, arguing that the CIA was behind the attacks to try to destabilise the region.\textsuperscript{105} The ICG report draws the conclusion that the perpetrators are unknown.\textsuperscript{106} Whether it is a renewal of national political violence or international involvement either from Israel or al-Qaeda, is not a question for this thesis to answer. However it is of importance to note the revival of political violence in Egypt society and add it to the greater picture of societal change in relation to policy fluctuations.

Recent societal development in the country is characterised by decreasing living standards which the government has been blamed for. In addition, the Egyptian pound fell over forty percent 2000 to 2003. The fall led to an economic crisis which e.g. made the situation of the poor even worse. Popular protests in the streets have occurred frequently.\textsuperscript{107} The reform programme of the Mubarak regime has continued though, officially a programme of liberalising the Egyptian democracy.\textsuperscript{108} In 2006 the President proposed a set of amendments to the Constitution which aimed at reforming the political system and eventually set an end to the 26 year long emergency rule. The amendments were then passed by parliament and approved through a national referendum in March 2007. The new parts of legislation involve the equivalent extended powers at the expense of human rights as during the emergency rule. The power to detain suspects for long periods and trialling in military courts remains.

\section*{6.4 International Relations Related to Islamic Extremism}

From the 1974 Open Door Policy and onwards the US-Egypt relations improved drastically. When Sadat a few years later decided to approach Israel and eventually signed the 1979 Camp David Accord, diplomatic relations began to run smoothly.\textsuperscript{109} Egypt was and still is of political and strategic interest for the US. It was Egypt which had led all the wars against Israel and whose leadership assembled the majority of the Middle East states.\textsuperscript{110} During Cold War times a pro-western

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{103} Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT), Terrorism Knowledge Base, Egypt
\item \textsuperscript{104} MEMRI. 2005, No. 801, p. 1
\item \textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{106} ICG: Middle East/North Africa Report, 2007, No. 61, p. 24
\item \textsuperscript{107} Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), Egypt Country Report 2006, p. 5
\item \textsuperscript{108} Egypt State Information Service, www.sis.gov.eg, 2007-05-06
\item \textsuperscript{109} Moman, Bessma. 2003, p. 1
\item \textsuperscript{110} Ibid., p. 2
\end{itemize}
Egypt also checked some of the Soviet influence in the region. It might not be correct to argue that the US was and is dependent on Egypt in the full meaning of the word. However it is evident that US interests in the Middle East such as the protection of Israel and securing of oil deliveries are facilitated by the domestic well being of Egypt. Since Egypt left the road of Arab socialism and expelled their Soviet advisors in 1972 the country has become increasingly in need of financial aid from other sources. In the mid 1970s this source of economic support became the US, which still gives approximately $2 billion annually. Apart from being allowed to station US military equipment on Egypt soil, other conditions were also set up in order to receive the needed financial aid.

It is clear that the US wants a politically moderate and prosperous Egypt to ensure stability in the region. To accomplish that the US has continuously pushed for economic liberalisation in the country holding the financial aid as a ransom for its follow-through. From that perspective, an Egypt dependency on the US crystallises instead. In order to achieve the annual aid Egypt has to meet certain demands. Through the years these demands have varied. One of these, however not initially formal, has been to keep the Islamic extremists down and all other Islamists out of politics. Apart from the essential $2 billion aid, Egypt society is also dependent on the US for two other reasons. The threat from Israel is one. Only the US can provide the support needed for Egypt against Israel. Israel is supported by a super power and for receiving the same strong backing and friendship, US stands out in a comparison with other theoretically possible choices.

In the new millennium Egypt has extended its international relations further. In 2000 Egypt worked closely with the US on counterterrorism issues and signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Financing. After the Nine Eleven attacks, Mubarak was the first Arab leader to announce his support of the operations in Afghanistan. The Egyptian government has also passed an anti-money-laundering law and politicians from the whole ideological spectra condemn Islamic extremism. At the same time Egypt has continued its international cooperation within the frameworks of the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Both of these organisations have intensified their efforts, with Egypt as one of the driving forces, to suppress terrorism. The efforts of LAS have been continuously intense since the adoption of the Arab Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism in 1998. OIC has worked more actively since 2001 with e.g. preventing the association of Islam with terrorism.

