

**Egyptian Islamic Activism:  
The Emergence of a Political Movement from the Muslim Brotherhood**

by

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### **Abstract**

This thesis explores the context in which Islamic political movements emerge, utilizing social movement literature to develop an understanding of Islamic political activism, how it fits in with Western concepts of democracy, and how political movements balance reform and Islamic values. It constructs a historical narrative of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Hizb al-Wasat, analyzing the growth of both Egyptian movements. Looking at the Brotherhood in the 1990s through the lenses of political and religious learning, civil society mobilization, and political opportunity structure, this paper describes the forces catalyzing the emergence of the Hizb al-Wasat. An analysis of this dynamic in Egypt today reveals if the societal and political context is propitious for the emergence of an ideologically-moderate, politically-driven Islamist movement. This thesis differentiates Islamic political social movements from Islamic fundamentalists, providing an understanding of potentially influential political parties in Arab Islamic countries.

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## Research Agenda

In a Quranic verse, God addresses the people saying “I made you a Wasat nation,” a statement that is taken to mean that the Islamic civilization is a unique and independent nation.<sup>1</sup> Despite the ideological-based conflict and violence that has tailed Islam throughout past centuries, it has proven to be a durable civilization, with an impressive will to survive. Islamic political parties are increasingly important in global politics as more attention is focused on the Middle East. Islamic activist movements are growing across the Arab World, and deserve increased attention from Western governments. Although our attention is typically drawn to fundamentalist Islamic movements, there are alternative Islamic political movements that are attempting to gain power at national levels. I draw on Islamic activism social movement theory to understand these political movements. My literature review addresses why some Islamist groups choose to participate in the political process and how they continue to relate to their Muslim bases. I rely on existing literature to show that Islam is secularizable and compatible with democracy, making these movements critical for the Western world to understand. I also address why civil society and the political structure are important to the development and sustaining of these movements.

After exploring these foundation topics in my literature review, I specifically focus on Islamic political movements in Egypt. Egyptian scholar Rabab Eh-Mahdi states that the study of democratization in the Middle East has “rarely benefited from the pool of social movement theory, despite the huge explanatory power.”<sup>2</sup> Instead, it has focused on the state and political elite of these countries. By using the social movement frame, I attempt to fill this gap in research. I examine the emergence of the Hizb al-Wasat (Center Party) from the Muslim Brotherhood

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond W. Baker, *Islam without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 194.

<sup>2</sup> Rabab Eh-Mahdi, “Enough!: Egypt’s Quest for Democracy,” *Comparative Political Studies* 42 (2009): 1015.

(MB) in the 1990s. In Egypt, setting up an Islamist political movement has been difficult because the government has banned the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>3</sup> However, it is still important to study the emergence of a moderate party because it could form coalitions, gain international support, or the government's restrictions may change. I then compare the current political forces and situation of the Muslim Brotherhood to the 1990s to determine if a similar pluralist movement may emerge in this decade. While there is existing research about the causal factors influencing the Hizb al-Wasat, there is no scholarly observation of similar trends in the Brotherhood today. What led to the emergence of the Hizb al-Wasat from the Brotherhood in the 1990s? Do similar conditions exist today that may lead to the emergence of a similar political movement? In answering these questions, I look at Egypt's political structure, civil society and history. I analyze the internal characteristics of the parties, their interaction with civil society, and their interpretation of Islam. I used a qualitative approach to delve into explanations for the behaviors of these parties. I sought to make a comparison of conditions in the 1990s and the present to demonstrate the range of potential for another emerging Islamic political party.

### **Research Design**

I studied abroad at the American University of Cairo in the Spring of 2009, providing the base of my interest and focus on Islamist political movements there. Living in Egypt, I was struck by the apparent disconnect between the government and the people. Particularly in an economic and social sense, it was obvious to me that Egyptians feel no meaningful connection to their government. Although the current Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak has provided stability for Western interests in Egypt, his regime has not succeeding in meeting the needs of its people,

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<sup>3</sup> Marina Ottaway and Amr Hamzawy, "Islamists in Politics: The Dynamics of Participation," *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (November 2008), [http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/islamist\\_participation.pdf](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/islamist_participation.pdf) (accessed January 20, 2010), 7.

contributing to widespread poverty and social unrest. The identity of many Egyptians does not come from their state; it comes from their religion, Islam. It seemed obvious to me that an Islam-influenced government would be the most natural and effective way to increase the connection between the people and government, contributing to a more stable society. This led me to look into Islamic political movements in Egypt. I found that the Muslim Brotherhood had been the most successful movement in recent history; with a large following and established network the Brotherhood has demonstrated success in recent elections.

I originally chose to look at the moderation of this movement and compare it to other Egyptian movements, in an attempt to understand why some movements moderate while others become extreme or fundamental. I found that this wasn't necessarily a question of moderation, but instead the dynamics of these movements were based largely on contextual circumstances and situations. If these circumstances led them to become politically-driven they naturally became more moderate as they secularized and pluralized to achieve their political strategies. I altered my question to look more specifically at the circumstances that led Islamic movements to become political. I found the most natural theoretical body of work to answer this question was Islamic activism social movement literature. However, some of my research still reflects my initial inquiries on theories of moderation. This research is important in understanding the differences between extreme, fundamentalist movements and moderate political movements.

Social movement theorists describe Islamic activism as the active assertion and promotion of beliefs, prescriptions, laws or policies that are Islamic in character.<sup>4</sup> This research identifies three different types of Islamic activism: Islamic political movements, missionary movements, and Jihadi movements. The purpose of political movements is to attain political

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<sup>4</sup> International Crisis Group. "Understanding Islamism" (March 2, 2005). <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=2969> (accessed January 20, 2010), 4.

power at the national level, while missionary movements are Islamic missions of conversion and Jihadi movements describe Islamic armed struggle.<sup>5</sup> Of these three, my paper will focus on Islamic political movements, how they have emerged and the challenges they face in the future.

According to Graham Fuller, political Islam represents either the last heroic stand of Muslim culture to globalization, or the beginning of a new synthesis of Islam with contemporaneity.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the Muslim world has been remarkably resistant to Western culture, especially in comparison with Asian and Indian civilizations. Fuller argues that Muslims attribute the past achievements and durability of Islamic civilization to the very message and implementation of Islam itself, and this sentiment has led to the formation of Islamic political movements.<sup>7</sup> These movements have strategically chosen to participate in the legal political processes of their state, acknowledging the legitimacy of the existing constitutional framework.<sup>8</sup> Although we often focus only on fundamentalist Islamist activism, we should pay greater attention to these movements as they gain increased prominence both in their own states and internationally. Fuller argues that at the moment, political Islam is the only realistic major alternative movement to most of today's authoritarian regimes.<sup>9</sup> These groups have growing constituencies, and it is important that they continue to support democracy and human rights.

In identifying political movements, it is important to distinguish between pluralist and fundamentalist movements. There is significant literature on the causes of fundamentalism and extremism, and because this complements my investigation, I begin my literature review with this research. In order to define a political movement in the activism context, I compare it to

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>6</sup> Fuller, xv.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ottaway and Hamzawy, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Fuller, 15.



extreme movements. There are some politicians and scholars who question the practicality of Islamic political groups because they believe that Islam is incompatible with democracy and not secularizable. My literature review counters these beliefs, proving that an Islamic political movement has potential for success in government. I then incorporate social movement theory to look at how the dynamic between religion and politics, mobilization of civil society, and the political structure of a country influence the direction of movement. These topics are related to characteristics of the Muslim Brotherhood that could support the emergence of a moderate political party. I integrate this literature in order to contribute to an understanding of how Islamic political movements change.

I use a qualitative approach and conduct exploratory and explanatory research. I have collected this data from online databases and books and reports. For my literature review, I have used primarily ProQuest, the Aladin Database, Academic Search Premier, and the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences. I have also used reports from international organizations, including the Carnegie Endowment and the International Crisis Group. I conclude my literature review by summarizing the challenges Islamist political movements face in achieving political success.

The next section of my paper is an examination of Islamic political party politics in Egypt. I chose to look at Egypt because it has been the breeding ground for many Islamic movements in recent Arab history. Egypt has long been a seat of the Muslim world, and has produced many influential Muslim leaders, both extreme and moderate. Egypt has been relatively open to globalization and has a positive relationship with the US and other Western governments, so its politics are very relevant. Egypt has been a crucial ally for the United States, and our relationship with the Egyptian government has been positive. Although it is a poor state

with many social problems, Egypt is not experiencing the turmoil of war. Other Arab, Middle Eastern countries have been plagued by the social turmoil related to war, but because Egypt is not directly experiencing conflict, it is insulated from this type of turmoil. These characteristics of Egypt combined with my experience studying abroad in Egypt made it ideal to study in order to increase my understanding of Islamic political movements. I introduce this section with a brief history of the Muslim Brotherhood politics in Egypt to provide a background to the relevance of Islamic political movements. I focus specifically on the Muslim Brotherhood, for reasons I explain below.

The Muslim Brotherhood has endured over many decades, and has influenced the direction of other Islamist movements across the Middle East. The Muslim Brotherhood has an interesting history of interaction with the state government, and I explore this history, focusing on the movement's political progress. Currently, most Islamist parties in Arab counties derive their ideas or are loosely affiliated with the Muslim brotherhood.<sup>10</sup> These groups accept the idea that participation in the political space is an acceptable means of fighting for their goals, differentiating them from more extreme Islamic activists.

I then examine the Hizb al-Wasat, a centrist Islamic political party that emerged from the new generation of the Muslim Brotherhood and is motivated by the political corruption and repression of the state. This party has been more inclusive and pluralist than the Muslim Brotherhood, and it has made impressive strides towards political participation. However, the Egyptian government bans each attempt at official party formation. I look specifically at the circumstances, context, and dynamics of, and within, the Muslim Brotherhood that led to the formation of al-Wasat.

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<sup>10</sup> Ottaway and Hamzawy, 3.

My examination has a qualitative approach, and involves analysis of current theory, articles, news stories, and events. I found many of these sources with the assistance of Professor Kristin Diwan. I also utilized reports by international nonprofits and NGOs. To add detail and relevance to these reports, I have relied on news reports from major international newspapers, such as *The Christian Science Monitor*, and also smaller newspapers that are based in Egypt.

Based on my literature review, my hypothesis is that a dynamic between political and religious learning, mobilization of civil society, and changes in the political structure that existed in the new generation of the Brotherhood contributed to the emergence of the Hizb al-Wasat in the 1990s. I examine the Muslim Brotherhood through these lenses in the 1990s to analyze the context under which the al-Wasat party emerged. As I look at political and religious learning, I focus specifically to the platforms of the Brotherhood and its members' expressed beliefs about religion and politics. My examination of civil society includes the way that the Brotherhood interacts with and utilizes mosques, university groups, professional syndicates and the media. Political structure includes electoral opportunities, and the relationship with the regime and judicial branch. I believe that these three factors are connected to each other, and that the related dynamic between them facilitated the growth of the Hizb al-Wasat.

I next examine the current dynamics of the Muslim Brotherhood to determine if the emergence of another moderate political force is likely or imminent. I use the same three frames of political and religious learning, civil society, and political structure to analyze the current context of the Brotherhood. If a group with pluralism and centrism similar to the Hizb al-Wasat emerges, it would be important for the international community to be aware of it. The Muslim Brotherhood has widespread popular support, and if the movement could peacefully participate in the government, political engagement of the people would increase enormously. Although the

Egyptian government remains closed, it is still important to understand the dynamics of these Islamist political movements. They may engage in electoral coalitions and support or work with non-religious groups in Egypt. Additionally, Egypt's current president Hosni Mubarak has been in power since 1981, and there have been growing rumors of likely succession that may lead to political opening.

I do not do any interviews in my research, so I avoid major ethical issues. However, I am careful about making assumptions about the entire Muslim, Islamic, or Arab population based on the research that I do. I made some generalizations about the moderation process and attempted to be careful to avoid asserting overly sweeping statements on political Islam.

### **Literature Review**

According to social movement theorists, Islamic Activism is the active assertion and promotion of beliefs, prescriptions, laws, or policies that are Islamic in character.<sup>11</sup> After September 11, 2001, Islamic movements generally have a negative connotation, and are represented by Western discourse as a unitary, extremist phenomenon. Social movement theorists stress the importance of an understanding of radicals and moderates that transcends a simple dichotomy. Westerners need to understand the alternate visions and policies of different movements, in addition to the intensity with which these views are held and promoted.<sup>12</sup> Different Islamist movements have differing diagnoses of problems facing Muslim societies, views of Islamic law, conceptions of the appropriate spheres in which to act and the kind of actions that are legitimate. In addition, social movement theory demonstrates that other factors are linked to mobilization, including resource availability, issue framing, and shifts in

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<sup>11</sup> International Crisis Group, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Amr Hamzawy and Nathan J. Brown, "The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood: Islamist Participation in a Closing Political Environment," *Carnegie Middle East Center* 19 (March 2010): 2.

opportunity structures. To understand Islamist movements it is important to understand their positions, structure, and vision in relation to all of these elements. To identify political movements and differentiate them from fundamentalist activism, an understanding of the extremist groups is critical.

M.A. Muqtedar Khan asserts that radical Islamists are perverting Islam and generating hatred against modernity, the United States, and other Muslims who disagree with them.<sup>13</sup> However, many ordinary Muslims have turned to the option of radical Islam due to the failure of other movements to deliver a stable and prosperous society. It is essential to understand these radical Islamists in order to create a successful alternative to their ideology that will appeal to Muslims. Mohammed Shaalan argues that there is an alternative to extremism; a revival of Islamic civilization does not need to be equated with a loss to the West. He asserts that traditional Islamic values can enrich and complement Western values, and that there is potential for deep and essential contributions by Islam to human civilization. Shaalan believes that this will take serious attempts at dialogue, and understanding of Islam as an umbrella of culture, civilization, and religion. He cites the example of Egypt, and its “predilection for moderation and nonviolence” that has given rise to open-minded Islamic thinkers.<sup>14</sup> It is important to attempt to understand moderate groups that rival and offer an alternative to extremist groups. Islamist political movements cannot have fundamentalist tendencies because incorporation into the political structure requires moderation. Often times the biggest challenge for these groups is finding a balance between Islamic values and principles of democracy.

