

# **The New Egypt and The Global Community's Perceptions of Islamic Rule: Undermining the Political Aspirations of the Muslim Brotherhood as the Freely Elected Government**

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## **Abstract**

Western nations, with their foreign policy objectives, have been relentless in their pursuit of democratization of the Middle East. An open political system is what they claim to be the answer to achieving equal human rights for all citizens. The critical component to accomplishing this goal are fair, open and free elections; of, by and for the people. The Muslim Brotherhood has blossomed into a viable political party with a comprehensive, historical understanding of Egypt's political landscape who found success in Egypt's first ever open and free election. However, the perception that erupted around the globe leading up to and since the first open presidential election in Egypt indicates that secular government leaders pretend verbally to know the Muslim Brotherhood's intentions exactly. The common theme threaded in the undercurrents suggests that the Muslim Brotherhood is an Islamist organization seeking to spread Shari'a law throughout the world using the interpretation of the restrictive dictates in the Qur'an as justification for jihad. Historical references, however, indicate otherwise. Islamic extremism is not and never has been its ideology from inception more than eighty years ago. The unfounded, disconnected, and misplaced fears of an Islamic movement instituting extreme changes to the freedoms of Egyptians are unconscionable and unnecessary.

**Keywords:** Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic extremism, political freedom, Sayyid Qutb, Egypt, politics, foreign policy, Robert Mitchell, Hasan al Banna

## **Introduction**

The name Muslim Brotherhood is known worldwide and the place of its origin as well, Egypt. However, that information seems to be the extent of accurate knowledge. The rhetoric that erupted around the globe leading up to and since the first open presidential election in Egypt indicates that secular government leaders pretend verbally to know the Muslim Brotherhood's intentions exactly. The common theme threaded in the undercurrents suggests that the Muslim Brotherhood is an Islamist organization seeking to spread Shari'a law throughout the world using the interpretation of the restrictive dictates in the Qur'an as justification for jihad. Historical references, however, indicate otherwise. The Muslim Brotherhood of old, under Hasan al-Banna, wanted an Islamic country that respected the intent of the Qur'an and provided the

Egyptian people with the legal, social, educational, and economic mores that were intended and had flourished at the time of the first four caliphs. As Mitchell (1969) discusses further in the following quote, the primary issue surrounding the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood and its efforts to influence the Egyptian government of the time was centered around al-Azhar University: "As intellectual keeper of the [Islamic] faith...the Azhar had persisted in a time-worn, anachronistic approach to Islam and its teachings—dry, dead, ritualistic and irrelevant to the needs of living Muslims" (p. 213). The Muslim Brotherhood was originally formed as a religious organization that could connect with the government and be the voice of the people. The idea of future Islamist domination or Qu'ranic dictatorial control by the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt or other free and open societies or both is simply a broken record of the hypersensitive interpretation by Western governments. It does not appear to be based in fact and implies a confused mixture of the meaning and intent of the often-misused term, "jihad" as perceived by the global community.