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111 Meital, Yoram. 1998, p. 6
112 Momani, Bessma. 2003, p. 3
113 Ibid.
114 Meital, Yoram. 1998, p. 3
115 Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT), Terrorism Knowledge Base, Egypt
116 Nesi, Giuseppe. 2006, p. 162
Chapter seven constitutes the core analysis of the thesis. The theoretical framework of the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory is applied to the case of Egyptian politics. It is however the understanding of the case itself which is the primary objective of the analysis. That focus shall be kept throughout the whole study. Still, interesting and useful observations about PE applicability are also noted.

### 7.1 Policy Images and Policy Venues

According to PE, *images* and *venues* are the two basic notions around which the understanding of policy change shall be built. The notion of policy images appears especially applicable to the Egyptian context. The public understanding of the severity of the problem of Islamic extremists has varied from time to time. It has continuously stayed on top of the political agenda since the 1950s though. During both Nasir’s and Sadat’s rule, as well as during Mubarak’s rule, the relation to the Islamists has been one of top priority among the political questions. Still the stance on Islamism has swung from negative to positive and back to negative again. The public opinion on these issues has altered as well. A vast majority of the Egyptian population is Muslim, approximately 85 percent. Therefore the public opinion on Islam is positive. Islamism has also traditionally enjoyed broad support. However this broad support has been welcomed by the government under certain periods but frequently suppressed or changed through massive information campaigns or by repressive means.

Throughout the rule of all three presidents, their policy on Islamism and Islamic extremism has to be seen as an act of balance. Although not in majority among the Egyptians, the Islamists have been largely popular, partly because of the failure of the government to create a prosperous society, partly because of the excellent means to communicate to people through the mosques. PE discusses the role of stakeholders for a policy image. In this case the stakeholders are constituted by, on one hand, the government and, on the other hand, the Islamists and the socialists. These three are competing to explain the poor state Egypt is in and to forward their solution to these problems. The government has its established channels of information, television and newspapers, and so do the Islamists through prayer-meetings. The other parts of the opposition therefore stand small chances of getting their messages out. The rare occasions when the other oppositional forces win some ground of popularity, the government simply looses its repression on the Islamists instead in order to counterbalance these forces, e.g. Nasir in 1965 and Sadat’s introduction of an Islamist friendly Constitution in 1971.

President Mubarak has put continuous effort into establishing his understanding of the Islamist problem with the Egyptian people. The mass arrests of suspected Islamic extremists in the 1980s and the 1990s have naturally deterred from such sympathies. Most important though is the setting up of information bureaus in the
cities and the countryside to inform of the dangers of extremism. Simultaneously the government disrupted the information channels of these groups in 1990 by putting all mosques under state supervision. By taking measures like this Mubarak has steered the public understanding of the policy problem to his advantage. Thus, the notion of policy images is an important factor in comprehending Egyptian policy.

As opposed to the good applicability of policy images, the notion of venues appears somewhat less suitable to describe the Egyptian context. Initially, several possible venues can be identified. The most influential ones are the government, the parliament, the trade unions, the professional associations and the army. When Sadat became president and loosened the ties on the Islamists, the trade unions and the professional associations were eventually taken over by them, politicised and used to pursue their interests. Together with the mosques these channels of information influenced public opinion and political decision making to a large extent. However it was the government who let these groups out on the political scene and later on also the government who limited their authority. As Egypt's political system can’t be described as fully democratic, the notion of venues cannot be applied to its full extent. The notion of venues refers to the possibility of different power centres to affect policymaking. The institutions described above do that. However, when opinions differ from those of the government in policymaking, the governmental line is chosen. Although not being able to exert any direct authority over the rule of the President, their effort at forming public opinion is still of great importance.

