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Evaluating The Muslim Brotherhood's Compatibility With Democracy: An  
Examination of the Ideologies of Hasan Al-Banna, Seyyid Qutb, and Essam El-Erian

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## Abstract

Evaluating The Muslim Brotherhood's Compatibility With Democracy: An Examination of the Ideology of Hasan Al-Banna, Seyyid Qutb, and Essam El-Erian

By Medhini Kumar

The main objective of this thesis is to determine whether or not the Muslim Brotherhood upholds its claim of being a democratic group. In order to prove whether the Brotherhood has ever been or could be a democratic group, this study looks at three representative leaders and examines their upbringing, ideology, and goals. The three representative leaders are Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Brotherhood, Seyyid Qutb, an influential leader, and Essam El-Erian, the Vice Chairman of the Freedom and Justice Party, a recently elected parliament member, and a current member of the Guidance Council. This study finds that historically the Muslim Brotherhood has been exhibited aspects of democratic tenets during specific time periods. Under Hasan Al-Banna the Brotherhood best aligned with the system of guardianship, an adversary of democracy that calls for a small elite, educated group to use its best judgment to advise and administer the state. Seyyid Qutb was determined to be the anomaly within the Brotherhood and encouraged radical Islamicism. Lastly, in modern times, under Essam El-Erian, the Brotherhood can be considered a form of protective democracy. Ultimately, the Brotherhood's claims of being a democratic group are partially supported. By analyzing influential leaders' ideologies within the Muslim Brotherhood and categorizing the type of governmental system the Muslim Brotherhood best falls under, this study lays the groundwork for further research and analysis in determining the credibility and motives of the Muslim Brotherhood.

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Though writing a thesis has been the most challenging, frustrating, and demanding experience I have had at Emory University, it has also been the most rewarding academic experience I have had in my four years here. It was the perfect capstone to my education, and I am so thankful for my family, professors, and friends for supporting me this year as I worked on this project.

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## **Introduction**

### *Main Theses*

In my thesis, I will look at the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and determine whether it can be considered a democratic group by looking at different forms of democracy. Though there are several types of democracy, it also has its critics, of which there are two main adversarial forms: anarchism and guardianship. I will examine whether or not the Brotherhood can be considered a democratic group or whether it falls under one of these alternative forms. I will examine the political nature of the group by looking at the history through the following representative figures: Hasan Al-Banna, Seyyid Qutb, and Essam El-Erian. I selected these three leaders because they signify important influences on the Brotherhood in terms of leadership and ideology and have had the greatest impact on the opinions and actions of the Brotherhood.

In examining these three leaders, I will analyze their upbringing, influences, and ideology. I will look at the history of the Brotherhood holistically to see if their thought is compatible with a form of democracy or one of its adversaries. I will be asking the question of whether the Brotherhood has ever been democratic or potentially could be in the future based on the definitions of democracy.

### **Theories of Democracy**

Before looking at the Muslim Brotherhood, I will examine the four main contemporary theories of democracy: protective democracy, pluralist democracy,



performance democracy, and participatory democracy. My understanding of democracy comes from Robert Dahl, Robert Terchek, and Thomas Conte. Terchek and Conte develop Dahl's observation that there is no single, universal theory of democracy, but only theories. Terchek and Conte look at classical and modern writers and commentators on "ideal democracy," and discuss the origin and reasoning behind democratic principles and practices. There are four forms of democracy: protective democracy, pluralist democracy, performance democracy, and participatory democracy.

Modern protective democracy was inspired by the early liberal theories of Locke, Paine, and Madison; it is a government where citizens protect their own liberty from the encroachments of government by limiting the power of the government. The citizens play a semi-active role, and the government plays a minimal role. Protective democrats feel that government should only extend as far as necessary to protect individuals' rights and a liberal, capitalist, market society. These limitations of the government prevent tyranny, achieved by the separation of powers, federalism, and bicameralism. It emphasizes equal protection under the law and political equality. This form of indirect democracy focuses on minimal government influence, where the government exists solely to protect the liberties of the nation's citizens (Tercheck and Conte, 2001, 91-97). This is very similar to the political philosophy of libertarianism that advocates for limited government power.

In contrast to protective democracy, pluralist democracy emphasizes the role of the government to protect and promote diversity by demanding a large base of social diversity to represent the view of many in society. Pluralists believe that

because not all individuals will try to have a voice, special interest groups must represent the opinions of the people. The politician's role is to appease these special interest groups, so that government policy will be a combination of various interest groups' opinions and represent the entire population. The goal of a pluralistic group is to speak for the population, and in order for pluralistic politics to be successful, there needs to be social diversity, liberty to pursue individual interests, representation of these various interests, and the necessity of groups in an open polity. This form of government strongly rejects the idea of a small elite to govern the population (Tercheck and Conte, 2001, 123-131). Robert Dahl is the best-known theorist of democratic pluralism in modern times. He states the pluralist system develops and thrives when important resources are widely dispersed throughout society, there is equality in voting and effective participation, and enlightened masses that are able to express their opinions, form their own relatively independent associations, organizations, and political parties (Tercheck and Conte, 2001, 133).

Performance democracy focuses more on the needs of the individual than the common good of citizens as a whole. It asks the voters to move from the collective conception of political conception of politics towards democratic politics that affect individuals. Performance democracy asserts that as society has become more secularized and ideas about a common good have become demythologized, causing people think in instrumental terms, it is important to bring personal, utilitarian standards to politics. Joseph Schumpeter is a key voice for performance democracy, and he believes that shared agreements about the common good should be

harmonized with narrow, short-term self-interests by creating coalition parties that promote ideas that will attract enough individual voters to agree upon. Schumpeter says the government has the role of mobilizing preferences, and by promoting competing policy proposals, the most attractive ones will gain the most support (Tercheck and Conte, 2001, 142-145).

Lastly, participatory democracy is the closest model of direct democracy. In this model, citizens play an active role in government through neighborhood assemblies and workers' councils. Supporters of this theory believe that citizens would be less apathetic towards government if they expanded their influence from solely participating through traditional roles of democratic expression such as voting. Participatory democrats believe that citizens lack enough opportunity to express their opinions and influence decisions to shape their lives. To solve this issue, they say that citizens should have a role in corporations, unions, schools, churches, and other institutions that have a direct impact on their lives (Tercheck and Conte, 2001, 165-166).

### **Alternatives to Democracy**

Today, the concept of democracy is universally popular. Most regimes, even dictatorial ones claim some sort of "democratic" title because they believe it is an indispensable ingredient for their legitimacy (Dahl, 1989, 1-2). The Muslim Brotherhood is no different, as it claims to support and uphold democratic values. However, is democracy the ideal, universal form of government, and what

adversarial forms of democracy exist? Robert Dahl discusses this idea, and states that although there are long instituted forms of democracy, it has its limitations. Dahl looks at the theories of democracy and critiques their efficacy and practicality. He proposes two main adversaries to democracy: anarchism and guardianship. He looks at these forms analyzes and their premises, strengths, and shortcomings.

Anarchism holds that because states are coercive and coercion is inherently bad, states are, therefore, intrinsically evil. The anarchist solution to this problem is to eliminate states and replace them with non-hierarchical voluntary associations. Though democracy might be the most desirable process for governing these associations, it might also be the most prevalent form of government in an anarchist society. However, in the anarchist view, democracy cannot redeem a state, and because coercion could be a product of democratic process and coercion is intrinsically evil, a state governed by a democratic process is evil (Dahl, 1989, 37).

Guardianship is the other alternative to democracy. Under this view, ordinary people cannot understand and defend their own interests, much less the interests of the larger society. Proponents of guardianship wish to replace the democratic assumption that ordinary people are qualified to make decisions for the masses with a small minority of people, who are specially qualified to govern by reason of their superior knowledge and virtue (Dahl, 1989, 52-53). Democracy and guardianship are inherently incompatible because hierarchy is democracy's most formidable rival and the claim of guardianship is a standard justification for implementing hierarchical rule.

I have laid out the main variations of democracy and its alternatives. I will use this as a basis to determine whether the Muslim Brotherhood aligns with either a form of democracy or one of its alternatives during its history under the leadership of Hasan al-Banna, Seyyid Qutb, and Essam El-Erian. I will now examine the recent and dominant role of the Muslim Brotherhood in politics, therefore explaining the relevance and pertinence of my research on this topic.

### **The Reemergence of Islamism**

In light of the reassertion of Islam in modern politics, the question of the potential harmony between democracy and religion has come to the foreground of political discussion. The continued strength of Islamic revivalism in the 1990's and the growing participation of Islamic movements in Turkey, Iran, and Egypt in electoral politics bring up the issue of the compatibility between democratic process and Islam. Some analysts believe that the promotion of democracy in the Muslim world could cause increased anti-Western reactions and instability, which would be counterproductive to Western interests (Esposito and Piscatori, 1991, 428). Others contend that Islamic values and democratic values are inherently antithetical, as seen in issues like inequality of believers and non-believers and between men and women. The potential existence of principles of democracy and the process of democratization in the Middle East are the subject of large debate both in the Muslim world and in the West. This brings me to the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist group that claims to uphold democratic values and has lately gained substantial support.

Since the recent uprisings in Egypt in January 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's largest opposition party, has gained tremendous attention both in Egypt and internationally (Wickham, 2002, 2-3, 177). As an example of recent Islamic revivalism and a potential candidate for establishing the coexistence of democracy and religion in the Middle East, the Muslim Brotherhood poses either a solution or a threat: it is either an answer to the question of Islam and democracy or a radical group that seeks power and authority. An expert on recent developments on the Muslim Brotherhood, Carrie Wickham, asserts that the Brotherhood's strong performance in Egypt's parliamentary and professional association elections in November 2000 indicates its enduring power to mobilize as a group and gain a foothold in Egyptian politics (Wickham, 2002, 224). After the ousting of the autocratic government of President Hosni Mubarak in January 2011, the Egyptian people called for elections to determine the new leader and political parties of Egypt. A prominent force in the uprisings, The Muslim Brotherhood has gained both support and skepticism. The United States government, in particular, remains cautious in predicting the true motives, intentions, and influence of the Muslim Brotherhood if they were to gain power. Running as the Freedom and Justice Party, the Muslim Brotherhood was the clear winner in the first parliamentary elections held since the ousting of Hosni Mubarak. After three rounds of voting in November and December, 2011 and January 2012, Egypt established its first democratically elected Parliament in more than sixty years. Saad el-Katatni, former member of the Guidance Bureau of the Muslim Brotherhood, was elected Speaker of Parliament by a vote of nearly 400 delegates to fewer than 100 delegates on January 23, 2012.

Despite this recent victory, the Brotherhood claims that they do not wish to govern the country. A prominent member of the Brotherhood, Abdel Moneim Abou el-Fotouh, claims that "It's not our [the Muslim Brotherhood's] aim to take power, it is just to participate" (Londono and Fadel, 2001). Members and political analysts say that the Brotherhood is keeping a low profile because its leaders are concerned that showing too much ambition could backfire and stir fear in the West and among the secular Egyptians. The fact that they are successfully running for parliamentary and government positions, however, is concerning both to Egyptians who do not support the group and to many members of the international community. They claim to be a democratic group, but it is difficult to predict the true intentions of this party, and its increasing popularity has caused a debate on their credibility.

Islamists propose a return to religious law. This proposal originally gained a tremendous amount of support during the early twentieth century as a consequence of the experience of Muslim decline and western domination. The fear of political subservience caused Muslims to seek a revitalization of Islam and the Muslim communities (Haddad, Voll, Esposito, 1991, 37). The mobilization and spread of the Islamist message largely lies in the success of Islamist leaders in gaining the trust and support of the masses. The Islamists assumed the role of "guardians of the *sharia*" (Wickham, 2002, 211). As guardians, the Muslim Brotherhood assumes the elite status of interpreters of *sharia* law. This phrase also alludes to a guardianship form of leadership. In order to gain the approval and respect of the people, the success of the Islamist mobilization relied on the efficacy of its agents and method of transmission. They gained legitimacy by impugning the credibility of leaders who

interpret *sharia* law. The Islamists have been successful in appropriating the authority to interpret sacred texts, an authority previously monopolized and abused by the state-appointed *ulama*. The Islamists in the Muslim Brotherhood have chosen several charismatic, well educated, and prestigious members of society as leaders(Wickham, 2002, 161-163).

Islamists emphasize the obligation of all Muslims to participate in reforming society at large, as they did in the 1970's under Anwar Sadat's rule of Egypt. The endorsement of new ethical and civic obligations was very appealing to the educated, lower-middle-class youth. A major site of Islamist outreach to educated youth was in the lower class in the *sha'bi* neighborhoods of Egyptian cities and provincial towns. These people had deeply conservative religious values and were physically and culturally marginalized (Wickham, 2002, 121-122). In addition, the Brotherhood attracted university graduates away from the lower classes, who were outraged by the perceived social injustices stemming from their deprivation of rewards as educated citizens. They sought an agenda for change and an alternative to the current "unjust" form of government (Wickham, 2002, 161). Challenging the authority and casting doubt on the legitimacy of the established order have paved the way for political reform.

The Muslim Brotherhood claims to be a democratic Islamic group. In this thesis, I hope to reassess the truth of their claim by looking at its Islamist leaders, their upbringing, interpretation of *sharia* law shown by their ideology, and its potential alignment with some form of democracy. The Islamist position sees Islam as a way of life and wishes to organize the whole society by Islamic *sharia* law.



However, there is a large spectrum to Islamism. William Sheppard explains that the position that is often labeled “Islamic modernist” wishes to organize society by *sharia*, but emphasizes the flexibility of the *sharia* in the social sphere and *ijtihad*, or the right to interpret scripture. This group is more likely to claim that true Islamic thought aligns with democracy and often calls for “Islamic socialism.” On the opposite end of the spectrum is “radical Islam,” which also encourages *ijtihad* for reform of traditional ideas; however, radical Islamists vigorously reject compromises with non-Islamic ways and perceive modernists as anti-traditionalists. This group focuses on reapplying the *sharia*, as opposed to the modernists, who wish to rethink traditional interpretations and then subsequently apply it (Shepard, 1996, xiii). It is important to understand the spectrum of Islamic thought and understand that the Brotherhood claims to follow the more modernist view of Islamism.

