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Is Islam the Solution?: The Muslim Brotherhood and the Search for an Islamic Democracy in Egypt

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Is Islam the Solution?
The Muslim Brotherhood and the Search for an Islamic Democracy in Egypt

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HIS 490 History Honors Thesis

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For my parents, who sent me to Providence College

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INTRODUCTION

The September 11th terrorist attacks on the United States brought about an increased interest in the study of Islam and Islamist groups all over the world. The Middle East, in turn, became the subject of discussion in many American homes as the U.S went to war first with Afghanistan in 2001 and then Iraq in 2003. Since then, the growth of Islamist groups in the Middle East and Northern Africa has been the source of some concern in the West, especially in Egypt, where the U.S relies on its alliance with the secular authoritarian regime. The removal of President Hosni Mubarak, who has been supported by the U.S. since his rise to power in 1981, after waves of protests calling for democratic change, has raised many concerns about the future of Egyptian politics. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is by far the largest and most successful Islamist group in the world, although it has never managed to claim state power. Despite the illegal status of the Brotherhood's political party, it strongly influences Egyptian society through its extensive social services and its organizational capacity. Recent events have called into question the role the Muslim Brotherhood will play in the creation of a new government in Egypt.

During the period of liberalization experienced at the beginning of both Sadat and Mubarak's regimes, the Brotherhood underwent a gradual transformation of its ideology in the direction of democracy and political participation. The influence of such ideologues as Hasan al-Banna, Hasan Isma'il al-Hudaybi, Umar al-Tilmisani, and Yusef al-Qaradawi provided the foundation for this transition and spurred the movement towards the blending of civil and

religious agendas. Despite rifts in the movement, most notably between the new and old guard, vigorous ideological support for inclusion in the political system has developed in the past few decades. The promotion of a civil state that adheres to a constitutional system of governance within the constraints of Islamic law is a source of hope for the future participation of the Muslim Brotherhood in the creation of a democratic state.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS OF THE MOVEMENT: AL-BANNA AND THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood began as a social-religious movement under the guidance of Hasan al-Banna, a schoolteacher working in Ismailia. Al-Banna was born in 1906 in the Delta Province of Beheira, where he was raised by his father, a respected religious scholar. As a youth, he attended a primary teacher's school, where he participated in societies designed to uphold religious standards of morality. He became attracted to Sufi mysticism and the Order of the Hasafiyya Brothers. Ibn Khaldun, the fourteenth century Arab historian, accurately depicted Sufism as "dedication to worship, total dedication to Allah most High, disregard for the finery and ornament of the world, abstinence from the pleasure, wealth, and prestige sought by most men, and retiring from others to worship alone."¹ Al-Banna was attracted to the mystical and emotive aspects of Islam emphasized in Sufism. His progression through the ranks of the Hasafiyya Brothers shaped his belief that "the moral reform of the individual [is] a precondition to the Islamization of society."² The Hasafiyya Society for Charity, a group created by al-Banna that fought to preserve Islamic morality and impede the work of Christian missionaries, would be

¹ "Sufism," *BBC Religions*, September 2009, http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/subdivisions/sufism_1.shtml (December 8, 2011).

² "Hasan Al-Banna," *Sunni Forum*, June 2004, <http://www.sunniforum.com/forum/showthread.php?10710-Hasan-al-Banna> (November 11, 2011).

the forerunner of the Muslim Brotherhood.³ At the age of seventeen, he moved to Cairo to attend Dar al-‘Ulum, an institution of higher learning for teachers. In Cairo, he was confronted with a sense of the disintegration of Islamic morals because of Western influence.

The westernization that al-Banna found so abhorrent in Cairo was the result of decades of foreign intervention, first under the Ottoman Empire and then under the British, which played a significant role in Egypt’s modern history. The construction of the Suez Canal in November 1869 guaranteed the continued intervention of the West in Egypt’s internal affairs, despite gaining autonomy from the Ottoman Empire in 1867. In 1882, the British occupied the country after the Arabi Rebellion in order to maintain political stability and ensure economic solidity. This event exacerbated the political isolation of Egypt from its Arab neighbors. Egyptians were “daily torn between two worlds, that of the Muslim East and that of the Christian West.”⁴ Religious affiliations with the East remained, but Egypt looked to the West for material advancement.

The occupation lasted until 1914, when a protectorate was established under British authority. The war that followed and the increased involvement of foreign powers would create many hardships and social problems for the Egyptian people. Martial law, inflation, and the unequal distribution of wealth angered many peasants. British influence created social and economic divisions within Egyptian society. The upper and middle classes embraced the secular ideals of the West, separating them from the poor lower class that embraced Arab and Islamic

³ Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 144.

⁴ Christina Phelps Harris, *Nationalism and Revolution in Egypt: The Role of the Muslim Brotherhood* (Westport: Hyperion Press, Inc., 1981), 66.

traditions.⁵ As a result, the twentieth century ushered in a period of renewed Egyptian nationalism which called for liberation from the British. Al-Banna, an ardent nationalist, was an active participant in the anti-British rebellion of 1919 and subsequent strikes and demonstrations. The revolt led to the unilateral declaration of Egyptian independence by the British government in February 1922.⁶

Al-Banna's exposure to what he viewed as the degradation of Egyptian society caused by the harmful influence of Western ideals in Cairo left a deep impression. He wrote extensively of his experience in his memoirs:

I saw that the social life of the beloved Egyptian nations was oscillating between her dear and precious Islamism which she had inherited, defended, and lived with and became accustomed to, and made powerful during thirteen centuries, and this severe Western invasion which is armed and equipped with all the destructive and degenerative influences of money, wealth, prestige, ostentation, material enjoyment, power, and means of propaganda.⁷

The "spiritual and ideological degradation" and the "deterioration of behaviors, morals, and deeds" convinced him of the deleterious effects of westernization.⁸ He determined that while he attended Dar al-'Ulum, he would do his best to counteract this trend. He wrote, "I therefore decided upon positive action and I asked myself: Why do I not place this responsibility upon the

⁵ William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2004), 199.

⁶ Harris, 144.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁸ *Ibid.*

shoulders of Muslim leaders and urge them strongly to co-operate in resisting this invasion?”⁹

When he graduated in 1927, he vowed to become a teacher and religious guide.

Al-Banna was appointed by the government to teach in Ismailia, where he again confronted the reality of imperial British and French influence in the Suez Canal Zone.¹⁰ In 1928, al-Banna was solicited by a group of six men who were influenced by his teachings and lectures. Together they formed *Jama‘at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*, the Society of the Muslim Brothers. The name was designated by al-Banna himself, who wrote that “we are brothers in the service of Islam; hence, we are the ‘Muslim Brothers.’”¹¹ The initial goal of the society was to educate members in gaining the correct understanding of Islam, a goal which greatly reflected the influence of Sufism on al-Banna’s life. He even assumed the Sufi title *al-murshid al-amm* (general guide).¹² Within four years, the Brotherhood had branches along the length of the canal zone, including major cities such as Ismailia, Port Sa’id, Suez, and abu-Suwayr.¹³

Al-Banna’s responsibilities brought him back to Cairo in 1932, where he set up headquarters for the Brotherhood and concentrated on recruiting members. After ten years, the ideological foundation of the organization was established. First, Islam was a total system that encompassed every aspect of life. At the Brotherhood’s fifth congress, al-Banna explained:

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 148.

¹¹ Mitchell, 8.

¹² Ana Belen Soage and Jorge Fuentelsaz Franganillo, *The Muslim Brothers in Egypt*. In *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Organization and Policies of a Global Islamist Movement.*, ed. Barry Rubin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 39.

¹³ Mitchell, 9.

It is our conviction that the rulings and precepts of Islam are comprehensive and organize the affairs of this life and the next. Whoever believes that those precepts are only concerned with worship and spirituality is mistaken. Islam is creed and worship, country and nationality, religion and government, action and spirituality, Book and sword.¹⁴

According to Richard Mitchell, in addition to the totality of Islam, it was also formulated from and based on its two primary sources; the revelation in the Qur'an and the wisdom of the Prophet in the Sunna. Furthermore, it is "an Islam applicable to all times and to all places."¹⁵ The scope of the movement attracted followers from every sector of Egyptian society. Al-Banna described it as "a Salafiyya message, a Sunni way, a Sufi truth, a political organization, an athletic group, a cultural-educational union, an economic company, and a social idea."¹⁶ As a result of Al-Banna's leadership and organizational ability, the Brotherhood was able to remain unified despite its internal factions and grow into the powerful organization it is today.