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<sup>13</sup> M.A. Muqtedar Khan, “Debating Moderate Islam,” in *Debating Moderate Islam: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, ed. M.A. Muqtedar Khan (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 2007), 3-14.

<sup>14</sup> Mohammed Shaalan, “Political-Psychological Influences in Islamic Revivalist Movements,” *Political Psychology* 7.4 (1986): 814-815.

There is extensive literature on the secularizability of Islam. This research is crucial to my study, as moderation will likely involve a degree of secularization to fit into the global system. The issue has been on the agenda of modern Arab and Muslim thought and history since Bonaparte's occupation of Egypt in 1798.<sup>15</sup> Sadik Al-Azm asserts that dogmatically, Islam is not secularizable, but historically it is. He concedes that some principles of Islam conflict with democratic values, but experientially Islam has been successful in secularizing. Islam is a "coherent static ideal of eternal and permanently valid principles" that is compatible with nothing other than itself.<sup>16</sup> Saad Ibrahim argues that although this orthodoxy has made it difficult for Islam to coexist with another in the same community it has happened time and time again.<sup>17</sup> However, according to Al-Azm, Islam has been long-lasting because it is a "living dynamic evolving faith, responding to widely differing environments and rapidly shifting historical circumstances."<sup>18</sup> Islam educates its adherents to accept differences among human beings, and the Qur'an teaches multi-culturalism and freedom of religious belief and tolerance.<sup>19</sup> Clearly, there is potential for Muslim political groups to be incorporated into the global political structure. Many of the basic principles of Islam align with democratic principles of Western countries.

Ibrahim further asserts that people of the Muslim world have been increasingly integrated in the international system.<sup>20</sup> Al-Azm insists that throughout history, Islam has been proven to be highly compatible to different polities, social and economic organizations, cultures and life-forms. Indeed, radical and fundamental Muslims complain about the absence of Islam from all

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<sup>15</sup> Sadik J Al-Azm, "Is Islam Secularizable?," in *Civil Society Democracy and The Muslim World* (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 1997), 17.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>17</sup> Saad E Ibrahim, "From Taliban to Erbakan: The Case of Islam, Civil Society and Democracy," in *Civil Society Democracy and The Muslim World* (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 1997), 33.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Azm, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Ibrahim, 34.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 43.

realms of human society, begging for its leadership in civil society.<sup>21</sup> Social movement theorists stress the ambiguity of political movements in their dual nature as both religious and political actors. These groups must accept the primacy of Islamic *Shari'a* law and also embrace flexibility as political actors. Many Islamic groups have adapted an Islamic frame of reference to incorporate *Shari'a* that emphasizes the acceptance of political pluralism, promotion of individual rights, and recognizes the legitimacy of secular actors.<sup>22</sup> In my research, I will investigate the success with which the Islamic movements have accommodated Islam in their political positions.

Harry Clor thoroughly examines the concept of moderation, beginning with the ordinary political parlance that the moderate position is usually thought of as a position located between opposite extremes, envisioned as the “center.”<sup>23</sup> Understanding this concept is crucial for my research. He questions whether this judgment depends on the definition of the extremes, contributing to critics’ arguments that “moderate” and “extremist” are subjective and situational terms. However, he asserts that moderation is essential to study, because a moderate leader’s tendencies to stress consensus and unification and seek agreement across partisan lines are essential in politics. Clor argues that moderation is recognition of limits, including the awareness of and accommodation to longstanding historical or habitual constraints. While immoderation is characterized by, “a one-sided or absolutely commitment to a good that is only one good among several,”<sup>24</sup> moderation involves a deep awareness of the plurality of goods and ends. This concept is essential in the Islamic context, as the struggle between Islamic and democratic ideals has long been a challenge to scholars and politicians alike.

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<sup>21</sup> Al-Azm, 18-20.

<sup>22</sup> Ottaway and Hamzawy, 7-8.

<sup>23</sup> Harry Clor, *On Moderation: Defending an Ancient Virtue in a Modern World* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 8.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

According to social movement theorists, Islamist political movements represent reconciliation between Islamism and nationalism that have come to democratic strategies and modernist views of Islamic law.<sup>25</sup> Fuller argues that these movements mark the uncertain beginning of Islamic thinking coming to terms with Western political thinking and institutions.<sup>26</sup> They have realized that democratization is the best vehicle by which to present their agenda to the public and gain political influence.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, in Egypt moderate Islamists are becoming active advocates for democracy and human rights, because they are the primary victims of its absence. Clor believes that this moderate statesmanship requires wisdom, seriousness, and the courage to confront longstanding ambiguities. He argues that the “the balancing enterprise characterizing moderate statesmanship necessarily encounters ‘anomalies’ because you are fighting on behalf of standards of value that maybe be in contradiction.”<sup>28</sup> I believe that political Islamists characterize Clor’s moderation as they straddle contrasting social norms and values, and struggle to serve multiple constituencies and work within the state. In my research, I evaluate the platforms of the Brotherhood and al-Wasat to understand their use of values.

Social movement theorists argue that Islamic political movements represent an attempt to reconcile tradition and modernity. They make an issue of misgovernment and social injustice and give priority to political reform achieved by political action.<sup>29</sup> In this preference, political Islamists differentiate themselves from fundamentalist movements. They generally accept the nation-state, operate within its constitutional framework, eschew violence, articulate a reformist vision, and invoke universal democratic norms. Political Islamists are the least fundamentalist of Islamic activism groups and have gone the furthest in accepting democratic norms and

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<sup>25</sup> International Crisis Group, 24.

<sup>26</sup> Graham E. Fuller, *The Future of Political Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>28</sup> Clor, 14.

<sup>29</sup> International Crisis Group, i.



principles. It is their objective to maintain and extend political influence. Particularly in Egypt, Islamist political movements have done this by drawing on policy lessons from past experience.

In his book *Islam without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists*, Raymond Baker describes the ideas and goals of the “New Islamists” movement, who have been a source of intellectual inspiration for moderation of Islamic parties in the Middle East. Their prevailing argument is that civilizational Islam must respond to the contemporary needs of Muslims. They stress that Islam must be politically understood in terms broader than that of religion, to enable inclusion of non-Muslim actors. According to Baker, this concept of civilizational Islam provides the foundation for a pluralistic, inclusive movement. Other goals of the movement are to reunite the intellectual and activist wings of the Islamic wave to utilize both bases of Islamic politics. Under the New Islamists’ thinking, moderation is understood as a way of life, or “a commitment to legitimate means and a real desire to achieve progress through peaceful methods.”<sup>30</sup> The movement advocates using education, through the media and use of Arabic language, to proselytize its ideas. Baker’s work implies that a moderate Islamic group must be flexible and diverse, and marked by a willingness to incorporate different ideas into its platform. It also must maintain relevance in a changing global world, and be able to adapt to changes within the country and internationally.

In “The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt’s Wasat Party,” Carrie Wickham specifically defines ideological moderation as “abandonment, postponement, or revision of radical goals that enables a movement to accommodate itself to the give and take of normal, competitive politics.”<sup>31</sup> It is interesting that she includes political habituation and inclusion in a political system in this definition. She furthers her explanation by

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<sup>30</sup> Baker, 193-195.

<sup>31</sup> Wickham, “The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt’s Wasat Party,” *Comparative Politics* (January 2004): 208.

asserting that moderation entails a shift towards a commitment to democratic politics. Wickham details the importance of ideological moderation in three areas: domestic politics (rather than economics and foreign policy), a change in the stated views of a group relative to the past, and that moderation may be uneven across issues. Finally, she gives an example of an Islamic principle of moderation, *ijtihad*. *Ijtihad* is the use of human reasoning to adapt enduring Islamic principles to modern times.<sup>32</sup> This concept relates to the New Islamists' ideas of civilizational Islam, and the need for moderation and inclusion as described by Raymond Baker. Although the New Islamists' don't necessarily advocate for "abandonment, postponement, or revision" of goals, they do present an agenda that is different from that of radical Islamic parties. The ideological concepts of civilizational Islam and *ijtihad* contribute to an understanding of the theoretical basis of moderate movements.

Nancy Rosenblum examines the significance of religion to political parties, and the role of religion in the formation of a political identity. She says that religious groups play an important role in expressing, constructing, and mobilizing political identity.<sup>33</sup> She has studied religious parties in stable, continuously democratic societies, demonstrating that these groups can be successful in maintaining a peaceful system. The inclusion of religious groups should not be dismissed based on their foundation. She describes four elements of the relation between religion and politics: toleration and free exercise rights, the parameters of separation of church and state, arguments for and against constraints on religious discourse, and the philosophical norms of "public reason."<sup>34</sup> Her historical examples do not include the Middle East, an area where religious groups have been a critical part of governments, whether included and moderate or not.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>33</sup> Nancy Rosenblum, "Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democracy of Liberal Democratic Thought," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 6.1 (2003): 24.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 24.

However, these ideas of the relationship between religion and politics certainly apply to many Middle Eastern governments, and can help lead to conclusions about the potential for inclusion of religious political parties in Egypt. In the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb al-Wasat, Islam has played a huge role in the construction of political identity. I will examine how these interpretations of Islam have changed, and investigate how these changes may have affected the emergence of Hizb al-Wasat.

Orientalist Ernest Gellner claims that Islam is a rival form of civil society because civil society requires the privatization of religious belief, but Islam is “secularization-resistant.”<sup>35</sup> According to Ilkay Sunar, as defined by most scholars, civil society is the intermediate domain between the state and the individual, where deliberation and societal organization can take place without constraint and coercion related to the state.<sup>36</sup> This includes associational life, social organizations, and independent political participation. While some scholars argue that it has to be independent of religion, others argue that Islam can spur increased participation in civil society. The recent upsurge of social activity and associational life that is centered on the mosque has been a focal point of Islam revival.<sup>37</sup> Bjorn Beckman argues that an Islamic social base for civil society is legitimate, regardless of whether Islam is supportive, indifferent, or hostile to democracy. He says that although the prevailing use of the term civil society tends to “build a commitment to liberalism” into the definition, this is not necessary. He argues that civil society involves autonomy of associational life with reference to the state, where free associations can flourish. If the state and civil society are interwoven, there is no distinction in the base of power

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<sup>35</sup> Ilkay Sunar, “Civil Society and Islam,” in *Civil Society Democracy and The Muslim World*, ed. E. Ozdalga (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 1997), 17.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>37</sup> Bjorn Beckman, “Explaining Democratization: Notes on the Concept of Civil Society,” in *Civil Society Democracy and The Muslim World*, ed. E. Ozdalga (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 1997), 7.

of decision making within civil society.<sup>38</sup> In Islamic countries, the mosque's independence from the State allows people to participate and contribute to associational life outside of the state.

Social movement theorists also emphasize the importance of civil society for Islamic activism. Quintan Wiktorowicz claims that activism emerges under conditions of repression, political, socioeconomic, or cultural.<sup>39</sup> In an attempt to fulfill these needs, social groups create new spaces to organize. According to resource mobilization theory, resources and mobilizing structures are used to collectivize what would otherwise remain as individual grievances.<sup>40</sup> Within mosques, Islamists offer sermons, lessons, and study groups. They mobilize through NGOs and student groups, using the grievances of these groups to build support for their cause. Islamists create political parties as a response to limited political liberalization measures to seek greater accommodation and participation. The widespread presence of Islamic networks at the local level in the Arab world makes them highly accessible, and there are low costs of participation.<sup>41</sup> Can the associational life that resonates in civil society through the Mosque be translated into direct political participation? My research will investigate the ways in which the Muslim Brotherhood have utilized or mobilized civil society throughout their history. Most importantly, I will investigate how this incorporation of civil society contributed to the emergence of al-Wasat.

Social movement theorists also call attention to political opportunity structure, an approach that emphasizes the interaction of activist efforts and mainstream institutional politics. These theorists argue that "protest outside mainstream political institutions is closely tied to

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>39</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004: 9.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>41</sup> Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, "Interests, Ideas, and Islamist Outreach in Egypt," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 23.

more conventional political activity within.”<sup>42</sup> Political opportunity structure was introduced to explain how the political environment affects the development of a social movement. This literature aligns closely with my finding that context matters; Islamist political movements do not choose to moderate randomly. David Meyer argues that the political context sets the grievances around which activists mobilize. The results of an activists’ choices—their agency—can only be understood by evaluating the structure they work in.<sup>43</sup> The opening or closing of the institutions of a government greatly affect the choices made by a political movement in seeking inclusion and legitimacy. Azad Berwari and Thomas Ambrosio assert that organized political activities will have significant difficulty emerging when political structures strongly discourage or are intolerant of participation in social movements. They further argue that organizers should be strategic in evaluating the right time to take maximum advantage of opportunities in the political structure.<sup>44</sup>

However, Meyer demonstrates that there is no specific model that can be used for each country or movement, and that the relationship between structure and agency differs widely for each movement. Berwari and Ambrosio attribute these differences to perceptions of political opportunities by those who lead a social movement. The way central actors frame opportunities for success can determine the unity of the movement, the willingness to mobilize, and the ability to overcome obstacles.<sup>45</sup> With nearly every recent election cycle there have been changes made in Egypt’s electoral procedures, and I will examine how these variations influence strategies of Brotherhood leaders.

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<sup>42</sup> David S. Meyer, “Protests and Political Opportunities,” *Annual Review Sociology* 30 (2004): 127.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>44</sup> Azad Berwari and Thomas Ambrosio, “The Kurdistan Referendum Movement: Political Opportunity Structures and National Identity,” *Democratization* 15, no. 5 (2008): 893.

<sup>45</sup> Berwari Ambrosio, 894.

Rabab El-Mahdi examines political opportunity structure in Egypt. He defines it as the “consistent- but not necessarily formal or permanent- dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their explanation for success or failure.”<sup>46</sup> Based on this definition, he examines the rise of Egyptian protest movements in 2004 and 2005, arguing that the growth of these movements was influenced by the political climate of the time. While these movements are not integral to this study, his background on Egypt is relevant. El-Mahdi describes Egypt as one of the oldest authoritarian regimes in the developing world. Since the establishment of a republican system after 1952, there have not been multi-candidacy elections of the President. Further, there has not been a democratic alternation of power: no Egyptian president has ever been voted out of office and opposition groups have never disrupted hegemony of ruling party.<sup>47</sup> It is important to understand this history for two reasons. First, it explains why opposition movements have sought alternative methods to promote their agendas. It also helps to understand why opposition movements are sensitive to even the slightest changes in the Egyptian political system.

