

# Islam and Politics

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## Renewal and Resistance in the Muslim World

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*Editors*

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# Political Islamist Movements: The Case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt

Diaa Rashwan

In the last few years, it has become clear that there is widespread interest in the relationship among political Islamist movements, politics, and governance in countries of the Islamic world in general, and the Arab world in particular. Interest has been spurred by developments in several Muslim countries over the last six years: a number of Islamist parties have contested general elections at the parliamentary and local levels, and some have scored significant electoral victories. These events have generated interest in trying to understand Islamists' positions on issues related to politics and governance, particularly since some Islamist parties have formed governments: the Justice and Development Party in Turkey and the Islamic Resistance Movement ( Hamas ) in Palestine.

Politics and governance can be used as the criteria to define and categorize Islamist movements in general. Traditional measures for classifying these movements, such as “moderate,” “fundamentalist,” “extremist,” or “peaceful,” should be set aside. A better measure is the place politics and governance occupy in the Islamists' own world view. The term “Islamist movement” refers generally to groups that defer to some aspect or interpretation of Islam as their authoritative framework, whether in defining their existence or their goals. Such groups may employ differing means when implementing their vision of Islam in their communities, countries, or other areas of influence.<sup>[1]</sup> The theoretical underpinnings of these movements (in addition to other related factors) play a pivotal role in distinguishing one group from another. Although certain criteria differentiate the movements—such as social background, political orientation, and approach to activism—the theoretical basis remains the most reliable classification.

Islamist movements can be divided into two major groupings, connected only by their affiliation to Islam. Otherwise they differ profoundly in how they affiliate themselves with Islam and interpret their religion. The first category includes sociopolitical groups that espouse a program of Islamization, while the second includes puritanical religious groups. The political grouping refers to those groups that maintain that their societies are already fully Muslim and that the only thing missing is a reorganization of their politics with a

program based on Islamic law. In contrast, the religious Islamist groups—both *jihadist* and non-*jihadist*—are primarily concerned with dogma. They maintain that their communities are not properly Islamic and must be persuaded to “re-Islamize,” either by preaching or by the sword. For them, politics and governance are merely means to an end but not goals in themselves.

Many people confuse these two groupings of Islamists despite recent developments on the world stage. Any perusal of the documents outlining key positions of the various factions of these two groupings affirms the profound gap between their theoretical and activist frameworks, suggesting that confusing or conflating them would be impossible. Blind spots persist, either deliberately or because observers lack knowledge. Similarly, developments in the Arab and Islamic world since the 9/11 attacks affirm that there can be no comparison between the widespread support of moderate, peaceful political movements and violent, extremist religious movements. Moderate, peaceful groups and parties have garnered tens of millions of votes in elections in 20 Arab and Islamic countries. Extremists have been unable to recruit more than a few thousand followers.

The history of Arab and Muslim countries, at least since the beginning of the 19th century, reveals that moderate, peaceful Islamist movements have dominated the scene, while the puritanical movements only began to appear in the 1960s. The moderate political movement manifested itself during the past two centuries in various groups, associations, organizations, and parties in almost every Muslim country, without ever disappearing from any of these countries despite multiple political, social, and economic challenges. The puritanical religious movement first appeared in Egypt with the writings of Sayyid Qutb, the well-known Islamist leader and former member of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB),<sup>1</sup> and then with the formation of small *jihadist* groups in the early 1970s.

## The Nature of the Muslim Brotherhood and Its Historical Development

In accordance with the aforementioned classification scheme, the Muslim Brotherhood should generally be considered (particularly in Egypt) a sociopolitical movement with a generic Islamist program, which differs from other comparable groups—whether on the right, left, or center—only in the content of its agenda. The Brotherhood does not seek to rectify the alleged theological deviations of certain individuals or countries; in contrast to

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<sup>1</sup> Sayyid Qutb (1906–66) was one of the most prominent Egyptian Islamist thinkers. He joined the Muslim Brotherhood in the early 1950s. He was arrested in 1954, set free in 1965, and then rearrested the following year. Qutb was brought to trial where he was sentenced to execution; this sentence was carried out that year. Qutb is considered the true founder of modern *jihadist* thought, which he expounded through his writings while in prison. Qutb completely went against the Brotherhood’s intellectual and political orientation. His most important works are *In the Shade of the Qur’an* and *Milestones*.

religious groups, it does not harbor doubts about whether the populace adheres to an orthodox understanding of Islam. Rather, its focus is to reorder the behavior of Muslim individuals and communities on the basis of its platform. This does not mean that the MB neglects theological issues; it puts them in their natural place at the forefront of an Islamic worldview. However, it does not attribute the current crisis in Muslim societies to their theologically going astray, whether in recent history or the more distant past. Instead, this situation is explained as the failure to implement true Islamic law as envisioned by the Brotherhood.

