

From Pulpit to Party:*
The Evolution of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers' Strategy

Sarah F. Salwen
PhD Candidate, Political Science
The University of Pennsylvania

DRAFT: Please do not cite or distribute without the permission of the author.

* This title is a reference to Stathis Kalyvas's 1998 *Comparative Politics* article "From Pulpit to Party: Party Formation and the Christian Democratic Phenomenon," which describes the unintended and unwanted emergence of Christian Democratic Parties as a contingent outcome of church-state conflicts.

Abstract: Since the advent of the “Arab Spring” and, in particular the Egyptian Revolution, one of the biggest questions concerning scholars, policymakers, and pundits alike has been what the role of the Muslim Brothers will be in the region’s burgeoning democracy. This paper examines the historical evolution of the Muslim Brothers’ early thinking about and orientation toward political participation, under the guidance of the organization’s first two leaders Hasan al-Banna and Hasan al-Hudaybi from 1928 to 1973. Much of the existing scholarly literature on Islamist movements emphasizes political structures, such as regime type or political opportunities, to explain their behavior at specific moments in time, such as during crises or brief periods of liberalization. In contrast, I examine the Muslim Brothers’ long-term objectives in relation to external variables of political context, such as levels of regime repression or tolerance and regional or international catalysts, as well as internal variables, such as internal factions, organizational decision-making procedures, and leadership. In opposition to the oft-cited inclusion-moderation and exclusion-radicalization hypotheses, I argue that it is the interaction of these external environmental and internal organizational variables that determines what strategies and tactics (from political participation to the use of violence) the Muslim Brothers choose to adopt at any given point in time. Taking a longer historical view offers insights into the dynamism of the organization and its ongoing internal strategic debates and provides a lens through which to view, and hopefully better understand, the Muslim Brothers’ current political activities and intentions.

Introduction:

Why do Islamist movements participate in politics? Notwithstanding the common definition of Islamism as “*political Islam*,” many prominent Islamist movements – foremost among them the Muslim Brotherhood – began as organizations dedicated to religious education and were often explicitly opposed to political participation. In the authoritarian and semi-authoritarian environments within which most of these movements operate, there are considerable costs to political participation. Political participation requires organizational and financial resources that must be diverted from other activities; it can invite unwanted attention, surveillance, and regulation; it can threaten or antagonize competitors and adversaries; and it can, and often does, lead to severe regime repression. At best, it seems, political participation opens Islamist movements to doubts from their supporters about what they gain by playing by the rules in an unfair political game; and at worst, it opens them to efforts by their opponents to destroy them. Nonetheless, in the last few decades, many Islamist movements have expanded their activities to become the multifaceted organizations we know today that – in addition to educational, social, and charitable activities – also devote considerable energy to political activities and electoral contestation.

Historically, the Muslim Brothers¹ eschewed involvement in political activities and vehemently opposed the formation of political parties. Hasan Al-Banna, founder of the MB in Egypt, initially avoided participation in politics and, especially opposed the creation of parties, because of what he viewed as the inherent divisiveness involved in such activities. For example, his vision of the ideal Islamic polity involved a constitutional and representative system, but did not include parties. Political opposition would be permitted, but only within certain limits, and would be limited to consultation rather than attainment of power, unless the extant regime forfeited its legitimacy.² However, since 1984, despite an ongoing “state of emergency”³ and being officially banned, the Muslim Brothers have consistently participated in parliamentary elections. In 2005, they won 88 seats (or 20%) in parliament. Even in the face of widespread arrests, regime repression, and severe internal debate, the movement chose to participate in the

¹ In this essay, I will use the terms “Muslim Brothers,” “Ikhwan,” and “MB” interchangeably to refer to the Society of Muslim Brothers.

² Lia, Brynjar, *The Society of Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942* (1998), 10-11.

³ Since 1967, Egyptians have lived under a State of Emergency (with an 18-month hiatus in 1980), which essentially turned the country into a police state, suspended many constitutional rights, restricted non-governmental political activity, and undermined any possibility of real democratic reform.

2010 parliamentary elections (from which it subsequently withdrew, along with other opposition movements, due to massive electoral fraud).

Some Islamist movements still choose to use rejectionism (through violence or withdrawal) as a strategy of opposition, but increasingly others seek to affect change from within existing political systems. This raises the question: How do Islamist movements select which strategies to use and how do they deal with internal disagreements over strategy? In this paper, I address this puzzle by examining the Muslim Brothers' greatest and most enduring dilemma – whether or not to participate in politics – through a selection of key decision points throughout the movement's history.

Brief Literature Review and an Alternative Approach:

Most scholarly examinations of Islamist movements up to now have been either a-theoretical, historical descriptions⁴ or have tended to emphasize political structures⁵ – such as regime type or political opportunities – to explain their behavior at specific moments in time, such as during crises or brief periods of liberalization. Structural explanations of Islamist movements' behavior also generally emphasize the role of authoritarian states in constraining them, failing to take into account the organizations' own agency and the ways in which organizational structure and divisions influence the choice of strategies for achieving objectives. Although authoritarian states certainly inhibit opposition movements' activities, these approaches privilege the perspective of the state by taking the status quo power relations at face value – viewing the Islamists as an opposition that can be managed, manipulated, controlled, or eliminated – without the possibility of change. The state sets the rules of the game and the Islamists react to them.

In this same vein, many scholars recently have become fixated on the inclusion-moderation and exclusion-radicalization hypotheses⁶ in an effort to understand how state actions

⁴ For example, see: Mitchell (1969); Cohen (1982); Lia (1998); and Boulby (1999).

⁵ For example, see: Wiktorowicz (2001); Lust-Okar (2005); El-Ghobashy (2005).

⁶ According to the logic of the exclusion-radicalization hypothesis and its obverse, the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, the more authoritarian and repressive a government, the more radical and unwilling to play by the rules of the game its opposition should be and the more open, inclusive, and democratic a government, the more moderate and willing to operate through legitimate channels its opposition should be. More specifically, if a state represses its opposition, one should expect the opposition to respond through extralegal channels, perhaps even resorting to violence. And, if a state tolerates its opposition and allows it room to move, one should expect the opposition to respond through legal channels, even participating in politics and granting legitimacy to the system. In addition, over time, if a state changes its policies and becomes increasingly repressive, its opposition should become increasingly radicalized and if a state liberalizes, its opposition should become increasingly moderate.

impact Islamist movement behaviors. Western scholars are especially preoccupied with questions about democracy, democratic participation, and assimilation or transformation of Islamist movements. This leads them to ask questions such as “when and why do Islamists turn to violence?” and “when do they embrace democratic practices?” and “how can we be sure they are sincere in their adoption of democratic norms and values?” Although scholars have been debating these issues since at least the early 1980s, there is still no consensus on how to best understand the behavior of Islamist movements.

One major problem with the inclusion-moderation and exclusion-radicalization hypotheses is that there is no real agreement on the definitions of “moderation” and “radicalization,” not to mention “inclusion” and “exclusion.” Yet, the most significant problem with these two hypotheses, and the source of much of the ongoing debate surrounding them, is that there is some empirical evidence to support them, but there is also plenty of support for the converse of each hypothesis. Repression and political exclusion can produce reactions of either radicalization or moderation in different individuals and different groups. And, political inclusion can produce either moderation or radicalization and rejectionism in different individuals, even those within the same organization. For example, in the case of the Egyptian MB, political repression has coincided with reactions of radicalism in a small minority of individuals (many of whom left the movement because they viewed it as too moderate), as well as with moderate reactions from the majority of its members. Since its inception in 1928, the Egyptian MB has experienced great vacillations in state tolerance and repression. Nonetheless, since at least the late-1960s, when MB General Guide Hassan al-Hudaybi articulated his conception of political moderation in *Preachers, Not Judges*, the Brothers have pursued a strategy of political participation. Furthermore, ever since Mubarak opened parliamentary elections to multiple parties in 1984, the Brothers have consistently participated (with two exceptions, when it chose to boycott), despite significant risks and obstacles to their participation.

As opposed to traditional structural approaches and inclusion-moderation style explanations, an alternative way of examining the behavior of Islamist movements is one that starts by taking into account their long-term objectives. This approach requires examination not only of political context, but also the movements’ internal organizational attributes, thereby introducing greater agency on the part of the movements into the equation. External variables of

political context, such as levels of regime repression or tolerance and regional or international catalysts, put pressure on Islamist movements to review their strategies and tactics. Internal variables, such as internal factions and the cleavages (often along ideological, generational, or national lines) underlying them, organizational decision-making procedures, and leadership (i.e. what faction is in power, effectiveness of the leadership, and rules for succession or leadership rotation) influence what strategies and tactics will be adopted at any given point in time.

As historian Barbara Zollner puts it, “The most crucial issue for Islamist movements is the call for the establishment of an Islamic state; this issue is the defining point of their activity.”⁷ In other words, Islamists’ overarching long-term objective is regime change. From their perspective, the status quo power relations between state and opposition are not immutable. They view their relationship with the state as a very long-term, iterative competition for control over definition of the rules of the game. The Islamists are fairly sure that they can win in the long run, at the very least by simply outlasting the illegitimate regimes that they are opposing. They believe that history is on their side and that they have the patience and steadfastness to outlive their adversaries.

This agreement on ultimate objectives does not mean, however, that there is unity or agreement among movement members as to the specific strategies and tactics for achieving their long-term goals. For example, within the Egyptian Muslim Brothers, there is an ongoing debate over the appropriate strategy for the movement to pursue, whether political or *da’wa*-oriented (that is, missionary). Islamists also argue over specific tactics, such as participating in a given election versus boycotting it or under what circumstances and against whom violence is justified. These ideological cleavages appear to be further complicated by other cleavages. In the case of the Egyptian Ikhwan, many scholars and observers have described generational cleavages, between an “old guard” (contemporaries of the founder, who tend to be conservative in their approach to confrontation with the regime and prefer a focus on *da’wa*) and a “young guard” (who gained their formative experiences in the professional syndicates in the 1980s and prefer political activism), which also tend to coincide with disagreements over strategy.

