The Muslim Brotherhood

Hasan al-Hudaybi and ideology

Barbara H. E. Zollner

Routledge Studies in Political Islam

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The Muslim Brotherhood is one of the most influential Islamist organisations in the world today. Based in Egypt, its network includes branches in many countries of the Near and Middle East. Although the organisation has been linked to political violence in the past, it now proposes a politically moderate ideology.

This book provides an in-depth analysis of the Muslim Brotherhood during the years of al-Hudaybi's leadership, and how he sought to steer the organisation away from the radical wing, inspired by Sayyid Qutb, into the more moderate Islamist organisation it is today. It is his legacy which eventually fostered the development of non-violent political ideas.

During the years of persecution, 1954 to 1971, radical and moderate Islamist ideas emerged within the Brotherhood's midst. Sayyid Qutb's ideas inspired a radical wing evolved which subsequently fed into radical Islamist networks as we know them today. Yet, it was during the same period that al-Hudaybi and his followers proposed a moderate political interpretation, which was adopted by the Brotherhood and which forms its ideological basis today.

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In memory of my father, Alfred Zollner.

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Introduction

Hasan Ismaʿil al-Hudaybi led the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood during a time of crisis and dissolution. Succeeding Hasan al-Banna', who was the founder and first leader of the organisation, al-Hudaybi was to be its head for more than twenty years. During his leadership he faced severe criticism from fellow Brothers. Following the Revolution of July 1952, he was pitted against the antagonism of ʿAbd al-Nasir, who became increasingly influential in the council of leading Free Officers. ʿAbd al-Nasir's determination to thwart the cause of the Brotherhood and its influence on society was part of his path to absolute rule.

Considering the significance of al-Hudaybi's years as leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, it is surprising that there is little scholarly work on the subject. When taking into account that his moderate ideas continue to have a strong influence on the policy and attitude of today's Muslim Brotherhood, e.g. his conciliatory position towards the state system and his refutation of radical ideas, the fact that so little attention is paid to his writing is even more startling. Certainly, there has been interest in the Muslim Brotherhood. There are quite extensive studies available on Hasan al-Banna': the founder and first leader of the Muslim Brotherhood has been described as a model figure of Islamic campaigning; others depict him as the originator of threatening political activism in the name of Islam. There has been even more interest in the ideas of Sayyid Qutb; some see him as the ideologue of Islamist radicalism, whose concepts trained extremist groups; others describe him as a victim of state persecution who developed a theology of liberation in reaction to his maltreatment. No doubt, it is important to examine the work of these thinkers in order to understand currents of Islamist ideology and Islamist movements. Whatever the verdict on al-Banna' and Qutb, it is a fact that certain ideas of the two thinkers have been incorporated into the modern-day Muslim Brotherhood. However, this focus has led to an incorrect perception that the Islamic movement is necessarily radical in its thinking and/or militant in its deeds, an assumption which has, in recent years, been questioned by a number of scholars, among them John L. Esposito, Fred Halliday, François Burgat, and Gudrun Krämer.[1] The following study of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood under the leadership of Hasan al-Hudaybi will form an addition to these theses, addressing and reassessing the viewpoint that political Islam is a monolithic block, all in all disposed towards violent means.

There are reasons why al-Hudaybi is hardly mentioned in the literature on the Muslim Brotherhood. The first that comes to mind is the observation that Islamist movements are, by definition, seen as fundamentally radical, anti-democratic and anti-Western. This reasoning questions any distinction between moderate Islamism and its radical counterpart. The argument goes that both have the objective of establishing an Islamic state system, that they both aim to replace existing secular governance and that they therefore differ only in the degree of their methods, but not in principle. This book, however, clearly joins the scholarly circle on political Islam, which identifies arguments such as these as neo-Orientalist. As Esposito shows, this approach to political Islam is based on what he terms 'secular fundamentalism'.