Ever since the Brotherhood was established in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna and six of his comrades, it has gone through significant changes in its theoretical and political outlook.<sup>[2]</sup> Perhaps the most prominent is its transformation from an Egyptian organization to an international movement. The MB began by spreading to Egypt's neighbors in the late 1930s, and expanded in subsequent decades to most Islamic and even several Western countries. It maintains a presence in some form in approximately 60 countries.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly, the MB's broad reach and diverse manifestations highlight its primary characteristics: flexibility and adaptability while maintaining the elements that underpin the movement. This flexibility on the international level is not only found in its activist approach, but in its natural extension which marks its general intellectual and political outlook, whose details or features may differ from one local branch to the next. Adaptability may be the major characteristic that has distinguished the Brotherhood over the last 80 years. It is this quality that the vast majority of religious Islamist groups lack, and is continually reflected in their failure to grow over time or across borders. Because of the puritanical stagnancy of their intellectual and political vision, these other groups perpetually suffer historical and geographical retreat over the long term. Even if they appear to be making headway for a certain time or in a certain geographical context, they are, in fact, constantly susceptible to disappearing completely. Their only hope is to transform themselves into political groups modeled on the Brotherhood.

## Theoretical Developments

We can now examine other developments that have left their mark on the MB's theoretical and political outlook, as well as its activist strategy. The first concerns the MB's intellectual sources over the course of its 80-year history. The Brotherhood relies on the sparse writings of its late founder for its theoretical and political approach, but has examined some of al-Banna's positions critically, particularly his refusal to acknowledge the validity

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<sup>2</sup> There are many branches and fellow travelers of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab and Islamic world, including the Jordanian, Libyan, and Syrian branches, the Islamic Party in Iraq, the Islamic Action Front in Jordan, the Assembly for Reform in Yemen, the Movement for the Society of Peace in Algeria, the Islamic Constitutional Movement in Kuwait, the Hamas movement in Palestine, the Islamic Association in Lebanon, the Islamic Party in Malaysia, the Islamic Community in Germany, and the Muslim Association in Britain.

of political pluralism. The Brotherhood has officially sanctioned political pluralism since 1994, with its branches in Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, and Yemen forming political parties. Beyond al-Banna's two main books, *Epistles of the Martyred Imam* and *Memoirs of the Mission and the Missionary*,<sup>[3]</sup> the MB's intellectual output was augmented by the group of thinkers who arose after al-Banna's assassination in 1949. At the forefront were Dr. Abdul-Qadir Awda, Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali, and Shaykh Sayyid Sabiq. The Brotherhood's intellectuals did not generally take a reformist approach to political and social issues, largely because of the difficult conditions to which the MB was subjected following al-Banna's assassination and the subsequent clash with the Nasserite regime after the revolution of July 23, 1952. Leaders and members preferred to stay within al-Banna's intellectual framework, although most of them did put forth some innovative interpretations (*ijtihad*).

The Brotherhood survived the "Inquisition"—as it is termed in MB literature—of the Nasserite regime and has engaged in general political work since the mid-1970s. This coincided with the "second founding" of the Brotherhood, when its ranks swelled with thousands of new university student recruits. This second generation of members helped renew the MB after the heavy clash between its founding generation and the Nasserite regime. Now, instead of referring exclusively to the ideas of its founder and the subsequent group of Brotherhood intellectuals, the door had been pushed open to intellectual sources from outside the Brotherhood. These novel sources began to influence the intellectual and activist outlook of the Brotherhood after the vast majority of the traditional thinkers of the Brotherhood had passed. Some of them came from independent writers and intellectuals who had been converted to Islamist ideas. They helped attract the generation of the second founding to the Brotherhood by proposing a more modern outlook for the Islamist program.<sup>3</sup>

Recent currents influencing certain thinkers and writers who were known for their Islamist bent and were close to the Brotherhood, although not members, were another important source of influence. Most possessed extensive experience in international or domestic affairs and were significantly well versed in modern culture.<sup>4</sup> New influences on certain traditional intellectuals in the Brotherhood who wanted to modernize their world views played a role as well.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Such people include Justice Tariq al-Bishri, Messrs. Fahmy Huwaidi and the late Adil Husayn, as well as Dr. Abdul-Wahhab al-Masiri, Dr. Muhammad Ammara, and the late Dr. Hamid Rabie and Dr. Jamal Hamdan.

