

Egyptian State and the Question of Legitimacy, 1970-2011

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled “**EGYPTIAN STATE AND THE QUESTION OF LEGITIMACY, 1970-2011**”, submitted by me for the award of the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Priyanka Chandra', is written above the name.

(Priyanka Chandra)

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A.K. Ramakrishnan', is written above the name.

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List of Abbreviations

- CIP: Commodity Import Programme
- ERSAP: Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Programme
- ETUC: Egyptian Trade Union Confederation
- ETUF: Egyptian Trade Union Federation
- GATS: General Agreement on Trade in Services
- GDP: Gross Domestic Product
- HCLF: Higher Committee for Liquidation of Feudalism
- IBRD: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- IFI: International Financial Institution
- IMF: International Monetary Fund
- NDP: National Democratic Party
- NGO: Non Governmental Organisation
- ODA: Overseas Development Assistance
- RBI: Reserve Bank of India
- SAP: Structural Adjustment Programme
- SDR: Special Drawing Rights [Currency code: XDR]
- SFD: Social Fund for Development
- UAR: United Arab Republic
- USAID: United States Agency for International Development
- WTO: World Trade Organisation

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Westphalian state, as envisaged in the West and adapted in the postcolonial world, is the most powerful and effective system of political organisation in the world, and forces of globalisation, civil society movements, transnational organisations, revolutions that spread across regions, or economic crises do not subsume this system of states which are territorial in nature and sovereign. The state is no longer an isolated lone actor in international politics, but it definitely remains the most powerful one, because its agency of accumulating and utilising power is recognised unlike any other form of political organisation. Moreover, it is still very powerful because civil society is tied to it and as much as the civil society has the power to transform the nature of the state, it needs the state for its own evolution. The state, particularly in domestic politics, remains the only institution for effectively accumulating power and using that power to implement change, and even as the civil society has the power to transcend it, the ideas, expressions, frustrations, rebellion and opposition generated by the civil society are all, nonetheless, aimed at the state. The classification of states in the West Asian region is not a new endeavour. There are numerous studies which have attempted to classify the Arab state as Islamic, Monarchical, military-ruled or democratic. There is also a political economic perspective that views the sovereign rule and the market as correlating variables. This view asserts that the economic policies of the state determine, and are in turn influenced, by the 'political state'. By extension of this view, the economic framework, of the state is also a key factor in the study of the nature of the state.

The Egyptian state has been shaped by numerous influences in the past century. Its colonial history has played a major role in bringing in Western concepts of nation, governance, democracy, liberalism, secularism etc. The foundations of the state were laid from the time of colonial rule which brought in a particular kind of state machinery, essentially Western in its conception, superimposed on the Egyptian system which had

been under the Ottoman rule till then. The reign of Muhammad Ali in particular was significant because it laid the foundations of the bureaucracy and military in Egypt, to which the current political system still traces its roots. A brief experience of being ruled by a monarchical regime saw a major transformation in the Egyptian politics, which culminated in the Free Officers' revolution in 1952. Since then, up until 2011, Egypt has been ruled by military regimes which have exerted their own influences on the institution of the state.

The opposition of the Muslim Brotherhood and a simultaneously growing demand for a more Westernised idea of democracy and liberalism have been a challenge to the authority of the state. The Muslim Brotherhood challenged not just the ruling regime but also the idea of a Western, modern state that the political leadership was trying to emulate. Such forces could not function because of state repression. Apart from sustaining these forces internally, the 'Egyptian' state coexisted with the 'Arab' identity, which was being reiterated under the leadership of Egypt. For a long time the Egyptian state was overshadowed by its own ideas of Arab nationalism, to the extent that the Egyptian leadership was deriving its legitimacy from this pan-Arab identity. All these features provided different facets to the character of the Egyptian state over the decades. But what is the essential nature of the Egyptian state, how does one define it? The understanding of the nature of the Egyptian state and tracing its evolution over the decades requires a comprehensive study of various features.

From the Free Officers' Revolution of 1952, and the coming to power of Gamal Abdel Nasser, there were many changes in the structure and style of leadership, such as the writing of the new constitution, party politics and the role of the military. The structures and functioning of the military and the bureaucratic systems have remained largely the same since. The process of consolidation of political power gave the military an authoritarian structure, which increased especially after the succession of Nasser. The Nasser-led government and military brought key changes to the economy of Egypt, not so much in terms of regulation as the state's possession of control of major sectors within it, through the Nasser-led government and military. The economy at this time, and throughout the rule of Nasser, was controlled by the state, with major industries

being regulated under the public sector. These included heavy industries, the oil sector and the Suez Canal business. The nationalisation of the Suez Canal was an important indicator of the economic trends within Egypt, and the stance it would adopt internationally.

During the Nasser era, the state had a distinctly socialist ideological position. The emphasis was on ideas of Pan Arabism and alleviating class distinctions, as reflected in the government's policies. Pan-Arabism and socialist economic ideals were highly emphasised, giving the state a particular shape during Nasser's leadership. Opposition, particularly from religious and social organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood was not tolerated. Elections were not regularly held, and the credibility of plebiscites dubious. Nasser's rule saw considerable opposition from the civil society too, especially in the later years when his persona had lost its strong hold on the people and economic anxieties and social frustrations were becoming palpable. This was the time when the state saw outbreaks of tension and mass unrest. Internationally, Egypt ascribed to the idea of non-alignment in the Cold War era, although there was an inclination towards the former Soviet Union. The defeat of 1967 had led to further loss of credibility of the state's subscription to Pan-Arabism. While Nasser, as the first President of Egypt was able to consolidate his own position and office, the state was still young and finding its feet given the serious economic challenges it was faced with.

It was in this socio-economic and political setting that Anwar el-Sadat succeeded Nasser in 1971. As the people of Egypt made their frustrations clearly felt, Sadat's era saw a shift from the claimed socialist credentials of the state. While Sadat claimed in his initial years to adhere to the policies of his predecessor, there was a clear break from the earlier socialist credentials to a more liberalised economy. This ideological shift was one of the most important factors indicating the increasingly authoritarian nature of the state. With the coming of the *Infitah* or the open door policy, there were major changes in the economic policies of the state, in turn leading to alteration in its political identity as well. It was seen as an active process of 'de-Nasserisation' by Sadat, which reflected in the political ideology as well as the economic and foreign policy of Egypt under Sadat's rule. The economy became more liberal and efforts were made to boost the

private sector. The pan-Arab ideals were abandoned as the government pursued an 'Egypt-first' policy. The Camp David Accords were a major indicator of this clear shift. A series of bread riots in 1977 following the abolishment of subsidies prevented a complete liberalisation of the economy. Since 1979, Egypt became the second largest recipient of United States (US) foreign assistance in terms of military and economic aid. The leadership turned to international organisations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank for aids, bringing the economy to the brink of neo-liberalisation for which it was not yet prepared. In 1981, the IMF estimated that Egypt's debt was US\$ 21.2 billion, which increased to US\$ 35.8 billion by the end of June 1986 (McDermott 1988: 79). Imposition of such an economic system required the state to assume even greater control of the economy, contrary to the idea of minimal role of the state in neo-liberal theory, giving it a more authoritarian character.

Efforts to liberalise the economy were also reflected in the structure of the political system, with the Permanent Constitution of 1971 and attempts at political liberalisation. There were a greater number of plebiscites as well elections, though their credibility was still doubted. Yet, despite the general air of liberalisation and relaxation in the economy as well as the political system, the state was gradually becoming even more powerful and authoritarian, both in terms of the political system as well as the regulation of economy. The added subservience of the Egyptian economy and state to international organisations raised questions on its legitimacy, both domestically as well as internationally. The relatively liberal political atmosphere did not sustain as opposition was slowly crushed down, the Muslim Brotherhood was cracked down upon, particularly after the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty of 1979. This was particularly so due to the strong opposition to the peace treaty as well as a severe critique of the Camp David Accords and the promised peace dividend. The economy of Egypt came almost entirely under the control of the state, either through direct government control or through the military which played an important role in the political system and the economy. The dynamics within the military were slowly changing but in order to consolidate his own position, Sadat pre-empted any effort to destabilise his control from within the ranks of the military. Despite half-hearted attempts at liberalising the political arena, the military remained the dominant political actor. The nature and functioning of the bureaucracy,

which was still deeply enmeshed with the military, had barely changed. There was growing resentment among the people who increasingly began to question the legitimacy of the government and the state, which no longer had the advantage of the personal charisma of Nasser.

Hosni Mubarak's rule, which began in 1981, was largely a continuation of the political and economic system from Sadat's time, with the imposition of emergency and minor changes in the Constitution or economic regulation. The new leadership continued with the ideological position of the state during the Sadat era. The military reigned supreme as a political force, and its control over the economy continued to expand, now in the guise of liberalisation. Partial economic liberalisation benefitted only a small section of the population as there was a dearth of effective economic reforms. By the end of 2011, Egypt's total external debt had reached almost US\$ 35 billion (Ahram Online 2012). This is despite the fact that in the decade of 2000- 2010, Egypt has been paying roughly US\$ 3 billion per year in debt service, which means that more public money has been flowing out of Egypt to Western lenders than vice-versa (Hanieh 2011). Mounting foreign debt, regulation and reform from above, which was ill-suited to the state of the Egyptian economy, and the continuing process of consolidation of power by the ruling regime gave the state a distinctly authoritarian character, further alienating it from the civil society. Even as members of the opposition factions such as the Muslim Brotherhood began to infiltrate the legislating bodies, backlash on oppositional forces during Mubarak's time was much heavier. The opposition from both political groups and the civil society at large constantly increased, and this opposition was targeted at the authoritarian style of leadership as well as the economic policies of neoliberalism. This opposition and growing antagonism towards the ruling regime was visible in the Egyptian culture, from literary commentaries to the role of the media. Eventually the political leadership was not able to contain the opposition and frustrations of the people, which subsequently led to the end of the Mubarak period.

Legitimacy of the Egyptian state, which is already undermined by the nature of the role assumed by the state in domestic politics, also faces international challenges. The neoliberal economic shift leaves states like Egypt politically vulnerable internationally,

placing their legitimacy under global scrutiny, questioning and criticism. Authoritarian or military regimes such as those that have existed in Egypt do not have the kind of popular support enjoyed by democratically elected governments. They face immense pressure to deliver to the people, particularly in the economic sphere. With the kind of neoliberal shift that has occurred in Egypt, this deliverance may also suffer. This impacts whatever legitimacy the state may have amassed, both domestically and internationally. Infringement on, or lack of deliverance in, the economic sphere undermines the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the people. Mounting foreign debts and a deficit in balance of payments also place the state in a precarious position internationally. The sovereignty and autonomy of a state in international politics gets severely affected by the interference that comes along with monetary aid. State sovereignty gets constantly eroded by such external pressures, raising further questions on the legitimacy of the state not just domestically, but internationally as well.

Given the trajectory of the evolution of politics and the state of economy in Egypt, it is evident that there have been many influences on the Egyptian state. But which of these influences have been the most prominent? And what shape have they given to the identity of the state? Has the long spate of military regimes made the state more authoritarian and dictatorial? The economic position of the country has been weak for many years. Added to that is the burden of international debt and accountability to international organisations. What does this clearly neoliberal shift do to the role and nature of the state? In imposing the neoliberal system from above, does the state assume an even more authoritarian role? This can be problematic on two levels. The first is on the theoretical plane. Minimal role of the state is the most basic essential of the neoliberal system. However, its imposition by the state in a developing country is contrary to the very idea of neoliberalism. The second problem is that of the legitimacy the state enjoys in the eyes of the civil society. Unlike popularly elected governments, military regimes do not have much legitimacy from the society. They are constantly under pressure to deliver, thus making the role of economic regulation an extremely important factor for them to attain legitimacy. In such a scenario, an authoritarian regime pushing an underdeveloped and unprepared economy towards neoliberalism is deeply problematic for the legitimacy of the state.

Survey of Literature

The survey of literature has been divided into three categories. These categories focus on the theories of state including theories of neoliberalism, the neoliberal shift in Egypt under Sadat and Mubarak and military and authoritarianism in Egypt.

Theorising the State

According to Antonio Gramsci, the state is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those whom it rules (Gramsci 1971). Timothy Mitchell regards the state as the structural effect resulting from modern techniques of functional specifications, organisational control and social surveillance that are exercised within society by institutions such as armies, bureaucracies and schools (Mitchell 1991a). States can be viewed as compulsory political organisations whose administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical forces in the enforcement of its order within a given territory (Weber 1978). The state is an authoritative political organisation in the sense that its policies and rules are recognised by those that it seeks to govern. Deviation from these rules involves the state exercising compulsion or coercion over the lawbreakers. For the state to be able to exercise its power to impose order, the state alone should hold instruments of coercion. This monopoly of coercive forces however, must be tied to legitimate use and, by implication, rule (Ibid.). Administrative, legal, extractive, and coercive organisations are at the core of any state. These organisations are variably structured in different states, and may be embedded in some form of constitutional representative system of parliamentary decision making and electoral contests for key executive and legislative posts (Skocpol 1985).

The state has been described by Nazih N. Ayubi as a juridic abstraction which connotes exclusive authority (sovereignty), domestically, over a certain territory with its inhabitants, and externally, vis-à-vis the foreign 'others', if necessary through war. This legal abstraction is therefore a formal expression of power relationships. The origins

and bases of many power relationships in modern, complex societies are, however, derived from economic relationships pertaining to property rights or control over the means of production. The state plays a crucial role, either in setting the conditions that enable certain types of economic relationships to take place or to reproduce themselves, or, more immediately, in directly controlling the means of production and fixing most of the economic relationships in a more authoritative way (Ayubi 1995).

Many authors view the state as an entity whose political powers are also deeply enmeshed with its regulatory role of the economy. Hani Shukrallah describes the state as a special material repository of the mode of production at a particular stage of development, whereby the relations of production are already inscribed into the institutional materiality of the state. He further comments on the nature of class system and exploitation that is relative to this state, in that it reflects the system of class exploitation in the economic sphere, into a language specific to it and inherent in the specific role historically assigned to it by the prevalent division of labour. The state then, particularly in the developing world, has to maintain its powers by extracting resources from the domestic economy (Shukrallah 1989; Clapham 1985).

The legitimacy of a state is dependent on the acceptability of the people it rules. According to David Easton, the inculcation of a sense of legitimacy is the single most effective device for regulating the flow of diffused support in favour both of the authorities and the regime (Easton 1965). It is the extent to which leadership and regimes are perceived by elites and masses as congruent and compatible with the society's fundamental, value-impregnated myths that hold society together (MacIver 1947; Hudson 1977).

Postcolonial states make attempts to gain primacy of the political especially in the form of state's intervention in the economic sphere, not only as animateur, planner and coordinator but also as producer and manager. Thus, the success of the state will become closely tied to its achievement and performance in the economic sphere (Ayubi 1995). Legitimacy of the state in West Asia is also intertwined with an evaluation of the performance of the state both as a producer (the public sector) and as a distributor (social welfare), and considerations of 'sufficiency' and 'justice' play a far more

important role as components of the concept of legitimacy than they do in advanced capitalist countries (Ibid.).

The process of consolidation of state power in such a country can often reflect a return to the authoritarianism of the colonial rule in the postcolonial period (Clapham 1985). An authoritarian state can be colonial in nature as it functions like a bourgeoisie state, in that it controls the means of production, and becomes the organised power for dominating the entire society. The bourgeoisie character of the state and its superiority, in some aspects, to the pre-colonial state does not change its basically colonial or negative character (Chandra 1999).

Neoliberalism has been generally understood to be primarily an economic doctrine with a set of policy prescriptions, which means that pivotal political questions have been relegated to the background. However, in recent academic trends, neoliberalism is increasingly being portrayed as a political doctrine, discourse or as a disciplinary practice (Ramakrishnan 2002; Gill 1995). A. K. Ramakrishnan has used the term 'neoliberal globalism' to highlight a shift from conventional liberal internationalism to the ascendancy of the process of globalisation, the accelerated attempt at incorporating every sector of the world into the capitalist mode of production and its market logic through unfettered flow of transnational capital (Ramakrishnan 2002). Neoliberal globalism marks its shift by undermining the role of certain actors like the state and by giving more importance to non-state actors such as transnational companies. The process of neoliberalism creates states with limited governmental powers relative to the problems they face. This leads to a weakening of both the state institution and state policy, relative to the market (Rosecrance 1999).

The wave of oppositional movements to the onslaught of neoliberalism indicates significant expectations of the people, especially in underdeveloped/developing and postcolonial countries, from the state. Even as the focus has shifted to markets and economics, state continues to remain the key site of political legitimacy as well as the locus of considerable and enduring powers, and the Western conceptions and formulation, if pushed to their logical limits, undermines the very state which is needed to implement the international agreements and business contracts signed in ever

increasing numbers every successive year (Babu 1998). A neoliberal shift and the circumstances created by it are not conducive to the effective functioning of such a state. The crisis of legitimacy faced by many South Asian states is in a large measure due to this incompatibility of the provider state with neoliberal institutional arrangements of the contemporary kind (Ramakrishnan 2008). State policies that are highly interventionist and manipulative in the economic functioning of the nation have been described as *dirigiste*. *Dirigisme* is a practice that places economics as the key area around which political battles are waged, and views the state as a necessary and essentially benign agent of economic transformation (Milanovic 1989; Ayubi 2006).

Evaluation of the state as an institution, as a body of political organisation in the context of a particular nation has been rather limited. While such studies have been conducted in Latin American nations for sometime (especially under dependency theory), in West Asia such inquiry has been very limited. Further, most of the studies that have been conducted in West Asia focus on the nature of regimes rather than the state. While classification and categorisation of regimes have been commonplace, how they, along with other factors like ideology, economy and civil society, reflect on the identity of the state has remained largely unexplored. A seminal work in this field has been that of Ayubi, who has provided extensive scholarship on various aspects of the Arab state, placing the Arab nations under different categories in the process.

Neoliberal Shift under Sadat and Mubarak

The *Infatih* or open-door policy introduced by Sadat, was aimed primarily at liberalising the banking sector, allowing foreign commercial banks to operate in foreign currencies in what had been a public sector monopoly. Foreign exchange regulations and the import regime were relaxed, an Arab and Foreign Investment code was drawn up (Law 43) to attract new capital flows, and efforts were made to stimulate the capital market. *Infatih* also brought about a shift away from dependency on the Eastern Bloc and towards markets in which Egypt could earn hard currency (Waterbury 1993). Ismail Fahmy has described the process of shaping Egypt's position during the negotiations of

disengagement agreements with Israel and the realignment of Egyptian foreign policy in distancing itself from Russian dominance and reestablishing relations with the United States (US) (Fahmy 1983). This shift in Egypt's policy towards a negotiated peace with Israel was a reflection of the state formation process and the constant thrust of the ruling regime to disengage from supra-state commitments based on Pan-Arabism or political Islam (Sela 1997). Mahmoud Riad, who was Foreign Minister of Egypt from 1964 to 1971, has described diplomatic exchanges on the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially those with Russia and the US (Riad 1981).

Sadat's shift to the right was consistent with changes in the foreign policy orientation of the regime. Sadat believed that it was important for Egypt to respond to the new opportunities that were created by the October War of 1973 (Ansari 1986). What the *Infitah* policy did not do was dismantle the state sector or reduce the state's intervention in the economy in any way. Rather, the state not only maintained its regulatory powers in economic functioning but such powers grew prodigiously during the 1970s (Waterbury 1993). The assertion of the state on economic functioning was visible in Nasser's era through the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, companies under foreign ownership of Britain, France etc. and the usurpation of control or ownership of major industries such as textiles, food processing and sugar refining plants, public utilities and mass transit, major construction companies, newspapers as well as importation and distribution of newsprint etc. and limited scope for development or expansion of the private sector.

During Sadat's era, the focus of the state's economic function shifted from providing subsidies and encouraging development of the private sector to amassing foreign aid leading to huge deficit and rising consumerism, but in no way lessening the control of the state over the economy despite its stated liberalisation programme (Ayubi 1980; Waterbury 1993). Free trade zones, new cities, and tourist centers were part of Sadat's schemes for the future, which needed a capital investment of US\$ 10 billion, as stated in the October Paper of 1974. The liberalisation of the economy opened the door to import businesses, whose income benefitted only a small section of the society. Inflation under the impact of *Infitah* drove up prices, making the purchase of essential commodities

beyond the means of people with fixed incomes. Many officials in the bureaucracy were obliged to seek additional sources of income in the private sector. Importation of luxury goods, affordable only to a small section of the society, led to the further widening of the gap between the wealthy classes and the majority of the population. The economic liberalisation policy contradicted the restrictions that prevented the emergence of genuine liberal politics. There was an attempt, however, to extend the liberalisation move to the political arena, though it was limited in scope. The October Paper was critical of the absence of political freedom during the Nasser era, but it confirmed the national alliance of popular forces as the medium of participation within the single-party organisation (Ansari 1986).

Ayubi's appraisal of the Mubarak regime includes a brief interlude with Nasserism after which it continued with the same personnel and political ideology as from the Sadat era. A minor degree of discipline and control was imposed on the *Infitah* policy, but its main thrust remained unchanged. A degree of rapprochement was achieved with other Arab countries without sacrificing the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, and some measure of political liberalisation was introduced, but this did not amount a major shift in the political and foreign policy of Egypt (Ayubi 1989a). According to Ansari, the Mubarak regime opted to follow its predecessor's policies by maintaining both the *Infitah* and a welfare-oriented system, the combined effects of which were reflected in the severe balance-of-payment deficits that increased Egyptian dependence on American and Western support (Ansari 1986). While the extensive Egyptian debts are viewed negatively in an appraisal of the Egyptian economy, according to David Butter, it did not pose as serious a problem for the international community as did the Latin American debtors, because the bulk of Egypt's debt is official- owed to governments rather than banks (Butter 1989).

The continuation of the *Infitah* policy also implied discontent among the middle classes comprising of teachers, shopkeepers, students, artisans and civil servants who were hit by inflation. It also decreased opportunities for upward mobility due to the trimming of the public sector and curbs on the free education policy. Economic frustrations created by these disparities were compounded by the rise of a new elite class in the private

sector, who were the sole benefactors of the partial liberalisation policy of the state. Added to this, charges of corruption against the government and bureaucrats, limited tolerance to political opposition, inefficiencies in foreign policy formulation and social inconsistencies such as communal violence and marginalisation of minorities like Copts culminated in growing resentment towards the state (Ayubi 1989a; Ebeid 1989a).

Military, Authoritarianism and Opposition in Egypt

The conflict preceding Sadat's succession to power laid bare the nature of the Egyptian state without Nasser at the time: a semi-institutionalised authoritarian-bureaucratic polity. The limits of institutionalisation were manifest in the conflict over authority of the Presidency and wide intra-elite acceptance of the traditional legal authority of the Presidency proved decisive. Another indicator of the partial institutionalisation was the minor role played by the military and of coercive politics in the conflict. The depoliticisation of the military was a watershed in Egypt's evolution away from 'praetorianism' (Hinnebusch 1985).

The Egyptian political system under the military faced a severe legitimacy crisis, especially when Sadat reversed the 'Nasserist legitimacy formula' under his programme of de-Nasserisation (Hudson 1977). Popular opposition from the civil society in unorganised protests such as the bread riots of 1977 posed a serious challenge to the legitimacy of the state (Ansari 1986). Shukrallah describes popular discontent, mass resistance, a sense of class division and class hate in the manifestation of protests as 'the crisis from below'. What started as an unorganised expression for protest in the aftermath of the 1967 War, matured into organised civil society protests through the eras of Sadat and Mubarak, culminating in the Arab Spring (Shukrallah 1989).

As the region witnessed a "third wave" of democracy, it brought about changes in the nature of authoritarianism in countries like Egypt, though it did not undermine the authoritarian nature of political rule. John Walton and David Seddon (1994) trace political economic developments through the mapping of popular protests across the globe, viewing them as an important indicator of the political, economic and social

transformations occurring as a consequence of these developments, and the strong waves of opposition to them from civil society movements. Nicola Pratt states that the existence and spread of civil society institutions such as human rights groups, women's organisations and other Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs in the region do not necessarily contribute to the undermining of authoritarian regimes but in fact may sometimes help in consolidating them (Pratt 2008). The juxtaposition of the merits of democratic practice coupled with the spread of economic liberalism against the persisting authoritarian regimes in West Asian countries is an important phenomenon which has been discussed in the works of Ghassan Salame (1994).

Arab socialist republics made timid turns towards democratisation in the 1980s and 1990s, but mostly utilised single party organisational resources and patronage-based economic liberalisation to subvert full democratisation and reinforce control over a new authoritarian system that included liberal economic policies, new ruling coalitions, some controlled political pluralism, and electoral legitimisation strategies. State-led economic liberalisation and experiments in multiparty politics in Egypt and other West Asian countries led not to a full opening but actually were crafted to support a new authoritarianism (King 2009). This has in turn led to growing control of the military over the economy. Ayubi describes it as a military/industry alliance (Ayubi 1995). Robert Springborg argues that Egypt has gone the farthest in terms of developing a military/industry alliance (Springborg 1987). A prime reason for this control of military over economy and the emergence of a new authoritarianism is that while political incorporation and institutionalisation can help in strengthening a state's legitimacy and immunity against external penetration or domination, it weakens dominating and authoritarian regimes that strive to maintain their power. Thus, authoritarian regimes endeavour to consolidate their power by furthering the monopolisation process to dominate state institutions and the society (Saouli 2012).

Rationale and Scope of Study

In the case of Egypt, there are substantial works available on issues like economy, agriculture, political opposition and political regimes. However, there is a gap in the specific study and analysis of the Egyptian state, its identity, its evolution and its nature based on these issues. The available studies concentrate on classifying Egypt as a military regime without any comprehensive and in-depth study of the Egyptian state at this juncture. While there is extensive literature available on factors like the Egyptian military, economy, role of ideology and civil society movements, how these variables have impacted the nature of the Egyptian state has not been substantially covered. There are numerous studies on the state and its theories, which address a plethora of issues such as the relevance of the state, reforming the state structure, democratisation, developing culturally contextual understanding of the state, and the political economy approach which highlights the regulatory role of the state. Most often, however, these works have been more prescriptive in nature.

This study aims to fill this gap by undertaking a comprehensive and analytical study of variables that constitute, shape and influence the Egyptian state within the specified time period. It highlights interlinkages of these variables and the impact they had on the nature of the state of Egypt during 1970-2011, the political periods of Sadat and Mubarak. Though this study is not comparative in its approach, the points of divergence in the policies and ideologies of the two leaders have been pointed out in order to facilitate the final analysis. The main focus will be on factors like the political and economic role of the military, economy, ideology, role of opposition from political groups and civil society. The time period chosen is vital to this study because it includes a considerable shift in state policies in Egypt, particularly the neoliberal shift of the Egyptian economy. This enables a study of how the Egyptian state has evolved from the time of previous regimes to the Sadat and Mubarak eras leading to the Tahrir Square uprising of 2011.

This study aims to look at how different regimes as well as social and economic factors affect the nature of the state and how this state as a structural-institutional authority in

turn shapes political and social processes through its hegemonic/accommodating relationships with society and social groups.

Research Methodology

The thesis undertakes an analytical study of the historical transformation of the Egyptian state by examining various factors such as political ideology, political regimes, military, economy, nature of political opposition and civil society. Primary as well as secondary data has been used to pursue this study. The primary data used includes the Egyptian Constitution during the Nasser era, the Permanent Constitution introduced by Sadat, Egyptian government reports, the October Paper released in 1974, political speeches, autobiographies, interviews to print and electronic media, United Nations reports, US State Department reports, reports and documents of the IMF and World Bank. Given that the attempted study is not empirical but analytical in nature, empirical data has not been catalogued throughout the thesis. Rather, an effort has been made to present a theoretical understanding of the subject on the basis of empirical data and analysis available. Empirical and statistical data has therefore, been cited only where relevant to the theoretical discussion. This study also relies on, and has referred to, data analysis presented by scholars such as John Waterbury and Nazih Ayubi, among others mentioned in the survey of literature.

Research Questions

This study was undertaken with the following research questions. Firstly, what are the factors that have contributed to the transformation of the Egyptian state to authoritarianism? Second, what has been the political and economic role of the military in Egypt? Third, what has been the nature of the role played by the state in implementing and actualising the shift towards neoliberalism in Egypt? Fourth, how does the neoliberal politico-economic system affect the legitimacy of the Egyptian state? Fifth, what has been the role and impact of opposition from political groups and

civil society on the Egyptian state? And finally, what are the factors that have helped the Egyptian state in sustaining its legitimacy?

Hypotheses

This study tests two hypotheses. The first hypothesis states that the neoliberal system enforced by the state has adversely affected not just the Egyptian economy but the nature of the Egyptian state as well. And the second hypothesis contends that the dominant political and economic role of the military has given the Egyptian state a distinctively authoritarian character which contributed to the legitimacy crisis of the state.

Scheme of Chapters

The research questions and hypotheses as outlined by this introduction, are examined through the following scheme of chapters. The second chapter titled *Theorising the State* situates the proposed study in a theoretical context by outlining relevant theories of the state and works on the Arab and Egyptian state and highlighting some of the major characteristics of this state, as well as giving a historical background of the Egyptian state. The third chapter, *Military as a Political Actor* discusses the role of the military in Egypt as a political actor during the eras of Sadat and Mubarak, the major changes brought about by the military regime in the administration, and the impact it has had on the state and social structure and class composition of Egypt. The fourth chapter deals with the *Political Economy of Egypt*. This chapter describes the economic landscape of Egypt within the period of study and maps the neoliberal shift therein. It critically analyses the implementation and impact of *Infitah*, neoliberalism and structural adjustment within the theoretical framework of liberalism as well as by examining its impact in terms of social experiences of exclusion and alienation.

The fifth chapter titled *Role of Opposition and Civil Society* explores the efforts to open up the political space in Egypt, specially the role played by prominent political

opposition forces like the Muslim Brotherhood. It also presents a description of the transformations in the Egyptian civil society and its responses and reactions to the identity, nature and policies of the state. Through this inquiry it explores the changing perceptions of the state and state-society relations, as well as the efforts of the civil society to renegotiate the social contract. In view of the issues discussed in the previous chapters, the sixth chapter titled *The Question of Legitimacy* problematises the question of legitimacy and look into how factors like the military, economy and political freedom in Egypt, affected its legitimacy, particularly in the context of the neoliberal transition. It further places these factors in the larger global context to discuss the changing notions of citizenship and their interaction with the state. The findings of the research and discusses the validity of the proposed hypotheses are summarised in the final chapter, i.e. the *Conclusion*.

Chapter 2

Theorising the State

This chapter provides an introductory theoretical framework to the thesis. It highlights the various relevant theories of state and the social contract, as well as the focal points of this thesis and how the concept of state has been approached herein. It seeks to study, in particular, how significant the process of state formation has been to Egypt, how its colonial history has shaped power structures in the contemporary Egyptian state and how these impact social relations. It also highlights the importance of the economic function of the state, and how it impacts the state as a power centre. Concepts of neoliberalism, postcolonialism, neopatriarchy, hegemony and counter-hegemony and class stratification, which have been discussed in detail in the following chapters, are also introduced here. This chapter seeks to answer two questions- a) how does the process of state formation impact the state?; and b) how does the colonial heritage of power structures and political institutions combined with traditional patterns of social relations shape new social and political fields in the postcolonial era.

State and the Social Contract

The state occupies a central position in all political theory. This is equally true of the discipline of international relations, given that the state is still widely thought to be the primary, if not the only, major actor in international affairs. Given the dynamic nature of global politics, the state has also, of necessity, seen an evolutionary arc, shorter in the case of the younger postcolonial states¹ than others. Despite a plethora of studies the nature of the state remains an elusive and enigmatic subject, continuing to engage academia across the world. The first set of liberal conceptions of state, against which

¹ Postcolonial states need to be differentiated from postcolonial *societies*, some of which predate the origins of the Western modern state, Egypt and India being primary examples. The relevance of the evolution of civil society is discussed in chapter 5.

the subject of this thesis is juxtaposed, is that of classical liberalism, specifically the theories of social contract propounded by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke.

Hobbes' political theory of liberalism is important for its imagination of individuals as 'free and equal' and where the best circumstances for human nature can be achieved. Most remarkable is the emphasis on consent, which is crucial to the creation of a social contract. The resulting creation, however, of a political entity that is all-powerful is completely contrary to the idea of liberalism, and highly undesired in contemporary political life, in both theory and praxis. Yet the concept of the social contract continues to be relevant for its conception of political power as a contract between the ruler and the ruled, achieved through negotiation, where the interest of the ruled occupies a central position. The image of the Leviathan is also relevant for highlighting what is *not* desirable in the nature of the state and political rule. "Hobbes remains of abiding interest today precisely because of this tension between the claims of individuality on the one hand, and the power requisite for the state to ensure 'peaceful and commodious living', on the other" (Held 2015: 15).

The concept of political power as something that can be negotiated, which is also the central argument of Locke's thesis, is significant to contemporary interactions between the state and civil society. However, Locke questioned the absolutist nature of the sovereign as well as the ability of individuals to submit all their rights to such a political authority. He viewed the state as an instrument for the protection of the 'life, liberty and estate' of its citizens. He asserted that since society existed prior to the state, "[l]egitimate government requires the consent of its citizens, and government can be dissolved if the trust of the people is violated" (Ibid: 19). According to him, citizens enjoy natural rights, and he especially emphasised the right to property which refers in the broader sense to 'life, liberty and estate' (although he also used it in the narrower sense to refer to just material objects). The paradox of liberalism, as propounded by Hobbes and Locke, and later further qualified by John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham among others, was the notion of state intervention. Although liberalism as a theory is predicated on the existence of an independent political and economic order in which individuals are 'free and equal', the notion of state intervention became crucial to

certain aspects of liberalism. The enforcement of law and protection of territory by coercive powers of the state and state intervention in a *laissez-faire* economic order were justified in order to protect public interest. The emphasis in this theory was predominantly on the rights of the individuals and their position vis-à-vis the state on the social contract.

Karl Marx, on the other hand, was critical of this myopic focus on the individual, asserting that it was the interaction of individuals with and in relation to others that would determine the nature of economic and political systems. Class structure was identified as the entry point to an understanding of society. The Marxist ideology and ideas influenced by it were formulated in reaction to the praxis of the capitalist and imperialist agenda, and so it essentially views the state in terms of the ownership of the means of production, wherein ownership represents not just an economic but also a political phenomenon- one which is bound to be all-encompassing in its manifestation. Similarly, ideas of exploitation (to which class struggle is the response) not only refer to exploitation of an economic nature but one which has severe social implications as well, the primary one being the very creation and realisation of 'class' as a social entity. Beyond its concept of class however, this school of thought in general does not envisage the place of the individual vis-à-vis the state (just as the traditional Arab focus on the *umma* or the larger Muslim community does not give much attention to the position of the individual vis-à-vis the political institution, like the state or even the traditional politico-religious institution of the Caliphate). Class struggle alone is identified as the sole agent of social and political change, to the exclusion of other aspects of social and political life. Marxist theorists like Antonio Gramsci, on the other hand, identify the state and society in terms of hegemony and recognise the way individuals and civil society would either give consent to or challenge the state.

Classical liberalism is more relevant to the concern regarding the linkage between the individual and state. The relationship between the individual and the sovereign is more aptly described as a social contract- one where rethinking and renegotiation are possible

even if they may not have been envisaged by most classical liberalists². Locke's definition of the right to property continues to be relevant in a larger sense, wherein 'property' signifies not only economic property rights but also civil and political liberties and the recognised familial and social position and function of the citizen. Contrary to the developments taking place in 'liberal' states as well as the global economic order, classical liberalism actually does provide for state regulation of the economy. Adam Smith's economic theory is based on the idea of state regulation in order to combat the effects of the "invisible hand" which disrupts the chain of demand and supply, and the stronghold of monopolies. The primary function of the state or sovereign in Locke's concept of the social contract is the protection of the individual's right to property (property being a comprehensive term rather than simply the economic aspect of it).

The concept of legitimacy in political theory is commonly predicated on the establishment of a democratic model. The liberal theory itself is the foundation for democracy, yet the concept of democracy is complex and widely contested. One of the major criticisms for proponents of democracy/democratisation is the question of cultural and social relativity, which argues that the democratic model cannot simply be recreated in non-Western societies. While this criticism is valid, it does not justify a complete preclusion of the possibility of a political system that provides space for political participation and political representation. Furthermore, the Marxist and especially Gramscian notions of class, society, hegemony and the socio-economic influences on an individual's political position are significant to gain a better understanding of the interaction between the state and the individual, or the state and the civil society at large. An effective way of approaching the study of any state in terms of its social interactions then is to view the individual as the point of locus in the web of social interactions, its relevance to political processes determined by how it is posited by virtue of economic relativity and class structure in society. The legitimacy of the state depends on the position of the citizen vis-à-vis the state, and the kind of space allowed by the state for civil society.

² The prime example here is Hobbes whose conception of the social contract leads to a sovereign whose powers are absolute, creating a Leviathan.

The primary basis for legitimacy for a state is that it is chosen by individuals that it is going to govern and/or it works to attain goals that are widely accepted as common goals of those individuals i.e. it protects the interests of the society it rules over. This is identified as the rational-legal basis for authority (Weber 1978). Furthermore, the private behaviour of individuals controlling the state institutions is also relevant to the legitimacy enjoyed by the state because nowhere can personal behaviour and interests be completely separated and distinguished from public behaviour and interests and the exercise of power over the public. In most 'third world states', adopting a rational-legal model of authority has been difficult, wherein obtaining legitimacy for the state is mostly contentious (Clapham 1985: 45).

One of the key factors determining the nature of a state is the power of coercion. Weber identifies the state as a form of political organisation that has the legitimate right to use coercive powers. His concept of state involves an administrative staff that "successfully upholds the claim to the *monopoly* of the legitimate use of physical forces in the enforcement of its orders... within a given *territory*" (Weber 1978: 54). Usually coercion or coercive power is referred to in two contexts: one, the protection of sovereign territories against foreign threats and two, for the purposes of enforcement of law. This concept is particularly significant to the question of legitimacy because legitimate use of force cannot be qualified, and force itself cannot be quantified. So at what point of wielding coercive powers does a state stop being a protector and start being a tyrannical power? This question becomes even more difficult to answer in the context of non-democracies because the powers of the sovereign therein are indefinite, given that they even control the sources of political power and can mould them to suite their interests (as demonstrated in the following chapter in the case of Egypt).

The state apparatus, i.e., bureaucracy, public sector etc., are not synonymous with the state in its entirety, but only a part of it. The other composite part of the state is a set of social relations which establish a certain system or order, backed by the centralised coercive powers of the state. These relations are mostly formalised or legalised by the legal system which is a 'constitutive dimension of the state' (O'Donnell 1993). This order is potentially, and likely, unequal and socially discriminatory in both capitalist as

well as socialist systems, in turn reproducing asymmetric power relationships. This asymmetrical power goes on to determine both the nature of the state and the social relations formed by it and within it.

Social relations, including those of daily preconscious acquiescence to political authority, can be based... on tradition, fear of punishment, pragmatic calculation, habituation, legitimacy, and/or the effectiveness of the law. The effectiveness of the law over a given territory consists of innumerable habituated behaviors that (consciously or not) are usually consistent with the prescriptions of law. That effectiveness is based on the widely held expectation, borne out by exemplary evidence, that such law will be, if necessary, enforced by a central authority endowed with the pertinent power. This is the supporting texture of the order established and guaranteed by the contemporary nation state (Ibid.).

The concept of authority and its correlation with coercion, force or domination are central to the idea of the state. In that, the state is an apparatus through which the ruler exercises authority over the ruled and this authority is enforced by the state's powers of coercion. This idea has been key to Weber's conception of the state's authority and legitimacy. "...Weber's conception of domination as the basis of the state is tempered by his concept of 'legitimacy': in principle, there are three inner justifications, hence basic *legitimations* of domination- 'traditional', 'charismatic' and 'legal'" (Ayubi 1995: 6). A comprehensive view of the state then entails the following features,

On the one hand, states may be viewed as organizations through which official collectivities may pursue different goals, realizing them more or less effectively given the available state resources in relation to social settings. On the other hand, states may be viewed more macroscopically as configurations of organization and action that influence the meanings and methods of politics for all groups and classes in society (Skocpol 1985: 28).

The concept of citizenship can be more comprehensively defined as an entity that is not simply limited to the political realm. As a party to a contractual relationship (i.e. the social contract) ensured by a legal system the citizen can seek redressal of grievances not just within the public or political realm but also the (relatively) private realm. By its inherent nature the legal system gives a public dimension to private relationships.

Private here ascribes to rights pertaining to the interests of the individual as opposed to the state and the social contract. Guillermo O'Donnell (1993) cites the example of the right of a peasant to access judiciary against a landowner as a private right as opposed to the 'public' right of voting without coercion.

Two concepts of legitimacy are relevant to this study. The first is legitimacy derived from a legal perspective, this notion of legitimacy pertains to the source of political power vested in the state institution, which is the legal framework i.e. the constitution or the *sharia* or other such sources. They define the nature of political power and who can rightfully claim it, and to what extent. They also provide the legal framework in which political power can be practiced and reinforced by the legal structures, such as the judicial system, religious scholarship and Islamic jurisprudence etc. These sources also affirm the coercive power at the disposal of the political power to protect the state and impose laws.

The other kind of legitimacy relevant here is legitimacy from the perspective of the citizen. The legitimacy of the political power of the state depends on the condition of the citizen, i.e. the position of the citizen vis-à-vis the state in a social contract. The legitimacy of economic deliverance is an important aspect of this kind of legitimacy, which evaluates the role of the political rule in ensuring that the state acts as a provider, and that the economic function of the state is fulfilled to protect the interests of the citizen. However, the economic aspect is only one part of it. The other, equally important part is the question of liberty, or property in Lockean terms. This is where the social contract becomes particularly relevant. The legitimacy of the state and political power also depend on the kind of civic and political liberties provided to the citizen, and the space for renegotiation of the social contract. In the absence of the preservation of political liberties or the right to property, the state and political leadership can easily assume the nature of a Leviathan, which is highly undesirable against the interests of the citizen.

State Formation

The yardstick for legitimacy, or expectations of legitimacy both from the ruler and the ruled, depend on the factors shaping the social contract. The nature of the social contract, and therefore the state, depends on several convergent as well as divergent influences and factors on the state. One of the key factors is the formation of the state. Unlike the imagined state of nature envisaged by various classical liberal thinkers as the precursor to the social contract, most of the non-Western states were created as a result of, and in some cases as a culmination of the colonial experience. Thus, the whole process of state formation and the experiences of colonialism are a crucial factor in determining the nature of the state in the postcolonial context.

Postcolonial thought attributes contemporary “crises of the state”, statehood issues and questions on state’s legitimacy to the colonial histories of states not only in terms of economic exploitation and its repercussions but also in terms of the shaping of a political consciousness in these societies which is seen as an essentially “postcolonial” political consciousness. Frantz Fanon’s reference of the native’s inverted gaze and colonial (as well as oriental) perceptions of the self as well as associating political power with the exploitative colonial power are very relevant. This inverted gaze and viewing of the self from a colonial lens also leads to aspirations to power of a colonial nature (i.e. exploitative and absolute) and result in a replicating of the exploitative and superior power figure in the postcolonial era. Such aspirations realised within the residual colonial power structures of the state (which retain their essentially colonial nature, for example in the institutions of bureaucracy or military in most postcolonial countries) combined with local patrimonial/patriarchal influences (of the tribal culture earlier, and later supposedly ordained by Islamist culture but inherent in traditional Arab family structure at all times) leads to the creation of a neopatriarchal state, which produces conditions for the continued psychological impact of the colonial ‘gaze’ or ‘wretchedness’ of the local people/society³.

³ For a detailed analysis of the psychological experience of colonial subjugation and its residual effects see Fanon (1963).

State, Neoliberalism and the 'Myth of the Free Market'

A study of the state and its legitimacy remains incomplete if it is viewed as a unitary and isolated entity. In a globalised world, the external pressures and compulsions on the state have increased manifold. It is important to contextualise the state in the larger global political landscape and consider the impact of supranational forces on the state. Therefore, the conceptualisation of the social contract and the sovereign for the purposes of protection of the life and interests of the citizen against the lawless state of nature and territorial and other threats must now be expanded to that of protecting the citizen and her/his rights in a globalised world. The rise of neoliberal globalism presents a serious challenge to the political and economic rights of the citizen and consequently to the legitimacy of the state, especially when economic exploitation in global capitalism adversely affects the legitimacy of economic deliverance which most regime-controlled states rely upon. The postcolonial state finds itself especially disadvantaged in this situation as it is already afflicted with problems of institutional weakness and an unbalanced correlation between the political leadership and the market in an already unstable domestic and international economic order.

The legitimacy of the state becomes even more problematic when the interests of the state and the local population become divergent, as is the case with regime-controlled states. While the citizen expects the state to safeguard her/his economic interests even when political rights may be severely curtailed, the state's subservience to a neoliberal global order and the diktats of Western-dominated international institutions i.e. the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank compromise local interests and further jeopardise the local economy. The fallacy of the blanket approach of international institutions is highly detrimental to the state. Their institutions predicate their analysis on macro-level assumptions while remaining apathetic to the peculiarities of individual states (Stiglitz 2003). The reform programme thrust upon postcolonial states is constructed within a specific template that may or may not be suitable to the problems of a particular state. Since this reform programme includes instructions of an economic as well as political nature, the impact on the state is far-reaching, affecting various aspects of the state. For instance, the notion of a specific kind of democracy as a

prerequisite for liberalisation of the economy leads these institutions to impose the conducting of elections as a necessary requirement to merit financial assistance. Yet in cases such as Egypt, as well as other states ruled by military regimes, elections in fact serve to consolidate the authority of the regimes, further weakening the state as a political institution and compounding its legitimacy problem (Pratt 2008).

Imposition of democracy from above is an essentially flawed notion given that democratic processes require a certain kind of political culture. On one hand these institutions fail to take into cognisance the specific issues that affect the economy and politics of any given postcolonial state, and on the other, the top-down approach to the imposition of liberal economic reform and democracy presents an anomaly to the ideas of political and economic liberalisation. Rather than freeing the market of state intervention, or at least overwhelming state control, it creates a deep state comprising of authoritarian regimes which assume even greater control of the local economy, subverting it and inadvertently increasing its dependency to consolidate their own power.

This paradox raises further questions about the liberal notions of the free market in a neoliberal global order. Is the free market really just a myth? How else does one explain the distortions that invariably occur in the market, which Adam Smith attributes to the “invisible hand”? Smith also talks about the free market, but in his thesis the state has a very important role of regulation of the economy. This role is based on the concept of justice, the most vital role of the state being to administer justice. Justice as a concept is completely missing from the neoliberal discourse, while productivity is considered synonymous with profitability, and minimum role of the state and promoting efficiency and productivity become synonymous to a free market which is essentially an agent to maximise profitability. The role of the state is divided into efficient and inefficient uses⁴ and anything that promotes productivity (profitability) is efficient while those functions of the state which do not serve this interest are rendered inefficient uses of the state. Thus, welfare functions like health, education etc. are considered inefficient uses of the

⁴ This idea, propagated by Keynes, has been contested by Milton Friedman and F. A. Hayek who argue for greater state regulation in an otherwise unrestricted *laissez-faire* capitalist system, which they see as deeply flawed.

state (this explains why in economies across the globe these functions are increasingly being transferred to the private sector and have become highly profitable corporate fields especially with the involvement of big corporations and multinationals).

A critique of the neoliberal political economy is not necessarily a critique of the market economy approach itself, but of its distortions, and particularly the exploitative and corrosive role assumed by the state, contrary to the idea of minimal role of the state. A comparison of the neoliberal discourse with works on classical political liberalism provides an important reference in terms of the ‘malfunctioning of the state’ under a neoliberal political economy. Works such as those of Locke explain how the state enjoys legitimacy because of its role of regulation of the economy, various checks and balances to control any excesses on the part of the state, and how such functions of the state are in the interest of the liberty of the individual.