The organization’s decision-making procedures, and their level of institutionalization and acceptance within the movement, also influence the choice of strategy and how well it will be executed. For example, the Egyptian MB has a very hierarchical, centralized (and fairly

⁷ Zollner, Barbara, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Hasan al-Hudaybi and Ideology* (2009), 106.

exclusionary) organizational structure, with clearly defined procedures for debating and selecting strategies, which are generally accepted by its members. This allows the movement to maintain a fairly high external appearance of cohesion and unity, and a significant level of coherence in executing strategies, even when there is great internal dissent. At the same time, when disagreements cannot be resolved within the organization, there is a high incidence of defections.

Considering the behavior of Islamist movements within the context of their long-term goals means that their actions at any specific point in time are epiphenomenal – they are of secondary, not causal consequence. For example, the decision to participate in elections does not make Islamists become more moderate and democratic, and the decision to reject political participation does not make them more radical. Instead, these decisions reflect both reactions to the political environment at the moment and ongoing internal debates and struggles over the most appropriate strategy for achieving their ultimate goal: regime change.

Founding of the Egyptian Society of Muslim Brothers, 1928-32:

Hasan Al-Banna, a public school teacher, founded the Society of Muslim Brothers in March 1928, in Ismailiyya, a town on the west bank of the Suez Canal, when he was just 22 years old. According to his memoirs, he and his friends established the organization at a meeting at his house and declared its aim to be the “Islamization” of Egyptian society through Islamic revolution of the individual and the collective. This process would be carried out in four stages: first, to make every individual a true Muslim; second, to develop Muslim families; third, to establish a Muslim *ummah* (or community); and finally, to establish an Islamic state in Egypt.⁸ This deterministic historical progression, somewhat reminiscent of Marx’s stages of history, requires a specific, unidirectional sequence of events through which people gain greater Islamic consciousness and eventually overthrow the existing order. It also dictates different strategies for different stages of history. For example, *da’wa* (proselytizing) and education are more appropriate methods of spreading the Islamist message in the earlier stages, whereas a more political approach is suitable to the later stages. However, unlike Marx, al-Banna never developed a detailed theory of the progression of history, and as a result, there has been considerable disagreement and debate amongst his followers as to what stage they are in and what the appropriate strategy is at any given point in time. This ambiguity has had lasting effects

⁸ Shaikh, M. N., translator, *The Memoirs of Hasan Al-Banna* (1981), p. 43.

on the internal dynamics and the strategic choices of the organization, especially with respect to the question of political participation.

Two years after its establishment, in 1930, the Society of Muslim Brothers legally registered as a welfare association. The Ikhwan took this measure in order to raise money from outside (non-MB member) contributors for their first mosque building project in Ismailiyya, Dar al-Ikhwan. However, as a result of its new legal designation, the organization was legally prohibited from engaging in politics.⁹

Al-Banna's heavy-handed leadership style quickly precipitated the first internal crisis within the movement in 1931. Al-Banna's younger brother Abd al-Rahman and a number of his friends merged their small Islamic Culture Society in Cairo with the Ikhwan, and Hasan al-Banna unilaterally decided to use funds from the Ismailiyya branch to subsidize the Cairo branch. This decision angered Ikhwan members in Ismailiyya who saw no reason to transfer their limited resources to the capital. Several high-ranking members of the organization resigned as a result of the dispute. Although the conflict was officially resolved by the summer of 1932, the sense of ill-will and resentment engendered by al-Banna's leadership style lasted much longer.¹⁰ This anecdote may seem to be only a minor incident in the long history of the Muslim Brothers; however, it clearly illustrates al-Banna's domineering and autocratic style of management, which would lead to future disputes. This internal crisis also had a lasting impact on the organizational development of the movement, not least because its resolution – in al-Banna's favor – strengthened the authoritarian and centralized nature of the organization.¹¹ Indeed, historian Zakariyya Sulayman Bayumi argues that al-Banna's leadership style and the lack of democracy within the Ikhwan caused numerous defections and crises and weakened the organization.¹²

Early Organization of the Muslim Brothers, 1932-35:

The Ikhwan held its first General Consultative Council, commonly called the General Conference, in Ismailiyya in June 1933. This meeting was important in formally establishing the rules and organizational structure for the Muslim Brothers. The attendees revised the General Law and set up a General Guidance Office as the highest decision-making body within the

⁹ Kramer, Gudrun, *Hasan al-Banna* (2010), p. 32.

¹⁰ Kramer, 34; Lia, 60-65.

¹¹ Lia, 70.

¹² Bayumi, Zakariyya Sulayman, *The Muslim Brothers and the Islamic Associations in the Egyptian Political Life, 1928-48*.

organization. The Guidance Office consisted of two Azhar scholars from Cairo, four leading members of the Cairo branch (including Abd al-Rahman al-Banna), and four associates representing provincial Ikhwan branches. This structure overlapped significantly with the Brothers' Cairo branch, reflecting Egypt's tradition of bureaucratic centralization, and it led to internal criticism that later resulted in the Guidance Office's separation from the Cairo branch and establishment as an independent body.¹³

After the Second General Conference, al-Banna took it upon himself to revise the General Law, and the Ikhwan adopted the new version at its Third General Conference in March 1935. The new General Law stipulated the highly centralized control of the organization, giving extensive powers to the Guidance Office whose members were chosen directly by al-Banna.¹⁴

According to historian Gudrun Kramer, the main attribute that set al-Banna (and the Muslim Brothers) apart from other earlier Islamic reformists, such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida (who also developed new ideas and established cultural and political associations and schools), was that the Ikhwan:

“built an organization with solid structures and trained cadres that proved able to survive dramatic personnel changes at the top and to withstand strong external pressure. Ultimately, success rested on three pillars: institution building, indoctrination and cultivation of personal loyalties both horizontally and vertically.”¹⁵

First Entry of the Muslim Brothers into Politics, 1936-1939:

In the late-1930s, in addition to expanding their organization to all parts of Egypt and recruiting a mass following, the Muslim Brothers became involved in regional politics. They were especially active with respect to developments in Palestine and in their opposition to the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Allegiance, which enhanced Egypt's formal independence but failed to satisfy the demands of nationalists for full independence and withdrawal of all British military forces from the country. It is worth noting that the Ikhwan first became involved in regional politics and only later delved into national politics; this was a safer approach as it did not immediately antagonize the domestic authorities and it was an approach followed at a later date by Ikhwan branches in other countries. Furthermore, as a benevolent society, the Ikhwan was prohibited from engaging in politics, but they could not be prevented from taking up the

¹³ Kramer, 37-8.

¹⁴ Lia, 71.

¹⁵ Kramer, 36.

cause of Muslims abroad.¹⁶ The earliest statutes of the Muslim Brothers even acknowledged the organization's legal non-intervention in politics, but when al-Banna revised these statutes in 1934, he omitted the paragraph on non-involvement in politics.¹⁷

The Muslim Brothers' activities in support of Palestine were varied, ranging from individual acts of protest to mass rallies and fund-raising campaigns. For example, they called for a boycott of Jewish businesses in Egypt, which they accused of collaborating with the Zionists. They also sent petitions to political and religious leaders in Egypt and abroad. And, they organized demonstrations and meetings, printed pamphlets, and distributed publications of the Palestine Higher Arab Committee about the fighting and destruction going on in Palestine.¹⁸ In contrast, the comparative inaction of the Egyptian government in support of the Palestinians undermined its legitimacy and increased the relative popularity of the Ikhwan. According to historian Israel Gershoni, the Palestine campaign generated "the most noticeable change in the essential character of the Society during the 1930s – the transition from religious preaching and education to...dynamic political activism."¹⁹

Beginning in April 1934, in a series of editorials in the Ikhwan newspaper (later published as the tract *To What Do We Summon Mankind?*), Hasan al-Banna wrote: "Other people say that the Muslim Brothers are a political group and that their mission is a political one, beyond which they have still other aims. Who knows how far our nation will go in spreading accusations, bandying suspicions, and name-calling?" Al-Banna's language in this editorial seems to underscore his negative view of and desire to distance the organization from involvement in politics. However, al-Banna continued:

"O our people, we are calling out to you with the Qur'an in our right hand and the Sunna in our left, and with the deeds of the pious ancestors of the sons of this umma as our example. We summon you to Islam, the teachings of Islam, the laws of Islam and the guidance of Islam, and if this smacks of 'politics' in your eyes, then it is our 'policy!' And if the one summoning you to these principles is a 'politician,' then we are the most respectable of men, God be praised, in 'politics!'"²⁰

It was not until February 1938, however, that the Ikhwan first formally announced its ambition to play a role in national politics. In a speech before the Student Section of the Ikhwan,

¹⁶ In addition, it is often easier and safer to take on external political causes rather than one's own government.

¹⁷ Lia, 68.

¹⁸ Kramer, 49-59; Lia, 237-244.

¹⁹ Gershoni, 381-2.

