

**Outlawed and Outspoken:  
The Muslim Brotherhood in Pursuit of Legal Existence and Intellectual Development in  
Egypt**

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15 December 2005

## Introduction

In the wake of the devastating earthquake that trembled the congested capital of Egypt and its neighboring cities in October of 1992, the Private Voluntary Organizations – dominated by Islamists – managed to considerably lead the relief efforts within hours, leaving the incumbent regime afflicted with its bureaucratic inefficiencies. The government's own limitations in providing the type of crucial operative services at time of mayhem is a mere example of its declining credibility among the masses. Moreover, its response to this public embarrassment was even more austere – passing a decree to ban any direct relief efforts by the PVOs therefore forcing all aid to materialize through the government only. But with governmental impediments still looming, the regime struggled to meet the needs of the victims in time which led to riots and posed as a mere reminder of the incessant exasperation that Egyptians have faced in their recent history. Hence, it became apparent that Mubarak's attempts to salvage his image in order to corroborate his grip on power had by and large alienated vital forces within Egypt's civil society.

The civil society has, therefore, been a crucial source through which oppositionists – predominantly the Muslim Brotherhood – derive the power of popular appeal. Being one of the largest and most influential oppositionist organization, the Muslim Brotherhood cuts across estranged social structures such as the modern working class, the urban poor, the young, and the new middle class, which form a support base. Some of the most prominent Brotherhood members themselves pertain to the new middle class and therefore network through *al-niqabat al-mihaniyyah* (Professional Associations). One example is Dr. Ahmad el-Malt, who was the former Deputy Supreme Guide to the Brotherhood and also President of the Doctors' syndicate prior to his death. As such despite their official ban in 1954 Brotherhood members have

managed to dominate a number of associations including the Bar Association, Engineers, Doctors, Pharmacists, Dentists, and Commerce syndicates.<sup>1</sup> The members are often young and educated citizens who advocate for “democracy, human rights, decent employment, and decent income” through peaceful means.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, through these Professional Associations, members gain the opportunity to engage in free and fair board elections modeling to the public a much needed change to the disparate discourse of parliamentary and presidential elections.

In light of Egypt’s history, participating in organizations outside the national party system has been a common route to quell disillusionment within the population. In fact, the Muslim Brotherhood itself was founded in the midst of national discrepancies, when in 1928 its founder – a layman educated at the Teachers’ Training college named Hasan al-Banna – created an outlet to express political dissent to the short-lived half-hearted liberal experiment with parliamentary democracy in 1924. During this experiment, the unreserved embrace of European values on top of ailments from foreign colonization ostensibly alienated “the population from the parliamentary regime and the politicians and intellectuals who claimed to speak for the people but ignored their economic grievances and insulted their Islamic sensibilities.”<sup>3</sup> Al-Banna’s vision was in some respect progressive in that it “sought to find a way for Muslims to take advantage of the technological advances of the twentieth century without feeling that they were compromising their commitment to Islamic values,” and meanwhile “*Shari’ah* [Islamic law] would be subject to interpretation and would hence be fully compatible with the needs of a modern society.”<sup>4</sup> His theory in preserving identity while in pursuit of modernity uprooted his organization and inspired much of the resistance against British colonialism, but the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibrahim, Saad Eddin. *Islam, Democracy, and Islam: Critical Essays*. (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2002), 166.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>3</sup> Cleveland, William L. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 198.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

Brotherhood had to eventually abandon its trait of violence in order to politically assert its presence following their official ban in 1954 for carrying out an alleged assassination attempt on Gamal ‘Abdel-Nasser.

Underlying themes of the Brotherhood had to, therefore, take on a “social movement” dimension which has managed to remain consistent in creed and broad in nature. For instance, the organization has constantly pushed for certain economic reforms such as “land redistribution, introduction of social welfare programs, and replacement of foreign capital by local investment,” establishing Islamic enterprises, and giving workers shareholding rights in their companies.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly enough, decades later, press reports from an interview with former Egyptian Prime Minister ‘Atif Sidqi in *al-Ahram* would determine that “the volume of Islamic venture capital held by some 180 institutions was between five to ten billion dollars in 1987.”<sup>6</sup> Islamic financial institutions included Islamic banks and investment companies in line with *Shari’ah*, in other words free of usury, and henceforth, creating models for a successful Islamic alternative that lifts some of the socioeconomic burdens placed on the population. This implies that albeit internal divisions that took place over the years, certain elements remained consistent to sustain the organization.

The Muslim Brotherhood has not only successfully materialized through its social programs and a consistent historical track, it also seeks to assert its presence through a popular appeal that the government has desperately failed to capture. However, the mounting sociopolitical grievances and economic strife are not the only ingredients that empower the “call” – *da‘wah* – of the Muslim Brotherhood. In recent years, the organization’s campaign for democratic reforms in elections places it on a political pedestal that legitimately challenges

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>6</sup> Ibrahim, 60.

President Mubarak's tyrannical tendencies. Particularly, a pedestal that indulges in the open-ended language of "equal representation" and "social justice." Therefore, despite the uproar of demands for democratic representation, it is important to discern the extent to which the Brotherhood has developed to accommodate for current democratic needs of the nation. In other words, with multifaceted problems that exist today in Egypt, what types of alternatives does the Muslim Brotherhood really offer?

In this respect, the Muslim Brotherhood's slogan, "Islam is the solution," has come to embody a relentless campaign that partakes in an incessant struggle for democratic reforms and "fair" representation in elections, but it is in fact the ambiguity and underlying assumptions behind this totalizing message that veils much of the organization's dogmatic character and stunted growth.

### **Manifesting in Exploitive Democracy**

The Muslim Brotherhood's endorsed representation under President Anwar Sadat in the mid-1970s as part of an effort to "de-Nasserize" Egypt and shift its ideological orientation, catapulted the organization's historical relationship with what has become today's rhetoric: the quest for "democracy." In essence, after Nasser's death, President Sadat freed the Muslim Brothers who were jailed by Nasser, and enforced a multiparty electoral system that dissolved the Arab Socialist Union insofar as to offset the lingering leftists. Using an Islamic rhetoric that had suffered under the wave of pan-Arabism was indeed an exploitive route for Sadat's attempts to consolidate power, but it was ultimately his new policies that manifested into the population's grave resentment towards the government.

One of the most substantial shifts Sadat undertook was the hasty restructure of the economy towards a capitalist market one. His program was among a string of others that are best outlined by the well-known sociologist and writer, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, into four main pillars: the Open Door Economic Policy (*Infitah*), democratization, alliance with the West and away from the Soviets, and finally conciliation with neighboring Israel.<sup>7</sup> By and large, Sadat failed to constructively deal with the mishaps of Nasser's socialist system that created a large underemployed and unemployed educated class. Moreover, the *Infitah* led to a massive labor migration of Egyptian labor to oil-rich Arab states, and a reappearance of the old bourgeoisie that had lost much of its wealth to nationalization and socialism under Nasser. The rise of this Egyptian bourgeoisie under Sadat pushed forth for larger Arab and foreign investments, better management, modern technology, and reducing the size of the public sector. Furthermore, their engagement in liberalization also networked through the political arena and they often joined either the ruling NDP while many of the older landed bourgeoisie joined the Wafd party.<sup>8</sup> The conspicuous relationship between the political and business elites due to Sadat's economic shifts alienated much of the working class that was at the time facing an unemployment rate that exceeded 15 percent, in addition to a middle to lower-middle class that had tripled in its size. Essentially, as far as the Muslim Brotherhood and segments of the population that suffered after the *Infitah* were concerned, Sadat had implemented his reforms only to the extent to which they served his interest, and the interests of his business partners and foreign allies.