Clearly, Islamist political movements have overcome a lot in distinguishing their priorities, positions, and future visions. Despite these accomplishments, I believe that they still face many challenges as they work to gain legitimacy domestically and internationally. Social movement theorists assert that political movements need to accept the nation state as the framework of their main activity. This is crucial to discern between political and religious activism, and affirm a political concentration. They must adapt to contemporary models of organization and focus on winning political power in their states.<sup>48</sup> To do this, they must convince their Muslim bases that participating in politics is a long-term strategy to prove that

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<sup>46</sup> Eh-Mahdi, 1017.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 1013.

<sup>48</sup> International Crisis Group, 6.

they are responsible political actors.<sup>49</sup> To address their religious dichotomy, they must find a balance between the requirements of participation and the demands of ideological commitment, establishing how *Shari'a* may be translated into legislation.<sup>50</sup> This will require them to rethink the relationship between their religious and political components, and devise a structure to establish them institutionally.<sup>51</sup> Different Islamist political movements have attempted to address these challenges in different ways, and have progressed uniquely. However, for a successful pluralist party to emerge from the Muslim Brotherhood, these questions and challenges need to be addressed.

The collective work of these scholars suggests that Islamic political moderation is possible. Social movement theorists discuss Islamist political activism in a very real sense; it is a trend that is gaining prevalence across the Arab world. Islam has a place in civil society in the Arab World, and its secularization has been tested by history. Extremism and fundamentalism, although prevalent, are not absolute and can be changed by domestic and international factors. Islam has been part of many national structures, and should necessarily be included in constructing democracies in the Arab World. Moderation will require a balance between the values of Islam and the values of democracy and a moderate group will strive for consensus and cooperation between extremes. The “New Islamists” movement shows that some Muslim intellectuals are trending towards moderation, and these ideas can certainly be applied politically. Missing is a connection between politics and civil society and Islamic moderation. My paper will integrate the literature and theory that I have studied, and specifically talk about Islamic political moderation in Egypt and its connection with civil society and the state.

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<sup>49</sup> Ottaway and Hamzawy, 20.

<sup>50</sup> International Crisis Group, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 21.

## History and Renewal of the Muslim Brotherhood

Mona El-Ghobashy asserts that the Muslim Brotherhood “has morphed from highly secretive, hierarchical, antidemocratic organization led by anointed elders into a modern, multifocal political association steered by educated, savvy professionals”<sup>52</sup> over the past quarter-century. This section seeks to examine and explain this transformation. The Brotherhood is in no way a strictly political party, it is an Islamic social movement. In this role, the Brotherhood represents a wide range of views—from conservative to liberal and traditional to reformist—and has struggled to manage tensions between these ideologies. Today, the Brotherhood is popular and well-organized, and has shown flexibility and originality in developing a conception of Islamic governance.<sup>53</sup> It is important to understand the roots of the movement to see how it has changed over time, but also to identify the parts of the organization that have not changed.

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928 by organizer Hasan al-Banna in the provincial city of Ismailiyya. He recruited members door-to-door and built a movement held together by “meticulous organization and strict master-discipline relations.”<sup>54</sup> Ten years later, the movement was a pro-Palestine and anti-colonial, built chiefly of lower-middle and middle-class Egyptians alienated by the exclusionary institutions of interwar Egypt. The movement’s strength came from its call for renewal of Islamic values in response to the influential secular nature of the State. Al-Banna ran and lost in the parliamentary elections in 1942 and 1945, and published a political and economic platform in 1952, but this experiment was soon aborted under repression by the Nasser regime.<sup>55</sup> This historical background is important because it demonstrates that the

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<sup>52</sup> Mona El-Ghobashy, “The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 3 (2005): 373.

<sup>53</sup> Bruce Rutherford, “What do Egypt’s Islamists Want? Moderate Islam and the Rise of Islamic Constitutionalism,” *Middle East Journal* 60, no. 4 (2006): 708.

<sup>54</sup> El-Ghobashy, “Metamorphosis,” 374.

<sup>55</sup> El-Ghobashy, “Metamorphosis,” 376-377.



Brotherhood has been a political organization from its foundation. Al-Banna sought a way to incorporate Islamic values into Egyptian institutions; he did not demand a Muslim state but instead called for the Islamization of society. Under Nasser in the 1950s the organization was outlawed and its leaders and followers were repressed and imprisoned, crippling the organization, which was not to re-emerge for another twenty years.

After suffering fierce repression under Nasser, the Brotherhood began to reorganize in the 1970s. It developed an electioneering strategy that would become “the centerpiece of their self-preservation.”<sup>56</sup> The Brotherhood’s electoral history is intertwined with the development of a social movement, particularly in the younger generation of the Brotherhood. In 1976, under the winner-take-all parliamentary system of Anwar Sadat’s regime, the Muslim Brotherhood ran candidates as independents. However, under Hosni Mubarak’s regime in 1984, the electoral scheme was switched to a party-list system, ruling out the candidacies of independent candidates.<sup>57</sup> Throughout the 1980s, the Brotherhood formed alliances with other opposition parties to run candidates on their slates. For example, in 1984 the MB allied with the Wafd party, securing 15.1 percent of the national vote. The alliance gained fifty-eight seats, eight of which went to the Brotherhood.<sup>58</sup> These alliances were beneficial to both parties: the Brotherhood had a significant popular base while the partner party provided the legal channel for the elections. Not only were the Brotherhood’s electoral victories a critical part of their development, but the pluralism that these alliances encouraged also shaped the movement. To form successful alliances with other opposition parties the Brotherhood accepted the views of non-Islamist movements, encouraging their own ideological moderation.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 378.

<sup>57</sup> Asli Bali, “From Subjects to Citizens? The Shifting Paradigm of Electoral Authoritarianism in Egypt,” *Middle East Law and Governance* 1 (2009): 48.

<sup>58</sup> El-Ghobashy, “Metamorphosis,” 378.

Simultaneously, a political Islamist movement was brewing on Egypt's university campuses. The Islamist student movement of the 1970s, empowered by political liberalizations embraced by Sadat's regime, became active in student politics and created a national network of Islamic groups.<sup>59</sup> These groups, known as al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, consolidated their power through student government groups and student unions, and became quite adept at competitive electoral politics, working as competent administrators of their university populations.<sup>60</sup> These student movements eventually split into three competing factions—militants of the Jihad and Jama'a Islamiyya and a moderate wing that chose to enter the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1979, this latter group, composed of many Islamist student leaders, decided to join the Muslim Brotherhood, abandoning any previous inclinations towards violence or salafism. This decision linked the new generation directly to the Muslim Brotherhood, but on an ideological level they were more moderate and more concerned with the social issues of the time.<sup>61</sup> Although the group developed a strong sense of loyalty for the Brotherhood, they were certainly not a creation of it. They had already created an established movement with followers, ascertaining a distance between themselves and the "old guard."<sup>62</sup> Their experiences in university student unions in the 1970s led them to win control of government board of professional syndicates in the 1980s and 1990s.

During this time, the Brotherhood remained reluctant to state their political objectives. They feared that a political agenda would be interpreted by regime as threat to its power and would lead to intensified crackdown.<sup>63</sup> However, their priorities in parliament were political

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<sup>59</sup> Bjorn O. Utvik, "Hizb al-Wasat and the Potential for Change in Egyptian Islamism," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 14 (2005): 296.

<sup>60</sup> Wickham, "The Path to Moderation," 217.

<sup>61</sup> Utvik, 294-297.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Rutherford, 720.

freedom from state repression, including cultural and educational issues, and economic concerns.<sup>64</sup> The ideological stance of the younger generation was shaped by the political situation they were born into. Unlike older Brothers, this Post-Nasser generation did not experience firsthand the violent suppression of Islamists from 1954-1970. Instead, they came to ideological maturity under Anwar Sadat's regime. Their immediate reality was the economic deprivation which spawned from *infitah* policies, and antagonism towards the government following the peace treaty with Israel. As the social gap widened, the students remained in poverty, and as leaders found themselves representing the social concerns of their class. As a result of these factors, the students were more concerned with social reform, and demanded immediate political change to address inequalities.<sup>65</sup>

In 1990, the Brotherhood led a boycott of the parliamentary elections with other opposition parties participating. The goal of the boycott was to delegitimize the regime's electoral engineering strategies, despite losing the opportunity to contest the regime through the parliament. However, during this time they continued to participate in the elections for councils and associations, and saw increased electoral successes. 1992 marked a turning point in the Brotherhood's relations to the State. Where the state had reluctantly tolerated the movement, in 1992 they shifted to legal and physical repression of the Brotherhood.<sup>66</sup> This was due to the group's defiance in the 1990 elections, their continued success in mobilizing civil society, and the Brotherhood's response to the devastating Cairo earthquake, outshining the response of the regime. The regime continued to enact constitutional amendments to restrict the rights of opposition parties, only furthering the attempts of these groups to gain ground in other areas.

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<sup>64</sup> El-Ghobashy, "Metamorphosis," 380.

<sup>65</sup> Utvik, 297-298.

<sup>66</sup> El-Ghobashy, "Metamorphosis," 377.

According to El-Ghobashy, “this was the moment that the new generation of Muslim Brothers came into their own as skilled organizers and alliance builders.”<sup>67</sup>

These changes facilitated the ideological revisions of the Brotherhood. Faced with repression from the government, the Brotherhood sought new religious and political space to spread their beliefs. According to El-Ghobashy, these new ideological positions “grew out of younger generation’s networking and response to their interlocutors’ demands to clarify positions.” Rutherford also articulates the importance of the younger generation to these positions, saying that they reflected the rise of a new generation who were better educated and more pragmatic. In the mid-1990s, the Brotherhood released their political goals, reflecting a moderate and conciliatory agenda. They authored pamphlets on controversial topics, including the rights of women and the role of Coptic Christians in Egyptian society, reflecting moderate positions on both topics. These publications led to the sharpening of internal tensions in the Brotherhood, slowing down and clouding the efforts to define a clear political agenda.<sup>68</sup> These tensions become more important later in this narrative.

The regime predicted the likely success the Brotherhood would have as it acted on its political agenda and President Mubarak initiated a crackdown against its moderate leaders. Key members of the younger generation were imprisoned, and student unions and syndicates were crippled and closed through legal and extra-legal measures.<sup>69</sup> 82 of the Brotherhood’s leading middle-aged activists were rounded up and detained. However, they still fielded 150 candidates for the elections. These elections of 1995 were the most violent vote in Egypt’s history,

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 382.

<sup>68</sup> Rutherford, 720.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

particularly in the regime's targeting of Brotherhood members and supporters, and the Brotherhood only won one seat.<sup>70</sup>

### **The Emergence of the Hizb al-Wasat**

From 1995 to 2000, the Brotherhood began to show severe organizational stress. Its best minds were imprisoned by the states, leading to factional disputes and tensions between the younger generation and old guard.<sup>71</sup> To understand the dynamics of the Muslim Brotherhood, it is important to understand its internal organization. The first pillar of the Brotherhood's organization is the one hundred member Shura Council. This is a legislative body that issues binding resolutions and reviews annual reports and budgets. The Guidance Bureau is a thirteen member council, where policy decisions passed by the Shura Council are executed. Finally, the institution of the General Guide is the highest executive office in the Brotherhood. This man serves as the official spokesman and chief executive officer of the group, and must be at least forty years old.<sup>72</sup>

In 1996, Mustafa Mashour was selected as the Brotherhood's new General Guide. He had been a member of the Brotherhood's controversial paramilitary wing founded in 1940 and his selection led to organizational discontent. His selection renewed the traditional, conservative tendencies of the Brotherhood, particularly the strict master-discipline relations seen in al-Banna's era. As mentioned above, as products of Sadat's regime, the younger generation was acutely aware of the burning social issues which Egyptian society faced in the late twentieth century. As a result, they were more eager to achieve results in reforming society and more concerned with the need for overhaul political change than the old guard of the Muslim

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<sup>70</sup> El-Ghobashy, "Metamorphosis," 384.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 385.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 377.

Brotherhood.<sup>73</sup> Mashour and his peers in the old guard did not identify with the urgency for political reform felt by the younger generation. They felt uncomfortable with the platforms drafted by the younger Brothers that called for social and political reform, creating tension within the movement. The younger generation found that decisions within the Brotherhood were made exclusively by a small group of old guard leaders, making them question whether the organization's leadership was much different from the government which they opposed.<sup>74</sup>

There had been rumors of the Muslim Brotherhood establishing a political party since the 1980s. In late 1995, there appears to have been a disagreement on the necessity of establishing a party within the Brotherhood's ranks. This argument was likely derived from the desire of the younger generation to increase their national political role, complemented by the constrictive ideological rigidity of Mashour. In 1996, engineer Abu al-Ela Madi and associates petitioned government's Political Parties Committee to form Center Party.<sup>75</sup> It is important to recognize that this split coincided with similar troubles in virtually all of Egypt's opposition parties. Repression by the regime augmented disputes between traditional leaders and restless middle-aged activists with a different vision. The political environment led conservative leaders to seek stability in the face of repression, rather than risk their movement's survival. However, the younger generation saw the regime's actions as further impetus to seek reform.

In 1996, the Hizb al-Wasat first applied for official party status to the Political Parties Committee (PPC) of the Egyptian government. Following their application, the government arrested three founders and charged them in military court, under accusations that the party was a cover for the Muslim Brotherhood. The men were released after three months, but the PPC denied al-Wasat's application on grounds that it was insufficiently different from other existing

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<sup>73</sup> Utvik, 298.

<sup>74</sup> Stacher, "Post-Islamist Rumblings," 419.