²⁰ Al-Banna, Hasan, "To What Do We Summon Mankind?," 74-75.

al-Banna declared the organization's intention to enter the political arena and address political issues openly. In an effort to establish an ideological foundation in support of entry into politics, he emphasized the comprehensive nature of Islam, which allows for no distinction between religion and politics: "O ye Brethren! Tell me, if Islam is something else than politics, society, economy, law and culture, what is it then? Is it only empty acts of prostration, devoid of a pulsating heart?"²¹

In the same year, in an editorial in the weekly *al-Nadhir*, al-Banna announced that the Ikhwan was entering a new phase of activity:

"We are moving from propaganda alone to propaganda accompanied by struggle and action. We will direct our Islamic mission to the leadership of the country: the notables, the government, rules, elders, legislators and political parties... We will place our program in their hands and demand that they lead this country... on the path of Islam with courage without hesitation. If they respond to our call and adopt the path to our aim, we will support them. But if they resort to double-crossing and evasion and hide behind false excuses and pretexts, then we are at war with every leader, every president of a party and every organization that does not work for the victory of Islam and does not move in the direction of re-establishing the rule of Islam."²²

This announcement seemed to indicate that the Muslim Brothers were already moving beyond the first two phases of their program (those of reforming the individual and the family) and on to the later, more political stages.

However, in June 1938, when some of the Ikhwan's members took his call to wage war a bit too literally and clashed with police (resulting in arrests), al-Banna became alarmed and dismissed those who supported violence from all leadership positions. In opposition to this unilateral decision, a group of activists known as *Shabab Sayyidna Muhammad* (The Youth of Our Lord Muhammad) split off from the Ikhwan to form their own organization.²³ The decision to enter into politics, the resort to violence, and the subsequent split off of Muhammad's Youth underscore the fact that the Muslim Brothers' actions cannot simply be analyzed in terms of political structure (i.e. reaction to some regime provocation), nor can they be understood as coherent, unified strategies. These events reflect the particular decision-making process at that time, the presence of strategic disagreement within the organization, and the organization's inability to resolve the disagreement without secessions and expulsions.

²¹ Al-Banna as quoted in Lia, 202.

²² Al-Banna as quoted in Lia, 206.

²³ Lia, 248-49; Kramer, 52.

In keeping with the Muslim Brothers' new political orientation, Hasan al-Banna ran for parliament as a representative from Ismailiyya in 1938. However, he was forced to withdraw his candidacy under pressure from the British occupation authorities.

In his speech to the Fifth General Conference of the Society in January 1939, al-Banna addressed the question of the Ikhwan's attitude towards political power and its attainment. He seemed to backtrack somewhat from his earlier confrontational approach and endorsement of political activism. Indeed, al-Banna sought to make it clear that the official activities of the Ikhwan would be aimed at reforming society, not taking political power; in other words, the Muslim Brothers were not power oriented, but policy oriented. In his speech, he discussed the goals and message of the Ikhwan, the methods and policies of the movement, and its positions with respect to various institutions, organizations, and ideologies in Egypt. According to historian Richard Mitchell, al-Banna made five main points:

“1) the kind of Islam in which the Brothers believe makes government an important cornerstone of their program; 2) without the power to legislate, the voice of the reformer would be as ‘a scream in the wilderness’; 3) thus, shirking the quest for governmental power is an ‘Islamic crime’; 4) the Brothers do not seek power for themselves and are prepared to be the ‘troops’ of those who would carry this burden in an Islamic way; 5) before anything can happen, there must be a period during which the principles of the Brothers are spread.”²⁴

Although al-Banna began by emphasizing the importance of political activism in bringing about Islamic reform, he concluded resolutely that, at least for the present period, the principal role of the Ikhwan should be one of Islamic education of society. Clearly, establishing an Islamic state was not the organization's most pressing priority, whereas Islamizing society and applying *shari'a* were.²⁵ This was the official position of the Ikhwan under al-Banna's leadership, as well as under that of his successor Hidaybi. Thus, although it remained an issue of ongoing and vigorous internal debate, the organization's official main strategy for achieving its objectives would be *da'wa* rather than political participation or militant activism.

Hasan Al-Banna's Rejection of *Hizbiyya* (“Partyism” or Partisanship):

Hasan al-Banna envisioned the Ikhwan as a comprehensive Islamic body, spreading the call to Islam and acting as a legal and moral source of authority. Therefore, he believed strongly that the Muslim Brothers had to be organized as a “movement” rather than a “party” and had to

²⁴ Mitchell, Richard, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (1969), 308.

²⁵ Mitchell, 236, 245.

remain above local politics. His distaste for parties was rooted in part in the unpleasant experience of party politics in Egypt after World War I, and was consistent with a general distaste for party politics during that period in many places, including Europe.²⁶ However, Al-Banna's stalwart opposition to the concept of parties surfaced most explicitly after World War II.²⁷

Al-Banna disdained parties and their leaders as tools of cultural imperialism. He considered parties to be British and Western imports, and believed Egyptian parties followed Western patterns of organization and thought. Indeed, the Egyptian parties were propped up by the British and, in turn, reinforced the power of the colonial occupier. According to this reasoning, the parties and their leaders, lacking any real connection or relationship to Egyptians, were agents of division and disunity. Al-Banna believed the party system weakened Egypt, especially with respect to efforts at internal reform and greater political freedom. Divided into irresponsible and conflicting partisan interest groups, the nation sacrificed its unity and could achieve neither independence nor progress. Therefore, al-Banna argued, not only should the MB not take the form of a party, but Egypt should also be governed by a non-party system (*al-la hizbiya*).²⁸

Perhaps most importantly, Al-Banna rejected parties as political organizations primarily because he viewed them as institutionalized disunity that necessarily sowed discord and disagreement, two social ills which had no place in an Islamic polity. He believed parties corrupted peoples' morals, hindered their interests, and were unnecessary in a representative, parliamentary system. Furthermore, he believed parties caused partisanship, extremism in opinion, and fanatical behavior, and that they weakened the authority of governing officials, all of which are anathema to Islam, with its emphasis on social unity and cooperation. Even coalitions among parties, which might seem to overcome the problem of disunity, were a palliative not a cure, according to al-Banna. The only solution was the abolition of all Egyptian political parties, which he referred to as "the parasites of the people" and "the greatest obstacle to

²⁶ Haqqani and Fradkin, "Islamist Parties: Going Back to the Origins," *Journal of Democracy* (2008), 14-15.

²⁷ Husaini, Ishak Musa, *The Moslem Brethren* (1956), 67.

²⁸ Lia, 204; Mitchell, 218-19.

our development.”²⁹ In applying these beliefs, the Muslim Brothers required all prospective members to be free of any party affiliation.³⁰

Al-Banna’s opposition to parties has caused considerable confusion and uncertainty among his followers as to his true views on the appropriate relationship of the Ikhwan to politics, as well as the propriety (or lack thereof) of establishing an Ikhwan political party. The variety of opinions on and ongoing debate over these issues within the Muslim Brothers can, in large part, be traced to this uncertainty. Al-Banna tried to be clear about distinguishing politics (*siyasa*) from party politics or partyism (*hizbiyya*),³¹ and he wholeheartedly embraced electoral participation. In fact, he ran for office in the 1942 and 1945 parliamentary contests (in spite of British objections to Ikhwan political activism), but withdrew his candidacy in 1942 after reaching an agreement with the Wafd party and was defeated in 1945.³² However, the wide range of MB interests – from educational to missionary to charitable to political activities – has caused enduring disagreement over what the organization’s main focus, to which it should devote most of its resources and efforts, should be.

The Secret Apparatus and the Strategy of Political Violence:

Similar to other political movements of the era, the Ikhwan developed their own paramilitary unit, known internally as the *Nizam al-Khass* (the Special Organization) and externally as the *Jihaz al-Sirri* (the Secret Apparatus or Unit) during its early years. Although its exact origins are unclear, the militant wing was established sometime in the early 1940s, and grew out of the organization’s “rover scout units,” which encouraged a military and manly spirit among the youth, and its “battalions,” which emphasized communal training and rigorous prayer and meditation.³³ The Brothers’ strong ideological emphasis on actions and deeds, in contrast with the inertia of the established parties, also inspired some of its members to call for greater activism against the imperialists. Moreover, the organization’s activities in Palestine, beginning in 1936, inspired some members, many of whom had volunteered in support of the Arab uprising and trained in guerilla warfare, to call for the adoption of a strategy of political violence in

²⁹ Lia, 203.

³⁰ Husaini, 67.

³¹ Lia, 203.

³² Mitchell, 27-8, 33; Kramer, 63-65.

³³ Zollner, 12; Lia, 166-77.

Egypt.³⁴ Indeed, “the conflict between demands for a radical anti-government course and the political realities of the day was the central divisive issue within the Society in the late 1930s.”³⁵

The founding of the Secret Apparatus was a response to some of the more eager and activist Muslim Brothers who had, for some time, been demanding implementation of al-Banna’s third stage, the establishment of the Muslim community through uncompromising struggle. Al-Banna argued at the organization’s Fifth Conference in 1939 that the Muslim Brothers were not yet ready for the third stage and warned against impatient activists who might act out independently and undermine the Society’s long-term objectives. However, as mentioned earlier, al-Banna’s strategy of restraint produced serious dissension within the ranks of the movement; caused the secession of the most zealous dissenters, who preferred a strategy of militant activism; and led to the formation of the rival society, Muhammad’s Youth. The Secret Apparatus was formed to provide an outlet for those remaining members who wanted to prepare for armed struggle against the British and the enemies of Islam, thereby reducing some of the pressure on al-Banna and the rest of the Muslim Brothers for immediate militant action.³⁶ Thus, in contrast to the predictions of the exclusion-radicalization hypothesis, the establishment of the Secret Apparatus and the violence later associated with it were not the result of repression, either by the Egyptian state or the British. Instead, they were the result of intense internal debates over the proper strategy of the Muslim Brothers, as well as the leadership’s attempt to manage a minority that preferred the adoption of a strategy of violence to a strategy of gradualism.