Using jihad in today's political context does not seem to have any basis in the reality of that which the Muslim Brotherhood sought in its pursuit of early political goals. Mitchell (1969) outlines the key structures, each a perceived nemesis of the Egyptian people, in the following passage: "In Egypt the Azhar failed to resist the governments of Egypt—'the occupier', the palace, the parties—and had thereby contributed to their corruption of all aspects of life in the country" (p. 213). The misconception for which the Muslim Brotherhood stands is more a condition of the current times and is linked to the radical fracturing of the Muslim Brotherhood as it set about attempting to remove the corrupt kings from power, the British as occupiers, and re-establish a government that would seek to provide for the people of Egypt. The current rhetoric is thus misguided by political intentions and blinds people worldwide to the significance of Egyptian citizens finally having a voice. El-Ghobashy (2005) spells out the extent of this blindness in the following statement: "The fevered attention accorded Islamist groups by Western policymakers, Arab state elites, and some academics exaggerates their perceived threat (to democracy, Western interests, stability, or "national unity")... and occludes clear thinking on [the way] they are shaped by their institutional political environment" (p. 374). Unfortunately, this closed-minded approach does not do justice to the majority of Egyptians who voted freely to elect President Mohammed Morsi. The foreign-policy objectives of the United States continue to center on the "democratization" of the Middle East. This opening of the Egyptian political system to allow free elections in a fair and just manner is the essence of the lip service the United States and its partners have been touting for many years. The idea that political change backed by the Muslim Brotherhood under President Mohamed Morsi, to normalize relations with HAMAs, open discussions on a "new" peace with Israel, and institute Shari'a law within the social structure of Egypt portends that the United States' foreign policy should change. The eventuality may not only be a knee-jerk reaction to the current rhetoric but also completely misguided. In fact, an opportunity for Egypt to engage with Israel to eliminate the terrorist threats plaguing the region and move the Palestinian crisis forward by influencing other Arab nations to take responsibility for a solution is the greater potentiality. This paper will present the reader with a notion that the perceived impact of these 'democratic' changes by the United States and others is far greater than the actual threat. Additionally, it may even turn out to be the best solution in the Middle East. Therefore, the world's politicians must now learn to communicate respect for the direction the Egyptians have chosen for themselves and promote this success rather than try to second-guess that which comes next.

## Origins of the Muslim Brotherhood

When the name Muslim Brotherhood is spoken or heard, immediately coming to mind is the ideologue by the name of Sayyid Qutb. He is big in name; however, his ideology, developed from the lengthy persecution by the al-Nasser government, is not the true belief system of the Muslim Brotherhood today. In Mitchell's recognized authoritative book on the Muslim Brotherhood, he infers Sayyid's ideology had the effect of supplementing the beliefs of its members as Hedaybi was not a studied religious scholar with the same vision and charisma as al-Banna. An ideological vacuum needed to be filled upon al-Banna's assassination. As outlined in Kepel's (1985) book, Sayyid Qutb was a teacher, journalist, and critic; as a child he was exposed to politics and the anti-British undercurrents within Egypt at the time through his father's association with Nationalist Party politics. He joined the Muslim Brotherhood in 1951 after returning from a stint in America where he envisioned this organization as having the ability to effect the changes he believed necessary. This American experience undoubtedly shaped his outlook for the future, as Kepel (1985) presents in the following excerpt: "Sayyid was repeatedly embarrassed by a sexual promiscuity that disgusted him. In this country so unforgiving to the disinherited, devoted to the worship of the dollar and devoid of any values that made sense to him, he witnessed outbursts of joy at the assassination of Hasan al-Banna" (p. 41). Sayyid Qutb became a prolific writer and through his incendiary works, namely, *Signposts or Milestones*, written while imprisoned, he expounded on the reason why Egypt had begun to decay. To scholars of today his ideas surrounding Jahiliyya (ignorance) and the action required to escape this condition were misinterpreted, eventually morphing his image into being recognized as the father of jihad and Islamic extremism. This view is probably furthest from the truth.

This interpretation by a small number of radical Muslim militants has greatly skewed the written works of Sayyid Qutb. The essence of Qutb's ideology lies in the desire to return the lives of current Muslims to the same path followed by the Prophet Mohammed and his four caliphs as they emerged from the period of jahiliyya. This overarching belief in Islam and the aspects of devotion to practicing the five pillars would provide a life void of persecution and servitude to man. Mitchell (1969) outlines the root problem Sayyid's writings were intent on exposing and the reason why the Muslim Brotherhood blossomed with Egyptian unions, workers, soldiers, and students by stating the following idea: "The economic question of control [was never] separable from the cultural, religious, societal or personal question of inferiority and humility—[resulting in] an angry response to the conspicuous contempt of the foreign 'economic overlord' for the Egyptian and to 'Muslim servility' before the foreign master" (p. 222). This disdain for the Egyptian state of affairs originally drew multitudes to the charismatic Hasan al-Banna in hopes that his way was the solution to all of society's ills. The organization had grown considerably since its inception in 1929, and with growth, springs differences of opinion on which actions should be taken and the speed with which they are to be implemented. The Muslim Brotherhood was no different; al-Banna used slow, methodical procedures to work with the government, attempting to infuse the ruling party with Islamic understanding. He simultaneously formed a branch known as the "secret apparatus" in 1943, to be the "defender of the movement against the police and government of Egypt" (Mitchell, 1969, p.32). Others believed more effective ways were available with more immediate results to eliminate the

