## The Egyptian Muslim brotherhood and the road towards the Ummah
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# The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Road Towards the *Ummah*

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In the past three decades, ever since political Islam became a powerful force in the Middle East, many scholars wonder if the ideal of unity of Arabs and Muslims is still possible in the current international political context. The concept of *Ummah* (Islamic community of believers) as a base of authority always existed in the Middle East even since the rise of Islam. In order to better understand why this concept became so important nowadays after it was dormant for centuries, it is necessary to look into the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its strife for the *Ummah*.

The objective of this essay is to critically analyze the contemporary developments of the *Ummah,* a concept which began to receive more attention due to the globalization of political Islam. Although this concept is as old as Islam it came on the Middle Eastern political stage propagated by different Islamic political organizations. Out of these organizations the most prominent is the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Through the years and influenced by the political changes in the region, the Muslim Brotherhood developed and gained millions of adepts not only in Egypt but in the whole Muslim World. After the great Arab defeat of 1967 the Arab public began to turn to Islam in order to find solutions for the day-to-day problems they were facing. Since the *Ummah* is one of Islam's ultimate goals, the Muslim Brotherhood started to strive for this concept through its political activity over the past decades and through its involvement on the international stage.

The essay is divided in three parts. The first part will analyze the concept of *Ummah* and its implications with regard to Arab and Islamic unity. The second part will search for the reasons of the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and around the Muslim and Arab World. What are the ideological and political factors that determined the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood and the strife for the *Ummah*? The third part will look into the role that the Muslim Brotherhood plays on the international stage concentrating on its foreign policy stances with regard to the all-inclusive *Ummah*.

## *The Concept of* Ummah

According to the Muslim Brothers, the *Ummah* is the basis of authority. It is the *Ummah* that "appoints the one whom it trusts and is sure of his faithfulness, loyalty, knowledge, experience, etc. Power cannot be taken by force or with the sword, but it is gained through proper free choice"[1]. Furthermore, the Muslim

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[1] Muhammad Ma'mun AL-HUDAIBI,"Politics in Islam", The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English Website, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/images/POLITICS_IN_ISLA1.doc, p. 10. Accessed on 10/02/2007.

*Ummah* is considered to be under the direct guidance of Allah alone and has the obligation to implement the *Quran* and the *Sunnah*. Also, the Brethren believe that man has to rule the *Ummah* only in the way revealed by Allah in the form of *sharia*. This way the rulers have to rule according with the laws of Allah and they should be always prepared to teach the *Ummah* the principles of Islam[1]. Only in modern times the concept of *Ummah* began to receive more attention, especially from the Islamist political movements around the Muslim World. Also globalization was a reason that brought the *Ummah* in the world's attention[2].

According to Abu Sulayman, the *Ummah* has many resources, opportunities, and values and the problems of the *Ummah* are obviously connected to mystified thinking, wrong social vision, inappropriate education, and the decline of its institutions themselves in general. Moreover he considers that Islamization of knowledge is the most significant issue on the *Ummah*'s agenda in the next decades in order to sustain active political action and mobilization all over the Muslim world[3].

One of the main objectives of the Muslim Brotherhood is the establishment of a nation based on Islam. This goal was also advocated by the Brotherhood's ideologue and leader Sayyid Qutb. Ahmad S. Moussalli identifies Qutb's goal as an Islamic system "where Islamic law is executed, where the idea of Islam rules, and where its principles and regulations define the kind of government and the form of society"[4].

According to Salih, a prerequisite to the use of Quran as a political model is the existence of the *Ummah*. Moreover, "the difficulty of creating a political system based on the *Quran* in the absence of a homogenous Muslim nation leads to a contradiction between the *Ummah* as a religious community and the state as a system of government that caters for Muslims and non-Muslims alike"[5].

Islam has the concept of universalism that stems from the call for the creation of a strong cohesive *Ummah*. Tibi states that "if this call is restricted to the real *Ummah*, to existing Muslims, then we may talk with some restrictions of an Islamic-nationalist *Ummah*"[6]. In this context political Islam is a real threat not only to the nation states themselves but also runs against the Pan-Arab project[7].

The idea of forging a distinctive Islamic World separate from the West is a consequence of the fragmentation of the international system and of the Islamic doctrine itself. In order to better understand this trend one has to comprehend the main precepts of the *Quran*. In the Islamic holy book, *Ummah* means nation and was started to be used as a term by both Islamists and Arab nationalists. The term

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[1] *Ibidem*, p. 11.

[2] Bassam TIBI, *Arab Nationalism – Between Islam and Nation-State*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1997, pp. 223-224.

[3] Abdul Hamid A. ABU SULAYMAN, "Crisis in the Muslim Mind", *The International Institute of Islamic Thought – Islamic Methodology No. 1*, The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English Website, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/images/Crisis%20in%20the%20Muslim%20Mind-AbuSulayman.doc, p. 80. Accessed on 10/02/2007.

[4] Ahmad S. MOUSSALLI, "Sayyid Qutb: The Ideologist of Islamic Fundamentalism", *al-Abhath,* no. 38, 1990, p. 60.

[5] M.A. Mohamed SALIH, "The Bible, The Qur'an and the Conflict in South Sudan", in Niels KASTFELT (ed.), *Scriptural Politics – The Bible and the Koran as Political Models in the Middle East and Africa*, C. Hurst & Company Ltd., London, 2003, p. 117.

[6] Bassam TIBI, *Arab Nationalism*...cit., p. 222.

[7] *Ibidem*.

*Ummah*, has a different historical and religious background than the traditional European term of a nation. Early Islam achieved the first *Ummah* that was supposed to be universal not national or local. Historically there never existed a harmonious *Ummah*[1].

Al-Banna has also a strongly defined position regarding Islamic unity. Although he recognizes the fact that Islam is foremost a religion, Al-Banna sees it also as patriotism and nationality. The believe in *Ummah*, the community of believers, still exists and thus he does not see distinctions of nationality or race between Muslims, nor geographical borders for Islam. This religion in his view forms by itself a single nation-the Islamic homeland[2].

Furthermore, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood makes a connection and even a classification in terms of national, Arab and Islamic unity. Al-Banna recognizes that in Egypt the Muslim Brothers have to be real Egyptian nationalists first in order to seek a true revival. This position is truly understandable when it is seen in the context when Al-Bana wrote it, shortly after the end of the Second World War when Egypt was still under British colonial rule. The second link advocated by Al-Banna is the support for Arab unity, also an important pillar in the movement of revival. Finally, Al-Banna considers that the perfect enclosure for the larger Islamic homeland is the establishment of the Islamic League (*al-jami'ah al-islamyyah*) in the context of world unity. World unity is considered as the true goal of Islam[3].

Nowadays, the Muslim Brotherhood changed in many ways from what Hassan al-Banna envisioned it to be. For example the position on party status differs since al-Banna believed that the *dawa* could not be restricted to a party associated with patrons of the ruling authorities. According to him the *dawa* was ment to address the common interest of the entire *Ummah*, and not just an organized part of it. Although, nowadays the Brotherhood still believes in addressing the *Ummah*, it admits that organization must begin at the local level, starting with the community and the state. The Muslim Brotherhood now recognizes that if the state within whose political system they function has regulations allowing the political involvement only for organized parties, in this case they must form a party[4].

Almost a hundred years ago, Abd al Rahman al Kawakibi in his book *Umm al Quran*, explained in the unambiguous terms how a contemporary Islamic resurgence might be developed. His efforts amounted only to a few localized achievements that did not actually change much in the actual importance to the *Ummah* overall[5]. Nowadays, the *Ummah* needs more efforts at the international level so it can reach a truly Islamic reformation. Abu Sulayman argues that the scholars of the *Ummah* must

> "focus their determination and attention first of all on the reform of Muslim thought and the clarification of Its vision for the *Ummah* and Its leadership.

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[1] *Ibidem*, p. 223.

[2] Hassan AL-BANNA, "On the Doctrine of the Muslim Brothers", in Hisham SHARABI (ed.), *Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World*, D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., Princeton, New Jersey, 1966, p. 110.

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 110.

[4] Sana ABED-KOTOB, "The Accommodationists Speak: Goals and Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3, August 1995, p. 328.

[5] Abdul Hamid A. ABU SULAYMAN, "Crisis in the Muslim Mind", cit., p. 81.

Thereafter, should it be the will of Allah, the *Ummah* will take over with the work of building for the future and progressing toward new horizons"[1].

The concept of the *Ummah* is an essential concept in the Muslim mind. This concept represents the unity of Muslims all over the world in their Islamic faith. Striving for the *Ummah* has been the aim of every movement rooted in political Islam as a way of preserving the national identity of the Arab people and to unite them in a community of faith.

## Historical Evolution and Ideology of the Brethren

Islamists are divided in many groups, the more fundamentalist groups call for revolutionary change to be imposed on the people and on the political system. The Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt is not part of these fundamentalist organizations and advocates for a gradual change that should emerge from within the political system with the help of the Muslim voters[2].

The Muslim Brotherhood is the most prominent Islamist political movement in the Arab World. Some other examples of Islamist movements in the Arab world include the Justice and Development Party and the Justice and Benevolence Society in Morocco; the Renaissance Movement in Tunisia; the Islamic Salvation Front, Hamas (The Movement for Peaceful Society), the National Reform Movement and al-Nahda in Algeria; the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan; The Reform Party in Yemen.

Mistakenly, many times, the general public considers the Muslim Brotherhood as a militant fundamentalist Islamic group. According to Ibrahim, Islamic militancy can be defined as "actual violent group behavior committed collectively against the state or other actors in the name of Islam"[3]. Nowadays only two groups of substantial size met this definition: the Islamic Liberation Organization (Munazzamat al-Tahrir al-Islami), known in the Arab mass media as Gama'at al-Fanniya al-Askariya (Technical Military Academy group) and Gama'at al-Muslimin (the Muslim group) known in the Arab public as Repentance and Holy Flight (al-Taktir wa -l- Hijra)[4].

Compared to these groups the Muslim Brotherhood is a moderate political movement rooted in Islam and thus fighting to reunite the *Ummah*. According to Shahin moderate Islamist movements such as the Brotherhood adopted certain guidelines in the political process such as

"the recognition of the existing political regimes and the institutions of the state; respect for the rules and regulations that govern the political process; rejection of violence; willingness to work in public and gain some form of official recognition; and willingness to make alliances and coalitions with other political parties that do not share their orientations"[5].

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[1] *Ibidem.*

[2] Sana ABED-KOTOB, "The Accommodationists Speak...cit.", p. 321.