Early Politicization

The Muslim Brotherhood became involved in politics as early as the 1930s through protests and demonstrations demanding the implementation of *shari'a* (Islamic law). Most Brotherhood members were dismayed by the current government and its Western backers. King Farouk I, the son and successor of Faud I, came to the throne in 1937 as the world was poised on the brink of war. His government was a constitutional monarchy but the British, despite official independence, were heavily involved in Egypt's internal affairs. When King Farouk, for instance, showed sympathies towards the Axis powers in 1942, a pro-British premier was placed in office

¹⁴ Soage, *The Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, 40.

¹⁵ Mitchell, 14.

¹⁶ Ibid.

to counter the King.¹⁷ Although his popularity was high at first, popular support decreased as his sixteen year reign progressed. His extravagant lifestyle and blatant corruption outraged his subjects, alienating the Army, which had long been loyal to the throne. By the 1950s, he had lost the support of his international backers as well. Sir Miles Lampson, the British high commissioner, described him in a 1937 report to the Foreign Office as “uneducated, lazy, untruthful, capricious, irresponsible and vain, though with a quick superficial intelligence and charm of manner.”¹⁸ Relations between King Farouk and the Muslim Brotherhood would be uneasy because of his corrupt lifestyle and complicity with the British.

The Brotherhood’s involvement in Palestinian resistance to the British mandate and pro-Axis plotting during the war led to the arrest of al-Banna and his closest advisors, as well as the temporary interdiction of the organization. This marked the beginning of a progression of clashes with the authorities that continues to the present day. For the first time, the Brotherhood became actively hostile to the ruling powers in Egypt. The clashes with the government and growing hostility prompted al-Banna to create a secret paramilitary organization designated the Special Apparatus (*al-jihaz al-sirri*) or the Secret Unit.¹⁹ It was established in late 1942 or early 1943 and quickly became the movements’ defense against government police forces. The Special Apparatus was kept a secret from most members and remained relatively small in size but, by

¹⁷ Richard Cavendish. “The Abdication of King Farouk,” *History Today* 52 no.7 (July 2002): 55. <http://web.ebscohost.com> (accessed December 2, 2011).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Mitchell, 30.

1947, it had become a fully structured, equipped, and efficient body of the Muslim Brotherhood.²⁰

After WWII, the political landscape changed dramatically. Instability revealed problems with the parliamentary system. Skirmishes and assassinations had become common occurrences in the political life of the country. The Muslim Brotherhood emerged even stronger after the war because of its anti-British rhetoric and support for Palestinian resistance, policies which endeared it to the growing nationalist movement. Schools and hospitals run by the Brotherhood also provided needed services for a large portion of the urban population that suffered from war induced inflation and unemployment.²¹ A realignment of parties also took place. The secular Wafd party, weakened from its support of the British during the war, formed an alliance with the increasingly popular communist party. Al-Banna's disdain for both parties pushed him into an unlikely alliance with King Farouk, who provided financial support and wide latitude for the Brotherhood to disseminate their message.²² The alliance eventually broke down due to the actions of the Special Apparatus, which "contributed to the mayhem by multiplying its attacks against the British, Egyptian Jews - accused of collusion with Zionism - and Egyptian public personalities," such as Judge Ahmad al-Khazandar and Prime Minister Mahmud al-Nuqrashi.²³ Although al-Banna condemned the violence, he was assassinated by the secret police on February 12, 1949. In that year, the Brotherhood was officially banned and labelled a terrorist organization.

²⁰ Ibid., 54.

²¹ Soage, *The Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, 40.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

Al-Banna's Ideological Contribution

The ideological contributions of al-Banna to the Muslim Brothers would last until the present. As the society's founder, his views on Islam, democracy, violence, and political participation would set precedents for subsequent leaders. His concept of Islam as a complete system and his goal of establishing *shari'a* in Egypt remain the primary goals of the society. The legacy of violence that precedes the Muslim Brotherhood today was initially established by al-Banna, although at the time the Special Apparatus was created, it was a common practice for political organizations to possess paramilitary groups.

Many scholars who study the Brotherhood during the 1930s and 1940s believe that the height of violence by the society was caused by the actions of an independent Special Apparatus. Barbara Zollner writes that because the influence of Abd al-Rahman al-Sanadi and Salih al-Ashmawi, the head and former head of the Special Apparatus, was growing steadily, "there is a question as to whether al-Banna really retained control over the Secret Unit."²⁴ If this was the case, it would explain al-Banna's denial of involvement in plans to overthrow the government while also acknowledging that some Brothers were involved in terrorist activities.²⁵ In fact, al-Banna condemned the destabilizing episodes of violence which some members took part in. In 1949, after the bombing of a court house by members of the Secret Unit, al-Banna declared that "they are neither Brothers, nor are they Muslims."²⁶ This violent past would create a measure of uncertainty regarding the Muslim Brotherhood's intentions in the future.

²⁴ Barbara H. E. Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Hasan al-Hudaybi and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 2009), 14.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Mitchell, 68.

The Brotherhood's early views on democracy and political participation were established by al-Banna. Early observations of the secular Wafd Party convinced al-Banna that pluralism and parties were divisive and harmful. To him, parties were unconcerned with the welfare of the people and rooted in personal disputes rather than political problems. He wrote that:

Even though it is viable in some countries, it is not feasible in Egypt at all. Especially at this time when a new era has begun, we have to cooperate, join forces, make use of all talents to build a strong nation. We need firm stability and complete devotion to all aspects of reforms.²⁷

The Muslim Brotherhood's appeal to the masses and their criticism of party politics were important components in Egypt's transition from a clientelistic and elite-dominated system, to mass politicization and the formations of ideological parties.²⁸ Furthermore, he considered democracy an import of the West and alien to Islamic culture and society. He did believe, however, that leaders should be held accountable to the people. He stressed that "Islam has enjoined, confirmed and recommended the principle that power belongs to the nation. The Muslims should be supervising the acts of their government, giving advice and support and holding them accountable."²⁹ These views kept the Brotherhood officially out of politics until a later date and played a large role in the ideological split between the new and old guard in the 1970s.

²⁷ Brynjar Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt : The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942* (Reading, England: Ithaca Press, 1998), 203.

²⁸ Ibid., 205.

²⁹ Ibid., 203.

Dissolution and the Struggles of Succession

Al-Banna's assassination created a multitude of problems for the Muslim Brotherhood. He had been their charismatic leader for decades, attracting followers with his charm, eloquent speeches, and command of the native tongue.³⁰ After al-Banna's death, power struggles dominated the inner workings of the society. The issue of succession was one area where internal divisions were clearly present. The Muslim Brotherhood was on the brink of destruction, existing underground with no elected leader. The difficulty of bringing the necessary members of the Consultative Assembly together and the divisions within the society's ranks prevented the election of a new general guide for several years.

The leading candidates were al-Ashmawi, Abd al-Hakim Abidin, Abd al-Rahman al-Banna, Shaykh Hasab al-Baquri and Mustafa Mu'min, who each represented different ideological positions within the Brotherhood. An open debate between the candidates, however, "would have exposed the intended public appearance of a unified and coherent organization as not being genuine," even though the internal rift was already considerable.³¹ The primary rivalry reflected two vastly different positions. Salih al-Ashmawi, al-Banna's deputy and former head of the Secret Unit, was considered the rightful successor by many Brothers because of his role in keeping morale high during the period of dissolution. He was a proponent of the militant and ideologically radical arm of the Muslim Brotherhood. Mustafa Mu'min, on the other hand, championed a more democratic distribution of power and was ideologically similar to the Wafd.³²

³⁰ Harris, 150.

³¹ Zollner, 17.

³² Ibid.

