

**Report on the Roots of Violent Islamist  
Extremism and Efforts to Counter It:  
The Muslim Brotherhood**

**Senate Committee on Homeland Security and  
Governmental Affairs**

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## Introduction:

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the security apparatuses of United States have dedicated themselves to combating Islamist terrorism and countering its roots. These efforts have been met with varying levels of success. Operationally, the U.S. has been largely successful – thwarting terrorist attacks against the homeland and hardening American targets abroad. However, the primary driver of the violence – ideology – has not been successfully countered or even sufficiently understood. The roots of this ideology are diverse and diffuse, but the primary root of Sunni Islamist violence in the modern era is the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*)<sup>1</sup> was founded as an Islamic revivalist movement in the Egyptian town of Isma'iliyya in March 1928 by school teacher Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949).<sup>2</sup> The vast majority of Sunni terrorist groups – including al Qaeda, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad – are derived from the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Brotherhood's goal has been to promote the implementation of *Shari'ah* (Islamic law derived from the Quran and the Sunnah).<sup>3</sup> Early in its history, the Brotherhood focused on education and charity. It soon became heavily involved in politics and remains a major player on the Egyptian political scene, despite the fact that it is an illegal organization. The movement has grown exponentially, from only 800 members in 1936, to over 2 million in 1948, to its current position as a pervasive international Sunni Islamist movement, with covert and overt branches in over 70 countries.

“I did not want to enter into competition with the other orders,” al-Banna once said. “And I did not want it to be confined to one group of Muslims or one aspect of Islamic reform; rather I sought that it be a general message based on learning, education, and *jihad*.”<sup>4</sup> According to al-Banna, “It is the nature of Islam to dominate, not to be dominated, to impose its law on all nations and to extend its power to the entire planet.”<sup>5</sup> That helps explain the Muslim Brotherhood's motto: “*Allah ghayatuna Al-rasul za'imuna. Al-Qur-'an dusturuna. Al-jihad sabiluna. Al-mawt fi sabil Allah asma amanina. Allah akbar, Allah akbar.*” (“God is our goal, the Quran is our Constitution, the Prophet is our leader, struggle [*jihad*] is our way, and death in the service of God is the loftiest of our wishes. God is great. God is great.”)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> They are also known as the Muslim Brothers, The Brothers (*al-Ikhwan*), or the Society of Muslim Brothers (*Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*).

<sup>2</sup> Born in Mahmoudiyya, Egypt, Hassan al-Banna was the son of the prominent Imam Sheikh Ahmad al-Banna. He studied at Al-Ahzar University and joined a Sufi order there. He then moved to Cairo as a school teacher in 1932 establishing the Muslim Brotherhood branch there. Al-Banna was assassinated by the Egyptian government on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1949 as part of an Egyptian government crackdown on the Brotherhood.

<sup>3</sup> *Sharia'h* is the body of Islamic religious law. It is primarily based on the Quran and the *Sunnah*.

<sup>4</sup> Hassan al-Banna, quoted in, Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 207.

<sup>5</sup> Fereydoun Hoveyda, *The Broken Crescent*, (Westport, CT: Praegar Publishers, 2002), p. 56.

<sup>6</sup> Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 193-4.



The Brotherhood has reached global status, wielding power and influence in almost every state with a Muslim population. Additionally, the Brotherhood maintains political parties in many Middle-Eastern and African countries, including Jordan, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and even Israel. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood attempted to overthrow the Syrian government in the 1980s, but the revolt was crushed. Aside from the Muslim Brotherhood in Israel proper, the terrorist organization Hamas was founded as the Palestinian chapter of the Muslim Brotherhood. In fact, Article II of the Hamas charter states:

The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the wings of Moslem Brotherhood in Palestine. Moslem Brotherhood Movement is a universal organization which constitutes the largest Islamic movement in modern times. It is characterized by its deep understanding, accurate comprehension and its complete embrace of all Islamic concepts of all aspects of life, culture, creed, politics, economics, education, society, justice and judgment, the spreading of Islam, education, art, information, science of the occult and conversion to Islam.<sup>7</sup>

Since its founding, the Muslim Brotherhood has openly sought to reassert Islam through the establishment of Sunni Islamic governments that will rule according to the strict and specific tenets of *Shari'ah*. To the Brotherhood, this is the correct primary endeavor of human civilization, with the ultimate goal being the unification of these regimes under the banner of the Caliphate – or universal Islamic state.

According to al-Banna, the Caliphate must govern all lands that were at one time under the control of Muslims. He stated:

We want the Islamic flag to be hoisted once again on high, fluttering in the wind, in all those lands that have had the good fortune to harbor Islam for a certain period of time and where the muzzein's call sounded in the *takbirs* and the *tahlis*. Then fate decreed that the light of Islam be extinguished in these lands that returned to unbelief. Thus Andalusia, Sicily, the Balkans, the Italian coast, as well as the islands of the Mediterranean, are all of them Muslim Mediterranean colonies and they must return to the Islamic fold. The Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea must once again become Muslim seas, as they once were.<sup>8</sup>

Once that is accomplished, the Caliphate is to be expanded to cover the entire globe, erasing national boundaries under the flag of Islam. This concept was elucidated by the Brotherhood luminary, Sayyid Qutb, who wrote in his seminal work, *Milestones* (1964), that Muslims are not merely obliged to wage *jihad* in defense of Islamic lands, but must