### 7.2 Attention Shifting

Societal problems, such as Islamic extremism, have multidimensional and complex origins. Harsh living conditions, both physically and psychologically, are examples of probable causes. Numerous dimensions of a problem cannot, however, be focused on simultaneously by neither political decision makers nor interest groups.\(^\text{117}\) It is therefore natural that, according to PE, both groups often choose to concentrate on one, namely the most profitable one. The Mubarak cabinet has all since the beginning of its rule in 1981 considered Islamic extremism a development of Islamism and therefore illegalised all Islamist political parties, e.g. the Muslim Brotherhood. This single dimension of the problem with extremism is repeatedly in focus. When al-Jihad was founded and extremism rose in 1979, Sadat’s initial moves were to stop the backing of Islamism and to order mass arrests of suspected activists in 1980. These measures can be viewed in the perspective of other possible actions the government could have taken instead. An example of such actions would be the drafting of immediate economic reforms to ease the alarming situation in the shanty-towns and in the countryside. Both Sadat and later Mubarak seem to have chosen the same dimension of how to understand the origins of Islamic extremism.

Sadat’s and Mubarak’s choices appear logic in the light of PE. PE argues that political decision makers choose to find the most profitable solution to a problem,

\(^{117}\) Hansén, Dan. 2007, p. 109
although with multidimensional origins. Egypt’s frequently reoccurring economic crises have been problematic for the accountability of the government. To introduce economic reforms as a direct measure towards extremism would be to admit the failure of its own rule. Instead, to cluster Islamists and Islamic extremists together and treat them as one solitary societal unit is to kill two birds with one stone. As the Islamist opposition groups have always offered the strongest political resistance and fierce criticism of the government, limiting their authority would hinder a substantial extent of criticism towards the President and his cabinet and thus facilitate the governing. From the perspective of the Islamists, all societal problems in Egypt are due to governmental secularism and the lack of sharia legislation. As a vast majority of the population are Muslim, criticism of secularity can be understood and sympathised by everyone, even those poorly educated. By advancing that criticism, the Islamic groups gained massive support during the 1980s and in the beginning of the 1990s.

In terms of PE, the policy on Islamism and Islamic extremism forms a policy monopoly where change becomes difficult. As the government also, to some extent, can control the information flow in television and newspapers, it can continuously reaffirm the public about the reason and logics for the policy. A breakdown of such a policy monopoly is difficult, although it sometimes happen. When it happens it is, according to PE, the result of f. in. crises or other triggering events. These are important in shifting attention and changing policy as the following section will elaborate on. However, PE does not take into account that a government can be forced to reforms and certain policymaking by an external state actor. In 1975 Egypt signed agreements with the US on economic aid. The US have since then been the main economic source on which Egypt has depended. After the establishment of these close ties to the US there have been no more changes in the Egyptian government’s stance on Islamism. In addition most reforms to dieter extremism have been pushed through during this period. Egypt’s policy on Islamism and Islamic extremism must also be understood as a product of US demands on a hard line in this policy area, not only as a result of domestic policymaking.

7.3 Triggering Events

The idea that certain events or situations can be driving factors for change in politics is not unique for PE. Uriel Rosenthal, Arjen Boin and Louise Comfort refer to the same types of occurrences when discussing the notion of “frame-breaking events” in their Managing Crisis: Threats, Dilemmas, Opportunities (2001). A similar concept, “external perturbations” is used in PAC to denote one of that theory’s key variables.118 Even though the existence of a similar concept within several of the theories on policy change, it has been given a slightly different importance here. According to PE, triggering events are always significant factors in policymaking. Although, PE suggests, they are not always equally significant. The significance is dependent on the level of public attention it will receive. Today public attention is often linked to how well media will cover such an event. In turn, the level of media coverage is naturally a resultant of the present news flow.

118 Sabatier, Paul A. 1999, p. 120
domestically and internationally. In other words, coincidental timing is crucial if an event should affect policymaking to the extent that it will cause policy deviation. Therefore, to distinguish between these two types, PE uses a second notation, attributed trigger, to denote when an event really has gained that level of significance.

