

One Person, One Vote...One Time?
The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as Moderates and Democrats
from Inception to the Present

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Joseph Lumbard, Advisor

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ABSTRACT

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A thesis presented to the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies

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Some question the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's motives for demanding democratic and social reforms, and whether the members of the Brotherhood are indeed democrats. In order to explore the ideology behind the modern Brotherhood, this paper will survey the roots of Brotherhood ideology as reflected by its major figures such as founder Hassan al-Banna, as well as his successor, Hassan al-Hudaybi. It was al-Hudaybi in particular who established the identity that the Brotherhood holds today through his appeals for moderation and non-violence. Additionally, many view the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt as the legitimate voice of the Egyptian people in the backdrop of an authoritarian government. The Muslim Brotherhood has gradually become more active in the Egyptian political arena, to the extent that some consider it to be as much a political organization as it is a religious one. Though banned from running candidates in parliamentary elections, there are still dozens of independent members of parliament associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. This paper explores the various ambiguities associated with the Muslim Brotherhood and its calls for political and civic and change in Egypt.

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Introduction

Speaking at a function to mark the end of a day of fasting during the month of Ramadan, Muhammad Mahdi Akef, the former leader of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, spoke of the stances and duties of the Brotherhood. He said “we believe that peaceful struggle for change and reform has started, the road ahead is long, and the process can neither be stopped nor reversed.”¹ This paper will explore the roots and different original goals and purposes of the Muslim Brotherhood, and how the philosophies and tactics of its earliest leaders are reflected in the contemporary Brotherhood. I will begin by outlining the roots of the Brotherhood and its early history, and then describe how Sayyed Qutb and especially Hassan Ismail al-Hudaybi served as major figures in creating the modern ideology of the Brotherhood. While not remembered as well as other figures such as Qutb and Hassan al-Banna,² al-Hudaybi’s major work *Duat La Qudat* (Preachers Not Judges) offers an ideology closely linked to that of the modern Brotherhood. Then, issues such as moderation will be viewed in the context of the Brotherhood striving for political power and influence in Egypt, particularly in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

¹ Abou El Magd, Nadia. “Akef may stay to lead Muslim Brotherhood,” Ikhwanweb: The Muslim Brotherhood Official English Website, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=21711> (accessed May 1, 2010).

² Davide Tacchini, Review of *The Muslim Brotherhood: Hasan al-Hudaybi and Ideology*, by Barbara H.E. Zollner. *Muslim World* 99, no. 4 (2009): 711.

Despite the various Egyptian leaders and state structures as a kingdom (1922-1953) or a republic (1953-present), the Brotherhood has confronted every regime³ to promote a government more centered upon the laws and traditions of Islam. Since the 1970's, the Brotherhood has promoted itself as a moderate organization,⁴ more interested in promoting such causes as education and full freedom of the press than seizing the reigns of the Egyptian state. In particular, the Brotherhood has pushed for democratic reforms in Parliament as well as in the office of the president. Various scholars, however, have identified troublesome and contradicting points in the Brotherhood's support for democracy in Egypt, which will be explored later.

Firstly, it is important to examine the various circumstances upon which the Muslim Brotherhood was formed in Egypt in 1928, as well as the leaders who influence how Brotherhood members and non-members view the organization. The founding of the Brotherhood had nothing to do with democracy, and the promotion of democracy in Egypt by the Brotherhood is a relatively new concept. In its earliest stages, the Brotherhood was a means of spreading Muslim values amongst the masses in order to weaken what its founders perceived as Britain's imperialist grip on Egypt. This paper will look at three of the most significant people associated with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood: the founder of the group, Hassan al-Banna, the author Sayyed Qutb, and Hassan al-Hudaybi, al-Banna's successor as the leader and *murshid* (guide) of the Brotherhood. He was a man whose ideas on the role of a Muslim living in a non-Muslim state cause him to remain "one of the most influential figures in the Society of Muslim

³ Abdel Monem Said Aly. "Understanding the Muslim Brothers in Egypt," *Crown Center for Middle East Studies*, Middle East Brief 23 (2007), 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

Brothers.”⁵ His work, *Duat La Qudat (Preachers Not Judges)*, which he wrote while imprisoned under Nasser’s regime, serves not only as a refutation of Qutbist radical philosophy, but also as a guideline for moderate Islamism in general that stresses introspection and patience rather than political activism as an aspect of belief in God.

Throughout its existence, the Muslim Brotherhood has remained committed to its most basic cause, advocating “a return to Islam as a solution to the ills” that have “befallen Muslim societies.”⁶ Ziad Munson suggests four main situations in the Middle East in the 1920s to consider when examining the circumstances surrounding the creation and growing popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood starting in 1928. Most immediate was the resentment felt by many in Egypt towards the continuous British presence in the country since the invasion in 1882.⁷ Egypt declared its independence on February 2, 1922, and the system of government was designed as a constitutional monarchy. While the government was nominally under the leadership of the monarch, King Fuad I, Munson states that “Egypt was almost wholly controlled by the British through their Egyptian High Commissioner, advisors in key positions within the Egyptian government, and command of the Egyptian army.”⁸ In particular, Lord Allenby (1922-1925) was active in the functions of the government, interfering with the creation of the Egyptian constitution, as well as insisting on the continued capitulatory privileges afforded to

⁵ Barabara H.E. Zollner. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Hasan al-Hudaybi and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 146.

⁶ “Hasan al-Banna and His Political Thought of Islamic Brotherhood,” Ikhwanweb: The Muslim Brotherhood Official English Website, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=17065> (accessed October 20, 2010).

⁷ Ziad Munson. "Islamic Mobilization: Social Movement Theory and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood" *The Sociological Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (2001): 495.

⁸ Ibid.

Britons residing in Egypt.⁹ Additionally, Britain continued to keep many troops in Egypt, and even with the Anglo-British treaty of 1936 restricting the number of soldiers during peace time, the large quantity of soldiers in the Suez Canal Zone continued to frustrate Egyptians.¹⁰ The secular monarchy, combined with the “quasi-colonial British control of the country”¹¹ led many Egyptians to the belief that their country was being controlled by Westerners with an Egyptian king simply as the image projected by the British.

Next, it is important to consider the failure of the Wafd party in Egypt as a condition setting the stage for the creation of the Brotherhood. The Wafd was initially a group established by Egyptian politicians who sought open negotiations with Britain and whose primary end was Egyptian independence.¹² The Wafd had widespread support of urban landowners, bureaucrats, and the intelligentsia, as well as more rural administrators.¹³ While the Wafd party did not fall from power until December of 1937, internal disputes and widespread frustration over its lack of effectiveness in terms of securing independence for Egypt and failure to enact major social or economic reforms¹⁴ throughout the late 1920’s led to the Brotherhood’s creation in 1928 as an alternative for those seeking reforms in the everyday lives of Egyptians.

Munson also mentions Jewish settlement through “Zionist land purchases and immigration”¹⁵ in the area of Palestine throughout the late 19th century and first half of the 20th century, culminating in the creation of the modern state of Israel in 1948. The early

⁹ M.E. Yapp. *The Near East Since the First World War: A History to 1995* (White Plains, New York: Longman Publishing Group, 1996), 56.

¹⁰ Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 11.

¹¹ Munson, “Islamic Mobilization,” 488.

¹² Yapp, *The Near East Since the First World War*, 55.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁵ Munson, “Islamic Mobilization,” 495.

days of the Muslim Brotherhood saw popular encouragement for Muslim Arabs in Palestine during merchant strikes, as well as support during the 1936 Arab revolts. The Brotherhood collected funds to help the Arabs in Palestine, and their support helped membership of the new group rise dramatically.

In addition to the three circumstances mentioned by Munson, the 1920's also saw the creation of the modern state of Turkey resulting from international recognition of its sovereignty as determined by the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.¹⁶ James Traub wrote in the *New York Times Magazine* that "The organization was established in 1928 in the wake of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's secularization of Turkey and his abolition of the caliphate..."¹⁷ Ataturk proceeded to implement a program of mass secularization in what was previously the seat of power of the caliphate for centuries. Ataturk's government voted to eliminate the *shari'a* (Islamic law) that had previously been law in the Ottoman Empire, and also abolished the caliphate, the Ministry of Religious Endowments (*vakef*), and religious schools. Egypt had been for a time a province of what was previously the Ottoman Empire, and the abolishment of the caliphate in exchange for a radical program of secularization in Turkey made many in Egypt self-conscious regarding the role of Islam in everyday life following the empire's breakup.

Coinciding with the previous four circumstances, and as a result of them, the biographers of Hassan al-Banna on the Brotherhood's official website (Ikhwanweb.com) consider Hassan al-Banna's primary concern to be that of what al-Banna saw to be the

¹⁶ William L. Cleveland. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 2004), 179.

¹⁷ James Traub. "Islamic Democrats?" *The New York Times Magazine*, (April 28, 2007) http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/29/magazine/29Brotherhood.t.html?_r=2 (accessed October 20, 2009).

decline of Islam in Egyptian society, and the biographers believe that this, more than any other factor, led to the creation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.¹⁸

¹⁸ “Hasan al-Banna and His Political Thought of Islamic Brotherhood.”

The Formation of the Ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt

Hassan al-Banna

Hassan al-Banna was born in Mahmoudiyya, near Alexandria, in northern Egypt, in 1906. According to the *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World* he received a “traditional education in Qur’an, hadith, elementary principles of law, and Arabic language” and additionally joined the Hasafiyya Sufi order as a teen. Throughout his adult life he would acknowledge Sufism’s strong influence on his religious viewpoints and activism. He decided to enter the field of education as a teacher, and went to the national teachers’ training college at Dar al-‘Ulum in Cairo. Ikhwanweb mentions that his father, Shaykh Ahmad al-Banna, was an educated local imam and teacher educated at al-Azhar. The author notes that while his family was respected and had some property, they were not wealthy.¹⁹ His father’s educational background and his social status is an important detail for the Brotherhood’s sources to emphasize, as it combines some of the most important features of its ideal membership. The undeniable influence of the precepts of Islam, as well as a modest background and social status, are qualities many Egyptians share and qualities that the Muslim Brotherhood promotes in disseminating its message to the public. Al-Banna’s first assignment as a teacher sent him to Ismailiya in northern Egypt in 1927, in the Suez Canal zone. As the Suez was a high priority for the British administration in Egypt, he found himself constantly exposed to British military

¹⁹ “Hasan al-Banna and His Political Thought of Islamic Brotherhood.”

personnel as well as European civilians, and experienced first-hand British colonialism of Egypt. He questioned Egypt's political subservience to Britain, and came to the conclusion that the only way to combat what he saw as Western imperialism was to initiate a revival of Islam among the masses. It was in March of 1928 that al-Banna and six others created an educational group that by the next year would be called the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, or Muslim Brotherhood.²⁰ While Hassan al-Banna spent a great deal of time and effort recruiting members in Ismailiyya, he finally decided that if the group sought to expand its numbers to a larger degree, the group had to move to Cairo. There the Brotherhood absorbed an Islamic society in Cairo headed by Hassan al-Banna's brother.²¹

It is important to note that through the first several years of the existence of the Muslim Brotherhood, the group was strictly apolitical, and remained a society for the advancement of an Islamic lifestyle in Egypt. However, events throughout the latter half of the 1930's and World War II looming in the background began to turn the organization into more of a socio-political one. The 1936 Arab uprising in Palestine became a nationalist cause, and the cause of defending Muslims from outside influence fit perfectly with the emerging ideology of the Brotherhood. Not only did they desire an Egyptian state free of outside (non-Muslim) influence, but they were active in their support for other Muslims in the region. However it was World War II itself that expanded the Brotherhood to massive figures within the country. The war made Egypt an unwilling theatre of battle, and led to the disintegration of the Egyptian government. The British insisted on having authority over the government to a degree not seen in decades. The

²⁰ Munson, "Islamic Mobilization," 488.

²¹ Ibid.

combination of British intervention not only in terms of troop presence but also in political control meant that even following the war, the Egyptian democratic system could not survive as an effective tool for governing. It was at this time of governmental weakness that many began to turn to and align themselves with non-governmental groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood.²² At this time, the Muslim Brotherhood, while somewhat political in nature, had no intention of considering itself a political party. The failure of former parties, and the Wafd party in particular, turned off many of these non-government groups from entering into the national administrative arena. Additionally, as a non-governmental group, the Muslim Brotherhood (though it was not by any means alone) also included a secretive militant wing, known as the Secret Unit (*al-jihaz al-sirri*), or the Special Organization (*al-nizam al-khass*). According to Barbara Zollner, by 1948 the group had around 1 million Egyptian followers in 1,700-2,000 branches.²³ Munson puts the number of active members between 300,000 and 600,000 by 1949.²⁴ At this point, the MB did not even seek to be a political party on the national stage, much less to create a more democratic government. Rather, they sought to appeal to the public at large, and acted as a sort of foil to the government, in that rather than creating policy or law, they created political pressure, and the greater the public support, the more weight their grievances and arguments would have.

It was the Secret Unit and the violence of the MB that would eventually lead to the death of the founder of the group, Hassan al-Banna. While he initially had the final say in decisions regarding the use of the Secret Unit, it eventually became a more

²² Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 11.

²³ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁴ Munson, "Islamic Mobilization," 489.

autonomous group, though it inherently remained a part of the Brotherhood.²⁵ In 1947, a large cache of weapons belonging to the Secret Unit was discovered by Egyptian police, and fearing an attempted overthrow of the Sa'adi government in place at the time, the government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Mahmoud Fahmi an-Nuqrashi, ordered the dissolution of the group, and had many members arrested and imprisoned. Three weeks later, on December 28, 1948, Prime Minister an-Nuqrashi was assassinated, and just a few months later, Hassan al-Banna himself was assassinated in what was most likely an act of retribution by the government for the murder of the Prime Minister.²⁶ The nature of his death at the hands of the government can be seen as an indicator of the features of the relationships between future Egyptian administrations and the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood. While it is questionable how much knowledge or input al-Banna had prior to the assassination of an-Nuqrashi, afterwards al-Banna, understanding the threat the killing held to the very existence of the organization, insisted that the murder was perpetrated by several members acting independently, and that the Brotherhood in fact desired to strengthen the central government.²⁷ Future leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood would understand the need to keep as tight control of the actions of the group as possible, especially when concerning the potential for violent measures. The government would always have the upper hand: at the time the Brotherhood had no thoughts of becoming a formal political party, and today the Brotherhood seems to understand that the possibility of an administration run by the Brotherhood is not realistic. Therefore, leaders of the MB must make sure the group stays as disciplined as possible, and try not to allow the government any excuse to crack down on the group,

²⁵ Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 12.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

though regular crackdowns and arrests would remain a recurring theme in the relationship between the government and the MB.