The organizational structure of the Secret Apparatus, its de facto chain of command, and its heavy emphasis on military readiness eventually came to cause problems for al-Banna and the overall Ikhwan organization. The military wing had a tight, hierarchical structure, in which members belonged to small, clandestine cells and reported directly to their unit commanders, who reported to the Head of the Secret Apparatus. He, in turn, was supposed to take orders only from the General Guide, although al-Banna preferred to communicate with the wing indirectly through selected liaisons.³⁷ Salih al-Ashmawi was the first head of the Secret Apparatus, and his personal influence within the Ikhwan was such that al-Banna later appointed him as his Deputy General Guide in 1947; however, later leaders of the Secret Apparatus did not possess the same

³⁴ Mitchell, 31.

³⁵ Lia, 270.

³⁶ Lia, 178.

³⁷ Zollner, 12; Mitchell, 54-55.

quality of allegiance to the General Guide. Members of the unit took secrecy so seriously that even fellow Brothers did not necessarily know who belonged to it.³⁸ If the official chain of command had been followed, this extreme organizational atomization probably would not have been a problem and might even have been an asset in evading government notice; but because al-Banna exercised control only loosely over the military wing, its members and cells became used to a certain level of autonomy and did not always behave in ways officially sanctioned by the Supreme Guide or in the best interests of the overall organization. Especially after leadership of the Secret Apparatus passed to members less loyal to al-Banna than Ashmawi, the Supreme Guide began to lose control of the military wing. In addition, training for members of the Secret Apparatus emphasized militarism, which perpetuated and strengthened their preference for a strategy of activism. Its members began with intensive ideological education, including readings on the duty of combatting the enemies of Islam, and also practiced a rigorous routine of prayer, fasting, physical exercise, performing escape procedures, and propaganda distribution. In addition, the Secret Apparatus acquired and stockpiled arms and its members trained in their basic use.³⁹ Thus, rather than providing a safe outlet for the more activist Muslim Brothers so as to relieve pressure on the leadership to adopt a more confrontational and militant strategy, as originally intended, the creation of the Secret Apparatus actually strengthened the revolutionary convictions of its members and weakened the central leadership's control over them.

During World War II, the Secret Apparatus remained relatively quiet because its leadership remained loyal to al-Banna and the General Guide did not want to jeopardize the Ikhwan's future with reckless actions. Especially given the organization's growing popularity and influence and its improved prospects for achieving some of its objectives through gradual reforms rather than revolutionary methods, al-Banna preferred to continue his strategy of restraint.⁴⁰ However, as will be discussed in the next section, the Secret Apparatus gained relative influence within the Ikhwan organization due to internal disputes and the increasingly chaotic post-war environment in Egypt, and it became known for its violent activity and incitement of terror.⁴¹

³⁸ Zollner, 12.

³⁹ Lia, 180.

⁴⁰ Lia, 181.

⁴¹ Zollner, 2007, 414.

In sum, although the establishment of a military wing may have seemed a good solution for accommodating the more activist Muslim Brothers as well as a useful tool for recruiting eager youths to the organization, in the long run it proved to be a dangerous mistake for the Society for two major reasons. First, establishment of the Secret Apparatus was an organizational mistake because the militant wing created a dual and often contradictory leadership which challenged the official leaders of the Ikhwan.⁴² When Abd al-Rahman al-Sanadi succeeded Ashmawi as head of the Secret Apparatus, he assumed “extraordinary and ambitious powers [that] raised questions of communication peripherally attested to by periodic changes of unsuccessful liaison officers between him and Banna, by the final assumption of that role by Banna himself, and in comments attributed to Banna about some of the activity for which the secret apparatus was later responsible.”⁴³ Al-Banna increasingly lost control over the militant wing, and the organizational challenge he created would continue to trouble his successor. Second, creation of the Secret Apparatus was a strategic mistake because, instead of temporarily staving off pressure for revolutionary action, it delayed but did not resolve the demands of the ever more impatient activist members. As we will see, when members who favored a militant strategy gained influence and acted on their preferences, the reaction of the government to the violence was swift and harsh and did not distinguish between the Secret Apparatus and the larger Ikhwan organization.

World War II, the 1948 War, Government Repression, and Internal Conflict, 1939-49:

World War II contributed positively, if indirectly, to the Muslim Brothers’ expansion and growing popularity. As the established political parties, especially the Wafd Party, appeared to succumb to corruption and lose touch with the social and economic needs of the Egyptian people during the war years, the Ikhwan distinguished themselves by their pragmatism and ability to respond effectively to social and national problems. They organized demonstrations and reached out through an impressive network of mosques, educational institutions, hospitals, and clinics to provide food and services for the poor and those adversely affected by the war and the British occupation, thereby enhancing their nationalist credentials and expanding their influence in society.⁴⁴ The also war left a vacuum of leadership and a disillusioned populace still suffering

⁴² Mitchell, 88.

⁴³ Mitchell, 55.

⁴⁴ Baker, 251; Voll, 363.

from deprivation and difficult economic conditions.⁴⁵ As a result, the Ikhwan emerged from the war years in an even stronger position and with an estimated membership of between 100,000 and 500,000.⁴⁶ This external event provided an opportunity, or political opening, for the Muslim Brothers; however, it did not have any discernible impact on the “moderation” of the organization’s strategy.

Similarly, the Muslim Brothers’ participation in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War increased their popularity and perceived legitimacy. As soon as the fighting erupted, Ikhwan volunteers traveled to Palestine to fight the Zionists, arriving even before the regular Arab armies. They also campaigned in Cairo for more volunteers to aid the Arab resistance. By such actions, the Ikhwan gained the respect and admiration of many of the Egyptian soldiers fighting in Palestine, as well as the support of a wider segment of the Egyptian populace.⁴⁷ Although its participation in the military contest was actually relatively limited, the organization’s members and supporters credit it with heroic achievements and the episode plays an important role in the Ikhwan’s historical mythology.

Following the 1948 War, however, tensions between the Ikhwan and the Egyptian government. The organization’s growth alarmed the government and its activities, including those of the Secret Apparatus, fanned suspicions that the Brothers were planning to overthrow the regime by force. Under increased official harassment, the loyalty of many of the rank and file Muslim Brothers weakened, although the Secret Apparatus remained intact and its relative influence within the organization increased. In March 1948, a judge who had sentenced some Ikhwan members convicted of terrorist acts was assassinated. In December, the government denounced the Muslim Brothers as a terrorist organization, decreed its dissolution, confiscated its funds and property, and arrested a large number of members. However, the government’s repressive measures against the organization quickly backfired. Three weeks after the order of dissolution, Prime Minister al-Nuqrashi was assassinated by a young member of the Ikhwan’s Secret Apparatus disguised as a police officer.⁴⁸ Al-Banna recognized his organization’s perilous situation and sought to negotiate a settlement with the government; thus, rather than respond to repression with extremism, the organization’s immediate response was a strategy of

⁴⁵ Vatikiotis, 256-7.

⁴⁶ Lia, 154.

⁴⁷ Baker, 251.

⁴⁸ Heikal, 123-4; Mitchell, 67.

conciliation. He condemned the escalation of violence and Nuqrashi's assassination and claimed that the terrorist incidents were the acts of individual Brothers, not authorized by him and at odds with the aims of the organization. Yet, his conciliatory efforts were to no avail. Hasan al-Banna was shot, most likely by government assassins seeking to put an end to the Muslim Brothers, on February 12, 1949.⁴⁹

From 1947 to 1948, during the worst conflict between the Ikhwan and the Egyptian government, inner organizational disputes and conflicts among the Muslim Brothers rose to the surface. According to Mitchell, these disputes "partially paralysed the administrative apparatus, and...coinciding with the increasingly strong pressure of external events, enhanced the role of the secret apparatus."⁵⁰ For example, in early 1947, al-Banna intervened to overturn the Guidance Council's decision to dismiss his brother-in-law from the organization for using his position for personal gain and had all the allegations dropped. In response to this heavy-handed interference in the organization's decision-making procedures, one of al-Banna's oldest colleagues, Ibrahim Hasan, left the organization in protest. A few months later, a founding member of the organization and Deputy General Guide, Abd al-Rahman al-Sukkari, who voiced his opposition to the Brotherhood's official antagonism toward party politics (and especially the Wafd party), was forced out of the organization by the Consultative Assembly under pressure from al-Banna. As a result of Hasan's dismissal, Salih al-Ashmawi, leader of the Secret Apparatus, rose to the rank of Deputy General Guide.⁵¹ As Zollner observes:

"Although al-Banna' managed to hold internal factions together, playing a cunning political game and (at times) resorting to repressive means, internal frictions became apparent during a time when the Brotherhood was clashing increasingly with the government. It was under these circumstances of internal weakness that Salih al-Ashmawi, and with him the Secret Unit, won a dominant position within the Brotherhood. While developing into the Brotherhood's vanguard, the Secret Unit also gradually escaped from al-Banna's control and formed a largely independently acting group."⁵²

Thus, governmental repression did not directly cause an "extreme" or militant response, but it exacerbated existing internal debates within the Ikhwan, which led to changes in the relative

⁴⁹ Zollner, 14.

⁵⁰ Mitchell, 52.

⁵¹ Mitchell, 52-55.

⁵² Zollner 15.

influence of competing factions. This, in turn, led, at least temporarily, to the rise of those in favor of a strategy of political violence.

