The Egyptian Question and its Origins

A Classical Liberal Vision
Table of Contents

The Egyptian Question

First: The Egyptian Totalitarian Project

I - Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism: Concepts

II - The Story of Totalitarianism:

1- Modernity and Liberalism

2- The Age of Enlightenment and Revolutions

3- The Crisis of Enlightenment

4- Fall of the Enlightenment Project

5- The Age of Totalitarianism

III – Egyptian Totalitarianism: Birth and Development

Second: The Crisis of Contemporary Egyptian Liberalism

I - Nationalist Liberalism

II - Formalist Liberalism

III - Islamic Liberalism

EULY and the Egyptian Question

First: EULY and the Authoritarian Regime

Second: EULY and the Totalitarian Elite

Third: EULY and the Liberal Elite
The Egyptian Question:

- We are Classical Liberals and Egyptians. How to bring these two aspects of our identities into harmony is what we have come to call, following a long forsaken tradition, the Egyptian Question. We believe that the Egyptian Question is open-ended, since we see Liberalism as an endless struggle. While Egypt has long suffered and continues to suffer under various forms of Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism, even a complete transformation to Liberalism, as inconceivable as it is today, would not necessarily result in a happy ending. Unrestricted Individual Liberty entails indefinite individual responsibility. The temptation to surrender one’s freedom to another who ‘knows better’ will always be there. Liberalism must always be defended, especially when it seems that there’s no alternative.

- Today, the Egyptian Question is threefold. First, there’s an incumbent Authoritarian Regime directly infringing upon individual freedoms and dominating almost all political and economic institutions in Egypt. Second, there is a Totalitarian Elite maintaining an iron grip on political and social discourse and effacing individual identity within rubrics of social, religious or national collectivities marching towards “glory” or “progress” or similarly empty platitudes. Third, there is a Liberal Elite confined to superficial political expression, far removed from the reality and the hopes of everyday life in Egypt, thus incapable of challenging either the Authoritarian Regime, with its repressive instruments and control mechanisms, or the Totalitarian Elite, with its massive popularity and its long-established institutional control over mass media.

- However, these three elements are too interwoven for us to be able to distinctively discern their institutional manifestations. The Authoritarian Regime manipulates both the Totalitarian and Liberal elites to implement its domestic and international political agendas. Also, many rudiments of Totalitarian rhetoric have seeped into liberal discourses and vice versa, as the liberals indulge in populist compromises chasing the specter of political achievement; and the totalitarians offer ideological concessions to approach the international community under the pressure of globalization.

- Since we believe that the Authoritarian Regime and the Totalitarian Elite share a common historical origin - what we call the Egyptian Totalitarian Project - we split the study of the Egyptian question into two main sub-categories: first, analysis of the historical development of the Egyptian Totalitarian Project; and second, diagnosis of the crisis of contemporary Egyptian Liberalism and its historical roots.
First: The Egyptian Totalitarian Project

I - Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism: Concepts

• Before we get to the origins of the Egyptian Totalitarian Project, we must first define what we mean by Authoritarian and Totalitarian and the relationship between them. Authoritarianism is a form of rule well-known and present throughout the ages; structured around the absolute authority of an individual or an oligarchy. An authoritarian system of government precludes the citizens’ right to elect their rulers, hold them accountable or ultimately dismiss them. The final end of any authoritarian regime is to stay in power regardless of any other concern, often through coercive measures. Totalitarianism, in contrast, is based on ideas rather than persons; first manifested in a political movement, then, if successful, a political regime.

• All totalitarian movements arise from the rejection of individual identity. Totalitarians perceive human existence as divided into collective entities (classes, ethnicities, religions) transcending the individuals who compose them. Consequently, totalitarian movements consider history to be the materialization of the struggle of one chosen entity against all others. Any individual who does not belong to this one entity is considered an enemy doomed to one of two fates: enslavement or elimination. For example, the German National Socialist (Nazi) movement based its ideology on ethnicity, placing the Aryan race above all others. Nazism saw history as a clash of different ethnicities, culminating in the victory of Aryans over all other peoples. Parallels can be drawn with other extremist variations of Communism, Nationalism, and Islamism.

• If a totalitarian movement successfully accedes to power, it establishes a political regime that differs radically from an authoritarian regime. The ultimate goal in this case is not merely to remain in power, but rather to continue the program to achieve “glory”, “victory”, “honor” or similar abstract concepts devoid of tangible content.

• While an authoritarian regime permits superficial opposition or seeks only to crack down on opponents, a totalitarian regime eliminates opposition entirely, considering dissent to be “treason”. In addition, an authoritarian regime is usually satisfied with public submission to its existence, regardless of its popularity. A totalitarian regime, on the other hand, seeks to impose its convictions upon its subjects by monopolizing media and mass communication, censorship of expressions of opposition and packing educational curricula with political instruction.
II - The Story of Totalitarianism

1. Modernity and Liberalism:

- We cannot understand Totalitarianism as a historical phenomenon without positing it face to face with Liberalism, its outright enemy and *raison d’être*, within the historical context in which they both emerged, what we call Modernity.

- It is extremely complicated to find an exact and concise definition of Modernity, especially considering the word’s awkwardness in Arabic. We can, however, state that Modernity is the sum of historical conditions that produced the political, economic, and social institutions that distinguish the Modern Era from the Ancient and Middle Ages. Nonetheless, because they are so complex and interwoven, any attempt at circumscribing these circumstances, let alone explaining them, becomes practically impossible. Therefore, historians usually choose a particular approach to understanding Modernity which serves best the study of the phenomena on which they work. The closest approach relevant to our goal is based on the transformation that befell Man’s perception of the world and his place in it, leading to an endeavor to change the world to compliment this perception.

- In Ancient Times, man had no conception of one humanity, but rather perceived human beings to be divided among distinctive groups ruled by varied religions, laws, and social relationships. Those belonging to a particular group, be it a tribe, city, or state, saw the “Other” as different by nature. Even when one group sought to control another, they would not impose their own beliefs on them or incorporate them into their establishments. In short, Ancient Man did not see the world as built upon a singular truth that wholly explained it. On the contrary, he acknowledged various truths, (most clearly reflected in the prevalence of polytheistic worship) even if some truths were considered “better” than others.