In effect, Sadat's announcement to terminate subsidies of basic commodities on top of skyrocketing prices, declining incomes, and problems with transportation, food, clothing, and housing, further polarized afflicted citizens in which the economic reforms in their views failed

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 138-139.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 129.

to consider them. Ergo, Islamists sought a golden opportunity to attack the regime. For instance Omar al-Tilmasani, former editor of *al-Da'wa*, expressed that the *Infitah* was devoted to luxury items and was used for embezzlement rather than productive enterprises for the masses.<sup>9</sup> Many other groups shared the sentiment that corruption bred by certain powers in Egypt led to the rich and among them Sadat himself “spending conspicuously on luxurie” while the average Egyptian paid the price. As a result, Sadat’s biggest beneficiaries – at least politically – at one point became his most ferocious critics on both domestic and foreign policy issues, including their outright condemnation of the new relationship with the West, and any reconciliation with Israel. For the most part, the Brotherhood created a basis for opposition that even secularists and political parties with different ideologies conformed to. However, this basis was at its essence planted in a deficient pretense for democratic representation that was more eager to capitalize on the regime’s failures than offer substantial solutions. The growth of their political language came in their two most widely read publications, *al-Da'wa* and *al-Itisam*, when the Brothers fought for a freedom of expression on the basis of “a birthright stipulated by Islam...exercised and guarded by the community of believers” and not by a “grant bestowed by the ruler.”<sup>10</sup> When violence escalated between the government and the Islamists in Egypt, Sadat’s façade for civil rights and democracy further empowered the Brotherhood’s struggle and advanced them along a language that spoke of a democracy that was undeveloped and derailed within the country’s system.

### **The Economic Dimension**

After Sadat’s death on October 6, 1981 by militants from the group *al-Takfir wal Hijra*, newly elected Hosni Mubarak was ultimately taking over a poisoned legacy of misguided

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 41.

reforms and political tension. The repercussions of the Sadat era were indeed felt and lived out through the Brotherhood who managed to not only survive, but to also keep an upper-hand amidst an uncertain transitional period. Sadat's death ushered a critical time for Mubarak to stabilize the country which ultimately led to his autocratic doctrine – the “Emergency Laws” or *qanun at-tawari*’ – that would manage to go on for nearly a quarter century.

Political stabilization was not the only crucial aspect Mubarak had to take on. There was a dire need to appease a huge working and middle to lower classes that had suffered under the Open Door Economic Policy. Egypt was essentially stuck between the remnants of the socialist system and an under-developed capitalist market. But with private and foreign investments underway, a more powerful and autonomous private sector had already emerged along with the rise of the businesspeople and trade unions. The fate of the capitalist system was unstable, but Mubarak was too cautious and reluctant to further economic reforms that would intensify tensions among socio-political groups, or worse yet cause any further destabilization in the economy. His hesitancy ultimately immersed the country in larger debts that would rise from \$30 billion to \$48 billion – that is 150 percent of its GDP – between the time he took office and when he finally initiated his economic program in 1990.<sup>11</sup> In that year, he introduced the Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program with agreements through the International Monetary Funds (IMF) and the World Bank. However, by the time he actually implemented his policy in 1991, Mubarak's initial support had waned off. The magnitude of Egypt's economic crisis forced it to be classified as one of the world's poorest countries in order to qualify for soft loans from the International Development Association, an affiliate of the World Bank.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, the sharp decline in revenues from oil remittances at the close of

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 143.

his presidential term in 1986 accompanied by his futile slogan for *al-mugtama'a al-attahara* or the “purified society” to boost productivity and rid Egypt of the corruption that had mounted during Sadat’s rule, culminated in a politically devastating first term for Mubarak.

By his fifth term in office, almost 3.1 percent of the population would live under abject poverty standards, that is living on \$1 or less per day, while 43.9 percent lived within standard poverty which is internationally set at \$2 per day.<sup>13</sup> Despite slight improvement from 1990’s World Bank figures that had shown 4 percent of the population living below \$1 per day, there was still an indication of Mubarak’s failure in reviving small businesses in the countryside as well as poor neighborhoods.<sup>14</sup> In addition to poverty, official unemployment figures – distorted by the government’s definition of “unemployment” – show an increase from 9.9 percent in 2003-2004 to 10.6 percent in 2005 which do not even account for people who solely live through inheritance and savings but still seeking jobs as “unemployed.”<sup>15</sup> This is in contrast to the World Bank’s report of an unemployment rate that is as high as 30 percent with the majority unemployed being of an educated class. As such, problems like poverty and unemployment which directly afflict the population have lurked around over the years, but moreover, they have shaped certain political dynamics in Egypt.

In light of this, a sustainable overturn in Egypt’s political and social deterioration must offer practical solutions to the economic unrest in the country. However, the more repressive the regime gets, the stauncher the opposition, and the more it is likely for core issues to become

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<sup>13</sup> Ahmad El-Sayed El-Naggar. “Massaging the figures,” *Al-Ahram Weekly* 8-14 December 2005 [newspaper online]; available from <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/772/ec1.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 December 2005. Figures from the year 2000 are reported from a published report by the World Bank in 2005.

<sup>14</sup> The World Bank. “Millenium Development Goals: Egypt, Arab Rep. Country Profile,” *The World Bank IBRD & IDA: Working for a World Free of Poverty* [database on-line] (Washington: The World Bank Group, 2005, accessed 8 December 2005); available from <http://devdata.worldbank.org/idg/IDGProfile.asp?CCODE=EGY&CNAME=Egypt%2C+Arab+Rep.&SelectedCountry=EGY>; Intenet.

El-Naggar, “Massaging the figures.”

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

overshadowed. Nevertheless, for the Muslim Brotherhood, the economic failures provided an avenue for greater criticism of the regime, and by 1986 the political implication of such failure was a full-fledged backlash enjoined by the Brothers against Mubarak's National Democratic Party to challenge it at the heart of its legitimacy in Parliament.

### **Party Alliances and Tactics of Opposition**

Just as Mubarak saw the economy as the key to both political and social contentment in Egypt, as of 1986, the economic adversity had been a key factor in his own political decay. Frustration mounted to the point of issuing accusations of interference in the voting process of the 1984 parliamentary elections. Finally, "in November 1986, despite sharply divergent ideologies and political programs, these [opposition] parties united with the Muslim Brotherhood to support a program of democratic reforms aimed at breaking the electoral stranglehold of the NDP."<sup>16</sup> By March 1987, "an administrative appeals court upheld ten complaints filed by the *Tagammu'* and Socialist Labor Party (also known as SLP)."<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the opposition coalition held the Muslim Brotherhood in prominence because it carried a strong social base.

In light of this, the Brotherhood's goals for a political party had engaged it in strategic alliances in order to bypass its ban and gain representation in politics and parliament. And in spite of discrepancies in its alliance with the New Wafd Party in 1984, the Brotherhood's coalition tactics flourished in 1987, and it merely taught the organization to ally itself with less domineering parties. As such its coalition with *Hizb al-'Amal al-Ishtiraki* – Socialist Labor Party – in 1987 was effective enough to gain the most seats in the People's Assembly after the ruling National Democratic Party which held on to about 80 percent of the seats. The new

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<sup>16</sup> Post, Erika. "Egypt's Elections." *MERIP Middle East Report*. (1987): 18.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

*Tahaluf* – the Alliance – captured sixty seats of which thirty-eight went to the Muslim Brothers.”<sup>18</sup>

The 1987 sudden election was Mubarak’s attempt to circumvent political pressures that haunted his party as well as secure his position in the Presidential elections for a second term in office that were to take place in the same year. Most significantly, the constitutional case filed independently by a lawyer named Kamal Khalid “charged that by prohibiting independent candidates the law violated a constitutional provision guaranteeing the rights of individuals” was the most threatening to the legitimacy of the electoral process and most relevant to Muslim Brothers who often ran as independents.<sup>19</sup> Since the Supreme court found in favor of Khalid with a final decision that was to be issued weeks later, Mubarak had to act before his opposition coalition could amplify the political tension. In fact, the coalition had planned a rally on February 5<sup>th</sup> calling for the abrogation of the 1984, dissolving parliament, and holding new elections under reformed electoral laws. As a result, Mubarak caught the opposition off guard and announced on the day before the scheduled rally that he was “calling for a national referendum on disbanding the parliament and holding new elections...and issued amendments to the old electoral law” that issued one seat for an independent candidate in each voting district.<sup>20</sup> In actuality, this new reform allowed for a party-nominated candidate to contest independent seats insofar as the candidate earns 20 percent of the total vote.<sup>21</sup> This policy aimed to give an upper-hand to those with access to campaign financing and party prestige – a definite advantage for the NDP. Nevertheless, a party still needed to capture 8 percent of the national vote to gain seats in parliament leaving parties that win substantial local vote in individual