The Arab State

In defining the Arab state, two historical influences, apart from the more recent nationalisms of the region, are of significance: a) socio-political and religious i.e. the Islamic model⁵ and b) the economic structural model i.e. the Asiatic mode of production. The influence of the Islamic model can be traced back to the works of Ibn Khaldun, followed in later centuries by the revisionist and reinterpretative thought of Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh and Rifa’ a al-Tahtawi.

Marx viewed the state as an entity that was distinct from society, but one that could not be separated from it. Gramsci, though influenced by the Marxist perspective, provides a far more comprehensive conception of the state as “...the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules” (Gramsci 1971: 244; Ayubi 1995: 5). This definition of the state is further reflected in

⁵ This idea was developed by Hamid Rabi, an influential Egyptian political scientist who is one of the few political scientists to work on the ‘Arab state’ which he did from a sympathetic view of German nationalism and anti-Enlightenment perspective (Ayubi 1995: 17-19).

Gramsci's theory of hegemony, particularly relevant to the authoritarian character of the state. The view of the state as an instrument of power is also endorsed by Weber's view of the state as "a human community that (successfully) claims *the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory" (Ayubi 1995: 5).

Domination, coercion and power are of central importance in Gramsci's conception of the state. This is common to Ibn Khaldun's idea of social integration and ideological cohesion as integral and inherent powers of the state. Interestingly, the Gramscian view of the state as an instrument of power in the hands of a class is one where the state wields not only physical coercive power but also the power of influencing and subverting ideas and ideology.

Gramsci realized that the dominant class did not have to rely solely on the coercive power of the state or even its direct economic power to rule; rather, through its hegemony, expressed in the civil society *and* the state, the ruled could be persuaded to accept the system of beliefs of the ruling class and to share its social, cultural and moral values (Ibid.: 6).

State formation and state survival in the Arab region can be explained through two processes integral to the state institution in the postcolonial era: domestic power monopolisation and external neutralisation.

Domestic monopolization enhances the abilities of a regime to consolidate power by preventing others from challenging its monopoly over, mainly, three areas: coercion, ideology, and economic resources....External neutralization is a derivative of, and is sustained by, the balance of power system that is inherent in the anarchic international system... To buttress their domestic autonomy and power monopoly, regimes in Arab states- by aligning themselves with external states- have been able to balance against threats, with the aim of neutralizing any potential hegemony in the region or rivals in the domestic arena; in doing so, the regimes have reinforced the anarchy in the regional and international systems (Saouli 2012: 5-6).

Sustenance of domestic monopoly by most regimes has depended on cultural homogeneity, the nature of the regime, its formation, structure and ideology, and its abilities of the self-appropriation of economic resources.

Local conceptions of political thought in the Arab world traditionally focused on ideas of community or *umma*. The state as an institution, or what can be viewed as a localised version of the (Western) modern nation-state has been a more recent development which occurred only in the modern history of Arab as well as other postcolonial states. Thus, rather than being a coherent and synthesised idea of a state, what most non-Western political thought has produced has been more of a sudden realisation of identity, nation and the self as a reaction to colonialism. This has been developed within the framework of local familial/tribal/patrimonial value systems reconciled to some extent with the idea of the state. A regular friction among these contrasting ideas and identities and the concurrent attempt to resolve these conflicts are evidenced by the constant tension present in local notions of state and identity. The imagination of a social contract with a focus on the citizen, the individual, has been somewhat belatedly conceived. Thus, in stark contrast to Western political thought since Enlightenment, which prioritised the individual before the state, is the non-Western, especially postcolonial political thought which was conceived in the reverse order of state-society/community-family-individual. This tension has co-existed with, and often been subsumed by the larger conflicts and pressures arising from a global order dominated by a few and often detrimental to the interests of the majority of states. The impact of such conflicts is one that severely undermines the character/identity of the state.

The Islamic model has an inherent ‘apparatus of hegemony’ in the form of a network of religious institutions which also form a nexus of dominant political and social forces such as schools, mosques, Islamic jurists and *sharia* courts, intellectuals etc. This apparatus has for the most part been incorporated into the modern Arab state model even though its absorption within the civil society has been incomplete, conflicted and widely criticised. This has given rise to an ‘incomplete hegemony’ that is “a hegemony that is more ideological than it is social” (Ayubi 1995: 84).

One of the key factors ascertaining the nature and role of a state is its economic function. The role that a state plays in the economy of a country determines not only nature of the state as a *provider* vis-à-vis the economic rights of the citizens but also defines the power of the state, in terms of whether or not this power is hegemonic, and

to what extent. This power is exercised by the state on the society not only in terms of protecting its sovereign territory against a hostile foreign threat, but also to counter oppositional forces from within. In that the economic function of the state plays an important role in determining its relationship with such social forces.

The origins and bases of many power relationships in modern, complex societies are ...derived from economic relationships pertaining to property rights of or control over the means of production. The state normally plays a crucial role, either in setting the conditions that enable certain types of economic relationships to take place and to reproduce themselves, or, more immediately, in directly controlling the means of production and fixing most of the economic relationships in a more authoritative way (Ibid.: 30).

In order to understand the economic role played by the modern Arab state it is important to study the Asiatic mode of production. The Asiatic system is distinctive from Western economies primarily because of its agrarian basis. Given the primarily agrarian character of the economy, the state is viewed as “the supreme landlord”. This feature of the state has extensive consequences for what has come to be known as the class-structure wherein the majority section of the society residing in rural areas and identified as the peasantry is ruled and controlled by a small political elite (which historically was usually a foreign rule). Unlike the class structure created by the Western economies, the Asiatic system did not have a strong or significantly sized bourgeoisie class (private land owning class). This was one of the several factors which aided colonial and imperialist exploitations of such economies, a phenomenon which is mirrored in the subservience of peripheral local economies to the Western dominated global capital system. The inherent contradiction of the Asiatic mode of production is the conflict between centralised state power that “appropriates directly part of the labour that it dominates, and the communal and social forces that push for more decentralisation and private property and in the general direction of autonomous class formation” (Ibid.: 45). The appropriation of the predominant ideology that influences these social forces (in this case primarily religious ideology) further adds to the hegemonic power of the state paradoxically weakening the state institution.

The distinctive features of the Islamic model which many thinkers ascribe to the modern Arab state are: a) *umma*, which also represents community-hood, and b) the function of power and authority which is derived from the patrimonial Arab family structure. “The Islamic ‘state’ is therefore a single ‘doctrinal’ state” with combined characteristics of “ethical principles with political ideals” as well as and a central role in economic regulation. Typically, the Islamic model is a tax-based economy with religion-specified ideas of the allocation and distribution of wealth. The latter is evidenced particularly in features or tenets such as *zakat* or the distribution of property within the family structure. Notions of authority in contemporary Arab states are also influenced by traditional forms of authority which existed in earlier political models of both Islam and the tribal and feudal cultures in the region. Feudal and patriarchal forms of authority are commonly visible in the region. These allude to the patriarchal social structures wherein kinship in the Arab society and deference to the patriarch or the male leader of the Arab family defined authority (Hudson 1977: 83). Patriarchal notions of authority, which are inherently absolutist and parochial, not only undermine the efficacy of political institutions of the state, but also act as a detriment to social modernisation. Caught between modern concepts of democracy, representation and liberty on the one hand and patrimonial respect and deference on the other, an individual is ill-equipped to exercise any rights pertaining to citizenship. The value of male dominance perpetuated by the social order of hierarchy created by patriarchy further acts against social progress, denying space to one half of the population. Patrimonial respect or subservience to the (male) leader in the family structure is an inherent aspect of patriarchal authority, and there is no place for dissent or dissonance. Opposition is seen as rebellion and protests are not tolerated within such authority structures. Patriarchal authority and hierarchy have negative influences not just because of the inherent discrimination against the female population, but also for trapping society in archaic hierarchical structures that generally diminish prospect for growth and the full realisation of all aspects of citizenship. This is also reflected in the exercising of power within the state institutions such as military or bureaucracy, where “ingrained habits of deference to paternal authority” (Ibid.: 85) plague modern political processes which do not recognise them. Neo-patrimonialism has come to be seen as a basic characteristic of

not just social relations in postcolonial societies, but how these relations are translated into political structures. Authority in neo-patrimonial societies is also based on the former tribal kinship culture of loyalty to one's kin. This results in authority and subservience being based on and defined in terms of ethnic group affiliations rather than structural and legal-rational (or constitutional) bases of authority (Clapham 1985: 49). This neo-patrimonial character then manifests itself in the form of clientelism. Clientelism can be defined as

a kind of relationship which characterises any society in which there are sharp divisions (usually on class lines) between superiors and inferiors, but in which neither superiors nor inferiors form politically coherent class units acting together; instead, individual superiors or inferiors need the security and support which is provided by members of the other class. The most familiar arena for patron-client ties is an agrarian economy of a broadly 'feudal' type in which control of land is vested in a landowning class whose members are in constant competition with one another; each landowner needs to attract peasants to work in his land, providing him both with produce and with a political-military following, while each peasant, if he is to survive, needs to find a landlord who will provide him with land and protect his right to work it. It is an inherently unequal exchange, hence liable to exploitation, but none the less meeting essential interests on both sides.

The neo-patrimonial state- indeed the modern state as a whole- provides an equally fertile breeding ground for exactly the same kind of relationship. It likewise embodies inherent inequalities, between those who control the state (or more generally, those who have the technical qualifications to do so if they get the chance) and those who do not, and also between those higher and lower within the state hierarchy (Ibid.: 55).

The structural features of the modern Arab state on the other hand have been derived from colonialism and the colonial experience of a political institution. Thus, the structural roots of various pillars of the state institution, such as the bureaucracy and the military, can be traced back to the colonial experience. The impact of the colonial history is highlighted by how it "emphasised the role of the state, *the entrenchment of a bureaucratic bourgeoisie as the guardians and beneficiaries of that state*, and a characteristically third world set of political consequences most sharply indicated by the level of military intervention" (Ibid.: 15) (emphasis added).

The long trajectory of the experiences of political organisation ranging from the Sultanate to the colonial experience combined with sporadic reform programmes and a constant clash with 'other' identities both before and during Western imperialism may have changed some of the higher administrative arrangements (Laroui 1976; Ayubi 1995: 22-23). However, the basis of the contemporary Arab state model is essentially derived from all of these experiences. Thus, the authoritarianism intrinsic to political rule of a colonial nature continues to resonate with the modern Arab state model. Consequently,

the contemporary Arab state is obsessed with power and strength, and it may indeed be strong in terms of its 'body.' But (and here he echoes Gramsci) the violence of the state is in reality an indication of its weakness and fragility; the (coercive) apparatus maybe powerful but the state as a whole is weak because it lacks rationality and because it lacks the necessary moral, ideological and educational supports (Ayubi 1995: 23)

Even though the discourse on the Islamic model has been an oft repeated source of deriving both notions of power as well as legitimacy for the state, at the time of the formation of the modern Arab states, the predominant discourse pertained to ethnic identity, and the *Arab* state. A few of the scholars and thinkers such as Michel Aflaq treated the Islamic and Arab identities as synonymous with reference to nationalism, asserting that Islamic nationalism was what resonated with all Arabs, Muslim or otherwise, owing to the large Islamic cultural heritage that partly defines the Arab identity and Arab nationalism. Yet most thinkers focused on defining the Arab identity and Arab nationalism as distinct phenomenon, even though they acknowledged the influences of political Islam. Sati al-Husri asserted a unique vision of the Arab identity

Every person who speaks Arabic is an Arab. Everyone who is affiliated with these people is an Arab. If he does not know this or cherish his Arabism, then we must study the reasons for his position. It may be a result of ignorance- then we must teach him the truth. It may be because he is unaware or deceived- then we must awaken him and reassure him. It may be a result of selfishness- then we must work to limit his selfishness (in Hudson 1977: 39).

Asserted in this manner, the Arab identity was derived from the wave of Arab nationalism (much in the fashion described by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*) rather than the other way round. Notions of the Arab state too were constructed around Arab nationalism. In its confrontations with colonialism, which was gradually ebbing, the force of Arab nationalism briefly subsumed other identities and ideas of state and society, only to resurface later. But in that moment in history, most newly independent states associated themselves primarily with their Arab identities. This was particularly so in countries where the military came to supersede other forms of political organisation and assumed control of state institutions. They not only usurped political institutions but also hijacked the nationalist agenda, ensuring only the most minimal opposition at a time when nationalist sentiment was running high.

The Democratisation Debate

Democratisation in West Asia has been oft-raised in recent academic research as well as international political discourses. There have been a host of opinions on this subject ranging from the derisive assertion that Arab and Islamic cultures basically preclude any possibilities for democratisation to intellectual explorations of the said cultures which argue that in fact the basic tenets of democracy are inherent in them. Recent developments in West Asia, especially the Palestinian *Intifada* of 2000, the United States (US) invasion of Iraq in 2003, and most recently the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011, have infused renewed vigour into the academic and political debate on democratisation. It is relevant to this study as a template to analyse the role and progress of civil society and its relations with the state. It is important to highlight that while democracy is not precluded by local traditional social, religious and cultural patterns, these are bound to influence local conceptions of democracy. The juxtaposition of the civil society against the state provides a glimpse of the struggle between the state in the form of the exercise of hegemony and the attempts of the citizen towards counterhegemony. The push for democratisation from within the civil society can be viewed as an effort in counterhegemony, wherein the very acts of questioning, protesting and defying by the citizen constitute the struggle for the exercise of

democratic rights, making the democratisation process itself a counterhegemonic strategy (Pratt 2008). This is similar to the role of civil disobedience in Rawls' conception of justice, in which the act of challenging the authority is itself viewed as an assertion of the rights to social and political justice as well as a the method for achieving them (Rawls 1971).

The Arab state has seen an ongoing struggle for democratisation with citizens resisting both monarchical and military regimes since the end of the colonial era. With the exception of Lebanon, a democratic political system is yet to be achieved by the Arab state. However, democratic strains have been evident in the nature of social transformation movements as well as the exercising of citizenship throughout the post-colonial history of the Arab state. As opposed to structural democracy imposed from above, discursive traditions as well as public consciousness reveal the efforts to arrive at local conceptions of democracy which are organic and imbibe local familial, cultural and social influences. Such evidence clearly refutes the assumptions (of the Western world) that the Arab state as it is cannot be democratic or that Arab and Islamic cultures are antipathetic to democratisation⁶. Civil society movements in countries like Egypt demonstrate that local politico-ideological thought and public consciousness in fact provide the locus for the genesis of democratisation. Arab and Islamic bodies of knowledge provide the intellectual context for the realisation of this process.

The Arab experience of democratisation has been both unique, given its religious and cultural specificity, and common to some of the other postcolonial states which share a history of colonialism and the complexities peculiar to postcolonial states. This is true of Egypt, which provides an important framework for the study of the state and the social contract, as a traditionally vibrant civil society with a rich political culture and a deep sense of self being governed by a state which (during the period of this study) was still young and institutionally fragile. For most of the Nasser era, Egypt was projected predominantly as an Arab socialist state. The nationalisation of the Suez Canal and the land reforms were direct manifestations of this ideological and ethnical rhetoric.

⁶ This thesis was advanced by scholars like Bernard Lewis, Olivier Roy and Samuel Huntington and was subsequently taken up by several scholars among the Western academia and as well as US policy-makers.

However, by the end of the 1967 War, the Egyptian population was almost completely disillusioned with the ideals of one Arab state, local fissures and cleavages rapidly grew and became increasingly apparent. By the end of it, as Egypt became increasingly caught up in its own social and economic turmoil, just like other Arab states, the ideals of Arab nationalism and identity had lost their lustre and could no longer elicit the kind of popular response they had done earlier. Even before Sadat came to power and launched the slogan of 'Egypt first', questions and contestations were already surfacing in the discourse on the Arab state.

The Egyptian State

While the Arab state and the Arab identity were products of anti-colonialism, the Egyptian state preceded these perceptions of the indigenous self. Though the emergence of the Egyptian modern nation-state was more recent in history, Egypt predates most Western states as a unified territory under a centralised cohesive political leadership. The imprint of this history of political rule is clearly visible in contemporary Egyptian politics, affecting various phenomena ranging from centralisation of power to its bureaucratic-administrative model, the colonial experience being only one of the influences. More recently the most predominant role has been that of Nasser's regime in shaping the modern postcolonial Egyptian state, as it is.

The origins of the Egyptian 'state' in the modern sense of the term have been traced back to the reign of Muhammad Ali. He was responsible for the first formation of the state as a political institution in Egypt. The conception of the early Egyptian state in Ali's rule can be viewed as an economy of hydraulic and agrarian modes of production being combined with a legal network, political institutions and industrialisation along Western ideas to create a state-sponsored form of capitalism. Ali was responsible for instituting the legal framework of the state, establishing a structure of bureaucracy that in some form still continues to exist in contemporary Egypt, institutionalising education, establishing new industries along western modes of production and creating

an ‘army of the state’ in the modern sense of the term (Ayubi 1995: 99-101)⁷. While Ali’s policies regarding land ownership, redistribution as well as taxation were ambiguous, especially in the initial years of his reign, his efforts to restructure the economy seem to be typical and have had reverberations in postcolonial Egypt. His economic reform was based partly on the revival of the Asiatic mode with an emphasis on state centralisation, and partly on establishing new industries while eliminating pre-existing local industries and crafts of the Mamluk period.

State centralisation, typical of the purer examples of the Asiatic mode of production, was enforced, while the semi-communal organisations of the minority religious *millas*⁸ were all dissolved. The Egyptian path towards capitalism, as represented by Muhammad Ali’s experiment, was therefore *etatiste* and took the form of state capitalism, yet many of the methods that were used to develop the economy remained distinctly ‘oriental’ (Ibid.: 100).

This trend seems to have continued in the postcolonial era when state centralisation by ruling military regimes became the most prominent instrument of neoliberal exploitation and misappropriation of wealth, land and resources⁹.

The era of Nasser’s regime was characterised by the authoritarian-populist phenomenon which, combined with the socialist agenda of the regime, embodied highly interventionist public policy, regime-enforced economic modernisation and emphasis on reform and development. This agenda was used to justify a strong, centralised and cohesive leadership, leading to the emergence of an authoritarian regime, comprising military officers from middle class or petty bourgeoisie background. However,

Unable or unwilling to pursue an authentic socialist course which would mobilize the masses and destroy the socio-economic dominance of the bourgeoisie, it was extremely vulnerable to an eventual shift in the balance of political power to the right. Under these conditions, to the extent it pushed development ahead, it created or strengthened the very forces which would be

⁷ Ayubi (1995) elaborates on how the Asiatic modes of production were significantly derived from and also combined with a more Western form of capitalism and industrialisation to create a modern state.

⁸ A *Milla* (religious community/group or even a religious sect) is distinct from the *Umma* (nation or a universal collective). Islam comprises several *millas*, such as the Druze, each with its special characteristics. See, Longva and Roald (2012).

⁹ For a detailed analysis of this aspect of military regimes, see chapter 3.

its undoing. Not only did the regime permit the persistence of a private sector, but it fostered the *growth of a large bureaucratic 'state bourgeoisie'* (Hinnebusch 1985: 3) (emphasis added).

The development of this bureaucratic state bourgeoisie was further plagued with high corruption as well as private accumulation of wealth as opposed to the intended public accumulation and redistribution according to the stated socialist agenda. While the regime stopped short of totalitarianism as it lacked the requisite penetrative capability at its creation, this was amassed gradually in the following decades, down to the Sadat and Mubarak eras. The expansion soon exceeded rationalisations of the socialist agenda, forging a multitude of functional ministries and organisations (Ibid.: 18). Contrary to the intended spearheading of welfare and public services, these organisations soon acquired the problems common to extended bureaucracies across the postcolonial states.

Nasser's socialist agenda was designed to cater to a specific class structure. Through the process of nationalisation of existing major industries of the time and the land reforms intended to revolutionise the agricultural sector, Nasser sought to demolish the pre-existing feudal landowning bourgeoisie that had dominated the predominantly agrarian economy of the colonial times. It was replaced by the peasant class and the small surviving but severely weakened national bourgeoisie. The former was not only the social background of most military personnel, Nasser himself included, but also came to be the support base of the military regime and the national modernisation project undertaken by it.

While the crisis of Egyptian state and society has been widely attributed to *Infitah*, it must be noted that specific conditions prevailing at the time of imposition of these policies have also in part caused the crisis. It cannot be attributed to economic liberalisation alone (Waterbury 1985, Amin 2000). Some of the prevalent conditions which acted as restraints upon economic liberalisation are typically characteristics of a 'soft state'. According to Waterbury,

The political regimes of these states are unwilling (but in a technical sense not unable) to engage in a kind of primitive extraction of surplus from their

populations through public policies and ideologies that promote forced savings, defer consumption gains to future generations, and maintain a societywide state of militant austerity (Waterbury 1985: 65).

The manifestations of the intertwining of the military regime-leadership and the stated socialist agenda rapidly became visible in the economic and international policies.

Regime, State and Authoritarianism

Dina Craissati differentiates between the state and government based on Howard Lentner's definitions of the state in abstract and concrete terms, stating that despite such differentiation between the two, they often tend to fuse together when the government acts on behalf of the state, embodying the powers of the state. Furthermore, the roles of the two tend to "fuse the interests of the state and the governors" (Craissati 1989: 8) as well. However, it is the contention of this thesis that the interests of the state and government do not fuse as easily and simply as their roles might. A pertinent point noted by this thesis is that the interests of governments and their leadership can in fact sometimes be completely contrary to the state. This is seen in the case of Egypt (and other postcolonial states). The following chapters explore how governments often adopt policies for, and focus primarily on, securing the stability of their regime. This idea of 'regime stability' negatively affects the state by undermining its legitimacy. Excesses of a regime can often corrupt or even completely alter the basic nature of the state through the policies it adopts. Exploitative or inadequate economic policies of a regime for instance give the state a distinct identity. Similarly as the regime becomes more and more authoritarian and intolerant to opposition of any kind, the state too assumes a more colonial and patriarchal character.

The more powerful the regime, the weaker is the state as the regime tries to exploit the political apparatuses of state and bureaucracy towards its own goals. This invariably results in structural and constitutional changes in the framework of the state, undermining this framework and making it subservient to the powers accumulated by the regime. As the author states, "governments are also often corrupt and/or self

serving, thus capable of deviating from the purposes of the state” (Ibid.). The argument that state and government are distinct entities and that their interests do not fuse together is taken by instrumentalists as opposed to structuralist and statist writers.

In cases such as the political system of Egypt, a clear distinction needs to be made between the military regime and the state. The regime is the government which exercises power by controlling the state apparatus.

Regimes are more permanent forms of political organization than specific governments, but they are typically less permanent than the state. The state, by contrast, is a more permanent structure of domination and coordination including a coercive apparatus and the means to administer a society and extract resources from it (Fishman 1990: 428).

Simply put, the regime constitutes the government while the state institution is the apparatus of the government. Its structure and source of power are vested typically in a legal source, i.e. constitution, or derived from the will of the people in a democratic system. In the case of military regimes, the lack of legitimacy is based on the fact that the source of power is decided upon *after* power has been acquired (as in the case of military *coups* which are common to several postcolonial states) and usually involves amending or rewriting of the existing legal code, which can be classified as a subversion of the existing legal framework as well as the sources and instruments of power. As opposed to a legal rational basis for power of popularly elected governments, the legitimacy of a regime is highly questionable. Any legitimacy enjoyed by the regime depends on other factors, primarily the factor of economic deliverance, wherein the regime successfully performs the role of the provider, which in turn explains the welfare activities commonly assumed by the state in such a political system. Nasser-era Egypt, with its proclaimed socialist agenda, also attempted to play this welfare role especially vis-à-vis the peasantry and the urban youth by providing agricultural subsidies and reform and employment opportunities in the public sector respectively. Such a political power can be categorised as ‘authoritarian populism’ (Hinnebusch 1985).

Authoritarianism is a political system wherein “power is highly centralized, pluralism is suspect and where the regime seeks to exercise a monopoly over all legitimate political activity” (Kienle 2001). Authoritarian regimes then can be categorised as

political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism; without elaborate and guiding ideology (but with distinctive mentalities); without intensive nor extensive political mobilization (except at some points in their development); and in which a leader (or occasionally a small group) exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones” (Ibid.: 9).

In Egypt authoritarianism fell short of such definitions as there were limitations to complete control of the regimes. However, it is important to ask whether such perceived limitations on authoritarianism or the authoritarian character of the state/ regime accrues from actual space for opposition, dissent, and checks and balances or from a matter of relativity in comparisons between Egypt and some of its even more authoritarian and autocratic neighbouring states (Ibid.).

The colonial state by virtue of being colonial depended on structures such as the bureaucracy that were intrinsically authoritarian and centralised. These features facilitated complete control of the political institutions themselves as well as the subjects.

Impact of State Formation in Egypt

Though Egypt is one of the oldest states in the world, state formation in Egypt has not necessarily been very comprehensive, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While certain structures of the modern state such as the bureaucracy, military etc. may have been established centuries back, other facets of state formation such as a cohesive political will and organic conceptions of citizenship were ignored. The lack thereof precludes ideas of democratic representation/participation and expression in contemporary Egypt. The old establishment of the bureaucracy etc. is the primary reason behind the military’s rapidly growing control over them immediately in the years

following the Free Officers' Revolution till now. These structures have established and recognised vestiges of power. On the other hand, the military regime even today remains alienated from other aspects of statehood such as civil society (more modern in its origin as an entity anyway) or the media (i.e. state's engagement or collaboration with media and civil society as opposed to control over them). This leads to not just constant friction between the two, but also compromises the stability and legitimacy of the state.

The lack of organic unity or shared values between the state and society compounded though it is by the myriad effects of social change and incorporation into the global economy and political structure, is the single most basic reason for the fragility of the third world state (Clapham 1985: 42).

Rather than being integrated with the civil society, the state under military regimes seeks to control it, and thereby gets alienated from it. The Egyptian population was the subject of the state, and continues to be treated as subject, allowed very little space in politics. This is a reflection of the colonial nature of the very process of state formation since the time of Muhammad Ali, and points to a continued tendency of 'colonial statehood' and colonialism within the state.

It is important to note the complicity of the citizens in the perpetuation of hegemony by the military regime in the nascent stages of the Egyptian state. This complicity was evident in the kind of civil society activism that took place during the Nasser era, and to some extent in the early years of Sadat era. At this time, the focus of civil society was on protesting the withdrawal of the economic role of the state as the provider, when subsidies or other provisions of socio-economic inclusion were rescinded. Contestation and protest occurred not for greater political liberty but simply to reinstate the system wherein political exclusion was overlooked for the fulfilment of economic interests, enabling rather than challenging the consolidation of political power and hegemony by the military regime. The Egyptian public in this way actually became party to the operation of hegemony, by supporting and reinstating state corporatism. This changed in the Mubarak era when the neoliberalisation drive threatened both the political as well as the economic position of the citizen.

The State and the Nation

A pertinent question that arises in the study of the legitimacy of the state is its correlation to the nation. While the state is a set of political institutions through which governance is carried out, the nation refers to the people, the citizens. The question of identity is important to the understanding of the nation and the feeling of nationalism. Common or overlapping identities among communities in society create the feeling of oneness within specific territorial boundaries. This leads to these communities relating to a shared consciousness of nation and nationality. In the context of the nation, the state derives its legitimacy from being reflective of this national consciousness. This does not only mean a democratic state (although it is assumed that popular representation in government assures maximum legitimacy for the state). It could also be a non-democratic state which draws its legitimacy from factors other than popular representation or the right to elect a government, such as legitimacy of economic deliverance or legitimacy on the basis of the charismatic personality of a ruler. The legitimacy of economic deliverance has been visible in most oil-based economies which provided specific welfare and social security schemes such as job security or food subsidies. In the case of rulers like Nasser in Egypt and Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, personal charisma garnered legitimacy and immense support from the masses. Legitimacy can also be obtained through the espousal of an ideology, as has been the case in the Saudi state where legitimacy is based on Wahhabism which recognises the al-Saud monarch as the guardian of the two holy sites, or in the case of Saddam Hussein in Iraq whose anti-imperialist and anti-Iran propaganda gained popular support.

It is important to note, however, that identities within a nation do not remain static, and as the national consciousness changes, or rather, evolves, so must the state. Identities within the nation, or which constitute the nation, have a huge impact on the state and statehood. In the past century or so, this has been evident in the evolution of the state in both its territorial and functional forms, in accordance with the ideas and identities of anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, Wahhabism, Pan-Arabism etc. In a fast changing social, political and economic landscape, some of these identities have been rendered obsolete (such as anti-colonialism and Pan-Arabism), some have seen resurgence (such

as Wahhabism and other religious ideologies mushrooming under the umbrella of political Islam), and new ones have been created (post-coloniality), or imported (democracy in its more Westernised form). The legitimacy of the state can then be determined not by how well it competes with these ideas and identities, but to what extent it takes cognisance of their existence and engages with them. If the nation is comprised of a national consciousness of society, the state as the authority governing the nation must enable this consciousness. Negotiations of the social contract between the state and the nation must then be an ongoing process for the state to retain legitimacy in the view of the nation.

The ideas of nation and nationalism witnessed considerable changes with the coming of military regimes in Egypt. The self-appropriation of nationalism is a crucial part of the politicisation of the nation-building process by the military. Ideas of nation and nationalism have been monopolised by the Egyptian military in a fashion typical of most authoritarian regimes, which justify excessive authoritarianism as a means to protect 'national' interests and the fabric of 'national' unity. Oppositional groups and individuals are often portrayed as a threat to the 'nation' (as discussed in chapter 5). This also impacts the ideas of nationalism in popular imagination and how people associate (or disassociate) themselves with it. In this sense, the discourse on nation and nationalism must be viewed not as a part of the process of state formation but as a part of the process of the emergence of regimes and their consolidation of political power. The coming of the Free Officers to political power was a process of the imagination of a particular Egyptian nation which was exclusive to specific identities and ideologies, and in subsequent decades these ideas were reimagined in accordance with the agenda of the political leadership and the political elite.

That the nature of rule in Egypt between 1970 and 2011 has been that of authoritarianism is a widely accepted idea, proven particularly in the Mubarak period with a continued imposition of emergency and a systematic elimination or oppression of political opposition. The question is not so much whether there has been military authoritarianism in Egypt. The question this study seeks to answer is: what has become the nature of the Egyptian state under this military authoritarianism combined with

numerous other socio-political and economic factors. The nature of the state has been an elusive idea for the most part, particularly because, as in the case of most postcolonial nations, distinguishing between the state and the government has been extremely difficult. More often than not, in postcolonial states, these two are considered to be synonymous. The primary effort then has been to be able to distinguish between the two. More importantly, if military regimes in Egypt have been seen as authoritarian, what does this say about the Egyptian state? Has it also by extension become an authoritarian political entity/structure? This can be answered by examining how policies and provisions applied by the government/regime have translated into laws, statutes and regulations enforceable by law, by the constitution.

This kind of study reflects on the institution of state, but remains incomplete in understanding the nature of the state. A comprehensive critical analysis can only be made by contextualising such an examination within the social landscape of Egypt over the decades. Egypt is one of the oldest states in the history of human civilization, with a vibrant and alive society. It has, for centuries experienced an advanced political culture. Military authoritarianism has in fact been an aberration of this political culture, and the responses of society to this kind of rule provide significant loci in the evolution of the nature of the Egyptian state.

State and Civil Society

Civil society can be viewed as the realm of social life, which deals with the interactions, convergences and divergences of the domestic sphere, economic sphere, cultural sensibilities and practices, and political interaction. Some segments of this realm are organised by private and voluntary arrangements between individuals and groups while others are unorganised. Both generally lie outside the direct control of the state (Held 2015: 6). While traditional scholarship focused singularly on the organised sector of society¹⁰, consisting of voluntary non-governmental organisations (NGOs), interactions

¹⁰ A major example could be Edwards, Michael (2004), *Civil Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press. Another good example is the two-volume study by Lester Salamon, for the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society

pertaining to social, economic, cultural and political life are not limited to the dialogue between state and this sector, but between the state and the (civil) society as a whole. This thesis asserts that a comprehensive view of civil society as a whole is central to any analysis of the state, especially discourses on the legitimacy of the state. Various interactions influence social movements and in turn political processes, involving both conventional and unconventional agents of social change¹¹.

A study of the state treated as a separate subject divorced from social influences is incomplete, as it does not clearly reveal the nature of the state, as mentioned earlier. It is important to contextualise the state in its social landscape in order to understand its full impact on society and vice versa, and this can be best done by studying the state in terms of social movements. Social movements here do not simply refer to popular protests or specific instances of staged dissent, but a more comprehensive view of the process of social transformation that occurs through both gradual means such as the daily happenings on the street and in the public spaces as well as sudden incidents which act as catalysts for the outbreak of social protest. The mediums of social transformation movements also vary and continuously expand, ranging from the street as a site of protest to the virtual world of the internet as a theatre of public discourse and a platform for mobilising the masses. The unconventional mediums for voicing dissent and conducting discourse become even more significant in a system where the political space is curbed, and civic liberties repressed. This can be seen as politics that contests these limitations, and is in turn 'contentious' politics (Bayat 2010).

The political field which is the site of the engagement between state and civil society, has been a shrinking space in Egypt since the Free Officers' Revolution. This is primarily because of the predominance of this field by the military which has assumed the character of a deep state, controlling not only physical force, but also civil liberties, state-controlled media and the larger political agenda of the 'nation'. It claims to be driven by ideological influences such as nationalism and secularism, such as the kind

Studies, entitled *Global Civil Society: Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector* (1999 and 2004). A jurisprudential approach towards the organized civil society was undertaken by Garton, Jonathan (2009), *The Regulation of Organised Civil Society*, Portland: Hart Publishing.

¹¹ For a detailed discussion see Chapter 5.

that have inspired the deep state in Turkey. Yet a long postcolonial history of military dominance over the political field requires a questioning of these ideologies, whether they act as influences or serve as popular rhetoric, and what do they really promote.

Chapter 3

Military as a Political Actor

One of the most dominant influences on determining the course of a nation, especially a postcolonial nation, is its political leadership. In postcolonial societies, the nature of leadership has an indelible imprint on the shape the state is going to take, the values it will espouse and the role it will play in protecting its citizens. While in the social contract, the agreement between the state and society determines the kind of political rule that will exist, in the case of postcolonial societies, it has often been an inverted process of a specific brand of political rule determining the nature of the state itself. The postcolonial society is not necessarily an equal party to the contract in its initial stages, and is therefore left to cope with it or challenge it as best as it can, for which there isn't much scope in authoritarian regime-led states. This can become even more problematic when the interests of the regime as projected on the state become clearly divergent from those of the citizens.

The ideology and ruling style of the leadership determine the nature of political rule, the style of governance and the functioning of the state. The most significant factor in charting the course of Egyptian politics since the Free Officers' Revolution has been the role of the military in politics, and its consequent domination of all aspects of the Egyptian state and society. While the ideologies of Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar el-Sadat and Hosni Mubarak led the country in a certain political and economic direction, the ruling styles of these leaders and the army created a distinct class which significantly changed the landscape of the Egyptian society. This chapter outlines how, gradually, with the change in leadership from Nasser to Sadat and then Mubarak, the interests of the state and society did become divergent, and how this conflict of interests was a consequence of the hegemony of the military, which acquired a class-like stature, with significant and lasting impact of the social structure as well as political space.

The impact of the military regime's control of Egyptian politics and society can only be understood when it is juxtaposed with the understanding of the self and identity. On the question of the military's ascendance to power and what aided it, local conceptions of identity and self have been major determinants. The process of state formation has been particularly relevant in terms of how identity and the self have come to be defined. These ideas have been greatly influenced by nationalism and the nationalist discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Postcolonial ideas of identity and the self were defined in terms of the nationalist discourse and rhetoric wherein terms like 'nation', 'nationalist' and 'patriotism' became significant. The ascendance of the military was aided to a great extent by the acceptance and faith of the masses in its capabilities. The military, in most countries, has been viewed as the pinnacle of nationalism and there was not only support but also high aspirations from the idea of the military overtaking political power. Another factor, perhaps the most important one, that helps explain the Egyptian military's ascendance to power has been the lack of a strong national bourgeoisie. It created a sort of political vacuum which was easy for the military to fill. A strong national bourgeoisie could have ensured continuity of the local market and preserved the class character of society.

In the initial stages of the military's ascendance to power in Egypt, the status of the military was dependent on that of the state (Waterbury 1983: 15). They had to disassociate from the higher echelons of the Egyptian class structure, especially to promote revolution from above. For this it was crucial to sever all links to the class owning the means of production, in this case the land-owning class (in addition to politicising the ideology of nation-building, as stated above). The proclaimed socialist ideology of Nasser achieved this severing of ties during the Free Officers' Revolution. The final destruction of the private land-owning class or what constituted the national bourgeoisie was secured in the subsequent land reforms of 1952, orchestrated by Nasser in the form of Law No. 178¹.

¹The Agrarian Reform Law of 1952 (also known as Law 178) was a "centrepiece of the 1952 Revolution" (Hinnebusch 1993b: 20). This Law provided quasi-property rights—in the form of legally secure tenancy at fixed rents—to almost one million agricultural families. The Law fixed land rents at seven times the basic land tax, as applicable in 1952. Further, the rent could only be increased by the government, and

The rule of the Free Officers meant that state power now belonged to

Petty-bourgeoisie officers whose class origins and class outlook differed from those of the ruling class. These officers, however, represented themselves not as enemies of the ruling class, but as a replacement within the established structure in order to instill new vigor in the class itself and reestablish the efficacy which the Egyptian state had lost (Hussein 1973: 95).

However, going through a tumultuous experience of negotiating with the conflicting interests of the indigenous ruling class on the one hand and negotiating with foreign powers, in particular the United States (US), on the other, the heretofore subjective interests of the Free Officers themselves became more akin to that of political bourgeoisie. That is to say, their political agenda began to reflect new class interests, “those of an emerging bourgeoisie grouping within the state apparatus” (Hussein 1973: 98).

Nature of the Military Regime

There are multiple reasons behind military coups and why the successive military regimes have lasted for long in several of the developing postcolonial states. Some writers have viewed this phenomenon as a result of a particular trajectory of social developments where the disintegration of traditional systems of rule in weak polities left a political vacuum which was occupied by the bureaucracy and its military wing (Huntington 1971: 192-263). This process was aided by armies which were

often consolidated by or reorganised by colonial powers, had represented the leading structure of the state even prior to the assimilation of that state into the imperialist system. Furthermore, as soon as they gain their independence most developing countries, Arab ones included, set about expanding their armies, installing a system for military service (often conscription), and establishing

since the government was slow in readjusting the rent, the Law led to improved rural welfare of a large number of Egyptian renters. The Law also barred owners from evicting a renter from his land. In the event of the tenant's death, the owner was obligated to rent the land to the former's male heirs. For details, see Adams 1986: 89-90.

their own military colleges (e.g. in 1932 in Iraq, 1936 in Egypt, and 1946 in Syria) (Ayubi 1995: 258).

Further, the military in developing countries has been generally more equipped than other institutions to lead them in their engagement with modernity, owing to the education, organisation, discipline and technological expertise intrinsic to its training from the colonial era. These features of the military, combined with the absence of social and institutional hegemony in postcolonial societies creates the political gap which provides the space for “wars of manoeuvre” rather than “wars of position”, that is, attempts to capture the state machinery as opposed to efforts to surround the state with an alternative “counter-hegemony” (Ibid.: 259). The military then, often through coercive and oppressive measures, becomes the repressive apparatus which then “has an inherent tendency... to subsume the political apparatus as well. In the process, the armed forces tend to appropriate the bulk of the national revenues” (Ahmed 1985: 55).

It is a major contention of the above line of argument that the ability of the military to gain control of political power in a new postcolonial state is aided by the vacuum created due to a lack of effective political leadership. A lack of cohesive political ideology and efficient cadres explains why countries like Egypt and Pakistan² have witnessed the rise and continued dominance of the military in the political arena despite having a fairly developed political culture. The culture of organisation and discipline prevalent in the military only furthered its chances of dominating Egyptian politics when other political factions failed to deliver.

In addition to the failure of other political factions to create an efficient government, nationalist agendas often enable the military to gain popular support where a parallel political ideology may be rendered ineffective. This is one of the reasons why Nasser’s

² Stephen Cohen argues that the Pakistan Army’s continuous intervention in politics was caused by four real and perceived arguments: first, army’s professionalism in itself is reason enough to intervene, to protect the state from incompetent and corrupt politicians; second, officers can stake a claim to power because of their unquestionable patriotism and commitment to the people, and the fact that they are the true ‘sons of the soil’; third, having earned professional education and training, military officers are better placed to understand national interest and hence to govern and administer; fourth, the military was viewed favourably by the people, as the honest guardians of the nation, against the conniving and corrupt political leaders (Cohen 2004: 126-128).

pan-Arab (and primarily anti-Israel) agenda was largely successful in overshadowing major failures in the areas of economic justice and political and social rights of the individuals or why the anti-India rhetoric of General Ayub Khan garnered him the popular support that leftist factions in Pakistan were unable to achieve. A counter example would be the case of India where the civilian leadership, since before independence, was consolidated enough that it had a clear strategy for the separation of military from politics and the nature of civil-military relations that were to exist in the following decades.

While this may be the primary catalyst leading to the rise of the military as a political actor, it does not explain the continued military dominance of politics in Egypt and elsewhere, given the relatively high level of political mobilisation in society. The military's continued dominance was achieved mostly through suppression of any potential opposition, which amounted to direct authoritarianism and even coercion, as well as through a strategic system of economic policies that ensured only limited opposition till the initial years of the Mubarak era. While the trajectory of Egyptian economics was led far from a welfare state, as elaborated in the next chapter, a set of policies for the provision of basic facilities from the state was inculcated into the reformed economic system so as to minimise opposition.

The predominant factor enabling the ascendance of the military to political power in Egypt was the vacuum that suddenly emerged in the Egyptian political scene. This happened when the Wafd party and the Leftist leadership lost vigour and the leadership itself splintered. The gap was further enhanced by the absence of a strong national bourgeoisie that could have steered the Egyptian economy, and therefore the polity, in a particular direction. The ascendance of the Nasser-led regime completely obliterated any remnants of any opposition- political or economic. Politically opposed leaders and even students influenced by communist ideas were targeted by the regime in the name of preserving 'national' unity and interests. This targeting was done by the military much in the same manner as the state policing of nationalist voices during the colonial era. This led to the emergence of what was soon to become the deep state within the Egyptian state institution- the all-pervasive military regime. Opposition of an economic

nature which could have arisen from the remaining minority of an erstwhile feudal land-owning class was destroyed through the land reforms introduced by Nasser. These reforms had an impact far beyond the economic sphere, severely affecting the makeup of the Egyptian social structure as well as the complete elimination of any potential political opposition which could have been bolstered by this land-owning class. While the reforms were celebrated at the time when the economy was set on a path of socialism, the incomplete and inadequate nature of the socialist programme combined with bureaucratic corruption and inefficiency meant that the economy could barely sustain itself in the absence of the class of owners of means of production that could have propelled it forward. The immense burden of wars only accelerated the economic crisis. Stripped of a class of producers in an agrarian economy in the absence of significant industrialisation, by the time *Infitah* was introduced by Sadat, the economy had no way of coping with the challenges of a neoliberal global order, much less benefitting from it.

Political Ascendance of the Egyptian Military

The political ascendance of the military (through the Free Officers) was secured and promulgated by its infiltration at the administrative level, as well as its gradual restructuring of the economic and social landscape of Egypt. Anouar Abdel-Malek identified this as,

The *first* stage of the military regime (1952-56) [which] was aimed at modifying the structure of power in order to create a modern, national, independent, industrialized society. This was achieved, at the top of the sociopolitical structure, by the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of the Republic of Egypt, the dissolution of all existing parties and organizations (except the Moslem Brotherhood, until 1954), the elimination of the traditional political elites, largely influenced by the European, mainly French and British, liberal tradition (*ahl al-kafa'a*, the capable men), and these were gradually replaced by a new type of officials- officers, economists, technocrats and engineers, mostly with American, German and British backgrounds (*ahl al-thiqa*, the trusted men). At the bottom of the pyramid, this policy was tackled by agrarian reforms which sought to weaken the economic basis of the land-owning

capitalists while greatly increasing the number of small landowners, as well as redirecting capital investment to industry. It also aimed at the elimination of Communist influence in the countryside, which was already in ferment in 1951 (Abdel-Malek 1968: xiii).

Thus, the military not only redirected land distribution and agrarian reforms, it also simultaneously eliminated all forms of political opposition, beginning with the already weak and flailing Wafd Party and the Leftist Movement, but eventually also banishing the Muslim Brotherhood. This was followed by the military assuming control of major industries through the process of nationalisation, and creating a renewed public sector under the stronghold of the military regime. This process was marked by

a coalition between the military apparatus and the financial and industrial sections of the bourgeoisie (and especially the Misr group). But this coalition, according to the Free Officers' view, was to work mainly in the economic field: political control, the "power of decisions" should continue to rest entirely in their hands (Ibid: xiv).

The other factor that propelled the military ahead of other political leaders and aided its political ascension was the threat of the Zionist state (Hussein 1973: 75). In public perception, Israel was an enemy that had to be defeated in accordance with the proclaimed Arab nationalist ideology that inspired Egyptians as well as other Arab peoples. This was a challenge that could be overcome only by the military, therefore, the public looked to the military establishment for political, nationalist and ideological deliverance.

The Free Officers' Revolution had a very deep and lasting effect on Egyptian politics. This was not just due to the removal of a monarchical regime or the expression of the political, economic and social aspirations of the people, some of which were represented by the Revolution in the way that principles of socialism and the national modernisation programme became an integral part of the military's discourse on 'nation-building'. It also had a significant impact on the structure of the state machinery and bureaucracy with the succession and empowerment of the military that followed the

army coup. Several legal provisions and constitutional amendments were made from the time of Nasser in order to enable the administration and executive body to function effectively. These included some extreme steps which were a serious challenge to the freedom and rights of the people (for instance, the curbing of free press and the repeated crackdowns on political as well as civil society oppositions combined with a quick disposal of potential opponents, as discussed in chapter 5). This was problematic because such an empowerment of the military was not accompanied by any mechanism that could ensure a significant amount of accountability to the public.

With the succession of Nasser by Sadat, the onset of an altered political and ideological course in Egypt, and the introduction of the Permanent Constitution of 1971, the abuse of political power by the military which had already begun to occur during Nasser's era increased exponentially. In addition to all the political powers, these provisions also put the top leadership in a position to reap the benefits of economic policies and control the flow of funds, both domestic and foreign (as expounded in the next chapter).

The ascendance of a military regime to power was much facilitated by the popular legitimacy enjoyed by Nasser as the hero of the Free Officers' Revolution. The legitimacy garnered on the basis of personal charisma in fact aided not just the ascendancy of a military ruler to power, but also the continued rule of the military under Nasser and then Sadat. Despite being a celebrated leader, Nasser did come under severe criticism for bringing the economy to a dire situation, and particularly for the defeat suffered in the 1967 War. He was singularly blamed for the defeat and humiliation faced by not just Egypt but the larger Arab world at the hands of Israel. However, he was still able to retain his charismatic hold over the Egyptian society even when his rule was being severely criticised. Sadat could never match up to the popularity and charisma of Nasser, yet he too garnered public support through an active campaign for publicity and for the effective 'de-Nasserisation' of not just the Egyptian economy, but also of public sentiments.

The other factor that played a significant role in the ascendance as well as the continuation of military's hold over political power was a lack of public faith in alternate political groups and rampant corruption at the structural level. The lack of

political cohesion and organisation among most contenders for leadership, be it the Egyptian Left movement or the Muslim Brotherhood, led people to look up to the Egyptian army during its ascendance to power rather than question it. Wariness of corruption and organisational inefficiency was another reason behind the public bestowing its faith in the military. The vision of uniformed soldiers, an organised and disciplined body of middle class officers organised into a hierarchical chain of command appealed significantly to the Egyptian public at a time of immense political chaos and economic suffering. There was a strong faith that the army officials who had led the Revolution would also salvage the nation and restore its glory.