To preserve the unity of the organization, which was struggling to maintain its existence in the face of government repression, the election of the next general guide had to be approached with caution. Elections would not be held until 1951, when the end of martial law created a semblance of normalcy that permitted the Consultative Assembly to meet. The leading figures in the movement, however, were still associated with the ignominy of violence and internal dissension. As a result, Hasan Isma‘il al-Hudaybi, an esteemed judge and a relatively unknown Brother, was chosen because of his ties to the royal regime, relative anonymity, and respectability.³³

Choosing a compromise candidate maintained the appearance of unity within the Brotherhood. Al-Ashmawi would later state that “it was necessary that the names of the terrorists, which had been made by the press the subject of stories of fear and terror, should disappear for a while.”³⁴ Al-Hudaybi’s nomination signified support within the society for re-legalization and cooperation with the government, as well as a move away from violence. One of his first moves as general guide was to dissolve the Special Apparatus, which he abhorred for its secrecy, legacy of violence, and destruction between 1946-49.³⁵ When told that the Special Apparatus was necessary to maintain the security of the organization and its principles, he responded that “there is no secrecy in the service of God. There is no secrecy in the Message and no terrorism in religion.”³⁶ His insistence on nonviolence at a time when the government was

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Mitchell, 85.

³⁵ Zollner, 23.

³⁶ Mitchell, 88.

threatening their destruction would anger many Brothers at the time, but would eventually be adopted and accepted by the majority of the movement.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BROTHERS AND THE FREE OFFICERS: 1952-1970

The violence that erupted in the years following WWII is considered to be a contributing factor in the revolution of 1952. Mitchell claims that the violence was the “beginning of the final phase” of the collapse of parliamentary life and the rule of law in Egypt.³⁷ It is widely believed that the Muslim Brotherhood played a significant role in the revolution. The exact role is unknown because the government made every attempt to deny the relation when the organization was eventually outlawed by Nasser. Several memoirs from leading figures on the Revolutionary Command Council describe a close relationship with the Special Apparatus and al-Banna. Those memoirs also show that Anwar al-Sadat, Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser, and Muhammad Naguib, prominent leaders of the Free Officers, were personally acquainted with al-Banna. Some authors even argue that Sadat, Nasser, and Naguib were actually members of the organization, which would imply that the Muslim Brotherhood actually instigated the whole revolution.³⁸ Even if the Muslim Brothers were not instigators of the coup, many Brothers and Free Officers fought together in the war for Palestinian liberation and shared a mutual respect for one another. Salah Shadi, al-Ashmawi, and ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sanadi were three Brotherhood leaders who directly participated in the revolution.

³⁷ Ibid., 59.

³⁸ Zollner, 26.

Despite controversy over the extent of the Brotherhood's role in the revolution, the fact that they provided support is undeniable. Some of the responsibilities designated to the Brotherhood before the coup, according to Richard Mitchell, included protecting foreigners, foreign establishments, and minorities in the event that certain groups sought to take advantage of the revolutionary fervor. They were to provide intelligence on possible enemies and, in the event of failed popular support, Brothers would rally the people behind the Free Officers. In the event that fighting broke out, the Brotherhood would join in and help maintain security and order or, in the case of failure, help secure the safe passage of escaping Free Officers. This was to be accomplished through the use of the Muslim Brotherhood's 'civil army.'³⁹ Although the quick success of the coup rendered many of the society's responsibilities unnecessary, the Brotherhood's role was still significant. One account states that "without the enthusiastic support of the Moslem Brotherhood, Mohammad Naguib's movement might already have met the fate of the half dozen Egyptian governments that preceded it in the year 1952. The Brotherhood was a full participant in Naguib's coup last summer and much of his success since then can be attributed to . . . their support."⁴⁰ Whatever the role of the Brotherhood in the revolution, their widespread influence and enormous support base would ensure continued relations between the two, at least for the first year.

Relations between the new government and the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood were good at first. Five days after the revolution, al-Hudaybi met with Naguib and a general letter was circulated to members to show support for the movement. Even though political parties were banned in 1953, the Muslim Brotherhood was permitted to continue operating as an organization.

³⁹ Mitchell, 102.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 101.

Early on, however, the new regime began to recognize the society as a potential threat. In one account recorded in the *Mideast Mirror*, Naguib's tour of Egypt was marked by the presence of Brotherhood supporters:

There was. . . evidence everywhere of the activity of the Moslem Brotherhood. The chanting calls for General Naguib and the army were frequently interspersed with purely religious chants from organized groups of the Brotherhood and in some places there were pictures of the murdered Brotherhood leader Hasan al-Banna and cries in support of him.⁴¹

The two had irreconcilable differences that, while tolerable at first, would eventually create a wedge between them.

The Muslim Brotherhood "saw in the officers an instrument to realize their vision of an Islamic state, whereas the [new government] wanted to turn the Brothers into the grassroots they lacked."⁴² When offered positions within the government, the Brotherhood turned them down because they feared the loss of popular support and the inevitability of having to put their name on legislation that was against their ideology. Eventually, relations soured and the Muslim Brothers joined forces with other opposition movements to demand a return to civilian rule. The attempted assassination of Nasser in October 1954 by a young Brother gave the regime the opportunity to move against the Brotherhood, imprisoning and torturing tens of thousands of members before putting them on trial.⁴³ Among those arrested were al-Hudaybi, who received a

⁴¹ Harris, 213.

⁴² Soage, *The Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, 41.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 41.

life sentence, and Sayyid Qutb, whose writings would inspire the creation of violent offshoot groups.⁴⁴

Sayyid Qutb and Hasan Isma‘il al-Hudaybi

Sayyid Qutb is worth mentioning because of the enormous influence he had on Islamist groups in the region, including a portion of the Brotherhood. He is often associated by the West with violent Islamists and many Western scholars question how much his rhetoric contributes to Brotherhood ideology today.⁴⁵ Qutb was a leading figure in the society throughout the 1940s and 50s and was even offered a leadership position in the Liberation Rally, Nasser’s first attempt at creating a single party system.⁴⁶ He was arrested in the purge that resulted from the attempted assassination of Nasser in 1954 and spent almost the rest of his life in prison. While in prison, his ideology first turned towards extremism and he produced many of the works he is most known for today. In 1966, he was executed after being convicted of leading a terrorist organization, making him a martyr in the eyes of his followers.

His book *Ma‘lim fi al-Tariq* (Milestones) is considered a theological guidebook for radical Islamist groups. Qutb emphasizes the Muslim’s obligation to counteract all non-Islamic influences and establish Allah’s absolute authority on earth.⁴⁷ His ideology boils down to two concepts: *Jahiliyya* (ignorance) and *Jihad* (struggle). In terms of *jahiliyya*, all governments that

⁴⁴ Kristen Stilt, “Islam is the Solution?: Constitutional Visions of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,” *Texas International Law Journal* 46, issue 1 (Fall 2010): 77, <http://web.ebscohost.com> (accessed August 2011).

⁴⁵ Zollner, 50.

⁴⁶ Soage, *The Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, 41.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

do not abide by *shari'a* law are *jahili*. Qutb wrote, “There is no intermediate state half-Islam and half-*jahiliyya* that Islam can accept. . . . Either God’s government or *jahiliyya* government. Either God’s *Shari'a* or human caprice.”⁴⁸ To oppose *jahili* forces, which will resist losing their own power and authority, *jihad* is necessary to establish Allah’s power on earth. Qutb wrote:

Anyone who understands this particular character of the *din* will also understand the purpose of *jihad bil saif* (striving by the sword), which is to clear the way for freedom to strive through preaching in support of the Islamic movement.⁴⁹

His writings avoid discussing the formal institutions that would create an ideal Islamic state because he believed that, when the time came to create one, true believers would instinctively understand divine will and know what was necessary. His writings, however, clearly indicate that the Islamic state would have the characteristics of a totalitarian regime, including a strong leader (*qiyada*) as a source of ultimate authority and a rigid interpretation of *shari'a* that is both restrictive and fixed.⁵⁰

Qutb’s influence was opposed primarily by al-Hudaybi. His well-known book, *Du'at la Qudat* (Preachers not Judges), outlines his interpretation of Islam and how it applies to the concept of an Islamic state. While Qutb considered all societies *jahiliyya*, al-Hudaybi considered them in a state of *juhl*, a term derived from the same stem but indicating a state of ignorance that can be remedied by preaching, not violent opposition.⁵¹ Al-Hudaybi takes a clear stance in favor of a minimal definition of principles and requirements for belief. For example, verbal profession,

⁴⁸ Soage, *The Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, 42.