In the case of Egypt’s policy on Islamism and Islamic extremism several potentially interesting events have been identified in the previous chapters. On both the western and eastern hemispheres, in almost every country, Nine Eleven is the event which can be described as the most serious attributed trigger for the policy on Islamic extremism. Nine Eleven became the pivotal event which put Islamism on top of all political agendas. Since 2001 bilateral relations on governmental and departmental levels have strengthened in this policy area between an array of countries. Examples of these joint efforts are the cooperation of police forces and stricter airport security. Several governments without an outspoken stance on Islamic extremism were forced to choose sides in the wake of Nine Eleven. However, Egypt’s history of Islamism and Islamic extremism as top level issues on the political agenda goes back further than 2001. In the case of the US, its policy on Islamism can be understood largely as a function of the WTC-attacks. Egypt, though, is different.

Since the end of the 1970s, the Egyptian government has maintained the same actively repressive policy towards all Islamic movements, moderates as well as extremists. The government’s stance has fluctuated to some extent but only marginally. To explain this policy, the ingredient of triggering events is useful. However, the Egyptian context demands a more complex analysis. In addition, the policy appears to have early historical ties too, not only to be the result of contemporary sentiments. In reference to the notions of images and venues, repressive reforms on Islamism are most frequently intensified after rises of public Islamist popularity. This popularity seems to be preceded by an increase in the Islamist propagation by different venues such as particular Imams or other religious leaders. The rise of Islamist popularity among the public then activates extremist groups and in turn a harsher governmental line on all movements wanting Islam as an integral part of politics. There are several examples to illustrate this circle of activity. For instance, in the beginning of the 1980s popular support of the Islamic groups mounts in the aftermath of the Camp David Accords. In the year to follow the extremist group al-Jihad is formed. Activity rises with, among other things, clashes between demonstrators and the police in the streets of Cairo. Shortly thereafter Islamists are excluded from political activity and mass arrests of Islamist leaders follow.

That circle of activity is repeated continuously. It is however not a casual chain where the initiating activity is identified. PE argues that a combination of images, venues, triggering events and timing is the driving force behind policy change. So, according to PE, when the venues are identified one should look for extraordinary events, domestic or foreign, to include in the analysis. In the search for such events the complicated relation with Israel stands out. The historical peace accords between Egypt and Israel, advocated by President Carter at Camp David in 1979, is perhaps the most sensitive one to the Egyptian people. In the same year political

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119 Hansén, Dan. 2007, p. 111
asylum was also granted to the Shah of Iran. Serious disturbances and an upswing of popularity for extremism followed. During this growth of extremism, President Sadat was assassinated in 1981.

7.4 Policy Inheritance

The previous section brought up the interesting aspect of historical ties in the making of Egypt’s Islamism policy. Apart from the important factors of images, venues and triggering events, this thesis puts forward that what has taken place in the past such as experiences and events is equally important to explain the intended policy. PE does not consider historical ties as a variable for policy change. That claim is however made by Richard Rose and Phillip L. Davies in Inheritance in Public Policy: Change without Choice in Britain (1994). Rose and Davies commence their argument by saying that it can be agreed upon by everyone that public policymakers, at least initially, are rooted in time: When public policymakers take office they take an oath to uphold the Constitution of the state. Henceforth, they accept the rule of previous governments. By doing so, they also accept all the constraints that come with it in terms of constitutional and other legislative intentions.

Rose and Davies develop their argument further by pointing out the fact that past choices and occurrences constitute the present political context to which policymakers of today have to adapt. Even though one might not agree with or desire policies of earlier administrations, they are followed through and the political decision maker has to accept the current situation. In addition, time also restricts the renewal of policies. During the relatively short time in office there is not enough time to alter all the policies inherited from the previous administration. Rose’s and Davies’ inheritance-argument also includes a consideration of the complexity of the state apparatus. The inertia of politics prevents sudden policy change. They argue that political agendas are set in reference to the possibility of success in achieving policy change. They further link the concept of bounded rationality, which is recognised by PE as well, to inheritance by saying that what really bounds rationality is the inheritance of the past. Rose’s and Davies’ argumentation is not contradictory to PE, in fact complementary. The focus on inertia fits well with the notions of images and venues and the need for changes in those to break policy monopolies, the direct or indirect political unwillingness for policy change.