Succession and Organizational Turmoil, 1949-1952:

Al-Banna's death at the relatively young age of 43, combined with the dissolution order and the arrests and military trials of a number of Ikhwan leaders, threw the Muslim Brothers into a period of serious disarray. Because the organization had lost its charismatic and controlling General Guide, more serious conflicts within the Ikhwan over succession and future strategies surfaced, with one faction headed by al-Banna's family and the other by leaders of the Special Apparatus.⁵³ The organization's constitution required the election of the next General Guide by a meeting of the General Assembly attended by at least 80% of its members, but these rules of succession had never been put to the test and, under the circumstances of continued government repression, the electoral procedures could hardly be carried out. Although most of the members presumed al-Banna's deputy and head of the Secret Apparatus, Salih Ashmawi, would assume the top leadership position, there were many contenders representing different ideological positions within the organization, leading to a heated debate over the selection of the next General Guide. Selection of Ashmawi as head of the Ikhwan would have indicated clearly that the organization had finally settled on a militant strategy for achieving its objectives, which would have threatened the unity of the organization and led to further clashes with the government. However, selection of any of the other candidates, each with his own ideas about the organization's future directions and his own group of supporters, would also have threatened the internal unity of the Ikhwan.⁵⁴ Ultimately, the members agreed "that the movement could ill afford an almost certain split in the ranks should any one of the contenders be appointed, and that, temporarily, a leader should come from outside the organization."⁵⁵

As a result, Hasan al-Hudaybi, an elderly judge who has been described rather uncharitably as "a singularly dull-witted and colorless ex-magistrate,"⁵⁶ was selected as al-Banna's successor. Hudaybi's supporters believed the Ikhwan needed a new face to represent them and they considered him to be a respectable compromise candidate, with useful connections to the judiciary and legal world. In addition, the existing leadership sought a figurehead, rather

⁵³ The Special Section, also known as the Secret Apparatus, was a paramilitary wing of the Muslim Brothers established in 1941 or 1942.

⁵⁴ Zollner, 16-17.

⁵⁵ Mitchell, 85.

⁵⁶ Sadat, Anwar, *Revolt on the Nile* (1957), 111.

than a strong leader, behind whom they could continue to exercise power, and Hudaybi seemed to meet these criteria. The negotiations over his nomination concluded and his appointment was officially announced in October 1951,⁵⁷ although it is worth noting that the selection process was not conducted in accordance with the Ikhwan's constitution.⁵⁸ During this tumultuous period, the organization's membership declined rapidly and it struggled to rouse the popular enthusiasm al-Banna had inspired so easily during his lifetime.⁵⁹ Although Hudaybi's leadership was intended as a temporary stopgap to hold the organization together, he served as General Guide for more than twenty years until his death in 1973, setting a precedent of life-long tenure that would last until 2009.⁶⁰

Hudaybi's Priorities and a New Strategic Direction for the Muslim Brothers:

According to historian Barbara Zollner, Hasan al-Hudaybi's highest priority as General Guide of the Muslim Brothers was to change Egyptian society, which, in his view, was not aware of the political nature of Islamic belief. In particular, he wanted to heighten awareness of the Ikhwan's program primarily through education and social engagement, appealing by means of *da'wa* to the consciousness of the individual believer, but also through participation in the political system. He strongly opposed the strategy of revolutionary overthrow of the existing regime, instead encouraging a gradual approach to reform. Although Hudaybi is a controversial figure, seen by some as a weak leader who presided over the Ikhwan during a period of severe repression under which the organization appeared on the verge of defeat, his strategy of conciliation toward the state and his refutation of militant ideas have had a lasting influence on the policies and attitudes of the Muslim Brothers.⁶¹ The continued relevance of his ideas was reinforced by his successors, Umar al-Tilmisani, Muhammad Hamid Abu Nasr, and Muhammad

⁵⁷ Mitchell, 86.

⁵⁸ The Ikhwan constitution required that the General Guide be a member of the organization for at least five years, that he be elected from among the members of the Assembly, that the Assembly elect him at a meeting at which at least 80% of its members must be present, and that he be elected with a 75% majority of the vote. None of these conditions were met (See Zollner, 20-21).

⁵⁹ Wendell, Charles, translator, *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna* (1978), 1.

⁶⁰ Because of the Ikhwan's illegal status and its ongoing difficulties with the regime, the selection procedures for subsequent general guides were exclusive and secretive and did not necessarily follow any institutionalized rules such as seniority or democratic election. Instead, the leaders were generally chosen through a combination of internal maneuvering for power and external circumstances. Hudaybi's successor, Umar al-Tilmissany, was selected as the third General Guide because he was the most senior member of the Guidance Bureau rather than through regular internal election procedures. This opaque, haphazard, and somewhat unfair selection process came to an end in 2004, following the death of General Guide Ma'mun al-Hudaybi (son of the second General Guide), when the Ikhwan announced that the next leader would be elected by a majority vote of the Guidance Bureau (El-Ghobashy, 377).

⁶¹ Zollner, 2009, 3-4.

Mashhur, who were all Hudaybi's close companions, as well as his son Ma'mun al-Hudaybi, who served as General Guide from 2002 to 2004.

As soon as he was appointed as General Guide, Hudaybi made his intention to take the Muslim Brothers in a new direction clear by insisting on the dissolution of the Secret Apparatus, the organization's military branch. Hudaybi expressed his repugnance toward the use of violence and his unwillingness to have any part in perpetuating it, saying "There is no secrecy in the Message and no terrorism in religion."⁶² More generally, he sought to correct what he viewed as the organization's historically excessive focus on physical and martial activities as opposed to spiritual, intellectual, and reformist activities. Furthermore, he hoped that by elevating the organizational importance of the family units, giving them (rather than the rover units) the role of indoctrination, he could erode the importance of martial activities.⁶³ These efforts at reorganization instantly alienated members of the Secret Apparatus, exacerbating the existing tensions between it and the rest of the Society. Nonetheless, Hudaybi underscored his seriousness when, four months after he took office, the Secret Apparatus continued its operations and he announced that he would resign unless his orders were carried out. As a result, a special committee tasked with dissolving the military unit was created and the immediate crisis was averted.⁶⁴ However, Hudaybi failed at this stage to institutionalize the organization's new non-violent approach or fully resolve the problem and the Secret Apparatus continued to operate.

The 1952 Free Officers' Coup - Political Opening and Renewed Debate:

Under Hudaybi's leadership, the Ikhwan developed and maintained contacts with the army and initially supported Gamal Abdel Nasser's 1952 Free Officers' coup, which overthrew King Farouk. The ban on the Brotherhood was lifted in 1951, and a week after the Free Officers took power, Hudaybi issued an open letter in *al-Ahram* newspaper declaring the Muslim Brothers' support for the rule of the Revolutionary Command Council.⁶⁵ In this new, optimistic atmosphere, the Ikhwan issued a political and economic platform, proposing land reform, industrialization, and welfare measures, among other things.⁶⁶ Clearly, they hoped to participate actively and have a share of power in the new regime, as well as to influence the character of the

⁶² As quoted in Mitchell, 88.

⁶³ Mitchell, 204.

⁶⁴ Zollner, 2009, 23.

⁶⁵ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 42; Zollner, 2009, 25.

⁶⁶ Baker, 252.

changing political arena, for example through a constitutional reform that would declare Islamic law to be the basis of all legislation.⁶⁷

This apparent political opening presented both opportunities and challenges for the Muslim Brothers and triggered renewed debate over details of the organization's strategy of political participation. For example, the Revolutionary Command Council's offer to the Ikhwan of some ministries in the cabinet precipitated an internal disagreement over the appropriate level of involvement in and cooperation with government activities. The Guidance Council decided unanimously not to enter the government for a variety of reasons, but most importantly so as not to diminish the organization's popular legitimacy by too close an association with power. As a result, when Ikhwan member Hasan al-Baquri accepted the position of Minister of Religious Endowments, he was forced to leave the organization.⁶⁸

In addition, the RCC's September 1952 order that all parties register with the government raised the still unresolved issue of how the organization defined itself. Similar to the debates under al-Banna's leadership, the organization was once again forced to consider whether it should define itself exclusively as a religious association or as a political party. Hudaybi preferred that the organization remain a religious association; his position was that the Ikhwan "was not a political party (not that it had no political role)."⁶⁹ However, when the Consultative Council met on October 4, the majority voted to register as a party. The general membership clearly wanted to play an active political role in the new government, while Hudaybi was still wary of becoming an actual part of the governing regime, despite his outwardly cooperative and accommodating stance toward the government.⁷⁰ Before the Brothers managed to resolve the question of registration as a political party, however, the RCC dissolved all parties in January 1953, making it a moot issue. The Muslim Brothers were exempted from this ban, having not yet registered as a political party, and in return they supported the regime's consolidation of power. However, shortly thereafter, the brief political opening that had renewed the Ikhwan's internal debates over political participation abruptly closed.

Within only six months of the Free Officers' Coup, cooperation between the regime and the Muslim Brothers began to deteriorate due to their conflicting interests and increasing

⁶⁷ El-Ghobashy, 377.

⁶⁸ Mitchell, 107-8.

⁶⁹ Mitchell, 118.

⁷⁰ Zollner, 2009, 27-9.

competition for power. According to Mitchell, “the problems raised by the disintegrating relationship between the Society and the government brought the conflict to the fore,”⁷¹ and by late 1953, controversy over Hudaybi’s leadership flared up among the Brothers once again. The disagreements ran deeper than simple differences over strategy, but also reflected ongoing personal antagonisms. Those who had opposed Hudaybi’s original appointment, including Hasan al-Buqari and former Deputy General Guide and leader of the Secret Apparatus Salih al-Ashmawi, who coveted Hudaybi’s post and was his most vocal critic and challenger, continued to resent his leadership and oppose his policies. Indeed, the strategic disagreements:

“reflected to these members what came to be an important focus of the conflict, Hudaybi’s ‘imperious usurpation’ and ‘dictatorial abuse’ of power in the Society...his arrogant disregard of the ‘right’ of the Guidance Council to decide the destiny of the Society and his ‘unconstitutional’ and arbitrary dissolution of branches for reasons of incompatibility with the new leadership. As a result there was, for the first time...open questioning about the formal distribution of power in the organization and its important corollary, the hitherto seriously unchallenged tradition of ‘absolute obedience.’”⁷²

Evidently, the lack of confidence in Hudaybi’s leadership stemmed from a number of issues. First, in the view of many older members, Hudaybi failed to live up to the example of his predecessor, al-Banna. More importantly, certain members took issue with the structure of the organization, its administration, and the decision-making processes. They wanted a less hierarchical, more egalitarian structure, more opportunity to voice dissent, and term-limits for the General Guide. There is also evidence that Nasser sought to undermine Hudaybi’s position and strengthen his opponents within the organization during this period.⁷³

The leadership crisis continued throughout most of the year, until a meeting of the General Assembly in October, when Hudaybi decisively defeated his opponents’ attempt to limit the tenure of the General Guide to three years, thereby ending his control of the organization. Although he claimed victory in this instance, he failed to resolve the underlying cause of the discontent – the authoritarian nature of his administration. Nonetheless, the meeting marked a turning point for the Muslim Brothers, beginning a period of increasing pressure for organizational reform.⁷⁴ The assassination of Sayyid Fa’iz, Deputy Commander of the Secret Apparatus, most likely by members of the Secret Apparatus, also gave Hudaybi the opportunity

⁷¹ Mitchell, 116.