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<sup>7</sup> "The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement," The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, August 18, 1988, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/hamas.htm> (Accessed June 9, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Hassan al-Banna, quoted in: Caroline Fourest, *Brother Tariq: The Doublespeak of Tariq Ramadan* (Encounter Books, 2008), p. 19.



wage offensive *jihad* in order to liberate the world from the servitude of man-made law and governance.<sup>9</sup>

### **Organizational Structure:**

The Muslim Brotherhood used activism, mass communication, and sophisticated governance to build a large support base within the lower class and professional elements of Egyptian society. By using existing support networks built around mosques, welfare associations, and neighborhood groups, the Brotherhood was able to educate and indoctrinate people in an Islamic setting. The organization is headed by a Supreme Guide or Secretary General and is assisted by a General Executive Bureau (*Maktab al-Irshad*), and a constituent assembly known as the Shura Council. There have been six Secretaries General of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,<sup>10</sup> which is widely seen as the leading branch of the worldwide organization.

### **Ideology:**

The Muslim Brotherhood seeks to restore the historical Caliphate and then expand its authority over the entire world, dismantling all non-Islamic governments. The Brotherhood aims to accomplish this through a combination of warfare – both violent and political.

The Muslim Brotherhood has provided the ideological model for almost all modern Sunni Islamic terrorist groups. When discussing Hamas, Al Qaeda, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Richard Clarke – the chief counterterrorism adviser on the U.S. National Security Council under Presidents Clinton and Bush – told a Senate committee in 2003 that “The common link here is the extremist Muslim Brotherhood – all of these organizations are descendants of the membership and ideology of the Muslim Brothers.”<sup>11</sup>

The leadership of Al Qaeda, from Osama bin Laden to his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri and 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed all were influenced by Muslim Brotherhood ideology.<sup>12</sup> In fact, al-Zawahiri was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood as a young man, but he broke with them when his terrorist career began. He later wrote a book called *The Bitter Harvest* in which he condemned the Brotherhood for neglecting *jihad* in favor of participating in elections.<sup>13</sup>

The Brotherhood’s ideology was formulated by its two main luminaries: its founder, Hassan al-Banna – who was assassinated by agents of the Egyptian government in 1949 – and Sayyid Qutb, hanged in 1966.

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<sup>9</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*.

<sup>10</sup> The six Secretaries General of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt are: Hassan al-Banna (1928-1949), Hassan Ismai’l al-Hudaybi (1951-1973), Omar al-Telmesany (1976-1986), Muhammed Hamid Abu al-Nasr (1986-1996), Mustafa Mashour (1996-2002), Ma’amun al-Hodeiby (2002-2004), and current leader Mohammed Mahdi Akef.

<sup>11</sup> Statement of Richard A. Clarke before the U.S. Senate Banking Committee, October 22, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Lt. Col. (res.) Jonathan Dahoah-Halevi, “The Muslim Brotherhood: A Moderate Islamic Alternative to al-Qaeda or a Partner in Global *Jihad*?” *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, November 1, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Raymond Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader* (Doubleday: New York, 2007), p. 116.



Al-Banna once described the Brotherhood as, “a Salafiyya message, a Sunni way, a Sufi truth, a political organization, an athletic group, a cultural-educational union, an economic company, and a social idea.”<sup>14</sup> While studying in Cairo, al-Banna had become immersed in the writings of Rashid Rida (1865-1935), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897), who formed the backbone of the Salafiyya Movement.<sup>15</sup> Al-Banna agreed with their ideas that Islam provided the solution to the afflictions plaguing Muslim society. Specifically, in accordance with Salafism, he called for a return to what he perceived to be true Islam.

Salafism is an austere form of Islam within the Sunni sect that attempts to return to what its adherents believe to be unadulterated Islam as practiced by Muhammad and his companions. In order to achieve this, Salafists strip out what they see as *bida*, or innovations, from the practice of Islam as it has developed over the centuries. According to Salafists, only pure Islam can solve the political, economic, social, domestic, and external issues of the Muslim nation (*ummah*). As such, Muslim societies should be governed according to *Shari’ah*.

While al-Banna drew almost exclusively on early Islamic doctrine in his works, it is also important to understand the strong anti-colonialism sentiments driving his ideology. Al-Banna was writing and working at a time when European powers had colonized the Middle East.

*Jihad*, death, and martyrdom have been lauded throughout the history of the Brotherhood, not only as a means to achieve the above goals, but as an end unto itself. In his seminal work, *The Society of Muslim Brothers*, Robert P. Mitchell the late University of Michigan Professor of Near Eastern History, quotes and paraphrases al-Banna:

The certainty that *jihad* had this physical connotation is evidenced by the relationship always implied between it and the possibility, even the necessity, of death and martyrdom. Death, as an important end of *jihad*, was extolled by Banna in a phrase which came to be a famous part of his legacy: “the art of death” (*fann al-mawt*). “Death is art” (*al-mawt-fann*). The Qur’an has commanded people to love death more than life. Unless “the philosophy of the Qur’an on death” replaces “the love of life” which has consumed Muslims, then they will reach naught. Victory can only come with the mastery of “the art of death.” In another place, Banna reminds his followers of a Prophetic observation: “He who dies and has not fought [*ghaza*; literally: raided] and was not resolved to fight, has died a *jahiliyya* [ignorance of divine guidance] death.” The movement cannot succeed, Banna insists, without this dedicated and unqualified kind of *jihad*.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Hassan al-Banna, quoted in, Mitchell, *Society of Muslim Brothers*, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> The term *Salafiyyah* comes from the phrase *as-salaf as-saliheen* or “pious predecessors” of early the Muslim community, referring primarily to Muhammad’s companions (*sahaba*).

