14.

Al-Banna, Mawdudi, and Qutb

Hasan al-Banna was born in a small provincial town, Mahmudiyya, some 90 miles northwest of Cairo in October 1906.[1] He was the eldest of five sons. Much of his early religious training came from his father, the imam and teacher at the local mosque who supplemented his income as a watch repairman. Another formative influence was his Qur'anic school (*kuttab*) teacher. At the age of twelve he moved from the kuttab to the local primary school. During these years he also became involved with the local chapter of the Hasafiyya Sufi brotherhood as well as other religious organizations. The next step, in the early 1920s, was enrollment in the Primary Teachers' Training School in Damanhur, also in the Delta, 13 miles from his hometown.

At age sixteen he entered Dar al-'Ulum, a higher-level teacher training institution that had been founded in 1873 to offer the modern (i.e., Western) curriculum that al-Azhar had resisted adopting. Graduating from Dar al-'Ulum in 1927 at the age of twenty-one, al-Banna accepted his first post as a primary school teacher of Arabic in Isma'iliyya.

Located on the Suez Canal, Isma'iliyya in those years was replete with the signs of alien military, economic, and cultural domination. British military bases,[2] the foreign officialdom of the Suez Canal Company, foreign economic domination of all major businesses and public utilities, even street signs in English brought home to al-Banna the colonized status of his fellow Muslims. It was in this environment that he organized his Muslim Brethren, the first members being, significantly, six Egyptian workers from the British military camp. The earliest recruits and activities were in the

canal zone, but when al-Banna succeeded in getting transfered to a teaching post in Cairo (1932) he was ready to make the organization a national force.

The continued British control, the uprootedness following on the accelerating exodus from countryside to city, and the added hardships brought by the depression years of the 1930s produced an Egyptian population longing for security, fellowship, a sense of personal worth, simple and clear answers to what was needed plus equally simple and clear answers to what must be opposed. That all this could be presented as getting back to the clear moral imperative demanded by Islam made the call even more attractive. Al-Banna's charismatic personality and good organizing skills did the rest. The Muslim Brethren experienced explosive growth. Mitchell's careful study offers the following estimate: "Four branches in 1929; 5 in 1930; 10 in 1931; 15 in 1932; 300 in 1938; 500 in 1940; 2,000 in 1949." And the peak membership is estimated to have been perhaps a half million active members with at least an equal number of sympathizers.[3]

Thus, by the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s the Muslim Brethren had become a political force in Egypt. The organization expanded as well beyond Egypt's border, into Syria by the mid-1930s, among the Palestinians and in Transjordan somewhat later, and south to the Sudan in the mid-1940s, plus a not inconsiderable impact throughout other parts of the Muslim world.

Organizationally, the Muslim Brethren may be seen as a hybrid of traditional Sufi orders and modern totalitarian parties.[4] The traditional Sufi brotherhood has its several different local branches (*zawiyas*) linked in an overall fraternal network by a common ritual and led by a master (shaykh). One became a full-fledged member by passing through staged tests. The radical mobilization movements of fascism and Communism (but especially the latter) have had their cells, their careful testing and indoctrination of members, and the strictly hierarchical principle of "democratic centralism" requiring adherence to the party line and a dismissal (or worse) of all deviants.

The Muslim Brethren also had their hierarchy, starting from small groups of "families" (*'usrahs*) of no more than five and later ten members, right up through several organizational levels culminating in the "general guide" (*al-murshid al-'amm*), with a consultative assembly and a general headquarters.[5] Potential members went through a probationary stage before being accepted as "active" (*'amil*), but even thereafter members were enjoined to repeat their oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*) at each meeting, and backsliders could be disciplined or even ejected from membership. There was

also a group known as the "rovers" (*jawwala*), clearly patterned on the Boy Scout movement. More ominous was the secret apparatus (*al-jihaz al sirri*), also known as the "special organization" (*al-nizam al-khass*) for carrying out its underground and often violent activities.

And the brethren did get involved in acts of violence against the British in the Canal Zone, in support of the Palestinians against the Zionists, and in attacking Egptian politicians seen as frustrating their goals. It was the assassination of Egyptian prime minister Nuqrashi Pasha on December 28, 1948, by a Muslim Brother that led to the government-instigated assassination of Hasan al-Banna less than two months later, on February 12, 1949.

Thereafter, the brotherhood went through a period of divided orientations. On the one hand, there was an effort to present a more moderate face and to gain at least grudging acceptance by the Egyptian regime. Symbolizing this tendency was the appointment in 1951 of Hasan al-Hudaybi, an Egyptian judge known for his moderate politics, to fill al-Banna's shoes. There were, however, others within the brotherhood who drew the opposite lesson from the violence and assassinations of the forties. Only resistance to the existing political establishment, they believed, would work.