- There remain two exceptional cases of crucial importance to later historical developments, where Ancient thought successfully conceived of an undivided human collective, first with Judaism, on the basis of one revealed truth, and second with Classical Philosophy, on the basis of one rationally deduced truth. In the end, however, both were still confined in the scope of abstract ideas without significant institutional effects; Judaism being restricted to one people and Classical Philosophy being an intellectual sport practiced by a few educated Greeks and Romans.
• The transformation to the middle ages came with the fusion between the monotheistic faith of Judaism and a new phenomenon appearing first with Christianity and then Islam: **Proselytism**. With Proselytism, the one human collective was no longer a purely abstract matter of faith; its actualization became a wide open possibility and even a religious duty. While religion played a significant role in the constitution of political, economic and social institutions in antiquity, this role was multiplied in the middle ages as religious groups became multiracial and multilingual empires, with religious authority thus becoming the one force of cohesion binding heterogeneous political, economic and social institutions. Consequently, medieval societies were sharply divided between two groups: one that possessed religious authority, consisting of politicians who ruled with divine right and clergymen who controlled all means of producing and imparting knowledge; and another deprived of this authority, composed of laymen dominated by the coercive force of the politicians and the ideological hegemony of the clergy.

• On the other hand, the vast geographic expansion of religious empires led to a revival of the ancient cultures of the regions under their dominion. This was of great influence on intellectual life during the Middle Ages, especially with the discovery of the massive cultural legacy of the Greek and the Romans. In the beginning, there were attempts to bring this cultural legacy to harmony with religious faith; first in the realm of Islam by Muslim and Jewish philosophers and then in the Realm of Christianity by Catholic theologians who came to establish a new educational and philosophical tradition known as **Scholasticism**. By the end of the 13th century, and for political and social reasons beyond the scope of this review, these attempts ended up with no institutional consequences in the Muslim world and were soon abandoned to oblivion, while they were consolidated at the heart of the official doctrine of the Catholic Church.

• We can say that the intellectual transformations proceeding from the Middle Ages to Modernity were all essentially reactions to Catholic Scholasticism with its one discipline of knowledge completely monopolized by the clergy and revolving around one truth both divine and rational. However, and before we can delve into the details of these transformations, we must first give a short account of the social force that engineered them or at least launched them into sweeping political, economic and social changes. During the 14th and 15th centuries, groups of merchants and artisans, who had managed to achieve extraordinary economic success over long decades and in historical circumstances irrelevant here, emerged in Western Europe as a new social class; which has come to be called the **Bourgeoisie**.
In spite of the enormous fortunes accumulated by the Bourgeoisie, the medieval institutions founded on strict rules of class distinction would not allow them to ascend socially and politically in parallel to their economic accomplishment. Though they sometimes could find a way around these rules, offering financial support to powerful men or joining the clergy, they were often exasperated by the restrictions imposed on them for their social status. Therefore, a Bourgeois spirit yearning for liberation combined with various historical circumstances such as the discovery of long lost classical texts, the invention of the printing press and the abundance of economic resources to produce a new knowledge society outside the church in a period later known as the Renaissance (i.e. rebirth, mainly of classical civilization).

We cannot cover in detail the influence of the Renaissance on the transformation to modernity, but we can say that the most important aspect of this influence was the deconstruction of the Scholastic model of knowledge into three distinct disciplines: Theology (concerned with the relationship of Man and God), Science (concerned with the relationship of Man and Nature) and Philosophy (concerned with the relationship of Man and Man; self and other). This deconstruction did not mean complete separation of the subjects of each discipline; on the contrary, friction, and even conflict, still exists among them to this very day. It rather meant a differentiation of axioms, objectives and method, allowing for unprecedented freedom for the cohorts of each discipline to pursue their quests without barriers.

The liberation of religion from the tight grip of reason (scientific and philosophical) led many theologians to severe criticism of catholic faith and practice. This led to the emergence of several massive movements: first the Reformation, which saw the secession of a large faction of Christians (to be known as Protestants) from the Catholic Church; and then a counter-reformation among the adherents of the Catholic faith. On the other hand, the liberation of Reason from the limitations of religion lit the first sparks of both Modern Science and Modern Philosophy, the two pillars of Modernity.

Modern Science is founded on the theory of Mechanism; that nature, i.e. the world and all its components, is nothing but a machine functioning according to fixed laws, and therefore could be utilized for the benefit of Man if these laws are mastered. Modern Science is thus practiced with a modus-operandi we call Instrumental Rationality, meaning that Reason is applied to create certain instruments without offering any account of the final ends of such instruments. Simply put, Science gives us the ability to make a perfect knife but it does not tell us what to use it for.
• Modern Philosophy, like its classical predecessor, revolves around the most important questions of human existence, questions of value as we call them: What is right, good and Beautiful? However, the major transformation from Pre-Modern to Modern Philosophy was essentially concerned with political philosophy, as the Italian Renaissance Philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli changed the question of political philosophy from: “What is the best political regime?” to “What is the best political regime possible?” i.e. the best political regime that humanity in its present condition could realize.

• We can hardly decide whether the Bourgeoisie was behind the initiation of these transformations or whether they were only influenced by them. In the end, the leaders of the Reformation, the pioneers of Modern Science and the founders of Modern Philosophy were all children of the Bourgeoisie. We can say, however, that Modernity became a bourgeois enterprise par excellence. The fruits of the Reformation, Modern Science and Modern Philosophy launched the light-speed ascendance of the European Bourgeoisie to dominate the continent and eventually the whole world. The Reformation culminated in a bloody political struggle that shook the authority of the Catholic Church and ended with an unprecedented space for political and religious freedom. The achievements of Modern Science, from the printing press to the perfection of firearms and navigational tools, opened previously inconceivable intellectual as well as geographical horizons. The new political philosophy had the deepest impact, however, as the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes responded to the Machiavellian question with a very unusual answer; that the ideal political regime possible is one that enjoys legitimacy on the basis of a contract between the ruler and the ruled. Hobbes’ Social Contract Theory initiated a long legacy of searching for the standards ensuring that all subjects approve of their contract with their government, regardless of social status, religious belief, ethnic affiliation or economic circumstances, a legacy we now call Classical Liberalism.

• In conclusion, Liberalism emerged as a political discourse complementing radical social and economic changes and pushing these changes further. Over time, Liberalism changed into a comprehensive political philosophy, transforming the meaning of politics itself, from the art of rule to the framework organizing the relationships between equal individuals. On the other hand, we must take notice that Modernity was founded on diverse, even contradictory, intellectual traditions that cannot be reduced to one context except through tracing them back to the emancipatory Bourgeois ethos in its clash with medieval institutions. This ethos gradually grew into what we call Individualism; an attitude seeking to see the world through the eyes of the individual human being, considering his happiness and well-being to be the highest of all ends.
2. The Age of Enlightenment and Revolutions

- The epoch spanning the 16th and 17th centuries, usually called Early Modernity, witnessed the success of the bourgeoisie in bringing about comprehensive political, social, and economic changes in Western Europe after a series of fierce battles with the regnant political and religious powers, a process we might describe as the Bourgeois expansion upwards. By the dawn of the 18th century, the bourgeoisie had entrenched their position and were able to turn their attention to those below them: the vast majority of laymen still living with a medieval mindset despite the radical changes of the institutions governing their lives. Thus the program for Bourgeois expansion downwards was conceived, the program historians refer to as the Enlightenment project.