Hassan al-Banna was a well-educated man, and through his work he founded a massive socio-political movement. However, he is not remembered as an intellectual as much as he is an activist. And despite his roots in Islamic study, it would be future figures such as Sayyed Qutb and the lesser-known Hassan al-Hudaybi who would comprise what is now considered to be the Islamic ideological basis of the Muslim Brotherhood, and not at all al-Banna. Gudrun Krämer in the *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World* states that “Hasan al-Banna excelled as the charismatic leader of his organization, but he was not an innovative thinker, and is mostly remembered for his activism, not for his contribution to Islamic thought.” To him, the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood existed at its inception, that being the ideology of Islam as a whole. That is, the organization was created as a way for him and his associates to promote Islam in Egypt in a day and age in which he saw the threat of foreign intervention in the form of foreign troops (especially in Ismailiyya), foreign influence in government, and the Muslim world outside of Egypt recovering and changing in the wake of the end of the last caliphate. Krämer suggests that the basic mantra of the MB was the “need to rid Egypt of immoral and imperial Western domination through the adoption of an Islamic path,” and that the MB called for an Islamic state. However, he also says that the young Muslim Brotherhood argued that “true Islam was essentially democratic.” However he does not elaborate on any early democratic ideals of the Brotherhood, and simply mentions it in passing while describing how the Brotherhood’s publicized letters demanding relatively non-specific changes such as “the strengthening of the army, increasing Egyptian ties

with other Arab countries, an expansion of hospitals and clinics, the banning of usury, improvement of the working conditions of both agricultural and industrial workers, a minimum wage, and government intervention to eliminate unemployment.” These were considered basic ideals for a Muslim state, and the writers of these letters believed that more secular lifestyles led to the immorality, poverty, and foreign domination they were subject to at the time.

According to the biography of al-Banna on the Brotherhood website, al-Banna announced the mission of the organization to be “the independence of the Muslim land from foreign domination, and the establishment of an Islamic sociopolitical system”, through the unity of the Muslim community (*ummah*) in Egypt to create a more moral society.²⁸ The biography declares al-Banna to be the chief ideologue of the group, and while that is true, the actual ideology is more about uniting the *ummah* and does not go into much more detail about the Islamic nature of his goals than simply stating that Islam itself is the answer to the frustrations and hardships the people were facing.

Sayyed Qutb

After the death of Hassan al-Banna, two major figures emerged in the Muslim Brotherhood who would shape both how non-Islamists view Islamism and Islamic radicalism, and how Islamists view their own role in society. Sayyed Qutb and Hassan al-Hudaybi both witnessed the changing dynamic between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian government in the 1950’s and 1960’s. With the success of the revolution led by the Free Officers’ Movement in 1952, the Brotherhood saw an opportunity to achieve their goals of a united Muslim people in Egypt under the rule of Islamic law. After taking

²⁸ “Hasan al-Banna and His Political Thought of Islamic Brotherhood.”

power, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) decided to dissolve all political parties and take complete control of the government. In an attempt to represent the people, the RCC created the “Freedom Organization” (*hay’at al-tahrir*), which would serve as a national front for the interests of the people. The decision of the Brotherhood to decline the RCC’s invitation to join the organization because of fears of lost influence marked the end of cooperation between the RCC and the Brotherhood,²⁹ and once ‘Abd al-Nasser became the leader of the country, the relationship soured and eventually a failed assassination attempt on Nasser by a member of the Secret Unit led to persecution of the Brotherhood on the part of the government.

There is some debate over the upbringing of Sayyed Qutb, as it relates to his future career. Qutb was initially involved in education and literature, and by the end of his life he was considered an icon of Islamic thought. Many scholars, such as Barbara Zollner, believe that while Qutb (1906-1966) had no formal training in Islamic theology and jurisprudence, he was not uneducated. In fact he, like al-Banna, studied at the teacher’s training college *Dar al-Ulum*.³⁰ However, others say that he received a proper religious education, as well as exposure to Western secular thinking.³¹ While secularism played a part in his education, his most elementary education had some elements of Islam, though there is no proof that he had the sort of Islamic upbringing that al-Banna had, in that Hassan al-Banna’s father was an imam, and Qutb came from a family of middle-class farmers.

²⁹ Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 31.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

³¹ Ralph H. Salmi, Cesar Adib Majul, and George Kilpatrick Tanham. *Islam and Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practices* (United States: University Press of America, Inc, 1998), 143.

Barbara Zollner cites the various stages that Abu Rabi‘, Hanafi, Moussalli and Haddad use to describe the development of Qutb in literature, going from a “politically aware modernist influenced by secular ideas to a rather radical thinking Islamist.”³² Zollner combines the different stages the other writers use into three. First, Qutb worked for the Ministry of Education as a writer and literary critic, and frequently wrote supporting the modernization of education. This period lasted from the 1930’s through the 1940’s. In the second stage, lasting from around 1949-1954, one can see the gradual shift into writing based more on Islamic ideas, as well as a growing anti-Western sentiment within Qutb. In his book *al-‘adala al-ijtima‘iyya fi al-Islam* (Social Justice in Islam), he argues that Islam is the source of societal justice, and that the separation of religion and politics is inherently an un-Islamic idea, in that there is no hierarchy in Islam, and God has the final word. He wrote that the separation is an historic characteristic of the West, in which Christian leaders sought to maintain political power. He was sent by the Egyptian Ministry of Education to the United States between 1948 and 1950 to study systems of education, and these travels widely impacted his views on the West as he would condemn Western lifestyles and politics for the rest of his career. When he returned to Egypt in the early 1950’s he became a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and quickly rose through the ranks.³³ In 1954 he was arrested and sentenced to 15 years in prison under the administration of ‘Abd al-Nasser, and his third and final stage took place mostly in jail from 1954 to his execution in 1966. While imprisoned he produced a large amount of writings and wrote in uncompromising terms about how “belief coincides with active engagement in establishing an Islamic state

³² Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 51.

³³ Ibid.

system.”³⁴ He wrote a great deal regarding the idea of ignorance (*jahiliyya*) and the responsibility of Muslims to fight against their un-Islamic governments. While some believe that the radicalization of his ideas was due to the isolation and frustration of prison, Zollner suggests that the seeds for such an ideology were already present in his earlier works, albeit not as fine-tuned or direct. It is concepts such as *jahiliyya* and the roles of believers that most clearly separate him from the ideology of Hassan al-Hudaybi, as will be seen below. To Qutb, a true Islamic society is one which “accepted the sovereign authority of God; that is to say, which regarded the Qur’an as the source of all guidance for human life, because it alone could give rise to a system of morality and law which corresponded to the nature of reality.”³⁵ All else, he argues, is *jahiliyya*. Qutb wrote that *jahili* society does not adhere to God’s laws or observances of worship, and that “according to this definition, all the societies existing in the world today are *jahili*.”³⁶ Using this argument of declaring un-Islamic any government that imposed laws and practices not exclusively based on the *shari‘a*, he was able to argue that it was the duty of true Muslims to put their beliefs to action, and fight for an Islamic society.

In comparing Qutb’s ideology to that of al-Hudaybi, Barbara Zollner specifies the *minhaj*, or method, which according to Qutb, it is necessary to establish an authentic and successful Muslim society. The first step is for individuals to profess their faith and servitude to God, and acknowledge the Qur’an as the ultimate source of law. Another part of this step is to build an organic activist group, and in attracting more and more people, become a force none can ignore. As will be explained below, al-Hudaybi also believes in the necessity of the profession of faith and servitude to God, but unlike Qutb, he is much

³⁴ Ibid., 52.

³⁵ Albert Hourani. *History of the Arab Peoples*. London. (Faber And Faber Ltd., 2005), 445.

³⁶ Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 58.

less severe regarding who comprises modern *jahiliyya*, in that according to Qutb, those who are not activists are not fulfilling their duties. The next step suggests that the ruling *jahili* system will attempt to restrict the Believers, and they will still be too small and weak to fight it, and must therefore withdraw (*hijra*), like Muhammad did from Mecca to Medina. This will allow the group to strengthen its internal structure. Finally, the group finds its internal strength, and reinforces its numbers, though the ruling *jahili* system will not give up without a fight. At this point, according to Qutb, it is not only appropriate, but vital that one battle against the ruling powers, and not simply call for action. Qutb wrote “those who have usurped the authority of Allah and are oppressing Allah’s creatures are not going to give up their power merely by preaching.”³⁷

Qutb goes into great length about the duty of Muslims to fight against their un-Islamic rulers and invokes the principle of *jihad* (struggle), though Zollner suggests that he is somewhat ambiguous about what he actually means when using the term. It could mean different things in Qutb’s *minhaj* such as learning and preaching, encouraging others to join the community, helping people perform the *hijra* mentioned by Qutb, and it could also mean the militant struggle against one’s illegitimate rulers. However, he criticizes those who suggest that *jihad* is “an inner struggle and a system of rituals.”³⁸ He believes *jihad* to be a much more proactive process, not simply a defense against others, but rather a way of creating an Islamic society in one’s land. The fact that Qutb is not very specific regarding the ideal structure of governance makes it challenging for his followers in the modern Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists around the world to outline a preferred system of government. Instead, Qutb believed that when the Islamic concept is

³⁷ Ibid., 60.

³⁸ Ibid., 61.

implemented in society, it will at once lead to an ideal Islamic state.³⁹ However, he does specify that a strong leader will be needed at the center of any such government until humans are ready to implement God's will on their own.

Hassan Ismail al-Hudaybi

Hassan al-Hudaybi's part in the history of the Brotherhood is much less well-known than that of figures such as Hassan al-Banna and Sayyed Qutb potentially for a number of reasons. Davide Tacchini, in his review of Zollner's book about al-Hudaybi and the Muslim Brotherhood, mentions one reason explicitly and hints at another. He says that al-Hudaybi's role in the history of the Brotherhood has been overshadowed by that of al-Banna because al-Hudaybi had the responsibilities of the successor to the founder of the Brotherhood.⁴⁰ Prior to that however, Tacchini writes that the time in which al-Hudaybi served as *murshid* was "the most obscure period of Egyptian politics."⁴¹ Al-Hudaybi was the leader of the Brotherhood at a time in which the very existence of the society was regularly in doubt because of persecution by Nasser's regime. Qutb was active in around the same time period, and though he too was active in the Brotherhood, he did not have the responsibility of balancing the politics of the Brotherhood with the will of the government as al-Hudaybi had.

After the death of Hassan al-Banna, the Brotherhood faced the challenge of selecting a new leader to serve as the guide for the organization. Many factors went into the selection process, not the least of which was that the MB faced a public relations problem. While someone like Salih al-'Ashmawi, the former head of the Secret Unit, had

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Tacchini, Review of *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 707.

⁴¹ Ibid.

many connections and a well organized unit, the Brotherhood did not want to portray itself as a violent group to the public whose trust and sympathy it needed, nor to the government, and invite more crackdowns and arrests.⁴² Additionally, the leaders of the group were sought not to conduct a public competition between the members of the Brotherhood's inner circle, desiring not to portray internal instability. Therefore the group needed someone who would be sympathetic to their cause, who would not arouse the anger of the government, who would come in as a relative outsider, yet still have powerful connections,⁴³ and Hassan al-Hudaybi fit this role well. Richard Paul Mitchell in his book on the history of the Muslim Brotherhood mentions similar points, such as the need to avoid internal conflict, and mentioning that having new blood in the leadership post would help to put a fresh face on the Brotherhood for the public. He also suggests that more than being somewhat a government insider, being an actual judge would help the Brotherhood's cause, as it may help the organization gain back its legality.⁴⁴ Leiken and Brooke mention that one of the most important reasons for picking someone like al-Hudaybi was to avoid any one faction gaining too much power⁴⁵

This is a similar sentiment to the other suggestions about avoid internal conflict, but they seem to suggest as well that the some of the members saw each other as threats, and not just as people with different opinions on the leadership of the organization.

Al-Hudaybi was born in 1891 in a village northeast of Cairo to a poor family and the eldest of seven children. He learned to read and recite the Qur'an at the local *kuttab*

⁴² Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 17.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁴ Richard P. Mitchell. *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1969), 85.

⁴⁵ Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke. "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 2 (2007).

(village school), and his father, hoping he would receive a religious education and become a cleric, sent him to a theological primary school. However, he soon transferred to a government school, and eventually earned a license to practice law.⁴⁶ His early life is markedly different from those of both his eventual predecessor al-Banna as well as his contemporary Qutb (though he was actually born before both of them). While al-Banna and Qutb both attended Dar al-'Ulum to become teachers, and eventually adopted Islamist leanings, al-Hudaybi actively chose to switch from a career track in Islam to that of a public servant. While he was a friend and advisor to Hassan al-Banna in the late 1940's before al-Banna's death, he does not seem to have displayed any Islamist leanings while serving as a judge. However, he had acquired enough Islamic knowledge in his upbringing, or would acquire enough knowledge as *murshid*, to lead the writing of *Duat La Qudat* (Preachers Not Judges) while in jail later on in his life, and use the Qur'an as the basis for his arguments against radicalism. He slowly worked his way up through the Egyptian court system, from working as a judge in Qana', and frequently traveling for work to Naj Hamadi, al-Mansura, Minya, Asyut, and Zaqaqiq, to finally receiving an appointment in Giza.⁴⁷ By the 1940's he was "one of the highest-ranking members of the Egyptian judiciary."⁴⁸ Also, by then he was interested in the Muslim Brotherhood, though by no means in a public manner. Though he was a confidant of al-Banna, his involvement was kept a secret for both his sake and that of al-Banna. Members of the Egyptian judiciary were not permitted to be members of organizations that could be

⁴⁶ Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 22.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

viewed as political, and al-Banna wanted some associates close to him to remain invisible.⁴⁹

As *murshid* Al-Hudaybi had an ambitious agenda, but it may have been flawed from the outset, as al-Hudaybi himself was never seen to be a long-term successor to al-Banna. In the words of Zollner, he was viewed as “a temporary solution and compromise.”⁵⁰ However, he immediately made it clear that he was not interested in a temporary role. Within six months of taking on the role of *murshid*, he established the post of vice-guide (*na'ib*), which he filled with a trusted associate, Muhammad Khamis Humayda.⁵¹ He also demanded the dissolution of the Secret Unit, and threatened to resign when, after four months in office, the group still existed.⁵² While he was selected partly because of his unique contacts and connections, these also cost him internal support. Other members were opposed to the fact that he had access to the royalty, as his brother was the chief of the royal household.⁵³ Many did not approve of his decision to accept invitations to an audience with the king. He was criticized for supporting the elite, when it was the political elites themselves that the Muslim Brotherhood feared. However, his greatest failure was his inability to unite the Brotherhood, especially after the Officers' revolution. Admittedly he was in a challenging position in charge of many people with very different ideas of how the Brotherhood should define its role, but he relied on his inner circle for support rather than trying to bring in the grass roots to advocate for his leadership.⁵⁴ And regarding his top-down style of leadership, Zollner

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁵¹ Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 87.