Military as 'Class'

The political ascendance of the military led to subsequent changes in the social makeup of Egypt, with the military leadership attaining a new stature. This stature of the military as an organisation that assumed control after a revolution was established during Nasser's era. It was then consolidated during the Sadat and Mubarak eras, as the military gradually progressed to establish and integrate itself within the structure of the state and bureaucratic institutions. While the military's infiltration of the bureaucracy had commenced since the time of Muhammad Ali, as postcolonial Egypt acquired 'statehood' in the modern sense, both at the domestic and international level, i.e. in terms of becoming a territorial and bureaucratic state which was also integrated into the global capitalist system³, the military too acquired the status of a class, as witnessed in changing social scenarios⁴.

³ Ayubi contends that social formation in a state is affected by the juncture at which the nature and characteristics of international capitalism penetrated it. Post-colonial countries such as Egypt were incorporated into the global capitalist system during the nineteenth century via colonialism, and thus the state and social formation process which began in the post-independence era was significantly affected by imperialist and capitalist influences, not just on the modes of production but also on the kinds of emerging class cleavages (Ayubi 1995:171).

⁴ Several of these changing social scenarios have been depicted by Galal Amin, in *Whatever Happened to the Egyptians?*, including instances which represent how military as a distinct class came to be experienced in Egypt (Amin 2000).

The leaders of the Free Officers' Revolution, which brought the military to the forefront of Egyptian politics, did not belong to a homogeneous socioeconomic background. While some belonged to the landed aristocracy, like Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer, and some had close relations with the monarchy as well, the undisputed leader- Nasser- belonged to the class of small landowners. The same is true with Sadat as well. While Nasser's family owned less than five *feddan*⁵ of land, Sadat's owned a mere two and a half *feddan* (Ansari 1986: 11). Thus, the two leaders who controlled Egypt for the three decades after the revolution belonged to the lower middle-class which enabled them, even when they emerged as the new ruling class, to continue to appeal to the sentiments and values of their class origins. Keeping with this trend, Mubarak also hailed from the lower middle-class, his father being a minor official in the Ministry of Justice.

The social relations of this emerging new class of military bureaucracy were determined by similar, if not the same, clientelistic patterns of the traditional Arab society. Traditional clientelism gradually transformed into new vertical clientelistic relations in structural bureaucratic institutions of the modern state. Clientelistic patterns of bartering of favours and benefits and the obeisance to patriarchal figures i.e. (male) figures that had utmost authority over the family, the tribe and the larger social organisations, were now replicated with military officials who were also top officials of the executive body and heads of various departments and ministries. In contemporary Egypt, these clientelistic patterns of behaviour had a direct bearing on trade and commerce, shaping both the politics of controlling means of production, resulting in the emergence of the military as a distinct political-economic class, and the complicity of commercial and technocratic groups within the society with this class. It had serious repercussions in the way it undermined the regulatory role of the state as the means for redistribution of resources and power under the socialist agenda, which was abandoned with the imposition of *Infitah*.

In his appraisal of the poor and insufficient liberalisation of the Egyptian economy (focusing on agriculture), Robert Springborg summarises the role of the state in terms of a four-fold strategy suggestive of "relative distribution of power between it and the two

⁵ 1 *feddan* is equal to 0.42 hectares.

wings of the bourgeoisie- parasitic and entrepreneurial” (Springborg 1990: 464). According to him, the first strategy of the state is to reinforce its own structures in order for it to serve as instrument of political and economic control. This involves the utilisation of various means to protect the dominant role of ‘parastatals’ and the state’s rural administrative organs in the agricultural economy. The handling of agricultural output is also controlled by the state, which in some ways resisted privatisation as well as maintained state-fixed prices of major field crops including cotton, rice and sugarcane. Further, the state also used reclaimed land “as a primary source of patronage” (Ibid.: 465). The second component of the strategy was to maintain patron-client relationships with the parasitic bourgeoisie and capitalist landowners. The third part of the strategy was the fulfilment of minimal obligations, or the basic welfare facilities, under the social contract, in order to maintain and ensure rural quiescence. At the same time there was an effort to politically demobilise the peasantry and deny channels of political participation. The last component of the strategy, employed if necessary, was coercion. Much of the repression of the state in the Mubarak years was “directed at Islamicists in outlying promises, a significant percentage of whom can reasonably be assumed to be *semiproletarianized* peasants” (Ibid.: 466) (emphasis added). While this is a description of the state’s means of controlling the agricultural sector, it reflects the state’s relations with what has been referred to as the bourgeoisie, or the elites and the parastatals, through patron-client relationships.

This manoeuvring of clientelist relations and the bourgeoisie was a conscious strategy of the military regimes which consequently changed the social structure in significant ways. In this way,

The state continues to retard the development of the bourgeoisie, giving preference to those classes more instrumental to its rule, while simultaneously seeking to fragment all constituencies to facilitate a divide-and-rule strategy. The role of balancer of class and sectional interests, which increasingly is being played by Egypt and many other Arab states, places limits on the degree to which those states can facilitate privatization and encourage competitive markets (Ibid.: 467).

The means of acquiring personal wealth by highly placed military officials changed down the decades. With the imposition of *Infitah* and the opening of local economy to foreign investment, the regime was in a position to control the flow of foreign capital and to misappropriate funds coming in as foreign aid, given the lack of accountability. Clientelist relations were at their peak during this time, as the exchanging of favours and greasing of the wheels of bureaucracy were common. However, by Mubarak's era, the peak of the corruption and obscenity of wealth was highlighted by the sources through which it was being amassed. The regime no longer relied only on mediation in the flow of capital and goods to acquire personal wealth as it had before, since years of *Infitah* had rendered most of these activities unprofitable. Instead, the regime now relied on seizure of state funds and the stripping of public assets for personal gains (Hassan 2011: 4).

The hegemonic power wielded by the military combined with the acquisition of personal wealth gave it a distinct position within the Egyptian social structure. The presence of the military as a distinctive class was not simply the consequence of its usurpation of power. This was also the product of state perpetration of class domination. It raises an important question: is the state an instrument or perpetrator of class domination? The common contention among both Marxist and non-Marxist thinkers has been that the state in fact does serve as an instrument of class domination.

Both functions, entrepreneurial and reform, are essential for the successful achievement of development under capitalist auspices, even from the point of view of the longer run interests of this process itself. But at the same time, the reformers are unlikely ever to appear as 'little helpers' of the entrepreneurial groups. When they enter the stage, they may well be full of invective against the latter, who will return the compliment (Hirschman 1979: 95).

The 'invective', then, is part of the game. Self-styled revolutionaries simply serve as reformers helping to reorder the process of accumulation, guided by an 'invisible hand', ultimately serving the capitalist class. It can further be argued that the economic and political connotations of such a mechanism make the state subservient to it, making it the medium as well as the perpetrator of this system. This is how state autonomy is

consolidated. However, Nicolas Poulantzas qualifies this idea, asserting that rather than the state serving as an instrument of class domination towards the bourgeoisie, it simply fulfils an organisational role, retaining relative autonomy, which in the long term serves as an instrument that perpetuates the dominance of the (political as well as economic) bourgeoisie (Waterbury 1983: 13-14).

Perpetuation of clientelistic relations and control of bureaucracy by the military facilitated accumulation as well as allocation of national wealth. The prioritisation of military expenditures over other sectors of the economy was a case in point.

Massive and Unwarranted Military Expenditure

One of the indicators of the expansion of the military into the political arena has been the defence expenditure being incurred by developing countries with military regimes. While postcolonial states find it imperative to consolidate the physical force of the state, through an expansion of their armed forces and the establishment of institutes such as army colleges, most military regimes have assigned a major chunk of national resources to military expenditure alone, often at the expense of other sectors which required urgent economic thrusts. It is remarkable that military expenditure has featured very high in the total national expenditure of developing countries when an impetus was needed in most other areas such as agriculture, industry, education, healthcare and scientific research.

The expansion in the size and the cost of the military establishment in most Arab countries has naturally reflected itself in a growing political role for the military. But whereas in the earlier, less institutional stages, this role had tended to take the form of coups d'état and of military or semi-military governments, there has since been a gradual shift away from direct and open 'interventions' and the military is now increasingly inclined to operate through more subtle, and sometimes structural, intertwinings between civil and military networks (Ayubi 1995: 257).

This is particularly so in the case of regimes which are unable to warrant or justify the extent and scale of military expenditures in the absence of war-like situations or in the event of poor performance in the case of an armed conflict. In Egypt, this was the case with both the defeat of the 1967 War and the outcome and aftermath of the 1973 War. For example, military expenditure shot up from 221 million Egyptian Pounds in 1967 to 386.5 million in 1969, an increase of more than 57% in a two-year period despite the defeat in 1967 War and ensuing economic troubles (SIPRI 2017). Similarly, military expenditure increased from 495 million Egyptian Pounds to 725 million Pounds in 1974 (Ibid.). Further, the cost of maintenance of the army and other military expenditures continued to remain high even after the Camp David Agreement when any scope for a major outbreak of armed conflict with Israel had been averted. Military expenditure increased from 807 million Egyptian Dollars in 1978 to 1.272 billion by 1981 and further to 4.22 billion in the next decade (by 1991) (Ibid.). This was partly due to the military regime and the internal politics of the military leadership, and partly due to the international economic compulsions which have been explored in the next chapter. A glimpse of the internal politics related to military expenditure is provided by Ayubi who states that,

In spite of the 1979 peace treaty with Israel and the widely held expectation that the treaty would lead to a reduction in the country's military expenditure, Field Marshall 'Abd al-Halim Abu Ghazala, an ambitious and somewhat controversial figure, managed to persuade the politicians to keep the military budget at its high level. During this period, military expenditure became an issue for heated debate, although the discussions were lamentably lacking in supporting figures. The way the military have calculated it, there was a 'damaging reduction' in expenditure between 1975 and 1981, followed by another reduction in 1985/86; the prospect that this latter reduction was to be made even larger was, according to some reports, the reason behind the hasty resignation of the Ali Lutfi cabinet of 1986. The armed forces have succeeded in their aim of maintaining military expenditure at such high levels, and have justified such expenditure partly by choosing to play up the potential threat to Egypt's security from Libya, and the uncertain prospects caused by the turmoil in the Gulf, and partly by making frequent references to the 'success stories' of the expanding arms industry and of the growing economic and developmental role that the armed forces have increasingly played in the society (Ayubi 1995: 271).

Unwarranted military expenditures were not limited to direct expenditures on the maintenance of the military as well as the various initiatives taken up by it, such as the establishment of military colleges and research facilities. Beyond these direct expenditures, the high level of corruption in the ever-expanding bureaucratic and administrative organisation added significantly to the overall cost of maintaining the military. While the impact of direct expenditures alone on the economy seems overwhelming, the effects of corruption are difficult to quantify. Corruption was only one of the issues plaguing the bureaucracy.

The institutional structures and channels of bureaucracy, when under the control of military officials, enabled the latter to abuse their position and power to exploit the citizens. Intra-ministerial rivalries and bureaucratic tussle for power and control is common to most developing countries. However, they are even more rampant in countries where governing bodies and political and bureaucratic apparatuses are not subject to constant public scrutiny. The presence of a military regime in Egypt resulted in military infiltration of the bureaucratic structure. In the absence of transparency and accountability, not only have these structures been plagued with corruption, but further, any progress that can be made in terms of economic development or reform is punctuated, and sometimes completely blocked, by intra-bureaucratic competition for control of power, i.e. control of funds as well as the decision-making process. This is caused partly due to corruption and partly owing to the fact that many of the bureaucratic-ministerial-military personnel have a personal stake in the policies of the state since they are also private businessmen (Sullivan 1990: 322-23). A rapidly expanding administration made it impossible for the regime to control the rampant corruption and abuse of administrative powers, as it helped to serve their own interests (Moustafa 2007: 5).

The problems of the bureaucracy were exacerbated by the international economic environment in which it was located. Operating as a channel of communication between global capitalism and the local economy, this new class had complete monopoly over the heavy flow of foreign capital given the lack of transparency.

No national bourgeoisie can any longer afford to ignore the facilities offered by international capital. For about two decades now the metropolitan bourgeoisie has provided to its major junior partners in the Third world technology, finance and military assistance which the recipients need to compete with other such recipients for export markets and in international politics. Export-oriented industries in the Third World need the facilities offered by the metropolitan bourgeoisie to succeed on the capitalist world market (Freyhold 1977: 79 in Craissati 1989: 12).

The absence of a strong national bourgeoisie, which could have provided the requisite boost to the private sector, resulted in this new class i.e. the military becoming the sole controller of the flow of capital. The impact of world capitalism's domination especially through agencies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), on military dictatorships like Egypt results in the state bureaucracy becoming the client/bourgeoisie and serving its own interests. This is visible in their expanding power in exercising control over foreign aid funds, as well as distribution/misappropriation of these funds amongst themselves (military personnel) given that they are also private businessmen and "state officials themselves constitute a special interest group" (Craissati 1989: 10).

The military, which is also the face of the bureaucracy, provides the crucial link in the relations between foreign capital and local capital. This explains why the governments, despite the sovereignty of the state remaining intact, are often subservient to the power of international capital, especially in postcolonial countries. Since the local capital (comprising of military personnel) feeds off foreign capital, the bargaining and negotiating capabilities of these governments become restricted and rather limited. "Governments in the periphery have thus minimal bargaining power vis-à-vis MNCs. And more so, the state bureaucracy can also act as a 'comprador class' by 'providing the local 'middlemen' required by foreign capital'" (Ibid.: 12).

The section of the ruling elite and military who propagated *Infitah* policies, referred to as *munfatihun* or the "fat cats", comprised of elements of the state bourgeoisie who had amassed private capital through increasing nepotism and abuse of state powers and state control over the public sector, and secondly, the private bourgeoisie including private businessmen, entrepreneurs and profiteers. This category flourished under the policies

of the *Infitah* as it provided them an opportunity to penetrate state structures and collaborate with foreign capital on joint ventures (Ibid.: 134).

Personality and Leadership Style

Individual leaders, and their respective styles and brands of leadership are an important aspect of the study of regimes and their impact on the Egyptian state. It is important to understand why the Egyptian population reacted to the failures of different leaders and regimes in different manners. The problem of social and economic adjustments to a reformist regime at the local levels was present even in the Nasser era. Not that there was no opposition to Nasser's leadership and his policies. However, protests against Sadat and Mubarak regimes had been open and more forceful, whereas even with radical measures such as nationalisation, or the targeting of anti-socialist, especially Leftist factions, the Nasser regime was able to retain legitimacy. In a large part this was a result of the charisma of Nasser's personality and the projection of his image as a saviour of the nation against monarchical tyranny. In addition to this, rather than being viewed as an 'undemocratic' and authoritarian ruler, Nasser's military credentials gave him a 'war hero' image, giving him the advantage of such a high and unique position among the public that it became impossible to replace him. Even though his successors had the same credentials, they could not match up to his stature. Heralding movements like Non-Alignment, which was a bold stance against the two superpowers of the world, and leading the cause of pan-Arabism in the aftermath of colonialism in a severely fragmented Arab world, created in the eyes of the public the image of a visionary, a nationalist leader and international figure whose views and concerns extended beyond the politics of his immediate surroundings, and his own interests. Even the defeat of the Egyptian-led Arab coalition at the hands of Israel in the 1967 War was unable to completely undermine the stature enjoyed by Nasser.

This personal charismatic legitimacy of Nasser is an important factor in the comparative analysis between his rule and that of Sadat and then Mubarak. This is so primarily because, as mentioned earlier, the problem of economic adjustment to new reforms at

the local level and the resulting social upheavals, such as the Kamshish Affair⁶, existed even at the time of Nasser's leadership. However, this opposition was far less intense in comparison to the Sadat and Mubarak eras which culminated in the Arab Spring protests. An important factor which contributed to this difference was the stated ideological objectives of the different regimes. The socialist agenda of Nasser appealed immensely to the Egyptian population recently freed from the capitalist exploitation perpetrated by a monarchical ruler. The land reforms and the nationalisation of the Suez Canal had a remarkable impact in sealing Nasser's image as the protector of national interests and socialist principles. The ideas proclaimed under the banner of socialism promised equitable distribution and redistribution of resources and wealth to the advantage of the economically backward. Equally important was the promise of better opportunities for the average citizen with respect to education, employment and the overall standard of living.

Not only did the socialist programme raise Nasser's stature in popular perception, it also altered the public opinion of the state- now viewed as a mechanism for the protection of the economic rights and interests of the individual, and by extension endowing social justice. The common feeling was that the state would ensure the welfare of its citizens, the sense of protection only enhanced by the sight of military officials replacing the old corrupt leadership. To this end, even the corruption and nepotism in the bureaucracy which existed at the time of Nasser was overlooked to some extent. Apart from the feeling of being protected by the military, an organised and disciplined body which appeared accountable at the outset, the overlooking was also a result of the fact that the sting of corruption among military ranks had not yet been felt to its fullest extent.

⁶ The Kamshish Affair emerged in 1966 as a case of the politically motivated murder of a socialist activist, Salah Husain Maqlad, by the local landed-aristocratic family- al-Fiqqi. The murder became emblematic of the struggles of the common peasants against the oppressive and privileged class, as well as the failure of Nasser's agrarian reforms in dis-entrenching rural feudal class interests, represented by the Fiqqi family. It is often referred to as a representative case study of evolving relations between Egypt's rulers and the masses. The radical social trends signified by this Affair, ironically, resulted in the re-traditionalization of Egyptian politics. The Kamshish Affair happened at a time when both rural and urban areas were experiencing growing discontent and when the left emerged as a political counterforce to the underground movements of the Wafd and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Kamshish Affair also forced Nasser to respond to the growing discontent, which he did by forming the Higher Committee for the Liquidation of Feudalism (HCLF). The HCLF brought charges against feudalists in all sixteen agricultural provinces of the country and led to large-scale land expropriation, banishment and dismissal from government services. For details, see Ansari (1986).

In contrast, the neoliberal policies of Sadat and Mubarak turned the state into a means of exploitation of the common masses. This sense of exploitation was furthered by the image of military officials who now reigned supreme, were apathetic to the plight of the citizens, and were subject to no sense of obligation or accountability to the public. The continued desertion of the welfare role of the state turned it into a perpetrator of economic, and eventually social and political, injustice.

Sadat's wariness of the image of his predecessor in public consciousness can be discerned from his attempts to de-Nasserise not only the defining characteristics of state policy, but also replacing his predecessor in public consciousness. His attitude to public life and publicity inadvertently gave away his intention to replace Nasser as a hero of the Egyptian people even before the announcement of *Infitah*.

His decision to dismantle many Nasser-era policies and his ground-breaking trip to Jerusalem, which made possible the Camp David accords, earned him acclaim from the Western governments and a Nobel Prize, but incurred the ire of segments of the Egyptian populace as well as the larger Arab-Islamic world. The confluence of internal discontent springing from the failed promises of his economic opening (*Infitah*) coupled with the ostracism of Egypt in the Arab world, its increasing reliance on American support, growing interclass inequality and repressive anti-opposition measures eventually undermined any residual popularity Sadat enjoyed following the relatively successful Egyptian performance in the 1973 War with Israel (Davidson 2000: 77).

The availability of a plethora of interviews, public speeches and written material in addition to literature in the public domain provides an indication to Sadat's willingness to project a specific image of himself as a national leader. This was also a compulsion due to the circumstances in which Sadat came to power. The defeat and losses of the 1967 War combined with the looming economic crisis that was inevitable in the aftermath of war and the complete loss of faith in the dream of Arab unity and nationhood necessitated drastic measures. However, since Sadat could not compete with Nasser's popularity, he embarked upon a process of de-legitimising Nasser's image in order to gain acceptability among the Egyptian masses. His benign attitude towards

oppositional forces like the Muslim Brotherhood and encouragement of critical writers and commentators was part of this effort to gain popularity.

Mubarak was far less inclined to be open to such intense public scrutiny. In comparison to the highs and lows of his predecessor's public life, Mubarak's approach was far more cautious, and strategised to consolidate his power. Consistent efforts to eliminate political opposition on one hand and curbing of free speech and criticism while dominating public opinion through state-sponsored media on the other were integral to Mubarak's leadership style. In addition to this, limited state-sponsored programmes such as the drive for women's empowerment⁷ were initiated to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Egyptian public. A dearth of critical material, especially in popular media up until the Arab Spring protests, is indicative of this cautious strategy.

Public attitudes towards the leaders are testimony to the diminishing popularity of the successive Egyptian military leaders. Nowhere is it more apparent than in the culture of the political joke. For decades, political jokes, like graffiti, have become an important medium for the expression of discontent and criticism in society, and a vibrant culture of political jokes has flourished since the onset of the period of the military regime.

The political joke became particularly important beginning in 1952, when a group of military officers led by Mohammed Naguib and Jamal Abdel Nasser (The Free Officers) overthrew the corrupt monarchy of King Farouk and replaced it with a military regime. With the new regime came the end of parliamentary politics and political freedoms, including the right to organize political parties, and freedoms of speech and the press. When open political expression became dangerous in Egypt, the political joke emerged as a vehicle for the criticism of political leaders, their policies, and government (Shehata 1992: 75).

In a society where space for expression of dissent was fast closing up, and the liberties of free speech and press were constantly impinged upon, the political joke served as

a weapon at the disposal of the people in the terribly unequal power relations that characterize the relationship of the rulers and the ruled, the political leaders

⁷ This is discussed further in chapter 5.

and the people. While the rulers have almost unlimited power, to arrest, imprison, torture, and even execute, the people maintain the power to ridicule and laugh (Ibid.: 76).

The political joke has been an important medium of expression for the Egyptian public since the time of Nasser's rule. When the political environment becomes excessively oppressed, and the right of speech, expression and dissent is severely curbed, the political joke has served as a crucial means of both critical expression and the venting of public frustration. In particular, jokes on the time-consuming paperwork, the need to grease administrative clog wheels with monetary incentives, and the attitudes of bureaucrats is a harsh comment on the red-tapism, corruption and a specific brand of 'class' arrogance rampant in government and administrative offices. Jokes on exchanges between the President and the Muslim and Coptic Christian religious heads reflects on the unfavourable approach of the political leadership towards the minorities. Even when not manifested in blatant discrimination, this approach places such groups at a disadvantage and such sarcasm and critical commentary gives voice to the widespread feeling of dissent and presents a criticism which is revealing of the true nature of the ruling regime. As a corollary, the political joke also reflects on the citizens' perceptions of the state (as an extension of the ruling regime) in looking for an alternate medium of expression when freedom of speech and press is denied.

The culture of political jokes and other media of expressing dissent reflected how deeply entrenched the authoritarian character of the state had become. This was the result of consistent efforts made by the regimes of Sadat and Mubarak to institutionalise authoritarianism as well as stifle the expression of dissent. These efforts resulted in the overpowering of the state by the regime through a consistent annihilation of various bodies of the state apparatus.

Regime versus State: Means of Subversion

The rise of an authoritarian regime makes the subversion of state institutions inevitable. In order to consolidate its own political power and position as the supreme ruler, the regime tries to subsume the various institutions of the state within its own control. Subversion of the state is required by a regime whose interests are no longer convergent with that of the state/social contract which also embodies the will of the people or the ruled. The regime seeks to subvert the state apparatus to consolidate its power and to ensure that no structural-legal inroads are available to the ruled for negotiating with the regime. Thus, the right to negotiate political liberty is taken away from the ruled as the regime gains absolute control of the institution of the state.

This has also been the case in Egypt, since the Free Officers' Revolution and the consecutive rise of the military regime. Though the methods employed by the three leaders may have varied, from 1952 onwards, there began a programme of usurping power and control of various aspects of the state, continuing down to the years of the Mubarak regime when it reached its pinnacle. Not only the legislative branch, but the bureaucracy, the judicial system, the space for political opposition and freedom of press- all key elements of the institution of the state- have been targeted by the authoritarian regimes.

The Judiciary

Subversion is often blatant as authoritarian regimes are not accountable to the citizens. Yet their attitude towards the judicial system presents an interesting anomaly. Several countries dominated by authoritarian regimes have judicial systems that function with remarkable autonomy⁸. However, this is also a paradoxical attempt on the part of the regime to consolidate political control. An autonomous or at least relatively independent judicial system serves many important functions. Such a system serves to enforce the will of an authoritarian state when it comes to laws and policies pertaining to

⁸ Egypt and Pakistan are examples where the judiciary has existed in relative or partial autonomy, with some success in making military regimes accountable and limiting their authoritarian tendencies.

controversial issues. While the use of the judiciary to reinforce legislation or policy decisions is predominantly a practice in democratic countries, this method may still have some utility for authoritarian regimes as well. Though such instances may be few the subversion and use of the judicial system to implement laws, particularly on controversial issues, is recourse taken by many authoritarian regimes. In spite of the lack of accountability, they still benefit from such a method when it comes to extremely sensitive issues or when public dissent and criticism are on the rise.

The religious-secular debates and Islamic notions of 'state' and 'nation' are issues that the Sadat and Mubarak regimes attempted to avoid because this is one area in which both political opposition as well as the public backlash could have been massive and permanently damaging. This also explains the regimes' attitudes towards the Muslim Brotherhood, especially that of Mubarak who was totally intolerant of the organisation. On the other hand are religious institutions like al-Azhar. While the military regimes have on certain issues sought legitimacy from al-Azhar, they refuse to accord it the supremacy enjoyed by religious institutions in countries such as Saudi Arabia. The primary reason is that the al-Azhar establishment and the military regimes were not as hand in glove as the regimes would have liked, nor is this establishment the sole religious voice in Egypt⁹.

Furthermore, a relatively independent judicial system restores or provides some sense of legitimacy to an otherwise authoritarian state which has no accountability to its citizens. Apart from domestic considerations, international pressure is also a factor. Even authoritarian regimes are sometimes compelled to employ such methods as recourse to the judicial system to bring an element of legitimacy to their laws and policies when the opinions of the world community become increasingly critical. This is more so in the case when critical attitudes of major powers and international institutions can potentially reflect in the economic ties and foreign aid thus far enjoyed by the regime. This has been an important consideration for the regimes in Egypt as well. In the long term, however, this partial subversion becomes detrimental to the limited legitimacy of

⁹ A more detailed analysis of the relationship between the military regimes and al-Azhar is presented in chapter 5.

the state, especially when the judicial system is unable to deliver justice. This inability is partly due to a direct and blatant subversion of the judiciary and partly due to the indirect means of subversion in the form of establishment of special courts, imposition of emergency and other such methods, as discussed in the following pages.

The Permanent Constitution of 1971

The powers acquired by the state through the process of consolidation of military regimes were authoritarian to the extent of being colonial in nature. The control of the military over the state and particularly the economy was of an extreme kind. Despite limited efforts to open up or liberalise the political arena, political opposition was not tolerated beyond a point, let alone given a fair chance to contest in a democratic set up. The ideology of the state also provides a key to understanding the authoritarian character the state has acquired, due to changing political and ideological rhetoric that created a façade which facilitated the consolidation of political power by the ruling regimes during the eras of both Sadat and Mubarak. The means of subversion employed by the regimes had a lasting impact on the state, especially because of the strategies employed by the regimes to alter the very source of law and political power i.e. the constitution, as well as other structural and institutional changes which would reflect on the nature of the state.

Part 7 of the 1971 Constitution of Egypt forms an important part of the move towards supposed liberalisation started by Sadat. This includes the empowerment of the Shura Council on matters of defence and national integrity, bestowing it with much greater powers. However, neither the President nor the Prime Minister and his council were made entirely accountable to the Shura Council. The President had the power to dissolve the Council “only in extreme necessity”. Chapter 2 of Part 7 guaranteed freedom of press and prohibition of press censorship. On the other hand, in a constitutional amendment introduced in 1980, the period of presidency was practically perpetuated to a lifetime, which meant that the president could run for an unlimited number of terms, rather than one term as originally stipulated in the 1971 Constitution.

One of the most significant instruments for the military regimes to acquire near-absolute powers, and consolidate their control over the state apparatus, was the emergency law. It also significantly reflects on the nature and integral characteristics the state has come to acquire. The emergency law has evolved directly from the martial law of the colonial era. Continuing into the postcolonial era, this law has been developed in the way that temporary measures have been cemented and enshrined as permanent in the Constitution. It was used immediately in the aftermath of the Free Officers' Revolution primarily to eliminate any substantial political opposition and specifically targeted the Muslim Brotherhood and the Leftist leadership. Criticism of this law emerged since 1952, in the era of Nasser itself, but far from it being abolished, it has only been strengthened over the decades. The 1971 Constitution contains the emergency law passed in 1958, the full text of which reads as the following,

The President of the Republic shall proclaim a state of emergency in the manner prescribed by the law. Such proclamation must be submitted to the People's Assembly within the following fifteen days so that the Assembly may take a decision thereon. In case of the dissolution of the People's Assembly, the matter shall be submitted to the new Assembly at its first meeting. In all cases, the proclamation of the state of emergency shall be for a limited period, which may not be extended unless by approval of the Assembly (Constitution, Art. 148).

The 1958 Emergency Law, which was vast in its scope of application, empowered the President to declare an emergency whenever there was a threat to public security. The nature or definition of such a threat remains ambiguous and open to interpretation, particularly in its reference to 'internal disturbances'¹⁰. The 2007 Amendments under the Mubarak regime not only made the state of emergency a more permanent state, but also made presidential powers under emergency law unimpeachable. This has had a direct bearing on governance trends and has altered the state structure. It is one of the most significant methods of consolidation of power and state control employed by the regimes owing to its constitutionality (Reza 2007: 532).

Articles 7 and 9 of the Constitution also authorise "the creation of State Security Courts to hear violations of emergency orders and ordinary criminal offenses the President

¹⁰ As stated in Law 162 of 1958 Emergency Law.

refers to them” (Ibid.: 539). This has been one of the most controversial provisions of the emergency law, especially for the way in which it has been implemented to stifle opposition or even public or media criticism.

A presidential decree of 1981... refers a variety of ordinary crimes to these courts; among them are crimes concerning state security, crimes of public incitement (including by newspapers), and crimes involving public demonstrations and gatherings. The decree also says that any crimes that are not specifically listed but are connected with those listed are included in the referral. The Emergency Law provides for judges of the ordinary judiciary to preside in these courts, but it also allows the president to seat military judges in their places. These courts are to follow the rules of ordinary procedure, but different procedural rules may be dictated by presidential order. Verdicts in these courts are subject to ratification by the president; otherwise they are unappealable (Ibid.).

Thus, not only do these special courts allow for ordinary violations to be treated differently but also to be adjudicated by military personnel, decreed by presidential order, and therefore exceptional to ordinary procedural regulations and appeals. This provision was amply used for the specific targeting of oppositional forces such as members of the Muslim Brotherhood and the struggling survivors of the Leftist movement since the rule of Nasser, but applied more widely to the activities of political Islamists and public protestors under the leadership of Mubarak. One area in which these provisions, combined with other oppressive measures of the regime, were applied with undue aggression was in the curbing of free speech and criticism from the media¹¹.

Despite the ambiguity of the numerous constitutional provisions and the excesses of the ruling regimes in the interpretation and execution of these laws, the role of the judiciary has been remarkable in Egypt. Contrary to the theory of the ‘judicialization of authoritarian politics’¹², the judiciary in Egypt has retained significant autonomy vis-à-

¹¹ For a detailed discussion see Chapter 5.

¹² Tamir Moustafa explains the concept of judicialization of authoritarian politics as the use of the judicial arm, often through the creation of special constitutional courts, to (a) encourage investment, (b) to strengthen administrative discipline within the state’s own bureaucratic machinery, and, (c) to implement controversial reforms, or generally to exploit judicial institutions to bolster their claim to procedural or legal legitimacy (Moustafa 2007: 20).

vis the state. On occasions, it has also exercised what has come to be known as judicial activism, intervening in the process of state sponsored legislature. Even though the creation of special courts, which can supersede the main body of the judiciary, presents a serious impediment to judicial autonomy, the independent judiciary has retained an open avenue for citizens to plead their case and challenge the rulings of the regime. While in countries such as China, administrative autonomy is rather limited and they are institutionally weak due to the aggressive stance of the ruling regime, in the case of Egypt, “administrative courts have a longer institutional history and a high degree of institutional autonomy, and they serve as effective avenues for citizens to challenge executive decisions all the way up to the ministerial level of government” (Moustafa 2007: 20).

At the same time, the judicial arm was in some ways also employed to ensure political stability for the ruling regime, especially in ensuring the cohesive functioning of various factions within the establishment. Lack of transparency presents a serious problem for the leaders of the ruling regime as much as it does for the citizens, in so far as centralised control of the functioning of various components of the regime becomes extremely difficult. This increases the probability of the formulation of smaller power clusters which may then attempt to break free from, or even supersede, the highest authority in the hierarchy.

In the Egyptian case, both Nasser and Sadat came to the conclusion that centralized modes of monitoring did not produce reliable information about the conduct of the state’s own administrative hierarchy. They both became concerned that they would fall victim to the emergence of alternative “power centers”, particularly within the military, police, and the intelligence services. Sadat spoke repeatedly about the need to strengthen legal institutions as a way of policing the state and short-circuiting the possibility of power grabs (Ibid.: 34).

It can be surmised then that relative autonomy of the judiciary aided the centralisation of power and command that is integral to the operation of military regimes in power in addition to providing legitimacy of a legal-rational nature, even though it was limited. Yet this could not empower citizens in a significant manner because the means of

subversion employed by the regimes went beyond manipulating and altering the nature of the legal source of power.

Parliamentary Elections

A look at the history of elections in Egypt presents another site of subversion. Parliamentary elections, which were relatively regular in Egypt, were far from free and fair. The regimes of both Sadat and Mubarak not only manipulated the resources for contesting elections, but also resorted to electoral irregularities. The parliamentary elections of 1995 are a case in point, when candidates opposing the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) faced several constraints and handicaps. These included legally denied access to broadcast media- a key instrument for campaigning in a country with a significantly high level of illiteracy- as well as other campaign resources. This meant that opponents were unable to broadcast their campaigns or reach out to the voters. Cut off at the very base of the campaigning process, they hardly stood a chance in the elections. NDP's ability to mobilise multitudes of public sector employees in its support further outweighed the campaigns of other opponents. Despite the clear advantage enjoyed by the NDP over its opponents, electoral irregularities were still reported and the demand of opposition candidates for internal election monitors was rejected by the government (Davidson 2000: 83). This picture is symbolic of what the political opposition was up against- an omnipresent authoritarian regime, the complete lack of resources for running a successful campaign, constant targeting and witch-hunting by the regime and uncertainty during the elections due to the corrupt and authoritarian manoeuvrings of the electoral process by the regime.

The first multi-candidacy presidential election was conducted on 7 September 2005. It was contested by 22 candidates including the ruling NDP's candidate and 24 year presidential incumbent, Mubarak. The outcome, however, was a remarkable poll of 88.57 percent votes with which Mubarak won the election (Stacher 2008: 301). It appears that the result of the election was foregone yet the conducting of the election held some important objectives. According to Joshua Stacher,

The Egyptian government wanted the world to see the amendment of constitutional article 76, which facilitated the presidential election, as the central political reform of 2005. The election has since been overshadowed by the more competitive parliamentary elections and the regime-led security and legal backlash against the Kifaya movement, journalists, and judges. Similarly, the imprisonment of Ayman Nour¹³, the two-year postponement of the municipal elections, continuing Muslim Brother arrests, and extension of the emergency laws indicate that the president's expansive campaign promises were empty (Ibid.).

Both the constitutional amendments as well as the presidential elections were targeted at adapting the authoritarian system and showing the world that Egypt was moving along the process of democratisation, rather than actually engaging in reforming the political system. It was contended by scholars such as Stacher (2008) that such a practice also served the larger purpose of ensuring the smooth succession of the president by another senior army officer, thus ensuring a seamless continuation of the military regime. However, this contention was challenged by widespread speculation over Mubarak's succession by his son, Gamal Mubarak.

Hijacking the Bureaucracy

As the primary component of the executive branch of any state, the bureaucracy is extremely important as an instrument to exercise the power of the state and its government. Control of the bureaucracy is an important measure of the control over the state. Most postcolonial states ruled by military regimes have bureaucracies which are infiltrated and controlled by the military. There are two key aspects to the way in which the bureaucracy affects the state. The first is the structure and functioning of the bureaucracy itself. The second is through the control of the bureaucracy which in the case of Egypt has been completely taken over by the military. The foundations of the bureaucratic system in Egypt- one of the oldest and traditionally structured states- was

¹³ Ayman Abd El Naziz Nour is an Egyptian politician and former member of the parliament, founder and chairman of the El Ghad party. He was the first runner up in the 2005 election against Mubarak, and was imprisoned under allegations of forgery which caused widespread criticism against the regime.

laid down by Mohammed Ali, and improvised upon throughout the colonial period. As is the case with most postcolonial developing states, the Egyptian bureaucracy too has been one of the least reformed institutions of the state.

Many third world societies are... hampered by the enormous difficulty, grounded in cultural patterns appropriate to small-scale subsistence societies, of maintaining institutions which are beyond the effective control of a single boss and which can readily adapt to changes in leadership. Since the largest organisation in most third world states is government, this difficulty is especially clear in the maintenance of an effective bureaucracy. The problem is presented in its starkest form when the army seizes power, and an essentially bureaucratic organisation becomes directly responsible for the political management of the state (Clapham 1985: 5).

Though much has been done by the military regimes to gain control of the bureaucracy, efforts to reform or restructure it have been severely limited. In fact, the military control of the state and bureaucracy has seen a great expansion of the bureaucracy in its pre-existing form which combined with class connotations of the military rule made it something akin to a 'fearful body of parasites'¹⁴. This is reflected both in terms of the significant increase in the rate of employment in various branches of the central administration as well as in terms of the stark rise in bureaucratic expenditures. These expenditures have multiplied over the decades due to economic factors such as accounting for the rate of inflation as well as other factors like providing guaranteed employment to a rapidly increasing pool of university graduates whose employment opportunities elsewhere were rather limited. The latter is predicated on the continuation

¹⁴ Karl Marx, in his *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Bonaparte*, referred to the second Bonaparte's regime as 'this fearful body of parasites', in the context of the role it played in the French society. According to him, "This executive power, with its tremendous bureaucratic and military organization; with its wide-spreading and artificial machinery of government-an army of office holders, half a million strong, together with a military force of another million men-; this fearful body of parasites, that coils itself like a snake around French society, stopping all its pores, originated at the time of the absolute monarch, along with the decline of feudalism, which it helped to hasten... The first French Revolution, having as a mission to sweep away all local, territorial, urban and provincial special privileges, with the object of establishing the civic unity of the nation, was bound to develop what the absolute monarch had begun-the work of centralization, together with the range, the attributes and the menials of the government. Napoleon completed this government machinery. The legitimist and July Monarchy contributed nothing thereto, except a greater subdivision of labour... Finally, the parliamentary republic found itself, in its struggle against the revolution, compelled, with its repressive measures, to strengthen the means and the centralization of the government" (translated by John Waterbury) (Waterbury 1983: 13).

of certain policies which the Egyptian state was not in a position to afford, but continued nevertheless only to quell any feelings of dissent in the public. Restructuring, reform and containment of such a system would have been far more conducive to the efficient and sustainable functioning of the bureaucracy. Yet bureaucratic expansion continued through the Sadat period down to Mubarak's rule.

The primary explanation for this expansion is the perception of the bureaucratic system as an instrument of development. The notion that an enlarged bureaucracy with a huge workforce would automatically result in better implementation of policies and enable the smooth functioning of the 'developmental model', prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s, is a major reason for the expansion of the Egyptian bureaucracy (Ayubi 1995). This notion, combined with the imperative to provide employment to a rapidly growing workforce in the public sector, led to this expansion. However, contrary to the notion of increased functionality, the expansion of the bureaucracy meant overstaffing, an unnecessary increase in the number of departments and branches, slower and more complicated administrative processes, unnecessary delays in policy-implementation and lack of accountability. It also meant that decision-making processes were slowed down, and an expanded workforce often lacking in a cohesive ideology or direction, in the absence of any consultative processes or interactions, in turn led to the filibustering of important decisions in the event of intra- or inter-departmental disagreements.

Added to this, the bureaucracy's specific composition, the fact that their accountability was to the military and not the general public, and the particular economic trajectory taken up by the Egyptian state made conditions conducive for excessive corruption and nepotism in addition to the pre-existing problem of red-tapism. All of this resulted in the inefficacy and parasitic tendencies commonly associated with bureaucracies in most developing countries, where they become a liability for the state rather than an instrument to enable the developmental model. In Egypt, such an institution with all its problems, continued to expand even through the Mubarak period.

In an institution that already breeds red-tapism, and, as in the case of most developing countries, corruption, the bureaucracy under the control of a military regime leads to a complete loss of accountability. As this is a distortion of the not just the powers

provided by the mechanism of the state to the government, but also a distortion of the state itself, this control and complete lack of accountability seriously undermines the legitimacy of the state. The primary way of controlling the bureaucracy is through political appointments of the heads of various departments. Given that the heads of major departments in countries like Egypt, Pakistan etc. are serving or retired military officials the expansion of military control over the bureaucracy becomes almost impossible to contain.

Further, individual backgrounds of the officials also contribute to the kind of leadership that emerges. Most officials in charge of or involved in the functioning of major departments like industry, agriculture, and education either belong to the former landed elite or have acquired higher education and vocational training (often in Western countries). When these officials acquire power and control over important departments and ministries in addition to holding significant positions in the military, it leads not only to the distorted or at least unaccounted functioning of those departments but more importantly to the creation of a new elite. This new class, or new elite is a nexus of military officials enmeshed in or heading the bureaucratic organisation, and their existence leads to a bureaucratic-technocratic-authoritarianism made complete by the military's ability to quell any significant political opposition or any other major challenge to this power.

What contributes to this nexus is the close alliance of the military and the landed elite or land-owning gentry. In postcolonial agricultural economies such as Egypt, a part of the new landed elite were also the political elite i.e. ministerial level military officials and bureaucrats. In these economies, on the one hand, targeted agricultural programmes were taken up to boost the production of specific agricultural crops and products (in the case of Egypt products such as cotton, processed foods and dairy products, for export purposes). On the other hand, the close alliance of the military and technocrats in postcolonial countries which only recently begun the process of industrialisation strengthened as special impetus was given to developing and importing latest technological and industrial advancements to boost industrial production. While this nexus has its origins in the Nasser regime in Egypt, its effects on the economy of the

country worsened significantly with the introduction of *Infitah* policies. This is, in turn, connected to the fact that many of the military-bureaucrats other than or in addition to being landed bureaucracy were also businessmen who manipulated economic and industrial policies to suit their own business interests.

The military's usurpation of power and control over the executive, legislative and other institutions of governance was just one of the characteristics that marked all three military regimes. The other was the lack of consolidation of political institutions and democratic processes. While the personal leadership style of each of the leaders had a bearing on domestic and/or foreign policies, an overarching feature of the state across all three regimes was the lack of sustainable political development and mobilisation. This resulted in Egypt becoming a 'weak' state. The political insecurities and consequent thrust on maintaining (political) stability led the regimes to become even more dictatorial, focused on consolidating personal power as opposed to political development or democratisation. This was reflected in all aspects of governance from political appointments to foreign policy orientations to domestic and international economic policies.

One of the most disastrous consequences of the weak state was the lack of a stable and legitimate political opposition. Not only did this result in a complete absence of any mechanisms of checks and balances, but also led to potential opposition groups and organisations, many of which, in retaliation to government repression, resorted to coercive measures and the use of violence and vandalism. Not all violent occurrences can be attributed directly to the government (as some were motivated by their political/social/religious ideologies, such as Sayyid Qutb and the radical faction of the Muslim Brotherhood, or Sadat's assassin). Yet, there are instances of violence resulting directly from the oppression of dictatorial regimes.

The Military-Industrial Complex

The military-industrial complex in Egypt is both a product of the political and economic developments under the rule of the military regimes, as well as a perpetuator of it. It has

been a significant means for the military to establish control over the economy as well as politics. The consolidation of the military-industrial complex is central to the political and economic powers of the military. It indicates that the military, through its 'economic wing', developing since the time of Nasser, controls a majority of the means of production in the industrial sector; a majority of land in the agricultural sector (especially in the case of agriculture-based economies like Egypt, where the military uses land either directly for the purposes of industrial production such as food processing plants or indirectly as a source of revenue to fund industrial and military initiatives); and a majority of technological research and advancement. The immediate result of the consolidation of such a nexus is the establishment of army colleges and training centres, establishment of technological and scientific research facilities within defence establishments, and the localisation of arms production. This brings us back to the problem of excessive military expenditures which have grave implications on developing economies of the Global South.

In addition, it leads to the creation of a new class¹⁵ - a new middle class of technocrats and bureaucrats, and army officials from middle class backgrounds who since the consolidation of the military regime have gained a stronghold on the economy especially by permeating into the state mechanism. The rise of this class in Egypt, which has come to control the state, major sectors of production, land, capital and technology, in turn contributes deeply to the bureaucratic authoritarian nature that the state thus assumes. With rising military control over the bureaucracy and industry accompanied by elimination of all political opposition, the state and bureaucracy become the instruments of political control and economic exploitation- both direct and indirect.

The emergence of the alliance of state technocrats and the political military elite along with foreign investors and occasionally, select domestic entrepreneurs, is an important

¹⁵ The term 'class' is only used for the purposes of highlighting the economic and social impacts of the military's ascendance to power. The rise of the military did give rise to a distinct class of military officials and technocrats who benefitted the most from the economic policies of *Infitah*. At the same time economic cleavages already prevalent in the Egyptian society widened even further due to most of these policies as well as other political changes. Thus 'class' becomes an important variable to study the economic and political effects of military dominance.

indicator of the ‘deepening’ of the state. Such an alliance in Egypt, as in most postcolonial states in the early stages of development, is considerably influenced by foreign investors and international institutions like the IMF.

Shifting Foreign Policy Orientations

An important characteristic feature of the military’s political role, and the drive for consolidation of power by Sadat and Mubarak as well as their subordinates, was the shift in foreign policy orientations. What in rhetoric may well have been justified as a move towards liberalisation indeed covered the search for great power patronage for the purposes of securing external aid, foreign investment and arms supplies. “In 1972, ...[Sadat] expelled 20,000 Soviet military advisors and began courting the USSR’s rival superpower” (Brownlee 2011: 648). On 14 March 1976, the Egyptian Parliament under Sadat cancelled the Egyptian-Soviet Friendship and Cooperation Treaty. In the same month, the US lifted its arms embargo on Egypt, making a sale of C-130 military transport aircraft (Ibid.: 649). While the Cold War pushed most postcolonial states towards such great power patronage, the reasons behind it were primarily related to domestic political and economic imperative. The most important of these was establishing complete political control and securing the consolidation of power with the aid of the legitimacy of economic deliverance. For instance, within a short time of the restoration of diplomatic relations between Washington and Cairo, on 28 February 1974, US President Richard Nixon appropriated US\$ 250 million in economic aid to Egypt (Ibid.: 648). Functioning on the assumption that an authoritarian regime could gain legitimacy and popular acceptance as long as it delivered on the economic front, top leadership sought to gain maximum favours through great power patronage, in a fast growing alliance with the US. The shift from a pro-Soviet stance was based on strategy to gain maximum benefits in military and financial assistance, both in the form of aid and loans through international institutions, more so than on the declining influence of the Soviet Union in the region.

While a broad analysis shows that the shift in foreign policy orientations was motivated by the changing international situation and the gradually declining influence of the Soviet Union, the process of the execution of this shift was actually more gradual, and often more reactionary in approach than as a planned strategy. Limited Soviet cooperation in regional and domestic affairs was one of the reasons that prompted this process. In the words of Nazih Ayubi,

one of the reasons behind the expulsion of Soviet experts from Egypt in 1972 was the officers' impatience with the patronizing attitudes of the Soviets, combined with the desire that any military success in the coming war with Israel should be attributed to the Egyptian army and not to its Soviet advisors. Following the October 1973 war, Sadat made sure that the military establishment was involved in all stages of the peace process with Israel; for example both General Gamasi and General Hasan-'Ali played particularly prominent roles in the disengagement negotiations and in the peace talks respectively (Ayubi 1995: 270).