<sup>4</sup> Among this group were Drs. Ahmad Kamal Abu-l Majd and Muhammad Salim al-'Awa.

<sup>5</sup> Among the more prominent of these are Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who currently exerts enormous influence on the Brotherhood, as well as the Tunisian intellectual Rashid al-Ghanushi and the Lebanese thinker Faisal Mawlawi, among other original members of the MB.

## Positions on Democracy

Thanks to the Muslim Brotherhood's considerable flexibility, the absorption of these new intellectual sources helped develop its overall outlook and several ideas related to politics. A number of its positions have evolved in recent decades. The MB has resolved its internal political debates according to the particular conditions in each country where it operates and has consequently resolved to accept the principles, institutions, and procedures of a modern democracy. This relates in particular to accepting elections as the sole means to obtain power, parliaments as institutions to affect social and political change, political pluralism as a mechanism for political action, and the peaceful transfer of power.

It has become clear on the international level that all the sociopolitical Islamist parties, such as the MB, that have become incorporated into the democratic political process in their respective countries have accepted the fundamental rules regulating the political process. There is no logical reason to assume that the MB would overturn these democratic rules and eschew the peaceful exchange of power even if it did manage to obtain a parliamentary majority in a future election. Similarly, the MB has affirmed its commitment in numerous documents officially published by the leadership committees, including the 1994 document and the Initiative for Political Reform, its political platform for the 2005 elections for the People's Assembly, its political platform for the 2007 elections for the Shura Council, and the draft platform for the MB's political party.<sup>[4]</sup> Lastly, the MB's actions in the syndicate and general elections, in which it has sometimes obtained a majority of seats, again demonstrate its public acceptance of the rules governing elections.

Despite the positive and progressive positions of the MB, there is still some ambiguity on its stance toward internal political development. It is imperative that the MB clarify itself on these issues, especially those involving the rights of women and non-Muslim minorities. In several of its official documents, the MB has espoused equal rights and obligations between Muslims and non-Muslim minorities, and between Muslim men and women. Nevertheless, such positions are worded very generally, without details that would eliminate ambiguity, particularly about whether women and non-Muslims have a right to hold public office in Muslim-majority countries.

The MB's draft political platform suggests that it was composed by several authors: some supporters of the outreach mission (*dawa*) and other politicians. Its major positions appear to be the work of the *dawa* supporters, not the politicians, particularly in the first two sections: "The Principles and Stances of the Party" and "The State and the Political Regime." The *dawa* outlook is based on the attitude that the fundamental problem with Egyptian society is a lack of faith, not corrupt politics. This outlook displays a lack of confidence that most Egyptians have a correct understanding of or proper sincerity toward Islamic law. Thus, in the first two sections of the political platform, a committee of religious scholars

## Women in the Muslim World

Jumaina Siddiqui

Women in the Muslim world are reclaiming Islam. They are using it to assert their rights and address growing extremism. In addition to adopting Islamic clothing, women are taking active roles in political and social groups and organizations that are motivated by Islamic principles and duties. There is a growing segment of the female Muslim population that is using Islam and Islamic principles to assert their standing in the community and the political system, and that is teaching a new generation of young Muslims, male and female alike, about tolerance and equality in Islam.

A rising number of young women are choosing to wear *hijab* in Turkey, which is cited as a model of secular democracy in the Muslim world. To uphold its secular principles, Turkey prohibits women from wearing the *hijab* in universities and government buildings. Women see the *hijab* as a way of expressing their Islamic identity, which should be permissible under the freedom Turkey's democratic system provides. The young women campaigning against the government regulation of *hijab* are seen as the next generation of political and social activists.

Young Jordanian women are looking to help their country strike a balance between Islam and democracy. They believe that Islam provides freedoms for women, but that extremist ideologies have co-opted the religion and its teachings and that a new type of Islamic government is needed.

To curb extremism, the Moroccan government has established a program recruiting female religious guides to preach tolerance and the rejection of violence by providing counseling and religious instruction in mosques and communities. In Syria, a growing number of young women are seeking to engage in in-depth studies of the Qur'an and Islam. Not only are girls memorizing the Qur'an, but they are also learning principles of Qur'anic reasoning and civic rights and responsibilities set forth under Islam. Girls are debating issues of voting and whether women have the right to vote differently than their husbands.