⁵² Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 23.

⁵³ Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 85.

⁵⁴ Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 33.

says that “there was no open democratic decision making – a phenomenon which can be argued to be part of the general political climate rather than peculiar to the Brotherhood.” And while she is correct that there was no real model for democratic decision-making, al-Hudaybi’s refusal to consult many people in top positions with whom he disagreed cost him dearly, as his opponents were able to recruit a great deal of support in order to oppose his decisions. However, he did appear to promote some forms of democracy, albeit in the government itself rather than in his own organization. In a letter to President Muhammad Naguib, he promoted public freedom and a parliamentary-style government, though the letter served mostly to oppose Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser, as Nasser sought the destruction of the group. The group continued to be hurt by disunity among the Brotherhood as well as the overall weakness of the organization itself, leaving itself vulnerable to the whims of Nasser.⁵⁵ The 1950’s were defined by the *mihna* (humiliation/trial), a period of persecution against Brothers under the leadership of Nasser, which included the dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood and its activity going underground, as well as the imprisonment and execution of a great deal of members during this time.⁵⁶ The years 1957-1958 saw a lull in the arrests and executions, but persecution flared up again in the mid-1960’s, which saw the execution of Sayyed Qutb in 1966, who’s influence even after his death would have far-reaching effects even outside of Egypt. Al-Hudaybi was also sentenced to death, but his sentence was suspended and commuted to life imprisonment.⁵⁷ However, Qutb’s death made him a martyr in the eyes of his supporters, giving him an edge over al-Hudaybi even in death.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 36.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 44.

Al-Hudaybi's and Qutb's different ideologies came to a head in the debate over Egypt's (and particularly Nasser's) role in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Qutb's supporters argued that it was never appropriate to support a *jahili* ruler, and that while Nasser was in power, they would never support him. Therefore, despite their dislike for Israel, Nasser's presidency, rather than Israel, was the primary enemy. On the other hand, al-Hudaybi argued that while he did not like Nasser (whose administration had previously sentenced him to death), Nasser was still a Muslim, and that in a time of war, it was still important to support a Muslim over the non-Muslim enemy. A third group of people emerged that supported neither Qutbists nor did it outwardly support al-Hudaybi, as it did not wish to take sides. They considered themselves to be in the tradition of Hassan al-Banna and did not consider themselves to be activists in the way Qutb's supporters did. The supporters of al-Hudaybi and al-Banna acted as moderates, as their arguments rested on the leadership itself, rather than "theological interpretations."⁵⁸ Unfortunately for al-Hudaybi, Egypt's bruising defeat in the war seemed to many to confirm Qutb's interpretation that a *jahili* ruler should not be supported even in the most dire of circumstances.

Preachers Not Judges

The manuscript of *Duat La Qudat (Preachers Not Judges)* was completed on February 23rd, 1960, while al-Hudaybi was in jail, but was not published until 1977.⁵⁹ Though the work has been available for years, the book, like al-Hudaybi himself, has been overlooked in favor of more radicalized works such as those of Sayyed Qutb.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 46.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 63.

Barbara Zollner's book *The Muslim Brotherhood: Hasan al-Hudaybi and Ideology* offers some of the only translation work done of al-Hudaybi's book, and she explores its different meanings, from the role of the government in an ideal Islamic society to beliefs regarding who is and who is not a Muslim that suggest a more moderate tone than Qutb. In fact al-Hudaybi's book is widely considered to be a repudiation of Qutbism, even though Qutb is not mentioned even once in the entire work. Some argue that *Duat La Qudat* was in fact not actually written by al-Hudaybi himself, and Zollner mentions the various implications of this suggestion. There are several claims of authorship aside from al-Hudaybi mentioned by members of the Brotherhood. Contemporaries such as 'Abd al-Majid, 'Umar al-Tilmisani, and Ahmad Ra'if all claim al-Hudaybi was not the author. Even 'Abd al-Khaliq, another imprisoned Brotherhood member and admitted supporter of al-Hudaybi, claimed that al-Hudaybi did not write the work.⁶⁰ Therefore it is reasonable to question the authorship of *Duat La Qudat* without assuming that the claim against al-Hudaybi is meant to slander him or reduce his accomplishments and legacy at all. These claims take various forms, and many of them include al-Hudaybi's son, Ma'mun al-Hudaybi. They range from the belief that Ma'mun composed the work with Brotherhood colleagues and his father edited it to the suggestion of Fu'ad 'Allam that the work was commissioned by the Secret Service in an attempt to curb Islamic radicalism in Egyptian jails. This argument suggests that Ma'mun was a mole for the Secret Service, planted the book with his father, and convinced him to support it.⁶¹

Zollner is confident that it is still in general the work of Hassan al-Hudaybi, based on the similarities in style of *Duat La Qudat* and a series of public letters written by al-

⁶⁰ Ibid., 66.

⁶¹ Ibid., 67.

Hudaybi during the 1960's called the *Rasa'il*.⁶² Despite the fact that he likely did not author every word of *Duat La Qudat*, there is no doubt in Zollner's mind that credit and responsibility for its creation still belong to al-Hudaybi. She suggests that as the leader of the organization, despite his limited contact with the world outside of prison, he must have approved its writing and final product. She also argues that the inconsistencies regarding the various claims of authorship are due to the fact that the writing process occurred amongst a circle of trustees, and he likely served as a kind of "editor-in-chief" of the project.⁶³

Along with the question of authorship, one must wonder why al-Hudaybi felt the need to create the book in the first place. He was in prison at the time, and during the time of writing, there were no assurances that he would ever leave jail. One can conclude that there were two major goals in writing the book. These goals were to use the book as a response to radicalism, and to set the Muslim Brotherhood's agenda to a moderate one that al-Hudaybi supported. Zollner suggests that the reason Qutb's name is not mentioned in the book at all is because al-Hudaybi meant for it to "refute circulating radical thought, rather than exclusively Qutb's interpretation"⁶⁴ within circles of the Muslim Brotherhood. Though he counters some of Qutb's specific arguments, perhaps he wanted to make the work a broader refutation of radical belief, without limiting it to one particular radical philosophy by one person. Similarly it is possible that al-Hudaybi either did not feel the need or desire to give Qutb so much credit for his beliefs and influence as to dedicate an entire book of theological thought to a person whose philosophies were so antithetical to his own. Additionally, though al-Hudaybi was in jail at the time, he was

⁶² Ibid., 66.

⁶³ Ibid., 69.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 67.

still the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, and in such a time of disarray he may have felt the obligation to keep the organization as centralized and organized as possible. Despite his incarceration, he did not want to see the Brotherhood disintegrate under his watch. Therefore he may have felt it was either his duty or his privilege to continue to set the agenda for the Brotherhood. As seen above, it is clear that his agenda was one of moderation, at least compared to Qutb's worldviews and philosophies of the role of Muslims as potentially violent activists. As a person coming from a background working with the Egyptian public sector as a judge, his ideas regarding patience and moderation may come from his belief that it was imperative that the MB live and work with and within the system, and not simply reject everything with a call for potentially violent action against the institutions of the state.

The meaning of the title *Preachers Not Judges* can best be explained in al-Hudaybi's discussion of *kufir*, or unbelief. Zollner uses the word *kafir* to refer to "a person [who] takes the position that there is no God, that He is not One, or that Muhammad was not a prophet."⁶⁵ Ibrahim Hayani, a professor at Ryerson University in Toronto, defines *kufir* as "denying and rejecting faith with ingratitude toward God and negligence toward the duties conferred by God, such as telling the truth."⁶⁶ Therefore the idea does not simply deny the basic tenets of Islam, but is also somewhat derogatory in nature and does not necessarily simply distinguish between Muslims and non-Muslims. The question of what it means to be a believer and the boundary between belief and *kufir* are crucial in al-Hudaybi's argument, as one of the fundamental points in *Duat La Qudat* is the difference

⁶⁵ Ibid., 71.

⁶⁶ Ibrahim Hayani. "To understand 'kuffar' we need to go to its root," *National Post*, October 27, 2009.

between what he believes is the correct way to be a true believer, as compared to a more Qutbist, radical approach to what entails being a believer.

The *shahada* is the Muslim profession of faith that there is one God and that Muhammad is God's prophet. It is the first pillar of Islam, and this admission of belief initiates people into the Muslim community. According to Zollner, it is appropriate to assume that al-Hudaybi's interpretation of the *shahada* comes from a more mainstream and moderate tradition.⁶⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, despite the fact that some see him as a forefather of radical Islamic thought, agrees with the consensus regarding the profession of faith, saying "Whoever pronounces this 'Pure word' [the *shahada*] with his tongue, believes in it in his heart and does not combine it with any contradictory saying, act or belief, will join the Deen of Allah and depart from *Kufr*."⁶⁸ Al-Hudaybi agrees with the stress on intention in the heart (*bi'l-qalb*), and writes that this is only one factor in the act of bearing witness; the other is expression through speech (*bi'l-lisan*).⁶⁹ Expression through speech is the only "verifiable"⁷⁰ form of admission of faith as it relates to other people, and he believes that only God can judge the true intentions in people's hearts. Therefore, it is not appropriate for any person to doubt the sincerity of another person's recitation of the *shahada*.⁷¹ According to al-Hudaybi "whoever judges that someone is no longer a Muslim...deviates from Islam and transgresses God's will by judging another person's faith."⁷² As far as al-Hudaybi is concerned, there is nothing else required to prove one's dedication or identity as a believing Muslim. This stance has serious implications for the

⁶⁷ Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 76.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 77.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Leiken, et al., "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood."

general society, because it counters Qutb's belief that "faith must at the same time be put into practice,"⁷³ and that "[the Muslim community] cannot come into existence simply as a creed in the hearts of individual Muslims, however numerous they may be, unless they become an active, harmonious, and cooperative group."⁷⁴ The fact that Qutb qualifies the admission of faith is reflected in his belief that true Muslims must actively seek to root out non-Islamic leaders. While God is the final judge in al-Hudaybi's idea of belief, Qutb's beliefs suggest that a person can determine whether one is sufficiently carrying out the actions required of him in order to prove belief.⁷⁵

To someone reading *Duat La Qudat* through the lens of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 21st century, an obvious omission in al-Hudaybi's book is his lack of discussion of democracy or of the public in any way selecting the leader of the ideal Muslim state. This is likely because al-Hudaybi viewed the Muslim Brotherhood not as a political entity, but rather as a strictly religious one.⁷⁶ That said, the creation of an Islamic state by its very definition requires that the government to be Islamic in nature. Therefore he does give some sense of how an ideal Islamic government would look. It would include institutions "such as the caliphate (*khalifa*), or Imamate (*imama*), council (*shura*), and judges (*qudah*)."⁷⁷ The ruler would inherently be a religious ruler, as he believed that "an Islamic state system without the imam as its ruler is unthinkable."⁷⁸ According to his book, this ruler would be male, healthy in both mind and body, not a minor in terms of

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 78.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Tacchini, Review of *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 708.

⁷⁷ Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 110.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 117.

age, and of course, the ruler would be a Muslim.⁷⁹ However, he does not go into much more detail about how the ruler or people of the other institutions would be selected.

One could argue that although al-Hudaybi was himself a moderate in the Muslim Brotherhood, he was not a proponent of democracy, and not how one pictures a moderate Islamist in today's sense of the term. While this is a valid argument, one must note that al-Hudaybi lived in a time of great flux within the Egyptian government, and he had witnessed several different forms of government, none of them truly resembling a modern democracy. Previous to the Free Officers' Revolution in 1952, there was a somewhat democratic process in place, but the country was still under the leadership of the monarchy. And above even that was the British government, which still had a strong presence and influence in Egypt.⁸⁰ Additionally, while the Brotherhood was somewhat involved in the political process before the 1952 revolution, al-Hudaybi and the members of the Brotherhood still considered the organization to be for the most part non-political. This is a marked difference from modern times, in which the Brotherhood does have representatives in the parliament, calls for democracy, and yet generally does not explicitly consider itself to be a political party.⁸¹

Duat La Qudat is a vital work that reflects the defiantly unapologetic moderate stance that al-Hudaybi took as leader of the Muslim Brotherhood during some of its most difficult days. It helps set the tone for discussion of the current state of the Muslim

⁷⁹ Ibid., 120.

⁸⁰ Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 303.

⁸¹ "Translation: Muhammad Badie's acceptance speech," *The Majlis*, <http://www.themajlis.org/2010/01/16/translation-muhammad-badies-acceptance-speech> (accessed May 1, 2010).

Brotherhood, as al-Hudaybi's beliefs remain the basis of the policies and approach of today's moderate Muslim Brotherhood.⁸²

⁸² Tacchini, Review of *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 709.