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

districts but not nationally significantly marginalized. The referendum managed to pass by 90 percent majority and 77 percent voter turnout, wherein Mubarak announced new elections in early April giving his opposition merely seven weeks to campaign.<sup>22</sup>

Mubarak's democratic reforms in elections for the People's Assembly were essentially to retain legitimacy and undermine the opposition coalition. However, Mubarak's partial democratization led him to make certain concessions to an opposition that was constantly eager to break his monopoly over power. In regards to the Muslim Brotherhood, Mubarak allowed it to maintain its national and regional offices, to issue public statements, and publish its own journals notwithstanding its ban.<sup>23</sup> The Brothers were further allowed to participate in elections as independents or under legal parties such as the Socialist Labor Party. The success of the alliance system as an agency for change entailed a much larger trend for vague appeals to end governmental corruption, implement "democracy," and promoting "Islamic welfare." Nevertheless, the momentum the Muslim Brotherhood picked up from alliances and electoral success further embellished the regime's authoritarianism and the opposition's sensational slogans to counter it. As the Alliance began to gain grounds, "the government rounded up Islamist radicals throughout the country, charging they were planning to use arms to disrupt the elections."<sup>24</sup> In response, SLP "claimed that 100 of the Alliance's headquarters were raided and 2000 cadre, including many poll watchers, were arrested."<sup>25</sup>

By 1987, it became apparent that Mubarak's abuse of emergency laws had sculpted his regime's despotic identity that ultimately produced a polarized political system. Therefore, democratic reforms that were pushed forth by the opposition and passed by Mubarak were

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 66.

<sup>24</sup> Post 21.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

problematic as such. They were half-hearted, deficient, and exploited under political tension. In this respect, it is imperative to inspect the influence of alliances on democratic reforms to convey something deeper than merely a rally for “democratic” needs. “The success of the Alliance is only one of a number of indicators of the growing undercurrent of Islamist sentiment in Egypt; another is the...victories of candidates from radical Islamist groups in university elections.”<sup>26</sup> But in coalition conduct, a vote for the *Tahaluf* (Alliance) was not necessarily a vote for an Islamic state or implementation of *Shari’ah* (Islamic Law) as much as it was a vote to de-legitimize Mubarak’s grip on power.

Alliances were not the only product of the 1987 elections. Loaded ambiguities further made their way into slogans such as the Muslim Brotherhood’s “Islam is the solution” campaign. Despite the slogan’s continuity and all-encompassing language which aims to address social, political, and economic adversities as a whole, it tells very little as to what the “solutions” are. Nevertheless, with a successful coalition such as the *Tahaluf*, generalities become an inherent implication. However, the Brotherhood as an outlawed organization has gained from two factors in terms of its relationship with the general masses. First, it works to establish grounds within certain afflicted segments of the population through its social programs or *gam’iyat khayriah*, orphanages, schools, and hospitals, and its participation in Private Voluntary Organizations under broad themes of “socioeconomic justice” amid a jaded economic structure. And second, it gains from the general political and popular in conjunction with the competing parties’ “ineptness.” For example, in the Bar Association’s (the Lawyer’s syndicate) elections on September 11, 1992, “The elections show the relative strength of the Muslim Brotherhood and the relative weakness of the opposition groups, which is mirrored in the country as a whole,” said Mustafa Kamil al Sayyid, a political science professor at Cairo

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 22.

University.<sup>27</sup> However, with less than a 10 percent voter turnout, and only 50,000 members who actually paid their dues only of which 12,000 cast ballot, syndicate elections show that the conservative Islamists affiliation of many of these unions is merely a reflection of the deteriorating conditions of a politically desolate majority and a frail opposition to the organization as opposed to a massive Islamization of Egypt.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, syndicate elections have been known to provide a discourse for free and fair voting – a right the government incessantly usurps.

Further, in an interview with the former Deputy Supreme Guide to the Muslim Brotherhood, Doctor Ahmad el-Malt, he explained the Brotherhood's presence in all official establishments, syndicates, and *al-gam'iyat al-khayriah* as vital in communicating with the “man in the street” or *ragul ash-shari'* which the “government bars [the Brothers] from engaging with.”<sup>29</sup> Here, el-Malt is referring to Associations Law 100 that came out on February 16, 1993, titled “the ‘Law Concerning the Insurance of Democracy within the Syndicates’...removing union elections from the authority of the syndicates themselves and placed them in the hands of the courts, which the state felt it could better control.”<sup>30</sup> It also “restricted solicitation of donations and the use of syndicate funds for outside projects such as the Cairo earthquake relief.”<sup>31</sup> It is evident that the government was aware of the low voter turnout in Private Association elections and how it had worked in the Islamists' favor. In effect, El-Malt went on to express that the “State works to stop [the Brothers] by any means from participating in any local or legal elections, because we are sure that if given the chance to enter

<sup>27</sup> Mattoon, Scott. “Islam by Profession.” *The Middle East* 3, no. 218 (1 December 1992): 16.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Abu Daood, al-Sayyid. *Al-Harakah al-Islamiyah: Ro'yah min al-Dakhil Huwarat Sarihah ma'a Rumuz as-Sahwah* (Cairo: Dar al-Nasr lil Teba'ah al-Islamiyah, 1998), 135. This interview was conducted with Dr. al-Malt two years prior to his death by Abu Daood in a collection of interviews with renowned Islamists.

<sup>30</sup> Abdo, Geneive. *No God But God: Egypt and the Triumph of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 99.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

such elections without any *tala'ub* (interference) that [the Brothers] would capture a sweeping victory.”<sup>32</sup>

But in spite of the outlawed organization’s success in becoming the main opposition to Mubarak, it has managed to deter from announcing an actual platform to the public. As such, the clarity in the Muslim Brotherhood’s agenda primarily lied in its battle to ascertain its legal representation through a broad campaign, a discourse of alliance systems, and reforming a defective democratic system to reach its goals. Nevertheless, whether it is due to internal division, external pressure, or to proliferate its broad support base, the 1987 elections have tracked the Brotherhood to the latest elections in 2005 where it continues to fuse shortsighted ambiguity with popular success and legitimacy. However, 2005 introduced a different dynamic to the successful coalition system.

### **Civilian Alliances**

“We simply have no choice but to reform,” the Muslim Brotherhood’s Deputy Supreme Guide Khairat El-Shater wrote in a commentary titled “No Need to be Afraid of Us” in the *Guardian* newspaper based in London in response to the Brotherhood’s bolstering success in the 2005 parliamentary election runoffs.<sup>33</sup> Shater went further to define the Brotherhood’s goal as to “end the monopoly of government by a single party and boost popular engagement in political activity.”<sup>34</sup> At only halfway through the second stage of the parliamentary election, the Brotherhood had already secured 24.6 percent of the 308 seats contested with a target to attain one fourth or 100 of the total 444 seats.<sup>35</sup> In doubling their number in seats of Parliament from the last election, the organization’s success since they launched their “Islam is the Solution”

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<sup>32</sup> Al-Daood, 135.

<sup>33</sup> Amira Howeid, “Who’s Afraid of the Brotherhood,” *Al-Ahram Weekly* 24-30 November 2005 [newspaper online]; available from <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/770/fr2.htm>; Internet; accessed 30 November 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

campaign certainly did not fizzle. But unlike the 1987 elections where alliances were in context of the party-system, nearly two decades later, coalitions would move beyond the framework of political parties and more along the lines of civilian activism.

