Islamist Transformations in Charitable Work

Prepared by: Ibrahim El Houdaiby

Law and Society Research Unit

September 2019

Table of content

1. Introduction[1]

1.1 Where did the Islamists Go?

The Egyptian revolution of 2011 and the political volatility that followed upended the structures of charitable work in Egypt. Whereas the outset of the third millennium saw an expansion of the 'philanthropic quasi-free market', with various parties competing to attract volunteers and funding to deploy in service of 'development,' the regime formed in the aftermath of July 2013 repositioned charitable work as a vital sphere for its exercise of government. Its involvement is no longer restricted to providing legal regulation, but extends to running charitable institutions and participating in the sector from within. This has contributed to narrowing competition, redefining the purposes of and main actors in philanthropy, and weakening civic influence over the direction it takes.

Islamists have not been immune from these transformations. In the years preceding the revolution, they were significant contributors to the field, active not only through institutions subordinate or close to official Islamist groups (such as the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) or the Alexandrian Salafi Call), or traditional civic groups (most significantly, al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya), but also through new institutions such as Resala and Life Makers (Sunna' al-Hayah). These institutions emerged in the decade preceding the revolution, bringing new human, financial, and intellectual resources to the philanthropic market, their activities intersecting with those of existing institutions to reshape the entire field. As the margin for competition shrank, Islamists were crowded out. Most were shut out of the field entirely with the seizure or closure of their institutions; the rest were hemmed in by additional legal and political restrictions. Declining Islamists were soon replaced by other Islamic institutions, mostly affiliated to al-Azhar and the official religious establishment,

which emerged in the aftermath of July 2013 as a junior partner in the ruling alliance, and, not unlike its governing allies, expanded its presence in the philanthropic market through numerous institutions. This paper examines the shifts in Islamists' charitable work. It focuses on formal institutions whose activities are regulated by law. It posits that four factors contributed to defining the fate and course of action of Islamist philanthropic activities, namely the legal framework governing each institution, the institution's position vis-à-vis the conflict between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood, the degree to which the institution relies on volunteers for its operation, and the nature of the platforms from which the institution's work is conducted.

In terms of legal frameworks, Law 70/2017 regulating civic institutions imposed significant restrictions on the establishment, funding, and operation of civic organizations, but it is not the sole statute regulating charitable organizations. Other frameworks are less restrictive, such as the laws establishing and regulating the operation of the Tahya Misr Fund, (which is subordinate to the prime minister's office and enjoys the president's patronage), and Bayt al-Zakah wa al-Sadaqat (the Zakat Foundation), which is overseen by the Sheikh of al-Azhar. As to the second factor, the September 2013 ruling of the Cairo Court for Expedited Matters that banned the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the subsequent Cabinet decree forming an asset seizure committee, along with the lack of any objective criteria for inclusion on the seizure list, severely constrained Brotherhood allies and sympathizers. At the same time, however, restrictions on some institutions were unofficially relaxed, despite their being subject to Law 70/2017, thanks to their operators' close ties with high state officials, most importantly for our this study is Ali Gomaa, former high mufti, member of the Azhar Senior Scholars Council, head of the board of trustees of the Misr El-Kheir foundation, and a senior official with several other institutions. Regarding volunteerism, the downturn in volunteers for charitable activities (for reasons to be discussed below) and attempts by institutions to retain them

---

and attract new volunteers posed various challenges for organizations such as Life Makers and Resala, whose response to the new circumstances set them apart from other institutions less reliant on volunteers. As for operating platforms, there is greater tolerance for institutions whose work is linked to a particular mosque—these are activities that are more properly charity- than development-oriented—than for those wholly independent of mosques or part of a broader mosque network (again for reasons to be discussed below).

The institutional philanthropic sector formed in the wake of July 2013 consists of five types of institutions. The "star" or mega-institutions[2] are run by ruling partners, receive the lion's share of funding and grants, and administer and steer the sector from within. For our purposes, the most important of these are the Tahya Misr Fund, the Zakat Foundation, and Misr El-Kheir and its sister organizations (institutions administered in part by Ali Gomaa). All of them share three features: they rely on paid staff rather than volunteers; they are free, to varying degrees and for different reasons, of restrictive laws; and their top officials are closely associated with the regime. The second type includes institutions that deploy volunteers with a developmental outlook, most importantly Life Makers and Resala. While their work is not linked to mosques, they depend on volunteers with Islamist leanings and motivations. As a result, they are forced to balance constant regime pressure to demonstrate loyalty with pressure from their own volunteers, who are, skeptical (if not outright hostile) to the regime due to their association with the revolution or Islamist groups. Institutions linked to the Muslim Brotherhood are the third type; such associations have ei-

ther been shut down entirely or were confiscated and then reconstituted with different administrative boards, as is the case with the Islamic Medical Association, whose board is now chaired by Ali Gomaa. The fourth type comprises institutions based in mosques and working primarily in traditional charitable activities. Such organizations rely on a different mode of volunteerism than the aforementioned institutions, to be explored below; they combine proselytizing and philanthropy and typically are not involved in development activities. Each of these institutions operates from a single mosque, and the few that have networks extending beyond that (notably al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iyya) allay security apprehensions by underscoring the independence of each of their "branches." The final type includes small institutions formed in the period between the years 2011 to 2013, a period in which restrictions were lifted on civic action and a huge number of civic initiatives flourished, most of which subsequently withered as the political winds shifted. The remaining few attempt to keep that brief period alive in a now hostile climate. As a result, they face challenges with financial and human resources as well as a restrictive legal environment.

1.2 Research Methods and Obstacles

This paper seeks to update social and legal researchers' understanding of civil society, contemporary Islamist trends in Egypt, and the impact of changes in governance on them through a study of institutional philanthropy and transformations in the legal and political environment over the past two decades. It studies the role of Islamists in the sector, examining the ways in which major actors have coped with changes, and the influence of these shifts on them. The paper draws on: 1) literature on philanthropy and particularly in Egypt, as well as literature on economic and political change, especially the rise of neoliberalism and its impact on charitable work and the state's relationship with and involvement in it; 2) desk research, which includes a review of the legal and policy regulations of the charitable sector

---

2   Amani Qandil identifies a small number of institutions, which she terms "stars," that receive the lion's share of funding, thus enabling them to maintain staff of more than 700 employees. See al-Jam'iyat al-Ahliya fi Misr wa Sanawat al-Makhatir, 32. This paper adopts that term to describe those institutions that meet these criteria. Star institutions are close to the political authority, which manages the institutional civic sphere through them.

and other relevant laws and court rulings, as well as a review of institutions, particularly Islamist institutions, working in the sector, including their websites, publications, and relevant secondary sources; 3) field research, which involved a series of interviews and focus group discussions with relevant actors, including staff and volunteers with charitable institutions, economists, and legal scholars.

Researchers organized three workshops in Cairo in the summer of 2018, bringing together current and former officials and volunteers from the field. Due to security restrictions and the difficulty of reaching activists in the field, workshops were not organized based on geographic location, social background, gender, or age, which limited the researchers' ability to sufficiently consider these important factors in the analysis and necessarily led them to take a more general view of the field. For the same reason, the researchers did not conduct interviews with recipients of charitable and development institutions' services. This in turn precluded the study from answering questions about different modes of legitimacy, its limits, and other issues that require a comprehensive field study of service recipients.

Due to the general curtailment of field research in Egypt and the subsequent refusal of several institutions to participate in this research, major actors were excluded from the field study. This includes, most significantly, institutions affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, which a court designated a terrorist group in 2014 and whose assets and institutions were subsequently confiscated. The researchers were unable to make direct contact with any of the group's activists in charitable work. It also includes the Ansar al-Sunna Association and the closely associated Nour Party; both represent the main faction of the Salafi trend. All the researchers' attempts to include them in the study or interview them failed.

Field interviews focused on two major actors: Resala and Life Makers, which were the most influential in shaping the civic "market" at the turn of the century. They overlapped with other Islamists in terms

of activities, volunteers, and finances, and their influence has extended to the regime of July 2013. In addition to these two central institutions, the field research included other important institutions, such as Misr El-Kheir, al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya, and several smaller, less influential associations. Studying these institutions enables us to spotlight transformations in the legal context, political environment, and interactions between Islamists, which in turn aids understanding of changes undergone by the two most important missing parties in the study: the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi Call.

Because of current political and security conditions and concerns for participants' safety, the researchers have withheld the names of interviewee and workshop participants names, especially those of current and former volunteers, administrators, and staff members with charitable institutions, who are likely to incur professional or security harm due to their involvement with this research.

Finally, and aside from security restrictions on social research, there was the issue of distinguishing Islamic/st from other philanthropic institutions. Distinguishing Islamists from others in Egypt is already challenging, and the challenge is magnified because charitable institutions, whether labeled Islamist or not, deploy Islamic rhetoric in promoting their activities. Their outreach campaigns typically take place in the month of Ramadan, and they rely on prominent Muslim personalities—scholars of Islamic jurisprudence, preachers, etc.—to urge people to donate to their projects. Most Egyptians contributing to these charitable activities consider their donations a type of religious devotion.[3] Standard definitions of Islamists are of little help, for they are either too restrictive, limiting Islamism to its political manifestations and consequently excluding significant actors such groups associated with al-Azhar

---

3   For example, research indicates that more than 90 percent of Egyptian families who donate to charity do so with the intent of giving religious alms. See Adel Amir, "al-Jam'iyat al-Khayriya fi Misr wa Hajm Infaqiha," Diwan al-Arab, 1 June 2017.

and Sufis,[4] and even some Salafi groups at times,[5] or too loosely defined, accepting rhetoric in publicity and promotional campaigns as the sole criterion, and therefore rendering every group potentially Islamist.[6] With keen awareness of the difficulties inherent in defines Islamists as groups of persons, organized in institutional forms or otherwise, that act to cultivate or express views, ethos, emotions or sensibilities that are explicitly linked to Islam.[7] Such a definition includes political Islamist movements,

Salafis, and groups formed around new preachers, as well as al-Azhar and its affiliated institutions and various Sufi groups.

---

4   For example, Soner Cagaptay defines Islamism as an ideology that is anti-Semitic, anti-Zionist, and hostile to Christianity, capitalism, and communism (see "Muslims vs. Islamists," the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 27 Jan. 2010). This definition excludes most Sufis and renders Islamists as overall anti-life, making them easy political and military targets. Despite the crudeness of this definition—offered by a director of a research program at a prominent Washington think tank—it is illustrative of a general tendency to associate Islamists with evil and contrast them with forces for good in the Islamic world. What constitutes good depends on the author's politics but often includes Sufis. Some writers may even describe Sufi groups as heretical or unrepresentative of the Sunni juridical and doctrinal heritage, lauding this as a positive feature.

5   See for example S. Hamid, Sufis, Salafis and Islamists: The Contested Grounds of British Islamic Activism (London: Taurus, 2016), which contrasts the three parties in a way that excludes Salafis from the definition of Islamist. Other literature similarly considers Salafis a force independent of Islamists, such as R. Meijer, ed., Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). These writings evince a tendency to limit the term Islamist to the Muslim Brotherhood and sister groups that were influenced by or evolved out of it.

6   For example, Shahab Ahmed considers a thing, activity, or subject Islamist if its meaning is acquired through "hermeneutical" engagement with revelation in its three dimensions: the text, pretext, and con-text. See What Is Islam? On the Importance of Being Islamic (New York: Princeton University Press, 2015). Using this definition, philanthropy in Egypt is Islamist in toto, based as it is on Islamic meanings of Zakat. Although this definition is useful in other contexts, in a study of the Egyptian charitable sector, it is inadequate to distinguish the relevant actors from one another.

7   See Amr Abdelrahman's paper in this project.

2. Foundations: Theoretical Introduction and Historical Beginnings

2.1 The Liberal Order and Governing Factors

Civic associations appeared in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.[8] however, their activities were limited to the cultural domain. They only expanded their activities to include philanthropic and development-oriented work in the Liberal Age (1923-1952),[9] which also saw the articulation of the social question, and emergence of the population as a question of government.[10] Civic institutions' role in community organization brought them into a relationship of 'doubling' with the nascent political authority, both creating one another's condition of possibility in a relationship that was nonetheless full of tensions.[11] The relationship between the two parties was therefore founded on conflict, though less an existential conflict than a territorial dispute; in the final analysis, both parties needed the other.

Over the last two centuries, the dispute between the political authority and civic institutions manifested itself in two interrelated areas. First, is the question of the sources of legitimacy. For people running civic institutions, the legitimacy of associations is derived from their voluntary will to found them, since the institution is an arena for the disposal of private property; in contrast, the political authority, considering civic associations to be involved in governing holds that it bestows legitimacy in the form of official legal status. The second area is the degree of independence enjoyed by civic institutions, which has been determined in various historical moments based on three factors: the dominant form of legitimacy, the central authority's need for civic institutions' contribution in government functions,[12] and the ability of civic associations to maneuver and exploit the regime's needs.

Political authority utilized two channels to control this sector: the prerogatives of state sovereignty, and law. The former entails the regulation of the civic sector by "sovereign decisions" and granting substantial discretionary power to administrative bodies and the security personnel. With the latter channel, a set of objective rules are articulated to regulate the sector. A greater reliance on law tends to (at least partially) privilege the claim that founders' will is the source of the associations' legitimacy, for law functions as an administrative regulatory framework allowing minimal room for the prerogatives of sovereignty. With the exception of the revolutionary moment extending between 2011

---

8   The first charitable association seems to be the Greek Association, established in 1821 to serve the Greek community. It was followed by the Egypt Institute Association in 1868 and the Geographic Association in 1875. The Islamic Charitable Association, founded in 1878, was the first "Islamist" association, while the Commendable Endeavors Association, founded in 1892, was the first charitable one. A review of the history of Islamist associations shows that they emerged as a response to Western missionary efforts and later Christian associations established in the same period, such as the Coptic Tawfiq Association, founded in 1891.