The Gray Zones

The Muslim Brotherhood walks a fine line in keeping its claimed reputation as a moderate group. The MB calls for reforms in the government and free elections, and yet as will be seen, is not entirely clear on its own policies were it to ascend to power in the Egyptian government. The Carnegie Endowment For International Peace and the Herbert-Quandt-Stiftung released a comprehensive publication in March of 2006 entitled *Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring the Gray Zones*. In it, the authors describe the various types of Islamic groups in the Arab world and how they respond to different issues facing them. The emphasis of the article is on six so-called “gray zones,” defined as “issue areas about which the thinking of Islamist groups is unclear.”⁸³ More specifically, the gray zones are in areas of “democracy and human rights.”⁸⁴ While the study pertains to various Islamist groups around the Arab world, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is certainly included, and considered to be a “mainstream Islamist organization.”⁸⁵ The authors define this term as groups that “have eschewed or formally renounced violence and are pursuing their goals through peaceful political activity.”⁸⁶ The paper acknowledges that this definition is meager, but suggests this is intentional, so as not to assume the actual beliefs of groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood. The MB itself seems to have no qualms about this definition, and openly

⁸³ Nathan J. Brown, Amr Hamzawy, and Marlina Ottaway. “Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring the Gray Zones,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* March 2006, no. 37 (2006), http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/cp_67_grayzones_final.pdf/ (accessed October 20, 2009), 4.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 3.

calls for democracy in Egypt, as stated by Dr. Mohamed Habib, the Deputy Chairman of the Muslim Brotherhood. He said that “Muslim Brothers have declared their adoption of democracy and acceptance of that choice as a basis for change toward the establishment of a State based on justice and freedom.”⁸⁷ It is unclear whether this suggests that he believes that the adoption of support for democratic reforms by the Brotherhood is therefore simply a tool to gain public support or whether they are firmly committed to a democratic Egypt. It is important to note that the Carnegie Endowment does not even assume the genuineness of the democratic aims of the mainstream Islamist movements it describes. As will be illustrated below, while Dr. Habib’s statement appears definitive in its defense of the Brotherhood’s desire for an open and free political system, many believe that there are in fact significant ambiguities in terms of specific policies that the MB endorses.

Since the publication of the paper by the Carnegie Endowment, there have been several responses, most notably by the Muslim Brotherhood itself. The comments were written by Abdul Monem Abu al-Futouh, a member of the Guidance Bureau of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. He names each “zone” and responds to the arguments as presented in the Carnegie paper. As will be seen, most of his response consists of stating the Brotherhood’s positions and then turning the issue to the West, as he suggests that Europe and the United States have dealt with the very same issues with which the Muslim Brotherhood struggles. Additionally, this discussion of the various “gray zones” will utilize arguments of Barbara Kerr from her piece *The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood*

⁸⁷ Mohamed Habib. “Democracy is Our Choice Toward a Civil State,” Ikhwanweb: The Muslim Brotherhood Official English Website, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=807> (accessed May 1, 2010).

– *a normal conservative party?*” in which she responds to the arguments of both the Carnegie Endowment as well as the Muslim Brotherhood in their respective releases.

The Carnegie Paper suggests that the ambiguities in mainstream Islamist movements have deep roots, “including the dual character of these movements as political and religious organizations, the rise of a new generation of activists, and the contradictions of the broader sociopolitical context of the countries where they operate.”⁸⁸ Near the beginning of his response, Abdul Monem Abul al-Futouh comments on the notion of the Brotherhood’s “dual character.” He seeks to draw a clear separation between the political and religious aspects of the Brotherhood, saying that the MB “is an Islamic association, not just a religious organization or a conventional political party.” He goes on to explain that there is currently a debate within the MB, and mentions two potential solutions: the possibility of a “transformation to a political party” that would execute the MB’s “reform agenda,” or even possibly the creation of a separate political party with a clearly defined role that differs from that of the Brotherhood movement itself.⁸⁹ Before delving into the particular gray zones, it is worth noting the possible intention behind ambiguities on the part of Islamist organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood. The Carnegie Paper mentions motives such as the “fear of undermining their credibility with either their religious followers or their political constituents,” as well as the desire to avoid backlash from the central government because of clearly defined positions.⁹⁰ Therefore, while al-Futouh’s responses may seem to further the ambiguities, it is entirely feasible and perhaps likely that this is completely intentional on

⁸⁸ Brown, et al. “Gray Zones,” 10.

⁸⁹ Abdul Monem Abul Futouh. “Response to Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring the Gray Zones.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, www.carnegieendowment.org/files/FutouhEnglishFullText__5_.pdf (accessed October 20, 2009).

⁹⁰ Brown, et al. “Gray Zones,” 7-8.

the part of the Brotherhood. The gray zones cited by the Carnegie Paper are as follows: Islamic law, the use of violence, political pluralism, civil and political rights, the rights of women, and religious minorities.

Islamic Law

The writers of the Carnegie Paper consider the issue of the implementation of Islamic law, or *shari'a*, to be of paramount importance, as “all Islamist movements call for the ‘application of the Islamic *shari'a*.’”⁹¹ Even this bedrock doctrine, they say, is not without questions. *Shari'a* is such a wide-ranging idea that there is no single comprehensive statement of what constitutes *shari'a*. As discussed earlier, two major influences of the contemporary Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyed Qutb and Hassan al-Hudaybi, could not even agree on exactly what constitutes the difference between a Muslim and an apostate.

Islamic law must also be discussed in the context of the political realities of the Egyptian state. According to the Egyptian constitution, *shari'a* is the major source of law in the country, thereby essentially making Islam the state religion. However, though *shari'a* is the basis of law, it is not the law itself. That is, *shari'a* is “unlikely to ever be the only source of law” in places such as Egypt. The authors note that Arab legal systems greatly draw upon non-Muslim systems, and are generally based on models of European civil law. (9) One must wonder therefore, that in promoting the application of *shari'a* as the law of the land, does the Muslim Brotherhood seek to keep what is basically the status quo in terms of civil law, or does it seek to radically change the Egyptian legal system, and if so, how?

⁹¹ Brown, et al. “Gray Zones,” 8.

Another ambiguity in terms of the application of *shari'a* law is that of enacting and executing the law. If the MB's goals are realized and *shari'a* becomes the law in a more direct sense than it already is in Egypt, the Carnegie Paper notes that "enacting law is not to be the prerogative of freely elected parliaments deriving their authority from the voters, but that of jurists interpreting the word of God – a position which is of course anathema to non-Islamists."⁹² The question would then be, how can the Muslim Brotherhood reach its goal of a more democratic society and government, when decisions relating to the law of the land cannot be entrusted to the representative leadership if they do not have what the Brotherhood would consider to be appropriate credentials to handle the job? There is a potential middle ground between leaving behind the desire for implementation of *shari'a* and the weakening of the democratic legal system, in which *shari'a* is used in a more flexible manner. Law would be "legislated through the normal parliamentary process but...Islamic authorities must be consulted and...the law should draw in part from an Islamic *marji'iyah* (frame of reference or authority)."⁹³ The authors note that this method of legislation does not have the support of all mainstream Islamists. The difference between this method of creating law and the present process is the mandatory consultation of "Islamic authorities," though there is no mention in the Carnegie Paper nor in al-Futouh's response (nor in *Duat La Qudat* for that matter), how these authorities would be selected from the public.

In his response to this gray zone, al-Futouh does not go into much detail as to how the Brotherhood would actually resolve this issue; only that "mercy crowns all Islamic virtues," and "a conscious understanding and correct application" of *shari'a* "protects it

⁹² Brown, et al. "Gray Zones," 9.

⁹³ Ibid., 10.

against extremism, fundamentalism, and violence.”⁹⁴ He makes the points that only a fraction of *shari‘a* consists of penalties (though the Carnegie Paper too says “criminal penalties, though often taken to be symptomatic of a perceived harshness in Islamic law, are only very rarely major issues for public debates”⁹⁵). In a similar vein he also notes that all prohibitions in Islam are “known and limited” and everything that is not specifically prohibited is allowed.⁹⁶ This suggests possible flexibility on the part of the Muslim Brotherhood as to the existence of other, potentially supplemental forms of government in addition to *shari‘a*. Barbara Kerr quotes Steven Cook of the Council on Foreign Relations and his concern regarding the possibility of an Egyptian government shaped fully by *shari‘a*:

“...the organization’s main goal remains to establish an Islamic state based on a particular interpretation of *shari‘a*. Islam and democracy are not mutually exclusive, but the Brotherhood’s conception of an Islamic polity contradicts basic democratic principles. The participation of Islamists [in a power-sharing arrangement] risks replacing one type of authoritarianism with another...”⁹⁷

While Al-Futouh naturally promotes the benefits of *shari‘a* in a society, Cook believes that if implemented, it may be no better for the Egyptian people than the authoritarian Mubarak government currently in control. As one will see, this discussion of how *shari‘a* could be incorporated into the legal process is vital in responding to the other gray zones, as theoretically, every aspect of the law and how the government would interact with the people, if the government were to be run by supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, would be dictated by *shari‘a*.

⁹⁴ Futouh, “Response to Gray Zones.”

⁹⁵ Brown, et al. “Gray Zones,” 9.

⁹⁶ Futouh, “Response to Gray Zones.”

⁹⁷ Barbara Kerr, “The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood - a normal conservative party?” Ikhwanweb: The Muslim Brotherhood Official English Website, www.ikhwanweb.com/uploads/lib/Kerr-EgyptianMB.pdf (accessed October 20, 2009), 2.

The Use of Violence

While the Carnegie Paper explicitly cites renouncing of violence by groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt as part of its definition of mainstream Islamist movements, violence associated with the Muslim Brotherhood is nevertheless an inescapable historical truth. As mentioned earlier, one of the first major contacts the government of Egypt had with the newly formed Muslim Brotherhood was the assassination of Prime Minister Pasha Mahmoud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi in 1948 by ‘Abd al-Majid Ahmad Hassan, a member of the Brotherhood.⁹⁸ Though Hasan al-Banna himself did not condone the acts of the Secret Unit⁹⁹ and in fact attempted to make peace with the succeeding government,¹⁰⁰ the assassination marked the beginning of not only a generally contentious relationship between the Brotherhood and the Egyptian government, but also of the fear of violence at the hands of splinter groups and off-shoots of the MB.

The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt rejects the use of violence, as according to al-Futouh it goes “against our interests and those of our nation.”¹⁰¹ While governments may accuse internal groups such as the MB of potentially inciting and using violence, the Carnegie Paper notes that “[Islamists] are quick to point out, Islamists are far more likely to be victims rather than perpetrators of political violence, with regimes like Egypt’s...unleashing their tough security forces against even moderate Islamist opponents.”¹⁰² The authors caution that governments may have reason to be wary of violent factors sprouting from the Muslim Brotherhood because of the MB’s wide reach and various associations. On one hand, this is a slightly unfair argument to make. It is not

⁹⁸ Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 67.

⁹⁹ Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 14.

¹⁰⁰ Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 68

¹⁰¹ Futouh, “Response to Gray Zones.”

¹⁰² Brown, et al. “Gray Zones,” 10.

unreasonable nor is it the fault of the Brotherhood that some fringe elements who oppose the government may be in some way associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, which itself essentially serves as Egypt's primary opposition party. Also, the paper notes that "the reactions of Islamic organizations to the more repressive environment suggest that the commitment to nonviolence by the mainstream organizations is real."¹⁰³

On the other hand, the Muslim Brotherhood is not against all forms of violence, and it is not hard to connect violence not condemned by the Brotherhood ("resistance to oppression") and violence condemned by the MB ("intimidation and bloodshed"),¹⁰⁴ despite al-Futouh stating that the "fundamental distinction between [the two]...should be clear."¹⁰⁵ This ambiguity regarding violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be summed up by the contradictory remarks made by leaders of the MB, in which the Supreme Guide stated that the Brotherhood would "respect Egypt's international agreements, implicitly recognizing the peace treaty with Israel." However, another leader spoke of preparing for jihad with "the enemy in the east," an obvious reference to Israel.¹⁰⁶ The question of Israel represents a major stumbling block for the Muslim Brotherhood, and Barbara Kerr considers its attitude toward Israel "the sticking-point in their relations with the West."¹⁰⁷ One must simultaneously consider that on this issue, the MB seems to be in a bind. If the Brotherhood appears to end its support for violence against Israel, it may lose support amongst some supporters as well as the Hamas government in Gaza (which, because of its military wing, is *not* considered a mainstream Islamist movement in the Carnegie Paper). Most of al-Futouh's comments regarding

¹⁰³ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰⁴ Futouh, "Response to Gray Zones."

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Brown, et al. "Gray Zones," 11.

¹⁰⁷ Kerr, "The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood," 8.

violence turn the issue back onto the West, stating “in truth, it is the West that must be cleansed of violence,” and proceeds to cite Eurocentric conflicts such as the Hundred Years’ War and both world wars.¹⁰⁸ While it is reasonable to believe that the Muslim Brotherhood has historically genuinely condemned violence in most cases, even if the Brotherhood did secretly condone the use of violence, it learned very early on with the assassination of Hassan al-Banna and later with the execution of Sayyed Qutb that the Egyptian government is willing and capable of reciprocating with even greater force. And, of course, any use of violence would immediately belie any demand to be taken seriously as a moderate group with which one can negotiate.

Political Pluralism

The issue of political pluralism is framed by the earlier gray zone of Islamic law, as groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood delicately design platforms that reflect not only their desired policies and legislation, but also their vision of how government itself functions. If the Muslim Brotherhood gains power in the Egyptian government, and follows through with its desire to implement *shari‘a* as the law of the land, what possible room is there for others who may disagree not only with the policies, but with the MB’s desired legislative process? In this case the Muslim Brotherhood would be operating not only according to the pursuit of different political goals, but with its own methods as well. This kind of situation is antithetical to the democratic process within legislative bodies. The Carnegie Paper cites two primary ambiguities regarding the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the notion of political pluralism.

¹⁰⁸ Futouh, “Response to Gray Zones.”

Firstly is the issue already raised: the insistence on the emphasis on Islamic *marji'iyah* (framework or reference) could prevent the Muslim Brotherhood from effectively working with those of other parties and political persuasions. An additional ambiguity is the seeming reluctance to embrace tolerance for all viewpoints. To explain this, the Carnegie Paper cites the example of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's electoral slogan "Islam is the solution."¹⁰⁹ This message is vague and simple, and it reaches out to a large segment of the population, and it suggests that there is no room for other faiths (namely that of the Coptic Christians) in the discussion.