In this regard, the *Kefayah* (Enough) movement rose to be a powerful voice of Egyptian civilians of different backgrounds and affiliations who have come to a consensus on certain issues that pose danger on Egypt's welfare.<sup>36</sup> According to *Kefayah's* Manifesto, political reform constitutes the "termination of the current monopoly of power at all levels, starting with the seat of the President of the Republic."<sup>37</sup> *Kefayah* further advocates to do so by breaking the hold of the ruling party on power and all its instruments; cessation of the Emergency Law; cessation of all laws which constraining public and individual freedoms; and constitutional reforms that allow for direct elections of the President and Vice Presidents from within several candidates as well as limit their terms not to exceed two terms, in addition to parliamentary election reforms and freedom of association and press.<sup>38</sup>

The movement is composed of members of eclectic political visions and social strata who promote a full-fledged democratic establishment by dethroning Mubarak and the National Democratic Party. *Kefayah* and the Muslim Brotherhood undeniably share a common enemy and therefore a common cause. As Wael Khalil – a "die-hard" socialist and a *Kefayah* activist – articulated to *Al-Ahram Weekly*, "The Muslim Brotherhood is, without question, my ally [in the battle for reform]... [Government] thugs attacked voters and innocent citizens and we're pontificating about the Muslim Brotherhood's commitment to a civil state."<sup>39</sup> In this respect, a

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<sup>36</sup> "Man Nahnu," in *Kefayah al Harakah al-Masriyyah min Agl al-Taghieer*, [database on-line] (2005, accessed 15 November 2005); available from <http://harakamasria.org/about>; Internet.

<sup>37</sup> "Declaration to the Nation," in *Kefayah al Harakah al-Masriyyah min Agl al-Taghieer*, [database on-line] (2005, accessed 10 November 2005); available from [http://harakamasria.org/manifesto\\_english](http://harakamasria.org/manifesto_english); Internet.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Howeidy, "Who's Afraid of the Brotherhood."

prominent Muslim Brother, ‘Essam El-‘Erian points out that of the 35 to 40 per cent of the electorate that voted for the MB "approximately 15 to 20 per cent of the votes were protest ones."<sup>40</sup> Therefore, Wael signifies a trend in voting and party dynamics that have been polarized as such. In other words, the Brotherhood’s success partially relies on the schism in electoral politics which is composed of two constituents; that is the opposition versus the regime. Additionally, it is imperative to note that nearly 75 percent of the registered voters boycott parliamentary elections to begin with. With a low voter turnout that often does not exceed 15 percent of eligible voters, it is evident that party politics is not connecting with the masses.<sup>41</sup> Whether it is to de-legitimize the process of elections, or a sign of popular despair when it comes to change, boycotters remain in fact the majority of the population.

However, this does not completely undermine the Muslim Brotherhood’s success, ideological appeal, or the momentum of its religious campaign. In the realm of a religiously conscious population and a strong history in Islam and resistance in conjunction with nationalistic battles against direct and indirect colonialism, the Brotherhood has in fact built trust and reputation among the population. However, its durability does not necessarily imply coherency from within. In fact, the harsh policies imposed on the Muslim Brotherhood to prevent it from legally advancing in politics may have forced it to set aside its internal problems and as such de-solidify its intellectual foundations. In light of this, the Brotherhood indulged in short-sighted goals but vague and under-developed long term solutions to Egypt’s economic and political turmoil. Nevertheless, the group’s electoral success is a mere indication of the effectiveness of alliances and broad slogans among a desolate population in pursuit of a what seems to be a jaded democracy in Egypt.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Omayma Abdel-Latif. “Dealing With a New Reality.” *Al-Ahram Weekly* 24-30 November 2005 [newspaper online] available at <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/770/fr1.htm>; Internet; accessed on 25 November 2005.

## Coalitions in the Legal System

As mentioned earlier, in 1984 the new Wafd Party's alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood's to contest seats on the People's Assembly broke down upon their clear ideological clash. Traditionally secular, the Wafd's goal was to guarantee that the party would meet its minimum 8 percent of the votes in order to participate. On the other hand, this was a mere opportunity for the Brothers to bypass their outlawed status and participate in the Assembly. The Wafd's domineering disposition in the alliance disparaged the Brotherhood and caused it to realign itself with the SLP in 1987. Therefore, as effective as alliances had been, their nature remains problematic. Coalitions with fundamental ideological variances have to a great extent pressured the government to reform its election laws. But there remains a question of whether such coalitions would produce a stable government in the long run or if they could in fact govern together with the same interest at all. Regardless, one aspect of inevitable alliances that have taken shape in Egypt, whether among political parties or civilian-led movements, is the striking success of ambiguous platforms and campaigns. All in all, elusiveness conceals differences and contradictions, and permits for effective opposition and a disposition to mobilize the population.

It has also been known to history for certain groups, governments, and regimes to work with the religious sector in order to gain further legitimacy or gather support. For instance, in Egypt, "when pashas, kings, and presidents wished to declare war on their enemies, they often turned to al-Azhar for a religious stamp of approval."<sup>42</sup> Therefore, it is important to discern further complexities within the political and legal dialogue in Egypt. For one thing, in Egypt, "*Shari'a* is an integral part of the legal system, especially in matters of personal status," as

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<sup>42</sup> Abdo, 43.

exclaimed by leftist lawyer Ahmad Sayf al-Islam.<sup>43</sup> Due to the fact that Egyptian law is based in part on *Shari'ah* in accordance to Article 2 of the Egyptian constitution, courts have provided a significant route for political expression for the Brotherhood in legal and social matters.<sup>44</sup>

Article 2 declares that “Islam is the Religion of the State. Arabic is its official language, and the principal source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (*Shari'ah*).”<sup>45</sup> This article initially stated that *Shari'ah* was “a” main source of legislation, but was amended on May 22, 1980 by

President Sadat as part of an attempt to appease the Islamic forces.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, Article 40 establishes that “All citizens are equal before the law. They have equal public rights and duties without discrimination due to sex, ethnic origin, language, religion or creed.”<sup>47</sup> As a

result, because Article 2 distinguishes the authority of Islamic Law as “the” source of law, then it inherently takes precedence to other religions, therefore, contradicting Article 40’s “equal public rights.” Moreover, with *al-Azhar* Institution acting as a “de facto legislative power” and enhancing the intertwinement of civil code and Islamic Jurisdiction of the *Hanafi* school of Jurisprudence, Egypt’s legal disposition has become heavily reliant on political currents.<sup>48</sup>

Therefore, the religious discourse in the legal system has allowed the Muslim Brotherhood among other Islamists to assert certain dogmatic standpoints and further elicit the contradictions in legislation rather than mend them, conveying the complications in Egypt’s contradicting laws and religious credence.

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<sup>43</sup> Ahmad Sayf al-Islam and Karim el-Gawhary. “Shari’a or Civil Code? Egypt’s Parallel Legal Systems: An Interview with Ahmad Sayf al-Islam,” in *Middle East Report* (1995): 25. Ahmad Sayf al-Islam is a leftist lawyer who specializes in political opinion cases was featured in this interview conducted by Karim el-Gawhary.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Arab Republic of Egypt, Laws and Constitution, *Article 2* [constitution online], accessed 10 October 2005; available from [http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/Constitution/chp\\_one/part\\_one.asp](http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/Constitution/chp_one/part_one.asp)

<sup>46</sup> Al-Islam, 25.

<sup>47</sup> Arab Republic of Egypt, Laws and Constitution, *Article 40* [constitution online], accessed 10 October 2005; available from [http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/Constitution/chp\\_three/part\\_one.asp](http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/Constitution/chp_three/part_one.asp)

<sup>48</sup> Al-Islam, 26.

Religious scholars like Sheikh Sayyid Sabiq, former Grand Mufti of Egypt, have managed to distinguish “western-style democracy” as a government “for the people, by the people” as opposed to Egypt’s “Islamic democracy” that is a government “of the people in the name of God, by God’s Law.”<sup>49</sup> The concept of “Islamic democracy” continues to be discussed and adapted to modern day problems, but the consistent rise in the Muslim Brothers’ popularity is a clear indicator of a powerful force in politics. It still remains a question as to how developed and ready this force is. In other words, since the Brotherhood claims that “Islam is the solution,” how has the group furthered its founder’s discourse to offer the answers to Egypt’s problems?