9   Qandil, al-Jam'iyat al-Ahliya fi Misr wa Sanawat al-Makhatir, 13. This expansion appears to be linked to attempts by elites operating these institutions to create platforms that would allow them share power with the British and the monarchy.

10   O. Elshakry, The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

11   J. Barkan, Corporate Sovereignty: Law and Government Under Capitalism, (Minneapolis; The University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 6.

12   This is a primary feature of the political authority's relationship with civic institutions. Narrowing the margin of independence enhances the regime's ability to steer the civic sector and its resources toward particular political, economic, and social ends while simultaneously limiting the capacity of institutions to play an effective role in governance, by rendering them de facto state institutions. Expanding the margin of independence lets civic institutions contribute more effectively to the management of society, but it erodes the regime's ability to exploit them. In the case of total independence, meaning the lack of all legal regulation of their activities, such institutions could become an alternate power base.

and 2013, state sovereignty has remained the predominant channel through which the civic sector is managed, even at times when law was somewhat consequential. Since the beginning of Liberal Age, the political authority has managed its institutional relationship with the civic sector through laws and two principal bodies: the Ministry of Endowments (MOE) and the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MOSS).

When the MOE was established in 1913, its authority over endowments was limited to administering them in accordance with the terms established by the endower.[13] This changed with the issuance of Law 48/1946, which Egyptianized the administration and certification of endowments. The law distinguished between charitable and civic endowments. It further permitted an endower of property other than mosques to rescind his endowment, thereby retaining his control of the endowed property and the disposal thereof. In turn, oversight of the endowment remained a live issue and hence the object of dispute and power struggles. This necessarily changed the function of the MOE, enhancing its custodial/political role beyond its previous administrative/regulatory role.

The Ministry of Social Solidarity was established as an expression of the newly articulated "social problem."[14] and from the outset, it was entrusted with

regulating civic associations. Law 49/1945 reflected the rulers' willingness to share the responsibilities of government with the local elites running civic institutions: the law was mostly administrative, not allowing for any substantive government intervention in these associations. It was not until 1951 that associations were viewed as a threat to the state's monopoly over the exercise of government. Law 66/1951 added two restrictions to the operation of civic associations. That law added two important conditions for the operation of civic associations: it required social associations to notify the authorities within 30 days of establishment and prohibited them from "exceeding in their activities the purpose for which they were founded." It also restricted the right to participate in founding an association.[15]

2.2 Development in the National Liberation State

The postcolonial state embarking on "the struggle for development" had its impact on the relationship between the regime and charitable institutions. The Free Officers' assumption of power coincided with the rise of liberation movements in various countries and the hegemony of an economic discourse emphasizing the state's leading role in development.[16] The regime extended its power over the civic sector with the goal of resources to the achievement of its economic and social goals. At the height of its power, rulers used to institutional arms— the MOE and MOSS —to achieve these aims.

Successive laws reduced the importance of the endower's terms, giving this power to the ministry

---

13   At its inception, the ministry's work was limited to certifying that the endowment document met the necessary legal conditions, overseeing endowments without an administrator in accordance with the endowers' terms, and ensuring that endowment administrators acted in accordance with the endowers' terms. In other words, prior to the Liberal Age, an endowment made for legitimate purposes was entirely subordinate—in its administration and disposal of assets—to the endower's terms, independent from his person. See the Ottoman edict establishing the Endowments Ministry, al-Waqa'i' al-Misriya, 20 Nov. 1913.

14   The ministry was created in 1939, at the height of the Liberal Age. Its tasks included overseeing acts of charity, cooperative associations, orphanages, and the poor, the disabled, and beggars, as well as supervising the Prisons Department, criminal rehabilitation institutions, and the improvement of conditions for workers and farmers. See the royal edict creating the Ministry of Social Affairs, al-Waqa'i' al-Misriya, no. 84, 24 Aug. 1939.

---

15   For example, the law denied persons convicted of felonies and crimes of moral turpitude, vagrants, and suspects of the right to found an association.

16   See for example S. Amin, Re-Reading the Postwar Period: An Intellectual Itinerary (London: Monthly Review Press, 1994).

instead.[17] The ministry became the de facto owner of the endowed property, previously perceived as "God's property". The MOE's budget was incorporated into the state budget in 1953, after which the role of the ministry was gradually geared toward religious guidance.[18] This shift was completed with the adoption of Law 103/1961 on the regulation of al-Azhar, which made subordinate to the Ministry and turned them both into a single ministerial portfolio. The Ministry of Social Affairs enhanced its control over charitable institutions with Law 348/1956 and Law 32/1964, which tightened the state's grip on civil society and restricted charitable and civic work by two primary means: affirming the state's sovereign prerogative to delineate the sphere of legal institutional work and prohibit informal associations

operating outside this legal domain,[19] and tightening control of existing lawful institutions.[20]

State control over civil society peaked in the mid 1960s, before the 1967 military defeat. Endowments no longer constituted a material basis sufficient to guarantee some margin of civic independence from the central authority or support institutional claims to legitimacy. The political authority was able to steer associations and institutions by choosing their fields of operation, the personnel in charge of them, and the size of their expenditure, and controlling their financial resources; it dominated the religious sphere by extending its control over al-Azhar and mosques. But this situation was not long lived. The military defeat and ensuing shifts in the regime's political outlook, combined with Anwar al-Sadat's assumption to power, partially undermined state hegemony.

The most significant development in philanthropy during Sadat's tenure and the first decade of Hosni Mubarak's rule, from 1970 to 1990, was the Islamic awakening. It originated among university students and from there moved to major mosques. al-Jama'a al-Islamiya and the MB, followed later by the Salafi Call, were the most important streams in the awakening. Political and economic development allowed these association some extralegal room for maneuver.[21] But this shift was not coupled with changes to the legal framework governing charitable work. Most of these groups' activities were not regulated by the restrictive laws issued in the Nasserist period, but were rather extralegally tolerated by the se-

---

17 For example, Law 180/1952 annulled both family and joint endowments not dedicated "purely to good works," giving oversight to the ministry, thus empowering it to redirect these endowments. Law 247/1953 allowed the ministry to redirect one-fourth of each endowment to purposes deemed more worthy "without regard to the endower's terms." Law 296/1954 made the ministry the administrator of endowments "provided the endower did not specify himself as administrator," thereby expanding the sphere under the ministry's control and the resources at its disposal. Law 30/1957 permitted changes to the administrative terms of charitable endowments "with the approval of the Supreme Endowment Council," which was subordinate to the ministry.

18 The role of the Endowments Ministry gradually shifted toward religious guidance. It began when it assumed the authority to review and approve printed copies of the Quran. Later, Law 157/1960 gave it the authority "to administer mosques...and guide those operating them so that they may perform their religious mission correctly." As such, it became responsible not only for the administration of mosques as physical structures, but for the content of religious discourse as well. The shift continued after al-Azhar was incorporated into the ministry. With the ministry now a primarily Islamic institution, the state returned Coptic endowments to the church, it being deemed unacceptable for them to remain under the authority of an Islamic ministry.

---

19 For example, the law criminalized fundraising outside the framework of legally recognized institutions and gave the administrative body the right to refuse to recognize civic institutions on vague grounds. It also vested the power to dissolve institutions with the executive rather than the judiciary.

20 It did this by disqualifying persons denied the exercise of their political rights and strictly limiting activities by institutions to persons legally registered with them, as well as numerous financial restrictions.

21 Interview with a person responsible for charitable work in the Islamic Group, Cairo, July 2018.

curity apparatus, part of an arrangement that gave Islamists greater room to maneuver than they had when the clash between Nasser and the Brotherhood was at its peak. This arrangement permitted the political authority to benefit from Islamists' charitable and political efforts to compensate for its own social role, greatly diminished amid the shift in political orientation, while retaining the capacity to stop activities if they exceeded permissible bounds. In this period, Islamist-controlled mosques were a base for both religious outreach (da'wa) and philanthropy. There was virtually no legally organized Islamist charitable work, except for al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya and the Ansar al-Sunna Association, both established before the Nasserist restrictions, in 1912 and 1926 respectively, and they, too, organized their activities through a network of mosques they administered.

3. The 90s and the New Millennium: a New Model of Philanthropy

3.1 Earthquakes and Aftershocks

In the early 1990s, Egypt was hit with three earthquakes: the economic crisis, culminating in President Mubarak's announcement of the 1000-day plan to liberalize the economy; a literal seismic tremor that killed and injured thousands and left 50,000 people homeless, exposing the state's inability to provide assistance; and a security convulsion that wracked the country as the armed confrontation between the Islamic Group and the police flared and the war on terrorism escalated.

The existing structure of institutional philanthropy cracked under the force of these quakes. Amid the war on terrorism and economic transformation, the security apparatus played a greater role in domestic affairs. The police budget shot up from $583 million in the early 1990s to $3.3 billion in 2002,[22] and the Ministry of Interior's State Security Investigations Services (SSI) became the main arm managing civil society. Formal/legal regulation became less important throughout the 1990s, as the state of emergency was institutionalized. Economic liberalization reduced the state's social role, as demonstrated by the steep decline in social spending, from 12 percent of all spending in 1982 to just 4 percent by 2000.[23] Egypt simultaneously increased its reliance on foreign aid, whose donors pressured the regime to grant civil society greater freedom to operate. Consequently, civil society institutions came to play a greater role in mitigating the adverse impacts of economic liberalization and maintaining a degree of social stability. Civic associations operated in le-

---

22   H. Frisch, "The Egyptian Army and Egypt's Spring," The Journal of Strategic Studies 36 (2013): 180–204.

23   Soliman, Samer. Al-Nizam al-qawi wa-l-dawla al-da'ifa: Idara al-azma al-maliyya wa-l-taghir al siyasi fi 'ahd Mubarak. (Cairo: Dar li-l-nashr wa-l-tawsi', 2006).

gal gray zones, determined not by law but by SSI, based on its assessment of the regime's needs and its ability to handle donors. As the threat of terrorism grew with the Islamist insurgency, SSI interventions in the charitable sector aimed at creating space for Islamist youth activity away from violence while ensuring that the sector continued to operate. SSI intervened directly in the field by vetting the establishment of civic associations and their board members.

This was the framework governing the field throughout the 1990s. Police showed no tolerance for the militant al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya and shut down all the group's charitable activities—the Imbaba clashes of 1992 marking the most significant moment in this era. In contrast, police gave greater latitude to institutions affiliated with other Islamist factions. The MB expanded its investment in social assistance offered through mosques and clinics, as well as charitable associations, whose establishment and administrative boards were approved through conflict and negotiation between SSI and the MB. The Islamic Medical Association—affiliated with the Brotherhood and founded in the late 1970s—established its first hospital in 1993. The charitable activities of the Salafi Ansar al-Sunna also expanded. Relevant literature charts growing Islamist philanthropic activity, particularly in the medical field through clinics associated with mosques.

The conflict with armed groups also spurred the rise of the official religious establishment as the state's ideological arm.[24] Its influence consequently increased, as demonstrated by the MOE's heightened control over mosques through annexation (under Law 157/1960). Al-Azhar, under the leadership of Sheikh Gad al-Haqq Ali Jad al-Haqq, also assumed a leading public position, seen for example in the growing number of Azhar academies established during his tenure and in his appearance—and after him Sheikh Mohammed Sayyed Tantawi—on a daily television program. Nevertheless, like associations, mosques remained a site of negotiations between

police and Islamists. Security was relatively tolerant of mosques operated by the Brotherhood and cooperative Salafis,[25] which often provided charitable and social services.

3.2 Neoliberalism and a New Order

By the turn of the millennium, the earthquakes of the 1990s and their aftershocks had contributed to the reconstitution of the philanthropic sector on different foundations. The most important features of the new order were: the entry of corporations as a principal player; the hegemony of a neoliberal Islamist discourse; a rapid transformation from charity-oriented work, limited to donations and aid, to development-oriented work, focusing on changing the behavior of service recipients in order to improve their social conditions, supplanting state-led development through the redistribution of resources to bring justice and empowerment; the shifting of the base of Islamist charitable work from the mosque to the association/institution; and a new reliance on volunteers not necessarily organized in the traditional Islamist institutions.

The waning significance of the war on terrorism, coupled with increased foreign aid to the charitable sector and pressure to open up the field,[26] were the main drivers of this restructuring. As al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya declared an end to violence in the late 1990s and with the drop in Islamist violence after the Luxor incident in 1997, the legitimacy of relying on informal channels for the management of civic action was gradually and partially eroded. With donors pressing for broader space for civil society, and in light of the new reality forged over the previous two decades, the need grew for legislative reforms that would give

---

24   Ibid, 87.

25   Amr Ezzat, The Turbaned State: An Analysis of the Official Policies on the Administration of Mosques and Islamic Religious Activities in Egypt, report issued by the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Aug. 2014.

26   For example, see chapter six of J. Elyachar, Markets of Dispossession: NGOs, Economic Development, and the State in Cairo.

the law a greater role in regulating civic institutions, while ensuring that the internal security establishment did not lose control of the sector.

Laws 153/1999 and 84/2002 provided three foundations for the restructuring of the field. First they separated civic work, both charity- and development-oriented, from political or trade union activity, "whose exercise is limited to political parties and trade unions," according to the law. Second, greater cooperation and interaction between state agencies and civic institutions was made possible by permitting "the assignment of state civil servants to associations to offer the assistance necessary to perform their mission." Third, all civic activity undertaken outside legally authorized civic institutions was criminalized and association officials were made liable to prison time and fines.