- As is customary when discussing modern phenomena, the Enlightenment breaches such a degree of complexity that it is practically impossible to define it precisely. For our purposes, we have chosen to define the Enlightenment as a program for emancipation through knowledge; a comprehensive social discourse claiming that the only path to individual happiness is through Reason and its offerings of scientific and philosophical knowledge. We may say that the Enlightenment project sought to transform the medieval belief in the divine promise of paradise in the afterlife into a belief in a rational promise of abundant prosperity and eternal peace; shortly, paradise in this life.

- Despite the outstanding success of the Enlightenment ideas among the Bourgeoisie and the lower classes alike, which brought the leaders and philosophers of the Enlightenment a level of popularity similar to that of contemporary movie stars, there remained a minority of dissident voices. This small minority, the Conservatives, called for the preservation of the established religious and moral values, and the foregoing of political and social changes brought about by force or systematic propaganda. As time passed, the program of the Enlightenment began to come to fruition through fast, radical, and sometimes even violent, changes on all levels, thus inciting historians to give this period the label: Age of Revolutions.

- The first of these revolutions was the uprising of British colonists in America against the monarchy due to the lack of political channels to challenge what they perceived as unfair economic policies. The American Revolution ended with the independence of the American colonies and the establishment of the United States of America in 1776. The American Revolution was principally inspired by the ideas of another prominent Social Contract theorist, the English Enlightenment philosopher John Locke.
Locke had argued that individuals have certain inalienable rights that should be protected by their government; otherwise, they have the right to bear arms and overthrow their rulers. Locke formulated these rights in a memorable phrase “Life, Liberty and Property”, which would be immortalized by the American revolutionary Thomas Jefferson in his introduction to the American Declaration of Independence, though modified slightly to read “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness”. The inspiration and basis for the American Revolution and constitution thus came from Enlightenment ideals. Their success had far-reaching effects as European public opinion was moved towards embracing these ideas.

Thereafter came the French Revolution, the beginning of which is difficult to determine (historians usually use the year 1789) with even more difficulty establishing its end. In contrast to the American Revolution, which witnessed an outstanding success for the Enlightenment project, the extremism of French revolutionaries sunk France into a bloodbath, which was perhaps the chief catalyst for the foundation of Modern Conservatism as we know it today. Since the beginning of the Revolution, the rebels intended to destroy old establishments and build totally new ones in a series of violent measures culminating in the execution of King Louis XVI and the declaration of the Republic. The revolutionaries annihilated their enemies mercilessly, the guillotine thus becoming a symbol of an era historically known as the Reign of Terror.

A series of upheavals and disturbances overwhelmed France under a political regime lacking in popularity, until a young military officer named Napoleon Bonaparte succeeded in taking over the reins of power. Though Napoleon barely challenged the ideals of the revolution, he established a harsh dictatorial regime supported by outstanding popularity across the lower classes. Frightened by the reign of terror and disenchanted with politics, the French people saw in Napoleon a safe choice and in the same time an embodiment of the revolutionary ethos; simply, a savior.

The French Revolution led most European states to declare war on France, fearing the spread of the Revolution’s ideas within their borders. The Reign of Terror posed an ominous threat to the European bourgeoisie, spreading doubts about the Enlightenment and pushing a significant number of its supporters into the ranks of the Conservatives. For example, the Irishman Edmund Burke, one of the most important proponents of the Americans and their grievances, was very critical of French in his early and seminal Reflections on the Revolution in France; largely considered to be the founding document of Modern Conservatism.
The greatest influence of the French Revolution was brought about by Napoleon himself, who decided to wage total war against all of Europe; in all appearances, to spread the ideas of the Revolution. However, Napoleon’s personal zeal overwhelmed all principles. The Napoleonic Wars changed the trajectory of History in several ways. First, the military confrontations between France and its enemies instigated an unprecedented sense of Nationalism among Western Europeans. A feeling of superiority took over the French, as they began to see France as a symbol for something bigger than merely a country in which they lived. The Conservatives countered with an emphasis on nationalism in their own countries, deeming the ideas behind the revolution to be essentially foreign or “French”. Second, the Napoleonic Wars ended in the dissolution of the remnants of the Middle Ages. In Western Europe, the individual began to look at himself as a citizen before anything else, regardless of the class to which he belonged or the religious creed in which he believed. Third, and most important, the Napoleonic Wars ended in the defeat of Napoleon and a settlement conference, the Congress of Vienna, which was held in 1815 to address the fate of the European continent. In Vienna, the victorious governments agreed to impose a state of stability over Europe that would prevent the occurrence of a similar revolution; a crushing victory for the Conservatives. The absolute control of the conservatives over the continent was ensured until the breakout of WWI in 1914, with a few exceptions of little importance to our purpose here.

The Age of Enlightenment brought about a third revolution which, though not political, was as influential on the course of history as the American and French Revolutions. The Industrial Revolution, as historians called it, was the outcome of outstanding scientific developments during the 18th century, the steam engine being at the forefront, rapidly converting Western European societies, particularly in Britain, from agrarian to industrial production. The mechanization of agriculture rendered a large sector of agricultural employment obsolete. The Modern City with its Mass Society was born out of the largest population movement in history, as people left the countryside for job opportunities in the new industrial facilities. Besides the emergence of Mass Communication (political propaganda, commercial advertising), these cities, where people hardly knew each other, permitted new types of human behavior and artistic creation in the absence of the moral and social constraints of smaller societies. But perhaps the most important outcome of the Industrial Revolution was the emergence of a new socio-economic class, made up of factory and petty workers whose entry into Modernity was, unlike the bourgeoisie, not by their own devices.
3. The Crisis of Enlightenment

- Though the Enlightenment elites suffered an irrevocable political defeat in Europe under the conservatism of the Congress of Vienna, the sweeping success of Modern Science helped perpetuate the Enlightenment project, but on different terms. The only way out for the Enlightenment was to “correct” the socio-political aspect of the program by disposing of philosophy as the main engine of the project and replacing it with social sciences that follow the steps of the natural sciences. **Positivism**, as this new approach was called, criticized philosophy for its lack of a distinction between “facts” and “values” (i.e., judgments associated with the true, the good, and the beautiful), and heralded a system of studying social phenomena on the basis of “facts” only. Positivism thus sought to restructure the enlightenment on a model of instrumental rationality regardless of value questions and final ends, eventually purging the program of any human substance in its version of heaven on earth. The hope of the Enlightenment became nothing more than an exposition of History, in which the human collective moves about from one phase to another without individuals having any hand in the process itself; a position which came to be known as **Historical Determinism**. Positivism reached its zenith with the success of **Darwin’s** theory of biological evolution, as the new Social Science shifted to an evolutionary explanation of social phenomena. **Social Darwinists**, as the proponents of this theory were known, argued that political and social systems develop spontaneously or by natural selection, similar to the development of living organisms in biology.