In the case of Egypt’s policy on Islamism Rose’s and Davies’ arguments appear to be supported by several examples from the past. After the coup d’état in 1952 Nasir illegalised the Muslim Brotherhood after having encountered strong opposition. In the decade to come, the policy on Islamism became repressive. The religious university of al-Azhar was taken over by the state and the traditional Sharia courts dealing with family law became supervised. However, the restraints on political Islam were released in 1965 when the leftist opposition had grown strong and Nasir was in need of political backing. A few years later Egypt attacked Israel in what has

120 Rose, Richard. and Davies, Phillip L. 1994, p. 1
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid., p. 2
123 Ibid., p. 4
become known as the Six-Day War. Initially Egypt had some military successes but was defeated in the end and lost the whole of Sinai. The failure favoured the Islamist groups and eventually Nasir was assassinated in 1970. One year after the accession of Sadat he introduced a new Constitution which further favoured Islamism by making sharia the main source of legislation. During the decade of Sadat Islamist activity and extremism increased exponentially. The Islamist were dissatisfied with e.g. the closer ties to the US through infitah, the open door policy, and another failed war on Israel during Ramadan in 1973. The end of the 1970s saw the establishment and growth of several extremist movements such as the al-Jihad. The very explosion of extremist rage and Islamist political opposition came after the Camp David Peace Accords in 1979 and led to another presidential assassination. Before the murder of Sadat he completely ended the support of Islamism and excluded Islamic groups from all political decision making arenas. It is in that perspective one must consider the policy on Islamism advocated by Mubarak. The historical record of the Islamist movements in Egypt tells that extremism, and hence subversive activities, have always followed in the tracks of those periods when these movements have been let forward.

7.5 Equilibrium, Punctuations and Gradual Policy Alterations

Through the present in-depth study of Egypt’s Islamism policy, the vast complexity which surrounds it becomes rather clear. There are numerous independent variables affecting the policymaking of which a handful have been identified here. PE illuminates important aspects of policy change. At first the general description of policy alterations as long periods of stasis interrupted by sudden change feels familiar in reference to the Egyptian context. The PE description of upcoming policy images advocated by policy opponents and, to some extent, the notion of strong venues can be recognised as well. The presence of triggering events is important in bringing about change although they do not seem to be as pivotal in the case of Egypt as PE argues. The scholar Sander Meijerink discusses the importance of triggering events for this process in his article Understanding Policy Stability and Change (2005). Meijerink concludes that policy change cannot be understood by considering extraordinary events as the most important factor, although they play significant roles. According to Meijerink, policy change must be explained by a combination of many factors. As in Meijerink’s study, policy changes in the Egyptian context include a triggering event at the initial stage but is also consequently followed by a change in public opinion or an activation of oppositional groups. Triggering events alone can not be adjudged the cause of policy change in the present case.

One of these factors is the role of leadership personality and another, the emotive aspects of public opinion. The pivotal factor in bringing about policy change is not the events, as argued above, but the situations created by interactions of the different factors. PE stresses that political decision making is built on bounded rationality. Decision makers are guided by biases such as ideological convictions and strong beliefs. As for the case of Egyptian politics the strong presence of these two is evident to the beholder. Biases can mean that the policy is not changed even

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124 Meijerink, Sander. 2005, p. 1074
though a new experience, e.g. in the form of a crisis, is added. Neither can one foresee policy change by considering what level of attention a certain issue gets. The change is steered by the bounded rationality of the decision maker. If the decision maker experiences strong emotions in a particular situation, the rational reasoning will stand back in favour of the emotive appeal. These emotions can in turn be pushed further by public opinion which is also guided by bounded rationality, perhaps to an even greater extent. The previously addressed idea of policy inheritance has close ties to this emotive aspect. Political history and earlier experiences certainly affect the reasoning of a political decision maker. Perhaps the most evident example here of a strong emotional experience is the fact that President Mubarak’s predecessor was murdered by Islamic extremists.