### **The Intellectual Foundation**

The complications behind Egypt’s political and economic problems entail a similarly complex program to resolve them. In effect, the Muslim Brotherhood’s slogan raises many questions as to the broad concept of Islam and Islamic justice. According to Hasan al-Banna, Islam is “creed and worship; nation and citizenship; religion and state; spirituality and labor; and a Holy Book and sword” and such the Qur’an regards as the core of Islamic values.<sup>50</sup> However, with Egypt’s developing concepts of democracy, how does political Islam contend? In general, it has been argued that the *Shura*, literally meaning “consultation,” is the Islamic equivalent of a “representative democracy,” and that the Islamic concept of *Ijma*’, or consensus, coalesces democratic notions with *shura*. Moreover, “the revival of the doctrine of *ikhtilaf* [Islamic religious disagreement] opens up possibilities for accepting differing and even divergent understandings concerning the nature of power and government, and...social and

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<sup>49</sup> Abu Daood, 121. This interview was conducted by Abu Daood prior to 1997 as part of a collection of interviews with Islamists.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Banna, Hasan. *Majmu’atu Rasa’el al-Imam al-Shahid Hasan al-Banna*. (Beirut: Dar al-Qalam): 244.

religious organizations, including a multiplicity of religions and philosophies of life.”<sup>51</sup> It is, therefore, evident that modern Islamic thought continues to evolve in order to address many of the values, challenges, and discourses faced today.

For the Muslim Brotherhood, however, the teachings of its founder, Imam Hasan al-Banna along with historical circumstances under repressive regimes have constrained the fluidity of discourse over development within the organization. In fact, the Brotherhood has somewhat separated itself from some ongoing Islamic movements such as *Wassatteya* and the new Islamists, or centrist groups whose contributors – some of which are dissidents of the Brotherhood – seek to liberalize Islam.<sup>52</sup> A few examples of the “new Islamists” who wish to broaden and adapt Islamic dialogue to modern issues and systems at hand are Ahmad Kamal Abul Magd, Fahmy Howaidy, and Tareq al Bishry.

Holding on to a certain doctrine has been both a strength and a weakness for the organization. On the one hand, it has preserved consistency in both its image and dogma, but on the other it has acted to block new waves of thought, creating schisms within both the organization and political Islam in Egypt as a whole. For instance, when certain new-Islamist forces worked to include Copts in their associations, the Labor Party – an ally of the Brotherhood – offered to nominate a Copt together in the same district with prominent Brotherhood figure Judge Ma'mun al-Hudaiby in 1995 elections, al-Hudaiby immediately declined.<sup>53</sup> Conflicting ideologies and statements issued from within the Brotherhood as to this issue and others has raised suspicion to its solidarity. By and large, factionalism within political

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<sup>51</sup> Moussali, Ahmad S. *The Islamic Quest for Democracy, Pluralism, and Human Rights*. (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1999): 160.

<sup>52</sup> Baker, Raymond William. *Islam Without Fear: Egypt and the new Islamists*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003): 192.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

Islam demonstrates that claims of Islamism or Islam as the “solution” is not in and of itself a coherent or uniform movement in Egypt.

In his teachings, al-Banna specifies a type of “Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood” – *Islam al-Ikhwān al-Muslimeen* – as one that encompasses every aspect of life, and therefore fuses the public with the private.<sup>54</sup> He further claims that the Brotherhood’s Islam is one that rectifies the deviations that occurred as a result of the flexible nature of the religion.<sup>55</sup> Certainly, if the Brotherhood are to offer promises, then their “solutions” emanate from *Islam al-Ikhwān* (Islam of the Brothers). In this regard, what are the tenets and intellectual basis for the solutions? Al-Banna inculcates his vision of *Islam al-Ikhwān* acting as *din wa dawlah* (religion and state) into eight core principles.

First, al-Banna declares the Brotherhood as promoters of a *da‘wa salafiyya*, or *salafi* call, and therefore, promotes the return of “pure” Islam that is derived solely from the Qur’an and the Sunnah.<sup>56</sup> Through this characterization, al-Banna accentuated an “untainted” *salafi* path separate from different running Islamic thoughts. Hence, according to the *salafi* factor, the Brother’s appeal for “Islam as the solution,” is in fact a *specific* type of Islam. The extent to which dialogue will be flexible is therefore incumbent upon a strict bias against leniency, because it is thought to be the source of “deviation” from the *salafi* path and the cause of unrest today. The *salafi* line of thought implicates a certain exclusive nature to the discourse that seems to extend to both Muslims and non-Muslims.

The Second and third principles al-Banna defines are *Islam al-Ikhwān* as both a Sunnah-driven path and a Sufi reality respectively.<sup>57</sup> Fourth, he establishes it as a “political

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<sup>54</sup> Al-Banna, 244.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

organization” because it seeks to rectify the authority, adjust the relationship between the *umma* (community) and the international public, as well as nurture the nation’s pride, dignity, and strong patriotism.<sup>58</sup> Al-Banna’s version of a state is one ruled by Islam, where the ruler’s responsibility lies in first upholding the rule, then in serving the people. In this regard, there is a subtle implication that maintaining Islam as the source of governance takes precedence over the people’s desires. As such are democratic rights undermined if in conflict with Islam? Perhaps as an attempt to divert from an unpopular authoritarian character, al-Banna claims that an Islamic state governing under an Islamic mutual understanding is tied by the *umma*’s will.<sup>59</sup> In turn, the community’s will is understood to supervise the actions of the leader. The *umma*’s role in governance presumably brings to the political arena a discourse for a “democratic” electoral system. However, how do religious minorities fit into al-Banna’s model for electing leaders? And how can they pursue an interest that may be outside the circle of Islamic unity? As such, it is important to examine if the minorities’ rights are usurped in the majority domination. Plurality is ambiguous in *Islam al-Ikhwan* insofar as the *umma* is loosely defined. For instance, is the *umma* a religious or national entity? If religious, does it include all Muslims, or merely *salafis* as “pure” Muslims, or Muslim Brothers? However, in addressing plurality, according to the well known Islamic intellectual, Dr. Muhammad ‘Imara, the Muslim Brotherhood has its own principles that pertain to democracy, governance, pluralism, consultation, and elections...that has even discussed accepting the existence of communist parties.<sup>60</sup> But under the ongoing circumstances, the Brotherhood often offer statements that speaks of a vague doctrine. In campaigning, an all-inclusive appeal has proved effective, but inherent contradictions remain to be reconciled with. Nevertheless, while substantial differences in opinions will never cease to

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>60</sup> Abu Daood, 15. This interview was conducted prior to 1997 by Abu-Daood as part of a collection of interviews.

exist, al-Banna shaped *Islam al-Ikhwān* to view an individual's relationship with the organization in four lights: the believer, the ambivalent, the exploitive beneficiary, and the passive resistant opponent.<sup>61</sup> But despite a certain acceptance of differences in creed, it is still unclear as to how the Brothers plan to deal with contradictions and elusiveness in the framework of their antagonists.

Moreover, part of al-Banna's vision is to reduce plurality altogether. As such he emphasizes that Islamization begins with the individual and not the state, and a society that is truly Muslim is therefore able to build an Islamic state. But if the Brotherhood derives popularity for a broad concept of Islamic governance, then how does it plan to assert its "democratic" presence and sustenance, while remaining loyal to its *salafi* ideals at the same time?

This leads to the organization's concept of *Da'wa*, or the Call (to Islam). The program is divided into a *Da'wa Fardiyya*, or a person-to-person form of outreach, and a *Da'wa 'Amma*, an institutional form.<sup>62</sup> The *da'wa fardiyya* involves "direct personal contact" whether to peers, relatives, or neighbors is one that seeks to set "a good example" and gradually show the masses "the right path."<sup>63</sup> The *da'wa 'amma*, on the other hand, constitutes the parallel Islamic institutions that promote the message through independent mosques, as well as "lectures, lessons, the media, books, newspapers, magazines and tapes."<sup>64</sup> While the *da'wa* as a concept is utilized by Muslims with no political agenda, for the Muslim Brotherhood it provides an avenue for certain indoctrination of *Islam al-Ikhwān*. The extent to which the Brotherhood is exclusive to *salafi* principles in the form of governance remains vague, however, the Brothers' *da'wa*

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<sup>61</sup> Al-Banna, 96-97.