- While the proponents of Enlightenment were inundated in the reassessment of their project, Western governments were compelled to implement a number of political – particularly democratic – reforms that earlier Enlightenment thinkers called for, in order to keep up with the massive economic and social changes of the time. Nevertheless, these reforms were sporadic. In Britain and the United States such reforms were far-reaching and bold (sometimes violent, as was the case in the **American Civil War**), but this was not the case on the European continent. The Nationalist sentiments of the Napoleonic Wars grew into extremely conservative political regimes, disturbed every now and then by unrest, revolutions, domestic clashes between monarchists and republicans in addition to limited military conflicts and hectic diplomatic efforts contesting hegemony over the continent.
• While Nationalism was a conservative reaction to the Enlightenment, Socialism emerged as an extreme variant of the Enlightenment. Nationalism is an irrational position by nature, placing the individual below the nation. Socialism, however, is an extremely rational position, placing the individual below a society organized on purely rational principles. The essence of Socialism, in all its theoretical and practical variations, is the rejection, or at least limitation, of private property on the basis that the value of things is determined by their utility for the human collective and not in its exchange value based on its supply and demand (i.e., the value of water should be greater than the value of diamonds). Socialist ideas had existed throughout the ages, but it was not until the Industrial Revolution that Socialism came to fruition after the rise of the new working class; when the idea of collective ownership of the means of production became more realistic, and more tempting. The crucial development in the history of Socialism came with the German Karl Marx who used positivist social science to establish what was later termed Scientific Socialism, thereby branding his name to the theory forever. Introducing a sophisticated theory of value combined with his own perspective of historical determinism, Marx prophesized that if the conditions of the workings class were to remain the same throughout the 19th century, it would lead to a revolution guided by a new conceptualization of heaven on earth: Communism, where each individual gives “according to his ability” and takes “according to his need”.

• Once again, technological progress in the 19th century led to radical political and social changes. First, further development of firearms and means of communication and transport (telegraphy, rail transport) increased the divide between a government’s military and law-enforcement forces and average individuals, thereby rendering popular revolutions practically impossible. Second, these developments themselves increased the divide between European military forces and those of the rest of the world. Subsequently, Western European forces increased their expansionary campaigns abroad, in a general attitude known as Imperialism. European economic hegemony over the world since the outset of Modernity was thus transformed into absolute domination by military occupation. Imperial expansionism placed the Enlightenment project in a problematic position, caught between the oppression of imperial armies against native peoples and Western Liberalism preaching freedom for all men. Positivist Social Science, however, found a convenient resolution to this paradox through Social Darwinism, proposing it was the duty of Europeans to push other peoples to climb higher on the ladder of social development; or as Rudyard Kipling, the famous poet of the British Empire, more succinctly put it, the White Man’s Burden.
4. Fall of the Enlightenment Project

- At the beginning of the 20th century, the social and economic developments of the Industrial Revolution reached their pinnacle, leading to a tangible rise in the standards of living in Western Europe, especially for the poorer classes. With further political reforms complementing this development, Marxism fell into a predicament. Marx’s prophecies about the continuation of the political and economic oppression of the working class were not actualized, leading to a severe polarization within the European Communist movement. A faction of communists dissented, calling for the renunciation of revolution as a means for toppling the existing economic system and consenting to peaceful political activism within liberal democratic regimes; they were dubbed Revisionists by their detractors and Social Democrats by their followers. While Social Democratic Parties achieved significant political gains in Western Europe, revolutionary Marxists remained the dominant political force in poorer countries, specifically in Russia, which had yet to take its first steps towards industrialization under an extremely repressive authoritarian regime.

- As there was a rational revision of Marxism, so too was there an irrational revision which called for preservation of the revolutionary ethos, particularly its emphasis on organized political violence, renouncing the scientific analysis as a “myth” whose sole objective was the mobilization of the masses. Despite their failure to become a far-reaching movement like the Social Democrats, the alliance of Irrational Revisionism with Nationalism achieved groundbreaking success later. Traditional conservative Nationalism had also declined in light of the relatively peaceful and stable political situation, which made the French Revolution seem like a ghost of ancient history. A more extreme form of Nationalism emerged, Romantic Nationalism as we may call it, positing the nation as an entity that transcends the individuals who constitute it. Moreover, Romantic Nationalism depicted the nation as a “person” – often a female – and considered history as the record of this person’s struggle towards glory. National Socialism - or National Syndicalism in the case of movements which used another socialist theory called Syndicalism – adopted and publicly announced a political program of violence against its enemies and relied on the “myth” as a means for political propaganda and addressed the emotions of the masses and not the interests of individuals.
• As domestic political situations in Western European countries improved, inter-state relations across the continent were increasingly deteriorating for several reasons. First, competition over world domination created a few grudges among imperial powers. Second, the countries arriving late at political modernity (Germany – Italy – Russia) wanted their share of political and diplomatic influence, challenging the authority of the traditional powers and the Congress of Vienna. Third, growing sentiments of Nationalism among the peoples of Eastern Europe ignited ethnic conflicts that transcended established borders. It was only a matter of time before someone pulled the trigger and a conflict of global proportions began in what became known as the Great War and later the First World War (WWI).