From within the new, de-politicized sector established by law (in which the political authority retained the ability to determine whose activities are legal, and in which the line demarcating state and non-state actors was blurred) the law appeared less restrictive. Whereas previous laws had made prohibition the rule (in fundraising, activity beyond the institution's geographic and functional remit, and the investment of surplus funds), the new law made permission the rule, though it did require the approval of the administrative body. (The exception was the receipt of foreign funds, where prohibition remained the rule; accepting such funds was permissible "only with the permission of the minister of social affairs.) The power to dissolve civic institutions was further vested in the judiciary rather than the administrative body. The result was the proliferation of civic associations.[27]

The law's dissolving of the lines between the public and private sectors dovetailed with changes in the political order, where the latter played a growing role in the economy and government, as manifest in the formation of the ruling National Democratic Party's Policies Committee (created by President Mubarak's son), the increasing number of businessmen elected to parliament (up from 12 percent of parliament in 1995 to 22 percent in 2005), and the growing participation of businessmen in the successive governments of Ahmed Nazif starting in 2004. It was also manifest as well by the simultaneous rise of businessmen in the MB leadership.[28] With businessmen at the top of both government and opposition institutions, the neoliberal hegemony was complete: the language of economics had extended to all spheres of life, making the market the normative standard and model for the regulation of conduct.[29] Poverty was consequently redefined as a technical problem, to be addressed not through redistributive policies, but rather through the inclusion of successful businessmen and technocrats in government, as propagated by international development institutions and the technocrats[30] concentrated in international development institutions, most significantly USAID, UNDP, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.

The reconceptualization of poverty as a technical, rather than political, problem contributed to the restructuring of the philanthropic/developmental field in three ways. First, it redefined the purpose of development to be poverty alleviation. Economic dis-

---

27 The number of registered civic associations jumped from 16,600 in 2000 to 28,000 in 2010, an average increase of nearly 1,500 associations, compared to less than 500 per year at the end of the 1990s. Of these associations, 80 percent offered social assistance and health, social, and educational services. Nearly 20 percent worked in the empowerment of marginalized groups and environmental protection, as well as rights awareness. See Qandil, al-Jam'iyat al-Ahliya fi Misr wa Sanawat al-Makhatir, 35.

28 I. El Houdaiby, "From Prison to Palace: The Muslim Brotherhood's Challenges and Responses in Post-Revolution Egypt," FRIDE, 26 Feb. 2013.

29 W. Brown, Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution (New York: Zero Books, 2015), 10.

30 See T. Mitchell, Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002); A. Roy, Poverty Capital: Microfinance and the Making of Development (New York: Routledge, 2010); and A. Ong, Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty (London: Duke University Press, 2006).

parities were no longer seen as a social ill to be remedied through policy, but a natural fact of life. The purpose of development was limited to protecting/caring for people with limited means, and improving their living conditions.[31] Second, the private sector became a partner in development, an economic process that was no longer the sole province of the state—in fact, the state was no longer seen as the principal actor. Businesses became more involved in development through charitable projects. Unlike their peers in Europe, for example, corporations did not undertake such projects out of responsibility toward the communities in which they operated or as an attempt to mitigate the adverse environmental or social impacts of their businesses. Rather, it was an obligation towards rulers to help address poverty, through development projects focused on the provision of aid and/or expertise.[32]

Third, the reconceptualization of poverty as an individual technical problem led to the emergence of new methods of addressing it. With the intertwining of the public and private sectors and the overlapping roles of corporate and civic institutions (to be explored below). It no longer sought merely to offer relief to the poor—possible through traditional charitable activities based on cash and in-kind assistance—but also made the alleviation of poverty an instrument for social control, to prevent the poor from becoming a significant social or political constituency.[33] Philanthropy was therefore transformed, by means to be discussed below, into development-focused activity, administered largely

through debt and loans. Escaping poverty became a matter of individual effort, accomplished by borrowing from banks and social solidarity funds or civic associations.

The increased participation of the private sector and international donor institutions in the field[34] led to the universalization of their conception of poverty and its alleviation. Whereas initially corporate responsibility projects took the form of one-off charity-cum-publicity initiatives such as "Orphan Day," which had little impact in the sector, corporate commitments to the regime spurred firms to increasingly contribute to development and fund activities undertaken by existing civic associations.[35] As a result, association activities were reoriented toward development work in the hope of obtaining corporate funding. Associations had to apply for corporate funds, the requirements of which contributed to the reconceptualization of associations' projects. Statistical concerns gradually became the primary occupation of such associations, which began to focus more on increasing the number of beneficiaries of their medical services, for example, and publicity than meeting the needs of beneficiaries, even at greater cost and fewer recipients.[36]

The Islamic association was not divorced from these developments. As noted above, this period saw the rise of businessmen in the MB, and it saw Islamists, who had risen in the context of Sadat's liberalization, reconcile themselves to economic liberalism, thereby eroding the independent/moral foundations of the 'Islamic economy,' and gradually adopting neoliberal conceptions.[37] Starting in

31   I. El Houdaiby, "Qissat al-Ihtikarat fi Misr: Kayfa Tuhaymin, Kayfa Tughayyir Ashkalaha?" Mada Masr, 25 Jan. 2018, https://madamasr-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/madamasr.com/ar/2018/01/25/opinion/امp/اقتصاد/قصة-الاحتكارات-في-مصر-كيف-تهيمن-كيف-تُ.

32   G. Barsoum and S. Refaat, "We Don't Want School Bags: Discourse on Corporate Social Responsibility in Egypt and the Challenges of a New Practice in a Complex Setting," International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy 35, no. 9 (2015): 390–402.

33   M. Lazzarato, The Making of the Indebted Man (Amsterdam: Semiotext(e), 2011), Roy, Poverty and Capital, and Elyachar, Markets of Dispossession.

34   Elyachar, Markets of Dispossession, chapter six.

35   Interview with director of social responsibility projects at a multinational corporation, Cairo, July 2018.

36   Interview with the founder of a civic institution working in the medical field, Cairo, July 2018.

37   C. Tripp, Islam and the Moral Economy: The Challenge of Capitalism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

the late 1980s,[38] Islamist ideas about poverty had begun intersecting with neoliberal conceptions. By the first decade of the new millennium, there was an observable increase in the number of fatwas issued by official bodies that encouraged Muslims to direct zakat to development projects undertaken by civic associations, instead of giving it directly to the beneficiaries.[39]

The rise of the 'new preachers' was the most consequential development in the 21st century Islamic philanthropy. While this development cannot be separated from the general shifts discussed above, additional factors spurred their formation and rise, most importantly the move of charitable work from the mosque to the association/institution and the concomitant shift of proselytizing from the mosque to the television screen. The proximate cause of both of these shifts was the increased restriction of mosque-based activity.

The end of the local war on terrorism contributed to the curtailment of mosque activities. The terrorist threat receded with al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya's revisions of the late 1990s, alongside the MB's political ascent culminating in their electoral victories of 2000 and 2005. The MOE annexed several mosques affiliated with existing Islamist associations, including al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya and Brotherhood-affiliated groups. In 2001, the Cabinet issued a decree regulating the construction of new mosques, which required, in addition to technical specs related to construction, a permit from the MOE. Family-run mosques were subject surveillancebut police would only interfere if mosque administrators were associated with Islamist groups. In contrast, "[W]hen an undesirable political or religious current became

active or when the mosque saw worrying mass action, the state's security apparatus would take action and issue orders to the Ministry of Endowments to take over the mosque. These orders were always followed."[40]

New Islamist preachers emerged out of this dual phenomenon of the nationalization of mosques and the hegemony of Islamist neoliberal discourses. Advocating "development through faith," they spoke largely to upper middle class youth, moving their preaching from the mosque to satellite television channels. They were active in philanthropy, working through several existing bodies before creating their own independent institutions.

Legal reforms, including law 153/1999 (later replaced by law 84/2002) contributed to the proliferation of associations. Several influential institutions were established at this time, most significantly, the Orman Association and Resala, both of which helped to alter the framework of institutional philanthropy.

Orman was first to use televised ads to raise money, meaning it was no longer dependent on contributions from a specific geographic location, as was the case with al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya, for example, which relied primarily on monthly contributions from small businesses near its various branches.[41] The Orman Association also organized volunteer visits to orphanages and other places without requiring participants to commit to the institution. Founded at Cairo University in 1999, Resala evolved beyond its student origins. It was the first association to institutionalize volunteerism, making advantageous use of young volunteers from the urban middle classes who were unaffiliated with organized Islamist groups and whose religious conceptions of heavenly reward were linked to service and a depoliticized form of social responsibility. In addition to conven-

---

38 For example, in Poverty Capital, 153, Ananya Roy notes that using a grant from USAID, the Alexandria Businessmen's Association turned their charity program for the needy into a development program offering small loans to beneficiaries.

39 M. Atia, "Approaches to Development: A Case Study of Zakat, Sadaqa, and Qurd al-Hassan in Contemporary Egypt," 8th International conference on Islamic Economics and Finance. [2011]

40 Ezzat, The Turbaned State.

41 Focus discussion groups with leaders and volunteers at various charitable institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

tional fields of charity,[42] such as the provision of medical and other assistance and literacy efforts, Resala was somewhat involved in development activities that deepened its ties to the market. It established the Resala Training Center, which offered "employment opportunities for trainees in cooperation with major training and employment firms," and helped place jobseekers in private-sector positions. Following Muhammad Yunus, Resala set up charitable microcredit to help reduce unemployment.[43]

These contributions of Orman and Resala, namely the use of televised advertising, reliance on volunteers unaffiliated with Islamists, forging ties with corporations, and the provision of loans for economic empowerment, provided the foundations for faith-based development. New Preacher Amr Khaled and his initiative, Life Makers, was the most important actor in this new trend.

3.3 Development through faith

Khaled's star began to rise in the late 1990s, as he gained renown for preaching at mosques located in upper middle-class Cairo neighborhoods, such as Agouza, Mohandesin, and October city, as well as in the homes of some of his students of the same class. He became the first Islamist satellite star, thanks to his Ramadan programs and other televised work in the early years 2000s. As his influence and activity increased, he came under pressure from the security apparatus, forcing him into self-imposed exile. He continued to present television programs, watched by the same upper middle-class audience that had access to satellite television. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, and the branding of Islamists as 'death merchants,' during the Bush administrations' war on terror, the need for non-violent Islamist protagonists became more evident. At this

point, Khaled announced his Life Makers program to promote youth development initiatives. The project attracted many observant youth from the upper middle classes, who, thanks to their social status, were affected by 'Western' hostility towards, and negative attitudes towards, Islam, and attempted to change them. They volunteered for the social initiatives advocated by Khaled's TV programs, and their initiatives culminated in the 2005 registration of Life Makers as a civic association.

Life Makers' activities and mode of operation embodied the transformation of institutional charity and innovations in Islamists' charitable work. Khaled's association built on the contributions of Resala, which many volunteers saw as "the spiritual father of volunteerism" or "the name most associated with volunteerism" at the turn of the millennium,[44] developing them in three overlapping directions, all of them related to the transition from charitable work to neoliberal, Islamist-inflected development.

First was a transformation of the volunteer's role. Once an arm of the institution, volunteers became

---

42   S. Sparre, "Experimenting with Alternative Futures in Cairo: Young Muslim Volunteers Between God and the Nation," Global Studies in Culture and Power 25, no. 2 (2018).

43   See Resala's website at resala.org.

44   This appreciation for Resala and its pioneering role in volunteerism was a point of consensus among volunteers with other institutions who took part in the focus group discussions in Cairo in July 2018.

entrepreneurs.[45] Resala's involvement in philanthropy—though it gradually leaned towards development over the years—meant that it conceptualized volunteerism as a donation of one's physical efforts,

---

45 Amr Khaled's conception of this transformation is articulated in his book al-Iman wa-l-'Asr: Ru'ya Jadida Fa'ala li-Dawr al-Din fi-l-Hayah (Cairo: Dar Sima for Distribution and Publication, 2015). In the book, he defines the goal of the project as "reviving religion's effectiveness in enriching life and encouraging work" (109). He uses Quranic scripture that commends work in the contemporary sense of productive endeavor, which he sees as the purpose of faith (131). Looking at the existing value system from this perspective, he concludes that the inherited system no longer works and a vision must be elaborated for "the value system and ethos that the country needs," (84). This value system can help to forbid the evil of poverty, which is "the mother of all ills and evils" (139). Since alleviating poverty in an individual market-oriented endeavor (138), the new value system should seek to instill three basic traits in the individual: creativity, follow-through, and the ability to coexist (85). Khaled rereads the Quran and parts of the prophet's life to demonstrate the centrality of a strong work ethic. For example, he concludes that the prophet chose Medina as his city of refuge because "Medina was a productive society…and the Prophet, peace and prayers upon him, was searching for a productive community that did not want to live on resources acquired without effort or labor," (121). He concludes the section with a questionnaire of 13 questions that will allow the reader to assess his values. The questions include: "Do you prefer to work as part of a team or are you better by yourself?"; "Did you create anything new in any field in the last year?"; "Are you a pro-active person who takes the initiative or do you follow those who act first?"; "Do you love and value yourself?"; and "Did you accomplish important works last month?" (92). In this way, poverty becomes a moral, faith-related problem whose solution is work. Although the prescribed solution is individualized in the sense that it is independent of impoverishing economic structures, the treatment is not an individual process, for everyone has a duty to offer counsel, following the precept of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. The poor person, then, should not be left to evil (i.e., poverty); in fact, he deserves to be chided for it, so that he may abandon this vice. The intersection here between this conceptualization of, on one hand, the self, poverty, and economics, and, on the other, the neoliberal lexicon is apparent, as is the contradiction between this conceptualization of the self and poverty and conventional Islamic constructs, to be discussed below in connection with Sufism.

utilized mostly to collect cash and in-kind donations from contributors and deliver them to beneficiaries. This mode of operation, which required no long-term commitment, helped to create a wide base of volunteers who implemented activities planned by the institution's administration.[46] Of this base of volunteers, Life Makers targeted only those willing to make medium to long term commitments. This gave volunteers greater input in designing and steering the projects they undertook. Successful initiatives, including bringing potable water and sanitation networks to impoverished areas, promoting small businesses, and fighting illiteracy, were publicized on Khaled's own television programs, especially "Life Makers," which aired from 2004 to 2005. This gave volunteers additional impetus to take the initiative: they were entrepreneurs overseeing projects, not merely implementing them.[47] Such, the preacher and his associates were able to draw large numbers of people who had volunteered for charitable institutions into development work.