<sup>62</sup> Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002): 130.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 131.

promotes certain teachings and interpretations rather than a broad *sahwah Islamiyyah* (religion awakening). Perhaps spreading certain teachings reduces variances and matters that would require problematic reconciliation within the Muslim majority. It is evident that an element of the Brotherhood's identity not only limits the flexibility of Islamic philosophy, it also confines its applicability at crossroads for much needed change in line with the current developments and contemporary philosophies. Moreover, the organization's *da'wa* elicits a type of indoctrinating trait to governance that limits thought and seeks to minimize dialogue in order to consolidate full power through a uniform indoctrinated majority.

Al-Banna's principles seek to expand the organization's horizons beyond the state structure, which leads to its fifth and sixth identities as a promoter of athleticism and cultural and educational circles whose goals are to build athletic clubs and schools to sustain healthy generations.<sup>65</sup> Finally, in the seventh and eighth principles, he broadly establishes the Brotherhood as both an economic partnership and a social ideology that completes its statehood attributes.<sup>66</sup>

With respect to the Brother's social ideology, in al-Banna's memoir, *al-Rasa'il al-Thulath (The Three Messages)*, he sets forth more specific political and executive goals for governance. The first objective is to bring an end to the party-system and point the political community into one direction.<sup>67</sup> According to some Islamic interpretations by scholars, such as former Grand Mufti Sheikh Sayyid Sabiq, the party-system is considered "destructive" in the sense that certain political parties coalesce with segments of the population to represent groups that alienate themselves from the Islamic *Shari'ah* which divides the *umma* and places groups at

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<sup>65</sup> Al-Banna, 249.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 249-250.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 192.

odds with one another further causing some form of sectarianism rather than cohesion.<sup>68</sup> The Brotherhood's concept of sociopolitical unification as such fails to preserve full right of representation for minority views, and stripping them from means to push for their agenda. Their voices therefore become drowned by a majority accord. Moreover, this type of amalgamation in fact alienates forces in both politics and society because the *ta'adudiyah* (manyness) finds no room for itself in a society of such narrow *tawhid* (oneness).

Another objective al-Banna states is to strengthen the ties between the Islamic circles internationally, especially within the entire Arab region in order to reassert the "earnest and practical doctrine" of the "lost" Caliphate.<sup>69</sup> The Caliphate is an institution for the successors to the Prophet, where the Caliph, also called *Amir al-Mu'mineen*, becomes the leader of the entire Islamic *umma*. The Caliphate connotes a certain Islamic global governance that is innately imperialistic. Moreover, the diffusion between the public and the private allows the governing body to interfere in personal matter under the theme of "social reforms" implicating certain "moral police" conditions that would, according to al-Banna, flog for adultery, separate the sexes in schools, shut down night clubs, ban dancing in public areas, censor "offensive" press as well as television and art that is considered "corrupting," set curfews for coffee shops and use them to educate rather than for entertainment purposes, regulating *tabbarog* (display of beauty) and *khala'ah* (inappropriate behavior) of women who are in the public eye such as academics and doctors, develop a unified dress code, resist foreign influences as a whole, in addition to several other forms of socio-religious restructuring.<sup>70</sup> Essentially, al-Banna's goal to dissolve the separation between the public and the private undermines any sense of individuality, and forces on society a uniform identity. Moreover, such merger takes away the Muslim's choice to

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<sup>68</sup> Abu Daood, 121.

<sup>69</sup> Al-Banna, 192.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 194-195.

practice religion on his or her own accord, and merely limits it to picking a leader under “democratic” elections. Meanwhile, although Coptic Egyptians are accepted as minorities under the “pluralism” rhetoric, they are also marginalized by not only the majority but also governance which dilutes them in both the political and social scene.

Aside from the political and social dimensions to *Islam al-Ikhwān*, al-Banna also incorporates certain economic principles as vital components in formulating an Islamic state. In essence, economic programs are central to the concept of Islamic social justice. Likewise, the Brotherhood accentuates this aspect in its campaigns in light of a dwindling economy which poses as a major source of sociopolitical unrest. The Brotherhood’s intellectual economic discourse is most extensively captured by Sayyid Qutb, one of its most prominent leaders in the 1950s who was imprisoned and executed under Nasser’s regime in 1966. Qutb coalesces the ideology of justice and Islam in his work namely, *Al-‘Adalah al-Ijtima‘iyya fi al-Islam*, or *Social Justice in Islam*.

In his chapter, *Siyasat al-Mal fi al-Islam – Management of Wealth in Islam* – he corroborates the institution of *Zakat*, otherwise known as almsgiving, as a “legitimate claim on property...[imposed] legally at a fixed and known rate,” and “It [Islam] has also given to the leader the right to take whatever is needed beyond the *Zakat* to prevent harm to people, to raise them out of difficult circumstances and to protect the interests of the community of Muslims.”<sup>71</sup> Moreover, he adds to legislation the principle of exhortation – that is to “give up all possessions and spend everything in the way of God” – forms the foundation of “financial management.”<sup>72</sup> According to al-Banna, in an Islamic economy, *Zakat* is also essential as a source of the state’s

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<sup>71</sup> Shepard, William E. *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996): 124.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

income as well as in advancing social programs and easing the poverty crisis.<sup>73</sup> It is further seen as “a right of the community over against the individual, to assure to certain groups within it the minimum sufficient to live on.”<sup>74</sup> Ideally, *zakat* aims to eradicate poverty and its counterpart, that is the “blind pursuit” of wealth. Qutb points out that “Islam hates for there to be differences among the individual members of the nation (*ummah*) such that one group lives at the level of luxury and another group at the level of hardship” – an ideal derived from a Hadith by the Prophet, “He is not a believer in Me [God] who goes to bed fully knowing that his neighbor is hungry.”<sup>75</sup> He also asserts that *zakat* is to be distributed to the poor, the destitute, the collectors of *zakat* who are given parts of the proceeds as a salary, those who recently entered Islam, debtors “provided that the debt was not contracted sinfully and that luxurious living and the like was not the cause of it,” and to other miscellaneous groups.<sup>76</sup>

Additionally, usury is forbidden because it is considered “a means of the great expansion of capital which is not based on effort and does not arise from work.”<sup>77</sup> Also, Qutb associates usury with “two serious maladies in society: first the unlimited expansion of wealth and the creation of wide separation between upper and lower classes, and then the existence of an idle, flabby, luxurious class which does no work but gets everything, as if its wealth were a trap for catching money, without even the need to put bait in this trap.”<sup>78</sup> However, such principles face obstacles in Egypt’s economic situation. In other words, how does these Islamic economic principles deal with the country’s foreign debts? And how does the Muslim Brotherhood plan to treat a society that is already submerged in existing loans and investments? In light of this, the

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<sup>73</sup> Al-Banna, 197.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 163. Author’s note states this Hadith as coming from *Al-Musnad*, Ahmad Shakir, Hadith no. 4880.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 154-155.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

Muslim Brothers face a struggle between ideology and reality where Islam's solutions are put into question.

However, it is important to view *Islam al-Ikhwan*'s economic standpoints as a whole rather than in part. In this respect, Qutb's emphasis on the right to private property brings about a different dimension to the promotion of social justice. As such, Islam protects "the right of private ownership [which] achieves a just balance between effort and reward," and in a sense it encourages privatization.<sup>79</sup> At the same time, "Islam is anxious to prevent this means of increasing wealth that it makes monopolizing something that puts the monopolizer far outside the pale of religion."<sup>80</sup> Therefore, it is clear that monopolizing on the necessities of individuals is condemned from being a source of expanding wealth.<sup>81</sup> But essentially, the Brotherhood's economic vision encourages the engagement in private initiatives while reserving the right of the government to intervene in all aspects of public life at the same time. It promotes a fair distribution of wealth in order to narrow the gap between social classes but maintain a sense of reward (profit) in private ownership. The economy of *Islam al-Ikhwan* attempts to appeal to groups of contradicting interests – seekers of social equality and seekers of capital and wealth – under a broad doctrine of "social equity." But how does a state use these goodwill-driven policies of *Islam al-Ikhwan* to fix the economy today and create more jobs, stimulate savings and investment instead of consumption, encourage labor-intensive activities, encourage small businesses where the cost of creating a job is twenty times lower than in major investment projects?<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> El-Naggar, "Massaging Figures."

