

Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong as a Principle of Social Action

The Case of the Egyptian al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya

Roel Meijer

The Jama'a al-Islamiyya as a social movement

Undoubtedly the Egyptian Jama'a al-Islamiyya is one of the most important Islamic movements in Egypt. Most of the attention has been focused previously on exotic groups such as the Takfir wa-l-Hijra, or minor groups such as the Military Academy Group,¹ or more recently, since 9/11, on the Jihad Organisation and its relationship through Ayman al-Zawahiri with bin Laden.² By contrast, the Jama'a has largely been neglected in Western sources, or, worse, put into the same bracket as the Jihad Organisation. Only at the end of the 1990s, when it revised its ideology, did it attract significant attention.³

¹ Gilles Kepel, *The Prophet and the Pharaoh: Muslim Extremism in Egypt*. London: Al Saqi Books, 1985.

² See for instance, Fawaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

³ An excellent analysis of their ideology and its revision that only belatedly was brought to my attention is Issam Fawzi and Ivesa Lübben, *Die ägyptische Jama'a al-islamiyya und die Revision der Gewaltstrategie*. DOI-Focus, No. 15, July 2004. For a more anthropological analysis of the Jama'a al-Islamiyya, see James Toth, 'Islamism in Southern Egypt: A Case

Unlike its neglect in Western research, the Jama'a has been the focus of many Egyptian researchers, but a definitive study has yet to be written.⁴ What makes the Jama'a interesting is that it is a social movement.⁵ As opposed to the Jihad Organisation, the Jama'a has always pursued the line of obtaining a large following and mobilising the masses and as such can be regarded as a social movement rather than a conspiratorial group or a sect. It was involved in all aspects of a contentious action: building an organisation, resource mobilisation, identity formation, framing, taking advantage of opportunity structures and choosing from a repertoire of contention.⁶ Moreover, the Jama'a is especially interesting for its relationship with violence and the dangers it poses for a movement that was basically not geared to taking over power from the state. In its history the Jama'a resembles in many ways the student movements in Europe of the 1960s, going through the same stages of development from an apolitical movement, acquiring political awareness, radicalising and in some

Study of a Radical Religious Movement', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4 (2003), pp. 547–72. For a sociological and cultural explanation of the rise of the Jama'a al-Islamiyya, see Mamoun Fandy, 'Egypt's Islamic Group: Regional Revenge?' *Middle East Journal*, vol. 48, no. 4 (1994), pp. 607–25. See also, *Gama'at al-Islamiyya Cessation of Violence: An Ideological Reversal*, Y. Carmon, Y. Felder, and D. Lav, MEMRI, No. 309, www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=countries&Area=Egypt&ID=IA30906.

⁴ The best book in Arabic is Hisham Mubarak's, *al-Irhabiyyun qadimun: Dirasa muqarana bayna mawqif 'al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin' wa-Jama'at al-Jihad wa-qadiyat al-'unf* (1928–1994) [The Terrorists Are Coming: A Comparative Study of the Concepts of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jihad Groups and the Issue of Violence, 1928–1994], Cairo: Kitab al-Mahrusa, 1995. Other books on the topic are Muhammad Husayn Abu al-'Ala, *al-'Unf al-dini fi Misr* [Religious Violence in Egypt], Cairo: Kitab al-Mahrusa, 1998 and Hasan Bakr, *al-'Unf al-siyasi fi Misr: Asyut bu'rat al-tawattur. al-Asbab wa-l-dawafi* (1977–1993) [Religious Violence in Egypt: Asyut the Source of Strain. Reasons and Motives], Cairo: Kitab al-Mahrusa, 1996. Undoubtedly the best source for research on the Jama'a al-Islamiyya are the articles Muhammad Salah wrote on the development of its struggle with the state for the newspaper *al-Hayat* since the beginning of the 1990s.

⁵ An excellent article that analyses the Jama'a al-Islamiyya as a social movement, is Mohammed M. Hafez and Quintan Wiktorowicz, 'Violence as Contention in the Egyptian Islamic Movement', in Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004, pp. 61–88. The authors, however, overstate the structuralist factors and downplay the ideational factors, such as *hisba*, that form the crux to understanding the repertoire of contention of the Jama'a al-Islamiyya, as I argue in this article.

⁶ The best overview is Sidney Tarrow's, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

cases coming into violent conflict with the state. Not only does the Jama'a differ from these movements on account of its religious character,⁷ but it is also a semi-Salafi movement and as such provides insight into one of the recurring characteristics of Salafism, *hisba*.

This chapter deals with the history of the Jama'a and its different tactics as a social movement. It will focus especially on the concept of *hisba* (*al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar*), or commanding right and forbidding wrong. The most important verses in the Qur'an concerning this issue state: "Let there be one community of you, calling to good, and commanding right and forbidding wrong: those are the prosperers" (3:104), and "You are the best community (*ummah*) ever brought forth to men, commanding right, forbidding wrong, and believing in God" (3:110). The most important *hadith* on *hisba* states that "whoever sees a wrong, and is able to put it right with his hand (*bi-l-yad*), let him do so; if he cannot then with his tongue (*bi-l-lisan*); if he cannot then with his heart (*bi-l-qalb*). That is the bare minimum of faith."⁸ *Hisba* is traditionally a conservative principle. According to the classical doctrine of Muslim scholars, putting things right (*taghyir*) with the hand is the prerogative of political authorities, with the tongue of scholars and in (or with) the heart for the common people. This elitist interpretation confirms the state's monopoly of force and the "natural" hierarchical structure of society.⁹ The originality of the Jama'a lies in turning this conservative concept into an activist programme or *manhaj*.

The early years

Originally, in the 1970s, al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya should be read in the plural as Jama'at, or religious societies (*al-jama'at al-diniyya*). They were concentrated in universities, operated independently from each other and, had no ties to

⁷ The major contribution to promoting the study of the Islamist movement as a social movement, is the anthology edited by Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004.

⁸ Michael Cook, *Forbidding Wrong in Islam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 3–4, 11–12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17. In contrast to Egypt, *hisba* has been used in Saudi Arabia as a means for the state and the *'ulama*, to assert control over society and impose its conservative moral order through the "religious police", or *matawi'a* as disciplining force. See David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2006, pp. 82, 95, 113 and 169 and Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 49–58.

other organisations like the Muslim Brotherhood. Most of them were informally organised as “families” (*usar*). Like the Muslim Brotherhood whose members were released from prison in this period, they were supported by the state as a counterbalance to the left.¹⁰ In Asyut and Aswan they were even subsidised by the local governor.¹¹ The organisational backbone of the Jama‘at was established by study “circles” (*halaqat*). One of the important activities they organised were summer camps, where students not only were taught *fiqh* (law) and *tafsir* (Qur’anic exegesis) but also engaged in physical training and self-defence, as the Brotherhood had done in the 1940s and 1950s. The Jama‘at gained adherents by not concentrating so much on politics as on providing services for students, such as free transport, copies of lectures, and organising markets for cheap food, books and clothing.¹² Through their networks and their ideology of purity the Jama‘at had a potential to become a political opposition.

Especially in Upper Egypt, where next to Asyut University new universities had been built in Sohag, Qina, and Minya, the Jama‘at grew into a contentious movement during the second half of the 1970s. One person stood out as particularly influential in the ideological development of the Jama‘at: ‘Abdallah al-Samawi. After having been imprisoned at the age of sixteen for his activities in the Brotherhood he had become alienated from the organisation at the end of the 1960s. Al-Samawi was able to create an independent network and devote himself completely to preaching and organising study circles. His Jama‘a expanded between 1974 and 1978 to several thousand members who supported him with donations.¹³ Another important figure is ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Rahman (b. 1938), who became the “spiritual father” of the Jama‘a when it became a separate organisation.¹⁴ Like ‘Abdallah al-Samawi, he had been in conflict with the state since the 1960s.¹⁵

¹⁰ See Muntasar al-Zayyat, *al-Jama‘at al-islamiyya: Ru‘ya min al-dakhil* [The Jama‘at al-Islamiyya: A View from the Inside], Cairo: Dar Misr al-Mahrusa, 2005, p. 63.

¹¹ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyun*, p. 158 and Muntasar al-Zayyat, *al-Jama‘at al-islamiyya*, p. 74 and Kepel, *The Prophet and the Pharaoh*, p. 134.

¹² al-Zayyat, *al-Jama‘at al-islamiyya*, p. 66; Kepel, *The Prophet and the Pharaoh*, pp. 143–56; Kamal al-Sa‘id Habib, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya min al-muwajaha ila al-muraja‘a* [The Islamic Movement from Opposition to Revisionism], Cairo: Maktabat al-Madbuli, 2002, p. 32.

¹³ al-Zayyat, *al-Jama‘at al-islamiyya*, p. 50.

¹⁴ Although he was an Azharite, he was especially a follower of Ibn Taymiyya, who was not regarded as a central figure at the Azhar at the time. See, Salih al-Wardani, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya fi Misr: Waqi‘ al-thamanin* [The Islamic Movement in Egypt: The Realities of the 1980s]. Cairo: Markaz al-Hadara al-‘Arabiyya li-l-‘Ilam wa-l-Nashr, 1991, p. 14.

¹⁵ For an interesting, though partly absurd, biography of ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Rahman, because

Ideologically, the Jama'at were "immature" in the first half of the 1970s.¹⁶ The movement had neither a clear policy nor a clearly defined project.¹⁷ Most members were simply pious and endeavoured to follow a "traditional Salafism",¹⁸ which had been founded in the 1920s. The movement was conservative, ritualistic, based on peaceful *hisba* and agitated especially against Sufism. In the 1970s it re-established its relations with Saudi Arabia and became oriented towards the Saudi Salafi establishment.¹⁹ In contrast, most

it is based on conspiracy theory that he was manipulated by the Americans, see Mahmud Fawzi, 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman, *al-Shaykh al-Amriki al-Qadim*! [Umar Abd al-Rahman, The American Shaykh is Coming!], No place, no date.