⁷² Mitchell, 117.

⁷³ Zollner 32.

⁷⁴ Mitchell, 121.

to retaliate more effectively and purge the Society of his opponents. He had the Guidance Council expel all the influential members of the Secret Apparatus. Although Hudaybi won a resounding victory over his challengers at this juncture, he once again resorted to authoritarian measures to shore up his power, risking further alienation of the membership and failing to resolve the organization's inner conflicts through reform.⁷⁵

Repression and the Withdrawal of the Muslim Brothers, 1954-1957:

Taking advantage of the turmoil within the ranks of the Muslim Brothers to remove what it had come to view as a potential competitor, the regime ordered the organization dissolved in January 1954. The dissolution led to the imprisonment of many of the organization's leading figures, exacerbating the unresolved internal disagreements over leadership and driving the factions further apart. One faction responded to the repression by advocating closer cooperation and reconciliation with Nasser and the RCC. They believed Hudaybi's strategy had failed the organization and that the only way to escape continued repression was to reconcile and work with the regime. Hudaybi's supporters thought the organization should stay the course, continuing as a non-aligned pressure group, but also opposing Nasser's influence within the RCC (and supporting his rival Naguib). A third faction, headed by Muhammad Khamis Humayda, chose to remain neutral and not to take sides with either of the other factions.⁷⁶

Hudaybi did approach Nasser with a petition demanding reinstatement of the Society's legal status, among other reforms, but the two could not reach a compromise and relations steadily declined. Later in the year, after publicly objecting to the conditions of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty, Hudaybi retired to Alexandria for several months on the recommendation of close advisors who feared he might be arrested or assassinated. Evidently, Hudaybi also hoped that his absence, declared a "vacation" by the Guidance Council, might help ease the conflict with the regime.⁷⁷ However, during Hudaybi's withdrawal, the confusion within the organization as to its strategy and leadership reached a peak. Just when the organization seemed most in need of decisive leadership, Hudaybi vanished from public life, and "the perplexity and ambiguity which followed"⁷⁸ his disappearance contributed to the overall weakness of the organization and the ease with which the regime subsequently crushed it.

⁷⁵ Zollner, 33.

⁷⁶ Mitchell, 144-45.

⁷⁷ Zollner, 34-5; Mitchell 138..

⁷⁸ Mitchell, 159.

Following an alleged⁷⁹ assassination attempt on President Nasser in October 1954, known as the Manshiyya incident (after the place where it occurred), Nasser banned the Ikhwan, executed a handful of its members, imprisoned thousands, forced many into exile, and drove the organization underground.⁸⁰ The Muslim Brothers faced systematic and nearly constant repression for the next two decades until Nasser's death in 1970, a period referred to by the organization as the *mihna* (the ordeal or trial). The 1954 persecution of the Muslim Brothers differed from its early experience with repression in 1949 (following al-Banna's assassination), when the organization was forced underground but remained intact. This time, the regime appeared to have successfully eliminated the leadership of the Ikhwan through arrests, military trials, executions, and lengthy prison sentences. Indeed, "the organization seemed to have come to an end."⁸¹

The Muslim Brothers' initial reaction to this period of repression is an exception to the usual pattern, in which repression leads to increased internal debate and reassessment of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the various available strategies for realization of the organization's long-term goals. In this case, the repression was so severe and the dismantling of the leadership so successful that, for three years, the Muslim Brothers seemed to fade away almost completely. In particular, the total breakdown of the leadership in the months leading up to the Manshiyya incident, Hudaybi's retreat into hiding, the deep cleavages within the Consultative Council, and the inability of the remaining members to establish effective lines of communication all contributed to the withdrawal of the Ikhwan from public sight.⁸² Indeed, "the general organization was so deeply split by its own internecine battles that it was relatively easy to cleave it further by giving full publicity to the 'confessions' and 'betrayals' – sometimes real, sometimes fabricated – of the various members" in the trials following the Manshiyya incident.⁸³ Furthermore, according to Zollner the reason for the Ikhwan's surprising utter silence at the beginning of the *mihna* was that "even more than exile, imprisonment, or the death sentences

⁷⁹ The official (state) version of events is that the Muslim Brothers were responsible for planning and carrying out an attempted coup d'état. However, according to Zollner, there is substantial disagreement as to whether the Ikhwan were in fact responsible or were framed by Nasser. Indeed, Nasser stood to gain the most from the incident, whereas the Muslim Brothers had little to gain by violently confronting the regime (Zollner, 37).

⁸⁰ A detailed discussion of the specific charges, trials, and sentences following the Manshiyya incident is not integral to my argument, but for those who are interested, one can be found in Mitchell, pp. 151-62.

⁸¹ Zollner, 38.

⁸² Mitchell, 158-9.

⁸³ Mitchell, 156.

imposed on a number of leading figures – a suppressed internal discontent is what actually weakened the movement’s unity. This discontent focused on leadership, direction, and participation.”⁸⁴ It took several years for the organization to overcome its sense of defeat and begin to regroup.

Reorganization, 1957-1964:

Beginning in 1957 and 1958, the regime slightly relaxed its policy of repression and the Muslim Brothers began to regroup and reorganize. After the Suez Crisis of 1956, the British presence in Egypt came to an end, representing a significant victory for Nasser. Given his new heroic status, Nasser may have felt less threatened by the Ikhwan and began releasing some young, low-ranking members from prison. He also pardoned Hudaybi, due to his age and poor health, placing him under house arrest in Alexandria. A small committee of Muslim Brothers formed to coordinate the reorganization effort, prisoners began to exchange and discuss ideas, and a communication network emerged linking prisoners to members and leaders outside of prison.⁸⁵ It is not clear to what extent Hudaybi was involved in the reorganization, but he was aware of it and at least initially approved.⁸⁶ These efforts produced a sub-group of the Muslim Brothers that would later come to be known as the “Organization 1965.”

It was also during this period that Sayyid Qutb, a prominent member of the Ikhwan and prolific theorist, wrote five books, including his most important works – the 30-volume Quranic commentary *Fi Zilal al-Qur’an (In the Shade of the Quran)* and *Ma’alim fi al-Tariq (Signposts along the Road)*,⁸⁷ a guidebook for the renewal of the Muslim Brothers – while in prison.⁸⁸ Qutb began disseminating his ideas among fellow prisoners, and particularly influenced some of the younger Brothers imprisoned at Qanatir, who were among the first to be released from prison. His ideas also reached the outside by way of emissaries, often the wives and sisters of the imprisoned Brothers, who brought his writings to groups meeting for the purposes of discussion and Muslim education.⁸⁹

After Qutb was released from prison in 1964, he became the leader of the Organization 1965, apparently with Hudaybi’s permission. Qutb’s thought (which will be discussed in greater

⁸⁴ Zollner, 2007, 413.

⁸⁵ Zollner, 2007, 416.

⁸⁶ Kepel, 1984, 29; Zollner, 40.

⁸⁷ Different scholars translate the first word in the title of this book alternatively as “Signposts” or “Milestones” and the last word as “Road” or “Path.”

⁸⁸ Zollner, 42.

⁸⁹ Kepel, 1984, 29-30.

detail later in this chapter) laid the groundwork for the regrouping of the Brothers outside of prison and provided an ideological foundation that imbued the group with a new sense of optimism and activism. Members of the Organization 1965 gathered for the purposes of Islamic study, with an extensive reading list, including many of Qutb's own writings. They also met to deliberate over how to revitalize the Ikhwan organization and bring it back to its former glory. Qutb was convinced that the cruelty of Nasser's repression during the *mihna* was the cause of all the Ikhwan's troubles, and his writings implied the legitimacy of the use of violence to bring about necessary change. Although it is not clear whether the Organization 1965 had any concrete plans to overthrow the regime, the group discussed political assassinations and it did attempt to amass an arsenal.⁹⁰ Thus, when the Organization 1965 came to the attention of authorities, a new wave of arrests and persecution of the Muslim Brothers began.

The emergence of the Organization 1965 had implications for the Muslim Brothers' organizational decision-making, factional balances, and choice of strategies and tactics. By allowing the formation of the Organization 1965 and the rise of Sayyid Qutb as its spiritual leader, Hudaybi indirectly aided the revitalization and reorganization of the Ikhwan, but he also inadvertently created an organizational subsection of the movement that would come to challenge his leadership and strategic vision, as the Secret Apparatus had done earlier in his career. Qutb's ideology, combined with the repression it brought upon the organization once again, also precipitated a critical debate within the ranks of the Muslim Brothers over the future direction of the movement and the legitimacy of the strategic use of violence.