The external view of political Islam is focused primarily on radical thought, and this may be due to the creation, on the part of power politics, of a fear of Islam as a religion, which is different, strange and seemingly in opposition to Western thought. Alternatively, it may be because radical or even militant groups are constantly appearing in the media by reason of their actions. In fact, militant Islamists actually seek such publicity. While radical thought and militant action make it necessary to study extremist groups, the focus on terrorism in the name of Islam marginalises moderate Islamists. It also makes it difficult to explain the differences between radical and moderate Islamism. In effect, the scholarly focus on radical or militant groups reinforces the generally negative public perception of Islam in the West.

A further reason why al-Hudaybi in particular has not been studied by Western scholars has to do with the internal affairs of the Brotherhood. It is astonishing that his name is not mentioned much by the writers of the Muslim Brotherhood itself. There is no simple explanation for this. One reason may be that members particularly stress their sympathies for al-Banna', depicting him as an ideal leader who died for his activist convictions. However, as many Brothers endured imprisonment, hard labour and even torture inside ʿAbd al-Nasir's prisons and camps, their personal histories have resulted in a dearth of discourse on Hasan al-Hudaybi. Thus, there is a tendency to remember al-Hudaybi's period of leadership as a time of near defeat and destruction. Still, the experiences of the persecuted are caught in the ambiguous relationship between forgetting and reappraisal. Many personal accounts of the time have been published since the mid 1970s,[2] narrating stories of torture and stressing steadfastness of faith. Only a few of the books written by Muslim Brothers take a broader approach, which includes discussion of a crisis within the organisation and of al-Hudaybi's part therein. Those authors who do tackle this issue not only reveal the society's weak position vis-à-vis ʿAbd al-Nasir, but also expose signs of disintegration within the Muslim Brotherhood.[3] This has led to differing attitudes towards al-Hudaybi, with most portraying him as an incompetent leader lacking the charismatic personality of his predecessor, al-Banna'. In particular, he was accused of not commanding the authority to bring together the different wings of the Muslim Brotherhood or to adopt a strong position in relation to the authoritarian state system. In the latter view lies an ambiguity, for it would appear to show al-Hudaybi not just as a

failure, but also as a victim of the political situation. Finally, these accounts reveal an ideological gap which opened at the beginning of the period of persecution in 1954. To a certain extent, Sayyid Qutb filled this gap. During his imprisonment he developed a radical approach, rejecting the then state system as illegitimate and 'un-Islamic'. In developing a revolutionary concept and explaining thereby the reasons underlying the persecution, he turned the condition of victimisation into one of pride. Thus, he gave many imprisoned Muslim Brothers, particularly young members, an ideology that they could hold on to.

It has to be said that al-Hudaybi did not react decisively to the situation of internal crisis and dissolution. Indeed, to a certain extent his indecisiveness triggered this situation. This was especially obvious during the period of persecution (1954–71), when he omitted to provide any guidelines to help in overcoming the feeling hopelessness ushered in by ʿAbd al-Nasir's mass imprisonments. His reaction to the radical ideas which flourished in the prisons and camps among certain, especially young, members came fairly late. Even then, his scholarly and juridical argumentation did not have the same sweeping effect as Sayyid Qutb's writings. In 1969, al-Hudaybi proposed a moderate concept in his writing *Duʿat la Qudat* (*Preachers not Judges*).[4] This writing, which was secretly distributed among fellow Brothers, is considered the first substantial refutation of Sayyid Qutb's ideas.[5] Qutb, who was hanged in 1966, was by then considered to be a martyr, his thoughts already having a considerable influence. This does not mean that the majority of Muslim Brothers did not pursue a moderate approach, but the lack of guidelines left them voiceless and reinforced the perception of al-Hudaybi as a weak leader.

