Businessmen in the Opposition

Introduction

This chapter aims to answer the question of how the Egyptian authoritarian regime dealt with businessmen in opposition parties and opposition movements who refuse to be co-opted. To answer this question, this chapter builds on the work of Ellen Lust-Okar, which finds that Egypt’s authoritarian regime maintained its survival by creating a divided political environment between the legal and illegal opposition. However, my findings are distinct from Lust-Okar’s, since I argue that in Egypt, the regime renewed its authoritarianism by creating a divided political environment among parties and movements in the opposition on other levels. On one level, the regime co-opted some businessmen in legalized opposition parties and used them to create a divided political environment inside those opposition parties that refused to be co-opted by the regime’s clientelistic chain. On another level, the regime created a divided political environment among parties and movements in the illegal opposition.

This chapter begins by discussing the significance of businessmen in opposition political parties in the context of regulations for establishing political parties under Mubarak. It also introduces Holger Albrecht’s typology of political opposition in order to understand the attitude of the Mubarak regime to different opposition figures. It then goes on to discuss several cases—like those of Moussa Mostafa Moussa in the Ghad Party, El Sayyid El Badawi in the Wafd Party, Medhat El Haddad in the Muslim Brothers (MB) Organization, and Hani Enan in the Kefaya (Enough) movement—that illustrate how the regime dealt with different opposition businessmen in order to suppress the political opposition as a whole.
Businessmen in Egypt’s Political Opposition

In Egypt, the funding of political parties seems to be restricted by regulations stated in the constitution. For instance, according to Article 11 of Law 40 of 1977, parties are not allowed to accept funds from abroad or from a company or institution (even if it is Egyptian). The resources of the party are composed of the subscriptions and donations of its members and the profit it makes from noncommercial activities (for example, issuing newspapers); however, under authoritarianism, political parties find it difficult to create a wide base of members who can subscribe to political parties. This means that the subscription of party members cannot cover the routine expenses of political parties, which include spending on election campaigns, party conferences, and other expenses for establishing offices all over the country, their administrative staffs, and so on. That is why having a significant number of wealthy members is important to provide funding for political parties. For instance, regarding South Korea under the Park Chung-hee regime (1961–79), Alexander Kim remarked that “no party could be effective unless it had many wealthy members, or unless it could secure secret illegal donations—something the ruling party could do, but which an opposition party would find immensely difficult.”

As mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4, most businessmen preferred to join the ruling party or remained independent and relied on their networks with the regime. Despite the limited number of businessmen in the opposition, the regime attempted to co-opt them; otherwise, they could use their structural and financial power against the regime. For instance, in each of Egypt’s opposition parties or movements, the regime co-opted the most prominent businessmen, as in the case of the businessmen Moussa Moustafa Moussa in the Ghad Party, El Sayyid El Badawi in the Wafd Party, and Hani Enan in the Kefaya movement.

Albrecht has distinguished between different types of opposition under authoritarianism:

1. Regime-loyal opposition, which works within the confines of the authoritarian regime and includes legalized political parties.
2. Tolerated opposition, which emerges in society independently from the state and which the state keeps under control by using a mix of co-option and coercion.
3. Antisystem opposition, which includes Islamic movements and groups that advocate human rights and democracy. These groups reject the discreet forms of co-option by the regime. The regime...