<sup>16</sup> Mitchell, *Society of Muslim Brothers*, p. 207.



*Jihad* is a central tenet in the Muslim Brotherhood ideology. In a booklet entitled, “Jihad” and in other works, al-Banna clearly defines *jihad* as violent warfare against non-Muslims to establish Islam as dominant across the entire world. He wrote:

*Jihad* is an obligation from Allah on every Muslim and cannot be ignored nor evaded. Allah has ascribed great importance to *jihad* and has made the reward of the martyrs and fighters in His way a splendid one. Only those who have acted similarly and who have modeled themselves upon the martyrs in their performance of *jihad* can join them in this reward.<sup>17</sup>

To support his assertions about *jihad*, al-Banna quotes extensively from the Quran, the Hadith, and great Islamic scholars. These quotes either define *jihad* as fighting and/or emphasize the obligatory nature of *jihad*. On the specific subject of “fighting with People of the Book [Jews and Christians],”<sup>18</sup> al-Banna quotes Quran 9:29 – the infamous sword verse:

Fight against those who believe not in Allah nor in his Last Day, nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger and those who acknowledge not the Religion of Truth (i.e. Islam), from among the People of the Book, until they pay the *jizya* [poll tax] with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.

Al-Banna quotes a Hanafi scholar:

Jihad linguistically means to exert one’s utmost effort in word and action; in the Sharee’ah it is the fighting of the unbelievers, and involves all possible efforts that are necessary to dismantle the power of the enemies of Islam including beating them, plundering their wealth, destroying their places of worship and smashing their idols.<sup>19</sup>

Al-Banna continues:

Islam allows jihad and permits war until the following Qur’anic verse is fulfilled:

*“We will show them Our signs in the universe, and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this (the Qur’an) is the truth” (Surat al-Fussilat (41), ayah 53)<sup>20</sup>*

In conclusion, al-Banna writes:

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<sup>17</sup> Hassan al-Banna, “Jihad,” [http://www.youngmuslims.ca/online\\_library/books/jihad/](http://www.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/jihad/) (Accessed June 9, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Al-Banna, “Jihad.”

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.



My brothers! The ummah [Islamic community] that knows how to die a noble and honourable death is granted an exalted life in this world and eternal felicity in the next. Degradation and dishonour are the results of the love of this world and the fear of death. Therefore prepare for *jihad* and be the lovers of death.<sup>21</sup>

To ensure that the *Shari'ah* would be the “the basis controlling the affairs of state and society,”<sup>22</sup> al-Banna laid out a seven-step hierarchy of goals to be implemented by the Brotherhood for the Islamization of society. The first step is to educate and “form” the Muslim person. From there the Muslim person would spread Islam and help “form” a Muslim family. Muslim families would group together to form a Muslim society that would establish a Muslim government. The government would then transform the state into an Islamic one governed by *Shari'ah*, as voted by the Muslim society. This Islamic state would then work to free “occupied” Muslim lands and unify them together under one banner, from which Islam could be spread all over the world.

As Mitchell explains, quoting original Brotherhood sources, these goals would be carried out in three stages. Starting with “the first stage through which all movements must pass, the stage of ‘propaganda, communication, and information.’”<sup>23</sup> In this stage, the Brotherhood would recruit and indoctrinate core activists. The next stage consists of “formation, selection, and preparation.”<sup>24</sup> In this stage, the Brothers would endear themselves to the population by creating charities, clinics, schools, and other services. More importantly, they would prepare for the third and final stage: the stage of “execution.”<sup>25</sup> Of this stage, al-Banna stated:

At the time that there will be ready, Oh ye Muslim Brothers, three hundred battalions, each one equipped spiritually with faith and belief, intellectually with science and learning, and physically with training and athletics, at that time you can demand of me to plunge with you through the turbulent oceans and to rend the skies with you and to conquer with you every obstinate tyrant. God willing, I will do it.<sup>26</sup>

### **Qutb and Jahiliyya**

In addition to al-Banna’s founding philosophy, the works of Sayyid Qutb (1909-1966) also had a major impact on the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. Beyond that, Qutb’s books sent shockwaves throughout the entire Islamic world. His most influential

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> “The Principles of the Muslim Brotherhood” IkhwanWeb.Org, Official Muslim Brotherhood Website (Cached), [http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:2\\_Lj7AHyW7oJ:www.muslimbrotherhood.co.uk/Home.asp%3FID%3D4584%26Lang%3DE%26Press%3DShow%26System%3DPressR%26zPage%3DSystems+%22the+bas+controlling+the+affairs+of+state+and+society%22+iSLAMIC&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=9&gl=us](http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:2_Lj7AHyW7oJ:www.muslimbrotherhood.co.uk/Home.asp%3FID%3D4584%26Lang%3DE%26Press%3DShow%26System%3DPressR%26zPage%3DSystems+%22the+bas+controlling+the+affairs+of+state+and+society%22+iSLAMIC&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=9&gl=us)