Nevertheless, al-Hudayb'is moderate thought had an impact on his fellow Muslim Brothers. After the general amnesty of 1971, al-Hudaybi played a major part in the re-establishment of the organisation. Although he died in 1973, his moderate and conciliatory ideas continued to be relevant. The fact that close companions such as Muhammad Hamid Abu Nasr, ʿUmar al-Tilmisani and Muhammad Mashhur, who died recently, succeeded him as leaders shows the continuance of his thought. Furthermore, his son Ma'mun al-Hudaybi has played a major role in his capacity as the Brotherhood's secretary and spokesman. Another reason why his thinking became important lies in the changed attitude towards the Muslim Brotherhood since Anwar al-Sadat's presidency. Al-Sadat, who succeeded ʿAbd al-Nasir, released the imprisoned Brothers and offered the organisation a half-legal though not officially recognised status. A period of reorganisation (1971–77) followed, during which the government lifted the censorship of books written by Muslim Brothers. Many memoirs of formerly imprisoned members were published, such as Zaynab al-Ghazali's account or al-Hudaybi's book *Duʿat la Qudat* (*Preachers not Judges*). Dealing with the past, these books did not merely preserve the memory of the cruelties of ʿAbd al-Nasir's persecution. Al-Sadat followed his own agenda when he allowed these publications to fill the market; this was a deliberate political stratagem, implying a change of direction and aimed at distancing the new government from the old. The posthumous publication of al-Hudaybi's writings was not merely aimed at providing ideological guidance to

the Muslim Brothers; they were distributed because of their statements against radical thought, and were thus used to address a new and rising problem, namely the establishment of Islamist groups, which began to fight actively against the political system in the early 1970s. In these terms, *Duʿat la Qudat* remains an important critique of radical thought.

Hasan al-Hudaybi's main aim was to change society, i.e. Egyptian society, which, in his view, was not aware of the political nature of Islamic belief. Thus, real change could only be brought about through creating awareness and by tackling the issue of Islamic identity (as opposed to a Western perception). Only through developing a sense of Islamic consciousness could the ultimate goal of the establishment of an Islamic society be reached. Given this approach, al-Hudaybi refuted revolutionary overthrow, instead preaching gradual development from within. A major point was therefore education and social engagement, as well as participation in the political system, appealing by means of mission (*daʿwa*) to the consciousness of the individual believer.

This path of his is now followed by today's Muslim Brotherhood, which endeavours to be recognised as a political party and which influences political decision making by infiltrating the political participatory structures (parliament, administration, non-governmental organisations). This study of the Muslim Brotherhood from the 1950s until the early 1970s, therefore, is not only a piece of research into the modern political history of Egypt and an analysis of a religious ideology, but has also a relationship to current politics.

Structure of the book

The study has three main objectives. First, to present a historical discussion focusing on Hasan al-Hudaybi's years as leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. Second, to show that the ideas of Sayyid Qutb have to be understood with reference to the context of their development. In spite of the fact that his ideas had an impact on the radicalisation of Islamists, the leadership of the Brotherhood, under Hasan al-Hudaybi as its Murshid, took steps to counter a turn towards extremism among the ranks of the organisation. The third objective is to present a detailed interpretative analysis of *Duʿat la Qudat*. It is this work which builds the theological basis of the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology since the late 1960s. These overall aims are reflected in the structure of the book.

Chapter 1 presents a description and analysis of the history of the Brotherhood during its most challenging period, from the death of al-Banna' to the short-lived time of cooperation with the revolutionary regime and the years of persecution under ʿAbd al-Nasser. Section 1.1 questions the commonly held idea that the Brotherhood's first leader, Hasan al-Banna', had unquestioned authority and control over the movement. In section 1.2 al-Hudaybi's struggle to secure his leadership of the organisation is described. Section 1.3 addresses the Brotherhood's relationship with the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), which took power in Egypt following the Revolution of 1952. The historical analysis thus investigates al-Hudaybi's role in the initial period of cooperation and his part in the

gradual corrosion of that relationship with the state and asks questions with regard to his responsibility for the ensuing time of persecution. Section 1.4 looks at the years of persecution, focusing on the internal networks which linked the imprisoned members of the Brotherhood and enabled scattered cells to communicate with each other. This section also examines the reformation of the Brotherhood and demonstrates how al-Hudaybi and his followers in the Guidance Council regained their authority and how their policies were implemented in the strategies of the Brotherhood from 1971 onwards.