Second was the shift from individual volunteers to the community of volunteers, a transition facilitated by the similar social backgrounds of volunteers and their commitment to long-term responsibilities. Volunteers who worked with both Resala and Life Makers, found it easier to volunteer as individuals at Resala; it was more difficult to continue participating in activities at Life Makers without joining the community of volunteers, who were organized into work teams involved in various projects.[48]

Third was the association's administration focus on volunteers, and not merely the beneficiaries. It was primarily concerned with cultivating cadres of people proficient in project management and with the requisite religious constitution. In contrast to Resala, which did not always highlight its religious underpinnings—though they were clear to the asso-

---

46 Focus group discussions held with volunteers with charitable institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

ciation's volunteers and staff—the religious dimension was a principal, overt part of Life Makers, a centerpiece of Khaled's project. It used volunteerism to inculcate followers, producing neoliberal Islamic subjects. The enterprise sought to create "the professional Muslim," grooming individuals to be effective leaders in their communities through pro-active initiatives.[49]

These developments culminated in the full-fledged articulation of neoliberal Islamism. Life Makers and sister initiatives created under the influence of Amr Khaled relied less on zakat than on funds from corporate social responsibility projects and private-sector donors. In turn, the association was liberated from the religious restrictions governing the disposal of zakat, instead adopting a development agenda par excellence.[50] The enterprise considered non-development-oriented charity "short-sighted," insofar as they addressed the problem of poverty by giving people fish instead of teaching them to fish.[51] Development activities were focused on infrastructure and microloans for small businesses, coupled with training programs designed to offer comprehensive support.

The security apparatus's attitude towards Khaled and Life Makers was complicated: Life Makers made important contributions to development, but the association's close ties to the MB were troubling.[52] Security attempted to partially exploit Life Makers to foster a non-political alternative to the Brotherhood by making volunteers aware that they were under constant security surveillance and repeatedly interfering with their work. This was not fundamentally different from its management of Resala in the previous era. Then, too, it initially curtailed Resala's activities due to its founders' close ties to the Brotherhood, but later showed more tolerance, as demonstrated by the major funding contributions of businessmen close to the regime.[53] But the nature of Life Makers operation, which closely resembled political organizations thanks to the model of volunteerism discussed above, rendered its activity "political action in a non-political sphere."[54] In consequence, it remained the object of security suspicion and scrutiny. Life Makers was only able to expand its scope of operation at the end of the first decade of the millennium, following an understanding that allowed Amr Khaled to return from his voluntary exile and support the campaign of a ruling party candidate in the 2010 parliamentary elections, who was running against a MB candidate.

3.4 The interplay of mosque and association

The ascent of Life Makers and its neoliberal Islamic discourse was not unchallenged. A large segment of the sector remained divorced from Life Makers' cir-

---

49   S. Sparre, "Muslim Youth Organizations in Egypt: Actors of Reform and Development?" Danish Institute for International Studies, 2008.

50   M. Atia, Building a House in Heaven: Pious Neoliberalism and Islamic Charity in Egypt (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 147.

51   Mittermaier, "Bread, Freedom and Social Justice: The Egyptian Uprising and a Sufi Khidma," Cultural Anthropology 29, no. 1 (2014): 54–79.

52   The association's ties to the Brotherhood were manifested in two main ways: Amr Khaled's personal ties to the group, of which he was a former member, and the involvement of a great many Brotherhood youth in Life Makers activity. This relationship constituted a double threat: it was feared both that Life Makers could become a locus for wide-scale Brotherhood recruitment and that the preacher would steer his broad base of volunteers to act in the Brotherhood's interest.

53   Interview with a former volunteers and current staff members at Resala, Cairo, July, 2018.

54   Sparre, "Muslim Youth Organizations."

cles. In contrast to Turkey, for example, where a less diverse Islamist landscape meant that the entire field tacked toward neoliberalism once the main actors did, the multiplicity of factions and currents of Islamists in Egypt and their divergent interests precluded neoliberal hegemony.[55] As different visions of Islamist charitable and development institutions flourished, tension and competition grew, although common ground for cooperation remained.

Unlike other Islamist groups, which are based primarily on religious ideas and orientations independent of or transcending individuals, Life Makers— the most effective party in Islamist development work in this decade— arguably the most successful 21st century Islamist association in the field – was centered on the person of Khaled.[56] Although he got his start in mosques in the Cairo neighborhoods, Khaled's transition from preaching to development took place while he was in voluntary exile. His channels of popular outreach were therefore limited to satellite channels, far removed from mosques; the conventional platforms for Islamist charities. For the first time, a space was created for Islamist activism that is completely independent of the mosque.

Philanthropy divorced from mosques led to a growing gap between Life Makers and other Islamist associations. Mosque-centered activism preserved the centrality of religious devotion and piety. It also ensured a greater degree of cross-class engagement, in mosque-based religious lessons, which, unlike those of the new preachers, did not target a particular socioeconomic class. Mosque-based activity maintained a more conservative relationship between men and women as well due to physical

segregation in places of worship.[57] It was from this standpoint that other Islamist bodies criticized Life Makers.

The most strenuous critiques came from institutions whose activity was limited to mosques. There was no cooperation between Life Makers and the Ansar al-Sunna; while al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya had reservations about the "unseemly" conduct of Life Makers volunteers, liberated as they were from certain religious restraints, which affected the degree of cooperation between the two groups.[58] As members of the al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya were released from prison in the late 1990s, and became active in charitable work through various Islamist institutions, they, too, refrained from volunteering for Life Makers initiatives for the same reasons.[59] Because of such reservations, only the Brotherhood and affiliated circles working in political and civic fields, independent of mosques, actively cooperated with Life Makers. The Brotherhood seemed to have no fundamental religious concerns about Life Makers. Rather, its reservations were focused on Khaled's closeness to the regime, Many MB members withdrew from the association when Khaled announced his support for the ruling party's candidate in 2010.

Different forms of leadership also contributed to the separation of Life Makers from other Islamic associations. Mosque-based leaders of charitable work derived their legitimacy and status, at least in part, from religious knowledge and their congregation's

---

55 C. Tugal, "Fight or Acquiesce? Religion and Political Process in Turkey's and Egypt's Neoliberalizations," Development and Change 43, no. 1 (2012): 23–51.

56 Focus group discussions with volunteers at various institutions, July 2018.

57 In contrast to historical mosques in Egypt such as al-Azhar and Sultan Hassan, modern mosques maintain a separation between men and women's areas that ensures total gender segregation, both inside the mosque itself and in the corridors leading inside. This is true of mosques built by Islamist associations such as al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya and Ansar al-Sunna and those where the new preachers give their lessons, such as the Da'wat al-Haqq Mosque in Doqqi, the Hasri Mosque in Sixth of October, and the Mustafa Mahmoud Mosque in Mohandiseen.

58 Interview with an official at al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya, Cairo, July 2018.

59 Interview with an official at a charitable institution affiliated with the Islamic Group, July 2018.

trust in their probity.[60] In contrast, Life Makers' leadership derived its legitimacy from the their adherence to the standards of 'Islamic management' as articulated by Human Development experts, including Ibrahim al-Fiqi and Tariq al-Suwaydan. These new leaders in philanthropic work, popular among middle-class youth, constituted a threat to the status of the traditional leaders of Islamist charitable work, thereby increasing the divide between them.

The different nature of activities further deepened the gap between Life Makers and others. Charitable work of other groups was based mosques, which also served as centers for proselytizing, hence interweaving both kinds of activities. Ansar al-Sunna's philanthropic activities include "building mosques and other projects, including clinics, Islamic schools, homes for the elderly, and orphanages."[61] Al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya combines charitable activity—care for orphans—with its mosque-based ministry, ; its leaders holding regular classes for orphans that including teaching the Quran.[62] Other institutions are similar, with the exception of Resala, which is not active in mosques and does not foreground its religious identity. Nevertheless, Resala cultivates no sphere for volunteer engagement and the development of an institutional culture independent from mosques since it relies on individual which it does not seek to organize them into a community.[63] Life Makers, its projects resembled what Tugal calls "market-oriented charity," in contrast to communitarian charity.[64] The major goal of the association's development activities was to help its beneficiaries achieve their 'financial freedom'[65] through the provision of small business loans, as is consistent with the particular ideas about poverty alleviation and mechanisms discussed above.

Mosque and association based Islamists employed different fundraising strategies. Institutions linked to mosques, such as al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya, relied on donations collected periodically by association officials from small merchants in various neighborhoods as well as donation boxed located in their mosques.[66] In contrast, institutions independent of mosques reached their donors largely through satellite television. Hence they turned to televised promotion, either through affiliated programs—like the "Life Makers" program anchored by Amr Khaled—or later through ads, which became increasingly common over the years and were concentrated in Ramadan.

Notwithstanding the importance of platforms in shaping different activists' outlooks, the mosque/association binary falls short of explaining the differences between different groups. Serving as platforms for charitable associations meant that mosques were no longer merely sites of proselytizing and conventional charity. Through mosques, associations were active in education, health care, the provision of aid, infrastructure, and more.[67] By the same token, associations independent of mosques, like Resala, were active in the religious realm, undertaking activities such as developing mosque ministries and Quran memorization. The MB, by di-

60   Focus group discussions with volunteers for various institutions, July 2018.

61   See the Ansar al-Sunna website at www.ansaralsonna.com/web/pageother-657.html.

62   Interview with an official with al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya, July 2018.

63   Nevertheless, Resala is involved in several mosque-based religious activities such as the development of mosques' outreach ministries through Quran memorization lessons and more.

64   C. Tugal, "Contesting Benevolence: Market Orientations Among Muslim Aid Providers in Egypt," Qualitative Sociology 36, no. 2 (2013): 141–59.

65   Interview with a volunteer at Life Makers, July 2018.

66   Interview with an official at al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya, July 2018.

67   J. Harrigan and H. El-Said, Economic Liberalization, Social Capital and Islamic Welfare Provision (New York: Palgrave, 2009).

versifying its activities to extend to politics, advocacy, religious outreach, development, and philanthropy, occupied a third space between the mosque and association, exemplified by the Islamic Medical Association. The work of that institution was not directly linked with the organization's mosque-related work, but due to its organic link to the Brotherhood, it had the same religious inflection. Its funding, too, did not depend on television advertising, but organized networks closely resembling traditional mosque-based networks.

The possibility of cooperation between different Islamist association rested on a few other pragmatic criteria. Al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya, having been the first institution to establish itself in certain geographic areas, came to function as a database or coordinator for other institutions, which could rely on it to identify beneficiaries and their needs, though the extent of cooperation on projects depended on "religious compatibility" between al-Jam'iya and the other institution. The conservative orientation of al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya precluded cooperation on projects led by Life Makers and its sister associations, which were seen by al-Jam'iya members as too lax in their religious observance, especially in regard to women. There was greater cooperation between Life Makers and Resala.[68] The latter association—from which many of Life Makers' volunteers graduated—helped to familiarize Life Makers volunteers with the work environment and its general parameters in the areas in which it was active. In contrast, volunteers with several associations said there was little cooperation with Ansar al-Sunna, which did not seek to expand its charitable activities, content to manage them through the mosques and clinics it operated.

The drive to balance competing interests was the signal feature of the MB's relationship with various associations. Associations, striving to attract volunteers for their projects and knowing that its

controlled a large reservoir of potential volunteers, sought to avoid conflict with the organization and harness the energies of Brotherhood youth. At the same time, they were careful not to provoke security with a heavy Brotherhood presence or by turning their institutions into extensions of the Brotherhood, which could spur security to shut down their work. By the same token, the Brotherhood was keen to extend itself into the civic sphere through already existing lawful entities given the security clampdown on its own organs.[69] Although the Brotherhood's relationships with various associations differed slightly, the most common arrangement was that Brotherhood youth worked with associations (particularly the volunteer-based Resala and Life Makers) but did not use this activity to systematically recruit volunteers to its own organization. Nevertheless, there remained some friction between the Brotherhood and civic institutions due to the latter's concerns about seeming too Brotherish and the MB's desire to capitalize on associations' charity work, particularly during election campaigns.[70]

The MB had similar arrangements with other associations. Misr al-Kheir, founded in 2007 with then-Mufti Ali Gomaa heading its board of trustees, and the Food Bank, founded shortly afterwards by the same group, both relied (at least partially) on the MB for the execution of their projects. The had managed – through their business and government networks – to secure sufficient funds, but lacked the volunteer manpower necessary for execution. In this, they relied on the volunteer networks of the Brotherhood and its institutions.[71] This enabled the latter to politically exploit charitable donations at times, while allowing the associations to exaggerate the scope of their activities and thus garner additional contributions and the trust of their donors.