The late 1940s and early 1950s brought many clandestine contacts between various brotherhood members and those Egyptian Free Officers who seized power in July 1952. For a time thereafter it looked as if the Muslim Brethren would be able to play an organizationally and ideologically dominant role in the new Egyptian regime being constructed by Jamal Abd al-Nasir and his fellow officers. All political parties had been banned, but the Muslim Brethren, not deemed a political party, was permitted a legal existence—for a time.

The brotherhood, however, was soon on collision course with the Free Officers, and this for a number of reasons. Nasser and his fellow officers, having in general a much more modernist and nationalist orientation, were not all that attuned to the brotherhood's fundamentalism. The one thing both the Free Officers and the Muslim Brethren shared was a keen sense that Egypt and Egyptians were being dominated and manipulated by outside forces, the British in particular. The Free Officers, however, did manage in 1954 to reach an agreement with that old oppressor, Britain, providing a conditional evacuation of British troops from the Suez Canal area and plans for determining the status of the Sudan (whether it would be united with Egypt or—as happened by 1956—opt for independence). The more radical elements of the Muslim Brethren opposed the agreement, and their opposition turned violent. When in October 1954 a Muslim Brother attempted to assassinate Nasser,[6] the stage was set for a governmental crackdown on the brotherhood.

The subsequent history of this organization, impressive in its size, organization, and fervor, that al-Banna had started from ever so modest beginnings in 1928 can be told in terms of its famous leader, Sayyid Qutb, who will be considered later. For now, what can be said about al-Banna as an ideologue?

Most observers see al-Banna as not nearly so logically coherent or comprehensive as either Mawdudi or Qutb—or, for that matter, Khomeini. Al-Banna, his critics and his partisans would probably agree, was more nearly a charismatic orator/preacher and a gifted organizer than a creative and consistent thinker.

Perhaps, al-Banna was, for this very reason, all the more effective. Scholars, usually somewhat removed from the hurly-burly of politics, often give too much weight to ideological clarity. In the real world, however, people rally around powerfully delivered messages that may well be incomplete, inconsistent, and even illogical.

An often cited statement by al-Banna was his description of the Muslim Brethren as "a Salafi movement, an orthodox way, a Sufi reality, a political body, an athletic group, a scientific and cultural society, an economic company and a social idea." Such a protean definition—"all things to all men"[7]—is in line with al-Banna's own vacillation concerning whether the brotherhood should claim to be above divisive politics or act as one of many political parties in Egypt's pluralistic polity. When it seemed that the brotherhood could thereby gain in strength, al-Banna was not averse to playing by the prevailing political rules.

Even so, al-Banna's essential conception of the brotherhood was clear. It was an all-embracing organization transcending political parties, indeed, making them unnecessary. He envisaged an Islamic utopia with no political parties, no class antagonism, and no legitimate differences of personal or group interests: the Islamist equivalent of the utopian Marxist classless society. In the case of the brotherhood, however, the utopia to be achieved in the future was based on restoring the utopia deemed to have existed in the past, at the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the rightly guided Caliphs.

Al-Banna's Islamic utopia also is in large measure a version of classic Muslim political thought (e.g., the good ruler ruling well, the "circle of equity," the *Shari'ah* as a comprehensive code of conduct valid for all time and place) adapted to modern times and terms.

Such an ideology, in effect, worked out in a more simplified fashion the basic tenets of the reformist Salafiyya school founded by Muhammad Abduh and continued by Abduh's principal disciple, Rashid Rida (1865–1935). The young al-Banna had been in contact with the followers

and the ideas of Rida. Al-Banna represents the more restrictive fundamentalist branch of thought and action growing out of the Salafiyya, just as secularizing nationalism reflects the more liberal tendency.

If Abduh may be said to have gone to great lengths to reconcile Islam to a liberal, democratic, and—yes—even individualist political stance, al-Banna advanced a more rigorously constraining pattern of group conduct that was to be, moreover, controlled by the state—provided, of course, that state had rulers who were properly Muslim as al-Banna understood the term. The end result to be achieved would produce a state controlling education and using it to instill the proper Muslim values, a state whose officials passed muster as both pious and religiously informed, a state that would implement social justice and also enforce a strict code of conduct on one and all. Not surprisingly, al-Banna favored the ultimate restoration of the caliphate, but he was realistic enough to accept—indeed, approve—the existence of separate Muslim states. Nor was nationalist sentiment to be deplored. Within appropriate bounds, nationalism, al-Banna held, was consistent with Islam.

Al-Banna's ideology was thoroughly, and sincerely, populist. He railed against Egypt's gaping economic inequalities. He was eloquent in citing the plight of millions of landless peasants or in calling for a greater social responsibility on the part of the "haves." Anyone with even a rudimentary idea of al-Banna's Egypt, with its stark contrast between pashas and peasants, its grinding poverty alongside luxurious villas, its widespread socioeconomic dislocation exacerbated by the demographic explosion and the massive rural-to-urban migration would surely understand the attraction of al-Banna's ideology.