Chapter 2 discusses the dispute within the Muslim Brotherhood during the time of persecution. Section 2.1 engages with Sayyid Qutb's development of ideas, questioning commonly held perceptions such as, for example, that Qutb's work can be reduced to radical thought and that he was the initiator or radical Islamist theology. Section 2.2 examines the content of Qutb's propagandist work *Milestones* and its impact on so-called 'Qutbists', who selectively used ideas implicit in this text to support their radical world-view. The discussion focuses on concepts such as *hakimiyyat Allah* (absolute sovereignty of God) and *jahiliyya* (state of ignorance), which were used to call for *takfir* (charge of apostasy). This line of thought sought to legitimise violent actions against the state, which was regarded as having infringed upon divine power. While Qutb's work had an impact on radical Islamists, he also continued to be admired by politically moderate, mainstream Muslims. This requires us to rethink the relationship between his work and the interpretations of those he inspired.

Chapter 3 presents a critical analysis of the book *Preachers not Judges*. The main aim of this chapter is to explain the use of Muslim theological and juridical arguments which present a refutation of radical thought. Section 3.1 attempts to determine whether the text of *Preachers not Judges* was indeed written by Hasan al-Hudaybi. There is reasonable evidence to suggest that the book may in fact has been written by a circle of trusted companions. Yet, the completed work was distributed in his name and it therefore needs to be assumed that it had his editorial approval. Section 3.2 deals with the most essential question in the refutation of radical ideologies and the concept of *takfir*: the definition of a Muslim and *kafir*, believer and apostate. *Preachers not Judges* presents a minimal definition, and thus one which calls for tolerance. Further, the book returns to classical interpretations, such as that of sin, and considers mitigating circumstances which can be brought forward in defence of a Muslim who has not complied with the rigid definitions of belief. Section 3.3 looks into the issue of defining shari'a law. Whereas the more radical interpreters tend to describe shari'a as a set code of divine law, the book *Preachers not Judges* takes issue with this narrow interpretation, arguing that there is still room within it for decision making. This interpretation thus also allows for legislative changes and legislative input. Section 3.4 analyses notions of an Islamic state as proposed in *Preachers not Judges*. It is striking that the depiction largely follows a classical interpretation of the state, thus reiterating medieval concepts of the caliphate, the function of the leader and his responsibility towards God. The book thus implicitly argues for the re-establishment of the caliphate under the rule of a single authority.

Section 3.5 presents the discussion on whether obedience is mandatory in order to avoid *fitna* (discord) within the community of believers or whether it is the duty of Muslims to take opposition to or even militant action against any form of governance perceived to be un-Islamic. The book permits violent opposition only as an absolutely final resort. Further, it attempts to find some balance in that it calls generally for obedience to the state, but also emphasises the need for appropriate, non-violent opposition.

Primary sources

As already indicated, the interpretative analysis of *Duʿat la Qudat* shows that al-Hudaybi's response to the radical thought of his time refers not only to the Qur'an and Sunna, but draws arguments particularly from classical Islamic theology and jurisprudence. It is therefore necessary to describe his stance with reference to secondary sources on these subjects. Since the focus of the book is on the interpretative analysis of *Duʿat la Qudat*, it has been impossible to provide a literary review of the large amount of relevant secondary literature.

Regarding the historical account of the Muslim Brotherhood during the years 1951 to 1971, some remarks on the sources are necessary. The majority of primary literature, especially about this period and about al-Hudaybi, is in Arabic, published in Egypt. Many of the sources are written either by members of the Muslim Brotherhood or by people affiliated to the movement. Additionally, other documents, like newspaper articles, governmenl statements and orders, have been consulted. As secondary, scholarly literature, the work of Richard Mitchell, Gilles Kepel as well as Olivier Carré and Gérard Michaud has been of greatest assistance.[6] In particular, Mitchell's scholarly work on the Society of the Muslim Brothers is essential reading for any student interested in the organisation.