The desertion of a pro-Soviet foreign policy orientation was almost immediately followed by a pro-American attitude of the military regime. The post-1973 War scenario, at both regional and international levels, demonstrates this. In the absence of concerns of electoral politics and open criticism, Sadat was able to augment a foreign policy trajectory that was a clear departure from the foreign policy objectives of Nasser. In a clear abandonment of pan-Arabism and in contrast to the stated commitment to non-alignment, Egypt made substantial concessions at Camp David. This closeness between the US and Egypt continued to grow in the following decades, through the Mubarak era as well. In 2006 alone, US military and economic aid to Egypt reached about US\$ 60 billion. This was classified as foreign military financing. In turn, Egypt continued to serve the strategic interests of the US especially with its logistical assistance to the latter in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. "In the global war on terror, Egypt has been a key node in the network of ordinary renditions" (Brownlee 2011: 644). With the Camp David Accords, Egypt completed the process of securing a favourable position with the US, which once again saw Egypt as its foothold in the Arab

world. This position was further cemented, and achieved new heights with the onset of the Mubarak era.

After President Mubarak came to power in 1981 the military establishment at large continued to expand its influence, and the armed forces are now financially semi autonomous, possessing a significant 'economic wing' and a strong and rapidly developing arms industry. The political influence of the military, both domestically and externally, is also in the ascendant (Ayubi 1995: 270-271).

Combining a more cautious yet carefully structured policy of economic liberalisation than the previous leadership with a prudent approach to the domestic political climate, Mubarak was able to secure substantial aid and assistance from the IMF and the US. Egypt received its first IMF loan in 1976, followed by the next round of loans in 1987 (Harrigan et al 2006: 255). Under the economic reforms implemented by the Mubarak regime in 1991, Egypt got several tranches of loans from the IMF. The first, worth US\$ 372 million, was announced in May 1991 (NYT 1991). The second tranche was approved in 1996 and it promised US\$ 391 million in return of continuing push towards subsidy reforms in Egypt (IMF 1996). The third generation of these reforms was started in 2004.

Growing political and strategic cooperation with the US during the Mubarak era also reflected in the external debt financing. Egypt mobilised Arab support for the 1991 Gulf War and also sent troops to help in liberating Kuwait. In May 1991, three months after the end of the war, Egypt received an IMF loan of SDR 234 million and a further Structural Adjustment Loan worth US\$ 300 million. In addition, Western countries, led by the US, wrote off more than US\$ 15 billion of Egyptian debt, the highest debt write off in the history of the West Asian and North African region (Harrigan et al 2006: 258). In addition, Egypt also benefitted from specialised US programmes such as the 'Commodity Import Program (CIP)' of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), under which, from 1999-2003, Egypt got assistance to import products worth US\$ 1.1 billion (USGAO 2004).

Military Regime and Repression

The perceived difference between the personal leadership style of Sadat and Mubarak can be attributed to the differing domestic and regional circumstances during their respective terms of rule. Beyond the personality differences between the two leaders discussed above, the changing circumstances were responsible not just in the perceptions of their leadership styles but also in contributing to the common perception that the Mubarak government was outright repressive compared with the attempt towards liberal politics in the Sadat era. Contrary to this common perception, political repression did not begin in the rule of Mubarak. Rather the roots of repression lie in the Sadat era. “Egypt’s ‘robust coercive apparatus’ grew in the shadows of its liberal experiment, as Sadat expanded his international ties and security organizations” (Brownlee 2011: 644). This is evident from the apparent liberty ascribed to the Sadat era, be it the relative freedom of press, the relatively benign attitude of the leadership towards the Muslim Brotherhood and other oppositional forces, or the elections and plebiscites conducted during the Sadat era. Some of these liberties could be afforded by the regime that rode the high of the 1973 War and the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty. In contrast, Mubarak came to power following the assassination of a president in office, in conditions when public dissent and anger were exceptionally high. It can be argued that the harsher measures that closed up the slight liberal opening were bound to follow, and that they became much more apparent in contrast to the gradually growing repression of the previous regime.

Shifts in regional and international policies, combined with the on-going economic crisis and domestic public dissent, saw a stark increase in the military and police presence at the local level. “In 2008, an estimated 1.7 million security personnel and support staff oversaw a domestic population of 80 million. The resulting staff-to-population ration (about 1:47) was reminiscent of the human resources East Germany devoted to internal monitoring” (Ibid.: 641). This rise in repression prompted what came to be identified by scholars like Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman as the

'police practices' of developing states¹⁶, or what was being viewed by most international relations experts as the emergence of the intelligence state.

Conclusion

The emergence of the military as a class, as demonstrated in this chapter, was largely a consequence of the changing economic trajectory, which in turn perpetuated such a class and its interests. The impact of this emerging class was across the spectrum and at different levels. While in rural Egypt, the impact felt was primarily economic (as discussed in the next chapter), it was also felt in the changing social makeup of the urban Egyptian society. In order to consolidate power and amass wealth, the regime not only distorted the institution of the state, but also targeted the public sphere, attempting to curb and control and as a result create a severely oppressive political environment. With the exception of the judiciary which retained partial autonomy, every other pillar of the state was rapidly subsumed by military control. The most damaging and lasting distortions came in the form of constitutional amendments as these altered the very nature of state institutions. While the origins of state repression as a policy of the regime lie in the Nasser era, the excesses were taken much further during the Sadat era and in a manner of speaking, completed, in the Mubarak era with the imposition of emergency and the amendment granting indefinite tenure of the President.

¹⁶ See Chomsky and Herman (1979).

Chapter 4

Political Economy of Egypt

Economy is the singular, most important factor that determines the nature of the state and the kind of politics that it allows. Particularly in developing countries, the economy dominates all other aspects of life. Furthermore, it is crucial to the process of democratisation as the primary site of negotiation and contestation in postcolonial societies. The political economic developments in Egypt have been both a crucial factor in determining the nature of the state as well as symbolising any significant shifts and changes therein. The state, viewed from the Lockean perspective of protecting the rights of the individual, has an important role to play in the economy of the nation. The notion of property acquires special importance as its definition is constantly questioned and re-determined in developing societies struggling to keep up with global capitalism. The fulfilment or lack thereof of this duty of the state is then a significant factor in determining the success or failure of the state vis-à-vis its citizens and the social contract.

An analysis of the Egyptian state requires a study of the political economic developments within the context of local politics and economic shifts and upheavals as well as in the larger context of global economic transformations occurring through the time period of this study. While placing the economic trajectory of the Egypt, the contextualisation of economic shifts and changes in the social landscape provide insights into how economic transitions translate into social experiences, and how they in turn determine political processes. The prominent aspect of the Egyptian political economy examined in this chapter is the process of state-enforced neoliberalisation and how it affected local economy.

A Brief History of Political Economy under Nasser

After the Free Officers' Revolution of 1952, Egypt, under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser, assumed a socialist character which was reflected to a great extent in the Egyptian economy during his rule. This socialist principle was not just a characteristic of the then government, but was in fact made into a state policy enshrined in the Constitution of Egypt. The impetus was primarily on equitable redistribution of land and resources, and development of the public sector to provide maximum jobs and higher wages. However, the nature of military rule during this era, as highlighted in the previous chapter, combined with regional and international developments and the given predicaments facing the Egyptian economy at the time, led to the government and bureaucracy, and the military in turn, gaining control over the economy with its tentacles reaching out for control over the public sector. This was partly required, given the economic situation of Egypt, and the continuing Western supremacy (mainly of Britain and France) in the region. Opposition from the regime to this supremacy came in the form of drastic economic and political measures such as the nationalisation of the Suez Canal industries. Yet this process eventually gave roots to the authoritarian tendencies of the military regime, which have continued to plague the Egyptian nation long after the demise of Nasser. Further, the anomalies of a progressing and prospering public sector controlled by a government and bureaucracy fast being infiltrated by military personnel soon became apparent with the rising corruption and nepotism, which existed even during Nasser's era. By the end of the Nasser era in 1970,

the Egyptian army had been twice defeated at Israeli hands and ingloriously contained in the Yemen. "Zionist imperialism" had extended its grip over all the Sinai. The "feudal" landowners had been swept away through successive land reforms, but there were still millions of landless peasants and above half the agricultural surface was still farmed by tenants. A new kind of capitalism, state capitalism as some call it, had taken over the power structure of the country and instituted monopolies in the name of the people in several domains. The distribution of income remained sharply skewed, absolute poverty probably continued to involve most of Egypt's population, and disease and illiteracy were only marginally eroded. Instead of a new generation of educated, motivated Egyptians whose members would be an asset, the revolution sired a generation whose more fortunate members were poorly educated, misemployed, and

unmotivated and whose less fortunate members would have a hard time discerning what distinguished their lot from that of their fathers (Waterbury 1983: 48).

This was a phase of transition from an erstwhile feudal system to a limited process of socialism, and saw the struggling of a massive landless agrarian workforce. The process of socialist reform itself was incomplete because of the political ascendance of the military, replacing the former bourgeoisie without replicating the economic role of the latter. It was a phase of prolonged socio-economic flux where the only benefactor was a small section of middle class which formed the strength of the military regime and would, in subsequent years and generations, benefit from the consolidation of political power and monopoly over economic resources.

In its nascent stages though, the Nasser regime did make headway in implementing its claimed socialist agenda. This was more both in response to international imperialist pressures and the necessity of the domestic economy to begin on a self-sustaining path. The process of nationalisation of the Suez Canal industries, major players in the banking sector¹ and other large-scale industries (such as the Abboud industrial conglomerate) reflected an attempt at comprehensive economic reforms that could benefit the masses, albeit bringing the economy largely under the control of the military regime. This process was significant not just because it indicated the political and economic inclinations of the government at the time, but also because it would lay the foundations for a particular kind of economic and political culture in Egypt, where the state could take drastic measures, if it deemed them necessary for the benefit of the nation. Anouar Abdel-Malek describes the process of nationalisation as the *third* step in a process of militarisation of the Egyptian society, in the following words:

The *third stage* (July 1961- June 1967) started with the laws of nationalization. The military regime had earlier shown its hand by nationalizing the National Bank of Egypt and Bank Misr (February 19, 1960). By the beginning of 1962 all

¹ In 1960, Nasser nationalized all banks in Egypt, including the foreign banks. Major Banks to be nationalized included the National Bank of Egypt (established in 1898), Banque Misr (established in 1920), Bank of Alexandria (which traces its origins back to 1860s) and Banque of Caire (established by wealthy Cairo families as a private bank in 1952).

banks, all heavy industry, insurance and the key economic enterprises were state-owned, and all medium-sized economic units had to accept a 51 percent state participation in their capital ownership and therefore in their administration. There was, further, an extensive medium and light sector of economic activity in which the state's participation was enforced, and the whole network was made to fit into the newly created "public agencies", of which, in the beginning, there were thirty-eight. This constituted the public sector as against the private one. Economic planning had begun with the first of two Five-Year Plans (1960-70), whose aim was to double the gross national product in all fields of the economy (Abdel-Malek 1968: xv).

The nationalisations which took place in Egypt since 1960, following the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, were to determine the economic trajectory that Egypt was going to take in the following years. It also set the tone of the nature of control that the Egyptian state would exercise on the economy, particularly with regard to the state-public-private sectors dynamics. As its first major economic step,

the nationalizations marked the final breakdown of the regime's attempt to cooperate with private capital, as well as the introduction of a system of statist control which was much more far-reaching than that in most other areas of the non-European world, where business property was not subject to wholesale confiscation and where the practice of public/private cooperation was still maintained. By 1964, the state owned most of the enterprises within the modern sector of the economy, while a few years later, in 1966/67, public sector firms contributed 90 percent of the value added by plants employing ten workers or more (Owen and Pamuk 1998: 131).

The process of nationalisation and dominance of the state-controlled public sector was not peculiar to the Egyptian state; it had resonance in the politico-economic histories of other newly independent countries like India as well.

This process was accompanied by reforms in the agricultural sector, particularly with regard to land ownership. In order for the largely agricultural economy of Egypt to prosper, major overhauling of the agricultural sector and getting rid of the feudal system of land ownership were a priority for the state. Therefore, the agricultural sector also

saw significant reform in the Nasser era, driving the nation towards a more socialist system of food production and distribution as land ownership.

The regime's intensification of control over the economy during this period can also be seen in the agricultural sector, where the second Land Reform Law of 1961 not only reduced the ceiling for family holdings to 200 *feddans* (208 acres), but also extended the system of supervised cooperatives to the whole country. This created a system by which the government created monopolies for itself over all agricultural inputs (credit, seeds, fertilizers, etc.), as well as over the marketing of all major crops, ordering them to be delivered to its own warehouses at prices that the government itself fixed. Once in place, such a system had many advantages for improving agricultural production, albeit at the cost of limiting most peasants' ability to grow what they chose on their own piece of land. It also provided a mechanism for extracting part of the rural surplus by selling inputs at above market prices while purchasing the crop at well below market prices (Ibid.: 133).

In addition to agrarian and public sector reforms, another factor that was responsible for shaping the economic landscape of Egypt was the military expenditures incurred in view of instability in the region, particularly with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Since the creation of Israel, the more powerful Arab states had been preparing for an armed confrontation. As an aspirant to leadership of the region, and as the most vocal proponent of pan-Arabism, leading the Arab world against the Zionist movement and colonisation was the most important priority for Nasser. This was reflected in the extent of military expenditure, particularly in the 1967 War (as discussed in the previous chapter).

The 1967 War was one of the most important events of the Nasser era, and its impact was felt deeply on all aspects of the state as well as the state-building process. Apart from the prominence of the military, the course of the Egyptian economy was also shaped in a large part by the gearing of the Arab world towards an armed conflict with Israel. Despite various steps taken including nationalisation, land reform and military-enforced industrialisation, which constituted the national modernisation project, the focus of the economy was on reinforcing the strength of the military which included its combative strength, upgraded intelligence services, research endeavours and efforts to

acquire latest technological advancements and additionally help maintain the expanding bureaucratic organization which was being infiltrated by the military. The thrust of national modernisation and development as well as state building that the economy and polity could have benefitted from had to be set aside in favour of maintaining a fully capable army and intelligence. While this would affect any economy adversely, the effects on a struggling and transitional economy were much worse.

The regime had no alternative to resorting to retrenchment and austerity. Military rebuilding towards which the bulk of Egypt's financial resources were channelled was still helped by Soviet financial and military aid. Limited steps were taken to reduce consumption and encourage savings in addition to other steps such as abolishing of annual bonuses, reduction of representational allowances, the introduction of a defense tax on incomes and the increasing of stamp taxes and duties on consumer goods like cars, televisions, theatre tickets and alcohol. The prices of other consumer goods like cigarettes, cooking oil etc. were increased and sugar ration reduced. However, these attempts helped only to some extent to alleviate the growing deficit in national wealth. In turn, the Egyptian economy survived, though barely, without having to surrender to the pressures of international institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

However, the situation became far more drastic for Egypt with the defeat in the 1967 War. Yet,

Nasser was no more willing after the war than before to accede to the prescriptions of the IMF. It was a question once again of stabilization and devaluation, and its proponents in the cabinet were Zakaria Muhi al-Din and Abd al-Mun'aim al-Qaissuni. Counterarguments came from leftists outside the ruling circle, principally from Isma'il Sabri' Abdullah. They were supported by 'Aziz Sidqi who argued strongly from outside the cabinet for a return to expansionist policies (Waterbury 1983: 99).

The measures undertaken by the Nasser regime could have been successful had they been implemented efficiently by a responsible and accountable administration in a democratic environment free of the authoritarian high-handedness of the military and the huge losses suffered by the nation due to the 1967 War. The severe impact of the

war combined with the inefficiencies of the political and administrative structure blighted any hope of success of these policies, leading the nation even further to dire economic circumstances.

Within the economic sector, there were glaring problems which proved to be major obstacles to any economic progress Egypt could have made. The poor management of the public sector, lack of impetus and severe restrictions on the private sector, Nasser's hesitation to create any opening for foreign investment, lack of effective reforms in the agrarian sector and the rampant nepotism and inefficiency of the military bureaucracy had already led the Egyptian economy into a very poor state. This problem was then severely compounded by the 1967 War. It was not just the aftermath of the war and loss of face for Egypt after the defeat, but the impact it had on Egypt's position regionally as well as internationally, combined with the entire enterprise of arming and maintaining the military, which, despite considerable assistance from the Soviet Union, took a heavy toll on the domestic economy of Egypt.

The dire circumstances which were a result of the defeat of Egypt meant that the nation was in urgent need of economic reform. The process of economic recovery had to be started during the rule of Nasser himself. In fact, it was initiated by Nasser with plans for some sort of reconstruction, especially by improving the efficiency of the public sector (Owen and Pamuk 1998: 134). Although the Nasser government took steps to give limited encouragement to the private sector, the economic trajectory continued largely on the socialist path.

The Political Economy under Sadat

Sadat's succession of Nasser saw the continuation of the military regime and its distinct culture of politics, but it was a major departure both in the style of politics and political ideology, as discussed in the previous chapter, and particularly in terms of the trajectory taken by the Egyptian political economy. The singular most significant change in terms of the political economy was the introduction of *Infitah* or the open door policies, designed to transform the *etatist* state system to one where the market reigned supreme.

Not only was it a departure from the economic policies and ideology of the previous ruler, but a complete reversal of it in some ways. The impact of *Infitah* was almost immediately felt especially on the public sector, and in terms of how it altered the very nature of the state. It also had a deep and inevitable socio-economic impact, widening class-cleavages, creating a new set of technocrats, and creating a general sense of scarcity and suffering.

Infitah

Infitah or the open-door policies were a set of policies predicated on the principles of free market and liberal economy, which would entail greater autonomy to the functioning of the private sector, affording it a conducive environment as well as incentives to perform better. However, what on paper proposed a policy of providing an impetus to the private sector, implying the local private enterprises, in implementation, turned into a policy of conversion of public-owned resources to private ownership, but remaining largely within the control of military personnel, who not just constituted the governing and administrative bodies, but also the elites, business people and producers.

Developed on the premise of the October Working Paper of 1974, *Infitah* was to be the revolutionary policy which not only changed some of the most basic features of the Egyptian state, but also enabled a shift in the political stance of the Egyptian state in regional and international affairs. Opening up the economy to Western powers as well as international institutions like the IMF and World Bank was a clear shift in the foreign policies of the state which had earlier leaned towards the former Soviet Union while propagating ideas of non-alignment. The disappointment with the Soviet Union in terms of both monetary and military support, especially after the 1967 War, convinced Sadat that the only way some of the most crucial issues faced by Egypt including the conflict with Israel and the challenges of a war-ravaged economy could be dealt with was through assistance and aid from the United States (US). During the Sadat era, Egypt was also opened up to a great extent to institutions like the IMF, even though initially the military regime tried to take a cautious approach towards them.

The policies of *Infitah* were designed with an the objective of attracting Western investment capital and technology, attracting Arab investment capital from Egypt's oil-rich neighbours, boosting the private sector, and by extension, promoting exports, reduce deficit in balance of payments and, to a much lesser extent, enhance the working of the public sector (Waterbury 1985: 70).

Though it was essentially an economic principle for formulating future economic policies, the *Infitah* served a political objective for Sadat, in the form of "de-Nasserization". Though Sadat borrowed heavily from Nasser's rhetoric on socialist principles in his initial speeches², he soon embarked on a set of policies which would in fact reverse the effects of Nasser's economic agenda. This was done with a view to demolish the mythical position Nasser still held in popular imagination, and impose a new image of Sadat himself as a reformer and rescuer. This process of de-Nasserization combined with a reversal of economic policies and restructuring of the Egyptian economy would perhaps help attain the legitimacy that succeeding Nasser as the next military leader hadn't.

In addition to the departure from socialism on the ideological level, the policies of *Infitah* would further open the economy to global economic forces, which Sadat assumed would translate into building confidences with the US, thereby receiving financial help to boost its economic reconstruction programme as well as secure the support of the US in regional politics, especially in terms of support in its conflict with Israel. As mentioned above, Egypt was thoroughly disillusioned with the Soviet Union after the 1967 War, and a revolutionary concept like *Infitah* allowed for a chance to stand on regional and international policies. This was in stark contrast to the principles that the Egyptian state had ascribed to.

A major departure from the state policies of the Nasser era was the abandoning of pan-Arabism. Sadat's economic policies as well as regional and international political attitude were best described through the phrase 'Egypt first'. More than just a departure,

² See for example, "Address by the U.A.R. President Designate Anwar el Sadat before the National Assembly on the occasion of his Candidature to the Presidency of the Republic, October 7, 1970" or "Address to the Nation by President Anwar el Sadat, broadcast on the U.A.R. Radio & TV Networks October 19, 1970" Anwar el-Sadat (1970).

it was a direct contradiction of the ideals Nasser had claimed to espouse, and were utilised with the clear objective of demolishing the image of Nasser from public imagination. It was assumed that a country suffering from the repercussions and humiliation of defeat in the war would welcome such an ideological shift. However, since this shift was not accompanied by suitable economic measures to alleviate the economic effects of the war and the economy continued to struggle, it only led to a growing sense of frustration coupled with anger and outrage against what was seen as a desertion of the cause of the Arab people against Israel.

October Working Paper of 1974

The October Paper of 1974 was a very definite signal from the government that a new era, the era of Sadat, had begun, as the paper proposed policy-level changes and public sector reforms that marked a clear departure from the socialist state policies of Nasser's time. The paper was submitted to national referendum where it received an overwhelming positive response. This provided Sadat with the legitimacy of popular support to pursue *Infitah*. The passage of Law 43 for Arab and Foreign Investment in Egypt, in June 1974, provided the legal basis for the implementation of the *Infitah* policies.

The most significant aspect of the October Paper was its emphasis on promoting the private sector enterprise and taking major steps to attract foreign investment. This was reflected in the clause that "any project approved within its terms is automatically considered part of the private sector even if the Egyptian partner is a public sector firm with a majority share of the equity" (Waterbury 1983: 131). This clause had major implications since projects within the private sector were exempt from labour laws, stipulations of worker representation on management boards, salary ceilings or profit sharing systems applicable to the public sector. Further, Law 43 sets priorities for investments which would boost projects self-sufficient in foreign exchange and encourage Egyptian exports. There was also an emphasis on promoting projects which would bring in advanced technology and management expertise or help improve

Egypt's strategic position, particularly vis-à-vis oil rich Arab countries. Another major shift in policy introduced by Law 43 was putting an end to public sector banking monopoly. Other major steps were the creation of an Investment Authority³, introducing tax exemptions to in-country projects and special privileges⁴ on Arab investments, as well as the provision of establishment of private commercial banks (Waterbury 1983: 131).

Though the *Infitah* policies as outlined in the October Paper and Law 43 were a complete departure from the previous socialist policies of the state, there was a partial attempt to safeguard the local economy in the form of limits on the foreign investments and their screening by the Investment Authority as well as feature such as free zones which had restrictions placed on them. For instance, free zones and in-country projects could purchase raw materials from Egypt at world market rates. However, these provisions and clauses looked good on paper, but were far from sufficient when it came to ground realities. The idea of protecting the domestic economy was not given much importance anyway, and even so any effort made towards it was half-hearted at best. Contrary to expectations, Egypt was not flooded with foreign investment with the coming of *Infitah* owing to a mistrust of the government, lack of political stability and the ongoing regional conflict. In order to bring about the desired liberalisation, policy-makers recommended further relaxation of any protective clauses that may have been a part of the initial version of the *Infitah* policy.

The Public Sector in the 1970s

Contrary to the image projected, by the then regime, of driving the nation towards a neoliberal economic setup, the public sector was not completely redundant. In fact, despite the severe problems of corruption, managerial and administrative flaws as well

³ The Investment Authority was created within the Ministry of Economy to screen all investment applications, and the Board of Directors of the Authority had representatives from various ministries and were to meet regularly to grant final approval to selected proposals, then furthered for the president's signature (Waterbury: 1983: 131).

⁴ Arab investments were given a special status owing to the potential of investment in the form of petrodollars. Thus they were provided special privileges such as the right to acquire urban real estate and housing (Waterbury 1983: 132).

as a lack of sufficient structural reform, the public sector offered substantial scope for economic growth. It could be surmised that

whatever its imperfections the public sector has brought the Nasserist and post-Nasserist regimes substantial economic and political dividends. It is above all an instrument of political and economic control, and no Egyptian leaders, however hostile they might be to the ideology of public ownership, will lightly will it away. It employs about 10 per cent of the total workforce; more particularly the elite of the industrial proletariat. Its wage bill in 1974 was over 20 per cent of the national total. At the same time it is a source of savings to which the government has direct and uncontested access (Ibid.: 108).

What was required in the mid-1970s was not so much a complete doing away with the public sector but a comprehensive over-hauling of the administration and management of the public sector. However, pushed by regional events and international actors (US, IMF and World Bank) as well as the individual ambitions of the political leadership, the state and economy of Egypt were fast driven towards a neoliberal system. This was achieved through the liquidation of major enterprises of the public sector⁵ and simultaneous reforms conducive for foreign investment.

The impact of the introduction of *Infitah* policies became evident as early as 1977-78. To begin with, the Egyptian economy was not flooded with foreign investment, contrary to the expectations. Rather, some of the “protective” clauses⁶ were actually seen as one of the main reasons that foreign investment was not forthcoming. However, this led the government to introduce even more radical features, such as the Law 97 of 1976 and Law 32 of 1977 to the open-door policy, further compromising the domestic economic interests. One such sector was banking.

⁵ The Presidential Decree of 1975 was a massive step towards the liquidation of the public sector by putting up to 49 percent of public shares for private consumption. This move was further consolidated by the passage of Law 111 of July 1975 for the abolishment of the General Organisations, which allowed greater freedom to public companies in managing their labour force. Combined with the provisions of the Law 43 (key among them being that joint ventures between foreign investors and public sector companies will be legally placed within the private sector), these changes left the public sector completely weak and incapable of shouldering the burden of the majority of Egypt’s workforce (Waterbury 1983: 139).

⁶ These ‘protective clauses’ included provisions for joint ventures and self-sufficiency in foreign exchange.

An example of the adverse effects of the open-door policies and following policy changes and reforms designed to attract foreign investment was the case of the banking sector. As stated above, putting an end to the monopoly of state banks was one of the biggest changes brought about by *Infitah*. This was done because one of the most important ambitions of the *Infitah* was to replace Beirut as the commercial hub of the region, by bringing in major foreign banks and investors into Cairo. However, it was not taken into account that foreign actors would be keen to exploit the vast market for investment and merchant banking in Egypt, unlike in Beirut, where foreign banks showed little, if any, interest in the domestic market. *Infitah* saw the coming of major foreign banks, including Citibank, Bank of America, Barclays and American Express, among several others, which were keen to do business in Egypt. The public sector banks, which could not compete with these foreign banks, especially in view of the severe limitations imposed upon them, such as statutorily low salaries and fixed, non-competitive interest rates, were soon to become marginalised⁷.

By mid-1970s, the effects of the shifting economic policies combined with the defence expenditure since the coming of Sadat had already begun to show on the Egyptian economy. Ridden with severe problems of agriculture, food shortages, unemployment and the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor, the economy began to crumble completely under the weight of foreign debt.

Rural immigration to Egypt's cities has resulted in major overcrowding and serious strains on urban facilities. Per capita income in Egypt is \$317 a year—among the lowest in the world; the limited arable land along the Nile cannot adequately feed the population and Egypt possess few natural resources which can be used to generate much-needed foreign exchange. *Large expenditures for national defense have aggravated Egypt's already serious trade imbalance.* Imports exceeded exports by 1,200 million Egyptian pounds in 1976. In addition, Egypt must pay annually a staggering 1,200 million Egyptian pounds in debt service for foreign loans. This annual balance of payments deficit of

⁷ By 1975, in order to boost the business of public sector banks and enable them to compete with foreign banks, their specialization was eliminated, which meant that they became full service banks rather than dealing with specific areas on financing and investment. They were also given a greater amount of flexibility regarding interest rates and competing for foreign exchange held by Egyptians. Still they failed to actually compete with foreign banks, and were left dealing with public sector savings and investments.

2,400 million Egyptian pounds represents a serious drain on the economy (McLaughlin 1978: 888-889).

The erosion of the public sector, as was evident by the late 1970s and early 1980s, could be attributed to pressures from the IMF and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) on the Egyptian government to introduce adverse policies and reforms, rampant corruption and mismanagement of the state-bureaucratic mechanism which controlled the public sector as well as foreign investment, and the ever widening rich-poor gap (Waterbury 1983: 140). The liquidation of the public sector and draining of national wealth combined with corruption in the state machinery resulted not just in the withdrawal of the welfare activities of the state and the rescinding of the limited achievements of Nasser's socialism. It then led to the stripping of assets of the state by the infested state machinery itself.

In the light of low rates of growth and declining levels of spending by the government as well as people alike, there is nothing left for acquiring wealth except asset stripping, and the easiest prey of these assets in a soft state is the property of the state itself. Such property may be represented in state-owned land that was offered for sale, or funds deposited in state banks for loans or the property of public companies to be privatized (Hassan 2011: 4).

The liquidation of the public sector also meant that the interests of the labour force were compromised, as was to be discovered in the following years. Contrary to the expectations of privatisation and foreign investment creating employment opportunities in the country, the liquidation of public sector companies meant that several workers lost jobs. Further, the joint ventures categorised under the private sector were exempt from labour laws, salary ceilings and representation on management boards, leading to further exploitation.

It was not just the policies designed by the government on paper under the banner of *Infitah* that were leading to problems in the domestic economy, as well as creating a deficit of foreign exchange and simultaneously liquidating the public sector. It was also

the malfunctioning, or what Adam Smith calls the “invisible hand”, which led to alterations in the results expected from policy-changes.

The very complicated and time-consuming authorization procedure, the increasing willingness of well-placed Egyptians to accept payoffs for greasing the rails, the inadequacy of the staff of the Investment Authority and frequent changes in its leadership, and the surliness of vested public sector interests frustrated investors and proponents of *infatih* alike (Waterbury 1983: 144).

The way in which the Sadat regime extended the system of subsidies of its predecessor to a great extent enabled the Egyptian population to combat a period of inflation. Yet subsidies were given to the entire population rather than benefitting a particular section of the population which actually needed it. This was particularly problematic when locally produced maize was being replaced by more expensive imports. Further, subsidies were only a part of the much larger gains including public sector goods provided in exchange for political acquiescence.

The Sadat regime continued the practice of providing university graduates and others government jobs from which they could not be easily dismissed. In the absence of effective reform and restructuring of the public sector, this practice was hard to sustain. In fact, as the regime began to amass more and more funds by the end of the 1970s (from various sources) there was lesser and lesser focus on the need for reforming the public sector.

Import-export and wholesale trade became the major field of profiteering for state bourgeoisie, especially the small private bourgeoisie as the military controlled-state monopolised foreign capital. “In 1974, the ‘own exchange’ system allowed the importer to acquire foreign exchange without any obligation to convert it through an Egyptian bank. This promoted luxury imports which reached impressive heights by 1977” (Craissati 1989: 138). The rise in imports of consumer goods under trade liberalisation was spectacular. In the absence of any taxation these consumer goods were being sold in the Egyptian markets at exorbitant prices. These classes also made immense profits in the field of wholesale trade and retail sectors comprising of essentially scarce products

including fruits and vegetables, fish and meat, cloth, paper, medicine, chemicals, shoes, cables, pipes etc. (Waterbury: 1983: 186).

The Agrarian Sector

The Sadat government similarly followed a rather ambiguous policy with regard to agriculture, promoting food security on one hand and, on the other, constantly increasing dependence on foreign aid, particularly American food supplies, to maintain a system of subsidies.

Food subsidies and agricultural price policies not only affected the level of production but also its orientation. Under Sadat, the continuation of food subsidies not only aimed at buying social peace and maintaining regime legitimacy, but was also linked to the US strategy of maintaining a leading American position in the international agricultural market (Craissati 1989: 152).

There was a jump in food subsidies from Egyptian Pound (LE) 11 million in 1972 to LE 329 million in 1974 alone (Ibid.). This was accompanied by the government's manipulation of prices of agricultural commodities. "...Government expenditures on agriculture declined as a proportion of total expenditure during the Sadat years while the state continued to manipulate the prices of agricultural inputs and outputs in such a way as to abstract a considerable part of the rural surplus" (Owen and Pamuk 1998: 137). Further, the focus of agricultural reform was almost limited to the notions of backwardness of peasant-agriculture, leading all reform policies to be centered on the mechanisation of agriculture. Recommendations for reform included reallocation of cropping patterns, shifting to higher value crops which could contribute to exports, reorienting livestock towards meat and dairy, and increasing cotton exports for foreign exchange.

This in turn led to another problem regarding state policy of agricultural reform, namely, "an 'agrarian counter-reform', which legitimated selective development policies, centered on the medium and large landowners of the countryside, who were

regarded as the only ones capable of modernizing agriculture” (Craissati 1989: 153). This meant a continuation of the selective price control system, land reclamation without any vertical expansion such as improvement of the drainage system etc., and neglect of small peasantry. Additionally, Law no. 117 of 1976 was a complete reversal of the Agrarian Reform Law introduced by Nasser, limiting access to agricultural credit to only those who could afford it from local banks seeking to maximise profitability. The impact of the *Infitah* policies in the field of agriculture were felt almost immediately with a new impetus in the agro-industrial sector, i.e. food processing and textile industries.

The larger idea behind open door policies of *Infitah* was to forge a triple alliance between the local private, public and foreign investors to boost economic growth as well as replenish foreign exchange reserves. This model was taken from Latin American countries like Brazil and Mexico⁸. However, owing to certain factors common to most developing countries such as bureaucratic inefficiency, lack of cohesive political will and widespread corruption, lack of proper planning combined with the numerous malfunctions and unexpected outcomes prevented such a model from being successful in Egypt as well. Yet, it was not just a question of what went wrong with the planning or the implementation of this set of economic policies but the policies themselves. The problem lay with the direction in which the regime was forcefully trying to steer the economy (often under international pressure), and its impact was felt not just on the economy of Egypt, but also the nature and character which the Egyptian state gradually assumed.

⁸ In the case of Mexico, the De la Madrid administration’s implementation of economic reordering based on the IMF recommendation enforced upon it resulted in the classical neoliberal pattern of rescinding of the welfare role of the state, increase in private investment, centralized accumulation of wealth and the privatization of several national industries. The worst affected by this deregulation of the Mexican economy were the most vulnerable socio-economic sections of Mexican society due to the aggravating of problems of unemployment, lowering wages, high infant death ratios and malnutrition (Abdelazim 2002: 65-66).

Impact of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

The events in the larger West Asian region, especially those pertaining to Arab-Israeli relations, had a definite impact on Egypt's economy. This impact can be traced from the effects and consequences of the 1967 War, the period leading up to the War of 1973, and its consequences in the following years leading up to the Camp David Accords.

The 1967 War was a definite moment in the political and economic history of Egypt as it was the first major catalyst towards creating a sense of disillusionment with the Nasser government, despite the economic problems that had already been plaguing the country since before the war. It was the defeat of 1967 and the aftermath of the war, which brought upon the nation huge economic repercussions, which created a furore against the existing socialist regime.

The period leading up to the 1973 War was a highly frustrating waiting period not just for the armed forces but also for the civil population. The build up to the war had a huge impact on the domestic economy, with the stocking and maintenance of the military taking a huge toll on the economy. Resources which should have been utilised for the much-needed reform of the domestic economy were directed towards military expenditure, leaving the already troubled economic situation in shambles (Pasha 1994).

In the aftermath of the 1973 War, events took a different trajectory than what was expected. Post 1974, Egypt started receiving massive amounts in aid and assistance from the US. However, most of this aid came in the form of military assistance and was directed towards the maintenance, upkeep and operations of the military. The promised peace dividend which had been a major incentive for Egypt leading up to the Camp David Accords continued to elude Egypt, leading to a feeling of having been misled. In the process of peace with Israel, Egypt lost its allies in all the oil producing states of West Asia and became alienated (Ibid.). The Camp David Accords had an adverse impact on the financial assistance Egypt received from the other Arab states. From 1973 to 1979, Egypt was the largest recipient of Arab Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), having received more than US\$ 24 billion. However, in the decade following the Treaty, Egypt was not even in the top 10 recipients of Arab ODA, having received

less than US\$ 1 billion during 1980-1989 (World Bank 2010: 12). This situation changed only after Egypt's role in the 1991 Gulf War.

What occurred from the 1970s onwards in terms of economic liberalisation and the on-going negotiations between Egypt and the IMF and US was translated into various experiences at local levels in society. These experiences resulting from the impact of shifting economic and foreign policy orientations have in turn affected processes of social transformation. Events at the international level saw parallels such as the sudden influx of imported luxury items and a stark increase in the number of imported luxury cars on the roads of Cairo. Such developments were accompanied by rising prices of basic commodities, inflation, and a decline in the number of jobs for young graduates in the public sector, which had up until then provided maximum employment to university graduates. One of the starkest experiences of economic disadvantage which paralleled state-imposed neoliberalisation was the discontinuation of food subsidies. This step of the state created immense furore among an already impoverished and economically disadvantaged people and was sufficient to galvanise immediate and widespread public protest followed by the outbreak of violence in the food riots⁹.

Political Economy under Mubarak

When Mubarak came to power, he inherited a state that had contradictory characteristics from the Nasser and Sadat eras. On the one hand, remnants of the Nasser era included an expanded bureaucracy, cost inflations due to the food subsidies-system, a deflated yet prominent public sector which still continued to be the predominant employer of the workforce and import-substitute industrialisation as the main development strategy rather than export promotion. On the other was the impact of *Infitah*, which due to the failure in implementation, could not create the envisaged investment climate for incoming foreign capital, though it did lead to the rise of a bourgeoisie (or the military-industrial complex) that thrived on accumulation of foreign capital, important international linkages and connections and tertiary activities

⁹ See chapter 5 for a detailed discussion.

(Hinnebusch 1993a: 160). The approach taken by Mubarak was definitely to further the legacy of Sadat, by correcting the gaps in policy-formulation under *Infitah* and giving a major boost to privatisation, and with the 1991 economic reforms, a more aggressive form of neoliberalisation.

The initial part of Mubarak's rule was marked by a gradualist policy towards liberalisation and privatisation, with the primary focus on correcting the political and economic excesses of the Sadat era. Unlike Sadat's strategy of de-Nasserisation, Mubarak did not openly oppose the policies or rhetoric of his political predecessor, yet there was a clear attempt to distance himself from the ill-effects of the policies of Sadat, and simultaneously rectify them. However, in essence, Mubarak's government continued along the path charted out by the previous ruling regime. This became increasingly evident in the policies of the Mubarak government in the following years, and also on the focussed implementation of these policies. In fact, the latter government went much further in the overhauling of the public sector, conversion of numerous public sector companies to private companies and joint ventures, and collaboration of the military bureaucracy with foreign investors to attract capital for major industries.

The Mubarak government did follow the path of continuing relations with major foreign powers and the IMF and World Bank along the same lines as the previous government, but there was an effort at resistance towards some of the conditions/reform suggestions given by the IMF. There was an attempt to negotiate with the authorities on various issues, even though Egypt was not really in a strong bargaining position given its economic history of the past decade, particularly its debt records. Often, when they failed at negotiating, as was mostly the case, the Egyptian government would resort to agreeing to certain conditions and reforms, but then keep stalling for time when it came to actually implementing the IMF-drawn plans of economic reform. For example, in 1987, Egypt successfully negotiated with the Paris Club¹⁰ to lower interest rates on the former's external debt, in return of curbing government expenditure. However,

¹⁰ The Paris Club, whose origins can be traced back to 1956, is an informal group of official creditors whose role is to find coordinated and sustainable solutions to the payment difficulties experienced by debtor countries. Since 1956, the Paris Club has reached 433 agreements with 90 different debtor countries, for debts worth US\$ 583 billion (www.clubdeparis.org) Accessed 21 June 2017.

concerned with the political fallout of spending cuts, Mubarak did not implement any of the commitments made to the international donor group (Brownlee 2012: 55). However, this resistance on the part of the Mubarak government was not on account of protecting the domestic economy, but was predicated on the concerns of the government to ensure political stability and longevity of the government itself.

The Public Sector (1980s-2000s)

The liquidation of the public sector saw a renewed impetus in the Mubarak era, especially since the economic reforms of 1991. Important factors that actually contributed to the slight improvement in the economy were on the revenue side, and included devaluation and the consequent increase in the value of exports, the introduction of a general sales tax in 1991- which was more of an “accounting trick” than the result of any substantial reform (Nagarajan 2013; Soliman 2011). These factors combined with the financial assistance that Egypt received in exchange for working with the coalition forces in the Gulf War helped improve the flow of revenue for some time. The government also cut back projects in the electricity and tourism sectors.

The process of liberalisation picked up spectacularly in the decade of the 2000s. From 1998 to 2004, a major thrust was put into improving trade and bringing about institutional measures. Extensive economic reform measures were introduced on a legal level only in the year 2002, followed by a unified Banking and Central Bank Law in 2003. The exchange rate was also liberalised in 2003. During this period, Egypt signed a number of trade agreements. These included the Free Trade and Investment Agreement with the US in 1999; free trade agreements with several countries of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa in 2000; the Agadir Free Trade Agreement with Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia in 2004. In 2004, the Egypt- European Union (EU) agreement also came into effect. Numerous free trade agreements as well as the membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has pushed Egypt to introduce more reforms in its trade policies, particularly in the areas of agriculture and industrial sectors, in order to be more in line with international standards (Alissa 2007: 5).

The pace of privatisation was also stepped up several notches with the launch of a comprehensive reform plan for the financial sector in September 2004. This plan saw more than half the banking sector becoming privatised by the end of 2006, including a majority of joint venture plans being sold to the private sector. This included the sale of the Bank of Alexandria to a foreign bank in December 2006. Consequently, majority of the banking assets have also been placed under private ownership. All of this has resulted in significant macroeconomic progress mapped with GDP growth rates at 4.1 percent in 2004, 4.5 percent in 2005 and 6.8 percent in 2006. In the same period exports have escalated from 7.6 percent to 17.3 percent (Ibid.: 6). Yet, it is important to note that these figures point to growth at the macroeconomic level, and progress has been measured against international standards of trade, industry and reform policies.

Agrarian Sector

The reforms in the agricultural sector were not entirely based on land reform. In fact reform towards land redistribution has been rather limited. Given that Egypt was, and continues to be, to this day, primarily an agricultural economy, policies of land reform and redistribution have been very limited since after the time of Nasser, when in 1954, the first significant agricultural land reforms had been introduced. However, there has been a greater emphasis on the commercialisation of agriculture in the Sadat and Mubarak years. This has been visible in the importing of seeds and fertilizers, incentives for growing cash crops, bringing in of new technology (mostly through the financial aid or loans) and higher subsidies to push for production of cash crops.

Local agricultural activities, such as cotton production, which have been the mainstay of the agricultural economy in earlier centuries, have suffered immensely. Absence of effective reform or subsidisation in this area has led to stagnation and even the gradual demise of a flourishing commerce. Not only the agricultural sector, but even the cotton industry has been severely affected by this shift to commercial agriculture.

The changes occurring under the reform programme had a direct bearing on the state, especially in terms of the institutionalisation of these reforms. The amendments to the

Constitution in March 2007 were the most recent in the brief history of institutionalisation of the neoliberal character.

Some of the most relevant modifications are found in article 4, which deals with the nature of the Egyptian economy and social equity, and in article 24, which deals with the role of the state in the economy. These articles, in their amended format, give market forces a major role in the economy while assigning the state the responsibility of regulating the economy. This contrasts sharply with the old social contract, under which it was primarily the role of the state to allocate resources, manage the economy, and determine its outcomes, as well as guarantee the provision of social welfare services, including securing employment for the masses; offering social services, especially health and education; and providing citizens with income support-subsidies-without imposing high taxes on them (Ibid.: 7).

Such laws and amendments sealed the neoliberal character of the state by limiting its role drastically in the economic sphere. The reforms initiated under *Infitah*, and especially those that were imposed since 1991 under structural adjustment, made serious alterations to the social contract, impacting both the role and position of the state in the contract. As market economy was given increasing prominence, the *etatist* character of the state rapidly diminished. Given that market economy did not pick the way it had been expected to, due to the ill-suited reform programme, the citizen did not acquire the centrality ascribed to the liberal politics of market economy. Rather, the gap between the state and society increased, the social contract significantly altered if not altogether become redundant, and the position of the citizen in the new scheme highly uncertain.

The Politics of Neoliberalisation

Despite the aid and assistance from oil-rich Arab countries, which was close to about US\$ 500 million immediately after the 1973 War, Egypt was in no better position to negotiate with the US and IMF than it had been before (Waterbury 1983: 128). These negotiations were conducted from a position of weakness and left Egypt vulnerable,

forced to accept several conditions that came with financial aid. Further, the worst impact of *Infitah* was felt with the complete opening of the Egyptian economy to the US and the Western world because Egypt's poor economic condition implied that it had to offer significant incentives to them in order to get funds. Foreign investment was invited and received in a way that was seriously damaging for the domestic economy. What had seemed like a shift from a socialist economy to a mixed economy actually turned out to be a complete abandonment of socialist principles and a drive towards neoliberalism at the cost of the indigenous industries, public sector, banking sector and the majority of the workforce employed by the public sector.

The Price of Economic Aid

US foreign aid, viewed as a political move, explains the implications of this aid for the state of Egypt. Egypt received much more than the required estimate for simply helping the economy. In turn, Egypt was required to play a certain role for the US in the region.

Economic aid provided the US administration leverage in making Egypt its political ally in the Arab world, thus creating a balance between the Arab world and Israel, its other big ally in the region. This was a primary reason why economic aid to Egypt far exceeded what an economic analysis would have warranted.

With the Camp David Accord, Egypt began to reap approximately \$2 billion per annum in U.S. aid, the second largest allocation after Israel. Aid to Egypt was, at its core, "a political symbol", as one U.S. government report put it, especially as the large sums Egypt received were beyond its capacity to effectively absorb. In fact, development experts believed that had Egypt's economic assistance been based on economic need rather than on political objectives, Egypt would have received \$100- \$200 million in U.S. assistance. This was a far cry from the approximately \$1 billion devoted solely to economic aid (Momani 2003: 88).

From the US foreign policy perspective, excessive and unwarranted inflow of economic aid and loans was predicated on the US strategic interests in the region given that Egypt was a strong foothold for the US in the Arab world. The Egyptian leadership, on the

other hand, relied on this continuing favour partly in order to maintain and strengthen its relations with the US and partly to help maintain some sense of legitimacy for the ruling government among the Egyptian people by continuing some of the welfare measures of the state, which could no longer be supported by public sector revenue. However, this arrangement quickly put Egypt on the back foot not just in terms of mounting foreign debt and a rising deficit in the balance of payments, but also in terms of the subordination of Egyptian domestic and foreign policies to US interests.

This would not be problematic in so far as the political objectives of the US were common with those of Egypt, particularly the Egyptian aspirations of playing a stabilising and peace keeping role as a regional leader for the Arab world. This explains why Egypt stood second only to Israel in the amount of aid received from the US. However, that the amount of aid far exceeded the actual requirements of the Egyptian economy, and that, significantly, most of it came in the form of military aid and assistance, could have been problematic. Owing to the nature of aid, US expectations of cooperation from Egypt have also gone far beyond economic restructuring. Egypt was expected to collaborate with the US in any event of military coalition, such as in the case of Somalia, even to the extent of neglecting Egypt's dire domestic economic situation where the main thrust of assistance and reform were required, and how such military operations cast a heavy burden on it. Where Egypt could have benefitted from receiving limited and reasonable amounts in economic aid for the purpose of restructuring its economy, it was reduced to a mere actor/stooge in the US' larger plans for the West Asian region.