Reformists and militants in the Islamic movement sought to establish an Islamic state; however, neither clearly articulated their vision of how such a state would function in practice. This ambiguity provokes concern and suspicion in Egypt and the West. However, both factions remain clear in their intent to promote a state defined by the application of *sharia*, or Islamic law. They refer to the period of rule by the prophet Muhammad and the rightly guided caliphs in seventh-century Arabia as the ideal model of righteous Islamic government. However, neither faction has developed a coherent set of guidelines for incorporating these Islamic principles into modern politics (Wickham, 2002, 114). The Brotherhood demands *al-ijabiyya* (positive thinking) and is fueled by faith. They strive for the inevitable dominance

and victory of the Islamic cause. They see that the West is in decline and that there will be return to the golden age of Islam. Voting is emphasized as *wajib dini* (a religious obligation), aligning well with democratic concepts (Wickham, 2002, 190-195). In this sense, the Muslim Brotherhood has specified some democratic and political initiatives that it wishes to realize.

Despite the Western skepticism about combining religion and government, the Brotherhood claims to be more moderate than other Islamist groups, such as the Nour Party, in their interpretation of *sharia* law. There is great pressure to liberalize and democratize Islamic movements in the Middle East. These pressures raise the question of whether Islam and democracy are ultimately compatible. History proves that nations and religious traditions are capable of having multiple ideological interpretations. In European history, the Enlightenment transformed European principalities from rule defined by divine right into modern Western democratic states through a process of reinterpretation and reform. Similarly, Islam also lends itself to variable interpretation; it has been used to support democracy, dictatorship, republicanism, and monarchy (Esposito and Piscatori, 1991, 434). The question that I wish to address here is to determine whether the Muslim Brotherhood's interpretation of *sharia* law can be considered as a form of democracy. As stated above, democracy is not limited to the form of democracy that the United States follows. My goal is to determine whether religious democracy, as held by the Muslim Brotherhood, is viable and can constitute true democracy. In confirming the truth in their statement of being a democratic group, I hope to confirm or deny the group's credibility.

Although a large majority of Muslims today would subscribe to the idea that consultative government is central to the Islamic state, the correct relationship between popular sovereignty and divine sovereignty remains disputed. All Muslims would agree that the divine will is supreme and, in theory, God's law is unchangeable by human desire or will. However, simultaneously, by the insistence on the obligation of rulers to consult and lead based on consensus of the public, they effectively concede that a form of popular participation is also required (Esposito and Piscatori, 1991, 438). Recently, many Muslims have accepted the notion of democracy but have yet to settle on its precise meaning. Muslim interpretations of democracy build on the Quranic concept of *shura* (consultation). However, they place varying emphases on the extent and role of 'the people' to exercise this duty. One school of thought contends that Islam is inherently democratic because of the principle of consultation and the concepts of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and *ijma* (consensus) (Esposito and Piscatori, 1991, 434). This shows that there are tensions within the Muslim world and Islamists in defining "Islamic democracy" and an external struggle in the U.S. and Europe in debating whether this is even a possibility.

Using the leaders' upbringings, writings, and opinions as a method of judging the validity and motives of the Brotherhood, I have chosen three influential leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood to analyze. These are Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, Seyyid Qutb (1906-1966), an ideologue during Nasser's regime, and Essam El-Erian (1954-present), a recently elected parliament member, current member of the Guidance Council, and the Vice

President of the Freedom and Justice Party. By looking at these three spokespersons' actions and ideologies, I hope to analyze the progress and development of the Brotherhood and to determine their credibility as a political organization. I would like to explore the idea of the possible compatibility between Islamic law and democracy and use it to determine whether the Muslim Brotherhood can be referred to as a democratic group. Understanding this group and its underlying principles and goals are imperative and topical both for Egypt's future and for the United States' foreign policy.

### **History of the Muslim Brotherhood**

With the need for general reform along Islamic lines of the social, economic, and political in mind, Hasan al Al-Banna founded the Jam'iyyat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin (now translated as the Muslim Brotherhood) in Isma'iliyya in 1928 to accomplish these ambitious goals. Since its founding, the Brotherhood has fused religious revival with anti-Western imperial motives and resistance to foreign European domination through the emphasis of Islamic thought. Initially, what set the Brotherhood apart from other groups was its ability to combine Islam with modern grass-roots political activism. The Brotherhood focused on changing the outlook of individuals, families, and finally societies. It focused on the middle class and the educated classes and pushed Islamization through *tarbiya*, or preaching and education (Leiken and Brooke, 2007, 180).

After being exposed to the Hanbali doctrine in school and raised in a religious environment by his parents, Banna moved to Cairo, where he encountered intellectual, political, and social problems associated with the process of Westernization. He saw an emphasis on materialism and the laxity of adherence to Muslim principles. Abd al-Moneim Said describes Banna's purpose in creating the Brotherhood. "For al-Banna, the Islamic ideal was represented by the first generation of Muslims, when Qur'anic principles were adhered to and Islam was the principal 'nationality.' For him, the distance between current Islamic societies and the true Islamic path is the cause of the decadence in the Muslim *umma* (community)" (Ali and Wenner, 1982, 339). Further, Banna gained wide support on account of his stance that the revival of Islam was not only imperative to rescue Muslim societies from the West, but it was also an offer to bring humanity, which he believed had gone astray, to the right course. His strong stances on the revival and refocus of Islamic culture and civilization led to the organization's rapid growth, and al-Banna moved the headquarters to Cairo.

Ishaq Musa Husaini discusses the six major principles of the Brotherhood in his book *Moslem Brethren, The Greatest of Modern Islamic Movements (1956)*. He argues that the first is scientific: to provide a detailed and clear explanation of the Qur'an and defend it against misinterpretation. The second is pragmatic: to unify Egypt and the Islamic nations around Qur'anic principles. The third is economic: the growth and protection of the national wealth, raising the standard of living, realization of social justice for all citizens, and a guarantee for equal opportunity. The fourth is socio-philanthropic: the struggle against ignorance, disease, and

poverty. The fifth is patriotic and nationalistic: the liberation of Arab countries from foreigners and their influence. The sixth and last is humanitarian and universal: the promotion of universal peace and a humanitarian civilization based on Islam. To achieve these principles, Banna reverted to Islam, saying that governing is in the very nature and origins of Islam and that the role of the Muslim reformer is to act as legislator, educator, judge, and executive (Ali and Wenner, 1982, 340).

A political party relies on the ideals and leadership of the individual actors in the group. The constituents of the Muslim Brotherhood include members of Egypt's national professional associations including the Journalists, Lawyers, and Doctors associations. Not only did the Brotherhood attract the majority of educated, urban citizens, but they also played leading roles within these above associations. The Brotherhood ran its own list of candidates in the Engineers', Dentists', Scientists', Agronomists', Pharmacists', Journalists', Commercial Employees', and Lawyers' Association elections (Wickham, 2002, 184). Carrie Wickham discusses the unique situation of the Muslim Brotherhood and its success in cultivating a popular base in comparison to other opposition groups. It brought together middle-generation activists that simultaneously represented the Brotherhood in parliament and the professional associations and Islamic outreach programs at the grassroots level. Because of this unique combination, they successfully mobilized smaller groups on the periphery into national politics (Wickham, 2002, 178). It is important to note that the majority of its members are educated, middle to upper class citizens when observing the Muslim Brotherhood's constituency base. At the core of the Islamist

outreach was a massive ideological project to capture the interest of the educated youth.

In general, Banna's strategy included avoiding the battleground of theological disputes, avoiding domination by notables and important men, avoiding divisive political organizations such as parties, emphasizing gradual development in his movement before achieving its goal, seeking power to realize goals, including armed force, if necessary, setting up a religious government because Islamic doctrine includes education, legislation, adjudication, implementation, and action, proposing complete belief in Arab and Islamic unity, encouraging the revival of the caliphate, as the caliphate is the symbol of Islamic unity, and treating every country which aggresses against the Islamic homeland as a tyrannical state which must be resisted in every way (Ali and Wenner, 1982, 341). There are several concerning aspects of Banna's strategy. He suggests avoiding political parties; however, democracy cannot exist without multiple parties. If Banna is suggesting only one choice of leadership, he is contradicting his claim in supporting democracy because one party implies dictatorship, not democracy. Also, he encourages armed force, if necessary, in order to achieve his goals. This is incredibly concerning and threatening. This goes against his claims of encouraging a peaceful, democratic process and gradual change. Finally, he suggests the revival of the caliphate, something impractical and unpopular in modern times.

Emphasizing action, Banna called the faithful through charitable acts and political activity. The activities the group participated in included the building of neighborhood mosques, creating small educational institutions and small hospitals

and dispensaries for the public, and establishment of social clubs and organizations. As the Brotherhood grew, it began addressing larger issues. In the 1930's, it adopted the causes of supporting the Palestinians and ending the British occupation of Egypt. While the group continued to perform economic, social, and religious activities, it became increasingly concerned with political life in Egypt (Ali and Wenner, 1982, 336-338).

After being imprisoned by the British forces, Banna founded a subgroup of the Brotherhood called the "secret apparatus." This group represented a more violent wing of the movement and undertook its own campaign and military tactics to bring about policy results that it sought (Ali and Wenner, 1982, 341). For example, this semi-autonomous group within the Brotherhood used violence against British nationals, pro-British Egyptians, and Zionist-Jewish inhabitants of Israel and Palestine. They also assassinated Prime Minister Mahmud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi. (Lia, 2006, 180-181).

During the Nasser Era, between 1952 and 1970, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian government's relationship was tumultuous and tense in the aftermath of the regime's imprisonment of more than 800 Brothers. The period between 1952 to 1954 was marked by conciliation between the Brotherhood and the Free Officers. Six members were executed in 1954; however, in 1964 Nasser granted the Brothers general amnesty. Then, again, in 1965, the Brothers were accused of planning to overthrow Nasser. Many were imprisoned, and some leaders were hanged. Nasser's ideology conflicted greatly with the Muslim Brotherhood because he pushed for the modernization and secularization of Egypt, opposing the basic principles of the



Brotherhood. After the end of Nasser's rule, the period from 1970 to 1981 during Anwar Sadat's rule was significant because the Brothers were allowed to play an increasingly prominent role in Egyptian political life.

During the presidency of Hosni Mubarak, from 1981 to February 2011, the Brotherhood maintained similar relations with the government to those under Sadat. The Brotherhood was tolerated to a certain degree, but was officially illegal. Regardless of this illegal status, it published two newspapers, maintained regional and national offices, and made statements to the public (Leiken, 2007, 109-121). The Mubarak regime launched a campaign to eliminate the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1990's, not because it was violent or antidemocratic, but because after a decade of increasing popularity and influence, the Brotherhood posed a real threat to his political power.

After Mubarak's ouster, there was an overwhelming desire of the community to change legal and political issues including police brutality, state of emergency laws, lack of free elections and freedom of speech, uncontrolled corruption, and economic issues. This feeling of marginalization and distrust towards an unjust government that undermined the educated citizens, which they felt in the 1980's and 1990's reemerged and is similar to the feelings of the protestors in the recent Egyptian revolution in 2011. Despite their status as holders of a university degree, a coveted symbol of status and an instrument of career advancement, recent graduates are outraged and feel wronged by a government that has "deprived" them of jobs, freedom of speech, and uncorrupt elections (Wickham, 2002, 222-226). Thus, the appeal of the Brotherhood in the past, when the Egyptian people felt

treated unfairly by the government, is reappearing now. It makes sense that the Muslim Brotherhood would gain support again, since the group addressed and fought for similar issues in the past. This reemphasizes the prediction that the Brotherhood will continue to gain increasing prominence and maintain a foothold in Egyptian politics in the future.

The Brotherhood has manifested itself in the center of Egyptian politics and is a crucial group to study in order to predict the future of Egypt. In order to understand the group's motives, address their claim stating that they are a democratic group, I will examine the three representative leaders I chose in the three consecutive chapters. After analyzing their upbringing, beliefs, and writings I will conclude whether or not the Brotherhood has ever fit one of the four major theories of democracy or aligns with one of the two alternatives to democracy. Finally, I will attempt to predict the future of the Muslim Brotherhood based on my conclusions of their past and current leaders and contemporary ideology and goals.

## **Chapter 1: Examining the Muslim Brotherhood Under Hasan Al-Banna**

### **Al-Banna's Upbringing and Influences in Establishing the Brotherhood**

In order to understand the goals and history of the Muslim Brotherhood, it is crucial to look at the founder Hasan al-Banna's upbringing, education, and influence on the Brotherhood. I will describe his youth and the foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Born in October 1906 in the province of Buhayra, in the small town of Mahmudiyya, Hasan al-Banna was raised by his father Shaykh Ahmad 'Abd al-Rahman al-Banna al-Sa'ti. His father, educated at Azhar University, was the local *mu'adhin*, *imam*, teacher for the mosque, and author of various works on the *hadith*. Raised in a religious and academic environment, where Islamic learning and piety were central values, al-Banna started his formal education at age eight at a *kuttab* school, and continued there until age twelve. His teacher Shaykh Muhammad Sahran and his father strongly influenced his development (Mitchell, 1993, 1-2). Though al-Banna's father wished for Al-Banna to attend a mosque school to become a *hafiz al-Qur'an*, Al-Banna refused (Lia, 2006, 25). At the age of twelve, he enrolled in a primary school and joined several religious societies including the Society for Moral Behavior, where Banna became the leader. Its goal was to sensitize its members to moral offences. Eager to join more groups, he joined the Society for the Prevention of the Forbidden, a group that worked composing and distributing secret and

sometimes threatening letters to those they regarded as living in violation of the teachings of Islam (Mitchell, 1993, 2).