<sup>23</sup> Mitchell, *Society of Muslim Brothers*, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Risalat Al-Mu’tamar al-khamis (Message of the Fifth Congress), quoted in Mitchell, *Society of Muslim Brothers*, p. 14.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



works were *Fi zilal al-Qur'an* (“In the Shade of the Quran”)<sup>27</sup> and *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (“Milestones”). *Milestones* has come to be Qutb’s most popular work and has influenced Islamic extremists such as Ayman al-Zawahiri,<sup>28</sup> Dr. Abdullah Azzam,<sup>29</sup> and Osama bin Laden.<sup>30</sup>

Written while Qutb was in prison in Egypt,<sup>31</sup> *Milestones*’ central thesis was that the world had degraded into a state of ignorance (as existed before the Prophethood of Mohammad) or *jahiliyya*.<sup>32</sup> He proposed that the overthrow of apostate rulers and the establishment of Islamic societies worldwide through offensive *jihad* is the only way to solve this state of affairs. In addition to Hassan al-Banna’s ideas, Qutb was heavily influenced by the writings of Indian Islamist Sayyid Mawlana Abul Ala Maududi (1903-1979)<sup>33</sup> and the medieval scholar Taqi ad-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328). However, Qutb expanded on their ideas of *jahiliyyah* and *jihad*.

As the 9/11 Commission Report found, Qutb came to the U.S. to study in the late 1940s:

Qutb returned with an enormous loathing of Western society and history. He dismissed Western achievements as entirely material, arguing that Western society possesses “nothing that will satisfy its own conscience and justify its existence.” Three basic themes emerge from Qutb’s writings. First, he claimed that the world was beset with barbarism, licentiousness, and unbelief (a condition he called *jahiliyya*, the religious term for the period of ignorance prior to the revelations given to the Prophet Mohammed). Qutb argued that humans can choose only between Islam and *jahiliyya*. Second, he warned that more people, including Muslims, were attracted to *jahiliyya* and its material comforts than to his view of Islam; *jahiliyya* could therefore triumph over Islam. Third, no middle

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<sup>27</sup> This work, written while Qutb was languishing in an Egyptian jail cell (1954-1964), is a 30 volume commentary (*tafsir*) on the Quran. A highly popular work, Qutb in his commentary advocates for *shari'ah* to be implemented in all Muslim societies. It also contains significant amounts of vitriol directed primarily at Jews.

<sup>28</sup> Zawahiri, also a member of the Brotherhood since the age of fourteen (1965) became familiar with Qutb’s writings while he was in Saudi Arabia. There he came under the tutelage of Sayyid’s brother Muhammad Qutb, who fled Egypt in 1972 and began teaching his brother’s philosophy while a professor at King Abdel-Aziz University in Jeddah and the Umm al-Qura University in Mecca. Osama Bin Laden also reportedly attended Muhammad Qutb’s lectures there too.

<sup>29</sup> Jim Landers, “Muslim Extremists Justify Violence on Way to Restoring Divine Law,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 3, 2001.

<sup>30</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*

<sup>31</sup> Qutb spent ten years in prison from 1954 to 1964 after being arrested for being a member of the Brotherhood (he joined in 1953) when Nasser outlawed the organization in 1954. *Milestones* was published when Qutb emerged from prison in 1965, even though Qutb was arrested and jailed again for preaching for an Islamic state in Egypt. He was executed on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1966 with excerpts from *Milestones* used against him during his trial. After his execution he became a “Martyr” (*Shaheed*) to his followers.

<sup>32</sup> *Jahiliyyah* can be loosely translated as a state of “ignorance of divine guidance” referring to the conditions in pre-Islamic Arabian society before the revelations of the Quran by Allah and the Prophet Muhammad.

<sup>33</sup> Also written as Maududi, Maudoodi, or Mawdudi. He founded the Pakistani Islamic group *Jamaat-e-Islami* in 1941 with the goal of establishing an Islamic state in South Asia. He headed the party until 1973 and was well known for his writings on Islam.



ground exists in what Qutb conceived as a struggle between God and Satan. All Muslims—as he defined them—therefore must take up arms in this fight. Any Muslim who rejects his ideas is just one more nonbeliever worthy of destruction.<sup>34</sup>

While both Maududi and Ibn Taymiyyah used *jahiliyya* to describe some contemporaries, Qutb described the whole of the Muslim community to be in *jahiliyya*, as “the Muslim community has long ago vanished from existence.”<sup>35</sup> Since Arab secular leaders did not follow the *Shari’ah*, they were considered to be in apostasy for violating God’s sovereignty (*al-hakimiyya*) on earth. In fact, “any place where the *Shari’ah* is not enforced and where Islam is not dominant becomes the Abode of War (*Dar-ul-Harb*).”<sup>36</sup> *Jahiliyyah* now included all states, whether ruled by Muslims or not.

To achieve his vision, Qutb advocated for the creation of a vanguard (*tali’a*), whose members would model themselves after the Prophet Muhammad’s companions. This vanguard would then fight *jahiliyya* and its influences through

methods of preaching (*daw’a*) and persuasion for reforming ideas and beliefs; and it uses physical power and *Jihad* for abolishing the organizations and authorities of the *jahili* system which prevents people from reforming their ideas and beliefs but forces them to obey their erroneous ways and make them serve human lords instead of the Almighty Lord.<sup>37</sup>

According to his vision, the vanguard would not “compromise with the practices of *jahili* society, nor can we be loyal to it,” Qutb wrote. “*Jahili* society, because of its *jahili* characteristics (described as evil and corrupt), is not worthy to be compromised with.”<sup>38</sup>

Qutb’s *jihad* against *Dar al-Harb* (Abode of War),<sup>39</sup> was not only to protect the *Dar al-Islam* (Abode of Islam) but also to enhance it and spread it “throughout the earth to the whole of mankind.”<sup>40</sup> Adherence to *Shari’ah* would free mankind from the *jahiliyyah* influences. This war would not be temporary, “but an eternal state, as truth and falsehood cannot co-exist on this earth.”<sup>41</sup>

### **The Brotherhood Today:**

While many Muslim Brotherhood branches around the world claim to have embraced democracy, the philosophies developed by Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb still carry

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<sup>34</sup> National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: Norton, 2004), p. 51.