Yet to many observers the Muslim Brethren became a dangerous group that deserved the label fascist. That it did develop into a movement boasting a secret organization bent on advancing its goals by any and all means, including assassination, is well documented. That it did not scruple to consider appropriate any available measures to come to power is also clear. There was little regard for the rules of liberal democracy in al-Banna's doctrines. How could there be, convinced as he was that God had provided His plan regulating all aspects of worldly life and that this plan could be readily understood by all?

Even so, to dub al-Banna's ideology and the organization it spawned fascism will not do. Structurally, a number of similarities link the Muslim Brethren to fascism, but the ideologies are quite different. Fascism offers a promethean vaunting of worldly heroism, places nationalism above all values, worships the leader, and is ambivalent toward—if not dismissing of—

scriptural religion. Al-Banna was not *il duce*. There was no equivalent of the Nazi leadership principle in his thought—quite the contrary. Yes, the Muslim Brethren placed a decided religious value on this-worldy affairs, but it was linked to the religious notion of the hereafter. Al-Banna accepted nationalism but only as a part of God's greater community—the *umma*. Totalitarian it was in ideology, if by totalitarian is meant covering all aspects of social and political life, but it was not totalitarian nationalism. The Muslim Brethren was a religious movement that embraced but transcended nationalism, not the other way round. Perhaps Hasan al-Banna's Muslim Brethren is best labeled an Islamist totalitarian movement.[8] As such it cultivated "true believers" with a mindset dividing the world into the good and the bad, the saved and the damned. Given this orientation, it was easy to sanctify any means, including violence, used to advance God's plan and to oppose God's enemies. As such, it was the prototype of many later Islamist movements.

Abu al-A'la Mawdudi, born in 1906, numbered among his ancestors those who had served the Moghul dynasty and, even earlier in time, had been connected with the Chishti Sufi order that had played a significant role in spreading Islam in the subcontinent. Sometime after the 1857 Indian Mutiny, members from both the paternal and maternal side of the family were to be found in service to the Muslim princely dynasty (the Nizams) ruling in Hyderabad, the last sizeable and somewhat autonomous Muslim polity under the British raj. The Nizams, however, ruled over a considerable Hindu majority, and the princely state of Hyderabad could be seen as a ghostly survivor, a Moghul Empire writ small.

Mawdudi grew up in a family context of nostalgia for past Muslim political glory, a distaste for infidel British rule, and a tenacious hanging on to what remained of traditional Muslim mores. In what might have seemed to be a step toward a different orientation, Mawdudi's father actually enrolled him in that very symbol of Islamic modernism and accommodation to the British raj—the Muslim Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh founded by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan. It is, perhaps, more telling that Mawdudi did not stay long at Aligarh but completed his education in law at Allahabad.[9]

Mawdudi's father, an ardent Sufi and traditionalist, attended to the education of his sons in their first years. It was only at age eleven that Mawdudi,

enrolled in a school at Aurangabad, was first introduced to modern subjects. When his father died five years later, Mawdudi dropped out of school and began while still in his teens a prodigious career in journalism. Indeed, during the years 1921–1924 he edited the party newspapers of the Jami'at-i Ulama-i Hind (Society of Indian Ulama).

It is sometimes suggested that Mawdudi, just like al-Banna, Qutb, and—in fact—most of the present-day Islamist leaders, never received the traditional education of the ulama class. This is not quite true. Tutors selected by his pious and puritanical father had introduced the young Mawdudi to what can properly be called a classical education in Islamic high culture. This included the study of Arabic and Persian, in addition to Urdu. Mawdudi relates in his memoirs that at the age of fourteen he translated Qasim Amin's *Al-Mar'a al-Jadida* (The New Woman) from Arabic to Urdu—no mean feat at any age.[10]

Then, while associated with the Society of Indian Ulama, he studied with an eminent religious scholar and later at a renown mosque/seminary in Delhi, earning in 1926 the certificate that entitled him to be numbered among the ulama. Yet, Mawdudi always identified himself as a journalist and was silent on his formal scholarly training, preferring to present himself as an autodidact.[11]

Mawdudi's formal education is, in fact, more properly distinguised from that of most other Sunni Islamists in the relatively slight exposure he had to modern studies, including English (which he later learned on his own) or any Western language.

In these early years the young Mawdudi was very much the Indian nationalist, having even written essays in praise of Congress Party leaders, including Gandhi. Moreover, before taking his editorial position with the Society of Indian Ulama he had worked for a pro-Congress Party paper. He was also caught up in the Khilafat movement, which, it will be recalled, was supported by Gandhi and the Congress Party.