<sup>75</sup> El-Ghobashy, "Metamorphosis," 386.

parties in Egypt.<sup>76</sup> In May of 1998, the State Council endorsed the opinion of the committee, noting that many of the initial signatories had withdrawn. This was because the Brotherhood's leadership had put pressure on members not to support the project.<sup>77</sup> Immediately after, several founders of al-Wasat reapplied to the PPC with a different name—Hizb al-Wasat al-Misri, the Egyptian Center Party. This party had a modified program and slightly different group of founders. However, in September 1998 the PPC rejected the party and the State Council again rejected the appeal.<sup>78</sup>

From the first application of al-Wasat to the PPC, the leadership of the Brotherhood has strongly attacked the party founders and worked to undermine it. They expelled party founders from their ranks, and intensely pressured supporters to withdraw their support.<sup>79</sup> Despite the opposition from both the government and Muslim Brotherhood, the party has been persistent in achieving recognition. With each new application for official status, the founders made amendments to the platform, which were designed to demonstrate how their effort would broaden the range of existing parties by introducing a more moderate party.<sup>80</sup>

In September 2004, the group's founders applied again, this time under the name Hizb al-Wasat al-Gedid, the New Centralist Party.<sup>81</sup> This time, the list of founders included 200 public figures, including university teachers, former judges, and political activists. Furthermore, it included 40 women and six Copts.<sup>82</sup> In 2005, the State Commissioners Authority spoke out in favor of granting the party a license; public support had grown and members were optimistic.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Maggie Michael, "Lawmakers Block Egyptian Islamic Party," *The Associated Press*, October 2, 2004.

<sup>77</sup> Eberhard Kienle, *A Grand Delusion: Democracy and Economic Reform in Egypt* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd., 2001), 15.

<sup>78</sup> Kienle, 15.

<sup>79</sup> Baker, 199.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>81</sup> Michael, 2004.

<sup>82</sup> "Egyptian Islamists Seeking to Establish New Political Party," *Al-Hayat*, May 17, 2004.

<sup>83</sup> Vivian Salama, "Latest Attempt to License Al-Wassat Fails," *Daily News Egypt*, April 11, 2006.

However, after the group's application, all of the Coptic founders withdrew. According to the party's leader Abul-Ela Madi, the Egyptian authorities had pressured their withdrawal.<sup>84</sup> Thus, the PPC was able to reject their application in 2006 on the grounds that it does not legitimize parties with a religious platform—since there were no longer Copt members, the party was considered Islamic.<sup>85</sup>

In evaluating the al-Wasat party, it is important to remember that it is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather “bears the imprint of a broader intellectual current that seeks to revive what scholars have referred to as the liberal interpretive tradition in Islam.”<sup>86</sup> The ideas of al-Wasat are not new, but the party is revolutionary because it represents the first attempt to organize politically, devise a written platform, and apply for legal party status.<sup>87</sup> It was the initiative of the younger generation, catalyzed by the conservative tendencies of the old guard that allowed this change to happen. What specifically made this younger generation so different than the older guard? What were the influences, motivators, and drivers of this ideologically different generation? This paper proposes that it was a dynamic between political and religious learning, civil society participation, and political opportunity structure. The following sections will explore these three elements of the younger generation, and investigate how they contributed to the unique activism of the al-Wasat brothers.

### Religious and Political Learning in the 1990s

Egypt has always been an important center for all types of legal thinkers, particularly religious scholars. Rutherford describes the ideas of Islamic Constitutionalism, a theoretical body that seeks to translate the abstract theoretical principles of Islamic governance into practical

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Wickham, "Path to Moderation," 210.

<sup>87</sup> Stacher, "Post-Islamist Rumblings," 417.



political platforms that can be used across the Islam world.<sup>88</sup> He argues that these ideas are part of an emerging consensus regarding the application of Islamic law and tradition to contemporary governance. These positions are represented especially by the younger leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood. In analyzing the theoretical ideas of these Islamic constitutionalists, it is important to look for their positions on key democratic features, including the source of the law, public participation, constraints on state power, and rights.

The source and power of law is important for Muslims because of the difficult balance between the laws of the state and Islamic law, or *Shari'a*. As explained in the literature review, some scholars question the potential of the democratization of Islam because of this balance. Islamic constitutionalists believe that elected officials should exercise *ijtihad*, the use of human reasoning to adapt enduring Islamic principles to modern times, to serve the community, while not contradicting *Shari'a*. They believe that the fundamental constraint on state power should be *Shari'a*. However, these theorists believe that political authority lies within the people, and the people create the state to more fully implement the law. Through this relationship, the state is accountable to the people and serves them. They also advocate for creation of an independent judiciary and civil society organizations to constrain the power of the state.<sup>89</sup> Further, the people are entitled to select their own ruler and public officials through free elections. They base this assertion of the Prophet's statement that Muslims are empowered to choose who will lead them in prayer. Islamic Constitutionalists further endorse the creation of multiple political parties, reflecting their tolerance of dissent.

According to Rutherford, Islam asserted the basic rights of individuals 1,000 years before these rights appeared in the West. These scholars advocate for the rights of women and non-

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<sup>88</sup> Rutherford, 707.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 711-714.

Muslims, but their toleration of completely equal rights for these populations varies. The Islamic Constitutionists believe that democratic institutions are the best means for achieving these goals, and that democracy is “the form of government that is closest to Islam.”<sup>90</sup> This conception of Islamic Constitutionalism shares many characteristics with liberalism and democracy.

Critics have argued that the ideas of Islamic Constitutionalism are good in theory, but question the value of their application. They suggest that while these ideas may be incorporated into the platforms of political Islamists, the parties will not use them once elected as public officials. However, the experience of the Brotherhood suggests otherwise. Brotherhood elected officials have engaged in reform efforts, trying to stop the repression of all opposition parties and promote civil rights in Egypt. The ideas of Islamic constitutionalism further demonstrate the compatibility of Islam with democracy, and show that there is the potential for a theoretically sound platform for moderate parties. To gain a better understanding of the practicality and applicability of the theorists, it is important to look at the substance of Islamic political movements.

In the 1980s, an Islamist centrist, or Wasatiyya, movement formed among journalists, professionals, and the younger generation of the Brotherhood. These Wasatiyya intellectuals formed the main source of influence and ideas for the al-Wasat party.<sup>91</sup> Their ideologies fit them into the Islamic constitutionalist framework, and their writings aligned with the work of these scholars. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the ideas of these independent Islamic reform thinkers were elaborated in a series of books and articles. They relayed a vision of a reformed Islam, as a basis for social and political reform in Egypt.<sup>92</sup> These intellectuals “combined an emphatic defense of Islamic identity and solidarity with a deep concern for the social and

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 714-718.

<sup>91</sup> Stacher, “Post-Islamist Rumblings,” 417.

<sup>92</sup> Utvik, 301.

political problems confronting the country and the Muslim world.”<sup>93</sup> According to Baker, al-Wasat’s most powerful source of intellectual inspiration was from the New Islamists, who provided insights on how civilizational Islam could respond to the contemporary needs of Egyptians.<sup>94</sup> According to an al-Wasat founder, “human knowledge of Islam, the relationship to the state, cooperation with the state, the call for democracy and the acceptance of human rights” were all ideas incorporated from these intellectuals.<sup>95</sup> In sum, Wasatiyya stresses an understanding of Islam in broader terms than those of religion. Particularly, al-Wasat argues that “their generation must pursue a different course that emphasizes the pan-affiliations of Islam rather than the sub-affiliations of Islam as religion.”<sup>96</sup>

Al-Wasat fulfills a unique role in the Wasatiyya movement in that it works to reunite the intellectual and activist wings of Islamism.<sup>97</sup> To a lesser extent, Islamists living abroad also impacted the ideological positions of the al-Wasat party. Through union and syndicate work, the younger generation came into contact with the international Islamist movement. They encountered the moderation of parties in other Arab countries, such as the Justice and Development Party in Turkey and the FIS in Algeria that revealed ways in which moderation can manipulate a party’s position within a government.<sup>98</sup> This interaction facilitated development toward a more modernist, liberal interpretation of the movement.

The political and religious learning of the younger generation of the Brotherhood developed slowly. It was affected by the social situation the Brotherhood grew up in, their exposure to new reformist ideas, and their willingness to accept change. However, these ideas

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>94</sup> Baker, 193.

<sup>95</sup> Stacher, “Post-Islamist Rumbblings,” 418.

<sup>96</sup> Baker, 193.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Utvik, 301.

were generally not accepted by the old guard of the MB. As the younger generation aged and became leaders of the Brotherhood, tension emerged between the two generations. The younger generation continued to develop reformist ideas as they worked within their associations and with other opposition parties to respond to the regime's electoral manipulation. The old guard was hesitant to immerse the Brotherhood into the liberal platform advocated by its younger members. Under General Guide Mashour, the younger generation was not allowed to express its ideas freely. They overcame these tensions by separating themselves from the Brotherhood, and creating their own political forum where they could advocate their ideology without restraint. Rather than be defeated by the conservatism of the old guard, they detached themselves from it. Within this new found freedom, they developed new concepts, such as *ijtihad*, to balance Islam and democracy.

### ***The Platform of the Hizb al-Wasat***

To better understand the how this political and ideological moderation impacted the younger generation, it is helpful to look at the Hizb al-Wasat's platform. The platform of al-Wasat party speaks volumes on their effort to achieve a moderate stance that could appeal to the whole of Egyptian society. According to Bjorn Utvik, the term *wasat* carries multiple layers of connotation. In the Quran, Muslims are referred to as the *ummat al-wasat*, or the "community of the middle," which is generally understood to signify a just and equitable community. Despite changes to its platform, the aim of al-Wasat has always been to seek the middle ground. Al-Wasat also represents moderation of means: the decision to simultaneously denounce the use of violence *and* the passive acceptance of current conditions. Al-Wasat advocates for moderation in outlook, a balance between the need to uphold sacred values and the need for dynamic social change, and a balance of learning from abroad and upholding independence. The movement

considers themselves the bearers of the “generation of the middle,” having absorbed the experience of the pioneers with the freedom to chart their own course.<sup>99</sup> For al-Wasat, moderating is a commitment to “legitimate means and a real desire to achieve progress through peaceful methods.”<sup>100</sup> The first step in this moderation is “distinguishing between what is constant and what is changeable in the national heritage.”<sup>101</sup> These positions differentiate the younger generation from the old guard. Where the old guard has preferred social work to political engagement, the younger generation seeks out civil involvement, moderating its positions to accommodate new positions and constituencies.

The most controversial topic regarding Islamist politics is the potential of a modernized implementation of the *Shari'a* law. In 1994, the Muslim Brotherhood published a declaration that supported popular sovereignty and representative democracy. Although it did say that the constitution should be based on the *Shari'a*, it acknowledges that there is an act of human interpretation involved. This declaration came about mainly as an initiative of the younger generation of the Brotherhood, and it served as a foundation for al-Wasat's party program. However, without the limitations and restrictions the old guard imposed on the younger generation, al-Wasat's platform emerged as an “all-out embrace of the basic elements of a democratic life.”<sup>102</sup> The al-Wasat party is based on an understanding of the Islamic Arab civilization,<sup>103</sup> and in this sense they use *ijtihad* to create a base for public law. They believe that Islam is a “provider of identity through a common cultural heritage and a set of deeply embedded shared values, rather than a set of detailed regulations.”<sup>104</sup> Although al-Wasat maintains the need

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<sup>99</sup> Utvik, 302.

<sup>100</sup> Baker, 195.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Utvik, 304.

<sup>103</sup> Stacher, “Post-Islamist Rumbings,” 424.

<sup>104</sup> Utvik, 302.

to incorporate *Shari'a* law into the constitution, they choose to apply *Shari'a* in a contemporary way, choosing “interpretations that do not paralyze society and economic development.”<sup>105</sup> Al-Wasat emphasizes the need for a thorough revision of historical *Shari'a*, using *ijtihad* to distinguish between enduring Islamic principles and outdated ideas.<sup>106</sup> They blend the notions of Islamism and *Shari'a* with Western institutions. According to Madi, “*Shari'a* is very simply a collection of guiding principles which should be put to *ijtihad*, to a free interpretation in order to adapt them to a world in the process of change.”<sup>107</sup> Here, their program was clearly influenced by the New Islamists and Islamic Constitutionalist movements. These theorists attempt to reconcile *Shari'a* and democratic-based law, and al-Wasat reproduces their efforts.

Al-Wasat's platform also promotes democracy, asserting that the source of sovereign authority in Egypt should rest in the hands of the people. This belief also came straight from the literature of the New Islamists and Islamic Constitutionlists. They promote the peaceful exchange of power, with free and fair elections, and ruling and opposition parties sharing in the duties and obligations of government.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, al-Wasat pushes the traditional Islamist standard, emphasizing that the *umma* includes all citizens, regardless of religious affiliation.<sup>109</sup> The platform advocates that Christians should enjoy equal citizenship and that it is the responsibility of Muslim jurists to create a system of law that applies to non-Muslims. The Muslim Brotherhood has made several similar statements, promoting equality among Copts and Muslims. However, al-Wasat's proposed party has consistently had Christians within its ranks. According to Stacher, this inclusion exhibits that al-Wasat is “more equipped to deal with the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>106</sup> Wickham, “The Path to Moderation,” 208.

<sup>107</sup> Stacher, “Post-Islamist Rumblings,” 426.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 425.

<sup>109</sup> Utvik, 304.

demands of contemporary political governance and democratic development.”<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, the al-Wasat party membership is inclusive of women, and it is estimated that 15-20% of the party are women.<sup>111</sup> However, in the platform women are essentially viewed in traditional terms, emphasizing their primary role as mothers and educators. It distinguishes between Western and Muslim attitudes in this regard, stressing the more traditional approach within the Muslim world.<sup>112</sup> Regardless, the party does suggest that a female’s election to any post in the country, including the head of the state, is both theoretically and legally possible.<sup>113</sup> These ideas come from the younger generation’s participation in civil society, which promotes ideological moderation and pluralism, as further discussed later.