---

68 Focus group discussions with current and former officials and volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

69 Focus group discussions with volunteers at various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

70 Focus group discussions with volunteers at various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

71 Interview with a staff member of Misr El-Kheir, Cairo, July 2018.

4. January and its aftermath: charitable work under military rule

4.1 Revolution

Despite the growth of institutional philanthropy—measured by the number of institutions active and total expenditure, it fell short of absorbing the resources allocating by communities for charity. Most charitable donations do not pass through official institutional channels, but go from donor to beneficiary either directly or through small, informal networks.[72]

This inadequacy was intentional in some respects. Despite the regime's interest in bringing philanthropic giving into a legal framework subject to its authority, other factors militated against it and hindered the expansion of the sector. First and foremost was the regime's desire to preserve the field as a depoliticized arena, which it did by maintaining the de facto authority of the security apparatus. The security establishment did not only restrict entry into the lawful charitable sector, it kept existing lawful institutions fragmented, neutering thematic and geographic federations and imposing close surveillance of institutions to limit institutional coordination, in order to prevent them from turning into an opposition political bloc, particularly in light of the growing reliance on volunteer networks. Another factor was the increasing role of civic institutions,

a non-political partner in governance[73] that played the lead role in development. The rulers therefore attempted to strike a balance between opening up the field enough to permit non-governmental actors to play their designated part, but not enough to allow this "partner" to become an opponent. This was particularly important given that institutions, especially Islamist ones, helped to reintegrate members of Islamist groups and other armed organizations coming out of prison while containing their political activity.

The January 2011 revolution upset all these considerations and upended the security apparatus that had reined in civil society, opening the floodgates for all kinds of activities. Charitable and development initiatives proliferated. Some originated with former volunteers for associations such as Resala and Life Makers breaking away and establishing their own initiatives. Independence was especially appealing for some given their reservations about civic institutions' ties with security, which they had tolerated previously due to the lack of alternatives. Other initiatives grew out of the popular committees that were established in various neighborhoods in the early days of the uprising to plug the security vacuum and evolved into various local charitable and development activities.[74] In both cases, only rarely

---

72   C. Herrold, "Giving in Egypt: Evolving Charitable Traditions in a Changing Political Economy," in The Palgrave Handbook of Global Philanthropy, eds. P. Wiepking and F. Handy (London: Palgrave Macmillan, date). The differences in charitable giving between men and women are worth noting. Men tend to donate charitable alms to mosques, while women give directly to the beneficiaries. See Adel Amir, "al-Jam'iyat al-Khayriya fi Misr wa Hajm Infaqiha."

73   As part of this arrangement, development was considered a technical rather than properly political endeavor, which circumscribed the arena of politics to a very narrow field, such that the insertion of political questions in other fields—such as, importantly, union struggles—could be considered an unacceptable act of politicization. Under this same arrangement, the role and function of the presidency itself came to be considered non-political.

74   Focus group discussions with current and former officials and volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

did these initiatives file for formal legal status.[75] The temporary collapse of the security arm of the state transformed the state of exception from law, (i.e. the toleration of extralegal activities) from an arena defined by the security authority through negotiations with various bodies into an arena defined by actors through their action (i.e. the complete disregard of law, and the acceptance of participants' will as the associations/initiatives' source of legitimacy). Legal registration was no longer important, particularly for the new actors.

Civil association were encountered by new challenges in this revolutionary moment. While restrictions on fundraising and operation were at least relaxed, giving rise to what activists call "golden age of volunteerism," the winds of change brought new challenges. With most volunteer civic efforts in this period geared toward the revolution and politics—e.g., participation in political parties, revolutionary factions, awareness activities, and election campaigns[76]—charitable and development work (viewed by the sector itself as distinct from politics) suffered. The lesser concern was the diversion of energies into politics; in the end, the energy unleashed by the revolution was sufficient to cover the needs of various arenas of civic action. The primary challenge for institutions was to define their position, the limits of their work, and their relationships in the new landscape.

Islamists associations and activists offered diverse responses to these challenges. Some institutions, including Resala, al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya, and Misr El-Kheir chose not to become directly involved in politics, confining themselves to charitable and development work. Resala took advantage of the relaxed security environment and the desire of private sector enterprises to improve their image after the revolution to partner with companies like Ghabbour, Pepsi, and Toyota. These joint philanthropic projects aimed to mitigate economic hardships resulting

75 The number of associations registered annually in the two years following the revolution doubled, from an average of 1,500 associations per year in the years leading up to the revolution to 3,000 in these two years. See Qandil, al-Jam'iyat al-Ahliya fi Misr wa Sanawat al-Makhatir, 25. Despite this stark increase, volunteers and staff at various associations agree that the overwhelming majority of new initiatives chose not to register under the law, demonstrating the magnitude of volunteerism and civic participation in this period.

76 Focus group discussions with current and former volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018. Amani Qandil identifies this politicization as a problem exclusive to Islamists, or what she calls "doctrine-based associations," but this is contradicted by many volunteers, who say that most volunteerism was geared directly to politics or political development, especially in the period immediately following President Mubarak's resignation in February 2011. Qandil also disregards the pre-revolution context of this politicization, observing that Islamists, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, mixed philanthropy and politics without noting how narrowly circumscribed the political arena was at the time for everyone and how numerous fields of civil society—from trade unions to civic associations and even social clubs—became spaces for politics. Qandil premises this argument on the assumption that development is easily distinguishable from politics, disregarding the historical and political nature of the boundaries between these two fields of endeavor. Such boundaries are drawn in numerous ways to legitimize or delegitimize certain activities, making these arenas spaces for negotiation and contestation. In fact, the fluidity of these boundaries is precisely what allowed most volunteers to shift to political development work and outright politics in some cases. In short, these divisions of labor express general orientations, not strictly delineated frameworks. Qandil, al-Jam'iyat al-Ahliya fi Misr wa Sanawat al-Makhatir, 41–46.

from revolutionary turmoil. The institution's failure to respond, coupled with other factors to be discussed below, led to a quiet attrition of volunteers.[77] Misr El-Kheir, hardly dependent on volunteerism, and al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya were not affected by this trend, nor did their funding channels change significantly. There is some indication, however, that the economic turmoil had a slight adverse impact on the total donations collected by al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya, most of which came from small businesses operating in proximity to the association's branches.

The political opening prompted other institutions to alter the nature of their activities. As the Brotherhood became more involved in politics, it sought to set itself apart from existing civic institutions. Brothers who took part in the activities of other institutions were now more interested in publicizing their Brotherhood affiliation, which caused some friction with officials at such institutions and spurred Brotherhood members to leave.[78] Given the lack of security constraints, this exodus heralded the establishment of their own associations, which enabled the Brotherhood to capitalize politically on its charitable and development work.[79] In the Salafi Call in Alexandria, the majority, comprising primarily young activists, advocated forming a political party despite opposition from some senior fig-

ures who devoted themselves to proselytizing and philanthropy.[80] With the establishment of the Nour Party, most of the Salafi Call's financial and human resources were geared towards its Life Makers, on the other hand, had to deal with its internal contradictions. When in May 2012, Khaled, alongside some of Mubarak business cronies, established a political party, a significant number of volunteers (affiliated in different ways with the revolution and/or the MB) were alienated. Another faction of Life Makers volunteers preferred not to become directly involved in politics because of their involvement in technocratic development work. According to several volunteers, the preacher, once "a magnet for Life Makers" became a repellent for volunteers,[81] and his stances hindered the association's operation. Al-Jama'a al-Islamiya decided from the outset to keep their political and philanthropic endeavors separate. Because of its anxieties about security and a fear of dissolution, the group's Shura Council rejected a proposal to form a single charitable association with branches in the governorates, choosing

---

77 Focus group discussions with current and former volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

78 Focus group discussions with current and former volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

79 In her study of associations formally established from 2011 to 2013, Amani Qandil observes that the overwhelming majority of these associations were affiliated with Islamists, while only 20 percent of them were founded by youth political groupings or coalitions (see Qandil, al-Jam'iyat al-Ahliya fi Misr wa Sanawat al-Makhatir, 26). This was confirmed in focus group discussions with volunteers, who said that the majority of non-Islamist youth initiatives did not acquire formal legal status. According to volunteers, a large segment of organized Islamist youth who volunteered with various institutions withdrew and began volunteering instead with institutions affiliated with their organizations, to better politically capitalize on charitable work.

80 Interview with a former volunteer in the charitable activities of Ansar al-Sunna and a current employee of Resala, Cairo, July 2018. The different stances taken by youth organizers in the party and sheikhs overseeing the association are illustrated, for example, in statements made by the association president to al-Furqan magazine in November 2011, at the beginning of the foreign funding case. The president said the association welcomed security oversight of fundraising and the retention of the arrangement by which approval or denial of funds was a sovereign matter subject to the discretion of the security apparatus absent any clear objective criteria. The president also affirmed that his association "had never entered the world of politics. It did not establish a party and did not participate in parties, and we have never put forth anyone to take part in representative councils or other such things. None of us wants to run for president." (See al-Furqan, no. 656, 28 Nov. 2011, 18–19.) These and other statements reflect unease with simple political participation and the acceptance of the authority of the security establishment at a time when the Nour Party was running parliamentary campaigns and adopting a political stance hostile to both the security apparatus and "secularists."

81 Focus group discussions with current and former volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

instead to establish several independent associations based in mosques engaged in conventional community and charitable work. These groups had little success in attracting volunteers from outside the Islamic Group's ranks.[82]

Volunteers and activists immigration to politics further contributed to interweaving the political and philanthropic domains, previously demarcated by the now-obsolete statute. Because parliamentary and presidential elections were soon to follow, newly established political parties relied on the more developed outreach channels of their affiliated/allied charitable association, hence further blurring the line between both domains. Expenditures and project implementation increasingly began to take the form of campaign bribes, disbursed to build a social base of supporters.[83] In turn, the charitable market, through development activities, became an extension of politics. Cooperation between institutions declined and competition became the defining feature of their relationship. In this context, groups affiliated with the Brotherhood, for example, could no longer execute projects for Misr El-Kheir as an unofficial subcontractor. As Gulf rulers watched the political rise of Islamists with mounting concern, stricter rules were set on donations coming from Gulf institutions to Egypt and they were steered away from institutions close to political Islamists,

particularly the Brotherhood and Salafi Call,[84] toward more acceptable parties like Misr El-Kheir and al-Azhar.

The political opening spurred al-Azhar to assume a greater role in the public sphere. Taking advantage of various social and political actors' anxiety with the Islamist rise, which became apparent with the March 2011 referendum, and their desire to find an ally or mediator to manage the relationship with them, al-Azhar Declaration was issued in June 2011. The declaration, hailed by different political actors, paved the way for the institution to play a more significant role in mediating political differences, hence allowing it to secure more autonomy. Legal reforms were introduced to allow al-Azhar's leadership more autonomy from political authority, gradually transforming the institution for a subordinate to a significant political actor in its own right. Given the overlap between philanthropy and politics, it was natural that this change would entail

---

82 Interview with an official with a charitable association affiliated with the Islamic Group, Cairo, July 2018.

83 Focus group discussions with current and former volunteers and officials with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

84 There are no accurate figures for donations coming to the Brotherhood from alms foundations and charitable and benevolent associations in the Gulf, or for the number of organization members residing in these countries, and hence no way to accurately track changed giving patterns. We can say, however, based on interviews with economists familiar with the field and volunteers and officials with various institutions, that in the past Gulf governments were relatively tolerant of various official and civic parties dealing with the Brotherhood and its institutions for the purpose of managing their philanthropic projects in Egypt. Such tolerance disappeared entirely in the wake of July 2013. Both Saudi Arabia and Egypt designated the Brotherhood a terrorist group, thus shutting down any avenues for the influx of official or even unofficial funding. As for various Salafi currents, some figures are available. For example, as the foreign funding case began receiving attention in late 2011, Ansar al-Sunna announced that it had received LE11 million a year from Gulf parties (see al-Furqan, no. 656, 28 November 2011, 24–25). This is a trivial sum in the philanthropic market, much less than the estimates of volunteers and economists. While there are currently no reliable figures for the sum total of donations, there is evidence that funding slowed, if not evaporated completely, as Gulf donations were shifted toward the two main governance partners—the Tahya Misr Fund and the Alms Foundation at al-Azhar—as well as Misr El-Kheir.

greater "civic" charitable and development activity byal-Azhar.[85]

The political opening was short-lived. Growing popular anger at Brotherhood opened the door to military intervention. In July 2013, President Morsi was ousted from office a year after his election, and the Brotherhood was violently excised from politics with the killing of hundreds of its supporters during the dispersal of sit-ins at al-Nahda and Rabiʻa al-Adawiya Squares in August and the arrest of thousands of members in subsequent months. In tandem with this, a state of emergency and curfew were declared and legislation was issued restricting protests and demonstrations. All these measures combined buried the emerging political sphere without entirely erasing the traces of the intersection of politics and philanthropy.

4.2 Security-based development

The defeat of the January revolution did not usher in the return of the ancien regime, but rather gave birth to a new regime. Its attitude towards civic associations differed from its predecessors in two respects: it participated in the sector from within rather than administering it from the outside, and it violently excluded the MB and its allies.