government's persecution and gain power in the name of Allah. The Muslim Brotherhood's activities created a welfare system designed to provide social services to the needy; his actions were supported by government funding. Al-Banna's vision sought to evolve into a political position and eventually "Islamicize" the country from both the top down and the bottom up. Internal disagreements by some members presenting a case against complicity with the government led to the fracturing of the organization and the growth of that which is known today as the Islamicist movement.

With the death of al-Banna in 1949, Mitchell discusses the utter devastation that had befallen the Muslim Brethren. It was exacerbated by the military coup of 1952 and Gamel Abd al-Nasser becoming president. Al-Banna had been the spiritual and ideological guide for the organization and his ability to envision working with the existing government and providing social services provided the membership with a clear understanding of the actions needed to achieve power, using political reform. The death of al-Banna followed closely by the Nasser regime in 1952 caused a period of change and tumult as Hudaybi became the new leader and Sayyid Qutb the spiritual guide. Kepel (1985) expounds on this change by stating the following: "Sayyid Qutb's use of the term *jahiliyya* to characterize the society in which he lives is an innovation that departs from the traditional beliefs of the Muslim Brethren. *Jahiliyya*, in fact, is the cornerstone on which the theoretical construction of *Signposts* rests" (p. 46). The Muslim Brotherhood under Hudaybi attempted continually to work with the existing government for the development of an Islamic state. Interpretation of Qutb's writings caused organizations such as Jama'at Islamiyya, the student protesters, to conduct violence against Coptic Christians, and want more immediate and radical change. The Islamic Jihad under Faraj was also one of these groups geared to take power through force. Kepel (1985) identifies Faraj's Islamic Jihad as the group responsible for the assassination of President Sadat in 1981. Kepel and Milelli (2008) present the growth of Ayman al-Zawahiri and his passion for the writings of Sayyid Qutb. Al-Zawahiri, never a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, became a radical leader in his own right as Kepel and Milelli (2008) indicate in the following passage: "It is also in prison that Zawahiri truly emerged as the leader of the Egyptian radical Islamist movement" (p.153). The Muslim Brotherhood never condoned violence to achieve political goals; however, as they were the largest grass-roots organization in Egypt, it often appeared as a significant threat to the existing government. Unfortunately, the Muslim Brotherhood continued to be blamed for the actions of these radical splinter organizations and was held responsible as the government sought retribution for the ongoing violence.

The Muslim Brotherhood, through all the successes and failures instituted by the government, remained a flexible entity embracing change and clinging to the belief that the Egyptian people deserve better. Mitchell (1969) outlines this change in the following statement: "[The] Society of Brothers emerges as the first mass-supported and organized, essentially urban-oriented effort to cope with the plight of Islam in the modern world" (p. 321). This all-encompassing character of the Muslim Brotherhood still appears true today and is oftentimes overshadowed by the splinter groups that exploit the name and ideology for their own advantage. In the following comment, Mitchell (1969) makes the most comprehensive statement of that which the Muslim Brotherhood exemplifies and still represents today: "The ultimate goal of the Muslim Brotherhood was the creation of an Islamic order...a set of legal (not political) principles which were regarded as fundamental to Muslim society whatever the particular form of political

order. The Shari'a—its implementation or non-implementation—was the determinant in the definition of a true Islamic order” (p. 235). Although changes in leadership have occurred throughout the eighty-plus years of its existence, with the spread of branches throughout the Levant, the foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood remains consistent, a nationalistic fervor for respect as Muslims who choose to live in an Islamic society without persecution, interference, or ridicule. Acceptable in today’s world, absolutely! However, understanding and appreciating human rights and ensuring equality of basic freedoms must be resolved if a true Islamic state wants to gain the respect and admiration of the global community.