The Hizb al-Wasat’s platform shows an integration of the ideas of Islamic Constitutionalism. The similar themes between the literature of the New Islamists and al-Wasat’s platform demonstrate that these theorists were influential in shaping the ideas of the younger generation. Al-Wasat developed a consensus between the ideals and values of Islam and the demands of democracy. They have clearly detailed their ideological stances, responding to the worries of the many critics of Islamic political movements. The Western media portrayed al-Wasat positively, highlighting their reformist vision and inclusion of women and non-Christians. The ideas reflected in their platform represent an Islamic form of governance that could be compatible with Western democracy. The political and religious learning demonstrated by the younger generation set them apart from the Brotherhood members who have been resistant to ideological revision. It also began to legitimize the ideas of Islamic Constitutionalists by putting the concepts into political use.

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<sup>110</sup> Stacher, "Post-Islamist Rumblings," 427-428.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 428.

<sup>112</sup> Utvik, 304.

<sup>113</sup> Stacher, "Post-Islamist Rumblings," 430.

### Civil Society in the 1990s

To better understand the positions of the Hizb al-Wasat and how they differ from the older generation, it is helpful to look at their involvement in Egyptian society. Political liberalization measures enacted by Sadat in the 1970s gave the younger generation of MB Islamists an opportunity to address the social problems that they witnessed under Nasser in an organic, comprehensive manner. The regime's creation of quasi-autonomous institutions encouraged Islamists to participate in public life.<sup>114</sup> The younger generation initially seized these opportunities as a means to further their goals of establishing an Islamic state, but as syndicate leaders their immediate goals changed. As elected leaders of large, national public institutions, they wanted to develop reputations as honest administrators, willing to place institutional interests ahead of partisan goals.<sup>115</sup> This new generation's successful performance in associations was due to their superior organizational and get-out-the-vote skills, transparent management of finances, and tireless campaigning.<sup>116</sup> By the late 1980s, members of the Brotherhood had won the elections of most of Egypt's influential syndicates.<sup>117</sup> By 1992, they had won virtual hegemony over the major syndicates through free and fair elections. As the Islamists adjusted to and maintained their leadership of these groups, their behavior shifted from a "politics of principle to a politics of responsibility."<sup>118</sup>

As elected leaders, Islamists were responsible for representing the interests of a group much larger than their own ideological constituency. These duties required cooperation with secular opposition parties and NGOs, and similarly interactions with the media required

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<sup>114</sup> Wickham, "The Path to Moderation," 216.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>116</sup> El-Ghobashy, "Metamorphosis," 380.

<sup>117</sup> Ismaeel Ibraheem Makdisi, "Collective Action in Authoritarian States: The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt," PhD diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2006: 299.

<sup>118</sup> Wickham, "The Path to Moderation," 218.



competence, pragmatism, and professionalism. In these roles, the Islamist leadership interacted with secular opposition leaders, in pursuit of common goals of reform. In 1990, the elected Brothers formed a joint ad-hoc committee for the syndicates called the Liaison Committee of Professional Syndicates that became a forefront for the MB. Through this forum, the younger generation leaders coordinated programs, resources, ideas among syndicates and political parties, always ranking democracy as their number one priority. In the early 1990s, the group sponsored a seven-month dialogue that was attended by all political groups in Egypt. Under the Brotherhood's leadership, the group produced the well-known Code of Political and Constitutional Reform.<sup>119</sup>

In these organizations and forums, the younger generation found meaningful avenues for participation outside the Brotherhood's often rigid structure. The practice of democracy within Egyptian institutions led Islamist activists to shift their positions on some issues, including the rights of women, Copts, and Arab relations with the West, as described in the previous section. In some cases, Islamist leaders assumed a high profile role in the promotion of national and international causes. With these changes, the younger generation "broke out of insular, ideologically uniform networks of Islamist politics and entered the realm of sustained interaction."<sup>120</sup> The most important gain from the syndicate experience was that it gave the Islamists more openness toward others. They "gained experience in relating to other political and ideological trends and in serving as elected representatives having to work in the interest of people professing diverse views" allowing the generation to gain a broader look on society and politics.<sup>121</sup> It is important to recognize that this change was a maturation and development of

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<sup>119</sup> Makdisi, 230-231.

<sup>120</sup> Wickham, "The Path to Moderation," 219.

<sup>121</sup> Utvik, 299.

ideas, not an abandonment of previous goals and positions.<sup>122</sup> However, it was a development that was not experienced with matched intensity by the older generation, leading to tension between the two trends.

The younger generation of the Brotherhood was also active in the traditional social programs of the movement. From 1970 to 1993, Egypt built 850% more mosques than it had over the previous fourteen centuries. After this increase, each neighborhood tended to have a mosque that was attended by dozens of people on a daily basis, and hundreds on Friday.<sup>123</sup> Within these congregations, the Brothers led discussion groups that focused on religion and politics. They set up Islamic libraries where members of the local community could borrow Islamic books and audio. They held frequent exhibitions in these communities that sold subsidized Islamic books, audio tapes, magazines, posters.<sup>124</sup> Here, the younger generation witnessed the political and religious aspirations of the people, and realized that the government was not responsive to these ideas. By engaging in a dialogue with normal Egyptian people, they became interested in representing them at a national level. These Brotherhood members provided Islamic guidance and services, and envisioned themselves providing these services more regularly through the state.

Throughout much of the past century and under various regimes, the Egyptian government has failed to provide social services to its people. After its renewal in the 1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood was prompted by this state failure to fill this void. Guided by their Islamic values, the Brotherhood set up a wide-ranging network of private voluntary organizations that offered quality, subsidized services to millions of Egyptians. Through these organizations, the MB was linked to millions of potential supporters, and each organization became an independent

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<sup>122</sup> Wickham, "The Path to Moderation," 220.

<sup>123</sup> Makdisi, 235.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 236.

mobilizing unit. This program transformed the slogan of the Brotherhood, “Islam is the Solution,” from abstract interpretation into reality.<sup>125</sup> This exhibition of the failure of the regime and the resulting Brotherhood’s actions to meet the people’s needs showed the younger generation that they could serve Egypt in ways the state was not. The continued success of the private voluntary organizations has enhanced the resonance of the Brotherhood’s proposed social and economic solutions.

The younger generation’s participation in and leadership of unions and syndicates led to the development of ideological positions that were very different from those of the old guard. As they developed new ideas through interactions with other groups, they sought to increase their public participation. However, the Muslim Brotherhood old guard was traditionally wary of increased participation as it typically led to repression. The younger generation became active in the social programs of the Brotherhood, where they witnessed the problems Egyptian society was facing, and realized that their platform could contribute to resolving these problems. Their leadership in Egyptian organizations showed them that their participation could make a political difference, and they desired this impact on a national level.

Although al-Wasat has not been able to promote their ideas officially as a political party, they have found other outlets for advocating their ideology. In April 2000, they established a NGO, the Association for Dialogue and Culture, which was approved and registered by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The mission of the organization is “enhancing the national culture of dialogue with all social forces,” and it aims to be a “meeting place in civil society for all trends.”<sup>126</sup> The broad aim of the Association is to deepen the understanding and appreciation of Egyptians for what a pluralistic political dialogue could bring to their personal and collective

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 242, 251.

<sup>126</sup> Baker, 201.

lives. In the spring of 2001, the Association hosted a two day conference on “The Right of Freedom of Expression and the Nation’s Fundamentals,” a first official attempt at contributing to the moderate Islamist dialogue.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, Abul-Ela Madi and other members of al-Wasat applied for a newspaper license, but were denied. However, a New Islamist journal called al-Manar al-Gadid was licensed, and al-Wasat writers regularly contribute. Through these mediums, the younger generation has tempered their desire to contribute nationally. However, driven by their participation in civil society, they continue to seek more official outlets to implement their platform.

#### Political Opportunity Structure in the 1990s

Across much of the developing world, power-hungry leaders maintain their power through electoral and institutional manipulation. Many of them may be making strides towards democratization in name, in reality these manipulations are serving to strengthen their power. Election types range greatly across the Arab World, but they are very rarely free from corruption by ruling parties or elites. Bali argues that electoral authoritarianism provides ruling regimes with an opportunity to engage in subtle forms of institutional manipulation while enjoying the legitimacy of a “democratizing” veneer.<sup>128</sup> Opposition parties that try to create their own political space in a state often must accept and accommodate this manipulation. There are few meaningful venues for successfully protesting electoral corruption. In doing so, these opposition parties tread a delicate balance between pushing for meaningful elections and avoiding violent intervention from state.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>128</sup> Bali, 42.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

According to Nancy Bermeo, “the experience of dictatorship can produce important cognitive change.”<sup>130</sup> Within the younger generation of the Brotherhood, the political repression of the Mubarak regime ignited political learning, or a significant change in core values and beliefs. The al-Wasat party was established in a period of intensified authoritarian rule, during which the Muslim Brotherhood and other active Islamist groups were targets of increased repression. According to Wickham, “increased repression can sometimes induce ideological moderation as ‘rational’ opposition actors moderate their agendas not only to seize new political opportunities but also to evade new political constraints.”<sup>131</sup> Thus, moderation can be viewed as a strategic move by the younger generation specifically to avoid repression. For al-Wasat, it was also a tool to secure formal and official party status, necessary to participate in public life, which would provide a sense of immunity from state repression. Furthermore, moderation facilitates alliances with secular groups, increases domestic and external pressures for a democratic electoral route to power, and enhances credibility with the electorate.

In this way, the al-Wasat generation reacted differently to state repression than the old generation leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood boycotted the 1990 elections in protest of a new national law stating that only individuals, and not parties, could participate in parliamentary elections. This would isolate MB candidates from the grassroots organization and popular support of the movement. For the Brotherhood, boycotting the election was followed a political strategy of challenging the regime through publicly exposing its authoritarian tendencies.<sup>132</sup> The older generation emphasized the social organization of the Brotherhood, and

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<sup>130</sup> Wickham, “The Path to Moderation,” 214.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>132</sup> Chris Harnisch and Quinn Meham, “Democrat Ideology in Islamist Opposition? The Muslim Brotherhood’s ‘Civil State,’” *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 2 (2009): 192.

was willing to forego national elections in this situation. However, through the 1990s the regime continued its moderate harassment of the Brothers in a “semi accommodationist approach.”<sup>133</sup>

Although the organization was banned, the regime did not cut it off entirely or threaten its supporters. However, the regime did harass and detain Brothers for their membership in an outlawed group. These tactics were aimed at weakening the MB’s capability to mobilize the masses, recruit bystanders, and field candidates. They also sequestered the Brotherhood controlled syndicates, and restricted its activities across nation.<sup>134</sup> They justified these “security measures” by reaffirming the view of the Brotherhood as a militant group and increased the repressive measures used against Brotherhood.<sup>135</sup>

In 1994, the regime declared that there would be elections held for the Parliament and the Muslim Brotherhood announced that 150 members would run as independent candidates. In response, the government launched a major crackdown against the movement, placing 49 Brothers on military trials.<sup>136</sup> According to Ismaeel Ibraheem Makdisi, the “prosecution of these nonviolent Islamists was a blatant move by the state to disenfranchise members of the country’s largest political opposition movement and thwart its participation in electoral politics.”<sup>137</sup> For the next five years, the Brotherhood experienced similar repressive measures, culminating in the repeated arrest and detaining of prominent Brothers. The selection of General Guide Mustafa Mashour demonstrates that the Brotherhood reacted to this repression by distancing itself from politics. Mashour was a member of the old guard and emphasized the movement’s social organization at the expense of the political reformist side. The younger generation still felt driven to participate politically to bring reform to the country. This was a factor in the creation of the

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<sup>133</sup> Makdisi, 251.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>135</sup> Harnisch and Mecham, 193.

<sup>136</sup> Makdisi, 158.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 158-159.

Hizb al-Wasat, which was created without the explicit prior approval of the Brotherhood leadership.<sup>138</sup>

In targeting and attempting to exclude the Brotherhood from national politics, the regime elicited two separate responses from the Brotherhood. The older Brothers thought that participation wasn't worth the risk, and were uncomfortable with some of the positions advocated by the younger generation. It was these reformists who reacted to government repression by seeking further inclusion in the system. Through the professional syndicates and unions, repression created incentives for sustained interaction between Islamists and secular opposition leaders as they worked for reform.<sup>139</sup> The younger generation was particularly known for their alliances with other parties. Faced with the decisions made by the old guard of the Brotherhood, the younger generation left the movement, forming their own party where they could set the priorities. As victims of repression both within the movement and from the state, members of the al-Wasat party came to value democracy more than they had in the past.<sup>140</sup>

#### A Summary of the Hizb al-Wasat in 1990s

A comparison of the Muslim Brotherhood at its founding in the early 1900s and today yields an interesting look at how the movement has grown over time. It also reveals the elements of the Brotherhood that have remained unchanged, indicating the aspects that are deeply embedded in the movement. Since its beginnings, the Brotherhood has sought to strengthen Islamic values in Egypt. This has always manifested itself as a conflict with the existing regime; the Brotherhood protests the lack of Muslim ideals that are propagated by the government. The Brotherhood believes that the government is leading the Egyptian people astray, and they seek

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>139</sup> Wickham, "The Path to Moderation," 213, 225.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 225.

the Islamization of the state. Additionally, the core of the Brotherhood still rests in their social welfare activities that have facilitated interactions with other Egyptians. Under the first few General Guides of the Brotherhood, the institution was characterized by enforced top-down leadership and apparent ideological unanimity. However, the generation split that has its roots in the 1970s led to a significant shift in ideological lines of the Brotherhood towards politics, eventually leading to the emergence of the Hizb al-Wasat. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded to pursue a broad reform agenda, but over time it has taken on personal, religious, social, and political aspects.<sup>141</sup> However, the younger generation's reformist ideas created tension between the old and new guards, breaking the unanimity that once preserved the Brotherhood's internal lockdown.

The emergence of the Hizb al-Wasat in 1996 was certainly a long time coming. The younger generation's split from the old guard began in its mobilization in the 1970s. These young, influential leaders had new ideas and were engaged in civil society. The professional syndicates allowed the would-be al-Wasat members to gain an independent political base from the Brotherhood, simultaneously facilitating their abilities as Islamist politicians, rather than solely acting as activists. Their leadership over the syndicates led to increased confidence in their own leadership abilities. The ideological characteristics of the younger generation, a product of gradual moderation and political learning, culminated in vast internal friction with the old guard. They had to accommodate the regime, and weren't willing to withdraw from political life as the old guard was advocating. The Hizb al-Wasat shows the "changing and dynamic nature of moderate political Islam in Egypt."<sup>142</sup> Its formation represented the emergence of a "post-

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<sup>141</sup> Amr Hamzawy and Nathan J. Brown, "The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood: Islamist Participation in a Closing Political Environment," *Carnegie Middle East Center* 19 (March 2010): 22.