By the mid-1920s the Khilafat movement was sinking into irrelevance, and Mawdudi was souring on nationalism. Then in 1925 came an incident that seemed to shape the Islamist orientation that he would maintain, and refine, during the remainder of his long life. In that year a Muslim killed a Hindu who had been agitating for the reconversion to Hinduism of low-caste Muslims. The tragic incident spawned a spate of publicity alleging the intolerance and rigidity of Islam and including the old canard about paradise being assured to any Muslim killing an infidel.[12]

In response Mawdudi wrote a series of newspaper articles later collected into a book on the subject of jihad in Islam. These articles were well received,

and the still young Mawdudi was embarked on his mission of providing an Islamist ideology to Muslims, and especially to the millions of Muslims in the subcontinent who, in spite of their numbers, were a vulnerable minority living amidst the Hindu majority.

Since Mawdudi rejected the idea of a nationalism that would unite Hindus and Muslims, one might have expected him to have joined the camp of those pressing for a Muslim nation-state, a Pakistan. It was not to be. Mawdudi fervently and consistently spoke out against nationalism, Muslim or otherwise. Indeed, when Mawdudi gathered some seventy-five followers to create the Jama'at-i Islami in 1941, he was challenging the nationalist Muslim League's celebrated Lahore Resolution of the previous year calling for a separate Muslim state.

Mawdudi's thinking in this matter was, as always with him, logical but quite idealistic in the sense of rejecting any compromise in principle. He was never to accept the notion that politics was the art of the possible. The Muslims of India, in his view, were not a nation to be defined by ethnicity or language or culture or even by a formal adherence to Islam. Muslims were a community to be distinguished from others only to the extent that they heeded and implemented God's divine plan as set out in the Qur'an and Sunna. Consistent with this manner of thinking, Mawdudi would resolve the plight of Indian Muslims by having a committed vanguard instruct and discipline others and thus eventually bring into existence a righteous community, a *salih jama'at*.[13] Muslims were in disarray and vulnerable not so much because of external factors such as British imperialism or a Hindu majority in India but rather because they had strayed from the straight path God had ordained for believers.

Better, in other words, to postpone independence indefinitely than to achieve an independent state based on other than truly Islamic principles. Mawdudi believed that the followers of Jinnah and the Muslim League were more nearly embarked on nationalizing Islam than creating an Islamic nation. He wanted none of it. Neither the overwhelmingly Hindu Congress Party seeking a single India that would embrace all religions nor the Muslim League attemping to construct a nation of Muslims (but not, by Mawdudi's stern logic, an Islamic nation) offered an acceptable choice.

The much more popular and powerful Muslim League viewed the Jama'at-i Islami as weakening Muslim ranks at a time when all should rally around the goal of an independent Pakistan. To opt out of the campaign for a Pakistan was, in their eyes, to play into the hands of the Congress Party. Mawdudi's response amounted to insisting that the task was to Islamicize first, then create a Muslim state.

With partition and the emergence of India and Pakistan as separate independent states in 1947, the dispute dividing the Jama'at-i Islami and the Muslim League became moot. The Jama'at split into two groups—those Muslims in what was now Pakistan and those left in India. Mawdudi had for several years before 1947 been living in what became Pakistan, and without hesitation he chose to remain there. Not having been able to cleanse, as he saw it, the Muslim League leadership of its secular nationalist orientation he now worked to transform the Pakistan they had created into a proper Islamic polity.

The Westernizing, secularist Muslim elite ruling Pakistan made much of Mawdudi's footdragging in the fight to create the state, but Mawdudi saw himself as being completely consistent. Since he had not succeeded in creating a *salih jama'at* first and thereafter a truly Islamic state, he would henceforth seek to Islamicize Pakistan.

The Jama'at was a designedly small party of the truly dedicated, not a coalition assembled by means of bargaining and compromise in order to win elections. Such has been the case both during the long period of Mawdudi's presidency (1941–1972) and thereafter. The Jama'at never became a mass political party and has over the years elected only small numbers of representatives at either the provincial or national level.

Yet, given Pakistan's pluralistic politics, the Jama'at has been able to act effectively as a single-issue lobby. Moreover, the single issue championed by the Jama'at has been difficult to challenge head on. How can a Pakistani politician be against an Islamic state? That is what everyone must want if the concept of a Pakistan makes any sense. And those who would reject Mawdudi's very strict definition of an Islamic state risk appearing less dedicated to that end.