Two important elements that influenced Banna's youth were Sufism and the nationalist fervor following the Egyptian uprising against the British in 1919. During primary school, Banna witnessed his first *dhikr*, the mystic circle of the Order of the *Hasafiyya* Brothers. He was impressed and became involved with this order and Sufism. At age thirteen, he became the secretary of the *Hasafiyya* Society for Charity, which aimed to preserve Islamic morality and resist the work of the Christian missionaries in the town. The leader of the organization was Ahmad al-Sukkari, who later played an important role in developing the idea of the Society of the Muslim Brothers. Banna saw the *Hasafiyya* Society for Charity as the "root and forerunner of the Society" (Mitchell, 1993, 2). His focus on charity and education later in his life and emphasis on charity when leading the Brotherhood, could possibly be traced back to his involvement in the *Hasafiyya* Society for Charity.

During his last year at the primary school, the Revolution of 1919 broke out, and Banna participated in demonstrations and the composition and recitation of nationalistic poetry. He then enrolled in the Primary Teachers' Training School at Damanhur. During this time in his life he struggled to balance his interests in secular education and traditional, religious education. Banna's education and adolescence were crucial in shaping Banna's thoughts and goals, which were molded by the 1919 Revolution, Sufism, and the teachings of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, and Rashid Rida (Mitchell, 1993, 3).

Banna continued his education and entered Dar al-Ulum in Cairo. The University was considered less traditional and attempted to provide a “modern” higher learning in addition to the traditional religious sciences that were emphasized in the conservative al-Azhar University. His choice to attend Dar al-Ulum over the traditional al-Azhar University is significant, and Brynjar Lia states, “His choice of education indicates an urgent desire to avoid the traditionalism and seclusion which were hallmarks of the Islamic establishment at that time” (Lia, 2006, 25). This is also an important note when determining Hasan al-Banna’s attitude and perspective while founding the Brotherhood. Al-Banna founded the Brotherhood during an opportune time because there were not many political organizations with similar ideas to his. The group led the oppressed masses to draw on its past for a improved future of liberty and social justice.

Al-Banna was influenced by the ideas of past political and religious philosophers Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhamad ‘Abduh, leaders of a general reaction to the political, social, intellectual, and moral decline in Egypt and the Muslim world. He drew from Al-Mawardi, as well, who also promoted a restoration of the Islamic Caliphate and Islamic reform. His studies of al-Afghani, ‘Abduh’s, and Al-Mawardi’s works, the influence of his father, and his contact with Sufism molded his personality and pushed him to establish the Brotherhood. His contemporary influences included Rashid Rida, whose ideas were foundational to the development of the modern Islamic state. This, in tandem with his awareness of the political and social situation in Egypt and the massive suppression of civil liberties and judiciary launched by Isma’il Sidqi’s government in 1930, led Banna to focus on regaining the

independent identity of Egypt on erecting political, judicial, and cultural systems based on Islam (Khatab and Bouma, 2007, 58-59).

Banna arrived in Cairo during the 1920's, a turbulent period marked by political and intellectual ferment. In surveying the situation, he believed the major problems were the disputed control of Egypt between the Wafd and Liberal Constitutional parties, the political disunity and debate following the 1919 Revolution, the post-war orientations to apostasy and nihilism that he believed were engulfing the Muslim world, the attacks on tradition and orthodoxy, the "non-Islamic" currents in the newly reorganized Egyptian University, the secularist and libertarian literary and social salons, societies, and parties, and lastly the books, newspapers, and magazines that propagated ideas that weakened the influence of religion (Mitchell, 1993, 4). This perturbation of Egyptian society moved him eventually to create the Society of Muslim Brothers. Mitchell claims that Banna was "concerned with the defection of the educated youth from the Islamic way of life" (Mitchell, 1993, 5). This led him to understand his role in "saving" Islamic society.

He expressed these sentiments in his final essay in his last year at Dar al-Ulum. Assigned to write on his greatest hopes after the completion of his studies and how they would be realized, Banna responded that he believed the best people are those who achieve their happiness by making others happy and in counseling them. He established that this could happen in two ways. The first would be by following the path of true Sufism through sincerity and work in the service of humanity. The second would be through teaching and counseling. He believed that under the impact of western civilization and materialist philosophy, the people of his time had

been corrupted and had departed from the goals of their religious faith (Mitchell, 1993, 6). This can be seen as the early ideas that encouraged Banna to found the Society of Muslim Brothers. He believed that society lacked these qualities, and he wished to educate people under these guidelines.

After graduating from Dar al-Ulum, Banna moved to Isma'iliyya, where he became an active member of the community. As he stated and promised himself in his graduating essay, he conducted day and night classes teaching, preaching, and discussing the cause of Islam. He also acquainted and aligned himself with the powerful members of the community including the *ulama*, the *sheikhs* of the Sufi orders, the elders of the leading families, and the social and religious societies. While in Isma'iliyya, he still continued to support Islamic groups in Cairo and aided the creation of the Young Men's Muslim Association in 1927 and acted as a local agent for *Majallat al-Fath*. During this time, there was a British military occupation in Isma'iliyya. Al-Banna abhorred the British military camps and the Suez Canal Company, which represented to him foreign domination that exploited and ignored the interests and lives of the local workers. In March of 1928, six member of the British camp labor force and Banna launched the Society of Muslim Brothers. Upon forming the group, Banna administered an oath to God to be "troops for the message of Islam." In choosing the name of the organization Al-Banna said, "We are brothers in the service of Islam; hence, we are 'the Muslim Brothers'" (Mitchell, 1993, 8).

Because of Banna's charisma and organizational skills, the membership grew quickly and the organization expanded from Isma'iliyya to other regions within

Egypt, ultimately becoming the largest social movement in recent Egyptian history. The group evolved from an organization with social programs and schools for children to a political movement, moved by anti- communist beliefs and opposition to the British occupation of Egypt (Mitchell, 1993, 37-45). Banna encouraged a resurgence of jihad, or holy war, emphasized by his disapproval of the British occupation and the Zionist Jews in the disputed Israeli/Palestinian area (Lia, 206, 178). The secret apparatus was created, and the rover group was trained with the intention of using these forces against British nationals and Zionist Jews during the Palestine agitation (Mitchell, 1993, 75).

As the Society grew, animosity, antipathy, and resistance accumulated as well. Arguments against the Brotherhood included assaults on Al-Banna that portrayed him as a communist and a criminal, who violated civil-service provisions against the gathering of funds for illegal purposes (Mitchell, 1993, 10). Additionally, the group struggled internally as extremists within the Brotherhood gained a stronger voice (Mitchell, 1993, 73). In 1948, the government ordered the Brotherhood to be disbanded because of a series of violent acts performed by the secret apparatus. Following this, the secret apparatus retaliated against the government by assassinating the Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmoud an-Nukrashi, an act that was allegedly not condoned by Banna. This furthered the repression and animosity the government and the general public felt towards the Brotherhood. Banna attempted to remedy this by writing pamphlets and maintaining that “the Society could not be held responsible for the acts of its members” (Mitchell, 1993, 71). Though Banna claimed that he had no direct connection with the secret



apparatus, the Muslim Brotherhood was very tightly organized. He potentially distanced himself for political reasons so that plausible deniability was firmly in place. This is concerning because the credibility of the group lies in its ability to take responsibility for their actions, and they cannot be trusted if they manipulate plausible deniability and use smaller factions of the group as scapegoats. Recently, the Muslim Brotherhood has become openly organized and is not as splintered as it seems.

The pamphlet was Banna's last contribution to the Brotherhood, as he was assassinated on February 12, 1949. Following Banna's death, the court indicted the Brotherhood in civil court for criminal conspiracy, plotting to take power by force and through the use of terror, stockpiling explosives, and charges of murder, theft, and arson. The final verdict was pronounced on March 17, 1951. The court found the group guilty of criminal conspiracy to overthrow the government and criminal conspiracy for murder and destruction. However, the court was lenient and asserted their "belief in the respectability of the goals of the movement...under the influence of the emotions generated in the post-war world by the continuing British occupation and Palestine question" (Mitchell, 1993, 78). The court remained merciful, and five of the defendants received three years in prison, twelve two years, and one one year. The remaining sixteen were acquitted (Mitchell, 1993, 78-79). Though the courts cleared the Brotherhood of charges of terrorism and admired their Brotherhood's goals, despite their questionable and violent actions, this does not necessarily mean they were innocent of crime. Politically- inspired court decisions are not necessarily indicative of guilt. The underlying fact is that the

Brotherhood was found guilty of several crimes, and how the court dealt with their sentencing should not be the focal point when questioning the trustworthiness of the Brotherhood.

### **Banna's Attitude Towards the West, Democracy and Islam, and *Sharia* Law**

Now that I have discussed Banna's influences and goals in creating the Brotherhood, I will direct my attention to his attitudes toward the West and democracy. His views reflect the founding views of the Muslim Brotherhood and give insight on the group's perception of Western concepts. Analysts fear the effect of the Muslim Brotherhood on Western politics and its impact on global security; therefore, understanding the group's view of the West is crucial.

With regard to his attitudes towards the West, Banna responded to literary critic Taha Husayn by saying that he did not claim that the West was completely "good or evil, bitter or sweet" (Khatab and Bouma, 2007, 67). When Banna referred to the West, he divided it into three categories: Western civilization, Christianity, and Western colonialism. Banna wore a suit and tie along with his Turkish fez (*tarbush*), which supports his belief that some Western customs can coexist with Islam and Muslim society. Though Banna did not generalize Western society as good or bad per se and accepted the incorporation of Western ideas in Islam, he also believed that there is a limit to adopting Western culture. He condemned Turkey's excessive admiration for European civilization and its dissatisfaction with the Islamic one, to the extent that Turkey established itself as a non-Islamic state.

He distinguished Western civilization from Christianity and supported the West in his views on Christianity. He noted the substantial Christian population in almost every Muslim country and pointed out that Christianity was not originally a Western religion, but was born in the land of the Arabs. Western Christianity would not be possible without its Eastern origins. He emphasized that Christianity was in the Middle East prior to Islam, and that the Prophet engaged with many Christians (Khatab and Bouma, 2007, 61-62). He used the concept of Christianity being based in Arab lands as a way to praise Arabian thought. Simultaneously, he acknowledged Christianity as an aspect of Western thought that he supported. He also subtly hints that despite the West's desire to influence the East, Eastern religion had a substantial effect on Western thought.

Banna's major disagreement with the West was in his third category: Western colonialism. Banna claimed that under colonialist rule, the West asserted dominance over the colonized nations by suppressing their identities and imposing its views by altering the basic principles of government, education, justice, and culture. Banna blamed colonialism for the ills of the Muslim community, saying that instead of being models, European systems of government and society hindered Muslim and Islamic growth. He said each of these nations struggled to regain its freedom and its right to exist as an independent identity. Banna's main desire in establishing the Muslim Brotherhood was not necessarily to completely refuse Western ideas, but rather to empower Eastern values that he believed colonialism quelled. Banna was aware of Western thought, the development of secular trends in countries such as Turkey, and the influence of religion on society. He believed that

the best way to achieve his goals was to mobilize the public against colonialism and its negative effects on society and encourage a reawakening and revival of Islam. Al-Banna's main goals in establishing his organization were to free the Islamic homeland from all foreign authority and to establish an Islamic state within this homeland. This state should act according to the precepts of Islam, apply its social regulations, and advocate its sound principles (Khatab and Bouma, 2007, 61-62).

Now that I have established Banna's two main goals in founding the Muslim Brotherhood and his general attitude towards the West, I will examine whether Banna's ideas can qualify as democratic. Banna proposed an Islamic state, but can Islam align itself with democracy? According to Banna, Islam and government are inherently compatible. Banna stated, "government is a bond of the bonds of Islam; it is one of the creeds and fundamentals, not the branches. Islam is a government and enforcement; legislative and educative; law and judgment" (Khatab and Bouma, 2007, 63). This highlights Islam's ability to be a basis for government; however, Banna does not directly speak to its compatibility with specific aspects of democracy. Banna followed the ideology of Rashid Rida and believed that the head of the Islamic state should be elected from amongst the Muslim community and should be responsible for the people. Though Banna strategically emphasized select phrases such as elections and *shura*, this does not necessarily suggest compatibility with democracy. *Shura* is a strategic word because this Islamic concept allows for consultation, a very democratic concept. However, the question here is not whether consultation exists, but who is being consulted. Consultation is not synonymous to voting, and Banna's use of this term does not imply inherent compatibility between

Islam and democracy. Additionally, he looks toward Rashid Rida; however, Rida's vision for an Islamic state is only compatible with the most passive form of protective democracy (Khatab and Bouma, 2007, 66).

Banna proposed the governmental system he believed best aligned with democracy, while also upholding Islamic beliefs. Banna suggested two types of governmental systems, one that had a form of parliamentary representation similar to Great Britain, and another that mimicked the United States' representative system of government. Based on a model that was used in governments in Islamic epochs, it divides the system of government into forms called Ministry of Delegation (*tafwid*) and Ministry of Execution (*tanfidh*). The ministry of delegation is a system where the head of state appoints the minister, to whom he delegates authority to organize dealings and programs. This system that Banna proposes appears misleadingly democratic; however, the ultimate power and authority lies in the executive branch, and there is no system of checks and balances between the executive and legislative branches.

Banna references the Quran, where Moses appoints Aaron, his brother, as a minister (*wazir*) to distribute his power. Moses says, "Appoint for me a *wazir* from my people, Aaron, my brother, and consolidate my strength by him and make him a partner in my affair" (Quran, 20:29-32). Using these verses as evidence, Al-Banna concludes that a minister is an appropriate assistant to the head of state in carrying out his responsibilities and protects the state from taking advantage of his weaknesses and shortcomings (Khatab and Bouma, 64). Banna refers to the interests of the people (*maslaha*) as a basis of his ideal form of government. He

suggests that the people should choose the head of state and the head of state should appoint and delegate representatives under him (Khatab and Bouma, 2007, 64-65). This resembles Rashid Rida's ideology.