• We cannot describe in detail the repercussions of WWI or the fragile peace that followed it. However, the most important outcome was the complete and final collapse of the Enlightenment project - if we exclude sixteen million people killed, twenty-one million injured and the fall of four European Empires after centuries of political and military glory. Positivist Social Science, with its value-free progress-oriented program, had – almost unanimously – supported an all-out clash, heralding “the war to end all wars”. The gross cost of the war, in addition to a shaky settlement that rendered the outburst of a second war a mere matter of time, led to the disintegration of the ideal of progress entirely. In its place, a universal mood of frustration and futility blanketed Europe; a continent that had yet to face the economic and social ramifications of war. The age of Enlightenment was over, the age of Nihilism began.
5. The Age of Totalitarianism

- The success of Liberalism in the United States and Britain – and considerably behind them in France – reflected a realistic and extremely sensitive balance between Enlightenment and Conservatism. In the rest of continental Europe, however, a general atmosphere of contempt for the values of Liberalism prevailed, provoked concurrently by the conservative extremism of the Vienna Congress and the Enlightenment extremism of the Age of Revolution and Positivist Social Science. The victory of liberal-democratic governments in WWI further stoked the fires of ire among those nations. Imposing vengeful reparations on the defeated countries (Germany in particular), the victors exacerbated the painful economic impact of the war on the peoples of these countries, abandoning them to liberal-democratic governments that were as lacking in competence as they were in popular support. Moreover, the imperial interests of Britain and France marginalized the demands of colonized countries, Egypt included. In conclusion, the post WWI international regime was founded by short-sighted politicians who, unwillingly, put the values of Liberalism on trial all over the world. Totalitarianism was the verdict.

- Regardless of ideological and organizational differences, totalitarian movements share one core tenet and one common goal: liberalism is the enemy, and all political, economic, and social institutions must change in accordance with this animosity. Totalitarianism, with its two wings – traditional Marxism in the poor despotic East and National Socialism in the wealthy democratic West – achieved astounding success among Europeans, who found in it a source for moral and social revival; an escape from the dreadful meaninglessness of Nihilism and the political and economic disasters of the Great War.

- With the invention of wireless broadcasting, in addition to incredible developments in printing and transportation technologies, mass society emerged from within the confines of the city to go beyond the borders of the one State. Totalitarian movements mastered these developments to create gigantic propaganda machines that became the primary weapon in their quest to bring down the established institutions. Totalitarian elites had taken heed of the futility of popular uprisings against organized police and army forces, therefore resorting to the formation of their own militias or attempting to penetrate the military to oust the regime from within through a coup. In most cases, they followed both courses of action.
• After a series of civil wars, coups and terrifying political violence, three different totalitarian organizations successfully took over the reins of power in their countries: the traditional Marxists in Russia (Bolsheviks), the National Syndicalists in Italy (Fascists), and the National Socialists in Germany (Nazis). Immediately after their rise to power, the core of a totalitarian regime was established. Afterwards, absolute domination of mass communication combined with merciless annihilation of opposition was enough to launch the greatest brainwashing schemes in history.

• In a few years, especially following the Great Depression, totalitarian regimes – especially in Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Russia – achieved exceptional economic success in comparison to their liberal counterparts by virtue of their extraordinary capacity for directing labor. This success, however, came at the cost of millions of lives lost to political assassinations, ethnic cleansing, mass deportation, concentration camps, systematic torture, and forced labor. Emboldened by domestic success, totalitarian regimes, particularly Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Russia, began to look to outward expansion.

• While the Bolsheviks were more inclined to political expansion through financial and ideological support for their followers abroad, the Nazis embarked on a military campaign with the declared objective of German domination over the world. As the Thirties drew to a close, Totalitarianism had devoured most of the European continent, whether by means of direct Nazi or Soviet rule, political integration with traditional conservatives into autocratic regimes (the Falange in Spain), or coups undertaken by military leaders inspired by the totalitarian experiment (Metaxas in Greece and Salazar in Portugal), in addition to numerous less successful movements and armed organizations in Europe and across the globe. As the world moved towards dark times enveloped by the cloak of absolute tyranny, it seemed to be the final demise of Liberalism.

• The military expansionism of Nazi Germany dragged the world into the grarest humanitarian crisis in history: the Second World War. In the early months of the war, Nazi Germany and the Axis Powers - an alliance Hitler forged with Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan – achieved crushing victories made possible by the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression pact. However, fatal strategic mistakes made by the Axis, namely the Nazis breaking their non-aggression pact coupled with the Japanese attacking the United States, shifted the balance to the benefit of the Allies (or the United Nations as the American president Franklin D. Roosevelt named them).
• The moral courage of a few truly liberal leaders along with the might of the two superpowers ensured an allied victory, but the price was catastrophic: at least sixty million dead (slightly more than three percent of the world’s population at the time), not counting dozens of millions wounded, displaced or left homeless. This time, the victory was not purely liberal. The Soviet Union, the stronghold of Stalinist Totalitarianism, was a chief partner in securing victory and thereby in the formation of the new world order.

• Following the war, it was up to the victorious liberal states, led by the United States, to exert the greatest effort to avoid the mess wrought by the previous world war settlement. The priority was to prevent another Nazi catastrophe, but also to stop the encroachment of Soviet Communism in a struggle that would last for a few more decades, the struggle known as the Cold War. The United States and its allies managed to rebuild the political, economic and social institutions of the defeated countries to great success. A relatively stable world order was established and the moral battle against communism was fought fairly well. Nevertheless, an amalgam of the loose ends of British and French imperialism and the ferocious competition of the Cold War aggravated or created various conflicts across the globe; the Middle East bears witness to one of the most unfortunate examples.

• The Cold War ended with a victory for Liberalism once again. The Soviet Union collapsed and with it ended any realistic totalitarian threat to Liberalism. Although one can hardly deny the astonishing political, economic, and social improvements almost everywhere around the world since, we cannot conclusively celebrate the final victory of Liberalism and declare that Totalitarianism has left for good. As we demonstrated, Totalitarianism emerges from within the intrinsic crises of Liberalism. After all, the dreams of the Enlightenment, Romantic Nationalism, fanatic religious conservatism, Positivism, Social Darwinism and Nihilism still cast their shadows over those societies in which Liberalism had been long established, let alone those societies which have yet to embrace Liberalism at all. Totalitarianism will not vanish as long as there is Liberalism. Its success, however, depends on the ability of liberals to face their own crises, without falling prey to the illusions of ephemeral victories. Liberalism is and will always be a never-ending struggle.
III - Egyptian Totalitarianism: Birth and Development

- The early omens of the Egyptian totalitarian project coincided with the rise of international totalitarian movements in the late 1920s, coming to maturity in the mid 1930s with the success of Egyptian totalitarian movements, most prominently the Muslim Brotherhood and Young Egypt; communist organizations were also present although to a lesser extent. Despite the evident disagreements among them, we place these movements under a single category as their appeal to millions of Egyptians was rarely based on conviction, but rather on a reaction to two phenomena: first, the sweeping success of totalitarian movements in Europe, the historical stronghold of Liberalism and its ideological birthplace; and second, the collapse of the Nationalist Liberal Project, which we will address below. For many Egyptians, exactly as seen with their European counterparts, totalitarianism offered a tempting alternative to a reality of economic instability and political stagnation.