### **The Palestinian Connection to HAMAS**

Scholars wonder if the newly elected President will promote a greater cooperation with the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip. More than likely he will, as this notion is the humanitarian way, given the abhorrent conditions under which the Palestinians of Gaza currently live and the long-standing relationship between the Palestinians and Egyptians. The mere mention that these actions would occur have already created subterfuge within the Levant region, surmising that the nations or the Muslim Brotherhood faction within in each nation, might increase support to the HAMAs ideology, thus taking global counterterrorism efforts since September 11<sup>th</sup> backward in the region. The Egyptian State Information Service (July 27, 2012) in the following excerpt presents insight into these recent discussions that have already begun: “President Mohamed Morsi met on Thursday 26/07/2012 with Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh for talks on ending [the] blockade imposed on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip” (allafrica.com). Although the Muslim Brotherhood has supported the Palestinians’ plight since before the 1948 war with Israel, opening dialogue and the borders for humanitarian supplies do not constitute complicity with the ideology of HAMAs nor suggest support for terrorist attacks against Israel. Little is ever mentioned in the current media about the relationship between Egypt and Palestine it focuses more specifically on HAMAs as a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. This linking together of two, ideologically disparate organizations consisting of the peoples they represent attempts to put them into the same category.

The fact that Egyptians and Palestinians have a long intertwined history does not equate to the Muslim Brotherhood becoming the proxy for HAMAs’s fight with Israel. Mitchell (1969) presents the origins of the relationship between Egypt and Palestine in the following comment: “The Society had first become directly involved in Palestinian affairs when Banna’s brother ‘Abd al-Rahman visited Palestine in 1935.... The visit reflected the predictable concern of the Muslim Brotherhood—as Egyptians, as Arabs, and as Muslims—for the cause of Palestine” (p. 55). The Muslim Brotherhood members pressed their organization to provide support to their Palestinian brothers as they were confronting the same issue as the Egyptians, namely, British colonial rule. The effects of the Balfour Declaration and the relocation of the Jewish People to a designated homeland exacerbated Arab discontent and was viewed as another insult resulting from imperialism. After participating in the war with Israel in 1948, Mitchell writes that the Society was disbanded during the fighting and the Egyptian military rounded up the volunteers and kept them contained. Given this experience of armed conflict, the government of Egypt saw the Muslim Brotherhood as a growing threat to current power. The Muslim Brotherhood did not support the Palestinians outright as Mitchell (1969) highlights in the following statement: “It was the feeling of al-Banna...that governments as such should not be involved in the Palestine

question beyond diplomatic and political support...that if fighting became a necessity, it should be left to the Palestinians themselves and to 'volunteers' [to be accountable]" (p. 56). Although the Egyptian government reluctantly committed troops to support the Palestinian fight in 1948, the loss to Israel created historical subterfuge that would smolder within the Muslim Brotherhood for years before reemerging to once again place direct blame on the Egyptian government. The agreement of both parties to the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979, thus, re-ignited the burning desire within members of the Muslim Brotherhood for retribution on Palestine's behalf that had never completely been extinguished. The Muslim Brotherhood supported the Palestinians but insisted on long-distance support as becoming involved directly only brought additional pressures to bear from the government.

Contrary to current accounts of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and HAMAs having a current bond, Mosab Hassan Yousef (2010) presents a unique personal perspective as the son of one of the leaders of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood and HAMAs on the origins of this relationship. Yousef's father, Sheikh Hassan Yousef, studied in Jordan during the mid 1970s under "Ibrahim Abu Salem, one of the founders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan" (p. 13). Mosab Hassan Yousef is the son of Sheikh Hassan Yousef and Sabha Abu Salem, daughter of Ibrahim. The connection has been established, but it seems to be only through bloodline as nothing indicates that the ideology or actions are synonymous with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as founded by Hasan al-Banna. The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood as originally envisioned by Sheikh Hassan Yousef flourished in its efforts to provide assistance to the refugees of the occupied territories. It was a non-violent approach. Yousef (2010) spells out the turning point whereby the ideology of newly created HAMAs and the Muslim Brotherhood diverged by stating the following: "Seeing this growth [in the Muslim Brotherhood], many young people in the Islamic movement, particularly those in Gaza, decided that the Brotherhood need[ed] to take a stand against the Israeli occupation" (p. 19). According to Yousef (2010), the inaction by the Brotherhood leaders resulted in a fracturing of the group, and the Palestinian Islamic jihad was formed. Yousef (2010) describes the actual birth of HAMAs in the following words: "In 1986, a secret and historic meeting took place in Hebron... My father was there... The men who attended this meeting were finally ready to fight" (pp. 19-20). A year later, the first intifada began in Gaza. It appeared as though the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine was transforming itself into an organization that now viewed violence as a possible tool for freeing the Palestinians from Israeli occupation.