<sup>35</sup> Qutb, Sayyid. *Milestones*. (Syria: Damascus, Dar al-Ilm), 9.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>39</sup> The *Dar al-Harb* (Abode of War) traditionally is considered to be countries and places where Islam is not predominant or areas not ruled by Muslims.

<sup>40</sup> *Milestones*, 72.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.



great influence within the organization. The Brotherhood continues to be driven by al-Banna's belief that Islam is destined to eventually dominate the world. The Brotherhood's declared principles remain steadfast even today. According to their website, the Brotherhood seeks, "the introduction of the Islamic *Shari'ah* as the basis controlling the affairs of state and society" and "unification among the Islamic countries and states...liberating them from foreign imperialism."<sup>42</sup> This includes "spreading Islamic concepts that reject submission to humiliation, and incite to fighting it" while "reviving the will of liberation and independence in the people, and sowing the spirit of resistance."<sup>43</sup>

Some have contended that there is a "moderate" wing to the Muslim Brotherhood that can and should serve as a bridge between the Islamic world and the West,<sup>44</sup> but this claim has been much disputed in academia and the media. Proponents of this theory claim that beginning with Hassan al-Hudaybi – al-Banna's immediate successor as Supreme Guide – the Brotherhood took a moderate turn.

Detractors<sup>45</sup> note the proponents' lack of background in the subject matter. They also cite the Brotherhood's persistent support of violence, under the rubric of resistance against occupation, and the greater popularity of decidedly immoderate figures like Sayyid Qutb over al-Hudaybi in the modern Brotherhood (Qutb's books can be found in a variety of languages all around the world. The same cannot be said for al-Hudaybi's). One scholar has questioned whether al-Hudaybi even penned the moderate volume, *Preachers, Not Judges*, that has been credited to him, raising the possibility that the Egyptian intelligence service played a role in its production.<sup>46</sup>

In the fall of 2007, the Brotherhood issued its first official platform in decades. The platform explains, in plain terms, the agenda of the Brotherhood in Egypt and the Islamic world. It calls for: "Spreading and deepening the true concepts of Islam as a complete methodology that regulates all aspects of life." Here are some other notable excerpts from the platform:

- "The intentions of the Islamic *Shari'ah* which aim for the realization of the important aspects and needs and good achievements in the realm of religion and spirit and the self and property and intellect and wealth represent the

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<sup>42</sup> "The Principles of the Muslim Brotherhood" IkhwanWeb.Org, Official Muslim Brotherhood Website (Cached), [http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:2\\_Lj7AHyW7oJ:www.muslimbrotherhood.co.uk/Home.asp%3FID%3D4584%26Lang%3DE%26Press%3DShow%26System%3DPressR%26zPage%3DSystems+%22the+basis+controlling+the+affairs+of+state+and+society%22+iSLAMIC&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=9&gl=us](http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:2_Lj7AHyW7oJ:www.muslimbrotherhood.co.uk/Home.asp%3FID%3D4584%26Lang%3DE%26Press%3DShow%26System%3DPressR%26zPage%3DSystems+%22the+basis+controlling+the+affairs+of+state+and+society%22+iSLAMIC&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=9&gl=us) (Accessed June 10, 2008).

<sup>43</sup> "Reading into The Muslim Brotherhood's Documents," IkhwanWeb.Org, Official Muslim Brotherhood Website, June 13, 2007, <http://www.ikhwanweb.org/Article.asp?ID=818&LevelID=2&SectionID=116> (Accessed May 29, 2008).

<sup>44</sup> Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," *Foreign Affairs*, March-April 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Douglas Farah, Youssef Ibrahim, Patrick Poole, and others.

<sup>46</sup> Barbara Zollner, "Prison Talk: The Muslim Brotherhood's Internal Struggle During Gamal Abdel Nasser's Persecution, 1954-1971" (*International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 39, 2007), pp. 411-433.



ruling policy in the defining of the priorities of the goals and strategic policies.”

- “Islam has developed an exemplary model for a state.”
- “The Islamic methodology aims to reform the state of limited capabilities to make it into a strong Islamic state...”

Whatever moderating stance the platform takes, in August 2004, the Brotherhood issued a public appeal of support for those fighting coalition forces in Iraq,<sup>47</sup> and the following month, spiritual guide Yusuf al-Qaradawi issued a fatwa deeming it a religious duty for Muslims to fight America in Iraq.<sup>48</sup>

The Brotherhood also plays an active role today in promoting terrorism against American interests. The Brotherhood actively supports Hamas to “face the U.S. and Zionist strategy” in the Occupied Territories and supports their “legitimate resistance.”<sup>49</sup>

A November 2007 interview with Brotherhood Supreme Guide Muhammad Mahdi Akef shows the group remains committed to violence against those it views as occupiers.