- With time, Egyptian totalitarians were able to dominate public opinion completely. Thereafter followed attempts to topple the incumbent constitutional monarchy through a series of demonstrations, boycotts, assassinations, and unbridled political violence. The complete absence of any liberal opposition afforded the totalitarian movements a succession of victories, beginning with the involvement of Egypt in the Palestine War in 1948, followed by the nullification of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and the launch of a guerilla warfare against British forces in the Suez Canal in 1951, and then the Great Cairo Fire in January 1952, culminating in a successful military coup on July 23, 1952.

- The military officers who carried out the 1952 coup, led by Gamal Abd al-Nasser (Nasser), were first preoccupied with the deconstruction the ancien-regime. They immediately sent the king to exile and, in a few months, declared Egypt a republic. In 1954, Nasser ousted the figurehead president, disbanded political parties and crushed all opposition (liberals and other totalitarians alike). Having contrived the Suez Crisis in 1956, thereby establishing his tremendous popularity and charismatic persona in the whole Arab region, Nasser had paved the way for his totalitarian regime. We may sum up the characteristics of Nasserite totalitarianism under three main headlines: a mixed ideology of Arab Nationalism and Socialism (institutionally closer to Syndicalism), a tendency for political and military expansion in the Arab region and a single-party system in conjunction with an oppressive police state that ruled Egypt with an iron fist intervening ferociously in all aspects of economic and social life.
• The **Nasserite Regime** suffered a number of shake-ups throughout its history (the dissolution of the unity with Syria and military failure in Yemen, for example), but was not seriously affected until the defeat of June 1967. The defeat opened a rift between the regime and the Egyptians which has proved unbridgeable to this very day. The regime leadership had to either let the system collapse completely or drop the totalitarian project and convert gradually to authoritarianism. Nasser’s successor, **Anwar al-Sadat**, picked the latter.

• Sadat started to dismantle Egypt’s totalitarian regime with partial liberalization of the economy and permitting limited political pluralism. He proceeded to bind the Egyptian regime strategically to American interests through the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty and the subsequent agreements on political and military cooperation. Despite his success in detotalitarizing the regime, he could not confront what remained of the Nasserite totalitarian movement, a task that could have only been accomplished through a genuine transformation to liberalism. Instead, he preferred to face it with the help of another totalitarian faction, the Islamists. Lighting the first spark of international Jihadism, Sadat dug his own grave and unleashed evils to be suffered by generations to come.

• **Hosni Mubarak** followed in the steps of his predecessor. With auspicious international developments, Mubarak entrenched the strategic ties between Egypt and the United States, successfully providing for security and political stability, in addition to moderate economic progress - especially in the first decade of the 21st century. However, these variables have not led to the demise of authoritarianism. The people of Egypt have to endure one of the most restrictive legal environments when it comes to political and civil freedoms. A blatantly oversized government still intervenes egregiously in the market. Moreover, the vast majority of the Egyptians are totally excluded from discussing, let alone determining, political and economic policies.

• In our opinion, the authoritarian regime will dissolve sooner or later. The question is whether this dissolution will be in the direction of totalitarianism or that of liberalism. As of today, the answer is not particularly pleasant. The totalitarian project still persists in two contemporary reincarnations, the Islamists and the Nationalists, both of which have deep roots in Egypt’s political and social infrastructure. We should also remember that the incumbent regime, though less evil, is an off shoot of the Egyptian totalitarian project. Therefore, an Egyptian liberal program must place a confrontation with Totalitarianism at the top of its priorities. But before we touch on this subject, we must first begin with our diagnosis of the crisis of contemporary Egyptian liberalism.
Second: The Crisis of Contemporary Egyptian Liberalism

- It is impossible to speak, whether ideologically or institutionally, of a clearly-defined Egyptian Liberalism due to two main factors. First, the restrictions imposed on freedom of association allow for too few political outlets, thereby confining political practice to insipid inter-organizational feuds. Second, the attempts at founding an Egyptian liberal tradition, rare as they were, have heretofore lacked any intellectual depth. Nevertheless, we can easily distinguish three different variations of liberal discourse with distinct ideological genealogies: Nationalist Liberalism, Formalist Liberalism, and Islamic Liberalism. The crisis of contemporary Egyptian liberalism can be thus divided into three separate crises.

I. Nationalist Liberalism

- The first problem of Egyptian Nationalist Liberalism goes back to the beginnings of Egyptian Modernity. In contrast to what happened in Europe, the Modern Egyptian State existed first and then sought to create an Egyptian bourgeoisie that would support its program of modernization. The Egyptians had found themselves, in the aftermath of the French revolution, in the middle of an international conflict that made absolutely no sense to them. They watched disinterestedly as the French, the British, the Ottomans and the Mamlukes fought viciously for dominion over the long dormant country. By the end of the clash, a young Albanian soldier called Muhammad Ali had slickly found his way to become the new ottoman magistrate. Dreaming of his own empire, probably under the influence of Napoleon, he realized the need for a modern army capable of challenging Ottoman and European authority. The logistic and economic needs of such an army required a modern state, and a modern state needed a bourgeoisie to run it. Mohammad Ali spared no effort towards creating his artificial bourgeoisie, from the introduction of modern education by sending educational missions abroad and by establishing local technical schools, to the appropriation of land - previously state owned under a feudal system - to those closest to him.

- Having served its purpose granting Muhammad Ali his empire and dynasty, the project for a modern state in Egypt continued under his heirs, though Egypt remained nominally a part of the Ottoman Empire. The project took a giant leap under Khedive Ismail, Muhammad Ali’s grandson, who, unlike his grandfather, had sincere intentions to modernize Egypt by emulating the European model. Ismail considerably expanded the Bourgeoisie creation process, increasing the number of schools and educational missions and even creating a representative council comprising prominent bourgeois figures.
• The hallmark of Ismail’s reign and crucial to the development of the Egyptian bourgeoisie and in Egyptian history in general, however, was his fiscal policy. Ismail had acceded to the throne at the time of the American Civil War, which resulted in the collapse of American cotton exports. The increase in demand for and the price of Egyptian cotton led Ismail to overestimate his financial resources and borrow excessively from European countries and banks. With cotton returning to its antebellum levels by the end of the war, in addition to a costly war with Ethiopia, Egypt fell in a deficit spiral. Ismail had to sell the bulk of government-owned land to his bourgeois allies, as well as Egypt’s stake in the Suez Canal as stocks to the British government. After a series of financial crises and clashes between the Khedive and his European creditors, the Egyptian state landed in bankruptcy and Ismail was deposed by an official decree from the Ottoman Sultan. The deposition of Ismail and the excessive intervention of European powers in Egypt’s finances brought about a series of uprisings led by members of the representative council and Egyptian military officers, culminating in what was later termed the Urabi Revolt. Ismail’s successor, Tawfiq, failed to control the turmoil driving Britain to intervene directly and occupy Egypt.