In response, al-Futouh stresses the Muslim Brotherhood's acceptance of diversity, calling diversity in method and ideas "natural and logical." There are two points of interest in his response to "Gray Zones." The first is an explanation of how societies are "broad enough to encompass all of these ideas so long as they do not conflict with the highest values anchored in the constitution."¹¹⁰ This is problematic because of the implications of the aforementioned "highest values." This could easily be taken to suggest that because *shari'a* is the primary influence in Egyptian law, and the Muslim Brotherhood seeks to apply *shari'a* to the society at large, then a more secular group that seeks to instill policies independent of Islamic law actually conflicts with the highest values in the constitution. In this case, the secular group could possibly be banned from introducing reform. This would therefore go directly against the Brotherhood's tolerance for "diversity."

The other point is an on-going discussion about the role of the individual in society. The statement stresses the need for a strong central government, and suggests

¹⁰⁹ Brown, et al. "Gray Zones," 13.

¹¹⁰ Futouh, "Response to Gray Zones."

that this is best served by parties, which can make differences on a larger scale. However, he also diminishes the need for the government to serve the individual. He writes that “the individual in opposition is extremely weak when he resists or differs with the state.”¹¹¹ This could, however, be more of a statement against the current regime in power in Egypt, especially when Kerr writes about the importance of the freedom of the media. It is as though the message is intended for the central government, and in this case, the Muslim Brotherhood could insist that it is they who are being oppressed and blocked from getting free access to the people. The explanation of political pluralism is also a demand for a free press in Egypt. According to Kerr, in 2005 Egypt ranked 143rd on press freedom advocacy group Sans Frontier’s Worldwide Press Freedom Index.¹¹² Therefore the statement by the Muslim Brotherhood does indeed support political pluralism, at least in a general way, but it appears at the time being that the main concern of the MB is attaining political pluralism for themselves, in the shadow of the regime currently in power.

Unlike Islamic *shari’a* and the use of violence, which deal with more general aspects of the MB, and political pluralism which deals with how the organization deals with other similar groups, the remaining three gray zones, civil and political rights, women’s rights, and religious minorities, are more concerned with the relationship between everyday people and their government.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Kerr, “The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,” 4.

Civil and Political Rights

When dealing with the topic of civil and political rights, Islamist movements such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood always stand strongly in support of extensive freedoms of expression. It is plausible that they truly seek a society where people are allowed total freedom of speech, religion, and association. (GZ 14) However, it is improbable that the MB would ever dare speak out against any sort of political freedom of speech, as the Mubarak regime would likely have no objection to silencing the Muslim Brotherhood even more than it currently does. The Carnegie Paper notes a potential ambiguity in the goals of the Muslim Brotherhood, emphasizing the parameters of free speech inherent to a group such as the Brotherhood. The writers say that “Arab liberals are willing to accept a degree of restriction to civil and political liberties to prevent open criticism of Islam and sacred symbols.”¹¹³ However, if liberals are willing to accept slight restrictions on freedom of speech, it is not clear how extensive prohibitions of free speech might be under the potential leadership of the Brotherhood.

Another aspect of this particular gray zone is “the tendency among Islamists to subordinate the rights of individuals to the good of the community.”¹¹⁴ This could reveal itself in a warped form of democracy, in which the will of the majority is accepted and implemented, but the will of the minorities and underrepresented is neglected and shunned. The Carnegie Paper does not explicitly use the word *democracy* when describing the concern over the good of the community rendering moot the needs of the individual. It is therefore interesting that al-Futouh, in his response, albeit brief, writes entirely about the Muslim Brotherhood’s goal of democracy in Egypt. He counters the

¹¹³ Brown, et al. “Gray Zones,” 14.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

argument regarding neglect of the individual, stating that the “protection of individual rights and freedoms” is an understood aspect of democracy supported by reformist Islamist movements.¹¹⁵

Barbara Kerr is skeptical of the Brotherhood’s dedication to civil rights. She cites examples in which the Muslim Brotherhood has come out against some forms of artistic expression such as its support of the recall of several “steamy novels” published by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture.¹¹⁶ While this is quite a far fetch from limiting freedoms of expression, she also quotes political scientist Ahmed Thabet, saying that “In past sessions of Parliament, their contributions have been limited to hounding thinkers and trying to legislate against novelists, artists and movie makers.”¹¹⁷ This relates back to the Carnegie Endowment paper’s hesitant acknowledgement of the Brotherhood’s support for all freedoms of expression. The Carnegie Paper mentions the banning of books in passing, suggesting that at times leaders of Islamic movements seek to gain popular Muslim support by publicly opposing some forms of expression that may be deemed by some to be un-Islamic “such as a risqué television program or a seemingly scandalous book.”¹¹⁸ It is important to note that this sort of tactic is certainly not unique to Islamist movements nor does it only occur in the Muslim world in particular. However, there is a legitimate concern that restrictions on expression that are proposed by an Islamist government and supported by the majority of the people could wind up harming ethnic and religious minority groups, all in the name of protecting the community at large. Al-Futouh writes

¹¹⁵ Futouh, “Response to Gray Zones.”

¹¹⁶ Kerr, “The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,” 4.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Brown, et al. “Gray Zones,” 14.

that “freedom itself is a central Islamic value.”¹¹⁹ It is possible that this may not be as much as a concern as Kerr suggests, as every society has some sort of limit on freedoms, though of course it is uncertain where a government led by the Muslim Brotherhood would draw the line between what constitutes necessary freedoms for the people and what is considered to be too harmful to the community to allow.

Women’s Rights

The issue of women’s rights is taken seriously not only in secular circles, but among Islamist groups as well. Islamist movements constantly stress their respect for women and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in particular has stated that “the general rule...is equality between men and women.”¹²⁰ However, the topic of women’s rights must be seen as an extension of the previous topic of civil and political rights. In the MB’s statement on the roles and rights of women, there is a very revealing passage dealing with rights in general. The article states “We, the Muslim Brotherhood, wish to draw attention to the need of distinguishing between a person’s having a right and the way, the conditions, and the appropriate circumstances for the use of that right.”¹²¹ This suggests that the Brotherhood has perhaps a unique idea of what constitutes one’s rights. According to this statement the Muslim Brotherhood believes, like most free societies, that individual freedoms have parameters. The Muslim Brotherhood is vocal regarding its support for women being active in society and politics, and al-Futouh writes that movements such as the MB not only support women, but strenuously protect their

¹¹⁹ Futouh, “Response to Gray Zones.”

¹²⁰ “The Role of Muslim Women in an Islamic Society,” Ikhwanweb: The Muslim Brotherhood Official English Website <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=4914> (accessed May 1, 2010).

¹²¹ Ibid.

women, compared to other societies in the West, in which "...all limits have been exceeded in the degradation of women in fashion, cosmetics, and sex."¹²² It seems the greatest disconnect between those questioning and doubting the MB's dedication towards women's rights and the Brotherhood itself involves the idea of gender roles. Al-Futouh writes "Women are half of society and they raise the other half."¹²³ The Brotherhood's online statement regarding women goes into further detail, stating "The woman is also the lord of the house and it is her task to care for the family and prepare the home as a place of comfort; her role is a huge responsibility and noble mission that must not be in any way neglected or underestimated."¹²⁴ The Brotherhood promotes the idea that women are no less important than men and are just as responsible for their religious obligations as men, and women can hold basically any job. This, however, is a major ambiguity. Al-Futouh says that "...women in public life have equal rights of participation in guiding society and in the policies of the state. They have the right to hold any position" and goes on to suggest that "it will be wholly legitimate for a woman to assume the presidency."¹²⁵ This stance, as noted by Kerr, goes against the Brotherhood's official statement which reads "The only public office which it is agreed upon that a woman cannot occupy is the presidency or head of state."¹²⁶ This contradiction has several possible implications. It is possible that the Muslim Brotherhood itself is divided, with some favoring expanded potential roles for women while others will not budge on the issue. Perhaps it marks a slow current of change in the attitudes of members of the Brotherhood. More cynically, al-Futouh may have simply been trying to defend the MB's

¹²² Futouh, "Response to Gray Zones."

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ "The Role of Muslim Women in an Islamic Society."

¹²⁵ Futouh, "Response to Gray Zones."

¹²⁶ "The Role of Muslim Women in an Islamic Society."

stance on women's roles and does not himself take seriously the idea that a woman could ever hold the office of president of Egypt. However, one consistent tactic is the defensive mechanism of turning the issue back onto the West. It is clear from its writings that the Brotherhood finds it hypocritical that some in places like Europe and the United States feel entitled to judge the status of women in the Arab world and accuse Muslims of oppressing women in their midst, while it appears to some in the Arab world that it is people in the West who repress women. The online statement says "We completely reject the way that Western society has almost completely stripped women of their morality and chastity."¹²⁷ Still, debates rage amongst all segments of Islamic society, and the ideal role of women in an Egypt led by the Muslim Brotherhood is still very much an open question.

Religious Minorities

The final gray zone discussed in the Carnegie Paper is the issue of religious minorities. Egypt is unique in that the majority of the population is homogeneously Sunni Muslim, and there is a large native Coptic Christian minority. In a country of close to 80,000,000 people, 90% are Sunnis, and around 9% are Copts.¹²⁸ This is unlike many other Arab countries such as Iraq, which contains not only both Shi'i and Sunni Muslims, but different Sunni ethnicities as well. Lebanon additionally has a very heterogeneous population. Therefore, though there is a significant Coptic community, Egypt mostly consists of a large homogenous population of Sunnis. While there is generally calm between the Christians and the Muslims, there is occasional violence which spawns

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ "Egypt." CIA: The World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html> (accessed May 1, 2010).

retaliation. Most recently, early in 2010, six Copts and a security official were killed in a drive-by shooting thought to be in retaliation for the rape of a twelve year-old Muslim girl by a Christian man.¹²⁹ In terms of the rights of religious minorities, al-Futouh stresses the Qur’anic tenet from surah 2:256 that “there is no compulsion in religion.”¹³⁰ He believes that freedom of religion is “the most basic of human rights,” and therefore the Muslim Brotherhood seems to be completely in favor of full religious rights for their Christian compatriots.¹³¹ The gray zone lies in the fact that the full rights supported by the Muslim Brotherhood only extend so far. There is no mention of political rights, and the Carnegie Paper explains that “the Brotherhood platform specifies that the head of state must be a Muslim.”¹³² The problem is that the Muslim Brotherhood is not just a political party that happens to be mostly comprised of Muslims. “Gray Zones” suggests that it is necessarily a party of Muslims, and therefore accepting full acceptance of non-Muslims in every realm of state (such as head of state) is impossible.¹³³

There seems to be debate within the Brotherhood itself regarding the role of Christians in Egypt, similar to the internal debate regarding women. According to Kerr, Copts are still suspicious of the Muslim Brotherhood after the former Supreme Guide Mustafa Mashour suggested that Copts should pay the *jizya* tax and should not serve in the military, as they could not be trusted, though this stance has since been repudiated by the Brotherhood.¹³⁴ In fact, al-Futouh explicitly says “The *jizya* (tax on non-Muslims)

¹²⁹ BBC News. “Three arrested after Egypt Copt killings,” BBC NEWS News - Front Page, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8448084.stm/> (accessed May 1, 2010).

¹³⁰ Futouh, “Response to Gray Zones.”

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Brown, et al. “Gray Zones,” 16.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Kerr, “The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,” 6.

and *dhimma* (protected non-Muslims) are historical terms only, which have been replaced by the concept of citizenship-based democracy.”¹³⁵

Another ambiguity regarding other religious communities is how active they could be within a government led by Islamists. The former *murshid*, Muhammad Mehdi Akef made a very telling argument:

“I would set no regulations for the formation of new parties. Every Egyptian would have the right to form a political party, even if it is a party for the Druze or for people who worship the sun. Whoever finds that this party contradicts the constitution can take that party to court. The courts will decide whether or not this party contradicts the constitution and the basic norms of the society.”¹³⁶

The Supreme Guide is inadvertently voicing a widely-held concern; namely, that other religious political parties would be legal, until they are ruled illegal. Religious minorities are already somewhat at a disadvantage because the basis of the law of the land is the religious law of a different faith. Many worry that someone of a different religion could be politically active, until that person is no longer allowed to be active. The freedom to be consistently banned is in fact no freedom at all. Al-Futouh, while convincingly explaining the importance of protecting minorities’ rights to their faiths, again does not mention anything at all about the legal political aspirations of someone whose faith is not in line with what could be *shari‘a* as the law of the land.

Discussion of the gray zones reveals the extent of the debate over such topics as women’s rights and the role of minorities that occurs within the Muslim Brotherhood itself. This proves that while the Muslim Brotherhood is a very organized society, it is, by virtue of its enormous size and influence, a society with very diverse opinions. Since the time of al-Hudaybi and Qutb there have been strong internal divisions within the

¹³⁵ Futouh, “Response to Gray Zones.”

¹³⁶ Kerr, “The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,” 6.

Brotherhood, as well as secretive off-shoot organizations. However, there has only ever been one real schism within the Muslim Brotherhood. This occurred in the 1990's, when Abu al-'Ila Madi and other members left the Brotherhood to form their own independent political party, calling itself *al-Wasat* (the Center).¹³⁷ Aside from the formation of *al-Wasat*, the MB has retained a remarkable ability, for such a large organization, to be able to function effectively while seeking to work out the various political and religious opinions and ideologies within the group.

As one can tell, these gray zones are sensitive areas to the Muslim Brotherhood, and areas in which there is obviously no unanimously-held position or single solution. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the ambiguities is how the Muslim Brotherhood seemingly tries to perpetuate them. The fact that the Muslim Brotherhood is not legally a part of the political process, means that there is less accountability towards the Brotherhood. If the Brotherhood ever ascended to power in Egypt and became the ruling party, the Brotherhood would likely change rapidly. As it stands, the Brotherhood has an enormous following and no formal power in the government. It seems it would be to the benefit of the Brotherhood not to get too specific about any single issue, especially if it is something that could potentially polarize supporters. The Carnegie Paper stresses that “even if Islamists take moderate positions while fighting for a legitimate political role, nobody can be sure how they would act if they gained power.”¹³⁸ It is impossible to know what kinds of policies the Muslim Brotherhood would enact. On one hand, it simply does not matter as the Brotherhood has, to an extent, accepted the fact that it is destined, at

¹³⁷ Nathan J. Brown and Amr Hamzawy. “The Draft Party Platform of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood: Foray Into Political Integration or Retreat Into Old Positions?” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=19835/> (accessed October 20, 2009), 6.