⁴⁹ Zollner, 61.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 62.

in the form of the *shahada*, and inner convictions are the only requirements of belief; and those cannot be judged by anyone but God. This eliminates the connection between faith and action which is “close to the radical assumption that activism is part of the category of *‘ibadat* (religious observances).”⁵² Most importantly, he discusses his view of an Islamist state under *shari’a*. He uses “well-established juridical opinions to refute the radical attitude of other Muslim Brothers.”⁵³ He takes a negative approach to the topic, choosing to refute the radical arguments of Islamist scholars that consider political action and violent opposition inescapable. He promoted peaceful, nonviolent resistance as the solution to creating an Islamist state. Although al-Hudaybi has always been tainted by his association with the period of near defeat for the society, his ideology provided the foundation of nonviolent opposition that dominates Brotherhood ideology today.

Egypt Under Nasser

The repression of the Brotherhood during Nasser’s persecution did not decimate the society as it had intended. It is estimated that membership levels stood at around 250,000 and 300,000 during the height of Nasserist oppression.⁵⁴ Nasser’s rise to the presidency in 1956 after ousting Naguib did, however, lead to drastic changes within Egyptian society. He nationalized the economy, placing control in the hands of the state. Most notably, he nationalized the Suez Canal. His expansion of the state extended to free education at all levels and public sector jobs for all university graduates. The public sector would account for 35% of the gross domestic

⁵² Zollner, 78.

⁵³ Ibid., 108.

⁵⁴ Soage, *The Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, 41.

product (GDP) during his rule.⁵⁵ He banned political parties and created a number of organizations or national rallies, such as the Liberation Rally (1953), the National Union (1956), and the Arab Socialist Union (1961). These were intended to maintain a monopoly on legitimate political activity.⁵⁶

Nasser's foreign policy was as aggressive as his domestic agenda. His policy of nonalignment in Cold War politics and his aggression towards Israel made him popular within Egypt and in other Arab nations. It also created many conflicts. The nationalization of the Suez Canal sparked international conflict with Britain, France, and Israel in 1956. Although Egypt was defeated militarily, Nasser's status as an Arab leader grew and British and French dominance in the region diminished.⁵⁷ Egypt also went to war with Israel in 1967 after closing the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Known as the Six Day War, Israel preemptively struck on June 5, destroying Egypt's airfields within three hours, and by June 8, Egypt had agreed to a cease-fire.⁵⁸ The war was devastating for Egypt, who lost the entire Sinai Peninsula and was facing grave economic, political, and social conditions. The economy had stagnated, which meant that fewer jobs were available for university graduates. It also resulted in the belief that Egypt's defeat was "God's punishment" for the regime's deviation from religion and its suppression of Islamists.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Lisa Blaydes, *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 29.

⁵⁶ Roger Owen, *State, Power, and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 134.

⁵⁷ Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010), 250.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁵⁹ Soage, *The Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, 43.

In this political atmosphere, the Brotherhood was able to reemerge on the Egyptian political scene with renewed vigor and popular support.

CHAPTER THREE

REEMERGENCE UNDER SADAT AND MUBARAK: 1970-2010

The succession of Anwar Sadat to the presidency in 1970 ushered in a period of political and religious opening. The new president rejected the socialist economy championed by Nasser, as well as his foreign policy initiatives. In particular, he improved relations with the U.S. and Israel, which had suffered greatly under Nasser. Sadat actively sought closer relations with the U.S. by dismissing Soviet military advisors and accepting foreign aid in exchange for a peace treaty with Israel. The Camp David Accords, signed on September 17, 1978, was the first peace accord signed by Israel and one of its Arab neighbors. It resulted in Egypt's recognition of Israel's right to exist and a cessation of hostilities between the two countries. In return, Israel returned the Sinai, which had been lost in Six Day War, and agreed to future negotiations regarding the rights of the Palestinian people. Further efforts to realign with the West led Sadat to undertake limited democratic opening and institute a policy of *infitah* (economic liberalization) in 1974. He embraced religion in an effort to undermine Nasserist and leftist opposition forces and as a means of obtaining legitimacy. He released many Brothers held as political prisoners and allowed opposition parties to become semi-participants in national politics. This period of liberalization allowed the Brothers to reestablish themselves as political actors.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Stilt, 77.

Umar al-Tilmisani, a lawyer by training and general guide from 1973 to 1986, was vital in bringing about change in the ideology of the Brotherhood. He advocated the end of violence as a means of opposition.⁶¹ Al-Tilmisani explained:

We are indifferent to the person of our ruler, for what matters most to us is the type of government, its form and constitution. If what it means by *haraka* (the movement) is to confront the regime by force and violence, then we believe that this is a futile use of the people's strength which benefits no one but the enemies of this country.⁶²

He believed that until *shari'a* was applied to the state, conflict between the ruling regime and the Muslim Brotherhood would be unavoidable. Causing physical destruction and perpetuating violence "is the business only of those who seek power for its own sake," rather than God's will.⁶³ As a result, "the burning of means of transport, the looting of shops, and the pillaging of public establishments" achieves nothing except injury to the Egyptian people.⁶⁴ He placed great emphasis on the need for legality and official recognition by the regime. He explained that the regime denies the Brotherhood "legal status," and despite continued calls "for the restoration of our rights," the society has "receive[d] no answer."⁶⁵ The goals of the Brotherhood under al-Tilmisani were to reestablish and structurally rebuild itself after the dissolution and repression of the past decades.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Barry Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism in Egyptian Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 29.

⁶² Kepel, 125.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 31.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

The hope of regaining legal status died when the period of cooperation with Sadat ended. Sadat halted his move towards a more democratic system when he faced heightened opposition to many of his policies. The Muslim Brotherhood protested Sadat's state visit to Israel in 1977 and criticized his peace initiatives at the Camp David Accords. The Muslim Brotherhood had long harbored anti-Israeli sentiment because of Israel's treatment of fellow Palestinian Muslims and the history of war between the two nations. Sadat's peace overtures also alienated ordinary Egyptians, who viewed the Accords as treason, and galvanized radical Islamists to "overthrow the *kafir* (apostate) regime."⁶⁷ According to Ibrahim, opposition also turned towards Sadat's liberal economic policy, limited democratization, and cooperation with the U.S.⁶⁸ In 1979, the regime cracked down on both Islamists and secular opposition. The Brotherhood's openly hostile position towards Egypt's treaty with Israel culminated in mass arrests of Brothers, including al-Tilmisani. Sadat was eventually assassinated on October 6, 1981, by a disgruntled member of Islamic Jihad (*al-Jihad*), a radical offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood.⁶⁹

Political Renewal

Hosni Mubarak, like Sadat, initially tried to establish good relations with the Brotherhood when he rose to the presidency. The 1970s revealed divisions within the Islamist movement; organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood adopted a reformist view while others, such as

⁶⁷ Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 114.

⁶⁸ Saad Eddin Ibrahim. "An Islamic Alternative in Egypt: The Muslim Brotherhood and Sadat." *Arab Studies New York, N.Y.* 4 (1982): 36.

⁶⁹ Stilt, 77.

Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Group (*al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya*) became militant.⁷⁰ Mubarak viewed radical Islamists as the greatest threat to Egypt and hoped that he could negate their influence by mobilizing moderate groups like the Muslim Brothers. Within the first year, he released hundreds of Brothers from prison. He also initiated regular, albeit flawed, multi-party elections and allowed a certain degree of freedom of the press.⁷¹ This brief period of liberalization was marred by the continued existence of the 'state of emergency' law, which made it legal for the regime to detain prisoners without trial, prohibit demonstrations, and enact laws through presidential decree.⁷²

The Muslim Brotherhood made massive strides during this second liberalization period towards greater participation in the formal political realm. Al-Tilmisani's renunciation of violence pushed the Brotherhood into the realm of politics in a new and more significant way. He transformed the society into a civil organization that provided social services, which gained the support of non-Islamists. Under his leadership, the Brotherhood gained control of student unions, teachers clubs, and labor unions. Elections for these organizations were among the freest allowed in Egypt at the time and the Brotherhood's victory shocked many liberal and secular circles.⁷³ These professional unions were important because they provided new graduates with access to the saturated job market, as well as loans, subsidies, and health insurance. The Doctor's Union came under Brotherhood control in 1984, the Pharmacist's Union in 1985, the Engineer's Union

⁷⁰ Wickham, 114.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Daniel Brownlee, "The Trap of Liberalized Autocracy," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 4 (October 2002): 6-7, <http://0-muse.jhu.edu> (accessed August 2011).