¹⁶ al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-islamiyya*, p. 73. This is the common theme of the present first generation of activists. See also Kamal al-Sa'id Habib, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya*, p. 31, who regards these years as "almost like a dream" that was filled with a spirituality, enthusiasm, and solidarity, but needed direction, organisation, and rules. In their interviews with the editor-in-chief of *al-Musawwar*, Makram Muhammad Ahmad, the Jama'a leadership also confirm their inexperience ("twenty years ago we were young men (*shabab*)"). Typically, they state that their religious, political and historical knowledge was inadequate. See Makram Muhammad Ahmad, *Mu'amara am muraja'a: Hiwar qadat al-tatarruf fi sijn al-'aqrab* [Conspiracy or Revisionism. Debate with the Leaders of Extremism in the Scorpion Prison], Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2002, p. 131.

¹⁷ al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-islamiyya*, p. 52.

¹⁸ The term "traditional Salafism", with the connotation of pious, quietist Salafism is used by Salih al-Wardani, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya fi Misr: al-Waqi' wa-l-tahaddiyat* [The Islamic Movement in Egypt: Reality and Challenges], Cairo: Dar Logos, 2000, p. 99. One of the main apolitical Salafi movements in Egypt is the Jama'iyya al-Shar'iyya.

¹⁹ For more on Salafism in Egypt see Salih al-Wardani, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya fi Misr*, p. 87 and 98. See also his chapter on Salafism, pp. 144–54. He argues that the Salafi discourse in Egypt was dominated by *tawhid*, *shirk*, and *bida'*, was loyal to the ruler (*wali al-amr*) and rejected the right to revolt (*khuruj 'ala al-hakim*), which it associated with the Kharajites, *jihad*, and *takfir*, instead concentrating on *aqida* and personal piety. *Hisba*, however, was an important practice of the Salafis, and it is this element that the Jama'a al-Islamiyya adopted from them. See also Salih al-Wardani, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya fi Misr: Waqi' al-thamaninat* [The Islamic Movement in Egypt: The Reality of the 1980s], Cairo: Markaz al-Hadara al-'Arabiyya li-l-'Ilam wa-l-Nashr, 1991, pp. 60–72. According to al-Wardani the ideas of 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman and the Saudi mufti Ibn Baz were the same, except for the issue of revolt against the ruler. That is supposedly the reason why he was refused a visa to enter Saudi Arabia (p. 65). Another major difference was that the Jama'at were self-taught, whereas the Salafis were oriented towards Saudi Arabia and its *ulama*. The image of the more traditional Salafis as a rigid apolitical movement that was more interested in ritual purity than in the struggle against imperialism and Zionism, and therefore clashed with the Muslim Brotherhood, is confirmed by Brynjar Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998, pp. 59–60, 116.

Jama'at members found their way "without directions" and read on their own the classic Salafi texts of Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Kathir. With the exception of al-Samawi,²⁰ or 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman, "we were our own shaykhs", Muntasar al-Zayyat (b. 1956), the later-to-become lawyer of the Jama'a, states in his memoirs.²¹ For some students it was an opportunity to emerge as ideologues in their own right, such as 'Isam Darbala, one of the later student leaders of the Upper Egyptian movement, who was admired by his peers as a "theoretician" and "a man of culture" for his knowledge of Salafi theology and jurisprudence.²² However, by the mid 1970s the Jama'at had adopted such potentially revolutionary concepts as *jahiliyya* (period of ignorance) and *hakimiyya* (sovereignty of God as opposed to the sovereignty of man) from Sayyid Qutb.²³ His *Milestones* was a key text in cadre training courses in 1980 and many members knew whole sections of it by heart.²⁴ Sayyid Qutb, however, had little to say on *hisba*, and it is from Ibn Taymiyya that they derived the characteristic repertoire of contention of "changing the forbidden/reprehensible" (*taghyir al-munkar*).²⁵ He argued that in extreme cases it was the right of every subject to exert *hisba* and to use force without the sanction of the state.²⁶ By linking *hisba* with the concept of *tawhid al-rubbubiyya*, the necessity to completely submit to God's sovereignty, it was developed into an activist "programme of changing evil by force" (*manhaj taghyir al-munkar bi-l-quwwa*).²⁷ Tal'at Fu'ad Qasim, at the time a student leader in Minya, stated that they had to "rid themselves of the despots (*tawaghit*,

Habib remarks that traditional Salafis were only interested in morals (*akhlaq*) and purity (*tazkiya*) and did not show any interest in reality (*waqi'*), *al-Haraka al-islamiyya*, p. 34.

²⁰ al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-islamiyya*, p. 47.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 97. The mid-1970s are recognised as a phase of transition to greater political consciousness. See Habib, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya*, p. 52 and Hasan Bakr, *al-'Unf al-siyasi fi Misr*, p. 90.

²³ See for the excellent accounts of Sayyid Qutb, Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism: A Critique of Development Ideologies*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988, chapter 5, 'The Religious Aesthetic of Sayyid Qutb: A Non-Scriptural Fundamentalism', pp. 170–205.

²⁴ al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-islamiyya*, p. 129 and p. 47.

²⁵ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyun*, p. 215. See also al-Wardani, *al-Haraka al-islamiyyah* (2000), pp. 144–54.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

²⁷ al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-islamiyya*, p. 73 and p. 86.

literally: idols) after reading the Salafi *‘ulama* and modern *‘ulama* [sic] such as Sayyid Qutb”.²⁸

Despite their growing antagonism towards the state, the actions of the Jama‘at were mainly directed against the community. The struggle against moral corruption (*al-fasad al-akhlaqi*) adopted the form of disrupting music performances, intervening in the showing of Western films, as well as preventing other forms of corruption: liquor stores, video shops and mixed gender trips of students.²⁹ Smashing Christian liquor stores in Aswan with clubs was one way of expressing their religious zeal,³⁰ preventing the building of cinemas was another method.³¹ But it is clear that *hisba* represented a multi-faceted repertoire of contention that was also used to encroach upon the prerogatives of the authorities. The clash with the authorities led to a cycle of contention.³² Demonstrations, sit-ins, prayer sessions on the streets (when mosques they controlled were closed down), and intimidation, followed by negotiations with and concessions by the authorities, led to a further expansion of their horizon, higher demands, and a new phase of contention, ending in violence.³³ During this cycle the Jama‘at increasingly became involved in public clashes with the state, such as the “food riots” of 18 and 19 January 1977³⁴ and the demonstrations against the Camp David negotiations between Egypt and Israel during the following year. By the end of the 1970s, the state regarded the Jama‘at in Upper Egypt as a threat and student leaders were suspended from attending university.³⁵

A separate organisation

The turning point came in 1977 when the Jama‘at were able to translate their numbers into power by electing their leaders to student unions. Some of them

²⁸ See the interview with Tal‘at Fu‘ad Qasim in Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, p. 159. Most of the attention on the ideological background of the student movement in the 1970s has been focused on Sayyid Qutb (see especially Kepel, *The Prophet and the Pharaoh*), but it seems that Ibn Taymiyya has been more influential and that instead of *jihad*, *hisba* was a crucial aspect of activism in this period. The combination of Ibn Taymiyya and Sayyid Qutb is mentioned by others. See also Habib, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya*, p. 29.

²⁹ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, p. 159 and p. 164.

³⁰ al-Zayyat, *al-Jama‘at al-islamiyya*, p. 73.

³¹ Salih al-Wardani, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya* (2000), p. 51.

³² Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, pp. 141–60.

³³ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, p. 159.

³⁴ al-Zayyat, *al-Jama‘at al-islamiyya*, p. 70.

³⁵ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, p. 160–1.

became both an *amir* of a local Jama'a and the chairman of a student union,³⁶ increasing their power and outreach.³⁷ In this period also the competition with the Muslim Brotherhood grew as the Brotherhood tried to recruit a new generation to its ranks.³⁸

The main difference between the Jama'at in Upper and those in Lower Egypt was the specific interpretation of *hisba* by the Upper Egyptian Jama'at and the acceptance of violence.³⁹ The Upper Egyptian Jama'at condemned the Brotherhood for its weak *manhaj* and its refusal to "change evil by force".⁴⁰ But the differences went deeper. They claimed that they differed in their creed (*'aqida al-sunna wa-l-jama'a*), condemning the Brotherhood for its rejection of the Qutbian concept of *hakimiyya*, which made it imperative to rise up in revolt against the ruler who does not rule in accordance with the revelation.⁴¹ For its part, the Brotherhood started to detach itself from the student societies of Upper Egypt after they had declared Sadat an unbeliever.⁴² Their relations reached a breaking point when these Jama'at laid claim to the term Salafism,⁴³ regarding themselves as living "according to the Salafi understanding" (*nahwa fahm salafi*).⁴⁴ The organisational split occurred within the Jama'at in 1978 when many student leaders in Lower Egypt proclaimed their adherence to the

³⁶ al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-islamiyya*, p. 61.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³⁸ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, p. 135 and 137.

³⁹ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, p. 163. Much has been made of the difference in culture between Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. See, for instance, al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-islamiyya*, p. 53. Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, p. 138 and Mamoun Fandi, 'Egypt's Islamic Group: Regional Revenge?' It is quite possible that tribal background of the Jama'at was an issue as well as their tolerance for violence. Also it seems likely that the conservatism of Upper-Egyptian culture promoted the Salafi bent of the Jama'at, as Habib in *al-Haraka al-islamiyya*, states (p. 32). But the main strategic difference was the violent form of *hisba* these Jama'at used.