US interest in aiding the Egyptian government was guided with a view to ensure political stability for the regime, despite the fact that it was suffering from a severe legitimacy crisis, particularly owing to its military and economic policies. Having invested considerably in making Egypt its foothold in the Arab world, the US was not willing to risk a change of regime, especially owing to the threat from radical Islamic factions such as the Muslim Brotherhood, which were gaining more and more popular support. For this purpose, the US constantly provided an economic boost, not to the state or economy, but to an authoritarian military regime. Thus, US support for the

Sadat and Mubarak regimes was guided by its ambitions in the region. This meant that Egypt continued to receive US economic aid, which came with severe pressure to liberalise its economy from the US, which was not interested in any real domestic economic reforms except those which benefitted their own interests. Despite pushing for liberalisation under pressure from the US, the Egyptian government was not completely willing to go to the extent expected by the former. The reticence of the Egyptian government regarding the process, extent and implementation of economic liberalisation, led to immense frustration among US officials.

Some of the economic reforms, sought by the US administrations, included fiscal discipline, reducing government expenditures, increasing tax revenues, liberalising interest and exchange rates, liberalising trade, promoting foreign direct investment, deregulating the public sector and safeguarding property rights. By the mid-1980s, however, the US government recognised that its foreign assistance programme to Egypt was ineffective at pushing these essential economic reforms forward. Part of the problem was that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was reportedly pressured into implementing projects that were more symbolic in nature than economically sound. USAID found itself promoting projects that clearly showed Egyptians that the project had been paid for by the United States. This was partly a reaction to the scepticism that Egyptians felt toward US foreign aid. As a result, overly large and expensive projects were implanted merely because they were highly visible both to the Egyptian regime and the Egyptian people (Ibid.: 90).

The continued provision of welfare facilities by the state during the Sadat era in order to secure its legitimacy, combined with the consumerist and accumulationist tendencies of the state bourgeoisie, translated into mounting foreign debt for Egypt in the following decades. In order to continue to secure its legitimacy and avert direct conflict with the masses, Egypt became a part of the international economic trend of mid-1970s wherein developing countries drew upon the substantially large funds available with international institutions as well as governments of developed countries in addition to benefitting significantly from the oil boom and the oil wealth of its neighbouring Arab countries. By mid 1980s, the oil prices declined while domestic economies of

developing nations could not achieve the targets of liberalisation and industrialisation to be able to repay foreign debts resulting in a stark deficit in balance of payments even as accumulation of private wealth soared. In this situation countries like Egypt were forced to accept the conditionality attached to financial assistance from the IMF, identified as structural adjustment.

While the measures adopted by the governments of Sadat and Mubarak (in initial years of the latter's tenure) jeopardised Egypt's standing in the international community vis-à-vis foreign trade and foreign policy interests, it did not prove very effective against the objective of retaining legitimacy and credibility among the citizens either. On the one hand, welfare measures still pursued by the state were inadequate and misguided (and almost completely withdrawn after 1991) and, on the other hand, the cost of rising foreign debt and lopsided liberalisation had begun to severely affect the people by way of rising inflation, scarcity of basic essentials while the market was flooded by luxury consumer goods being sold at highly inflated rates, rising unemployment and limited assistance from the government in order to combat these issues. Rather than preserve legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the people, these measures, by aggravating the foreign debt crisis, went much further in compounding the legitimacy crisis of the governments, and by extension, the state.

Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)

In view of the impact of the Gulf War, 1990-91, which saw a majority of migrant Egyptian workers, more than 700 thousand in number, returning from the Gulf, and the continued failure of the Egyptian state to counter the growing economic disparity and rising foreign debt, Egypt was once again forced to look for foreign economic assistance (Afifi 1998). To combat rising deficit in the balance of payments as well as dealing with other economic problems, Egypt had no choice but to negotiate with international financial institutions on a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Egypt has already committed to the implementation of SAP in May 1987, in order to reduce public spending, liberalise the private sector, and improve the functioning of financial

markets. The Paris Club in turn agreed to reschedule debt repayment. As Egypt failed to comply with the terms of agreement, the negotiations collapsed by the end of 1987. The agreement, till then, had dispensed only half the support before it was suspended (Nagarajan 2013).

Prior to 1991, Egypt showed only a half-hearted measure towards the implementation of SAP. This was more in order to avoid any major protest from the society, primarily from the working classes, rather than in order to protect the local economy. However, mounting foreign debt and growing economic frustrations within the country in addition to regional instability and its impact on the tourism and economy of Egypt, led the government to implement SAP with a renewed force and to its completion. The Egyptian government signed another agreement with the IMF in March 1991, committing to a more extensive economic reform programme. The following years saw new agreements between Egypt and the IMF and World Bank towards implementing economic reform through SAP. Even at the outset, the SAP was expected to cause several problems particularly in the employment and social welfare sectors as it was aimed at cutting down government expenditure, liberalising the local economy and opening it to the global economic system through systematically restricting and abandoning of trade bans and tariffs and privatising through increased foreign investment. Privatisation in particular was to affect employment and job stability.

The primary objectives of SAP were identified as elimination of economic disequilibria, stabilisation of the economy in the short term, achieving a free market economy with substantially decreased public or state intervention, and the restructuring of the economic system to create market-based competition. Additionally, development of new industrial cities for commercial activity and of five star hotels to provide a boost in tourism, which had been a primary source of revenue for the Egyptian economy, was planned. Attainment of these objectives was expected to lead to sustainable economic growth and an improvement in the standard of living. Subsequently, there was a lowering of import bans, from production coverage of 37.2 percent of total manufacturing to 22.7 percent from 1988 to 1998 alone. Some of the features and laws pertaining to the labour market which were identified as obstacles to its efficient

functioning were removed or altered. These included laws which guaranteed lifetime job security for workers, policies guaranteeing employment to all graduates in the public sector through a centralised manpower allocation system, and provisions for differential treatment of workers in the public and private sectors. In the period of 1988-1998, an increase from 5.4 percent to 7.9 percent was recorded in the unemployment rate. This unemployment was concentrated primarily among the educated youth. Additionally, an influx of labour that was no longer absorbed by state-owned enterprises into the private sector saw a decline in the earnings of the private sector labour (Afifi 1998).

The tourism sector on the other hand did not bring in the expected revenues. There were primarily two factors responsible for this. The first was regional politics. Even though at this time Egypt was one of the more stable countries, the region as a whole was going through a political turmoil. The Gulf War of 1990-91 had deep reverberations throughout the region, and was seen as a major threat to regional security. One of the first economic sectors to be hit was tourism, not just in Egypt but across most of the region. The other factor was the domestic political and economic approach to boosting tourism. Development plans for urban areas in Egypt put a major thrust into industrial and luxury centres, with numerous five star hotels coming up. However, these hotels and centres were quite expensive and not affordable for the average tourist. Other smaller hotels, accommodation and other tourist facilities were not up to the mark, and as a result the numbers of tourists coming to Egypt dwindled further every year. Given that a large chunk of the state's resources had been put into development of luxury hotels, which did not bring in the expected revenues, it became a huge cost as the state then incurred severe losses in those years.

The IMF failed to recognise the adverse effects of SAP. The reason behind this was partly the blanket approach used to target only macroeconomic variables in its estimate of economic progress. These variables precluded important factors like unemployment or the concept of human development¹¹. In fact, the programmes of the IMF being

¹¹ The concept of Human Development was introduced, in 1990 in the first Human Development Report, as "a new approach for advancing human wellbeing." The human development approach looks at expanding "the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human

imposed on Egypt as on other developing countries completely ignored what has been identified by Berboğlu (2000) as the “triangle of poverty”. Unemployment, low wages and income inequality were considered neither at the policy formulation level, nor at the level of evaluation of these programmes. As shown by Tamer Afifi¹² in a study of the impact of SAP on the Egyptian labour market,

Even if the Egyptian economy has shown very positive changes in recent years at the macro level, accelerated growth and Balance of Payments improvements, these macroeconomic indicators do not necessarily show that the quality of life for all the people, especially for the poor has improved. On the contrary, some critics have argued that poverty and unemployment have increased as ERSAP 91 aimed to achieve economic efficiency by applying fiscal and monetary measures. Hence, no economic development can be justified by itself, unless it is accompanied by improvement in the quality of life for the mass of the people of the society, or- at least- the majority of the society does not become worse off (Afifi 1998).

In addition to flawed policy, the reforms suggested by IMF, particularly SAP, have also been flawed in implementation. A comprehensive and immediate implementation of “a laissez-faire free-for-all big bang liberalization” not just has a negative impact in the short term, but has an even worse long term impact on the economy and the polity of the country, setting it so further back that these reforms cannot salvage the economy even in the long term. A critical evaluation of the “Post-Washington Consensus’s rapid-fire liberalization” (Nichols 2011) shows that it is a mistake for several reasons.

Firstly, a lack of regional economic integrity in the Arab world severely deterred any effort toward economic reform, especially one as radical as extreme neoliberalisation. Economic support and integration among regional states is vital to the success of such

beings live. It is an approach that is focused on creating fair opportunities and choices for all people.” The concept grew out of global discussions on the links between economic growth and development. ‘Human Development’ uses alternative focuses to go beyond GDP to assess a country’s development, including putting greater emphasis on employment, followed by redistribution with growth, and then whether people had their basic needs met. See, UNDP (2015).

¹² The main findings of the study conducted by Afifi conclude that while inequalities in income distribution increased, this was a result of growing unemployment and declining incomes among educated and skilled workers as opposed to any significant increase in employment and income rates of unskilled labour. For a detailed analysis, see Afifi, Tamer (1998).

large scale reform. Absence of such regional economic integrity and cooperation translates into an inability to bring in foreign direct investment. Further a country imposing such massive reform in the absence of regional support becomes far more vulnerable to external shocks such as an international economic crisis. The Global Crisis of 2008, which was essentially an American economic crisis, and its impact on other countries is a case in point. Secondly, a simultaneous trade liberalisation and privatisation has disastrous short term effects for the economy. As in the case of Egypt, the downsizing of the public sector combined with smaller private sector firms suffering and going out of business under the structural reform programme sets off a sudden increase in the rate of unemployment. “The average unemployment rate in the Middle East is amongst the highest in the world. Given the already dangerously high unemployment levels across Arab states and the lack of adequate social insurance, rendered even weaker from privatization, a supposedly short-term spike in unemployment could easily become catastrophic and long-term” (Nichols 2011: 206).

Not only were unemployment levels a cause for concern, but working conditions of the Egyptian workforce were far from adequate. The competitive market economy model that SAP was oriented towards was not labour-friendly. Labour laws were changed or subverted to a great extent prior to the 1990s, but with SAP the state imposed a new labour law which would completely marginalise labour unions and curtail their ability to protest social and economic injustices¹³. The thrust process of privatisation saw an increasing contractualisation of labour, which provided no safety net to the workers whatsoever. Given the complete lack of job security, workers were employed on three-month contracts, maintaining their temporary status. This exempted companies from

¹³To regulate the Egyptian labour market, a new Unified Labor Law No. 12 was enacted in 2003. The new law was designed “to address all the legal aspects of the Egyptian labor market. The new law aims at increasing private sector involvement and ... achieving a balance between employees’ and employers’ rights. Among the most important issues that the law addresses is the right of the employer to terminate an employee’s contract and the conditions in which it performs under. In addition, employees are granted the right to carry out a peaceful strike in conformity with the conditions and procedures prescribed by the new law” (GAFI (2015)). This law actually excludes huge sections of the working population from the definition of ‘labour’ including “government administration, domestic workers, members of an employer’s family, those in short-term employ...principal management positions and the self-employed ... Workers in ‘pure’ agriculture, etc.” (Abdelazim 2002: 103). At the same time, the Law also requires all ‘workers’ to sign ‘form six’ “preemptively announcing their resignation” and committing to “pay the factory owner a punitive fine of [US] \$20,000 if he leaves his job” (Ibid.: 104).

having to provide social security benefits such as adequate increments, minimum paid leave, health insurance and pension benefits. In fact, workers were often compelled to sign undated resignation forms which could then be used to terminate their contract at the whims and conveniences of the management. Another way of ensuring voluntary resignation from a worker was to transfer her/him to a different plant, often located in a different city altogether. The housing crisis in urban Egypt combined with the inability of workers to uproot and relocate would ensure their resignation (Paczynska 2009: 174-175).

Furthermore, the absence of job security created an environment of constant fear, where workers were discouraged to openly demand their rights or assert their liberties. This resulted in the excesses of the management going largely unreported, compounding the problem of marginalisation of labour and denial of their social and economic rights. This problem increased with alarming rapidity in the late 1990s and 2000s despite the fact that labour unions comprised one of the most organised and highly politically mobilised sections of civil society. Even so, the unions and their representative body, the Egyptian Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), found it difficult to resist state pressure for privatisation.

The sudden and consistent withdrawal of welfare policies and social insurance by the state at a time when the economy is being subjected to such extreme upheaval creates a crisis. The IMF does not recognise that social insurance is crucial to sustaining the economy at a time when unemployment levels are expected to shoot up. While the Sadat government attempted to remove subsidies and ensured employment, fear of a popular protest prevented it from completely abandoning these provisions. However, in the Mubarak era, the removal of these policies completely eroded any sense of financial security the society might have had. Rapidly growing unemployment, rising poverty and falling standards of living were the immediate consequences of SAP that the IMF failed to take into account.

The sections of society worst affected by structural adjustment were the most vulnerable ones. In particular, women were severely affected by SAP, in ways that went beyond economic cycles and the impact of which could not be encapsulated in figures and

estimates. Up until the mid-1970s the public sector had employed the bulk of the Egyptian workforce. Under the rule of Nasser, due to the growing pressure and lobbying of feminist organisations and individuals, the public sector had become the primary structure for enforcing state feminism. The institutionalisation of feminism was a result of the increased agitations for public integration of women, leading the Nasser regime to adopt it as part of state policies, adding to the state's socialist character. The economic shift of the 1970s led to a complete abandoning of state feminism. This was the result of a peculiar 'triple alliance' between the international institutions and their recommendations, the conservatism of the Islamists, and the military regimes of Sadat and Mubarak. The IMF and World Bank recommendations on withdrawing welfare facilities combined with the conservative attitudes of certain sections of the Islamists allowed the regimes to focus on a competitive market economy model, neglecting the vulnerable sections of society (Hatem 1994a).

The ensuing changes in both the public and private sectors affected various aspects of women's lives, ranging from working conditions, remuneration and dress within the workspace to marriage, child-bearing and health beyond it. Policies which had been designed to integrate women into the public life, endow them with greater economic freedom and improve their legal status were rescinded to a great extent, not so much as a direct form of discrimination but as a fallout of the new thrust on increased productivity and cost cutting in the public sector. While earlier the state had attempted to address the issue of multiple familial and economic responsibilities shouldered by women and sought to provide a working environment that could help them perform these roles more smoothly, the changes in state policies allowed public companies far greater liberty to alter these conditions. The SAP resulted in a fall in the numbers of jobs available, which meant that thousands of young graduates were left unemployed or working at jobs for which they were overqualified. The rate of unemployment rose from 7.7 percent in 1976 to 14.7 percent in 1986. While the unemployment figure for men was 10 percent for women it was 40.7 percent (Ibid.: 48). This was because women were far more dependent on the public sector than men.

For older women work conditions in the public sector deteriorated, reflecting in remuneration and welfare facilities like day-care for children and paid maternity leave. In the private sector, on the other hand, the facilities for women were scarce to begin with, even in the Nasser era, but with structural adjustment they were abandoned altogether. The working conditions within the public sector changed on the pretext of streamlining operations and increasing productivity and efficiency. The lessening numbers of female recruits reflected the growing perception that rendered women less productive than men owing to their familial responsibilities. Hiring women was also seen as a cause for increased labour costs owing to the compulsion to provide paid maternity leave and other facilities. Public enterprises like the Helwan textile factory resorted to violation of labour laws by employing girls below the minimum age and on a contractual basis to reduce labour costs. These contracts could be easily terminated if they got married or pregnant, and if retained, they had no claim to pension benefits (Ibid.:48-49).

The private sector in Egypt had discriminated against women since the Nasser era. With the onset of privatisation and the increasing deregulation of the private sector by the state, this discrimination only increased and in a blatant manner. Private enterprises would hire less than 100 women so they were not legally obligated to provide day care facilities. Since the 1970s, they began hiring women on contractual basis, keeping their employment status temporary so they did not have to pay social security benefits. Men were given preference over women as potential employees, a fact that was openly displayed in job advertisements specifically seeking applications from male candidates, in a direct violation of labour laws prohibiting gender-based discrimination. However “these practices [were not] challenged due to the policy orientation towards privatization” (Ibid.: 49).

Apart from employment, other issues such as illiteracy got exacerbated as the state withdrew its welfare role and discontinued investing in the provision of affordable public education¹⁴. Rather than building more public schools, the state resorted to

¹⁴ “For example, in 1976 the overall illiteracy rate was 56.5 per cent: 43.12 per cent for men and 71 per cent for women; in 1986 it dropped to 49 per cent overall: 38 per cent for men and 62 per cent for women. While this drop seemed to represent an advance, the figures showed an increase in the absolute

increasing class sizes as well as the number of school sessions in a day. This increased the workload of (mostly female) underpaid teachers manifold while diminishing the quality of education. Enrolment figures of girls at the primary school level begun to stagnate, and at college level enrolment figures showed minimal increases. Since the majority of teachers were women, their working conditions became more and more challenging, with increasing workloads rendering them underpaid and with few benefits. Female teachers employed in private schools had no claim to the few benefits that public school teachers were entitled to. They worked increased work hours without being provided any social security benefits. Islamic schools were no different in their recruitment policies, except in the matter of dress for female teachers and the inclusion of religious instructions in their curriculum. Young graduates qualified to teach faced imminent unemployment as the number of public schools remained largely constant, and number of teaching positions remained limited despite the growing workload. New work schedules and deteriorating equality of education forced most middle class working women to enrol their children in private schools, increasing the financial pressures on them and their families.

That the structural adjustment programme has been imposed universally by the IMF on developing countries for which it was barely adequate, especially given that it lacks universal applicability, has resulted in disastrous consequences for those nations. But even prior to its application and implementation, the SAP has been flawed at the level of formulation itself. This is because of its focus being concentrated on and limited solely to the macroeconomic aspects. Policy formulation in IMF has considered developing nations on the level of global markets, when in fact the state of economy in almost all developing countries have not been in a position to compete with global economy and world markets. Reforms pushing for free trade and privatisation translate on the domestic front into higher taxes and shrinking welfare functions of the state, including exclusion of the private sector from labour laws, growing unemployment and lower wages.

number of illiterates because of the dramatic population increases in the 1970s. In 1976, Egypt had a population of 38 million; by 1986, it was 50 million” (Hatem 1994a: 51). It must be noted that in relative terms the alleviation of illiteracy was more in the case of men than women.

Egypt's open door policy has developed under the impact of the state bourgeoisie opting for alliance with international capital, more than it has under any pressure from the local industrial capitalists... The state has become unable to continue with both a developmental function and a welfare function at the same time, but it continues to host an entrenched state bourgeoisie keen to preserve its distinction in power and wealth (Ayubi 2006: 340).

The liberalisation drive not only created but also enhanced class cleavages in the Egyptian society as well as served to protect the pre-existing rich class. While it continued to fail to bring about any sustainable structural economic reform, liberalisation, the way it was being pursued, served the interests of the small capitalist elite by providing them bigger economic opportunities and enabling them through the possibility of collaboration with foreign investors. It also helped to serve the interests of the military bureaucracy, which could now control/consume part of foreign capital as well as controlling the public sector, and partially the private sector (due to its checks against complete privatisation in the form of joint ventures etc.). In so far as privatisation was enforced by the state for its own purposes, it was a shift in the role of the state from de-regulation to re-regulation (Ibid.). Key changes were made and new provisions introduced for the purpose of enabling joint ventures. The public policy for investment which had first been introduced in the 1970s, was brought back along with holding public corporations in the following decade. Contrary to expectations, the overpowering nature of the military-led state precluded significant privatisation and liberalisation, and further prevented any significant reform of the expansive and over-staffed bureaucratic machinery.

The convergence of the 'state' and the 'new bourgeoisie' is clear in the way privatisation was being carried out. In the midst of several policies being introduced to bring about privatisation and liberalisation, efforts to free the economy of state and bureaucratic control remained insufficient. This was largely due to what they gained, officially and unofficially, from their control over various aspects of the economy, not limited to the public sector anymore, but infringing upon the newly growing private sector too. It was evident that

the state and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie were not prepared to relinquish the control functions and the special privileges provided to them by a large, if transformed, public sector. Increasingly too, a major fraction of the state bourgeoisie became more interested in allying the public sector with international capital than in forming and strengthening ties with domestic capital (Ibid.: 342).

In fact the limited defence mechanism of the government against complete privatisation was also not aimed at protecting the domestic economy. Rather it was directed at ensuring political stability for the ruling regime, given the staunch opposition faced by the government on earlier occasions such as the removal of subsidies and the subsequent bread riots of 1977.

What Will Nichols refers to as an “Arab peculiarity”¹⁵, but which is in fact common to most developed countries, is the culture of clientelism rampant in a rentier-state economy. This factor, which the IMF has not taken into account in its approach to reforms in developing countries, refers to a nexus of resources-extraction by the private sector enabled by the state and the rent-seeking corruption of its bureaucracy, leading to a shrinking of the entrepreneurial class owing to suffering businesses as privatisation fails to show the expected results and the concentration of capital among the small elite, further deepening class cleavages and widening the gap between the rich and the poor (Nichols 2011).

Most of the capitalist world and especially the architects of global liberalisation from the IMF and World Bank have recognised the 1970s as a period of economic turmoil. However, they characterised this turmoil as a phase of “shocks and setbacks” (Walton and Seddon 1994) which to them were a part of the process of economic liberalisation. What they failed to identify is that unlike occasional and incidental shocks, this economic turmoil has been a consequence of misguided liberalisation rather than a side-

¹⁵ Will Nichols discusses a number of Arab “peculiarities” including regional political turmoil, exceptionally high rates of unemployment and rampant clientelism and corruption to which the failure of IMF and World Bank policies is attributed. See Nichols (2011). However, Christopher Clapham in his seminal work shows that these features, namely clientelism, corruption and nepotism are prevalent across developing countries, though they may exist in varying degrees in various third world states, and thus are not peculiar to Arab countries. See Clapham (1985).

effect, and that these economies are not robust enough or equipped with the necessary economic and political mechanisms to recover from and overcome such immediate crises. This is why the 1980s, predicted to be a more prosperous time for developing economies after the setbacks of the 1970s, did not see any improvement in their conditions. Some of them actually worsened with the continued imposition of liberalisation through forced global adjustment and rising debt crisis.

It is evident from the responses of developed countries of the West (East European countries in 1960s and 1970s being a case in point) that they were not open to any major form of structural adjustment which became a part of the ‘conditionality’ aspect of foreign institutions’ provision of loans and debt rescheduling for developing countries.

In so far as the purpose of restructuring domestic political economy to integrate it with or opening it to the global political economy has been the primary (stated) objective of this enforced liberalisation, the merits of such a system need much rethinking.

One of the major consequences of this deepening integration [of global political economy] is a greater “synchronicity” or “simultaneity” of events in different parts of the world and in different countries. Evidence suggests that, from the late 1960s onwards, the advanced capitalist countries of the West in particular have become both more closely integrated and mutually interdependent. Consequently, they demonstrate, in recession and in recovery, an increasingly high degree of synchronicity in economic rhythms relative to earlier periods; only Japan stands somewhat apart. By the early 1980s the same was becoming more generally the case for the developing world as a whole, although the unevenness of capitalist development in the Third World and the continuing survival of state socialism in the Second World until the late 1980s ensured that global synchronicity was still not achieved at the beginning of the 1990s. increasingly, however, the successive booms and recessions of the advanced capitalist world have been “passed on” to the rest of the world in a variety of ways and as a consequence a major process of restructuring on a world scale has taken place (Ibid.: 7).

An integrated global political economy which entails a synchronisation of booms and recesses across the globe has few benefits. A possible simultaneous and total global

crisis would make recovery that much more difficult. On the other hand, developing countries suffering from a continued debt-crisis and its economic, political and social consequences do not gain much from such an integrated global economic system as they are still not developed. Rather such a system is becoming a means for developed capitalist states to export domestic financial crises to developing non-capitalist or semi-capitalist (mixed) economies.

The Paradox of Neoliberalisation and Democratisation

The Keynesian idea on which the whole concept of the IMF was originally predicated, proposed that there was an urgent need for a Fund like this because of the high risk of market failures. Moreover, the only solution to such challenges could be a *global* initiative since market failure in one country would have a ripple effect and adversely affect the economies of other countries as well. This thought appears paradoxical in its very conception given that proponents of capitalism who express their utmost belief in the *free market* would also propose any kind of intervention in the functioning of the market. Joseph Stiglitz explains how such intervention almost always, without exception, aggravates the problem rather than being effective to any degree in containing it. The original philosophy behind the IMF was that since individual governments might fail to serve “global economic welfare”, such an institution can “put international pressure on countries to have more expansionary policies than these countries would choose of their own accord” (Stiglitz 2002:197). It is imperative to examine the nature of global economic welfare, as envisaged by big powers.

“Keynes provided such an analysis, explaining why countries may not pursue sufficiently expansionary policies on their own- they would not take into account *the benefits that it would bring to other countries*” (Ibid.: 199, emphasis added). Which countries? Whose interests are truly being served by the concept of ‘global economic welfare’? The idea behind the IMF, of applying pressure on certain countries in order to benefit the economies of certain other countries, is in itself flawed, as this translates into developing and economically weaker countries being pressurised to adopt policies to

expand trade through special economic zones and free trade agreements, to benefit the economies of developed countries, that too at the expense of their own domestic economies. The IMF as an international institution is far from democratic, and rather than examining the particular crisis of specific cases/countries, constantly imposes a set of economic and political reforms designed to further global economic interests rather than to resolve the individual crisis of a particular economy. Forcing certain economies to remodel themselves to serve the global market or global economic interests is extremely problematic as the global market and interests are dominated by superpowers.

Keynes assumed that the IMF could help countries by “putting pressure on countries to maintain their economy at full employment” (Ibid.: 196). Yet, reforms imposed on countries in need of economic aid invariably translates into liquidating the public sector, cutbacks on salaries and massive unemployment as well as cutbacks on subsidies, healthcare, education and other social welfare functions of the state (as these in developing countries are provided and managed primarily by the public sector). Further, the opening up of the economy, as in the case of Egypt, translates into the creation of special economic zones and free trade areas and leads to increased, and often unchecked, foreign investment. Direct consequences of these steps are fall in revenues from trade, loss of limited domestic markets for indigenous products, fall in exports due to growth in international competition, and the control of major parts of the industrial and banking sector shifting to private and foreign ownership.

Samir Amin expounds on this shift in the role of state in political economy vis-à-vis the arguments for free market and deregulation in today’s neoliberalism.

In some circumstances, the state intervenes to restrict the powers of high finance. It can give itself the means of regulating the financial markets. The central bank then exercises decisive authority in determining interest rates, controlling foreign relationships through power in varying degrees over exchange rates, etc. the state sometimes goes even further, imposing its tutelage over research and decisions regarding major investments. These practices can go well beyond the mere regulation of public expenditure and indebtedness, and so-called monetary policies. The mature Keynes strove to encourage such practices....But, in other circumstances, such as today’s neoliberalism, high finance succeeds in domesticating the state and reducing it to the status of an

instrument at its service. The issues of limitless privatization, market “deregulation” (understood as the abolition of the state’s regulatory interventions, abdicating to high finance control of markets), and state withdrawal are the orchestrated and organized into an effective doctrinal and ideological cluster (Amin 2008: 53).

Apart from the social repercussions of unemployment, deepening class cleavages and economic crisis for indigenous industries and producers (especially small scale producers who are not equipped to cope with economic competition on such a level), it also poses challenges to sovereign control over decision making on economic, political and strategic issues. The flow of foreign investment means that foreign investors have more and more leverage to manipulate the economic policies of the state to favour their business interests, further aggravating the crisis of the domestic economy. Economic aid from international institutions comes with a certain loss of political sovereignty as the IMF and other institutions do not prescribe economic reforms alone. They also push for political reforms as economic aid is only forthcoming on the condition of ensured political stability which can only be achieved through *their* reforms. The challenge to the sovereignty of the state does not end there. It goes further to strategic interests and concerns of the state. Economic aid is accompanied by economic and political accountability as well as a cost pertaining to strategic interests. The US, both directly and indirectly, through institutions like IMF, coerces such states and uses them as strategic footholds in the larger region, as has been in the case of Egypt. From determining the nature of bilateral relations between the two states to involving such a state into a regional conflict, the US is in a position to dictate the regional and international policies of the state, to its own advantage. A most prominent example could be the Camp David Accord.

The penetration by external actors including international agencies and foreign donors, in the policy-making process of the recipient state is significant. This is particularly relevant to the role played by the IMF in most developing countries, including Egypt. “In this dependency relationship, the IMF plays the dominant leadership role “in determining the creditworthiness of prospective aid recipients” and in “advising” them

on financial and economic matters” (Craissati 1989: 13). In fact, providing aid to developing countries provides the IMF with leverage to ‘advise’ them in economic and political restructuring. The IMF then becomes an agency of international capitalism, imposing its Western brand on the developing countries. These countries on the verge of financial collapse or political crisis are forced to follow these suggestions. “The real importance of the IMF lies in the authority delegated to it by the governments and capital markets of the entire capitalist world” (Ibid.).

Changing Perceptions and Experiences of Poverty

The growing gap between the rich and the poor is evidence of the flawed economic policies of the state. This has had physical manifestations in the form urban poverty and its spread to rural areas. Economic transformation has been reflected in physical transformations as well. Transformations in the trajectories of development have been mirrored in the changing landscapes. New cities like the Sadat city have risen in order to support the ‘new’ commerce and commercial class, primarily foreign companies, their offices and staff. The landscape of Egypt has changed significantly. These new cities have been a contrast to what has happened in the existing commercial and agricultural spaces. Cities like Cairo and Alexandria have witnessed a rise in the building of shanty-towns and slums, owing to the influx of labour from rural areas as traditional agricultural activity has dried up. Even the landscape of villages has undergone a change, becoming poorer physically and more so in popular imagination. To a great extent, the rural structures are being fast disposed. This is partly due to the actuality of poor economics in the rural areas and the growing economic cleavages in urban areas, and partly due to notions of poverty being external to the self. It is common notion today, in most developing economies, that rural areas are inflicted with poverty; and they are visually and physically poor. This is evident from the clearly lower standards of living and the absence of all the facilities and accessories of the ‘city life’, especially in the new cities.

However, this notion of poverty too is partial, as it precludes the fact of poverty of urban life, and of the educated middle class. Urban poverty needs to be qualified beyond aggregate economic figures and estimates such as per capita income or the consumption of 'x' number of calories per day. The financial strains of urban life combined with the rapid expansion of the concept of 'basic necessities' and the sense of relative poverty exacerbated by the stark contrast of the rich-poor divide are not accurately represented in empirical studies. Migration within the country from rural to urban areas combined with the fall in migration trends to other Arab countries since the fall in oil prices and recession in mid-1980s led to a sudden boom in urban population. Poverty in the urban context refers to the challenges of living in big cities where prices of basic utilities like electricity, transportation, housing and education as well as those of basic consumer goods like meat, dairy and bread were much higher, especially due to the high rates of inflation. But the challenges go far beyond these commodities, as the very concept of 'basic necessities' changes in the urban landscape. Since the late 1980s, refrigerators and television sets were no longer considered necessities but became part of the basic urban lifestyle. It was the consumer goods, such as edible goods, that became harder to afford for the lower middle class (Amin 2011).

The impressions of the self is based on the physicality of imported technology (such as electrical and electronic gadgets etc.) or the growing use of virtual technology like the internet, and assume these accessories as the benchmark for evaluating income, or property. The realisation and experiences of poverty are magnified and intensified when surrounded by the stark contrast of the rich elite 'obscenity of wealth'. The sense of poverty and deprivation is heightened with the growing awareness of such contrasts in a globalised world where one is exposed to what appears to be alternate realities through the medium of television and internet in addition to the changing face of one's own surroundings.

Economic exclusion and exploitation was also visible in the changing faces of cities like Cairo and the rise of new urban centres as a result of projects of urban planning and development. Resources which could have been allocated for rural development and welfare schemes such as housing, health and education were committed to these urban

development projects. Consequently, the landscapes of Egyptian cities have changed significantly in the past few decades as new urban centres of steel, glass and concrete have risen, in notably stark contrast to traditional urban cities like Cairo which still reflect the economic historicity of the urban population. Old commercial buildings and new hotels coexist with slums populated by rural migrants and urban poor. The new cities and commercial centres, on the other hand, are not meant for these sections of the population, nor the lower and middle income groups which face a crisis in the housing sector. These new centres are meant for a new class which consists primarily of foreign investors, delegates etc. and partly for the Western educated, technocratic elite. It can be surmised that the rise of these new urban centres is symbolic of the emergence of this new class. The poorest of people living in Cairo have been forced to live in the old necropolis, the City of the Dead, as urban (re)development schemes within Cairo have rendered numerous slum dwellers homeless.

Other factors such as the contractualisation of labour in urban areas, especially of the educated middle class are completely overlooked in such an estimate. But the fact is that such contractualisation and exploitation exists, and is having a telling effect on the urban society too. As shown above, the educational sector has been severely affected by such changes in the nature of labour contracts. This extreme contractualisation and exploitation of labour, leading to a consistent erosion of the security of labour, which can only exist in a welfare model, has seen some upsurges in the recent decades, but have gone largely unremarked until very recently when the impact of this erosion could no longer be ignored. Since 2004, Egypt has witnessed more than 3000 labour actions. The understanding of unemployment too has to be problematised. What the alarming rates of unemployment fail to reflect is the problem of disguised unemployment. As opposed to open unemployment, the concept of disguised unemployment includes

people who have jobs completely out of line with their qualifications-like an engineer who works as a taxi driver, a law school graduate working as a hotel receptionist, or a holder of a commercial school certificate working as a housemaid or cashier in a supermarket. No one of these is counted in the Egyptian official statistics as unemployed, but they all could be as miserable as any unemployed person (Ibid.: 75).

The IMF and other international institutions too observe poverty and unemployment through a macro-economic lens, remaining blithely unaware of the fallout of the changes it imposes. Nor do they take into account the psychological impact and frustrations of people who are forced into a sub-standard lifestyle, constantly denied professional fruition while barely making ends meet and being forced to compromise on a host of fronts ranging from an adequate education to a fulfilling family life. That the self-immolation of an educated middle class person forced to be a vendor (in Tunisia) resonated so strongly with the Egyptian public is a violent and extreme manifestation of this sense of frustration and exploitation, and while the incident occurred very recently in 2011, this corrosive political economic activity has been prevalent for decades.

One of the reasons as to why this morbid hollowing of the economy has taken some time to be identified in popular imagination is the false sense of security and pride drawn from various factors which at best, have really had no impact on the society, and at worst have been causes of severe economic deterioration. The intense militarisation of the economy as well as the politics of the country has falsely been a source of pride for many citizens. A society conditioned from the era of colonialism to identify pride with the 'nation', especially one which becomes a military state in the postcolonial era, derives great pride from technological advancement of the military in terms of increasingly sophisticated weapons, fighter jets and carriers, the rising military cities and militarisation in general. These are physical proofs of progress, as defined in macroeconomic variables and imposed on to the social psyche by large corporations and international financial institutions. That they have no bearing whatsoever on per capita income, or worse, are perhaps responsible for the exhaustion of the limited resources of the state goes mostly unremarked.

These notions of pride are mostly based on projected images. Images such as the sudden appearance of imported cars in 1993, give a false sense of economic development. Paradoxically, the reverse of this was also true. The realisation and experience of poverty among the mass of the Egyptian public has been far more acute in the 1990s and 2000s compared to the 1970s. This is because the very idea of 'basic necessities' has undergone a change.

Perceptions of prosperity versus poverty are best reflected in the narratives of the Egyptian writers of these eras. The narrators' positioning of 'us' versus 'them', 'us' mostly being the poor, the lower and lower-middle class, is a reflection of the view taken by people of the prosperity of their nation being exclusive in nature. Suffering, pain and humiliation are constant undertones in a considerable amount of writing of this time, be it in the works of Naguib Mahfouz or Nawal el-Saadawi. The suffering refers to social disadvantages touching upon disparities of class as well as discrimination between sexes, but also has an overarching reference to economic disparities in the Egyptian society. Many feminist narratives too, targeted patriarchal notions not just of male dominance, but also of class dominance¹⁶.

Situating the Egyptian Politico-Economic Developments in the International Context

The Egyptian political economic restructuring has to be viewed in the context of other developing countries and the global political economy, especially through the decades of 1970s and 1980s as this was the time when the impact of the debt crisis began to be felt most deeply and was no longer limited to the developed countries of the West where the series of economic crises had originated in the 1960s (Walton and Seddon, 1994). The 1970s and 1980s were a time of a crucial shift in landscape of global political economy. This shift was visible both in terms of developing countries versus developed countries and later between developing countries versus developed countries and international institutions controlled by them. The 1970s, 1980s and 1990s are considered as a time of socio-political change the world over, with the imposition of neoliberal reforms often by increasingly authoritarian regimes. The process of neoliberalisation in Egypt coincided with that of most developing countries, but even the Western states already oriented towards a capitalist economic system also witnessed radical liberal economic restructuring and simultaneously a severe cutback in the welfare functions, schemes and benefits of the state which included tax exemptions, subsidies, wages and benefits and provisions for employment. One of the first countries

¹⁶ For a detailed discussion, see chapter 5.

to witness this process perpetrated by the state, according to David Harvey, was Britain under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher. These reforms and measures led to a wave of popular protests even there, as the impact of these measures on the working class was immense. However, in comparison, the impact on developing countries like Mexico was much worse.

An important factor behind why liberalisation in Egypt had such a negative impact as opposed to liberalisation in countries such as India is the state of the economy at the time of the economic shifts. By the time economic reforms were introduced in India in 1991 the industrial sector was well established, despite being limited the private sector was relatively powerful with the presence of major business houses/corporations, the country was self-sufficient in and even exporting food crops, systematic five-year plans were being introduced and implemented and despite the severe problem of corruption, there was a substantial level of accountability and transparency owing to the fact that, unlike Egypt, the state apparatus was not controlled by a military bureaucracy. As opposed to this, the industrial sector in Egypt had not been established, rather it had been curbed during Nasser's time, agricultural and land distribution reforms had been few and far in between, the practice of systematic five year-plans was eroded by the on-going regional conflict combined with a lack of systematic planning. While the state provided food subsidies for its people, not much was done to expand growth and employment opportunities, the public sector was plagued by gross mismanagement and corruption in the absence of adequate transparency and accountability since the state apparatus was controlled by the military. Added to the of lack internal economic reforms and a restructuring and revitalising of the public sector, the Egyptian economy was frequently subjected to severe economic upheavals which accompanied regional events and international developments (to which Egypt was particularly vulnerable during the Nasser and Sadat eras). Thus, despite receiving economic aid and military assistance from the Soviet Union and later the neighbouring Arab countries, the Egyptian economy was far from sustainable, and completely unprepared for liberalisation or any kind of competition with the international markets and the global economy.

A comparison with India's banking sector, for example, provides insights into how and why privatisation in two countries, both postcolonial developing countries with similar socio-economic challenges, produced such different results. The policies of privatisation in India were limited to allowing foreign direct investment in addition to the pre-existing public banking sector. Further, privatisation and opening up of the economy to private banks was combined with numerous welfare schemes and policies being provided by the public sector banks. This meant that the welfare role of the state, of which the public banking sector can be a mighty instrument, was not abandoned completely. Neither were the public sector banks functioning at a steep and significant disadvantage. They had their own purpose and their own targeted commerce which ensured that they remained profitable ventures. Additionally, private banks in India were not given a free reign unlike in Egypt and were obligated to function in accordance with the parameters set by the state-directed economic policies through institutions such as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

One of the reasons as to why the Indian economy was able to sustain itself and actually benefit from the process of liberalisation (in addition to the fact that the nature of socialism in India had differed from that of Egypt under Nasser), was the diversification of industry and production in India at the very outset from the time of independence (and possibly prior to it). This accrued from the state's effort under Jawaharlal Nehru's directives to diversify production in terms of variety and scope of products, as well as in terms of bringing in modern industrial technology and equipment in the public and private sectors in addition to the fact of availability of a variety of natural and mineral resources in large quantities. While the Egyptian economy mostly remained closed during the Nasser era, the infiltration of the economy by the 'technocratic' class under Sadat was not accompanied by the necessary diversification of production through industry. Combined with limited resources, the emergence of the technocrats and the flow of foreign capital, local modes of production and industry were side-lined and almost overshadowed by the suddenly dominant and fast expanding trade. The marginalisation of local industry and production, which, with adequate state regulation could have benefitted from the liberalisation scheme, was complete as the lack of impetus required by the local production efforts was accompanied by rise of severe

competition from global products and goods (both consumer goods and essentials) now available in the Egyptian markets.

Conclusion

On the domestic level, the neoliberalisation drive resulted in the weakening of the economy even as official statistical figures continued to show improvements. The absence of a local bourgeoisie meant that the economy was completely incapable of sustaining itself in the face of competition from the global market. Combined with the emergence of the military as the new elite class, the policies of *Infitah* and structural adjustment resulted in the altering of social and class composition, the widening of the gap between rich and poor and exacerbating the experiences of poverty. On the international front, these policies resulted in the subservience of the Egyptian state to foreign actors like the US and IMF. Not only was the freedom in decision-making of the state at the regional and global levels compromised, but the state apparatus was significantly weakened. Furthermore, the social contract was irreversibly altered due to the structural changes entailed by these policies, compromising the right of property of the citizen.

The anomalies of the free-market-democratisation notion in liberal capitalist thinking were also revealed. While the local as well as regional circumstances prevented the realisation of the competitive market economy model, the role of the state too was contrary to that envisaged in liberal theory. In pushing for liberalisation and privatisation, the state assumed a more interventionist role as opposed to the withdrawal from regulation of economy espoused by liberal theory. The interventionist nature of the state's economic role was compounded further by the near-absolute rule of the military bureaucracy, unchecked given the lack of accountability. Finally, the economic shifts resulted in the loss of bargaining powers of the citizen, stalling the process of democratisation. This called for a serious rethinking of citizenship and civil society activism, which was extremely challenging given the curtailment of the political space. However, as the experiences of poverty and despair became acute, so did responses to

state authoritarianism and neoliberalisation. State-society relations in the light of these developments are examined in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

Role of Opposition and Civil Society

This chapter seeks to examine how the citizens perceived the state and how they have attempted to renegotiate citizenship rights and the social contract over the years, in keeping with changing notions of citizenship, by voicing dissent and challenging regime autonomy. This opposition and contestation has been witnessed through traditional methods and unconventional ones, through the political platform as well as the ever-expanding public sphere. The latter includes what has come to be known as street politics, voices of the media, popular culture and personal narratives as well as various social media platforms.

The discursive and pedagogical traditions in civil society have been viewed as originating in the Western political thought and praxis. West Asian interactions with this discursive tradition have been primarily inclined towards contestation. Given the perceived alien nature of the very notion of civil society, reactions from the Arab world ranged from hesitant and reluctant acceptance to total scepticism. However, the scepticism and contestation have resulted in efforts to develop organic conceptions of civil society, based on epistemological knowledge of local identities and social relations. It is significant that the civil society is viewed as inherently political. The quest of the Arab states for legitimacy, on the one hand, and that of Arab societies for political participation, on the other hand, projects a political character on the civil society where it can no longer be imagined as apolitical. The political is manifested in notions of civil society due to the growing need for a site of protest, dissent and politico-ideological contestation. In fact, in the absence of democracy and the space for dissent, the civil society has emerged as a major political entity to challenge the increasing authoritarian tendencies of most Arab states.

The civil society as a political actor has assumed greater significance in the context of globalisation and the way it has encumbered local politics. As states become

increasingly subservient, to what Ramakrishnan has referred to as “neoliberal globalism,” it is the civil society which posits local socio-political and economic concerns against the state and resists the neoliberalisation drive which threatens local citizens, especially those who are already economically and socially marginalised. The civil society plays a pertinent role in questioning and limiting state infringements on civil liberties, challenging the growth of the ‘deep state’ typical of authoritarian regimes in the global neoliberal context. While the success of the civil society may be debatable, it has managed to contain a total abandonment of individual rights and liberties, and to some extent limit the deep state. The juxtaposition of the state and civil society, inherent to notions of civil society as political, demonstrates a contrast to the “contemporary phase of capitalist globalisation with its neo-liberal vision [which] promotes a version of civil society that is associated with the preponderance of non-state actors” (Ramakrishnan 2010: 27). Civil society can therefore be seen as the site of contestation between power and the myriad conflicting interests. Not only is it the site of the functioning of hegemony, it also allows for contestation among conflicting interests within society. It showcases both politico-ideological struggles as well as the clash of power in the form of traditional authority and power structures with local agents of social and political transformation. Given that the coercive powers of the state are constantly expanding and are largely unchecked in Egypt (as demonstrated in the previous chapters) this contestation of power and hegemony occurs both at the micro level in issues of daily life and their impact on social relations as well as at the macro level moving towards socio-political transformation.

With high level of political culture, civil society has emerged as an important unconventional sphere within which a play of power, hegemony and legitimisation takes place. Equally, the voices of the dominant classes strive towards socio-political transformation aimed at reform in the state apparatus along with local issues which challenge traditional authority. This assertion of local interests and the attempts to renegotiate with power reflects the integral link between identity, citizenship and civil society.

Opposition and civil society movements and protests are a crucial aspect of the nature of the state, and the legitimacy it enjoys in the eyes of its citizens. Walton and Seddon (1994) trace the political economic developments surrounding the hegemonic push for an integrated global political economy, or neoliberal globalism, by focusing on popular protests and food riots across the globe as a reaction to global adjustment. Their work elaborates on how these popular protests, which rose in an unprecedented wave in the 1970s in different parts of the world, are reflective of the impact of global economic integration through global adjustment propagated by international institutions to manage economic crises which have their actual origins in Western developed economies. The protests are clearly symbolic of popular opposition to global economic integration and its negative impact, especially on developing economies. Not only is the validity of such global integration questioned, but the tendency of international institutions to view these protests as shocks, which are temporary in nature and a part of the development process, is also challenged.

Further, they elaborate on how these developments and reactions to them are in turn affecting the very nature of the state by altering the relationship between the state and civil society.

Not only economic and political structures but the very relationship between state and society has been substantially redefined as new forms of integration have developed to lay foundations for the world of the 1990s and beyond. Popular protest is an integral part of that process... [the postwar period world] will be qualitatively different, not least in the degree of economic integration which will ensure that developments taking place within the states will be increasingly conditioned by global forces. At the same time, resistance to certain aspects of those developments will continue to be associated with various forms of open struggle and protest (Walton and Seddon 1994: 22).

In the context of postcolonial states, the coercive powers of the state provide a medium for investigating notions of civil society. It has already been highlighted how the civil society assumes an increasingly political role particularly in authoritarian states where both individual rights and the space for renegotiation thereof are severely restricted. The focus of most civil society discourse in such a context is the nature and methods of

coercion employed by the state. Coercion in this case refers to both military/physical coercion as well as politico-ideological and psychological coercion, described in Gramscian understanding as perpetuation of 'hegemony'. Seen thus, civil society becomes the site for the operation of hegemony, more so in the indirect coercive manner in which power is assumed and exercised in a given society (Ramakrishnan 2010: 29). The engagement of the values and interests of citizens with the state's coercive efforts to legitimise its own interests is the primary function of this kind of hegemony.

Attempts to attain historical accuracy in placing the origins of civil society in Egypt present several problems. The first of these would be to delineate the specific definitions and structural frameworks within which civil society can be identified. Arguably, if notions of civil society include the unorganised sector, then civil society in Arab states predates Western conceptions of the same, marking its presence in the mosque, the institution of religious and scientific learning, the market and the street, the traditional coffee shop and various other informal social groups and sites. The civil society in Egypt has been something of a fledgling organism. The *consciousness* of civil society as a collective phenomenon in the modern sense, however, can be traced back to the late 1800s¹. At its inception during the reign of Muhammad Ali, the civil society was not an agency of opposition against the state. Rather, in some ways, it served as an extension of the state. It was much later, during the struggle against colonialism, that the civil society began to express anger and agitation against the 'authorities'. This was only a brief period of a kind of political and cultural renaissance of the civil society, where movements were heralded often by individual activists. The origins of an active civil society can be traced back to the rise of Islamic modernism, which through its processes of questioning of traditional knowledge and methods of learning, reinterpretation of both historical practices and texts and engagements with modernity and with Western civilization, provided the genesis of a culture of discursive pluralism. Not only was discursive pluralism made possible with the co-existence of often

¹ For a brief history of the evolution of the Egyptian civil society, see Hassan (2011) and Moaddel, (2002).

contradictory ideas and ideologies, but methods of learning and modes of expression also became diversified.