Egyptian women of all ages in Cairo have been involved in a larger Islamic revival in the form of the women's mosque movement for almost 30 years. The movement began with women gathering, first in private homes, then in mosques, for weekly lessons on religion and the Qur'an. The goals of the lessons are to combat the increase in secularism in Egyptian society and help women include Islam in their daily routines. Women in this movement are not calling for the implementation of *shariah* as the basis of governance and justice. The revival is to help Muslims, in particular women, learn the Islamic virtues in order to become better Muslims and, in turn, impart this knowledge to future generations.

would be established to ensure that the head of state and members of Parliament correctly implement Islamic law, as envisioned by the political platform. Elsewhere in these two sections, this viewpoint discounts the possibility of women and Copts, who constitute more than 60 percent of the Egyptian population, being appointed head of state.

There are three major reasons this *dawa* stamp dominates the draft party platform. The first concerns the circumstances under which the MB decided to announce the establishment

of a party. It has become clear that the MB was not seriously planning to establish a party; indeed, it would not have done so but for the constitutional amendments against religious-affiliated parties propagated by the ruling National Democratic Party. These amendments were meant to prohibit the MB from lawful partisanship, establishing a political party, and engaging in general political activity, on the basis that the group mixes political activism with religious activism.<sup>6</sup>

Second, the contradictions among certain sections of the political platform and the preponderance of the religious dimension can be traced to a problem the MB has been dealing with since its inception: the integration of the organization's constituent activities, which encompass religious proselytizing, social work, education, economic activities, and political action. Mixing these activities together is based on the concept of the "comprehensiveness of Islam," which is key in the movement's world view. The main problem with this is not the validity of the slogan, which refers to the totality of Islam and the propensity of various political, social, and religious aspects of Islam to overlap. Rather it is that this approach implies that the comprehensiveness of Islam can only be actualized by pursuing all these facets of life collectively, as opposed to addressing each facet individually. In truth, the comprehensiveness of Islam does not entail that every individual, group, institution, or even state should assume all these functions, as if they could only be accomplished when addressed simultaneously. Even at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) and the rightfully guided caliphs, the concept of the comprehensiveness of Islam had not yet meant that Muslims or their institutions were responsible for carrying out all these functions.

Some people were *hadith* scholars, some Quranic exegetes, jurists, judges, administrators and politicians, merchants, and soldiers. Granted, during the first years of Islam, it was often necessary to combine these careers, as the Muslim population was small. After it grew and the Islamic state expanded, these functions became distinguished from one another while simultaneously complementing each other, with the result that the true meaning of the totality of Islam was realized. In contrast, the MB—or at least a subsection of it—believes that its role is to carry out this totality in all of its aspects and functions, and that to differentiate or ignore any task would be paramount to disavowing the totality of Islam. This attitude is clearly manifested in the draft political platform and in the previous documents related to it.

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<sup>6</sup> The revised wording in article 5 of the Constitution, which prohibited the inclusion of religion in any state or political activity, directly resulted in the strengthening of the *dawa* wing. This pointed out that the platform must include more conservative religious dimensions in order to combat the dangers posed by the constitutional amendments to the role of religion in Egyptian society as seen by supporters of the *dawa* wing.

The third reason for this *dawa* stamp has to do with the varying social and generational makeup of the Muslim Brotherhood. The MB has a vast and widespread membership in Egyptian society. This means it must embrace people of differing political, social, and religious views, ranging from strictly conservative to liberal. Geography also fosters diversity and contributes to increasing the conservatism of the group. Most of the MB's new members and supporters composing the third generation reside in the countryside and in working-class areas, which are more traditional and socially conservative than the more affluent urban areas.

## Position on Violence

Because of the Muslim Brotherhood's sociopolitical nature, neither its intellectual nor its activist outlook sanctions violence in any form to propagate what it believes is the most correct vision of Islamic law. The Brotherhood's theoretical and activist documents—Hasan al-Banna's *Epistles*, the writings of the intermediary generation of intellectuals such as Abdul-Qadir Awda and Muhammad al-Ghazali, and even the writings of the current generation—demonstrate that the Brotherhood has renounced the use of any violence as a political or social means or to expand the movement.