¹³⁸ Brown, et al. “Gray Zones,” 19.

least for the near future, to remain an opposition party. The Brotherhood has nothing to lose by claiming to accept different faiths as legitimate, just as there is nothing to gain by releasing a policy plan more detailed than the general platforms the Brotherhood releases periodically. Recently, Brotherhood platforms tend to deal primarily with issues of infrastructure and attempt to play a populist role, compared to the disconnected central government of Egypt. Therefore, while the Brotherhood seems to have a solution for every ill facing Egypt, there are in fact many ambiguities that strike at the core of what it means to be an opposition Islamist movement in a country that has had only three presidents in the past 50 years.

Modern Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood as Moderates

There are a few different possible approaches in analyzing the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and how and if they are moderates. Dr. Abdel Monem Said Aly, in arguing that the Muslim Brotherhood is anything but moderate, suggests that the MB becoming moderate depends on the state and society, and these factors affect the actions and policies of groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood.¹³⁹ It is also possible to look at moderation as a function of the organization, rather than the environment in which the organization exists. So rather than deciding on the moderate nature of the Muslim Brotherhood based on their relationship to the Mubarak government, one can look at the Muslim Brotherhood and its policies. Dr. Aly describes many hard-line potential policies that he believes would be enacted by a Brotherhood-led government. He seems to have no interest in the public statements of the Brotherhood, as he believes their claims of desired equality and civil rights for all ring hollow. He looks beyond the public statements of the platforms of the Muslim Brotherhood, and more at the “devil in the details.”¹⁴⁰ He believes that while the Brotherhood may present itself as an organization seeking equality for all, it quietly harbors “radical views regarding the relationship

¹³⁹ Aly, Abdel Monem Said. “Understanding the Muslim Brothers in Egypt.” *Crown Center for Middle East Studies*, Middle East Brief 23 (2007).
<http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB23.pdf> (accessed December 5, 2009), 6-7.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

between religion and state.”¹⁴¹ He concludes by suggesting that the government’s relationship with groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood ultimately dictates whether the organization will be moderate or not. It is important to note that Dr. Aly is a member of the ruling National Democratic Party led by President Mubarak. His political affiliation means that it is highly unlikely that he would support any position or action of the Muslim Brotherhood. Aside from his notion of being moderate, it is also possible that choosing to be moderate is a more active process than simply reacting to how an organization is being treated by the government. This examination will attempt to analyze moderation in the Muslim Brotherhood through the policies and decisions of the MB itself, while accepting that many of the policies of the MB come as products of the political environment of Egypt and the Brotherhood’s increasingly limited freedoms.

Before moving further, it is necessary to define what it means for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt either to be moderate or not. As previously stated, the Carnegie Endowment paper *Gray Zones* gave the definition of a mainstream Islamist organization as a group of individuals that “have eschewed or formally renounced violence and are pursuing their goals through peaceful political activity.”¹⁴² This, however, is too vague, and possibly incorrect, as a group that takes a hard line against women and minorities could qualify under the same definition. Rather, one can use the specific gray zones that would apply to any major social or political organizations. Therefore, the definition of a moderate group in this case would be one that avoids the use of violence to intimidate, embraces political pluralism, civil and political rights, and the rights of women. Because the Muslim Brotherhood is based on the practice of a religion shared by most citizens of

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Brown, et al. “Gray Zones,” 19.

the home country, the final gray zone of accepting religious minorities will also be used to gauge the MB's status as a moderate group. The chapter on the "gray zones" already covered much of the information supporting the Muslim Brotherhood as a moderate group as well as the ambiguities regarding these topics. Aside from that discussion it is hard to gauge the moderate ambitions of a group such as the Muslim Brotherhood, simply because the Brotherhood is not currently in power, and in at least the near future there does not seem to be a chance that the Muslim Brotherhood will ascend to power. Simply put, it is impossible to know for sure whether or not the Brotherhood is being dishonest, because its members do not have the national authority of leading the government to impress or let down their supporters. All an observer can do is speculate as to what kinds of potential policies are behind the rhetoric released by the Muslim Brotherhood.

While Aly again does not consider the Muslim Brotherhood to be a group of moderates, he says that this "should not lead to the conclusion that Egypt's Brothers are incapable of *becoming* [italics his] moderate."¹⁴³ According to Aly there are two possible conditions to the Muslim Brotherhood becoming a moderate group, both suggesting that the conditions of the society and political realm of the state dictate the status of the organization, rather than the organization itself dictating its own status. One condition is a nationalist or totalitarian central government. A group such as the MB would be persecuted along with other types of groups, and the country would be headed for ruin. A group like the MB would be forced to ally and work with even secular groups, just for the sake of survival.¹⁴⁴ The other societal and state prerequisite seems opposite to the first. In this condition, "the state and society have developed institutionally and economically" to

¹⁴³ Aly, "Understanding the Muslim Brothers in Egypt".

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 7.

an extent where the “serious political and economic reforms” lead the society towards democracy and a market economy.¹⁴⁵ Because, according to Aly, neither of these conditions have yet come to fruition in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood cannot be considered a moderate group.

The idea of the Muslim Brotherhood being a moderate organization is inherently tied to its support of democratic reforms in Egypt. As has been explained, the MB considers democracy a top priority, and Shari Berman connects moderation with democracy by suggesting that democracy can function as a method to make extremist parties moderate.¹⁴⁶ As Tarek Masoud explains,

“1) by causing them to converge toward a (presumably) mild-mannered median voter; 2) by redirecting their focus from recruiting militants to recruiting able bureaucrats and party-builders; and 3) by forcing them to spend time and energy fixing potholes rather than preaching *jihad* or subjugating women.”¹⁴⁷

In some ways, the Brotherhood already engages in these steps. The Muslim Brotherhood already has a broad base of support, to the extent that more extremist and violent groups do not associate with the MB.¹⁴⁸ The seemingly large base expressed its support by electing many members of the Brotherhood to the Egyptian parliament, as will be explained below. The second method is to replace militants with bureaucrats and politically-minded supporters. As *Gray Zones* indicated, the Brotherhood already claims not to have any violent or militant intentions, despite its historical “murky relationship to

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Tarek Masoud. “Are They Democrats?: Does It Matter?” *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008): 22.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Lydia Khalil. “Al-Qaeda & the Muslim Brotherhood: United by Strategy, Divided by Tactics.” *Terrorism Monitor* 4, no. 6 (2006), [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=714&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=181&no_cache=1/](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=714&tx_ttnews[backPid]=181&no_cache=1/) (accessed May 1, 2010).

violence.”¹⁴⁹ As for the third point, the Muslim Brotherhood seems to be a bit more ambiguous, in that while it supports improvements to the infrastructure, it also leaves room for debate about its attitude towards women. In the summer of 2007, the MB released a draft of a party platform to be perused by scholars and analysts.¹⁵⁰ This platform devotes itself more to describing “social and economic issues than to...the gender of the head of state.”¹⁵¹ However, it must be noted that the draft still does not allow for women and non-Muslims to hold senior positions in the state if the Muslim Brotherhood were to indeed come to power in Egypt.

Regardless of the fact that the Brotherhood is mired in ambiguities and questions about its particular views and practices, the MB appears to use its support for democracy in Egypt as a way to prove its status as a moderate Islamist organization, and has slowly been participating more and more in the democratic process itself by running candidates for seats in parliament. The following section will discuss the Brotherhood’s role in Egypt as supporters of democratic reforms, and how it is viewed by the government, as well as how or if members of the Brotherhood itself see a gradual shift towards functioning as a political party.

The Muslim Brotherhood as Democrats

The Muslim Brotherhood, though formed as a religious organization rather than a political one, has run candidates affiliated with the group for parliament as independents

¹⁴⁹ Masoud, “Are They Democrats?” 22.

¹⁵⁰ Nathan J. Brown and Amr Hamzawy. “The Draft Party Platform of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood: Foray Into Political Integration or Retreat Into Old Positions?” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=19835/> (accessed October 20, 2009), 1.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

since 1984, and since then the Brotherhood has gradually been becoming more successful in the polls.¹⁵² The participation of the MB was capped off most recently in 2005, when independent candidates affiliated with the MB won 88 seats of the 454 member body, more than ever before. While this is the largest polling victory in the history of the organization, the number still only represents around 20% of the total number of seats. Therefore, the parliament's reputation for being a "rubber stamp for the regime"¹⁵³ remains intact, as most of the members still represent Mubarak's party, the ruling National Democratic Party. However, under the circumstances at the time, it speaks to the widespread support among the public for the Brotherhood that the group won that many seats.

In a piece written by James Traub for the *New York Times*, the 2005 poll made the Egyptian government nervous from the start, as the Brotherhood surprised the government with how successful its independent candidates were in the first several rounds of voting.¹⁵⁴ In the second round, despite the fact that the police "restricted access to polling areas in brotherhood strongholds," the Brotherhood was still successful. According to Traub, once the third round of voting arrived, the government "pulled out all the stops."¹⁵⁵ Activists for the opposition were beaten and arrested, voting booths were closed, and by the end of the election, fourteen people had been killed.¹⁵⁶ There are several possible explanations for the success of the Brotherhood in the democratic process in 2005. The first is the widespread support for the MB, at least compared with

¹⁵² Shehata, Samer and Joshua Stacher. "The Brotherhood Goes to Parliament," *Middle East Report*, Fall 2006. http://www.merip.org/mer/mer240/shehata_stacher.html (accessed October 20, 2009).

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Traub, "Islamic Democrats?"

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

the Mubarak-led NDP. The Brotherhood had been organizing and building up support for its political wing for years, culminating with its 2005 success. For instance, though 2005 was a huge victory, it was not the first time the MB held seats in parliament; the Brotherhood gained 17 seats in 2000.¹⁵⁷

Additionally, the MB was very careful in the run-up to the 2005 elections, as stated by Israel Elad-Altman. He explains that beginning in March of 2005, the MB organized street protests in Cairo demanding political reforms.¹⁵⁸ Many members were arrested, and by that summer the demonstrations had ended. He argues that the Brotherhood, according to one of its senior members, actually contacted the authorities to prepare them for most of the protests. He says that the demonstrations were held to satiate the lower ranks in the party, and did not call for the removal of Mubarak from office.¹⁵⁹ The Brotherhood, along with other opposition groups, had originally planned to boycott the elections as a way to avoid legitimizing the expected wide success of the NDP. The Brotherhood finally decided that it was in their best interest to actually participate in the elections, or risk giving up a potentially valuable opportunity. Later, before the election, the MB “announced that its candidates would now identify themselves as representing the MB rather than ‘the Islamic Trend,’” a departure from the practice of the previous several years.¹⁶⁰ At the same time, the Brotherhood decided it would not run candidates in the same areas where senior government figures were also running, as a nod to the government.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Israel Elad-Altman, “Democracy, elections and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 3 (2006): 31.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 34.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

The preparation of the Muslim Brotherhood coincided with another important factor: pressure from the United States under President George W. Bush. Bush made the integration democratic reforms across the world a major priority during his inaugural address in 2005. He said “it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.” Traub argues that “Egypt occupied the bull’s-eye on this target,” and the United States certainly had sufficient leverage to pressure Egypt in the form of a yearly \$2 billion economic and military aid package following the 1979 Camp David accords, which resulted in the peace deal between Egypt and Israel.¹⁶² Egypt is the most populated country in the Arab world, and is as well a strong ally of the United States. It was therefore logical that Egypt would be one of the primary targets of Bush’s appeals for more democracy. In fact, Bush contacted Mubarak not long after his inaugural address to urge him to “allow independent monitors to oversee the elections and to loosen the asphyxiating controls on political activity and the press.”¹⁶³ Mubarak relented, and agreed to allow for more freedom in the polling system than ever before. This included loosening restrictions on political freedoms, and allowing for the first time a contested presidential election. Additionally, the U.S. Agency for International Development allocated \$50 million strictly for the training of election monitors and political party activists.¹⁶⁴

The careful preparation by the Muslim Brotherhood, combined with American pressure resulted in the Brotherhood gaining the most parliamentary seats in its history. The hysteria demonstrated by the Egyptian government during the polling rounds after

¹⁶² Traub, “Islamic Democrats?”

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

seeing the success of the Muslim Brotherhood suggests that it did not expect the Brotherhood and its ardent supporters to participate to the extent that they did. The Mubarak administration was likely more concerned with other, more secularist groups that pushed for democratic reform such as the *Wasat* - literally “Center”- party. The *Wasat* Party broke with the Muslim Brotherhood in the mid-1990’s and considers itself to be a secularist party, even inviting Copts to be members, expressing its belief that it is not necessary for a Muslim to lead the country.¹⁶⁵ The government found itself in a difficult situation, as there were many more trained election monitors in Egypt than ever before, mostly due to the Bush administration’s pressure to hold fair and open elections. Therefore, the Muslim Brotherhood took advantage of its organizational abilities and the political atmosphere in Egypt at the time, and used it to secure a huge victory.

Those affiliated with the Brotherhood hold a large number of seats in parliament, though one must also consider the effects, or lack thereof, of the Brotherhood’s participation in the Egyptian legislature. While again, the Brotherhood’s affiliates hold only a minority of seats in parliament, there have been signs that they have been making a difference, even if not in policy. Previously the parliament represented simply Mubarak’s legislative arm, but Husayn Muhammad Ibrahim, a twice elected MP associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, has said “Our presence has had an effect. The NDP MPs are forced to be more critical toward the government and better prepared.” However, he added “It has changed how they act, but not how they vote,”¹⁶⁶ though there may be signs that this may be changing slightly. For the first time, after a strong response by the MB against the government’s annual statement on budgetary and policy priorities,

¹⁶⁵ Magdi Abdelhad, “Egypt may allow first Islamist party.” BBC NEWS News - Front Page, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4316258.stm/ (accessed May 1, 2010).

¹⁶⁶ Shehata, et al., “The Brotherhood Goes to Parliament.”

a few representatives from the NDP actually voted against it.¹⁶⁷ However, though the Brotherhood MPs have been active in parliament, because of their status as a minority party in a legislature filled mostly with NDP representatives, there has still been little to show for their efforts, aside from the numbers of MPs themselves.