⁴⁰ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, p. 139.

⁴¹ al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-islamiyya*, p. 90.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 96. See also Habib, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya*, pp. 17–18, and al-Wardani, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya* (2000), p. 52. According to al-Wardani the Jama'a issued a pamphlet on their relations with the Muslim Brotherhood, called *Nahnu wa-l-Ikhwān*, in which they condemned the Brotherhood's programme for enticing its members to commit innovation (*bid'a*) and sin (*ma'siya*).

⁴⁴ 'Abd al-Rahim al-'Ali, *al-Muqamara al-kubra: Mubadarat waqf al-'unf bayna rihan al-bukuma wa-l-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* [The Great Gamble: The Initiative to End Violence between the Wager of the Government and the Jama'at al-Islamiyya], Cairo: Markaz al-Mahrusah, 2002, p. 141.

Brotherhood, to the outrage of their Upper Egyptian colleagues.⁴⁵ In March of that year a conference was organised in Asyut during which the Upper Egyptian Jama'a was established as a separate organisation with its own leader, Najih Ibrahim.⁴⁶ Characteristically it established vigilante groups "to change the wrong" (*taghyir al-munkar*) in the form of forbidding the drinking of alcohol and the mixing of sexes. It also started to print pamphlets in its own name.⁴⁷ Its activities expanded to include harassing Copts and the imposition of a head tax (*jizya*) on them.⁴⁸ Religious leaders such as 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman, legalised (*istihalla*) the appropriation of the money of the Copts, and robberies took place in such places as Shubra al-Khayma in Lower Egypt and Nag' al-Hamadi in Upper Egypt, during which several Coptic goldsmiths were killed.⁴⁹ In addition to clashes with Copts during the national/pagan holiday of Shamm al-Nasim, it also attacked Sufis, and fights occurred during the celebration of saints' days, *mawlid*s.⁵⁰

Merger with Tanzim al-Jihad

The merger with the Jihad Organisation in 1979–1980 has been extensively analysed and needs no elaboration here except for a few points that illustrate the influence of Tanzim al-Jihad on the Jama'a.⁵¹ First, the unification marked a merger of two different tactics of overthrowing the regime by means of a coup d'état by the Tanzim,⁵² supported by a "popular revolution" (*thawra sha'biyya*) led by the Jama'a.⁵³ Second, for the first time an attempt was made

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 141, and al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-islamiyya*, p. 67 and p. 82.

⁴⁶ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, p. 138. Its members were Karam Zuhdi, Najih Ibrahim, Salah Hashim, Usama Hafiz, Tal'at Fu'ad Qasim, Isam 'Abd al-Majid, Sabri al-Banna, 'Ali al-Sharif, Hamdi 'Abd al-Rahman, Rifa'i Ahmad Taha.

⁴⁷ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, p. 139.

⁴⁸ al-'Ali, *al-Muqamara al-kubra*, p. 139–40, and 142.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 142. al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-islamiyya*, 165.

⁵⁰ Salih al-Wardani, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya* (2000), pp. 47–8 and 102.

⁵¹ See for the merger, Muhammad Hassanein Heikel, *The Autumn of Fury: The Assassination of Sadat*, London: Deutsch, 1983.

⁵² Typically the basic ideological text of the Jihad Organisation, *The Hidden Duty*, by 'Abd al-Salam Faraj, is completely focused on *jihad* and does not mention *hisba*. See the translation in Johannes J.G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986, pp. 159–234.

⁵³ al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-islamiyya*, p. 105.

to draw up a strategy for achieving this goal.⁵⁴ Regarding revolution as a method that could lead to formation of a “special praxis”,⁵⁵ the new organisation closely studied the Iranian revolution that erupted in 1979.⁵⁶ Third, as a result of this merger members of the Jama’a for the first time received military training in the mountains along the Nile Valley in Upper Egypt.⁵⁷ The plan was to take over power after a period of three years.⁵⁸

Notwithstanding the merger, the basic differences could not be overcome between the two parts of the organisation. The main issue was the role of *hisba*.⁵⁹ Whereas the Jihad Organisation was a secret conspiratorial organisation that concentrated on *al-munkar al-akbar* (the greatest evil, i.e., of the state) and believed that the state could only be brought down by a tight knit vanguard that was capable of penetrating the military and staging a *coup d’état*, the Jama’a focused on open activism.⁶⁰ Characteristically, the Jihad Organisation condemned *hisba* because it attracted the attention of the police.⁶¹ Eventually these differences would crystallise into the two main strategies of the 1980s laid down in the *Mithaq al-‘amal al-islami* (The Charter of Islamic Action) of the Jama’a and the *Manhaj al-haraki li-Jama’at al-Jihad* (The Activism Programme of the Jihad Group) of the Jihad Organisation.⁶²

The second generation

The assassination of Sadat on 6 October 1981 and the uprising in Asyut two days later, and the massive arrests which followed, did not mean a break with

⁵⁴ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, pp. 165–7.

⁵⁵ See for the analysis of this concept in a contemporary form and the interaction of theory (*nazariyya*), programme, (*manhaj*) and application (*tatbiq*), Roel Meijer ‘Yusuf al-‘Uyairi and the Making of a Revolutionary Salafi Praxis’, *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 47, nos. 3–4 (1997), pp. 422–59.

⁵⁶ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, p. 167 and for more on the military strategic role of ‘Abbud al-Zumur, pp. 180–1.

⁵⁷ al-Zayyat, *al-Jama’at al-islamiyya*, p. 143–5.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁵⁹ See also the pamphlet of the Jama’a itself *Taqrir khatir* [An Important Communiqué] (no place, no date), where *jihad* is downplayed and *da’wa* and *al-amr bi-l-ma’ruf* emphasised. Collection of Islamist pamphlets of the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

⁶⁰ See also *Taqrir al-halat al-diniyya fi Misr* [The State of Religion in Egypt], Nabil ‘Abd al-Fattah (ed.), Cairo: Markaz al-Dirasat al-Siyasiyya wa-l-Istratijiyya, 1996, p. 186.

⁶¹ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, p. 189.

⁶² Muhammad Salah, *Waqa’i’ sanawat al-jihad: Ribla al-Afghan al-‘Arab* [Realities of the Years of Jihad: The Journey of the Afghan-Arabs], Cairo: 2001, pp. 65–7.

the past. The split that had existed before with the Muslim Brotherhood became even greater when it started to focus on civil society and gained seats in parliament in 1984 and 1987, while the Jihad Organisation and the Jama'a continued their strategies. Of the two, the Jama'a was by far the most successful. Ninety per cent of the actions and publications against the state in the 1980s and 1990s were from the Jama'a.⁶³

Three developments were crucial in this period. First, the first generation of leaders (born in the second half of the 1950s) would remain in prison (until 2003–2006), but would acquire prestige as the “historical leadership” (*al-qada al-tarikhiyyun*) and try to exert influence on events outside the prison through their extensive writings and communiqués. Second, a new leadership arose out of the second generation of students, who had been trained in the prisons and instructed on how to build a new infrastructure,⁶⁴ enabling them to take over daily operations of the Jama'a once they were released. The torture they had undergone in prison had radicalised them.⁶⁵ Third, the Jama'a diversified geographically, extending its influence, importantly, to the marginal suburbs in Cairo.⁶⁶ Fourth, a significant change took place in ideological writings. These became not only much more extensive, rigorous and systematic than the previous period, promoting violence via *hisba* and *jihad*, they also became much more political, promoting the establishment of an Islamic state, and therefore becoming more Islamist. In contrast to the rather abstruse *The Hidden Duty* of 'Abd al-Salam Faraj, the ideologue of the Jihad Organisation, these writings were very direct.⁶⁷ Fifth, the Jama'a became a much more disciplined organisation after its members were released in 1984. Divided into different sections based on ideology and the paramilitary training of cadres, it was transformed into “an army” geared to the execution of *hisba*, the main element they retained from Salafism.⁶⁸

⁶³ Salih al-Wardani, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya* (2000), p. 46.

⁶⁴ al-'Ali, *al-Muqamara al-kubra*, pp. 146–9.

⁶⁵ All commentators agree on the disastrous effects of the torture in prison after the assassination of Sadat in October 1981. See for instance 'Ali, *al-Muqamara al-kubra*, pp. 144–5, Salih al-Wardani, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya* (2000), p. 18. The effect on Zawahiri is clear from Muntasar al-Zayyat, *Ayman al-Zawahiri kama 'araftuhu* [Ayman al-Zawahiri as I Knew Him], Cairo: Dar al-Mahrusa, 2002.

⁶⁶ See for an excellent analysis of the Jama'a in Imbaba and other poor neighbourhoods in Cairo: Patrick Haenni, *L'ordre des caïds: Conjururer la dissidence urbaine au Caire*, Paris: Karthala, 2005.

⁶⁷ See the translation in Johannes J.G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty*, pp. 159–234.

⁶⁸ al-'Ali, *al-Muqamara al-kubra*, p. 148.