It is important to point out the confusion caused by Sayyid Qutb's writings vis-à-vis the thoughts and activism of the Muslim Brotherhood. Qutb, in conjunction with other thinkers of his generation,<sup>7</sup> is well known for playing a major role in reestablishing the modern religious *jihadist* school on the world stage. Although the Brotherhood has never officially declared as much, Qutb's ideas from his prison days (starting in 1954) through the publication of his most famous book, *Milestones*,<sup>[5]</sup> in the mid-1960s have no real connection to the Brotherhood's school of thought. The leadership of the Brotherhood, headed by second General Guide Hasan al-Hudaibi, has circulated academic and legal refutations of all major positions adopted by Qutb in a well-known book published under the General Guide's name, *Preachers, Not Judges*.<sup>[6]</sup> However, the book never refers directly to Qutb, and the Brotherhood may be reluctant to publicly denounce him. He was executed in 1966 after being charged, along with other Brotherhood leaders, with conspiracy against the Egyptian regime. It would be highly awkward for the MB to officially disassociate itself from the writings of a man not only considered one of its greatest martyrs but one of the most important for the Islamist cause.

## Relationship with the State

The current stage in the historical relationship between the political establishment and the Muslim Brotherhood is unprecedented. Both sides are attempting to rewrite the formula

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<sup>7</sup> The most prominent being the Pakistani Abu-l Aala al-Maududi.

that has governed their relationship since 1954. Ever since a cabal from the MB tried to assassinate President Gamal Abdel Nasser that year, the political establishment, through three successive presidents (Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak), has resolved to deny the legitimacy MB has sought since it was banned after the assassination attempt and subsequent clashes with the government. At the same time, the Egyptian state has never sought to liquidate the MB; most of the time, it has tolerated a limited, de facto MB presence in various arenas of political and civil society. It is clear that the MB has understood the implications of this formula. The government has consented to deal with the MB, while refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of the group's existence. The MB has accordingly expended all its energies to take advantage of the occasional toleration of its de facto presence in society and in the political arena. Furthermore, the Brotherhood has committed itself both in theory and in practice to avoiding the use of violence in its social activism and political work, disavowing any calls to strike at the state. The Brotherhood continues to propagate its ideas and expand its base in all segments of society and even in certain sectors of the government. It is still trying to influence, participate in, and eventually come to rule the country's political processes, but without resorting to violence or force.

This formula now appears to have been amended by both sides, leading to the intensity of the current confrontation between the MB and the government. In March 2007, the political establishment added constitutional amendments that were intended to "outlaw" the MB, not only by prohibiting it from forming a political party, but by trying to keep it from political activism in general. The fifth article (which has been amended) provides the constitutional basis for excluding the MB on paper and in practice, while other articles exclude it from participating in future general elections in Egypt. Faced with this strategic change in the government's stance, the MB has resolved to change its side of the equation as well. For the first time since being outlawed in early 2008, the MB has decided to try to go beyond merely being tolerated (as per the traditional formula) to enjoying a lawful presence as a political party. Most likely, the primary factor behind the MB's demand to be recognized as a political party is the fear that the political establishment's new game plan (carried out via the constitutional amendments) will exclude, if not banish, it from the public sphere.

Both the Brotherhood and the government are trying to compose a new formula to replace the half-century-old one. Each side wants to maximize its interests and rid itself of its rival or at least minimize the other's ability to meet its own objectives.

## **A Political Party**

Ever since the 1954 resolution banning the Muslim Brotherhood, the group has faced the dilemma of trying to gain legal recognition from the Egyptian state. Even though the MB has persevered as a major player on the Egyptian political scene for all these years, its

outlawed status has been a constant challenge. The MB's stance toward its legal dilemma has perceptibly changed over the last 25 years, passing through at least three separate stages. In the first phase beginning in the early 1980s, the MB filed a lawsuit before the administrative judiciary to annul the resolution outlawing the MB. This suit has still not been adjudicated and remains before the judiciary. This has not kept the Brotherhood from insisting that it is in the right and that one day a ruling will be passed down in its favor.