HAMAs had acquired the support of the leaders and membership of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine; however, the radicalization was mostly in the Gaza Strip where it developed its own aggressive ideology of violence against Israel by forming a group with an outlook more like Fatah, the military wing of the PLO than the Muslim Brotherhood al-Banna had created in Egypt. HAMAs began to operate independent of those Muslim Brotherhood members who mostly resided in the West Bank and continued with its social- services outreach to the Palestinians. On the surface, individuals with little knowledge of the region's history would easily connect HAMAs and the Muslim Brotherhood as one and the same; this identification is certainly a blatant misjudgment of the facts. It does, nevertheless, lead to an overblown perception of pending turmoil when coupled with the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood has risen to power in Egypt. Today the overreaction of Western and secular politicians lead these individuals to purport diabolical intentions are afoot because this specific

Islamist group is now in control of the Egyptian government. Once again, this rhetoric could not be further from the truth.

### **Egypt and the Israel Peace Treaty**

Politically, President Morsi will find it necessary to open dialogue with Israel regarding the peace treaty signed by Sadat in 1979. The Muslim Brotherhood has been adamantly opposed to any relationship with Israel since 1948, duly justified by the Palestinian condition and Egypt's loss of three armed conflicts to Israel (1948, 1967, and 1973). The organization has changed and reformed over the years; however, the plight of Palestinians, specifically in the Gaza Strip, has always held Egypt's attention. The outcome is yet to be determined; however, it is a premature and unfair categorization to assume that the newly-elected government of Egypt will openly discount the peace treaty. This action would set the country back considerably in the eyes of the global community and the necessity of economic assistance would be withheld. Khedr (Aug 7, 2012) of *The Egyptian Gazette* presents early rhetoric over the peace treaty in the following excerpt: "We must rethink the security arrangements [stipulated in the Camp David agreement] concerning restrictions on the movement of our troops [in the Sinai Peninsula]" (The Egyptian Gazette website). The current subterfuge over whether or not a letter was sent to Israel regarding this "rethinking [of] security arrangements" has already moved this topic to the forefront of the global stage (Khedr, 2012, The Egyptian Gazette website). Assumptions by the supposed experts immediately become the driving force behind suggesting the United States change its relationship with Egypt. American politicians upon hearing these comments begin to stir the rhetoric toward the negative, as they assume policy must be adjusted to protect against and prevent action by this Islamist movement. These unfair assumptions have no grounding in truth. In analyzing the current situation, as reflected by the media, the adjustments referred to seem to reflect only one key article – of the actual peace treaty, specifically, the three "zones" of the Sinai and the demilitarized conditions set within these "zones" (jewishvirtuallibrary.org). In other words, the intent has nothing to do with scuttling the peace between Egypt and Israel. In fact, the treaty specifically details the limitations of military composition authorized by Egypt to occupy and defend its own sovereign territory. Times have changed and if Egypt is to become part of the solution to terrorism in the region then the global community must accept the Egyptians' desire to regain full and complete sovereignty over the Sinai.