When the second generation leaders were released from prison in 1984, they took up the familiar practice of “changing wrong” by breaking up mixed parties, music festivals, theatre performances. As before, they were able to take advantage of the weakness of the central authority and terrorise the universities, especially Asyut University, where they used knives and chains to intimidate students and professors. To a much greater degree than in the 1970s they were able to expand “Islamic space” to neighbourhoods in cities and villages in Upper Egypt. Their main venue was the mosque, especially the smaller mosques. They acquired popularity by providing social, educational and health services, distributing free health care, medicine and food, besides acting as intermediaries and power-brokers in neighbourhood conflicts, establishing a kind of militia for this purpose.⁶⁹ By the end of the 1980s, the Jama’a succeeded in gaining control over entire regions, such as the district of Dayrut, where it dominated fifty-two villages.⁷⁰ Its hegemony was not total, however. By the mid-1980s a group of independent Jama’at emerged that rejected violence.⁷¹ After the appointment of Zaki Badr as Minister of Interior in 1987, the relations with the state deteriorated, and the police started forbidding lectures, preaching in mosques,⁷² and opening fire on demonstrating students.⁷³ The major assassination attacks on officials in this period were not the work of the Jama’a but of other groups, such as the Najun min al-Nar (Saved from the Fire) and the followers of a *shaykh* in Fayyum, called the Shawqiyun.⁷⁴

The life of an activist in the 1980s

An interesting insight into the activism of the Jama’a in the 1980s on the individual level can be gleaned from the autobiography of Khalid al-Birri.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, pp. 227–8.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁷¹ Salih al-Wardani, *al-Haraka al-islamiyya* (2000), p. 50.

⁷² al-Zayyat, *al-Jama’at al-islamiyya*, p. 242–4.

⁷³ Mubarak, *al-Irhabiyyun*, p. 217.

⁷⁴ al-‘Ali, *al-Muqamara al-kubra*, p. 149. See on this period also Hala Mustafa, *al-Islam al-siyasi fi Misr min harakat al-islam ila jama’at al-‘unf* [Political Islam in Egypt from Reformist Movement to Violent Groups], Cairo: Markaz al-Dirasat al-Siyasiyya wa-l-Istratijiyya, 1992.

⁷⁵ Khalid al-Birri, *al-Dunya ajmal min al-janna: Sirat usuli Misri* [The World is more Beautiful than Paradise: Life of an Egyptian Fundamentalist], Beirut: Dar al-Nahhar, 2001. These memoirs have been translated into French, as *La terre est plus belle que le paradis*,

Born in 1972 in Asyut he became member of the Jama'a in 1986 at the age of fourteen while he was in secondary school. His autobiography confirms many of the notions on the process of radicalisation, of empowerment and alienation that are part of the "spiral of encapsulation".⁷⁶ In the neighbourhood where Khalid al-Birri lived, he was impressed by the combination of courage, even brutality, and the piety that the members of the Jama'a demonstrated. It was their capacity for "action", "bravery", sense of "honour" and "solidarity", mixed with their commitment to their religion (*iltizam bi-dinibim*) that made them attractive as role models for a young man in search of an identity.⁷⁷

Everything in his memoirs revolves around the practice of *hisba* as an internal, individual as well as an external, collective, disciplining principle. He recounts how he loved listening to music and was a great fan of football but erased the music from his cassettes, recorded Qur'an citations instead, and stopped watching TV under influence of a Salafi shaykh.⁷⁸ He also started to practice another important principle in Salafism, *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*, avoiding contact with "all those who do not believe in God", especially his Coptic neighbours and friends.⁷⁹ During the next phase of empowerment—and alienation from his environment—he started practising *hisba* himself in his neighbourhood and at school. As he became aware of the "injustice of the unbeliever", embodied by the state, his "political consciousness" was raised.⁸⁰

The main reason for his transformation eventually, however, was an intellectual one. In the summer of 1987 he read *The Inevitable Confrontation*,⁸¹ one of the more virulent tracts of the Jama'a that was peddled on the streets. For him it was a revelation, and he was immediately convinced of the necessity of

Paris: J.C. Lattès, 2002, and in Dutch, *De Aarde is mooier dan het paradijs*, Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 2003.

⁷⁶ The term is used by Donatella della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 12 and pp. 195–201.

⁷⁷ Birri, *al-Dunya ajmal*, p. 11. He admires them elsewhere for their courage (*shaja'a*), devotion (*ikhlas*) to the cause and the justice (*'adl*), purity (*naqa'*) and equality (*musawab*), p. 18.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁸¹ *Hatmiyyat al-muwajaha* was issued in 1987. The pamphlet has been reproduced in 'Abd al-Rahim 'Ali, *al-Mukhatara fi safiqat al-hukumah wa-jama'at al-'unf* [The Danger in the Deal of the Government with the Violent Groups], Cairo: Mirit li-l-Nashr wa-l-Ma'lumat, 2000, pp. 252–94.

armed resistance against the state. His ardour for martyrdom and self-sacrifice was reinforced by documentaries on the *jihad* in Afghanistan and songs, *anashid*, and gradually his personality was subsumed into that of the collective of the Jama'a. He equated "submission" and "total obedience" to God with obedience to the Jama'a and the excommunication (*takfir*) of "those who do not rule in accordance to what God has revealed".⁸² Typically, for his and the previous generation, he acquired an understanding of the nature of activism and the "relationship between theory (*nazariyya*) and application (*tatbiq*)" by reading Sayyid Qutb, who provided him with a "complete cognitive model".⁸³ The sense that they were "distinguished" and "different" from the rest of society was translated in the minute details of eating and clothing and behaviour, and found its expression in the belief that they formed the vanguard of society. All attempts by the school to undermine the influence of these ideas, finally leading to his expulsion from school, only confirmed the just nature of the struggle against an "unbelieving system" (*nizam kafir*).⁸⁴

Al-Birri also makes clear in his autobiography that the Jama'a leadership were shrewd and constantly adapted their repertoire of contention according to circumstances. At a certain point, for instance, it was convinced that the strategy of *hisba* as an activist method was too aggressive for secondary schools, and that it could only be practised in the more open and less controlled environment of the university or the neighbourhoods of towns. Toned down, propaganda was limited to "personal *da'wa*", the approach of individual pupils instead of formally organised meetings and indoctrination sessions in "study circles".⁸⁵

The Salafi-Islamist revolution

It might be an overstatement to present Khalid al-Birri as a typical Jama'a member, but his activist experience, and especially the pamphlets he read, confirm the ideological developments of the Jama'a in the 1980s.⁸⁶ These writ-

⁸² Birri, *al-Dunya ajmal*, p. 21. Based on Sura 5: 44.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁸⁶ It seems that the Jama'a was mostly not so well organised as Khalid al-Birri makes it out to be. For him, as a smart pupil, the influence of texts was probably more intensive than for other members. See Patrick Haenni, *L'ordre des caïds*, who does not ascribe much influence to texts.

ings are imbued with a Manichean world view, with the world divided into the bad and the good. Basically the Jama'a subscribed to a deductive method in its effort to combat the bad. Its reasoning is from principles to practice, from creed (*'aqida*) to method (*manhaj*), to application (*tatbiq*).⁸⁷ Their writings are geared to action and the Qur'an is regarded as a programme for "an activist method (*manhajan harakiyyan*) that taught us how to establish an Islamic state."⁸⁸ Also noteworthy in this worldview is that politics and religion are totally congruent. The worst political crime is not to err but to commit a sin (*ma'siya*), and sinfulness (*fisq*) is associated with misrule.⁸⁹ Politicians and westernised intellectuals are depicted not as having different political or cultural ideas but rather as being "mentally confused."⁹⁰ And acting politically correctly can only be achieved by one's commitment to religion (*iltizam bi-dinibim*).⁹¹

The writings of the Jama'a stress the comprehensive nature of religion. Inverting the official totalitarian discourse of the times, Islam is depicted as an all-encompassing, total system (*shumuliyya*) that regulates all aspects of life.⁹² The *Charter* states "our religion is complete, total and final"⁹³ In that sense the Jama'a, like all the rest of the Islamist movements, stresses the central paradox of Islamist political thought in modernity: the liberation of man by his total submission to God. Revolt against God is the same as sin (*ma'siya*), and as man by nature is the slave/servant (*'abd*) of God the goal of the Jama'a is "the subjection of man to God" (*ta'bid al-nas li-rabbihim*)⁹⁴ in accordance with Ibn Taymiyya's dictum that "Islam means obedience" (*wa-l-din huwa al-ta'a*).⁹⁵

⁸⁷ Birri, *al-Dunya ajmal*, p. 24.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁸⁹ *Hatmiyyat al-muwajahah*, p. 256.

⁹⁰ See the central ideological document of the Jama'a al-Islamiyya of the 1980s, *Mithaq al-'Amal al-Islami* [The Islamic Action Charter], p. 69. It was written by three members of the "historical leadership", Muhammad 'Isam al-Darbala, 'Asim 'Abd al-Majid and Najih Ibrahim. Photocopy of a handwritten version at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

⁹¹ Birri, *al-Dunya ajmal*, p. 11.

⁹² *Shumuliyya* is a recurrent concept in the writings of the Jama'a. See for instance *Mithaq*, p. 96, *Hatmiyyat al-muwajaha*, p. 282.

⁹³ *Mithaq*, p. 135.

⁹⁴ *Mithaq*, pp. 62–7.