⁷³ Mark Tessler and Laurie Brand, "Democracy and Islam in Arab Politics," *Institute for the Study of Diplomacy* (1995): 9.

in 1986, and the Lawyers' Association in 1992.⁷⁴ These important organizations, whose boards were soon dominated by Brothers, would provide the Muslim Brotherhood with a legitimate platform to participate in the political life of the country.

Al-Tilmisani's influence also inaugurated the society's gradual transition into mainstream national politics through the formation of political alliances. The society was still forbidden from participating legally in formal political contests, but forming alliances with legal parties circumvented this restriction. First, in 1984, the Muslim Brothers joined forces with their former rivals, the secular Wafd Party, where they won 15% of the vote with eight seats solely belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood. Although opposition to this alliance rose within the ranks of the society on ideological grounds, al-Tilmisani defended his choice by claiming that "the Wafd is a legal conduit and the Brotherhood has a popular base, so what is wrong with them coordinating in this area to bring about good?"⁷⁵ In 1987, an Islamic Alliance was reached with the Socialist Labor Party and the Liberal Party under the slogan *al-Islam huwa al-hall* (Islam is the Solution).⁷⁶ Their platform stressed accommodation and promised gradual implementation of *shari'a*. The Islamic Alliance succeeded in gaining 17% of the vote with 36 seats belonging to the Brotherhood.⁷⁷

These early successes in national elections did not, at first, prompt the government to respond with force. The U.S Agency of International Development inferred at the time:

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 31.

⁷⁶ Soage, *The Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, 45.

⁷⁷ Blaydes, 26.

The Mubarak government . . . clearly prefers to use the tactic of repression sparingly, and by regional standards, successfully limits its recourse to ‘the stick.’ Whether from calculation or conviction, the government is committed to a process of consultation with important social actors and of political reform. The government’s style, in marked contrast to that of its predecessors, has been one of consensus building.⁷⁸

The Mubarak government did not remain lenient for long, however, because of the Brotherhood’s increased ability to challenge the legitimacy of the regime. The Brotherhood openly clashed with the regime by boycotting the 1990 parliamentary election, undermining the facade of democracy Mubarak had constructed. The Gulf War and the Algerian Civil War added to his concern over the Muslim Brotherhood’s growing role in Egyptian society.

The attempted assassination of Mubarak in Sudan in 1995 led to accusations of the Brotherhood’s cooperation with radical Islamist groups, despite their condemnation of the attacks. Repressive measures were adopted and a fierce media campaign was launched to tarnish the Brotherhood’s reputation. Interestingly, the regime reversed its initial position and attempted to associate the Muslim Brotherhood with militant Islamist groups. This allowed further justification for the emergency law and the denial of party status, both of which prevented the “radical Islamists” from gaining state power. Legislation was passed which brought most professional syndicates under the authority of the state through government-appointed judicial committees. A total of 54 Brothers were sent to prison by military tribunal and thousands were arrested without charge.⁷⁹ The parliamentary election of 1995 was the most violent since

⁷⁸ Brownlee, 7.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Mubarak took office and resulted in the National Democratic Party (NDP) winning a 94% majority.⁸⁰

Internal Divisions: The New and Old Guard

Electoral politics of the 1980s were instrumental in transforming the Brotherhood from a conservative social organization into a progressive political force. Not all Brothers were interested in seeing the organization move in this direction. Internal rifts, which had their origins in the period after al-Banna's death and had been developing since Sadat's liberalization policies, divided the Brotherhood on the issue of greater participation in the political arena. The old guard retained al-Banna's opinion of pluralism and a conservative view on the rights of women and Coptic Christians. They focused on proselytizing, rather than politics. They shared a common identity due to shared experiences of persecution and imprisonment. The new guard, also referred to as the Generation of 1970, was made up of a younger generation of Brothers more in tune with modern society. They objected to the lack of democracy in the internal decision making process of the society and the isolation of the Brotherhood. They possessed modern views towards pluralism, women, and Copts.⁸¹

Some scholars, like Mona el-Ghobashy, considered this rift unimportant. Others, such as Sawsan al-Jayyar, go so far as to claim fundamental differences over the source of authority; the old guard based sole authority in *shari'a* while the new guard considered authority to rest with the *umma*, or community of believers.⁸² While al-Tilmisani's support of nonviolence and his

⁸⁰ Soage, *The Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, 48.

⁸¹ Philips, 7.

⁸² Soage, *The Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, 49.

support of rising new guards to leadership positions was opposed by members of the old guard, his guidance helped bridge the gap between the two groups.⁸³ After al-Tilmisani's death in 1986, the old guard was able to reestablish its primacy within the Brotherhood. The general guides that followed, Hamid Abu al-Nasr (1986-96), Mustafa Mash'hur (1996-2002), and Ma'mun al-Hudaybi (2002-2004), were members of the old guard and left the new guard feeling both deprived and displaced. The result was a divided organization that contained both liberal and conservative influences struggling to come to terms in a modern political environment.

These internal divisions became apparent in 1996 with the creation of a new offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. Abu al-Ila Madi, a member of the new guard, applied to register Hizb al-Wasat (the middle way) as a party without the permission of the general guide. Stacher writes that "the Wasat members' desire to participate formally in politics overrode support of *da'wa* of the Muslim Brotherhood. In this sense, they pragmatically chose to become Islamist politicians, rather than restrict their roles to that of activists in the Brotherhood."⁸⁴ The official explanation behind the Muslim Brotherhood's rejection of the party was that it was not the right time to form a political party. Scholars such as Ana Belen Soage believe that, in reality, the old guard factions within the organization feared losing members to a new party.⁸⁵

Hizb al-Wasat pursued a more moderate approach to politics than their conservative leaders. Using the example of legal Islamist parties in countries such as Turkey and Jordan, they

⁸³ Ibid., 43-44.

⁸⁴ J. A. Stacher, "Post-Islamist Rumbings in Egypt: The Emergence of the Wasat Party," *The Middle East Journal* (2002): 422.

⁸⁵ Soage, *The Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, 49.

promoted transparency, accountability, and legal status within the Egyptian political system.⁸⁶ Hizb al-Wasat applied for legal status on two occasions, once in 1996 and another in 1998, but was denied by the government both times on the grounds that it added nothing new to the political landscape. The party, however, was granted the status of a nonprofit organization. Since then, it has gained the support of many secular forces within the country, “who see them as representing a moderate and enlightened form of political Islam.”⁸⁷

Yusef al-Qaradawi and Wasatiyya

An important influence on the founders of Hizb al-Wasat was Shaykh Yusef al-Qaradawi, a popular Islamic theologian and ideologue of the Brotherhood. He was born in 1926 and belonged to the organization for several decades before leaving to pursue nonpartisan studies. The Muslim Brotherhood, however, still considers him a key thinker and his works are often required reading for members. He is known for his views on extremism, *wasatiyya* (middle way or moderation), and civil government. Extremism, he believes, is the failure of Muslim societies to adhere to Islam, leading youths to justify violence by misinterpreting the Qur’an. Al-Qaradawi stated:

Extremism reached its utmost limit when a single group deprives all people of the right to safety and protection, and instead sanctions their killing and the confiscation of their lives and property. This, of course, occurs when an extremist holds all people - except those in this group - to be *kuffar* (nonbeliever). This kind of extremism severs any bond between such a person and the rest of the Ummah.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Wickham, 219.

⁸⁷ Wickham, 219.

⁸⁸ Zollner, 63.

He was especially critical of Qutb and his teachings on belief and unbelief, which many scholars, such as Barbara Zollner, consider the distinction between moderates and radicals.

The concept of *wasatiyya* makes him an appealing ideologue for the Muslim Brothers and accounts for his popularity among the Egyptian people.⁸⁹ *Wasatiyya* was coined by al-Qaradawi as early as the 1990s. He summarizes it as “the balance between mind and the Revelation, matter and spirit, rights and duties, individualism and collectivism, inspiration and commitment, the Text and personal interpretation, the ideal and reality, the permanent and the transient, relying on the past and looking forward to the future.”⁹⁰ The influence that this concept had on young Brothers is evident in the name Hizb al-Wasat. His movement advocated “conservatism without rigidity and combines pragmatism with idealism.”⁹¹ The concept is the foundation of al-Qaradawi’s views on an Islamic state, which have been internalized by the Brotherhood.