Banna also outlined an Islamic Constitution, which compares he compares with the American Constitution. Banna stated that the Constitution should include protection of personal freedom of all types, consultation, obtaining the authority from the people, the rulers to be responsible before the people, the rulers be judged on the basis of their actions, the limits of each and every authority be clearly defined. He uses the term "consultation" again; however, this term is not synonymous with voting. Also, unlike the American Constitution, Banna's constitution does not include a separation and protection of government powers. His mentioning of protection of personal freedom of all types is comparable to the first amendment of the United States that protects the freedom of religion, speech, press, and the right to assemble and petition the government. Banna's ideal Constitution is similar to the Egyptian Constitution of 1923. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded under the 1923 constitution, and Banna was deeply influenced by it. He stated that the system of government in Islam was based on "the responsibility of the ruler, the unity of the *ummah*, and the respect of its Will" (Khatab and Bouma, 2007, 63-70). This phrase is not conducive with democratic values. This system puts the responsibility in the hands of the ruler and requires the ruler's subjects to respect and uphold his views. The fact that Banna strongly approved of this particular statement contradicts his claims of encouraging popular

consent and voting. If the public is not allowed the right to dissent and must blindly follow and respect the leader's view, this aspect of Banna's system is not democratic.

Banna distinguished between the Constitution and the Law. He believed that the constitution was the general ruling system that organizes the structure and function of the state; however, the Constitutional rule should put everyone, including the rulers and the ruled, under the Law (Khatab and Bouma, 2007, 71). This is a key feature of democracy. John Adams, the second president of the United States described popular consent by saying "a government of laws, not men" is necessary (Jellinek and Farrand, 1901, 41). The law applies to all, regardless of position. The common definition of the rule of law in modern American democracy includes a government bound by and ruled by law, equality before the law, the establishment of law and order, the efficient and predictable application of justice, and the protection of human rights (Trebilcock and Daniels, 2002, 13).

He noticed that the Constitution and Law were altered during the period between 1924 and 1944; however, the decisions of the Senate during this time period only represented 10.75% of the registered voters Banna wished to change this and emphasized the need for free and fair voting procedures. Al-Banna looked at the current political model and used it to identify flaws. He focused on their political performance, the processes of election and electoral laws, and its subsequent effects on society (Khatab and Bouma, 2007, 70).

## **Conclusion**

After looking at Hasan al-Banna's education, upbringing, reasons for establishing the Muslim Brotherhood, and his attitudes towards the West and democracy, Banna seems to be most strongly influenced by his father, the British presence in Egypt, and the straying of Islamic values in Cairo. He formed the Brotherhood with the intention to reestablish an Islamic state, and held a moderate view of the West, without being paranoid and condescending towards Western culture.

In terms of his education and upbringing, Al-Banna made the conscious decision to go to a more "modern" school, despite his father's wishes. His ability to express his own ideas and defy his father's request to go to a religious school is notable when looking at any possible bias al-Banna could have later on in his life. He was also involved on his campus at a young age in several altruistic student groups. He wrote his final paper at Dar al-Ulum on his goals post graduation and how he wished to achieve them. His essay was very noble in its goals, as he hoped to counsel and help others through Sufi thought, sincerity, service work, teaching, and counseling. He wished to depart from materialist philosophy and to return to a focus on religious faith. His aspirations were very pure and noble at a young age, and not only did he write about his goals after graduation, but he also pursued these same goals.

Under Al-Banna, the Brotherhood's ideology had aspects that were compatible with principles of guardianship. He stressed mass education, a strong sense of community, an Islamic revival led by Muslims, and pride for Muslim ideology. Social justice was an integral part of the Society's ideology. The



Brotherhood developed a program for political, social, and economic reforms by the end of the 1930's that emphasized supporting the lower classes, educating the lower middle class, and expanding social and educational work (Lia, 2006, 283). The Brotherhood differentiated itself by emphasizing the need for comprehensive reforms, social welfare, and ideological commitment. Under Al-Banna, there were illiteracy campaigns, the founding of hospitals and evening schools, and the organization of *zakah*. Al-Banna also frequently used pamphlets and manuals to express his ideas to the public. In these senses, Al-Banna's method of organizing and administering the Brotherhood were to reform society.

Banna desired the head of his ideal Islamic state to be from the Muslim community from his highly educated, religiously knowledgeable group of Brotherhood members that stemmed from the most well-informed and successful levels of society. These learned and enlightened elite would have the responsibility to lead the entire community. Al-Banna emphasizes the responsibility of the head, and how under Islamic principles action starts from the head, and how accordingly there should be a mass-community respect of its will. He emphasized a top-down model and the role of these leaders as "guardians of the *sharia*." This clearly relates to a guardianship form of leadership, which calls for a qualified minority that is competent to govern based on its superior knowledge and reasoning on what is best for the state. The educated and religious Brotherhood leaders would fit this description and would apply their interpretation of *sharia* law upon the rest of the state. Though this leader would serve the people's needs, he would dictating the future of the state and its laws based on his and fellow appropriate, knowledgeable

political and religious associates judgment. Finally, Banna did not condemn the West and solely criticized colonization and the general Western emphasis on materialism, wealth, and status. He suggested combating this moral decay and laxity of adherence to Muslim principles by forming the Brotherhood and encouraging an Islamic revival.

Now, I will look at Seyyid Qutb to examine how the Brotherhood's ideology evolved after Hasan Al-Banna's leadership and determine whether the Brotherhood conformed with a form of democracy under Seyyid Qutb's influence.

## **Chapter 2: Examining the Muslim Brotherhood Under Seyyid Qutb**

### **Transitioning After Banna: An Introduction to Seyyid Qutb**

Banna's death left the Brotherhood with the issue of choosing an appropriate heir. This was a challenging task, because Banna's abilities as a leader were unmatched, and internal issues and rivalries sprouted within the Brotherhood. After careful deliberation, Hasan Isma'il al-Hudaybi was chosen to fulfill the role of Banna's successor. He was chosen for his respectability, and members hoped to change the public face of the Brotherhood and alleviate the tense relationship with the government and the public (Mitchell, 1993, 84-86). However, Hudaybi struggled to live up to the image of Al-Banna, under whom the Brotherhood represented a popular movement for average people, as opposed to "a party of aristocrats" under Hudaybi (Mitchell, 1993, 116). Additionally, the secret apparatus continued to operate and in 1952, after a wave of anti-British sentiment and riots, the Free Officers' Revolution began, in which the Egyptian military led a coup to remove King Farouk, who still pledged alliance to the British. For a brief period, the military regime and the Society banded together towards this common goal; however, this was fleeting, and the relationship quickly exacerbated (Mitchell, 1993, 120-140).

During a political rally on October 26, 1954, Gamal Abdel Nasser, a leader of the Free Officers movement, was fired on eight times during his speech. In a show of bravado and drama, Prime Minister Nasser paused shortly but continued to announce to his audience that he was willing to die for his country and for its

freedom. Unharmd by the bullets, he finished his speech and left the podium. This attack was performed by members of the Muslim Brotherhood. As a result, six brothers were hanged and thousands imprisoned. In the words of Richard Mitchell, “the organization had been efficiently crushed” (Mitchell, 1993, 151). This was a pivotal moment in the history of the Brotherhood. After being very active, the Brotherhood was quickly disbanded and dismembered. Under Nasser’s regime, many brothers were tortured in prison.

Seyyid Qutb was one such member of the Brotherhood who suffered during his time in Nasser’s prisons, where his already extreme beliefs appear to have been catalyzed. He became the chief spokesman of the Society after its dissolution in 1954 and its “martyr” in 1966 (Mitchell, 1993, 141). William Shepard comments that Seyyid Qutb never seems to have been an Islamic modernist, often members of the Brotherhood, but his later works seem to have become increasingly radically Islamist (Shepard, xvii). There is a clear shift in thought from his commentary in *Social Justice in Islam*, written in 1948, to *Milestones*, written in 1964 after time in Nasser’s prisons. I would like to focus on the impact of extremist leaders, such as Seyyid Qutb, on the views and actions of the rest of the Brotherhood. Does Seyyid Qutb represent an anomaly or is he representative of the Brotherhood as a whole? By looking at Seyyid Qutb’s leadership, ideology, and writings during his lifetime, I hope to answer this question of whether his philosophy aligns with that of the rest of the Brotherhood or if he represents an exception.

### **An Overview of Seyyid Qutb’s Life and Influences**

Seyyid Qutb was born in September of 1906 in the village of Musha, approximately half way through the period of British occupation, a force that shaped his views toward the West and imperialism. During the decade of his birth, Egypt was developing a visible reaction to Western ways and ideas that had slowly been filtering into Egyptian society for the past century. Seyyid Qutb was born in a family that was beginning and participate in the movement to call for the departure of the British (Shepard, 1996, xiv). His father, Qutb Ibrahim, was an educated, influential, land-owning farmer. However, he was facing financial pressures. Similarly, his mother, Fatimah, came from a prominent family whose fortunes were slowly waning. After Qutb became aware of his parents' financial problems, he resolved to restore his family's wealth and stature. His mother had a great influence on his upbringing. She emphasized religion and education, a significant factor that later affected his Islamist ideology (Musallam, 2005, 29-31).

Egyptian society during Seyyid Qutb's youth had been going through a great cultural upheaval, where traditional values and modern values were in conflict. In Seyyid Qutb's autobiography *Tifl min al-qaryah* (Child from the Village), where he discusses his youth, Seyyid Qutb discusses the shift from traditional to secular education and how this shift shaped his worldview. Qutb's education began when he was six and studied at a local *madrasah* that used modern methods of education as opposed to the traditional *kuttab* schools that focused on religious texts. By the end of his fourth year in the *madrasah*, he memorized the Quran completely, and though he did not fully understand the intricacies and the full meaning of the Quran, its

literary style and imagery had a long-lasting impact on him. In addition to memorizing the Quran at a young age, Seyyid Qutb excelled in school, especially the study of Arabic. He was emotionally mature at a young age and began reading the newspaper regularly and attending prayers at the local mosque (Musallam, 2005, 31-33). Very similar to Banna, Seyyid Qutb also empathized with the underprivileged. Despite his pampered upbringing, he helped members of the less privileged section of the community. He took the time to observe his community's lifestyle and helped them by reading and writing letters for the workers that farmed his father's land and sending money orders to their families (Musallam, 2005, 33-35).

Two years after the start of the 1919 Egyptian revolt, Seyyid Qutb moved to Cairo to continue his studies at Dar al-Ulum, the same University as Banna. Passionate about the Arabic language, he began to compose poetry that was featured in several literary publications. Also akin to Banna's background, Seyyid Qutb's upbringing in a traditional environment amidst popular Sufi practices was responsible for his mystical outlook on life, which is apparent in his writings *al-Shati' al-Majhul* (The Unknown Shore) and *Muhimmat al-Sha'ir wa-Shi'r al-Jil al-Hadir* (The Importance of the Poet and Poetry of the Present Generation). From 1929 to 1933, he wrote secular, political essays that were greatly influenced by progressive, nationalist thinkers, notably 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad. By 1939, Seyyid Qutb's writing transitioned toward literary criticism and then toward religious writing on the radical end of the Islamist spectrum (Musallam, 2005, 95-110).

As political corruption, economic inequality, and the continued presence of British imperialism dominated Egyptian society after WWII, Seyyid Qutb focused his attention on issues of social justice. He wrote critical arguments against the West and the rulers of Egypt in the journal *Al-Fikr al-Jadid* (New Thought), and his opinions culminated in his work *al-Cadalah al-ijtima'iyyah fi Islam* (*Social Justice in Islam*) in 1948 (Shepard, xv-xvi). This work, which I will analyze later, marked a clear shift in his thought from secularist to radical Islamist. Prior to writing this book, Seyyid Qutb analyzed the Quran from a literary perspective; however, *Social Justice* proposes the importance of the Quran to serve as a societal guide. The Brotherhood members were impressed by the book and supported his views. Though he was not a member or affiliated with the society yet, Seyyid Qutb agreed with the Brotherhood's cause and his views had a great impact on a significant portion of the brothers. Despite Seyyid Qutb's similar schooling, values, and morals to Banna, their paths diverged strongly and Seyyid Qutb focused on using the Quran to justify his view of the perceived immorality of the West and Egyptian society, which he believed adopted many negative aspects of Western culture (Shepard, 1996, xvi-xvii).

This was only furthered after his travels to America from 1948 to 1950. During his stay in America, Seyyid Qutb visited New York, Washington D.C., Colorado, and California. His negative reaction to America was due to his disapproval of the West's focus on lust, money, and sexual relationships. He criticized the role and status of the church in America, the brutality of athletic life in America, American music, and foreign policy and involvement in other countries. He

expressed his negative impressions of the United States and the American lifestyle and culture in a series of articles titled *Amrika al-lati ra'ayt: fi mizan al-qiyam al-insaniyya* (America That I Have Seen: In the Scale of Human Values), which were published after his return to Egypt in 1951. During his imprisonment from 1954 to 1964, he included some of his articles in his larger works criticizing and evaluating Islam and societal problems.