[3] Saad El-Din IBRAHIM,"Egypt Islam and Democracy- Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Islamic Groups Methodological, Notes and preliminary finding 1980", The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English Website, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/images/Egypt_Islam_and_Democracy. doc, p. 5. Accessed on 15/02/2007.

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 5

[5] Emad El-Din SHAHIN, "Political Islam: Ready for Engagement?", *Working paper*, The American University in Cairo, February 2005, p. 5.

Often referred to as the Brotherhood or under their name in Arabic *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, or *the Ikhwan*, this organization is a group viewed by many scholars as the founder of salafi Islam. The movement calls for a return to the fundamental basics of Islam as practiced by the original founders, the *salaf*. The Muslim Brotherhood originated in Egypt, and in its glory days, from the 1930s to the 1950s, was an extra-parliamentary group which appealed occasionally to violence and assassination to reach its goals[1].

Contemporary Muslim Brotherhood renounced to the violence advocated in the first half of the 20th century. Actually the brotherhood strongly rejects violence and terrorism against the state and innocent civilians as means to achieve their aims. In his interpretation on the teachings of Hasan al-Banna, al-Tilmisani endorses al-Banna's understanding of *jihad*. Although he validates the fact that *jihad* is a key obligation for each Muslim, al-Tilmisani stresses that there is a holy prohibition against aggression *(tahrim al-'idwan)* and offensive attacks. As an alternative, he believes that *jihad* stipulates "justice toward enemies and the guidance of Muslims to show mercy in this respect"[2]. Over the time the Brethren changed their tactics and approach in order to better integrate into the secular Egyptian political system but in the same time they maintained their main original goals.

The rise of the religious movement in Egypt dates back to aftermath of the Arab defeat of 1967. Later on, President Anwar Sadat had a reconciliatory policy towards Islamist groups from 1970 to 1973 in order to counterbalance the Nasserist-leftist opposition. Contrary to his successor, President Anwar Sadat was not opposed to the Islamic *Ummah*[3]. This political environment was a favorable ground for the development and growth of the Muslim Brotherhood and of other smaller Islamic groups that actually represent the small hard core of a "broad but amorphous mass of religiosity in the society a whole"[4]. According to Choudhury, national essence, local tradition, and the religious commitment of the population indeed survived the ideologies of the last part of the twentieth century, returning the people to Islam[5]. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s the main goal of most fundamentalist Islamic militant groups in Egypt was to capture the state and Islamize it from the top down. The Muslim Brotherhood would like to do the opposite starting from the bottom upwards[6]. This is the main difference between the Brotherhood and all the other Islamic groups in Egypt and elsewhere.

The mid 1980s was the time when for the first time the Muslim Brotherhood became heavily involved in contemporary Egyptian politics. They formed a coalition with their historic rival Al-Wafd Party in the 1984. The crucial year 1987 represented a boost for the Brotherhood. Their slogan in the legislative elections of 1987 was "Islam is the key solution" and was a novelty on the Egyptian political scene

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[1] Joshua TEITELBAUM, "The Muslim Brotherhood and the 'Struggle for Syria', 1947-1958 Between Accommodation and Ideology", *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2004, p. 134.

[2] Umar AL-TILMISANI, "Do the Missionaries for God Have a Program?", *Liwa al-Islam (The Banner of Islam),* June 1987, p. 8.

[3] G.W. CHOUDHURY, *Islam and the Modern Muslim World*, Scorpion Publishing Ltd., London, 1993, p. 111.

[4] Saad El-Din IBRAHIM, "Egypt Islam and Democracy...cit.", p. 3.

[5] G.W. CHOUDHURY, *Islam and the Modern Muslim World*, cit., pp. 111-112.

[6] Fawaz A. GERGES, *The Far Enemy – Why Jihad Went Global*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 49.

dominated by secular discourses[1]. Furthermore, in 1987, they formed the "Islamic Coalition" with both Al-'Amal and Al-Ahrar parties while in the 1995 elections, which were organized on an individual system, the Muslim Brotherhood gained only one seat[2].

In 2000 the Muslim Brotherhood gained seventeen parliamentary seats. After 2000, having this increased number of members of Parliament the Muslim Brotherhood deputies were able to be heavily involved in legislation and judicial review[3]. Later on, the Brethren joined the legislative elections 2005 as independent candidates. With time the Muslim Brotherhood presence in the Egyptian Parliament steadily increased. Just looking at the timeline of the involvement in the Egyptian elections we can see this change. In the elections of 1984, Egyptians voted for seven members of the Brotherhood while in 1987, 35 members won the elections out of 60 members of Parliament from the Islamic Coalition. In the 2000 elections, the Muslim Brotherhood gained only 17 seats then their gains increased to a surprising 88 seats in the 2005 elections[4].

After the fall of Communism and other ideologies that failed in Egypt before the 1990s, the Muslim Brotherhood came with a new kind of discourse. In the 2005 legislative elections of their experience taught them to be less ideological except concerning their general slogan "Islam is the key solution" and more efficient and pragmatic offering social services for citizens as alternatives to the government's incapacity to address the immense social problems of the country[5].

Throughout the decade 1984-1994, the Muslim Brotherhood members managed to infiltrate into numerous social and governmental institutions. This fact obviously worried the Egyptian regime and made it powerless when facing the heightening increase of the Brethren's influence spread in the society. During this decade the Muslim Brotherhood was able to have a grasp on many societal institutions such as the syndicates for example[6].

The last part of the 1980s all the way through the 1990s, was a period characterized by popular disappointment with government policies and vocal calls for other kinds of political representation of the large Muslim masses. This general disappointment encouraged Islamic fundamentalism and made the future of stability and peace in the Middle East to look quite bleak. For this reason the general trend towards fundamentalism needed to be counterbalanced by more moderate Islamic elements that do not advocate violence but at the same time would like to follow the Islamic path in changing the Egyptian society based on Islamic moral, social, and economic norms. Throughout the past 20 years, the

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[1] Amr AL-CHOBAKI, "The Future of the Muslim Brotherhood", *Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies – Cairo, Egypt*, The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English Website, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/images/brotherfuture.doc, p. 24. Accessed on 15/02/2007.

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 24.

[3] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "Why We Stand For Elections", The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English Website, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/images/ikhwanprogram.doc, p. 43. Accessed on 04/02/2007.

[4] Amr AL-CHOBAKI, "The Future of the Muslim Brotherhood", cit., pp. 19-20.

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 24.

[6] Amr Abdel Karim SADAWY, "Muslim Brothers and the Egyptian Regime: Equations of Struggle and the Quest for a Path", *Al-Manar Al-Jadid Magazine*, issue 31-32, summer-spring 2005, The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English Website, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/images/Muslim%20Brothers%20and%20the%20Egyptian%20Regime-AmrSadawy.doc, p. 1. Accessed on 11/02/2007.

Muslim Brotherhood became a centrist moderate group, representing conventional political Islam[1].

At the beginning of the 1990s, the supremacy of the old guard in the leadership of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood caused some younger members to leave the movement and establish *al-Wasat Party* (Center Party) in 1995. Among the second-generation reformists that stayed was Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh, a dynamic and eloquent spokesmen member of the Brotherhood's supreme decision-making body, the Guidance Bureau (Maktab al-Irshad). He was one of the first Brethren to declare that Islamic discourse is not holy; rather, it is founded on human judgment (*ijtihad*) and can be amended and updated to the modern era[2]. The Muslim Brothers gained more success in the 1990s because they were able to build a wide-ranging network of social relationships and to attain a great ability to mobilize and gather. The social network played the role of a buffer between the government and his target of taking away the historical reputation from the Muslim Brothers in order to destroy the social dimension of the movement. The ability to mobilize the masses exceeds the ability of any other group or political party in Egypt. Many times this ability exceeds the capability of the government itself[3].

According to Muhammad Mahdi Akef, chairman of the Muslim Brotherhood, since the year 2000, elections demonstrated that an Islamic project of setting up a regime in Egypt is feasible. According to him:

> "The final goal of the Muslim Brotherhood to get in the Parliament or other elected councils, syndicates and all civil society establishments, is set up the Muslim society which leads to setting up the Islamic state in which good for all human beings, whether Muslims or non-Muslims, is achieved"[4].

A notable evolution for the Muslim Brotherhood was the Reform Initiative in March 2004, an initiative proposing reforms in 13 areas. This initiative is extremely important for reforming the Egyptian society and the Muslim Brotherhood itself but also it could affect its affiliated organizations throughout the Islamic world. The Initiative unambiguously confirms the Brotherhood's commitment to a republican, parliamentary, constitutional, and democratic system in Egypt following the principles of Islam. Furthermore the initiative

> "calls for other political parties to adhere to a national charter that calls, among other things, for recognizing the people as the source of all authority, respecting the principle of the transfer of power through clean and free elections, confirming the freedom of belief and expression, guaranteeing the freedom of the formation of political parties, putting a limit to the term of the president, and enhancing the independence of the judiciary"[5].

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[1] Sana ABED-KOTOB, "The Accommodationists Speak...cit.", p. 322.
[2] Israel Elad ALTMAN, "Current Trends in the Ideology of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood", *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Hudson Institute, vol. 3, January 2006. Article available on the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English Website, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/images/Ideology_of_Egyptian_Muslim_Brotherhood.pdf, p. 2. Accessed on 04/02/2007.
[3] Amr Abdel Karim SADAWY, "Muslim Brothers and the Egyptian Regime...cit.", pp. 8-9.
[4] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "Why We Stand For Elections", cit., p. 43.
[5] Emad El-Din SHAHIN, "Political Islam: Ready for Engagement?", *Working paper*, The American University in Cairo, February 2005, p. 6.

In recent years besides the Muslim Brotherhood, several other movements appeared in Egypt. For example, the Movement for Change (Kefaya), the Movement of the Judges, Engineers Against Custody, the March 8th Group for the Independence of the University are just a few movements, most of the secular. These movements form the new vocal opposition[1]. In spite of the competition for votes on the Egyptian political scene, the Muslim Brotherhood remains the main opposition force in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood's recent successes after 2005 are the result of over twenty years of alliances with other parties and strenuous political work. Also, the favorable international and internal environment helped the Brotherhood achieve high scores in the elections.

In the 2005 parliamentary elections the NDP (National Democratic Party), that is also the governing party for a number of years, won most of the seats in the Parliament obtaining a total of 311 seats. Taking into consideration that the Parliament is composed of 444 elected deputies and ten appointed by the president, this victory allowed the NDP to benefit from a comfortable majority in all major political matters when it came to voting[2]. Although the NDP was the expected winner of the November-December 2005 elections, the great surprise was represented by the excellent performance of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brethren won a total of 88 parliamentary seats, by far the best results by an Egyptian opposition party in over 50 years. And even more remarkable was the high rate of success since 61% of the 144 candidates it nominated won the parliamentary elections. This represents an extraordinary six-fold increase in comparison with their 2000 gains when they won only seventeen seats. In the 2005 elections other secular opposition parties performed quite poorly[3].