The Brotherhood’s Success in the 21st Century

Though the Muslim Brotherhood was unable to make significant gains in parliamentary elections during the 1990s, the period of repression and de-liberalization came to an end at the turn of the century. In 2005, due to changes made to electoral laws, the presidential election would include multiple candidates. Unfortunately, the election in September 2005 contained many irregularities and a low voter turnout. Mubarak would win the contest for president with

⁸⁹ Ana Belen Soage, *Yusef Al-Qaradawi: The Muslim Brothers’ Favorite Ideological Guide*. In *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Organization and Policies of a Global Islamist Movement*, ed. Barry Rubin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 19.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

90% of the vote. The parliamentary elections took place in November and December of that year. The first round of elections was relatively free and fair. However, violence, intimidation, and fraud carried out by the security forces characterized the second round as the regime's growing fear of Brotherhood successes materialized.⁹² In the end, the regime's underhanded tactics prevented the NDP from losing its majority in parliament. The Brotherhood was still able to win 20% of the seats in the lower house or 88 out of 444.⁹³ The Brotherhood's success at the polls in 2005 confirmed the society's political aspirations. As El-Ghobashy wrote, the Brotherhood "morphed from a highly secretive, hierarchal, antidemocratic organization led by anointed elders into a modern, multivocal political association steered by educated, savvy professionals not unlike activists of the same age in rival Egyptian political parties."⁹⁴

The Muslim Brotherhood's rise in popularity among the population is attributed to its political tactics, organizational capacity, and social welfare services. The Brotherhood evaded provoking the regime by tactically avoiding contingencies that would pose too much of a threat. For this reason, they only fielded candidates in regions where they had the best chance of winning. In 2005, they fielded 161 candidates, only challenging the NDP for one-third of the seats.⁹⁵ In addition, they constructed strategic plans to account for the imprisonment of leaders or candidates. In terms of organization, the society was structured with a strict chain of command

⁹² Blaydes, 150.

⁹³ Tarek Masoud, "Are They Democrats? Does it Matter?" *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008): 23.

⁹⁴ Blaydes, 150.

⁹⁵ Antar, Noha, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Success in the Legislative Elections in Egypt 2005: Reasons and Implications," *Euromesco* (2006): 13, <http://www.euromesco.net> (accessed June 2011).

that ran from the families at the bottom to the general guide at the top.⁹⁶ They operated a clean, highly efficient campaign based on the work of volunteers and local coordinators. Deputy general guide Mohammad Habib said that “rather than plastering districts with religious posters and slogans, Brotherhood candidates will establish direct contact with voters through visiting their homes and canvassing with families one at a time.”⁹⁷ The Brotherhood is also well funded by wealthy donors abroad and at home, as well as through membership fees.⁹⁸

Finally, the success of the Muslim Brotherhood can be found in its support at the grassroots level, because of its emphasis on welfare services and its process of ‘Islamization from below.’ They offer social services to a large portion of the population that the national or provincial governments are unable or unwilling to provide. These services generate support from non-Islamists, as well as Islamists. The Muslim Brotherhood provides education, healthcare, and employment through a wide network of social and charitable NGO’s, that benefitted different segments of society, including the rural sector. It is estimated that the Muslim Brotherhood controls 20% of active NGO’s in Egypt.⁹⁹ The adoption of ‘Islamization from below’ advocates Islam as a sources of social and national progress. Lack of participation and freedom of expression in the political system before the revolution has led to the emergence of a new form of religious expression, which benefits the Muslim Brotherhood, who has been given credit for the “Islamic renaissance.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Mitchell, 165.

⁹⁷ Blaydes, 159.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Antar, 12.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE COMPATIBILITY OF ISLAMIC LAW AND DEMOCRACY

The period of tolerance permitted by both Sadat and Mubarak in the early years of their regimes allowed the Brotherhood to undergo a crucial transition in ideology and political views. This transition has been the subject of much scholarship in recent years. Differing opinions have surfaced about whether or not the transition to democracy is genuine or if the Muslim Brotherhood are only using democracy to achieve their own end. Rachel Ehrenfeld, the director of the New York based American Center for Democracy, writes in “The Muslim Brotherhood Evolution” that the Brotherhood “uses Western democratic rules to gain inroads” and that their “made-up benevolent public image” is a front obscuring its real intentions.¹⁰¹ She makes a further comparison that “the Brotherhood’s successful campaign to deceive the West seems to incorporate time-tested techniques used by some of the world’s most successful totalitarian regimes.”¹⁰² Kristen Stilt, however, focuses on the Brotherhood’s platform for constitutional change and the probability of Islam being defined and enforced by state institutions. If implemented, the Brotherhood’s platform “differs little from a political party in the United States that favors a particular interpretation of a provision of the U.S. Constitution and advances it through all appropriate possible mechanisms.”¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Rachel Ehrenfeld, “The Muslim Brotherhood Evolution,” *American Foreign Policy Interests* 33, issue 2 (Mar/Apr 2011): 71, <http://0-ehis.ebscohost.com> (accessed August 2011).

¹⁰² Ehrenfeld, 80.

¹⁰³ Stilt, 104.

Saad Eddin Ibrahim, the founder and chairman of the Ibn Khaldun Centre for Development Studies and author of “Toward Muslim Democracies,” holds that “to enlist Islamists under the flag of democracy” is a crucial step towards making Egypt a democratic state.¹⁰⁴ The Muslim Brotherhood’s participation in the political system through legitimate democratic means “further ties the Islamists to the system of electoral competition,” which he believes will be beneficial in promoting the future of democracy in Egypt.¹⁰⁵ He goes further to suggest that “the Koran and other Muslim religious texts contain nothing that bars democracy or liberty,” and that the concept of *shura*, or consultation, is the same thing as competitive elections.¹⁰⁶

Yusef al-Qaradawi holds that the idea of an Islamic state is compatible with a democracy because the model established by Muhammad and his successors provides little guidance in this modern age. His conception of an Islamic state in Egypt would be civil rather than religious. The leader would be constrained by elections, consultation of the *umma*, and the *shari’a*. His basis for a civil state stems from the belief that Islam is a comprehensive system, a concept that al-Banna championed during his life. In order for Islam to be fully comprehensive, it must include political institutions, law, and economics. He endorsed participation in a multiparty system:

I am aware that the martyred Hasan al-Banna deplored partisan life and the establishment of parties in Islam due to what he witnessed in his time of parties that divided the *umma* in confronting the enemy. They were parties that revolved around individuals instead of clear goals and platforms. It is all right if our interpretation differs from that of our Imam, may God have compassion on him, for he did not disallow those who came after him to have their own interpretations,

¹⁰⁴ Ibrahim, “Toward Muslim Democracies,” 10.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 12.

especially if circumstances change and positions and ideas evolve. Perhaps if he lived till today he would see what we see. Fatwas change with changing times, places, and conditions, especially in ever-changing political affairs. Those who knew Hasan al-Banna know that he was not rigid but developed his ideas and policies according to the evidence available to him.¹⁰⁷

He focuses on Islamic constitutionalism as the formula for enacting a civil state based on *shari'a* law.¹⁰⁸

In “Institutions Make the Difference,” Laith Kubba, a director for the Middle East and North Africa at the National Endowment for Democracy, agrees that Islamist groups that come to power through democratic means will uphold democracy. However, it will only be true if they come to power through a slow process of institution building and moderation that will establish rules to safeguard democracy. He writes that “Islamist groups will be at their most radicalized and dangerous at times of social upheaval in states that suffer from the terrible combination of weak institutions and no limit on power.”¹⁰⁹ In this article, he is referring to the great fear held in the West that the Muslim Brotherhood will create a theocracy similar to Iran if revolution is their means to power. He does stipulate that when “faced with the sustained challenge of having to operate within a robustly democratic process (such as Egypt now lacks), the Brotherhood with either modify its views or give way to a new generation of moderate Islamic groups.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Mona El-Ghobashy, “The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 3 (August 2005): 383-4.

¹⁰⁸ Blaydes, 184.