Moreover, many policies rely on ending wealth-driven corruption by instilling “good intentions” in individuals that seek “Islamic welfare” without accounting for preconceived capitalistic notions and drives already inculcated in the structure itself. Thus, if moral-driven reforms are to be implemented at the core, that is the individual, then how long does it take to reshape society’s morals? Also, how does the state plan to deal with those who do not adopt the same values and who lack an incentive to accumulate what to them seems like a “lost” profit? Furthermore, the Brothers’ economic solutions ultimately combine certain socialist policies – which had already inflated the bureaucracy from Nasser’s days – with capitalist gains that had once boosted the ruling class and fueled corruption under Sadat, but it relies on a principle of goodwill of *Islam al-Ikhwan* to fix the pitfalls of both systems.

In al-Banna’s memoirs and the eight principles of *Islam al-Ikhwan*, there is a sense of clarity in the agenda, but an ambiguity in tactic. Nonetheless, in al-Banna’s era, Egypt’s governance was far more indeterminate amid the British colonization. Tactics of the Brotherhood continued to fail at times but indeed evolve with new systems and processes. Likewise, Qutb’s years pushed the Brotherhood to develop new strategies while holding on to its doctrine. Indeed, tactics took on new shapes for the Brothers to become the biggest opposition force against the incumbent President in Egypt, but how has their intellectual conception evolved with this respect?

### **The Intellectual Development**

According to essential teachings of Islam, the period prior to the revelation of the Qur’an in the pagan Arabian peninsula was known to be called *al-Jahiliyya*, or the age of ignorance. Sayyid Qutb further expands the concept of *Jahiliyya* to apply to contemporary events. Qutb believes that as soon as a Muslim embraces Islam that he or she would completely separate

himself or herself from the past values of ignorance.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, through his work in *Ma‘alim fi al-Tariq* or *Milestones*, Qutb identifies a *jahili* (ignorant) society as one that has continually existed even with the presence of Islam. “We are also surrounded by *Jahiliyya* today...Our whole environment, people’s beliefs and ideas, habits and art, rules and laws – is *Jahiliyya*, even to the extent that what we consider to be Islamic culture, Islamic sources, Islamic philosophy and Islamic thought are also constructs of *Jahiliyya*.”<sup>84</sup> In order to overcome the ongoing *Jahiliyya*, Qutb suggests that Muslims remove themselves from all such influences and aim to change the “ignorant” system at “its very roots” without changing “true” Islamic values and concepts to make a bargain with such society.<sup>85</sup> “It is therefore necessary that Islam’s theoretical foundation – belief – materialize in the form of an organized and active group from the very beginning. It is necessary that this group separate itself from *jahili* society.”<sup>86</sup> It was Qutb’s ideology for the Muslim Brotherhood to appropriate change from within society and independently of the system as a whole.

Nearly half a century later, it has developed into the Brotherhood’s strategy to not only work within the system, but to also reform it in the process. However, how and why have the teachings of the Brotherhood changed such that it was able to abandon Qutb’s isolationist doctrine? Surely, Sadat’s democratization program along with his strategy to appease the Islamic components in Egypt to weaken leftists presented a golden chance for the Brothers to gain social and political ground albeit its illegal status. The organization’s success in reaching out to civil society has further forced it to commit to a certain discourse - the election establishment. Nevertheless, an election is merely a procedure in the goal to govern, which is in

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<sup>83</sup> Qutb, Sayyid. *Milestones* (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 2002): 19.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

and of itself only a process to spreading a bigger message. Just as al-Banna had preached about a unified *umma* under a state decades prior, governing still remains to be only a goal to a vision of an expanding Islamic doctrine.

Suffice it to say that the ban on the Brotherhood has more than affected the Brothers' methods to gain support. It has forced them to rethink their original partiality against political parties as it stands to be an effective avenue towards change. In this regard, against al-Banna's teachings condemning the entire party-system establishment, the Brothers now fight to form a political party of their own. In an interview with the Brotherhood's former Deputy Supreme Guide, Dr. al-Malt, he reasons the drastic shift in the doctrine as crucial.<sup>87</sup> "We need to address the people freely and openly, and to display our programs and goals similarly, and as such we have resorted to the party-system as it deemed necessary, and in spite of that, the party to us is a merely a component of the *da'wa*, and not a substitute to it...the party is a means among others and never an alternate [to the *da'wa*]."<sup>88</sup> Participating in the electoral system requires the Brothers to form a political party that issues a uniform agenda when running for office rather than coalesce itself with conflicting ideologies of other parties.

Despite necessary changes, there are still aspects of the Brotherhood that remain consistent. For instance, goals to free Islam from foreign control, establish an Islamic state in its place run by *al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyyah* (Islamic Law), apply its social order and its old principles, and spread the "righteous call."<sup>89</sup> Similarly, the Brothers continue to emphasize that Arab solidarity can only be reached through Islamic unity making the creation of an Islamic state

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<sup>87</sup> Al-Daood, 134.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> *IkhwanOnline*, "Ahdaf al-Ikhwan al-Muslimeen" [database on-line] (Egypt: 2005, accessed 20 October 2005); available from <http://ikhwanonline.com/Target.asp>.

a religious duty or *farida*.<sup>90</sup> Akin to al-Banna's teachings, "The Muslim Brothers [still] do not ask to rule over themselves and the *umma* if there are those found to carry such burden, therefore the Brothers are not seekers of power, and governance is not an end but rather a means and a burdening one."<sup>91</sup>

The Brothers add that the "Muslim society is the means to achieve an Islamic government and the *sha' b* (masses) has the right to choose its government."<sup>92</sup> This is another resemblance of al-Banna principle for governance as one chosen by the *umma*. Beyond an Islamic government, the Brotherhood's goals include an Islamic state that ushers other Islamic societies into *wihdah* (unity) and cuts across Muslims of all backgrounds in order to work together as it was once established under the Prophet.<sup>93</sup> Further, it seeks a "Single Islamic State" or *al-Dawlah al-Islamiyyah al-Wahidah* composed of Islamic states united under a single leadership, and even further a "Global Islamic State" – *al-Dawlah al-Islamiyya al-'Alamiyyah* – that guarantees human rights, freedom, security, and worship among others to all Muslims around the world.<sup>94</sup> This brand of global governance is strikingly similar to al-Banna's vision of reviving the Caliphate.

In an interview with Judge Tariq al-Bishri, former Deputy President of the State Council as well as an historian and Islamic thinker, when asked about the return of the Caliphate he pointed towards the institution's underdevelopment and obscurity as to what groups it would hold authority over. "Is it merely the unity of Islamic groups and organizations, or an establishment of a state that calls for Islam, applies its laws, and export its understandings?" He

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> *IkhwanOnline*, "Wasa'il al-Ikhwan al-Muslimeen" [database on-line] (Egypt 2005, accessed 20 October 2005); available from <http://ikhwanonline.com/Means.asp>.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

exclaimed.<sup>95</sup> As such he adds that “there is a difference between general goals and the [actual] possibilities for attaining them in respective stages.”<sup>96</sup> The Brothers have held on to certain creeds but fail to develop them. Most of all, they fail to adapt them to the ongoing discourse. Yet why have they not abandoned the “general goals” that are more far-fetched now than in earlier years? In some respect, this imperialistic creed looms in the background for its ambivalent time to be implemented, rather than really evolve itself to fit democratic notions.