The post-July regime differs from its predecessors in its heavy reliance on non-labor-intensive economic monopolies as a means of creating wealth and the position of the military as a key player in operating these monopolies. This has deepened the divide between a socioeconomic minority, which increasingly barricades itself in luxury housing compounds encircling Cairo and Alexandria and a few urban pockets and enjoys nearly full rights, and the majority, which, with the defeat of the revolution and the discourse advocating equality, has

been stripped of nearly all its social and economic rights.[86] Wealth distribution mechanisms have fell short of mitigating the economic impacts of these monopolies. Wealth became more concentrated: in 2007, the top income decile owned 65.3 percent of wealth; in 2014, it owned 73.3 percent;[87] This has severely exacerbated social disparities, generating an urgent need for civic efforts to alleviate poverty.

The civic sector was reshaped along two lines. First, charity supplanted rights and the state's social responsibility as the framework governing the relationship between, on one hand, the regime and its allies and, on the other, the governed. Businessmen assumed responsibility for the brunt of charity works in exchange for acceptance as junior partners in ruling alliance. Consequently, the philanthropic/development sector began to undertake activities that had previously been core state responsibilities, such as infrastructure works, the provision of water networks to poor areas, and even expenditure on public and university hospitals. Second, security became the regime's primary concern. The question of government was no longer how to provide for limited-income groups, but rather how to prevent the formation of another mass movement that can sabotage the apparatuses of capture as it did in 2011. Development, in short, became security-driven. With these transformations, as well as the previously discussed overlap between philanthropy and politics in the era of political openness, shaped the regime's relationship to philanthropy.

The post-2013 regime rules without a political party. The atrophied political arena, the erosion of a rights-based discourse, and the politicization of philanthropy prevented it from government through a party. Instead, it tightened its grip on the media, and established various association in the civic sector, which was perceived as a potential threat. The

---

85 For further discussion of the developing position of al-Azhar in the wake of the revolution, its transformation into a partner in governance, and its expanding scope of action, see Amr Abdelrahman's paper in this project.

86 El Houdaiby, "Qissat al-Ihtikarat fi Misr."

87 Credit Suisse, Global Wealth Report 2014. Available at https://publications.credit-suisse.com/tasks/render/file/?fileID=60931FDE-_3_.A2D2-F568-B041B-58C5EA591A4.

most important of these development/charitable initiatives was the Tahya Misr Fund, announced by President Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi less than a month after his election. Presidential Decree 139/2014 defined its prerogatives as "assisting state agencies in undertaking service and development projects, developing informal areas...and other projects that support the state's social and economic position." The fund set the relationship between the political authority and the charitable field on a new footing. Unlike past regulatory measures, it was not a statute that governed the sector from the outside or a decree that restricted the movement of actors within it, but an entity that operated within the sector. Although Law 84/2015 made its assets public monies and five ministers sit on the fund's board of trustees, the Tahya Misr Fund is nevertheless an entity independent of the state budget. Its resources come from "cash and in-kind donations, gifts, and grants received from natural or legal persons, Egyptian or foreign, and local or foreign agencies." The president has the authority to manage the fund, dispose of its resources, and select its projects "without regard to government regulations set forth in any other law" and not subject to legislative oversight or accountability. This makes the fund, according to one staff member, "an arm of the president"[88] to carry out his will without regard to the legal and financial restrictions imposed on state institutions, since the services it offers are ostensibly charity, not rights.

Notwithstanding the importance of the Tahya Misr Fund, it was not the only entity created to participate in the charitable sector in a way that gives ruling allies certain privileges and blurs the distinction between the public and private sector, Law 123/2014 established al-Azhar's Zakat Foundatio. It gave the sheikh of al-Azhar and the board of trustees he appoints to manage the foundation prerogatives similar to those enjoyed by the president with the Tahya Misr Fund. Like the fund, the Zakat Foundation is exempted from restrictions on fundraising found in laws governing civic associations. The foundation's assets and administrators are considered public monies and servants for the purposes of financial oversight, but a private-sector entity with private assets in relation to the disposal of assets.

In addition to sharing a common legal structure, the Tahya Misr Fund and the Zakat Foundation have similarly constituted boards of trustees, reflecting the nature of philanthropy under the new regime. The fund's board includes five ministers, the Central Bank governor, the sheikh of al-Azhar, and the Coptic pope, all in their official capacities, as well as six public figures chosen by the president, three of them businessmen (two of which own or co-own media institutions) and the former president of the armed forces' Financial Affairs Agency. The Zakat Foundation board includes six current and former ministers (including former prime minister and current presidential advisor, engineer Ibrahim Mehleb), the former governor of the Central Bank, three Azhar scholars, two businessmen, and the chair of the Financial Regulatory Authority, as well as the director-general of the Kuwaiti Zakat Foundation and the director-general of the Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation for Humanitarian Works.

The legal framework governing civic associations, on the other hand, became more restrictive. The MOSS submitted a bill to parliament whose primary aims were to separate philanthropic from political or religious activity and impose strict oversight of foreign funding. Two days later, parliament discussed another bill—largely security-oriented, it is said to have come from the security established—that treated the regulation of philanthropy as a national security issue, severely restricting the establishment, funding, and operation of all civic associations.[89] Parliament passed the security establishment's bill and

---

88   Interview with an employee at Tahya Misr, Cairo, July 2018.

89   For additional information about the two bills, the differences between them, the sponsoring bodies, the discussion and development of the drafts, and the political battle over the two bills, see Qandil, al-Jam'iyat al-Ahliya fi Misr wa Sanawat al-Makhatir, 83–95.

sent it to the president for ratification in January 2017 amid local and international protest. Although President al-Sisi did not ratify it and returned it to parliament for further discussion, the version of the bill that became Law 70/2017 was not substantially different from the earlier, rejected version.

New legal restrictions did not prevent institutions from operating, but gave the executive sweeping authority to obstruct and prohibit their activities by curtailing judicial oversight of executive decrees. all this in an environment in which the cost of prohibition and obstruction was insignificant. The new statutes made prohibition the rule while giving the executive the right to make exceptions. Using the power of exception, the regime was able to reshape the philanthropic map, permitting the growth of partner institutions close to it—most significantly, Misr El-Kheir, the Magdy Yaqoub Foundation, Hospital 57357, and the Orman Foundation—and stifling the rest.

In short, the regime's relationship with the charitable sector—anchored by security-based development—was based on the participation the ruling allies, acting through bodies that are exempt from the restrictive laws, and the participation of their affiliates through institutions that, while subject to the law, are granted greater latitude than their non-affiliate counterparts. The president's supervision of the Tahya Misr Fund meant that the majority of donations from regime allies were directed to the fund. Since it controls a substantial portion of philanthropic/political funds, it has become the most important funder of charitable works, relying on several state institutions (the Ministries of Military Production, Social Solidarity, Environment, and Housing, the Social Fund, and the National Agency to Combat Liver Disease) and civic institutions close to the regime (Misr El-Kheir, the Food Bank, and Or-

man)[90] for project implementation. These projects include rural development, informal housing development, and social support programs, as well as a presidential program to train youth for leadership.

---

90 This may explain the persistence of what Amani Qandil calls "celebrities," meaning institutions with more than 700 employees that are active in important fields, most prominently education and health (al-Jam'iyat al-Ahliya fi Misr wa Sanawat al-Makhatir, 32). The role of these mega-institutions expanded for two reasons, both regime dependent. Firstly, the substantial funds they raised became subject to a great degree to the will of the executive, which controlled grants, and the will of its allies, who direct their philanthropic donations mostly to Tahya Misr. In turn, that fund contracts out the projects to allied institutions, according to interviews with employees at Tahya Misr and Misr El-Kheir. Secondly, latitude given to allied institutions increased markedly even as other institutions faced severe restrictions. As a result, a very small number of mega-institutions close to the regime emerged to lead the civic sector. Of course, the degree of closeness to the heart of the power varies from one institution to the next. The rapport with, and indeed organic ties, to power can be judged by the accommodations institutions receive to do their work. In contrast, some relatively minor inconveniences experienced by some mega-institutions, such as Hospital 57357, which was the subject of a media attack in summer 2018, can be seen as a reflection of their relative distance to power compared to other celebrity institutions.

5. After July: the stabilization of new structures?

5.1 What happened to the Islamists?

The aforementioned transformations had an adverse impact on Islamic civic associations. Since the regime saw the sector as a critical arena for the exercise of power and given the relative strength of the Brotherhood and its allies in the sector, it was natural for the authorities to intervene violently to exclude the Brotherhood and its allies. Under the pretext of the war on terrorism, it segregated MB affiliate institutions from other associations, and subsequently targeted them.

The regime smashed Brotherhood operations, both political and development-oriented, through legal action, made more effective by the organization's independence in the period of political openness, which made it easier to distinguish and target the group. First came the ruling by the Cairo Court of Expedited Matters in September 2013 banning the Brotherhood and seizing its assets. This was followed by a Cabinet decree that formed a committee to oversee the asset seizures. Another court ruling in February 2014 declaring the MB a terrorist organization expanded the scope of the committee's work.[91] By early 2016, some 1,200 "Brotherhood" institutions had been seized, among them schools, clinics, and hospitals, most importantly the Islamic Medical Association, whose reconstituted board Dr. Ali Gomaa was appointed to chair. Given the research obstacles discussed at the outset of this paper, it was impossible to accurately assess the impact of the new administration on the magnitude of donations and operations, its relationship with the association's staff, and the degree to which staff was retained or dismissed based on political

affiliation, and this is true for other bodies seized as well. Nevertheless, workers in the philanthropic field who participated in our research agreed that a Brotherhood presence, both volunteer and salaried, was tolerated at such institutions at the lower levels due to the need for their expertise and labor. In exchange for such leniency, operations were closely monitored to prevent the formation of new channels for Brotherhood grassroots outreach that could enable them to build reservoirs of popular support.[92]

The seizure of associations was not the only reason for the decline in Brotherhood philanthropic activity. The space open to Brotherhood volunteers at other associations was narrowed due to concerns about being linked to the group (this was the case

---

91   The court ruling gave the authorities the right to take extralegal, preventive measures due to "the imminent danger...which must be deterred with in interim measure for which ordinary court procedures are inadequate."

92   Focus group discussions with former and current volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018 and an interview with an employee at a charitable institution working in medical care, Cairo, 2018. This conclusion is supported by press statements by Dr. Ali Gomaa, who after the second meeting of the newly constituted board in January 2015, announced "a 10 percent bonus for staff and doctors at hospitals" affiliated with the association. He also affirmed his desire to retain "the staff [at the association] without changing any employee." Another member of the board stated, "No worker at any of the association's branches will be harmed." (See Ibrahim Qassem, "Khilal al-Ijtima' al-Thani li-Majlis Idarat al-Jam'iya al-Tibbiya al-Ikhwaniya al-Mutahaffaz 'alayha: 'Ali Jum'a Yuqarrir Sarf 10% Mukafa'a li-l-'Amilin," al-Youm al-Sabie, 20 Jan. 2015.) This concords with what most volunteers said (to be discussed below): that there was a desire to retain low-level Brotherhood volunteers and employees in the charitable sector, while imposing close surveillance to prevent them from investing their efforts for the Brotherhood's benefit. They also observed that the giants in the field, particularly Dr. Ali Gomaa and Misr El-Kheir, were used to manage this issue.

with Resala).[93] Other volunteers were loath to work with some institutions due to the political stances of their leaders (such as Life Makers and Ansar al-Sunna).[94] Yet another group of Brotherhood volunteers gave up volunteerism and community service entirely for reasons related to the political defeat (to be discussed below). Most importantly, the organization, or what was left of it, retreated inward, and existing charity committees directed their limited resources to the families of those members killed or detained. The few people still involved in Brotherhood charitable work had no desire to assist parties they saw as complicit in the bloodshed due to their support for the July regime, and charity was therefore focused on a narrow circle of supporters.[95]

The Brotherhood was not the only target for security. The Brotherhood asset seizure committee announced the freezing of assets of several other Islamist institutions, including 138 branches of al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya and Ansar al-Sunna (along with the Food Bank, before interim President Adli Mansour exempted it from the freeze order). The move fueled anxiety among these institutions, which sought to clear their associations of the taint of the Brotherhood. After the Resala spokesman appeared at the sit-in of supporters of President Morsi in Rabi'a al-Adawiya Square, the association was accused of being a Brotherhood organ and of distributing donation funds to the protestors there in the form of meals and collection bags. As rumors spread of its impending seizure or freeze, Resala strove to exonerate itself of any Islamist links at all by honoring a dancer for her social role.[96] As regards Life Makers, Amr Khaled, in repeated media appearances, affirmed his support for the July regime and denied any links to the Brotherhood.[97] Immediately after the military intervention, al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya leaders met with the Military Council to inform

---

93 Resala was repeatedly accused of organizational links with the Brotherhood, and the regime-friendly media figures who made such accusations cited the participation of Brotherhood volunteers as evidence. This concerned the Resala administration, which sought to distinguish itself from the group, made easier by the fact that the Brotherhood set itself apart from other institutions in the years when restrictions on work were lifted, according to focus group discussions with former and current volunteers at various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

94 Focus group discussions with former and current volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018. The Brotherhood's growing reservations about Amr Khaled and Life Makers have already been noted. These concerns mounted considerably after 2013, largely due to Khaled's political choices, such as joining Dr. Ali Gomaa in the Our Morals campaign or giving lectures to military officers (in which, it was said, he urged them to use violence to disperse the sit-in by supporters of the deposed President Morsi in August 2013). The tension between Ansar al-Sunna and the Brotherhood was occasioned by the anti-Brotherhood stance of the Nour Party (close to Ansar al-Sunna) in July 2013, the repeated affirmations of support for President al-Sisi from Ansar al-Sunna leaders, and the association's support for him in successive elections. This tension was manifested in charitable activity.