The concept for limiting military expansion into the Sinai at the time was meant to ensure that Egyptian troops could not be massed on the border and threaten Israel, which had the effect of reducing overall tensions in the region. Terrorism is now a global focus and the *Chicago Tribune's* article (Aug 5, 2012) discusses the recent massacre of Egyptian soldiers by terrorists at the Rafah crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. The commentary highlights the pressing desire by Egypt to gain flexibility over the Sinai in order to confront these terrorists (chicagotribune.com). The idea of opening dialogue with Israel might also result in a joint effort to contain the terrorists of HAMAs by dramatically reducing the weapons, explosives, and fighters being funneled to the Gaza Strip and consequently used against Israeli citizens. Gartner (May 16, 2012) of *McClatchy News* puts into context the significance of the timeframe this peace treaty represents and provides supporting commentary on the following reason why any disregard for the treaty is not anticipated: "Many interstate peace treaties fail fast, with almost ten percent not even lasting their first week and [twenty-five] 25% not making it to 8 weeks...."

[And forty] 40% of [partial agreements]... fail to survive eight weeks. Clearly[,] 34 years is an astonishing outcome” (mcclatchydc.com). Now that it appears HAMAs has taken advantage of the newly-elected government and attempted to gain an upper hand in the Sinai, it is time to revisit the peace treaty and consider modifications that will benefit not only Egypt and Israel but also the region as a whole.

### **An Open Political System and Shari'a Law**

Egypt has always been a blend of civil and Shari'a law; the country was Islamic with a secular government under Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak who gained power through the military. The only difference now is the Egyptian President was duly voted into office by the first-ever free election by the citizens of Egypt. President Morsi, as a Muslim, must still operate within a secular government in the Islamic country of Egypt. Omar Ashour (Aug 10, 2012), a reporter for *The Daily Star Newspaper* out of Lebanon, comments on the following composition of the newly appointed cabinet that demonstrates an obvious appearance of secularism and compromise: “Thirty-five ministers were chosen by the new prime minister, Hisham Qandil[:] seven...(including Qandil) were ministers in the... SCAF-appointed government. Five ministries – those of Information, Higher Education, Youth, Labor and Housing – were given to the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party” (dailystar.com.lb). The equitable spread across both the old regime and the Muslim Brotherhood appears to indicate a balancing act by President Morsi with the intent of providing representation for all Egyptians. The Muslim Brotherhood-dominated parliament of the past might have made the transition to stricter Islamic law easier than the new, soon to be, openly-elected body from cross-sectional areas throughout Egypt. The parliamentary elections are expected in September 2012 and will develop the character of the Egyptian government from that day forward, at least as viewed from the eyes of the global community.

The expansion of Egypt’s political system, with a genuine fairness to all political parties, is the concept that the Western world considers democratizing. The Muslim Brotherhood originated under al-Banna, carried forward the idea of eliminating the corrupt, dictatorial rulers through political activism, and thus become a voice for all citizens. The Muslim Brotherhood as an official political party focused on achieving forthright political gain to establish a deterministic influence within the government structures. The facts speak to an organization that is and always has been opposed to violence for gain, but this original ideology is often overshadowed by the rhetoric of those who maintain the misinterpreted ideology espoused by Sayyid Qutb. An open political system whereby citizens can speak their minds, even if the ideas are underpinned with an Islamic foundation, holds considerable promise for reducing the effects of radical militants. Nacos (2010) identifies some of the following statistics that corroborate the reduction in radical militant actions through an open political system: “[Forty-three] percent of... [terrorist] organizations [worldwide] terminated their violence because of political solutions or settlements” (p. 213). Given the opportunity to engage in the political process genuinely, the Muslim Brotherhood has finally achieved its long sought- after goal of being the voice for millions of Egyptians who have struggled against the tyranny of the past. It may actually serve to reel in some of the more radical splinter groups going forward. El-Ghobashy (2005) eloquently presents the ideological changes that are now imbued in the Muslim Brotherhood of today in the following comment: “Ideologically...the Ikhwan’s political engagement [of today]

has been a decisive move away from the uncompromising notions of Sayyid Qutb...toward a cautious reinterpretation of...al-Banna[‘s ideas]. A related innovation is the Ikhwan’s appropriation of moderate Islamist thinkers’ works authenticating democracy with Islamic concepts” (p. 374). The idea of a democracy in Egypt that respects human rights and equality for all is now a real possibility. Although it will be undoubtedly Islamic in nature, it is not an issue that should cause reaction as no one can predict democracy’s meaning under the new Islamic government of Egypt. All indicators point to a Muslim Brotherhood that will adhere to the ideology of al-Banna, thus creating an Islamic government that can provide for its people and be a force for good in the global community.