<sup>142</sup> Stacher, "Post-Islamist Rumbings," 431.



Islamist” polity that attracted professionals, intellectuals, and discontented Brotherhood members.<sup>143</sup>

### **The Brotherhood in the Past Decade**

The first half of this paper sets the stage for the current situation between the younger generation, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Egyptian state. No previous study has compared this relationship from decade to decade, investigating the context in which changes within the Brotherhood occur. To understand the environment that the younger generation is operating in today, it is important to continue the narrative of the Brotherhood into the 2000s. Using a social movement theoretical perspective, this paper utilizes a historical narrative to determine if the context that shaped the Brotherhood in the 1990s exists today.

In 2000, the government’s repression of the Brotherhood continued as it rounded up and imprisoned 20 would-be candidates for the upcoming Parliamentary elections. However, the MB still fielded candidates in the election.<sup>144</sup> These elections were free of the widespread violence that marked the 1995 elections, as result of a hard-won battle for judicial supervision of the elections.<sup>145</sup> However, fraudulent regime-sponsored activity and interference with the election continued. In the early 2000s, the younger leaders imprisoned in 1995 were released and resumed their positions. According to El-Ghobashy, these members seamlessly assumed leadership, patching up the Wasat split and re-establishing their ties with other political groups. The reemphasis of the newer generation was strengthened by the death of Mashour in 2002, and the death of the subsequent General Guide Ma’mun al-Hudaybi in 2004. These men represented

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<sup>143</sup> Bayat, 176.

<sup>144</sup> El-Ghobashy, “Metamorphosis,” 387.

<sup>145</sup> Bali, 38.

the last of the influential old guard, although there were still conservative brothers in leadership positions.

Until 2004, the Brotherhood's General Guide had been elected in a secretive, illogical manner by the Council of the Brotherhood. However, in 2004 the Council announced a switch to election by a specific and publicized procedure.<sup>146</sup> While the new General Guide was an older generation brother, his two Deputies were respected leaders from the younger generation, marking a transition to a new generation of leadership. The new General Guide, Muhammad Akef, endorsed the moderate political views articulated by the younger generation.<sup>147</sup> The changes in the MB's political perspectives have been driven by key leaders in the younger generation of activists, and resulted in the Brotherhood's active participation.<sup>148</sup> This time period was truly a window of opportunity for the political growth of the Brotherhood. The younger generation had prominent voices within the Brotherhood, multiple groups including the Judiciary were pushing the regime for electoral reform, and the Brotherhood had recovered from the tensions of the 1990s.

In 2005, the Brotherhood gained a sizable parliamentary bloc to develop its policy inclinations into a sustained series of initiatives and detailed proposals. In this way, the Brotherhood has demonstrated their comprehensive, alternative vision for Egypt. The Brotherhood parliament deputies have worked hard to portray their religious agenda as compatible with and a full expression of a comprehensive reform agenda.<sup>149</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood continues to be a significant contributor to Egyptian social life and civil society, and the younger generation is particularly active in this realm. The following section will

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<sup>146</sup> El-Ghobashy, "Metamorphosis," 389.

<sup>147</sup> Rutherford, 721.

<sup>148</sup> Harnisch and Mecham, 189.

<sup>149</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, "Islamist Participation," 24.

investigate the past decade, investigating political and religious learning, civil society, and political opportunity to determine if the context of the Brotherhood today is similar to that of the 1990s. I will specifically focus on changes and shifts made by the Brotherhood and younger generation in recent years to determine if the conditions are similar to those under which the Hizb al-Wasat emerged.

### Political and Religious Learning

The ideological divide between the younger and older generation is still prevalent in the Muslim Brotherhood today. This split has caused both tension and conflict within the Brotherhood as the organization attempts to establish its platform and priorities. The Brotherhood still has not reached a coherent consensus on an ideological vision, drawing criticism both internally and externally. The Brotherhood continues to be influenced by younger Islamist reformists who push for a liberal interpretation of Islamic issues. Their positions were driven and shaped by the New Islamists and Islamic Constitutionals, and they have adapted these ideas into their own statements and policies. However, the older generation continues to resist these more moderate interpretations and viewpoints. The ideological position of the Brotherhood reflected a balance between these competing positions for much of the past decade.

At the heart of the contemporary Brotherhood ideology is their concept of a civil state that upholds civil liberties and a constitutional government, within the boundaries of Islamic law.<sup>150</sup> This vision integrates the Brotherhood's goal of establishing a state ruled by Islamic law with a democratic system that claims to protect a range of civil liberties. According to Chris Harnisch and Quinn Mecham, as of 2009 the entire Brotherhood leadership publicly accepted this vision. However, it was several younger brothers that most outwardly promoted the

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<sup>150</sup> Harnisch and Mecham, 189.

ideology, with older Brothers emphasizing legal conformity with Islamic principles.<sup>151</sup>

Reflecting this vision, in the past decade the Brotherhood has used a variety of venues to spell out their vision for a better governed, public spirited, prosperous, more just, and increasingly moral and Islamic Egyptian society.<sup>152</sup> Examining documents produced by Brotherhood leaders demonstrates the ideology that has influenced their programs, proposals and policies.

In 2004, the Muslim Brotherhood produced a comprehensive vision for political reform. The content of the Reform Initiative was remarkable for its detail and the way that it mirrored demands of other opposition groups across the political spectrum.<sup>153</sup> An article in an Egyptian weekly newspaper describes the statement as consisting of a “mosaic of new and old ideas.” These ideas included revoking the regime’s emergency law, ridding the information media of controversial non-Islamic content, curtailing the sweeping powers of the president, ensuring religious, speech and political freedoms, releasing political detainees, and deepening the principle of rotation of power through elections marked with integrity.<sup>154</sup> At a press conferencing announcing the initiative, General Guide Muhammad Akef said that the MB believes that political power should be in the hands of the majority of the people, and that Coptic Christians (Copts) are an integral part of Egyptian society. “They must be on equal footing with Muslims in terms of having equal rights,” Akef said. He also said women must be authorized to occupy all kinds of top posts.<sup>155</sup> The moderation of the document and the public support of the Brotherhood’s leader demonstrated the movement’s commitment to reform and the principles iterated in the initiative. The positions on participation of women and Christians represented an ideological progression of the movement that was praised by outside observers.

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>152</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, “Islamist Participation,” 2.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>154</sup> Gamal Essam El-Din, “Brotherhood Steps Into the Fray,” *Al-Ahram Weekly*, March 11, 2004.

<sup>155</sup> Essam El-Din, 2004.

In 2007, the Brotherhood spelled out their positions in a lengthy document that was intended to be a draft party platform. The document was circulated among the Brothers and was subsequently leaked to the press. This document compelled the Brotherhood to settle the details of their political vision for themselves, with the eventual purpose of communicating it with those outside the movement.<sup>156</sup> According to Amr Hamzawy, the document “sends mixed signals about the movement's political views and positions.” Its detailed articulation of issues is a step up from less developed positions, but it reveals some regression on political and social issues.<sup>157</sup> The document shows respect for the country’s political institutions. It says that the Brotherhood seeks to diminish presidency but it shows “genuine comfort with the idea that the people’s elected representatives in parliament are ultimate arbiter of which Islamic teachings must be treated as authoritative.”<sup>158</sup> However, it calls for the creation of a council of religious scholars to advise legislative and executive branches in matters of religious law and describes the implementation of *Shari’a* as one of the organization’s main goals. These positions represent a change from the more pragmatic spirit of previous Brotherhood statements and initiatives. “The return to a focus on *Shari’a* in the platform has led to positions fundamentally at odds with the civil nature of the state and full citizenship rights regardless of religious affiliation.”<sup>159</sup> The document also states that women and non-Muslims should be excluded from senior governmental positions. “This constitutes a violation of basic principles of universal citizenship, which the Brotherhood's discourse had once seemed to accept.”<sup>160</sup> This regression is likely a result of the decreasing voice of reformists following the repression of the Brotherhood in the past few years.

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<sup>156</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, “Islamist Participation,” 10.

<sup>157</sup> Amr Hamzawy, “Regression in the Muslim Brotherhood,” *Arab Reform Bulletin* 5, no. 8 (2007).

<sup>158</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, “Islamist Participation,” 10.

<sup>159</sup> Hamzawy, “Regression.”

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

Although when it was released, the 2007 document supposedly represented the views of the entire Brotherhood, there was internal debate on its controversial positions listed above. Younger brothers saw these positions as outdated, unnecessary, and politically damaging. They argued that a new kind of state authority exists that prevents mechanical applications of older understandings.<sup>161</sup> Although the older generation clearly won this debate, there was evidence of the influence of the younger Brothers. The document was never officially released, and many people attribute this to the lack of agreement and consensus on these issues. Additionally, when questioned, many Brotherhood officials hinted that they could accept defeat on the issues of elections if it came through legitimate democratic procedures.<sup>162</sup> The debate that grew from the party platform reveals the conflict and split that has characterized the Brotherhood for most of the past decade. Although the older generation holds more leadership positions and is more influential in determining the priorities of the organization, the younger generation advocated its positions actively with a range of success.

In the past decade, the younger generation's positions have been further influenced by their interactions with other groups in Egypt. Between 2002 and 2005, the Muslim Brotherhood made efforts to join forces with other opposition actors to develop a national platform for democratic reform. They aimed to combine forces to exert pressure on the regime to accept a greater degree of political competition and pluralism. Before the 2005 elections, the Brotherhood joined many other opposition parties to form the United National Front for Change. It was the younger Brothers who led these and other efforts, relying on their contacts and networks from their work in unions and syndicates. The Brotherhood's attempts to find common ground with other opposition movements resulted in the strengthening of their platforms on social, economic,

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<sup>161</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, "Islamist Participation," 11.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 12.

and political reform issues. The “Brotherhood’s platform has echoed that of liberal and leftist parties calling for reforms,”<sup>163</sup> as exemplified in the 2004 Reform Initiative. This adoption of pluralism affected the younger generation, who saw the movement for democratic reform as more important than specific Islamic social requirements.

The reform drive of the Brotherhood has been bolstered by other political forces in Egypt. These other forces, interested in a share of the Brotherhood’s popularity, have reached out to the movement and joined it in developing a grand opposition platform. In March 2007, the Brotherhood again joined other opposition groups to form a coalition against the undemocratic Constitutional amendments imposed by the ruling party.<sup>164</sup> These alliances continued to encourage the younger generation to push for moderation in order to facilitate cooperation with more secular opposition movements.

Unfortunately, there has been longstanding mistrust between the Brotherhood and other opposition movements in Egypt, leading to the limited success of these coordinated movements. Although the United National Front for Change provided a forum for the opposition to work together, it failed to coordinate further opposition activities.<sup>165</sup> The other movements recognize that it is the younger generation who push for a moderate platform, and question the older generation’s willingness to cooperate. While most other opposition movements are focused on politics, the older generation of the Brotherhood is generally focused on its social movement.<sup>166</sup> The other movements question how seriously the Brotherhood takes its reform platform, despite the younger generations’ insistence on it. This mistrust has led to the failure of partnerships and alliances. In this way, the conservative older generation has indirectly prevented the younger

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 14.

generation from building concrete bridges of cooperation with other parties.<sup>167</sup> This marginalizes the younger leaders, who seek to build genuine and serious alliances across existing ideological divides. The younger generation sees the value of cooperation in creating a unified front against the regime's authoritarian tendencies, but their efforts are often encumbered by the old guard. However, although the various alliance achievements have been limited, they have "left real marks on the Brotherhood's platform."<sup>168</sup>

The electoral victories of the Brotherhood in the 2005 parliamentary elections gave its elected deputies the opportunity to have a more sizable impact than previous years, despite resistance of the ruling party. The Brothers who have been elected are younger generation reformists who seek to promote democratic reform of the regime. After the 2005 elections, they assembled a parliamentary bloc, devoting resources to developing an agenda, drafting proposals, and strategizing about priorities. In these tasks, they played the unofficial role of leading the opposition.<sup>169</sup> Their participation has triggered ideological development, and has led to a shift in the political ideology of participating Brothers.<sup>170</sup> Unfortunately, this ideological progression has not occurred among older generation Brothers who refrain from parliamentary activity. These older and more conservative members advocate for the growth of the movement's social program, at the expense of political activity. Despite this divide, the younger generation's presence in parliament has allowed the deputies to sketch out their priorities and policy positions.<sup>171</sup> The Brotherhood parliamentary bloc is being noticed for its work across ideological lines. In their efforts to serve their constituents, they have also increased their knowledge of local

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<sup>167</sup> Hesham Sallam, "Opposition Alliances and Democratization in Egypt," United States Institute of Peace (June 2008), [www.usip.org/resources/opposition-alliances-and-democratization-egypt](http://www.usip.org/resources/opposition-alliances-and-democratization-egypt) (accessed March 10, 2010).

<sup>168</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, "Islamist Participation," 14.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>170</sup> Harnisch and Mecham, 194.

<sup>171</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, "Islamist Participation," 15.



and national issues.<sup>172</sup> Brotherhood deputies continue to live in their districts and maintain their jobs, and provide social services in the roles they served in prior to their elections. In this way, they demonstrate to their constituents that they are being responsive to their needs, and that these needs continue to be their priority in the parliament.

Over the last ten years, the Brotherhood has made an unmistakable shift in emphasis. The religious and moral platform of the Brotherhood has declined in salience, in favor of more politically oriented reforms. This is particularly evident among the MB's deputies, who in the parliament have been occupied with constitutional amendments, political freedoms, and socioeconomic legislation.<sup>173</sup> The deputies have challenged the ruling party and regime on human and civil rights issues. For example, they questioned the prime minister, minister of justice, and minister of interior on issues of prison torture, interrogation of citizens, and actions taken by intelligence officers. However, in addressing social issues the deputies have failed to develop a clear and policy-oriented platform regarding women's rights. They have focused on defending the religious rights of Muslim women, rather than the role of women in society. Although the deputies need to clarify their positions on these issues, they have prioritized democratic reforms. A researcher estimated that during December 2005-July 2006 parliamentary session, 80% of all parliamentary activity came from the Brotherhood.<sup>174</sup> This was the most recent parliamentary session at the time of the study, and the Brotherhood deputies continue to be active.