¹⁰⁹ Laith Kubba, “Institutions Make a Difference,” *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (July 2008): 42, Project Muse (accessed August 2011).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 41

Tarek Masoud argues in “Are They Democrats? Does it Matter?” that the Brotherhood is not poised to take over the government as soon as the opportunity arises because its success is only due to social projects and lacks any real competition from liberal parties. Like Kubba, Masoud believes that strong institutions are the safeguards of democracy and that the strengthening of liberal secular parties is crucial for counteracting the presence of Islamist ideology. He writes that liberal parties and other institutions, such as the Army, will provide enough pressure to prevent the Muslim Brotherhood from subverting democracy, whether or not “liberal democracy resides in their hearts.”¹¹¹

Scholars, such as Eric Trager and Ira Weiner, have a less optimistic view of Islamist intentions in Egypt. Trager and Weiner state that the Muslim Brotherhood should not be permitted to gain strength because “despite the Brothers’ insistence that their goals are ‘moderate,’ they seem to define this word differently than how one would in the West.”¹¹² Moderate to Islamists, he holds, is only a renunciation of terrorism and the promise not to work with jihadists.¹¹³ Barbara Zollner writes about moderation and the origins of the ideology of nonviolence in her assessment of Hasan al-Hudaybi. She demonstrates how al-Hudaybi’s ideology paved the way for advocates of nonviolence, such as Umar al-Tilmisani, Hamid Abu al-Nasr, and Mustafa Mashhur. Al-Hudaybi’s path “is now followed by today’s Muslim Brotherhood, which endeavors to be recognized as a political party and which influences political decision making by infiltrating the political participatory structure.”¹¹⁴ Ana Belen Soage

¹¹¹ Masoud, 23.

¹¹² Eric Trager, “Grim Prospects for Liberal Egypt,” *Foreign Relations* (2004): 8.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Zollner, 4.

discusses the influence of Yusef al-Qaradawi on the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood today. Al-Qaradawi advocated an ideology that was traditional but also compatible with the modern political environment. *Wasatiyya*, Soage believes, has been a major influence on the Brotherhood's shift towards democratic participation in the political system.

The transformation of ideology in the direction of democracy, pluralism, and nonviolence is important to note when studying the prospect of democratic change in Egypt today. There is general agreement that the adoption of democratic ideals will positively contribute to the future of democracy in Egypt because it shows a desire to work within the confines of the constitution. The transformation of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1980's is a topic of considerable interest to many scholars who study the growth of Islamist movements in Egypt. This transition has also led to increased interest in the results of elections in which the Muslim Brotherhood has participated. Some scholars, such as Tarek Masoud, believe that Western fears over the growing popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood are unfounded. In 2005, he wrote, the Muslim Brotherhood "garnered only about a third of all ballots cast, amid voter turnout of less than 25 percent."¹¹⁵ According to Masoud, the religious ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood ensures that it will only be supported by a minority of the population. If a higher percentage of Egyptians had turned out to vote, the results would have been different. Shadi Hamid states that Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, are the only opposition groups capable of winning free and fair elections against the ruling regime. He writes, however, that the Muslim Brotherhood does not try to win elections because they value "self-preservation over political contestation."¹¹⁶ In 2005, for example, the

¹¹⁵ Masoud, 23.

¹¹⁶ Shadi Hamid, "Arab Islamist Parties: Losing on Purpose?" *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 1 (January 2011): 73, Project Muse (accessed August 2011).

Muslim Brotherhood only contested 36.3% of the seats (161 out of 444) to prevent Mubarak's regime from retaliating in order to maintain a majority in parliament.¹¹⁷ This same idea is expressed by Lisa Blaydes in *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt*. Elections are "an opportunity for the organization to establish itself as the most viable opposition group in the country without posing a direct challenge to the short-term existence of the regime."¹¹⁸

The Constitutional Vision of the Muslim Brotherhood

A majority of the scholars who have explored this subject have been inclined to view the Muslim Brotherhoods' intentions in Egyptian politics as genuine and feasible. Based on documents released by the Brotherhood and the testimony of its leadership, it is clear that the organization has transformed in the decades since its creation into a political entity intent on participating in the constitutional system. Muhammad Ma'mun al-Hudaybi, a Brotherhood spokesman and later the general guide, wrote that "in Egypt there is a certain degree of democracy; we guard and hold on to it. We work to confirm and develop it until rights are complete. It is important to confirm the democratic pursuit in practice."¹¹⁹ In a statement released in 1991, the Muslim Brotherhood publicly declared its official support for democracy and its continued integration into the Egyptian political system. The 10 point consensus was agreed upon by the Brotherhood and nine other opposition parties. It stated:

1. Commitment to the human rights and public liberties mentioned in *shari'a* and international law;

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 70.

¹¹⁸ Blaydes, 149.

¹¹⁹ Chris Harnisch and Quinn Mecham, "Democratic Ideology in Islamist Opposition? The Muslim Brotherhood's 'Civil State,'" *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 2 (March 2009): 191, <http://0-ehis.ebscohost.com> (accessed August 2011).

2. An end to the state of emergency and martial law;
3. A lifting of restrictions on the formation of political parties;
4. The independent supervision of elections by the judiciary;
5. The adoption of the parliamentary system in which the executive power will be vested in the cabinet, which is selected from the party with the majority;
6. Guarantee of the right of the People's Assembly to amend the budget; granting the Shura Council powers of oversight and legislation;
7. Choice of the president through direct election from a list of several candidates, with a limit of two terms;
8. The compatibility of all legislation passed with *shari'a*, with emphasis on the rights of non-Muslims to follow their own religious law in case of contradiction;
9. The independence of the judiciary;
10. Freedom of the press and media from government control and equal opportunities for all parties in the official media.¹²⁰

In “The Electoral Program of the Muslim Brotherhood for Shura Council in 2007,” released in June 2007, the idea that the “state’s regime should be republican, parliamentary, constitutional and democratic in accordance with the Islamic Sharia” is expanded.¹²¹

Prior to the overthrow of Mubarak and the plans to adopt a new constitution, the Muslim Brotherhood accepted the current constitution with only a few minor changes. The Draft Platform for the Political Party, also released in 2007, stated that Article Two of the constitution provides the link between the political and religious agendas of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹²² Article Two states that “Islam is the religion of the state and Arabic its official language.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 192.

¹²¹ “The Electoral Programme of the Muslim Brotherhood for Shura Council in 2007,” *Ikhwanweb*, June 14, 2007, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=822> (accessed October 3, 2011).

¹²² Stilt, 88.

Principles of Islamic law (*Shari'a*) are the principle source of legislation.”¹²³ In addition, the platform recognizes Egypt as a civil state and citizenship based on nationality. The 2007 Electoral Program stated:

Belief in equality among all Egyptian citizens as stipulated in the constitution and law and according to the principles of citizenship and equal opportunities regardless of faith, city or gender. Everyone is free to practice basic political and social freedom as long as he/she enjoys Egyptian citizenship.¹²⁴

The Muslim Brotherhood also respects the independence of the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC), which is granted the power to interpret the meaning of *shari'a* through a process of Islamic judicial review.

Coptic Christians and Women: Equal Partners?

The Electoral Program and Draft Platform reflect the ability of the Brotherhood to adapt the concept of *shari'a* to democratic institutions. However, a fear that predominates this discourse is that Egypt will morph into a theocracy governed by a small, elite group of religious scholars who possess a veto power over legislation. These fears have been exacerbated by the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the revolution and subsequent civil war in Algeria. Others fear the rights of women and Coptic Christian, who make up 10% of the population, will be diminished.

Accounts of the Brotherhood's position on Copts and women contain contradictions that hinder a comprehensive evaluation of their intentions. For example, Mohamad Habib said that Coptic Christians should have equal rights except the right to become head of state. On the other

¹²³ Egyptian State Information Service, “Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt 1971,” State Information Service, http://www.sis.gov.eg/en/LastPage.aspx?Category_ID=208 (November 11, 1971).

¹²⁴ “The Electoral Programme.”

hand, Al-Futuh claims that there is no objection to a Copt becoming President.¹²⁵ The Electoral Program officially maintains that Copts will share the same rights as their Muslim brethren, including the ability to hold public office and the “freedom of faith and worship.”¹²⁶ Despite the assurance, violence against Copts following the revolution has increased fears that an Islamist victory will lead to further hardships. Mina Samir, a 22-year-old university student and a Coptic Christian, believes that the Brotherhood will set Egypt back 500 years.¹²⁷ Statements released by the Brotherhood, however, condemn such violence and hold that political cooperation between the two groups is possible. Amr Darrag, the head of the Giza branch of the Freedom and Justice Party, said that “there are so many Christians who are convinced with our references and our way of approaching problems and they are willing to participate with us in our work towards, you know, having [a] better Egypt.”¹²⁸

The matter of women’s rights is just as controversial as the fate of the Coptic Christians. Many fear that an Islamist state will limit the rights of women to participate fully in the state in an equal capacity to men. The Muslim Brotherhood’s 2007 Electoral Program emphasized the importance of education, financial independence, and political participation for women. General guide Mahdi Akef stated that women could hold any position but the presidency and pursue

¹²⁵ Alaa Al-Din Arafat, *The Mubarak Leadership and Future of Democracy in Egypt* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 178.