The second phase in this struggle for legal recognition began in 1996, when the Office of the General Guide issued a decree that the Muslim Brotherhood would present a formal request to the Committee of Political Parties in Egypt for the establishment of a new party. The Office of the General Guide appointed as its representative Abu Ila al-Madi, a Brotherhood member. The Office also appointed Muhammad Mahdi Akef, a member of the Office (who is now the current General Guide of the MB), to oversee this process. Nevertheless, several problems and obstacles impeded the Brotherhood's first attempt to establish a legitimate political party. Because of these issues, the MB withdrew its support for the Wasat (Moderate) Party, and withdrew its members' names from the list of Wasat founders. With a small band of close companions, Madi seceded from the Brotherhood. The platform of his new party, which has yet to secure official recognition despite three attempts, has become the special project for Madi and his cohorts, who include other ex-members of the Brotherhood. The MB's intention in forming a political party was not that it should replace the Brotherhood in the Egyptian political scene or be the sole representative of the Brothers. It was to use the party as a means to carry out the political work of the MB, which would remain the parent institution.<sup>8</sup>

Because of the crisis within the Wasat Party and a strong trend among the MB's leadership to be less than enthusiastic about forming a political party, discussions of party formation declined in the years that followed. Immediately after Muhammad Mahdi Akef was appointed the MB's General Guide on January 14, 2004, the third and current phase began. Akef began his tenure by issuing public statements expressing the organization's desire to form a political party. Since this was decreed by a General Guide, it was considered a precedent-making move and has been the MB's official position since.<sup>9</sup> Akef and others from

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<sup>8</sup> There are many stories about the reasons behind the Brotherhood's withdrawal from the Wasat Party and Madi's secession from the group. Both sides agree that Madi submitted the party platform according to his own agenda, but each side maintains that it was subsequently abandoned by the other due to their differing expectations. The Wasat Party today is acknowledged as completely independent from the MB, as evinced by their sharp criticisms of each other.

<sup>9</sup> A large part of the explanation for the reemergence of the Muslim Brotherhood and its increased political activity is due to the appointment of Mahdi Akef to the office of General Guide in January 2004, and his personal opinion that it is essential for the MB to actively engage in the political scene in order to reflect its ideology and identity. Akef launched the MB's initiative for political reform after only two months in office, confirming that he was the driving force of the party. The reason behind this important change in the orientation of the Brotherhood toward politics is due to its centralization and the strength of the leadership within the group.

the supreme leadership continued to demand a legal opening for the Brotherhood to obtain a legitimate political party. This demand was made clear at the MB's protests in 2005.

Most of the MB leadership and membership now support the idea of forming a political party. Nevertheless, the MB is caught in an internal debate: not over whether to form a political party, but whether this prospective party will be a means for the MB to carry out its public and political work, or if it will replace the Brotherhood entirely. There are several indications that the Brotherhood is internally divided along these lines, with the overwhelming majority of the older generation leaning toward a party in addition to the organization, which will act as the ultimate authority. A significant number of members from the second and third generations also lean toward this approach. Nearly all of those who support having the political party replace the organization come from the second and third generations.

Indeed, part of this internal disagreement may be attributed to the characteristics of the older generation and its personal experiences. Another part may be attributed to the practical situation the organization currently finds itself in, a situation whose roots spring from the concept originally put forth by the MB's founder, Hasan al-Banna. Conceptually speaking, al-Banna founded the Brotherhood as a comprehensive Islamic committee which would encompass, as he wrote, "a Salafi mission, a Sunni methodology, a Sufi reality, a political committee, an athletic association, an academic and cultural association, an economic corporation, and a social concept." The organization has indeed developed along these lines, and it continues to carry out all these functions three-quarters of a century later. It would be difficult to incorporate all of these functions within the activities of a political party; if the MB were replaced by a political party, it would be forced to abandon some of them. Additionally, since the 1940s, the MB has expanded in both the Arab and Muslim worlds to become an organization with branches in many countries. Its internal organizational structure has come to reflect its international bent, particularly in its supreme leadership committees, such as the Office of the General Guide and the General Consultative Assembly. If the MB were to become a purely political party, it would be forced to jettison this enormous structure and reorganize it along Egyptian lines, since Egyptian law prohibits its political parties from having foreign branches.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> From an organizational standpoint, according to the bylaws of the MB, the group continues to have an international character, wherein the General Guide in Egypt represents upper leadership in all three branches, and there are three deputies, two Egyptian and one Syrian. From an administrative standpoint, the branches must follow general and broad guidelines set forth by Egypt, but these branches have full authority to run their affairs in their own countries without interference from the central leadership. This is reaffirmed by the command structure within the group, which acts like a Guidance Bureau or Shura Council, and is comprised of only Egyptians, with no foreign members participating.