The recent success of political Islam influenced not only the strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood but also that of the ruling NDP. Sometimes the cause of radical Islam is advocated by the ruling regimes themselves when they realize that this could be a viable venue that could replace the nationalist and state ideologies[4]. Relying on religious legitimacy is the easy way out for corrupt regimes that loose popular support in the Arab World.

In order to use the newly found Islamic fervour in Egypt in his favour president Mubarak is manipulating the various sub-groups that make up the Islamic movement including the Muslim Brotherhood. Moreover, he is tolerating, if not encouraging, the participation of these groups in the political process in a limited way[5]. Choudhury states that the Mubarak regime in order to suppress the so-called fundamentalism started to use brutal methods against Muslim groups, although some of these groups were truly using violence against the government

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[1] Amr Abdel Karim SADAWY, "Muslim Brothers and the Egyptian Regime...cit.", p. 11.

[2] Amr HAMZAWY, Nathan J. BROWN, "Can Egypt's Troubled Elections Produce a More Democratic Future?", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – Democracy and Rule of Law*, December 2005, http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/PO24.brown.hamzawy.FINAL1.pdf, pp. 3-4. Accessed on 11/02/2007

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 4.

[4] Emmanuel SIVAN, "Why Radical Muslims Aren't Talking Over Governments", in Barry RUBIN (ed.), *Revolutionary and Reformers: Contemporaries Islamist Movements in the Middle East*, State University of New York Press, New York, 2003, p. 5.

[5] Denis SULLIVAN, "Islam and Development in Egypt: Civil Society and the State", in Hussin MUTALIB, Taj ul-Islam HISHMI, *Islam, Muslims and the Modern State – Case-Studies of Muslims in Thirteen Countries*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1994, p. 212.

and innocent civilians. This way the Mubarak government violates basic human rights and disregards the rule of law when fighting fundamentalism. Although this regime tolerates some Islamic organizations and promotes Islam at some level, Mubarak is neither a democratic leader nor an Islamist. Furthermore, according to Choudhury, the presidential elections[1] in Egypt are similar to those of "the communist and authoritarian states – it is a one-party election which is the negation of one of the fundamental ingredients of a free society"[2].

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the Egyptian government has strengthened the control measures over Islamist organizations. The relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood became quite tense especially after the 2002 runoff of the legislative elections when many Brotherhood activists were arrested in Alexandria, allegedly for attempting to hinder public balloting, rioting and illegal gathering[3]. Sadawy argues that linking what is occurring to the Muslim Brothers in Egypt to the international politics, in particular the West's stand towards the Islamist movements when facing violence and terrorism, is an unavoidable approach. The internal factors in Egypt intermingle with the external factors to generate a political situation where it is impossible to separate the internal from the external factors[4].

The unfavourable international conditions do not allow the Islamists to assume power in many countries in the Middle East. The growth of the Human Rights Movement worldwide and the increasing international sympathy for political prisoners would stop many Middle Eastern governments to suppress Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood. In the general trend for the democratization of the Middle East, even the US State Department sees the relationship with the Brethren in a more pragmatic light. Secretary of State Rice does not see anymore the Muslim Brothers as inflexible enemy but more of a possible partner.[5] Although it may seem surprising, many scholars consider that the strong showing of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 2005 parliamentary elections can contribute to Egypt's democratization. These results may convince the Egyptian government to find ways to recognize the movement's popularity and allow some room for political reform. This way, the United States is interested to encourage these reforms[6].

Al-Chobaki argues that the stance of the Muslim Brotherhood towards democracy varied in different ages significantly. In the 1930s, the Brethren rejected democracy since they considered it as a product of the western civilization. Later on, in the 1950s and 1960s, the Muslim Brotherhood became a revolutionary movement and thus they accepted democracy as a venue for political change. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Muslim Brothers focused on respecting democracy and human rights in Egypt and efficiently led the Egyptian opposition groups against government abuses[7].

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[1] The 2005 presidential elections were the first multi-party presidential elections in Egypt's history. Hosni Mubarak, the incumbent president of Egypt won a fifth consecutive six-year term in office, with official results showing he won 88.6% of the votes cast.

[2] G.W. CHOUDHURY, *Islam and the Modern Muslim World*, cit., p. 112.

[3] David THALER, "The Middle East: The Cradle of the Muslim World", in Angel RABASA *et al, The Muslim World after 9/11*, Project Air Force Rand Corporation, Santa Monica CA, 2004, p. 98.

[4] Amr Abdel Karim SADAWY, "Muslim Brothers and the Egyptian Regime...cit.", pp. 3-4.

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 11.

[6] Amr HAMZAWY, Nathan J. BROWN, "Can Egypt's Troubled Elections Produce a More Democratic Future?", cit., p. 9.

[7] Amr AL-CHOBAKI, "The Future of the Muslim Brotherhood", cit., p. 3.

After decades of ostracizing Muslim world's Islamists, some western scholars realized that it is actually in the interest of Middle East stability that western foreign policy-makers come to terms with the more moderate Islamist groups willing to work within the modern nation-state system. This new approach that "accomodationists" call for is the best way in order to avoid the brutal seizure of power by the fundamentalists[1]. A very effective way of penetrating the different social classes and especially the poor are non-governmental organizations. The success of the Brotherhood in this civil society sector gave them the opportunity to be heard by the educated masses and thus gather the support of many members of Egyptian intelligentsia. The new members of the Brotherhood are able to have an intellectual secular approach as good as their religious one skilfully using the Arabic language in a way in which their views are easily understood by all[2].

Although many reformist acceded in the high ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood, the conservative still have a strong grip over the organization's ideology. In 2004, for example, the March Reform Initiative clearly states in its introductory section that the final objective of reform in Egypt is the introduction of *sharia*. It goes on to say:

> "Our only hope to achieve progress in all the aspects of life is by returning to our religion and implementing our *sharia* [. . .] We have a clear mission – working to put in place Allah's law, on the basis of our belief that it is the real, effective way out of all of our problems – domestic or external, political, economic, social or cultural. This is to be achieved by forming the Muslim individual, the Muslim home, the Muslim government, and the state which will lead the Islamic states, reunite the scattered Muslims, restore their glory, retrieve for them their lost lands and stolen homelands, and carry the banner of the call to Allah in order to make the world happy with Islam's blessing and instructions"[3].

The Muslim Brotherhood, although an officially banned political movement, has surprised analysts with its strong showing in Egypt's 2005 parliamentary elections. Strengthening the role of Islamic law (*sharia*) is the main aim of this organization in Egypt and among the group's many offshoots around the Islamic world. In spite of this clear goal Brotherhood leaders are quite vague when asked for specifics on how they would legislate and implement Islam if given the opportunity. Recently, some leaders have actually deemphasized the importance of *sharia* in their elections messages although some times they demand rather clear the implementation of Islamic law. According to Heba Raouf Ezzat, a political scientist specialist in the Muslim Brotherhood from Cairo University: "Their program remains deeply ambiguous"[4].

The current political environment in Egypt forces the Muslim Brotherhood to work within the political system in order to advance its goals. This strategy makes

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[1] Sana ABED-KOTOB, "The Accommodationists Speak...cit.", p. 322.

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 329.

[3] Israel Elad ALTMAN, "Current Trends in the Ideology of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood", cit., p. 5.

[4] Sharon OTTERMAN, "Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's Parliamentary Elections", *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 1, 2005, http://www.cfr.org/publication/9319/muslim_brotherhood_and_egypts_parliamentary_elections.html. Accessed on 10/02/2007.

the Brotherhood a credible partner and brings votes from the moderates. Although historically, political accommodation is not a new tactic for the Brotherhood, it is actually a new phenomenon in terms of concrete practice on the Egyptian political scene[1]. Moreover, ever since 1941, the Muslim Brotherhood called for participation in the system. "Early in its development the Muslim Brotherhood accepted that it had to contest elections if it was to exercise real influence. It resolved to field candidates in any forthcoming national election."[2] Nevertheless, the Brethren failed because of corrupt elections and government prohibitions against it.

The current status of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt looks vague since it does not enjoy a legal position. Although it is a banned society the Brethren were able to win 20% of voters as well as about ten folds of what other opposition parties represented in the Parliament (6 seats for Al-Wafd party, 2 seats for Al-Tagammu' party and one seat for Al-Ghad party)[3]. In order to understand the incredible gains made by the Muslim Brotherhood in the 2005 elections we have to look beyond ideology. The success lies in the movement's concentrated presence in many social spheres and its work as a grass-roots service-provision organization. Moreover, the Brotherhood is an extensive social movement heavily involved in the fields of health care, education, and poverty alleviation. Since Egyptian state institutions from such social and economic fields since the mid-1970s perform poorly this civil space was filled by the local religious forces represented by the Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood was able to use its new social networks based on reliance among citizens in order to gain and use effectively financial resources, organizational capacities, and charitable work[4].

Looking at the evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood over the decades we can observe a certain flexibility and pragmatism that drove the organization in the forefront of the Egyptian and Middle East politics. Although the organization focused on national problems during the elections its core ideology remained the same and sees the *Quran* and consequently the implementation of the *sharia* and the unification of the *Ummah* as main objectives on the long run.

Nowadays the Egyptian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood still remains the most significant Brotherhood group, although some other offshoots have thrived throughout the Middle East and even Europe. In spite of the current speculations, there is actually no Islamist "Comintern" since the Brotherhood's International Organization is in reality a weak coalition hardly able to assemble its own members. Many scholars believe that this international debility is a result of the Brotherhood's successes at the national level. Because of the national autonomy and adaptability to local conditions, the Brotherhood's international links depend individually on every country's national priorities[5].

The national branches of the Muslim Brotherhood do not always have similar views regarding various issues such as their stance on the relationship with the United States. Although, for example, in Egypt and Jordan, in order to fight their

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[1] Sana ABED-KOTOB, "The Accommodationists Speak...cit.", p. 328.

[2] John L. ESPOSITO, James P. PISCATORI, "Democratization and Islam", *Middle East Journal*, no. 3, Summer 1991, p. 429.

[3] Amr AL-CHOBAKI, "The Future of the Muslim Brotherhood", cit., p. 35.

[4] Amr HAMZAWY, Nathan J. BROWN, "Can Egypt's Troubled Elections Produce a More Democratic Future?", cit., p. 4.