Since unswerving consistency was always a hallmark of Mawdudi's ideology, his opponents could not readily label him manipulative or opportunistic. On the contrary, he could often catch out the ruling elite's inconsistent use of Islamic symbolism. A striking example was Mawdudi's stand in 1948 that the Pakistani government could not declare the fight against Indian rule in Kashmir to be a jihad while observing an Indian-Pakistani cease-fire. Pakistan could properly speak of a jihad only after declaring war against India (which would have been, of course, disastrous). Nothing popular about this argument at the time, but Mawdudi was absolutely correct in terms of Islamic law, and he managed to drive home the point in maintaining that a jihad could not be declared in circumstances of "hypocrisy."[14]

Mawdudi demonstrated the same consistency in an issue that scandalized liberal Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This was the deplorable cam-

paign to declare the Ahmadiyyah sect to be non-Muslims. Actions against this tiny minority that was, however, well represented in the educated elite (including the then Pakistani foreign minister) wreaked such havoc that martial law had to be imposed in 1953. Mawdudi, without approving the violence, did support the idea that the Ahmadiyyah could not be considered Muslims. The Ahmadiyyah saw one Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (thus the name, Ahmadiyyah) as the promised messiah, and this to Mawdudi was an unacceptable theological error, for Muhammad was the last divinely inspired person. The Prophet Muhammad was the "seal of prophecy."

Brought to trial before a military court for his role in the anti-Ahmadiyyah agitation, Mawdudi was sentenced to death, but this draconian judgment brought such a public protest that it was commuted to fourteen years in prison. He was actually released after having served twenty months.[15]

Unlike many Islamic modernists, Mawdudi never tried to tone down or reinterpret the literalist readings of scripture that would be most jarring to modern sensibilities. The argument, for example, that the non-Muslim *dhimmi* in Mawdudi's Muslim state becomes a second-class citizen does not faze him. The dhimmis, he would counter, are protected, permitted to follow their own religious practices, and released from certain duties such as serving in the armed forces. This compensates for disabilities such as being barred from many public offices, paying a tax imposed on non-Muslims (*jizya*), and having subordinate standing vis-à-vis Muslims in litigation. Dhimmis, according to his logic, who wanted to be full-fledged citizens of the Muslim state could convert, but the Muslim state will not pressure them. "There is no compulsion in (the Islamic) religion" (Quran 2:256). Those who do not convert wish only to be protected and left in peace. Thus, to Mawdudi, the circle of logic is completed.

Such is the continuing influence of Mawdudi that his ideology has become the norm for all Sunni Islamists, the principal themes of which may be outlined as follows:

1. The ineffable and undisputed sovereignty of God.
2. The vice-regency (the term is *khalifa*—caliph) of all believers.
3. These Muslim "caliphs"—that is, all pious, practicing Muslims—confine themselves to determining God's will as set out in the Qur'an and Sunna. There is no legislative function as such but only the duty of discovering and implementing the divine plan. The resulting system is a "theodemocracy" or a "democratic caliphate."[16]

4. Consultation (*shura*) is enjoined. The Muslim ruler must consult, but the concept of a government and an opposition or of different political parties is ruled out. In a properly constituted Islamic state, interests and needs are reconciled. This, in turn, downgrades the necessity for elections or changes in administrations. The ideal Muslim state and community, once realized, brings, seemingly, an "end of history." The lion lies down with the lamb.

5. In this idealized government political leaders and administrators must be not only competent but pious. Nor should they eagerly seek political office. Indeed, those who seek office are to be disqualified.[17]

6. Islam is comprehensive, embracing both public and private life. The idea that there could be religiously neutral social or political institutions is ruled out.

7. To the extent that government or public life falls short of this Islamist idea, it lapses into *jahiliyya*. This "age of ignorance" is not just a historic era coming to an end with the arrival of God's message to mankind through His prophet Muhammad. Jahiliyya exists in any time or any place in which the divinely ordained ideal community has not be realized. In Mawdudi's worldview many of the serious shortcomings that make for jahiliyya can be attributed to Western ideas and institutions.

Most of these basic ideas have been advanced in one form or another by other Muslim thinkers, past and present, but Mawdudi occupies a special niche in having produced a richer corpus of writings that in their consistency and coherence have been of great influence to others, including our third major Sunni Islamist, Sayyid Qutb.

Sayyid Qutb was born in an Upper Egyptian village in 1906, the son of a moderately prosperous farmer. His early schooling included the traditional Qur'anic school (kuttab), and he had memorized the Qur'an by the age of ten. While still in his early teens he moved to Cairo and completed his education at Dar al-'Ulum. The parallels with the life of Hasan al-Banna are striking. Born in the same year, provincials from families with good standing in their villages, they both received a traditional Islamic rote education in their earlier years and completed their training in Cairo, but not at al-Azhar. Neither of these two leading figures in twentieth-century

Islamist thought and action was a seminarian. Both chose careers in education.

Qutb's intellectual development, however, took a different tack from that of Banna until the late 1940s. Whereas al-Banna remained consistently within an Islamist mode throughout his life, Qutb during the 1920s and 1930s carved out a modest niche for himself as a writer and critic. He is believed to have been especially influenced by the eminent modernist writer/critic Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad.[18] Qutb's literary output in these years consisted of poetry, short stories, and criticism, and he was much taken with English literature, eagerly devouring all he could lay his hands on in Arabic translation. Not surprisingly, later in life, as a convinced Islamist, he expressed regret in having wasted time with such literary interests.