Akef, the Supreme Guide, pledged 10,000 fighters for Palestine but said it was up to a government to arm and train them. In the same interview, Akef denied the existence of Al Qaeda:

“All these things are American Zionist tricks,” Akef said. “The Shi’ites attack one another, the Sunnis attack one another, and the Shi’ites attack the Sunnis. But the Muslim Brotherhood has a principle, which I declared from day one: The Shi’ites and Sunnis are brothers.”

[...]

“I’d like to go back to the issue of Al-Qaeda. There is no such thing as Al-Qaeda. This is an American invention, so that they will have something to fight for...”

Interviewer: “What about Osama bin Laden, Al-Zawahiri, and the Islamic State of Iraq?”

Akef: “When one man, or two or three, fight this tyrannical global superpower – is it worth anything?”<sup>50</sup>

Interviewer: “Thousands have carried out attacks in the Iraq in the name of Al-Qaeda...”

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<sup>47</sup> “The Muslim Brotherhood Movement in Support of Fighting Americans Forces in Iraq,” MEMRI Special Dispatch Series, September 3, 2004.

<sup>48</sup> “Cleric Says It’s Right to Fight U.S. Civilians in Iraq,” Reuters, September 2, 2004.

<sup>49</sup> “Reading into The Muslim Brotherhood’s Documents,” IkhwanWeb.Org, Official Muslim Brotherhood Website, June 13, 2007, <http://www.ikhwanweb.org/Article.asp?ID=818&LevelID=2&SectionID=116> (Accessed May 29, 2008).

<sup>50</sup> Special Dispatch - Jihad & Terrorism Studies Project, MEMRI TV Project, December 18, 2007.



Akef: “That is a lie. Who says so?”

Interviewer: “They do.”

That argument fits with a theory offered by Lt. Col. (res.) Jonathan Dahoah-Halevi, senior researcher of the Middle East and radical Islam at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. He argues that Al Qaeda and the Brotherhood share the same final goal – the establishment of a global Caliphate – but the Brotherhood fears “that an Al-Qaeda attack against the West at this time might hamper the Islamic movement’s buildup and focus the West on the threat implicit in Muslim communities.”<sup>51</sup>

Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood and spiritual guide al-Qaradawi condemned al Qaeda’s actions in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

However, in an interview on May 23, 2008 with the online Arabic news service *Elaph*,<sup>52</sup> Akef seemed to change his approach. He was asked: “Regarding resistance and *jihad*, do you consider Osama Bin Laden a terrorist or an Islamic Mujahid?” In response, Akef said, “In all certainty, a mujahid, and I have no doubt in his sincerity in resisting the occupation, close to Allah on high.”<sup>53</sup> He was then asked about his previous denial about the existence of al Qaeda, and said, “The name is an American invention, but al Qaeda as a concept and organization comes from tyranny and corruption.”

The interviewer followed with this question: “So, do you support the activities of al Qaeda, and to what extent?” Akef said, “Yes, I support its activities against the occupiers, and not against the people.”

Two days later, in another interview the Saudi-owned pan-Arab daily *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, Akef tried to clarify some of his comments about al Qaeda after receiving criticism from religious and political leaders about his remarks in the May 23 interview. He said:

We (the Brotherhood) have nothing to do with al Qaeda or Osama bin Laden... we are against violence except when fighting the occupier...When he [bin Laden] fights the occupier then he is a mujahid, and when he attacks civilians, then this is rejected. The word al Qaeda is an American illusion...Bin Laden has a thought ...his thought is based on violence, and we do not approve of violence under any circumstances except one and that is fighting an occupier. We have nothing to do with al Qaeda or Osama bin Laden...we condemn any thought that leads to

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<sup>51</sup> Lt. Col. (res.) Jonathan Dahoah-Halevi, “The Muslim Brotherhood: A Moderate Islamic Alternative to al-Qaeda or a Partner in Global *Jihad*?” *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, November 1, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Mohammad Akef, *Elaph*, May 23, 2008, <http://65.17.227.80/ElaphWeb/AkhbarKhasa/2008/5/332823.htm> (Accessed May 28, 2008).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*



violence. When bin Laden fights the occupier then he is a mujahid, when he attacks the innocent and citizens then this is rejected.<sup>54</sup>

Al-Qaradawi's condemnation of 9/11 was based on his assertion that the passengers in the plane and the people in the World Trade Center were civilians. However, in an interview on *Al-Jazeera* in 2004, al Qaradawi elaborated on the concept of the civilian:

When I was asked, I said that I forbid the killing of civilians. I said that it is permitted to kill only those who fight. Islam forbids killing women, youth, and so on. I said so openly, but I asked, "Who is a civilian?" When engineers, laborers, and technicians enter [Iraq] with the American army, are they considered civilians? Is a fighter only the one inside the tank or also the one servicing it? I am speaking of the interpretation of the word "civilian".<sup>55</sup>

By this logic, it can be argued that anyone providing support to a military force in a Muslim country – whether it be a tank mechanic, a worker at a defense factory, or even an American taxpayer – is no longer considered a civilian.

In June 2008, Mohammad Habib, the first deputy chairman of the Muslim Brotherhood, sat down with an interviewer from *Al Ahrar*, an Egyptian daily. In the long interview, Habib spoke to the international Muslim Brotherhood:

**Al-Ahrar:** But what about the view that the Muslim Brotherhood will perish in the coming twenty years?

**Dr. Habib:** On the contrary, I see that the future is ours, and we will reach our aspirations. The group is gaining every day more territories and a depth in the consciousness of the Egyptian people. Add to this, the group is not confined to Egypt, it has offshoots in various countries all over the world, it continuously grows, achieves more successes at all levels.