The inevitable argument that opening a political system to include groups grounded in Islamic fundamentalism is dangerous for world security. Rubin (2010) points out in the following quote what seems to be this prevailing extreme view: “The primary problem with soft solutions [political negotiations] is that the ideologies that spark terrorism...are so extreme that they allow no solution other than surrender or victory” (p. 222). The Muslim Brotherhood’s ideology, under al-Banna, was always one of compromise. The confusion rests with those fractured groups who used violence as a way of speeding the change of government and had at one time been associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood with Sayyid Qutb was the same organization although the interpretations of his writings inflamed the existing government and caused unnecessary persecution which was met in retaliation with violence from some of the more radical members. The final result, Egypt’s true democratic reform must have a government structure that provides security for its citizens with law enforcement and a realistic justice system of equality. More important, it must recognize human rights for all men and women, specifically religious freedom. Furthermore, it must strive to provide both educational and economic opportunities for all. Whether the Muslim Brotherhood bases its decisions in Shari’a law or civil law, the world is watching for the indicators that will marginalize radical Islamists in their efforts to manifest political violence in the name of religion.

### **Islamic principles and the “New” Ikhwan al Muslimi**

The English version of the Muslim Brotherhood’s website mentions the Freedom and Justice Party, as the political arm of the ‘new’ Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 2011 to participate in the election process (ikhwanweb.com). Now that it has achieved the top position of power within Egypt, it will begin to grapple with the domestic challenges confronting it. Ottoway’s (May 26, 2012) observation in the following statement is a valid indicator that the Muslim Brotherhood is about resolving Egypt’s issues and has no intention of developing an Islamic caliphate run by strict Qur’anic jurisprudence (Shari’a law): “Islamist parties appear to be truly national. There does not seem to be an overarching ‘Islamist International’ to which they all belong, and...[other chapters of the Muslim Brotherhood] do not even seem to be in limited contact with each other” (Ikhwanweb.com). Speaking of Shari’a law, the mention of which turns the heads of secular governments worldwide is the foundation of the Qur’an. As Western Christian nations base their legislative actions on the Christian principles of the Bible, the Muslim nations, governed by Islamic rulers will thus base their legislation on the Islamic principles (Shari’a) of the Qur’an. The purpose, like in all governments, will be as a guide to informing decision-makers on establishing fair and just rule. Ottoway (May 26, 2012) states the same in the following passage: “Whether or how the constitution should mention shari[’]a is the

hottest ideological issue that Arab countries in transition face. It looms large in the relationship between Islamists and secular parties and is a major cause of anxiety among the secularists” (Ikhwanweb.com). The Islamic rule of Egypt will develop within the global political environment in which it is confronted; thus, the greatest effort by the international community must be not to isolate Egypt due to unfounded rhetoric.

Accepting common-sense decisions from an Islamist government that may be different from the global communities' expectations is the answer to quelling the unfounded fears of the secularists, women, Christians, and Jews. Ottoway (May 26, 2012) expounds on the following necessary action: “Islamists need to be integrated...in[to] all domestic and international fora to understand what is acceptable or not acceptable elsewhere[;]... help[ing] them to confront the choices they face and the reality of functioning as political parties in the real world” (ikhwanweb.com). The word Shari'a harkens the naïve back to the days of old when history presented women or Christians or Jews in Muslim nations as not being equal. Highlighted by the Muslim brotherhood's official website Question and Answer section (Sep 11, 2011) is the fact that women constitute half of the Muslim Brotherhood's membership. Most secularists would be surprised (Ikhwanweb.com). The official website presents an article that assessed the first Presidential speech given on June 25, 2012. President Morsi has encouraged reunification for all Egyptians; this group includes Coptic Christians and women. The tone seemed to be one of encouragement and unity. He addressed the idea of holding fast to international treaties that directly addresses the peace with Israel. In an interview on the official Muslim Brotherhood website with Dr. Oaima Kamel (June 11, 2012), the women's affairs spokesperson for the Morsi campaign, highlighted the future prospects for all Egyptians to be included in its government by stating the following: “Dr. Morsi pledged to appoint a Copt and a woman as Vice Presidents, assigning to each important dossiers, tasks and powers; because the weight of responsibility is very heavy and their presence is not honorary but to carry forth the interests of the homeland” (Ikhwanweb.com). These comments are truly encouraging and the new Egyptian Islamist government will be watched closely to assess whether or not the campaign rhetoric will be turned into action the world and secularist Egyptians can accept.