[5] Robert S. LEIKEN, Steven BROOKE, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 86 no. 2, March/April 2007, p. 115.

government's autocracy and the Muslim Brothers see favorably some US policies, overall they severely criticize the United States, especially during the elections. In the case of the Syrian Brotherhood there is a reverse situation since this Brotherhood branch supports the Bush administration's move to isolate Bashar al Assad and his regime[1].

Political Islam knows no borders. Only looking of the way Muslims in the West support different political aims in the Middle East we can realize that the *Ummah* became truly transnational. Suppressed throughout much of the Arab World, the Brotherhood found refuge also across the Mediterranean in Europe via students and exiles. Furthermore Islamic scholars that act as higher legal and moral authorities are not establish in their native country. For example, Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood lives in Qatar and is at the same time the supreme mufti of the Palestinian Hamas while Shaykh Ibn Qatada, a Palestinian-Jordanian residing in Britain, is a mufti for some branches of the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA). Also, an Egyptian such as Abu Hamza is one of GIA's main ideologues and propagandists[2].

Although independent, the Muslim Brotherhood offshoots collaborate with each other to the extent of their own national interests. At the beginning of the 1990s the Muslim Brotherhood adopted a more conservative line. This fact influenced also the relationship with its branches bringing disadvantages to the organization since it contributed to the loss of control over those Muslim Brotherhood branches outside Egypt. For example, the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, adopted a more practical approach while the International Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood (IOMB) has been gradually transformed. Nowadays, the promoter of IOMB, Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi established World Association of Muslim Clerics, which replaces the traditional role of the Muslim Brotherhood as the Sunni fundamentalist source of authority (*marja'iyyah*)[3].

Although in the early 1980s, the Egyptian Brotherhood's International Organization sought to coordinate its offshoots around the Arab World they encountered fierce opposition everywhere. For example the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood leader Hasan al-Turabi protested, "You cannot run the world from Cairo"[4]. Moreover when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, the Kuwaiti Muslim Brothers objected to the tacit consent of the International Organization and withdrew from the organization and also cutting their funding. Also, the Iraqi branch of the Muslim Brotherhood collaborates with the US-controlled government in Baghdad against the protests of their fellow Muslim Brothers worldwide. Moreover, in 2006, the coalition between the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and Abdel Halim Khaddam, the rebel former Syrian vice president, has been extensively criticized by other Brotherhood branches. The 2006 Lebanon war further divided the Brethren in the Arab world. The Syrian Mulsim Brothers condemned President Bashar al-Assad's interfering in Lebanon, while the other offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood supported Hezbollah[5].

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[1] *Ibidem*, p. 116.

[2] Emmanuel SIVAN, "Why Radical Muslims Aren't Talking Over Governments", cit., p. 5.

[3] Reuven PAZ, "Qaradhawi and the World Association of Muslim Clerics: The New Platform of the Muslim Brotherhood", Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center, The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM), *Occasional Papers*, vol. 2, no. 4, November 2004, www.eprism.org, Accessed on 04/02/2007

[4] Robert S. LEIKEN, Steven BROOKE, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood", cit., p. 115.

[5] *Ibidem*.

Although the different offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood do not act as a whole, they still have the same objectives in mind and they strive for the *Ummah*. Moreover, the Muslim Brotherhood has normal relationships with other Islamic movements not involved in politics because they are still part the greater Islamic society[1]. As the main promoter of political Islam in the Arab World, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood became a catalyst for other Islamic organizations and for their branches in the Muslim World. Furthermore, the Egyptian Brethren gained a truly influential role in the Islamic society all over the world by becoming a model for political achievements through their moderate stance. This moderate stance is essential for the Brotherhood's foreign policy making and international relations since it is giving a real hope to those Muslims looking towards unifying the *Ummah*.

In order to better understand the Muslim Brotherhood's strive for the *Ummah* it is necessary to look into its historic ideological development and vision for socio-political change. Al-Chobaki believes that "the Muslim Brotherhood's speech contains many contradicting dualities such as the duality of religion and politics on one side, and the partial structure and renouncing authority on the other"[2]. Moreover, according to Al Mubarak, "the theory and practice of Islam, over fourteen centuries and in different countries and continents can provide evidence of compelling and even contradictory interpretations"[3]. These dualities mentioned above both in terms of theological approach and secular politics make the Muslim Brotherhood a pragmatic organization that never lost sight of the *Ummah*.

Compared to the other major political movements in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood has a unique theological approach towards politics. Since the Muslim Brotherhood preaches intense spiritual renewal, the organization does not even perceive itself as a political party (*hizb*) but more as a society (*jama'a*) coordinating a wide range of activities intended to implement Islam in all aspects of life[4]. The philosophy of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has a few major objectives and strategies. The most important goal pursued by the Brotherhood is the founding of an Islamic state governed by Sharia, Islamic law. Besides this goal that has been always in the minds of Islamic scholars and rulers, other aims are more similar to the aims of Western societies. Such aims include the imposition of democratic ideals such as liberty, representation, and responsibility; and the pursuit of socioeconomic fairness[5].

The *dawah* is an Arabic term meaning "invite" or "invitation" and it is considered to be an obligation on every Muslim to invite others to Islam, it is also the preaching of Islam. For the Muslim Brotherhood ever since 1928 *the dawa* is a great concern. In terms of the Arab world the *dawa* is exceptionally effective in countries such as Jordan where Jabhat Al-'Amal Al-Islami (the Islamic front) is a very important political force, and in Yemen where the Islah (reformation) Party influences the politics of the country[6].

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[1] Muhammad Ma'mun AL-HUDAIBI, "A Quiet Discussion on Heated Issues", The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English Website, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/images/A_QUIET_ DISCUSSION_ON_HEATED_ISSUES.doc, p. 10. Accessed on 10/02/2007

[2] Amr AL-CHOBAKI, "The Future of the Muslim Brotherhood", cit., p. 47.

[3] Khalid AL-MUBARAK, *Turabi's "Islamist" Venture Failure & Implications*, El Dar El Thaqafia, Cairo, 2001, p. 43.

[4] Anthony GORMAN, *Historians, State and Politics in Twentieth Century Egypt*, Routledge Curzon, London, 2003, p. 98.

[5] Sana ABED-KOTOB, "The Accommodationists Speak...cit.", p. 336.

[6] Muhammad Ma'mun AL-HUDAIBI, "A Quiet Discussion on Heated Issues", cit., p. 16.

In order to understand accurately the goals of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, one must first understand that Islam is not just a religion; it is much more than that. Actually, a precise definition of Islam would unavoidably interpret that Islam is both "religion and state" (*din wa dawla*). Umar al-Tilmisani, the General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood until his death in 1987 had this kind of interpretation. He characterized Islam as "creed, worship, homeland, citizenship, creation, the physical, culture, law, forgiveness, and power"[1].

Historically the Muslim Brotherhood has been a community of Muslims dedicated to the rule on Islamic principles and to the strife to revive them. The Brotherhood has two essential aims: liberating "the Islamic homeland" from any foreign occupation; and creating in that free homeland a free Islamic state that will follow the principles of Islam, including its social order. Before reaching these essential goals the Brethren have other seven intermediary goals prescribed by founding father of the Muslim Brotherhood al-Banna. These seven intermediary goals are arranged hierarchically[2].

At the base of the hierarchy is the formation of the Muslim as a person, followed by the formation of the Muslim family, which is the base of the future Muslim society that will decide later on to choose a Muslim government. Furthermore, abiding by Allah's law, the Muslim government will create an Islamic state. This Islamic state will be the main force that will liberate Muslim lands occupied by foreign forces. This Islamic state will be, according to al-Banna, the state that will gather all other Muslim countries in a union. The main objective of that union is not only to govern according to Islam over the Muslim lands but also to spread Islam in the entire world. Al-Banna states that working towards establishing an Islamic government is truly a religious duty (*faridhah*) for every Muslim since only this way the political, economic, social, domestic and external problems of the Muslim Nation can be solved[3].

The Muslim Brotherhood's program recognizes *shariah* as the main pathway for creating progress, development and reform in a way in which politics would be link with religious morals and thus making the political discourse truly noble. Moreover, the Muslim Brothers recognize *shariah* as the only way for following the wish of Allah and identify this means as absolutely necessary for the community since it stems from Islam[4].

Legal Counselor Muhammad Ma'mun Al-Hudaibi, the deputy of the *Murshid* (general guide of the Muslim Brotherhood), argues that the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood has two key pillars: the introduction of *sharia* and the strife towards unification of Islamic countries, mainly among the Arab states. Furthermore he calls for liberating them from foreign influence and occupation[5]. Historically this goal has always been on the Brethren agenda. The Muslim Brotherhood ever since its establishment has been heavily involved in the fight for liberation of

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[1] Umar AL-TILMISANI, "Do the Missionaries for God Have a Program?", *Liwa al-Islam (The Banner of Islam)*, June 1987, p. 7.

[2] Israel Elad ALTMAN, "Current Trends in the Ideology of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood", cit., p. 2.

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 2.

[4] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Program of 2005", The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English Website, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/images/ ikhwanprogram.doc, p. 2. Accessed on 04/02/2007.

[5] Muhammad Ma'mun AL-HUDAIBI,"Politics in Islam", cit., p. 6.

Egypt from British occupation and achieved it later on with the participation of other political forces[1].

Al-Hudaibi argues that in the *sharia* there are unequivocal texts that call for the obligatory implementation of Islamic law. Moreover, according to *sharia*, Muslim rulers should abide by the texts. Such Quranic texts are:

> "O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Apostle, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah His Apostle, if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: that is best, and most suitable for final determination". (An-Nisa: 59)
> "But no, by thy lord, they can have not (real) Faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction". (An-Nisa: 65)
> "The answer of the believers, when summoned to Allah and His Apostle, in order that he may judge between them, is no Other than this: they say, 'we hear and we obey': It is such as these that will attain felicity." (An-Nur: 51)
> "Then we put thee on the (right) way of Religion: so follow thou that (Way), and follow not the desires of those who know not"." (Al- Jathiya: 18)
> "To thee we sent the Scripture in truth confirming the Scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed…." (Al-Ma'idah: 51)[2].

Although in many speeches and even documents the Brethren preach otherwise, officially the Muslim Brotherhood has insisted on the fact that they do not seek to establish a religious state or a religious government. On the contrary they advocate the establishment of a civil government and a civil state in which Islam is the main basis of authority. The reason behind this is that: *sharia* in an ultimate source of authority that derives from God, while the government derives its authority from the people it governs[3].