At present, the Muslim Brotherhood is confronted with several issues. It must resolve its positions on these issues as soon as possible and delineate its political stances in greater detail. Of the two issues that stand out as the most vital and complex, one is the relationship among the various generations within the Brotherhood. The other is the relationship between the leadership and membership in the urban centers versus those in the rural and semi-rural areas. This dichotomy represents the relationship between two distinct outlooks, where the former could be described as open minded, and the latter as more conservative.

The MB currently encompasses three main generations: the first are those who have participated in the organization since the 1940s and 1950s, whose average age is around 70 years. The second generation comprises those who joined the MB in the 1970s and 1980s, and whose average age is around 50 years. The third and current generation is comprised of those who joined in the 1990s, and are in their 20s and 30s. Generally speaking, it can be argued that the first generation is different and separate from the second and third, which are similar to each other in many respects.

After President Sadat was assassinated in October 1981, the tensions that had hung over Egypt during the last four years of his rule began to subside, and the members of the second generation set out to reestablish and rebuild the MB. By that time, they had graduated from college and entered respectable professions as doctors, lawyers, and engineers. In the nearly two decades that followed, this generation was able to achieve, both in Egyptian politics and the syndicates, which had never been achieved before in all of the MB's history. Above all else, this generation succeeded in recruiting the third generation through its activism in the organization, politics, media, and universities.

Although the first and second generations belong to the middle class from the urban and rural areas, they are quite different in their professional expertise and relationship to the state and other political actors. The first generation grew up politically conscious, joining the MB before or during the July 1952 revolution. At that time, the MB and other Egyptian national actors clashed with one another, despite agreeing on the need to end the British occupation. Members of that generation were barely in their 30s when the organization had its first set of bloody clashes with the government, which led to the loss of the MB's founder and first General Guide, Hasan al-Banna, in 1949. Only four years later, the same generation faced an even greater clash with the new revolutionary regime, which cost most of them 20 years of prison, self-imposed exile, forced exile, or exclusion from public life. This early and prolonged experience branded that generation with a troubled relationship with other opposition parties, and embedded in them doubts about the sincerity of these parties with regard to forming alliances. It also instilled in them a perpetual weariness of the government.

The second generation began its history with the MB while in college in the second half of the 1970s. In contrast to the first, members of this generation participated with their peers

from other political parties in forming a widespread student movement that was opposed to President Sadat's policies, particularly his foreign policy. This was managed despite several disputes among these groups that occasionally reached the level of outright clashing. Even though this generation of the Brotherhood was active in opposing the Egyptian state, it managed to stay away from prison and the state's iron fist, which had clamped down on the first generation. Given this different experience, the second generation, unlike its predecessor, did not have a strained relationship with the other opposition parties. Indeed, its relationship was good with those who had been their comrades in the political university movement of the 1970s. Similarly, the second generation did not share the same fear of the government, although it maintained a critical stance toward its makeup and its domestic and foreign policies.

The difference between the second generation and its predecessor becomes even starker when three vital factors are taken into account. First, the second generation interacted with the outside world and with both Islamist and non-Islamist activists. The first generation was not afforded the same opportunities in this regard. In particular, the first generation could not yet learn from the successes and failures of Islamist movements in Algeria, Iran, and Turkey. The second important factor is that the second generation's intellectual inspiration came from sources that emerged after the majority of the first generation's traditional intellectuals had passed away. The third factor is that the second generation's members and leaders engaged more with the media. Indeed, they were forced to deal on a regular basis with the general media, whose audience includes vast swaths of the Arab and Muslim masses. This has significantly shaped the form and content of their discourse and, consequently, their thought. By contrast, the first generation was accustomed to spreading its message only through its own publications and media with an Islamist bent.

A second important consideration in analyzing the internal affairs of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is the relationship between the leadership and the membership of the MB in the urban centers as opposed to the leadership and membership in the rural and semi-rural areas. The MB conducts religious, educational, social, political, and economic activities. Because of this diversity in activities, some members devote themselves to activities related to the issue of conservatism, while others devote themselves to activities that have a more liberal bent.

After the Brotherhood's victory in the 2005 parliamentary elections, there were mounting calls from across the political spectrum for the MB to quickly form an open and legitimate political party. This prompted several reactions within the Brotherhood. The more conservative members harbor reservations regarding the MB's decree to form a party, preferring to keep the organization as the framework for the movement, which is the same organization to which they attribute their electoral victory. These members refuse to allow the MB

to be transformed into a political party, fearing that it will fall into the abyss of dismal failure that afflicted other legally recognized Egyptian political parties in the last elections.<sup>11</sup> Conversely, there is another trend calling for the formation of a political party to eventually replace the organization completely. Between these two positions, there is a compromise proposal to have a political party that is subordinate to the organization, which will have the last word over the party's direction.