Yet his was not so much a sharp break from a belles-lettrist past to an adamant Islamist position as it was a natural development for this intense, subjective, and highly moralistic man. For that matter, al-'Aqqad, his early literary mentor, and others of the modernist school all began to elaborate upon Islamic themes in their writings from the late 1930s on.[19]

Another milestone in Qutb's intellectual odyssey to radical Islamism was the two years (1949–1950) he spent in the United States. Qutb, then an official of the Egyptian Ministry of Education, was sent to study educational administration. Soon after his return he joined the Muslim Brethren and from that time until his execution in 1966 Qutb had his mission: to formulate in writing and implement in action what he believed to be God's plan for mankind.

From one perspective, Qutb's visit to the U.S. was yet another link in the long chain of influential Egyptian intellectuals whose views had been shaped by having lived for a time in that attractive/repulsive West. The chain may be considered as having started with Shaykh Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi, whom Muhammad Ali posted to Paris in the 1820s to serve as "chaplain" of the Egyptian student mission. It continued right down to Qutb's older contemporaries and the literary lions of his day: Taha Husayn (1889–1973), Muhammad Husayn Haykal (1889–1956), and Tawfiq al-Hakim (1899–1987), who had all been students in Paris. Just such contacts contributed in no small measure to the broad spectrum of Westernizing influences on modern Egypt, ranging from liberal nationalism to Islamic modernism.

Not so for Sayyid Qutb. He was jolted by American racial prejudice (Qutb was swarthy) and by what he saw as America's anti-Arab and pro-Israel posture (he had arrived in the U.S. one year after the birth of Israel and the first Arab-Israeli war). His letters from America as well as the short

articles written in 1951 convey his antipathy.[20] Americans might smile smugly when reading of the American mores that evoked Qutb's displeasure. They included such details as dancing at church parties or the sexual innuendo of the popular song "Baby, It's Cold Outside." A closer reading, however, when set within the context of his many other writings, reveals a coherent perspective of the "Other" that provided a foil for better explicating Qutb's own religious program. Americans, to Qutb, were powerful and wealthy but emotionally primitive, too materialist and licentious. Most of all, Americans and the people of the West in general were racist and imperialist. "The white man is our primary enemy," Qutb maintained.[21]

Qutb's American experience probably sharpened his sense of a clash of civilizations—beleaguered Islam against threatening West, and to that extent it may have accelerated his intellectual journey to Islamist radicalism. Still, a more rounded look at his entire life indicates that he would have reached the same goal even without that time in the United States. One of his most famous works, *Social Justice in Islam*, first published in 1949, was written before his visit to America. *Social Justice* reveals Qutb as much more than just a religious nationalist bent on defending Egyptians and Muslims everywhere from the intrusive Other. He was also, and perhaps even more, a populist condemning the harsh lot of the common folk and scoring the Egyptian establishment, including the official ulama, for their inattention to the plight of most Egyptians.

Qutb in *Social Justice* even offered indirect praise of American "social justice" when insisting that it was acceptable for the American president to live in the luxurious White House since the American worker has his automobile and the wherewithal to take vacations with his family, but such was not the case in Eygpt. Qutb added:

> When there are millions who cannot afford the simplest dwelling, who in the twentieth century have to take tin cans and reed huts as their houses; when there are those who cannot even find rags to cover their bodies, it is an impossible luxury that a mosque should cost a hundred thousand guineas, or that the Ka'bah should be covered with a ceremonial robe, embroidered with gold.[22]

Qutb, moreover, followed the line of many leftists, including Communists, in singling out Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad and champion of the poor, for special praise.

There is, however, one more twist to the story. The favorable reference to the American worker and the following lines cited above were deleted from

all editions of *Social Justice* (there were many, as well as several translations, too) after 1954.[23] Did Qutb's populist orientation diminish in his later writings? Perhaps it is more accurate to see this theme as having been somewhat muted as he moved toward a larger conceptualization of three major forces in the world—Communism, capitalism, and Islam. In Qutb's evolving theory it was axiomatic that neither Communism nor capitalism but only Islam offered the solution needed.[24] To suggest that America or any other part of the non-Muslim world did rather well in providing at least material benefit to workers would have weakened Qutb's case. Better to emphasize Communist atheism, Western imperial aggressiveness, and the toadying of the Egyptian establishment to such outside forces. Qutb thus regarded all—the alien non-Muslims and the indigenous nominal Muslims—as living in a state of jahiliyya.