The discursive pluralism of nineteenth century Egypt did not simply mean the presence of different ideological groups in the country. For highbrow culture producers, scholarly debates were not simply the clashes of ideas. These debates were also over the codes and conceptual framework in terms of which ideas were expressed. As the diffusion of modern culture to Egypt accelerated, the conceptual schema of the Islamic orthodoxy collided with alternative sets of codes in the discourse of the followers of Enlightenment, British Westernizers, and Christian evangelicals. These codes included binaries like human reason versus superstition, scientific rationality versus traditionalism, civilization versus savagery, gender equality versus male domination, freedom versus despotism, Christendom versus Heathendom. Discursive pluralism signified conceptual pluralism as well (Moaddel 2002: 6).

Islamic modernism gained significantly from its engagements with Western modernity, finding new entry points of inquiry that opened up new conceptual possibilities, particularly in the efforts to resolve binary juxtapositions which had been typical of traditionalism. Jamaluddin al-Afghani expounded the possibility of the co-existence of the idea of a universal religious community that is *umma*, and the modern emerging nation-state. His disciple, Muhammad Abduh, was able to show the convergence of traditional knowledge with scientific rationality through the application of human reason in the study of historical knowledge through methods such as *ijtihad* or reinterpretation of Islamic texts and reform of Islamic law as well as the legal system. Given that up until then concepts such as democracy and civil society had not really been a part of Arab political discourse, even being completely shunned in some parts of Arab societies, local conceptions of civil society had originated within the Islamic modernist discourses. In that, they tended to be an interaction of Western influences with local issues of politics and governance. Ali Abd al-Raziq not only challenged the caliphate as un-Islamic, but further established a justification for a democratic state in accordance with the tenets of Islam. Though his claim was criticised from a theological perspective, it contributed significantly to the modern Islamic conceptions of a state.

In the aftermath of independence, Egypt was still ruled by a monarchy followed by a military regime, both strong and centrally controlled systems of political power, almost absolute in nature. Throughout its independent history, the Egyptian civil society was perpetually trapped under, and subordinate to, the authorities of the state. From the media to civil society organisations to individual activists, various components of the civil society were subjected to state control, and there have subsequently been numerous cases of state repression. There were few exceptions depending on the nature of particular organisations and how a particular leader was disposed towards them. For example, the Muslim Brotherhood, which was severely proscribed throughout most of independent Egypt's history, was deemed legitimate and given an open public platform during the era of Sadat. Similarly, the feminist movement gained momentum under the otherwise authoritarian Mubarak regime (given that the most highly placed within the regime were at the helm of the movement).

One of the key factors that aided the consolidation of authoritarian rule is the national modernisation project undertaken by these regimes in the postcolonial era. It explains why civil society actors shifted focus from modernisation to democratisation, in light of their experiences of how modernisation became a project of eliminating any alternate political ideas and ideologies. Thus, the focus shifted from reimagining the nation to reimagining citizenship and the place of individuals *vis-à-vis* the state in the social contract.

The development of support among many civil-society actors in favour of individual rights and freedoms represents a significant step in the war of position against authoritarian rule. The attention to the rights of individuals brings into question the notion of national unity, which forms a major element in the national modernization consensus underpinning authoritarianism. In so doing, it opens new spaces for a plurality of opinions to be represented. It challenges the relationship between regime and society that subordinates the interests of the latter to the policies and programs of the former (Pratt 2008: 14-15).

Despite a vibrant political, historical and intellectual culture, the civil society for a long time could not be a significant agent of political change. This is due to the complicity of the civil society with the national modernisation project at the very onset of the

postcolonial era. Nationalism and the national movement had assumed paramount importance in the struggle against colonialism, and subsumed some of the other social concerns at that point. Agents of social change became active in supporting the movement as they believed that this movement would not only free them from the yoke of colonialism but also rid them of the numerous social and economic issues that the society was faced with at the time. Thus, civil society was supportive of the national modernisation project that was seen as a continuation of the national freedom struggle, especially with the Free Officers at its helm (Ibid.: 57). However, as this project turned into a method of consolidation of power for the military and with the emergence of a new political elite- the emerging class of the military elite (discussed in chapter 3)- the focus of civil society shifted to the democracy debate. The interests of the civil society and military-ruled state have since been clearly divergent. This explains the different kinds of repression incurred by the civil society from the state, in the face of its counterhegemony efforts. Most of this repression down the decades has been justified on the grounds that the agenda of civil society actors is detrimental to national modernisation and the national character. Even though there have been several instances of protests and demonstrations even in the face of state repression, the biggest protest against a regime was witnessed during the Arab Spring, as recently as in 2011.

One of the elements that constitutes the civil society, and which is perhaps the most difficult to define, is an 'idea' itself. An idea, which may be communicated through unorthodox means, can sometimes prove to be a stronger catalyst than the formation of an organisation, and it can successfully compel the society to move towards a process of transformation that is massive and mass-based. This idea is what a movement germinates from. A more adequate representation of what questions the state, raises issues and attempts constant renegotiation of the social contract is a broad social transformation movement which can at once draw in workers, students, intellectuals, etc. Civil society in the traditional sense, or the institutionalised Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) sector, is but a small part of it.

The following section studies the evolution of some such ideas emerging from within the religious secular debates on civil society and state, and their impact on civil society, the organism and its activism.

Religious Secular Debates on Civil Society: Discourses and Actors

In defining civil society, it is crucial to identify (a) the local conceptions of civil society; (b) the actors and agents of social transformation and the ideologies that influence them; (c) internal conflicts and contestations within the civil society; and (d) the challenges it faces vis-à-vis the state, and the medium and language it employs to question the state and renegotiate the terms of the social contract. One of the major sites of contestation within the Arab discourses on civil society has been the religious-secular debates on civil society and the state. The primary reason for the inherent conflict in religious secular debates is that despite their convergence on the critique of authoritarian rule of military regimes, their ideas of a reformed state and political system are mostly divergent. While most of the secular actors within civil society have been demanding greater rights and liberties derived from the democratisation model, any reimagination of state and citizenship in religious discourse is that of a state derived from Islamic principles (Ramakrishnan 2010: 31). The theoretical and pedagogical basis for criticising the regimes and the directions which agents of social transformation try to propel the state in are both contrasting and contentious. The very notions of civil society and the state have incurred an extensive discourse, with important questions being raised about the source and nature of political power, and the relationship it ought to have with the society.

Islamist movements and the discourse on political Islam have played a major role in determining the nature of civil society. The penetration of Islamic activism into social movements has not only influenced these movements, but has also led to political Islamic discourse occupying a central position in the dialogue on state and the reshaping of state-society relations. The efficacy and influence of Islamic activism have garnered more and more support not just due to its appeal to the faith of people but also because

of its expanding sphere of influence and extensive reach to areas and issues neglected by mainstream secular discourses.

The Egyptian government's scant regard for social justice, which was due both to its preoccupation with the struggle for national self-determination and the elitist background of its members, prompted the less privileged sectors of society, especially the *efendiyya* (the educated urban middle class), to turn to more radical ideas toward the end of the 1920s. It also paved the way for the rise of supranational ideologies that claimed both authenticity and political power, mainly Islamism (which was prompted by the Brotherhood) and pan-Arabism. The popularity of these ideologies was enhanced by intellectual literature in the 1930s that re-emphasized Egypt's Islamic heritage (Hatina 2000: 42).

This explains the increasing appeal and growing influence of political Islam, especially in the aftermath of the 1967 War and the disillusionment with the idea of Pan-Arabism. By the late 1960s, the Brotherhood, even though banned, was well established and had gained popularity enough that its ideology began to appeal to a sizeable chunk of the Egyptian population (especially the youth), outgrowing any other ideological influences or orientations.

In early stages of infancy, the Egyptian intellectual discourse, particularly secular discourse, was cautious and moderate in its approach. The major contributors to this discourse included Muhammad Husayn Haykal, Ahmad Amin, Taha Husayn and Tawfik al-Hakim. They envisaged a society based on rationalism, national sovereignty, civil liberty and openness to modernity. Yet they never vocally disassociated from their Islamic heritage and, unlike later secularists, did not outright reject the role of religion in politics and law, nor did they refute the claims of organisations like the Brotherhood that posed Islam as the solution to social problems.

Secularists such as Farag Fouda argued that an Islamic state based solely on *sharia* would not only have the inherent problem of social injustice but would also diminish the sensibilities of nationhood and unity between Muslims and Copts. He refuted the claims of the alien origins of democracy, which in his conception was inherently secular, on the basis of the universality of culture which in his view was free from "the monopoly of a single entity" (Ibid.: 58). Unlike other secularists, though, Fouda did not

argue for a complete separation of religion from society and politics, recognising its role in public life and discourse. Rather, as a politician he was well versed in realpolitik and argued for “a democratic compromise based on an interim compromise: between the jurisdictional approach, which guaranteed the role of religion in the state by legislative and constitutional definitions, and the separatist approach, which made religion a purely personal and private issue” (Ibid.: 60).

The origins of the Arab socialist discourse on civil society can be traced back to the 1970s, when many Arab Leftists began to renounce the Soviet state as repressive and started looking for an alternative to the Leninist perspective that had so far influenced their approach. So far, they had viewed the civil society as much of the Marxist tradition had, as a ‘bourgeois society’, and therefore excluded themselves from it. It was only very recently that they began to view it not as a product of socio-economic and political redundancy, rather as an agent of social and political change. Gramsci provided an important entryway for the Arab intellectuals into the civil society discourse, and the influence of Gramscian thought on the Arab discourse has since been significant (Browsers 2006: 163-165).

Sadiq Jalal al-Azm views the civil society as essentially secular- given that civil society, like secularism, is a product of modernity. Those who are critical of the civil society for its lack of cultural relativity as a concept, are in turn viewed by him as ‘orientalists in reverse’. He asserts that by attempting to employ epistemological specificity, they ‘orientalise’ themselves. His critique of the civil society itself is based on the aforementioned Marxian view of it as something that is a product of and in turn perpetuates the cleavages of a bourgeois society.

The debates on state and religion, particularly the question of establishing an Islamic state, invariably come to centre around democratisation. Democracy as a possibility in an Islamic state is the basic contention between religious and secular scholars. While a small section of religious thinkers reject democracy outright as a Western concept, the majority of the thinkers argue over democracy as either inherent or alien to any notion of an Islamic state. Islamic scholars elsewhere, such as Abu Ala Maududi, have argued that that Islam provides an ideal foundation for a political system because it is

inherently democratic, making a case for a ‘theocracy’. On the other end of the spectrum, Fouada has cited the cases of Iran, Sudan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia as examples of religious states which are tyrannical and autocratic, impinging on social justice and the rights of citizens.

The intolerance of orthodox Islamists towards liberal and secular discourses in the earlier decades can be viewed as one of the reasons for the lacuna in the role played by the civil society as a cohesive and effective organism. Combined with Nasser’s “inept and incomplete transformation of Egypt from an agrarian to an industrial society as well as to the erasure of the collective memory of its people”, which was furthered by Sadat, these factors resulted in the severely diminished “prospects of establishing a civil society in Egypt characterized by institutional and ideological pluralism, which would prevent the state from exercising a monopoly over power and truth” (Hatina 2000: 61).

This intolerant approach to alternate ideologies in the initial years incurred much suspicion and criticism from secularists as well as the regime in the later years of Egypt’s postcolonial history. Even at its most lenient phases towards political Islamic organisations, the state/regime has been cautious at best, and episodes of said leniency have been few and far in between.

A look at the actors functioning in the field enables the locating of praxis within the theoretical framework of the civil society discourse. The most active and popular organisations and groups can be categorised into religious and secular categories². That is not to say that these two are homogenous categories. In terms of ideology, they need to be further qualified into sub-categories, ranging, in the case of religious organisations, from Islamist political parties and voluntary organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood to radical and militant groups such as the Islamic Jihad group, which was responsible for the assassination of Sadat in 1981, and secularist thinker Fouada in 1992. Organisations in the secular category too, can be qualified in terms of the specific ideologies they adhere to, such as the American liberal conception of civil

² For an elaborate introduction to Egyptian civil society and Arab thought on state and society, see Browers (2006); Zubaida (2010); Wright (2012).

society espoused by the Ibn Khaldun Center (a recipient of foreign funding) or the Marxist orientations of thinkers such as Samir Amin.

The implications of this discourse are reflected not just in the ideologies of the various groups and organisations working in the civil society, but also on how they function and how effective they are. Majority of the organisations functional and effective at the grassroots level are religious, predominantly Islamist organisations. They rely on and benefit from the widespread network of mosques and madrasas, are funded by religious groups and individuals, and in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, it gained popularity through the social services it provides to the people, especially the poor, such as health and educational facilities. Such organisations recruit from local madrasas as well as universities in addition to young professionals. Big organisations like the Muslim Brotherhood also have a separate wing for women and, more recently, have seen an influx of young volunteers who are students and young professionals. On the other hand, are organisations backed up by foreign funding, usually comprising of a top leadership of foreign-educated professionals with an essentially Western liberal conception of civil society. These organisations are widely criticised for their Westernised, typically American approach to the state and civil society, which in their view amounts to ‘aping the West’; and even from some secular thinkers with leftist orientations who view their approach as imposing Western notions of civil society on local society and politics. In her discussion on the Ibn Khaldun Center, Browsers opines that,

Despite the importance of the Ibn Khaldun Center for Arab- and especially Arab liberal- discussions of civil society owing to its singular focus on the idea of, the expanse of its projects, and its consistently liberal stance, the nature of its research precludes its discussion at length in a work on intercultural conceptual change and political theory. The concept of civil society, for Ibrahim, is understood and then applied to assess its absence or existence in the Arab context in a manner virtually indistinguishable from that of Western social scientists, except perhaps for the vast knowledge of the region he brings to the topic (Browsers 2006: 93).

While these organisations have better resources and, in some cases, the full support of the regime (as on issues which do not harm the image of the government, such as environment or health), they are not as effective as their locally funded religious counterparts at the grassroots level. Conversely, religious organisations are often the most vocal critics of the regime and have therefore been battling state repression for the most part since Nasser's era. To this end the establishment of religious political parties was prohibited through an amendment to Article 5 of the Constitution brought in 2007³. The amended Article forbade the establishment of political parties or even conduct activities on religious grounds: "Citizens have the right to establish political parties according to the law and no political activity shall be exercised, nor political parties established on a religious referential authority, on a religious basis or on discrimination on grounds of gender or origin" (cited in Bernard-Maugiron 2008: 410). In justifying the amendment, Mubarak asserted that for a state with a rich history of national unity and institutional structure, it was 'inappropriate' to permit political programmes "on any basis other than citizenship exclusively" (Ibid.: 411).

Muslim Brotherhood: A Challenging Opposition

Despite the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood has been banned for most of the years of its existence since Egypt's independence, it has consolidated its legitimacy among the masses through the growing support for its efficient organisation and consistent social welfare activities. It has been arguably the most consistent and challenging oppositional force against the military regimes, proven by the harsh and extreme measures adopted by the regimes to curb its sphere of influence.

³ The 2007 amendment was in addition to the amendments brought in 2005 to the 'political parties law' (Law 40 of 1977) which, while doing away with some of the restrictions of the formation and functioning of political parties, had added new conditions. The 1977 law "required parties to apply for permission to operate, the new law requires parties merely to *notify* the Political Parties Committee (PPC) that they have started operating, putting the onus on the committee to object within 90 days". The new conditions added have limited the powers of the PPC while introducing further requirements for the creation of political parties. While the old law "required that a petition to create a new political party had to be signed by 50 founding members, and that half of these had to be "peasants and farmers", Law 177/2005 raises the number of "officially authenticated" signatures required to 1,000 and stipulates that these should be "drawn from at least ten governorates with no less than fifty members from each" (HRW 2007: 7).

The growing influence of the Brotherhood was seen especially in the 1980s and early 1990s, when the Mubarak regime displayed some tolerance towards this organisation. The tolerance of the regime can be understood as an effort to retain its own legitimacy and not appearing hostile to all Islamic groups while it targeted the radical Gama‘a al-Islamiyya and the Jihad group, in the aftermath of Sadat’s assassination. The Brotherhood fully exploited this opportunity and the slight opening up of the public sphere to expand its network, and was soon seen as a prominent force in various “social spaces”, including student unions, teachers’ university clubs and professional syndicates (Al-Awadi 2005: 62). In 1987, the Brotherhood acquired a majority of seats in the student unions of Cairo, Alexandria and Zaqaziq universities, followed by their control of the student unions of al-Azhar and Mansura in 1988 and 1989 (Ibid.: 64). It helped alleviate key concerns of students including the provision of textbooks, study materials and free revision classes. The Brotherhood did a thorough job of ascertaining the needs and concerns of the students through elaborate questionnaires. In the teachers’ university clubs, the Brotherhood focussed on the three key concerns of teachers: low salaries, lack of suitable accommodation and lack of healthcare. Partially negotiating with the government and partially mobilising health services, it was able to provide teachers with facilities that the state could not.

The Brotherhood’s growing influence and efficacy were the results of some well-planned strategies and structural changes, a key one being decentralisation of power. Not only did it enable the Brotherhood to survive state repression, but to actually become a strong and widespread network that would eventually challenge the state. A complex though organised system of departments helped the organisation to assign specific groups of professionals to specific tasks such as financial management, media operations etc., share solutions and achieve better mobilisation of resources. Decentralisation of power and the autonomy of regional sub-groups to take decisions on issues pertaining to those regions empowered the organisation as a whole, made it more organised and effective yet localised in its contacts with the people. This was a very different approach from the leadership of the military regime which was very centralised and top-down in its approach, inherent to its structural organisation, and therefore alienated from the people.

Another example of the Brotherhood's political capitalisation of its social welfare activities was its relief initiative after the 1992 earthquake. The prompt and well-organised relief programme of the Brotherhood was in stark contrast to the laxity and inefficacy of the state. This was an important instance of the public opinion turning in favour of the Brotherhood *as opposed to* the regime, especially because of the publicity it received from the media, which was very critical of the regime's inaction. International media too took notice of the important role played by the Brotherhood, which helped change the international perception of the Brotherhood of a more radical organisation, as labelled by the regime. This kind of activism on the part of the Brotherhood sought to integrate the movement more deeply into the Egyptian social fabric. It was directed at not only assuming a central place in civil society but also positing itself within the context of the larger discourse on the regime's dubious commitment to democratisation (Ibid.: 78).

The Brotherhood recognised the importance of these social spaces, and utilised them to expand as a social welfare organisation as well as to further its political agenda. (A widespread criticism has been that the Brotherhood used their control of these syndicates as their political front). Therefore, the Brotherhood derived its legitimacy from the society rather than from the state. In the face of its growing influence the regime felt threatened. Mubarak, who wanted to project a regime that encouraged a liberal political culture without actually democratising politics went from accommodating the Brotherhood in the political processes of 1984 and 1987 to targeting it and labelling and assigning it to much the same category as the radical Gama'a al-Islamiyya and Jihad.

Since the time of Nasser, there were several such efforts made by the regime to curb the space for effective civil society activity. Organisations and professional groups were either repressed or infiltrated by the regime in order for it to be able to control the civil society. For instance, in order to control the workers' movements, a Federation of Trade Unions was formed to monitor and control all working class activities. The infiltration of the regime was not limited to the system of governance alone. Through its unique brand of institutionalised authoritarianism, the regime was quite successful in curbing

the voices of the opposition, especially those of the religious factions which it had no tolerance for. A case in point was the Political Party Affairs Committee, a semi-governmental organisation headed by the president of the Shura Assembly or the advisory council. However, three of the six members were ministers of the government and the other three were judges appointed by the government (Hassan 2011). In effect, the committee was just a way for the regime to prevent any substantial political opposition from cropping up. While on the one hand opportunities for new political parties to emerge were precluded, on the other, existing political parties and groups were being suffocated by the regime as the increasing control of the NDP made it progressively synonymous with the state. Through the decades, reliance on traditional state-controlled media and other resources has successfully impeded the emergence of a strong political opposition. The struggle of the political parties which have managed to survive the state unfortunately keeps their discourse limited to demands for political reform and the suspension of emergency.

Excessive steps were taken from the time of Nasser to ensure that no voice parallel to the regime could emerge. While students and individuals suspected of leftist orientations were randomly arrested or taken for questioning, the government also came out with official policies that exhibited a blatant disregard for political liberty. A law enacted in 1964 gave the administrative authority “the right to refuse the creation, dissolution, or amalgamation of any civil association without recourse to the judiciary” (Ibid.).

With the change in leadership, there was an upsurge in civil society activism. However, this was not due to Sadat’s relatively tolerant approach towards various factions of the civil society, including, briefly, the Muslim Brotherhood. This increase in civil society activism can be attributed to *Infitah* and the immediate reactions it provoked, especially from the more mobilised sections of civil society, such as the textile workers. The resulting trend of protests, strikes and demonstrations was part of the aforementioned outbreak of protests against adjustment policies across developing economies. While this activism increased, debates and discourses on civil society, state and the nature of citizenship were also gaining momentum.

Secular discourses on civil society, particularly knowledge produced on this subject from a leftist perspective, saw renewed vigour in the post-Soviet era. Prior to this, the civil society was viewed as a somewhat elitist concept to represent a few individuals and groups more aligned to Western notions of modernity, politics and secularism. The leftists in particular emphatically distanced themselves from any notion of civil society, viewing it as a singular dominant bourgeois society, as mentioned above. However, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the disenchantment with Soviet ideology catalysed a rethinking of civil society. A slightly reformed socialist Arab approach combined with the dialogue on religion and society saw not just a more active role being undertaken by thinkers and intellectuals but also witnessed a shift in the position which they spoke from. This shift, along with the growing space for more Westernised, albeit state-controlled NGO sector and the increasing influence of political Islamist thinking and action led to the re-emergence of the civil society dialogue as well as action since the 1990s.

It is interesting to note that Gramscian resonances can be found in both religious and secular discourses on civil society. While the Arab leftists and socialists relied heavily on the Gramscian approach to this discourse, especially since 1990s, unwitting similarities can be discerned in the methodology and functioning of religious factions, especially the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and the ideas of contestation and counterhegemony advocated by Gramsci.

The counterhegemonic strategies employed by the Islamist movement, primarily the Brotherhood, had Gramscian connotations, particularly in its exploitation of the correlations between culture and religion. The Brotherhood expanded its role in civil society not only by amassing support for its religious doctrine, but more so by making itself the face of other social organisations. Since the 1970s, the Brotherhood members began to infiltrate various organisations. One of the key organisations controlled almost exclusively by the Brotherhood was the student unions, the most prominent “political force available for the expression of students’ discontent” (Shukrallah 1989: 79). These included, as mentioned above, student unions at colleges and universities across Cairo, Alexandria, Minya and Asyut as well as other universities. By 2000, they had infiltrated

the American University of Cairo, which had so far been the base of secularists (Kandil 2011: 51; Bayat 2007: 147). In the face of growing state repression, by 2006 they began to form 'shadow unions' called Free Students' Unions (Kandil 2011: 51; IHRC: 2007).

The politicisation of professional syndicates has led to what can be called an emerging civil organisation that has created a new space for a dialogue on democratisation and reform. Professional syndicates such as those of lawyers, doctors, engineers and professors became an important political agent of social change at a time when the role of opposition parties had shrunk to an all-time low and the media was constantly battling for its liberties. What increased the efficacy and sphere of influence of these syndicates was the subsequent Islamisation of several of these bodies. The most remarkable victory of the Brotherhood in gaining control of syndicates was "their securing 75% of the vote at the Lawyers Syndicate during the 1992 elections" (Kandil 2011: 51). Other instances included the Medical Syndicate, the Engineering Syndicate and the Pharmacist Syndicate among others. This development alerted the regime to an imminent threat to its authority, prompting it to attempt to bring these syndicates within its sphere of control, especially by replacing the process of electing the heads of these syndicates to appointing them. Apart from professional syndicates and student unions, there are also the "neo-traditional institutions, which have continued to be centers of social and political activities, often beyond the control of the government" (Al-Sayyid 1993: 233). The most prominent among them are mosques and a lesser number of churches.

Combined with its alliances with political parties, such as the Wafd in 1984, the socialist al-'Amal in 1987 and the al-Ahrar (Kandil 2011: 50), this infiltration of the Brotherhood into various social and professional organisations made it the most powerful opposition block to the regime.

It is very telling of how Islamic movements and ideas began to become increasingly visible when a scholar, writing in 1987, stated that:

Islamic movements appear to be proliferating, although they continue to operate underground because of government restrictions and efforts at containment. Their existence is evident in the fliers they plaster on the walls in the streets of

Cairo and the Islamic literature they distribute during the night, as well as the thousands they are able to turn out for public prayer at designated spots despite the efforts of the security police, who cancel such events. Some thrive at various Egyptian universities, where they appear capable of intimidating other students into conforming to Islamic dress and social conduct. It is interesting to note that the vice president of Cairo University tends to minimize the role of the Islamic movements on campus, ascribing disruptive activities to the communists (Haddad 1987: 243).

Other incidents of proliferating political Islamic influences include the covert but insistent pressure on students and professionals to follow the Islamic dress code as well as the far more blatant protest, such as Hafiz Salama's attempt to organise a 'Green March'⁴ on Mubarak's house (Ibid.).

The shifting landscape of Egyptian politics and civil society has been marked by changing alliances and by the emergence of new actors. One of the most striking shifts was the alliance of leftist and political Islamist blocs. By the 1980s, the Labour Party, under the influence of Adil Husayn (editor of the party's paper until early 1990s), also aligned itself with conservative Islamist discourse (Ismail 1998: 217). The party made a remarkable shift from a socialist perspective to an alliance with the Brotherhood and al-Ahrar in 1987. The party's identity was slowly reconstructed on religious terms and ideas of political Islam.

An overview of the Mubarak era shows that efforts to open up a space for civil society and NGOs has been mostly directed towards either appeasement of international concerns and criticism or a bid to contain and eradicate the spreading influence of

⁴ The Green March was an attempt by political Islamic activists to expose the 'hypocrisy' of the Egyptian regime, paying lip-service to adopting Sharia while effectively repressing Islamic organizations, and also of the futility of compromising with the state. The March, planned for June 1985- during the month of Ramadan, was the initiative of the Shaikh Hafiz Salama, the imam of the historic al-Nur Mosque, who had risen to prominence as a leader of the resistance to Israel's brief occupation of Suez during 1973. This nationalistic attestation to his credentials helped make him the spokesperson of 'exasperated Muslims'. The March was to be of peaceful demonstrators, armed only with Qurans, who were to occupy the Abdin Square- right in front of the presidential headquarters- until the government accepted the demand of immediate application of Sharia. The Green March, though banned and Salama briefly imprisoned, is far more significant for the secularist opposition it spawned, including the call to create a 'Patriotic Front,' by the novelist Abd al-Rahman al-Sharqawi, to oppose Islamism (paradoxically, the Front was also never established). The March and the opposition to it helped create two distinct 'camps', one Islamic and the other secular. For further details, see Rousillon (1998: 387).

Islamist forces. The proliferation of Islamist activists, ideologies and organisations has been seen as a major threat to the military regimes since the time of Nasser and especially after the assassination of Sadat.

Ironically, efforts to limit this influence have included the creation of Law 100 in 1993, titled the Law to Guarantee Democracy within Professional Syndicates. This law required a minimum 50 percent voter turnout for the first round for members in the syndicate, or at least 33 percent in the second round. Failure to adhere to these standards would lead to the voiding of the vote and the placement of the syndicate under a government appointed panel of judges for six months, until the fresh elections can be conducted (Davidson 2000: 86).

In the Mubarak era, while the Brotherhood remained officially banned, it began working on a strategy for political participation. Several Brotherhood members contested local and parliamentary elections, wedging into an NDP controlled and dominated political arena. “In 2005, tactics of voter intimidation and ballot-stuffing failed to stop the Brotherhood affiliates from winning a historic 88 seats in the legislature” (Shehata and Statcher 2006: 33). In most cases, they continued working from their districts to continue their jobs and stay connected to the people they served. This localised leadership and social service was in stark contrast to the centralised, elitist and distant rule of the military under Mubarak. For example, reports of the H1N1 virus or bird flu in early 2006 prompted a hands-on reaction from Brotherhood-affiliated MPs, while the government displayed remarkable nonchalance to a serious issue that caused public concern and posed a threat to the economy. Brotherhood-affiliated MPs were able to dissipate panic and allay public fears, at the same time mobilising doctors and medical facilities as well as educating the citizens about the virus and the necessary precautions that could be taken to prevent its spread. They further reassured poultry farmers whose livelihood was being threatened, and brought their concerns to the Parliament so that the government could take preventive measures against a potential crisis⁵.

⁵ For a detailed report see Shehata and Statcher (2006: 36-37).

The stand taken by the Brotherhood parliamentarians against the extension of emergency in May 2006 is another example of how important the voice of opposition can be, even in the face of a tyrannical government. Faced with an authoritarian military regime, the Brothers along with other members of the opposition voiced their protest nevertheless, highlighting the dictatorial measures adopted by the regime and calling attention to widespread public discontent over the extended renunciation of civil liberties. Law 40 of 1977 on political parties stipulated several conditions for the establishment of a legally recognised political party (Al-Sayyid 1998: 236-237). It also prohibited the formation of any political party that opposed what Sadat called the ‘Corrective Revolution’, which was basically a means of eliminating any remaining leaders who subscribed to the Nasserite ideology.

Befittingly for the military regime, targeting the economic foundation of the civil society has yielded maximum results for them in terms of curbing the political space. “The law No. 84 of 2002 on non-governmental organisations prohibits these associations from accessing *local or foreign financing without government authorization*” (Hassan 2011, emphasis added). According to Article 17 of the Associations Law, “The Association has the right to receive funds; fundraising is permissible by natural or legal persons after the administrative entity’s consent and abiding by the executive regulations of the law” (Guirguis 2009). The Associations Law itself can be described as “an accumulation of restrictive regulations, administrative barriers and procedures that represent an unreasonable burden on NGOs and substantially reduce, if not eradicate, their room to operate, and offer wide space for arbitrary practices” (Kausch 2009).

Role of Al-Azhar

Since its establishment, the al-Azhar served as a voice that time and again challenged the state and political leadership. Even though it has functioned within the parameters set by governments, its unequivocal leadership of Islamic scholarship has influenced religious thinkers and scholars as well as guided public sentiment for centuries. It has

served as a key instrument of religious legitimisation of the state and various rulers over the centuries, and sometimes used its power and influence to also question and challenge the state. The relationship between al-Azhar and the state may appear symbiotic at first glance, but a closer study reveals persistent fissures and tensions. Although the history of al-Azhar and its fluctuating relationship with the state began with its founding in 973 A.D., a major rift between the two institutions occurred during the reign of Muhammad Ali. Ali challenged and severely undermined the power and authority of al-Azhar through his land reform policy which nationalised 6,00,000 *feddans* or 6,23,000 acres of *waqf* land that had served as the economic basis for mosques and *madrasas* (Moustafa 2000). He also created secular schools for specialised vocational studies such as medicine, law and engineering. His separation of law and religion in the form of the establishment of an independent and secular judicial system free from religious edicts or interference was yet another blow to the authority of al-Azhar and *ulama* across Egypt. these measures taken by Ali not only undercut the resources crucial to the survival of the institution and its *ulama*, as well as its network of mosques and *madrasas*, but also severely undermined the authority of the religious institution and the place it had thus far occupied, particularly in public life and political discourse. The availability of a secular judicial and education system meant that al-Azhar could no longer retain its position of utmost superiority in the Egyptian society.

Such attempts to overcome the religious oppositional voices in the civil society have continued to the present and indicate how serious a challenge these voices have posed to the state and the regimes. It is also yet another indication of the authoritarianism getting more and more deeply embedded in the state institution, given that the regime's measures to gain control over them were often coercive.

Control of religious factions through state acquisition of *waqf* lands, which were the basis of the functioning of mosques across Egypt was a part of the state's 'nationalization program' as well as the regime's method of undermining religious opposition (Ibid.). The subsidising and nationalising of mosques has been undertaken as a consistent measure by the Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak regimes.

The legitimacy derived from support from al-Azhar has sometimes come in the form of support for very specific issues and subjects. By the 1990s, the Egyptian public had “become accustomed to hearing the prime minister read a letter from the Shaykh al-Azhar or other religious dignitaries that state a particular piece of legislation is consistent with Islamic teachings” (Al-Sayyid 1993: 241). One such area in which it has been manifested is in foreign policies of the regimes, and especially in its policies towards the Arab region. Support from a long-standing religious institution has given the regime some credence in taking up a strong position against external powers, such as Saudi Arabia. This has been a particularly important instrument of garnering popular support for regional diplomacy not just within Egypt but across the Arab Muslim community or the *umma*. Thus, this legitimacy hasn’t been limited to a religious sanction alone, nor does it necessarily accrue to the traditional discourse on the divine source of political power, as in the case of the Western countries before the French Revolution.

The military regimes of Sadat and Mubarak have constantly exploited differences among the al-Azhar scholarship, and provided an impetus to the moderate and pro-regime *shaykhs* of the institution, to derive legitimacy. Beyond providing religious legitimacy requisite for the state, control over al-Azhar and state-ownership of mosques also enabled the regimes to counter and subvert the opposition and influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. This has been one of the major roles that al-Azhar has been expected to play as an accomplice of the state. It can thus be argued that the emergence of radical Islam gave al-Azhar more leverage vis-à-vis the state. This is evident from its negotiating and challenging the government on issues such as population control, the practice of cliterodectomy (commonly referred to as Female Genital Mutilation- FGM) and censorship rights (Moustafa 2000).

Al-Azhar has also exploited its proximity to ruling regimes down the centuries to further its own causes and interests and has on occasion used its leverage vis-à-vis the state to coerce it as well. In postcolonial Egyptian history too, Al-Azhar, despite its allegiance to the state, has not always provided the unequivocal support that was hoped for by the regimes. On numerous occasions, it has used its unique position vis-à-vis the

state to counter the regime and implement religious doctrines that were contrary to the ideologies of the regime.

Over time, Egyptian government policy toward religious institutions appears to be schizophrenic: its policy toward both al-Azhar and the Muslim Brotherhood has shifted back and forth between strategies of domination and cooperation. These pendulum-like shifts in policy are the result of a paradoxical relationship between state power and social control. The primary goal of many developing states is to maintain social control and pre-empt challenges to the state. Fulfilment of this goal pushes the government toward a policy of domination. When the government has the capacity to control immediate institutions (particularly those which pose potential threats to the state), it is likely to exert this control. Paradoxically, state domination has a perverse effect on these institutions and the state's standing in society. These dynamics force the government to reverse direction and enter into cooperative relationships with social forces that share some of its goals (Ibid.: 18).

The symbiotic relationship between the state and al-Azhar has been particularly reflected in the kind of censorship that the Egyptian press and media are subjected to. Apart from the extreme reactions to the works of Naguib Mahfouz, "There are other examples of books by Tariq al-Bishri, Louis Awad, and Sa'id Ahmawi being censored by al-Azhar or even by petty officials of the Islamic Research Office" (Al-Sayyid 1993: 234).

The dichotomy of the state vis-à-vis religion in Egypt at the time of Sadat's rule is elucidated by the instance of Islamic press and circulation of religious literature.

The Islamic press... is not restricted to the movements. The government itself is thoroughly involved on the process, producing material on religious topics at a very high rate and consequently inundating the marketplace. This material is generally "middle of the road" in tone, written by Azharites considered to represent "official Islam", or by those associated with the more liberal wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as some of the modernists. The government allows a great deal of freedom in the public distribution of Islamic literature no matter what its source, although it appears to draw the line on public demonstrations by the more radical groups (Haddad 1987: 241).

As a part of the *Infitah* policy, which was aimed at the liberalisation of state policies including the social, as well as political and economic spheres, the Sadat regime allowed for a space for oppositional movements like the Muslim Brotherhood, which had been banned for a long time. Further, it also allowed for greater freedom of press in an attempt to impress upon the public a liberal and progressive image of Sadat. Of course, this changed drastically in the aftermath of Sadat's assassination when the Mubarak regime imposed severe restrictions and censorship through the imposition of emergency.

Rather than being viewed as a singular ideology, political Islam must be understood as an umbrella under which a host of ideologies based on varying interpretations of religion combined with diverse political agendas have mushroomed. It is far from a homogenous movement or ideology, be it within Egypt or outside. While the Brotherhood is one of the most important and the oldest political Islamist organisations with a wide social network and even greater sphere of influence, it is by no means the only organisation that claims to represent the ideals of Islam. There are other organisations, political parties and even individuals who represent varying, and sometimes contrasting versions of political Islam, based on their individual influences, vantage points and political agendas. Militant or radical Islamist groups also emerged as actors in the civil society and, through their rhetoric as well as action, contributed significantly to the public sphere. While their methods may not have had much credence with the majority of the population, as also placing them on the wrong side of the law, the motivations which analysed their actions often spoke to the larger public, reflecting their grievances and frustrations.

The rise of militant Islamism has been attributed to growing poverty. However, economic factors alone do not explain the rise and spread of Islamic militancy. It has more to do with questions of identity and cultural biases and resulting frustrations rather than simply economic factors (Pipes 2002).

In Egypt, the militant Islamic movements derive their main personnel from people who were made socially mobile by Nasserist policies, but deprived of concrete opportunities for social promotion because of the regime's changing

economic policies. They are recent immigrants into the hurriedly constructed belts of urban degradation around Cairo and other major cities, highly educated but alarmed about their career prospects, or recently given symbolic state employment with no real professional content and with abysmal financial and working conditions (Ayubi 1995: 264).

Saad Eddin Ibrahim's account of interactions with second echelon leadership of two Islamic militant groups, the Military Academy group and *al-Takfir wal-hijra*, held prisoners in the aftermath of Sadat's assassination and the execution of their top leadership, published in 1982, revealed some interesting anomalies, which shed light on the differences that divide political Islamic discourse from within. Surprisingly, they were willing to concede the inequality suffered by women, and acknowledged that these were a result of men who had "neglected women's rights and been excessive in extracting obligations" (Ibrahim 1982: 8). While they maintained that a woman's first obligation was to her husband and the socialisation of children in accordance with faith, they could work outside as long as this role was fulfilled. In fact, the prisoners refused to play the role of mere subjects of study, asking their own questions and asserting their own demands. One of these demands was for the women researchers on the team to wear a veil and cover themselves, and upon the refusal of one of three women researchers to follow this stipulation, they "finally tolerated her 'sinful' behaviour" (Ibid.: 6).

On the question of ideological differences with the other schools of thought within political Islam, the primary difference was in the confrontational attitude of Islamic militants in establishing an Islamic order.

The militants' belief that it is their religious duty to construct a truly Muslim social order sooner or later takes on an organizational form in inevitable confrontation with the ruling elite. *A serious challenge to the status quo is a built-in component of any militant Islamic ideology* (Ibid.: 7, emphasis added).

Gama'a al-Islamiyya

The upsurge of political Islamist organisations and groups included more radical and violent ones such as Gama'a al-Islamiyya, or the Islamic Group, which was largely responsible for the outbreak of anti-government violence since 1992. Gaining momentum and support through a network of mosques and *madrasas*, it specifically targeted the tourism industry. This delivered a massive blow to the government, as tourism, after foreign aid from international institutions, constituted the second largest source of foreign reserves for Egypt (Davidson 2000: 89).

The Gama'a al-Islamiyya and Jihad, both organisations were offshoots of splintered political Islamic groups which came into prominence by gaining influence in student organisations in the 1970s. While they were able to gain supporters among the Egyptian youth, especially on university campuses, their radicalisation rapidly alienated the Egyptian public. The alienation and condemnation became stark after the November 1997 Luxor attack by a Gama'a cell which resulted in the killing of 68 foreigners and Egyptians (Gerges 2000: 594). Political parties, religious leaders, the Muslim Brotherhood and various civil society organisations severely criticised this act of violence. The Jihad group was responsible for the assassinations of Fouda and, later, Sadat as well.

Mubarak's strategy of dealing with opposition from the civil society and especially its infiltration by Islamist factions was initially accommodating for a brief period of time, and then repressive. It falls in line with his approach towards political economic issues—initially conciliatory or conforming to the existing framework (usually that set by the predecessor) with an attempt at limited reform, followed by a gradual overhauling and the rescinding of liberties. After the excessive round ups of Sadat's opponents and the repression following his assassination, in 1981 Mubarak began a process of limited accommodation of the more moderate voices within the Muslim Brotherhood into mainstream politics. But as an upsurge of highly critical Islamist organisations with strong anti-government campaigns began, Mubarak's process of accommodation swiftly ended. This was followed by regime repression, far more severe than witnessed earlier, with such organisations and individuals being labelled a threat to public security and

relentlessly targeted. Estimates of the number of detainees following the imposition of emergency in 1981 go up to 16,700, at the peak of crackdowns and repression (Davidson 2000: 90).

Despite being eventually overpowered by the Mubarak regime, these organisations left an indelible mark on state-society relations in Egypt. The inefficiencies and weaknesses of the state were revealed in its high level of dependence on foreign economic aid as well as counter-strategic guidance to combat these local threats⁶. Even when the threat was almost completely eliminated by the end of the 1990s, the impact of radical political Islam on society has been immense. Even as the Egyptian public and civil society shunned violence, the essence of anti-state/anti-regime discourse resonated with the public, and has since been reflected in religious dialogue on state and governance. The key to the success of these organisations in challenging the state was that they used the same discourse as the state, deriving from religion to find credence for their acts while condemning the state as un-Islamic. “Although revolutionary Islamists could not seize power, their discourse and ethos permeate many aspects of state and society: they lost the war but they won the debate” (Gerges 2000: 599). While most sections of the Egyptian society rejected their arguments on the basis of differences on theological interpretations as well as their political and social consequences, the essential crux of the radical arguments, which was basically to question the state, had a lasting impact on this discourse, which continues to this day, and has in fact escalated in some areas, witnessing a stark increase in both radicalisation and violence.

In recent years, the Gama‘a has attempted to reinvent itself, yet may not be entirely socio-economically relevant. There is an overlap in their socio-economic vision with that of the Brotherhood.

The group professes a commitment to the free market shared by the Brothers and the “reformers” surrounding Gamal Mubarak in the ruling party. In the rural sphere, the Gama‘a supports the unravelling of Nasser-era land reform... The group shares with conservatives everywhere the conviction that society’s problems are due mainly to lax morals, not an unjust economic system (Stein 2010).

⁶ For a detailed study, see Gerges (2000).

As witnessed in the Arab Spring protests, this view has not been quite relevant to the issues faced by the Egyptian society.

The conservative yet moderate brand of political Islam is espoused by majority of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as the right-wing opposition party al-Ahrar, and some segments of the state apparatus, state news papers and mass media. Produced by agents outside the state, such as conservative Islamist scholars, and spread mostly by state media, the conservative Islamist discourse can be seen as one that resonates the most within the Egyptian civil society. This is so because it also serves to maintain a “state of balanced tension” by positing itself vis-à-vis the state, radical Islamists, and secularists.

A re-grouping in the political field takes place with a polarization of positions whereby secularists face off with various lines of Islamism. Positions of resistance and confrontation revolve around the two poles... Different points of convergence have emerged between the conservatives and the militants and the conservatives and the state. This convergence puts limits on the positions available to other actors and, as such, attempts to break down the ideological dominance are contained. This is the case of the secularist position as well as that of the “Islamic left”. The secularists develop a position of “counteridentification” taking from the form of “your Islam versus my Islam,” best exemplified by Faraj Fuda’s text *al-Haqiqa al-Gha’iba* (The Missing Truth). The Islamic left, while attempting a subversion from within, is itself absorbed into the dominant ideology (Ismail 1998: 216).

These contrasting and conflicting ideologies have contributed significantly to civil society discourses over the decades.

Labour Movements and Migration

The workers’ movement in Egypt has been an important agent for socio-economic reform, if not change. Its presence has been felt since the Nasser era. Earlier, the workers’ movement worked in collaboration with the state, demanding economic rights

and social justice. Protests, demonstrations and strikes were aimed at gaining the attention of the government, not challenging it. However, this began to change in the Sadat era. The enforcement of neoliberal policies directly impacted workers at a time when the economy was struggling to survive, and quickly becoming dependent on foreign aid and assistance. Any economic reform primarily targeted labour unions and workers rights, taking steps ranging from withdrawal of state subsidies on essential commodities to lay-offs and reduced remuneration for workers. Not only did the drive for neoliberalisation deny workers their economic rights, but further infringed upon their social and political liberties. A stark increase in workers' strikes and protests was witnessed in the 1970s and 1980s. The most severe outbreak of protests was witnessed in January 1977, in response to the withdrawal of consumer subsidies by the state (Pratt 2008: 74). Low wages, inflation and increasing unemployment rates were key issues of discontent among workers.

The Egyptian bread riots and food protests of 1977 and the like have been categorised by Walton and Seddon (1994) as an *austerity protest* which they define as

large-scale collective actions including political demonstrations, general strikes, and riots, which are animated by grievances over state policies of economic liberalization implemented in response to the debt crisis and market reforms urged by the international agencies. Because “structural adjustment” policies were devised and implemented by the International Monetary Fund, the violent protests that frequently ensued have come to be known as “IMF riots” (Walton and Seddon 1994: 39).

It is remarkable that compared to other countries, especially developed economies which in earlier centuries witnessed several forms of food riots and protests, developing countries like Egypt, and more so those of Latin America, have experienced far less protests and outrage by comparison. This is surprising given the severity of austerity programmes imposed on an already crippled economy burdened by a growing debt crisis and rising inflation. While some segments of the Egyptian labour had been mobilised since before the Nasser era, such as the textile workers, since the 1970s, workers across segments started frequent agitations despite state control of labour unions. These agitations were set off by the cutback in food subsidies in 1977 upon the

recommendations of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission that visited in 1976. Although the government revoked its decision to withdraw subsidies in the face of nation-wide protests in 1977, since then, all subsidies were gradually eliminated (Beinin 2010: 12). Egypt was not the only country that witnessed popular riots.

Between 1976 and late 1992, some 146 incidents of protest occurred, reaching a peak from 1983 to 1985 and continuing to the present without attenuation. These mass protests have challenged class-biased stabilization as a solution to the debt crisis, deposing regimes or modifying their policies in some countries, suffering repression in others, but generally raising the political costs of measures that would stabilize the global political economy at the expense of large sections of the populations of Third World countries (Walton and Seddon 1994: 42).

This period also saw an increase in migration of Egyptian youth, primarily to other Arab countries to explore job opportunities. While some were able to find more lucrative jobs in the oil-rich Arab countries, most of the workforce was overqualified for jobs where remuneration was low. While the oil boom and increasing migration had eased the situation of rising unemployment and low wages, this was a temporary reprieve for the Egyptian working class.

The oil boom of 1974-82 created job opportunities for workers and peasants to migrate to the Arab oil-exporting countries and earn many times what they could in Egypt. The money they sent home to their families became the largest source of Egypt's hard currency. The fall in oil prices after 1982 reduced labor migration and contributed to an economic contraction that exposed Egypt to increased pressure to adopt neoliberal economic policies. Higher prices, failing real wages, and a sharp rise in workers' collective protests in 1984-89 accompanied the implementation of Washington Consensus policies (Beinin 2010: 13).

Furthermore, migration trends themselves were not constant, as the issue of equal rights of migrant workers in other countries became contentious, one that involved several complex layers such as the questions of religious and ethnic tension and discriminatory labour laws and treatment in other Arab states.