However, the Mubarak administration is attempting to reverse the successes of the Muslim Brotherhood by doing more to keep groups like the MB from being able to run candidates for parliament. In March 2007, a referendum passed a ban on “the creation of political parties based on religion.” Part of the reason it passed is likely because the MB boycotted the vote, and later criticized the low voter turnout.¹⁶⁸ The legality of the Muslim Brotherhood’s participation in the democratic process, however, has always been questioned, as the group itself has technically been banned since 1954, though subsequent leaders have, to varying degrees, dealt with and accepted the reality of its existence and broad support. It is hard to say whether the referendum would have actually passed had the MB not boycotted it, but it is clear that the MB, being the largest opposition group, and a religious one at that, was the clear target of the referendum. The candidates affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood have always, at least since the beginning of the 21st century, run not as a member of any sort of Muslim Brotherhood political party (as many in the MB would refute the claim that the MB even has a political party), but as independents with connections to the MB. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the law would not technically affect the MB candidates, but it seems the Mubarak administration will be much more restrictive in the future in terms of which candidates will be able to

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Rachel Ehrenfeld and Alyssa A. Lappen. “The Muslim Brotherhood’s Propaganda Offensive,” *American Thinker*, http://www.americanthinker.com/printpage/?url=http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/04/the_muslim_brotherhoods_propag.html (accessed October 15, 2009).

run for parliamentary seats. It is hard to tell what the future brings for the MB in parliament. It is possible the MB will be able to hold its seats, though it is unlikely Mubarak will allow for a repeat of 2005. Additionally, the new strongly conservative-leaning leader of the Brotherhood, as will be discussed below, suggests that the Brotherhood may seek to shift back into more of a social and religious organization than remain as active in the political realm as it has over the past few years following its parliamentary success.

Much has been written about the Muslim Brotherhood's shift from a religious and social organization into a more hybrid organization that includes a politically active wing. Carrie Wickham of Emory University refers to a shift within Islamist groups such as the MB in Egypt as "Islamist auto-reform," which she defines as the "internal process of self-conscious re-definition of Islamist goals and strategies."¹⁶⁹ That is, members of Islamist groups have begun in recent years, not to ignore *shari'a* or move to a more secularist philosophy, but rather to question and revise Islamic law, and "embrace new interpretations of Islam which, to varying degrees, privilege ideas of democracy, pluralism and citizenship rights within a religious framework."¹⁷⁰ This way, members of groups like the MB can reconcile the conflict between a traditional Islamist view of the role of the Muslim Brotherhood, in which people like Hassan al-Banna and Hassan al-Hudaybi regarded the MB as purely an Islamic group with no real political goals (aside from the freedom for them to organize), and a more modern, politically active attitude

¹⁶⁹ Carrie Wickham. "Democratization and Islamists - Auto-Reform," Ikhwanweb: The Muslim Brotherhood Official English Website, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?ID=4112&SectionID=0/> (accessed October 20, 2009).

The paper was presented during Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy Annual Conference: May 4-5, 2006.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

held by the younger generation of Islamists. By shifting the contemporary interpretation of *shari'a*, auto-reform allows members of the Brotherhood to make the goal of attaining more representation in parliament just another aspect of the MB's mission to support Islam.

Some have gone even further, suggesting that the Muslim Brotherhood should support political reforms and participate in the democratic process, despite some arguing that it is not inherently Islamic to do so. Abdel Monem al-Futouh (the person who wrote the response to *Gray Zones* representing the MB) rejects any religious aspect of democracy, and believes that democracy is what Altman refers to as “a unique fruit of human experience that has intrinsic value,”¹⁷¹ and that democracy means that people abide by the law of man, rather than “Allah's law.”¹⁷² He believes the Muslim Brotherhood should change from its present form, and dedicate itself to being a transparent political party, and even cease its involvement with the International Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁷³ This departure from the standard practices of the Muslim Brotherhood could be what al-Futouh referred to in his response to *Gray Zones* when he stated that there exists within the MB a “debate...about the possibility of transformation to a political party that carries out the movement's reform agenda.”¹⁷⁴ This group of political reformers can be referred to as the middle generation whose identities as activists with the MB were shaped by their roles as student leaders during the 1970's, when Sadat did not crack down as much on MB activities. Their frame of reference tends to be Egypt itself, rather than the entire Muslim world, and they focus

¹⁷¹ Elad-Altman, “Democracy, elections and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,” 26.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 27.

¹⁷⁴ Futouh, “Response to Gray Zones.”

their energy on reform inside of Egypt. This belief in Egypt as a distinct political environment explains why people like al-Futouh believe the Egyptian MB should separate from the international group of Muslim Brotherhoods. Al-Futouh said on another occasion “we are not a religious body,” and explained that even the most religious members of the MB leadership are political.¹⁷⁵ However, based on his comments regarding his definition of democracy, as well as his defense of the Muslim Brotherhood’s ideals in his response to “gray zones” his actual position on the matter of the Brotherhood’s role in democratic reform in Egypt is unclear. The call for political activism by the younger generation, possibly even at the cost of the MB’s religious identity, certainly differs greatly from the earlier position held by the MB that considered the desire for democracy as “an assault on Islam” because of its perceived connection to Western secularism.¹⁷⁶

The desire to move from a religious organization to a political one stands in stark contrast to the beliefs of the “old-guard,” comprised of people from the older generation who were part of the Muslim Brotherhood during the days of the leadership of Hassan al-Hudaybi and possibly even Hassan al-Banna, and suffered at the hands of Nasser. The old-guard believes that becoming a political party would take away much of the value of the Muslim Brotherhood, and at most, the political wing of the MB should be an “addition”¹⁷⁷ to the organization, rather than a replacement for it. A strictly political group is unable to perform the missionary, educational, and social work¹⁷⁸ that many believe is the original and most important role of the MB. Professor Wickham suggests in

¹⁷⁵ Traub, “Islamic Democrats?”

¹⁷⁶ Wickham, “Democratization and Islamists.”

¹⁷⁷ Elad-Altman, “Democracy, elections and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,” 29.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

her article about “Islamist auto-reform” that the tension between these two groups could explain the ambiguities present in the Egyptian MB’s platforms. She writes that the middle generation of political activists are “constrained by ideological purists”¹⁷⁹ who do not want to go too far astray from the founding goals of the Muslim Brotherhood, and wish to remain a religious organization seeking to revitalize Islam in Egypt. However, the old-guard has the advantage of claiming seniority, so the comprehensive transformation mentioned by al-Futouh will most likely not become a reality in the short term. It is worth noting, however, that according to the 2005 parliamentary polls, the MB does not lack the public support to take part in the democratic process in Egypt, and commands the votes of many citizens. This could reflect the large membership of the Muslim Brotherhood, and while there is no doubt that the MB enjoys a large base of support, it is more likely the result of the MB being the most well-known and best-organized opposition group in the country. It seems to represent the interests and identities of many Egyptians as a product of its focus on social welfare and the advancement of Islam within the public and within the state. While unlikely, if the Muslim Brotherhood is able to retain its seats in parliament and keep political activism a priority, it is possible that a schism may develop within the MB between those who wish to remain active in the political scene, and those who believe the role of the MB should remain a strictly religious one.

The discussion of the Brotherhood’s growing activity in politics, and in parliament in particular, leads one to question its sincerity; whether the MB truly seeks a freer society open to democratic values and civil rights for all citizens, or if democracy is simply the MB’s best path to gaining power in the government, where it would use its legislative influence to make the country more religiously strict and conservative. The

¹⁷⁹ Wickham, “Democratization and Islamists.”

question of whether the Brotherhood is truly genuine in its calls for democracy is pondered not only by its opponents in the government, but also by other smaller opposition groups, many of which are secular in nature, and do not trust the inherent religiosity of the Brotherhood. One on hand, some argue that the Brotherhood-affiliated members of parliament “are attempting to transform the Egyptian parliament into a real legislative body, as well as an institution that represents citizens and a mechanism that keeps government accountable.”¹⁸⁰ Rather than entering government in order to fundamentally change its orientation, they seek to make it more efficient and more responsive to the will of the people.

Many democracy activists such as famous government dissident Saad Eddin Ibrahim are beginning to accept the Muslim Brotherhood as an honest catalyst for change in Egypt. He suggests that it is the government itself which is attempting to scare people away from the Brotherhood. He believes that the government uses fear tactics “to scare the foreigners and the middle class and the Copts,”¹⁸¹ as the government sees the growing political support for the MB as a significant threat to its own power. Despite the MB’s declared rejection of violence, the Mubarak administration considers the Brotherhood a national security threat,¹⁸² and by doing so, is able to deal with the Brotherhood as it pleases. Additionally, by accusing the MB of extremist tendencies, it can put the MB in a terrorist light and potentially gain Western sympathy by showing how the government is tough on Islamic terrorism.

Many secularists and others, however, are concerned that the MB is disingenuous when it appears to be in support of full civil rights and democratic reforms. They believe

¹⁸⁰ Traub, “Islamic Democrats?”

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

that while they themselves fight for reform, the MB is simply attempting to harness political power for itself, and that if the MB ever came to power, that they would, according to progressive media publisher Hisham Kassem, “establish an authoritarian theocracy.”¹⁸³ Dr. Abdel Monem Said Aly, who, as mentioned previously does not believe the MB is a moderate organization, bases his doubts regarding the honesty of the MB’s democratic goals on “qualifiers” used by the MB that “place the Brothers’ positions regarding the relationship between politics and religion squarely within the framework of Islam.”¹⁸⁴ He assumes a diametrical opposition between democracy and Islam. The Brotherhood is a self-selecting group, while the country is not, and he believes that if the MB came to power, it would change the nature of what it means to be an Egyptian to one that is more strictly Islamic. For instance, Aly suggests that every dispute and conflict would be considered a “‘holy war’ against the ‘enemies of God,’ thereby contradicting every democratic and civic tradition.”¹⁸⁵ Therefore, he and others argue that the Brotherhood is simply using the democratic process in order to one day implement un-democratic laws. This charge, of course, is troublesome, coming from a representative of the party that has placed severe limits on who can run for parliament. This concern is described by Tarek Masoud as the idea that the MB would “fix potholes in the morning, legislate *shari’a* in the afternoon, ban blasphemous books in the evening, and boycott the United States after dinner.”¹⁸⁶ Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke state that many are concerned that “the Brotherhood’s adherence to democracy is merely tactical and transitory,” and they cite the history of other groups who have also promised democracy,

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Aly, “Understanding the Muslim Brothers in Egypt,” 3.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁸⁶ Masoud, “Are They Democrats?” 22.

only to later recant such as the Bolsheviks, the Nazis, the Baath Party in Iraq and Syria, and the Nasserists, who were responsible for the deaths and prison sentences of many members of the MB.¹⁸⁷ Professor Wickham mentions that the MB is likely aware of this concern, and therefore uses rhetoric that would help them avoid suspicion that they are attempting to exploit democratic procedures.¹⁸⁸ It is important to note that Islamist leaders such as those in the MB are fully aware that they would be the “first to benefit from a relaxation...in electoral politics,”¹⁸⁹ and that is why, as has been illustrated, many are concerned about the true intentions of the MB’s growing political activism.

The simultaneous support for democratic reform and concern over exploitation of the democratic process was perhaps best expressed in a 1992 speech entitled “The U.S. and the Middle East in a Changing World” by the former American Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Edward P. Djerejian. He devotes his speech to describing U.S. policy on the Middle East after the conclusion of the Cold War and the Gulf War. He explains that the U.S. will always be supportive of those pushing for democratic reform, but is wary of “those who would use the democratic process to come to power, only to destroy that very process in order to retain power and political dominance.” He prefaces his description of immoderate groups by expressing the U.S. government’s belief in “the principle of ‘one person, one vote,’” and not in “one person, one vote, one time.”¹⁹⁰ While political reformers in Egypt seek to support any who will join their cause, they remain wary that, despite its best efforts to prove otherwise, democracy may not be the final goal of the Muslim Brotherhood.

¹⁸⁷ Leiken, et al., “The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood.”

¹⁸⁸ Wickham, “Democratization and Islamists.”

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Edward P. Djerejian, “The U.S. and the Middle East in a Changing World,” *The DISAM Journal* 14 (1992). http://www.disam.dsca.mil/pubs/Vol%2014_4/Djerejian.pdf (accessed October 20, 2009).

Recent Activities of the Muslim Brotherhood

One can take much from the recent activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, namely the instillation of the new Supreme Guide Muhammad Badie, as well as the Brotherhood's support for Nobel Peace Prize laureate Dr. Muhammad ElBaradei to run for the presidency of Egypt. These events shed light onto how the Muslim Brotherhood sees its role in the public realm as well as its how it views its role in Egypt's political arena. Interestingly, the implications of the two recent moves are in opposition to one another. As one will see below, Muhammad Badie is a very conservative member of the Brotherhood, and the modern ideology of Muslim social conservatives in the MB tends to shy away from public life and stress ideology and public outreach, rather than political activism. On the other hand, ElBaradei represents a much more moderate view, and his famous work serving with the International Atomic Energy Agency does not reflect any sort of Islamist tendency, much less support of Muslim Brotherhood, aside from the fact that he himself is an Egyptian Muslim (along with the other 90% of Egyptians).

The discussion of Muhammad Badie's ascendancy to the role of Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood must begin with the reasons for the vacancy of the office in the first place. From the outside, his predecessor Muhammad Mahdi Akef could be considered to be one of the old-guard because, as discussed above, he is of an older generation, and was imprisoned by the Nasser government in 1954 as a step down from execution, and was not freed until 1974 under the Sadat government. Ibrahim al-Hudaybi, the grandson of Hassan al-Hudaybi, says of Akef that he "...is the last of the historical leaders of the group ... the leaders who ... joined the group early on, who have met the

founder Hassan Al Banna, who have some sort of historical legitimacy.”¹⁹¹ However, he did not only have the support of the old-guard, but also reformers and young people as well.¹⁹² In the fall of 2009 Akef was rumored to have resigned in protest because of his choice of Essam el Eryan, a reformist, to the Matab el Ershad (guidance office), a 21-member group of leaders that is mostly comprised of conservatives. Many top leaders opposed his choice, and Akef left the group’s headquarters.¹⁹³ It is possible that this internal quarrel led to his eventual resignation. While he decided to stay in his position until his term expired the following January, he decided he would not seek reelection, despite the fact that the group was going through a “period of turbulence.”¹⁹⁴ Interestingly, this decision makes Akef the only Supreme Guide of the Brotherhood who has ever stepped down from this role; all of the tenures of his predecessors ended upon their deaths.¹⁹⁵ This strong influence of the conservative wing of the party and its ability to frustrate even someone as roundly respected in all corners of the organization as Akef suggested that while reformers may not necessarily constitute a small minority within the Muslim Brotherhood, positions of influence and leadership were generally held by conservatives. Therefore many predicted even before the election of Badie that the Brotherhood would select someone from the old-guard.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ Ursula Lindsey. “Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood: widening split between young and old,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 21, 2009, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2009/1221/Egypt-s-Muslim-Brotherhood-widening-split-between-young-and-old> (accessed May 1, 2009).