Here Qutb built on Mawdudi's ingenious reinterpretation of a venerable Muslim term—*jahiliyya*, or the time of "ignorance" before God's message to Muhammad—to make it describe not a historical period but a condition that can exist at any time. In the Mawdudi/Qutb formulation, even professed Muslims who do not live up to God's comprehensive plan for human life in this world and the world to come are living in a state of jahiliyya. Nor is the true Muslim who follows God's plan to the letter permitted simply to suffer in silence the wickedness of others, including those who claim to be Muslim. No, God alone possesses sovereignty (*hakimiyya*), and God alone is to be obeyed. Any individual and certainly any ruler who seeks to impose other than what God has mandated is to be resisted, for "governance belongs to God" (Qur'an 12:40). "Those who do not rule in accordance with what God has revealed are unbelievers" (Qur'an 5:47).[25] And resistance takes the form of jihad.

Accordingly, Qutb's mature political theory as worked out in his many writing throughout the 1950s and 1960s, including his six-volume Qur'anic commentary,[26] may be seen as a rigorously logical and consistent working out of the implications of his three concepts: jahiliyya, hakimiyya, and jihad. In simplest terms it comes down to this: God's sovereignty (hakimiyya) is exclusive. Men are to obey God alone. Men are to obey only rulers who obey God. A ruler who obeys God faithfully follows God's mandate. That mandate is clear and comprehensive. It is available for mankind's guidance in the Shari'ah. To set aside that clear and comprehensible divine mandate is to lapse into jahiliyya. Rulers who so act are to be resisted. Resistance under these circumstances is a legitimate act of jihad. The ruler's claim to being a Muslim ruling a Muslim state is null and void.

It cannot be stressed too often just how much Qutb's hardline interpreta-

tion departs from the main current of Islamic political thought throughout the centuries. Yes, it does evoke the memory of the early Kharijite movement, with their all-or-nothing approach to politics (*la hukma ila lillah*, "judgment only to God"), but in the eyes of the great majority of Muslims, both scholars and "laity," *Kharijite* was a term of abuse. They were seen as having brought strife and anarchy (*fitna*) to the early Muslim community by resisting Muhammad's son-in-law and fourth caliph, Ali, who is venerated by both Sunnis and the Shi'a. It was a Kharijite who later assassinated Ali. Thus, when Egypt's President Sadat dubbed the Islamists of his day "Kharijites" he was placing them outside the acceptable boundaries of Muslim orthodoxy. His description, sadly for him, soon became even more appropriate. Sadat's assassins came from the ranks of these radical Islamists, implementing Qutb's ideology. It was Kharijism redux fourteen centuries later.

Qutb also buttressed his hardline jihadist ideology by reference to Ibn Taimiyya (1268–1328), who justified a jihad against the Mongols. Why? The Mongol rulers had embraced Islam but did not apply the Shari'ah. Therefore, they should be resisted. This was just the legal finding that the Mamluk opponents of the Mongols were looking for. The Mamluks themselves were hardly paragons of Islamic virtue, but they did cater rather better to the interests and concerns of the ulama. In a word, the precise historical case Ibn Taimiyya judged was less an issue of black versus white than of gray versus less gray. The legal principle that he asserted, however, emerged in a more categorical form: even nominal Muslim rulers not living up to the high standards of Muslim orthodoxy should be resisted. They would rightly become the object of a jihad. This, of course, explains why Ibn Taimiyya has become the champion of modern-day Islamists.

Ibn Taimiyya has the deserved reputation as one of the most powerful Muslim thinkers. He was no minor figure known only to specialists until discovered and dusted off by present-day Islamists. In fact, Ibn Taimiyya greatly influenced Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, founder of the strict official Wahhabi doctrine followed in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, at the tactical level of resisting governmental censorship the Islamists could rest assured that governments might ban Qutb's works but not the works of a master of the tradition Muslim canon such as Ibn Taimiyya. Even so, all things considered, Ibn Taimiyya's ideas on this issue are not in the mainstream of Muslim political thought. The case for this assertion was presented in part 1, where it was argued that the dominant Muslim political tradition tilted toward quietism and acceptance of any political authority provided it did not impede individuals believers in carrying out their religious duties. That rulers should *impose* religious orthodoxy or orthopraxy was very much a

minority view. The predominant Muslim position throughout the ages was that those who made the profession of faith were deemed to be Muslims. The question of how faithfully the Muslim implemented the divinely ordained plan was a matter between each believer and God. It was not for Muslims to "excommunicate" other Muslims. Thus, the notion of professed Muslims lapsing into jahiliyya and becoming legitimate targets of a jihad represents a bold reworking of Islamic political thought.

Such ideas were political dynamite. They had been during the 1930s and 1940s, in the years of Hasan al-Banna's active leadership of the Muslim Brethren. They were no less so from 1950 on, when Sayyid Qutb, after returning from America, embarked on his explicitly Islamist years brough to an end sixteen years later by his trial and execution in 1966.