⁹⁵ *Hatmiyyat al-muwajaha*, p. 277. See also the pamphlet *Mulakkbhas bahth al-ta'ifa* [Extract of the Research of the Sect] (no date, no place). Handwritten copy at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

The political goal is the re-establishment of the caliphate.⁹⁶ However, the contradictions of applying the classical political doctrine of the Jama'a in a contentious age become apparent in the way an apolitical Salafism associated with pietism can snap and tip over into an activist, even revolutionary, movement at the crucial point when subservience is transformed into revolt. Although stressing the necessity of obedience ("obedience to the caliph is obedience to God") and compliance ("all his commands must be completely executed"), even when the ruler is oppressive (*zalim*) or sinful (*fasiq*), the Jama'a does allow for the ruler to be "uprooted" when the "heinous act" (*maf-sada*) of deposing him is less grave than the "heinous act" of letting him remain in power. This leaves enough room for individual interpretation and forms the basis for a theory of revolt.⁹⁷

Once this step has been taken, the Jama'a leaves no doubt about the right to depose the ruler. The popular version of the *Charter*, entitled *Who Are We and What Do We Want?*, states: "No doubt that he who prefers man-made positive laws to the laws of God is a *kafir* [...]," adding that "as it is not allowed for a *kafir* to rule over Muslims (*la wilaya li-kafir 'ala muslim*) it is a duty to depose the rulers of our country."⁹⁸ It is stressed that this can only be done by violent means and the assassination of Sadat is regarded as having been a rightful act (*sahih*).⁹⁹ Even in the 1990s, in a debate with Nasir al-Din al-Albani who condemns all political action, the right of revolt is justified if the ruler is an unbeliever (*kafir*).¹⁰⁰

No less important is the repertoire of contention that the Jama'a propagates. The *Charter* does not single out any means, but holds a flexible view of activist praxis, depending on the circumstances. It states that the manner in which the movement "interacts with reality around us" (*ta'amul ma'a al-waqi' hawlana*) and finds "means of changing it", depends on the means that are presented by God.¹⁰¹ But as politics is condemned as part of *jabiliyya* (pre-Islamic period), and *hizbiyya* (participating in politics) is rejected,¹⁰² only three methods are

⁹⁶ *Hatmiyyat al-muwajaha*, pp. 282–4, and *Mithaq*, pp. 68–75.

⁹⁷ *Mithaq*, p. 74.

⁹⁸ *Man nabnu wa madha nuridu?*, p. 33. Photocopy of a handwritten version at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

⁹⁹ *Man nabnu*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁰ *Waqafat ma'a l-shaykh al-Albani hawl sharit (min manhaj al-khawarij)* [Exchange of Views with Shaykh al-Albani Concerning the Tape on the Programme of the Khawarij], 1996, p. 10–11. Document at the International Institute of Social History.

¹⁰¹ *Mithaq*, p. 83.

¹⁰² Salafi movements generally reject politics as *hizbiyya*, except the Saudi *Sabwa* movement.

left. The first is *da'wa*, which is regarded as essential in every period in order to prevent people from deviating towards *jahiliyya*.¹⁰³ The second method, the most characteristic of the Jama'a, is *hisba*.¹⁰⁴ Typically almost no attention is spent on what should be changed, for on this issue "there is general agreement". Instead, all attention is focused on the issue of the qualifications of the persons who can exert this task, the *muhtasib*. Although *hisba* is a *fard kifaya* (collective obligation), it is, in the view of the Jama'a, also more demanding than *da'wa*. *Hisba* is limited to those who are legally responsible (*mukallaf*) and capable (*qadir*) to implement it, and in this context this involves the cadre of the movement. This is confirmed in classical legal doctrine, according to the *Charter*. The classical scholar al-Nawawi, for instance, explicitly argues that *hisba* is not restricted to Islamic authority (*al-sulta al-muslima*) but that everyone has the right (*sahib al-haqq*) to exert *hisba*.¹⁰⁵ The argument to usurp the right to exert *hisba* by force, by the hand (*bi-l-yad*), and the tongue (*bi-l-lisan*) from the state, is the tipping point where a conservative political doctrine is turned into an activist one: because the present authorities do not rule in accordance with the *shari'a* and as such they have lost their legitimacy to exert this right themselves, or to give this right or to withhold it.¹⁰⁶

Hisba thus becomes "one of the most important obligations of the Islamic movement," and an instrument to "change reality" (*taghyir al-waqi'*). In the present circumstances in which *jahiliyya* "is all around us", the *Charter* states that "we can only oppose it by *hisba*".¹⁰⁷ It is a means of bringing society "as close as possible to an Islamic society, and to realise one of our goals [...]: to make man submit to his master (*ta'bid al-nas li-rabbihim*) and later to establish a caliphate".¹⁰⁸ Or as it is stated in the *Charter*: "There is no contradiction between *hisba* and striving to establish a Muslim state; on the contrary *hisba*

¹⁰³ *Mithaq*, p. 92.

¹⁰⁴ See for an extensive treatment of the subject *Mithaq*, pp. 100–14. The Qur'anic verses used to sustain this argument are: 3:104 and 9:67, 71 and the famous *hadith* on changing evil by the hand, orally or by the heart.

¹⁰⁵ *Mithaq*, p. 107.

¹⁰⁶ *Mithaq*, p. 106. One of the books written by one of the leaders in Asyut, 'Abd al-Akhir Hamad, at the time was *al-Adilla al-shar'iyya fi jawaz taghyir al-munkar bi-l-yad li-ahad al-ra'iyya* [Legal Proofs for Permitting the Forbidding of Wrong by the Hand as a Right for Every Citizen]. See Hala Mustafa, *al-Islam al-siyasi fi Misr: Min harakat al-islam ila jama'at al-'unf* [Political Islam in Egypt. From a Reformist Movement to Violent Groups], Cairo: Markaz al-Dirasat al-Siyasiyya al-Istratijiyya, 1992. pp. 163–4 and 174.

¹⁰⁷ *Mithaq*, p. 113.

¹⁰⁸ *Mithaq*, p. 114.

is for us a way of re-establishing the caliphate".¹⁰⁹ *Hisba* can be applied whether there is a ruling entity among the Muslims or not. In fact, it is the *raison d'être* of the Jama'a for "as long as this principle is applied the *ummah* will exist [...]".¹¹⁰ The importance of *hisba* is also stressed in later works.¹¹¹

The third method is that of *jihad*. *Jihad* is regarded as a permanent duty until Judgement Day. "We know that *jihad* is a historical inevitability" (*hat-miyya tarikhiyya*). The struggle between the believers and the unbelievers is eternal and the unbelievers will never rest until they have undermined Islam.¹¹² History is seen as a zero-sum game.¹¹³ *Jihad* against the ruler is mentioned, but the *Charter* only states that removing the unbelieving ruler (*al-hakim al-kafir*) is a duty based on consensus, *ijma'*.¹¹⁴ The popular version of the *Charter* is even more explicit,¹¹⁵ while other pamphlets are wholly devoted to this topic. Especially the pamphlet *The Confrontation Is Inevitable* calls for open revolt. It is proud of the assassination of Sadat. The revolution provided hope and "for the first time in years Muslims could lift up their head in pride, by the blessing of the revolt (*khuruj*) and *jihad* in the way of God."¹¹⁶ It goes on to state that it is "a duty (*wajib*) of Muslims to oppose him [an unbelieving ruler] violently (*muwajahatihi bi-quwwa*) and to uproot him and appoint a Muslim *imam* who can execute the true *shari'a*."¹¹⁷

A totally new element in the ideology of the Jama'a in the 1980s is its condemnation of the parliamentary system. *Hizbiyya* became much more reprehensible because at the time the relations with the state deteriorated again and a new cycle of contention arose when the Muslim Brotherhood participated in elections.¹¹⁸ Democracy was rejected because those who

¹⁰⁹ *Mithaq*, p. 111.

¹¹⁰ *Mithaq*, p. 111.

¹¹¹ *Waqafat ma' al-shaykh al-Albani*.

¹¹² *Mithaq*, p. 127–8. Qur'an verses quoted in support are 2: 109 and 2: 217.

¹¹³ *Mithaq*, p. 129.

¹¹⁴ *Mithaq*, p. 124.

¹¹⁵ *Man nabnu*, p. 23.

¹¹⁶ *Hatmiyyat*, p. 259.

¹¹⁷ *Hatmiyyat*, p. 262.

¹¹⁸ See the pamphlet *al-Haraka al-islamiyya wa-l-'amal al-bizbi* [The Islamic Movement and Political Parties], written according to Habib, in his *al-Haraka al-islamiyya*, p. 43, by Usama Hafiz. See also the article "Muhakamat al-Nizam al-Siyasi al-Misri" [The Trial of the Political System], published in the journal of the Jama'a al-Islamiyya, *Kalimat al-Haqq*, 1986. Republished in Rif'at Sayyid Ahmad, *al-Nabi al-Musallab* [The Prophet Armed], Vol. 2. *al-Tha'irun* [The Revolutionaries], Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes, 1991, pp. 273–82. See also another pamphlet of the Jama'a al-Islamiyya against political sys-

entered parliament “recognised the legitimacy of this secular system and agreed with its institutional practices (*wasā'il 'amalīhi*) [...], believing that they have the right to legislate without God [...].”¹¹⁹ It was regarded as *shirk* (polytheism) to take part in the political system. This, and the stress on other Salafi principles such as *tawhid*, *wala' wa-l-bara'* and *hisba* demonstrate the Salafi strain in the Jama'a's ideology. At the same time, some pamphlets make clear that the Jama'a had political goals. It opposed the rise in land rents, political corruption, the extension of the state of emergency and infringement of human rights.¹²⁰

About-turn: The initiative to end violence

In the second half of the 1980s the Jama'a increasingly came into conflict with the state. Its interpretation of *hisba*, especially the expansion of physical and moral space and the encroachment on the territory of the state, which the government regarded as illegitimate, enhanced the likelihood of this confrontation.¹²¹ When the Jama'a attacked tourists, starting in 1992, the state clamped down on the movement, dismantling the Jama'a's infrastructure in Upper and Lower Egypt.¹²² In the end, 1,500 people died in clashes and

tem, *Mawqif al-haraka al-islamiyya min al-'amal al-hizbi fi Misr* [The Position of the Islamic Movement Concerning Party Politics in Egypt], partly reproduced by in Rif'at Sayyid Ahmad, *al-Nabi al-Musallah* [The Prophet Armed]. Vol. 1. *al-Rafidun* [The Rejectionists], Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes, 1991, pp. 150–78.