95 Focus group discussions with former and current volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

96 Interview with a former Resala volunteer, Cairo, July 2018. During interviews and focus group discussions, Resala volunteers mentioned the institution honoring the dancer Boussi on Mother's Day. But according to secondary sources, the dancer was invited to attend a 2013 celebration hosted by the association "to pay respect to mothers." The head of Resala's board also denied the "rumor" that Boussi was a guest of honor and blamed "youth volunteers" for the "mistake" of inviting her to the celebration. It is possible that the tensions within the institution at this time—the leadership's sense that it needed to reconcile itself to the new regime as opposed to volunteers' sympathy for the revolution or the Brotherhood in the wake of the huge casualties during the dispersal of sit-ins at Rabi'a al-Adawiya and al-Nahda—gave rise to internal misunderstandings and mutual distrust between the two sides. See for example Mahmoud Abbas, "Radd-an 'ala Sha'i'at Takrim 'Busi' Risala: Shabab al-Jam'iya Akhta'u bi-Da'wat Shakhsiya Muthirat al-Jadal," al-Watan, 26 Mar. 2014.

97 An important episode in this context was Khaled joining former Chief Mufti Ali Gomaa in announcing the Our Morals campaign, which prompted several media figures close the regime to brand Khaled a Brother. The preacher denied the accusation in repeated television statements, calling such talk "shameful and ridiculous." See for example Sahar Azzam, "'Amr Khalid: Lastu Ikhwaniyan wa Iqsa'i bi-Hila Sakhifa La'ba Qadima," Almesryoon, 9 Feb. 2016.

it that while it rejected the military action, it nevertheless would continue its peaceful work independent of the Brotherhood.[98] Al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya cautioned Friday preachers at its affiliated mosques against "addressing any political matter."[99] In Ansar al-Sunna, the sheikhs who had rejected political work out of hand had the final word; the leadership partially sympathetic to the Brotherhood was removed and replaced by leaders more amenable to friendly relations with the security apparatus.[100] The association then resumed its charitable work divorced from the political activity of the Nour Party, whose importance receded with the violent closure of the political arena.

Because the authorities approached development largely as a security concern, philanthropy and development were progressively demarcated. The former gave associations a tangible power over the lives of citizens, the latter, based in mosques, was of a religious nature, entailing no strong bond between beneficiaries and service providers. While the regime and its allies participated heavily in the first field, dominating it, seeking to restrict it institutionally, and retaining Islamists only if they swore fealty to the authorities and renounced the Brotherhood and its allies, and greater tolerance was shown for Islamists in mosque-based philanthropy.

Here, al-Azhar, a junior member of the ruling alliance, helped negotiate the bounds of the permissible. The philanthropic activities of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, which affirmed the religious authority of al-Azhar and was careful to support it and cultivate relations with it, did not face substantial harassment.[101] After overcoming its crisis with the Brotherhood asset seizure committee, al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya, which cooperated with al-Azhar in the appointment of preachers to its mosques, resumed its charitable work unmolested, having removed Brotherhood members in charge of the work at some of its branches.[102] The activity of these groups—along with Ansar al-Sunna, whose members could not be reached for this research—was limited to religious and benevolent service provision, which greatly resembled Islamist charitable work of the 1990s, before the momentum of volunteers so influenced Islamist philanthropy and geared it toward development in the first decade of the millennium. Being restricted to mosques, the activity of these associations was also limited geographically; it was not linked through an organizational structure; and it was not based on any cultivation of service beneficiaries. As such, it constituted no political challenge

---

98 Interview with an official at a charitable institutions associated with the Islamic Group, Cairo, July 2018.

99 This warning was repeatedly issued in other instances. Most importantly, when the Brotherhood asset seizure committee ruled to seize several of the association's branches, leaders in the institution reiterated the warning as part of their appeal to the authorities to reconsider the decision. See for example, Maha al-Qadi and Mustafa Yahya, "Tajmid Amwal al-Jam'iyat al-Ahliya fi Misr: Man Yadfa' al-Thaman?" BBC Arabic, 27 Dec. 2013.

100 Interview with a current Resala official and a former volunteer with Ansar al-Sunna, Cairo, July 2018. The internal struggle in the association began following the removal of President Morsi, culminating in some leaders accusing others of supporting the Brotherhood. See for example Ahmed Salah, "Tafasil Azmat Jam'iyat Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiya," Veto, 4 Apr. 2016. One outcome of the struggle was Social Minister Decree 10/2016 dissolving the association's Burg al-Arab branch. After the shuffle in the association's board, the secretary general of the group, Dr. Yasser Marzouq, said that the association is not involved "in politics, but rather religious outreach. We support no religious or political parties, and we do not want to become involved in political life or engage in it...Ansar al-Sunna signed no statement in support of the Muslim Brotherhood during its rule, and the organization means nothing to us." See "Amin Jam'iyat Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiya: al-Ikhwan La Yumaththilun lana Ay Shay' wa Lam wa Lan Natahalaf ma'hum," Sada al-Balad, 5 Apr. 2017.

101 Interview with an official at a charitable institution affiliated with the Islamic Group, Cairo, July 2018. It was not only due to its closeness to al-Azhar that the group's charitable activity was overlooked. It was also the marginal nature of such activity. Even in the years of openness, the Islamic Group was unable to attract volunteers outside of vary narrow circles.

102 Interview with an official with al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya, July 2018.

to the regime. Naturally, this tolerance was not extended to the MB and its affiliated associations. Their exclusion from the field was in fact similar in many respects to the exclusion of the Islamic Group in the 1990s.

5.2 From volunteerism to donors

One of the most significant consequences of the transformations discussed above was the attrition of volunteers in philanthropic/development activity,[103] a trend bolstered by the fall of the symbols of Islamist neoliberalism and the waning centrality of the liberal subject, as a result of which the importance of service-oriented volunteerism declined. The exodus of major players from the field led to a reliance on charitable giving rather than volunteerism, a shift that redrew the entire field.

Several challenges encountered neoliberal Islamic associations' efforts to retain their volunteers, let alone attract new ones. There were several reasons for this. Some volunteers feared the consequences for themselves and their families of being associated with institutions suspected of ties to

the Brotherhood.[104] (This anxiety was heightened by the lack of any objective criteria for identifying Brotherhood-linked or "terrorist" entities, given the broad discretionary authority given to the regime by the court ruling declaring the Brotherhood a terrorist group and subsequent laws regulating the lists of terrorist entities and terrorists.) The defeat of the revolution also spurred a general decline in volunteerism.[105] Some institutions lost a significant part of their volunteers with the Brotherhood's withdrawal from them, while other volunteers exited because of their distaste for the political positions of the institution's leadership, which they saw as contrary to their principles, such as Resala's honoring of a dancer or Amr Khaled's backing for the new regime and his apparent support for the dispersal of the sit-ins at Rabi'a al-Adawiya and al-Nahda.[106] According to people involved in administering operations at these institutions, they faced difficult choices that forced them to "declare fealty to the regime" and make several "concessions" to ensure their survival. This angered many volunteers, either because of their opposition to the new regime or their reservations about these institutions' participation in "politics."[107]

As discussed above, the rise of Islamist neoliberalism in the first decade of the millennium expanded the space for civic volunteerism. Islamist neoliberalism was based on a conception of the self as a

---

103 Numerous studies have charted this decline in volunteerism. The I'm A Volunteer campaign, mounted by the Culture for Life organization, identified eight administrative problems facing charitable institutions in Egypt, three of them related to declining volunteerism. (See Bassem al-Janoubi, "al-Jam'iya al-Khayriya fi Misr: Ja'ja' Bila Tahin," Al Jazeera seminars, 5 Dec. 2016.) Amani Qandil considers "declining volunteerism, particularly among youth" one of two major problems facing civic institutions, the second being declining donations. (al-Jam'iyat al-Ahliya fi Misr wa Sanawat al-Makhatir, 30). But she attributes this to economic pressures, which in the view of this author, is inadequate, as will be discussed below. Qandil nevertheless makes an important observation in noting that the decline was specific to youth volunteers. This helps explain why institutions relying on non-youth volunteers, such as al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya and Ansar al-Sunna, were able to continue to operate unharmed to the same degree as institutions that leaned heavily on youth volunteers and entered the field at the turn of the millennium.

104 Focus group discussions with former and current volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

105 Focus group discussions with former and current volunteers with various institutions, and an interview with a former Resala volunteer and current director at a small, non-volunteer civic association, Cairo, July 2018.

106 Focus group discussions with former and current volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

107 Focus group discussions with former and current volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018; interview with a Life Makers volunteer, Cairo, July 2018.

resource that must be cultivated,[108] married with an Islamist ethos that made participation in acts of charity part of this self-development.[109] As hopes of improving conditions were dashed with the revolution's defeat and the symbols of the neoliberal Islamist current lost their sheen, believers found new paths to individual spiritual salvation. They turned to Sufism, yoga, and cultural and artistic self-help initiatives that flourished among former volunteers in the charitable sector.[110] New volunteers approached the field with a more contractual mindset, seeking to acquire skills that would enable them to emigrate and find personal deliverance or to obtain institutional experience that would improve their own employment prospects and economic circumstances.[111]

This tapering off of volunteerism was a threat to development-oriented associations. For major institutions like Resala and Life Makers, the lack of new volunteers led to the return of veteran volunteers who had helped to establish the institution and later went independent with their own initiatives or took up politics. Understanding of their old institution's political accommodations, veteran volunteers were prompted to return by the curtailment of the political sphere, their fear for the new bodies they had established due to the exodus of volunteers, or their inability to sustain their independent initiatives due to the same exodus or financial pressures.[112] For small civic initiatives born in the golden age of volunteerism, financial constraints coupled with reduced volunteers spelled a slow death that

required no direct intervention by security.[113] Many people working with such groups moved to development institutions close to the new regime (Misr El-Kheir, Tahya Misr, or the Nasser Social Bank) or corporate social responsibility units, taking advantage of these institutions' need for their expertise and contacts in the development field. Entering at the lower job rung in these institutions, they often had to negotiate the terms and limits of their work, over which they no longer had much influence.[114] In contrast, other civic institutions began to rely more on paid employees than volunteers to maintain operations,[115] which increased costs and posed its own set of challenges.

Mosque-based charity were not similarly affected by the decline in volunteerism, for two reasons. First, the work at these associations was carried out by circles far removed from Islamist neoliberalism and with a very different philosophy of volunteerism, neither of which was substantially altered by the post-revolution mutations in neoliberalism. Volunteers with al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya, for example, proselytized, collected donations from acquaintances and local merchants, and distributed them to eligible persons registered in the association's database.[116] Second, there was greater latitude in charitable, mosque-based activity than in development activity, and such work in mosques was closely tied

---

108 Brown, Undoing the Demos, 33.

109 See footnote 44 for a discussion of Amr Khaled's enterprise.

110 Focus group discussions with former and current volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

111 Focus group discussions with former and current officials and volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

112 Focus group discussions with former and current officials and volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

113 Interview with an economist studying institutional philanthropy, Cairo, June 2018; interview with the founder of a civic institution working in health care, Cairo, July 2018; and interview with a university professor studying civil society and a former volunteer with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

114 Interview with a staff member at Tahya Misr, Cairo, July 2018; interview with a volunteer with an alms committee at Nasser Social Bank, Cairo, July 2018; and interview with a staff member at Misr El-Kheir, Cairo, July 2018.

115 Interview with a former volunteer with various institutions and the founder of a non-volunteer-based charitable institution working in health care, Cairo, July 2018.

116 Interview with an official with al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya, Cairo, July 2018.

to members of Islamist groups, such as Salafi Call and the Islamic Group, and therefore not dependent on volunteers.

5.3 Donor-based development and its problems

As volunteerism tapered off, civic associations faced challenges that impeded their effective operation. With the exception of the mosque-based sector, development work shifted from a reliance on volunteers to paid staff. This undermined the ability of these institutions to harness civic energies, particularly Islamist energies, and steer them away from activities that concerned the authorities: violence or effective opposition. The transition to paid staff also raised two new pressing issues for the civic sector: funding, now urgently needed to cover administrative costs, and project implementation, which suffered with the exodus of volunteers well-versed in the field. Various institutions' responses to these two challenges exposed the limits of development through charitable giving, as dictated by the logic of security, and it adversely affected these institutions' ability to perform the functions the political authority hoped they would.

Increasing dependence on paid staff raised the cost of operations and put pressure on institutional budgets, and so, having despaired of re-attracting volunteers, philanthropic institutions began looking for donors. Institutions divided the donor market into three categories: 1) major donors—regional and international businessmen, commercial firms, and charitable institutions—whose interests are directly tied to the existing regime and whose philanthropic contributions function as a negotiating lever; 2) the general public unconnected to the civic sector, which nonetheless gives its charitable contributions (alms) to institutions; and 3) middle-class youth who take part in civic activity by both giving and volunteering.[117]

All three of these groups were affected in various ways by legal and political transformations of the civic sector. Major donors, motivated by conviction, fear, or greed, directed their philanthropic contributions to the Tahya Misr Fund, making it the major funder of philanthropic activity as well as a project implementer.[118] Contributions from the general public declined due to deteriorating economic conditions, which eroded savings and fueled anxiety about the future, and for other reasons to be discussed below. The public, particularly rural citizens, directed what donations they made to the Zakat Foundation and other traditional channels, such as al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya.[119] Youth contributions to the institutional charitable sector declined for the same reasons. When donations were given, they did not go to the major institutions, but to initiatives founded in the years of political openness that later became staff-based institutions. Seeing themselves in such institutions, young people trusted the institution officials and their political positions, and tended to make a fixed monthly contribution of LE500–1,000.[120] Due to the negligible sum total of contributions to this type of association, there were very few institutions left to use these donations. Most small initiatives faced funding difficulties that ultimately caused them to shut down.