Qutb's sweeping generalizations and opinions on the American lifestyle were not formulated suddenly upon his arrival in America. He held a negative attitude toward American values and culture before his arrival in the United States. He wished to visit the United States to confirm his preconceived notions of the pitfalls of American values, on which he had already published works (Musallam, 2005, 117-118). Paul Berman comments on Seyyid Qutb's attitude when arriving in the United States and says that Seyyid Qutb considered himself "a devout and perhaps even a radical Islamist, which means that everything about the United States was bound to rub him wrong—the national mood, habits, materialism, racism, vices, pastimes, business practices, and sexual freedom, not to mention America's larger politics and policies" (Musallam, 2005, 119). As Berman states, Seyyid Qutb's stay in the United States only reinforced his belief that the Islamic way of life was the only salvation for the sex-driven and capitalistic America. Upon returning to Egypt, Seyyid Qutb along with many other nationalistic Egyptians veered into radical directions as Nasser and the Free Officers overthrew the old king in 1952, and launched a revolution on Pan-Arabist grounds. Though the Pan-Arabists promoted their own revolution, Seyyid Qutb took it a step further and aimed to turn Islam into



a political movement to create a society based on Quranic principles. Berman describes his methods and ambitions as comparable to those of the Italian Fascists of Mussolini's time, who wished to resurrect the Roman Empire (Berman, 2003). It is clear to see how Seyyid Qutb's experiences, strong religious views, and convoluted and biased view of American society pushed him to extremist thought that was far from the original principles of the Brotherhood under Al-Banna.

Upon returning to Egypt fascinated with the idea of the re-establishment of Muslim rule in Egypt, Seyyid Qutb became a Muslim brother and began fighting the Egyptian monarchy that was believed to have facilitated the influx of Western ideology with the help of the Free Officers under Nasser's leadership. However, Nasser's leadership as president did not live up to the Brotherhood's expectations in terms of his cooperation with the group's idea of reform. This led to a harsh clash, and as a counter-measure to prevent another revolution led by the Muslim Brotherhood, Nasser imprisoned several members in 1954, one of whom was Seyyid Qutb. He was tried and sentenced to fifteen years of hard labor for his anti-government agitation. From prison, Qutb began to formulate his own extremist ideology that built upon Banna's existing philosophy. (Calvert, 2010, 140-145).

Qutb remained imprisoned from November 1954 to 1964, when he was released for health reasons. His confinement in prison was painful and severe, and he suffered from poor health and was transferred to several hospitals, where he was "horrified by the barbarism" and prison guards (Musallam, 2005, 151). This was exemplified by the bloody massacre of June 1947, when twenty-one jailed Muslim Brothers were killed for refusing to report to their daily hard labor. He continued to

write and revise his earlier writings and his writings became increasingly radical. It is generally assumed that harsh conditions and torture contributed to this.

Frustrated with this “distorted” Muslim society, Seyyid Qutb’s intellectual career shifted and he no longer wrote about competing nations, regions, or civilizations. Instead, he preached a complete and uncompromising struggle between Islam and its conceptual opposite, namely Western philosophy, government, society, and religious practice (Calvert, 2010, 15).

His emphasis on the uncompromising nature of the struggle is the origin of radical Islam. This total, uncompromising struggle led to other interpretations that furthered anti-American thought and the use of violence to fulfill his goals. Though he condemned the general culture of the ignorant *kafirs*, or non-believers, never sanctioned the killing of civilians, which several of the Qutbian heir militant groups commit today (Calvert, 2010, 15). In summary, Seyyid Qutb’s upbringing, political and social surroundings, distress and frustration with the government, strong distaste for Western societal values and colonization, and long, arduous stint in prison collectively led to his divergent thought that defined modern day radical Islamic thought that has inspired groups such as Al Qaeda. Though he probably would not support the methods that Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups use, Seyyid Qutb is considered an inspiration to their radical ideology. He strayed from original track of Hasan Banna and his latest writings, namely *Milestones*, appealed to the more extreme participants in the past and present resurgence.

### **Analyzing Seyyid Qutb’s Writings and His Ideology**

I will give a brief overview of Qutb's major works in order to explain his evolution in writing styles and themes; however, I would like to focus my attention and analysis on Seyyid Qutb's most famous, influential, and revealing works *Social Justice* and *Milestones*.

During the 1930's, under the influence of secular intellectuals, namely 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad, Seyyid Qutb focused his talents on poetry and literary critiques. In 1932, he published *Muhimmat al-Sha'ir wa'Shi'r al-Jil al'Hadir* (*The Task of the Poet and Poetry in the Present Generation*) and in 1935, he published his own poetry in a book called *Al-Shati al-Majhul* (*The Unknown Shore*). This represents his initial engagement with literary journals, debates, and critiques. After delving deep into Quranic studies, he transitioned into analysis of the Quran. In 1944, he published *Al-Taswir al-Fanni fi al-Qur'an* (*Artistic Portrayal in the Qur'an*) and *Mashahid al-Qiyamah fi al-Qur'an* (*Scenes of the Resurrection in the Qur'an*), where he approached the Qur'an with praise and critique. However, at this point he was not an Islamist.

As social stress, political corruption, economic disparity, and continued European presence persisted in Egypt after the Second World War, Seyyid Qutb, along with many of his contemporaries, was influenced by the political and social climate and started to comment on social justice. This represents his first major shift in ideology and writing styles. He wrote *Social Justice in Islam* in 1948 on an Islamist rather than a secularist basis, signifying a change in his orientation and opinions. Between *Social Justice* and his prison writings, Qutb traveled to America, returned,

joined the Muslim Brotherhood, supported the Free Officer movement, and then was arrested when the Egyptian government and Brothers' relationship went awry. This series of events led to his second major shift in dogma. This time, he continued to comment on the Quran and the future of Islam, and he directly called for an Islamic revolution in his works, such as *Milestones*, which appealed to extreme revolutionists in the present Islamic revolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Musallam, 2005, 152-165).

I will now turn to *Social Justice* and *Milestones* because these two works marked the two shifts in Qutb's philosophical development. In *Social Justice*, Seyyid Qutb expresses his disappointment in Capitalism, Communism, and Christianity and their inability to alleviate injustice and corruption. His work diagnoses the social and intellectual stagnation plaguing the Islamic society and defends his solution to this stagnation—a return to Islam. He discusses the role of religion and society, and Islam's inherent compatibility with a successful, unified society. In his second chapter, discussing the nature of social justice in Islam, Qutb claims, "Islam's conception makes humanity a unity, whose parts separate in order to come together again, differ in order to harmonize, and hold various opinions so that they may finally cooperate with each other" (Shepard, 1996, 29). This translates to Islam's natural ability to unify different people and encourage cooperation, something he saw lacking in society at the time. He claimed that human life would not be rightly ordered until this cooperation and harmony were fully instituted in accord with the will of God, emphasizing his belief that Islam is the only and necessary solution.

He discusses the failures of Christianity and describes it as “distorted,” along with Hinduism and Buddhism. Under Seyyid Qutb’s perspective, Islam is the clear and only solution to the ignorance plaguing society, as it incorporates economic values, equal opportunity, human justice, and balance and equity in society (Shepard, 1996, 33-37). He praises Islam for being the religion of worship and social relations, creed and *sharia*, spiritual and material things, and economic and spiritual values. Islamic justice deals with a wide range of questions and concerns such as freedom of conscience, human equality, and mutual responsibility in society, unlike other religions, making it superior and the natural choice for a basis of jurisprudence. Seyyid Qutb saw Christianity as a religion of savage, war-mongering people. The systems of government formed under it encouraged division and destruction (Shepard, 1996, 187). Apart from comparing Islam to Christianity, he compares it to the West, as a whole. He deems the freedom that the “materialistic” West gives to women as dishonorable, in comparison to the “innocent motives” of Islam (Shepard, 1996, 64).

He also denounces communism as a valid form of government because it prevents the distribution of wealth and state property to all individuals. He also looks down upon their view on women’s rights. After asserting Islam’s dedication to equality between the two sexes (except in specific situations connected with natural recognized capacities, skills, or responsibilities), Seyyid Qutb claims that communism encourages the exact opposite (Shepard, 1996, 61). He says that men shirk their duty to provide for women and compel them to do men’s work in a male environment. He says that communism is the natural completion of the materialistic

Western ideology that lacks spiritual values in human life. He warns the reader of the deception of “false glitter” within communism and the West, as Islam gave women rights “fourteen centuries ago while the Western civilization has not given them to this day” (Shepard, 1996, 66).

Seyyid Qutb groups together all the concepts he disapproves of, regardless of their differences. He forges a comparison between communism and Western materialism because of his underlying disapproval of their values, rather than natural compatibility. He claims Christianity is flawed because it looks at man in terms of his spiritual desires alone and attempts to curb his physical desires and communism looks at man and the universe in terms of his material needs alone. However, Islam looks at man in terms of both spiritual and material needs (Shepard, 1996, 33). On a moral level, Seyyid Qutb disapproves of communism because he says that it has tried to destroy the family by developing feelings of selfishness and love of possessions (Shepard, 1996, 71). Seyyid Qutb expresses his strong views against communism, capitalism, the West, and Christianity, which he places in a group that represents immoral values and a threat to Islam.

After discussing the relationship between Islam and government, Seyyid Qutb explains the laws that are written within Islam and how these economic and social theories would apply to daily life. He explores managing wealth in Islam, namely the right of individual ownership, ways of increasing possessions, and Zakat. He also outlines how rule under *sharia* law would function. He says that the government would be based on the principle that God alone has sovereignty and enforces *sharia* law. He examines the role of *shura* consultation and the role of the

*imam* as leader. There is consultation between the rulers and the ruled, and Caliphs are used to consult the Muslims. Though he identifies these leaders in society, he emphasizes that no ruler has more rights than an individual expect for obedience to God's command, advice, and assistance in enforcing *sharia* law (Shepard, 1996, 115-117).

The final section is most revealing in terms of his prejudices, fear, and defense against Western ideology, religion, and government. He mulls over the present and future prospect of Islam, highlighting his perceived outside threats to Islam. He becomes more impassioned in his call for a restoration of Islamic life in an Islamic society governed by *sharia* law and gives no other option for the future of the Muslim countries, saying, "The future belongs to this religion" (Shepard, 1996, 280). He strongly criticizes the "wickedness" of Turkish secularism, which Kemal Ataturk claims is "Islamic." Clearly, Seyyid Qutb believes that all Islamic laws are intertwined, and Islamic states can only function properly if *sharia* law is implemented in its entirety. His rejection for Turkey's secular government system is indicative of his close-mindedness when it comes to Islam is being the sole basis of governance in Muslim states.

Concerning his prediction of the future of Islam and the Islamic states, Seyyid Qutb says he has "absolute faith in the inevitability of the restoration of Islamic life in the Islamic world and of the readiness of Islam to be a worldwide—not just local—order in the future" (Shepard, 1996, 289). This statement implies two bold claims: he believes that the restoration of Islamic law is certain and that it will be a worldwide phenomenon. He acknowledges that this is a challenging goal with

several obstacles and thus requires “one to send forth a resounding cry of fervent zeal” and “uncommon effort and zealous faith” (Shepard, 1996, 290). One of the obstacles he describes is the European and American imperialistic desire to destroy the strength of Islam (Shepard, 1996, 288). He makes bold, general assertions that every imperialist state has attempted to oppose and stifle Islam and its goals. He says that the West has an innate Crusader spirit that they “carry in their blood and lies hidden deep in their minds” (Shepard, 1996, 287). He refuses to qualify his beliefs and states that a single feeling and interest in destroying Islam link all Westerners. This is where we can see his fundamental, radical side. By claiming that Islam is under siege and constant pressure from the West, he depicts a vile enemy that Islam must overcome. Also, by accusing the West of always attempting to destroy Islam, he rationalizes his revival as a natural reaction and defense to this attack. He also goes on a rant against the alleged role of worldwide Zionism in the plot against Islam as a uniting force between crusader imperialists and communist materialists. Seyyid Qutb says Jews have always played this role since the Hijrah of the Apostle to Medina and founding of the Islamic state (Sheppard, 288). These blatantly biased statements identify all Westerners and Jews as campaigners against Islam. This highlights Seyyid Qutb’s fears and defensive attitude toward the West.

He states two “facts” that are clearly his opinions on foreign countries, religions, and governments. His first fact states, “the evil stirred up by the crusaders was not limited to the clash of arms, but was first and foremost a cultural evil. The poisoning of the European mind against Islam arose from the distorted version of the teachings and ideals of Islam that the European leaders gave to the ignorant



masses in the West” (Sheppard, 1996, 283). The words Seyyid Qutb chooses to use: evil, poison, distortion, and ignorance all clearly express his strongly negative and condescending view of the West. He makes overarching, general statements that Europeans and Christians have carried the spirit of fanaticism against Islam since the Crusades and continue to support European and American imperialism. This leads to his second fact that says, “European and American Crusaderist imperialism cannot leave out of its account the fact that the Islamic spirit is a bulwark resisting the spread of imperialism and it must destroy this bulwark or at least shake it” (Sheppard, 1996, 286). This attitude towards the West is a clear result of his experience under British colonialism in Egypt. This quotation expresses Seyyid Qutb’s distaste for imperialism and urge for resistance and struggle to preserve Islamic thought.

I will now address his most controversial work, *Ma’alim fi al-Tariq* (*Milestones*). Published in 1964, *Milestones* calls for the inevitable establishment of a just Islamic society and the overthrow of the existing *Jahili* (pagan) society by means of *jihad*. He bases this call on God’s rightful sovereignty on earth and the universe (*al-hakimiyyah*). Seyyid Qutb believed that Egyptian and other Arab and Muslim societies were *Jahili* because at the time of God’s sovereignty on earth in these societies was non-existent. Seyyid Qutb said the revival of Islam should be carried out and led by an “Islamic *tali’ah* that will know the ‘milestones’ of the road toward establishing the Islamic society with their basic reference being at all times the Holy Quran” (Musallam, 2005, 155). This resembles vanguardism and Qutb’s attempt to lead a small few to overtake the existing power and change society from top-down.