¹²⁶ “The Electoral Programme.”

¹²⁷ “Coptics Fear Islamists Will Sweep Egypt Elections,” *NPR*, November 29, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/11/29/142883188/coptic-christians-fear-islamists-will-sweep-egyptian-election> (accessed December 8, 2011).

¹²⁸ “Coptics Fear.”

studies “that responds to their nature, role and needs.”¹²⁹ However, many question the sincerity of those claims. Dalia Ziada, a 29-year-old human rights activist and candidate for parliament, conveys these fears. When asked whether the success of the Muslim Brotherhood and the ultra-conservative Salafi party in the first round of the 2011 parliamentary elections worries her, she replied:

Of course, it worries me very much. How will they behave regarding women. . . . the Muslim Brotherhood, at the end of the day, is a political group and they keep changing according to what people want. They don't stick to religion as much as the Salafi.¹³⁰

Although she expresses worry over the potential of Islamist groups to impinge on women's rights, Ziada claims that the Brotherhood will uphold their promise because it is what the people want. Within the movement itself, women have been among the most important political activists in terms of volunteer work and a large portion of their electoral success comes from the female vote. The Muslim Brotherhood has a political incentive to maintain its promises regarding the rights of women.¹³¹ A question that remains unsolved is whether denying women and Copts the chance to become the head of state precludes compatibility with democracy.

The Implementation of Shari'a

Harnisch and Mecham discuss the two different approaches to democracy, one supported by the old guard and the other by the new. The new guard believes that the people, through the concept of *shura*, would elect the candidate who shares their interpretation of *shari'a* law,

¹²⁹ Soage, *The Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, 50.

¹³⁰ “Egyptian Activist Discusses Recent Elections,” *NPR*, December 2, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/12/02/143062999/activist-discusses-egyptian-elections> (accessed November 10, 2011).

¹³¹ Blaydes, 159.

therefore making the *shari'a* subject to the interpretation of legislators. The old guard wants to create a Council of Religious Scholars that would have the power to veto legislation deemed inconsistent with *shari'a*. The council would resemble the Council of Guardians in Iran, a distinctly undemocratic political body. Pro-democracy supporters within the organization and outside fear that this addition would render the executive and legislative branches useless.¹³² Mehdi Akef, general guide from 2004 to 2010, responded to these fears in an interview, stating that “I do not accept doubts of our intentions from anyone. Our intentions are known and open. We demand full democracy and peaceful transition of power.”¹³³ How exactly the Muslim Brotherhood will resolve the question of *shari'a* interpretation and implementation is unknown at this point because they have never been given the opportunity. The fall of Mubarak and subsequent plans to write a new Egyptian Constitution will provide the chance for the Muslim Brotherhood to put their rhetoric into action.

¹³² Harnisch, 196.

¹³³ Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE

POST-MUBARAK

The knowledge of the Muslim Brotherhood's historical beginnings and the shifts in its ideology are necessary to determine the success or failure of democracy in the newly liberalized post-Mubarak state of Egypt. The participation of the Muslim Brotherhood in the political sphere in the 1980s brought about a transition in ideology towards the acceptance and incorporation of democratic principles. Inclusion in politics has led to the emergence of a more moderate Brotherhood that is willing to blend religion and politics to participate successfully in the state. The question that arises now is what role the Brotherhood will have in the new state.

A recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in 2011 asked Egyptians what opinion they had of the Muslim Brotherhood. A majority of 75% claimed a very favorable or somewhat favorable opinion, while an additional 5% were uncertain.¹³⁴ Another survey conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes resulted in 56% of urban Egyptians from Cairo, Alexandria, Giza, and Subra supporting the Muslim Brotherhood's blend of Islamism and democracy in elections.¹³⁵ The same organization also

¹³⁴ "Islamic Extremists," *The Pew Research Center for People and the Press*, in *Polling The Nations*: April 25, 2011, <http://0-poll.orpub.com.helin.uri.edu/search.php?key=exportcart> (accessed November 15, 2011).

¹³⁵ "Islamic Extremists," *Program on International Policy Attitudes*, in *Polling The Nations*: June 3, 2009, <http://0-poll.orpub.com.helin.uri.edu/search.php?key=exportcart> (accessed November 15, 2011).

asked urban Egyptians if they believed the Muslim Brotherhood considers democracy the best type of political system. The result was that 69% agreed, with 6% unsure.¹³⁶

Fear that the Muslim Brotherhood will retract its previous position on democracy now that they are legitimate is still on the minds of many in the West, as well as many secular intellectuals in Egypt itself. Gigi Ibrahim, a blogger and participant in the youth movement to bring down Mubarak, expressed his skepticism when he said, “They have been created to scare us from democracy. And now that we have democracy, it will be interesting [to see] who they really are.”¹³⁷ A senior spokesman for the Brotherhood, Essam el-Errian, responded in an interview to the claim that the new Egyptian government would have to be purely secular or purely religious. He stated that “democracy is built on (unintelligible), which is universal, humanitarian. Human dignity, development, equality, freedom. All of these principles are the point of Islam. And so, Islam is compatible with democracy. Our democracy will be unique because it joined a morality, worship and also we can add to this democracy our Islamic spirit.”¹³⁸ To summarize, it will not follow the path of Iran’s theocracy or Turkey’s secular government.

Numerous claims from within the society itself that the Brotherhood will not try to take power and the testimony of experts on the subject look favorably on a peaceful transition to democracy. A recent interview for NPR with Steven Cooks, a senior fellow for Middle Eastern

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ “Muslim Brotherhood: Wild Card In Egypt Power Game,” *NPR*, February 15, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/02/15/133759039/muslim-brotherhood-wild-card-in-egypt-power-game> (accessed November 10, 2011).

¹³⁸ “Muslim Brotherhood Speaks Out On Egypt,” *NPR*, February 18, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/02/18/133870711/Muslim-Brotherhood-Speaks-Out-On-Egypt> (accessed November 10, 2011).

studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, sheds light on the current situation. When asked what a victory for the Muslim Brotherhood would mean for Egypt, Cook responded:

I don't think there's going to be an outright Muslim Brotherhood victory. But I think the Brotherhood is likely to do extraordinarily well in these elections, perhaps 30 to 35 percent of the seats in the People's Assembly. That is going to be more than any other single party and this People's Assembly will pick a committee of 100 to write Egypt's new constitution.¹³⁹

A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in April 2011 asked Egyptians which group they would most like to see lead the new democratic government. The Muslim Brotherhood achieved only 17% of the vote, behind the New Wafd Party (20%).¹⁴⁰ The key to Egypt's success as a democracy is not dependent on the Muslim Brotherhood, but on the presence of opposition parties. In this case, Masoud was correct when he called for the strengthening of liberal secular parties. Increased competitiveness in elections is crucial for avoiding single party rule. An active democracy will force the Brotherhood, and other parties, to continue participating in the legal political system.

Despite vagueness in the Brotherhood's political agenda and uncertainties over the equal status of minorities and women, the Brotherhood has adhered to a gradual transition to power both before and after the revolution. The foundation of the movement's political ideology, established in the 1980s, has ensured the strength and success of the progressive factions of the society over the conservatives. Ideologues, such as al-Banna, al-Hudaybi, al-Tilmisani, and al-

¹³⁹ "Egypt, 30 Years After Sadat's Death," *NPR*, October 6, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/10/06/141103841/egypt-30-years-after-anwar-sadats-death> (accessed November 10, 2011).

¹⁴⁰ "Egypt," *The Pew Research Center for People and the Press*, in *Polling The Nations: April 25, 2011*, <http://0-poll.orpub.com.helin.uri.edu/search.php?key=exportcart> (accessed November 15, 2011).

Qaradawi, have contributed to this transformation, turning the society away from violence and isolation and towards participation in the political system. Only time will tell what direction the Brotherhood will take in forming the new Egyptian state, but based on the movements' recent history in the political sphere, the outlook for democracy is hopeful.

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