During the whole of Mubarak’s time in office, the policy on Islamism and Islamic extremism can be described as stable and unchanged, though with a few alterations. The tools for describing the minor policy changes during a long period of stability are not sufficient in PE. The PE framework only sees major change or stasis, nothing in between those two dichotomous stages. The inability to notice gradual policy alterations originates in the rigid focus on images and venues. By such a focus, the result of the organising of interest groups is accounted for, not the important process leading to that state. In turn, such a neglect means that PE can’t be used for prediction either, only to explain policy changes in the past. As opposed to PE, the PAC framework recognises minor change to a greater extent. Though, it is more a question of labelling the level of change than actual analysis. In PAC the topic and scope of change decide whether a change is major or minor. However, the increased focus on labelling, evidently, brings along a greater attention to minor change.

When considering the minor policy change by looking at inheritance and the present context, the Mubarak leadership has inherited a complex legacy. Trying to assess the situation from the Cabinet’s point of view, their harsh but stable policy on Islamic extremism appears logic. The heritage from Sadat is two headed: On one hand Sadat put in place extensive legislation to strengthen the power of the state. On the other hand he left Mubarak with a large, further radicalised, extremist opposition. Mubarak has simply used these legislative tools his predecessor put in place for him. Already radicalised extremist groups have been suppressed. Additionally, Mubarak has adopted a businesslike discreet style in general, to avoid stirring up further strong emotions. He has e.g. accentuated that he is neither a Nasir nor a Sadat. However, the policy of the Mubarak administration should not be seen as a core belief but rather a way to cope temporarily with domestic problems.

In his study of Swedish nuclear energy policy (2005), political scientist Daniel Nohrstedt has drawn similar solutions of why a certain political line of action is chosen. He found that the Social Democratic Party in reference to a national referendum on the existence of nuclear energy chose to “sell out policy core beliefs

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125 Hansén, Dan. 2007, p. 111
126 Hansén, Dan. 2007, p. 112
127 Ibid.
128 Sabatier, Paul A. 1999, p. 147
129 Craig Harris, Lillian. 2006, p. 54
130 Ibid., p. 55
in order to escape temporary strategic problems and safeguard short-term political interests”\textsuperscript{131}. When it comes to the Egyptian policy on Islamism, it seems as both the unfortunate clustering of Islamism and Islamic extremism as representing the same value, and the collective policy pursued towards these two movements, is a political solution to a severe societal problem. The policy, most probably, does not come from a profound dislike of these groups. Besides the importance of policy inheritance and core beliefs, Nohrstedt advances the view that policy is to be understood in reference to the present political landscape and politico-strategic manoeuvring.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{131} Nohrstedt, Daniel. 2005, p. 1056
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
8. Conclusion

The concluding chapter summarises the findings. This chapter also includes comments on the need for further study within this area and on specific research directions that have appeared fruitful to pursue in the future.

8.1 Egypt's Policy on Islamism and Islamic Extremism

The study examines President Mubarak’s policy on Islamism and Islamic extremism by taking on a perspective of policy analysis and particularly PE theory. The idea of such a novel approach to this area of study originates in the appeal by terrorist researcher Martha Crenshaw for further cross fertilisation of different discourses. Terrorism and counterterrorism studies are in need of new theoretical approaches. The application of PE on the case of Egypt attempts to explain the origins of the government policy. By doing so it can also, possibly, contribute to such enrichment called for by Crenshaw. The thesis’ policy change-perspective aims at enriching, partly the radicalisation discourse with taking on a state centric perspective as opposed to the common individual-based ones, partly that of counterterrorism by bringing in classic policy analysis.

The distinction between Islamism and Islamic extremism serves as the point of departure of the illumination of Egyptian policy. The clarification of these terms becomes increasingly important as the presentation and analysis of the case progresses. The reason for this is Egypt’s government’s continuing tendency to cluster moderate Islamic groups and Islamic extremist groups in policy practice. The equivalently repressive policy is applied to both moderates and extremists. It eventually becomes sufficient to refer to the policy on Islamism and Islamic extremism as only the policy on Islamism, meaning both. However, to highlight this distinction is fundamental in understanding that the choice of the Egyptian government is not the universal perception of political Islam.