From the Introduction, Seyyid Qutb criticizes humankind, which is “on the brink of abyss,” plagued with “disease,” and “devoid of vital values,” for which Islam is the only solution (Qutb, 2005, 1). In addition to these strong claims, he says that democracy in the West, socialism, communism, and capitalism are all unsuccessful mainly because the leadership of mankind by the West is on decline. He uses these examples as his justification for his belief that it is the optimal time for an Islamic revival. He claims that *jahiliyyah* has encompassed the whole world and in response the vanguard movement would bring freedom through preaching and *jihad* until it formed a completely Islamic community that encompassed the entire world (Qutb, 2005, 4-21). Qutb deals with absolutes and does not allow for moderation in his ideas. He proposes a revival of Islam that leaves no room for non-Muslims or any ideas other than his own. This is the underlying factor in his radical thought: the fact he sees no alternative to his ideology.

His attitude in *Milestones* is a clear development from his relatively ideologically based piece *Social Justice in Islam*, where Seyyid Qutb merely states the inevitable return to an Islamic state and praises Islam for its ability to govern on a societal and religious level. In *Social Justice*, Seyyid Qutb explains the need for an Islamic revival, but in *Milestones*, he takes this idea a step further and explains exactly how this revival should be carried out. Additionally, *Milestones* deviates from Seyyid Qutb’s focus in *Social Justice* because of his use of distorting Islamic terminology such as *jahiliyyah*, *hakimiyyah*, and *jihad* to further his cause. This is supported by a quote by Radwan al-Sayyid, professor of Islamic studies, Islamist author, and editor of *Al-Hayat* newspaper, who says that *Milestones* is “the founding

text for the jihadist Islam. From between the lines of that booklet, all groups in jihadist Islam, in the Arab domain at least, came out. The ideas from which the jihadist groups set out and depend on: The idea of al-Jahiliyyah and the idea of al-Hakimiyyah” (Musallam, 2005, 155). Al-Sayyid and other critics of Seyyid Qutb believe that *Milestones* was an expression of a new direction of political Islam that uses the religion to “poison the minds of Muslims” (Musallam, 2005, 155). There are also sympathetic views towards Seyyid Qutb, such as those expressed by researcher Ja’far Sheikh Idris, who also describes *Milestones* as a new stage in contemporary Islamic thought, but believes it encourages openness, challenge, and pride, as opposed to fanaticism (Musallam, 2005, 155). Though these views exist, I believe it is evident that Seyyid Qutb used passionate language to incite a transition to eliminate everything in society that was non-Muslim, indiscreetly causing a division between Muslims and non-Muslims, good and bad, righteous and sinful.

### **Progression of Seyyid Qutb’s Thought from the 1940’s Onward**

In terms of Seyyid Qutb’s ideological development, the period that was most influential in shaping his beliefs in the late 1940’s, 1950’s, and 1960’s was his dedication to becoming a serious student of the Quran from 1939 to 1947. During this period, he also became a stern moralist, anti-Western thinker, and an anti-political, anti-literary establishment thinker. Hassan Hanafi, a prominent Islamic thinker, commented on Seyyid Qutb’s transformation in thought until his time in prison succinctly. He states that Seyyid Qutb “developed naturally from literature to

patriotism to socialism to discovering Islam as containing all these currents. Had his development continued in a natural way, he would have reached scientific socialism as synonymous to Islam, and he would have become one of the pillars of the Islamic left in Egypt and one of its first supports in the Muslim world” (Musallam, 2005, 150). Though this is just a theoretical hypothesis, it does explain Seyyid Qutb’s attraction to Islam and how he manipulated the religion to support his anti-Western thoughts.

Within the Brotherhood, Seyyid Qutb’s responsibilities were prestigious, as he was head of one of the most powerful sections of the organization, namely, *Qism Nashr al-Da’wah* (The Propagation of the Message Section). He was in charge of organizing the society’s call, planning and giving speeches and lectures inside and outside of the society, journalism and the publication of Islamic-oriented literature, and the spiritual, mental, and physical guidance of all Brothers (Musallam, 2005, 145). This is notable because Seyyid Qutb’s ideology became the voice of the Brotherhood as a whole. He emerged as a Muslim Brother ideologue from his appointment to the position in 1953 to 1954, and during this time period there was a shift in tone, emphasis, and method of propagation of the Islamic call in comparison to the previous leadership under al-Hudaybi. He also served as the representative of the society in Islamic conferences from 1953 to 1954, where he gave lectures on the ethical responsibility of Muslims to move beyond the domain of charity to a more inclusive Islamic way of life where the individual, family, society, and government employ Islamic concepts to promote the political and economic well-being of society as a whole. (Musallam, 2005, 148-149).

Seyyid Qutb's writing and ideology evolved further in prison, where he used terms such as *jahiliyyah* (ignorance) and *hakimiyyah* (divine governance) to qualify his controversial ideas. He was partly influenced by Pakistani radical Islamist Mawdudi, though Mawdudi's supporters claim that Seyyid Qutb exaggerated and further distorted Mawdudi's already extremist principles. During his time in prison his revolutionary ideas revolved around the principle that all societies, including those that claimed to be Muslim societies, were *mujtama 'at jahiliyyah* (societies of ignorance) filled with *kafirs* (non-believers) (Musallam, 2005, 151-153). His solution to this mass ignorance is a "proper" Islamic society that resembles European fascism, "which focuses on change at the expense of a fully-thought out 'orthodox stage when the dynamics of society settle down to becoming 'stead-state.' Namely when its internal and external enemies have been eliminated and new institutions created" (Calvert, 2010, 211). In essence, Seyyid Qutb proposed a complete reorganization of society where legislation was completely in line with Islam that completely shuns non-Muslims and non-orthodox Muslims. He emphasizes that Islam must be the basis for all laws and cannot be implemented in a piecemeal fashion. His explanation for this is that Islam's beliefs and practices are interrelated and mutually reinforcing with the goal of liberating man from tyranny, poverty, fear, and vice. He states that it would be "a travesty to God's justice" to implement one aspect of the law and disregard the other (Calvert, 2010, 212). The fallacy in his thinking is forgetting to account for modern society and its demands. Many of the laws lack a place and can be seen as cruel in contemporary times.

For example, Seyyid Qutb suggests implementing the *hudud* punishments, specific penalties for specific crimes. The punishment for stealing under Quranic law is amputation of the hand, and since Islam takes care of the economic needs of all people, stealing is unnecessary and is purely based on greed (Calvert, 2010, 212). In this way, Seyyid Qutb rationalizes some of the strict laws that he wishes to reestablish into Egyptian society. Seyyid Qutb is considered a radical thinker because unlike Banna, he does not emphasize the reinterpretation of Islamic laws to adapt to the modern Egyptian society. He reverts to an archaic interpretation, which holds little relevance in current society and employs incredible severity towards non-Muslims. This brings me to my next point: the severe transition the Brotherhood's vision from Banna's leadership to Seyyid Qutb's. How did Seyyid Qutb alter Banna's original vision for the Brotherhood, and what does this say about the Brotherhood under the influence of Seyyid Qutb from 1953-1966?

### **Ideological Transformation Within the Brotherhood from Banna to Seyyid Qutb**

How did Qutb's upbringing and influences stray from Al-Banna's teachings, and what can be concluded by Qutb's experiences in Egypt and America? A defining characteristic when looking at the Brotherhood is the influence of the environment of the leader in determining his attitudes. Banna created the Brotherhood in response to social and cultural upheavals and his desire to return to a more devout practice of Islam. However, from Banna's vision of a reform or social liberation

movement, the political climate during Seyyid Qutb's time and the persecution by Nasser's government brought out a new interpretation of Banna's struggle for social liberation of the pan-Islamic and pan-Arabic realm. This new environment caused several brothers to reconsider the principle of non-violence that Banna preached.

Additionally, their affiliations and focuses varied. While Banna was only concerned with founding and expanding the Muslim Brotherhood, Seyyid Qutb was initially passionate about literary criticism and journalism, then became involved in various political parties in Egyptian politics, and was unsatisfied with several parties and jumped from one party to another. He engaged with the army officers of the 1952 July revolution and then rejected them and joined the Brotherhood and was jailed for fifteen years. These experiences colored and altered his theories to a certain extent.

The evolution of thought from that of Banna to that of Seyyid Qutb can be characterized by a shift in method in achieving the society's goals. While Al-Banna engaged in violence through the secret apparatus, Seyyid Qutb was significantly more vocal in his encouragement of a violent *jihad* against foreign occupants and Egyptian leaders, who continued the Western spread of *jahiliyya* or ignorance to the guidance of God under Islam and the Quran.

Unlike Banna, Seyyid Qutb did not share the same sentiments towards the West. While Banna was against many of the social values and characteristics of the West such as materialism and colonialism, Seyyid Qutb had a very negative view of European and American values that was only aggravated after his visit to the United States. This attitude spurred Seyyid Qutb's largest contribution to the

Brotherhood—the concept of a thorough and unbounded holy war against infidels and non-observers. Berman refers to Seyyid Qutb as “the philosopher of Islamic terror” because of this radical shift in doctrine that Seyyid Qutb discussed intensively in his prison writings, which managed to influence some branches within the Brotherhood (Berman, 2003). The experience of political persecution under Nasser’s government in tandem with Seyyid Qutb’s ideology brought out a new interpretation of Banna’s fight for social liberation and reform based on religious thought. He introduced the notion of a forceful *jihad* against any organization or individual that was not based on the historic example of the Salafi period in Early Islam. This radical and jihadist ideology marked a clear, yet temporary shift, within the Brotherhood (Calvert, 2010, 162-165).

Hasan Al-Banna was in no way completely innocent of violence, as the Secret Apparatus was active under his leadership. However, he was significantly more moderate than Seyyid Qutb, who was overtly aggressive and advocated a religious *jihad* against all people who he believed threatened his beliefs. Though Banna used violence through the secret apparatus, he did not condemn all those opposed to him.

As evidenced by Hasan Al-Banna and Seyyid Qutb, within the Muslim Brotherhood, the leader, radical or moderate, has significant clout on the remainder of the Brotherhood’s views. Seyyid Qutb developed most of his radical ideas in prison and merely wrote them down, without the opportunity to implement his ideology. However, a group of followers, inspired by his beliefs and writings, emerged and eagerly adopted a physical, violent interpretation of *jihad* against all *kafirs*. The threat of the Muslim Brotherhood lies on the ability influential, radical



leaders have the ability to sway smaller subsets of the Society into following the same extremist pathway.

### **Radical Islamic Thought and Democracy**

A main component to all forms of democracy is the concept of sovereignty and authority. In order to consider the Brotherhood as democratic, their interpretation of where authority lies and the responsibility of the community are paramount. Seyyid Qutb uses of the term *hakimiyya* strategically. *Hakimiyya*, God's sole sovereignty, denies the capacity of men and women to distinguish between right and wrong, licit and illicit. There is the idealistic interpretation of his use of the term that can be twisted into a democratic guise. Since all people are created equal, and no one has the right to impose their will on others, a higher authority must be in place to maintain order and peace. If the higher authority is divine law, Islam serves as a theology of liberation that promotes equality and prevents corruption and despotism. This aspect of Seyyid Qutb's dialogue reflects equal opportunity and rights for all people and aligns with democratic values. (Khatab and Bouma, 2007, 86-88).

However, Seyyid Qutb continues to say that the government should be based on justice on the part of the ruler, obedience of those who are ruled, and complete acceptance of the role of *hakimiyyah* and *sharia* law in daily life. This implies that the ruler has the responsibility and unquestionable power to interpret *sharia* law. This resembles a dictatorship since those ruled have to completely abide to what the

leader says. Seyyid Qutb contends the ruler will justly interpret the law to protect the citizens interests; however, this idealistic view seems impractical, and the leader is likely to succumb to corruption.

Many terrorist organizations have drawn inspiration from Seyyid Qutb's principles and implemented them to further their own causes. Jihadi conspirators of the post-Qutbiyyan groups, such as Ayman al-Zawahiri, who have looked to Seyyid Qutb's writings for inspiration and direction, believe that democracy is an idolatrous idea designed, especially against Islam. Democracy assigns equality between people and instead of following the Islamic belief that designates sovereignty to God, democracy gives the power of legislation to the people (Khatab and Bouma, 2007, 80-81).

Additionally, Seyyid Qutb expressed extreme skepticism and even condemned Western ideas. He did not trust the Western system of government and did not approve of its societal values. This is expressed in his writings such as *Social Justice in Islam* and *Milestones*, which I discussed. This skepticism has been exacerbated by militant Islamic groups that interpret this distrust as a reason to avoid democratic values completely in their ideal form of government. These Qutb supporters argue that Muslims in Algeria were winning the presidential election and that Western democracies interfered, hindered their progress, and helped the existing regime maintain power. They cite this example as one of many reasons to distrust the West, question its involvement in the East, and examine its desire to impose its form of government on the Middle East. Historically, democracy has not been effective in the Middle East, so this leads to even more doubt on whether it is a

viable and appropriate form of government compatible with their goals. Most of the Middle Eastern regimes are not democratic, and they came to power through military coups, so elections and democratic processes are foreign and inappropriate. They believe that this democracy is ineffective and that to appease the West's encouragement of democracy is futile (Haidar, 2006, 13-15).

Though there is this ambiguity in Seyyid Qutb's ideal implementation of the law, it is clear that he became increasingly radical and absolute in his implementation of the laws as his life went on, and it is more likely that he would lean towards favoring the radical implementation of his writings, as imposed by terrorist groups, than the optimistic interpretation of his terminology. This is evident mainly in the harsh and absolute nature of his writing that predicted no future but one that involved a complete imposition of Islamic rule. The main concern that I see that stands between Seyyid Qutb's ideology and democracy is that his focus on religion's claim to be the complete and only embodiment of the truth. This unwavering idea is incompatible with the toleration and incorporation of opposing beliefs. Unlike Al-Banna, Seyyid Qutb seems uncompromising in his interpretation of the law, and this does not lend itself to constructing society with the focus of liberty and autonomy. If *sharia* law is so strictly implemented without consideration for reinterpretation or alteration, it cannot be democratic under the Seyyid Qutb's principles.