A New Wave of Persecution and Renewed Strategic Debate, 1965-1970:

In July 1965, the regime undertook a massive wave of arrests, targeting not only the activist Organization 1965, but the entire Ikhwan organization. Most of the leaders of Organization 1965 were taken into custody and charged with high treason for allegedly planning to assassinate Nasser and overthrow the state system. A series of military show trials in 1966 resulted in guilty verdicts, prison sentences for hundreds, and the death penalty for several, including Sayyid Qutb and Hasan al-Hudaybi. Qutb's sentence was carried out on August 26, instantly making him a martyr for the cause, but Hudaybi's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Zollner, 43; Zollner, 2007, 418-19.

⁹¹ Zollner, 43-4.

The 1965 persecution was similar in some ways to earlier bouts of repression, most importantly in that its outcome was a renewed strategic debate within the Ikhwan. As in 1949 (following al-Banna's assassination) and 1954 (following the Manshiyya incident), the regime struck the Muslim Brothers during a period of organizational instability and flux. The Ikhwan was in the process of reconstituting itself, but had not yet worked out all its internal differences or developed a clear, agreed-upon approach that might have enabled it to resist the attack. According to historian Gilles Kepel, the Muslim Brothers "had come together again, but they could not agree on a political strategy."⁹² The outcome of the 1965 persecution differed significantly from the immediate aftermath of the 1954 repression, however, which had resulted in the apparent defeat of the Muslim Brothers and several years of inactivity and silence from the organization. Instead, similar to the aftermath of the 1949 repression, the 1965 round of persecution led to another period of renewed ideological and strategic soul-searching within the Muslim Brothers.

Among the leadership in prison a debate arose between al-Hudaybi and the older generation of members of the Guidance Council, on one hand, and the remaining leaders of Organization 1965 on the other. Hudaybi publicly sought to distance himself from the Organization 1965. He also published *Sab'a Rasa'il min Sijn al-Turra* (Seven Letters from Turra Prison), written in the form of a series of questions from Muslim Brothers and his answers, in order to provide advice and guidance to the members of the organization, counter the emerging activist trend, and reestablish himself as the supreme, unchallenged leader. These efforts angered Qutb's remaining followers, who felt Hudaybi was sacrificing them for personal gain, could no longer be trusted, and was a weak leader who would take the organization in the wrong direction by collaborating with the *jahili* (un-Islamic) system. It is worth noting that this split occurred largely along generational lines, with Hudaybi and his followers representing the "old guard" within the Muslim Brothers and Qutb's followers generally from among the younger generation. In addition, a significant number remained undecided between the two positions.⁹³

Above and beyond the challenge to Hudaybi's leadership, the debate between Qutb's followers, or the *Qutbiyyun* (as the government labeled them),⁹⁴ and Hudaybi and his followers had important implications for the Ikhwan's strategies and future direction. It centered on three

⁹² Kepel, 31.

⁹³ Zollner, 45.

⁹⁴ Beattie, 198.

main issues: the relationship of the Ikhwan to the state, the role of *takfir* (the denunciation of others as apostates), and the appropriate strategy for achieving the shared goal of establishing an Islamic state.

At this point, it is worth quickly summarizing some of Qutb's central arguments and contributions to the Islamist ideological debate. In particular, three concepts, which formed the core of his ideology, were central to the ensuing intra-Ikhwan dispute: *takfir*, or the denunciation of others as non-believers; the extension of *jahiliyya*, or pre-Islamic ignorance or unbelief, into modern times; and *hakimiyya*, the absolute sovereignty of God. Although Qutb did not invent the concept of *takfir*, he incorporated it into his guidelines for revival of Ikhwan activities both inside and outside of prison. Similar to traditional Ikhwan doctrine, Qutb observed the moral bankruptcy of the West and its influence on modern Muslim society and viewed the resurrection of Islam as the solution to society's problems. However, Qutb departed from traditional Ikhwan thinking by arguing that "the entire world lives in a state of *jahiliyya*,"⁹⁵ thereby denouncing all of society as living in a state of unbelief. Finally, for Qutb, the only legitimate sovereignty in a Muslim polity is that of God, and therefore the regime can exercise sovereignty only in accordance with God's law.⁹⁶ Nasser's persecution and torture of the Muslim Brothers, as well as his overall secular nationalist program, plainly marked him as a non-believer and his regime as un-Islamic. Given that Nasser had contravened the laws of God, Qutb called on Muslims to undertake a struggle against their unjust ruler. The Qutbiyyun interpreted this to be a call to complete armed rebellion and an endorsement of the killing of *kafireen* (unbelievers), although Qutb's writings can be and have been interpreted differently by his numerous and varied followers.⁹⁷ Thus, while al-Banna and Hudaybi urged reform of the political and legal systems by urging leaders to implement Islamic law and seeking reform from within the system, the Qutbiyyun essentially declared religious war on the state.

Qutb's followers from the Organization 1965 vehemently opposed Nasser and his program of Arab nationalist socialism, which they believed to be in opposition to God's law. Indeed, "Qutb challenged the ideology of the Nasser regime on almost every key issue."⁹⁸ They insisted that establishment of an Islamic state was an immediate duty and should be

⁹⁵ From "Signposts," as quoted in Kepel, 46.

⁹⁶ Zollner, 2007, 419-21.

⁹⁷ Beattie, 197.

⁹⁸ Voll, 370.

accomplished through offensive jihad, i.e. revolutionary and militant means. They also embraced the idea of irreconcilable divisions between Islamic society and *jahiliyya*, as well as between Muslims and nonbelievers. Furthermore, they subscribed to Qutb's view that, as the vanguard of Islamist activism, they had to pass through stages of study, preaching, and persecution before they could reach their goal of establishing an Islamic state.⁹⁹ Taken together, all this implied an activist strategy, involving potentially violent struggle and conflict, as well as a necessary rejection of Hudaybi's more conciliatory approach.

Clearly, Hudaybi's political and religious worldview differed fundamentally from that of the Qutbiyyun. As his efforts from 1951 to 1954 demonstrated, he believed in engagement with the state and tried to influence the political system through negotiation, policymaking, and political participation. Although he shared with the Qutbiyyun the ultimate goal of establishing an Islamic regime, he did not believe in a strategy of revolutionary change. He and his followers argued that an Islamic state could only be realized through gradual changes in society, which would require education (*ta'lim*) and missionary engagement (*da'wa*).¹⁰⁰ However, due to his record of weak leadership and the attractiveness of the Qutbiyyun arguments to many Muslim Brothers, Hudaybi had to make a concerted effort to persuade his fellow Brothers to recognize his authority and reject the path of militancy.

The discord within the Muslim Brothers surrounding the organization's strategy and future direction reached its height around the time of the 1967 War. During the tense lead-up to the war, debate arose concerning issues of national loyalty and the appropriateness of challenging Nasser in the context of an imminent threat to national security. Hudaybi's faction argued that although Nasser's regime was far from blameless, he was still a Muslim and must be supported against a non-Muslim enemy, namely Israel. Furthermore, failing to support the regime against Israel would lead to *fitna* (chaos or civil strife among Muslims). In contrast, the Qutbiyyun argued that Nasser should not be supported under any circumstances, even in the case of war with Israel, because Egypt's leadership represented a more immediate enemy.¹⁰¹

In the midst of this debate, the most radical proponents of Qutbist's ideology effectively broke away from the Muslim Brothers, establishing a small new fringe group called *Jama'at al-Muslimeen* (the Society of Muslims) and refusing any further association with their former

⁹⁹ Voll, 371.

¹⁰⁰ Zollner, 2007, 419-421.

¹⁰¹ Zollner, 2009, 46.

Brothers. Shukri Mustafa, who had spent six years in prison for distributing Ikhwan pamphlets as a student, eventually became the leader of this group, which embraced *takfir* and preached total separation from *jahiliyya* society. The press portrayed the group as a gang of fanatical terrorists and referred to it as *Takfir wa'l-Hijra* (excommunication and withdrawal) for its practices of excommunicating fellow citizens and withdrawing from society into the mountains. Although in 1978, Sadat's security forces destroyed the movement after members kidnapped and murdered an Islamic scholar and former Minister of Islamic Affairs, Muhammad al-Dhahabi, the group left an enduring legacy for subsequent militant Islamist groups.¹⁰² Significantly, the fact that most of the radical Qutbiyyun left the Muslim Brothers shifted the internal balance of power in favor of Hedaybi and his conciliatory strategic approach.

Egypt's humiliating defeat in the 1967 War, which ended with Israel in control of the Sinai Peninsula, had a devastating effect on Nasser's popularity and concurrently buoyed Islamists of all stripes who were able to cast the defeat as God's punishment for Muslim societies that had gone astray. Faith in Nasser and his secular nationalist and socialist policies evaporated. According to Hinnebusch, "It is clear that the decisive political event which revived the fortunes of the Islamic movement was the 1967 defeat."¹⁰³ An atmosphere of religiosity began to permeate Egyptian society, even to the extent that Nasser began to employ religious slogans in his speeches more often, as if to rationalize the defeat by Israel.¹⁰⁴

Despite this opportunity, Hedaybi still had to confront the multi-pronged challenge of reuniting what remained of the fractured Ikhwan organization, reclaiming his leadership authority, and persuading those who were still undecided between the arguments of the Qutbiyyun and the mainstream leadership. To this end, he began work on his most important book *Du'at la Qudat* (Preachers Not Judges), a clarification of Ikhwan objectives and strategy and a refutation of militant Islamist thinking. Completed in early 1969 and published in 1977, the work was most likely not written by Hedaybi alone, but was written collaboratively with a number of leading members of the Guidance Council, including Umar al-Timisani, Mustafa Mashhur, and Abd al-Aziz Attiyya, as well as Hedaybi's son Ma'mun al-Hedaybi, who had been

¹⁰² Kepel, 1984, 72-78.