Compared to the other major political movements in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood has also a distinctive political agenda where social issues are intertwined with religion and politics. The Muslim Brotherhood's political discourse is not only a purely religious one but has deep social features that appeal to the impoverished Egyptian masses. In its 2005 elections program the Brotherhood

> "sees that Egypt has suffered for long time from the absence of democracy, the monopoly of wealth and authority, the rising of corruption, the abundance of laws and clauses that oppose public freedoms and human rights, the increasing number of the political detainees and the various types of torture"[4].

This approach has existed since the founding of the Brotherhood and did not change in terms of tactics for winning popular support. The founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan Al-Banna envisaged three phases for the development of the Muslim Brotherhood:

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[1] *Ibidem*, p. 6.
[2] Muhammad Ma'mun AL-HUDAIBI,"Politics in Islam", cit., pp. 9-10.
[3] Israel Elad ALTMAN, "Current Trends in the Ideology of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood", cit., p. 5.
[4] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Program of 2005", cit., p. 26.

> "1. Winning adherents through 'propaganda, communication and information'. 2. 'Formation, selection and preparation', in which cadres would be chosen, members ranked according to their status and kind of activity in the movement, and an enormous emphasis would be placed on publications, journalism, and meetings. 3.'Execution', in which all kinds of changes in society would be struggled for"[1].

Nowadays the same approach is used. The Muslim Brotherhood's program for the parliamentary elections of 2005 is obviously based on Islam in order to reform "the democratic mechanisms of the modern civil state"[2]. The main reasoning behind the Islamic approach for a renewal of society is the fact that

> "each man wishes for others what he wishes for himself and faith increases. Consequently, man's conscience comes to life and everyone feels Allah's Presence; thus, the rates of corruption in society decrease on economic, political and social levels"[3].

In the Egyptian political environment where corruption can be found at many levels this religious approach gained many sympathizers among the large masses especially among young urban poor and religious bourgeoisie. The social base of Islamic organizations around the Muslim world is almost uniform: students in technical faculties, recent migrants to cities and members of the urban lower-middle class[4]. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood thrives in the professional associations of doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, and engineers and thus has the opportunity to attract younger professionals and recent university graduates[5].

The program with which the Brotherhood gained most popular support was its 2005 elections program. The 2005 Muslim Brotherhood program is divided into three parts: revival, development and reform. The revival part includes the Brotherhood's stand on moral values, culture, freedom, human rights, rights of citizenship, development of man, media, youth, women, and children. The second part analyses the organization's vision on the development of few important sectors such as agriculture, education, scientific research, industry, constructional development, health, and environment[6]. The largest part of the Muslim Brotherhood's 2005 electoral program deals with reform at a political, economic and social level. The program is very comprehensive since it includes domestic and foreign policy issues, things that concern the civil society, but also reforming the national security and the local ruling. In terms of economic and social reform the issues are the same issues that all the other parties in Egypt want to tackle: unemployment, budget deficit, internal and external debt and inflation, social security services,

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[1] Michael GILSENAN, *Recognizing Islam – Religion and Society in the Modern Middle East*, I.B. Tauris Publishers, London, 2000, p. 219.

[2] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Program of 2005", cit., p. 1.

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 1.

[4] Mohammed M. HAFEZ, *Why Muslims Rebel – Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London, 2003, p. 16.

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 16.

[6] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Program of 2005", cit., p. 4.

insurance and retirement rights, health insurance and promoting moral values, a point high on the Brotherhood's agenda[1].

As a contemporary political movement on the Egyptian political scene, the Muslim Brotherhood proves to be a very pragmatic organization that not only rejected violence but also embraced western ideals and called for the development of democracy within a state ruled by Islamic law. In spite of the scholarly debate on the compatibility between *sharia* and democracy, the Muslim Brotherhood established in Egypt a real model for the pursuit of Islamic ideals. This political model is a much more moderate way than the model followed by other more radical groups[2].

Besides the theological and socio-political features of the Muslim Brotherhood's political discourse, the Brethren display a certain kind of Egyptian nationalism that is complementary with the higher goal of uniting the *Ummah* and liberating it from foreign invaders. In this process Arabism also plays a key role. The Muslim Brotherhood calls for the establishment of an Islamic state for the all-inclusive *Ummah*, a state based on values such as truth and justice not only among its citizens but also among all nations on the same standards[3].

Not only the Muslim Brotherhood, but other Egyptian Islamist organizations see Egypt as essential in the spread of Islam and the unification of the *Ummah*. For example, one leader of the Islamic Liberation Organization (MA) in Egypt said in an interview that

> "we believe that the Egyptians are basically the most religious of all Islamic peoples. They were so before Islam, from the time of the Pharaohs. They have continued to be very religious. Egypt would therefore be a good base to start the world Muslim revival. All that the religious Egyptians need is a sincere Muslim leadership. This conviction, we believe, had a decisive impact on shaping the strategy of MA, as will be shown later"[4].

According to Cottam, the change in Egyptian-identity patterns was influenced by the growth of the politically participant population. In the 1920s the Egyptians perceived themselves as Egyptians first only after as Muslims and Arabs. Later on during Nasser the three identities converged. Taking into consideration the growth of the political participation and in view of the fact that religious masses started to go through a process of crystallization of their identity, the population started to loose their Egyptian and Arab identities and became more Islamic. This way the Egyptians started a transformation at their identity level towards integration with the larger *Ummah*. Their links to their Egyptianess and the Arab community complicate this process[5].

The Muslim Brothers proudly consider themselves nationalists since they fought for the independence of Egypt and the other Arab countries.

> "The Muslim Brothers love their country and are anxious to preserve its unity; they find nothing wrong for any man in being loyal to his country,

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[1] *Ibidem*, p. 5.
[2] Sana ABED-KOTOB, "The Accommodationists Speak...cit.", p. 337.
[3] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Program of 2005", cit., p. 8.
[4] Saad El Din IBRAHIM, "Egypt Islam and Democracy...cit.", p. 8.
[5] Richard COTTAM, "Nationalism in the Middle East: A Behavioural Approach", in Said Amir ARJOMAND (ed.), *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1984, pp. 36-37.

dying for the sake of his people, and whishing for his fatherland every glory and every honor, and every pride. All this is from the particular standpoint of nationalism [*min wijhat al-qawmiyyah al-khassah*]…"[1]

Moreover the Brethren see themselves as an essential tool in uniting all the Arabs under the flag of Islam in order to achieve their higher goal, the *Ummah*:

> "The Arabs are the core and guardians of Islam…Arab unity is an essential prerequisite for the restoration of Islam's glory, the reestablishment of the Muslim State, and the consolidation of Muslim power. This is why it is the duty of every Muslim to work for the revival and support of Arab unity-this is the position of the Muslim Brothers in regards to Arab unity"[2].

Looking at the Muslim Brotherhood's political agenda we can also distinguish certain features that promote Arabism. In terms of education the Muslim Brotherhood stresses some nationalistic and religious aims. For example, the 2005 electoral program views education as means to coincide "with the identity of the nation and the constitution, and maintains the Arabic language"[3]. Moreover, the Arab and Islamic values[4] in education are strongly enshrined in the Brotherhood's program. The most respected Islamic university in the world, Al-Azhar, has a central role in this process and the program requests further support for the university's basic aims and needs[5]. Although, Al-Azhar University is seen as a model for educational development the Muslim Brotherhood recognizes the need for improving the curricula and the education plans in order to better serve religious people, scientists and educators from both Arab and Islamic worlds[6] and to provide guidelines for them.

Furthermore, another move that proves the Arabist aims of the Brotherhood is their demands to the High Council of the Universities and to the syndicates to adopt a national plan to Arabize the sciences and education[7]. In Egypt, and in many other Arabic speaking countries, many subjects and sciences in particular are taught in English or French. This is not only a legacy of the colonial period but also a way for the curricula to keep up with the latest scientific and technological advances of the time. Since the elites in the Middle East have been traditionally educated in a foreign language there was no opposition and actually it made much sense. The Muslim Brotherhood calls for translating books and research into Arabic[8], inventing new words in Arabic in order to develop the language and bring it in modern times but also for the large masses that speak only Arabic to have access to some fields in education that were banned for decades by the foreign educated, and many times more liberal, ruling elite.

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[1] Hassan AL-BANNA, "On the Doctrine of the Muslim Brothers", in Hisham SHARABI (ed.), *Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World*, D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., Princeton, New Jersey, 1966, p. 110.

[2] *Ibidem*.

[3] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Program of 2005", cit., p. 19.

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 21.

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 20.

[6] *Ibidem*, p. 21.

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 22.

[8] *Ibidem*.

According to the Muslim Brotherhood, Marxism and secularism bring perversion, corruption, and falsehood especially among the young people thus diverting their attention from the teachings of Islam. Furthermore in many Muslim countries the western media spreads obscenities such as half-naked drunken women, obscene literature, songs, plays, films, and pornographic material. These obscenities are corrupting the Muslim people and thus they represent a Western menace to Islamic societies[1]. This western cultural invasion is also seen by the Muslim Brotherhood as a continuation of the crusader spirit of the West. This crusader spirit lasted from the Middle Ages to this day and it is directed against the Muslim *Ummah*. Although many Muslim intellectuals doubted the authenticity of this Western crusading spirit, claiming that national interests are overriding and they are generally the only reasons for the West when attacking Islamic countries, the Muslim Brotherhood believes that current circumstances have demonstrated the crusading spirit is still the driving force of the West in Middle East politics[2].

Muhammad Mahdi 'Akif, a more conservative leader of the Brotherhood, states in a few articles[3] published in 2005 that the fundamental aims of the Brotherhood did not change. To liberate the Islamic homeland and to found a free Islamic state are the guiding principles that the old guard still adhere to. Furthermore he believes that Islam's principles are destined to organize people's affairs in this world and in the afterlife, and the sum of Islam's laws is constructed of indubitable principles that cannot be overstated. He considers that the different parts of Islam are integrated and each part is symbiotically linked to the other: the faith (*'aqidah*), the law (*sharia*) and the acts of devotion (*'ibadat*). These cannot be separate "religion from politics, or religion from the state, or the acts of devotion from [political] leadership"[4].

Although moderate Islamist movements and parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood have not completely abandoned their goal of establishing an Islamic state, they call for a gradual approach and working through authorized channels in order to reach their aims. Muslim Brotherhood members competed in local and legislative elections, many times as independents or in alliance with other political parties, thus demonstrating adherence to democracy. This strategy of moderate Islamist movements made them aware that they have more opportunities for success in the democratic game rather than using to violent means[5].

The ideology of Islamic militant groups in Egypt is far more conservative than that of the Muslim Brotherhood. For example in their literature they use axiomatic statements considering that man was created for a reason to represent the will of God by leading a virtuous life and following the right path (*al-sirat al-mustaqima*).