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Abou El Magd, Nadia. “Akef may stay to lead Muslim Brotherhood,” Ikhwanweb: The Muslim Brotherhood Official English Website, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=21711> (accessed May 1, 2010).

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ “Egypt’s Brotherhood group selects new leader,” *Asharq Alawsat Newspaper* <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=19536> (accessed May 1, 2010).

¹⁹⁶ Lindsey, “Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood: widening split between young and old.”

Badie has all of the credentials that one might expect from a member of the old-guard in the Muslim Brotherhood. A veterinarian, he was also responsible for ideological education in the Muslim Brotherhood. As a member of the old-guard, it is not entirely surprising that he, like many of his contemporaries, spent time in jail during the 1960's. In his case he was imprisoned from 1965 to 1974, and served three more years starting in 1999. Even his wife is the daughter of a member who was almost executed in the middle of the 20th century by the government.¹⁹⁷ He presents no reason for concern to conservatives, and as a member of the conservative wing of the party, he is likely to move away from activism in the country's politics, at least compared to his predecessor Akef, who was instrumental in helping to elect Muslim Brotherhood members who were running as independents (due to the prohibition on the MB as a political party) to 20% of the parliament in 2005.¹⁹⁸ Al Jazeera mentions that "analysts say the new leadership team and a campaign of arrests by police are likely to encourage a shift away from public life."¹⁹⁹ While he is still relatively new, Badie's acceptance speech suggests that he will continue the trend of the MB acting as political and social moderates. He stressed several points as particularly crucial during his speech:

1. The role of the Brotherhood as one of many moderate Muslim groups.
2. General support for all like-minded pro-Islamic movements.
3. The need for gradual and peaceful reform through dialogue, and the rejection of violence.

¹⁹⁷ "Profile of Dr. Badie: A resilient leader," Ikhwanweb: The Muslim Brotherhood Official English Website <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=22669> (accessed May 1, 2010).

¹⁹⁸ Abou El Magd, "Akef may stay to lead Muslim Brotherhood."

¹⁹⁹ Al Jazeera English. "Egypt's Brotherhood gets new leader," News: Middle East, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2010/01/2010116123052219712.html> (accessed May 1, 2010).

4. Political power through democracy and the parliamentary system and the need to maintain personal freedoms.
5. The role of the MB not as opponents of the current Egyptian presidential administration, but rather as contributors of alternate ideas.
6. The stance of no opposition for its own sake.
7. Positive relations with Christians in the Muslim world.
8. Citizenship based on equality afforded by the state, and obligations to the state.
9. Opposition to sectarian violence.
10. General support for the rights of women.
11. Support for institutions based on democracy and consultation.
12. Support for pluralism in regards to other political parties.
13. Support for the Palestinian cause.
14. Support for dialogue amongst Arab and Islamic nations regarding important issues.
15. Opposition to what he regards as anti-Arab and anti-Islamic policies of the West.
16. The call for freedom and justice around the world.²⁰⁰

Reviewing his comments, one will find that among these points, Badie covers five of the six previously mentioned “gray zones.” The only ambiguity he does not discuss is the possible application of Islamic law as the law of the land. While he cites *shari‘a* in regards to other issues, nowhere does he explicitly state this major objective in his discussion of main concerns, despite the Brotherhood idea that “Islam is the answer”. His conservative ideology comes out a bit in his discussion of the fact that the Brotherhood is *not* in opposition to the government. It is possible that he sets not political goals because the Brotherhood as a political party is illegal in Egypt, he does not even hint at any sort of

²⁰⁰ “Translation: Muhammad Badie's acceptance speech.”

institutional activity. From this list of priorities, one has reason to believe that he does not want the Brotherhood involved in the politics of the state. While he himself is a conservative, he gives no reason to suspect that the Muslim Brotherhood will at all stray from its generally moderate course.

The attempts of the Muslim Brotherhood to court Dr. ElBaradei, the former chief of the United Nations' atomic watchdog group, the IAEA,²⁰¹ reflect the external actions of the Brotherhood, rather than its internal issues and politics. The first sign of interest in ElBaradei came in February of 2010, when a representative of the Muslim Brotherhood is said to have attended a meeting led by Dr. ElBaradei in which he announced his intent to form what he referred to as "a national association for change" in Egypt.²⁰² ElBaradei is not known to have any Islamist ties, and has only even moved back to Egypt recently after living abroad for decades.²⁰³ The Brotherhood's interest in him was confirmed after *Time* reported in April 2010 that

the "Brotherhood's secretary general, Mahmoud Hussein, declared publicly last week that his group would join ElBaradei's coalition as a party — if he'll have them."²⁰⁴ While ElBaradei has not yet announced whether or not he is interested in the support of the Muslim Brotherhood, it is a major step for the Brotherhood towards a moderate stance because the Brotherhood's apparent support for the democratic process combined with the fact that ElBaradei himself has no recognizable Islamist credentials such as jail time,

²⁰¹ BBC News. "ElBaradei to form 'national association for change'." BBC NEWS - Front Page, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8534365.stm/ (accessed May 1, 2010).

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Abigail Hauslohner. "Egypt: ElBaradei Talks to Muslim Brotherhood Opposition," TIME, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1981368,00.html?xid=rss-fullworld-yahoo/> (accessed May 1, 2010).

previous activity with the Brotherhood, or a strong Islamic educational background (though many Islamists do lack this educational background as well).

While the election of a very conservative leader and the Brotherhood's courting of ElBaradei seem contradictory, there are perhaps ways to reconcile the two trends in the framework of the Brotherhood. It is possible that the Muslim Brotherhood sees ElBaradei as the only realistic chance it has to challenge the Mubarak government, or whoever else the ruling party chooses to run for the presidency in 2011. Additionally, it may be that support for ElBaradei is a way for a conservative-led Brotherhood to, in fact, stay out of politics. If Dr. ElBaradei decides to run, he will have the support of the Brotherhood while not being a member himself. The Muslim Brotherhood avoids the need to put one of their own in running for office as an independent, while at the same time supporting the opposition to the ruling party's nominee. In conclusion, while the ambiguities certainly remain in terms of the conservative Badie's actual goals for the MB outside of his broad acceptance speech, it appears with the MB's support of ElBaradei's potential presidential campaign that the Brotherhood is seeking a path of moderation.

Conclusion

As has been illustrated, despite the consistent goal of spreading Islam in Egypt as a way to improve Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood is a very different entity in modern times than it was at the time of its creation in 1928, and even through the 1960's. At its formation, Hassan al-Banna observed what he perceived as the wayward state of Egyptian society in the first part of the 20th century. He saw that groups like the Wafd Party failed to benefit the Egyptian people in its communications with the local British leadership. He himself did not see the Muslim Brotherhood as an organization meant to be active in the political realm in Egypt, but rather as a social group intended for outreach to be what al-Banna called "the troops for the message of Islam."²⁰⁵ So rather than the failure of the Wafd Party giving him political inspiration, he likely saw it more as another example of the lack of control that Muslim Egyptians have over the affairs of their own state. Its failure is inherently connected to the legacy of Western involvement in the Middle East, and particularly in Egypt, starting with the Napoleonic invasion in 1798. He must have seen first-hand the effects of British colonialism, as the Muslim Brotherhood was formed while he lived in Ismailiyya, which contained many British troops at the time.

The reasons behind Hassan al-Hudaybi's ascent to the post of Supreme Guide of the Brotherhood could not have foretold his lasting influence in the role of the Muslim Brotherhood as a moderate Islamist group. As stated at the beginning, his selection was

²⁰⁵ Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 8.

largely out of circumstance and necessity rather than any sort of support for any ideology he may have held. The Brotherhood was looking for new blood in the attempt to move past the violence that had marred it. For all anyone in the MB knew, al-Hudaybi was a perfectly respectable person, who, as a judge, not only had experience as a part of the Egyptian government, but could also potentially assist the Brotherhood as they sought legality. His selection would seemingly quietly fill the void left by al-Banna, so that the Brotherhood would not have to radically change after the passing of its first and most influential leader.²⁰⁶

While al-Hudaybi did not radically change the mission statement of the Brotherhood, he led the group through one of its most difficult periods, under the Nasser administration. As has been explained, he did not have unanimous support for advocacy for patience and gradual societal change without the use of violence. His ideology of preaching Islam and acceptance for all Muslims, rather than judging fellow Egyptians and Muslims, put him at odds with the supporters of Sayyed Qutb's idea of rejecting and fighting against disbelief and political leaders he viewed as being not only non-Muslim, but also anti-Islamic. While al-Hudaybi is a lesser-known figure than someone like Sayyed Qutb, this paper has argued that it is the ideology of al-Hudaybi, rather than that of Qutb, which is reflected by the attitude and approach of the modern Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. While the book *Duat La Qudat* was not widely available until the late 1970's, al-Hudaybi's influence still managed to keep the Muslim Brotherhood from resorting to violence, while other, more extremist groups and figures went over to violence. Many of the individuals who adopted violent means themselves used to be associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, and had generally left the Muslim Brotherhood

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 85.

in order to pursue a more violent path.²⁰⁷ Some of these people, such as Ayman al-Zawahiri, in fact now denounce the Brotherhood for not being extreme enough in striving for its goals.²⁰⁸ Despite this, the Brotherhood, for the most part, has stayed true to its insistence on avoiding violence as a means to spread Islam throughout Egypt. Hassan al-Hudaybi was the major catalyst in molding the identity of today's Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. He himself faced severe criticism by members of the Brotherhood because he insisted on the Brotherhood having a unified message.²⁰⁹

The modern Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt desperately seeks to be viewed as a moderate organization interested in equality and a democratic society, despite an attitude held by many within the Brotherhood that the group should not itself be political in nature. The democratic nature of the Muslim Brotherhood is certainly an ambiguity, at the very least because indeed the more conservative wing of the group desperately wants the Brotherhood to remain out of the politics of the state. While al-Hudaybi himself did press the government for more parliamentary elections²¹⁰, this was most likely done as a repudiation of Nasser. This is aside from the fact that he never called for the Brotherhood itself to be a part of the parliamentary elections in any capacity anyway. This is therefore the most significant ambiguity of the Muslim Brotherhood as it pertains to democracy. Hassan al-Banna wrote that "people are the source of authority."²¹¹ As has been stated, the modern Muslim Brotherhood calls for democratic reforms in Egypt, and many members of the Brotherhood believe that the group should dedicate itself more towards political reforms in the parliament, despite the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood is

²⁰⁷ Leiken, et al., "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood."

²⁰⁸ Khalil, "Al-Qaeda & the Muslim Brotherhood."

²⁰⁹ Tacchini, Review of *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 708.

²¹⁰ Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 34.

²¹¹ Traub, "Islamic Democrats?"

formally not allowed to run candidates for public office. Those who want to see the MB play a larger role in the affairs of the Egyptian political realm, as well as those who want the Brotherhood to stay out of politics, all seem to agree with Badie's stated support of religious and social plurality, civil rights, women's rights, the importance of *shari'a* as a way by which to live, and the need to repudiate violence. These, however, are also the gray zones in which there are various ambiguities.

The biggest ambiguity regards the quest of the Brotherhood for democratic reform, and the common desire to gain more influence in the parliament. One must conclude that the Muslim Brotherhood, at its essence, is not designed to be, nor can it ever be, in control of the state in Egypt. It is, by its very nature, the loyal opposition of Mubarak and of whatever person the ruling party will install after him. This is because the Muslim Brotherhood, as was seen in *Duat La Qudat*, holds no separation between Islam and the state. It was antithetical to the beliefs of an Islamist like al-Hudaybi that the government could be independent of Islam. Therefore, while the Brotherhood supports democratic reforms, if the Brotherhood in some incarnation were ever to lead the Egyptian state, it is possible that democracy, in the sense of the public selecting any person to lead the nation, would cease to exist. There is no purpose served by imagining the Brotherhood in politics as anything other than the minority opposition party at best. For if the Brotherhood ever did ascend to power, both the nature of the Muslim Brotherhood as it is now known, as well as the nature of the Egyptian state, would both fundamentally change.

So if one removes the possibility of the Brotherhood leading Egypt, then one is left with a group that sees its primary goals as spreading the influence of Islam and

opposing a government they see as suppressing Islam. As such, the Muslim Brotherhood functions as a moderate Islamist group. It uses its widespread support and influence to pressure the Egyptian government towards policies that reflect the points that Badie made during his acceptance speech upon becoming the Supreme Guide.

Former Supreme Guide Muhammad Mahdi Akef concluded his 2005 speech at the breaking of the fast of Ramadan for a day by stressing unity as a means of empowerment amongst those in the Brotherhood. He said:

“It is in view of this that we call, in all sincerity and humility, on those who are in authority in our country to respond to the calls for reform that spring from hearts that are sincere to this nation, to submit to the will of the people...so as to relieve the suppressed congestion and heal the pain of the frustrated souls and tense hearts and so as for concord, peace, love and loyalty to prevail in the lands.”²¹²

The Muslim Brotherhood seems to understand its role in society in modern times to go beyond simply attempting to influence people into being more observant Muslims. The promotion of Islam by the Muslim Brotherhood takes the form of support for social and political reforms, in addition to strengthening what they believe to be the Islamic nature of the Egyptian state. And yet despite the argument of the Brotherhood that they support all sorts of civil and social rights, and the fact that it is unlikely that they will ever directly impose laws on Egypt, it is important to point out the ambiguities and questionable aspects of the Muslim Brotherhood. While they may not have much political power, they hold a great deal of social influence in Egypt, and, if ElBaradei does become a major political player in Egypt with the help of the Brotherhood, the influence of the MB would grow even larger. It is therefore crucial that they themselves be held accountable for their platforms and stay true to their stated goals.

²¹² “Speech by Mr. Muhammad Mahdi Akef, At the Iftar Party.”

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