¹¹⁹ *Man Nabnu*, p. 43.

¹²⁰ *Taqrir khatir*. The pamphlet is probably written in 1992, during the first negotiations with the government.

¹²¹ Hasan Bakr confirms that violent *hisba* was the main reason for conflict with the state, starting from 1986. See his *al-'Unf al-siyasi fi Misr*, p. 112. Typically the assassination attempts on ministers and journalist Makram Muhammad Ahmad were made by other groups such as the Najun min al-Nar and Shawqiyyun, while the attacks on the anti-Islamist writer Faraj Fawda in 1992 and the novelist Naguib Mahfouz in 1994 were done by members of the Jama'a. The escalation of violence was not started by the Jama'a, but was the result of the murder of its spokesman, 'Ala' Muhyi al-Din, in September 1990. In retaliation they tried to assassinate the Minister of the Interior, killing the Speaker of Parliament instead. In that year clashes with the state doubled to thirty-five from a year before.

¹²² See for an analysis of this process of escalation, Mohammed M. Hafez and Quintan Wiktorowicz, 'Violence as Contention in the Egyptian Islamic Movement', in Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004, pp. 61–88.

20,000 members, supporters, or simply family members of the Jama'a's followers were imprisoned.¹²³ Although the confrontation did not end until 1997, by 1995 it was apparent that the Jama'a was losing the low-intensity war. At the same time authority within the movement was shifting from the external leadership, who had migrated to Afghanistan at the end of the 1980s,¹²⁴ to the internal leadership. Two attempts were made to merge the two organisations, one in Afghanistan and the other in the Sudan, but in the end they failed for the same reasons as before.¹²⁵ Moreover, by that time there was another issue that came to the fore. While the Jihad Organisation decided that due to the military defeat in Egypt it should turn against the "far enemy", the Jama'a always believed that the "near enemy" was more important: "It is more important to fight the groups of denial (*al-tawa'if al-mumtani'ah*) in our country than to fight the Jews and the Communists in their lands." [...] "We can only fight the far enemy after we have purified ourselves of the near enemy."¹²⁶

This is also apparent in the Jama'a's denial of any relationship with the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, when its "spiritual leader", 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman, was arrested.¹²⁷ Nor did it react against the US when they arrested Tal'at Fu'ad Qasim in 1995 and transported him to Cairo. Instead, the Jama'a's historical leadership drew the conclusion that the confrontation with the state, always ambiguously stated, was counter-productive. In April 1996 the

¹²³ See for an overview of the events in 1995, *Taqrir al-halat al-diniyya fi Misr* [Report on the Religious Situation in Egypt], pp. 189–207.

¹²⁴ See especially, Salah, *Waqai' sanawat al-jihad* and Jihad 'Awda, *'Ulama al-haraka al-islamiyya al-radikaliyya* [Globalisation of the Radical Islamic Movement], al-Minya: Dar al-Huda li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi', 2004.

¹²⁵ See for the two failed attempts of the Jama'a al-Islamiyya and Jihad Organisation to merge, the first in Afghanistan and the second in the Sudan, Camille al-Tawil, *al-Qa'ida wa-akhawatih: Qissat al-Jihadiyyin al-'Arab* [al-Qaeda and its Sisters: The Story of the Arab Jihadis], London: Dar al-Saqi, 2007, pp. 179–83.

¹²⁶ *Mulakkbhas babh al-ta'ifa*, p. 8.

¹²⁷ Salah, *Waqai' sanawat al-jihad*, pp. 95–6. Salah cites the communiqué "Ama anna li-hadha al-hura' an yantahi". Only after 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman was sentenced to life imprisonment, the Jama'a issued a communiqué on 19 January 1996 in which it threatened the US, declaring that "American interests and nationals are the legitimate goals of our justified jihad until they have released the shaykh al-mujahid, Dr. 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman and his brethren from American prisons." But the threat is related to a specific issue and condition. See Salah, *Waqai' sanawat al-jihad*, p. 98. The issue is controversial. Peter Bergen believes that a *fatwa* issued by 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman from prison started the war against the United States. See Peter L. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know. An Oral History of al-Qaeda's Leader*, New York: Free Press, 2006, 200–8.

first preliminary attempt to stop violence (*mubadarat waqf al-'unf*) was launched by one of its leaders who called for a unilateral declaration to end the use of violence.¹²⁸ More than a year later, on 5 July 1997, the historical leadership itself issued a communiqué announcing the unilateral and unconditional initiative to end violence.¹²⁹ The initiative (*mubadara*) was supported by others, such as Salah Hashim, one of the students leaders of the 1970s, who issued his own communiqué.¹³⁰ But the initiative was not helped by the continuous low level warfare in Upper and Lower Egypt¹³¹ and the trials in which members of the Jama'a were being sentenced to death.¹³² Above all, the Luxor massacre of fifty-eight tourists on 17 November 1997 and the claim that it had been a Jama'a operation led by Ahmad Rifa'i Taha,¹³³ a member of the external leadership who is closely attached to bin Laden and who had earlier opposed the initiative,¹³⁴ would setback the initiative for years.¹³⁵

Despite these setbacks the supporters of the initiative gradually gained the upper hand during 1998. Immediately after the Luxor attack the lawyer, Mun-

¹²⁸ al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-islamiyya*, p. 278. Communiqué of Khalid Ibrahim, photocopy at the International Institute for Social History.

¹²⁹ Karam Zuhdi, Najih Ibrahim, 'Abbud al-Zumur, Fu'ad al-Dawalibi, Hamdi 'Abd al-Rahman and 'Ali Sharif. See also al-'Ali, *al-Muqamara al-Kubra*, p. 15.

¹³⁰ *Mubadara Liman, Amal Jadid* [The Initiative of Liman Prison. A New Hope]. Hand-written statement by Salah Hashim, Jama'a documents of the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

¹³¹ For instance, on 21 June 1997 three members of the Jama'a were killed in a clash with the police in the village of Shantur in Upper Egypt. In Minufiyya sixty members of a radical group were arrested after they threatened to burn a church (*al-Hayat*, 21 June 1997). On 15 November members of the Jama'a assaulted a police station in the town of Tama in the governorate of Sohaj, during which one member died. Four days earlier a fight in Nag' Hamadi cost the lives of a police officer, two policemen, and one member of the Jama'a (*al-Hayat*, 17 November 1997).

¹³² One of these, "the Bank trial", was famous for the amount of money the Jama'a had been able to rob from banks throughout Upper and Lower Egypt (*al-Hayat*, 5 November 1997). In another trial in the town of Tama two members of the Jama'a were sentenced to death (*al-Hayat*, 4 November 1997).

¹³³ The external leadership issued several communiqués reproduced in *al-Hayat*, 19 and 20 November 1997.

¹³⁴ See for extensive quotes from the letter al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-islamiyya*, p. 300.

¹³⁵ Usama Ibrahim, 'Isam Ibrahim Hafiz and 'Isam 'Abd al-Majid Muhammad, *Silsila tashih al-mafahim. Mubadara waqf al-'unf: Ru'ya waqi'iyya wa-nazra shari'iyya* [The Correction of Concepts Series. The Initiative to End Violence: From a Pragmatic and a Legal/Theoretical Viewpoint], Cairo: Maktabat al-Turath al-Islami, 2002. Introduction, 5–6.

tasar al-Zayyat, came out condemning it.¹³⁶ Usama al-Rushdi, another member of the external leadership living in the Netherlands, issued a communiqué entitled *The Luxor Attack, a Dead End*, and later attacked Ahmad Rifa'i Taha directly.¹³⁷ Others followed suit. In April Mustafa al-Muqri', a member of the external leadership living in Britain, issued a report in which he supported the initiative.¹³⁸ The major change, however, occurred when 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman came out in support of the initiative on 22 October, in a statement issued from his prison in the United States.¹³⁹ He called for the movement to concentrate on spreading the call (*da'wa*) and a non-violent form of *hisba*.¹⁴⁰ Finally, on 24 March 1999, on 'Id al-Adha (the Feast of Immolation), the external and internal leadership issued a joint communiqué in which they fully endorsed the initiative.¹⁴¹ By then, the International Front Against Zionism under the leadership of bin Laden, supported by a former Egyptian leader of the Jama'a, had issued its *fatwa* in 1998 after it had declared war on the Americans in 1996.

Revisionism

After the issue of the common communiqué of the external and internal councils in 1999 it took another two years before the internal leadership took over completely and gained hegemony over both the external leadership and the members of the movement.¹⁴² With help from the state they visited nine prisons in which their members were interned, beginning from October 2001 (one month after 9/11). In January 2002 they started to publish their famous series of four books, which would constitute what they called "revisionism" (*muraja'a*). The series consists of four books written or supervised by the six

¹³⁶ *al-Hayat*, 23 November 1997.

¹³⁷ *al-Hayat*, 10 December 1997.

¹³⁸ *al-Hayat*, 15 April 1998. He was Secretary General of al-Rabita al-Islamiyya li-l-'Aminin bi-l-Kitab wa-l-Sunna [Islamic association of those who act according to the Qur'an and the Sunna], located in Great Britain, and imprisoned for seven years after the Jihad trial in 1981.

¹³⁹ al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-islamiyya*, p. 304.