Austerity measures which were aimed at providing a buffer to the local economy through the transitional phase actually had a crippling effect on the economy. These measures were not just limited to withdrawal of subsidies, but also involved a gradual long-term desertion of the welfare model that the prior government had at least been aspiring to achieve. The brunt of it was faced primarily by the working class. Already struggling with problems of inflation, job insecurity and contractualisation of labour, the working class was now faced with cutbacks, rising unemployment and withdrawal of non-salary benefits such as housing etc. (in the select places where such facilities had been provided up until then). The most immediate impact of this was felt on employment opportunities in the public sector, which, in the Nasser era, had been employer of the majority of the Egyptian working population. The rapid liquidation of the public sector⁷ meant that the majority of the labour forces were pushed under the control of private employers, in a private sector wherein provisions for protection of their rights and interests were not as stringent.

The effect of the *Infitah* policies was so immediate that it provoked a panic among the working class. Spontaneous outbreaks of protests, demonstrations and strikes were symptomatic of the sense of uncertainty and urgency that plagued workers. The ripple effects of the neoliberalisation drive were seen as workers' protests erupted in different sectors of the Egyptian economy. While some sections of the workforce had benefitted from a high level of mobilisation since the Nasser era, other sections were moved to actively voice their dissonance and anger, creating an unprecedented chain of protests beginning in the late 1970s, which became far more frequent in the 1990s and 2000s. These protests were commonly aimed as much against the unions and their structural organisations as they were aimed against the policies of the regime. This was largely due to the infiltration and control of the regime over most of the labour unions⁸. In fact,

⁷ Under law 203 of 1991, through which the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) had been implemented, 314 public sector companies were listed as eligible for privatization. By mid-2002, 190 firms had been privatized. While massive layoffs had been forbidden under this law, cutbacks on the staff were seen as a means to attract more buyers by the management of companies liable for privatisation (Beinin 2010: 13).

⁸The Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) has had close links with the state apparatus resulting in frequent interference in trade unions by security authorities, especially State Security Investigations. Even so, during the 1990s the ETUF opposed the transition of the Egyptian economy to a more "flexible" labour market, which would rescind job security and lead to infringement of numerous labour laws. It

in many cases, the top leadership of unions was directly chosen by government ministries as opposed to the workers, and naturally represented the interests of the political ruling elite rather than those of the workers. With the rapid liquidation of public sector companies the workers found themselves severely short-changed as their rights were no longer guaranteed as they had been in the public sector. Even the right to protest became severely limited under the Unified Labour Law of 2003. According to this law

The legislation permits a strike if two-thirds of the relevant general union executive committee approves it and the ETUF executive committee ratifies it. These bodies are in the hands of National Democratic Party (NDP) members loyal to the government....According to the law, after a strike is approved, the union must give the employer a ten-day notice. It must also announce in advance the planned duration of the strike. Indefinite strikes to achieve demands are not legal. Strikes held while collective agreements are in force or during mediation and arbitration procedures are forbidden (Ibid.: 35).

In addition to legal subversion of the rights of workers, the heavy involvement of security forces in curbing and controlling protests was another major impediment to the realisation of workers' rights. Regime ordered investigations by State Security Investigations officers, especially in politically strategic sites of protests were frequent⁹. The period from 2004-2009 has been cited as the most active in the outbreak of protests by the workers' movement. As a response, state repression was only further heightened post the parliamentary elections of 2005 (Ibid.: 15).

As the worker's movement caught momentum, there was rapid backlash in the form of state repression. Subversion of existing laws and provisions of the constitution

resisted the passage for the Unified Labour Law which would allow the hiring of workers on a fixed-term basis, introducing the contractualisation of labour. After almost a decade of resistance though, the Unified Labour Law was passed in 2003. It resulted in workers being hired on a temporary basis but working full-time for years without being given permanent status by the employer. As temporary workers, they were not eligible to receive any welfare provisions such as health insurance or housing. Further, they were not eligible to vote in the local labour unions, and in several cases, were not represented legally by the local labour unions, giving employers an even bigger advantage where they could withhold the rights of these workers (Beinin 2010: 28).

⁹ One such site is the Ghazl al-Mahalla factory where textile workers protested the denial of the right to form an independent labour union in 2006 and 2007.

combined with amendments or creation of new discriminatory laws ensured that the workers' movement, though still vocal, became stifled. In addition to subversion of labour laws, the regime also manipulated state bodies and organisations meant for the protection of labour rights and resolution of labour-management conflicts.

During the 1984-89 wave of collective protests, several alternative newspapers and organizations emerged to give workers a voice outside the framework of the state dominated [Egyptian Trade Union Federation]. Most of these publications and organizations did not survive the 1990s, when the Mubarak regime became even less tolerant of labor dissidence, an aspect of its generally more repressive character (Ibid.: 13).

The workers' movement itself had a chequered history as it was not simply embroiled in a contest with the state, but had several conflicts running within it. The question of the rights of women workers has been one such issue that has run through the history of the Egyptian labour movement, and is only recently being acknowledged by the state, as a result of the struggles of several NGOs, civil groups and individual cases of contestation with the state. Discrimination in wages is only one of the issues that affects women workers, the others include sexual harassment in the workplace, denial of non-wage benefits such as housing and health facilities by the employer, the impact (negative and positive) of segregation of the sexes in the work place etc¹⁰.

Feminist Discourses and Women in Civil Society

An emphatic criticism of the differentiation of public life from the private stems from within Islamic feminist discourses, focussing on what has been called public-private, state-social, or civil society-familial distinctions. These distinctions were apparent in the works of early modernist thinkers, and are of particular relevance to the

¹⁰ For a detailed description of the workers' movement, labour laws, issues of women workers and the issue of child labour as well as related case studies, see Beinín (2010). The most detailed study of the Egyptian labour union and working class in recent years has been conducted by Joel Beinín whose work ranges from investigating the gradually increasing dissonance and discontent within the Egyptian working class in the 1980s to its role as an agent of political change and direct forays into politics in and since the 2011 Arab spring protests.

conceptualisation of women's role in society, which has traditionally been limited to the private sphere. Heba Raouf Ezzat has in particular been critical of distinctions made in Western liberal thought, dividing human life into public, social, private and personal¹¹, asserting that such rigid compartmentalisation overlooks the fact that human actions tend to overlap these categories and limits our understanding of them and their relevance (Browers 2006). Even within Islamic discourses on civil society (particularly traditional Islamic discourses), the focus on state and exclusion of family as a component of politics, to be treated as something separate, and as a "special realm of jurisprudence outside the framework of politics" has been criticised by feminists (Ibid.: 199). Ezzat's own conception of the role of women is based on the mirroring of the family structure in the larger social structure, and how the choice and responsibility of the leader is similar in both these structures.

Ezzat's argument relies upon locating similar institutions and values at the levels of state, society, and the family in order to show that Islam, as a comprehensive and completely just way of life, does not require a public-private distinction to protect the individual or society from the state and its laws. According to the Islamic principle of *tawhid* (oneness, unity), rules that apply in the political arena should also be valid for the family and vice versa (Ibid.: 200).

She further argues that the extended role and nature of families in many societies, especially non-Western societies, means that the role of women is not limited to reproduction, child rearing and household responsibilities, neither does it result in the diminishing of her social function.

The very concept of public space or public domain has also been contested by several thinkers and activists. Moroccan sociologist and feminist Fatima Mernissi's (Sabbah 1984¹²) assertion that a trans-historical Muslim view of the female as dangerous and destructive in powers, which calls for the close control and supervision by a male authority, is relevant to the marginalisation of women in the public sphere as well as the physical public spaces. Mernissi attributes this view to distorted interpretations of

¹¹ See Browers (2006).

¹² Fatna A. Sabbah is widely believed to be a pseudonym for Fatima Mernissi.

Islam. This is most visible in public spaces, not just in Egypt but in most places across the West Asian region. In the words of Najde S. Al-Ali,

Linked to the assumption that normative Islamic traditions and customs prevail throughout the Middle East, allowing, perhaps, a degree of local specificity, is the notion of strict sexual segregation. This is often perceived in terms of women's seclusion, veiling, women's belonging to the private sphere (while men are seen to belong to the public sphere), sexual modesty and the concepts of honour and shame (Al-Ali 2002).

Egyptian political thinker and activist Ezzat questions and problematises the concept of distinction of public and private space, considering that such a distinction is both vague and inaccurate. Given that public space or domain is the realm of politics and private is the sphere of family and the individual, civil society must essentially be constituted of both these domains as they cannot function in isolation.

Ezzat argues that the problem with these distinctions is not only that they are imprecise and that human actions tend to overlap across the categories but, more important, their relevance remains limited and relative [and] hinders the development of a good method for understanding the role, reality and social position of the family (Browsers 2006: 199).

Problematising the public space becomes increasingly relevant in the context of a protest demanding change in the very nature of citizenship through the granting of greater rights and possibly a more democratised system of governance. It is imperative to ask what role the female population will be assigned in the public space and domain, and the attitudes of the society at large to women in the public space *during the protest* provide a significant insight into these attitudes. Sexual violence targeted against female protestors signifies an active opposition of women's right to voice their demands in the public space. The message is very clear, "Limit yourself to the confines of the household which is your designated position in society, or else". Such an attitude appears far more aggressive in a society like Egypt, where women had far greater liberties in the public domain in the past few decades. Where the women's movement had been strong historically in countries like Egypt, scholars have documented a decline

in women's political participation as both candidates and voters over the past few decades (Ibid.: 194).

Despite the prominent role played by women throughout the Arab Spring protests, the systematic targeting of women through acts of sexual violence and harassment clearly showed how public spaces remain 'gendered spaces'. These male-dominated and male controlled public spaces are symbolic of how the public domain at large also remains male-dominated and that women find themselves not just marginalised but aggressively excluded from the public domain. As stated above, considering that the stage of the Arab Spring protest was the space shaping the future of Egyptian politics, such an attitude of male domination and perception of public spaces as gendered space further reflect in the marginalisation of women from active politics both in terms of representation as well as participation. If the public domain or public sphere is to be perceived in the Habermasian sense as a designated theatre of modern societies where political participation is enacted through the medium of talk, and where citizens deliberate about their common affairs, making it an institutionalised arena of discursive interaction (Fraser 1992: 110), then in the context of the Arab Spring protests, women did not have a voice, or a presence in this discursive interaction. Rather, they have been aggressively denied it, by the society as well as the state.

The use of sexual violence against women as an instrument of 'state oppression' speaks volumes. It signifies the inherent patriarchal nature of society as well as means and instruments of oppression employed by the state. It is even more problematic as it is part of the unstated 'state policy' for oppression- which is a clear indication of the kind of space the state/authoritarian regime is willing to accord to women in the public sphere, be it in politics or in the society at large. It means that not only has the civil society failed to evolve into a more liberal and democratic one, but the superstructure of the state too has abandoned any effort to support equality for women in the most basic ways. Rather the state is abusing the most basic of women's rights by using sexual violence and violation as means of oppression. The challenge of bringing about effective political change which benefits the entire society in such a scenario becomes even more difficult. Change in the ruling regime or the policies of the state cannot be

productive for the improvement of women's status if it runs parallel with this deeply entrenched patriarchal and oppressive attitude of the society as well as the state.

The distinctions drawn between private and public, or familial and social spheres have been a particularly contentious issue, given that they are used as a premise for demarcating and limiting the role and space for women in society in several discourses, especially political Islamist ones. The issues of veiling, women's right to work and right to political participation are often discussed within the parameters of these distinctions, and are therefore extremely important. The significance of these distinctions are recognised by feminists who challenge the very notions of public-private distinctions, arguing instead that not only are there parallels that can be drawn between the patriarchal nature of the family on one hand and the state on the other, but also that the family as the first social institution is particularly important in ascertaining the role women are to play in society at large. This division also reflects the paradox of the 'national modernisation project' which views women as representative of the culture and morality of the nation, and therefore seeks to restrain them to be good wives and mothers. "This division between women's rights in the public and private spheres has acted to limit women's ability to participate publicly" (Pratt 2008: 16).

The question of the veil, the political rights of women, their right of political participation and representation, and the question of exclusion of women from public spaces may be very different subjects as far academic research is concerned, but they are essentially aspects of the same basic issue, i.e. the role and space of women in society. Marginalisation of women begins at the domestic and social levels with instruments like the veil, lack of education or their exclusion from the public space and domain, and extends to larger issues like unequal employment opportunities, economic disparity and political discrimination faced by a segment of the population which is treated as second class citizens. It is a question of changing inherent and traditional patriarchal and neopatriarchal attitudes towards women in the public domain, be it within the civil society or in the approach of the superstructure of the state.

Traditionalists (or conservatives) have justified the practice of veiling by presenting a view of women as essentially sexual beings. Rather than recognising their right to

choice in sexual practice, this perception has rationalised men's sexually aggressive attitudes and behaviours stating that as innate sexual beings women present temptation and thus have a corrupting influence on men. In other words, women spell trouble, or *fitna*. This perception is used not only to justify veiling but also the segregation of the sexes in public spaces (Badran 2011). In fact, not only does the social construction of sexuality and women as sexual beings determine their place in society, social attitudes reveal that sex is a major factor in the construction of women¹³. That is to say, a good pointer on the space for and role of women in society is to locate them in general social attitudes to the very act of sex. This is evidenced by the fact that the most powerful feminist voices arose from women who either refused to restrict themselves to a life of marriage and domesticity and everything it entails such as Bahithat al-Badiya (pen name of Malak Hifni Nasif, one of the first Egyptian women to be educated, who worked as a teacher) and Nabawiyya Musa (The first Egyptian woman to obtain a high-school degree certificate), or women who, for other reasons, did not fall into the category of conventional society, such as sex workers or courtesans who have held a unique position as working, earning women in the public spaces, in societies across cultures. Either way, these women were able to speak out and question conventional notions of sex, gender and morality because of their non-conformist approach to the conventional attitudes regarding women, especially their association with sex.

The history of veiling in Egypt itself is very revealing of women's attitudes to these impositions and to ideas of feminism, which are very nuanced and full of complexities. Early Islamist feminists like al-Badiya were reluctant to give up the veil and believed that women's forays into the public spaces could only be very gradual. Huda Shrawi was the first to make a political act of removing the veil in public. During the nationalist movement it seemed that feminist concerns were somewhat subsumed by the nationalist movement, where several nationalist figures endorsed the idea of liberation of women, but at the same time the feminist movement lost its vigour to some extent because of the larger movement. The Nasser period was also a dull period for the feminist dialogue,

¹³ Thus in ridiculing patriarchy both Saadawi and Mernissi have discussed, from different theoretical standpoints, the male and female sexual organs and the popular myths and notions surrounding them. See Al-Saadawi (1988); Badran (2011).

which resurfaced in powerful ways in the 1970s and 1980s with the works of Nawal al-Saadawi and Mernissi at its helm. This was a kind of ‘sexual feminism’ as it discussed constructions of sexuality and women and also raised questions of religion and legality which had for the most part been ignored by early feminists of either ilk (Ibid.). The continued adherence to veiling by Egyptian women, especially Islamist feminists, has been viewed as an implicit condoning of the view of women as solely sexual beings, lacking rational mental faculties, and in constant need of being controlled by society. Yet this adherence also highlights women’s concerns ranging from a basic fear (especially in the early 1900s) of the ‘male gaze’ in a society where men were not used to seeing women without a veil to a more recent post-colonial political act of renunciation of Western modern feminism in favour of a more organic and comprehensive construction of women’s identity. In contemporary politics the veil is no longer simply reflective of adherence to religious guidance. It has become a political statement, and a tool for women to deconstruct persisting orientalist perceptions of them and their value-systems, both within the West Asian region and outside it.

Up until the contributions of Saadawi and Mernissi, women’s issues and concerns were only partially addressed by the reformists on one hand and the traditionalists or conservatives on the other. Though the reformists attempted to work on some of these issues, they were unable and occasionally even reluctant to address key issues at the core of these problems (often for fear of retaliation or opposition from the traditionalists) as these were intertwined with legal and religious issues and complexities. Traditionalists on the other hand were almost solely focussed on rationalising and justifying the status quo and opposing structural change on the grounds of theological underpinnings of existing structures and in the case of the latter, predicting a societal breakdown. Both Saadawi and Mernissi, by employing their own discursive and ideological faculties, ridiculed the inherent hypocrisy of neopatriarchy which is “inwardly preoccupied with sex and outwardly behaving as though sex did not exist” (Sharabi 1988: 33). While Saadawi took a psychoanalytical and Marxist approach, Mernissi took recourse to Western science to expose the neopatriarchal structure and attitudes prevalent in Arab societies.

It was important for the early Islamist feminists to establish that “Islam did not ordain the domestic seclusion of women, or the segregation of sexes” (Badran 2011: 68). By distancing religion from patriarchal practices and employing religious discourses to argue the feminist case, early Islamist feminists were able to challenge patriarchy in the same language which it subjugated them in. However, as pointed out by secular critics, challenging patriarchy through its own discursive tools helped sustain the repressive social framework they sought to challenge (Badran 2011).

It is important to note that Islamist feminism, which gained considerable influence in the 1970s and 1980s, has been correlated with economic strains on the Egyptian population. Given the low wages, inflation and withdrawal of welfare services of the state, there was a growing need for a second earning member in the average middle and lower-middle class family. This in turn led to a renewed debate on the space for women in the public sphere with an emphasis on their right to employment and the challenges arising around it (such as women’s safety in the work place, flexible or long working hours, maternity leave and benefits or transfers). Given that Islamist feminism held significant appeal for women across-socio-economic strata, ranging from lower-middle to upper class (unlike secular feminists who speak to a very niche audience), a renewed dialogue ensued on issues like a better position for women, adequate representation in the workforce and better remuneration- all of this within the purview of religious discourse.

A study of historical or personal narratives and accounts of experiences under *Infitah* reveal a lacuna in the voices of the Egyptian women, not just from feminist perspectives (where a few voices have persisted and penetrated the thick layers of censorship and bias of domestic state controlled and international media), but more so in the areas of family life, streets and street politics of dissent, work culture, education and various other social experiences. This lacuna gives the impression that the Egyptian women have been all but absent from these spaces, with the exception of the family and household, reinforcing the notion that Egyptian women are relegated and confined to the private sphere and have no presence in the public domain. Thus, the matters that concern them are only those of family and the personal domain and that they have no

awareness of larger socio-economic and political issues. This is also reflected in their treatment in law. The only laws that seem to concern women (because they are the only laws that recognise the existence of women distinctly and provide a space, though severely restricted, for their rights), are personal law: family law, marriage, divorce and child custody laws.

However, this is far from the reality. Travelogues and first-hand experiences, scholarly field trips and documentaries have revealed that women are not just present in these spaces beyond the private sphere, but are deeply affected by, and aware of politics and economy. Furthermore, they are not just 'passive subjects' as the selective representations of them, particularly in international media¹⁴, would have one believe, but active participants in politics, asserting their opinions and openly voicing their dissent. They have been present in the street, not just recently in the Arab Spring protests, but for decades, and on various issues. In fact where sometimes even intellectuals have been reticent about openly voicing dissent in the face of state oppression, women of different socio-economic classes have been far more forthcoming¹⁵.

The lacuna in personal narratives extends beyond women's voices, and includes a gap in personal social narratives at large. One finds a striking lack of journal-keeping or the publication of personal memoirs, of personal or political correspondences, of which there seems to be no record or practice (unless it was an international correspondence and was preserved by the other side), or the biography, especially in the case of women. These are an important medium of producing and recording knowledge not just about an individual but also about a particular time in a society, and particular issues. Through these sources the historian or scholar is able to form a comprehensive picture of that particular time, and a lack thereof proves to be a serious impediment to such scholarly exercise. A similar problem has been faced by the historian studying India. Up to a certain point, the only narratives and accounts were those foreign and Anglo-Indian observers. These accounts provide a partial image of Indian society at the time at best,

¹⁴ See Said (1997).

¹⁵ For this section, I would like to thank Dr. Angela Joya for her insightful comments in an interview on 18 May 2016.

as they are essentially colonial narratives¹⁶. Interestingly, not only are women absent from the literary realm, but also conspicuously missing from historical photographs. Images of the several postcolonial countries, especially during their struggles against colonialism, may showcase women as parts of large groups of protestors, but seldom have any prominent female national figure emerged in the limelight. Thus, it would be highly unlikely to find a female contemporary that matched the popularity of Saad Zaghlul in Egypt, just as the female supporters or even the ‘better halves’ of Jawaharlal Nehru or Abul Kalam Azad or Vallabhbhai Patel find scant space in pictorial representations of the Indian struggle for independence. However, there is at least awareness in current scholarship about this problem, and an effort to bring out indigenous voices from the past to gain a more nuanced understanding of the past despite occasional repression. It is hard to believe that such indigenous voices and narratives didn’t exist in the Egyptian society. Yet records of such narratives are few and far in between. Unfortunately, the space for scholarly exploration and recovery in Egypt is severely constrained because of the constant scrutiny, surveillance and oppression of the state.

Egypt has had an active autobiographical tradition at least since the beginning of the twentieth century. However, while men and women both contributed to the modern autobiographical tradition in Egypt, women’s biographies from the early decades of this century down to the 1970s was more the exception than the norm. In that, it was more an act of defiance or an assertion of rights or a stark revelation about a woman’s life rather than a collection of memoirs. This explains why most of these narratives had strong feminist tones and agenda, they were in fact a product of the feminist agenda, and only women with this agenda were the ones producing them.

For all the controversy and antagonism connected with the issue of uncovering the face, the public disclosure of a woman’s own life was a far greater challenge to convention. Much of women’s early practice of autobiography can be seen as a feminist act of assertion, helping to shatter the complicity with patriarchal domination that had been affected through women’s enforced invisibility and silence. Women’s autobiography constituted exposure. It was an entry into

¹⁶ See Thapar (2015) and Said (1994).

public discourse in a very personal and individual way, and was a way of shaping it. A woman speaking about her own life constituted a form of shedding of the patriarchal surrogate voice (Badran 2011: 97).

There were also those such as Mahfouz who were unable to reconcile their modern literary sensibilities with their traditional social grounding, and thus left a rather paradoxical or confused view on pertinent issues such as women's role in society. Mahfouz himself recognised that women could no longer be restricted to the private sphere of the home and domesticity. Yet at the same time he warned of a potential breakdown of the 'sanctity of marriage' and by extension, society, in the event of difficulties in women's professional lives. This is a very typical male attitude of someone who pays lip-service to modernity yet espouses traditional patriarchal notions of family and society.

Civil Society: Opposition and Protests

The students' protests of 1968 and 1972 combined with the criticism of the 'no war no peace' situation by popular Egyptian intellectuals such as Mohammad Sid Ahmad, Louis Awad, Tewfik el Hakim, Hussein Fawzi, Naguib Mahfouz, Ahmed Bahaeddin, etc. posed a serious threat to the legitimacy of Sadat's rule and policies. The situation only improved through Sadat's personal endeavour to win over the support of Egyptian intellectuals in the form of a meeting with Hakim, with Haykal as the mediator, to neutralise the growing criticism of Sadat's inaction and inept policies. Convinced of Sadat's policies and motives, Hakim, an intellectual of international repute, was then able to channel public support for Sadat, who in turn was able to preserve his legitimacy (Pasha 1993).

The October War of 1973 went some way in appeasing the anger of students, and there was a consequent ebbing of the students' movement, which in the long term proved detrimental to the civil society. While many students who had been a part of this movement began to question their ideologies, some of them taking time off to reread

and rethink political ideologies and some going abroad to pursue advanced degrees, other became severely disillusioned with politics and what appeared to be a severely limited political space. In addition to ideological disillusionment, they were also faced with the challenges of daily-living compounded by unemployment, inflation and shrinking welfare facilities of the state. Few students with leftist allegiances joined the Tagammu Party, which was a coalition of socialists, leftists and Nasser-loyalists and former members of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) (Pratt 2008: 70-71).

In spite of the subversions of liberty and the right to property in the Lockean sense, in recent years the primary opposition to authoritarian regimes has arisen out of advocacy NGOs and social movements which have sought to represent the interests of multiple social and economic groups (Langohr 2004: 181; Ramakrishnan 2010: 32). The most remarkable of such movements has been Kifaya, the Egyptian Movement for Change. Kifaya is demonstrative not just of growing expectations of change in traditional state-society relations but also of the evolution of civil society itself. Born out of the '1970s generation', this movement was a culmination of various political and ideological strains which has previously existed and struggled independently, and had been marginalised or subverted by the state with greater ease (Shorbagy 2007: 41). Kifaya was aimed at finding common ground for these varying political and ideological perspectives, attempting to solve the problem of divergent and divided opposition movements which had existed up until then. Heralded by individuals who had spearheaded several protests in the student unions of the Egyptian universities since the 1970s, this movement sought the engagement of cross-ideological politics above and beyond the acrimony of the secularist-Islamist divide and the vehement criticism of mainstream politics by leftist political leaders and intellectuals (Nasserists as well as Marxists). Despite the ideological conflicts among these groups on various issues, they were united in their criticism of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and the normalisation of relations with Israel (Shorbagy 2007). This had been viewed at by the civil society at large as a serious betrayal of the basic principles of the Egyptian nation, and provided an important opportunity for the communion, at least at the level of presenting serious political opposition to the regime, to these diverse political factions.

The immediate call of the movement was the rejection of a fifth term of rule for Mubarak, as well as opposing the succession of Mubarak by his son, Gamal Mubarak. Due to this, and some of the slogans which captured the initial fervour of the movement, it has been criticised for its lack of political pragmatism and any real agenda belying its assertion as a serious oppositional force. However, the overarching tenor of this movement has been the decades-long subservience of the state to the United States (US) and its continued denial of political liberties justified by the 'liberalising and progressive' agenda of a regime that became increasingly authoritarian. While the movement has faced several challenges, not least of which has been its own internal rivalries and clashes, it presents an important step in the evolution of the nature of civil society, where the need for the restructuring of state-society relations is being translated into civil society activism through a platform which is inclusive of various politico-ideological concerns and forces, and representative of them in its negotiations with the state.

The need for such negotiation was felt more acutely during the rule of Mubarak. The impact of neoliberalism on Egyptian society became even more evident in the Mubarak era. During the Sadat era, space had been allowed for dissent and criticism as part of Sadat's de-Nasserisation programme to vilify Nasser as dictatorial in his approach, as opposed to the benign and tolerant to criticism attitude of Sadat himself. Thus, personal narratives and commentaries speaking the language of dissent are available from the Sadat era as opposed to the Mubarak era when the limited space for such voices was fast closing down. In addition to curbed space for the voicing of public dissent was the impact of neoliberalisation on civil society itself. By the time of the Mubarak era several of the civil society actors were influenced by specific, often political agendas, based on their sources of funding and sponsorship. Supported either directly by the government or by foreign capital, these civil society actors spoke from a particular position and with a particular agenda, presenting only a partial, or in some cases exaggerated, feedback on government policies. However, there remained a gap in the personal narratives, critiques and commentaries on what was happening in the country and how local citizens were viewing it, at least up until the internet became an easily accessible and widely used social platform.

Institutions and academia such as the Center for Arab Unity Studies and the Ibn Khaldun Center, by chronicling and discussing state-society relations and civil society, have contributed to giving a direction to the debates on civil society and shaping the discourse (Al-Sayyid 1993).

Public Sphere and Local Sites of Protest

Public spaces as well as social spaces are significant as they are representative of the 'public sphere'. Subsequently, the shape acquired by the public spaces (sometimes in actual physical form, such as graffiti on the walls or places for people to gather, stand and protest or coffee houses for them to congregate and socialise) or the structures and identities of social spaces (i.e. professional syndicates, clubs, etc. and their predominant ideological identities) play an important role in defining the public sphere and determining its course.

If civil society as an alternative to politics is not feasible, its proper functioning is contingent on a number of things. The appropriation of public spaces as realms of freedom and buffers against government depends on a concept of politics in the general sense as used by some of the lawyers in Egypt, that is non-partisan politics or "non-political politics". Yet what has taken place in Egypt is the ideologizing of spaces of the public sphere beyond functionality. As such, broad alliances and consensual politics are ruled out (Ismail 1995: 49).

Street politics has been one of the traditional spaces that have acted as the physical theatre for the politics of protest. In Egypt, as in several other postcolonial countries, the trend of individuals taking to protests shouting slogans and calling for the end of tyranny began in their colonial past, during their national struggles. Then and in subsequent decades, these struggles have expanded to include planned and organised marches, nationwide strikes and boycott campaigns, popular demonstrations and the shut-down of public spaces, most remarkably the blocking of thoroughfare streets. The importance of street politics is widely recognised even if in recent years the Western world has been apathetic to it. While Western criticisms of Arab street politics displays

yet another Orientalist imagination and representation of street politics as violent outbursts of public rage, what it essentially represents is the politics of public dialogue and expression of public opinion. It is ironic that expression of dissent which is an integral part of the democratic political process, garners only antipathy in Western media.

Street politics, or what Asef Bayat has identified as the “modern urban theatre *par excellence*” (2003: 11) serves as both the platform for political mobilisation as well as a site for the expression of politics and the assertion of citizenship of the people. Since the 1970s, student unions, labour unions, women’s movements, Muslim Brothers and other political Islamist protestors have taken to the streets to oppose the authoritarian excesses, both political and economic, of the state. Issues ranging from withdrawal of subsidies and rising costs of living to the inherent patriarchal tendencies of the state have been challenged through street politics. Interestingly, even low-ranking military officials resorted to protesting on the streets in 1986¹⁷ when the Mubarak regime decided to expand the tenure of military service. Notably, it is inclusive of those individuals who are marginalised or completely absent from traditional power structures. In the neoliberal era, a new kind of opposition emerged on the street. It was not in the form of open and conscious protest but in the form of ‘quiet encroachment’ of ‘informal individuals’¹⁸. The street became their medium for questioning and contesting the state institutions which ruled from above. In the absence of political representation this is where political negotiation between the state and society occurs. Thus, the street assumes a form which is both physical and ideological, giving a basis to socialisation and political mobilisation. Most importantly in authoritarian states it is the theatre of politics¹⁹ and citizenship i.e. it is the physical manifestation of the public sphere.

¹⁷ For details see Frisch (2001).

¹⁸ Bayat (1996; 2003) catalogues the presence of squatters, slum dwellers, street vendors, etc. These individuals, identified as ‘informal’ due to their lack of association with any institution or socio-political groups and quite literally on the margins of society do not protest openly. It is their presence, and their so-called illegitimate existence on the street that challenges the authority of the state. They do not call for protest or demand their rights, they simply relocate, create slums, plug in to electricity boards illegally and constantly defy the state.

¹⁹ One example of this politics was the wall of the American University of Cairo on Mohammad Mahmoud Street during the 2011 Arab Spring protests. This wall was turned into by graffiti artists a “mural for the martyrs who were shot dead on this very same street and in other protests elsewhere in the

The public sphere cannot be viewed as a static or stagnant space. Rather, it is dynamic and constantly expanding. Through the period of 1970 to 2011, the public sphere in Egypt, much as in most other countries, has expanded drastically and has come to include a host of actors from traditional and local ones to unconventional and international ones. While traditional actors in the public sphere included political parties and NGOs, the internet opened up a range of unconventional platforms, providing space for individuals, empowering them and providing them a platform to exercise this newfound power. The most significant manifestation of this power was witnessed in the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011, a movement largely generated through the platform of social networking and unconventional media.

Media is one of the most important actors in civil society. While it may be considered the fourth pillar of democracy, its importance increases manifold in an authoritarian political system where the frustrations of the people do not have a voice.

Just as hegemonisation of media and images has shaped public discourse on pertinent issues of society and politics, so should contesting images through new media expand the space for a more liberal kind of discourse. This does not, however, happen in a simple, linear fashion. Besides, it is a very gradual process as it takes time for alternate images and ideas and their impact to spill into public discourses and influence attitudes. Hegemonisation through media is so deeply entrenched and completely insitutionalised that it takes a significant amount of time, sometimes spanning across generations, to be able to create mainstream discourses that challenge what is seen as 'common knowledge'. The process is a lot more difficult as agencies of hegemonisation are not static or passive. They too constantly function to subvert any challenge. This is done both through the commercialisation of the platform of media as well as the constant regeneration and circulation of selective content.

The content presented on media reflects its ownership and the subsequent control it is subjected to, being usually driven by directives from the state or private interests. That

country" (Mostafa 2017: 123). Authorities kept erasing graffiti art which kept reappearing on this wall until it was finally demolished by the university on the pretext of the construction of a new building (Ibid.).

explains why various television news channels or even print media seem to advocate singular, uniform ideas and images that are in accordance with either state agenda or private commercial interests, depending upon who claims ownership. Arab media is no exception when it comes to being subjected to control of such nature, although often it is done under the label of 'regulation'.

In most Arab countries it is the information minister's job to ensure that state television expresses one opinion, follows one direction and stays well within bounds. As for privately owned Lebanese or Palestinian channels, or most pan-Arab satellite stations, these remain subject to legal constraints and political imperatives that prevent them from giving airtime to a full range of political views (Sakr 2002: 21).

However, even relatively independent media is subjected to local as well as international pressures time and again, and despite its valiant efforts it has to occasionally give in to these pressures. One such instance was the case of Al-Jazeera during George Bush's 'War against Terrorism'. His message of 'you are either with us or against us' led to Al-Jazeera's content "being judged on criteria that had not previously been applied to supposedly independent news organizations. In accordance with Mr. Bush's polarizing message, Al-Jazeera came under sustained US pressure to show whose side it was on" (Sakr 2002: 21). This is just one in many examples of how international hegemonic pressures can lead to the successful subversion of local and international media cultures. It is therefore not just by means of direct ownership that the tide of neoliberalism affects the role and impact of media.

Attempts to contain the influence of oppositional forces, such as Islamist groups, targeted the media as well. For example, Law 93/1005, which was later repealed, penalised journalists and writers who were critical of the regime, or were accused of insulting public officials and institutions and threatening peace or economy. Violators were subject to five years' imprisonment and a heavy fine (Davidson 2000: 91)

Often the repression suffered by free voices that either challenge a hegemonic leadership or the imposition of selective images is so blatant that it becomes common knowledge internationally. It is remarkable then, that the political leadership of the so-

called free world not only continues to support such oppressive regimes (for example US' consistent support for Saudi Arabia, or its silence over the violent repression of the Pearl Square protests in Bahrain during the Arab Spring) but also feeds off and regenerates those images creating a common body of knowledge globally. Such selective representation of images is ironically centred around the democratisation debate. It is in the discourse on democratisation in non-Western societies that such images are constantly used to project them in a certain way. It is interesting to see that the most rigid stereotypes are generated around ideas and ideologies pertaining to democratisation. A whole body of knowledge was created, for instance, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent 'War on Terror' that could project the US as the democratic and liberal hero against a rigidly conservative, archaic and oppressive Satan-Islamic terrorism- an image that fast subsumed much of the Muslim world under its shadow. Over a decade later, the imposition of such imagery has conditioned popular perceptions of not just Muslims, but also other religious, ethnic, linguistic and coloured communities. It begs the question to be asked: how democratic is the debate over democratisation when it originates in a culture of shutting out the 'other'?

In the case of Egypt, there was an increase in the production of films, novels, music, plays etc. that represented alternate voices and a strong critique of state politics. The image of the military officer in particular underwent a change in popular representation, reflecting the shifting perceptions of the military in popular imagination. From the war hero and martyr of the 1973 War, the 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of films and television series that presented a critical picture of the new military elite. While respect for the military uniform and the individual figures such as Nasser remained intact, narratives in film and other popular media switched to more scathing critique of the *munfatihun*. Corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency became common themes against which the struggles of the common man were portrayed. This was the theme of films like *Sawwaq al-Autobis (The Bus Driver)* released in 1983 and the 1991 film *al-Mowaten Masry (Citizen Masry)*. Other films which were more hard-hitting and visceral in revealing the excesses and abuse of power by the military, particularly in direct assault on the life and liberties of citizens, were targeted by the regime as they were viewed as an attack on its authority and legitimacy. For instance, the film *al-Barei' (The*

Innocent) was initially banned from being released, and was eventually released only after passing through heavy censorship and several editorial cuts.

The Innocent remains an iconic film in the history of Egyptian cinema in the way it came to disturb the national image of the military figure and the ensuing debate that followed. The audience began to see the striking contrast between the reality of unlawful detention and torture inside military camps and the popular image of the heroic military figure in their imagination (Mostafa 2017: 108).

Technological advancements combined with state surveillance and policing of traditional sites of protest such as the street have pushed citizens to seek alternate spaces in order to continue public dialogue. This has come about in the form of increasing political activism of the academia and the intellectual world, boycott campaigns, and most significantly the increasing shift to cyberspace. Internet has given a decidedly transnational character to local politics, enabling it to connect with similar experiences of poverty and political and social exclusion in other parts of the world. This transnational character which aids the convergence of interests not just across national borders but also across regions and continents refutes the Western assumption that cites Arab and Islamic peculiarities as exclusive and incapable of democratisation.

Interestingly, the period of the 1970s and the 1980s also witnessed the emergence of a new kind of discourse, which was more adept than reformists or conservatives/traditionalists at questioning and criticising neopatriarchy. At a time when the social, economic and political stagnation caused by neopatriarchy was at its peak, there emerged a set of Western influenced critical voices, speaking from either the Western social science, Western Marxist or the French structuralist and post-structuralist perspectives. These voices together created a body of critique of neopatriarchy, countering hegemonic discourses established by neopatriarchy and in turn creating a space for new kinds of discursive traditions (Sharabi 1988: 104).

This emerging criticism sought to question, rethink and repostulate hegemonic discourses by attempting to change and localise the terminology and vocabulary of thus far hegemonic discourses, question existing hegemonic structures of interpretation and

reinterpreted. Further, they sought an ideological deconstruction of thought which would open up space for new discourses. The most important objective of new criticism was to dismantle the theological grounding used to legitimise theological authority as well as political power (Ibid.: 105). One of the areas which new criticism and new discourses permeated into was the areas which were completely closed to discourse that is, body and sexuality.

Apart from being the immediate and spontaneous catalysts of the Arab Spring protests, military control, *Infitah* and the colonial tendencies of the state have been long term causes of the sudden but inevitable protests.

The neopatrimonial character of the state is evidenced by the typical security structure of the state, which is composed of two sub-structures, that is, the military-bureaucratic structure which exists alongside the state or secret police. The latter in such a case is solely dedicated to the regulation of the civil and political existence of citizens, curbing any space for liberties.

Thus in social practice ordinary citizens not only are arbitrarily deprived of some of their basic rights but are the virtual prisoners of the state, the objects of its capricious and ever-present violence, much as citizens once were under the classical or Ottoman structure (Ibid.: 7).

This has been true of the Egyptian state for the most part, with minor occasions of benevolence of an individual leader while the state retained its police structure.

As a new class of military elite emerged with its political ascendancy, other classes were also emerging or in some cases were created. The nexus of the military elite, technocrats and foreign collaborators led to the emergence of a specific group of people whose place and existence in the Egyptian society was reflected in the changing landscapes and the emergence of new urban centres and cities. Similarly, categorisation of the formerly salaried class, particularly those from the lower income groups, who were now being severely marginalised, led to the emergence of a new 'poor' class. The existence of this section of the society was marked by the increasing number of inhabitants in what fast came to be referred to as slums. A careful categorisation of

these people by the authorities has led, most remarkably, to the emergence of the 'criminal class', poor slum-dwellers, who by virtue of their dire circumstances are considered highly prone to criminal activity. These people are then identified as a threat to society, and targeted or at least restrained to the fringes of society, as reflected by the physical spaces allocated to them.

The role of intellectuals and their contribution to the debates within the public sphere have been a contentious issue. On the one hand, there is the problem of the state competing with, and sometimes openly battling, independent-minded intellectuals to be able to control and dictate what has been deemed by the military regime the 'nationalist discourse', which espouses specific ideas of the self, national identity and national interest. The question of existence of multiple narratives is a pertinent one in this context, and has resulted in severe politicisation of Egyptian historiography in particular (Gorman 2003). On the other hand is the issue of the nature of the role played by the intellectuals themselves. During the Sadat era intellectuals who were loyal to the socialist programme of Nasser and opposed *Infatih* vociferously were rivalled by those who were swift in shifting their allegiances for private gain as well as those who wholeheartedly supported Sadat's policies of privatisation and peace negotiations with Israel.

With Mubarak's succession, there was a brief period of optimism among the public and the intellectuals, followed by growing frustration from the realisation that the new leader was following the same path of privatisation and neglect of the public sector, deteriorating relations with neighbouring Arab states, and growing subservience to the US and IMF. A notable difference, however, was that as opposed to the constant presence of Sadat in the limelight and his vocalism and overactive public relations campaign, Mubarak's rule was marked by silence and a certain amount of disengagement from the public sphere (Amin 2011: 109). During this time, state repression against those intellectuals who began to voice their doubts and criticisms over the regime's continued pursuing of neoliberalisation, faced severe state repression. This repression increased significantly during the 1990s and 2000s even as debates within the public sphere and civil society activism picked momentum since the breakout of the Palestinian *Intifada* in 2000 (Mostafa 2017: 120).

Despite the increased engagement of intellectuals with the public sphere, especially in view of the Kifaya movement, there are still gaps in the role that they are able to play in civil society. While their contribution in the ‘production of culture’ and knowledge is significant, and probably outweighs that of any other segment of the society, there remains a disconnect between their contribution to public discourse and their relativity to the public sphere of action. This is particularly true of socialist intellectuals who may sympathise with the working class and focus on socio-economic cleavages in society, but remain limited themselves to functioning within the closed environs of academic life. The discourse produced by them too often remains limited to a select section of society, as it is specialised and speaks to only those who are a part of that specialised group of people as well. One of the reasons that political Islamist thinkers seem to have more currency with the larger population than socialist and leftist orientated intellectuals of the academic world is because the former comes from within the mass of society, and has the ability to be an organic intellectual that can speak to wider, larger audience whereas the academic intellectual is a traditional intellectual, whose reach is limited to the purview of the academic world. Public discourse has also entailed discussions on the relation of the intellectual to civil society, and the emerging notions of a ‘public intellectual’²⁰ and there may even be some exceptional cases of intellectuals who are active in the public sphere beyond their primary occupation of producing knowledge and culture, but these are few and far in between.

A severe weakness in secular criticisms of political Islam has been the fact that it hasn’t been able to appeal to the masses and remained an *avant-garde* movement. Unlike the political Islamist thinkers who emerged from within the social fabric and spoke a language that held a wide, mass-based appeal, the secular intellectuals have remained distant and alienated from the masses. Secular intellectual discourse “enjoys limited power in the political arena (lacking political organisation), and as state censorship erodes, restricts, and deflects its effectiveness, it finds itself also opposed by mass (religious) opinion” (Sharabi 1988: 12).

²⁰ See Thapar (2015).

Conclusion

Based on the arguments of this chapter it can be surmised that the civil society in Egypt has seen a long and eventful trajectory of evolution. On the question of whether the political opposition and civil society have evolved enough as an avenue to lodge protest, the answer is mixed. In terms of organised opposition, the Muslim Brotherhood has been the only consistent and viable opposition despite being banned for the most part. There are others like the Tagammu Party which have weathered state repression and managed to sustain themselves, but were unable to find the mass-based support necessary to seriously threaten an authoritarian regime. While political parties in particular have constantly struggled against regime repression, civil society at large has certainly become a dynamic and vocal organism with a life of its own. Various factions and movements within the civil society, be it the students' movement or the workers' movements, have successfully lodged protest, resisted autocratic and exploitative policies of the government, and most of all voiced public grievances and frustrations despite the challenge of the curbing of political space. The public sphere itself has become an issue of contestation as much as a site of it, with the rethinking and reshaping of not only public discourse but also the public space as a site of protest.

Feminist voices have simultaneously exposed the inherent patriarchal nature of authoritarian military regimes and the state, as well as challenged the orthodox and traditional segments of the Egyptian society in order to reimagine citizenship rights for women in the public as well as private spheres. Furthermore the notions of distinct public and private spheres have been challenged by many feminist voices, which also contributed significantly to the discourse on the public sphere and the public space. The intellectuals have had a special role to play in informing public discussion and debate down the decades, though state repression has posed a very serious challenge to their work. Even beyond this challenge, political Islamist ideologies have gained credence with the masses as much due to their own appeal as due to the ideological vacuum created by the isolation and alienation of intellectuals, especially secularists and

members of the academia (the ‘university intellectual’ who remains limited to the university campus’) from the masses.

An attempt to contextualise political authoritarianism in terms of social and personal experiences reveals that the curtailment of political liberties can often lead to a complete lack of recognition of a particular identity. Thus, issues such as women’s participation in public life become even more significant, because they are viewed as a necessary prerequisite to ensure an equal position for women in the society and at the level of the family, as well as the other way round. Notions and concepts of religion, society and politics, such as the public sphere and religious-secular debates on the state are challenged as a way of resisting authoritarianism and struggling against the fast closing up of spaces for public discourse. The role of media, and especially new media, is particularly significant in this regard, as it opens up new spaces for the voicing of dissent. The flipside of neoliberalisation has been the benefits of modern technology and new media accrued by the masses, which the regime seeks to monitor but cannot control.

Finally, how far is the civil society effective in shaping the political field? In so far as civil society is the voice of the citizen in the negotiation and renegotiation of the social contract, and for voicing dissent, the role of civil society is even more crucial in an authoritarian political system than a democratic one. This is so because it is here that the registering and seeking of recognition, both national and international, of dissent becomes even more crucial. The civil society in Egypt has come down a long evolutionary path, and enjoys a high level of political culture and awareness. The peak of this culture was visible during the Arab Spring protests that broke out in 2011, demonstrating the dynamism of the civil society. However, the persistence of a military-regime culture also reveals how deeply has authoritarianism been institutionalised in the political system and altered the character of the state. A change of leader therefore cannot singularly achieve an effective change or comprehensive reform of the political system at large. A discussion on the Arab Spring protests, the role of civil society and how it reflects on the question of legitimacy in light of the political and economic trajectories of the Egyptian state is presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

The Question of Legitimacy

In light of the previous chapters, it is evident that the legitimacy crisis of the Egyptian state has been compounded by a variety of factors that result from its authoritarian military rule. This chapter analyses the nature of the Egyptian state and the question of legitimacy by highlighting the linkages between the various factors and their impact on the state. The analysis of the Egyptian state is then placed in the global context, locating it within the social transformation occurring in the broader context of the Global South, and its position vis-à-vis neoliberal globalism.

Arab Spring Protests of 2011

The Arab Spring protests that broke out in January 2011 in Egypt as part of a region-wide movement marks the end point of this analysis. In that, it presents the pinnacle of the extreme effects authoritarianism of military regimes and the neoliberalisation that destroyed the political as well as economic ethos of Egyptian society.

From the experience of the neoliberal economy in Egypt, Tahrir Square is representative of solidarity among those who feel excluded due to the disregard by the state of its social contract and the integration of the economy to the global supply chain, leading to rising informality, jobless growth and polarized wealth distribution (Pant 2012: 333).

By the time the uprisings broke out, almost 50 percent of the young educated working population was employed in the informal sector in the urban economy. The urban economy in turn was not a product of industrialisation but that of rural poverty and migration to big cities (Ibid.: 336). The sense of exclusion and alienation resulting from this economic situation was exacerbated by urbanisation driven by neoliberal global processes, resulting in the rise of exclusive mega cities among overpopulated and

infrastructurally poor urban landscapes. This sense of alienation was heightened by the sight of a visibly distinct social class of elites and the struggles of the urban youth to retain underpaying jobs, which included compromising not only their professional aspirations but also their familial and personal lives. The range of effects on this young population working for international brands, departmental stores, luxury hotels etc. covered issues such as dress, language, marriage, social status, health concerns, family time, child-bearing and parenting among others. The contrast in their working environment, and the informal housing they occupied was stark, causing a deep sense of alienation.