It is not certain exactly when Qutb joined the Muslim Brethren. It may have been as late as 1952. In any case, his writings had given him a standing that placed him quite soon in charge of the brethren's publishing and pros-elytizing activities.[27]

That same year, 1952, brought the Free Officers' coup and the advent of what became the Nasser era. Since many of those Free Officers (including Sadat) had developed close ties with the Muslim Brethren during their years of clandestine preparation, it appeared that the brethren were destined to play a major role after 1952. That brief honeymoon between the Free Officers and the Muslim Brethren, as noted earlier in discussing al-Banna, lasted less than two years, to be followed by harsh repressive actions through the remainder of the Nasser era.

Qutb himself experienced a dramatic rise and fall in his relations with the Nasserists. For roughly the first six months after the July 1952 Free Officers coup he was viewed as having "eaten, slept, and voted on matters of policy with the (Free) Officers trying to influence their plans for the country."[28] It has even been suggested that Nasser contacted Qutb with the idea that he become secretary general of the Liberation Rally.[29] Whatever the precise nature of Qutb's ties with the Free Officers, it was short-lived, following if not even slightly preceding the rapid decline of ties between the Revolutionary Command Council and the Muslim Brethren. Within a year of the July 1952 coup the Free Officers were bent on bringing the Muslim Brethren to heel. The ups and downs of this struggle, involving as well the Nasserist split with the older officer recruited to represent the new government in those early days, General Muhammad Naguib, offer a fascinating case study in postrevolutionary consolidation of power. For present purpos-es, however, it will suffice to note that Qutb was arrested and detained for a short time in early 1954, in the first and incomplete showdown with the

Muslim Brethren. He was again arrested in the massive arrests that followed the failed attempt of a Muslim Brother to assassinate Nasser in October 1954.

Qutb was destined to spend the next ten years of his life in prison. Struggling against poor health and harsh treatment, he nevertheless managed to produce an impressive corpus of writings during those years of confinement.

He was released in May 1964, the official reason for commuting the remaining five years of his fifteen-year prison term being his poor health, but it is generally accepted that none other than Iraqi president Abd al-Salam Arif, then on a state visit to Egypt, interceded to get him freed. He was to enjoy only somewhat more than a year of freedom before being arrested with many other Muslim Brothers accused of planning, yet again, assassination of Nasser and the seizure of power. Tried by a special military tribunal beginning in April 1966, he and others were sentenced to death. Sayyid Qutb was hanged on August 29, 1966.

The Nasserist military tribunal sought to make it a show trial that would expose the un-Islamic extremism of Qutb and his followers. The prosecution produced experts in Islamic law and tradition to question and challenge Sayyid Qutb, drawing on the texts of his copious writings and especially his most famous book, penned in prison, *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Signposts on the Way). The trial actually gave Qutb one final forum to present his ideology in severe and uncompromising fashion. Those many Muslims (surely a majority) who just as in past centuries deplore acts of fitna and cringe at the idea of calling a fellow Muslim an infidel would not have felt at ease with Qutb's views as aired in these proceedings. Still, hanging a man for his writings (and Qutb's involvement in an alleged assassination and coup conspiracy was not effectively established) did not sit well with liberal opinion. The manifestly stacked nature of the trial, leading to a preordained conclusion,[30] was hardly designed to educate the public concerning the justice of the government's case.

As for those many Muslims in Egypt and elsewhere inclined toward radical fundamentalism, the trial and hanging of Sayyid Qutb provided yet another martyr, an Islamic *shahid*.

Three Sunni Islamist leaders, all born in the first decade of the twentieth century. All learned in Islamic studies but not members of the religious

establishment, the ulama. The only one whose formal studies entitled such a standing, Mawdudi, deliberately avoided the title. All found themselves strugging against existing government (two killed by their rulers) but not so much to claim the individual's or the group's freedom from government control as to demand a divinely ordained authoritarian government. One, al-Banna, was an accomplished organizer and (if the Christian term be permitted) pastoral preacher. The other two were more intellectual. Mawdudi was more elitist and made no effort at mass political organization. Qutb, with a populist streak, worked within the framework of the most widespread religio-political movement in modern times—the Muslim Brethren.

Many other Sunni Islamist leaders could be mentioned. Some have attained political power, or some measure thereof, such as Pakistan's General Zia, Hasan Turabi of Sudan, or Malaysia's Anwar Ibrahim.[31] Others have assembled and led opposition groups: Abbasi Medani of the Algerian FIS (Islamic Salvation Front), Rashid Ghannoushi of the Tunisian MTI (Islamic Tendencies Movement), or Ahmad Yasin of the Palestinian Hamas. Some have been more radical and terrorist, others more prone to work within the system. For all, however, the ideas of al-Banna, Mawdudi, and Qutb provided the ideological bedrock of Sunni Islamism.