¹⁴⁰ *al-Hayat*, 22 October 1998. Text has been reprinted by al-'Ali in *al-Muqamara al-kubra*, p. 16.

¹⁴¹ For part of the text, al-'Ali in *al-Muqamara al-kubra*, p. 17–18.

¹⁴² The Jama'a al-Islamiyya were not the only organisation that renounced violence. Kamal al-Sa'id Habib, a former member of Jihad Organisation, presented in his *al-Haraka al-islamiyya* an impressive analysis of the reorientation of the Islamist movement.

historic leaders of the Jama'a al-Islamiyya.¹⁴³ Their content is not Salafi, but falls back on classic thinkers such as Muhammad al-Ghazzali (d. 1111) and modern thinkers such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi. One is a general introduction to the series,¹⁴⁴ the other three treat in greater depth the topics that needed to be revised, such as *takfir*,¹⁴⁵ *jihad*,¹⁴⁶ and *hisba*.¹⁴⁷ These were followed by two other books: one on their condemnation of the Saudi attacks in 2003,¹⁴⁸ the other containing a general defence of revisionism.¹⁴⁹ In the summer of 2002 the weekly *al-Musawwar* published a series of interviews with the historical leadership.¹⁵⁰ In an impressive tour through the prisons the historical leadership propagated revisionism and demonstrated their power over their followers as well as the internal discipline within the movement. They still regarded themselves as Salafis, but organisationally they claimed to "resemble a party", willing to be accepted by the state as an NGO (*jam'iyya*).¹⁵¹

¹⁴³ The series was called *Silsilat tashih al-mafahim* [The Correction of Concepts Series]. The authors are Karam Muhammad Zuhdi, Najih Ibrahim 'Abdallah, Usama Hafiz, Fu'ad Mahmud al-Dawalibi, Hamdi 'Abd al-Rahman 'Abd al-'Azim, 'Ali Muhammad al-Sharif, Muhammad 'Isam al-Din Darbala, 'Isam 'Abd al-Majid Muhammad.

¹⁴⁴ Usama Ibrahim, 'Isam Ibrahim Hafiz and 'Isam 'Abd al-Majid Muhammad, *Mubadara waqf al-'unf: Ru'ya waqi'iyya wa-nazra shari'iyya* [The Initiative to End Violence: From a Pragmatic and a Legal/Theoretical Viewpoint], Cairo: Maktabat al-Turath al-Islami, 2002. At the end of 2008 a total of twenty-six books and booklets have been published by the historical leadership.

¹⁴⁵ Najih Ibrahim 'Abdallah and 'Ali Muhammad 'Ali al-Sharif, *Hurmat al-ghuluw fi-l-din wa-takfir al-muslimin* [The Forbidding of Extremism in Religion and the Excommunication of Muslims], Cairo: Maktabat al-Turath al-Islami, 2002.

¹⁴⁶ Hamdi 'Abd al-Rahman al-'Azim, Najih Ibrahim 'Abdallah and 'Ali Muhammad 'Ali al-Sharif, *Taslit al-adwa' ala ma waqa'a fi-l-jihad wa-min akhta'* [The Exposure of Mistakes Made during the Jihad]. Cairo: Maktabat al-Turath al-Islami, 2002.

¹⁴⁷ 'Ali Muhammad 'Ali al-Sharif and Usama Ibrahim Hafiz, *al-Nash wa-l-Tabyin fi tashih mafahim al-muhtasibin* [Counseling in and Explanation of the Correct Concepts for the People Who Exert *Hisba*], Cairo: Maktabat al-Turath al-Islami, 2002.

¹⁴⁸ *Tafjirat al-Riyad: al-Ahkam wa-l-athar* [Explosions in Riyadh: Legal Verdicts and Practical Results], Cairo: Maktabat al-Turath al-Islami, 2003. It is a collective book written by the historical leadership.

¹⁴⁹ *Nahr al-Dhikrayat. al-Muraja'a al-fiqhiyya li-l-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* [The River of Memories. The *Fiqh* basis of the Revisionism of the Jama'a al-Islamiyya], Cairo: Maktabat al-Turath al-Islami, 2003.

¹⁵⁰ They were later published in a book, Makram Muhammad Ahmad, *Mu'amara am muraja'a: Hiwar qadat al-tatarrufi sijin al-'agrab* [Conspiracies or Revisionism? Debate with the Leaders of Extremism in the Scorpion Prison]. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2002.

¹⁵¹ *Mu'amara am muraja'ah*, p. 55.

The authors start out with an analysis of the present crisis for which Muslim youth (*shabab muslim*) is held responsible. They claim these had strayed from the right path,¹⁵² and deviated from the middle of the road (*wasatiyya*), and that this led them to choose exaggeration in religion (*ghuluw fi-l-din*) and the transgression of boundaries (*tajawuz al-hudud*) and rules (*ahkam*).¹⁵³ The youth in their enthusiasm had confused means (*wasila*) with goals (*ghaya*), and had substituted derived principles (*far'*) for primary principles (*asl*).¹⁵⁴ This confusion has in fact led to a situation that is even worse than the one before the confrontation with the state. Even if the Islamic youth acted in good faith and reacted to oppression and wanted to free prisoners, "they did not take into account an important truth, that through their actions injustice and oppression increased, the number of arrests grew in number, *da'wa* was forbidden, families were threatened, corruption (*mafasiid*) became more widespread, while the common good (*masalih*) was further impaired, and the Jews could take advantage of this opportunity to sow dissension."¹⁵⁵ The result was a vicious circle of terror and counter-terror, leading to the spilling of blood and "murderous internal strife" (*qital al-fitna*).¹⁵⁶

The solution can only be found, they argue, by returning to the right path, correcting (*tashih*) [misguided] concepts (*mafahim*).¹⁵⁷ One must focus again on general principles (*asl*) and the common good (*maslaha*). The good (*maslaha*) must always be weighed against the bad (*mafsada*).¹⁵⁸ Following the classic scholar Muhammad al-Ghazzali (d. 1111), the historic leadership holds the view that the common good is represented by protecting religion (*din*), the soul (*nafs*), reason (*'aql*), offspring (*nasl*) and property (*mal*).¹⁵⁹ Everything that endangers these five principles runs contrary to the general good (*maslaha*).¹⁶⁰ In the same manner the correction of concepts pertains to giving priority to the principles (*asl*) instead of to the derivative matters (*far'*). The goals of *ta'bid al-nas li-rabbihim* (submission of man to his master/creator) and guidance of mankind (*hidayat al-khala'iq*), or, in other words, the goal, the transition from sin (*ma'siya*) to obedience (*ta'a*), remains the same but

¹⁵² *Taslit*, pp. 19–20.

¹⁵³ *Mubadarat waqf al-'unf*, pp. 52–3.

¹⁵⁴ *Taslit*, pp. 3–4.

¹⁵⁵ *Taslit*, p. 16, and *Nahr*, p. 10.

¹⁵⁶ *Taslit*, p. 18.

¹⁵⁷ *Mubadarat waqf al-'unf*, pp. 51–2.

¹⁵⁸ *Taffirat*, p. 23.

¹⁵⁹ *Mubadarat waqf al-'unf*, p. 20.

¹⁶⁰ *Mubadarat waqf al-'unf*, pp. 22–26.

the means to achieve this end are different.¹⁶¹ They also believe that youth should recognise the authority of the *'ulama* and should not themselves issue *fatwas*.¹⁶²

The reassertion of general principles, however, entails more than just a self-critique and a revision of tactics. It also leads to a new epistemology and a fundamental redefinition of the Jama'a's members relation to reality. Whereas in the *Charter* the Jama'a argued that reality should be changed (*taghyir*) to adjust to religion, they now recognise a more complex relationship between reality and religion. "One of the obvious mistakes that has been made is to adopt opinions and create rules and issue *fatwas* that do not take reality (*waqi'*) into account, and neglect to investigate the facts and do not take these as the primary sources for formulating *fatwas*."¹⁶³ In fact, the general good should take priority over the text (*nass*), "because the text must accomplish the general good and is not a goal in itself."¹⁶⁴ The general norm is that "Islam is a practical religion" (*al-islam din 'amali*).¹⁶⁵ Even parts of the *shari'a* can be deferred if circumstances require it.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, for the first time they acknowledge that a knowledge of politics is crucial. "That is why a profound knowledge of the *shari'a*, as well as a knowledge of reality (*al-'ilm bi-l-waqi'*), and a deep understanding of politics (*al-fahm al-siyasi al-'amiq*) are essential tools for tackling this subject." "Otherwise," they argue, "people will destroy themselves, spill their own blood and that of others and lose their homeland without justification, and without serving the common good and attaining their goal."¹⁶⁷ The inclusion of reality is called the jurisprudence of reality (*fiqh al-waqi'*).¹⁶⁸

For the first time, as well, history is valued as a practical, lived experience from which one must learn.¹⁶⁹ Such crucial concepts as *hakimiyya*, *jabiliyya* and *taghut*, derived from Sayyid Qutb, which had dominated the 1970s and the 1980s, are not directly condemned but are regarded as exaggerations that must be placed within a wider knowledge of *fiqh* and the way it works.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶¹ *Nabr al-dhikrayat*, p. 42.

¹⁶² *Mu'amara am muraja'ah*, p. 132.

¹⁶³ *Mubadarat waqf al-'unf*, p. 39.

¹⁶⁴ *Mu'amara am muraja'ah*, p. 107–8.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁶⁷ *Taslit*, p. 13.

¹⁶⁸ *Mu'amara am muraja'ah*, pp. 117–18. This theme runs through this whole book.

¹⁶⁹ *Nabr al-dhikrayat*, p. 44.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 168–70.