Regarding the study of Hasan al-Hudaybi's life, a few further remarks are in order, to show the difficulties encountered when dealing with the source material. There are only a few biographical accounts of Hasan Isma'il al-Hudaybi. These are relatively sparse on information and/or partly tendentious. Additionally, all primary sources and biographical descriptions are in Arabic and, as such, not easily accessible to Western scholars following modern trends in Islam. There are two main biographies: of these, ʿAbd Rabbih's *Hasan al-Hudaybi* is the less useful.[7] It is a very tendentious, in parts almost hagiographical, account of al-Hudaybi's life which contains little accurate information and a great, uncritical accumulation of hearsay about the second leader of the Brotherhood, without providing references. Additionally, ʿAbd Rabbih's work contains some incorrect details. It is also surprising that parts of this biography match an account by Sayyid Ahmad, who compiled al-Hudaybi's speeches and articles and edited them into a book entitled *al-Islam wa al-Daʿiyya* (Islam and Mission).[8] As Sayyid Ahmad's collection was edited in 1977, thus preceding ʿAbd Rabbih's book (first published in 1987), it is likely that the latter copied the text, which is not uncommon and is not necessarily considered plagiarism in the Islamic scholarly tradition. The most reliable biographical source is *Hasan al-Hudaybi*. *Al-imam al-mumtahan* by Jabir

Rizq, who was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and therefore had first-hand information. The major part of this work consists of a collection of interviews and comments by leading Brothers and other people with whom al-Hudaybi dealt, as well as extracts from shorter writings by the *Murshid*,[9] such as speeches and letters. Still, the compilation has the disadvantage that precise references and dates for sources used are only partially given.

It has to be noted, though, that the scholarly work on the period before the time of persecution, e.g. the research done by Mitchell, draws its information mainly from newspapers and magazines. Here lies the problem; it has to be considered that these sources often reflect a non-independent point of view – this is particularly the case after May/June 1954, when the press was purged and severe censorship was introduced. Moreover, the commentators and journalists may not have had the necessary insight, as internal Brotherhood matters as well as government actions were (presumably) kept secret. Additionally, a change of attitude towards the Muslim Brotherhood should be noted. Articles written shortly before and especially after the assassination attempt on ʿAbd al-Nasir in 1954, which refer back to the relations between the Revolutionary Command Council and the Society maintain a very propagandistic tone, accusing the *Ikhwan* of a double game. There may be documents maintained in archives which have not yet been considered. Although these sources will chiefly match the government view, there may be some surprises waiting as Egyptian archives start to release files relating to this time.

There are a number of sources written by members of the Muslim Brotherhood that deal with the time of persecution. Particular attention should be drawn to the works of ʿAbd al-Halim, ʿAbd al-Khaliq, Shadi, al-Sisi, Ramadan, ʿAbd Majid and Ra'if.[10] An extensive scholarly analysis of this 'prison literature' is still awaited. The above-mentioned stress on alternative primary sources, i.e. sources written by members of the Muslim Brotherhood, was deliberate. Generally, the same precautions as in dealing with governmentl or journalistic sources have to be considered and applied – one has to be aware that these accounts present a specific point of view and were written for a certain purpose. Second, the accounts of members of the Muslim Brotherhood writing about this period sometimes contain discrepancies, which makes the analysis difficult. Therefore, specifically in relation to these primary sources, which are mostly memoirs, one must ask which author is able to provide trustworthy and insightful information.

In making these remarks on the use of primary sources I want to draw attention to some fundamental considerations. The intention has been to provide an alternative point of view, tending away from an official version of the history of events, i.e. the version drawn up by the government side of the period, which was then picked up unquestioningly by scholars using government documents and state-censored media sources.[11] By consulting these kinds of primary sources I do not claim to be rewriting the Egyptian history of time; rather, the historical study presented should be seen as an addition to and extension of scholarly work on the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood. The intention is to draw attention to history as it is commonly seen or experienced within the organisation itself.

Therefore, the research does not claim to givprovidee an objective, historical insight; the latter is a project which this author is generally doubtful of.