Although the issue of a political party currently dominates the internal discussions of the MB, this does not mean that it is the sole issue that elicits opinions, ranging from the extremely conservative to the very liberal. Other issues, including the status of women and Christians and the priorities of implementing Islamic law—particularly the *hudud* punishments—are still debated. Nevertheless, the organization has generally been very open with the Egyptian political community since the elections, with a number of MB leaders and members submitting these internal debates for public discussion. This will most definitely prompt the MB to come up with more unified stances on these issues, stances that are most likely to be more liberal and moderate.

Egypt is the largest and arguably the most important Arab nation. It is imperative, if we are to understand its political life and future, that we adopt an empirical rather than a prejudiced understanding of the significant Islamist presence there. There can be no question that the Muslim Brotherhood has a vitality, richness, and variety that few in the West appreciate. It is also a vital part of the Egyptian political mind and life. To encourage or condone its repression by local elites on the mistaken assumption that it is something more dangerous than it is would be inviting greater political instability and the possibility that more extreme ideologies will fill any vacuum created by its repression.

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<sup>11</sup> The accomplishment of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 2005 elections can be described as a great success, as the unexpected win of 20 percent of the votes and seats had never happened before in its history, nor in the history of any other Egyptian political force in the past 30 years. The Brotherhood was able to achieve this victory given its superior organizational capabilities and because the government did not expect it and therefore did not pressure it during the election season. In addition, it enjoyed major gains due to negative voting against the ruling National Democratic Party, which took votes away from the ruling party's majority. Another reason for the outcome was the fierce competition between the official opposition party and the official ruling party candidates and the weakness of the platform of the official opposition party.

## Notes

### ***Political Islamist Movements: The Case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt***

1. The definition for Islamist movements employed here is adopted from the analytical introduction to Diaa Rashwan, ed., *The Spectrum of Islamist Movements* (Berlin: Verlag Hans Schiller, 2007), pp. 13–22.
2. One of the seminal works that has recorded the inception and development of the Muslim Brotherhood is Richard Mitchell's *The Muslim Brotherhood*, Abdul-Salam Radwan, translator (Cairo: Maktabat Madbuli, 1977).
3. Several editions of *Epistles of the Martyred Imam* have been published both inside and outside Egypt. The last edition was supervised by the Brotherhood in Egypt as *Majmu'at Rasa'il al-Imam al-Banna* (I'dad al-Basa'ir lil-Buhuth wal-Dirasat. Dar al-Tawzi' wal-Nashr al-Islamiyya: al-Qahira, 2006). *Memoirs of the Mission and the Missionary* was originally published by Hasan al-Banna as *Mudhakkirat al-Da'wa wal-Da'iya* (Al-Maktab al-Islami: Beirut, al-Tab'at al-Rabi'a, 1978).
4. The text of these documents is available [www.ikhwanweb.com/](http://www.ikhwanweb.com/), the official website of the Muslim Brotherhood.
5. Sayyid Qutb, *Ma'alim fil-Tariq* (Dar al-Shuruq: al-Qahira, Tab'at muta'adida, 1964).
6. Hasan al-Hudaibi, *Du'at La Qudat* (Dar al-Tawzi' wal-Nashr al-Islamiyya: al-Qahira, 1977).

### ***Radicalization of Muslims in Mindanao: The Philippines in Southeast Asian Context***

1. A. Rasul, *The Radicalization of Muslim Communities in the Philippines* (Manila: Magbassa Kita Foundation, Inc., 2006).
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8. K. Kamel, "Islam under Siege in Southeast Asia: The Conflict in the Philippines," *Bangsamoro*, available at [www.bangsamoro.com](http://www.bangsamoro.com); accessed September 15, 2008 (2003).
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10. International Crisis Group (ICG), *The Philippines: Counter-insurgency vs. Counter-terrorism in Mindanao*, Asia Report No. 152 (Jakarta: ICG, 2008).
11. Rasul, 2007, op. cit.
12. Liow, 2008, op. cit.
13. A. Asani. "The Bangsamoro People: A Nation in Travail," *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, pp. 295–314 (1985).
14. Rasul, 2006, op. cit.
15. N. Marohomsalic, "ARMM: Electoral Basket Case" (Manila: Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy, 2007).