The Brotherhood deputies have formed alliances and coalitions with secular and political groups, and this cooperation encourages the moderation of their platform. However, the old guard, who do not participate in politics, has resisted the moderation tendencies of the younger

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<sup>172</sup> Samer Shehata and Joshua Stacher, "The Brotherhood Goes to Parliament," *Middle East Report* 240 (2006): 34.

<sup>173</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, "Islamist Participation," 25.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

generation. Without the experience in parliament and in leading syndicates and unions, the older generation's positions have not progressed in the way the younger Brothers' have. The difference between the 2004 Reform Initiative and the 2007 draft platform reveals that the conservative trend is gaining more power in the organization.

### Civil Society Today

Part of the Muslim Brotherhood's platform is their vision of a civil state; a consultative, legal, and constitutional state that achieves freedom, justice, and equalities with guarantees for civil liberties. In line with this concept, the group calls for the freedoms that they associate with their vision—freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of criticism, freedom to demonstrate, and freedom of assembly.<sup>175</sup> The younger generation of the Brotherhood has developed these positions through their sustained interaction with aspects of Egyptian civil society. As mentioned above, the younger members engaged in professional syndicates, student unions, congregational groups, and in social service provision. It was through these forums that they developed both the impetus and policies for their participation at the national level. This section will identify ways that the younger generation has continued to engage in civil society, and show the ways that this engagement has affected their participation.

The Brotherhood is not considered a political party in Egypt, and has never applied for official party status.<sup>176</sup> By remaining outside of the legal requirements that are associated with party organization, the MB can participate in extra-political activities that are not allowed of Egyptian parties. These civil society programs give the Brotherhood a mobilizational advantage to Egypt's officially recognized parties and allows the Brotherhood's deputies to be more in-touch with the constituencies they represent. Brotherhood members continue to offer social

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<sup>175</sup> Harnisch and Mecham, 199-200.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 201.

services to underprivileged Egyptians. The charitable networks and service provision centers facilitate constant exchange between deputies and the Egyptian population. Their provision of service and charity are also key elements of their constituency building.<sup>177</sup>

The younger generation also continues to propagate the message of the Brotherhood in mosques, engaging in key dialogues with Egyptians who have problems and are looking for answers in the government.<sup>178</sup> In the early 2000s, the “pre-extant, extensive, and mass-based indigenous networks of neighborhood mosques were utilized by the newly released Brethren and later by neo-Brethren who employed strategies and tactics that overcame much of the state’s structural barriers and enlarged their pool of adherents.”<sup>179</sup> Before the 2005 elections, the Brotherhood turned the mosque congregations groups into constituents who would spread their message. They can engage in grassroots type of activities with Egyptians and share the Brotherhood’s message at a local level. Mosques are places where neighbors socialize and exchange ideas. The deputies can maintain their oversight of the problems Egyptians are facing. By being a part of these conversations, the Brotherhood becomes more invested in local Egyptians’ lives. On the other hand, these forums give the people a chance to question the deputies about their actions in the parliament, increasing accountability.

The Brotherhood deputies have also increased their transparency and accountability through the media in Egypt. Beginning in the past decade, the Brotherhood was allowed to own licenses publishing houses in Egypt. They have many bookshops in Cairo and in other Egyptian cities that both encourage and enable the movement to spread their thoughts in writing. Deputies can write about the work they do in the parliament, or the ideas they have for the future. Furthermore, independent news sources seek articles written by members of the Brotherhood,

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<sup>177</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, “Islamist Participation,” 17.

<sup>178</sup> Harnisch and Mecham, 201.

<sup>179</sup> Makdisi, 240.

and publish these pieces outside the restrictions of the state. The availability of satellite television networks and the Internet has created space for the younger generation to communicate with people, and Egyptians increasingly turn to these places for credible news.<sup>180</sup> Freedom and governance deficits have become integral components of press coverage, including opinion writing and television talk shows.<sup>181</sup> The Brotherhood has both led and driven the shift of focus to a discourse on political reform.

Beyond the more traditional elements of the media, there is a group of younger Brotherhood bloggers who advocate for new ideas through the internet. They push for democratic reforms both of the state and within the Muslim Brotherhood itself. The bloggers also call for the development of open dialogue on political and religious discourse in the government. However, they do not stop at the state. MB blogger Abdel Rahman Mansour explains, “First, we want things to be more democratic within the Brotherhood. There needs to be new means to move up in the group, and we need openness and moderation.”<sup>182</sup> According to Khalil Anani, an expert on political Islam and democratization, it is an era of new political awakening in Egypt that has made it possible for the younger generation to speak out against the injustices of the organization. These younger bloggers also believe the Brotherhood should be taking a more active role in achieving democratic reforms in Egypt. Some have called for the Brotherhood’s slogan, “Islam is the Solution” to be changed to address the larger Egyptian society, and not alienate people who are afraid of an Islamic organization. The more controversial bloggers have been rebuked by movement leaders, who oppose making these internal divisions public, claiming

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>181</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, “Islamist Participation,” 29.

<sup>182</sup> Joseph Mayton, “Young Egyptian Bloggers Seek a More Democratic Muslim Brotherhood,” *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 28, no. 8 (2009): 34.

that these are private matters.<sup>183</sup> It is important to recognize that these bloggers do not represent the majority of the movement. However, they represent the ideas of much of the younger generation who disagree with the direction the movement's leadership is taking.

Although the Brotherhood deputies' participation in parliament defies the definition of civil society, it is important to look at how civil society has affected their political agenda. The Brotherhood's work in mosques, with social provisions, and with other movements has greatly shaped their priorities. Their continued engagement in civil society will only strengthen these policies, and provide the deputies and younger generation with further motivation to contribute nationally. Participation in Egypt's electoral system has helped the Brotherhood come closer to achieving its political and social objectives.<sup>184</sup> Campaigning provides the younger generation reformists with an avenue to disseminate their message and their vision of the state's problems. This activism has given the group increased popular legitimacy, especially among Egypt's lower classes, the majority of the population. The state repression that follows the Brotherhood has given the movement the profile of a "political martyr," attracting popular sympathy and the belief that the Brotherhood is fighting for the people.<sup>185</sup>

In general, the Brotherhood has used its parliamentary presence to call attention to the government's socioeconomic shortcomings, especially the negligence of the needs of Egypt's lower classes. The deputies have blamed the government for economic problems including inflation, unemployment, and corruption. They have rejected all of the regime's proposed annual budgets. According to the Brotherhood's bloc, the budgets should have allocated greater funding for long-term investments for jobs and economic growth. The Brotherhood deputies have also pursued issues of corruption, bribes, and private exploitation of public property through inquiries

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>184</sup> Harnisch and Mecham, 194.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 194.

and interpellations in parliament. On the other side of the socio-economic issues, the Brotherhood's platform reveals that private welfare is a major concern. They prefer a strong interventionist state that would mitigate the effects of free trade. The Brotherhood has also tried to introduce Islamic principles into its economic program to demonstrate the relevance of its Islamic values to Egypt's developmental challenges.<sup>186</sup> For instance, MB deputies have called for Islamic banking in Egypt, a program that has been successful for investors and citizens alike in the Arab Gulf region. However, outside of the economic realm, the Brotherhood advocates to limit the influence of the state and create a greater role for civil society.

The Brotherhood's deputies have promoted increased freedoms and rights, in line with their vision of a civil state. President Mubarak reinstated Emergency Law in Egypt in 1981, and the regime has restricted civil freedoms on that basis since. The Brotherhood actively campaigns against the Emergency Law, and deputies have introduced proposals to combat the influence of the Law. For example, Brotherhood deputy Yusri Bayumi announced a draft law to ensure Egyptians the freedom to establish NGOs, labor unions, and professional associates. The proposal called for the simplification of procedures necessary to form these bodies and demanded that government intervention be curbed. This law was not approved by the parliament. The Brotherhood's deputies also rejected a draft law proposed by the regime that would forbid demonstrations inside mosques. A deputy suggested a clause allowing for peaceful demonstrations that don't damage or politicize the mosque, but the parliament rejected the suggestion.<sup>187</sup>

The Brotherhood deputies ensure that they are responding to the people's needs in shaping their platform and policies through the Parliamentary Kitchen. This term describes

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<sup>186</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, "Islamist Participation," 12, 22.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 21.

specialized teams that gather information about issues that deputies deal with in the parliament.<sup>188</sup> The teams are composed of people with knowledge and experience in issues like public health, judicial matters, and environmental problems. In exploring these issues the teams reach out to society to gather information, and do not just rely on Brotherhood sources.<sup>189</sup> This encourages civil society activists to continue participating by providing an attentive and legitimate audience.

The Brotherhood's platform and proposals reflect their interactions with civil society. The younger generation's previous interactions with syndicates and unions and their continued engagement in mosques and private voluntary organizations expose the social and economic problems that Egyptians are facing. Unlike the older generation, the deputies seek opportunities for political participation to solve these problems. Civil society forums give deputies and other members of the younger generation opportunities to hear from the people about what they want to see the government do. On the other hand, civil society allows the people to hold the Brotherhood accountable. The Brotherhood has become more active in the media, and independent news sources are commenting on the deputies' actions. Members of the MB also write opinion pieces, books, and participate in talk shows, increasing the transparency of the government.

### Political Opportunity Structure

Despite the regime's historical refusal to legally recognize the Muslim Brotherhood as a political party, it has allowed the movement access to the political system through electoral participation. To placate the group and internal and external observers, the Egyptian government has turned a blind eye to Brotherhood candidates, allowing them to run for parliament as

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<sup>188</sup> Shehata and Stacher, 35.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 35.

independents. “The MB under Mubarak has become a quasi-official group whose members run for elected-offices with the knowledge and approval of the establishment”<sup>190</sup> However, there is a certain level of give-and-take between the regime and the Brotherhood. The regime allows it a modest amount of political freedom, but if the Brotherhood is subsequently successful, the regime engages in repression tactics to limit its success.

In the run up to the 2005 parliamentary elections, the regime afforded the Brotherhood an unprecedented level of freedom. The Brotherhood was able to carry out a nationwide election campaign, where Brothers ran under the campaign slogan “Islam is the Solution.”<sup>191</sup> In the Brotherhood’s candidates’ rallies, public gatherings, debates and press conferences, they formally declared their membership in the outlawed Brotherhood. These campaign events drew larger crowds than other political groups, demonstrating the popularity of the Brotherhood and the enthusiasm of its followers. Furthermore, the mass media networks enjoyed a large degree of freedom in covering and analyzing Brotherhood campaign activities and involvement.<sup>192</sup> The Brotherhoods’ candidates had never before experienced such a high level of unfiltered access to their constituents, and their success demonstrates the strength of their grassroots movement. In this way, younger members of the Brotherhood experienced what it was like to be a candidate of a normal and legal political party. It is hard to image these Brothers giving up this political involvement in the near future, especially because they are motivated by their electoral success in 2005.

The Muslim Brotherhood saw surprisingly large electoral victories in the first stage of the elections, Brotherhood won a surprising 34 seats in the first round of balloting.<sup>193</sup> Feeling

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<sup>190</sup> Makdissi, 183.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 168-169.

<sup>193</sup> Bali, 59.



threatened by the Brotherhood's potential success, the regime cracked down in the second round with widespread violence, voter intimidation, and the arrest of supporters. The government arrested over 1,300 Brotherhood members after the first round.<sup>194</sup> Nonetheless, the Brotherhood managed to secure forty-two seats in the second round, and twelve in the third round, capturing more than twenty percent of Parliamentary seats.<sup>195</sup> The third and final round of the elections saw even greater violence and electoral fraud manufactured by the regime. However, the Brotherhood secured 88 seats in the Parliament in 2005, the largest amount of seats ever won.

Social movement literature claims that “moments of rapid transition in the political environment—when new opportunities or challenges present themselves to religious movements—are capable of altering the marginal status of moderates, enabling them to attain a greater degree to parity with hard-liners.”<sup>196</sup> The 2004-2005 time period provided this catalyst for the younger generation. Not only did their success at the national level give a voice to their platform, but it also convinced members of the older generation that the political strategy was legitimate.

In addition to loosening restrictions on the Brotherhood in 2005, the Mubarak regime also amended the constitution to allow for direct, multi-candidate presidential elections. The resulting presidential elections on September 7 and parliament elections in November and December were occasion for domestic mobilization on election management and monitoring.<sup>197</sup> Egyptian law stipulates for judicial supervision of election stations, but the regime had stretched the meaning of “judicial body” to include legal officers. In previous elections, judges were harassed at polling stations; some got in fights with police over road blocks or violence towards voters. This

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<sup>194</sup> Harnisch and Mecham, 193.

<sup>195</sup> Makdisi, 168.

<sup>196</sup> Ottaway and Hamzawy, 17.

<sup>197</sup> Mona El-Ghobashy, “Egypt’s Paradoxical Elections,” Middle East Report Online (Spring 2006). <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer238/mer238.html> (accessed February 10, 2010).

behavior laid the ground for the judicial mobilization of the 2005 elections. Egyptian judges threatened to boycott the elections, and then participated in full force on their own terms. They combined their pursuit of fair elections with their quest for judicial independence from the regime. In April 2005, at a meeting of the Alexandria Judges Club, the judges asserted that they would stand strong against the falsification of the voters' will. In May 2005, at a gathering of thousands of judges from all over Egypt, they discussed their conditions for clean elections.<sup>198</sup> They set standards for the regime, and made it clear that they would demand that these standards be met.