¹⁰³ Hinnebusch, 199.

¹⁰⁴ Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 44.

imprisoned with the others. Yet, it was published in Hudaybi's name and can therefore be taken as an expression of his views.¹⁰⁵

In *Du'at la Qudat*, Hudaybi does not directly attack Qutb, and in fact, never even mentions his name, but he does argue against Qutb's ideology. In particular, he rejects the practice of *takfir*, arguing that only God can judge whether a Muslim has true faith, and that humans are not competent to make such judgments or to denounce others as apostates. Hudaybi also refutes the idea of a modern state of *jahiliyya*, although he does not use the word specifically. He argues that the Qur'an and Sunna have provided Muslims with access to Islamic understanding for all time, and therefore the ideas that their contents, meaning, and interpretation could have been lost since their revelation and that modern society is ignorant of Islam in the same way that pre-Islamic societies were simply cannot be true. Finally, Hudaybi challenges the Qutbiyyun view of *hakimiyya*, arguing that Islamic law is not entirely fixed and that human reason can be applied to certain areas of governance and regulation of social life without defying divine authority. Moreover, he repudiates the notion that obedience to God requires implementation of Islamic law at the level of the state; much more fundamental is the practice of God's law in Muslims' everyday lives. Although these arguments may seem abstract and primarily theological, they have important implications for the behavior and activities of the Muslim Brothers.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the text is immediately relevant to the Ikhwan's objectives and strategies in that it advocates "a nonviolent and nonrevolutionary opposition, repeatedly emphasizing conformity to political authority and allowing only a gradual increase in force if a ruler turns against shari'a."¹⁰⁷

In brief, Nasser's massive crackdown on the Muslim Brothers in 1965 led to a period of renewed strategic debate within the organization. Contrary to the expectations of the exclusion-radicalization hypothesis, the Ikhwan did not respond to repression by adopting an extremist strategy of violence. Instead, factions within the organization emerged, each supporting a different strategy and future direction for the movement in pursuit of their shared goal of establishment of an Islamic regime. Those inspired by the writings of Sayyid Qutb, especially his ideas relating to *takfir*, *jahiliyya*, and *hakimiyya*, did indeed prefer a path of militant activism. However, General Guide Hudaybi and his supporters promoted a conciliatory approach to the

¹⁰⁵ Zollner, 2007, 421-27.

¹⁰⁶ Zollner, 2007, 421-22.

¹⁰⁷ Zollner, 2007, 423.

regime and emphasized gradual reform of society through *da'wa* and *ta'lim*. In their view, the activist-led attempt to revive the Ikhwan during the early 1960s had obviously backfired by bringing about such a harsh regime response, thereby substantiating Hudaybi's rejection of violence. The 1967 War brought this debate to the fore because it challenged both factions to consider how they should deal with Nasser's regime in the context of a war with Israel. In the midst of the disagreement, the most steadfast Qutbiyyun, many of whom were youths who did not have access to or substantial input in organizational decision making, split off from the Muslim Brothers and founded the rival group *Jama'at al-Muslimeen*. This shifted the factional balance of power within the remaining Muslim Brothers in favor of Hudaybi. In the aftermath of Egypt's defeat by Israel, Hudaybi sought to reunite the fractured Ikhwan, cement his leadership, and persuade the undecided of his position with his seminal work *Du'at la Qudat*. With the support of a number of leading members of the Guidance Council, several of whom later rose to the post of General Guide, Hudaybi's conciliatory approach won out. Thus, repression caused two reactions within the Muslim Brothers – one “radical” and one “moderate” – but more importantly, it caused a significant reappraisal of strategy. In the end, leadership, factional balance, and organizational decision-making led to the Ikhwan's adoption of a strategy of accommodation and reform rather than confrontation and revolution.

Reorganization and Reemergence of the Muslim Brothers in the Political Arena, 1970-1977:

The Muslim Brothers underwent a period of reorganization during the 1970s, beginning shortly after Nasser's sudden death on September 29, 1970. When Nasser's vice president Anwar al-Sadat, who had had fairly close ties to the Muslim Brothers in the early 1950s,¹⁰⁸ succeeded him, the Ikhwan initiated a rapprochement with his government. They sent several messages and emissaries to Sadat indicating their willingness to cooperate in return for his release of prisoners. Sadat recognized that he needed support from the influential organization in order to consolidate his hold on power. He also saw an alliance with them as a useful opportunity to create a counterweight to the political left and to chart his own course apart from Nasser's legacy. Thus, Sadat, who portrayed himself as the “Believer President,” started to rebuild the regime-Ikhwan relationship and began releasing Muslim Brothers from prison in

¹⁰⁸ When he first heard Hassan al-Banna speak, he was reportedly very impressed and even considered joining the organization (Heikal, 16).

1971.¹⁰⁹ The same year, he promulgated a new constitution, which asserted that Islamic law would now be “a principal source of legislation.”¹¹⁰ The Ikhwan’s reconciliation with the Sadat regime and its commitment to work within legal channels laid the foundation for the organization’s expansion in the following decades. However, it also precipitated renewed debate within the organization as to whether this was an appropriate or effective strategy, and the entente with the regime proved short-lived.

Following the release from prison of a significant number of members, the Ikhwan began a process of rebuilding and expansion of its internal structure. Although he died only two years later in 1973, Hudaybi played a major role in the re-establishment of the organization. His approach of putting *da’wa* and education first, and attempting to influence politics through social structures and institutions rather than through confrontation of the regime or withdrawal from society, eventually became the strategy of the dominant faction within the organization. However, there continued to be challenges to this strategy from those who preferred a more activist approach.¹¹¹

For example, following Hudaybi’s death, several factions emerged within the Ikhwan, which were divided over the appropriate strategy for dealing with the regime. The least activist group, known as the “Murshid Jadid” faction and led by Rahman al-Misiri, argued that the Ikhwan had entered a “period of weakness” during which God did not require *jihad*. This faction eschewed confrontation with the state and instead sought to focus on creating a new generation of preachers. A second faction, led by Zeinab al-Ghazali, head of the Muslim Women’s Association, opposed this passive faction and called for a more confrontational, activist approach. However, the largest and most influential faction that emerged was led by Umar al-Tilmisani, editor of the Muslim Brothers’ *al-Da’wa* magazine. This faction preferred to cooperate with the Sadat regime, participated in parliament, opposed anti-regime violence, and avoided overt criticism of the regime, at least initially. In addition, in keeping with the Ikhwan’s long-term objectives, it called for the replacement of Western laws with Islamic ones, and cautiously advocated its own conception of an Islamic state in which the ruler would both enforce and be bound by the *shari’a*.¹¹² This group “acted in the name of the legacy of the ‘two

¹⁰⁹ Beattie, 81-82; Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 44; Hinnebusch, 50.

¹¹⁰ Voll, 377.

¹¹¹ Zollner, 3.

¹¹² Hinnebusch, 201.

Hasans' (al-Banna and al-Hudaybi),” but because of their explicit rejection of violence and inclination to collaborate with the regime, some scholars, including historian Gilles Kepel (who coined the term), refer to them as the “neo-Muslim Brethren” to distinguish them from their predecessors.¹¹³

A related debate that developed within the Ikhwan during this period concerned the best methods for implementing and enforcing the application of Islamic law and customs in society. One group of Muslim Brothers, led by Tilmisani, advocated efforts to introduce Islamic legislation to change Egyptian law to bring it into accordance with their vision of an Islamic society. They argued that replacement of *shari'a* by Western laws had weakened the Muslim world and that prompt reinstatement of *shari'a* would solve Egypt's problems. Beginning in 1972, they sought to introduce Islamic legislation in Egypt, including proposals to implement *shari'a* penalties (*hudud*) for crimes such as theft, adultery, apostasy, assault, and consumption of alcoholic beverages. They also proposed legislation to institute collection of *zakat* (an alms tax), to punish public nonobservance of Ramadan, to prohibit usury, to separate the sexes in school, work, and public transportation, and more. However, another faction within the organization disapproved of this approach and maintained that the kind of Islamic legislation proposed in Egypt would never produce an Islamic society. In their view, a truly Islamic society guided by the Islamic creed and governed according to its laws, morality, and traditions could not be established simply by submitting resolutions to parliament suggesting changes to existing laws. They also argued that an Islamic society could not be brought about from the top because government cannot reform people and the regime was not genuinely interested in establishing an Islamic society. In their view, society must first be instilled with Islamic faith and piety before implementing legal and institutional changes. In response, the advocates of Islamic legislation argued that in the time of the Prophet Muhammed *shari'a* was applied right away in the first Islamic state and it was applied in the lands ruled by Islam immediately following their occupation, so if gradualism and advance preparation were unnecessary then, they were clearly unnecessary now. In short, this was a debate over the appropriate strategy for achieving the organization's long-term objectives; the debate turned on whether or not one believed progress

¹¹³ Kepel, 1984, 107.

toward the ultimate goal of establishing an Islamic society could be achieved by working within the current regime.¹¹⁴

Evidently, the political opening provided by Sadat's willingness to cooperate with the Ikhwan did not automatically and necessarily bring about "moderation," or docility and collaboration, on their part. Individuals among the Muslim Brothers initiated the rapprochement, and when Sadat reciprocated and it appeared that an understanding between the regime and the Ikhwan had been reached. This led to a debate within the organization as to whether or not accommodation with the regime was in fact the most appropriate and effective strategy for achieving their long-term objective. Only after Tilmisani's faction emerged as the largest and most influential within the organization and he became the Ikhwan's most prominent spokesperson, did the accommodationist strategy become dominant. Although no official successor was named following Hedaybi's death in 1973, Tilmisani became the organization's primary public figure and eventually became the General Guide.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Altman, 1979, 90-91.

¹¹⁵ Kepel, 1984, 106.