**Al-Ahrar:** What about the international Muslim Brotherhood?

**Dr. Habib:** There are entities that exist in many countries all over the world. These entities have the same ideology, principle and objectives but they work in different circumstances and different contexts. So, it is reasonable to have decentralization in action so that every entity works according to its circumstances and according to the problems it is facing and in their framework. This actually achieves two objectives: First: It adds flexibility to movement. Second: It focuses on action. Every entity in its own country can issue its own decision because it is more aware of the problems, circumstances and context in which they are working. However, there is some centralization in some issues.

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<sup>54</sup> Abd-al-Sattar Ibrahim, "Akif tells Al-Sharq al-Awsat: The Brotherhood is Against Al-Qa'idah Organization Targeting Civilians; Bin Ladin's Thought is Based on Violence" *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 25, 2008, FROM: BBC Monitoring International Reports.

<sup>55</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Al-Jazeera*, November 20, 2004.



These entities can have dialogue when there is a common cause that faces Arabs or Muslims over their central issues like the Palestinian cause. At that time, all of them must cooperate for it. I want to confirm that while some see that Palestine caused rifts among the Arabs, we see that this cause is the one for which all Arabs unite.<sup>56</sup>

### **The Brotherhood in the West**

In the United States, the Brotherhood has had an active presence since the 1960s. They have been represented by various organizations such as the [Muslim Students' Association](#) (MSA) founded in 1963, the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT) 1971, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) 1981, the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) 1981, the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP) 1981, the United Association for Studies and Research (UASR) 1989, the American Muslim Council (AMC) 1990, the [Muslim American Society](#) (MAS) 1992, the Muslim Arab Youth Association (MAYA), the [Council on American-Islamic Relations](#) (CAIR) 1994, and others. In fact, nearly all prominent Islamic organizations in the United States are rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood.

An [internal Brotherhood memorandum](#), released during the terror-support trial of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF) trial in July 2007 shows that the Brotherhood's *jihad* can take more subtle and long range approaches. Dated to May 22, 1991, the memo states:

The Ikhwan must understand that their work in America is a kind of grand Jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within and 'sabotaging' its miserable house by their hands and the hands of the believers so that it is eliminated and God's religion is made victorious over all other religions.<sup>57</sup>

That theme was picked up four years later by al-Qaradawi, the Muslim Brotherhood spiritual leader, while attending a conference in Toledo, Ohio. Al-Qaradawi has been offered the post of General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood twice, but has turned it down in favor of building and managing several Islamist organizations in the West and the Middle East associated with the Brotherhood.<sup>58</sup> At the Ohio conference, hosted by the Muslim Arab Youth Association (MAYA), he said, "Our brothers in Hamas, in Palestine, the Islamic resistance, the Islamic Jihad, after all the rest have given up and despaired, the movement of the Jihad brings us back to our faith."<sup>59</sup>

He later added:

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<sup>56</sup> "Interview with MB Deputy Chairman in Al Ahrar Daily," IkhwanWeb.Org, Official Muslim Brotherhood Website, June 16, 2008, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=17267&LevelID=1&SectionID=0> (Accessed June 17, 2008).

<sup>57</sup> U.S. v. Holy Land Foundation, 04-CR-240 Government exhibit 3-85.

<sup>58</sup> Mona El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 385.

<sup>59</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradawi, MAYA Conference, 1995, Toledo, Ohio.



What remains, then, is to conquer Rome. The second part of the omen. “The city of Hiraq [once emperor of Constantinople] will be conquered first,” so what remains is to conquer Rome. This means that Islam will come back to Europe for the third time, after it was expelled from it twice... Conquest through Da'wa [proselytizing], that is what we hope for. We will conquer Europe, we will conquer America! Not through sword but through Da'wa.

...

But the balance of power will change, and this is what is told in the Hadith of Ibn-Omar and the Hadith of Abu-Hurairah: "You shall continue to fight the Jews and they will fight you, until the Muslims will kill them. And the Jew will hide behind the stone and the tree, and the stone and the tree will say: 'Oh servant of Allah, Oh Muslim, this is a Jew behind me. Come and kill him!' The resurrection will not come before this happens." This is a text from the good omens in which we believe.<sup>60</sup>

Prominent Brotherhood organizations in Europe include the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations, the Muslim Association of Britain, the European Council for Fatwa and Research, the Islamische Gemeinschaft Deutschland (IGD), and the Union des Organisations Islamiques de France (UOIF).

Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated organizations in the West have successfully, but disingenuously, positioned themselves as gatekeepers to the Muslim-American community. The underlying goal of these groups is to redefine moderate Islam and to oversee a separation between Western Muslim communities and their secular host societies in order to promote Islamism and reinforce loyalty to the global ummah. Inherent in these goals is a strategy to weaken Western resistance to Islamism. Presenting themselves as the moderate voices of Islam, they have created a narrative to their community that the US government's campaign against terrorism is, rather, a generalized “war against Islam” that must be shunned, discouraged, and monitored. This characterization serves to demonize the efforts of the U.S. government and the West, which ultimately serves to radicalize and alienate Western Muslims.