The 2005 parliamentary elections saw unceasing action by judges to ensure a clean vote. Their activism was particularly evident during the second and third rounds of the election, when violence against opposition parties led to eleven deaths. This was the first instance in Egypt of widespread judicial activism and conflict with the regime. In July of 2005, the judges released a report criticizing the conduct of the national vote on a referendum in May, and challenging government assertions about the fairness of the results. Additionally, in November the judges released a similar report criticizing the presidential elections.<sup>199</sup> This judicial activism represents a step towards more fair elections in Egypt that will definitely favor opposition movements like the Brotherhood. If the judges continue to advocate for expanded control, Egyptian elections will inevitably be more fair and clean, much to the benefit of the MB. The 2005 elections produced unseen judicial collective action and the largest share of opposition seats in Egypt since 1976.

The repression, violent tactics, and harassment towards Brotherhood members and supporters did not stop after the elections. In response to the movement's unexpected success, the Brotherhood has felt the brunt of the regime's repressive measures since 2005. Its activists

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

and leaders have been harassed and arrested in order to constrict the space the movement has for political opposition.<sup>200</sup> Since 2005, the regime has sought to portray the Brotherhood as a dangerous threat. They have specifically targeted the movement, cracking down on attempts to conduct independent elections on university campuses, and suggesting that the Brotherhood be treated as a militant organization. The regime has also placed stricter limits of democratic processes to combat the influence of the Brotherhood. They have implemented legal and constitutional restraints, despite opposition, to inhibit opposition. In December 2006, President Mubarak called for the amendment of thirty-four constitutional articles to prohibit the establishment of religious parties. The Brotherhood led the protest of these amendments, but it was eventually passed by the ruling party's majority.<sup>201</sup> Particularly in the Brotherhood, this repression has provoked the younger generation, giving them a stronger desire for reform, but has given conservative members reason to seek a less political strategy.

Although the next parliamentary elections are in 2010, there have been other local and national elections that have given the Brotherhood opportunities to deliver on their platform since 2005. In 2008, Egyptians elected more than ten thousand local council seats.<sup>202</sup> More than eight hundred Brotherhood members who had been involved in campaigns for these seats were detained, and thousands of aspiring MB candidates were barred from filing their paperwork through bureaucratic trickery and violence. As a result, many prominent members went into hiding around the country. The regime arrested forty influential Brotherhood members and kept them imprisoned as they delayed the verdict for fourteen months. The trial targeted key moderates and financiers of the group. It was the first time the government has gone after the finances of the Brotherhood members, and it struck a blow at the movement's charitable

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<sup>200</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, "Islamist Participation," 30.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>202</sup> "Egypt Targets Muslim Brotherhood Moderates." *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 25, 2008.

activities and sent a warning to other donors. A deputy of the Brotherhood responded to the trial, “The fact that they keep delaying the verdict means that this case is purely political and there are no actual, serious charges.” In response, the movement boycotted the elections in protest.<sup>203</sup> The repression is likely to continue into the 2010 parliamentary elections, and the Brotherhood’s leadership will certainly remember prior repression in determining a course of action.

The majority of Brotherhood members who engage in elections are moderate reformists who are from the younger generation. The crackdown both directly and indirectly weakened the influence of the movement’s moderates. By arresting and harassing the moderates, the regime either physically prevented or discouraged many of the most willing candidates from running. In a less direct sense, the crackdown weakened the internal organizational influence of the movement’s moderates and empowered its ideologically conservative elements, who criticize the Brotherhood’s political activity. They argue that the harassment and violence is not worth it, and this crackdown upset the balance between the pragmatists and conservatives. The “discussion and debate surrounding this issue have called into question the priority of political participation as a strategy, especially in comparison to the success of wider social and religious activities.”<sup>204</sup> Recently, the Brotherhood has dealt with the tension with the regime by formalizing its political operations within the organization. To avoid direct and regular conflict between the moderates and conservatives in the Brotherhood, they created a functional separation between parliamentary bloc that addresses reform issues and the leadership of the MB that prioritizes religion and moral concerns.<sup>205</sup> However, as the regime crackdowns continue, the conservative faction is gaining power within the Brotherhood.

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<sup>203</sup> Ottaway and Hamzawy, 16.

<sup>204</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, “Islamist Participation,” 30.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 29.

The Egyptian political system allows dissent with “red lines” that are constantly shifting as they are pushed and probed by opposition actors. The rules governing Egyptian elections are particularly subject to manipulation by the government in response to the actions of the opposition. In trying to work within these lines, the Muslim Brotherhood has learned a hard lesson. The harder the organization plays the political game- the more candidate it fields, rallies and press conferences it holds, the more likely they are to be shoved out of the political arena through harassment and repression.<sup>206</sup>

### **The Brotherhood Today: Conservatives Gain Influence**

In June of 2008, the Brotherhood elected a group of hard-liners to the Guidance Office. Their elections unseated reformists in the Council who had promoted the reformist trend within the organization.<sup>207</sup> Later in the year, General Guide Muhammad Akef had a blow-up with the Guidance Council when he tried to appoint a younger, reformist member to the elderly conservative council.<sup>208</sup> Akef had the ability to manage the diversity of the group, particularly between the different trends of its conservative members. The blow-up showed that the more conservative trend was gaining power, and his resignation led to the election of the eighth Brotherhood General Guide.

In January of 2010, the Brotherhood selected Muhammad Badi as their new General Guide.<sup>209</sup> Badi was not involved in the public work of the organization; he is part of the ideological work trend. According to MB blogger Abdul Moneim Mahmoud, “The choice reflects a focus on ideological education. He is more likely to take care of teaching the rank and

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>207</sup> Ottaway and Hamzawy, 16.

<sup>208</sup> Ursula Lindsey, “Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood: Widening Split Between Young and Old,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 21, 2009.

<sup>209</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, “Islamist Participation,” 1.

file than public and political work.”<sup>210</sup> It is predicted that Badi will consolidate conservative influence, especially because his election “sidelined a younger generation of reformers who hoped to transform Brotherhood from ‘organization focused on religious outreach and social welfare projects into something more like a modern political party.’”<sup>211</sup> Instead, under Badi the group will likely focus more on its internal organization and social and educational projects.<sup>212</sup>

The regime is also continuing to harass members of the Brotherhood before upper house elections in April and lower house elections in October. In February, the regime arrested sixteen prominent Brotherhood members. Among those detained were moderates who hoped to run in elections.<sup>213</sup> In March, Egyptian police arrested another nearly fifty members of Brotherhood. Human Rights Watch said that the February arrests dealt “a blow at hopes for genuinely free elections” in Egypt.<sup>214</sup> The government’s tactics continue to diminish the arguments of Brotherhood reformists who maintain that the risks of participation are worth it. Furthermore, the arrests decrease the ranks of the reformists, giving them less of a voice within the movement,

### **Conclusion and Findings**

Reflecting on the hypothesis presented in this paper, these findings have demonstrated that political and religious learning, civil society participation, and political opportunity structure have affected the younger generation of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, the key word in the statement is “dynamic”—it was a dynamic between these three factors that has been most influential. They are certainly interconnected and related, and together they have produced changes within the Brotherhood. Specifically, it was this dynamic that drove a wedge between

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<sup>210</sup> “Egypt Brotherhood Elects New Head.” *BBC News*, January 16, 2010.

<sup>211</sup> Liam Stack, “Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood to Name New Conservative Leader Mohamed Badie,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 12, 2010.

<sup>212</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, “Islamist Participation,” 2.

<sup>213</sup> “Egypt Makes New Arrests in Muslim Brotherhood Ranks,” *AFP*, March 12, 2010.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

the younger and older generation of the movement, distancing the two trends' priorities, policies, motives, and demands. This wedge proved to be extremely decisive in 1996, when members of the younger generation broke away from the Brotherhood to form the Hizb al-Wasat to pursue their own goals. Comparing this to today's context, it appears that the wedge is again strengthening, as the conservative trend in the Brotherhood gains influence.

In the 1990s, the younger generation of Brothers experienced ideological moderation that turned them to politics. They participated in syndicates and unions, incorporating pluralism into their positions as they represented people outside of their religion. Driven by the ideas of Islamic Constitutionals and New Islamists, they created a platform that supported both Islamic and Western values. By putting their ideas into policies, they showed critics that an Islamic-based movement could be successful in the Egyptian government. With their organizational skills and grassroots backing, they aimed to sustain a political movement that was responsive to the people. Their experience in mosque dialogues and voluntary organizations gave them oversight over the people, and their message for social and political reform gained resonance as they saw the poverty and social repression of the people. Finally, the harassment and repression from the Mubarak regime ignited political learning in the younger generation. While the older Brothers distanced themselves from politics, these younger members saw repression as increased motivation for political participation. They broke off from the Brotherhood to create their own political movement, and although the movement was not ultimately successful, it created a model for an Islamic political party in Egypt.

After many of the younger brothers were released from jail in the early 2000s, the Brotherhood enjoyed a period of moderation between 2000 and 2005. Culminating in the highly successful elections of 2005, the Brotherhood struck a balance between its competing factions,

promoting social and political reform and continuing to engage in civil society activities. At the heart of their contemporary ideology is the concept of a civil state, upholding liberties within the boundaries of Islamic law. This vision is driven by the work of the Brotherhood parliament deputies and their supporters, all members of the younger generation reformists. The group has formed coalitions with opposition movements in parliament, strengthening their platform on social, economic, and political reform issues. The younger generation entered politics with enthusiasm, and have fought against corruption and repression of the state, articulating their positions in draft laws and policies. The parliamentary presence has strengthened the legitimacy of the reformists, who are able to spread their message to a wider crowd. Through increased media sources, including the internet, the Brotherhood is able to communicate with Egyptians more easily, promoting their parliamentary agenda, and engaging in a dialogue about priorities. This also increased the transparency and accountability of the deputies—the Egyptian people can see what they are doing, and provide the Brothers with feedback. The younger generation's participation in elected bodies, continued activism in civil society organizations, and interactions with other movements have strengthened their moderate positions and increased the impetus for political engagement. Clearly, the younger generation today is experiencing a reform-driven, moderate, and persistent dynamic that encourages their political participation despite its risks.

However, the success of the Brotherhood deputies is certainly not an isolated occurrence. As their popular support increases, both domestically and internationally, the regime is engaging in increased targeted exclusion of the movement. Prominent Brotherhood members are harassed, arrested, and detained to both directly prevent and discourage further political activity. While the younger generation does not see this as reason to back away from politics, the old guard is gaining power internally. They believe that participation is not worth the violence and



harassment, and that the Brotherhood should retreat to a focus on social and ideological activities. The 2007 draft platform that marked an ideological regression from the Brotherhood's 2004 Reform Initiative is evidence of this internal shift. The Brotherhood's platform reflects a more conservative platform and opposition movements are less willing to form alliances with reformist deputies. This acts to marginalize younger leaders, who are prevented from accomplishing their goals both within the organization and outside of it. Currently, the conservatives wield the power within the organization and the emphasis on the Brotherhood's political program is decreasing.

Since the Muslim Brotherhood was founded, its leaders have debated how extensive political participation should be, what forms it should take, and how to connect political activity to long-term reform goals.<sup>215</sup> Right now there is a massive division between younger generation reformists and older hard-liners on the answers to these questions. There is the growing recognition that the Brotherhood is under siege, and the dominant view within the Brotherhood is that it should focus its energies on sustaining organizational solidarity than expending efforts in political participation. The government repression acts to discredit the reformists and increase the influence of hard-liners within the Brotherhood's internal organization.

The 2009 elections for the movement's leadership illustrated the depth of the divisions. Influential moderates and defendants of political participation, who had worked hard to build bridges with Egyptians outside the movement, lost, and very few re-elected members can be considered pro-participation.<sup>216</sup> The new General Guide of the movement, Muhammad Badi, is known for his interest in internal solidarity and activities in social and religious spheres. Although the effects of this leadership change are yet to be seen, especially in terms of the 2010

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<sup>215</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, "Islamist Participation," 3.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 32.

parliamentary elections, it is not an encouraging environment for moderates. Observers, both internally and externally worry that the new leadership will alienate young, reform-minded members. Blogger Abdul Moneim Mahmoud claims that the younger generation of the movement “will not come up with their own initiatives or offer advice. They will not express their opinions publicly. Leaders in their 40s won’t leave the organization but it will just become like a club they belong to.”<sup>217</sup> He describes his membership in the group as “frozen” and says that others may become less involved if it changes direction.

It appears that the dynamic between political and religious learning, civil society, and political opportunity structure that existed in the younger generation of the Brotherhood in the 1990s is similar to the conditions today. As this dynamic strengthens, the younger generation strengthens its vision for reform, and their motivation for political participation increases. In the 1995, a regime crackdown on the Brotherhood led to the selection of a hardliner conservative as the movement’s General Guide. Similarly, in 2010 conservative Muhammad Badi was elected to the highest post in the Brotherhood. He has worked with the Guidance Council to discourage political involvement in favor of social work. The sentiment expressed by the blogger above does not bode well for the future unity of the Brotherhood. If the discontentment among the younger generation continues or increases, it is possible that they may look for alternative means to engage in politics.

The participation of the Brotherhood is crucial to the future of Egyptian politics. The Brotherhood’s engagement has begun to build a pluralistic political system in Egypt, where hope for more open political contests between visions for Egypt’s future can compete for power.<sup>218</sup> In the parliament, the Brotherhood’s deputies have been active in promoting and fighting for

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<sup>217</sup> *BBC News*, January 16, 2010.

<sup>218</sup> Hamzawy and Brown, “Islamist Participation,” 33.

political reform. And it appears that the Muslim Brotherhood is committed to the pursuit of democracy for Egypt. In February of 1989, the group's spokesperson and later General Guide Muhammad Ma'mun al-Houdaiby wrote, "In Egypt there is a certain degree of democracy; we guard and hold on to it. We work to confirm and develop it until rights are complete. It is important to confirm the democratic pursuit in practice."<sup>219</sup> The Brotherhood openly professes its belief in democracy as the most appropriate political system from Egypt. The younger generation has borrowed Western concepts and values in building a platform, adding to their understanding of democracy. Despite his conservative tendencies, the newly elected General Guide also respects the institutions of the West and will pursue moderation positions. After his election in 2010, he told the members of the Guidance Council, "Show the world the true Islam, the Islam of moderation and forgiveness that respects pluralism in the whole world."<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Harnisch and Mecham, 191.

<sup>220</sup> *BBC News*, January 16, 2010.

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