• We may say that, until the British Occupation, there was no reason for a bourgeois project to expand upwards; the bourgeoisie were inseparable from the modern state to which they owed their rise to economic, social and political superiority in the first place. More importantly, the Egyptian bourgeoisie had no exposure whatsoever to the deep philosophical questions that formed the European bourgeois mentality during the Renaissance and Early Modernity. The Egyptian bourgeoisie emerged at a time when Modern Science was the official mouthpiece of modernity; it was born and raised in the shackles of instrumental rationality. Therefore, Egypt had never experienced a serious debate over the values of liberalism; as liberal ideals are always reduced to an elitist discussion of the best means to rule and questions of meritocracy. As for downward expansion, the Egyptian bourgeoisie considered it one of the responsibilities of the state, to be carried out according to its priorities. Therefore, an independent bourgeois Enlightenment project did not arise. To this very day, the inseparability of the bourgeoisie and the state, or yearning for it, remains a major feature of nationalist liberalism.

• The British Occupation of Egypt further complicated the relationship between the Egyptian bourgeoisie and Liberalism. The British administration under Evelyn Baring Earl of Cromer, the chief decision maker in Egyptian politics between 1883 and 1907, embarked on completing the mission to modernize Egypt, primarily to pay off international debts.
• With hundreds of British bureaucrats taking top positions, the Egyptian bourgeoisie, compelled to obey, were severely disgruntled. Thus, the Egyptian bourgeois elite began to gradually formulate programs of upward expansion distinguishable into three main currents, each relying on an alliance between the bourgeoisie and another political force. The first adopted a conservative alliance with the Ottomans, seeking to reinstate the Islamic Caliphate as the legitimate sovereign power. Abbas Hilmi II, successor to Tawfiq, led this faction with the aid of his protégé and spokesperson, a young lawyer and journalist named Mustafa Kamil. The second, composed primarily of Christians (both Coptic natives and Levantine immigrants) aligned with the British, whom they considered bearers of the torch of European civilization and saviors from the oriental despotism of the Islamic Caliphate. The third chose complete independence from both the English and the Ottomans, inventing a totally new ally. Thus, the concept of the Egyptian Nation was born, subsequently becoming the cornerstone of the nationalist liberal discourse.

• The concept of the Egyptian nation did not develop naturally, as was the case in Europe after the Napoleonic wars; it was rather a pure bourgeois invention. First, the nationalist liberals advanced the concept of the Sovereignty of the Nation versus Non-Egyptians, introducing themselves as representatives of the Nation in its struggle against the British, at a time when most Egyptians did not pay any attention to the presence of the British or know about their existence in the first place. This reflects the systemic schizophrenia concerning the nationalist liberal relationship with the West; the master and modern prototype on one hand, and the enemy to be gotten rid of on the other. Second, the nationalist liberals argued for the Sovereignty of the Nation Versus the Government, which is close to the often disputed concept of Popular Sovereignty, but differs insofar as the Nation in this case is not the collectivity of the individuals who constitute it. The nationalist liberals deemed the Egyptians, mostly illiterate peasants at the time, incapable of determining their own interests. Thus, the divide between Nation and Government was not equal to that of People and Government, but rather to Worthy and Incumbent. Therefore, and third of all, the nationalist liberals developed the concept of National Unity, dividing the nation into elements (religious sects, classes), that ally together in order to realize a unitary and undifferentiated interest. National unity was the nationalist liberals’ umbrella for guaranteeing sweeping popularity by securing the support of the leaders of these elements, avoiding the need for a clear political program that would alienate some in favor of others.
The Egyptian bourgeoisie flourished under the crushing economic success and limited political openness of the Cromer Administration. Nevertheless, the arrogance of British bureaucrats, the failure of Cromer’s successors in maintaining the same program and the international atmosphere of WWI combined to marginalize the group allied with the British. As for the conservative movement supporting the Islamic Caliphate, it gradually became barren after the untimely death of Mustafa Kamil, then collapsed completely with the abolition of the Caliphate and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after the war. Only the Nationalist Liberals survived, taking advantage of post-war conditions to achieve sweeping popularity. After a series of clashes, including the great 1919 Revolution, the British agreed to negotiate and Egypt acquired independence for the first time in modern history (with four notorious British Reservations); the Egyptian Kingdom was born. After several disagreements among Nationalist Liberals, the liberal Constitution of 1923 was enacted, launching an epoch of representative government to be known later as the Liberal Era which, despite various interruptions and interventions from the British and the Royal Court, continued effectively until July 1952.

Nationalist liberalism achieved great success during the Liberal Era, especially with regard to the question of British occupation, which was almost entirely resolved with the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in 1936. However, the nationalist liberal discourse did not advance one bit; still bound to its schizophrenic relationship to the West and its ideal of the unitary national interest whose prognosis and actualization is monopolized by the nationalist liberal elite. As nationalist liberalism remained stagnant, the continuation of the modernization program brought about sweeping social and economic developments, leading to the emergence of a new bourgeoisie, known by historians as the New Effendis. In contrast to their predecessors, the New Effendis were completely alienated from any Western influence. Under the prevailing Nationalist liberal discourse, their relationship with the West, and subsequently with Liberalism, evolved from schizophrenia to outright animosity. Shortly, the new effendis embraced the Egyptian totalitarian project and carried its banner until its final victory in 1952. The nationalist liberals submitted gradually to the rising totalitarianism, indulging one populist compromise after the other as they struggled in vain for the popularity of 1919.
Nationalist Liberalism disappeared under Nasser’s brutal oppression, until Sadat opened the door for its return with his economic openness, estrangement from the Soviet Union, introduction of political pluralism and forbearance with a limited space of freedom in the academia and the press. Nationalist Liberalism was resurrected to moderate success both among the elite (journalism, historiography) and the public (the **New Wafd Party**), but with unyielding insistence on following the same old program. Incapable of shouldering their historical responsibility or offering a coherent apology for their terrible failure, the nationalist liberals argued that what had happened in Egypt since 1952 was an “inexplicable deterioration” on all levels. This particular argument drove the movement to massive failure once again for two main reasons. First, the vast majority of Egyptians do not think of the political, economic, and social changes brought about since 1952 as deterioration. This is especially true in light of the nationalist liberals’ incessant evocations of a past filled with religious and ethnic diversity, culture and civility, economic prosperity and political glory, whereas many Egyptians think of a time when their illiterate grandparents lived in abject poverty in villages they barely left. Second, even if the hypothesis of deterioration could be advanced, it will not make sense unless the nationalist liberals admit their failure and assume their historical responsibility as the originators, if by concession, of the Egyptian totalitarian project. A defense of nationalist liberalism should include a revision of the traditional approach to the relationship with the West and the disposal of schizophrenic concepts like the “independent national will” or “patriotic capitalism”. More important, the nationalist liberals should have introduced a political discourse that acknowledges the diverse interests and backgrounds of the Egyptians, expunging the notion of the one nation with one undifferentiated interest from their lexicon forever.
II. Formalist Liberalism