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[1] Yusuf AL-QARADAWI, "Islamic Awakening between Rejection and Extremism", The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English Website, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/images/Islamic%20Awakening%20.doc., p. 37. Accessed on 10/02/2007.

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 40.

[3] Muhammad Mahdi 'AKIF, "We Never Did and Never Will Talk to the Americans", June 22, 2005; IDEM, "The MB and the Return of the Islamic Revival", July 10, 2005. The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English Website, http://www.ikhwanonline.com. Accessed on 10/02/2007.

[4] Israel Elad ALTMAN, "Current Trends in the Ideology of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood", cit., p. 4.

[5] Emad El-Din SHAHIN, "Political Islam: Ready for Engagement?", *Working paper*, The American University in Cairo, February 2005, p. 5.

Furthermore, they believe that to become a good Muslim one must not be content with only observing the commandments, taboos, and other rituals. In their view a person has to do more, the moral Muslim cannot exist alone; he must struggle to build and preserve a righteous community of the faithful (*the Ummah*). This struggling to build up the *Ummah* is a duty of every true Muslim[1].

Islamic militant groups have many things in common with the Muslim Brotherhood. In terms of ideology the main difference between them and the Brethren is the means to achieve their goals. They view the present as a fundamental part of their principles considering the current governing system in Egypt as corrupt and incompetent. According to Islamic militant groups the enemies of Islam like the Christian West, the Jewish Zionism, and atheist communism humiliated the government and force it to make unacceptable concessions. For this reason the regime deviated from "the straight path" and was not able to fight against the foreign assaults on Dar al-Islam (the homeland of Islam) on the home front. Moreover, they consider that the regime did not implement *sharia* well enough favoring western-imported legal codes. While the political leaders of the country live in moral decay, poverty, disease, illiteracy and the vices (*radhila*) are rampant in Egypt. According to militant Islamic groups but also to the Muslim Brotherhood the only way for a moral revival of society is to implement the *sharia*[2].

Radical Islamist groups created also a split in the Muslim Brotherhood between reformers and conservatives. The best example of the internal frictions between conservative and reformist members of the Muslim Brotherhood is the policy shift in the 2005 presidential election. The reformists encouraged the Brotherhood to join other opposition groups in an effort to force political change while the conservatives strongly opposed this move since they were reluctant to risk the long-term attempt to Islamize the society for political gains on the short-term. The conservatives were represented by the General Guide Akif. In 2005 they overruled the reformist side represented by Abu al-Futuh. In the 2005 elections the Muslim Brotherhood declared that its candidates would now consider themselves as representing the Muslim Brotherhood and not "the Islamic Trend", as they had done previously since the 1990s[3]. This trend towards a more conservative approach is actually the general trend in many Arab countries in the region. The rise of Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine are only a few examples of this trend. The move towards a conservative approach has helped the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and Hezbollah to preserve their organizational unity and raise funds from rich Islamist benefactors from around the Islamic world.

Many scholars consider Islam as a comprehensive system governing all aspects of human life. Islam covers all material and spiritual aspects, society and individual, politics and personal aspects. For this reason a remarkable resurgence of Islamism in the past two decades it is not surprising and it is very likely that in the future the Muslim Brotherhood's slogan "Islam is the solution" will gain more momentum all over the Middle East[4]. According to Abu al-Futuh and other reformist Muslim Brothers the Caliphate is a purely political, nonreligious matter, and our times call for other types of political unity, and the European Union is considered

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[1] Saad El Din IBRAHIM, "Egypt Islam and Democracy...cit.", p. 7.

[2] *Ibidem*, pp. 7-8.

[3] Israel Elad ALTMAN, "Current Trends in the Ideology of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood", cit., p. 9.

[4] Sana ABED-KOTOB, "The Accommodationists Speak...cit.", p. 323.

an excellent example. Although this view obviously contradicts the conventional understanding of the Muslim Brotherhood as a Sunni source of religious authority (*marja'iyyah*), which would restore the abolished Caliphate, the more reformist idea gains more and more supporters among the members of the Brotherhood[1].

The Muslim Brothers have a distinct national focus and talk in their 2005 electoral program about terms such as the nation's identity, development and revival. The focus is on Egypt more than it is on the Muslim community of believers, the *Ummah*. According to them, the nation's identity should be reflected by its culture and the development of "the human being" in a way in which the members of the nation are strong and willing to further develop for the benefit of the country[2]. Moreover, the flaws of the nation strengthening process come from low morals, "the weakness of the culture of belonging and bad manners" and therefore reviving the moral values is essential[3]. This view comes from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad who said, "I was sent but to complete the noble manners…And verily, you (O Muhammad) are on an exalted standard of character. (Al-Qalam: 4)"[4]

The Brotherhood's strive for the *Ummah* is not only a result of its historic ideological development but also a necessity in the eventual establishment of an Islamic state. The implementation of the *sharia* is crucial in the strife for the *Ummah*. Also, the only way to gain legitimacy for an Islamic state is to fight for the *Ummah*.

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was truly able to abide by the *Quran* and preach the unification of the *Ummah* viewing Egypt as the core catalyst in this process. This way the Muslim Brothers fight for the independence of Egypt in order to be able this way to unite the *Ummah* around the Egyptian core. Furthermore, the strife for the *Ummah* can also be observed in the moves to Arabize the country even more. The Arabs are the people of the *Quran*, and Allah revealed the holy book in Arabic to them. For this reason strengthening the Arab element in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab World is a step forward towards the unity of the *Ummah*.

## The Muslim Brotherhood on the International Stage

The Muslim Brotherhood's stance in the international arena has a few guiding lines that stem from the *Quran*, elements of Egyptian nationalism and secular political pragmatism. When analyzing the foreign policy stance of the Brethren we can observe a few key elements that are essential to their world view. First, we have the strife to unite the *Ummah* by integrating the Arab and Islamic countries around the Egyptian core. The second objective is the liberation of Palestine, an objective that is seen more as a religious duty rather than a strategic goal. Another objective of the Brotherhood is furthering Islamic causes around the world and protecting Muslims against foreign invaders.

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[1] Israel Elad ALTMAN, "Current Trends in the Ideology of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood", cit., p. 3.
[2] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Program of 2005", cit., pp. 8-9.
[3] *Ibidem*, p. 9.
[4] *Ibidem*.

In the Brotherhood's view, Egypt needs to be a powerful country in order to be able to gather the *Ummah*. The strategies to achieve this aim call for the establishment of an integrated infrastructure in order to develop an industrial and technical base. The main strategies of the Muslim Brothers propose not only integrated national projects such as developing Sinai, Al-Wadi Al-Gadid, the Red Sea, the Northwest Coast, the West Desert, but also specialized national programs such as nuclear program, space and aviation program, armament programs, vital techniques programs. These strategies are essential to achieve a comprehensive development in Egypt. What differentiates the Brotherhood from the other Egyptian political parties is the distinct focus on the Islamic world. Even in its electoral program the Brotherhood calls for a developmental integration with the Islamic and Arab countries.

The novelty that distinguishes the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood from its sister organizations across the Arab world is the distinct focus on the integration of Egypt with its western and southern neighbours, Libya and Sudan. This strategy is considered a focal point in the developmental process of Egypt[1]. The move towards regional integration is not surprising taking into consideration the fact that during the British Empire Sudan was under Egyptian control while during Nasser's time there were some moves towards an Egyptian and Libyan integration. The focus on the regional integration puts the policies of the Muslim Brothers in perspective and shows that actual national Egyptian interests prevail in the geostrategical arena.

In spite of this regional integration approach, the path towards integration with the other Islamic and Arabic countries is still the backbone of the Brotherhood's strategy. An example of this strategy is found in the 2005 Electoral Program in the section dedicated to the support of agricultural development. This section recognizes the absolute need for integration with some Arab and Islamic countries in order to " increase the revenue of the investment in the agricultural production"[2].

In the national security section of their 2005 electoral program the Muslim Brotherhood stresses the fact that economic stability and traditional cultural values are a shield against "foreign invasion, westernization, threats, and aggression"[3]. Moreover the Brotherhood recognizes the high importance of the army for the society and for national security. In terms of foreign relations, regional Islamic relations are seen as the key in Egypt's geo-strategic scheme. In order to maintain Egypt's stability the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood advocates for broadening relations with Libya and Sudan, not only because they are in the geographical proximity but also for the historical links that always existed. In terms of strategic interests the Brotherhood calls further attention the security of Sinai and the Arab-Israeli conflict[4]. The Muslim Brothers do not mention in their official documents the state of Israel instead they name it the Zionist regime. This practice is very common among organizations rooted in political Islam.

The Muslim Brothers see Africa as a playground of strategic importance for Egyptian interests especially when it comes to defending Egypt's interests in the Nile Basin. For this reason the Brothers advocate "caring for the countries of the River Nile's basin and activating trade agreements among them for saving the

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[1] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Program of 2005", cit., p. 12.

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 15.

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 32.

[4] *Ibidem*.

Egyptian interests"[1]. While British colonial era treaties grant Egypt an excessively large allocation of the Nile runoff, there are other African nations that need that water. For the moment, the agreements on water allocation have been upheld because of Egypt's military and strategic position. Egypt's dependence on Nile waters presents a dramatic example of resource economic and political vulnerability. About ninety-five percent of Egypt's water comes from outside of the country, flowing into it through the Sudan[2].

Since the 1980's, the Sudan has been ruled by an Islamic military dictatorship. This situation cooled down the close links between Cairo and Khartoum. For this reason Egypt can not rely that much on Sudan to help maintain the *status-quo* for its guaranteed volume of water supply[3]. From this perspective it is understandable that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood supports "integration projects between Egypt and Sudan, and drawing up a timetable for accomplishment"[4]. Moreover, the historical links and the ideological similarities between the Islamists in Khartoum and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood make this integration project a desirable goal.

Other nationalist actions taken by Muslim Brotherhood members in the People's Assembly are their fight against the foreigners' possession of the Egyptian lands. They consider this practice as danger on the Egyptian national security. Furthermore, they believe that the governorates where there was no industrial development, especially the Red Sea area, should be taken into special consideration[5].

A common feature of Islamic groups around the Arab World and the Muslim Brotherhood is the pan-Islamic nature of their economic thinking. Furthermore, militants in particular disagree with the excessive differential in the wealth of various Islamic countries and thus they believe that no true Muslim ruler should tolerate some Muslims to enjoy excessive wealth (as in Saudi Arabia) while other fellow Muslims are starving (as is the case in Bangladesh)[6].