Trajectories of exclusion and alienation have acquired a gendered quality as female experiences within it have been extreme. The denial of women's economic rights in the form of lower wages, contractual labour, denial of social security and provisions regarding maternity and healthcare have run parallel with compromised familial and personal lives as marriage, child-bearing and child-rearing abilities have been severely affected. In addition, women already disadvantaged by the effects of neoliberalism have continued to be subjected to gendered notions of distinctions of public and private domains, social and familial roles assigned to women, gendered notions of dress, behaviour, etc. in the public space and the constant conflict between local traditionalism and Western modernity. While women struggle to combat these issues in the Egyptian society, the male gaze continues to manifest in increasingly aggressive and violent forms, both physically and ideologically. As outlined in the previous chapter, this gaze is inflicted upon women not only by their male counterparts within society but also by the state which has assumed a strongly neopatriarchal character. The participation of women and other disadvantaged sections of the society in the uprisings demonstrates a bid for social inclusion, economic empowerment and, above all, recognition as equal stakeholders in the social contract.

The nature of the protests highlights the peak of the evolutionary trajectory of the Egyptian civil society, which has anyway been quite eventful in the period of 1970 to 2011. It was a politico-ideological conflict between the manifestations of a patrimonial and authoritarian regime and its exploitative economic agenda and subservience to

global capitalism, which proved fatal for the local economy on one hand, and the height of political culture and awareness coupled with the expansions, both gradual and sudden, of the civil society and the public sphere on the other. The juxtaposition of the two provides interesting reflections for the Egyptian state. In a sense the developments of the past few decades in Egyptian politics and economy can be seen to have been gearing the nation towards these protests, mirrored in other Arab and non-Arab postcolonial countries suffering similar plights.

The Arab Spring protests captioned the state-society relations at their most volatile, owing to a long-drawn series of events and developments that bespoke increasing authoritarianism of the state and constant violations of the social contract. The uprisings were not a sudden occurrence catalysed by a single event, but the culmination of decades of political mobilisation and social transformation in a repressed political environment, finally exploding into open protest. It was propelled by years of civil society activism in the relatively organised local sector of civil society, in places like workers' unions and professional syndicates, combined with the more recent mobilisation through unconventional means and media to give a cohesive shape to what became the Arab Spring uprisings. The expansion of the public sphere and the growing activism of the increasingly 'public' intellectual (as a result of various initiatives, most notably the *Kifaya* movement) in particular defined this movement as distinctive and more socially encompassing than any previous protest.

This event is also important in showcasing the shift in the role of the civil society, which is no longer struggling on the margins of restricted political space but has asserted itself in an open negotiation with the state. The uprisings "transformed the Egyptian women, peasants, workers and courageous middle class intellectuals into a pressure group that will no longer remain passive" (Jawad 2015: 98). The nature of the 2011 protests has been one of demanding social justice, and should be viewed as a vital counterhegemonic movement. While achieving the removal of a figurehead in its immediate aftermath, the more significant accomplishment of the uprisings has been galvanising the process of renegotiation of the social contract and reimagining of the nature of the state and citizenship.

Are We Over-Stating the Egyptian State?

One of the key questions on which the legitimacy of the state depends (and which this thesis seeks to answer) is whether the process of state formation affects the nature of the state? The postcolonial identity of the Egyptian state demonstrates that state formation has in fact been a vital determinant of the nature of the state as a political institution and its legitimacy. While scholars such as Ayubi (1995) opine that the state itself has been over-stated in the study of such nations as Egypt and other Arab states, the chaotic mesh of ideas, influences, political complexities, economic crises and social movements that have informed the process of state formation continue to impact the state in subsequent decades. This has been largely due to the continuation of several aspects of the colonial state, be it the institutional structures of the state apparatus, such as the bureaucracy, or the exercise of power and the subsequent creation of the new ruling elite, which retains the characteristics of colonial rule.

It has been argued that former colonies can overcome colonial influences and chart independent economic and political trajectories, such as has been the case partially with India (Chandra 1999). However, the particular combination of political leadership, national capitalist bourgeoisie, confluence of ideological and pragmatic processes of decision-making and the particular history of events specific to India has not been common to Egypt. The absence of a national bourgeoisie in Egypt translated into stunted industrialisation while absence of political representation and the political ascendance of the military created a new elite class which had, after successive generations, become alienated from the social landscape of Egypt and more or less divorced from the concerns of the Egyptian public.

Constant regional upheavals compounded the economic crisis, further undermining the legitimacy of the new political elite. Where the regime could have salvaged its legitimacy to some extent by delivering the economic rights of the Egyptian public, subservience to global capital reversed the progress of Egypt on the path of a welfare state. The absence of welfare facilities and curtailed civic liberties served as a catalyst

for the process of social transformation which was already underway, resulting in constant contestation by the masses. Neo-patriarchal and neo-patrimonial tendencies completely overtook the state as the regimes of Sadat and Mubarak became increasingly repressive in attempting to curb voices of dissent. All of these factors and the responses of the regimes to various political, economic, social and international challenges have continuously overwhelmed the state, so much so that the sources of law and power themselves have been subverted by the regimes, making the state almost totalitarian in nature.

Impact of Regime on the State: Institutionalisation of Authoritarianism

The usurpation of political power by the military regime of Nasser was followed by decades of consolidation of the regime. The employment of various tools to institutionalise authoritarianism not only continued during the Sadat and Mubarak eras, but gained momentum with each of the successors of Nasser, reaching its pinnacle in the last decade of the Mubarak era. The ways in which the military permeated the political and administrative systems resulted in irreversible changes in the structure of the state and its institutions. As these changes damaged state-society relations and infringed upon the social contract, they consistently eroded the legitimacy of the state.

These manoeuvres benefitted the regime significantly but undermined the legitimacy of the state even though many of them were actually part of an attempt to legitimise the regime. While the enhanced independence of the administrative court system was established partially to check the excesses of the regime in the administrative structure, it served a larger purpose of becoming a legitimising factor for the regime and the state. Sadat used the Supreme Constitutional Court and introduced administrative court reforms not only to distinguish his government from the failures of the Nasser regime, but also as a “legitimizing ideology” by emphasizing the centrality of the rule of law and trying to establish the identity of the Egyptian state as a “state of institutions” (Moustafa 2007: 6). Creating (the facade of) an independent judiciary was expected to bring some credibility and legitimacy to an otherwise authoritarian regime.

In so far as the structure of the state institution has its own legitimacy (Hudson 1977: 22-23), this has been enjoyed by the Egyptian state too. In that sense, the fact that much of the institutional structure is a remnant of the colonial past, has helped the state retain some sense of legitimacy, even as the regimes occupying and controlling these institutions have grown increasingly authoritarian and arbitrary, undermining these institutions as well.

An authoritarian regime such as that in Egypt leaves little room for the existence of positive liberties in their strictest sense. Because participation in the selection of the rulers is highly restricted, few Egyptians enjoy real positive liberties... Even in times supposedly more liberal, the opportunities for political participation were restricted for the vast majority of Egyptians (Keinle 2001: 12).

The powers acquired by the state through the process of consolidation of military regimes were authoritarian to the extent of being colonial in nature. For one, the control of the military over the state and particularly the economy was of an extreme kind. Despite limited efforts to open up or liberalise the political arena, political opposition was not tolerated beyond a point, let alone given a fair chance to contest in a democratic set up. The ideology of the state also provides a key to studying/understanding the authoritarian character the state has acquired, due to changing political and ideological rhetoric that created a facade which facilitated the consolidation of political power by both the ruling regimes during the eras of Sadat and Mubarak.

The Mubarak regime can be characterised as solid and cautious (owing largely to the personality of Mubarak), one that has been less flamboyant in the style of leadership and yet, pushed some of the harshest measures on the politics and economy of Egypt. While most of these measures and their implementation have been attributed to the personality of Mubarak, it has undoubtedly been aided by certain distinct characteristics of the Egyptian state. In the complete absence of any “systemic political reforms” (Davidson 2000: 75), Egyptian politics has come to be characterised by an extremely powerful executive, weak institutional balances on executive prerogative and low levels of popular inclusion in the political domain. These structural characteristics have been

overarching and progressively consolidated during the times of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak. While the stamp of individual leaders on the Egyptian state must be acknowledged, particularly in the realm of foreign affairs, these characteristics have charted the framework of Egyptian domestic politics to a great extent. In the words of Davidson, “The pervasive strength of the ruling party, professions of reform and liberalization and subsequent deliberalization, and vacillating policies towards Islamist elements are fittingly descriptive of not just the Mubarak regime but of all the regimes of post-revolutionary Egypt” (Ibid.: 76).

In military dictatorships/weak states/authoritarian states the interests of the state may not be in confluence with national interests (interests of the ‘nation’). Such a state is a corrupt state (a political institution corrupted by authoritarian regimes). In such a state national interests often become subservient to the interests of the state (in this case meaning the political institution controlled by, or enabling and empowering the military regime which is also the face of the bureaucracy as well as the local bourgeoisie). The conflict between concepts of ‘regime stability’ and legitimacy have been a constant feature of the Egyptian state since the 1970s.

The primary manifestation of securing regime stability at the cost of the state is subversion of state institutions and political processes. The subversion of electoral and judicial processes (discussed in chapter 3) are not merely instances of blatant abuse of power by the military. More than that, it is indicative of the deep running problems in the very system, which allow for a foothold for an abusive and exploitative regime. The military is the most dominant player in the Egyptian politics- yet it is only an actor that distorts rules and procedures and controls the power structure. The loopholes that allow the military such excesses within the system, within the so-called democratic (or at least electoral) processes and how they came to be established and practiced in the first place, became the instrument of the complete institutionalisation of military dominance and hegemony. Recently, the removal of Mohammed Morsi, who was a democratically elected leader, is indicative of how deep-seated and institutionalised authoritarianism has become.

Many postcolonial countries utilise these processes as an instrument to legitimise a regime, or even, simply as eyewash for the international community. Most postcolonial, predominantly agricultural countries still have remnants of the erstwhile land-holding feudal class, especially in rural areas, which shows little or no commitment to democracy. The urban bourgeoisie is totally displaced in the colonial experience and the following upsurge of nationalism. The process of industrialisation at this stage is stunted at best and there is no unified or mobilised workers' class that can push for political change. In the discourse on nationalism, 'self-'rule' overrides democratic values and the aspirations of the masses become linked to nationalist leaders, as has been the case in Egypt and Pakistan, rather than to the ideas and values they have associated with self-rule. The importance given to individual leaders or symbols of nationalism far outweigh the importance given to the crafting of state apparatuses- be it the drafting of the constitution, the establishment of an independent judiciary or the initiation of truly democratic electoral processes. Internal disturbances, regional politics and the meddling of the Western powers, which have been the fate of most postcolonial states, further dilute any attempts to move the state towards democratisation.

A focus on regime stability breeds corporatism in a way that further overwhelms local politics. For instance, the inability to resist pressures from and cater to the 'new private interests' is an indication of the limitations of the regime and the weakness of the state. These include the interests of a new emerging business class, the *nouveau riche*, and its infiltration of the state institutions (to the extent that the regime is either serving or is itself comprised of these 'new interests'). The military-industrial complex further demonstrates the inability of the state not only to curb infiltration and corruption in the political institutions, but also a failure to control social relations as evidenced by its failure to curb population growth¹, the failure to maintain a presence in remote rural areas such as the villages of Upper Egypt, and or the failure to curb crimes borne of

¹ The government's failure to control population growth was not simply a defeat in terms of failure to educate the masses and advertise the concept of family planning, but the bigger failure of being unable to successfully counter the al-Azhar as well as other Islamist forces that denounced the government's family planning programme as un-Islamic. This was one of the few instances of a direct and open confrontation between the military regime and al-Azhar.

murderous family vengeance, a feature that has plagued Egypt's social history, or to control and effectively regulate the prosperous gun trade (Arafat 1993).

The distortion and infiltration of the bureaucracy by the regime has served to weaken the institution of the state. In addition to breeding corruption and nepotism, however, the bureaucracy can be viewed as a sort of interface between the state and society, used by both to breach each other's sphere of influence giving the society power, although a very small one, while preventing the state from becoming an absolute Leviathan, not because of transparency but rather because of the corruption and rampant trespassing and impinging onto the effective functioning of one or the other.

The authoritarian attitudes of the military regimes under Sadat and especially under Mubarak have been clearly apparent and have translated into increasing authoritarianism of a state already surviving on colonial foundations. This authoritarianism can be observed in the 'modes of oppression' employed by the state on its citizens. (e.g. sexual violence against women, or limiting women's direct role/participation in politics). Provisions like those of the emergency law which allow arbitrary arrests etc. are a blatant and direct mode of oppression that alters the nature of the state (in a structural manner) due to its constitutional origins/source or its constitutionality. State surveillance has become an increasingly invasive tool of oppression in recent years, especially the 1990s and 2000s. Other methods such as sexual violence against women or urban (re)development to curb the public space as the site of popular protest are more indirect modes of oppression, although equally or sometimes even more violent. The state's manipulation and monopolisation of religious and cultural heritage too, is a bid to secure its legitimacy. Religious regulation by the state, as in the case of Egypt, spurred debates on contemporary reading and understanding of religion and its role in society instead of giving the state the desired moral and religious legitimacy it sought.

The Egyptian case of religious regulation suggests that high levels of state power can paradoxically undermine the state's control of society. The endemic problem of political instability in the developing world in many cases is not the result of weak political institutions, as many would suggest. Rather, many developing states are simply too strong vis-à-vis intermediate institutions,

tempting the strong state to adopt short-term horizons and policies of domination that eventually invigorate opposition and undermine the state's hold on society (Moustafa 2000: 18).

The consolidation of the military regime was reflected most clearly in the Egyptian society becoming an increasingly military society. This was evident not only from the emergence of the new class, but changing dynamics of class composition and interaction relative to it.

Military Society and Social Relations: Postcolonialism and Neopatriarchy

It was imagined that the neoliberalisation drive and the accompanying economic changes would replace traditional patriarchal clientelism and corporatism with new socio-economic relations. However, what was not anticipated was how the capitalist manifestations of neoliberalism would interact with local traditional structures of power and authority. Rather than replacing the latter, the changing economic landscape only resulted in replacing one class with another, while the nature of social relations as well as state-society relations became increasingly patriarchal and hegemonic, further abetting the operation of cultural hegemony of the state. Patriarchal systems of hierarchy are visible in the state as much as in the society, in that they enforce certain values and notions from the top down. In the case of the state, this hierarchy assumes a complete disregard for local value systems, and aspires to a dictatorial authority over what it comes to view as its *subjects*. The nature of the state as well as the nature of citizenship in such a state, are severely impacted by this forceful imposition. In the postcolonial state, the ruler assumes a neocolonial and neopatriarchal face and, as opposed to a 'self' versus 'other' view, takes an 'us' versus 'them' approach to its subjects. These divisions and categorisations are based on a variety of factors and classifications ranging from politico-economic philosophy to economic classifications in terms of haves and have-nots, or the Marxian classifications of the bourgeoisie or the proletariat.

In a military state, military personnel and bureaucracy enjoy powers almost paramount to that of the colonial rulers. In a bid to push for reforms it has been argued in several postcolonial states, including India, that the bureaucracy is still organised and functioning along colonial systems of administration. Yet the structure and functioning of such organisations, as the defense forces and bureaucracy, remain colonial in the nature of power they enjoy. Many of these countries have seen an upsurge of the military in the political arena in the postcolonial era. Essentially colonial and patriarchal in their approach, they inevitably become authoritarian in the absence of any accountability, or the lack of political opposition which they ensure. This has been the case in Pakistan and for some time in Iraq, as much as in Egypt. Such unrestricted power is a means of enforcing neopatriarchal systems of hierarchy, rendering any efforts towards reform ineffective. These neopatriarchal and authoritarian tendencies are manifested in, and in turn impact, the economy as well as society. While on the economic level, the abuse of political power is blatant and constant, often pushed forward in the name of economic reform and restructuring, the battle to control society is even bloodier. This is truer for countries with evolved social and cultural landscapes, such as Egypt. The presence of elite intellectuals i.e. Marxists, socialists, feminists, secularists etc. on one end of the spectrum, and political organisations which have acquired insurmountable legitimacy in the eyes of the public over the decades, on the other end of the spectrum, have posed serious challenges to the authoritarian tendencies of the state.

The excesses of the military, especially its accumulation of private wealth has been even more damaging given the denial of the property rights of the citizen. The concept of right to property in the social contract has been problematised to outline a more comprehensive understanding thereof. In a more comprehensive light, right to property within the social contract includes the right to material property and economic rights of the individual as well as civil liberties and social justice, which is intrinsic to economic equality. What remains constant in the period of this study, in the case of Egypt, is the consistent erosion of the right to property (in its narrow sense connoting economic rights and interests) as well as, in a more gradual process, civil liberties and social justice. As explained in previous chapters, this erosion can be attributed to the nature of

political rule and the economic trajectory it set Egypt upon. In the larger context of neoliberal globalism, the denial of the right to property has been far deeper, as even the myth of the free market is blatantly subverted to the monopoly of the United States (US) and international institutions, which have assumed the superior position in what is clearly a hierarchical economic order. Civil liberties can be arbitrarily rescinded, as has been the case in Egypt, and social justice remains incidental to the prevailing political situation, which is far from inclusive or representative given the hegemony of the military regime.

The development of the Egyptian political economy reflects the exclusion of local production and market trends to policy-formulation, subverting them to global market economy. The resulting economic crisis indicates that any viable and effective process of economic development must be inclusive of them. Contrary to neoliberal assertions, development in the Global South depends on the state's ability to protect local economic interests and actively negotiate with global markets on their behalf. Comprehensive development further necessitates comprehensive economic reform. Due to the lopsided and exclusionary nature of reform programmes prescribed by *Infitah* and structural adjustment, neglect of the public sector and the stripping of public assets have only served to enhance economic disparities. As changing migration trends and a flailing local economy compound the problem of unemployment, the safety net of social security from a welfare state become increasingly pertinent. Any attempt at thorough land reform or a boost to the public and even the private sector has been circumvented by the presence of the military-bourgeoisie nexus, which continues to control maximum national resources as a result of private accumulation, even in the aftermath of the Arab Spring protests and the removal of Mubarak from power. The continued dominance of the military has resulted in a method of economic planning focussed on the maintenance of a 'military' state, wherein a major chunk of economic resources have been usurped by the defence establishment.

The failure of the state to fulfil its economic function, undermined the legitimacy of deliverance that a socialist state could claim. Furthermore, the erosion of the right to property of the citizen, and the myriad effects on all aspects of life caused by it have

propelled civil society towards a more active role in altering the status quo of the regime's cultural hegemony, in which it had earlier been complicit. The changing economic realities of Egypt resulted not only in changing social relations, but also in changing and expanding the nature of civil society activism.

While economic exploitation is gradual in its percolation of the society, oppression of social and cultural values is more immediate and provokes strong reactions almost immediately. Therefore, the banning of the Muslim Brotherhood or the restrictions on freedom of press are more widely criticised, and that too with a sense of urgency. Economic downfall is invariably gradual, with constant optimism among the populace about the various schemes and programmes of the state claiming to restore the national economy. Combined with a lack of a coherent and cogent criticism of economic policies, this optimism can, and often does prove to be the last nail in the coffin of a political economy. Such has been the case of Egypt, where the economic exploitation started by the government, and perpetrated by the state, started way back in the era of Sadat, but has run so deep, so consistently that today salvation seems nearly impossible.

However, it must be argued that the neopatriarchal state is not a strong state, it is essentially a weak state. Its weakness is revealed primarily in the failure to obtain legitimacy, or to provide any resistance against the authoritarian tendencies of a regime. A difference between the two is vital. A strong state based on a sound political system can resist a particular regime and its autocratic attitudes, but a weak state, with a flailing and porous political system is defeated by the same regime. Institutions such as the constitution, the judiciary and the media can be effective in curbing authoritarianism, provided they are an essential part of the political system. While the judiciary in Egypt failed to be actively and vocally critical of the Sadat and Mubarak regimes, the constitution became an instrument for the regimes to shape the state, as was visible from the writing of the Permanent Constitution of 1971, the Constitution of 1991, and the recent Constitution rewritten in 2014. The media, on the other hand, was never allowed sufficient space to exist freely. The presence of extensive literature on the Sadat era and the absence thereof in the Mubarak era, reflective of the personalities of the rulers, is testimony to the control and influence exerted by the regimes on the media.

It is easy to relegate this emphasis on the role of judiciary and media to Western notions of democracy and not necessarily applicable to non-Western non-democracies, but the other key factor that can provide resilience to a state is the economy, Saudi Arabia being a very prominent example. It is evident that the regimes, and the state in turn, failed in the management of the economy. This is reflected not just in the absence of a positive role of the state, but more so by the existence of what has often been referred to as the 'parallel state' or the 'state within a state', i.e. the Muslim Brotherhood. Where the state/regime failed its citizens and lost the 'legitimacy of deliverance', the Brotherhood provided social welfare facilities necessary for a society to feel a sense of socio-economic security. However, while the Brotherhood and other political Islamic voices were successful in contesting the 'national' rhetoric and the inefficacy of the regime to deliver, their biggest challenge has been the inability to identify viable alternatives to the neoliberal market economy in addition to generating nuanced understanding of local socio-political issues and being able to locate them within the larger global context. For this reason, political Islam has been more successful as an agent of social transformation and civil society activism than as a viable political leadership.

Altering State-Society Relations

Studies on the nature of postcolonial and politically unstable states draw polarising analyses- especially on account of state-society relations. Egypt has had a centuries-old tradition of centralised power which has existed since before the concept of a republic was realised, one that has since its origin been all pervasive. Yet, the evolution of the Egyptian society and the very consciousness of being a (civil) society that has a role to play in the politics that governs it, that engages in debates on modernity and politics and to some extent shapes it, implies that the centralised and all-powerful state is not as powerful as it ought to be. The Egyptian society is a classic example of a society that has actively engaged in debates on modernity and politics down the centuries, and to some extent shaped its course despite its constraints.

The authoritarian nature of the state in such a case is explained in different ways by scholarship that stands divided in its analyses. The predominant perspective views the state as a 'weak state' which is forced to resort to authoritarianism to retain some level of political stability and obedience (Arafat 1993; Ayubi 1995). A challenging perspective however asserts that the state in such a case has perhaps become too strong and therefore does not allow any space for contestation (Laroui 1976). The key factor in this approach is how the term 'state' is often used interchangeably with 'government' or 'regime' - given that it is the latter which becomes so powerful that it can subsume the institution of the state.

The consolidation of the military regime also resulted in the consolidation of military as a class, which had far-reaching social as well as political implications. Its effects were seen not only in the curbing of the political liberties but also in the experiences of poverty and social exclusion. This was even starker when juxtaposed with the economic and social changes that surrounded the presence of the military. The transformation of the Egyptian society into a 'military society', which was started in the Nasser era, rapidly progressed when it began to alter class composition and the structure of social landscape. The land-owning bourgeoisie of the erstwhile colonial feudal agrarian system was replaced by the military which now occupied a central position in society. This was reflected in how military officials occupied centre stage not only in official but also social functions, how their reception varied from that of other guests, how popular representation of military officials in mediums like film shifted from that of the saviour to one of the antagonist.

The ascendance of military's political power was coupled with its growing economic stature. In public consciousness this was reflected in the association of wealth with the military, and how it was surrounded by physical and material manifestations of this private wealth in the form of private cars, five-star hotels and uber-urbanised spaces that sprung up in the midst of overpopulated, infrastructure-backward and slum-infested traditional urban landscapes. The expressions of public appreciation simultaneously shifted to that of public disdain in the form of satire and political jokes, which was symbolic at a time when the public sphere was severely strangled.

The pashas or the erstwhile feudal lords (which had anyway become something of a bad word in the early phase of national modernisation and socialism in its infancy) of an era gone by were rapidly replaced by *munfatihun* or ‘fat cats’ who now represented the peak of corruption and the obscenity of private wealth, giving tangible form to the experience of economic and social exclusion to the vast majority of the Egyptian citizenry. Given that the state was born of a neopatriarchal society, where the ruler is a despot who assumes the role of a father, neoliberalisation and the emergence of a new bourgeoisie was accompanied by the totalising of authority of the paternal figure. The paternal figure was the ruler, who assumed the role of a father. This phenomenon can be understood in terms of the image of an Arab who respects solidarity within a particular group or community and bows to a leader whose image is that of a father figure (Sharabi 1988). The father can be cruel but will provide. This is how the leader is also viewed, he is despotic and authoritarian and allows for very little, if any, liberty, but will provide economically. This is why rulers like Nasser and Sadat attempted to assume the role of the father figure, using terms such as “my people” in their speeches. With the changing socio-economic landscape, the patriarchal father figure of the political leader who was authoritarian yet benevolent as a provider was replaced by the neopatriarchal figure that was downright tyrannical because he has ceased to be the provider but continues to demand obeisance associated with the paternal authority figure in the traditional Arab familial setup.

The traditional characteristics of clientelism or patron-client relations and patriarchy of the traditional Arab family and society have interacted with globalising and neoliberalising forces to produce complex social relations. The position of women vis-à-vis power centres and authority figures in society is reflective of the changes in the social landscape, as well as providing keynotes on the very urgent problem of women’s place in Egyptian (and by extension Arab and generally postcolonial) society. Mapping women’s movements as resistance provides important insights into the ontology of contemporary state-society relations. Women’s movements and the religious-secular debates on feminism reveal how the place for women is being re-evaluated based on changing perceptions of the state and the kind of authority associated with it. Earlier the military led state was a secular, modernising force that they accepted or challenged

based on their ideological convictions, yet it was replicating patriarchal traditions and tendencies in a passive way. At this time the women's movement was more focussed on challenging local traditional attitudes.

However, this changed as gradually the military acquired the status of an active (neopatriarchal) oppressor owing to its deliberate oppression and newfound efforts at perpetuating traditional patriarchal values and relying on them to reinforce its own dominance and hegemony. The employment of sexual violence as a method of suppression by the state emphasises the neopatriarchal nature of this hegemony. The perception of the military as a more active oppressor corresponded with a shift in women's perception of the self, viewing themselves as full citizens rather than partial or absentee citizens and their changing perceptions of the state. As a result of the long drawn debates in feminism, there has been an impetus on the questioning of the public-private sphere distinction and the political role of women as equal stakeholders in society. Therefore, expectations from the state have changed and there is a demand to be full and equal party to the social contract. Islamic feminism argues for the state to recognise and protect its assertions rather than imposing a Western-based value system of gender roles in society, much as these assertions are contested by secular feminism.

While religious-secular debates and the challenge of conflicting traditional Islamic and Western modern sensibilities have in part defined women's movements in Egypt, the thrust of these has been on the opposition to neoliberalism. As demonstrated in chapter 4 and 5, the impact of neoliberalism has been acute and far more pronounced on women. It has, therefore, been a major catalyst for these movements, and for the questioning of the space for women in the Egyptian society. This is common to most nations of the Global South, where women have been particularly disadvantaged in terms of education, health, economic empowerment and equality and safety in public spaces (the last two are not limited to developing countries). Women's responses then are emblematic of resistance to global structural adjustment as well as local consolidation of neopatriarchal social structures and patron-client relations that define social relations.

The Question of Legitimacy: State and Regime

There is an inverted link between the legitimacy enjoyed by Nasser on one hand, and that of Sadat and Mubarak on the other. Popular narratives such as Naguib Mahfouz's interview in *The Paris Review* (Mahfouz 1992) provide insights into how Nasser was perceived to be much more authoritarian than Mubarak. Yet Nasser also enjoyed more legitimacy in the broad sense than did Mubarak. This, despite the fact that the economic situation during the Mubarak era was comparatively better, freedom of speech and press was greater, the general standard of liberalisation, if not democratisation, was judged to be higher. Some of this can be attributed to the fact that the process of accumulation and (limited) redistribution, as espoused by Waterbury, had already almost completed two stages: high level of accumulation and low level of redistribution resulted in increasing popular dissatisfaction and discontent. Further, as a postcolonial state, Egypt had been in its infancy during the Nasser era when its popular psyche was inclined to be more tolerant of a cruel but benevolent father figure epitomised by a despotic leader but one who could be counted on to provide. By the end of Mubarak's tenure Egypt was populated by mostly second and third generations in a postcolonial state. The expectations and aspirations of the society, in keeping with the changing times and the age of the postcolonial state were higher- as was the level of discontent.

The growing discontent was largely due to the fact that while earlier experiences of poverty and disparity had been due to the internal challenges of an economically weak infant nation, in the later decades the reason for economic suffering and disparity was mostly subservience to international power and institutions. It must also be noted that while under the authoritarian rule of Nasser the political institution of the state and military as a political actor had been fledgling and weak, by Mubarak's era both had been structurally consolidated, their authoritarian powers and control completely entrenched and institutionalised. This meant that even a relatively 'liberal' leader would still be placed at the helm of a state which was by now structurally and institutionally authoritarian. Finally, the growing interaction with the outside world, evolving notions of modernity, social networking, relatively improved standards of human rights, labour

and trade unions, freedom of press and continued (though partial) autonomy of the judicial system- all this opened up more space for dissent than ever before.

Thus, increasing authoritarianism on the part of the regime and the state were juxtaposed by growing public frustration and dissonance. This seems like a vicious cycle which throws up pertinent questions about the state and its legitimacy. The distinction between the state and regime is central to these questions. Regimes such as those of Sadat, Mubarak and even Nasser to a certain extent, could never enjoy the legitimacy derived from popular support, given the absence of a populist democratic state in Egypt. Yet, Nasser stands out as a political ruler for securing enormous legitimacy on the basis of his charismatic personality. In this, Sadat falls desperately short, Mubarak even more so.

The evolution of the Egyptian state in the post-Free Officers' Revolution period can be understood as a "general phenomenon where an army creates both its state and its party in its image" (Browers 2006: 108) and ingratiating the state institution into the image of the party. Legitimacy for the state has thus been intimately bound to legitimacy for the party and its leader. Often this has resulted in support for the leader and by extension for the state simply due to the popularity enjoyed by the leader in spite of unfavourable government policies and actions². Conversely, the growing discontent with the leader and the government has also resulted in the undermining of the legitimacy of the state institution, especially during the Mubarak regime. On several occasions the judicial system had to intervene in the functioning of the government and the state on behalf of the civil society as well as individuals who were being victimised.

The regime and the state have been so enmeshed in the eyes of the Egyptian public for generations that in spite of its authoritarian characteristics, the regime has been able to garner support and faith in the state has been maintained, often the latter being the consequence of the former. The fact that no other political faction or entity has managed

² The culture of drawing upon the popularity of an individual leader, often seen as a father figure, to gain political legitimacy for his party and government has been a part of the traditional patriarchal associations still prevalent in Egyptian public life. The leftist thinker and Tagammu Party member Farid Zahran adopted the syntax of *al-mujtama 'al-ahli* to express a critique of Egyptian group activity down the centuries "characterised by the worship of the personality of the leader, president, or director, and thus a negative force throughout Egypt's history" (Browers 2006: 106).

to (or been allowed to) surpass the authority of the regime has made it even more synonymous with the state itself. Even in the face of extreme criticism, the regime has remained the ruler, occasionally benevolent but mostly tyrannical.

The other aspect of their brands of leadership is being a military regime, which initially held some legitimacy in the perception of a postcolonial state which was still grappling with the evils associated with a Western-imposed capitalist and exploitative economic and political system perpetuated by a monarchy fast losing its legitimacy. In such a context, military rule based on socialist credentials appealed significantly to the Egyptian masses. Over the decades, however, with the loss of a charismatic personality and a socialist character of the state, the humiliation of defeat in war, and the dawning impact of a flailing economy, the same military rule, albeit under different leaders, became increasingly autocratic and authoritarian.

It is important to note, however, that all this translated into the loss of legitimacy for a regime, not the state. This is evident from the continued demands, protests and even criticism, of the state within the Egyptian society. The ultimate manifestation of these reactions was last witnessed in the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011. The protests and demands were aimed at the removal of ruler and his regime, but were not an opposition to the existence of the state per se. The attempt to reform rather than remove the structure of the state and the political system reflects the continuing faith of the citizens in the state. They do not demand a removal or abolishment of the state, but simply a revision of the nature of the social contract between them, and by extension, an alteration in the nature of power and authority of the state. A demand for greater political rights and representation is not a negation of the state, but of a style of political rule. This demand and opposition provide the key to distinguish between the state and the regime.

The relevance of the state has been increasingly questioned in contemporary international politics. This questioning has increased manifold with the rise of non-state actors and the process and impact of globalisation as serious challenges to the presence and role of the state. But attitudes of the citizenship at the local indigenous level clearly indicate otherwise. It is symbolic that they seek to restructure and reform the state,

rather than remove it completely. These are citizens of a postcolonial era, seeking the protection of the state politically as well as economically. This protection would be vital to their interests which are at stake, interests not merely of prosperity and political representation, but of the right to exist and sustain themselves economically, in the face of rising challenges of forces like globalisation, and a global capitalist economic order.

Even when the state is in the process of shedding whole bureaus and rule-making functions- “in deregulating society”- no one can doubt that when markets now take over these functions the state still authorizes the new arrangement. And, if there are those who do not play by the market’s rules, the state will use its authority to enforce contracts made in the marketplace (Migdal 1988: 16).

On the question of what enables the state to still sustain its legitimacy, it can be discerned from the state formation argument, discussed in chapter 2, that the Egyptian state does in fact still resonate of its colonial foundations. It follows that the postcolonial critique of victimisation by the state among citizens stands. The citizen or the victim or the ‘other’ applies the colonial gaze to view himself/herself as well as the ‘self’ or the colonial entity. The legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the citizen can then be traced to this colonial gaze and colonial victimisation/ subjection where the self (the ruled, the native or the citizen) views herself as is viewed by the other, the colonial, the foreigner, or in this case the state. The legitimacy of the state in the modern world, despite modernity, thus stems partly from its colonial character.

Back to the Democratisation Debate

Given the nuances and layers of a host of complex issues pertaining to the self and notions of identity, particularly in terms of social contextualisation, it is not possible to arrive at a singular and cohesive idea of Arab democracy. However, the multitude of ideas of democratisation emerging from the region is extremely significant to the future political trajectory of the state in the Arab world. The process of articulation of these ideas not only emphasises the demand for democratisation, but in itself forms a

constitutive step in this process. As pointed out by Iliya Harik civil society may not necessarily precede democracy, but is itself a manifestation of it (Harik 2006: 345; Ramakrishnan 2010: 28). The existence of an active and rapidly expanding civil society represents partial attempts to exercise democratic rights and/or contest the denial thereof, in a more democratic manner. Yet the Egyptian state is far from democratic not least because history repeated itself in the aftermath of the Arab Spring protests but because change of political leadership alone could not facilitate serious structural and political reform of the state institution itself, which continue to retain its authoritarian character. The deeply ingrained authoritarianism of the state apparatus continues to pose a challenge to the ongoing social transformation movements, leading to a continued struggle of the function of hegemony and counterhegemony between the state and the citizen. From the perspective of the citizen, the state holds absolute power, the changing faces of military regime-led governments only furthering the consolidation of power thereby making the state intrinsically an edifice of total authoritarianism.

The nature of civil society activism in Egypt since the early 1970s displayed a growing awareness of citizenship rights and the efforts to reimagine and renegotiate citizenship rights. The struggles of students, workers, women's movements and both organised and unorganised politico-religious groups and individuals have reflected the growing demand for democratisation by carrying out parallel and often overlapping protests geared towards greater political and economic rights as well as increased political participation. These movements have been triggered by instances of state abuse of power, as well as state failure to protect the basic rights of citizens. The abuse of power has emerged mostly from the infiltration of military regimes into the political and bureaucratic structures, the unrelenting control of power and the exercise of hegemony. The failure of the state to protect local interests stemmed from a crippling economy, a complete lack of effective political and economic reform and the regime's incessant attempts to gain legitimacy by offering economic incentives that the local economy was not in a position to generate. This has been especially apparent in the neoliberal phase of the Egyptian state, where a failure to overcome the dominance of global capitalism and the lack of its own institutional weaknesses resulted in a growing gap between the state and society.

In the initial stages of civil society activism the emphasis was on the demand for economic rights and the protection of economic interests. This was evident in how the withdrawal of welfare facilities such as food subsidies triggered workers' protests, demonstrations and lock-ins but never led to a complete shutdown of production which was seen as a part of 'nation-building' or the national modernisation process, and therefore a duty of every citizen (Pratt 2008). In the later stages and especially since the 1990s, the emphasis shifted to a struggle for political rights, the opening of spaces for dissent and demand for political participation. These latter demands emerged from shifting perceptions of the self and identity, and consequently the questioning of thus far established notions of citizenship. Prior to this shift, the understanding of citizenship has been based on specific cultural, religious, gender-based and national discursive constructions. However, a renewed investigation of these social, political, cultural and ideological constructions led to a shift in the understanding of the concept of identity and citizenship.

The shift in the conceptualisation of citizenship in turn promulgated a review of the nature of social contract and the state. While legitimacy of the Egyptian state was problematic to begin with, from the perspective of the democratisation debate, changing notions of citizenship and expectations from the state meant that the very yardstick for legitimacy, or the factors on which legitimacy had so far been evaluated and ascertained, also changed. The fulfilment of the economic function of the state was no longer sufficient to appease the citizens regarding their position vis-à-vis the state. This also explains why despite brief spurts of economic growth and the reluctance to impose the recommendations of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in its entirety, disillusionment and anger against the regime only increased in the later years of the Mubarak era, despite the fact that the SAP put Egypt in a slightly better economic position than some of its other postcolonial Latin American counterparts. Expanding public consciousness and changing notions of citizenship led not only to citizens seeking recognition of this new consciousness but also to the protesting of the role of the state itself in asserting some of the obsolete socio-political ideas of the self and subjecting it to an inverted colonial gaze. The questioning of the inherently

neopatriarchal nature of the state was one such site of contestation with the state³. This has had a direct bearing on the course of democratisation in Egypt.

As part of the larger Global South, the Egyptian experience has had both unique and common dimensions to democratisation. Its uniqueness has been the demonstration of unconventional trajectories of how this process unfurls across different societies. Not only has Egypt as part of the Arab world been orientalised, the concept of democratisation too has been remarkably uni-dimensional. Democratisation in postcolonial societies itself needs to be problematised in order to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of it. Western definitions of democracy are exclusive of non-Western cosmopolitanisms (Chimni 2012) that inform local political processes, and therefore inadequate. Narrowly defined Western-prescribed modules of democratisation based on elections and plebiscites do not encompass diverse socio-economic postcolonial experiences that influence local political processes, and do not fit. While the intellectual discourse problematising democratisation is not new, it has yet to realign itself with contemporary and ongoing civil society transformations and their implications on citizenship and the social contract. While the Arab Spring protests (i.e. anti-regime protests in the Arab world) were not unpredicted, the means and scope of the protests was certainly unprecedented and unimagined. In the aftermath of the protests, the focus of political debate and academic research has been centred on the subsequent power tussle among different factions while the realisation of civil society as a major stakeholder in democratisation, and the employment of democratisation as a counter-hegemonic strategy have been neglected. Studies on civil society actors- both conventional and unconventional- have continued to be seen as alienated from domestic and global politics, decision-making and democratisation when they need to be placed within local cosmopolitanisms.

As local cosmopolitanisms continue to infiltrate domestic and global politics, the process of democratisation too continues to assume an expanding nature. The nature of civil society activism and social transformation in Egypt exposes the fallacy of treating

³ Pratt categorises this shifting civil society consciousness as a shift from participating in and enabling the function of (cultural) hegemony to ideas, methods and strategies of counterhegemony or “war of position” (Pratt 2008: 198).

democratisation as a linear process wherein hegemony will provoke counterhegemonic struggles, leading to democratisation as the end result. This notion has been inverted by non-Western societies, Egypt being a prominent case in point, of the employment of democratisation as a counterhegemonic strategy. The ways in which civil society resists state oppression and pushes for more space in the social contract can be identified as the essential tools of democracy such as popular protest, traditional legal contestation of regimes, infiltration of a military regime-dominated politics and mobilisation through unconventional media. Resistance provoked by the neoliberalisation drive has to be read as renegotiating the social contract. This is a simultaneous struggle for resistance against authoritarianism of a regime and the renegotiation of the social contract.

Furthermore, it has far reaching consequences for global processes. As a multi-layered socio-political process, it seeks to renegotiate citizenship not only at the local but also the transnational levels, seeking inclusion and empowerment that pushes for both local and global democratisation. This has deep significance for the state as a political institution whose compromised legitimacy has led to the reimagination of citizenship, and consequently the state itself. Domains of contestation of citizenship and neoliberal globalism are vital in determining the changing role of the state, especially as the sole interface between the citizen and global political processes. The linkages of the right to property of the citizen and global market economy require comprehensive regulation by the state not to curb, but to promote a symbiotic relationship between local and global market systems.

Conclusion

The state is still relevant as the most viable form of political organisation. Moreover, contrary to the myth of the free market, the contemporary state in the globalised world, especially in developing countries, needs to play a much more important regulatory role. Constant reform and restructuring must be an integral part of the political processes of the state, yet, it is the state which can protect the interests of the economically weaker sections of its population or prepare its economy to compete with world market forces (or to protect its economy against them).

The local population, even in a state governed by a military regime or an authoritarian government looks to the state to protect its interests, more so in the 'era of globalisation'. This, above all else, gives the state, whether its government is popularly elected or not, the greatest sense of legitimacy. This legitimacy has a much deeper foundation, as it is not attached to any particular regime or government. It belongs to the institution of the state. It also highlights the difference between the state and the regime/government. The political history of Egypt (and other states of the Global South) shows that protests and popular unrest may have attacked and sought the removal of a regime but still display their faith in the state through their aspirations for change in the political system as well as processes. The disgruntlement of people may manifest in rioting or protesting but that is aimed at a particular government and it is the deep legitimacy enjoyed by the state as an institution which also insulates the state to a great extent from popular unrest or a disillusioned or disappointed populace. In fact, the strongest manifestations of public fury and grief are also addressed to the state, seeking reform and change rather than the overthrow of the state.

However, this legitimacy has been undermined by the political and economic developments that have occurred in Egypt between 1970 and 2011. The legitimacy crisis, which began in the aftermath of the Free Officers' Revolution, given the military's unmitigated usurpation of power and dominance of the state, has been compounded by both the nature of political control exerted by the military since, and

the complete abandoning of socialist objectives in lieu of the neoliberal globalism thrust by international institutions and global capitalism on the Egyptian state. While the process of state formation has had a deep impact on the nature of the Egyptian state, as is common to most postcolonial states, the baggage of colonialism has been only one of the influences determining the shape assumed by the Egyptian state. This study outlines the other factors that have proved detrimental to the legitimacy of the Egyptian state, in order to test the hypotheses of this study.

The first hypothesis examined in this study is: the neoliberal system enforced by the state has adversely affected not just the Egyptian economy but the nature of the Egyptian state as well. This hypothesis is proven as the legitimacy of deliverance gained by the state through the earlier socialist agenda was lost due to the neoliberal shift. The right to property of the citizen was severely compromised due to neoliberalism. The impact of *Infitah* and later structural adjustment (outlined in chapter 4) rendered the Egyptian economy vulnerable to global market forces, further marginalising the middle and lower income groups in the economic order and exacerbating the situation of exclusion and alienation. This situation was worsened as the limited benefits of privatisation and the coming of multinational corporations accrued only to a small class comprising mostly of the military-technocrat nexus and a small section of the economic order which was the new bourgeoisie. On the other hand, these economic changes also rendered the state vulnerable to global pressures such as those of international financial institutions and the United States. The economic trajectory of Egypt between 1970 and 2011 therefore not only resulted in the erosion of the local economy, but severely compromised the social contract, as the state was rendered ineffective in protecting the citizen's right to property, as well as having lost, to a degree, its own sovereignty. The experiences of poverty, relative poverty, exclusion and alienation demonstrate the impact of neoliberalism on individuals and their perceptions of the state. Women, especially middle and lower class working women, have been forced to face exponential challenges and difficulties due to the changing economic profile of the state. In fact, the economic function of the state which could have been a redeeming factor in the case of Egypt, given the dominance of the military regime, turned out to be

the most severe detriment to the legitimacy of the state and the most crucial catalyst for the uprisings.

The second hypothesis asserted by this study is: the dominant political and economic role of the military has given the Egyptian state a distinctively authoritarian character which contributed to the legitimacy crisis of the state. This hypothesis is also proven by this study. The political role of the military served to consolidate the authority of the *regime* while undermining the *state*, giving it a distinctly authoritarian character. The military's consolidation of power was attained through the practice of cultural hegemony in addition to outright denial of citizens' rights and blatant and violent oppression. The means of oppression and instruments of consolidation of power employed by the regime led to changes at the structural level in the political institution of the state. These included constitutional and judicial changes on one end of the spectrum, and a complete rescinding of civil liberties on the other. Rather than being replaced by the neoliberal shift, traditional patriarchal and clientelistic socio-economic relations were further reinforced and consolidated. These factors resulted not only in the subversion of the state by the regime, but in altering the very nature of the state, so much so that a change in leadership is not sufficient to undo the impact of the regime on the state. Furthermore, colonial patterns of social formation have been reinforced by the military's usurpation of power and assumption of hegemony, not to mention the loss of legitimacy drawn by charismatic leadership since the end of the Nasser era. Consequently, the institution of the state which was already weak, as is the case with most postcolonial countries, has been further weakened.

As is common to most postcolonial states, some aspects of state and governance have remained prominent since the colonial era, while others have not been sufficiently developed. In the case of Egypt, the military bureaucracy not only retained institutional power of a colonial nature, but as shown in chapter 3, amassed political powers of an almost insurmountable nature. It acquired the characteristics of a 'deep state' within the larger state and by its own functioning undermined that of the state. The legitimacy of the state has, therefore, been further compromised. Furthermore, the existence of a deep state within the Egyptian state, which controlled not only political power but also came

to acquire the status of a dominant socio-economic class, created a wide gap between the state and civil society.

While the political role of the military and the economic changes highlight the trajectory of the Egyptian state, its nature is exposed by its interaction with civil society. The paces of development of the state and civil society have not been synchronised, the state being hindered by neoliberal global compulsions. The civil society, on the other hand, has evolved at a rapid pace, a process which gained further momentum with the expansion of the public sphere and the coming of a plethora of unconventional media of interaction and dialogue. The interaction of the civil society with the state has been parallel to the society's exposure to transnational cosmopolitan influences, and the resulting debates on the self and identity have enabled the reimagination of citizenship in spite of state oppression and authoritarianism. These debates have been waged between the traditional and contemporary ideas of the self, state, religion, nation etc. and have in turn created a high level of political culture and alternate ideologies (alternate to both the official state policies as well as Western notions of modernity, state and governance). Thus, the notions of citizenship and state have also undergone a shift. Whereas during the Nasser era and the initial years of the Sadat era the public was supportive of the military regime in its national modernisation project, thereby enabling the function of cultural hegemony, with increased debate in the public sphere this submissiveness turned into open expression of discontent. Informed by these influences and discourses, the civil society has contested the state with increasing alacrity, and through multiple modes of contestation. The most significant aspect of this contestation has been the employment of democratisation as a strategy in counterhegemony. In so far as the demanding of social justice is also the practice of social justice, the act of the demanding of democratisation is also a practice of it, especially in terms of the means through which it is demanded. The very expansion of the public sphere from the increasing scope of street politics to the technological and digital development are strategies in contesting a state that constantly seeks to curb the space for dialogue.

The shift in civil society discourse and activism in Egypt provides valuable insights into the evolution of citizenship and identity across most developing, postcolonial states, and

can be extrapolated to develop a more current understanding of citizenship and the state. In the globalised world notions of citizenship and state have expanded to incorporate a transnational/global aspect. The individual is at once a national and global citizen. The role of the state as the sole interface between the citizen and global political processes has to expand, contrary to global capitalist constructions of sovereignty, citizenship and market economy. Efforts to synchronise local economies with the global market system must be cognizant of this expanding nature of citizenship as well as the prevailing conditions of local economies. This synchronisation can only be possible through a local to global approach rather than neoliberal globalism controlling and dictating local economies. The state's role must expand as it has to respond not only to global but also local politics. In addition to protecting the property rights of the citizen against external pressures and challenges, the state also needs to respond to local demands for the renegotiation of the social contract and the reimagining of citizenship, particularly in states of the Global South. As citizenship assumes a transnational overtone, external influences in the form of democratic aspirations become a major factor in its interaction with the state. The state has to open itself to the local cosmopolitanisms that inform local political processes.

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