- Formalism denotes an intellectual or practical concern with form rather than content. Therefore, what we call formalist liberalism encompasses a group of movements that invoke empirical Western formulations of Liberalism; having neither understood the philosophical underpinnings of these formulations nor sought to ground them in an Egyptian context. Formalist Liberalism is primarily founded on the legal and economic documents and institutions established by Western governments as means of propaganda and pressure against communism after WWII which, after the liberal victory in the Cold War, were turned into some sort of world constitution and government.

- The bias of the Egyptian political Elite against the west, deeply rooted in the nationalist liberal discourse, made it impossible for formalist liberalism to have a significant influence in Egypt until the end of the Cold War when there seemed to be no alternative to liberalism. The crushing liberal victory led many to reassess their positions, especially in light of the temptation of Globalization and its entirely new political, economic, and social discourses. Gradually, two formalist liberal movements began to crystallize in Egypt; the first growing out of international human rights law and its institutions, and the second inspired by the ideas of economic Globalization and its institutions.

- Human Rights Liberalism reduces liberty into a set of abstract rules, overlooking the philosophical foundation as well as the historical and social origins of these rules. On the other hand, Economic Globalization Liberalism prioritizes the economy over all other aspects of human existence. Egyptian Economic Globalization Liberals believe that the structural adjustment of the Egyptian economy, disregarding the political and social cost, will ultimately lead to the complete transformation to liberalism. Despite the success of both movements (human rights liberals challenged the authoritarianism of the regime through international channels, while economic Globalization liberals achieved significant economic reform by working for the government), neither is capable of holding out against any deep criticism of liberalism or even convincing most Egyptians of the validity of their arguments. With lukewarm to hostile responses to their efforts under the totalitarian hegemony over public opinion, formalist liberals rely completely on a precarious balance of international interests that shift invariably between security, economics and colonial guilt.
III. Islamic Liberalism

• Islamic Liberalism is not yet an organized political movement, but we must take it into consideration, especially in light of Western, American in particular, assertions of its importance. The basic tenet of Islamic Liberalism is the priority of reforming the religious discourse of Islam to comply with Liberalism. We may trace the roots of Islamic Liberalism to several secular thinkers who achieved moderate success in the 1980s and 1990s at a time when the Egyptian regime clashed with militant Islamists, thus granting a larger space for ideological confrontations over religion. It did not take long for this wave to lose momentum after the Egyptian state claimed victory over Islamist militants by force. Thereafter, it became evident that this debate served to only provoke the emotions of devout believers rather than pushing them to adopt a more liberal vision. It was not until the tragic events of September 11 that Islamic Liberalism began to truly take shape. This is especially true of the Muslims (Egyptian Muslims included) residing in the West who are trying to formulate a “moderate” Islamic thesis that fits in a liberal-democratic context.

• Regardless of the philosophical and theological superficiality of the arguments advanced by Islamic liberals heretofore, hence their incapacity of confronting traditional religious institutions, the movement sets out from an erroneous premise in the first place, a principle we call the Myth of Islamic Society. The adherents of this principle claim that Muslim people in countries of Muslim majority would not accept any political, economic, or social program devoid of Islamic justification. The Myth of Islamic Society is the central hypothesis of Islamist totalitarianism; the Islamists’ success in imposing it on everyone – including academics – has been the most important achievement of political Islam so far. The Islamists realize that any disagreement on purely religious grounds will be settled in favor of orthodox fundamentalism. Therefore, any attempt to rationalize religion from within will not only end with a sweeping victory for fundamentalism, it will also vindicate the core tenet of Islamism: that Islam is an all encompassing framework that should explain everything.

• As we proposed earlier, totalitarianism, Islamist or otherwise, is the legitimate child of the inherent crises of Liberalism. Therefore, Islam has nothing to do whatsoever with Islamist Totalitarianism. Confronting Islamist Totalitarianism is not possible but through the introduction and perpetuation of a purely rational liberalism based on the concept of individual liberty in the Egyptian context.
EULY and the Egyptian Question

First: EULY and the Authoritarian Regime

- We do not classify ourselves as supporters or opponents of the incumbent regime. We do, however, seek to propose a set of rigorous and precise legal and economic policies for public discussion, and thereafter to push for their implementation regardless of who implements them. As we mentioned above, we believe that the authoritarian regime will dissolve sooner or later. Whether this dissolution comes from within or without, whether it happens suddenly or gradually, is none of our business. We only have two concerns. First, that this dissolution leads to a transformation to liberalism, and second, that the majority of our countrymen agrees to this transformation.

Second: EULY and the Totalitarian Elite

- Confronting Totalitarianism is our top priority at the Egyptian Union of Liberal Youth. While our legal and economic proposals for reform will help transcend totalitarian programs with their grandiloquent rhetoric and meaningless promises, we will also seek to establish an Egyptian liberal platform to address the political, economic, social, and ethical questions of individual liberty. Along with our complete dedication to place individual liberty above all other considerations in politics, we are committed to the debate over the meaning of this liberty and its content in the social sphere, including the values of individual initiative, work, family, civic virtue, and human creativity in all its forms. In short, we will start with the establishment of a solid liberal ground, and then we will set out to fight totalitarianism on this ground and according to our terms, not theirs.

Third: EULY and the Liberal Elite

- In general, the Egyptian Union of Liberal Youth does not see prospective partners in any of the three sub-groups of the Egyptian liberal elite: Nationalist, Formalist, or Islamic. On the contrary, we consider contemporary Egyptian Liberalism closer to authoritarianism or totalitarianism. This does not mean that we claim a monopoly on Liberalism. Our understanding of Liberalism is extended to include not only those of Classical liberal conviction, like ourselves, but also the two other variations of modern liberal democracy: Social Liberalism (Social Democracy) and Conservative Liberalism. However, we do not seek to establish an all inclusive platform, as this would only take us back to generalizations, compromises, and concessionary approaches. The responsibility of establishing opposing views lies on the shoulders of those who hold these views, not on ours.