In terms of economic integration the Muslim Brotherhood recognizes the centrality of the Arab League in this process and supports an extensive role of the organization in the political, social, cultural, economic and strategic fields, especially in the move towards establishing a joint Arab market[7]. The same integration move is advocated when it comes to economic reform. Integration with the Arab, Islamic and African countries is a strategic economic priority for the Brotherhood. Furthermore, the economic Arab unity could only be achieved by the establishment of joint projects between different Arab capitals[8].

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[1] *Ibidem*, p. 33.

[2] Peter H. GLEICK, "Water and Conflict: Fresh Water Resources and International Security", *International Security*, vol. 18, no. 1, Summer 1993, p. 86.

[3] Ashok SWAIN, "Ethiopia, the Sudan, and Egypt: The Nile River Dispute", *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* vol. 35, no. 4, December 1997, p. 684.

[4] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Program of 2005", cit., p. 33.

[5] Abdul Moez MOHAMMED, "News of Muslim Brotherhood Bloc", *Non-periodical bulletin on News of MB parliamentary bloc members in newspapers and internet*, Fourth issue – April 2006, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/images/News%20of%20MB%20parliamentary%20bloc(4).doc. Accessed on 10/02/2007.

[6] Saad El-Din IBRAHIM, "Egypt Islam and Democracy...cit.", p. 9.

[7] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Program of 2005", cit., p. 33.

[8] *Ibidem*, p. 37.

In many conflicts around the world the Muslim Brotherhood has a foreign policy that prioritizes the *Ummah*. Ever since the Bosnian conflict in the beginning of the 1990s the Brotherhood became very much involved in helping its fellow Muslims. The Islamic enthusiasm of that decade became less during present day because of the violent action that took place by some fighters in Afghanistan. For this reasons, nowadays in the Arabic and Muslim governments put obstacles to this kind of trend. The simplest strategy is government control over this trend by curtailing the raising of donations for Islamic causes all over the world[1]. In the case concerning the Kashmir problem, the Brotherhood supports the UN resolutions demanding a referendum, and deplores India's refusal to hold the referendum[2].

In the case of the first Gulf War the centrality of the *Ummah* was also a key factor in determining the Brotherhood's stance. Although the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was among the first to condemn Iraq's invasion on Kuwait, it became opposed to a retaliatory act against Iraq since it viewed this action as an internal feud among Arab leaders. In the Brotherhood's view these feuds were the foremost threat to the integrity and unity of the *Ummah*. For this reason, although the Brethren started by condemning Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, they ended up supporting the Iraqi regime[3].

According to its 2005 elections program, the Muslim Brotherhood has a truly pan-Arabic agenda advocating national resistance not only in Palestine, but also in Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, a territory claimed by Syria. Moreover, the organization calls for resistance in Iraq, a country that was during 2005 still under the occupation of an American-led coalition that toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003. It is mentioned specifically that these territories are Arabic and the national resistance can be achieved by "all possible means"[4] suggesting that armed resistance could be a way. This armed resistance is not uncommon in Islam and is one of the five meanings of the word *Jihad*, specifically *Jihad by the sword* (*jihad bis saif*). This form of *jihad* represents armed fighting for God, a holy war for the defence of Muslim lands. Offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood, such as the Salafis, adopted previously this kind of approach. Leiken and Brooke argue that the Brotherhood does authorize *jihad* in occupied territories such as Afghanistan under the Soviets, Iraq and Palestine. They view this *jihad* as "defensive *jihad*" against foreign invaders[5].

Al Hudaibi sees the Muslim Brotherhood as a popular movement chained all over the Arab world. As any Islamic popular movements in Arab countries the Muslim Brotherhood is banned since it is seen as antagonistic to the state. Moreover, Al-Hudaini sees that the Arab public has been in the last years less responsive to the problems of their fellow Arabs in countries such as Lebanon, Afghanistan or Sudan. When the United States bombed Sudan and Afghanistan few demonstrations took place in Arab and Islamic countries with the exception

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[1] Muhammad Ma'mun AL-HUDAIBI, "A Quiet Discussion on Heated Issues", cit., p. 24.

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 24.

[3] Gehad AUDA, "An Uncertain Response: The Islamic Movement in Egypt", in James PISCATORI (ed.), *Islamic Fundamentalism and the Gulf Crisis*, The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Chicago, 1991, p. 119.

[4] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Program of 2005", cit., p. 32.

[5] Robert S. LEIKEN, Steven BROOKE, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood", cit., p. 116.

of Sudan, where demonstrations were arranged by the government itself[1]. When the massacre of Qana took place, during the 2006 Israeli attack on Lebanon, there were a few demonstrations only in Palestine but no reaction in Egypt, Syria or other Arab[2].

Officially as an Islamic movement, the Muslim Brotherhood does not participate in any kind of government, except the Islamic ones which apply the rules of *sharia*. In other countries with Muslim populations the different circumstances actually dictate other approaches. In other countries such as in India, where the Muslims comprise over 200 million, they cannot rule by themselves and therefore they have to participate in the ruling of the state together with the Hindus in order to protect their welfare. The same case is in Lebanon where half of the Lebanese are Marinates and Orthodox Christians, and thus Muslims cannot ask for an Islamic state[3]. In this case they have to reach an agreement and govern together with the Christians and Druze. In the case of Egypt where only 10% of the population are Christians, the Muslim Brotherhood does not see this minority as an impediment in establishing an Islamic state.

The pan-Islamic idea of unity is also reflected in the fact that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood actually considers Palestine as a common propriety of all Muslims because of the importance of Jerusalem. Therefore Palestinians do not have the right to give away any part of this holy land[4]. Moreover, they do not have this right because, according to Islam, on the Day of Judgment, Muslims will be judged if they defended this holy city and for this reason all have a responsibility in this matter[5]. According to the Muslim Brotherhood Jerusalem is the main reason for which Palestine is a Holy Land. This ancient city actually gives Palestine its uniqueness and importance. Moreover:

> "Palestine without Jerusalem is nothing but a pure political struggle for liberty Just as Sinai in Egypt, Golan in Syria and the southern boundary strip of Lebanon"[6].

The reason for which in Islam Jerusalem is a sacred place is the fact that here is the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the First of the Two Qiblahs and the third Holy Place after Makkah and Madina. This holy mosque is important because of its distance far from Makkah and Madina. Moreover, the mosque and Jerusalem itself indicate the weak state of the Muslims in history and vice versa. For this reason they represent a real test of the force and strength of the Muslims all over the world[7]. The Muslim Brothers consider that the contemporary state of Jerusalem truly represents the weaknesses of the entire Islamic Nation[8]. Also, Jerusalem is a sacred city for Arabs and Muslims because is the city of the Al Aqsa mosque, the

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[1] Muhammad Ma'mun AL-HUDAIBI, "A Quiet Discussion on Heated Issues", cit., p. 3.

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 10.

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 14.

[4] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "What Does JERUSALEM Represent for Muslim?", The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English Website, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/ images/ Jerusalem.doc, p. 1. Accessed on 04/02/2007.

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 2.

[6] *Ibidem*, p. 1.

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 16.

[8] *Ibidem*, pp. 25-26.

Holy place where Muhammad passed through during his midnight journey to the seven heavens and the city of the resurrection of Jesus the Christ, the son of God for Christians and an important prophet for Muslims.

One of the first pan-Arabists was the Egyptian scholar and politician, Ahmad Zaky Pasha (1884-1934). He was among the first to call for Arab unity and that is why he was considered "The Sheikh of Arabism". In 1929, he left Egypt and went to Palestine to participate in the fights of Ha'it al-Buraq between the Arabs of Palestine and the Jewish Zionists. As a pan-Arabist, Ahmad Zaky Pasha used to deplore the loss of Arab territories to infidels and non-Arabs. He was the one that called Andalusia "The lost paradise" and even with his great interest in Palestine, he never thought that this land would be "The second lost paradise"[1]. However, the Brethren strongly believe that in Palestine

> "the conflict is continuing and *Jihad* is proceeding and Palestine is not a second Andalusia and surely Almighty Allah shall grant Victory to His Believers in the end. All Praises and Thank are due to Allah, the Almighty"[2].

The Muslim Brotherhood recognizes that the Jewish colonies and the Jewish policies have been highly effective in Palestine and for this reason the situation deteriorated gravely. In this situation it is clear that the Muslims might loose Jerusalem forever[3]. The strategic importance of the city is crucial since:

> "Jerusalem is the pivot point; the point at which Arab identity and Islam meet without any opposition or contradiction and Muslims meet and participate with Christians without conflicts. In a word, Jerusalem gathers all people regardless of their approach to life, whether secular or religious"[4].

The liberation movement of Palestine is characterized by an Islamic approach and identity although Islam was in the beginning not that important and became essential only later on[5]. In the conflict between the Islamic resistance movement Hamas and the Palestinian Authority ruled by Fattah, the Brotherhood's stance is clear. The Brethren do not necessarily support reaching a solution to the problem through negotiations and they strongly sustain Hamas. Moreover, when dealing with the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians there is a general consensus among Muslim Brotherhood leaders around the Arab world since they express willingness to follow suit if Hamas, the Palestinian offshoot of the Brotherhood, recognize the Israel[6].

According to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the new Islamic movement of Palestine is the true representative of the Palestinian people. This movement represented a true challenge to the historical control of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) over the liberation movement[7].

They call for Fattah and Yasir Arafat to stop being a "destructive element" and work together with Hamas. Furthermore, the Brotherhood views Hamas martyrdom

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[1] *Ibidem*, p. 3.
[2] *Ibidem*, pp. 15-16.
[3] *Ibidem*, pp. 3-4.
[4] *Ibidem*, p. 4.
[5] *Ibidem*, pp. 8-9.
[6] Robert S. LEIKEN, Steven BROOKE, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood", cit., p. 116.
[7] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "What Does JERUSALEM Represent for Muslim?", cit., p. 9.

operations as totally different from those taking place in Egypt where some civilians are hurt. They believe that the operations in Palestine are considered martyrdom operations since they have the baking of Islamic scholars including the present Sheikh of Al-Azhar[1].

Also, regarding the relations with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Muslim Brotherhood calls for a cancellation of "the laws and resolutions which prevent the financial aid to the occupied people (especially the military governor's resolution number 4)"[2]. Military Decree no.4 of 1992 forbids collecting or receiving donations for any reason without authorization from the Ministry of Social Affairs and stipulates a minimum of 7 years imprisonment to punishment for infringement of this decree[3]. Although this decree is used usually when prosecuting opposition civil society leaders and organizations on the home front, in Egypt, in the case of the Palestinians there were US and Israeli pressures to cut financial aid to them. The pressures were heightened after the Second *Intifada* of 2000 when arms and funds were channelled to Gaza through tunnels coming from North Sinai.