### **Establishing Seyyid Qutb as the Exception Within the Muslim Brotherhood**

I believe Seyyid Qutb represents an anomaly within the Brotherhood, who was charismatic enough in a time period and environment where Egyptians were susceptible to sympathizing with his ideas to create a radical Islamist movement. This is clear because he had some unique views that were non-existent within the Brotherhood before his extremist writings. He differed from other Brotherhood members on matters regarding the threat of the West, non-Muslims role in society, and using violence as a means of conducting *jihad* against non-believers. Seen in his writings, namely *Social Justice in Islam* and *Milestones*, Seyyid Qutb's ideology strays from Hasan Al-Banna's original ideas and modifies them to incorporate extremist, unaccommodating implementation of *sharia* law.

Seyyid Qutb's legacy lived on, and in the wake of his death, following his execution in 1966, the radical Islamists within the Brotherhood regrouped and reviewed their organization and ideas. They lost confidence in the leadership of the Brotherhood and formed militant Islamic groups that were strategically small. They also abandoned the Brotherhood's educational program, as they saw it as a precursor to Seyyid Qutb's and other leaders' deaths and the failure to establish an Islamic state. Additionally, they believed that the alternative course was to overthrow the regime and apply *sharia* law. It is in this step that violence and terrorism began to take shape in Egyptian society (Khatab and Bouma, 2007, 78). This is an important detail, because the violence was linked not to the Muslim Brotherhood, but rather to radical offshoots that emerged promoting their own conception of *jihad* through terrorism.

Seyyid Qutb's effect in modern times on the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology, excluding terrorist organizations that draw inspiration from his work, is minimal within Egypt. The Brotherhood looks upon Seyyid Qutb's leadership as a digression within the party and its values. His ideas do not represent the continual values of the party, as a whole. Though extremist offshoots such as Hamas in Gaza are existant, the Egyptian Brotherhood claims to disassociate from Qutb's philosophy. John Calvert claims that though the Brotherhood has a violent history, it foreswore violence in 1970. In regards to the modern Muslim Brotherhood's acknowledgement of Seyyid Qutb, Calvert states, "The younger generation of Brothers are more eager to engage in the Brotherhood in the political process and play by democratic rules. They regard Seyyid Qutb as problematic, as something of an embarrassment" (Sacirbey, 2011). In conclusion, the Brotherhood cannot be judged by Seyyid Qutb's views because they do not represent the ideology upon establishing the Brotherhood nor the current consensus within the Brotherhood.

## **Conclusion**

Under Seyyid Qutb, the Brotherhood was pushed towards extremist thought and actions. Seyyid Qutb was strongly influenced by Al-Banna's work; however, after his time in America and Nasser's prison, he began developing what is now referred to as "Radical Islamism."

Under Seyyid Qutb, the Brotherhood adopted violent and radical strategies to attempt to impose an extreme version of Islamic law. Seyyid Qutb's strategy

diverged from Al-Banna's original vision for the Brotherhood. His writings encouraged discrimination between people, specifically between Muslims and non-Muslims and between women and men. He was severely threatened by the West and concerned by the West's interpretation of morality. His ideal Islamic society allowed for no adaptation to the diverse nature of the modern, Egyptian society.

In looking at el-Erian in the following chapter, I will see how his ideology transformed the Brotherhood after Al-Banna and Seyyid Qutb, and use his beliefs and goals within the Brotherhood to determine the validity and credibility of the Brotherhood in current times.

## **Chapter 3: Examining Essam El-Erian's Ideology and the Muslim Brotherhood Today**

### **Essam El-Erian's Upbringing**

Essam El-Erian, one of the most prominent representatives of the new generation of Brotherhood leaders, is the deputy head of the of the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, former member of the Guidance Bureau of the Brotherhood, and a current Egyptian parliament member. His childhood and upbringing is indicative of his current, dominant role in the Muslim Brotherhood and the Freedom and Justice Party. He was born in a small village called Nahya, near Giza. His father was a teacher, and El-Erian was raised a devout, observant Muslim. He was brought up with a strong emphasis on education and religion, but only decided to enter the political Islamist realm when he was fifteen years old and was nearly electrocuted by touching exposed wires on a lamp. He claims this was a turning point in his life where he questioned his purpose and goals in life. The solution he found was by joining the Muslim Brotherhood to his interest in political activism and religion (Slackman, 2006).

El-Erian was one of the brightest students in his village and was selected to study medicine in Cairo. During his time in school, he joined an entire class of young people who were trying to transform the Brotherhood by pushing the group back into politics. The government, however, felt threatened and struck back. He eventually earned a master's degree in clinical pathology, but as a result of El-

Erian's active role in the Brotherhood, he was sent to jail and never managed to finish his medical training. El-Erian served in the Egyptian Parliament from 1987 to 1990 as an independent, because the Brotherhood could not run candidates as an outlawed group. He was a key player in the Brotherhood when the group briefly prospered in the 1980's. In 1995, he, along with 27 members of the Brotherhood, was arrested and he was sentenced to five years in prison for belonging to an illegal group that sought to create an Islamic state in Egypt and worked to suspend the constitution. That conviction automatically disqualified him from running for public office that year. During his imprisonment, El-Erian enrolled in Al-Azhar's Faculty of Islamic Sharia and Law and the Faculty of Arts' History Department (El-Erian and Howeidy, 2000). From El-Erian's childhood and educational upbringing, it is clear to see that he was very intelligent, focused, and academically successful. He was not raised in a radical, extremist religious environment. His reasons for joining the Brotherhood appear to be noble, as he joined it because he was unhappy with the current state of politics in Egypt and wished to use the Brotherhood as a stepping-stone to enact this change. During this portion of his life, El-Erian seems to be an intelligent figure, who did not show signs of radicalism or extremist ideology.

### **Essam El-Erian's Current Role in the Muslim Brotherhood**

Now, I will examine the current state of the Brotherhood, El-Erian's contemporary role in the Brotherhood, and the goals that he seeks to fulfill. Essam El-Erian is a spokesman and political strategist for the Muslim Brotherhood and



current chair of the Egyptian parliament's foreign affairs committee. Recently, in 2005, El-Erian helped organize a campaign in which 88 Brotherhood members captured parliamentary seats running as independents. El-Erian is a leading force in the Brotherhood, and his actions largely reflect, impact, and lead the Brotherhood's actions, as a whole (El-Erian and MacLeod, 2011).

Essam El-Erian speaks about The Muslim Brotherhood, now a legal party, as a group promoting democracy and comparing itself to democratic nations like Turkey. The Brotherhood has an incredible influence on the future politics of Egypt, because its representative political party, The Freedom and Justice Party, won more than 43 percent of the seats in parliament in the most recent 2012 election. One of these seats is occupied by Essam El-Erian (Perry and Blair, 2012). This large presence has raised questions over how it may balance its Islamist platform with the realities of modern society.

Encouraged by its electoral success, the Brotherhood is becoming increasingly vocal in its opinions on Egypt's future. However, its main focus has been on Egypt's economic crisis, rising crime, and political reform, rather than on the tighter application of Islamic *sharia* law (Perry and Blair, 2012). El-Erian and the Brotherhood are aware that Egyptian voters are looking for economic and social progress, not a dramatic change in government structure. Additionally, since the Brotherhood has been through waves of success and oppression from its founding in 1928, it knows to be careful with this new found freedom. Because so many eyes, namely the West, are watching the Brotherhood's actions closely, they are even more cautious in how they wish to proceed. They wish to accommodate the people's

wishes and adapt their Islamist ideology to modern times (“As government-in-waiting, Egypt’s Brotherhood finds voice”). This is reassuring because this external pressure will make them more likely to commit to any model that they claim to implement.

El-Erian wrote a piece that was published in the *New York Times*, in which he stated the Muslim Brotherhood’s goals in the wake of the revolution in the Spring of 2011. He expresses the Brotherhood’s desire to be a representative of the Egyptian people. He says that their agenda, asserted since the beginning of the uprising, is the Brotherhood’s agenda. He also clearly states that they hope to achieve reform and rights for all, not limiting their agenda to members of the Brotherhood or to Muslims (El-Erian, 2011).

In an interview with the *Cairo Review*, Essam El-Erian emphasized that politics should be about the power of the people, not the power of regimes. Though the President has stepped down, the military and Mubarak’s men still remain in power. El-Erian demands that a new cabinet must be formed and a new parliament and a new president must be elected. He emphasizes that the transfer of power to civilians is very important. Though the process might take a long time and a series of trials and errors, El-Erian believes Egypt is on the right path to bring about a democratic system (El-Erian and MacLeod, 2011).

Additionally, the Brotherhood wants to rectify the wrongs of the previous government. El-Erian states that the Brotherhood’s steps forward include, “cleaning the country, by the political meaning because [officials of the former regime] are corrupt. They need to be brought to justice, the stolen wealth needs to be restored,

the people who are still in power from the last regime must be out, and this needs the course pressure” (El-Erian and MacLeod, 2011).

El-Erian asserts that since the Brotherhood’s founding in 1928, it has promoted an agenda of gradual reform, preaching non-violence as a method to achieve its goals. Because of the nature of this method, the process is slow and tedious. El-Erian says that the Brotherhood does not intend to take a dominant role in the political transition (El-Erian, 2011). They claim that they are not targeting to have a majority in the coming parliament, though their popular support caused this result. El-Erian emphasizes their desire to “not dominate, but participate” and all of their actions are not “to send a message,” but rather “it is [their] policy and [they] do it and believe in it” (El-Erian and MacLeod, 2011).

It is natural to question whether these bold claims of non-violent reforms are trustworthy. The Muslim Brotherhood did not uphold their promise to avoid a dominant role in politics, evidenced by the fact that they are putting forward a candidate, Khairat el-Shater, for the presidential elections. This can be seen as a strategy to prevent the opposition party from supporting a potentially dictatorial candidate or can be seen as the Brotherhood’s desire for power and dominance. El-Erian summarizes the immediate changes that he wishes to see take place and says, “the tyranny of autocratic rule must give way to immediate reform: the demonstration of a serious commitment to change, the granting of freedoms to all, and the transition toward democracy. The Muslim Brotherhood stands firmly behind the demands of the Egyptian people as a whole” (El-Erian, 2011).

## **Essam El-Erian's Views on Implementing Sharia Law**

Essam El-Erian and his fellow Brothers claim that the implementation of *sharia* law is not their first priority because the constitution already includes *sharia*. El-Erian stated in an interview with *Hurriyet Daily News* that every court in Egypt implements *sharia* law, and that the implementation of traditional Islamic law is not a new concept (Yezdani, 2011). They say that they wish to focus on the pressing issues, such as working to establish a just, democratic country and get rid of the former corrupt officials before they can move toward establishing a civil state that is founded on religious tenets. Even as they work to furthering these goals, El-Erian emphasizes that they have the same demands as the people, and are working to complete these goals (El-Erian and MacLeod, 2011).

The Brotherhood has been keeping its distance from more radical Islamist parties, such as the al-Nour party. Simultaneously, they claim to have disassociated themselves with the Salafis, a group of ultra conservative Islamists that see popular entertainment as sinful, reject women's participation in voting or public life, and wish to implement laws that mandate a shift to Islamic banking, restrict the sale of alcohol, provide special curriculums for boys and girls in public schools, and censor the content of the arts and entertainment. Contrary to this extreme imposition of religious law, the Brotherhood has pledged to respect basic individual rights while still using the influence of the state to merge currently relevant aspects of *sharia* law into society. Some leaders have proposed that a special council of religious scholars

advise Parliament or the top courts on legislation's compliance with Islamic law (Times Topics: Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt), 2012).

Also, in contrast to Seyyid Qutb's condemnation of Turkey's forever secular government, Abdel Ghaffar of the Muslim Brotherhood, a close associate to El-Erian, says that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has a good relationship with Turkey's ruling Justice and Development party and believes that they are a "good role model for us, but with some changes" (Yezdani, 2011). He stated that the Muslim community in Turkey is different from the Egyptian community, and while *sharia* law is not a part of Turkey's Constitution, it is already a part of the Egyptian Constitution, and ideally, according to the Brotherhood, it should stay there. This comment implies that the Muslim Brotherhood's goals do not include a complete application of *sharia* law. They appear to be striving for a middle ground between the extreme *Salafi* Islamists ideal Islamic state and Turkey's implementation of a secular democracy that is open to religion. Consistent with their philosophy of gradual change, the Brotherhood suggests that Egypt focuses on economic changes and drafting a new constitution, while slowly removing the military power, instead of a sudden, holistic, implementation of *sharia* law. El-Erian vaguely reconciles divine law with civil law by describing this grey area of ideal government that lies between the Islamic Caliphate's implementation of *sharia* law and Turkey's secular government that contains parties that are inspired by Islamic principles.

Also, the Muslim Brotherhood asserts that Turkey is a good democratic model for them; however, the Brotherhood's goals for Egypt are in no way related to Turkey's implementation of a secular parliamentary representative democratic

republic. Turkey does not include any *sharia* law and emphasizes a separation of power between the Council of Ministers (the executive power) and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (the legislative power). This is completely different to the top-down model of government that the Muslim Brotherhood supports.

### **Essam El-Erian's Ideology**

El-Erian has commented on the role of religion and democracy in the future of Egypt. He says that governmental options are not limited to secular, liberal democracy, or authoritarian theocracy. He says secular liberal democracy, encouraged by France, firmly rejects religion in public life; however, this is not the only model for democracy. In the United States, for example, rejects official religion, but religious values can be in public life. He says that Egypt's heritage and culture revolves around religion, freedom, and justice, and that the civil state should draw upon these Islamic values. El-Erian comments on the compatibility between Islamic law and democracy and states, "We embrace democracy not as a foreign concept that must be reconciled with tradition, but as a set of principles and objectives that are inherently compatible with and reinforce Islamic tenets" (What the Muslim Brotherhood Wants"). El-Erian discusses the role of Islam as a way of life on the individual, family, societal, social, economical, and educational level. He emphasizes its holistic role and natural inspiration for law making (El-Erian and MacLeod, 2011). As El-Erian discusses and rejects these models, the crux of the problem lies in

his dislike for a secular government that embraces Islamic values, such as that used in Turkey, which he does not deem “Islamic enough.”