Despite a certain solid grip on original principles, the Brothers have been constantly accused of being divided, even within their leadership. One example of their division is in the divergence in the methods of interpretation, or *ta'wil*. *Ta'wil* is essentially how laws and religious decrees are derived, and as such essential to policy-making decisions for the Brotherhood. The split in the *salaf* and *khalaf* interpretations is one between a *ta'wil 'amm* (general interpretation) and *ta'wil khass* (specific interpretation) of the Qur'an and Sunnah.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, among the Brothers the *salafi* approach has been the preferred one notwithstanding external pressures for more flexible interpretations. While internal debate is arguably healthy for the organization, such conflicts hardly get intellectually resolved amid a greater fight against the assailant regime whose emergency laws usurp even the most basic of human rights. Thus far, the relentless fight for recognition often sets aside the organization's internal disputes. This has in turn caused a paralysis in intellectual development whose platform is ambiguously holding on to its founder's principles without either formally upgrading or informally integrating them.

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<sup>95</sup> Al-Daood, 49.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> *IkhwanOnline*, “Al-Ikhwan ‘ala Darb al-Salaf Sa’iroon” [database on-line] (Egypt: 2004, accessed 8 November 2005); available from <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ID=5984&SectionID=458>.

As a result, the Muslim Brother's have retained a solid resistant shell with a vague and uncertain philosophical identity. This ultimately resonates in their campaigns and platforms. And when asked why the Brotherhood has insisted on not announcing its detailed political program and instead opting to chant broad mottos, Dr. Ahmad al-Malt, responded by saying that once the organization is legalized and openly allowed to participate in the political process that it would publicize its party platform in details as it is ready for such step. However, if Islam is indeed the solution and their platform is so appealing, then why do they continue to conceal it? What is evident is that they have not shown substantial intellectual growth from their past, but if they merely wish to use their platform as a bargaining chip with the regime, then they convey more tactic than creed. Yet not only are Egyptians caught between this political bargain, they are left with questionable slogans and open-ended claims as their strongest chance to seek its basic rights.

In a recent attempt to unwind the hostility against the Brotherhood's campaign "Islam is the solution," Dr. Ahmad Ghazlan, an associate of *maktab al-irshad*, the department of religious guidance of the Brotherhood, wrote a commentary titled "What We Mean by 'Islam is the Solution.'" <sup>98</sup> In it, Ghazlan outlined the identity of Islam as both creed and code for practice; as well as a set of ethics that address social organization, punishable matters, internal debates, freedoms, and human rights. <sup>99</sup> With slight readjustment and different wording, it is apparent that Ghazlan's message echoes al-Banna's. Likewise, he accentuates Islam's authority over personal, social, and political matters including family values, and the people's right to choose

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<sup>98</sup> Mahmood Ghazlan, "Madha Na'ni Bi-Shi'ar 'al-Islam huwa al hal'" in *IkhwanOnline* [database on-line] (23 November 2005, accessed on 24 November); available from <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ID=16091&LevelID=1&SectionID=458>.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

their elected leader whose duties are to first adhere to Islam then to attend to people.<sup>100</sup>

Ghazlan's tenets for Islam's solutions include guaranteeing freedoms of religion, speech, and expression; ensuring equality among individuals and before the law; protecting minorities; maintaining rights of civilians over their ruler; upholding the right to live in dignity and respect; guaranteeing jobs with decent salaries; providing welfare for the elderly and disabled; preserving the right to private property so long as its source is *halal* (religiously permissible) and ensuring it is used for a good cause rather than self-indulgence; holding the ruler responsible for maximum efficiency of public services; limiting monopolization and excess profit; fighting corruption; in addition to several more concepts of social justice.

However, in the midst of political tension where do these benign principles stand? Brothers and Islamists alike have often resorted to obstinate tactics such as *takfir* (charge of apostasy) as a way to isolate and ravage opponents.<sup>101</sup> A prominent example is the case of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, a Cairo University professor who was denied tenure and later pressed to divorce his wife on the grounds that he was an apostate due to his literary criticism of the Qur'an and other religious text.<sup>102</sup> "Expelling someone from the university is a way of silencing him," Abu Zayd exclaims.<sup>103</sup> In light of this, how constraining are the actual "Islamic" solutions? It seems that many Islamists quietly qualify the rights they promise people with "sacred limits" that are innately repressive.

Economic realities are to an extent the hub to many of Egypt's sociopolitical unrest. Therefore, as new economic problems arise the Brothers have worked to offer solutions that are

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> 'Abdel Fattah, Nabil. *Al-Nas wal Rusas: al-Islam al-Siyasi wal Aqbat wa Azamat ad-Dawla al-Haditha fi Misr* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 1997): 24.

<sup>102</sup> Ayman Bakr, Elliot Colla and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, "Silencing is at the Heart of My Case," *Middle East Report* (1993): 27.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 29.

in line with the Brotherhood creed. In 1987, campaigning under the *Tahaluf*, the Islamists' idea for economic development was underlined in six parts: (1.) shrinking the government bureaucracy and public sector; (2.) official adherence standards of high productivity; (3.) the private sector as the backbone of the economy; (4.) a non-interest bearing banking system; (5.) *zakat*; (6.) independence from foreign economic intervention and integration of the Egyptian economy with other Muslims economies as an alternative.<sup>104</sup> Overall, the Brothers extend al-Banna's teachings to likewise promote a society where "the upper class would not exploit the poor, the manager would not oppress the worker, and the profit would be tempered by piety and good works."<sup>105</sup> The Brothers implicitly suggest that they will lift nearly 28 million people from an international poverty status, reduce the unemployment rate that ambivalently ranges somewhere between 10 and 30 percent, on top of paying outstanding debts that have placed the country as one of the poorest in the world by general themes such as shrinking bureaucracies and resisting foreign economic intervention. The Brotherhood's campaign for economic reform conveys their vision of a successful economy, but no actual solutions or programs to fix the concurrent problems.

The generality in the Brothers' political language does not only make it easier for them to tactfully form cross-cutting alliances, it also puts into question the nature of their agenda. Ambiguity further conceals deficiencies and underdevelopments in their intellectual basis. In this light, is Islam really the solution? Certainly, al-Banna and his successors thought so. But what seems to be clear is that the Brothers, among other opponents of the regime, identify general problems and offer general solutions. This is an indication of political decay and frail intellectualism.

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<sup>104</sup> Sana Abed-Kotob, "The Accommodationists Speak: Goals and Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27 (1995): 327.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusion

In 1992, the same year the October earthquake had ripped through Cairo, the lawsuit against the Cairo University professor Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd in order to divorce his Muslim wife was filed.<sup>106</sup> Abu Zayd, like many others, was caught in the crossfire between the religious and secular drifts in Egypt. His case signified a coalition in the legal system that affirms a certain Islamist force. Further, it conveyed a political tug-of-war between secularists and Islamists.

The regime's despotism has maintained neither political nor economic stability. On the contrary, it has fueled the polarization in the political system. Ironically, the current main opposition to the regime is technically outlawed, but it was the concessions that both Sadat and Mubarak had given to the Muslim Brothers that asserted their presence in the electoral system. The political discourse was ultimately crippled by oppressive regimes, and it was more so tactics than platforms that catapulted the Brotherhood into its status today. In addition, recently *Kefayah* and "Islam is the solution," have been the outcry of campaigns in Egypt, but democratic reforms have been the underlying goal of all factions aside from the regime.

Slogans of democracy, ending corruption, solutions, freedom, and so on, have proven to be the shell that hides much of the political malnutrition in Egypt. Banned for most of its history, the Brotherhood has for the most part manifested itself in "secrecy." In line with the majority political apathy, the group has gained momentum primarily in its pursuit of legal representation that has overshadowed its intellectual development. In other words, the Muslim Brotherhood has not fully developed from al-Banna's teachings decades ago to deal with obstacles today. The elusiveness of Islam as the solution has allowed the Brotherhood to adopt "democracy" as a rhetoric to gain representation from oppressive regimes that had invoked

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<sup>106</sup> Bakr, 27.

democratization for exploitive purposes to begin with. As such, sustainable democratic reforms in Egypt are ones that are accompanied by political and economic stability to curb the polarization in politics, and curtail broad rhetoric that further causes volatility which manifests into repressive regimes.

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