To a large degree, the narrative propagated by these organizations is a corollary of the primary message of radical Islam at large: That there is a conspiracy by the West to subjugate Islam. This self-victimization fuels paranoia that Muslims are being selectively targeted for racist reasons, because of “special interests,” or due to anti-Muslim bias in Western foreign policy. This, in turn, inflames self-alienation and degrades any positive connections between Western Muslim communities and their host state. The foundation and histories of these intertwined organizations in America, as well as their actions in the West, should be examined in an effort to shed a light on the radicalizing effect on the local Muslim communities.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.



Over the last forty years, the movement that began in 1963 with the MSA has transformed itself into a network of like-minded organizations most commonly identified by a wide array of acronyms. ISNA grew directly out of MSA. According to Muslim activist Ihsan Bagby, who has long been involved in ISNA leadership, “ISNA has always sought inspiration and guidance from the intellectual leaders of the modern Islamic movement (Maududi, Sayyid Qutb, Hasan al-Banna, etc.)”

NAIT serves as the financial arm of ISNA and holds the deeds to hundreds of ideologically compatible mosques and Islamic institutions. Groups such as ISNA attract Muslims of all backgrounds to their conferences. Yet, the leadership has remained committed to uphold the values of Islamism, which looks to Islamicize society within the confines of a very specific interpretation. These organizations have been supported by funding from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In 1993, there was a meeting of the Palestine Committee of the Muslim Brotherhood in North America on how to advance the cause of Hamas. As a result of those discussions, three officials from the pro-Hamas, Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP) founded the Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). CAIR’s stated mission is “to enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.” By observing the Washington, D.C. based leadership of CAIR, and some of CAIR’s local branch leaders throughout the United States for twelve-years, it has become clear that CAIR has branched out beyond their stated mission. CAIR resources have consistently been utilized to block any action against radicalism. Since its inception, CAIR has intimidated and silenced critics – even fellow Muslims – while spreading disinformation about any who attempt to oppose or compete with them. Personal attacks on reporters, government officials and others who address issues of Islamism are dispatched in lieu of responding substantively to allegations. Almost every time there is a terrorist prosecution or an asset forfeiture of an Islamic charity linked to a terrorist group, CAIR condemns it as a fishing expedition meant to demonize Muslims. These cries often are joined by similar groups, including the Muslim American Society (MAS), an organization identified by a top Muslim Brotherhood leader as one of their own.

CAIR does indeed also work to protect the civil liberties of Muslims, an important endeavor, but does so in a way that projects an “us vs. them” mentality to American Muslims, purposefully fomenting isolation from the rest of the country.

Despite the known ties of the above mentioned organizations to the Muslim Brotherhood, the U.S. government insists on engaging in “outreach” and dialogue with them. This has led to an almost comical situation in which one side of the Department of Justice labels CAIR as an unindicted coconspirator in what has been alleged to be the biggest case of terrorist financing in the history of the Republic while the other side of the Department of Justice meets with CAIR officials and attends CAIR conferences in an effort to perform outreach with the Muslim-American community.



While it can be argued that outreach with the Muslim-American community is a necessary component to a successful counterterrorism strategy, there is absolutely no reason that this outreach has to go through organizations that ascribe to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. Alternatively, outreach can be performed at the grassroots level and through individuals respected in the Muslim-American community, like doctors and local businessmen, instead of through groups such as CAIR, ISNA, and MAS.

Muslim voices which promote accountability, democracy, human rights and freedoms must be elevated and embraced. Short of that, organizations, individuals and institutions in the West *and* in the Muslim world that are knee-jerk anti-American, and pro-terrorist, or apologists for terrorism, should be denounced and avoided. The U.S. should not seek to embrace or promote the “least worst option” for lack of a better solution. All organizations with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood need to be treated for what they are: fascistic, paternalistic organizations that seek the return of the Caliphate, act as apologists for Islamism and terrorism, and are not prepared to be responsible actors in democratic systems. They will not and cannot support the future pluralistic liberal institutions which much be built throughout the Muslim world in order to strengthen the promotion of democracy.

Rather than countering the ideology promoted by the Muslim Brotherhood and the terrorist groups that it has spawned, the U.S. has empowered the Muslim Brotherhood and, by extension, its uncompromising message by reaching out to the group itself in a poorly targeted effort to find allies in the Muslim world. Domestically, government agencies, departments, and officials at the federal, state, and local levels have unwittingly empowered the affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood by making them the dominant focus of their outreach to the Muslim community and thus anointing groups with an extremist bent and a documented ulterior agenda as the gatekeepers to the Muslim-American community. This policy, which continues to this day despite the criminal connections of many of these organizations, can only end in disaster for the interest of the United States both domestically and abroad.

Current and future U.S. outreach efforts need to be viewed through this lens, as the promotion and legitimacy of dangerous elements needs to be avoided at all costs, lest we allow short term and short sighted efforts of outreach, that mostly serve our goals only for the sake of appearances, yet do much damage to legitimate and genuine moderates by promoting elements which seek to exclude moderate voices, trump the more important long term needs and goals of the region, and U.S. national security.

The Muslim Brotherhood movement should be considered a strategic enemy of the United States. It should be designated as a foreign power and a threat, from a counterintelligence point-of-view, to the national security of the United States. The Muslim Brotherhood has stated clearly that it considers the United States to be its enemy, despite claims by some commentators that there exists a moderate wing of the movement that somehow does not support the movement’s core goals and ideology.