Because, all Arab governments, without exception, consider Palestine as belonging to all Muslims and Arabs, it is the responsibility of all the Arab governments to protect this territory[4]. The Muslim Brotherhood considers that maintaining Palestine as an Arab and Islamic territory is a matter of national security for all neighbouring and distant Arab countries. In this strategic game the United States has high interests. Although neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are certainly capable of supporting the Palestinian movement against Israeli occupation, they are wakened by the United States. The US is using other Arab countries such as Iraq, Sudan and Libya to distract the attention from Palestine and thus the Muslim Brotherhood considers that Palestine's neighbouring countries are losing their political and strategic importance in case of conflict[5].

Concerning the call for an economic boycott of Israel and the United States, many Brotherhood leaders hope for the boycott to take place. Moreover they call for move to "be backed by a strong authority and it needs enormous publicity"[6]. Brotherhood leaders do not consider this economic boycott as fruitless since the fight against "Zionism" should be taken on the economic field and therefore resisting the foreign goods of the countries supporting the Zionists would be a victory towards the liberation of Palestine[7].

In terms of foreign policy the Muslim Brotherhood has well defined views that reflect the interests of an active Islamic political movement. The Muslim Brothers also focus a great deal on the relationships between Arab countries, especially Egypt, and Israel. They support the movements of boycott and call for resistance against all kinds of normalization of relations with Israel. Moreover they appeal to all Arab countries to adopt a single policy for dealing with "the Zionist policy" and

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[1] Muhammad Ma'mun AL-HUDAIBI, "A Quiet Discussion on Heated Issues", cit., p. 23.

[2] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Program of 2005", cit., p. 33.

[3] The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, "2002 Report", http://www.eohr.org/report/2002/omtc1.htm. Accessed on 04/02/2007.

[4] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "What Does JERUSALEM Represent for Muslim?", cit., p. 12.

[5] *Ibidem*, pp.14-15.

[6] Muhammad Ma'mun AL-HUDAIBI, "A Quiet Discussion on Heated Issues", cit., p. 24.

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 24.

also reconsideration of the nature of "the Egyptian-Zionist relations"[1]. This kind of discourse, although popular with the masses, seriously goes against the reconciliation policy promoted by Egyptian president Anwar Sadat and his successor, president Hosni Mubarak. Furthermore, Egypt's role as a credible mediator in the Middle East and that of an US ally in the region might be threaten if this kind of policy would be adopted officially by Cairo.

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood calls for a reconsideration of the Israeli-Egyptian relationship. Now about twenty years after the late Egyptian President Anwar Al-Sadat went to Israel in 1977 as a sign of conciliation, the situation in the Middle East is still volatile. Even after Egypt became the first country to sign a peace treaty with the Jewish state in 1979[2], the relationships between the entire Arab World, Palestinians in particular, and Israel are still marked by violence. The repeated attacks in Gaza and the Lebanon war of 2006 are just a few examples of the contemporary violence. In the light of these events, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood sees Egypt as a key player in the regional geo-strategic game. The friendly Egyptian-Israeli relations are seen as damaging for the Arab world, for the Palestinian cause and for the *Ummah* in general. By breaking the Israeli-Egyptian partnership for peace, the Muslim Brotherhood hopes to turn the most populous and powerful Arab country against the Jewish state thus creating an imbalance in the regional power system.

The Muslim Brotherhood recognizes that much of the problems in Palestine result from the support of the United States for Israel against the whole Arab world. Because of this stance the US is viewed by the Brotherhood as a new colonial power. An example to prove this point is the US history itself. The Brethren do not forget the United States waged violent wars against the Native Americans under the excuse of establishing peace and stability in North America[3]. Brotherhood leaders consider that there is an American and "Zionist" role in fighting the Brotherhood in particular and Islam and Muslims in general[4].

The suggestion put forward by the Muslim Brothers that the basis of the future Egyptian, American and Israeli relations[5] should be revised by an annual conference where political powers, parties and research centers would participate is not new. Although not new it is an unrealistic approach to the amiable diplomatic relations that should exist in the Middle East.

Officially, the Muslim Brothers deny the accusation that their organization is anti-Semitic and they argue that there is no conflict between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jews, but them and the Zionists (which the Brotherhood does not consider Jews). Regardless of these denials, Brotherhood writings[6] have expressed detestation for both Jews and "Zionists"[7]. Such examples are always present in the Arab and Egyptian press.

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[1] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Program of 2005", cit., p. 32.

[2] IDEM, "What Does JERUSALEM Represent for Muslim?", cit., p. 12.

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 5.

[4] Muhammad Ma'mun AL-HUDAIBI, "A Quiet Discussion on Heated Issues", cit., p. 24.

[5] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Program of 2005", cit., p. 32.

[6] The October 1980 children's supplement to the Brotherhood newspaper *Al Dawa*, was published to teach children on "the enemies of your religion": "Such are the Jews, my brother, Muslim lion cub".

[7] Robert S. LEIKEN, Steven BROOKE, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood", cit., p. 116.

For example, the Members of the Muslim Brotherhood continue their fight against Zionism and Israel even from the benches of the Egyptian Parliament. Their representatives in the foreign relations committee lobbied actively to reject a resolution of the UN General Assembly demanding to celebrate the Jewish Holocaust, on January, 27th annually. The demand was sent by the head of the Israeli Knesset to Parliament speaker, Dr. Fathi Soror. The Muslim Brothers together with the other parliamentary groups stated that:

> "Egypt is not concerned with the occasion and the international society should celebrate as well with the Zionist massacres against the Arab nations like Deir Yassin, Sabra and Shatila, Qana massacre and Bahr Al Baqar School in addition to many other occasions. The members added that the UN General Assembly resolution is issued for governments and not Parliaments and those resolutions are not obligatory for the nations"[1].

Furthermore, the fight of the Muslim Brotherhood against Israeli interests goes also on the home front. In 2006, Dr. Mohammed Al Beltaji – secretary of the MB parliamentary bloc in the Egyptian Parliament – submitted an urgent statement to the Prime Minister and Minister of Planning and Regional Development against the selling of a building of the American University in Cairo (AUC) to the Israeli embassy. This initiative came after a number of newspapers spoke about the AUC intention to sell its lands downtown Cairo to the Israeli embassy. The issue was seriously analyzed and publicized by the Brotherhood and the legislative was asked to take preventive measures[2].

Muslim Brotherhood's strife for the *Ummah* on the international stage can be seen from different perspectives. The venues to achieve this goal are diverse: political and economic integration, empowering Egypt to become the core of the *Ummah*, supporting Islamic causes and Muslims all over the world and the liberation of Palestine. The success of these venues depends not only of the Muslims in general but on the political power the Muslim Brotherhood and its branches around the Muslim World manage to acquire.


## Conclusion

The emergence of Islamic militant movements in Egypt in the past two decades is especially important for the general political context of the Middle East since Egypt has been considered for centuries the center of the Arab-Muslim world. It is the most populous and powerful Arabic country, and its strategic location make it a gate not only towards the Middle East but also to North and Sub-Saharan Africa and the Mediterranean. Historically, in the past two centuries, what happened in Egypt influenced political and ideological currents in the Arab World and beyond. Because Egypt is considered a true cultural unifier of the

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[1] THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, "News of Muslim Brotherhood parliamentary bloc (1)-Non periodical bulletin issued by MB Parliamentary bloc in Egyptian People's Assembly-First Issue", The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) Official English Website, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/images/kotla1_translation.doc. Accessed on 10/02/2007.

[2] Abdul Moez MOHAMMED, "News of Muslim Brotherhood Bloc", cit.

Arab-Muslim world it has the potential to influence the vast area of the Arab and Islamic world to respond to it as one center, particularly in times of crisis[1].

According to Ibrahim, the dream of establishing an Islamic social order has always been the objective of Muslims for centuries. History showed that actually it usually becomes an ardent demand during national crisis or in the aftermath of a humiliation at the hands of foreigners. Ibrahim believes that "the Islamic vision will never be cut down to its proper size until it is tried at least once. This is why the Iranian Revolution is uniquely significant for the present and the near future"[2].

In the past two decades the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood proved to be a strong political force not only in Egypt but across the Arab World. Its ideology spread across the Arab countries and influenced them in their own national political fabric. The old Islamic concept of the *Ummah*, a concept long forgotten by many Arabs, was brought again to light from the annals of the rise of Islam and the Arab Empire. Although the pragmatic internal policies advocated by the Muslim Brotherhood might seem to focus on Egypt and its national interests, the Brotherhood actually advocates the reestablishment of the all inclusive *Ummah* where Egypt, as the most important and populous Arab country, should play a pivotal role.

The foreign policies promoted by the Muslim Brotherhood and its branches across the Arab World stem from aims derived from the *Quran* and the history of the Arab people. Although realistic, the Muslim Brothers position themselves in international matters following the Islamic holy texts. Few political organizations around the world could claim such religiosity and vision in the foreign-policy making process. What differentiates the Muslim Brotherhood is the merging of guiding lines from the *Quran*, elements of Egyptian nationalism and secular political pragmatism in order to become a major player in Egyptian and Middle East politics.

They are the first truly democratic movement that strives to unite the *Ummah* through the ballot box. The medieval concept of the *Ummah* became a reality with the potential of integrating the Arab and Islamic countries around the Egyptian core, only because of the Muslim Brotherhood. Also in this new reality pan-Arab issues such as Palestine are seen from a different perspective thus further uniting the Arabs towards the *Ummah* as a way of protecting Muslims against foreign invaders.

The practical reality has proved the incapacity of many Islamist groups to solve society's problems efficiently. For example "Islam is the key solution" was also the Taliban's slogan in Afghanistan. Their true loyalty to fundamental Islam was well-known, however, they took devastating political decisions that pushed Afghanistan backwards. In the same fashion the Sudanese Islamists (the friends of the Muslim Brotherhood) ruled in a revolutionary manner, and maintained the civil war in Sudan thus impeding the progress of democracy in the country[3].

Although the Egyptian Brethren did not have yet the chance to come to power and solve society's problems, they gained a truly influential role in the Islamic society all over the world. They truly became a model for political achievements through their moderate standpoint. This moderate standpoint is critical for the Brotherhood's role in the Middle East since it is giving a real hope to those Muslims looking towards unifying the *Ummah*.

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[1] Saad El Din IBRAHIM, "Egypt Islam and Democracy...cit.", p. 3.

[2] *Ibidem*, pp. 22-23.

[3] Amr AL-CHOBAKI, "The Future of the Muslim Brotherhood", cit., p. 28.