The Mubarak administration has inherited a vastly complex legacy. After the changing policy of both Nasir and Sadat, varying from welcoming to completely repressive, the country was left with a spectra of active Islamist movements, both radicalised and moderate ones. The popularity of these grew substantially during the 1980s. Simultaneously, the living conditions remained harsh for large groups of society especially in the countryside and the shanty-towns where the extremists recruited terrorists-to-be. The theoretical framework of PE was useful in understanding Egyptian policy to a significant extent. The two basic notions of PE theory, *images* and *venues*, correspond to different extents to the Egyptian case. Both notions are important in explaining policy change, though that of venues was difficult to apply because of Egypt’s reoccurring compromises with democratic rule in Egypt.
PE theory states that only one causal factor of multidimensional problems get public attention at a time. Political decision makers as well as public interest groups naturally tend to focus on the most profitable one. The Mubarak Cabinet has always described Islamic extremism as a development of Islamism in its moderate form. It would not be as profitable for the Cabinet to attribute the growth of extremism to poverty and harsh living conditions. That would mean to criticise one self. As long as Egypt’s economy and living standard remains relatively low it is probable that no shift of attention will take place. Through the PE perspective the present political landscape is where the explanations are found. Though, in the case of Egypt the aspects of policy inheritance and learning also have to be highlighted as causal factors. In order to do so, PE was successfully complemented with Rose’s and Davies’ *Inheritance in Public Policy* (1994). Through that theoretical lens, the incentives of the Mubarak presidency became much clearer. In retrospect Mubarak could see that releases of moderate Islamists onto the political scene always had resulted in a successive build-up of extremist movements and eventually to terrorism and uprisings in the streets. In addition, both his predecessors had been assassinated by Islamic extremists. For a sitting president with an acute problem to handle, the solution from his perspective appears rather clear.

It was long before the events of Nine Eleven Egypt’s alarm clock went off concerning the need for an active policy towards Islamic extremism. The Six-Day War of 1967 and the Camp David Peace Accords in 1979 have been identified as triggering events which twice made extremism explode in popularity and eventually led the government to adapt a repressive policy towards both moderate and extreme Islamists. These two failures for Islamism are not however pointed out as the sole factors to explain the policy. Egypt’s policy on Islamism and Islamic extremism should be understood equally in terms of historical ties as well as the present political landscape. Egypt was not completely unaffected by Nine Eleven in the sense that US demands on Egypt in reference to counterterrorism increased. These demands were already in place in the 1980s though, although less substantial. In fact, Nine Eleven came as a blessing to the Egyptian government in need of a strong incentive for adapting further repressive measures towards Islamism. The several-billion-dollar aid creates a situation of dependency between Egypt and the US, making Egypt forced to follow American policy. Henceforth, Egypt’s policy cannot be understood without reference to the influence of the US.

The policy on Islamism showed to stay rather unchanged during the rule of Mubarak, although with smaller fluctuations. These minor policy changes were not explainable through PE. In that sense, PE appears rather dichotomal. In the world of PE it is always a question of either major change or complete stasis. As opposed to PE PAC recognises these fluctuations better and was brought in to the analysis as a complement. Egypt’s continuously stable policy of Islamism and Islamic extremism has been found to be the result of several causal factors whereof domestic public pressure, the activities of the strong Islamic movements, influence of foreign states and policy inheritance appear to be the most important ones. The next step of further research is to weigh these factors against each other to further understand their mutual importance. The precision needed in such an act can not be provided by PE.
8.2 Further Research

It would be of interest with further case studies applying PE, especially in the Middle East. From a theoretical point of view it would also be fruitful to apply PAC on Egypt and compare the applicability between the two frameworks. Apart from the theory-linked issues, the new wave of terrorist attacks in the Sinai is puzzling from a PE perspective in the sense that no major policy change, apparent at least, has preceded them. The origins of this activity are important for a deeper understanding of the Egyptian context and possibly the security complex it forms with the other North African states and Israel.
Bibliography