## **Conclusion**

The Muslim brotherhood is not listed as one of the State Department's known foreign terrorist organizations. Its name, however, has been associated with Islamic extremism given purported links to HAMAs and it has become synonymous with terrorism since Ayman al-Zawahiri joined al-Qae'da. Zawahiri is one of the most recognized Egyptians of the Islamist movement who espouses to the radical interpretations of Sayyid Qutb. This view is an unfair categorization of the group, as El-Ghobashy (2005) in the following statement outlines the significant changes in the Muslim Brotherhood since Sadat's assassination in 1981: “The Society of Muslim Brothers...has morphed from a highly secretive, hierarchical, antidemocratic organization led by anointed elders into a modern, multi-vocal political association steered by educated, savvy professionals not unlike activists of the same age in rival Egyptian political parties” (p. 373). The Muslim Brotherhood has blossomed into a viable political party with a comprehensive, historical understanding of Egypt's political landscape. Islamic extremism is not and never has been its ideology from inception more than eighty years ago. The unfounded, disconnected, and misplaced fears of an Islamic movement instituting extreme changes to the

freedoms of Egyptians are unconscionable and unnecessary. An Islamist has come to power, and the majority who voted to elect President Morsi is of the largest religious sect in the country. The new President's initial comments regarding the Palestinians of Gaza, Israeli peace, and Shari'a law are by all indicators moderate and in keeping with the Muslim Brotherhood's original ideology of political compromise based on Qur'anic understanding. It remains to be seen the direction that will develop with parliamentary elections, the writing of the new constitution, and whether the military turns over control to an Islamic-supported ruler. The risk incurred by the Muslim Brotherhood gaining a power position is the perception that it will change the legal structure and restrict the freedom of its citizens, that is, by instituting mandatory Shari'a legal tenets that affect women more significantly than men or persecute the Jews or Christians by reducing openness to religious freedom. An Islamic government selected through an open political system is assumed to be more anti-American and anti-Western culture, but it is yet to be proven.

As the old saying goes, *we cannot understand where we are going if we do not know where we have been*. The Muslim Brotherhood certainly knows where it has been, under the dictatorial rulers of the past, it has been relentlessly persecuted for having a difference of opinion and has been disbanded twice. It has fought an uphill battle for more than eighty years. It struggled with maintaining unity of effort with its membership when action for change did not proceed at the expected pace. It reshaped itself throughout the political turmoil to abide by the rules of politics, never as a group resorting to or condoning violence. It has weathered some fracturing of the more radical members that gave it a bad name. In the following quote, Mitchell (1969) highlights the significance of Egypt in relation to Islam as the Muslim Brotherhood perceived it to be: "From the beginning of Islamic history the destiny of Egypt had been irrevocably bound to the destiny of the Muslim people. The centre of the oldest civilizations of mankind, Egypt was the logical and historically right place for Islam to base itself... Egypt had a unique role to play in Islam's resurgence" (p. 217). This statement holds the same emphasis today as it would have at the founding of Islam. Egypt will continue to play a significant part in the resurgence of Islam as it attempts to demonstrate to the world that it can rule with fairness for all citizens. With the Muslim Brotherhood now at the helm, it remains to be seen the way it shapes the country using Islamic truth. If given a chance, it very well might be for the betterment of the entire international community.

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