The aim in providing a historical account is to create a basis for discussion of the theoretical texts. They reflect a theological dispute about the fundamentals of Islamic belief, a dispute that cannot be comprehended outside its historical context, i.e. the political situation in Egypt during this period and the position of the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood.

1 The Muslim Brotherhood during the years 1949–73

1.1 The Brotherhood in disarray: the legacy of Hasan al-Banna'

Hasan al-Banna', who was the founder and first General Guide (*Murshid al-ʿAmm*) of the Society of the Muslim Brothers (*Jamaʿat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*), is seen by his followers as an example of the combination of religious conviction with moral courage and public engagement. Not only in the past, but even today, followers of the Brotherhood portray his leadership as charismatic and appealing to the masses of believers; they describe his ideology as exemplifying Islamic ideals.[1]

In contrast, Hasan Ismaʿil al-Hudaybi, who succeeded al-Banna' as *Murshid*, is a much more controversial figure. There are some brothers who put forward rather negative views on his period as leader. Al-Hudaybi's policies in the early 1950s were described as disastrous for the future of the Brotherhood; he was accused of weakness, of failing to unify the organisation in its opposition to the political system and of letting down the Brotherhood in its efforts to contain ʿAbd al-Nasir's despotic exertions. Others depict al-Hudaybi's style of taking charge of the Brotherhood as autocratic, not permitting the building of democratic structures.[2] These and other comments about al-Hudaybi's ability resulted in downplaying of his contribution to the history of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, since the late 1990s one can trace instances of reconciling al-Hudaybi's reputation as one of the most important leaders of the first generation. In the same vein, there is a growing recognition that he and his vision of the organisation paved the way for the ideological profile of today's Society of the Muslim Brotherhood.[3] This can be seen in the fact that official statements of the Muslim Brotherhood clearly emphasise non-violence, with an occasional reference to *Duʿat la Qudat* (*Preachers not Judges*).[4] Additional evidence for al-Hudaybi's legacy is the fact that successive leaders, such as ʿUmar al-Tilmisani, Mustafa al-Mashhur and his son Ma'mun al-Hudaybi, were trusted companions of al-Hudaybi during his prison years.[5] The influence of al-Hudaybi on the subsequent leadership can be measured by the fact that the current *Murshid*, Muhammad Mahdi Akif, also refers to Hasan al-Hudaybi as a major influence on his thinking.[6] Similarly, the now General Secretary Mahmoud Ezzat said that Hasan al-Hudaybi encouraged his followers to read Qutb, but that the Brotherhood 'should follow the rules mentioned in the research "*Preachers not Judges*"'.[7]

The success of the founder, al-Banna', seems to be so pertinent that it was the measure by which his successor Hasan al-Hudaybi was assessed. Not only for this reason is it necessary to engage, albeit briefly, with Hasan al-Banna's legacy. However, it is not the intention here to present a comprehensive history of the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood under al-Banna', since the topic is beyond the scope of this book and because it has already been done elsewhere in greater detail. What is left to be done here is to focus on the historical circumstances of the late 1940s and to ask what impact this context had on the leadership of al-Banna's successor. Considering that the government issued an order of dissolution in December 1948 and that al-Banna' was murdered, it is fair to ask whether the latter's policies were indeed successful. To put it bluntly: did al-Banna', despite his success in building up the Brotherhood and its significance as a political mass movement, fail in the end? Was he really the ultimate example of a leader, or was he the root of a crisis which befell the Brotherhood by 1949? Were political circumstances such that the organisation was made a scapegoat for the failures of an ill-functioning political system? Was the Brotherhood becoming too powerful, too much a competitor for power? Or was the Brotherhood an organisational giant which lacked internal command and structure? These and other questions set the tone for the Brotherhood's prospects after al-Banna'.