Though in the past the Brotherhood has consistently emphasized that God remains the only judge of immoral behavior and ultimately responsible for rule of government, the Brotherhood is currently moving away from the concept divine sovereignty and emphasizing the principle of *shura* or consultation. Though in the past, this term was used for consultation in all matters private and public, it is now presented as the functional equivalent of Western parliamentary rule, and serves as a basis of Islamic-based democracy. The Brotherhood emphasizes that this concept of consultation is inherently democratic and requires elected representatives to be involved in the political process revolving representation, competition, contestation, and law making (Kramer, 1993). The appeal to Islamists of using this particular term *shura* is that they use it as an indication of Islam’s natural compatibility with democracy. However, *shura* does not imply the process of elections and fair representation. This term is strategically used, and the question that should be asked is who is being consulted and ultimately is this consultation indicative of the actual delegation of power. Though El-Erian frequently refers to this word, implying voting and a system of checks and balances, this is contradictory to his model of a small, elite group guiding the masses. This model eludes more to a system of a overly protective-protective democracy, where those leading guide the masses for their benefit.

El-Erian discusses his opinions regarding the electoral and law-making processes. He told the *Al-Hayat* newspaper that high voter turnout rates in Egypt’s

first post-Mubarak parliamentary elections were a great success for the country, and the next step is to establish the rule of the law by working together “with all forces” and with “respect for all voters” to draft a new constitution (“Brotherhood’s Essam El-Erian: We Will Not Exclude Any Force From Drafting New Constitution,” 2012). El-Erian believes that the country has a straight course and clear road map toward establishing a constitution. In terms of this timeline, he refers to the American and French revolution. He says the process of creating a constitution takes a long time and patience, and cites the American constitution as an example of a constitution that took months to draft (El-Erian and MacLeod, 2011).

El-Erian assured leaders that the constitutional committee would be chosen by parliament to draft the constitution, and that the Brotherhood would not monopolize the decision making process. El-Erian promised that this new constitution would be representative of all the different factions of society and would conform to the public’s and country’s interests. He also stressed the importance of the military council’s abdication of power on the declared date in the middle of 2012, so to transition Egypt into a civil state (“Brotherhood’s Essam El-Erian: We Will Not Exclude Any Force From Drafting New Constitution,” 2012). This idea of the government looking into the best interests of the public while being representative of their views aligns with a system of guardianship.

In terms of the actual laws being implemented, in a referendum in March 2012, more than 70 percent of Egyptians backed a package of amendments to the 1971 Egyptian Constitution. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces approved an Interim Constitution based on these results. El-Erian says that this was a



constitutional declaration based on a legitimate and sovereign public referendum, and that it cannot be revoked (“Brotherhood party to confront ruling military council if constitution drafted,” 2012). Sharia laws are already incorporated into the 1971 constitution. The extent that this will change is uncertain as of right now, since the new constitution is still being drafted. However, according to the Brotherhood and El-Erian’s statements, it is clear that the rule of law will be representative of the Egyptian consensus and will not revolve around one group’s political agenda.

El-Erian has expressed that he is also concerned with transparency within elections. It is an issue that has heavily affected the Brotherhood, as their representation in parliament has been hurt due to rigged elections. El-Erian says that in the 1987 elections, at least four of the Brotherhood candidates on the ticket won, but only one made it to parliament. They deserved 120 seats, and won that many; however, they were only given 60 seats. He says that this has been occurring in Egypt since 1924. The most recent elections held this year, however, were a great success. El-Erian and other Brotherhood officials commented that it had a very high voter turnout and was fraud free (El-Erian and Howeidy, 2000).

El-Erian articulated how he believed electoral participation and representation should ideally work. He says that Brotherhood strongly encourage the involvement of all people in elections, including women and non-Muslims. This equal opportunity of citizens extends to who El-Erian believes can run for president and parliamentary positions. He claims that the “election of president is not our opinion only. It is the rule of the people. If the people elect women, if the people elect Christian, its up to them” (El-Erian and MacLeod, 2011). El-Erian says the

Brotherhood intends to support any candidate with legitimate qualifications, regardless of religion or gender. He says that just because the Brotherhood is an Islamic group, they do not look down upon Christian candidates. He said they supported the only Copt who made it to the 1987 parliament because he represented the values of the Brotherhood: nationalism, honesty, straightforwardness, and a clear position on Muslims and their legal rights (El-Erian and Howeidy, 2000). However, after nominating El-Shater to run for president, it seems unlikely that the Brotherhood would support a non-Muslim as president, because he or she would not have the rightful qualifications to lead the country under an Islamic guise. Though they probably would continue to support non-Muslims in parliamentary positions as they did in the 1987 parliamentary elections, the Brotherhood would never consider or support a non-Muslim as president because that would completely undermine their goals.

### **Discussion El-Erian's Ideology with the Models of Democracy**

El-Erian's vision for the future of Egypt can be seen as an incredibly specific and protective form of protective democracy. El-Erian's view that the government must guide the people according to Islamic tenets can be qualified as government that is limited to the basic functions of preventing tyranny and protecting its people. Since protective democracy holds that the government exists solely to protect the people, it can be argued that El-Erian wishes to protect the people to the extent that a small, enlightened group guides and oversees its citizens. Additionally, since El-

Erian represents a specific faction and interest group within Egypt, his desire to focus on furthering this particular group's goals. These ideas of focusing on the utilitarian aspect of politics align with the model of performance democracy. His views do not condone the principles of participatory democracy because he does not support an active role of citizens in the government. Lastly, his ideas do not reflect the model of pluralist democracy because he does not wish to represent all of society within the government. Though he allows for diversity of religion and gender within the Egyptian Parliament, he wishes for the entire parliament to represent a cohesive goal for the Egyptian people.

## **Conclusion**

Under Essam El-Erian, the Brotherhood aligns with a qualified form of protective democracy. El-Erian rejects Turkey's model of secular democracy that incorporates Islamic values. He desires a more Islamically-based form of government. His use of the word *shura* is strategic, and though *shura* means consultation, consultation does not imply voting or a democratic process. Additionally, the separation of powers is not existant in El-Erian's ideal model for governance. His model, however, does resemble protective democracy because he contends that he wishes to protect and guard the interests of the people. Because of this claim, if we grant an association with this vanguard model and protective democracy, we can conclude that El-Erian's model can be defined as a model that adapts protective democracy to its needs.

## **Conclusion**

### **Evolution of Ideology Within the Muslim Brotherhood**

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hasan Al-Banna as a revolutionary, Islamist movement that challenged the existing form of government and pushed to restructure Egyptian society to one based in Islamic law. The Brotherhood consists mostly of educated middle class members of society that wish to implement Islamic law into Egyptian society. As the Brotherhood has evolved, the leadership and its conformance with democratic principles have varied.

Throughout the history of the Brotherhood, the group has been a product of its environment. The transformative moment in Banna's life was his exposure to life in Egypt under the British protectorate, where he witnessed the influence of British imperialism, the Suez Canal workers' working conditions, and the lack of Islamic values in daily life. These surroundings in tandem with his fathers' strong religious influence affected and inspired Banna's motivation to form the Muslim Brotherhood. Under Hasan Al-Banna, the group emphasized community-building projects as a method of rebuilding the nation after the end of the British occupation in Egypt. They emphasized mass-education, nationalistic pride, and a return to Islam's golden age. This was a clear reaction of the political and religious suppression Egyptians faced under British rule. Banna's ideology focused on delegating power from top down through the "guardians of the sharia." He disapproved of multiple parties and promoted leadership and guidance of a knowledgeable, Islamic elite. This type of

leadership reflects guardianship, since a small minority of people are chosen to lead the society according to what he deems the public's best interests.

Seyyid Qutb represented an anomaly within the Muslim Brotherhood. Though he, too, wished to establish an Islamic state founded on *sharia* law, he did not account for the religious and cultural diversity within the society, used restrictive terminology to further his cause, and fabricated an unfounded fear of the West and all ideology associated with the West. His thinking expressed in his writings was absolute and unwavering. He traveled to the United States searching for flaws in American society and evidence for his anti-Western sentiments. His preconceived notions of the West clouded his interpretation of America's lack of morals. His radical views, magnified after an extensive period in Naser's prisons, encouraged an exclusivistic mentality that later inspired several terrorist organizations. His values align with vanguard thought, as he believes that a leader, following God's will, should guide the people based on just principles. He does not allow the people the right to dissent if the leader becomes unjust and dictatorial. Qutb does not incorporate a system of checks and balances or request consent of the governed. Therefore, his system of government cannot be counted as democratic.

Following Qutb, the Brotherhood has moved away from his extremist principles and has searched for a middle ground that appeals to a modern, diverse Egyptian population. Essam El-Erian speaks highly of democratic principles and encourages free and fair elections and open participation of all citizens. However, his definition of the democratic system is different from the Turkish and American systems. He rejects Turkey's model for democracy that encourages secular

government with Islamic values and political parties that draw inspiration from Islam. His model advocates greater incorporation of Islam and *sharia* law than that used in Turkey but less than that implemented during the Islamic Caliphate. El-Erian leaves this grey area between reconciling divine law with civil law. Though he encourages participation of all people in elections, he would not support a non-Muslim as the head of state. However, he asserts a claim for democracy by saying that he and the Brotherhood speak for and represent the majority of the Egyptian people. The criticism I have here is that democracy also advocates the protection of minorities, and though El Erian's views allegedly reflect the Egyptian consensus, he needs to incorporate minority rights in his governmental system in order for it to be considered truly democratic. He stresses the slow and gradual process of change in implementing *sharia* law into modern Egyptian society. According to El-Erian, as the sophisticated, enlightened, and informed leaders of society, the elected Brotherhood leaders would rule Egypt with its general welfare in consideration.

### **The Muslim Brotherhood in Modern Times**

A major concern when evaluating the credibility and the future of the Brotherhood is determining the likelihood of the Brotherhood upholding its promises if it achieves a position of power. Sarah Mousa, a recent Princeton University graduate and journalist for Al-Jazeera, questions whether the Brotherhood will actually make good on its claims, or whether it will succumb to hypocrisy (Mousa, 2012). Her views reflect the views of most skeptics of the

Brotherhood, who believe that the Brotherhood is using the image of democracy as a guise to gain power, and then once in power will completely abandon the values they preach. After looking at Essam El-Erian's ideology and the resonance of Al-Banna's principles in this ideology, I partly agree with Mousa's view. There is reason to question the Brotherhood because of potential problems and issues that come with guardianship. The leaders under the model of guardianship keep the role of making decisions for their constituents to themselves. This could easily evolve into a dictatorship that does not reflect the interests of its people. However, I also believe the Brotherhood has an incentive to abide by their previous assertions and upholding its promises if they come to power. After obtaining legal status for the first time since the beginning of Nasser's administration, the Brotherhood has reason to be very careful in its plans and methodology. If it does not do so, it understands the backlash it would face and potential removal of its legal status, eliminating all progress made from the 1950's to present day.

Additionally, because Western eyes are watching every move the Brotherhood makes, they are likely to tread carefully, not make too drastic changes, and avoid extreme positions on future Islamic policies. Any rash decisions or overwhelming signs of aggression would affect the funding that Egypt receives from the United States. Because of their recent accession to power and the pressure the group faces within and outside of Egypt, the Brotherhood has to act strategically, and if it does not fulfill the promises of democracy that it claims to achieve, the backlash would be tremendous. To avoid criticism that they are power-hungry, they have maintained a purposeful distance between themselves and positions of

complete, authoritarian power. They have been gradually introducing themselves into the political realm by attempting to facilitate the transition of Egypt from Mubarak's regime, using parliamentary elections as a litmus test of their popularity and influence.

An important recent development is the nomination of Khairat el-Shater as a presidential candidate. This nomination can be seen in two ways. On the one hand, it violates the promise that the Brotherhood made to the Egyptian people to not submit a candidate for presidential elections. On the other hand, it can be argued that by not putting up appropriate opposition, they are allowing a potential unjust dictator from another party to gain power.

### **The Issue of the Muslim Brotherhood and Its Compatibility with Democracy**

The Muslim Brotherhood has marketed itself as a democratic, reformist group. However, the Muslim Brotherhood does not specifically align with a single form of democracy, but adapts protective and performance democracy towards its interests, while simultaneously incorporating aspects of guardianship. Though there is not a name for this alternative form of democracy, it could potentially be democratic in a sense.

The Brotherhood believes that Islam is the solution and that the laws incorporated in the Islamic doctrine serve as an inspiration for laws that should guide all citizens' lives. In a sense, they advocate a form of protective democracy, where they wish to protect the citizens' interests to the extent that they serve as



guardians and guides of the people. In this sense, the vanguard system under the Brotherhood could qualify as a version of protective democracy. Additionally, the Brotherhood currently also functions partially as a performance democracy. Since it represents individual voices and concerns and a specific interest group of people within Egyptian society, it incorporates this aspect of performance democracy. Like Banna, El-Erian has not shown any desire to incorporate and apply multiple interest groups' opinions. He claims to have views that are representative of what a majority of Egyptians want and does not acknowledge and consolations for minority groups in Egypt. Because of this, his ideas are discordant with pluralistic democracy.

Ultimately, the Brotherhood's claims of being a democratic group are partially supported. Although their ideology does not completely qualify as an existing form of democracy, their goals are not necessarily something to be condemned. They exhibit aspects of performance and protective democracy; however, the issue of vanguardism and the misleading use of *shura* are issues to be wary of in terms of the Brotherhood's credibility and gauging their trustworthiness. Their vanguard ideology has an innate tendency toward totalitarian rule; however, if implemented correctly, they could potentially be a form of a performance-protective democracy that benevolently looks to protect the best interests of the people.

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