Adopting *fatwas* and opinions from a different time and applying them to completely different circumstances is recognised as one of the big mistakes the Jama'a committed. For example, the emergence of the concepts of *takfir* and *kufr* are explained as the result of torture in Nasser's prisons, but are rejected as innovations.¹⁷¹ *Muraja'at* is therefore a critique of their former claim to Truth (*ashab al-haqq*). No longer is Islam portrayed as a programme (*manhaj*) that is "complete, total and final" and that can simply be implemented if the ruler implements the *shari'a*. Even the pious forefathers (*al-salaf*), the historical leadership argues, had stated that they did not hold a monopoly of the absolute truth.¹⁷² Their writings should be analysed in historical context.¹⁷³

The historical leadership, in fact, acknowledges that life is complex and that the sources of Islam must be interpreted (*ijtihad*) and debated in order to adjust them according to constantly different places (*makan*), circumstances (*ahwal*) and times (*zaman*) in which Muslims live.¹⁷⁴ It is this recognition of (historical) time and (geographical, political and cultural) circumstances that allows them to change their ideas and accept flexibility. Rather than holding the truth, they regard themselves now as part of an ongoing debate about the truth.¹⁷⁵ In these continuing debates only the common good (*maslaha*) is eternal; the rest depends on circumstances.¹⁷⁶ In this new-found self-confidence Islam is regarded as a strong religion that takes from other religions and allows Muslims to "interact with life positively".¹⁷⁷ Borrowing what is beneficial from the West is no longer rejected.¹⁷⁸ What is condemned is loving the unbelievers and wishing them to be victorious over Muslims, a wholly different view from their previous writings, or those of contemporary Jihadi-Salafis such as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and his concept of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*.¹⁷⁹ For the same reason they are now willing to accept the parliamentary system, although it might not be the ideal way to change society.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46 and *Mu'amara am muraja'ah*, p. 93.

¹⁷² *Taslit*, p. 29.

¹⁷³ *Mu'amara am muraja'ah*, p. 36.

¹⁷⁴ *Taslit*, p. 38.

¹⁷⁵ *Nabr al-dhikrayyat*, pp. 119–21.

¹⁷⁶ *Taslit*, p. 41.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁷⁸ *Nabr al-dhikrayyat*, p. 45.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48. See for a comparison chapter 3 by Joas Wagemakers on Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi.

¹⁸⁰ *Nabr al-dhikrayyat*, p. 162.

In their more lenient interpretation of Islam, the emphasis has moved to classical *fiqh* and the elaborate conditions and proofs that the traditional jurisprudence requires. Instead of the enthusiasm and moral outrage of the activist, legal procedures, and a totally different form of discipline, are upheld. One, for instance, should not pry into another's "secrets" (which is God's prerogative), to find out what he thinks. Instead one must seek to establish a society based on trust and accept at face value what people say and do (*zahir*).¹⁸¹ Politically, this classical doctrine undermines their former justification for revolt, for as long as the ruler states he is a Muslim, "even if he does not apply the whole *shari'a*", rebellion against him is unjustified.¹⁸² But even if the *'ulama* condemn the ruler as an unbeliever, the disadvantages (*mafasid*) of a revolt must be weighed against the advantages (*masalih*) of accepting his rule.¹⁸³ On the basis of classic *fiqh*, also the robbing of Copts is condemned as well as attacks on tourists, who are protected by the visas which are regarded as *aman* (assurance of protection).

What does revisionism entail for *jihad* and *hisba*? In the new programme the Jama'a leadership does not renounce *jihad* in principle, but its status and function is subordinated to the larger concerns of the general good (*tahqiq maslaha*), making Islam victorious (*nusrat al-din*), and the ending of civil strife/dissension (*izalat al-fitna*).¹⁸⁴ *Jihad* is only allowed if it is a means (*wasila*) towards achieving the general welfare, not a goal in itself.¹⁸⁵ It must lead to the common goal of submission of men to God (*ta'bid al-nas li-llah*) and not to the fragmentation (*taftit*) and weakening (*id'af*) of the *ummah*.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, in accordance with the classical theory, it must only be directed against a foreign invasion.¹⁸⁷ In fact, the historical leadership argue, true Islam is not so much threatened by its enemies, but by Muslims who do not understand its rules, as is apparent from the suicide attacks in Riyadh in May 2003.¹⁸⁸ In their view, violence in Saudi Arabia and Palestine¹⁸⁹ strengthens the enemies of Islam and harms its reputation,¹⁹⁰ as well as the interests of Muslims.¹⁹¹

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹⁸² *Mu'amara am muraja'a*, p. 35.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁸⁴ *Taslit*, p. 15. See also *Mu'amara*, p. 35.

¹⁸⁵ *Taslit*, p. 50.

¹⁸⁶ *Taffirat*, p. 40. See also *Nahr al-dhikrayat*, pp. 109–11.

¹⁸⁷ *Mu'amara am muraja'ah*, p. 55.

¹⁸⁸ *Taffirat*, p. 43.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Like the book on *jihad*, the one on *hisba* is primarily meant to curb its excesses.¹⁹² The problem with the previous period is that *hisba*, like *jihad*, became a goal in itself and was not regarded “as a means to realise the general welfare of society”.¹⁹³ *Hisba* is regarded as a legal and religious duty (*farida*, *fard dini*), like fasting, praying and other duties, but is a *fard kifaya*, a collective obligation not imposed on every individual Muslim. It is sufficient that some Muslims fulfil this obligation, for instance the representatives of the government.¹⁹⁴ Yet *hisba* is still regarded as the main instrument against the “internal enemy of the principles of the revelation”¹⁹⁵ as well as the most important instrument of maintaining morality.¹⁹⁶ The new interpretation of *hisba* by the historical leadership of the Jama‘a, as laid down already in the classical *fiqh*, is based on virtue and moderateness.¹⁹⁷ It has become an expression of social responsibility of the “normal individual” (*al-fard al-adi*), who shares this task with a special functionary, the *muhtasib*, who is a governmental officer and not a self-appointed activist.¹⁹⁸ Their cooperation for the common good is an expression of the new relationship between the citizen and the state. For instance, if a citizen sees a deviation, he should not punish the culprit by force on his own volition, but rather should hand the person over to the authorities “in order that they fulfil their legal duties.”¹⁹⁹ In fact, in its new form, *hisba* has become the cornerstone of a new Muslim civil society that is based on the obligations and rights of the citizen in a new contractual relationship with the state. *Hisba* is regarded as a social obligation (*ijabiyya*) of the citizen on whose diligence the state’s prosperity and well-being depends. For in the view of the historical leadership, “the more the population positively works together with social institutions and understands its role and is encouraged to exert it—within the confines of the law—the more society enjoys rest and stability.”²⁰⁰ Conversely, “the less the citizen is involved, the more society will be the victim of ignorance (*tajahul*), negativeness (*salbiyya*), confusion (*khalal*), deviation (*inhiraf*), leading to collapse (*inhiyar*), disintegration (*tafasukh*) and corrup-

¹⁹² In *Nahr al-dhikrayat*, *da‘wa* is even preferred above *hisba*, p. 51. See also the conditions for exerting *hisba*: Cook, *Forbidding Wrong in Islam*, pp. 45–63.

¹⁹³ *al-Nash*, p. 97.

¹⁹⁴ The relevant suras are 3:104, 110; 9:71; and 5:78–9.

¹⁹⁵ *Mu‘amara am al-muraja‘ah*, p. 55.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹⁹⁷ There are constant references to *fiqh* (jurisprudence), see for example, *al-Nash*, p. 79.

¹⁹⁸ *Mu‘amara am muraja‘ah*, p. 37.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²⁰⁰ *al-Nash*, pp. 26–7.

tion (*fasad*).²⁰¹ The precondition of the new renaissance of society is that *hisba* is exerted with respect for the sanctity (*hurma*) of other citizens and their rights.²⁰²

Conclusion

The history of the past three decades of the Jama'a al-Islamiyya can be read as an experiment in Islamist activism with a strong Salafi bent in Egypt. The Jama'a has twice gone through all the phases of the cycle of contestation. During the first cycle it started out as an apolitical, pious group of students that became politicised and activist during the second half of the 1970s and succumbed to violence with the assassination of Sadat. During the second cycle it learned little from its previous experience. When the second generation was released in 1984, the Jama'a started out with a strident and activist stance and with a provocative level of violence, ending in a second round of contestation with the state in the 1990s in which an unprecedented number of people were killed. Although the state was to blame for much of the violence and the escalation, it is clear that the Salafi repertoire of contestation of "forbidding wrong by force" was highly provocative, delegitimised the state, sometimes even calling for its overthrow, and replacing it with a utopian rule in the form of a caliphate. But the problems ran deeper and were not limited to its tactics as a social movement. As is clear from the theoretical works of the Jama'a in the 1980s and after the period of revisionism, its relationship with reality (*waqi'*) is crucial to understanding the ideological developments. The major transition is one from a strong Salafi tendency, which completely depended on religious sources and advocated a change of reality (*taghyir al-waqi'*) to fit the text, to a phase in which the Jama'a were forced to give reality and the general good (*maslaha*) more room, culminating in the development of a "jurisprudence of reality" (*fiqh al-waqi'*). Although the historical leadership might not be as pragmatic as to denounce *jihad* and *hisba* completely, by means of a relativistic, historical, and circumstantial interpretation of the sources of Islam, they have provided the groundwork for a much more mature Islamic political theory that focuses on human agency and opens the way for an Islamic civil society based on an Islamic concept of civility and civic virtue that has left behind the rigorism and dogmatism of Salafism.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 39.

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