The Society of the Muslim Brothers, generally referred to as the Muslim Brotherhood, was established in 1928.[8] Founded by Hasan al-Banna', the organisation developed rapidly from a local circle in Ismaʿiliyya to an Islamist mass opposition movement.[9] The growth of the Society during the 1930s and up to the late 1940s is remarkable. Although it is difficult to give exact figures, the organisation had an estimated number of 1,700–2,000 branches in 1948, with about 1 million followers and sympathisers in Egypt alone.[10]

Without going into much detail about the various social, economic and political factors contributing to the Brotherhood's evolution from a group which was mainly concerned with educational reform into a religious–political movement, it needs to be emphasised that the failure of the liberal political system contributed much to the Society's ideological and organisational growth.[11] The political system of a constitutional monarchy, which Marsot has described as 'Egypt's liberal experiment', was introduced with that country's declaration of independence on 28 February 1922. During the three decades that followed, national politics was marked by an ongoing internal battle which eventually paved the way for the coup d'etat of 1952. The reasons for the failure of the political system, a failure which became obvious during the course the Second World War and its aftermath, are manifold and are interlinked with the political world scene. To a great extent, however, Egypt's constitutional monarchy was torn apart by competition between the political forces, namely the king, the British, the parliamentary political parties and the growing power of non-governmental opposition movements, among them the Muslim Brotherhood.[12]

At least nominally, the British Empire ended its protectorate over Egypt in 1922 and released the country to independence.[13] Yet, Egypt remained under the spell of Britain, which secured its interests through the influence of the High

Commissioner and the presence of large quantities of troops. Although the Anglo-British treaty of 1936 restricted the number of troops during peace time, their presence in the Suez Canal Zone remained a thorn in the side of many Egyptians.[14] The endorsement of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty must be seen in connection with the growing possibility of war with Nazi Germany; Great Britain was keen to secure its relations with Egypt as a future ally and as a place of strategic importance. Nevertheless, the treaty was seen by nationalist Egyptians as a warrant for continuous control over Egypt. Anti-British sentiments were on the rise in Egypt when the confrontation between Jewish settlers and Muslim natives in Palestine, a land under British mandate, escalated.[15] The first Palestinian uprising in 1936 became a widely supported cause among Egyptian nationalists as well as Muslim Brothers.[16] With the beginning of the Second World War, feelings against Britain rose to a peak, not only because Egypt was unwillingly becoming a theatre of war, but because Britain now actively demanded power over national politics.[17] Consequently, the constitutional monarchy, its parliamentary system and the idea of an elected government became an empty shell. The inability of the king and the government to withstand British intervention led to widespread disillusionment with the democratic movement and the parliamentary system. Foreign intrusion into national politics was thus a contributory factor in undermining the authority of the state system.

Even after the war, Egypt's democratic system was unable to recover. Traumatised by the legacy of British intervention, a malfunctioning administration and governance were unable to implement effective policies to address the most pressing social and economic problems. As the political system fell apart, non-governmental opposition movements grew in popularity. Among them were the Muslim Brotherhood, and also nationalist right- and internationalist left-wing movements, some of which were close to political parties. Similarly to the Brotherhood, many of these movements had their own youth organisations, but were also running scout groups and even guerrilla forces.[18]

While the political system showed signs of disintegration, the Muslim Brotherhood grew under Hasan al-Banna's leadership to become a non-governmental force and an opposition with immense influence. The Brotherhood's official line regarding party politics was rather negative. Labelling it as '*hizbiyya*', which could be translated as the rule of party politics, al-Banna' argued that the existing parliamentary democracy merely followed party interests rather than the demands of the people and the guidelines of Islam.[19] Despite the official rhetoric, political influence was exerted on a number of levels. It is well known that al-Banna' twice stood for election, once in 1942, when he withdrew his candidacy after reaching an agreement with the Wafd, and once in 1945, when he was defeated.[20] Real political influence was, however, played out behind the scenes. Under al-Banna's guidance, the organisation gradually built up contacts with notables and party representatives. The Society had broad support among individuals, mainly from the middle class, and was successful in building an effective network.[21] The sympathies of the middle class secured considerable financial funds and opened the doors to a political network which reached both the political top level as well as