Tahya Misr, which became the main funder of civil society activities—or at least, the major player in directing funding—assigned responsibility for the implementation of its projects to several associations close to the political authority.[121] The provision of

---

117 Focus group discussions with former and current officials and volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

118 Interview with an economist following the philanthropic market, Cairo, June 2018.

119 Focus group discussions with former and current officials and volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018; interview with an economist following the philanthropic market, Cairo, June 2018.

120 Interview with a former volunteer with various institutions and the founder of a non-volunteer-based charitable institution working in health care, Cairo, July 2018.

121 Interview with a staff member at Tahya Misr, Cairo, July 2018.

funding gave these groups the financial resources necessary to hire the skills they needed, and these resources set them apart from other associations that were not as close to the regime, such as Resala, which, with the ongoing exodus of volunteers, increasingly relied on paid staff. But Resala's financial straits adversely affected its ability to pay attractive salaries, which in turn had a negative impact on the institution's quality of service provision.[122]

Funding for institutions close to the regime was nevertheless not enough to ensure their success. They thus typically relied on other local associations for project implementation. Misr El-Kheir, for example, has presented itself since its inception as "an umbrella for small associations," and it continued to manage its operations through these associations, relying on their administrators' networks to open funding avenues not accessible to others.[123] As local associations that previously relied on volunteer efforts were crippled, Misr El-Kheir faced difficulties in project implementation, which made for a tense relationship with its funder, Tahya Misr. Considering Tahya Misr's commitment to the president, it was compelled, following administrative changes, to directly implement or supervise projects itself, which put additional pressure on its skeletal administration.[124] The fund was therefore faced with two options. It could hire more staff, increasing costs and turning it into the dominant party in, rather than the internal regulator of, the charitable field, thereby transforming the entire sector into a quasi-governmental arena. Or it could forgo direct project implementation and look for other partners with sufficient volunteer resources to implement projects at a low cost.

In addition to the Tahya Misr Fund, institutions close to power looked for other sources of funding, like the addition of fees for state services earmarked for associations (the Red Crescent, for example, receives LE1 from each train ticket).[125] This is not an option for institutions that are not intimately linked to the regime, even if they do declare their loyalty. Life Makers, for example, was deep in negotiations with the Futtaim Foundation for a similar agreement, before the latter withdrew amid renewed rumors of ties between the association and the Brotherhood.[126]

The restrictions on fundraising and the direction of funds largely to regime allies had two interrelated effects. Civic associations were split into two major types. The first includes privileged institutions close to the regime that rely on paid staff. The other institutions did not view these with a great deal of respect, accusing them of the mismanagement of financial resources (and at times, corruption) and a lack of knowledge of how to operate.[127] Such allegations were given additional steam by the substantial promotional spending of the privileged institutions, particularly on Ramadan ads.[128] This, combined with renewed rumors of other civic institutions' ties

---

122 Interview with a Resala official, Cairo, July 2018; focus group discussions with former and current officials and volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

123 Interview with official at Misr El-Kheir, Cairo, July 2018.

124 Interview with a staff member at Tahya Misr, Cairo, July 2018.

125 Focus group discussions with former and current officials and volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

126 Interview with a Life Makers volunteer, Cairo, July 2018; interview with a Resala official, Cairo, July 2018.

127 Focus group discussions with former and current volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018; interview with an official in a social responsibility unit for a multinational firm, Cairo, July 2018; and interview with the director of an institution not based on donations and not a mega-institution in the civic sphere, Cairo, July 2018.

128 These expenditures were criticized even by regime supporters. See for example Amr Abd al-Samie, "I'lanat Tahya Misr," Al-Ahram, 29 May 2018. In contrast, some informed economists do not view the spending as exaggerated, explaining it as the desire of the celebrity institutions to maintain their share of donations amid growing competition for a stagnant pool of donor funds (interview with an economist following the philanthropic market, Cairo, June 2018).

to the Brotherhood—such as al-Jam'iya al-Shar'iya, Life Makers, and Resala—led the general public to withhold donations from them, and in fact from the entire institutional philanthropic sector. Instead, the general public tended to give directly to beneficiaries or donate through local, informal networks.[129] This led to a partial calcification of the institutional civic sector, whose spending, according to estimates by economists in the field, accounted for just 20–25 percent of total charitable spending. As a result—and this is the second effect—a parallel sphere emerged based on narrow charitable networks.[130]

5.4 Al-Siddiqiya Order

Although Sufi orders participated in mosque-based philanthropy—particularly offering food in mosques and shrines—they were neither institutionalized nor primarily focused on development. This can be attributed to three reasons. First, the Sufi worldview privileges the present, as opposed to development projects' future-oriented development projects. Second, orders provide their service (known as khidma) for all, irrespective of their social class or material need, for everyone is poor a spiritual sense. This runs contrary to the development oriented approach towards poverty, which a. treats it as a curable disease, and b. therefore sets to distinguishes the poor, their deserving beneficiaries, from others. Third, Sufis are generally wary of institutionalization and durable service; they provide their khidma in particular seasons or places, and invite all to attend.

But despite their avoidance of development and politics, Sufi orders were not unaffected by the changes wrought by the revolution. The political rise of the Salafis in 2011, and the increased calls to demolish Sufi shrines that came with it, constitut-

ed a existential threat that prompted some to enter the political fray directly.[131] In addition, the Islamists' failures led some of their supporters to turn to Sufism in search of meaning.[132] If Sufi political participation had been marginal in past years,[133] the aforementioned shifts in the form of government, manifested in the growing significance of the philanthropic sphere, has arguably paved the way for a more significant transformation: the potential to draw mainstream Sufism into the heart of the development-political process. The authorization of a new Sufi order, the Siddiqiya al-Shaziliya, in February 2018 by the Supreme Council of Sufi Orders and the appointment of Ali Gomaa as its Sheikh may signal an important stage in this evolution.

Gomaa is no stranger to the field. During his tenure as mufti, he issued several fatwas permitting zakat to be given to institutional development projects instead of directly to the poor. In the same period, he helped to establish and administer numerous philanthropic and development associations, most significantly Misr El-Kheir, whose board of trustees he has headed since its founding in 2007. He also helps to steer and manage its sister institutions, like the Food Bank, in both official and unofficial capacities. But his relationship to this sector assumed a different shape after July 2013, a period that coincided with his retirement as mufti. He began to play a more prominent role in the ideological battle with

---

129 Interview with an economist following the philanthropic market, Cairo, June 2018; focus group discussions with former and current volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018.

130 Interview with an economist following the philanthropic market, Cairo, June 2018.

131 For example, the secretary of the Rifaiya order established the Coalition of Sufi Youth, which was involved in the parliamentary and presidential negotiations following the removal of President Mubarak. The Tahrir Party, affiliated with the Azimiya order, was also founded. Some Sufi sheikhs, among them Sheikh Abu al-Azayim, justified this conduct with by pointing to concern about the rise of Islamists and the potential harassment this could spell for Sufis. See Amr Rushdi, "al-Sufiya wa-l-Siyasa fi Misr," Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 3 Aug. 2017.

132 Focus group discussions with former and current volunteers with various institutions, Cairo, July 2018; focus group discussions with participants in unofficial educational initiatives, Cairo, May/June 2018.

133 For example, Sufi-affiliated parties had only trivial electoral success.

Islamists, even as he was appointed to influential positions in the development sector. In 2013, he was appointed to the board of trustees of the Tahya Misr Fund and the following year to the presidency of the Islamic Medical Association, after its confiscation from the Muslim Brotherhood. He thus became an important player in the field and a voice of legitimacy the regime could wield against its junior partner, al-Azhar.[134] (His noticeable absence from the board of trustees of al-Azhar's Zakat Foundation, despite his position as the most prominent Azhari figure in the philanthropic and development sector, is pertinent here.)

In addition to his charitable/development positions, Gomaa chairs the administrative board of al-Nass satellite channel, which has shed its Islamist-Salafi cast of previous years to become an expression not of al-Azhar in general, but of Gomaa's circles in particular.[135] Insofar as the regime exercises power by delegating governance to the charitable/development sector and monopolizing the media instead of the political arena, Sheikh Gomaa can be considered a prominent regime figure. It is no wonder, then, that the Supreme Council of Sufi Orders and the MOE agreed to approve the new Siddiqiya Sha-

ziliya Sufi order as soon as he filed for recognition,[136] one of the main reasons for the approval being Gomaa's role in combating extremism.

The Siddiqiya order is not new—according to its website, it has been active for decades—but it only filed for legal status of late because of "what our community [umma] is experiencing" and the duty "to educate youth" in light of "the economic, political, social, moral, intellectual, and philosophical crisis" facing the nation.[137] If it is still too early to make definitive statements about the role the order will play, it is clear from this self-description that it will not confine itself to that of other registered Sufi orders. Given its sheikh's prominent status in the philanthropic arena, it is possible that the order will act as the nucleus for civic work that can again attract volunteers and harness their energies for development projects, while simultaneously ensuring that they do not evolve into an opposition political bloc.

---

134 This was illustrated by a fatwa Gomaa issued in Ramadan (May) 2018, holding that the Tahya Misr Fund was a legitimate body for the receipt and disposal of alms (zakah), which served to steer some donor funds away from al-Azhar's Alms Foundation toward the fund. It should be noted that despite his centrality in the development field, Gomaa is not a member of the board of trustees of the Alms Foundation, which reflects the persistent tension between him and the chief sheikh of al-Azhar, both of whom have been the leading lights of al-Azhar for the past two decades.

135 Many of Gomaa's students and disciples and people who worked with him during his tenure at the head of the Fatwa Authority present regular programs on the channel, among them Youssri Gabr, Amr al-Wardani, Mohammed Awad al-Manqoush, Magdi Ashour, Abd al-Baeth al-Kittani, and Ahmed Mamdouh.

136 The process was not without some hiccups. The Supreme Council of Sufi Orders rejected Gomaa's initial name for the order, the Ulya order (apparently derived from Ali Gomaa's own name) before approving al-Siddiqiya (from Sheikh Abdullah bin Siddiq al-Ghamari). This may reflect an attempt to place some restrictions, however symbolic, on Gomaa's position in the Islamic and Sufi landscape. See for example Hisham al-Naggar, "I'adat Zabt al-Mashhad al-Sufi Wahida min Aliyat al-Harb 'ala-l-Tatarruf," al-Arab, 6 Aug. 2018.

137 See https://siddiqiya.com/en/what-is-siddiqiya.

6. Conclusion

As "sovereign gifts" designed to strengthen the state, philanthropic and development-oriented association share the responsibilities of government with the state in a manner that reflects both parties conjoined fates and severe rivalry. Throughout their long history in Egypt, civic institutions, a core part of them Islamist, have performed various functions.

Although these vary in part depending on the political context, in general such institutions have dedicated themselves to two principal missions. The first is the management, coordination, and steering of social resources in pursuit of development, (which, as discussed, has been underpinned by different philosophical foundations in

successive periods, each with its own conception of the problem of poverty, its causes and treatment, and the proper balance of the roles of state and society in this treatment.). Managing these resources required lifting constraints on institutional work, lest these resources be directed to another sphere.

The second mission of civic institutions has been to help stabilize the governing power by cementing social peace, whether by providing social security networks in times of economic restructuring, fragmenting social constituencies through loan management, or incorporating actors excluded from the political process into the social arena, thereby utilizing their energies and insulating society from their violence or alienation. A contradiction is embedded in these two missions, as institutions' need for relative independence to perform them has run up against the political authority's anxiety that such independence will foster the creation of opposition political blocs, particularly given the closed political arena.

In the decades preceding the 2011 revolution, political rulers sought to balance these two tasks by managing the sector through unofficial channels, allowing sovereign bodies to set the permissible boundaries of action for each association and current based on the regime's political interests irrespective of the formal legal structure. In contrast,

the regime that took shape in the wake of July 2013 seems to have resolved the contradiction by making the philanthropic sector the major arena for the exercise of power. It has preferred to manage the sector from within, distributing resources itself and excising its opponents with not a small degree of violence. In turn, the sector's capacity to assimilate regime opponents has diminished, as has its ability to mobilize social resources—funds and volunteers—for the purpose of development.

As the regime realized the hazards of its approach, it moved in two directions. First, it allowed a narrow margin of freedom to institutions whose impact did not go beyond a single mosque. Such institutions are not strong enough to make any appreciable contribution to development, although they can help mitigate poverty in narrow geographic areas. Secondly, it is attempting to provide resources to the institutional sector, not by lifting security restrictions, but rather through other means. Most importantly, it appears to be fostering the formation of new volunteer reservoirs through the networks of Sufi orders, which had previously been wary of institutional work. These new volunteer bases would presumably be more loyal to the regime due to the stances of their head sheikhs. At the same time, the regime is attempting to concentrate financial resources and take full control of revenue and spending channels by expanding the scope the Tahya Misr Fund's operations. Affirming the fund to be a legitimate "channel for the disposal of Zakat" in Ramadan 2018 appeared to another step toward this goal.

The sustainability of this new formula remains an open question. While the future cannot be predicted, sustainability depends on several factors: the change to economic policy's impact on the relationship between businessmen, especially tycoons, who would like a greater degree of economic independence, and the ruling sovereign and military bodies; the regime's ability to cultivate a new reservoir of volunteers from the ranks of Sufis while ensuring it does not become a force of opposition; the potential need to integrate Islamists, particularly if large numbers are released from prison and

the political situation shifts in a way to make existing mechanisms of repression, such as surveillance, untenable; and, relatedly the need to empower institutions in which Islamists could participate to perform their designated function.